

Summit County, Ohio



General Land Use Development Plan

Russell M. Pry, County Executive

**County of Summit Community and
Economic Development Department**

Adopted March 2006

Summit County, Ohio



General Plan

The Summit County General Land Use Development Plan
was adopted by the Summit County Planning Commission on
March 30, 2006

Summit County, Ohio



General Plan

Pursuant to Resolution No. 2006-166

The Summit County General Land Use Development Plan

was also adopted by the Summit County Council on

June 19, 2006

Summit County, Ohio



General Plan

**The following County of Summit Community and Economic Development
Department, Planning Division staff prepared this Summit County General
Land Use Development Plan**

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RESOLUTION NO. 2006-166

SPONSOR Mr. McCarthy, Mr. Kostandaras, Mrs. Heydorn, Mrs. Prentice & Mr. Teodosio

DATE June 19, 2006

A Resolution recognizing, supporting and adopting the County of Summit General Land Use Development Plan as a guide for future land use growth in the County of Summit as recommended by the County of Summit Planning Commission, for the Executive's Department of Community and Economic Development, and declaring an emergency.

WHEREAS, the County of Summit has never prepared and adopted a general land use development plan; and,

WHEREAS, the County of Summit Planning Commission recognized the need for such a plan; and,

WHEREAS, the County of Summit Planning Commission, authorized the professional planning staff of the County Executive's Department of Community and Economic Development, Planning Division to prepare such a plan; and,

WHEREAS, the staff has undertaken a two year effort to prepare such a plan in cooperation with other county departments and agencies, political subdivisions and a steering committee representing a wide range of interests throughout the County ; and,

WHEREAS, the staff conducted surveys, interviews and public meetings to determine the land use development preferences of the County's citizens and public officials; and,

WEHEREAS, the General Land Use Development Plan provides policies and guidelines to assist the Planning Commission in the performance of its duties to guide future land use growth in the County; and,

WHEREAS, the Plan is compatible with township, village and city planning efforts in the County and supports and strengthens those planning efforts; and,

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission adopted the Plan at its March 30, 2006 Planning Commission meeting and recommended the recognition and adoption of the Plan as a guide for future land use growth in the County; and,

WHEREAS, this Council has determined by reviewing all pertinent information that recognizing, supporting and adopting the County of Summit General Land Use Development Plan, as recommended by the Planning Commission is necessary and in the best interest of the County of Summit;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the County of Summit, State of Ohio, That:

SECTION 1

The County of Summit recognizes, supports and adopts the County of Summit General Land Use Plan as the policy guide for land use planning decisions by the County Planning Commission.

RESOLUTION NO. 2006-166
PAGE TWO

SECTION 2

This Resolution is hereby declared an emergency in the interest of the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of the County of Summit and for the further purpose of promoting clear land use development policies to guide the future land use growth of the County of Summit.

SECTION 3

Provided this Resolution receives the affirmative vote of eight members, it shall take effect immediately upon its adoption and approval by the Executive; otherwise, it shall take effect and be in force at the earliest possible time provided by law.

SECTION 4

It is found and determined that all formal actions of this Council concerning and relating to the adoption of this Resolution were adopted in an open meeting of this Council, and that all deliberations of this Council and of any of its committees that resulted in such formal action, were in meetings open to the public, in compliance with all legal requirements, including Section 121.22 of the Ohio Revised Code.

INTRODUCED April 17, 2006

ADOPTED June 19, 2006


CLERK OF COUNCIL


PRESIDENT

APPROVED June 21, 2006


EXECUTIVE

June 21, 2006
ENACTED EFFECTIVE

VOICE VOTE: YES: Callahan, Congrove, Crawford, Crossland, Dickinson, Gallagher, Heydorn, Kostandaras, Prentice, Smith & Teodosio

Summit County General Land Use Development Plan

Table of Contents

Foreword

Executive Summary

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Chapter 2 – History

Chapter 3 – Cultural/Historic Resource Preservation

Chapter 4 – Demographics

Chapter 5 – Housing

Chapter 6 – Land Use

Chapter 7 – Natural Resources

Chapter 8 – Utilities & Storm Water Management

Chapter 9 – Economic Development

Chapter 10 – Transportation

Chapter 11 – Implementation & Policy

Summit County General Land Use Development Plan

List of Maps

Chapter 1 Introduction

Map 1.1 Community Survey Future Vision

Chapter 3 Cultural/Historic Resource Preservation

Map 3.1 National Register of Historic Places and Districts

Chapter 4 Demographics

Map 4.1 Summit County General Plan – Plan Areas

Map 4.2 Population Change

Map 4.3 Summit County 2005-2009 Consolidated Plan Jurisdiction

Map 4.4 1999 Median Household Income

Chapter 5 Housing

Map 5.1 Median Home Value, 2000

Map 5.2 Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority (AMHA) Properties, 2004

Chapter 6 Land Use

Map 6.1 Land Use, 1979

Map 6.2 Land Use, 2004

Map 6.3 Summit County Generalized Zoning, 2004

Chapter 7 Natural Resources

Map 7.1 Ground Water Resources

Map 7.2 Ground Water Pollution Potential

Map 7.3 Floodplains

Map 7.4 Total Household Storm Damage by Zip Code, 2003

Map 7.5 Summit County Communities Protected by a Riparian Ordinance

Map 7.6 Generalized Wetlands

Map 7.7 Steep Slopes

Map 7.8 Canopy Cover

Map 7.9 Parks and Open Space

Map 7.10 Summit County Trails and Greenways Plan

Map 7.11 Ecologically Sensitive and Preservation Areas

Chapter 8 Utilities & Storm Water Management

Map 8.1 Areas Served by Publicly Operated Central Water Systems

Map 8.2 Publicly Operated Water and Sewer Treatment Facilities

Map 8.3 Water Service Areas and Ground Water Resources

Map 8.4 Areas Served by Publicly Operated Central Sanitary Sewer Systems

Map 8.5 Soil Suitability for Septic

Map 8.6 Summit County Joint Economic Development Districts (JEDD)

Map 8.7 Summit County 208 Water Quality Plans Facility Planning Areas

Map 8.8 FPA Prescriptions

Map 8.9 Summit County Watersheds

Chapter 9 Economic Development

Map 9.1	Commercial and Industrial Land Use, 2004
Map 9.2	Business Density Per Square Mile by Zip Code, 2002
Map 9.3	Industrial Land Use Change, 1979-2004
Map 9.4	Commercial and Industrial Parks, 2004
Map 9.5	Commercial Land Use Change, 1979-2004
Map 9.6	Enterprise Zones

Chapter 10 Transportation

Map 10.1	Federal Functional Classification of Highways
Map 10.2	Rail Ownership and Traffic Volume
Map 10.3	Daily Truck Volume
Map 10.4	Proposed Cuyahoga National Park Road Enhancements



Foreword

Foster Armstrong, former Planner for the Summit County Department of Community & Economic Development, worked on a Concept Plan for Summit County, but it was not completed due to his early death. He prepared the History Chapter and his thoughts have been reflected in other Plan Chapters.

This Summit County General Land Use Development Plan is dedicated to him.

Summit County, Ohio



General Plan

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Thanks to those who served on the Summit County General Land Use Development Plan Steering Committee:

- Paul Gallagher, Summit County Planning Commission
- Allen Mavrides, Summit County Planning Commission
- Rose Mary Snell, Summit County Planning Commission
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- Deborah Houdeshell, Summit County, D.O.E.S.
- Mark Szeremet, MetroParks Serving Summit County
- Mayor Michael Lyons, Village of Richfield
- Mayor William A. Currin, Mayors Association
- Mayor Don Kuchta, Mayors Association
- Donna Skoda, Health Department
- Laurie Pinney, Richfield Township Clerk



Summit County General Land Use Development Plan

Executive Summary

The Summit County General Land Use Development Plan is a policy plan. The overall goal of the General Land Use Development Plan is to add a county-level perspective and planning direction that complements and strengthens local planning efforts. The Summit County General Land Use Development Plan will also be referred to in this document as the General Plan.

The Summit County General Land Use Development Plan outlines a policy guide for public decisions regarding development issues in the County over the next twenty years. It calls for a more sustainable approach to development. Sustainable development has been defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."¹

The following are important sustainable development goals and reflect the goals set forth in the Summit County General Plan:

- ◆ The promotion and maintenance of healthy environments, featuring clean air and water
- ◆ The conservation of energy, soils, and water supplies
- ◆ The reduction, reuse and recycling of waste
- ◆ The clean up of brownfield sites
- ◆ An emphasis on the reuse of existing buildings and infill development rather than buildings on open greenfields in the outer suburbs
- ◆ The promotion of mass transit and compact, transit-oriented development
- ◆ The construction of mixed-use commercial and residential development that includes public parks and emphasizes walking and biking
- ◆ The designation of compact growth areas that have services available to support development
- ◆ The separation of developing areas from sensitive natural areas, to avoid natural hazards and to protect wildlife habitats
- ◆ The creation of greenways – linear paths and corridors – to connect cities and towns to the countryside and to each other
- ◆ The designation of areas for open space conservation development based on community preservation and open space planning goals
- ◆ The protection of productive farming and forestry areas

The intended long-range result of this plan is to protect the quality of life for the residents of the county while accommodating economic growth, coupled with less expenditure of public tax funds, and less impact upon the environment. The development of the General Plan was guided by the Summit County Planning Commission with the assistance of AMATS, NEFCO and county departments and townships. The Summit County Department of Community and Economic Development Planning Division staff prepared the Summit County General Land Use Development Plan.

¹ The World Commission 1987, p. 43

Summit County Natural Resources Study Modeling

Allowing for higher density development, if coupled with natural resource and open space protection programs, can reduce the impact of the built area on the environment. By concentrating development and people within a smaller geographic area, density reduces land consumption and allows communities to protect valuable open space, habitat, farmland and ecologically sensitive areas.

A build-out projection model was utilized in the Summit County Natural Resources Study (2003). Using the *"What If"* planning model, the study looked at changes in land use by projections of acres of vacant land converted to residential, commercial and industrial uses. Using the *"What If"* model, Summit County modeled two alternative scenarios to depict possible impacts of land use measures on future land use patterns, in Scenario 1 there was no change to current land use controls and open space protection. In Scenario 2, there was a use of environmental protection and open space acquisition measures. It was found in the Scenario 2 model that thirty-six percent more land was preserved when environmental land use controls were in place, and yet basically the same amount of development could occur. ²

In essence, this build-out analysis reflects that a balance of development and environmental protection may be reasonably accommodated. However, the realities of development are that as communities reach the build-out stage, there is more pressure to develop environmentally sensitive lands. So communities need to plan and implement natural resource protection measures before development is proposed, if they wish to preserve natural areas, green infrastructure and the public health and safety functions they provide.

DISCUSSION OF SMART GROWTH

Like many parts of Ohio and the United States, Summit County is growing slowly in population and jobs, yet we are rapidly converting undeveloped open space to more urbanized uses such as housing, subdivisions, shopping centers and roads. The population of Akron is declining as residents move to the suburban cities and townships. Out-migration from the Cleveland metropolitan area has contributed to high growth in northern Summit County. This sprawling form of development undermines the health of existing urban areas, destroys farmland and irreplaceable natural resources, and creates environmental problems.

However, Summit County and the rest of Northeast Ohio have a chance to make positive changes and slow these destructive development trends. As staff at EcoCity Cleveland observes, "we have the chance to come out ahead of other regions. As troubling as our situation is, it is not as dire as the situation of many regions. Our growth has been slower, more digestible. We have not sprawled as much. We still have a manageable urban area. We offer a high quality of life at a low cost of living. In short, we are not in a crisis like Atlanta or parts of California. We have the opportunity to think about our growth, plan well, and do it right. We have our opportunity. Let's seize it."³

² Natural Resources Study, Summit County, Ohio 2003, p. 96

³ See www.ecocitycleveland.org for full report on Smart Growth

What is Sprawl?

Sprawl is the inefficient and unplanned conversion of rural land to exurban and suburban uses. It is typically manifested in development that is low-density, scattered ("leapfrog"), single-use and automobile-dependent. Sprawl is often characterized by the loss of green space, increased traffic congestion, increased pollution and higher taxes and service costs. Anthony Downs of the Brookings Institution identifies ten characteristics that are typical of sprawling development patterns:

- Predominance of low-density residential and commercial settlements, especially in new growth areas.
- Unlimited outward extension of new developments.
- Leapfrog projects jumping beyond established settlements.
- Single-use development that separates shopping, working and residential activities.
- Low-density, single-use work places and strip retail development typically located at the periphery of metropolitan areas.
- Reliance on auto transportation for virtually all trips.
- Fiscal disparities among localities.
- Lack of adequate housing choices located close to work opportunities, thus forcing long commutes.
- Reliance mainly on trickle-down older housing to provide housing to low-income households.
- Fragmented land use decisions by local governments.

What is Smart Growth?

Smart Growth recognizes connections between development and quality of life, and leverages new growth to improve the community. The features that distinguish smart growth in a community vary from place to place, but in general, smart growth invests time, attention, and resources in restoring community and vitality to center cities and older suburbs. New smart growth is more town-centered, is transit and pedestrian oriented, and has a greater mix of housing, commercial, and retail uses. It also preserves open space and other environmental amenities.

Smart Growth is development that serves the economy, community, and the environment. Although there is no "one-size-fits-all" solution, successful communities do tend to have one thing in common - a vision of where they want to go and of what things they value in their community – and their plans for development reflect these values. This is Smart Growth.



Smart Growth principles address a number of key issues important to Summit County, including:

Quality of Life

Smart Growth offers a framework to build community, and help create and preserve a sense of place. It does this through housing and transportation choices, green spaces, recreational and cultural attractions, and policies and incentives that promote mixed-use neighborhoods.

Design

Smart Growth creates communities that offer health, social, economic, and environmental benefits for all. It achieves this by promoting resource-efficient building and community designs, green building practices, low-impact development, and mixed-use, walkable neighborhoods.

Economics

Smart growth encourages community-based small business investment and development, adds to the variety of local employment opportunities, and helps attract new businesses and industries. More efficient government services are key to this, as are public and private investments that focus on quality of life improvements.

Environment

Many of our current environmental challenges – air and water pollution, global warming, and natural habitat fragmentation – are due in part to the way we have built our communities and metropolitan areas during the past half-century. Smart growth attempts to change development patterns and processes to reduce negative environmental impacts.

Health

Smart growth reduces health threats from air and water pollution and indoor air contaminants through resource-efficient building design, and offering transportation options such as mass transit, bike lanes, and pedestrian walkways. These engage residents and workers in a more active, healthy lifestyle.

Housing

Smart growth promotes housing options for diverse lifestyles and socio-economic levels. It does this through mixed-use, affordable housing and compact development that revitalizes neighborhoods and provides an alternative to automobile-dependent communities.

Transportation

Smart growth protects public health and environmental quality, conserves energy, and improves the quality of life in communities by promoting new transportation choices and transit-oriented development.

Ten Principles of Smart Growth

Smart growth success share common attributes. Moreover, although different organizations use varying language, the basic and underlying principles of smart growth remain the same. The Smart Growth Network, an organization formed in 1996 by a number of organizations including the State of Maryland, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the National Association of



Realtors, identifies the following ten principles as a framework for smart growth discussion and action:

1. Create Range of Housing Opportunities and Choices

Providing quality housing for people of all income levels is an integral component in any smart growth strategy.

2. Create Walkable Neighborhoods

Walkable communities are desirable places to live, work, learn, worship and play, and therefore a key component of smart growth.

3. Encourage Community and Stakeholder Collaboration

Growth can create great places to live, work and play – if it responds to a community’s own sense of how and where it wants to grow.

4. Foster Distinctive, Attractive Communities with a Strong Sense of Place

Smart growth encourages communities to craft a vision and set standards for development and construction, which respond to community values of architectural beauty and distinctiveness, as well as expanded choices in housing and transportation.

5. Make Development Decisions Predictable, Fair, and Cost Effective

For a community to be successful in implementing smart growth, it must be embraced by the private sector.

6. Mix Land Uses

Smart growth supports the integration of mixed land uses into communities as a critical component of achieving better places to live.

7. Preserve Open Space, Farmland, Natural Beauty, and Critical Environmental Areas

Open space preservation supports smart growth goals by bolstering local economies, preserving critical environmental areas, improving our communities’ quality of life, and guiding new growth into existing communities.

8. Provide a Variety of Transportation Choices

Providing people with more choices in housing, shopping, communities, and transportation is a key aim of smart growth.

9. Strengthen and Direct Development Towards Existing Communities

Smart growth directs development towards existing communities already served by infrastructure, seeking to utilize the resources that existing neighborhoods offer, and conserve open space and irreplaceable natural resources on the urban fringe.

10. Take Advantage of Compact Building Design

Smart growth provides a means for communities to incorporate a more compact building design as an alternative to conventional, land consumptive development.

Every individual community, county and state has smart growth responsibility --- we cannot wait for the “other guy” to address issues that affect our quality of life. The principles of smart growth



support the vision identified in this Summit County General Land Use Development Plan and address key planning and development issues important to Summit County. Therefore, the Summit County Planning Commission Steering Committee has adopted the ten principles of smart growth as a planning framework for developing more specific goals, objectives and implementation strategies in the Plan. Each chapter in the Plan will address and incorporate the principles of smart growth relevant to the planning issues.

The following summary refers to the vision and goals that serve as the basic policy framework for the plan, which are the major recommendations and strategies for implementation. As a fundamental basis of the process, surveys were completed by community officials for their input into the planning effort as the plan was formulated.

VISION AND GOALS

Properly managed and rationally planned development, the creation and linkage of open space areas, prime farmland preservation, an expanded range of housing opportunities, and economic development are the unified vision of the plan. The vision is to utilize Smart Growth principles to improve land use planning and development patterns in Summit County.

Cultural Resources and Historic Preservation: The overarching goal is to safeguard the heritage of Summit County by preserving those aspects of our built and natural environments that embody important elements of our culture and history. Cultural and historic resources should be identified and preserved.

Economic Development: Orderly light industrial growth should be encouraged in areas properly zoned for it. Commercial development should be sensitive to its impact upon existing commercial areas (particularly central business districts), family farms and related agribusinesses should be assisted, and the tax implications of development should be examined. Utilize incentives to enhance regional economic development, and cooperate with other Northeast Ohio communities for the common good of the region. Revitalize existing commercial and industrial areas before developing new facilities wherever possible. Encourage better communication between businesses, secondary, trade and technical schools, and local colleges and universities to identify necessary employee skills, business development needs and corresponding educational requirements.

Housing: Housing opportunities should be addressed with emphasis on affordability, building code compliance and revitalization of the housing stock in accordance with the adopted Summit County Consolidated Plan (2005-2009). The consolidated plan is basically a strategic housing plan that outlines to the federal government how Summit County plans to work on providing safe and affordable housing and providing a suitable living environment (especially for low-to-moderate income persons).

Demographics: Economic development and land use concerns need to be addressed for the expanding population. The population is aging and becoming more diverse. Baby boomers as they reach 50+ remain the largest, most important demographic group in America. As the baby boomers age, they are becoming the fastest growing segment of the housing market.



Utilities: Provision of service in a cost-effective manner is a priority. Central sewer and water infrastructure should be installed only in accordance with an adopted service area plan for the affected community. Service area plans should be devised with the input of local officials.

Natural Resources: Natural resources and green infrastructure should be conserved. Green infrastructure such as floodplains, wetlands and streams can provide free natural services. Natural systems provide important services such as flood control, stormwater management and pollution filtration. The loss of these services increases the risks of flooding.

Land Use: Growth and development should be managed and balanced with protecting sensitive natural resources, and open space areas should be linked when feasible. Zoning should be in harmony with community comprehensive plans.

Transportation: The transportation system should continue to be examined in order to address existing and expected traffic flow based upon level of service criteria. Maintenance of the existing system is a priority. Multi-modal transportation systems should be explored.

Summit County General Plan Goals, and Objectives

The following is a Summary of the Goals and Objectives found in the Summit County General Plan. Chapter -1- Introduction and Chapter 2 - History does not cover goals and objectives.

Chapter 3: Cultural Resources and Historic Preservation

Goals and Objectives

The overarching goal is to safeguard the heritage of Summit County by preserving those aspects of our built and natural environments that embody important elements of our culture and history. A secondary goal is to promote the use and conservation of these areas for the education, pleasure, and enrichment of all who visit or live and work in Summit County.

The goals and objectives listed below are intended to assist Summit County and its constituent communities in the recognition and preservation of our heritage. They will guide townships, villages and cities in the preparation of specific local land use goals, priorities and policies to protect, restore and promote their significant historic and cultural resources. The goals and objectives are not listed in order of priority but are considered equally important.

- A. Identify, evaluate and protect historic, scenic and cultural features throughout Summit County.
- B. Encourage individual communities to take ownership and facilitate the preservation of their historic resources.
- C. Recognize and reinforce each community's unique character and identity.
- D. Encourage rehabilitation and preservation of privately and publicly owned buildings and structures.
- E. Establish minimum property maintenance guidelines and standard building codes to encourage and support historic preservation.



- F. Establish the groundwork for adopting or strengthening local historic preservation ordinances.
- G. Increase public awareness and education to enable Summit County residents to discover, understand and preserve their historic places.
- H. Recognize outstanding preservation efforts.
- I. Partner with existing agencies and organizations to share data and resources and coordinate implementation measures.
- J. Assist Summit County communities with heritage tourism and related economic development opportunities.
- K. Position Summit County as a fun, interesting and rewarding place by nourishing arts- and culture-related organizations.

Chapter 5: Housing

Goals and Objectives

Adequate housing is one of the key components of a healthy community, and a critical ingredient in the way a community grows. Therefore, the primary goal of this plan element is to ensure that a range of housing opportunities and choices are available for current and future Summit County residents of all income levels and life stages.

The goals and objectives listed below are intended to assist Summit County and its constituent communities in the pursuit of this goal. They will guide townships, villages and cities in the preparation of specific local housing goals, priorities and policies. The goals and objectives are not listed in order of priority but are considered equally important.

- A. Encourage housing development that supports the principles of smart growth.
- B. Promote the development of a range of housing choices that meet the needs of persons of all income levels, life stages and age groups, as well as for persons with special needs.
- C. Support local planning that identifies essential housing needs with respect to development of new housing and the rehabilitation of existing housing.
- D. Increase the supply of affordable housing for the elderly and non-elderly populations in those areas of the county where need is identified.
- E. Facilitate homeownership.
- F. Increase public awareness about the various homeowner assistance and loan programs available.
- G. Facilitate coordination of housing efforts between local communities and private and public agencies/organizations.
- H. Provide the homeless and those threatened with homelessness with a range of housing options and appropriate supportive services.
- I. Identify and rehabilitate vacant, abandoned or substandard buildings in appropriate locations for housing.



- J. Ensure that new housing is properly and safely constructed.
- K. Ensure the existing housing stock is properly maintained.

Chapter 6: Land Use

Goals and Objectives

The primary goal of the land use element is that smart growth management techniques should be practiced in the county so as to balance development with the preservation of critical, sensitive areas such as wetlands, floodplains, riparian corridors and prime farmland.

Allowing for higher density development, if coupled with natural resource and open space protection programs, can reduce the impact of the built area on the environment. By concentrating development and people within a smaller geographic area, density reduces land consumption and allows communities to protect valuable open space, habitat, farmland and ecologically sensitive areas.

The Ohio Department of Development's Office of Strategic Planning has projected Summit County to grow by 3.9 % between 2000 and 2030. According to the U.S. Census in 2000, Summit County had a population of 542,899, the Ohio Department of Development's Office of Strategic Planning has projected the Summit County population will be 564,212 in 2030.

- In contrast to the population patterns that have evolved over the last thirty years, the goal for future population distribution is to direct a greater percentage of population growth to areas that are already served by centralized utilities, near existing transportation facilities, and in close proximity to employment centers. Accommodating the same number of housing units on less land enables communities to shift construction away from sensitive areas to areas more suitable for development.
- To conserve resources, reduce initial building costs, and diminish the long range cost of services, greater consideration should be placed on restoring, rehabilitating and reusing existing structures, and finding sites suitable for infill development in locations near existing services.
- Fewer homes should be constructed in outlying locations where urban services are not available.

The objectives listed below are intended to guide townships, villages and cities in the preparation of specific local land use goals, priorities and policies. In addition, the objectives provide a policy framework for county decision making.

Land Use Planning Objectives:

- A. Land should be developed efficiently, keeping in mind that it is a finite resource.
- B. Through local zoning, encourage higher density development in urban centers and villages and maintain lower density in the unincorporated areas.

- C. Zoning resolutions should be in accordance with local land use plans.
- D. Guide commercial and industrial development into areas already zoned for it.
- E. Develop and adopt service area plans as a means to manage existing and future infrastructure improvements.
- F. Encourage the preservation of prime agricultural land.
- G. Encourage the conservation of open space, particularly those areas containing sensitive land such as jurisdictional wetlands, floodplains, river corridors, and woodlands.
- H. Support local zoning based upon a land capability analysis.
- I. Promote tax incentives such as the CAUV, agricultural districts and the forestry program. The Current Agricultural Use Value (CAUV) program allows owners of farmland the opportunity to have their land taxed according to value in agriculture rather than full market value.
- J. Work with local nonprofit land trusts and affected governmental agencies to preserve sensitive land through the acquisition of conservation easements.
- K. Periodically review all county regulations pertaining to development activity.
- L. Update local land use plans on a continuing basis to ensure that such plans and zoning are in harmony. The County Planning Commission may provide technical assistance in guiding communities during the plan update process.

The majority of vacant land left in Summit County is zoned for residential uses. There is a real opportunity to use Smart Growth housing and development options to preserve many of the current existing natural resources and “special places” that define Summit County. Also utilizing these options will promote quality development. The following are the recommended Smart Growth Development Options:

Smart Growth Development Options:

1. **Open space conservation development** – This type of development provides for the same overall densities on a site that would be permitted with the underlying residential zoning but provides for the clustering of the houses in order to preserve a substantial amount of the site in open space (at least 40% - 50% of the total site). This can reduce the cost of providing infrastructure as well. Access to quality open space areas with woodlands, meadows or water courses is incorporated into the design of the open space conservation development. Pedestrian circulation is a primary design objective providing opportunities for passive recreation, such as biking, walking, etc.
2. **Compact development:** This is development that provides for higher intensities or densities of use. Instead of development patterns that are spread out, the Smart Growth movement promotes more compact development patterns which can be compatible with the trend in



smaller household sizes. Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) is a type of neo-traditional mixed use neighborhood design that has implemented these compact building design principles.

3. **Mixed use development:** Mixed use developments are developments that are patterned often after traditional villages, and that usually include a mix of retail, residential and office uses, and pedestrian friendly sidewalks. A mixed use development contains different land uses that are in close proximity, planned as a unified complementary whole, and functionally integrated to the use of shared vehicular and pedestrian access and parking areas. Mixed use developments are often cited as ways to reduce traffic generation, particularly where homes and jobs are planned and developed within easy commuting distance and shopping is located close to residences.

There is a positive relationship between encouraging more compact patterns of development and making it more feasible for mixed use developments to occur. Well designed mixed use developments encourage more walking and less dependence on automobiles.

4. **Transit oriented development:** Transit Oriented Development (TOD) refers to residential and commercial areas designed to maximize access by transit. A TOD neighborhood has a center with a rail or bus station, surrounded by relatively high density development, with progressively lower density spreading outwards. Encouraging compact, denser types of development promotes transit oriented development.
5. **Infill development/ Revitalization of older urbanized areas:** Infill development is the economic use of vacant land in urban areas where water, sewer, and other public improvements and services are in place and available for immediate use. Infill development is one of the main antidotes to suburban sprawl. Infill development tends to be more compact than conventional development patterns, so the same number of dwelling units, stores or offices, takes up much less land.

Chapter 7: Natural Resources

Goals and Objectives

this section of the Natural Resources chapter outlines goals and objectives for natural resource decisions, open space preservation and future planning. The overall goal is to preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas. Open space preservation supports smart growth goals by bolstering local economies, preserving critical environmental areas, and guiding new growth into existing communities.

- A. An overall open space network should be created to conserve and protect important natural resources and to assist in structuring the form of urban development.
- B. Using the Summit County Trails & Greenways Plan as a guide, each community should develop a local plan for linking these areas with sidewalks, bikeways and/or trails.
- C. Promote compact mixed use developments thereby relieving growth pressures on remaining open space.



- D. Invest in the rural economy to preserve agricultural lands. Encourage local communities to utilize land use tools to protect agricultural land and uses.
- E. Use land management techniques and acquisition to protect drinking water sources. Preserving open space upstream can help protect drinking water resources by filtering out contaminants before they enter the community's water system. Critical areas for water quality protection include wetlands, riparian corridors, and floodplains.
- F. Educate local communities on the need for ground water resource protection based on the new mapping information from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources that shows the ground water pollution potential for Summit County. The ground water pollution potential mapping program (DRASTIC) ranks areas with respect to relative vulnerable to ground water contamination.
- G. Preservation of floodplains is an essential component of a good storm water management program. Green infrastructure such as floodplains and wetlands should be preserved because they provide free natural services for flood control.
- H. Encourage the use of low impact design best management practices for better stormwater management, to reduce runoff and increase groundwater recharge.
- I. Protect and preserve environmentally sensitive parklands and open space areas, including critical wildlife habitats for the benefit of future generations.
- J. Make sure the entire County is evenly distributed with parks and recreation opportunities.
- K. Preserve the visual integrity of significant scenic views.

Chapter 8: Utilities & Storm Water Management

Goals and Objectives

The overall goal is to provide for the extension of public utilities to new development in a timely, cost effective, efficient and responsible manner, and to ensure that utility extensions are consistent with the land use plans of individual communities. Public utilities should also be provided in such a manner as to create the least impact upon Summit County's remaining natural resources.

- A. Coordinate land use planning and utility infrastructure planning at local and county levels to ensure growth and development occurs only in locations where it is both suitable and desirable, according to smart growth principles.
 - 1. All utility extensions should be consistent with the land use plans of individual communities.
 - 2. In those communities without land use plans, extension of facilities into undeveloped areas should be avoided to prevent unplanned growth.
- B. Encourage intergovernmental coordination and cooperation in utility extension issues.



- C. Coordinate and utilize existing plans (i.e. 208 Water Quality Plans, Storm Water Management Programs, and local jurisdiction plans) to maximize efficiency and avoid duplication of efforts.
- D. Plan public utility services to maximize efficiency and cost effectiveness and ensure concurrency wherever possible.
- E. Plan public utility services to support local and county economic development goals.
- F. Protect Summit County water resources, effectively treat sewage disposal, and eliminate private onsite septic systems on lots that have access to central sewer systems to ensure human health and promote water quality.

Chapter 9: Economic Development

Goals & Objectives

This section of the Economic Development chapter outlines goals and objectives for economic decisions and future planning. These goals and objectives are intended to promote stabilization, retention, or expansion of the economic base and quality employment opportunities in Summit County and its communities. They are also intended to encourage, facilitate and support economic development efforts at a local and regional scale.

Economic development involves working together, and reaping the direct and indirect benefits of business retention, expansion, and attraction endeavors. Economic development efforts at the local level benefit the county and region as well as other local communities, and economic development efforts at the county and regional level benefit local communities.

- A. Expand and diversify the Summit County and local tax bases while efficiently using land.
- B. Support the philosophy that Northeast Ohio functions economically as one large region rather than a collection of small, individual economies based on political boundaries.
- C. Utilize incentives to wisely enhance regional economic development.
- D. Formulate local and regional plans to communicate economic development goals and objectives.
- E. Encourage smart growth and sustainable business development best practices.
- F. Encourage communication between businesses, secondary, trade and technical schools, and local colleges and universities to identify necessary employee skills, business development needs and corresponding educational requirements.
- G. Revitalize existing commercial and industrial areas before developing new facilities wherever possible.
- H. Create and/or retain jobs that result in household incomes at or above the area median household income, particularly those jobs that result from government subsidies to business and industry.

Chapter 10: Transportation

Goals & Objectives

This section of the Transportation chapter outlines goals and objectives for transportation decisions and future planning. These goals and objectives are intended to coordinate with the goals and objectives set forth in other chapters of the Summit County General Plan. They are also intended to encourage, facilitate and support transportation improvement efforts at a local and regional scale. This chapter is also intended to complement the more specific plans and recommendations set forth in the AMATS Regional Transportation Plan.

Managing traffic congestion will save time and frustration for residents and employees, limit air pollution, save energy, and allow goods to be moved more efficiently. Providing viable transportation alternatives to driving (i.e., public transportation, walking and biking) will help to limit traffic congestion, and also increase transportation access for those Summit County residents that can't drive or don't want to drive.

The overriding goals are to improve transportation efficiency and transportation options by providing safe, reliable movement of people and goods through intermodal and multimodal transportation systems.

- A. Maintain the existing transportation system.
- B. Manage traffic congestion.
- C. Improve transportation safety.
- D. Increase opportunities to take public transportation, walk, or bicycle
- E. Create hospitable environments for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- F. Move goods efficiently and considerately.
- G. Fix it first! Improve and repair existing roads and highways before building new ones.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Land Use Development Plan's recommendations are an extension of the vision and goals noted in the prior section, as well as an outgrowth of the Goals and Objectives for each Chapter as listed above.

The following summary is offered for review.

General Recommendations

Redirect and Concentrate Development: The plan seeks to guide future high-density development to the urban centers and villages to reduce the overall amount of land consumed by development. The result will be savings in land otherwise developed, less intra-county sprawl, and reduced public expenditures for infrastructure.

Encourage Economic Development: The need for a strong and diverse local economy should be recognized as integral to the plan. Economic considerations should be integrated into the various elements of the plan.

Plan for Future Parks Needs: Preserve open space that can be used and developed for passive and active recreational opportunities. As the county develops there will be a need for more park and community facilities.

Utilize more Innovative Development Patterns: It is recommended that communities develop plans which integrate "smart growth" principles in all development programs to increase opportunities for walking, bicycling and transit use. Create transportation options by mixing development and land uses within existing downtowns and new town centers. Make positive public health impacts a priority in land-use planning and development decision making. Utilize innovative development patterns such as open space conservation development, compact and mixed use development and transit oriented development design. Coordinate thoroughfare planning in harmony with desired land use patterns.

Coordinate Infrastructure Expansion: The relationship between water and sewer service extension and land use development patterns must be coordinated to implement Smart Growth principles.

Specific Objectives

The planning process is dynamic and on going. The next phase of the comprehensive planning process will concentrate on specific plans for three crucial elements needed to control and direct growth:

- 1). Sewer system infrastructure expansion and extension
- 2). County thoroughfare planning
- 3). County open space plan



General Plan

Sewer System Planning: Develop goals, objectives, priorities and strategies for sewer system expansion and infrastructure extension as a guide to future land use development in cooperation with the Summit County Department of Environmental Services.

County Thoroughfare Plan: Assist the Summit County Engineer to develop a County Thoroughfare Plan which designates road classifications, right of way and access management in harmony with desired land use patterns.

Open Space Planning: In the General Plan's Natural Resource Chapter there are areas that are identified as being ecologically important within the County. More work should be done to identify these and other significant natural resource areas as part of developing an overall Open Space Plan for the County.



Chapter 1

Introduction

Summit County General Land Use Development Plan

This Summit County General Land Use Development Plan has been designed to guide development and redevelopment in Summit County during the next twenty years. The Summit County General Land Use Development Plan is basically a policy plan. The overall goal of the General Land Use Development Plan is to add a county-level perspective and planning direction that complements and strengthens local planning efforts. The Summit County General Land Use Development Plan will also be referred to in this document as the General Plan.

Location

Summit County is located in the Northeast Ohio. Akron is the County seat and principal city. Summit County is named for the highest point along the Erie-Ohio Canal. Summit is adjacent to Cuyahoga, Medina, Portage, and Stark Counties. The County had a population of 542,899 in 2000 (U.S. Census). Summit County has an area of 412.8 square miles. Besides Akron, other cities are Barberton, Cuyahoga Falls, Stow, Twinsburg, Munroe Falls, Tallmadge, Fairlawn, Green, Hudson, Macedonia, Norton, and New Franklin. Summit County is the only county in Ohio with a Charter form of government. Summit County has a County Executive and 11 County Council Members.

BASIS FOR THE PLAN

Project Mission: The plan is meant to address land use issues, transportation issues, demographic trends, parks and open space issues, devise economic development strategies, and encourage open space conservation.

Planning Area Qualities: The planning process recognizes the unique qualities that define the area's character and considers the impact of those items on the county's future. Such qualities include for example, service areas for central sewers, future road improvements, and open space areas.

Governmental Organization: Summit County consists of nine townships, ten villages, and thirteen cities. All of these jurisdictions have a certain amount of responsibility in the realm of growth management (policy, zoning, capital improvements.)

The Region: Summit County is an important part of Northeast Ohio, which contains the metropolitan areas of Akron, Cleveland, Canton and Youngstown.

Adoption and Implementation: The Summit County Planning Commission, under the Ohio Revised Code Section 713.23, has legal responsibility for adopting a general plan for the unincorporated area. Implementation will predominately include the County Executive, County



Council, and the County Planning Commission, although other county departments, local political subdivisions, and the private sector may be involved.

PLAN OVERVIEW

What is a General Plan?

A general plan is a long-range planning tool used to establish a community's overall approach and strategy for future growth and development. It provides a consolidated policy statement, which helps community officials and decision-makers evaluate land-development proposals and make educated decisions for the future.

Why Prepare a County General Plan?

The Summit County Executive and the Summit County Planning Commission initiated the effort to establish a plan intended to guide the County over the next twenty years, including periodic review. The Plan will create an agenda relative to economic development, growth issues and may promote preservation efforts related to open space.

The Summit County General Plan can more readily embrace those issues that are best considered on a regional scale, such as transportation, utility infrastructure, economic development, preservation of natural resources and open space. Solutions to these issues often require cooperation and collaboration among various levels of government, which is often more easily addressed from a broad countywide perspective.

Specifically, the General Plan may be utilized to:

- Direct public land use decisions
- Inform private development decisions
- Coordinate transportation issues and linkages
- Update zoning regulations
- Target capital improvement plans
- Support economic incentives
- Procure outside funding assistance

THE PLANNING PROCESS

Summit County established an advisory General Plan Steering Committee to work with the Summit County Department of Community and Economic Development Planning Division in developing the General Plan.

The Summit County Planning Commission Steering Committee, is a subcommittee of the Summit County Planning Commission, and is made up of Summit County Planning Commission members. In addition, on the Steering Committee there are representatives from the Township Association of Summit County and the Mayor's Association. The General Plan Steering Committee is also comprised of a "County Technical Advisory Committee" comprised of representatives of other County Agencies and Departments including:

- NEFCO
- AMATS



- County Engineer
- Environmental Services
- Health District
- Summit Soil & Water Conservation District
- MetroParks Serving Summit County
- Ohio & Erie Canal Way Association
- Cuyahoga Valley National Park
- Emergency Management Agency

In addition, township zoning inspectors were routinely invited to the General Plan Steering Committee Meetings. Public input and evaluation are essential to the success of any planning process. The Summit County General Planning process involved many public participation elements, including Community Surveys, public meetings, newsletters, and the County website that provided information on the General Plan.

The following describes the planning process:

Project Setup – The first phase focused on several tasks, including organizing a main Steering Committee.

Data Gathering and Analysis – In the second phase existing conditions were inventoried and projections made based upon current trends. Demographic factors and land use trends were compiled.

Visioning - The public was brought into this process during this phase to assist in developing goals to drive the Plan. Ideas regarding the County's future were generated by a Community Survey that was mailed out to all communities in Summit County in October 2003. In addition, a public Kick-off Meeting was held on January 16, 2004, and more surveys and opinions regarding important key County and community issues were collected at that Meeting.

Formulate goals and objectives: In this phase general goals and objectives were developed based on the key issues identified and input from the Steering Committee.

Plan Development and Review: Based on local input, the General Plan topic areas were organized into the following Sections:

History
Cultural/ Historic Resource Preservation
Demographics
Housing
Land Use
Natural Resources
Utilities & Storm Water Management
Economic Development
Transportation
Implementation & Policy

These Plan sections were reviewed by the Steering Committee.



Draft Plan Presentation: The Plan has been drafted in conceptual form and presented to the general public on the County website and at Public Meetings for feedback.

Public Participation: There was a Public Kick-Off Meeting held for the General Plan on January 16, 2004. There was also a series of three land use meetings held in different locations with Summit County Planning staff and local governmental and planning officials the week of September 20, 2004. Various land use issues were discussed, and input was obtained for use in the Plan. A presentation on the General Plan was made to Summit County Council at their March 14, 2005 meeting. Then on March 16, 2005 a Public Meeting was held to present a summary of the first half of the General Plan that had been completed thus far. The complete Plan was presented at a Public Meeting held on March 15, 2006 and to the local Home Builders Association on March 23, 2006.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

These guiding principles were developed at the outset of the planning process to guide the efforts of the General Plan Advisory Committees, and the Summit County Department of Community and Economic Development, Planning Division staff as they developed specific goals, objectives, policies, and implementation strategies.

The Summit County General Plan will:

- Provide information, dispense planning advice, and serve as the foundation for allocating regional resources.
- Provide the means to address regional issues such as natural resource preservation, economic development, and transportation.
- Coordinate, strengthen, and supplement local area plans.
- Promote efficiency and effectiveness among Summit County jurisdictions and agencies.
- Serve as a centralized source of information, with the type of facts, figures and data individual communities could use to apply for grants, update their comprehensive plans, etc.
- Act as a guide for decision makers reviewing development proposals.
- Enable all levels of government to be proactive instead of reactive.

VISION STATEMENT

A vision statement defines a community's preferred future. It is broad and somewhat idealistic, but attainable. Developing such a broad vision will help Summit County residents, government officials, and business owners plan for the future by anticipating trends, addressing challenges, and focusing priorities. The vision statement identified below was developed based on data collected from the community surveys (summarized later in this chapter) and input from the Steering Committee. The vision statement directed the overall development and preparation of the General Plan.



Our Vision for Summit County in 2025 is that ...

Summit County offers a high quality of life in an environment in which all our citizens may safely live, work, shop, learn, and play.

Our urban centers are healthy and energetic thanks to measures that allow a mix of land uses, encourage revitalization and redevelopment, and preserve Historic and cultural resources.

Our suburban and rural residential areas offer a variety of housing options that meet the needs of all Summit County residents, including first-time homebuyers, empty nesters and seniors.

Our tax base is strong and diversified due to measures designed to promote the retention and recruitment of responsible, productive business and industry.

Protecting our shared natural resources is a priority throughout the county, with environmentally sensitive measures that preserve green space, conserve farmland, protect water quality, reduce the impacts of development, and minimize residential sprawl.

Summit County has created a beautiful, countywide open space emerald network, comprised of connected trail systems and greenways, which provides recreation and tourism opportunities, a biking transportation network, and quality wildlife habitat.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

In October 2003 the Summit County Planning Commission sent a community survey to each township, village, and city to gather opinions and identify key issues in the various Summit County jurisdictions. Five surveys were mailed to government officials in each community, with the goal of getting at least one representative response from each jurisdiction. Out of 32 Summit County communities, 27 (84%) responded to the Community Survey.

The following is a description of the results of the Summit County Community Survey. For certain planning analyses, the County is grouped into North, Central, and South divisions.

NORTH

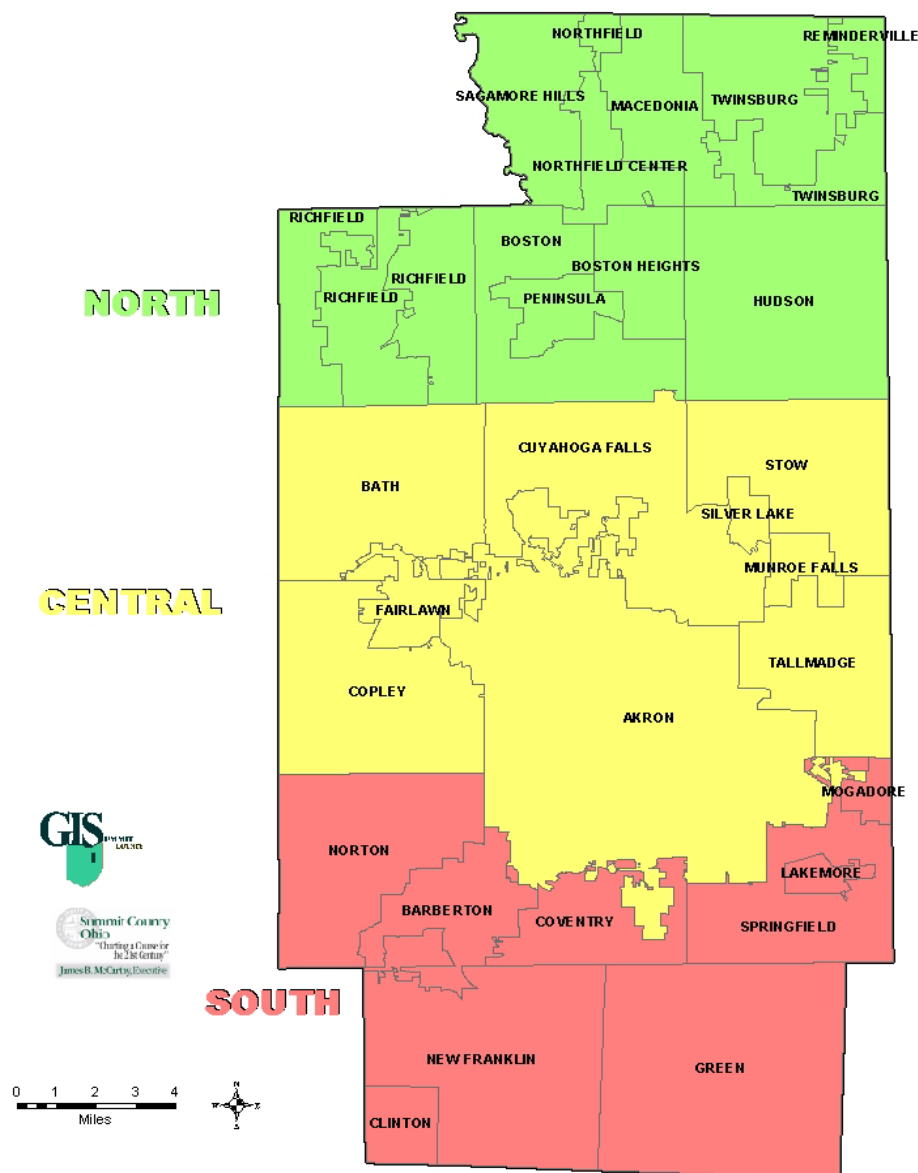
Boston Heights Village
Boston Twp
Hudson
Macedonia
Northfield Center Twp
Northfield Village
Peninsula Village
Reminderville Village
Richfield Twp
Richfield Village
Sagamore Hills Twp
Twinsburg
Twinsburg Twp

CENTRAL

Akron
Bath Twp
Copley Twp
Cuyahoga Falls
Fairlawn
Munroe Falls
Silver Lake Village
Stow
Tallmadge

SOUTH

Barberton
Clinton Village
Coventry Twp
New Franklin
Green
Lakemore Village
Mogadore Village
Norton
Springfield Twp



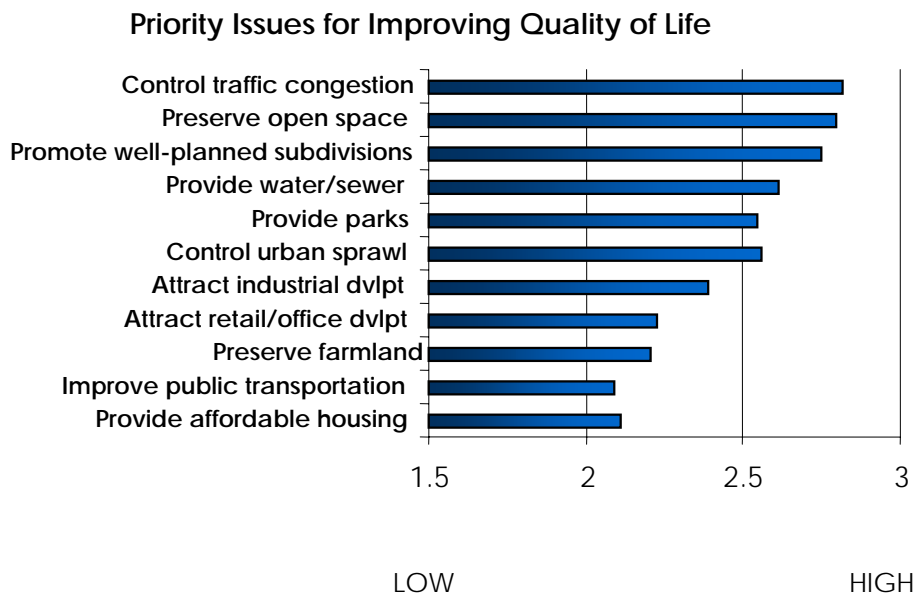
This Survey was divided into two parts: the first part of the Survey asked the respondent to answer the question from a countywide basis; the second part of the Survey asked them to answer the questions as they applied to “your community.”

Chart 1. Illustrates the results of the survey question, what priority should each of the following issues have in maintaining and improving the future quality of life in Summit County? See Chart 1. below.

The highest priority issues included:

- Controlling traffic congestion
- Preserving open space
- Promoting well-planned subdivisions
- Providing water/sewer services
- Providing parks/recreation opportunities and
- Controlling urban sprawl

Chart 1.

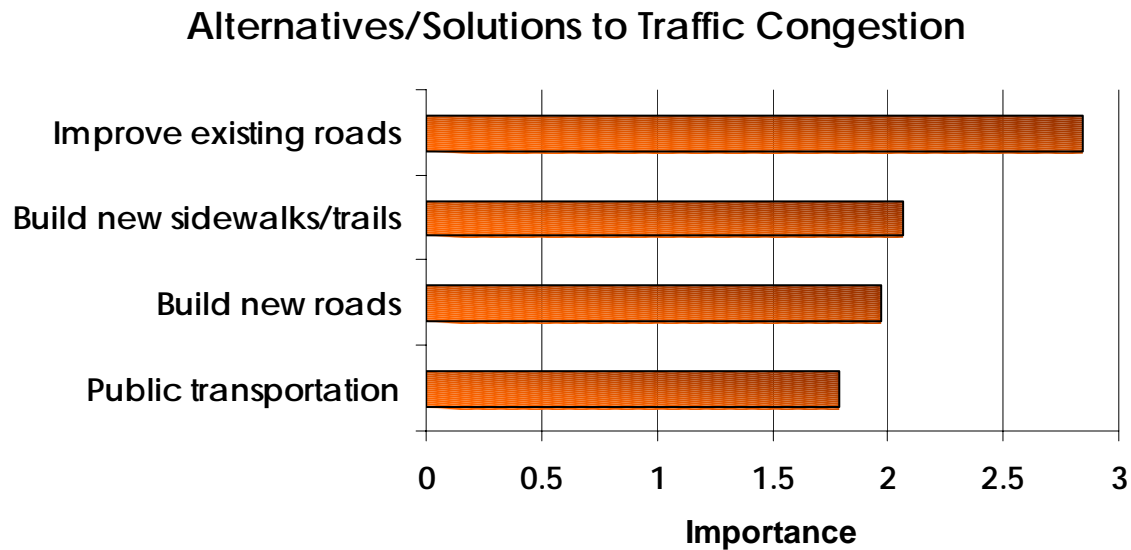


Controlling traffic congestion was ranked as having the highest priority in terms of maintaining and improving the future quality of life in Summit County. Seventy two percent (72%) of those responding felt that traffic congestion was a problem.

- More townships than cities/villages considered traffic to be an issue.
- Communities in the central and south planning areas were more likely to see traffic congestion as a problem.

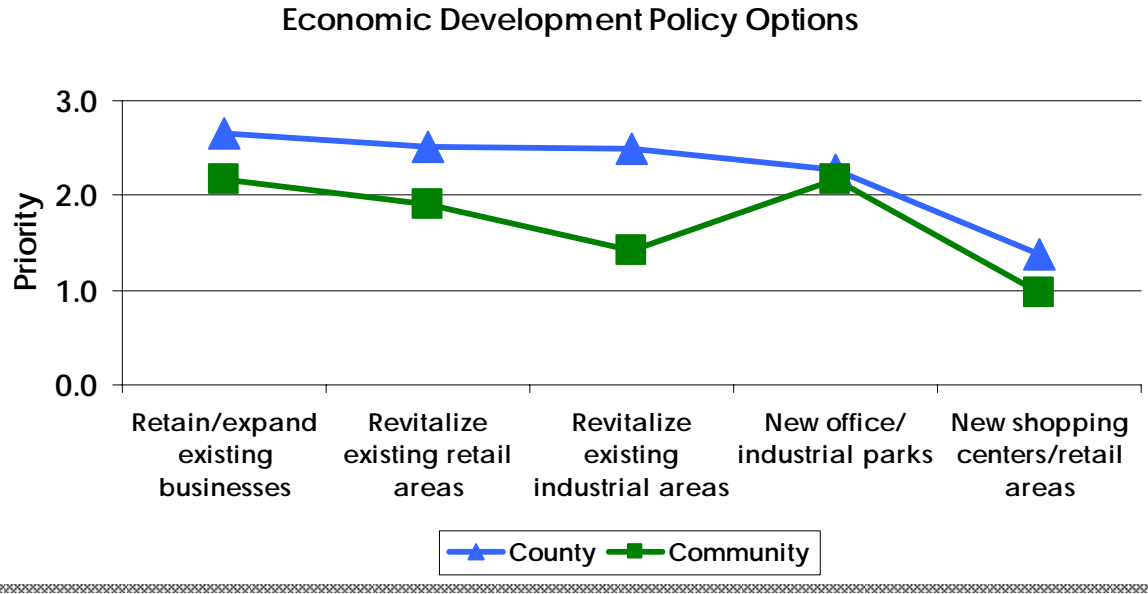
The respondents were asked to indicate the priority or importance of each of the following alternatives/solutions (see Chart 2. below). “Improving existing roads” had the highest priority in terms of traffic congestion solutions.

Chart 2.



Survey questions asked respondents to rank the importance of some economic development policy options, both from the perspective of Summit County (triangle) and in their individual communities (square.) See Chart 3. below that illustrates the survey results pertaining to the Economic Development Policy Options questions.

Chart 3.



As Chart 3 above illustrates, retaining and expanding existing businesses was the preferred economic development policy at both the county and local level, while revitalizing existing retail areas came in a close second.

Chart 4. Local Community Priorities

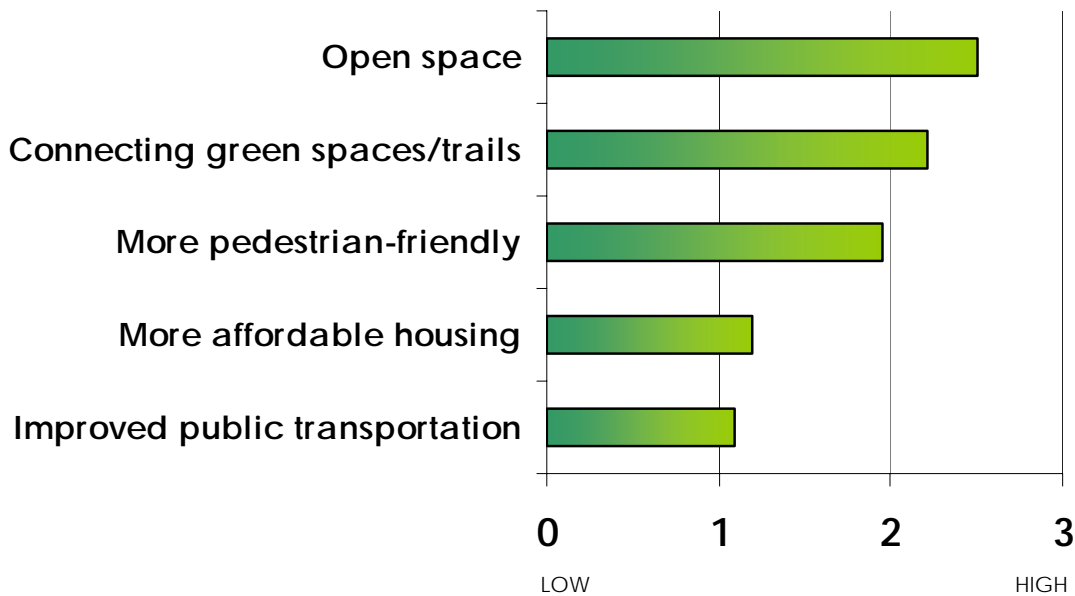
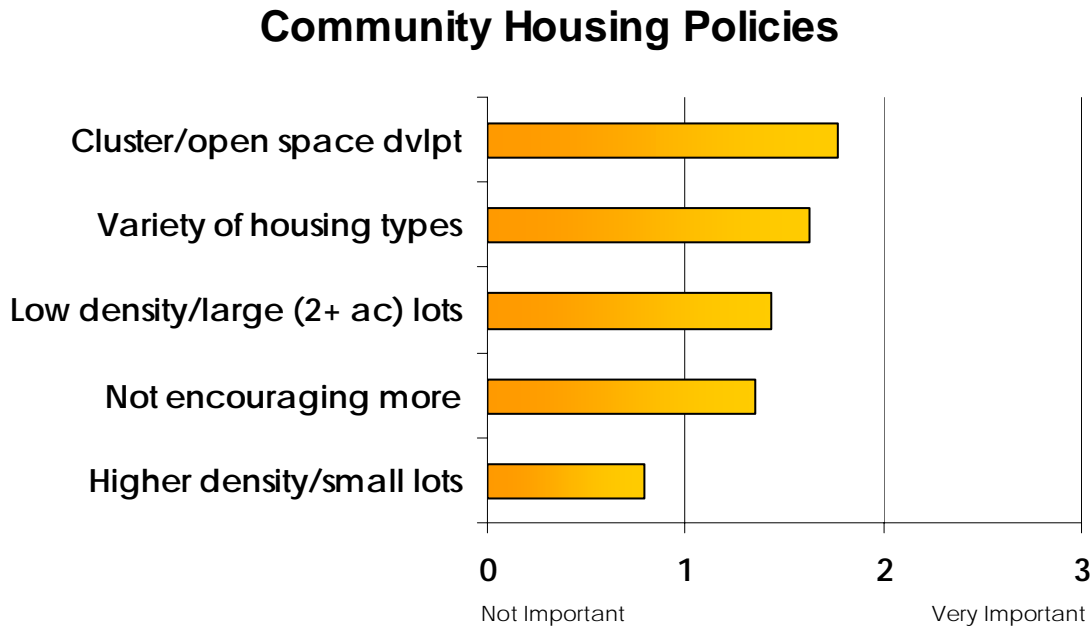


Chart 4 indicates that preservation of open space was overwhelmingly important no matter how the responses were analyzed. Townships and cities, and communities north and south all considered this a significant issue.

Chart 5.



The chart above illustrates the results of a question, which listed various housing policies and asked the respondent to indicate the importance of each in their community on a scale of very important (3) to not important (0).

- Although the average importance ranked only 1.6 out of 3.0, cluster/open space development was the most agreed upon policy option across all respondents.
- Townships favored larger lots and low density, while cities/villages favored the cluster/open space approach.

Community Positives and Negatives

There was a question on the Community Survey that asked respondents to identify the top 4 “likes” and “dislikes” about their individual communities. Although not all of the features listed apply to each and every community, they were stated often enough to provide a good idea of what is and is not appreciated.

The most commonly identified positive features of Summit County communities included:

- Natural areas and open spaces
- Parks and recreational opportunities & programs



- A sense of community
- Rural atmosphere, where it currently exists
- Community character
- Good schools
- A small-town atmosphere

On the other hand, the most commonly stated negatives about Summit County communities included:

- Traffic congestion and access issues
- Limited water & sewer
- Poor property maintenance and lack of enforcement
- Limited or insufficient tax base
- Reluctance of residents to accept change and development

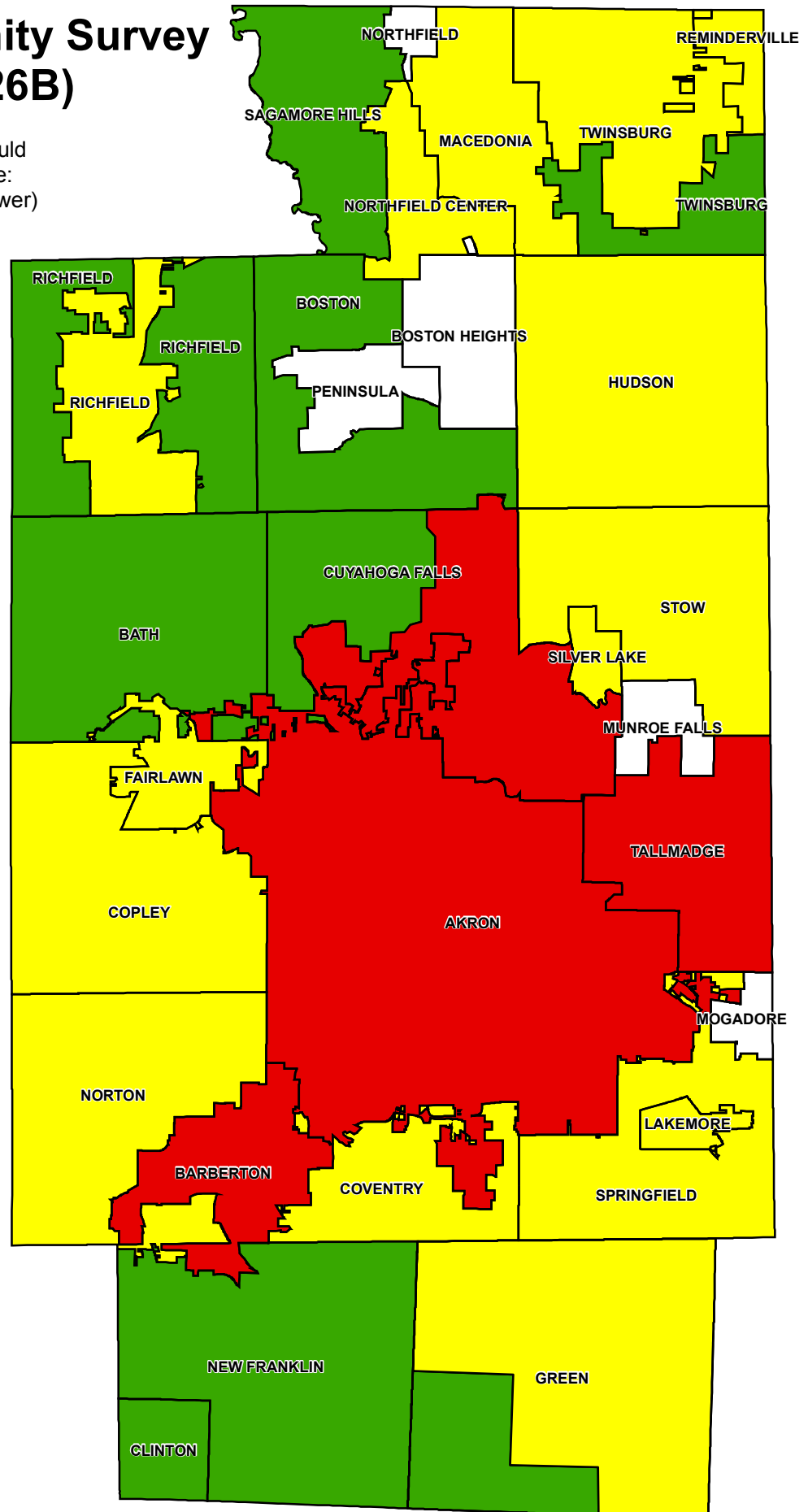
Future Vision

In addition to providing space for a descriptive vision statement to be written, respondents were asked to choose whether they thought their community should be rural, suburban or urban in character 20 years from now. When mapped, the responses show a solid urban core for the county (with the city of Akron at the center) surrounded by suburban communities. "Rural" communities are clustered primarily around the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, and in the southernmost portion of the county.

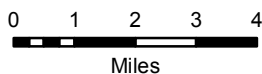
Communities without a color designation did not respond to the question.

Map 1.1 Community Survey Future Vision (Q26B)

Question 26B: "in 20 years, what would you like your community to be? (Note: communities not shaded did not answer)"



Summit County, Ohio
"Charting a Course for the 21st Century"
James B. McCarthy, Executive



Source: AMATS

Included in the Community Survey was a Visioning Question, which asked the respondent if you could control future events, what would your community be like in 20 years?

Common themes included the desire for:

- A community center or focal point
- Balanced development
- Preserved natural areas

Community Survey: Key Issues Summary

The survey questions asked for a lot of opinions and information. The following is a list of key issues and concerns that were repeatedly raised:

- Preserve open space and existing natural areas
- Address environmental concerns in general, through stormwater management, riparian setbacks, and greenway connections
- Increase effectiveness of economic development to balance the tax base burden. Retention and expansion of existing businesses, and revitalization of existing downtowns, town centers and other shopping areas were emphasized
- Control growth and reduce sprawl
- Reduce traffic congestion
- Improve partnerships and cooperation between communities

Smart Growth

What is Smart Growth?

Smart Growth recognizes connections between development and quality of life and leverages new growth to improve the community. The features that distinguish smart growth in a community vary from place to place, but in general, smart growth invests time, attention, and resources in restoring community and vitality to center cities and older suburbs. New smart growth is more town-centered, is transit and pedestrian oriented, and has a greater mix of housing, commercial, and retail uses. It also preserves open space and other environmental amenities.

Smart Growth is development that serves the economy, community, and the environment. Although there is no “one-size-fits-all” solution, successful communities do tend to have one thing in common: a vision of where they want to go and of what things they value in their community. Their plans for development reflect these values. This is Smart Growth.

Smart Growth is an umbrella term for a set of principles and tools that communities can use to direct growth the way they want. Smart Growth is part of a broad movement embraced by the National Realtors Association, the National Home Builders Association, the National

Association of Counties, the United States Conference of Mayors, and by a number of private organizations across the country.

County health departments around the country have acknowledged the relationship between sprawling land use patterns and increased obesity rates. There have been a number of health studies to show that people living in places marked by sprawling development are likely to walk less and weigh more than people who live in less sprawling communities. Studies have shown that people living in sprawling areas drive more, while people living in compact communities are more likely to walk.¹

The United States is facing a health crisis of epidemic proportions. Physical inactivity combined with overeating has made us a nation of fat, out-of-shape people. The incidence of overweight or obese adults increased steadily from 47 percent in 1976, to 56 percent in 1994, and 61 percent in 1999. The prevalence of overweight children and adolescents almost doubled during the same period. Physical inactivity and obesity rank second to smoking in their contribution to total mortality in the United States.²

There are many options for creating more healthy communities; many of these options are also similar to Smart Growth principles. Community leaders looking to reshape their communities to make it easier to walk and bicycle have many options. They can create more walkable communities by creating mixed use districts, increasing development densities in certain areas, requiring sidewalks and trails in new developments, retrofitting already developed areas with sidewalks, trails and bike paths, instituting traffic calming measures, linking open space, and requiring street connectivity.

There are numerous changes that can be made to zoning and subdivision regulations to create neighborhoods where residents have more opportunities to be active. One is to revise ordinances to permit New Urbanist or traditional neighborhood developments, and to permit mixed use zoning districts.

Ten Principles of Smart Growth

The Smart Growth Network, an organization formed in 1996 by a number of organizations including the State of Maryland, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the National Association of Realtors, identifies the following ten principles as a framework for smart growth discussion and action:

1. Create Range of Housing Opportunities and Choices

Providing quality housing for people of all income levels is an integral component in any smart growth strategy.

2. Create Walkable Neighborhoods

¹ Smart Growth America, Measuring the Health Effects of Sprawl, <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/health>

² Increasing Physical Activity Through Community Design, May 2002, p. 2, see www.bikewalk.org.

³ This information in this section is from the Smart Growth Network, see www.smartgrowth.org

Walkable communities are desirable places to live, work, learn, worship, and play, and therefore a key component of smart growth.

3. Encourage Community and Stakeholder Collaboration

Growth can create great places to live, work, and play – if it responds to a community's own sense of how and where it wants to grow.

4. Foster Distinctive, Attractive Communities with a Strong Sense of Place

Smart growth encourages communities to craft a vision and set standards for development and construction, which respond to community values of architectural beauty and distinctiveness, as well as expanded choices in housing and transportation.

5. Make Development Decisions Predictable, Fair, and Cost Effective

For a community to be successful in implementing smart growth, it must be embraced by the private sector.

6. Mix Land Uses

Smart growth supports the integration of mixed land uses into communities as a critical component of achieving better places to live.

7. Preserve Open Space, Farmland, Natural Beauty, and Critical Environmental Areas

Open space preservation supports smart growth goals by bolstering local economies, preserving critical environmental areas, improving our communities' quality of life, and guiding new growth into existing communities.

8. Provide a Variety of Transportation Choices

Providing people with more choices in housing, shopping, communities, and transportation is a key aim of smart growth.

9. Strengthen and Direct Development Towards Existing Communities

Smart growth directs development towards existing communities already served by infrastructure, seeking to utilize the resources that existing neighborhoods offer, and conserve open space and irreplaceable natural resources on the urban fringe.

10. Take Advantage of Compact Building Design

Smart growth provides a means for communities to incorporate a more compact building design as an alternative to conventional, land consumptive development.

Every individual community, county and state has smart growth responsibility - we cannot wait for the "other guy" to address issues that affect our quality of life. The principles of smart growth support the vision identified in this Summit County General Plan, and address key planning and development issues important to Summit County. Therefore, the Summit County Planning Commission Steering Committee has adopted the ten principles of smart growth as a planning framework for developing more specific goals, objectives, and implementation strategies in the Plan. Each chapter in the Plan will address and incorporate the principles of smart growth relevant to the planning issues.



Chapter 2 History

As a precursor to preparing, reading and understanding the Summit County General Plan, it is important to examine some of the major forces that have created the present pattern of development. One reason for this is that our future will be partially shaped by events and decisions made in the past; another is to project our thinking beyond the day-to-day frame of reference by which we all live.

Overview

Summit County was established in 1840, largely in response to growth and development around the activities of the Ohio & Erie Canal that had been completed through the area in 1832. Because many locks were needed between Summit Lake and the Cuyahoga River, people had time to linger while the boats went through this series of locks. Entrepreneurs saw the opportunities in this delay and Akron soon became the county's leading commercial center.

Although the area began to become an important industrial place in the 1870s, growth was relatively slow until the beginning of the twentieth century. In the first third of the twentieth century, Akron became the rubber capital of the world and the county's population increased from slightly fewer than 66,000 in 1900 to over 344,000 in 1930. Growth slowed during the great Depression of the 1930s, but the county experienced another growth boom during World War II that lasted until 1970. At that time the county experienced its greatest population to date with a little more than 553,000 residents. The restructuring of industry and the emerging global market had a devastating impact on the county's economy during the 1970s and 80s. Since 1990, the county's economy has markedly improved, and while it is once again in a growth mode, the County's population in 2000 was approximately 10,000 less than it was in 1970.

Development Prior to the Establishment of Summit County

Before a county was created, the path that the Indians used to portage between Lake Erie and the Ohio River crossed a summit in the area of present day Summit Lake. Later, that high point between the Little Cuyahoga and Tuscarawas Rivers gave the county its name—Summit. In 1796, the Connecticut Land Company sent Moses Cleaveland and Seth Pease with a team of forty men to survey the eastern portion of the Connecticut Western Reserve.¹ They laid out the area in a grid of townships that were each roughly five miles square, a feature retained to the present day. The first of these townships to be settled in what is now Summit County were Hudson, Stow and Tallmadge. While now located on the eastern boundary of Summit County, they were originally part of Trumbull County, and later part of Portage County.

When Ohio became a State in 1803, the Connecticut Western Reserve became part of it. But it was not until after claims by Native Americans were settled, and the War of 1812 was over, that the western part of what is now Summit County was surveyed and migration to the area escalated.

¹Miller and Wheeler: *Cleveland: A Concise History, 1796-1990*. Indiana University Press. 1990. p. 8.



To improve its general economy, the new State of Ohio authorized the selling of bonds to build a canal between Lake Erie and the Ohio River. It appointed a commission to select the best route and, after a bitter and extended battle, the commission approved two routes. The first built was the eastern route which ran up the Scioto River to a point just south of Columbus. From there it headed eastward to the Muskingum River and thence northward toward Lake Erie. Where it crossed the old Indian portage summit, considerable construction was required. Forty-four locks were required to negotiate the fall between the 964-foot elevation of Summit Lake at Akron and the 572-foot elevation of Lake Erie at Cleveland.² The first fifteen of these locks were located in close proximity between what is now Exchange Street and the Cuyahoga River—a distance of a little over one mile. This set of locks became known as the Cascade Locks and formed the incentive to build a city at the summit—Akron.

Summit County, 1840 -1880

In 1840 another new canal, the Ohio & Pennsylvania, opened between Akron and the Ohio River near Pittsburgh. The junction of the two canals at Akron assured that it would become the major city in the region. Due to the growth of the area, a new County of Summit was created in 1840 out of portions of the existing counties of Portage, Medina, and Stark. Portage County contributed the townships of Twinsburg, Hudson, Stow, Tallmadge, Springfield, Northfield, Boston, Northampton (Cuyahoga Falls), Portage (Akron) and Coventry. Medina County conferred its eastern most tier—Richfield, Bath, Copley and Norton Townships. The two southernmost townships, Green and Franklin, were bestowed by Stark County. These last two townships are larger, six miles by six miles rather than five by five. This is because they were not in the Western Reserve and were surveyed according to the methods of the US Land Ordinance of 1785 rather than the methods used by surveyors of the Connecticut Land Company.

At the time of its creation in 1840, Summit County had a total population of 22,560. Cuyahoga Falls and Akron were about the same size, with Akron's population at 1,665 and Cuyahoga Falls' at 1,400. Both wanted to be the new county's seat of government. The Ohio General Assembly decided in favor of Akron in 1842 and Simon Perkins donated land in the area between the two original cities for a courthouse and safety building.³ The site is still used for the same purposes.

The period between 1840 and 1880 saw the beginnings of industrialization. The first railroads arrived in the early 1850's. Many other railways quickly followed and soon replaced the canal as the major mode of transporting goods and people. By 1880, 38% of the County's residents lived in Akron. The County's population grew by 21,228 between 1840 and 1880 making the total population in 1880 nearly 44,000.

Summit County 1880 -1920

Between 1880 and 1920 there were more public improvements, and even greater industrial growth than in the previous forty-year period. In the 1880's Akron secured an electric street lighting system, a telephone company, and electric trolleys. Because all the lines converged in the center of Akron, initial commercial development concentrated along Main Street. Later, this activity dispersed along the trolley lines.

² George W. Knepper: *Akron: City at the Summit*. The Donning Company. 1994. p. 24.

³ George W. Knepper: *Akron: City at the Summit*. The Donning Company. 1994. p. 35.



Though the 1890's were not especially prosperous for Summit County, a major development occurred that had a long-range impact on the County's future. Benjamin Franklin Goodrich helped make Akron, Ohio the "Rubber Capital of the World" during the late 1800's. B.F. Goodrich opened his Akron plant, the Akron Rubber Works in March 1871. In 1895 the Akron India Rubber Company was established with John Seiberling as an investor. It was there that John's sons, Frank and Charles, learned the rubber business, and in 1898 they formed the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company. In 1900, Harvey Firestone moved to Akron and by 1902 had opened the Firestone Rubber Company. In 1915, local son William O'Neil organized the General Tire and Rubber Company. These four companies—Goodrich, Goodyear, Firestone, and General—quickly became the largest employers in the county due to the rapid increase in the mass production of the automobile.

At the beginning of this era, there were no automobiles. During the middle period, few people could afford them and roads were not generally paved. By the end of the era, automobiles were fairly common. Because each car needed four or five tires, Summit County experienced phenomenal growth. Population increased from 43,788 in 1880 to over 286,000 in 1920, an increase of 653%. Most of this growth occurred in the last decade of the period. In 1910 the County's population was 108,253; by 1920 it was 286,065. Growth during this period was also concentrated in the cities, especially Akron. In 1880, 38% of the county's residents lived in Akron. By 1920, the percentage of County residents living in Akron had increased to 73%.

Summit County 1920 -1960

Even though Akron experienced a short, sharp and surprising depression in 1920 that nearly destroyed some of the large rubber companies, the County continued to experience growth for another decade before the Great Depression set in. During this period, government continued to try to catch up with private sector needs. Many of the county's roads were paved and utilities were expanded. In the spring of 1920, the first paved road to Cleveland (via Richfield) was completed. Under court order to improve its sewage treatment capacity, Akron constructed seven miles of trunk line along Riverview Road, and opened the Botzum Wastewater Treatment Facility in 1928.⁴

Akron completed a new Municipal Building in 1926, and its new Post Office on East Market was opened in 1928. Many other of Akron's present day landmarks were also constructed between 1925 and 1929. These include the United Building, Akron Savings and Loan, O'Neils Department Store, Polsky's Department Store, First National Tower, YMCA, YWCA, and the Mayflower Hotel. During this short building spurt between 1925 and 1929, construction commenced on over 28,000 structures with a total value of over \$93 million.⁵ Among them was the Goodyear Airdock, at the time the largest structure ever built without interior supports. In the middle of all of this construction, the stock market crashed. Between October 1929 and the end of 1930, Akron industries laid-off 14,200 workers and bank deposits were reduced by \$14 million.⁶

World War II quickly took Summit County out of the Depression. In January 1939 there were 52,700 workers employed in the Akron district rubber companies. By January 1944, over 130,000

⁴ Karl Grismer: *Akron and Summit County*, Summit County Historical Society, n.d. p. 418.

⁵ Karl Grismer: *Akron and Summit County*, Summit County Historical Society, n.d. p. 445.

⁶ Karl Grismer: *Akron and Summit County*, Summit County Historical Society, n.d. p. 451.



were on the payroll. Goodyear became a supplier of aircraft making both blimps and planes for the war effort. Goodyear also supplied Boeing and Martin with brakes and tires. At Firestone, workers helped build anti-aircraft guns, wings for transport planes, shatterproof oxygen cylinders for high altitude planes, bogie wheels, tank tracks, and machine gun cartridges. To meet the demand for rubber products, every Akron district tire factory worked day and night, seven days a week. These included the older companies of Goodyear, Firestone, Goodrich, and General as well as smaller newer companies such as Seiberling and Mohawk.⁷

When the war ended, factories were converted almost overnight to the production of consumer goods. Due to the long depression and war, there was a scarcity of goods of all kinds, including tractors, toys, clothes, and appliances. The greatest demand, however, was for cars and houses. The war effort required so much material that no passenger cars were manufactured in America between February 1942 and September 1945. To satisfy pent up demand, auto manufacturers produced over 2 million cars in 1946 and 3.5 million in 1947. Of the 27.5 million tires made in those years, most were manufactured in Akron.⁸

By 1960, the impact of the mass-produced automobile was reflected in the development pattern. In response to new job opportunities, the population of the County grew from 410,032 to 513,569, an increase of 25% between 1950 and 1960. During the same period the population of Akron grew from 274,605 to 290,351, an increase of less than 7%. Thus, it became clear that the population was decentralizing at an increasing rate. Cities were becoming less dense, outlying areas more crowded. Buses replaced streetcars. Trucks largely replaced trains. Autos replaced pedestrians and bicycles. The county's population grew by 78% between 1920 and 1960, but the population had shifted from Akron to outlying areas. In 1920 Akron held 73% of the county's residents. By 1960, that percentage had dropped to 57%.

Summit County 1960 -2005

During the first decade of this period, industry continued to boom. The region's rubber, auto, and steel industries remained viable and in many cases expanded. Machine tools and electric machines remained in high demand.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the region's prosperity came to an abrupt end largely because high quality foreign products became available to American consumers and their cost was often less than those produced locally. High labor rates, extensive employee benefits, older plants and high energy costs here encouraged companies to look at other locations where costs were lower and productivity higher. The County's labor force changed significantly during this period, and many industries closed or moved elsewhere. The percentage of workers engaged in traditionally high-paying manufacturing jobs dropped from 42% of those employed in the labor force in 1970 to 24% in 1990. During the same period the percentage of persons employed in traditionally low-paying retail and service positions increased from 38% to 51%.⁹

⁷ Karl Grismer: *Akron and Summit County*, Summit County Historical Society, n.d. p. 508.

⁸ Karl Grismer: *Akron and Summit County*, Summit County Historical Society, n.d. p. 517.

⁹ Ohio Department of Development. *County Business Patterns*, 1995.



As a result of this restructured economy, Summit County lost almost 39,000 residents between 1970 and 1990. During this time, the urban areas of the Midwest became known as the "rustbelt" due to the high levels of unemployment in the steel and steel fabrication industries.

In spite of the general population loss that occurred during this period, auto registration soared, land was developed at accelerating rates, and the remaining open space in the County quickly disappeared. Previously undeveloped areas that were well served by new transportation systems such as Twinsburg, Macedonia, Hudson, Stow, Cuyahoga Falls, and Green attracted many new industries. The expansion of these residential, commercial, and industrial activities between 1970 and 1990 consumed over 20,700 acres of the County's undeveloped land.¹⁰ During the same period the County lost over 38,000 residents. Fewer people consumed greater resources.

Even during this period of seemingly unchecked growth and land consumption, land preservation efforts were present. In 1974, Congress authorized the establishment of the Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area for the purpose of preserving and protecting "for public use and enjoyment, the historic, scenic, natural, and recreational values of the Cuyahoga River and the adjacent lands of the Cuyahoga Valley, and to provide for the maintenance of needed recreational open space necessary to the urban environment."¹¹ In 2000, the area was made a National Park and the park's name was officially changed to the Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CVNP).

Since 1990, a number of initiatives have had a positive influence on the County. The economy of the County also improved markedly. The number of persons employed jumped by over 43,000 between 1990 and 2001, an increase of 15%. During the same period, unemployment dropped from over 6% to less than 4.5% and personal per capita income rose from \$19,070 to \$31,145.¹² Due to the stabilized economy, Summit County's population grew by 5% between 1990 and 2000, to nearly 543,000.

¹⁰AMATS, Land Use Database

¹¹ Public Law 93-55

¹²Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Economic Information System, Washington, D.C., 1997.

Chapter 3

Cultural Resources and Historic Preservation

Community Character and Identity



Figure 1: Village Historic District, Peninsula

Community character and identity are formed by the collection of qualities that makes a place unique. In this era of sprawling growth, chain stores, and repetitive corporate architecture, the preservation of historic and cultural resources is critical to protecting community character and identity.

The homes, barns and commercial buildings constructed throughout Summit County reflect the area's distinct history as part of Connecticut's Western Reserve. Communities such as Bath Township, Peninsula and Hudson still reflect the New England development patterns of closely spaced village buildings transitioning gradually to suburban and rural residential areas. The Greek Revival architecture from the New England cultural influence (see photo of Bootie's Dry Goods Store at left), neighborhoods of Irish canal workers, and the bank barns built by the German immigrant's of the mid-19th century contribute to the area's unique heritage. In much of Summit County, the natural landscape is

defined by waterways and topography—the Cuyahoga and Tuscarawas Rivers, the Portage Lakes, the Cuyahoga Valley, and the Ohio & Erie Canal.

When Summit County government officials were asked in a 2003 survey to identify “likes” and “dislikes” in their communities, “sense of community,” “community character,” and in some cases, “small-town atmosphere” topped the list of desirable qualities. Buildings constructed throughout Summit County a half-century or more ago, and their resulting sense of place, history and character are irreplaceable. They cannot be recreated.

This chapter of the Summit County General Plan encourages the concept of stewardship, in which people act responsibly towards protecting irreplaceable resources, and respect for historic resources to preserve our unique heritage and character.

Smart Growth and Preservation

Historic preservation has evolved beyond its original function of individually landmarking historically and architecturally significant buildings. Preservation is now seen as sustaining quality of life and protecting community identity – two key benefits of resource stewardship and smart growth. Smart growth recycles existing buildings and developed land, preserves open space and maintains local community character.

Typically, historic areas are densely built, pedestrian-friendly communities, which not only promote a greater sense of neighborhood, but offer the health benefits from more exercise opportunities and potentially less automobile traffic. The revitalization of traditional commercial areas reduces the demand for new strip malls and superstores, and the rehabilitation of existing homes and conversion of vacant downtown warehouses into apartments helps reduce demand for new housing located on once productive farmland. Such rehabilitation also eliminates the need to construct unnecessary and expensive infrastructure such as roads, schools, and utilities. This type of continued maintenance and revitalization is crucial to retaining a high quality of life, creating more livable communities, and keeping and attracting residents and businesses.

Communities will and should grow, but they should do so intelligently. Wise stewardship involves putting policies and practices into place that guide land use and development decisions promoting smart growth and preservation of resources.



Figure 2: Anna Dean Farm National Register District, Barn #1, Barberton

What is Historic Preservation?

“When you strip away all the jargon and rhetoric, historic preservation is simply having the good sense to hang on to something -- an older building or neighborhood or a piece of landscape, for instance -- because it's important to us as individuals and/or as a nation.”¹



Figure 3: Brecksville-Northfield High Level Bridge

Historic preservation is the identification, restoration and protection of tangible elements from our past—the physical history—for future generations. These elements include historic and archaeological resources that are associated with important past events, themes, and people; that are representative of periods and types of architecture; that possess high artistic value; or that are likely to yield valuable information about the past. Such resources may be buildings or structures, sites or specific locations, or even landscapes and viewsheds.

¹ National Trust for Historic Preservation www.nationaltrust.org/primer/historic.html?cat=7



Why Preserve?

Planning for our future requires preserving our past. Preserving important aspects of our history not only maintains the character, individuality, and vitality of Summit County communities, but can also lead to tangible economic benefits.

Preserving our heritage is not just a romantic notion or pursuit. It helps combat many of the problems that plague our present-day communities by stabilizing neighborhoods, bringing people and businesses back downtown, providing affordable housing, stimulating private investment, attracting tourists, and strengthening community pride. Preservation of historic and cultural resources is a smart and powerful community economic development strategy that:

- Maintains community character
- Encourages additional neighborhood investment and revitalizes surrounding areas
- Returns life and vitality to already developed areas, reducing the need to consume new land and destroy natural resources
- Takes advantage of existing public infrastructure such as roads, sewers, and water lines
- Stabilizes or increases property values
- Increases the diversity of housing options in older neighborhoods
- Generates community pride

Compared with new construction, preservation keeps more money in the local community's economy. New construction costs are typically 50% labor, and 50% materials, and costs of materials are usually incurred and taxed outside the community. Historic rehabilitation costs typically runs 75% labor and 25% materials. A higher percentage of labor costs means more money is earned by resident workers, spent inside the community, and taxed by the municipality or county.

Historic Cultural Resources

The National Register of Historic Places establishes guidelines for determining historically significant landmarks. Historic properties must meet three evaluation standards in order to be listed in the National Register:

- the property should be at least 50 years old;
- retain its basic historic integrity; and
- meet one of the four established National Register criteria.

The four National Register criteria are: (1) the property has significant association with historic events or broad patterns of history; (2) the property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; (3) the property has architectural merit; or (4) the property has the potential to yield information important in history or prehistory (archaeology). Once a historically significant resource has been identified, it is typically recorded in one of two databases in Ohio—the National Register or the Ohio Historic Inventory.



Figure 4: Cuyahoga Falls, Chuckery Race

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of properties recognized by the federal government as worthy of preservation for their local, state, or national significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, or culture. Although the National Register is a program of the National Park Service, each state's Historic Preservation Office administers it at the state level. In Ohio, the Ohio Historic Preservation Office administers the National Register program.

The Ohio Historic Inventory was developed to serve as more encompassing, continuing record of the architectural and historic properties currently existing in the state, and is used to record basic information on historic properties in Ohio. Since 1974, over 70,000 historic properties have been entered into the records of the Ohio Historic Inventory. These listings include those officially recognized on the National Register.



Figure 5: Alling House, Tallmadge

Ohioans value historic preservation. The Ohio Preservation Plan reveals that Ohio ranks third in the country in the number of National Register listings with approximately 3,600 listings for sites, buildings, structures, objects and districts.² This is crucial, as eligibility for or listing on the National Register of Historic Places serves as the threshold for consideration under many federal and state

² The full text of the Ohio Historic Preservation Plan can be viewed online at www.ohiohistory.org.



financial assistance programs.

Summit County has 148 listings in the National Register of Historic Places, ranging from historic homes, farms, and churches to town squares, bridges and canal locks.³ Three common themes that are hallmarks of Summit County development are represented in these listings: (1) canal-related development; (2) Western Reserve/New England heritage; and (3) planned industrial communities and neighborhoods. It is highly likely that additional built resources of these themes are still present and not yet identified in other Summit County communities.







The majority of the current Summit County National Register listings are located in the northern and central portions of the county, with two additional clusters of historic places in Barberton and Clinton. Akron has the largest number of listings (44) followed by Peninsula (24) and Clinton (11). The Ohio Historic Inventory, by definition, encompasses a much broader range of historic resources and includes nearly 3,000 listings for Summit County. The Archeological Survey identifies 374 sites in Summit County, including sites such as Hale Village and the Jaite Paper Mill.

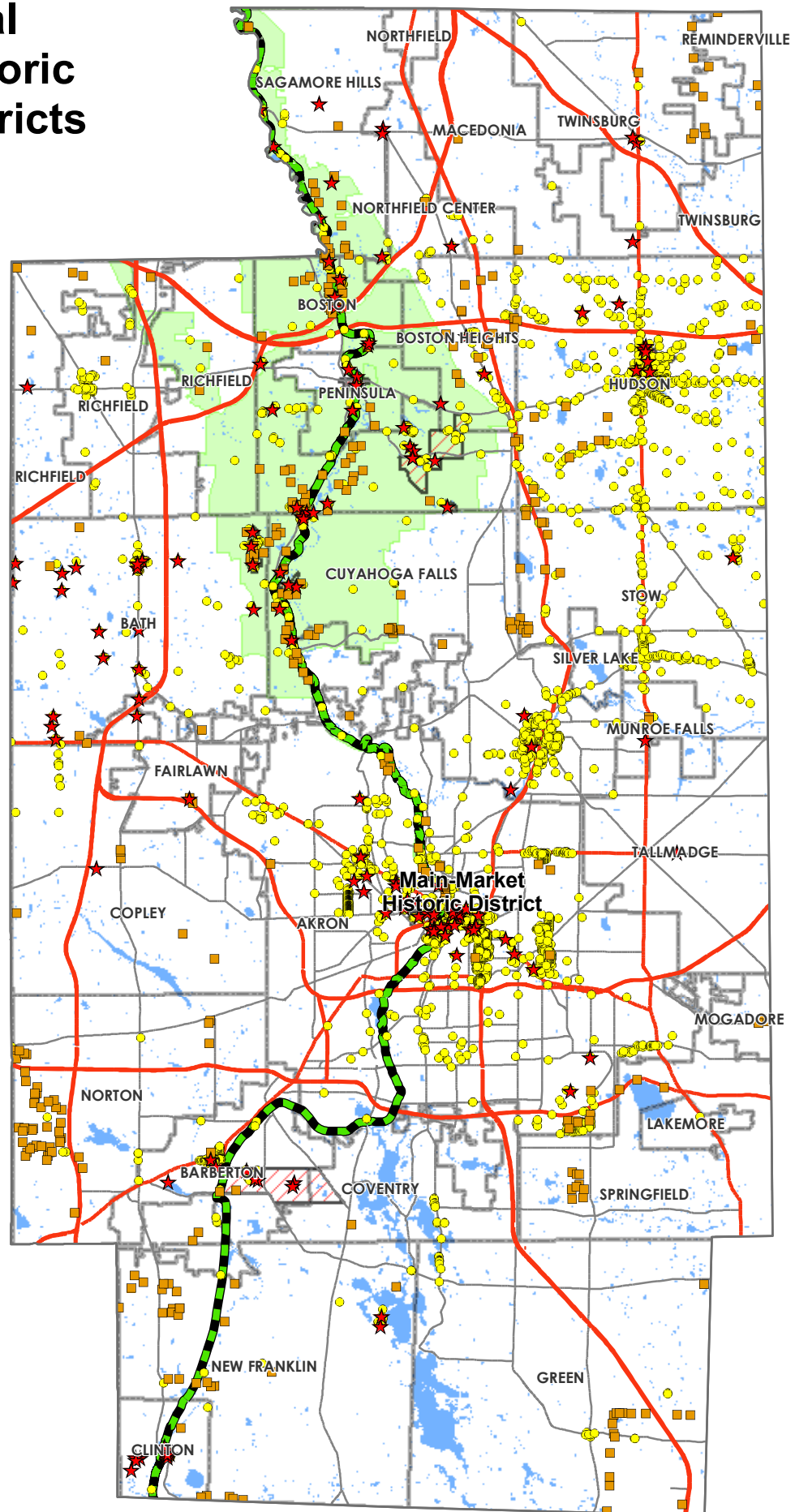
Some of the well-known and not-so-well-known historic resources in Summit County include the following (see Map 3.1 National Register of Historic Places and Districts.)

- *Akron YMCA (Akron)*
- *Stan Hywet Hall (Akron)*
- *Quaker Oats Cereal Factory (Akron)*
- *Goodyear Airdock (Akron)*
- *Anna Dean Farm (Barberton)*
- *Copley Depot (Copley Twp)*
- *Western Reserve Academy (Hudson)*
- *Northfield Town Hall (Northfield)*
- *Everett Rd. Covered Bridge (Peninsula)*
- *Twinsburg Institute (Twinsburg)*
- *Ohio & Erie Canal Locks (Boston Twp, Clinton, Peninsula, & Sagamore Hills)*

³ In comparison, other urban counties in Ohio have National Register listings as follows: Cuyahoga County (339), Franklin County (299), Hamilton County (322), Lucas County (88), and Montgomery County (129).

Map 3.1 National Register of Historic Places and Districts

-  Cuyahoga Valley National Park
-  National Register Historic District
-  National Register of Historic Places Listing
-  Ohio Historic Inventory Site
-  Ohio Archeological Inventory Site
-  Towpath Trail



Summit County, Ohio
"Charting a Course for the 21st Century"
 James B. McCarthy, Executive

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 Miles



Modern Cultural Resources

The appeal of preserved historic areas is apparent in many nationally-known city neighborhoods such as Ohio City and the Warehouse District in Cleveland and German Village and Short North in Columbus. Summit County communities such as Hudson, Peninsula and Clinton are attractive in the same fashion. All are vibrant, eclectic places with a variety of residential, commercial and cultural uses.

In addition to the historic cultural resources, there are also a number of important modern cultural and community resources that contribute to Summit County's uniqueness and high quality of life. Such resources include schools, museums, music venues, theaters, civic organizations and religious facilities. A short list of key modern cultural resources in Summit County includes:

- *Blossom Music Center, summer home of the Cleveland Orchestra*
- *The National Inventors Hall of Fame*
- *Akron Art Museum*
- *Akron Civic Theatre*
- *Akron Area Arts Alliance*
- *Lock 3 Park, outdoor festival space*

The Akron Area Arts Alliance (AAAA) is a non-profit organization that fosters cooperation among arts and cultural groups, generates greater awareness of arts and cultural events throughout the area and advocates for financial investment in the arts by local governments. Among its 39 organizational members are museums, theatres, visual and performing arts groups, university arts departments plus environmental and scientific organizations serving Summit, Portage and Medina Counties. Membership also includes individual artists and arts supporters.

Since its founding in 1991, the Akron Area Arts Alliance had been aware of the need for a community arts center. The dream among the arts community had been to develop a center that would offer affordable studio, workshop, classroom and rehearsal space for artists; economical office space and shared facilities for arts organizations; and a public gallery devoted to local art. Such a center would also serve as an incubator to nurture/mentor local talents, as a headquarters for collaborative art projects throughout Summit County and as an exciting and welcoming gathering place for artists and the public. Similar facilities established in



Figure 7: Akron Beacon Journal Building circa 1920s (above)

Figure 6: Akron Beacon Journal Building circa 2002 (right), now home to Summit ArtSpace

communities across the country have proven to be valuable economic development tools helping to revitalize downtowns, initiate development in marginal neighborhoods, create jobs and attract tourism.

In 2001, Summit County Executive James McCarthy offered a vacant, county-owned building at 140 East Market Street as a possible site. This historic, art deco building, which was built in the 1920s as the first home of the Beacon Journal newspaper, is conveniently located near the Akron Art Museum. In July 2002, Summit County Council approved lease of the gallery space. With generous support from the Summit County, Akron Community Foundation, GAR Foundation, City of Akron and OMNOVA Solutions, Summit Artspace opened its Inaugural Exhibition September 21, 2002 displaying over 100 works by 50 Akron area artists.



Figure 8: Akron Art Museum

An environment that cultivates the arts, music, nightlife, and historic integrity results in places that are fun and interesting; places that we all want to experience as residents and visitors. In his 2002 book, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*, Richard Florida argues that this type of place attracts the "creative class", which in turn is linked to economic vitality and job growth.

Goals and Objectives

The overarching goal is to safeguard the heritage of Summit County by preserving those aspects of our built and natural environments that embody important elements of our culture and history. A secondary goal is to promote the use and conservation of these areas for the education, pleasure, and enrichment of all who visit or live and work in Summit County. The measures and efforts discussed in the following Sections 3.7 and 3.8 of the Summit County General Plan should be proactive, not reactive.



Figure 9: Stan Hywet Hall, Akron

The goals and objectives listed below are intended to assist Summit County and its constituent communities in the recognition and preservation of our heritage. They will guide townships, villages and cities in the preparation of specific local land use goals, priorities and policies to protect, restore and promote their significant historic and cultural resources. The goals and objectives are not listed in order of priority but are considered equally important.

The Ohio Historic Preservation Office recently completed a preservation plan for the State of Ohio. Entitled *A Future For Ohio's Past: The Ohio Historic Preservation Plan*,⁴ the plan outlines several goals and the numerous action steps

necessary to implement those goals. Where appropriate, the local action steps identified in the state plan are incorporated here to ensure continuity and coordination of efforts.

- A. Identify, evaluate and protect historic, scenic and cultural features throughout Summit County.
- B. Encourage individual communities to take ownership and facilitate the preservation of their historic resources.
- C. Recognize and reinforce each community's unique character and identity.
- D. Encourage rehabilitation and preservation of privately- and publicly-owned buildings and structures.
- E. Establish minimum property maintenance guidelines and standard building codes to encourage and support historic preservation.

⁴ The full text of the Ohio Historic Preservation Plan can be viewed online at www.ohiohistory.org.

- F. Establish the groundwork for adopting or strengthening local historic preservation ordinances.
- G. Increase public awareness and education to enable Summit County residents to discover, understand and preserve their historic places.
- H. Recognize outstanding preservation efforts.
- I. Partner with existing agencies and organizations to share data and resources and coordinate implementation measures.
- J. Assist Summit County communities with heritage tourism and related economic development opportunities.
- K. Position Summit County as a fun, interesting and rewarding place by nourishing arts- and culture-related organizations.



Figure 10: Wallace Farm Barn, Sagamore Hills Township (above); Wallace Farm Barn, now renovated as part of the Inn at Brandywine Falls (right)





Implementation Strategies

Efforts to preserve Summit County's cultural and historic resources require strong leadership and desire at the local level, as well as effective collaboration with state, national and other local partners. Strategies may be applicable at the county and/or local level(s).

- A. Identify and preserve the historic and non-historic cultural resources important to your community, including buildings, structures, landscapes, views, vistas and local landmarks.
- B. Create a survey of historic properties; develop and maintain a GIS database of historic & cultural resources.
- C. Develop clear, realistic and specific preservation goals for your community.
- D. Nominate eligible historic resources to the National Register of Historic Places.
- E. Establish a Main Street program for downtown revitalization.⁵
- F. Establish a point person or contact to coordinate historic preservation activities.
- G. Encourage the use of historic easements and tax credits for rehabilitation.
- H. Ensure infill development is compatible with the positive character and development patterns of the neighborhood.
- I. Encourage rehabilitation and reuse of vacant, historic structures (i.e., surplus schools, warehouses/industrial buildings, old homes).
- J. Create, adopt and utilize local enforcement tools such as local historic preservation ordinances, historic zoning district or overlay district regulations, and design guidelines encouraging the preservation of and sensitivity to historic resources.
- K. Adopt and utilize property maintenance regulations that encourage the preservation of and sensitivity to historic resources.
- L. Utilize the Summit County General Plan Toolbox resources to identify existing organizations, gather resources and work together. Partner with existing organizations such as the Cuyahoga Valley National Park and the Ohio & Erie Canal Corridor Coalition to generate ideas and leverage resources.
- M. Enhance capability of the Summit County Department of Community and Economic Development to coordinate preservation activities with planning, economic development, community development and housing activities.
- N. Make historic preservation information available to professionals, educators, elected officials and the public. Educate them about the economic benefits of historic preservation by highlighting successful rehabilitation/restoration projects.

⁵ Additional information on the Main Street program can be found at www.mainstreet.org and Downtown Ohio, Inc. www.heritageohio.org.



Chapter 4 Demographics

Introduction

Summit County's population declined between 1970 and 1990; however, between 1990 and 2000, it began to grow again, and is expected to continue to grow for the next quarter century. This growth had been concentrated in the northern part of the county, but it can be expected that this growth will move southward due to available land.

Census data indicate Summit County increased by approximately 28,000 residents between 1990 and 2000. This recent growth has helped reverse much of the population loss that occurred during the previous two decades. This growth may be attributed, in part, to changes in work force, improvements in technology, growth in the polymer industry, a more stable and diverse economy, and also the movement of former Cuyahoga County residents into northern Summit County.

Housing unit construction is outpacing population growth in Summit County. Households are getting smaller and there are more of them. This trend is fueling the real estate market. Coupled with the low interest rates and an improving economy, new home construction will continue to grow faster than the population. The population is aging and becoming more diverse. Baby boomers remain the largest, most important demographic group in America. As the baby boomers age, they are becoming the fastest growing segment of the housing market.

The overall density of development is decreasing as land is consumed faster than the population grows. This is sprawl. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Inventory, in the 15 years between 1982 and 1997 Summit County converted 46,500 acres of farms and forest land to developed or "urbanized" land.

In summary, Summit County is experiencing the following trends:

- Population has resumed growing;
- Households are getting smaller;
- Population is aging;
- Population is becoming more diverse;
- Land is being developed at a much faster rate than its population is increasing; and
- Open space and natural areas are decreasing.

The following sections describe past demographic trends and also present future demographic trends for Summit County. The next section describes population changes in Summit County.



Demographic Data

Population Change

The rate of population increase peaked between 1960 and 1970 in Summit County. From 1970 to 1980 there was a 5.22% loss of population, a loss of 28,899 residents. However, from 1990 to 2000, this trend was reversed (see graph below), and the population in Summit County increased by 5.42% or 27,909 persons.

Population Change (1960-2000)
Summit County

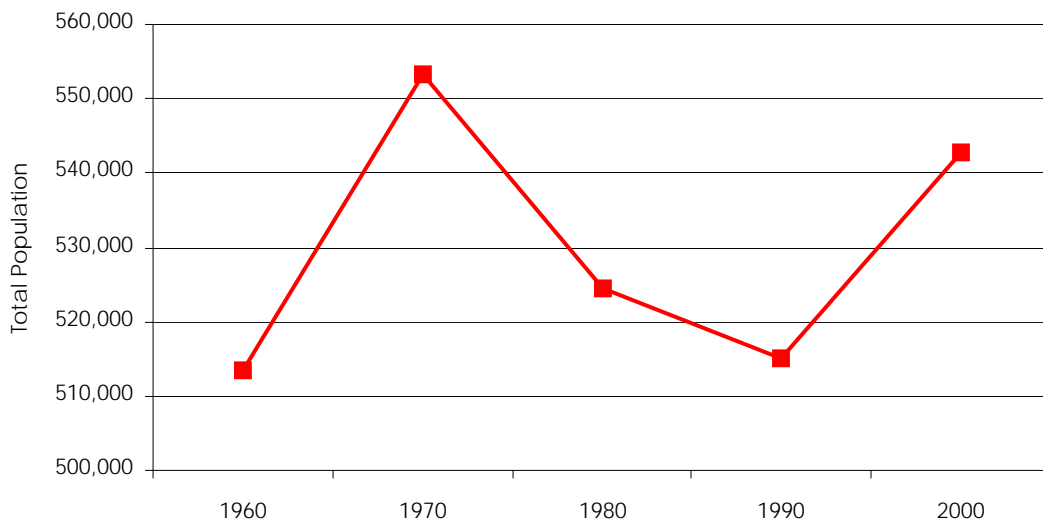


Table 1:

Population (1960-2000)
Summit County

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Total	513,569	553,371	524,472	514,990	542,899
Change	--	39,802	(28,899)	(9,482)	27,909
Percent Change	--	7.75%	-5.22%	-1.81%	5.42%

Source: US Census



The 2000 Census reported a Summit County population of 542,899. About 40% of these residents live in Akron, the county's largest city, with a population of 217,074.

Within the county there has been considerable redistribution of the population within the last 30 years. Older and larger cities have lost population, while newer "suburban cities" have gained population. For example, Akron's population decreased by more than 21% between 1970 and 2000 even though its land area increased by over 20% via annexations during the same period. Barberton also lost more than 16% of its population while it increased its land area by over 10%.

This is in marked contrast to newer suburban cities, which showed considerable population growth. Twinsburg, for example, had a 1970 population of 6,432. By 2000, it had grown to 17,006. Thus the 30-year growth rate here is over 160%. Hudson Village, which became a city in 1990 and later merged with Hudson Township, had a combined 1970 population of 8,395. The 2000 population for the same area was 22,439, an increase of over 160%. Similarly, Green Township had a population of 13,473 in 1970. By 2000 the same geographic area, now the City of Green, had a population of 22,817, an increase of over 69%. The City of Stow had a population of 19,847 in 1970; by 2000 it had a population of 32,139, an increase of 62%.

The County increased in population by 3.5% between 1980 and 2000. During this time period, the townships increased in population overall by 7%, even with annexations, while the cities increased in population by only 3% and the villages increased in population by only 2%. The City of Akron lost 8.5% of its population, or 20,103 persons between 1980 and 2000. In contrast, the total populations of townships grew even though there were fewer townships in 2000 than there were in 1980. Central, older, compact cities have become less dense while outlying areas have become denser. These shifts have had a considerable impact on: land use and housing patterns, transportation and utility systems, and community facilities and services.

Between 1990 and 2000, all Summit County communities had population gains save Akron, Lakemore, Mogadore, Boston Township, Coventry Township, and New Franklin.

See Table 2. Population Trends by Jurisdiction on the following page.



Table 2.
Population Trends by Jurisdiction
Summit County

	1980	1990	2000	1990-2000 # Change	1990-2000 % Change
Cities					
Akron	237,177	223,019	217,074	(5,945)	-2.7%
Barberton	29,751	27,623	27,899	276	1.0%
Cuyahoga Falls	50,526	48,950	*50,272	1,322	2.7%
Fairlawn	6,100	5,779	7,307	1,528	26.4%
New Franklin	16,142	14,910	14,530	(380)	-2.5%
Green	17,625	19,179	22,817	3,638	19.0%
Hudson	12,645	17,128	22,439	5,311	31.0%
Macedonia	6,571	7,509	9,224	1,715	22.8%
Munroe Falls	4,731	5,359	5,314	(45)	-0.8%
Norton	12,242	11,475	11,512	37	0.3%
Stow	25,303	27,998	32,139	4,141	14.8%
Tallmadge	15,269	14,870	16,180	1,310	8.8%
Twinsburg	7,632	9,606	17,006	7,400	77.0%
Villages					
Boston Heights	781	733	1,186	453	61.8%
Clinton	1,277	1,175	1,337	162	13.8%
Lakemore	2,744	2,684	2,561	(123)	-4.6%
Mogadore	3,061	2,967	2,951	(16)	-0.5%
Northfield	3,913	3,624	3,827	203	5.6%
Peninsula	604	562	602	40	7.1%
Reminderville	1,906	2,163	2,347	184	8.5%
Richfield	3,437	3,117	3,286	169	5.4%
Silver Lake	2,915	2,756	3,019	263	9.5%
Townships					
Bath Twp	8,476	9,015	9,635	620	6.9%
Boston Twp	1,460	1,317	1,062	(255)	-19.4%
Copley Twp	9,810	11,130	13,641	2,511	22.6%
Coventry Twp	11,951	11,295	10,900	(395)	-3.5%
Northfield Center Twp	4,294	3,982	4,931	949	23.8%
Richfield Twp	1,504	1,893	2,138	245	12.9%
Sagamore Hills Twp	7,189	6,503	9,340	2,837	43.6%
Springfield Twp	16,125	14,773	15,168	395	2.7%
Twinsburg Twp	1,257	1,896	2,153	257	13.6%
Summit County Total	524,418	514,990	543,797	28,807	5.6%

* Cuyahoga Falls had a Census population adjustment Oct. 2003

Source: US Census



General Plan

Population Trend Analysis: North, South and Central Summit County

Another way to analyze Summit County population trends is to divide the County into three geographical areas: North, Center and South. (See Map 4.1 Plan areas).

North Summit County includes:

Boston Heights Village

Boston Township

Hudson

Macedonia

Northfield Center Township

Northfield Village

Twinsburg Township

Peninsula Village

Reminderville Village

Richfield Township

Richfield Village

Sagamore Hills Township

Twinsburg City

Central Summit County includes:

Akron

Copley Township

Fairlawn

Silver Lake Village

Tallmadge

Bath Township

Cuyahoga Falls

Munroe Falls

Stow

South Summit County includes:

Barberton

Coventry Township

Green

Mogadore Village

Springfield Township

Clinton Village

New Franklin

Lakemore Village

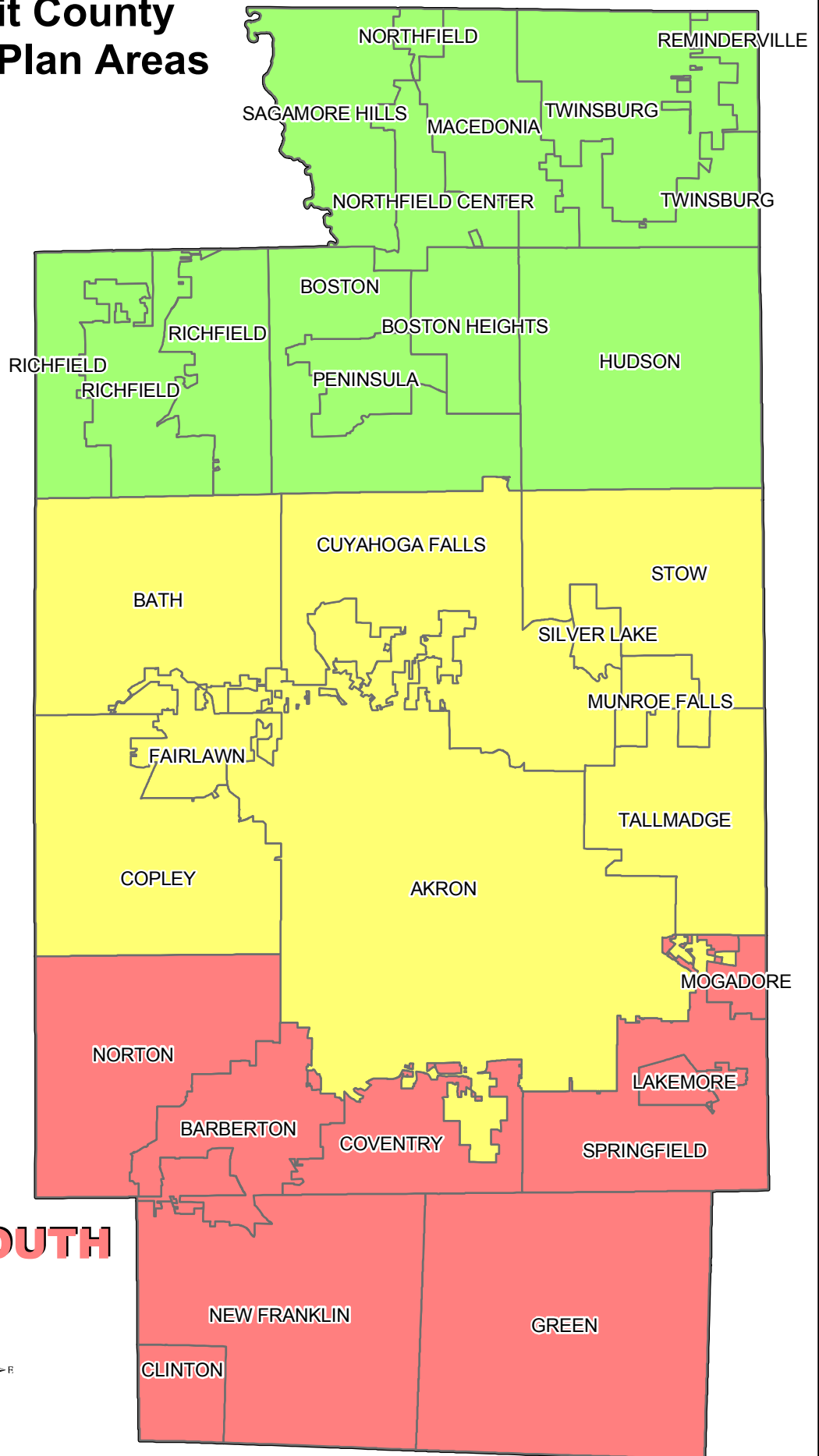
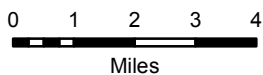
Norton

Map 4.1 Summit County General Plan - Plan Areas

NORTH

CENTRAL

SOUTH





Population Trend Analysis 1990 – 2000, North, South and Central Summit County

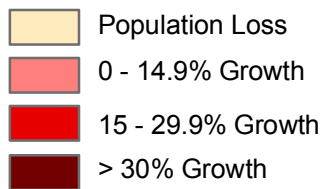
Between 1990 and 2000, Summit County's population increased by 5%. Most of the population growth over the past ten years has been concentrated in the Northern portion of Summit County. In the north, the communities grew by 29.8% and certain communities had a growth rate greater than 30%, including Sagamore Hills Township, City of Twinsburg, Boston Heights Village and City of Hudson. See Map 4.2 Population Change 1990-2000.

Between 1990 and 2000, the City of Hudson population grew by 31%, the Village of Boston Heights grew by 61.8%, the City of Twinsburg grew by 77% and Sagamore Hills Township grew by 43.6%. The rapid growth in northern Summit County was due, in part, from the outward migration from Cuyahoga County and available vacant land. In addition, due to the good interstate highway system, people working in either Cleveland or Akron can easily commute to their jobs from northern Summit County. According to the "Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2003-2004" Report by NEFCO, most of the areas exhibiting the larger population changes are adjacent to major transportation routes and are within commuting distance to Cleveland.

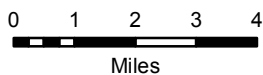
The aggregate population growth in the Central area was 1.3% when including Akron. When Akron is removed from the calculation, population grew by approximately 8% between 1990 and 2000. Akron lost 5,945 persons during this time period.

The population growth in southern Summit County between 1990 and 2000 was 4.2%. The City of Green had the highest growth rate at 19%.

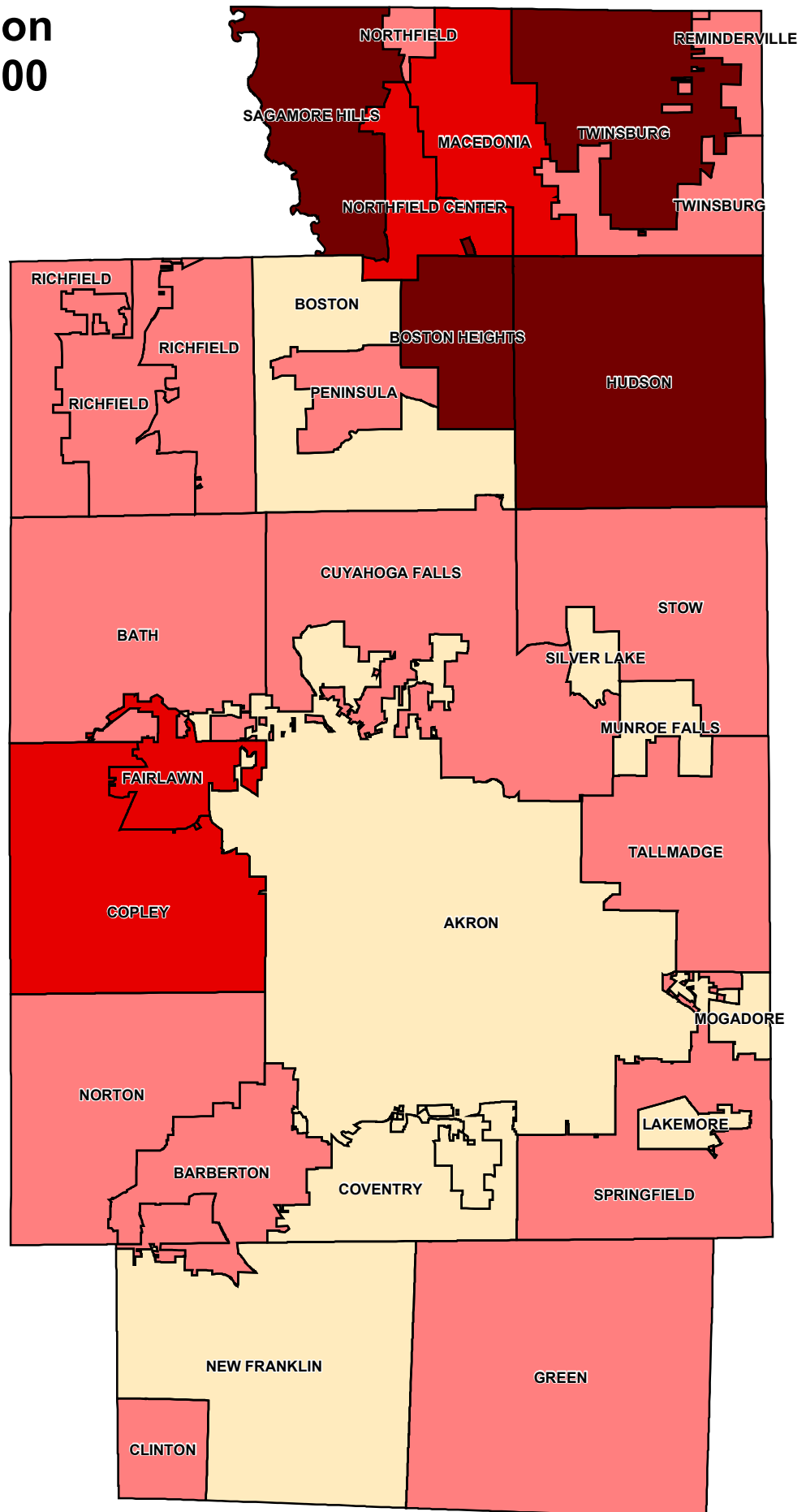
Map 4.2 Population Change, 1990-2000



Summit County, Ohio
 "Charting a Course for the 21st Century"
 James B. McCarthy, Executive



Source: U.S. Census Bureau





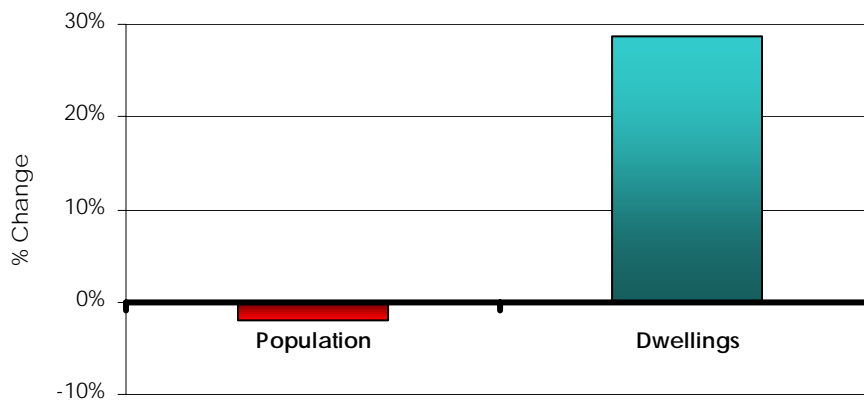
Household Trends

Between 1970 and 2000, the population of Summit County decreased by 1.9%, a loss of 10,472 residents. Even though Summit County's total population decreased during that time period, the number of households increased by 26%. This is a nationwide trend fueled by decreasing household size and changing family characteristics. Delayed and declining marriage rates, single-person and single-parent households, and higher rates of divorce have also contributed to this trend. Census data from 1970 show that the average household in Summit County consisted of 3.16 people; in 2000, this number decreased to 2.45 persons per household.

Dwelling Unit Growth Trends

The number of dwelling units has increased by nearly 30% between 1970 and 2000, even though the population dropped over the last 30 years. Close to 52,000 new dwelling units were added in Summit County between 1970 and 2000. This translates to an average of about 1,700 units per year.

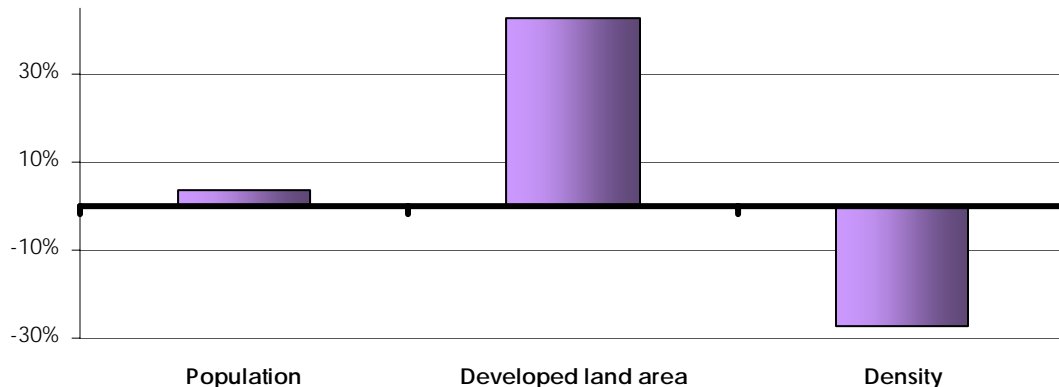
Population & Dwelling Units (1970-2000)
Summit County



The graph above clearly summarizes the key demographic trend in Summit County over the last 30 years: even though population has decreased by 2%, the number of dwelling units has increased by 29%.



Change in Density (1982-1997) Summit County



This Change In Density graph above, which uses data from the US Department of Agriculture's National Resource Inventory, illustrates the following trends between 1982 and 1997:

- Population increased by only 3.5% but the amount of developed or "urbanized" land increased by nearly 43%.¹
- Density has decreased by approximately 27%. (In this study, density is defined as the population divided by the urbanized land.) **In other words, essentially the same number of people "used up" more land.**²

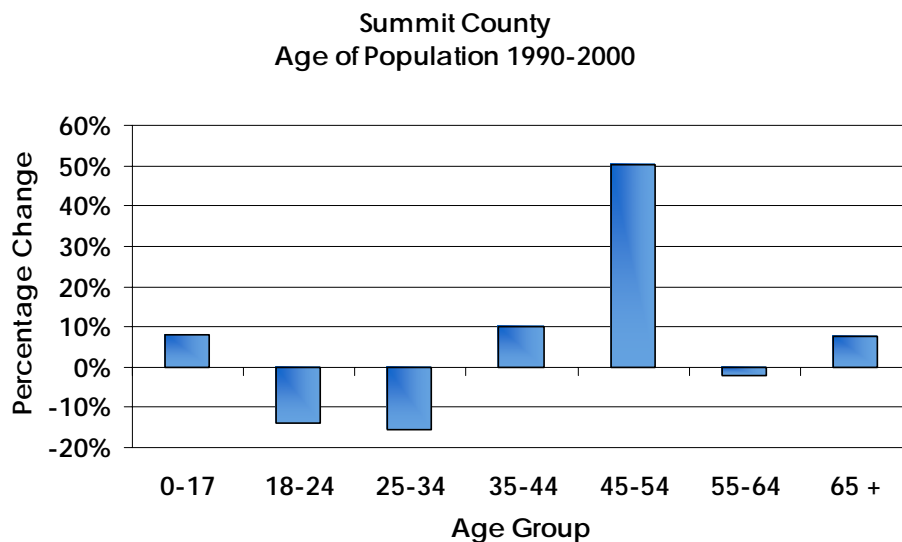
What all this means is that Summit County, like most of Northeast Ohio, is adding urbanized developed land at a much faster rate than its population is increasing. This is the basic definition of sprawl.

¹Urban and built-up areas: A land cover/use category consisting of residential, industrial, commercial, and institutional land; construction sites; public administrative sites; railroad yards; cemeteries; airports; golf courses; sanitary landfills; sewage treatment plants; water control structures and spillways; other land used for such purposes; small parks (less than 10 acres) within urban and built-up areas; and highways, railroads, and other transportation facilities if they are surrounded by urban areas. Also included are tracts of less than 10 acres that do not meet the above definition but are completely surrounded by Urban and Built-up land. Two size categories are recognized in the National Resource Inventory: (i) areas 0.25 to 10 acres, and (ii) areas greater than 10 acres. [NRI-97]

² The Exurban Change Project, Ohio State University (data from the National Resource Inventory. (NRI), U.S. Department of Agriculture)

Aging Trends

Since the 1970s, most Ohio communities have experienced an increase in the median age of the population. Summit County has experienced this trend as well, as evidenced by a comparison of median age between 1990 and 2000. The median age for Summit County was 34.3 in 1990 and increased to 37.2 in 2000; both are slightly older than the Ohio and U.S. median age figures.



According to the graph above, between 1990 and 2000 the greatest increase occurred in the 45-54 age group; it grew over 50%. The baby boomers, born between 1946 and 1964, are responsible for this increase. As baby boomers age, they are becoming the fastest growing segment of the housing market and the most important demographic group in America. Market studies indicate that persons aged 50 and over are attracted to the condominium housing market because they are ready to downsize and many do not want to worry about the upkeep and maintenance of a home. Therefore, there will probably be more of a demand for condominium and cluster type housing.

In contrast, the 18-24 and 25-34 age cohorts experienced the greatest decline, most likely due to students leaving for out-of-state colleges and individuals seeking better career opportunities in other areas. To combat this trend, the Greater Akron Chamber of Commerce is currently working on an initiative aimed at attracting and keeping young professionals and talent in the greater Akron area.



According to national trend information on aging provided by the Harvard Generations Policy Journal³, there will be major demographic changes as the baby boomers ages. By 2010, there will be 100 million people ages 50 and older in the United States.⁴

The baby boomers have begun to turn 60 in 2006, and in 2011 they will reach 65. In the coming decades, there will be a significant increase in the number of elderly boomers and in their proportion to the total population. By 2030, the boomers' proportion will expand to 20% of the total population up from a current 13%, and the number of elderly will double. Put in different terms, from 2010 to 2030, the 65+ population is projected to spike by 75% to more than 69 million people.

The 85+ population is the fastest growing segment of the older population. According to statistics compiled by the Area Agency on Aging, in Summit County there is expected to be a 32% increase of those 85 years and older between 1995 and 2015.

Even though the notable increase of those 85 and older and the elderly in general is good news in terms of our attempts to lengthen the lifespan, there is a downside. By 2030, there will be sizeable increases in the number of people requiring services in health care, nutrition, housing, transportation, and recreation.⁵

Relationship to HUD Consolidated Plan

Some of this demographic analysis was done for the HUD Consolidated Plan. The County of Summit is one of eight urban entitlement counties in Ohio that are eligible for direct funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The Consolidated Plan jurisdiction includes 29 of Summit County's 32 communities. The cities of Akron, Barberton, and Cuyahoga Falls constitute Summit County's most populous and urban communities, and are separate entitlement areas (see Map 4.3). Therefore, the 2005-2009 Consolidated Plan addresses only the suburban Summit County communities. This Summit County General Plan will examine housing and demographic issues for all of Summit County. By their very nature, urban and suburban housing issues are quite different; therefore, housing and demographic data in this plan are presented and compared for urban Summit County (Akron, Barberton and Cuyahoga Falls), suburban Summit County (the Consolidated Plan jurisdiction—all communities except Akron, Barberton and Cuyahoga Falls), and the County as a whole to illustrate the occasional stark contrasts between the areas.

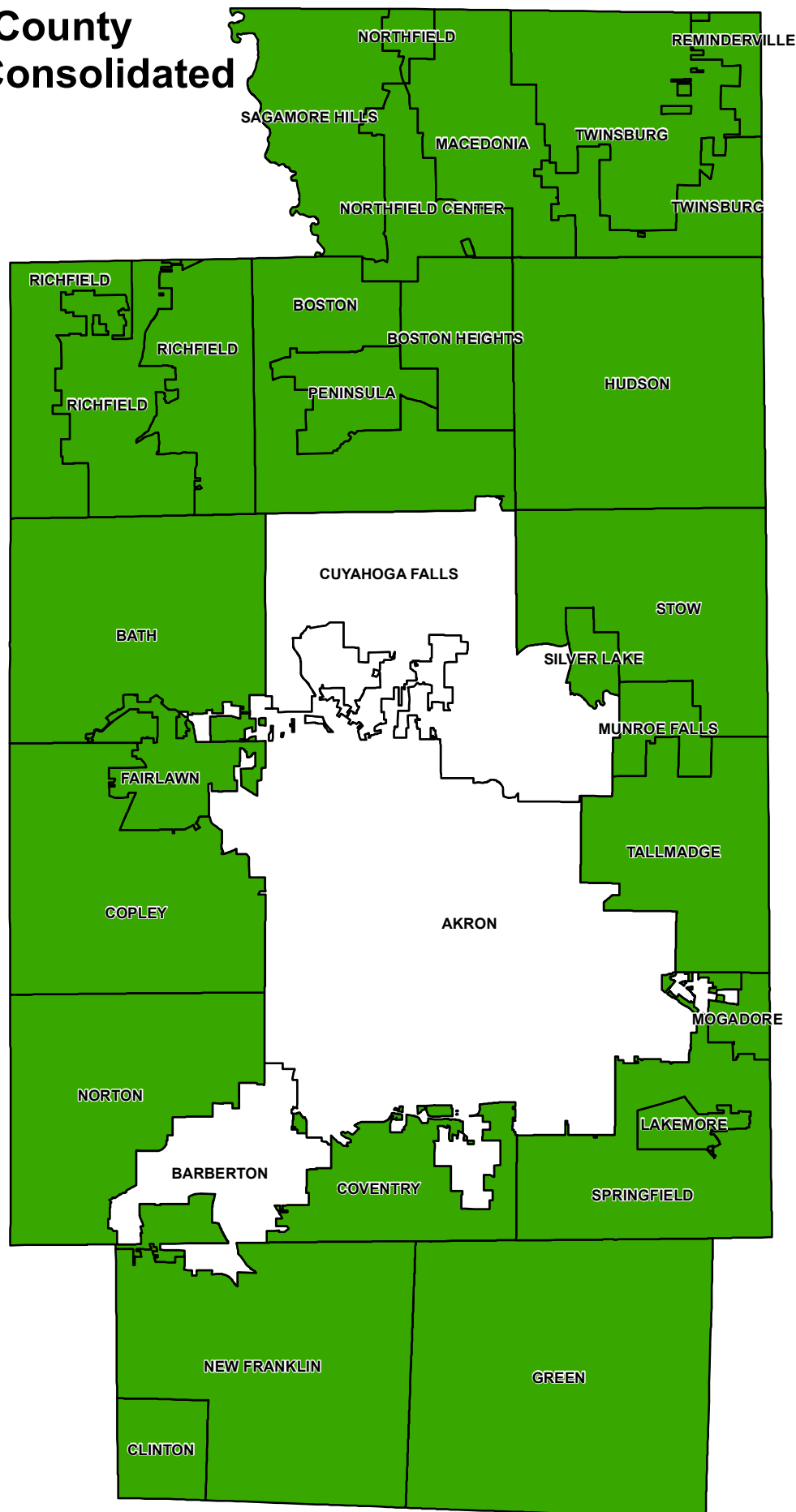
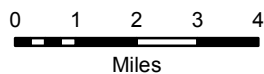
³ Harvard Generations Policy Journal, Vol. 1, Winter 2004.

⁴ NAHB, Senior Housing News, Winter 2005

⁵ Harvard Generations Policy Journal Vol. 1, Winter 2004

Map 4.3 Summit County 2005-2009 HUD Consolidated Plan Jurisdiction

- In Jurisdiction
- Out of Jurisdiction





Racial/Ethnic Composition

The population growth in Summit County from 1990 to 2000 reflects disproportionate growth in minority populations. Although the minority populations are still small, they are growing at a much faster rate than the population as a whole.

Table 3:

Change in Racial Composition 1990-2000⁶

	White	African American	Asian/Pacific Islander	American Indian
Summit County Total	1.4%	17.0%	55.2%	2.0%
Suburban	12.4%	61.7%	97.7%	5.0%
Urban	-8.2%	13.4%	25.7%	0.7%

Source: US Census

Hispanic Population Trends

Although still quite small, the Hispanic population in Summit County between 1990 and 2000 grew 58.5%. In 1990, the Hispanic population accounted for 0.6% of the entire County population; in 2000, it accounted for 0.9%. In comparison, the Hispanic population accounted for 3.4% of Cuyahoga County's population.

Table 4:

Racial Composition of Population 2000

	White	African American	Asian/Pacific Islander	American Indian	Other
Summit County Total	85.2%	13.2%	1.4%	0.2%	0.3%
Suburban	95.4%	3.0%	1.5%	0.1%	0.2%
Urban	76.6%	21.8%	1.3%	0.3%	0.4%
Ohio	87.2%	11.5%	1.2%	0.2%	0.8%
US	83.2%	12.3%	3.6%	0.9%	5.5%

Source: US Census

According to the 2000 Census, the suburban areas were comprised of 95% white and 5% racial or ethnic minorities (African American, Asian or other Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaska native, or some other race).

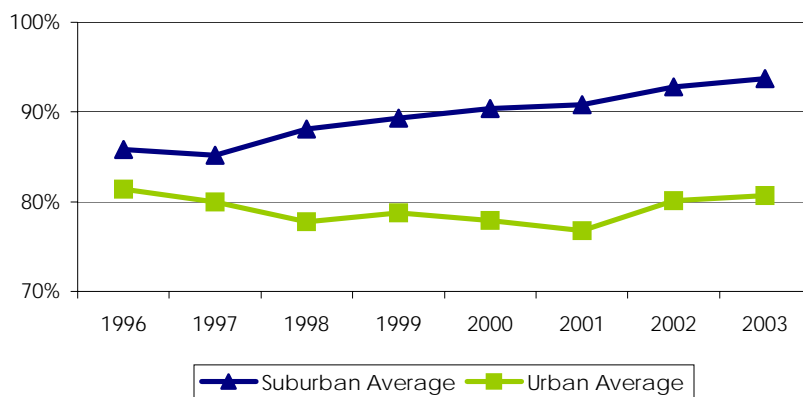
⁶ Per the US Census, data on race for 1990 and 2000 are not directly comparable. Figures are shown for illustrative purposes only.

Education

The results of the 2000 U.S. Census revealed that the education levels of the United States population reached an all-time high. Of the 182.2 million people aged 25 and over on April 1, 2000, 80% had at least a high school diploma, and 24% had obtained at least a bachelor's degree. More than half of the US population 25 and over in 2000 (52%) had completed at least some college education.

The report card for Summit County is better than that of Ohio and the U.S., with fewer residents failing to receive a high school diploma and more achieving at least a bachelor's degree. According to the 2000 Census, 98% of the population over the age of 25 in suburban Summit County was a high school graduate, and nearly one-third has obtained at least a bachelor's degree.

School District Graduation Rates (1996-2003)
Summit County



The average graduation rate for all Summit County school districts was 92% in 2003, compared with 85% in 1996. All of the school districts improved their graduation rates between 1996 and 2003 with the exception of the Barberton City school district.

Income and Poverty

Generally, Summit County residents enjoy a better economic position than the average Ohio or U.S. resident due to higher median incomes and lower poverty rates. Between 1989 and 1999, median household incomes for Summit County increased 12.4% to \$42,304. Within Summit County, the suburban communities were in a better economic position than the urban communities. Hudson had the highest median income in 1999 at \$99,156; Akron had the lowest median income at \$31,835 (See Map 4.4 1999 Median Household Income). The same disparity was reflected in per capita income figures.



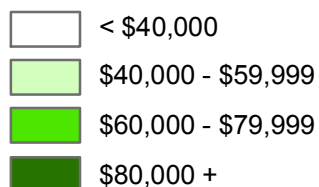
Table 5:
Household, Family and Per Capita Income (1999)

	Median Household Income	Median Family Income	Per Capita Income
Summit County Total	\$42,304	\$52,200	\$22,842
Ohio	\$40,956	\$50,037	\$21,003
US	\$41,994	\$50,046	\$21,587
Akron	\$31,835	\$39,381	\$17,596
Barberton	\$32,178	\$39,387	\$17,764
Cuyahoga Falls	\$42,263	\$52,372	\$22,550

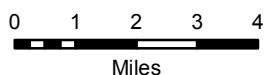
Source: US Census

Map 4.4 Median Household Income, 1999

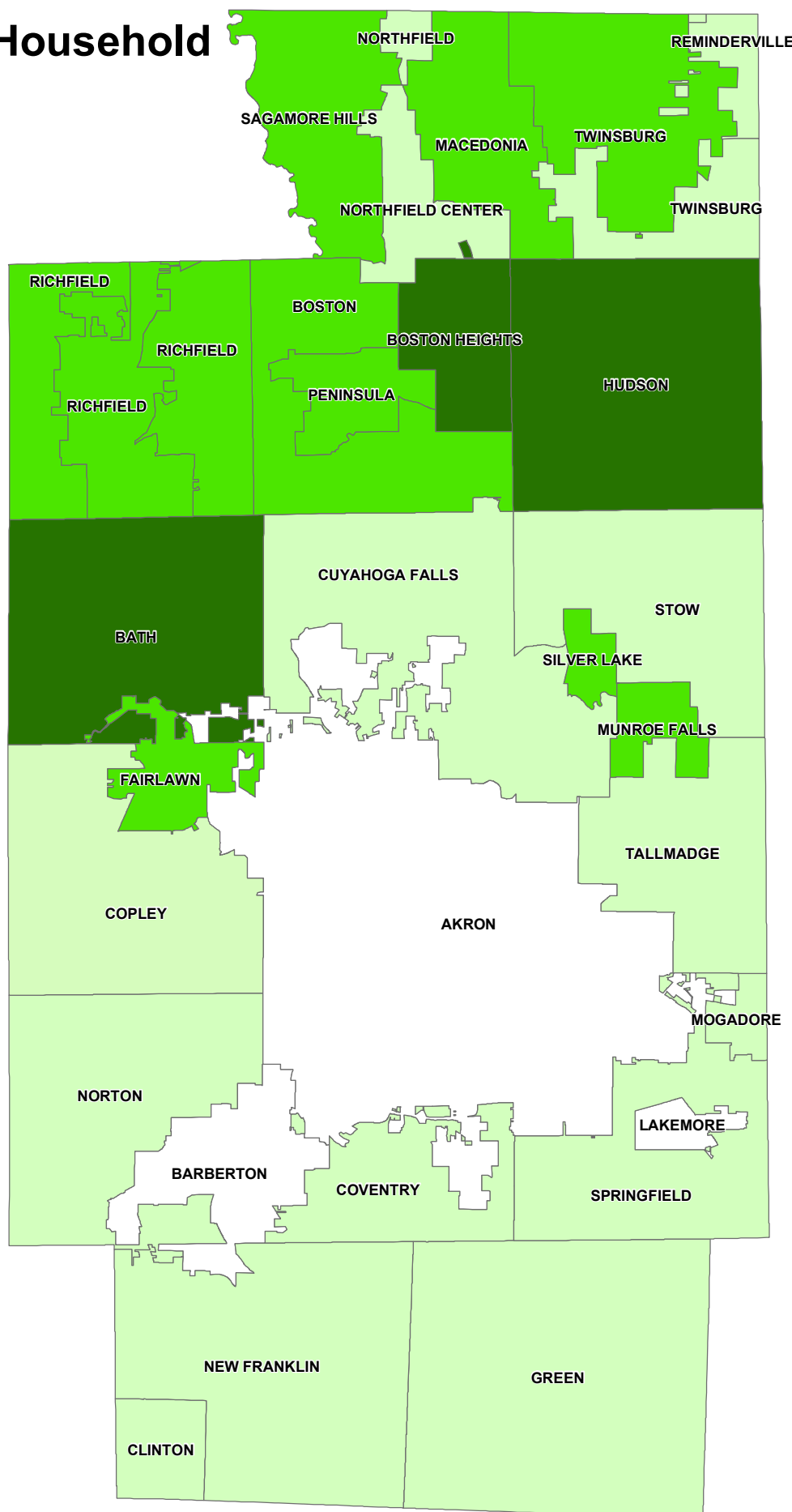
Median Household Income



Median Household Income for Summit County is \$42,304



Source: US Census Bureau





Even though the economic situation in Summit County is better than average, poverty is still a problem. The poverty rate in Summit County (9.8%) is slightly less than the Ohio poverty rate (10.6%).

Table 6:
Poverty in Summit County (1999)

	Families Below Poverty Level	% of All Families	Individuals Below Poverty Level	% of All Individuals
Summit County Total	10,896	7.5%	52,991	9.8%
Suburban	1,842	2.6%	9,369	3.8%
Urban	9,054	12.1%	43,622	14.8%

Source: US Census

The communities located in the suburban areas showed even lower rates of poverty, with most under 7%. Only two suburban communities' experienced double-digit poverty rates—Twinsburg Township (11.5%) and the Village of Lakemore (10.1%). The highest poverty rates in Summit County were recorded in Akron (17.5%) and Barberton (13.3%).

Low-Income Population Concentrations

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has set the exception criterion for Summit County at 37%. Therefore, Summit County defines areas of low-to-moderate income as census block groups where 37% or more of the households have incomes at or below 80% of the area median income (AMI). Based on 2000 Census data, 37% or more of the residents in the following block groups are classified as low-to-moderate income (see Map 4.5).

4.1 Population Projections

Looking to the future, the Ohio Department of Development estimates that Summit, Medina and Portage counties will continue to grow over the next 30 years. Cuyahoga County is expected to continue to lose population.

Summit County's population is expected to grow about 3.9% between 2000 and 2030.

Map 4.5 Summit County Low to Moderate Income (37% or higher) Based on 2000 Census

 Low/Moderate Income
Block Groups

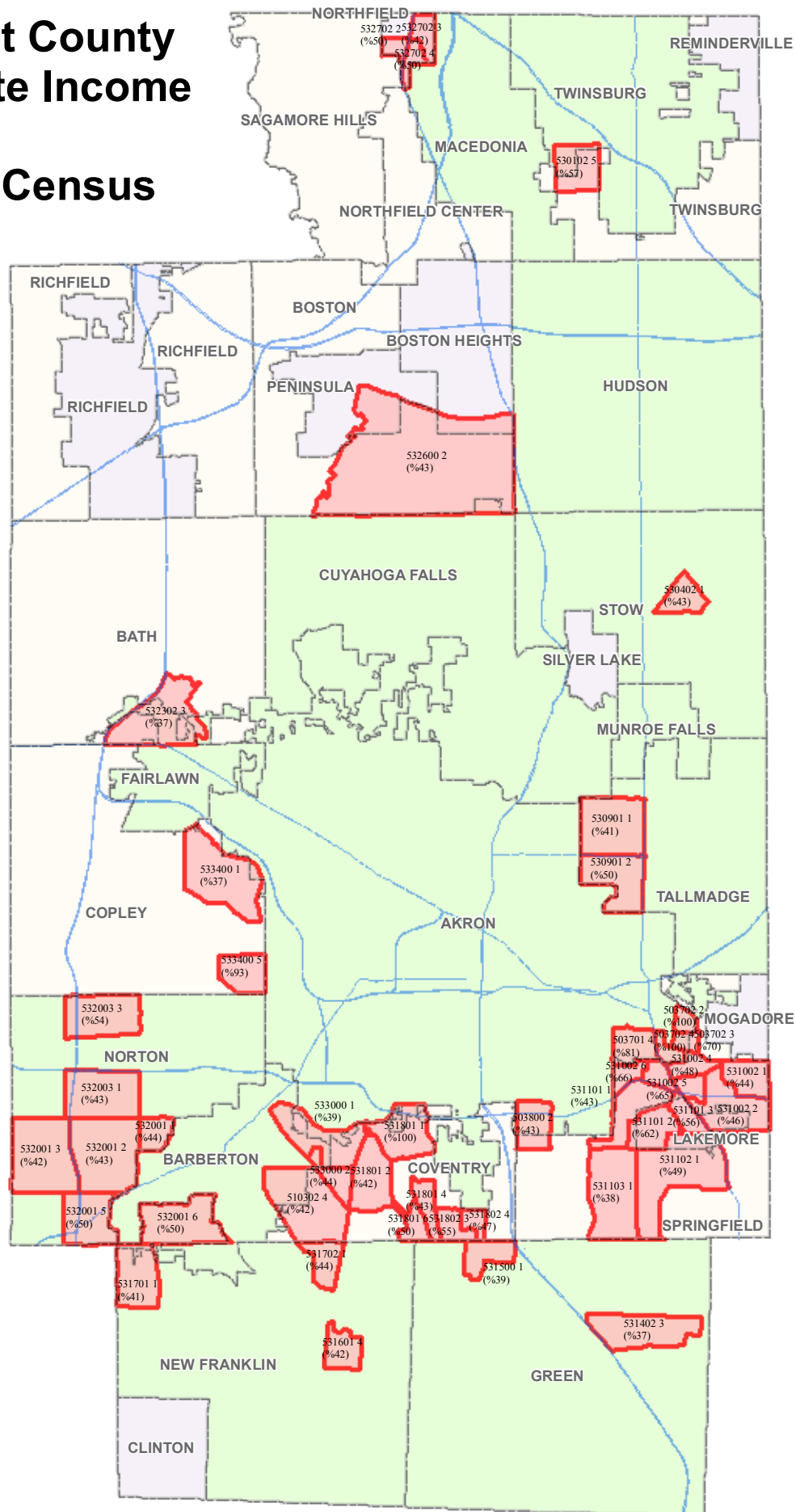


 **Summit County, Ohio**
"Charting a Course for the 21st Century"
James B. McCarthy, Executive

0 1 2 3 4
Miles



Source: US Census Bureau



Chapter 5 Housing

Housing is a basic human need and a fundamental part of the American Dream. It is also the largest single expense of most Americans. According to the Consumer Expenditure Survey prepared by the Bureau of Labor Statistics/U.S. Department of Labor (2000), households in the Midwest spend an average of 27% of their annual incomes on housing, compared with 18% for transportation, and 12% for food. Decent, affordable housing is a critical component of stable households, vibrant neighborhoods and healthy communities. A variety of housing types is necessary in each community to meet the needs of families and individuals in various economic and life stages.

Adequate housing is one of the key components of a healthy community, and a critical ingredient in the way a community grows. Therefore, the primary goal of this plan element is to ensure that a range of housing opportunities and choices are available for current and future Summit County residents of all income levels and life stages.

Smart Growth and Housing

Housing is crucial to shaping the way communities grow. Housing is also a key factor in determining access to transportation, commuting patterns, access to services and education, and consumption of energy and other natural resources. By using smart growth approaches to create a wider range of housing choices, communities can mitigate the environmental costs of auto-dependent development, use their infrastructure resources more efficiently, ensure a better jobs-housing balance, and generate a strong foundation of support for neighborhood transit stops, commercial centers, and other services. A number of the ten smart growth principles set forth by the Smart Growth Network involve housing and housing-related issues:¹

- Create Range of Housing Opportunities and Choices
- Create Walkable Communities
- Foster Distinctive, Attractive Places with a Strong Sense of Place
- Mix Land Uses
- Strengthen and Direct Development Towards Existing Communities
- Take Advantage of Compact Building Design

¹ See the Smart Growth Network website (www.smartgrowth.org) for additional information on smart growth.



Key Issues in Summit County

Addressing the need for safe, affordable and decent housing for Summit County residents of all income levels and life stages is an ongoing concern, particularly for the elderly, special needs and low-income populations.

As the demographics in Summit County shift and the baby boomers approach retirement age, their needs and preferences must be taken into consideration. Between 1990 and 2000, the number of Summit County residents between the ages of 45 and 54 increased more than 50%. Over the next twenty years, it is expected that these boomers will double the number of seniors nationwide.

The term "affordable housing" is no longer just a euphemism for low-income, subsidized projects or large mobile home parks. Many recent graduates and others new to the workplace, as well as police officers, firefighters, schoolteachers, retail workers and other private sector employees cannot afford to live in the communities where they work. Low-income households often have great difficulty finding adequate housing that can accommodate their needs within their financial means. Families that cannot afford housing frequently become homeless, which causes great personal stress for those involved and can also stress limited community resources.

Summary Statistics

The following housing data for Summit County are from the 2000 Census, unless otherwise indicated.

- There are a total of 230,880 housing units in Summit County, representing a 9.2% increase over 1990 when the number of units was 211,477.
- Of the total 230,880 housing units, 66% are owner-occupied, 28% are renter-occupied, and 6% are vacant.
- In Summit County, 76% of the occupied housing is single-family units; 23% are multi-family.
- The majority of the housing stock in Summit County is more than 25 years old—66% of all housing units were built before 1979.
- The average household size for Summit County is 2.45 persons.
- The median home value for Summit County is \$109,100. Boston Heights has the highest median home value at \$263,500 and Akron has the lowest at \$76,500.
- The housing wage in Summit County is \$12.65. This is the amount a full-time (40 hours per week) worker must earn per hour in order to afford a two-bedroom unit at the county's fair market rent of \$658 per month.²
- A minimum wage earner (earning \$5.15 per hour) working full-time can afford monthly rent of no more than \$268. He or she must work 98 hours per week in order to afford a two-bedroom unit at the fair market rent.³

² National Low Income Housing Coalition www.nlihc.org

³ National Low Income Housing Coalition www.nlihc.org

- A Social Security Income recipient (receiving \$552 monthly) can afford monthly rent of no more than \$166, while the fair market rent for a one-bedroom unit is \$513.⁴

Housing Inventory and Trends

Data from the US Census indicate that there were a total of 230,880 housing units in all of Summit County in 2000, a 9.2% increase from 1990. Slightly less than half (43%) of these units are located in suburban Summit County.⁵ The remaining 57% are located in Akron, Barberton and Cuyahoga Falls.

Although the number of existing units is almost evenly divided between the urban and suburban areas of the county, the majority of the growth between 1990 and 2000 occurred in the suburban communities. The 16,570 dwelling units built in suburban Summit County between 1990 and 2000 represented an increase of 20.2%. During the same time period, only 2,833 dwelling units were built in the three urban core communities—a growth rate of only 2.2%.

<i>Housing Units (1990-2000)</i>				
	Census 1990 Housing Units	Census 2000 Housing Units	# Change	% Change
Summit County Total	211,477	230,880	19,403	9.2%
Suburban	82,105	98,675	16,570	20.2%
Urban	129,372	132,205	2,833	2.2%

Source: US Census

Households

As stated earlier, the number of households is the key driver behind housing demand. Between 1990 and 2000, the growth in the number of households in the county outpaced the increase in the general population. This is a nationwide trend fueled by decreasing household size and changing family characteristics. Declining marriage rates, single-person and single-parent households, and higher rates of divorce, etc. all contribute to this trend. Both the increasing number of households and the changing household composition result in demand for a larger variety of housing types in greater quantities in Summit County.

Ownership

Most (66%) of the 230,880 housing units in Summit County are owner-occupied; 64,792 (28%) are renter-occupied, and 13,092 (6%) are vacant. The number of occupied housing units has increased by slightly less than 9% between 1990 and 2000. Most of this increase was in owner-

⁴ National Low Income Housing Coalition www.nlihc.org

⁵ For the purposes of the analyses contained in this chapter, “urban” Summit County includes the cities of Akron, Barberton and Cuyahoga Falls; “suburban” Summit County includes all other communities.



occupied units, which indicates that the homeownership rates for some segments of the population in Summit County are increasing.

Types and Size of Housing

Most of the occupied housing units found in Summit County are single-family detached homes. This is, in some part, a reflection of local zoning, particularly in the townships, where single-family detached dwelling units are the primary permitted housing type. However, changing housing preferences, driven by cost considerations and the desire for lower-maintenance living, are reflected in the significant increase in single-family attached units. These types of units are often described as attached cluster homes, patio homes, or townhouses. The single-family attached housing type increased by over 75% in owned/for-sale units and by nearly 20% in rental units between 1990 and 2000. Significant decreases were reflected in the numbers for all mobile home and other (boat, RV, etc.) units during the same time frame. The number of duplexes decreased as well.

*Occupied Housing Units (1990-2000)
Summit County*

Occupied Unit Type (Units in Structure)	Census 1990 Owner- Occupied Units	Census 2000 Owner- Occupied Units	# Change	% Change	Census 1990 Renter- Occupied Units	Census 2000 Renter- Occupied Units	# Change	% Change
1 Unit Detached	126,814	140,081	13,267	10.5%	17,501	17,786	285	1.6%
1 Unit Attached	3,858	6,781	2,923	75.8%	2,227	2,667	440	19.8%
2 Units	2,040	1,687	(353)	-17.3%	9,819	9,334	(485)	-4.9%
3-4 Units	685	752	67	9.8%	7,378	7,061	(317)	-4.3%
5+ Units	1,527	1,743	216	14.1%	24,430	27,671	3,241	13.3%
Mobile Home & Other	2,520	1,952	(568)	-22.5%	1,199	273	(926)	-77.2%

Source: US Census

In comparing suburban and urban Summit County, the largest percentage of housing is still single-family units, whether detached or attached. However, only 14% of the occupied units in the suburban communities were in structures with 2 or more units, whereas nearly twice as many (28%) urban dwellings were in structures with 2 or more units. The most significant difference was in structures with five or more units—9.1% of suburban units and 16.9% of urban units.

Age of Housing Stock

The housing stock in suburban Summit County tends to be newer than the housing stock available in the cities of Akron, Barberton and Cuyahoga Falls. According to 2000 Census data, of the housing units in the suburban communities, 9,255 (9.4%) were built in 1939 or earlier. In contrast, 34% (44,917) of the units in the urban core were constructed before 1940.



For-Sale Housing

The value of for-sale housing stock in Summit County increased substantially from 1990 to 2000. Existing units are increasing in value, and more expensive new housing is being built. In 2000, occupied housing units valued in the \$200,000 and over range represented about 15% of the housing available compared to only 3% in 1990. The number of homes valued at \$500,000 or more increased by 452%.

Value of Owner-Occupied Housing Units (1990-2000)
Summit County

Unit Value	1990	2000	# Change	% Change
<\$50,000	43,271	9,891	(33,380)	-77.1%
\$50,000-\$99,999	55,311	54,035	(1,276)	-2.3%
\$100,000-\$149,999	14,716	37,939	23,223	157.8%
\$150,000-\$199,999	4,941	19,845	14,904	301.6%
\$200,000-\$299,999	2,887	14,389	11,502	398.4%
\$300,000-\$499,999	1,069	5,113	4,044	378.3%
\$500,000 or more	226	1,248	1,022	452.2%

Source: US Census

Housing units valued at \$100,000 – \$199,999 reflected 41% of the housing stock in 2000. Slightly less than 44% of the housing stock was valued at less than \$100,000.

The median home value for owner-occupied units in 1990 was \$61,900. By 2000, it was \$109,100, a 76% increase. Communities with the highest home values tend to be located in the northern part of the county, reflecting the desirability of the area (see Map 5.1 Median Home Value). This is due, in part, to its convenient location between the cities of Akron and Cleveland and easy highway access.



The average sales price in Summit County has remained fairly constant since 2000, but the prices in the urban core are much lower than the rest of the county.⁶ According to the Summit County Fiscal Office, average sales prices in Summit County as a whole were considerably higher than in the cities of Akron, Barberton and Cuyahoga Falls. In 2003, the average single-family home sales price in Summit County was \$142,868, which exceeded the average sales price in Akron by 33% (\$95,667), in Barberton by 57% (\$88,373) and in Cuyahoga Falls by 24% (\$121,764).

Rental Housing

Rental housing in Summit County's suburban communities is more expensive than in the urban cities of Akron, Barberton and Cuyahoga Falls. The median gross monthly rent for the entire

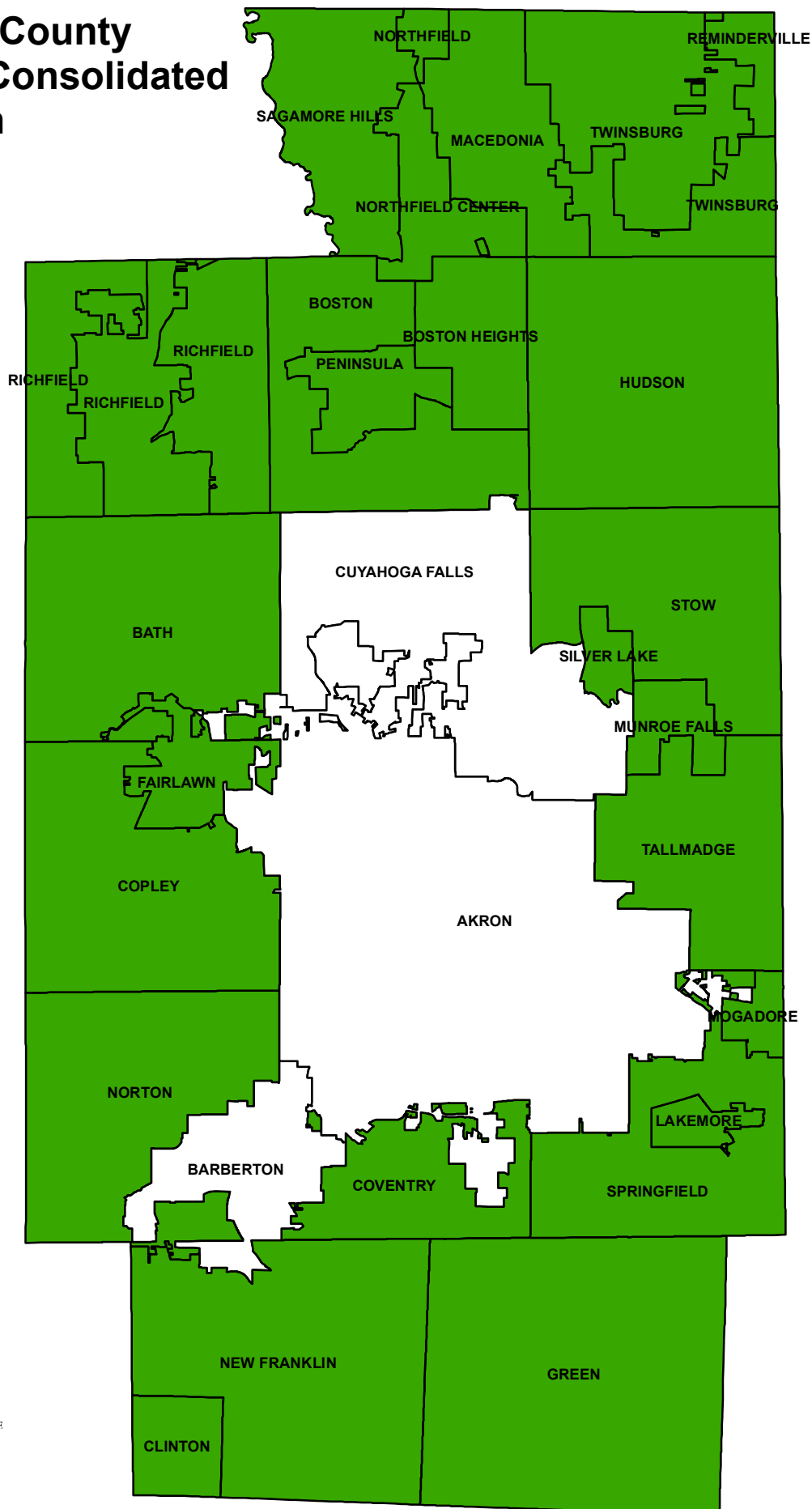
⁶ See the Summit County Fiscal Office website for additional information <http://www.summitoh.net/clt/showsales.main>.

Map 5.1 Summit County 2005-2009 HUD Consolidated Plan Jurisdiction

 In Jurisdiction
 Out of Jurisdiction



0 1 2 3 4
Miles





County is \$546, versus \$496 in Akron and \$457 in Barberton. In suburban Summit County, only 20% of the renter-occupied units had rents of less than \$500 per month. Almost 50% of the renter-occupied units in the urban core had rents of less than \$500.

The higher than average housing costs in suburban Summit County makes it difficult for many low-to-moderate income households to rent or purchase homes outside of the urban core. Also, although Summit County's suburban communities have newer housing stock when compared to the housing stock in the older urban areas, low-income households still tend to occupy a disproportionate number of the county's older housing stock. Because older housing that has not been renovated or updated is generally less expensive, it is more affordable to low-income residents. According to 2000 Census data, 13.4% of all households below poverty level live in housing constructed in 1939 or earlier.

Public and Assisted Housing

The Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority (AMHA) is the authority responsible for the public housing facilities and the distribution of Section 8 vouchers in Summit County. AMHA provides housing assistance to all of Summit County, including residents of Akron, Barberton, and Cuyahoga Falls, through a number of programs. The Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority operates seven housing programs in Summit County, including: conventional housing, Section 8 voucher certificates for private, market-rate housing units, and single-room occupancy units.

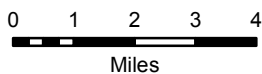
AMHA owns and manages 35 public assistance buildings and 849 scattered site units (a total of 4,568 units) in its system. Nearly all of these housing units are located in the cities of Akron, Barberton and Cuyahoga Falls (see Map 5.2 AMHA Properties.) AMHA properties in the cities of Stow and Twinsburg provide a total of 225 public assistance units in the suburban areas of Summit County.

<i>Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority (AMHA) Public Housing Units</i>	
<i>Location</i>	<i>Units</i>
Akron	3,225
Barberton	732
Cuyahoga Falls	322
Stow	100
Twinsburg	125
Scattered sites	64
Total Units	4,568

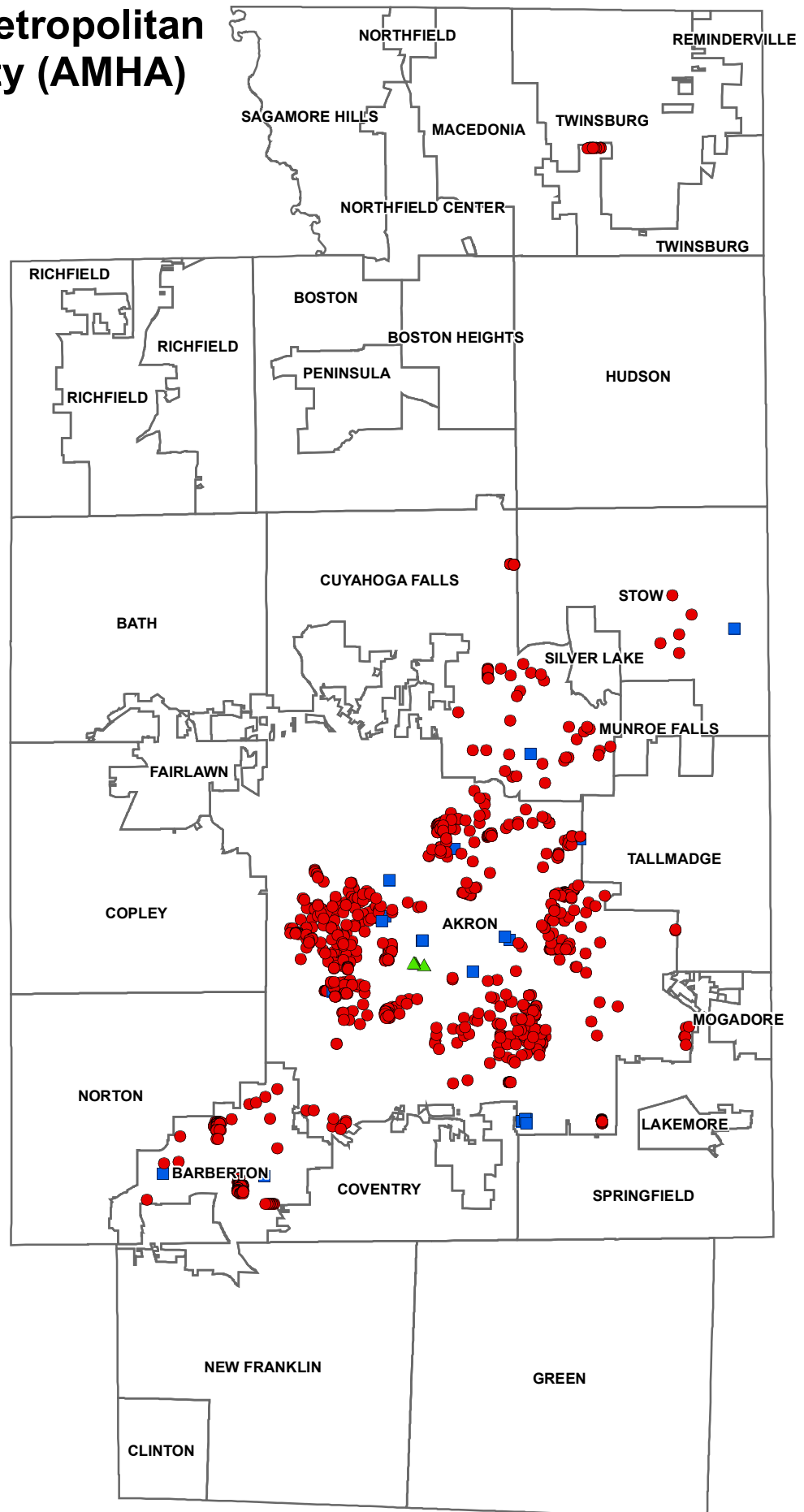
Source: Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority

Map 5.2 Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority (AMHA) Properties, 2004

- ▲ Disabled
- Elderly/Disabled
- Family



Source: Summit County Fiscal Office



Elderly Special Needs Population

Some Summit County residents may have difficulty finding decent, affordable housing or may need specially designed housing and services due to special needs or circumstances—including those who are elderly, homeless, or have mental illness, substance abuse problems or physical disabilities.⁷

According to the 2000 US Census, 14% of Summit County's population (76,572 persons) is 65 years of age or older. While this percentage of population has remained fairly constant since 1990, the composition of this age group has changed considerably due to the significant increase in the number of elderly 75 years or older. The number of adults in the 75-84 age group increased 32% between 1990 and 2000; the number of adults 85 and older increased 26% over the same time period. The largest concentration of older adults in Summit County occurs in the Village of Silver Lake, where nearly one-third of the population is age 60 and older.⁸

Senior households typically have special housing needs due to three primary concerns: (1) fixed, often low, incomes; (2) high health care costs; and (3) self-care or independent living limitations such as health-related disabilities. There are four common types of housing specifically designed for seniors; each providing an increasing level of services as residents becomes less healthy and frailer: independent living, congregate care, assisted living, and nursing homes.

Disabled Special Needs Population

Persons with disabilities typically have special housing needs because of their fixed or limited incomes, a lack of accessible and affordable housing that meets their physical and/or developmental capabilities, and higher health costs. A disability is defined broadly by state and federal agencies as any physical, mental, or emotional condition that lasts over a long period of time, makes it difficult to live independently, and affects one or more major life activities.

Census 2000 counted more than 89,000 people in Summit County with disabilities, representing nearly 18% of the population five years of age and older. This is slightly less than the national disability rate of 19.3%. As can be expected, disability dramatically increases with age. In Summit County, 40% of all residents sixty-five and older have some sort of disability.

Living arrangements for persons with disabilities depend on the severity of the disability. Many persons can live and work independently within a conventional living environment or with other family members. To maintain independent living, persons with disabilities may need special housing design features, income support, and in-home supportive services for persons with medical conditions. However, more severely disabled individuals require a group living environment in which trained personnel provide partial or constant supervision. The most severely affected individuals may require an institutional environment in which medical attention and therapy are provided.

⁷ The Summit County Consolidated Plan profiles the facilities and related programs that exist in Summit County for persons who are homeless, as well as the facilities and services available for non-homeless persons with special needs.

⁸ Area Agency on Aging 2001 Older Adult Profile.

Homeless Special Needs Population

Most individuals and families become homeless because they are unable to afford housing in a particular community and/or unable to care for themselves. Beyond the need for housing, homeless individuals frequently have other needs, such as support services, life skills training, medical care, and education or job skills training. Nationwide, about half of those experiencing homelessness over the course of a year are single adults. Most enter and exit the system fairly quickly. The remainder essentially lives in the homeless assistance system, or in a combination of shelters, hospitals, the streets, jails, and prisons. There are also single homeless people who are not adults, including runaway and “throwaway” youth (children whose parents will not allow them to live at home or who are unable to care for them.)

In Summit County, it is estimated that 35% of the homeless have substance abuse problems, 35% are mentally ill or suffer from both addiction and mental illness, and 22% of the homeless are veterans.⁹ Other homeless populations in Summit County include victims of domestic violence, youth and those that are diagnosed as being in the HIV positive/AIDS population.

Barriers to Affordable Housing

Barriers to affordable housing exist in every community. While some of these barriers can be addressed through legislative or procedural change, others are very difficult to alter because they are the result of societal, financial and/or market conditions. Public policies also often have a significant impact, both anticipated and unanticipated, on the cost to develop, maintain or improve housing. Some of the barriers to affordable housing in Summit County include:

- Limited Supply of Affordable Units
- Costs of Repairs and Rehabilitation
- Building and Zoning Regulations
- NIMBYism (Not in My Back Yard)

⁹ 2003 Gaps Analysis.



Housing Needs

Housing needs are most often experienced by lower income households, which in Summit County are those households earning less than 80% of the median family income. The HUD-estimated median income for Summit County (2004) is \$60,300 for a 4-person household. For analysis purposes, these households are grouped into three categories: extremely low-income households, low-income households, and low-to-moderate income households.

Affordable Housing Analysis Summit County

	Income Range	Households in Income Range	Affordable Rental Units	Affordable For Sale Units	Housing Supply
Extremely Low-Income	<\$18,100	25,739	15,235	0	(10,504)
Low-Income	\$18,101 to \$30,150	24,043	27,660	29,385	33,002
Low-to-Moderate Income	\$30,151 to \$48,250	39,854	24,445	52,074	36,665
Total		89,636	67,340	81,459	59,163

Source: HUD SOCDs Affordability Data (<http://socds.huduser.org/scripts/odbic.exe/chas/reportsaff.htm>)

- Extremely Low-Income Households. Approximately 25,739 (12%) households in Summit County would be classified as extremely low-income. Most (81%) of these extremely low-income households live in the urban core communities of Akron, Barberton and Cuyahoga Falls; only 19% live in the suburban communities. There is a shortage of affordable housing for households earning 30% or less of the HUD Area Median Family Income (\$18,100 or less.)
- Low-Income Households. Approximately 24,043 households in Summit County would be classified as low-income. Like the extremely low-income households, most (73%) of these low-income households live in the urban core communities of Akron, Barberton and Cuyahoga Falls; only 27% live in the suburban communities. Affordable housing for households earning between 30% and 50% of the HUD Area Median Family Income (\$18,101 to \$30,150) is in good supply. However, lower income families spending a higher percentage of income on housing may occupy many of these "extra" units.
- Low-to-Moderate Income Households. Approximately 39,854 households in suburban Summit County would be classified as low-to-moderate income. Forty percent of these low-to-moderate income households live in the urban core communities of Akron, Barberton and Cuyahoga Falls; 60% live in the suburban communities. There are a large number of affordable units available for households earning between 50% and 80% of the HUD Area Median Family Income (\$30,151 to \$48,250.) The majority of the units in this price range are owned or for sale units.



Residential Construction Trends

Throughout Northeast Ohio, housing starts increased 5.8% between 2002 and 2003. In Summit County, housing starts for single-family homes increased by 16% during the same time period. While new housing construction has predominantly taken place in the suburbs of Cleveland and Akron, 2003 research by *The Plain Dealer* showed that construction in both cities landed in the top five for total housing starts in Northeast Ohio. Cleveland led Cuyahoga County, and Akron led Summit County.

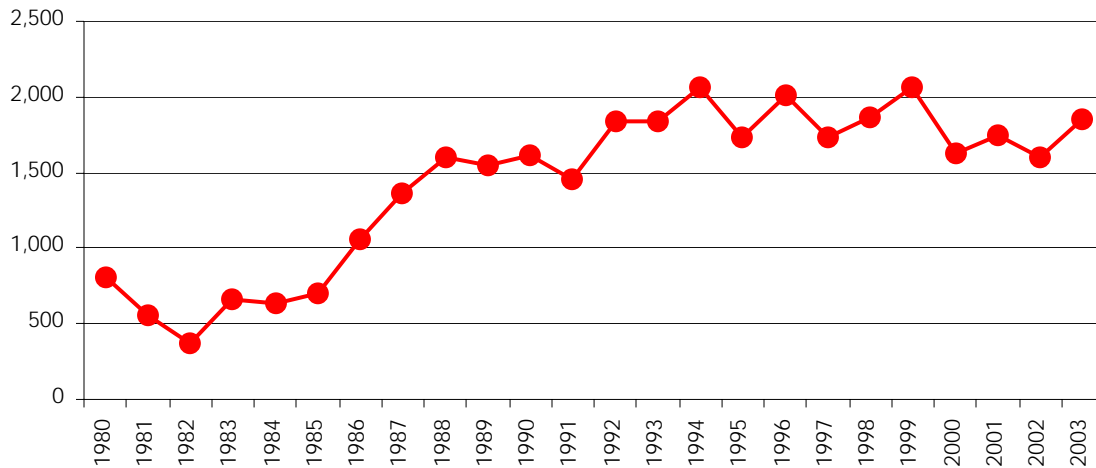
Top 20 Communities for Housing Starts in Northeast Ohio (2003)

Community	County	Units	Average Price	Community	County	Units	Average Price
1 Cleveland	Cuyahoga	434	\$150,479	11 Elyria	Lorain	187	\$146,873
2 North Ridgeville	Lorain	422	\$189,916	12 Olmsted Twp	Cuyahoga	184	\$229,856
3 Avon	Lorain	403	\$261,181	13 Brunswick Hills Twp	Medina	184	\$229,856
4 Broadview Heights	Cuyahoga	330	\$248,884	14 Macedonia	Summit	179	\$243,558
5 Akron	Summit	296	\$135,999	15 Copley Twp	Summit	177	\$279,473
6 Avon Lake	Lorain	265	\$268,472	16 Painesville Twp	Lake	175	\$162,647
7 Montville Twp	Medina	256	\$264,727	17 Strongsville	Cuyahoga	164	\$310,850
8 Green	Summit	225	\$228,575	18 Lorain	Lorain	158	\$197,289
9 Concord Twp	Lake	207	\$297,999	19 North Royalton	Cuyahoga	136	\$291,646
10 Stow	Summit	202	\$232,559	20 Streetsboro	Portage	129	\$207,609

Source: The Plain Dealer, 2004 Northeast Ohio Guide

A historic review of the data from the Summit County Department of Building Standards and the US Census reveals that housing starts averaged 1,493 units per year between 1980 and 2003. Construction of new single-family homes increased every year from 1984 to 1990, when building became more cyclical, as illustrated on the graph below. Construction peaked in 1994 when nearly 2,100 new homes were constructed.

Single-Family New Housing Starts (1980-2003)
Summit County



From 1990 to 2003, single-family residential construction activity has been strong with slightly more than 25,000 building permits issued for an annual average of 1,926. Despite its population loss, the City of Akron led housing construction over the last decade, building 3,157 new homes. Twinsburg and Stow constructed more than 2,000 units during this same time period. A third of all new, single-family home construction over the last 13 years occurred in these three communities.

Goals & Objectives

- A. Encourage housing development that supports the principles of smart growth.
- B. Promote the development of a range of housing choices that meet the needs of persons of all income levels, life stages and age groups, as well as for persons with special needs.
- C. Support local planning that identifies essential housing needs with respect to development of new housing and the rehabilitation of existing housing.
- D. Increase the supply of affordable housing for the elderly and non-elderly populations in those areas of the county where need is identified.
- E. Facilitate homeownership.
- F. Increase public awareness about the various homeowner assistance and loan programs available.
- G. Facilitate coordination of housing efforts between local communities and private and public agencies/organizations.
- H. Provide the homeless and those threatened with homelessness with a range of housing options and appropriate supportive services.
- I. Identify and rehabilitate vacant, abandoned or substandard buildings in appropriate locations for housing.
- J. Ensure that new housing is properly and safely constructed.
- K. Ensure the existing housing stock is properly maintained.

Implementation Strategies

- A. Implement the 2005-2009 Summit County Consolidated Plan recommendations. Formulate specific plans for low-to-moderate income areas to address specific housing needs in those areas.
- B. Educate citizens and local officials about housing's importance to the overall health of the county and individual communities and its relationship to economic development, land use, community facilities, and transportation.
- C. Educate homebuyers (particularly low-to-moderate income persons) and local officials about the public and private homeownership assistance programs available.
- D. Adopt and implement a property maintenance and point-of-sale inspection program to ensure that Summit County's housing stock is properly and safely maintained.
- E. Encourage government entities, social service providers and private sector elements to share data with regard to housing needs and locations.
- F. Hold meetings with affected public agencies and private organizations and businesses to review and coordinate housing policies.



- G. Review and update local land use plans to ensure housing issues are adequately addressed.
- H. Review and update local zoning and building codes to permit a wider variety of housing types at a range of price points.
- I. Provide financial incentives to restore, rehabilitate, and reuse underutilized buildings for housing.
- J. Create a computerized database of case studies and zoning regulations from other communities that have been successful in implementing affordable housing initiatives as a reference guide for local political jurisdictions.
- K. Research and evaluate the use of inclusionary zoning policies to ensure that affordable housing options are provided throughout all Summit County communities.

Chapter 6 Land Use

Overview

This chapter will analyze existing conditions and trends to explain the current land use picture in Summit County. The chapter will also discuss current planning issues in Summit County.

This chapter will examine the Summit County 2030 land use forecast data developed by AMATS. Some alternative options to current land use policies will be presented. Land use planning and growth management techniques will also be discussed.

The goals and recommendations set forth in this chapter are intended to support Smart Growth development principles. The majority of vacant land left in Summit County is zoned for residential uses. With proper planning, there is a real opportunity to use Smart Growth housing and development options to promote quality development and preserve the natural resources and special places which define Summit County. Smart Growth development principles promote infill development both for industrial, commercial, and residential uses, and the reuse of brownfield sites after proper clean-up. In this chapter, the relationship between extension of public infrastructure/utilities and land use development is discussed. A key Smart Growth principle is to encourage future development in locations where public infrastructure and facilities already exist.

Key Land Use Issues

In October 2003 a community survey was sent to each township, village, and city in Summit County to gather opinions and identify key issues.

The following is a list of key issues and concerns that were repeatedly raised.

- Preserve open space and existing natural areas
- Address environmental concerns in general, through stormwater management, riparian setbacks, and greenway connections
- Increase effectiveness of economic development to balance the tax base burden. Retention and expansion of existing businesses, and revitalization of existing downtowns, town centers and other shopping areas were emphasized
- Control growth and reduce sprawl
- Reduce traffic congestion
- Improve partnerships and cooperation between communities



In addition, from a series of meetings with Summit County Planning staff and local governmental and planning officials the week of September 20, 2004, several key land use issues were identified. There was a concern regarding how local planners can provide for the best balanced development between residential/ commercial and industrial uses. Other issues questioned how to control growth, preserve open space, maintain rural character, protect the environment and preserve natural resources. Additional issues were how to best promote open space conservation design and link green space between residential developments and parks. There was also a concern for preserving the remaining farm land.

Other concerns included how to limit retail development, and promote quality office and light industrial development. There were concerns regarding protecting existing residential development from commercial pressures. Other planning issues included concerns with traffic congestion and some communities are interested in preserving low residential densities. Other communities are concerned about encouraging the redevelopment of older commercial areas and there were some who wanted to develop more of a Central Town Center.

Smart Growth Principles

The goals in this Chapter support the major principles of the Smart Growth Movement, which are listed below.

1. Mix Land Uses
2. Take Advantage of Compact Building Design
3. Create a Range of Housing Opportunities and Choices
4. Create Walkable Neighborhoods
5. Foster Distinctive, Attractive Communities with a Strong Sense of Place
6. Preserve Open Space, Farmland, Natural Beauty, and Critical Environmental Areas
7. Strengthen and Direct Development Towards Existing Communities
8. Provide a Variety of Transportation Choices
9. Make Development Decisions Predictable, Fair, and Cost Effective
10. Encourage Community and Stakeholder Collaboration in Development Decisions



Existing Conditions and Trends

Generalized Land Use

1979 land use data from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources was compared with 2004 parcel data from the Summit County Auditor. These data were used to analyze trends and determine noteworthy changes. Maps 6.1 and 6.2 display the land use classifications for these years, respectively. The reader must be cautioned that the maps are employing data from different sources. Map 6.1 uses more generalized classes for 1979 land use. Map 6.2 is much more precise and detailed, since it displays land use classes at the parcel level. Although the units of analysis are different, the maps still accurately show the major land use trends that have occurred in the last 25 years.

The comparison between the two maps shows two significant trends over the past 25 years. The first is the large increase in commercial and residential land use. The second major trend is the large decrease in vacant land and farmland. 50% (49,858 acres) of the vacant land was developed, and 24% (6,588 acres) of the farmland was lost. The vacant land is indicated in white for both maps. According to 2004 Summit County Auditor Parcel data, there are 49,427 vacant acres and 20,764 agricultural use acres remaining in Summit County.

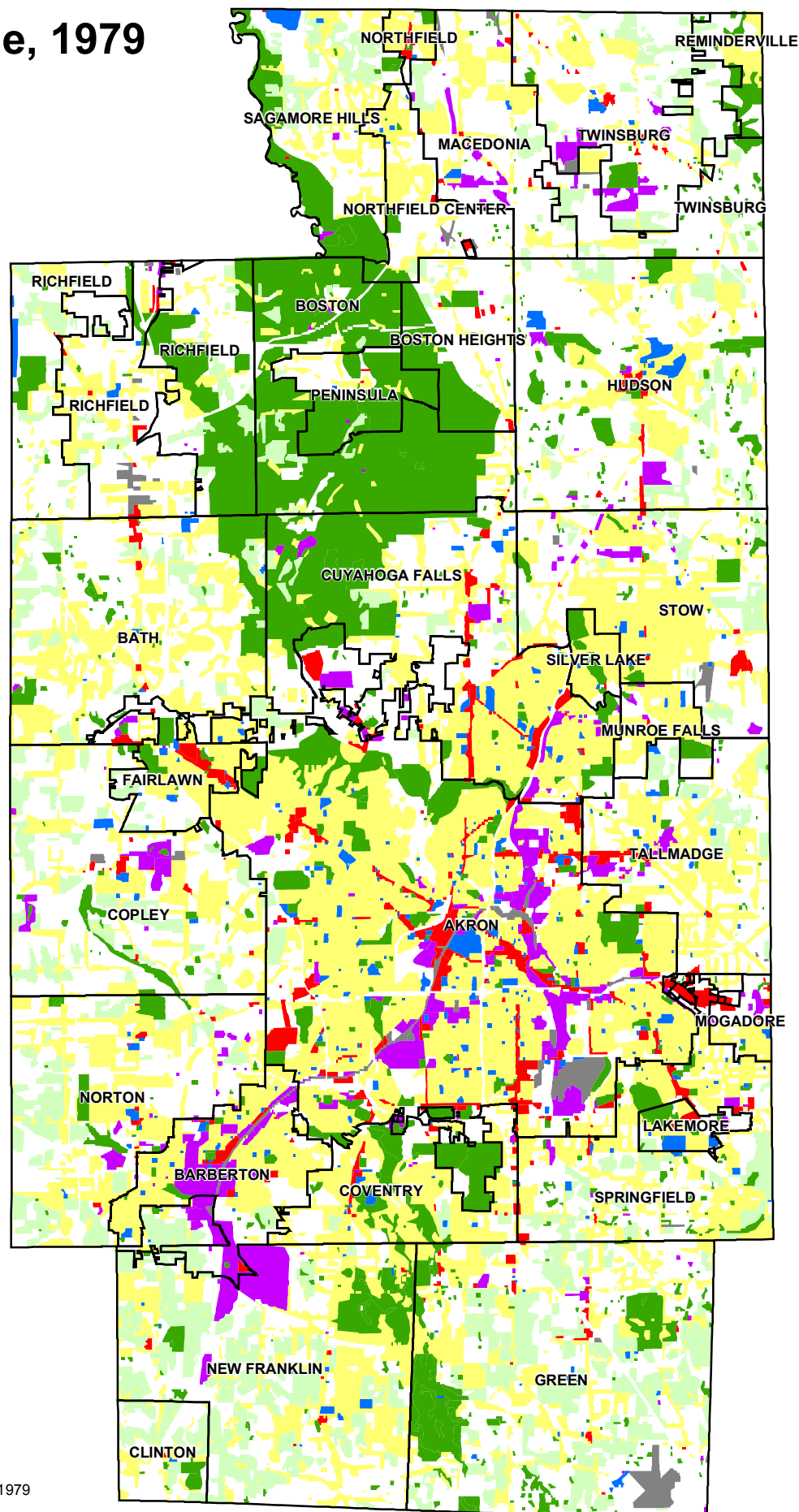
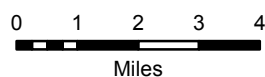
Although population in Summit County only increased by 3.5% between 1982 and 1997, the urbanized land increased by 42.6 % during this same time period.¹ This results in a decrease in density of approximately 27%. In other words, essentially the same number of people consumed much more land.

¹ The Exurban Change Project, Ohio State University (data from the National Resource Inventory (NRI), U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Map 6.1 Land Use, 1979

Land Use Code

- Residential
- Agricultural
- Vacant
- Industrial
- Commercial
- Parks/Open Space
- Transportation
- Public/Semi Public



Source: Ohio Department of Natural Resources, 1979

Map 6.2 Land Use, 2004

- Residential
- Agricultural
- Vacant
- Industrial
- Commercial
- Parks/Open Space
- Transportation
- Public/Semi Public

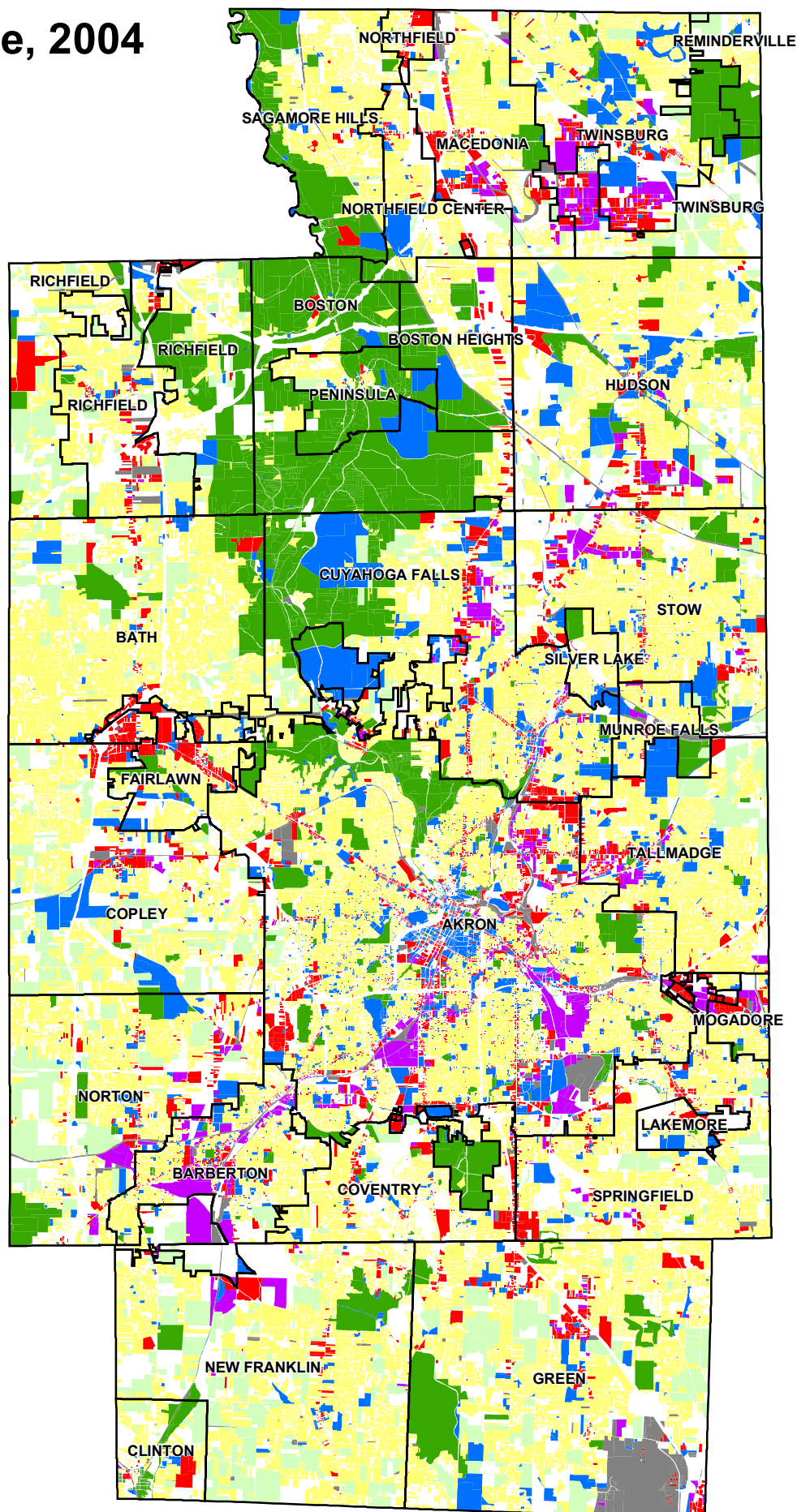


Summit County, Ohio
"Charting a Course for the 21st Century"
 James B. McCarthy, Executive

0 1 2 3 4
 Miles



Source: Summit County Auditor, 2004





Zoning Analysis

As Table 1 illustrates, most of the County is zoned for residential use. According to County 2004 generalized zoning data compiled in the Summit County Department of Community and Economic Development GIS – 83% of the County is zoned for residential use. See Map 6.3, Generalized County Zoning Map (2004)

Table 1:

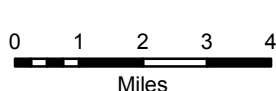
<i>Summit County Generalized Zoning Classifications</i>		
	Acres	%
Residential	217,484	83.0%
Commercial	19,437	7.4%
Industrial	23,460	9.0%
Government	1,387	.5%
Total	261,768	100%

Source: Summit County Auditor

Map 6.3 Summit County Generalized Zoning, 2004

Zoning Classifications

- Rural Residential
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Commercial\Business
- Government
- Industrial\Manufacturing



Resources based upon 2004 Summit County Zoning Classifications

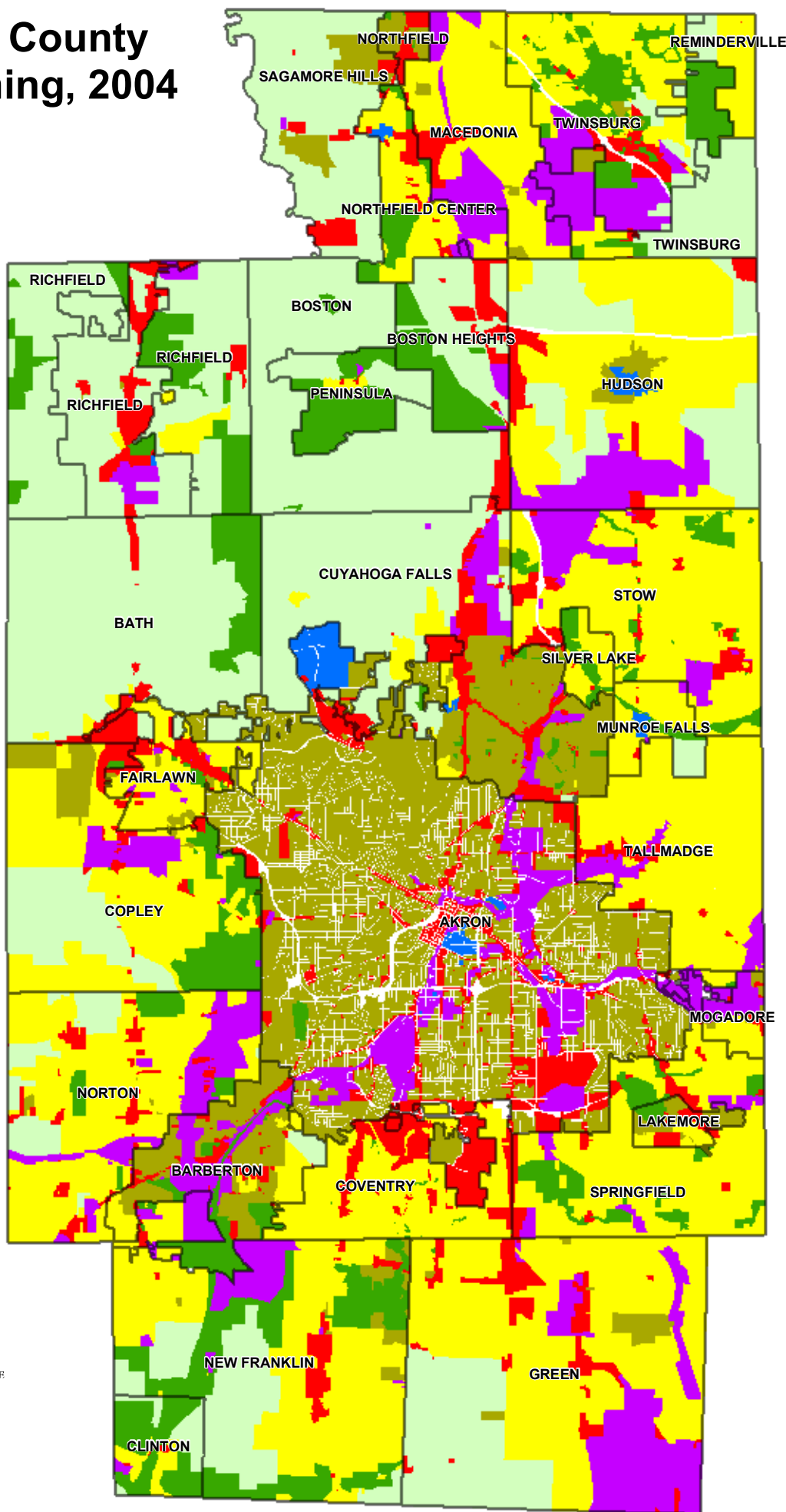




Table 2. Vacant Land by Zoning Classification below shows the vacant land left in the County by generalized zoning category. Table 2 was generated by taking the vacant land parcels from the County Auditor's parcel database and then cross-referencing these data with the Department of Development zoning data. This table indicates that 76% of the remaining vacant land is zoned for residential use. Approximately 10% of the vacant land or 4,760 acres is zoned for commercial uses and approximately 15% or 7,157 acres of the vacant land is zoned for industrial uses. See Table 3 below for explanation of the various residential zoning categories, such as rural residential, etc.

Table 2: Vacant Land by Zoning Classification

<i>Vacant Land by Zoning Classification</i>		
General Zoning Category	Acres	% of Total Vacant Land
Rural Residential	3,968	8.05%
Low Density Residential	12,701	25.76%
Medium Density Residential	15,287	31.00%
High Density Residential	5,369	10.89%
Commercial	4,760	9.65%
Government	63	0.13%
Industrial	7,157	14.52%
TOTALS	49,305	100.00%

Residential Zoning Analysis

The densities are based on standard zoning classifications of various minimum lot size requirements for single-family dwellings.

Table 3:

<i>Generalized Residential Zoning Classifications</i>		
	Density	Approximate Lot Size
High Density Residential	> 1 dwelling unit/ = or <.21	< 8,999 sq.ft.
Medium Density Residential	> 1 dwelling unit/ >.21 acre	=/> 9,000 sq.ft. and < 43,559 sq.ft.
Low Density Residential	< 1 dwelling unit/ per acre	=/> 43,560 sq.ft. and < 217,799 sq.ft.
Rural Residential	< 1 dwelling unit/per 5 acres	=/> 217,800 sq. ft.



Residential development pressures have been coming from Cleveland with people moving to the northern part of Summit County and commuting to work to Cleveland. From 1990 to 2000, the northern Summit County communities experienced an average 25% to 50% dwelling unit increase. This rapid growth has been shown in Sagamore Hills Township, Boston Heights Village, Macedonia, Northfield Center Township, Twinsburg City and Township and Hudson. Between 1990 and 2000 Summit County's population grew 5.4% overall, however in the northern part of the County, the population growth rate was 29.8%.

Planning Issues

Redistribution of Population

According to U.S. Census data, the population was 553,371 in Summit County in 1970 and in 2000 the population was 542,899. In Summit County, extensive development has occurred, even with a slight decrease of population between 1970 and 2000. This is the result of a serious decline of the number of persons per household, the desire of families for more land and larger houses, increasing wealth among some sectors of the population, and the redistribution of homes, businesses, and industries from existing cities to outlying areas of the region.

In recent decades both Summit County and the surrounding region have experienced significant development without significant real growth. While infrastructure has expanded to serve new areas, the infrastructure in older areas is often underutilized. For example, many schools have been built in outlying sectors of the county while many schools have been closed in older cities. The duplication, or underutilization, of infrastructure further increases per capita costs.

The average household size in Summit County decreased from 2.72 in 1980 to 2.45 in 2000. Summit County added 30,514 new housing units between 1980 and 2000, while during the same time period, the population only increased by 3.5 %.

Higher incomes, relatively inexpensive land, the expansion of infrastructure, lower interest rates, and the tax advantages of a large mortgage provided the incentives for many people to move from older neighborhoods to new homes in outlying locations. Most of this new residential development that has taken place since 1970 is in the form of single family housing on large lots. Lots and home sizes are quite a bit larger than they were a generation ago. The national average in 1970 for the size of a new home was approximately 1,200 square feet.² Today it is about 2,000 square feet. According to the American Housing Survey, the median new house size grew from 1,725 square feet in 1993 to 1,928 square feet in 1999, an 11 percent increase in just six years, despite a shrinking average household size of just 2.61 persons. Some of this growth is the result of consumer demand, but some of it is also due to nonmarket incentives such as zoning and tax breaks, that encourage or require larger homes. Similarly, in the last 30 years, the amount of retail space has grown four-fold from five square feet per person to 20 square

² The New York Times, February 27, 2003, from "High, Wide and Transomed"



feet.³ These consumptive patterns consumed nearly 49,858 acres or 50% of the remaining developable land within the county between 1979 and 2004.⁴

These consumptive development patterns require a lifestyle with higher land and building maintenance costs and longer distances to be traveled using more cars. All of this requires greater infrastructure expenditures in the form of schools, roads, sewer/water and utilities. This growth is not self-sustaining and in fact, must be subsidized by other members of the community. Dispersed low-density growth is subsidized partly because utility pricing is based on average – rather than the actual costs of providing services. Residents in more urban, higher density areas in effect subsidize those in edge areas.

Running Out of Land Suitable for Development

According to 2004 Summit County Auditor parcel data, there are approximately 49,427 vacant acres remaining in Summit County. Not all of these acres are considered developable.

A shortage of suitable land places more pressure on developing land that is not suitable for development, e.g. wetland areas and steep slopes. While some lands designated as unsuitable for development were developed in recent years, there will be greater temptations to build on unsuitable land as land becomes scarcer. Development on sensitive lands could result in very costly maintenance and significant damage to the natural environment. Rapid development would also quickly diminish the County's remaining rural character and the little land that is still used for agricultural purposes. The existing rural character is greatly valued by local residents and agricultural uses are also prized by some. Although Summit County no longer has the support infrastructure that exists in more rural counties, there is significant community support for small-scale production and sale of locally grown food. Community policies should support and preserve such small-scale farms.

The random redistribution of population in recent years has produced patterns of development that have consumed much of the county's remaining developable land. It has put greater pressure on developing land that is not suitable for development due to its sensitive natural conditions. Wetlands have been filled in, riparian corridors for wildlife have been severed, woodlands have been reduced, and scenic areas have been destroyed. Agricultural uses within the county have almost disappeared. Many previously natural areas have been replaced with hard surfaces; this has increased storm water runoff and created flooding problems.

Redistribution of Wealth

Wealth is concentrated in outlying areas. Stores and shops follow residents to locations with the greater buying power. Industries too are attracted to outlying locations because of lower land costs, room for expansion, tax incentives, better educated work force, and fewer development controls. Such changes in land use often result in disinvestment in older cities. They also leave people with below average incomes in the city with a diminished tax base. Older housing stock, mostly located in older cities, often results in a "trickle down" effect that puts the poorest people in housing units that require the greatest maintenance. The growing disparity between the rich

³ *Getting to Smart Growth- 100 Policies for Implementation.*

⁴ *Summit County Department of Development Land Use Data.*



and poor often results in fewer housing choices for the most needy.

The redistribution of the population has produced social impacts. The gap between rich and poor has become greater. Generally, only wealthier people can afford to move to new large homes on large lots in outlying areas. Therefore, older central cities have become increasingly poor. The demand for services is great in older cities but fewer tax dollars are available because wealth has moved out, and the poor have remained.

There is also concern about social issues among those who have moved to suburbia. Large lots consume much time in maintenance. Large lots also mean that the driving time and distance to go for services are much greater. When land uses are distributed over a wider area, the catchment area for stores, schools, and other community facilities increases. As distance between these facilities and homes increase, people become more dependent on their cars and spend more time in them. This creates a demand for more roads or increases congestion on existing ones. It also consumes more energy and more time, and increases air pollution.

The dispersion of the population and the separation of uses from one another and from other uses contribute to a greater demand for parking. For example, when commercial uses are built as stand alone buildings and scattered along highways, people can no longer walk to stores, walk between stores, or complete several tasks from a single parking location. Because there are no sidewalks or places for chance meetings with other people, residents living in outlying locations often experience a feeling of social isolation and yearn for a sense of community and place.

Health Effects of Sprawl

The Vermont Forum on Sprawl defines sprawl as "dispersed, auto-dependent development outside of compact urban and village centers, along highways, and in rural countryside." Available evidence supports the concept that sprawl is associated with more driving, less walking and less transit use.⁵

Akron Children's Hospital hosted a Conference on January 12, 2005 entitled "Preventing Childhood Obesity: A Summit County Community-Wide Planning Conference." One of the options discussed during a morning brainstorming session was implementing zoning and planning practices that promote walking or biking.⁶ The public health community has become more interested in promoting planning to create more walkable communities. This interest has been sparked by the soaring rates of obesity nationwide. There is a current planning effort underway by the Summit County Health Department to work with the Village of Lakemore to plan for better access of residents to Springfield Lake for more walking and recreational opportunities. The Summit 2010 Quality of Life Study completed in 2004 by the Summit County Executive's Office and the Social Services Advisory Board directed this planning effort by the Summit County Health Department. As part of this Summit 2010 Quality of Life Study, the Village of Lakemore developed recommendations to improve the quality of life of their residents and these recommendations included the notion of improving recreational opportunities by adding walkway trails around Springfield Lake.

⁵ *Urban Sprawl and Public Health.*

⁶ *Akron Beacon Journal*, Jan. 13, 2005.

According to an article entitled "Suburban Sprawl and Physical and Mental Health" by Roland Sturm and D.A. Cohen,⁷ it was found that people who live in areas with a high degree of suburban sprawl are more likely to report chronic health problems such as lung disease, abdominal illnesses, arthritis and headaches than those who live in urban areas. The study results propose that suburbanites' dependence on cars to get around may be responsible for their higher rates of health problems. "We know from previous studies that suburban sprawl reduces the time people spend walking and increases the time they spend sitting in cars, and that is associated with higher obesity rates," says researcher Roland Sturm, a health economist at the RAND Corp., in a news release. "This probably plays an important role in the health effects we observe." These results point to the possibility that urban form is a determinant of the physical health of the population.

Inactivity seems to encourage people becoming overweight and associated conditions such as diabetes have emerged as major public health challenges. There is growing evidence that the physical features of urban sprawl discourages physical activity thereby contribute to the epidemic problem of obesity.⁸ Research has identified many determinants of physical activity. These include density, land use mix, the presence and quality of sidewalks and footpaths, enjoyable scenery, and the presence of other people who are physically active and healthy.⁹

According to the book Urban Sprawl and Public Health, to the extent that Smart Growth changes current development patterns into new development patterns that encourage "walkability", it can be considered a public health paradigm. Smart Growth principles promote mixed land use; a balance of density and preserved greenspace; a balance of automobile transportation with walking, bicycle and transit – these and other strategies offer the potential to increase physical activity and decrease air pollution.

There are numerous changes that can be made to zoning ordinances or regulations to create neighborhoods where residents have more opportunities to be active.¹⁰ One option is to revise ordinances to permit more compact traditional neighborhood developments with front porches, and sidewalks to encourage walkability. Other tools include:

- Increasing development densities
- Requiring sidewalks and trails in new developments
- Retrofitting already developed area with sidewalks, trails and bike paths
- Linking open spaces
- Requiring street connectivity
- Instituting traffic calming measures such as narrower streets and roundabouts

⁷ *Journal of Public Health*, May 2004.

⁸ *Urban Sprawl and Public Health*.

⁹ *Urban Sprawl and Public Health*.

¹⁰ *Zoning Practice*, June 2004 "Zoning to Promote Health and Physical Activity."



Need for More Compact Development Patterns

In recent decades most builders have constructed big houses on big lots in suburban areas that are attractive to families with children. However, in 2000, the traditional family (i.e., a married couple with kids) represented less than one in four households. With household growth concentrated in older age groups, the traditional family is projected to account for only one in five households in 2025.¹¹ In 2000, the national average household contained 2.6 people (down from 3.6 as recently as 1970) and only 68 percent of them were families (down from 81 percent). Nationally single person households now account for over 25 percent of all households. These national trends are consistent with Summit County trends. Locally the percentage of people living alone has increased by 42% between 1980 and 2000. There were 42,891 single person households in Summit County in 1980 and 60,913 in 2000.¹²

The vast consumption of resources for land development without the equivalent level of population growth is not the most productive use of local assets. In recent years a significant portion of money has been spent to expand infrastructure and services that have enabled more private citizens to have larger lots and bigger homes. Instead of development patterns that spread out and use large amounts of land, the Smart Growth movement promotes more compact development patterns, which could be compatible with the trend in smaller household sizes. One of the principles of Smart Growth is to take advantage of compact building design. Communities could incorporate more compact building design as an alternative to conventional, land consumptive development. Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) is a type of neo-traditional mixed-use neighborhood design promoted by architects Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk that has implemented these compact building design principles.

Mixed-Use Development

Mixed-use developments are developments that are patterned often after traditional villages, and that usually include a mix of retail, residential and office uses, and pedestrian friendly sidewalks. A mixed-use development contains different land uses that are in close proximity, planned as a unified complementary whole, and functionally integrated to the use of shared vehicular and pedestrian access and parking areas. Mixed-use developments are often cited as ways to reduce traffic generation, particularly where homes and jobs are planned and developed within easy commuting distance and shopping is located close to residences.¹³

There is a positive relationship between encouraging more compact patterns of development and making it more feasible for mixed use developments to occur. Land use mix is a measure of how many types of uses – offices, housing, retail, entertainment, services, etc. are located in a given area. A high level of land use mix should reduce the need to travel outside of that area to meet one's needs.¹⁴ Mixed-use developments often encourage more walking and less dependence on automobiles.

¹¹ Issue Papers on Demographic Trends Important to Housing: "How Changes in the Nation's Age and Household Structure will Reshape Housing Demand in the 21st Century" by Martha Farnsworth Riche, Prepared for: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research, February 2003

¹² U.S. Census

¹³ *The New Illustrated Book of Development Definitions.*

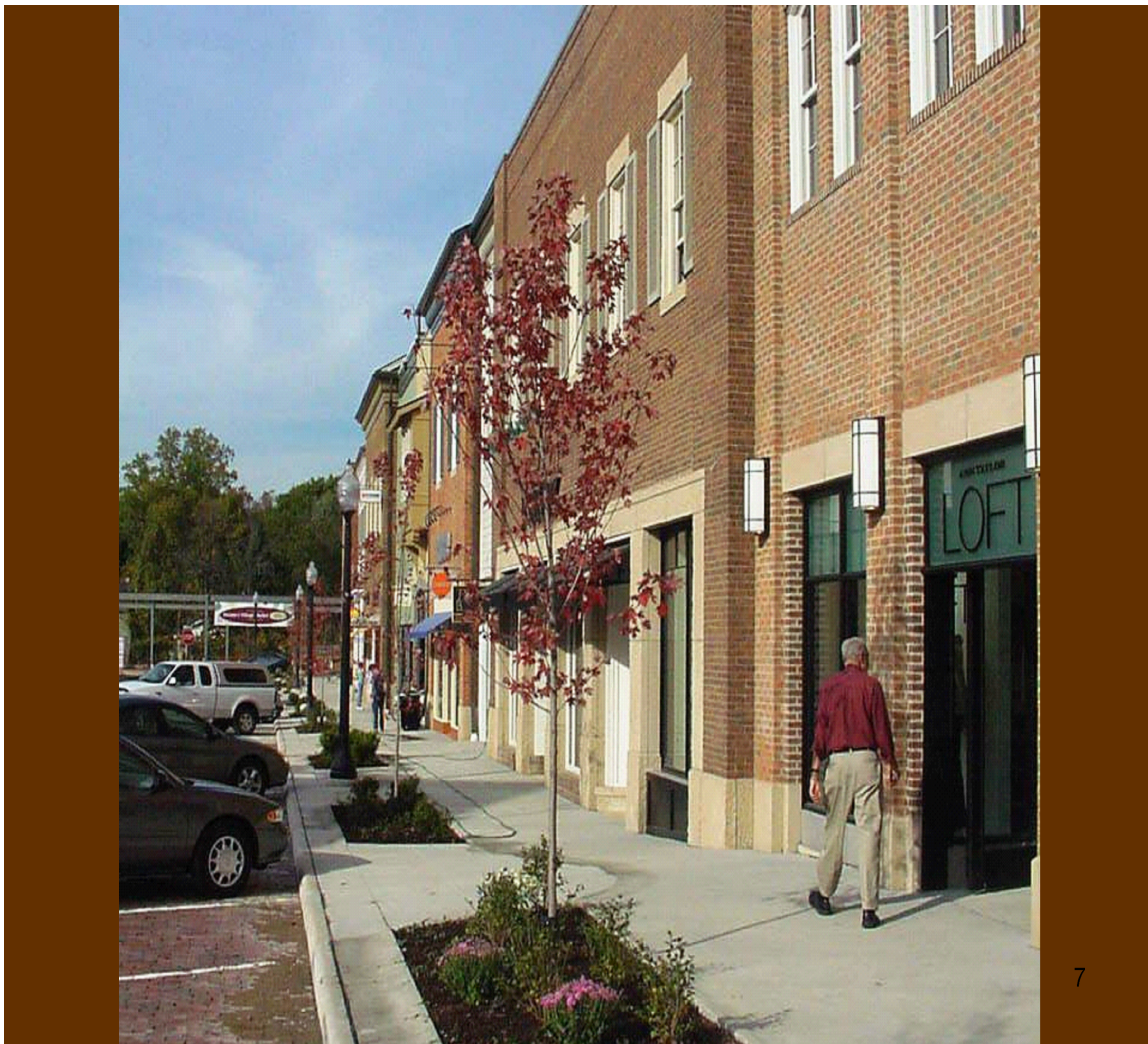
¹⁴ *Urban Sprawl and Public Health.*

The City of Englewood, Colorado, developed a mixed-use transit oriented development on 55 acres of land formerly occupied by the Cinderella City Mall. A central aspect of the development includes a two-acre public square, including a civic center. The civic center houses a library, Municipal Court and the Museum of Outdoor Arts for the City of Englewood. This City Center development includes apartments and adjacent to them and the public square is a steel truss bridge that creates a gateway into City Center from the light rail station. The City Center development includes a good mix of civic, cultural, retail, office and residential uses, and is a transit oriented development (TOD) as well.



City of Englewood, Colorado, Transit-Oriented Village, with light rail station. This is a mixed-use development that contains a civic center, retail, office and apartments.

A new mixed-use development opened in 2004 in Summit County in the City of Hudson, called First & Main. This project has been a joint public - private partnership. The City of Hudson provided land, public improvements, and both off-street and on street parking.



City of Hudson, First & Main mixed use development

The developer produced the site and architectural plans, purchased land, constructed buildings and recruited and leased tenants. The City sought a development firm to buy the land and create historically compatible layout and buildings, since this First & Main development increases the size of Hudson's downtown. The First & Main buildings that make up the nearly 200,000 square feet of retail, dining, residential and office space are built in the same unique New England style in which the adjacent historic Hudson downtown buildings were crafted. Also, provided in the new mixed use development are sidewalks, green spaces, retail stores, restaurants, and a new library.

Preservation Issues

There has been a previous discussion of various ways to encourage densities and development in certain areas in a planned fashion. There are also land use tools that can be used to preserve rural character, open space and farmland areas. One growth management tool is to control the extension of water and sewer infrastructure and road infrastructure. One way of maintaining and promoting a “rural” atmosphere in those communities that desire that rural character is to limit infrastructure expansion. This often requires residential development to occur on larger lots and makes large-scale commercial development difficult.

It was indicated through the results of the Summit County Community Survey for Government Officials in the fall of 2003 and again in the Land Use Meetings held in September 2004, that loss of open space, farmland and natural resources are major concerns.

The concern about the loss of open space is understandable, especially in an urban county that is already so developed. The remaining open space becomes even more precious because it is so scarce. Open space can provide scenic views that shape the special places of a community. Open space can also provide separation and buffers between communities so a community boundary is clear and attractive gateways to the community can be provided. Open space can be a design element in a community's design toolbox, and can be used as an organizational element. Open space can assist in structuring the form of urban development.

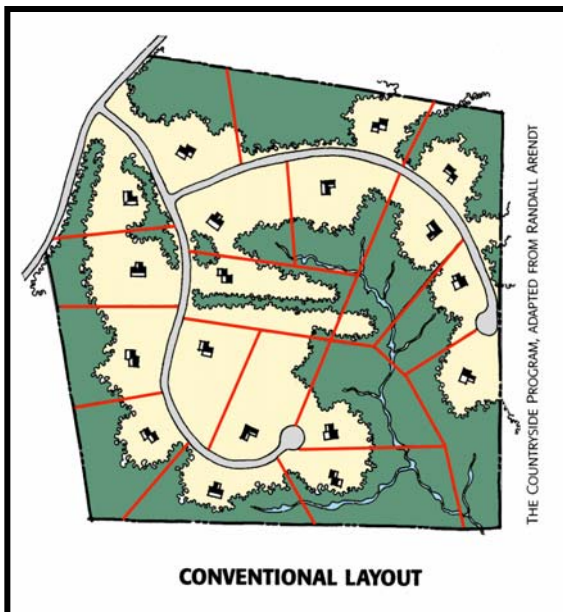
Open space can be preserved in some cases as parkland through local efforts working with local park boards and Metroparks Serving Summit County. There are currently many local efforts underway to implement the Summit County Trails and Greenways Plan. Many of the areas that are being proposed for preservation in the Summit County Trails and Greenways Plan are narrow linear areas that would provide links for trails.

Farmland can provide open space as well as the value of continued agriculture to the local economy and rural amenities to the community.

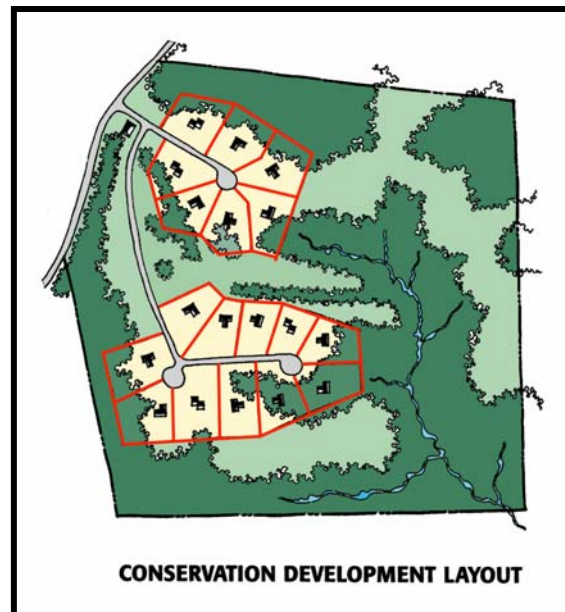
Open space can also be preserved as a community develops through open space conservation developments where a developer clusters the houses and preserves 40 to 50% of the site in permanent open space. One can cluster homes to preserve significant wooded areas, wetlands, other natural features or farmland by the flexible arrangement of permitted units. This also will reduce road length, which reduces the amount of impervious surface, thereby reducing flooding and stormwater management problems.

If each community in Summit County would promote this type of open space conservation development design (that preserves 40 to 50% of the total site in permanent open space), many acres of the total remaining open space could be preserved in Summit County. In addition, Summit County, in conjunction with local communities, could develop a County wide Open Space Plan that would complement the Summit County Trail and Greenway Plan to provide a County wide vision for preservation of open space areas to form a County wide open space network. A County wide open space map could conceptually indicate how residentially zoned areas, as they are developed, could form greenways that could be linked together through the provision of permanent open space provided when residential Conservation Development becomes reality. In addition, natural resources, including wetlands and wildlife habitat could be

preserved. See the following graphic that compares an open space conservation development subdivision with a conventional subdivision.



<i>Area</i>	<i>36 acres</i>
<i>Lots</i>	<i>18 lots</i>
<i>Undisturbed Open Space</i>	<i>None</i>
<i>Road Length</i>	<i>3,808 feet</i>



<i>Acres</i>	<i>36 acres</i>
<i>Lots</i>	<i>18 lots</i>
<i>Undisturbed Open Space</i>	<i>53%</i>
<i>Road Length</i>	<i>2,072 feet</i>

In local community comprehensive plans, communities need to identify areas where open space conservation development would be suitable. This can be based on a number of factors, including potential open space linkages, and the identification of natural resources such as forest, meadows or wetlands that the community would like to see preserved.

After communities identify the areas where they want open space conservation development to be located, then they may use ORC 519.021 (C) to be able to identify in their zoning codes certain areas of the community where the open space conservation development option can be a permitted use. The use of this option can be attractive to developers because the development plan is not subject to referendum, saving time and avoiding conflict. Using this option, the developer must meet with the zoning standards with administrative approval by the Zoning Commission.

In addition, open space conservation development subdivisions are on the USEPA's national menu of Best Management Practices for the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Stormwater Phase II. This is because they preserve large open space areas that are more effective in stormwater management because compared to conventional developments,



they reduce impervious cover, storm water pollutants, construction costs, grading, and the loss of natural areas. Another reason why open space conservation development subdivisions are promoted for better storm water management site design is because they are more effective in imitating closely pre-development conditions than are conventional subdivisions.

Land Use Meetings

In a series of meetings with Summit County Planning staff and local governmental and planning officials the week of September 20, 2004, there was discussion of various land use issues. There was a Land Use Survey handed out that asked a question whether they thought that certain areas of the County should remain rural and unsewered: out of 21 respondents, 18 agreed that certain areas of the County should remain rural and unsewered.

There was also a question asked whether they thought that certain areas of their community should remain rural and unsewered and the majority of planning officials answered yes to this question as well. The location of water and sewer infrastructure is an important growth management tool and should be utilized in conjunction with local land use planning efforts in the County.

Another question on the Land Use Issues Survey was do you have farms in your community that you would like to see preserved? Over half of the respondents answered yes to this question. Some of the planning officials were from cities and villages that do not have any farmland left.

Farmland/ Open Space Preservation Techniques

Farmland can be preserved by the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR). The State of Ohio's PDR program is officially known as the Agricultural Easement Purchase Program (AEPP). Ohioans have access to the AEPP as a result of the Clean Ohio legislation (that will end in a few years if not put forth again as a new bond issue for Ohioans to vote on). With the purchase of development rights program, the farmer sells the right to develop his/her land and a permanent conservation easement is placed on the land. If development rights are sold then the land should be valued accordingly for property taxes. This provides an additional incentive for farmland preservation.

A conservation easement is a deed restriction landowners voluntarily place on their property to protect resources such as productive agricultural land, stream corridors, wildlife habitat, historic sites or scenic views. Typically easements are held by governmental agencies, land trusts or other nonprofit organizations designed for this purpose.

A land trust is a nonprofit organization that protects land from development by purchasing or accepting donations of land and by purchasing or accepting donations of conservation easements. Some local land trusts active in Summit County include the Medina-Summit Land Conservancy, Hudson Land Conservancy, and the Tinkers Creek Land Conservancy. National land trusts that have Ohio offices include the American Farmland Trust and the Trust for Public Land.

Agricultural zoning is another tool that can be used to protect farmland. This type of zoning establishes where farming is the primary land use and discourages non-agricultural uses. There is no agricultural zoning currently being used in Summit County.



Transfer of development rights (TDR) is another possible farm or land preservation tool that could be explored. TDR allows landowners to transfer the right to develop one parcel of land (sending area) to a different parcel of land (receiving area). It is designed to shift development from agricultural areas to areas that have the infrastructure capacity to support increased development. The benefits to this type of program is that it offers permanent protection, is a voluntary – market driven process, and farmers can retain equity without developing their land. The Ohio Revised Code currently lacks specific language to authorize counties and townships to participate in TDR. Work is being done on legislation that will ensure that all communities in Ohio can participate in TDR programs.

Summit County 2030 Forecast Characteristics

AMATS recently completed a 2030 Planning Data Forecast in 2004. AMATS forecasts population, dwelling units, household vehicles, employment, and non-residential floor area in order to prepare the 2030 AMATS Regional Transportation Plan. The main input for this process is the Ohio Department of Development Office of Strategic Research (OSR) 2005-2030 county projections. When NEFCO convened the local planning agencies in the fall of 2003 to assist in developing the 2030 population forecast for the area's political units, it was with the understanding that the results would conform as closely as possible, to the OSR county totals. These population projections are based on past trends and an analysis of available vacant land.

Planning Area Analysis

For the purpose of analysis, the AMATS forecast analysis data have been divided into the three Summit County General Plan planning areas of north, central and south Summit County (see Map 4.1 in Chapter 4).

The North Planning area consists of the following communities:

- Boston Heights Village
- Boston Township
- Hudson
- Macedonia
- Northfield Center Twp.
- Northfield Village
- Peninsula Village
- Reminderville Village
- Richfield Twp.
- Richfield Village
- Sagamore Hills Twp.
- Twinsburg
- Twinsburg Twp.



The North Planning Area is expected to lose 5,864 acres (a loss of 27.5%) of vacant usable land between 2000 and 2030. The residential land area will be increased by 3,986 acres or 19.3% during this same time period. The total housing units is expected to increase by 7,124 units or by 23.4% in the North Planning Area between 2000 and 2030. The total population in the North Planning Area is expected to increase by 19.3% or by 15,385 persons.

Table 4: North Planning Area

	<i>2000</i>	<i>2030 (PROJECTED)</i>	<i>CHANGE 2000 - 2030</i>
POPULATION	79,541	94,926	19.3%
TOT HOUSING UNITS	30,448	37,572	23.4%
LAND AREA (ACRES)			
RESIDENTIAL	20,610.5	24,596.8	19.3%
VACANT USABLE LAND	21,310.8	15,446.5	-27.5%

The Central Planning Area consists of the following communities:

- Akron
- Bath Twp.
- Copley Twp.
- Cuyahoga Falls
- Fairlawn
- Munroe Falls
- Silver Lake Village
- Stow
- Tallmadge

The significant increases that were projected for the North Planning Area are not projected for the Central Planning Area for this same time period. Actually there is a projected decrease in population of 1.4% with a projected loss of 5,013 persons in the Central planning area between 2000 and 2030. The number of total housing units is expected to increase by 2,349 units or by 1.5%. The residential land area will be increased by 1,944 acres or by 5.2% between 2000 and 2030. During this same time period the Central Planning Area is expected to lose 3,183 acres of vacant usable land or -12.7%. Compared with the North and South Planning Areas, some of the projected differences for the Central Planning Area can be explained by the loss in population projected for the City of Akron. Akron is expected to lose 7.7% of its population between 2000 and 2030.

Table 5: Central Planning Area

	<i>2000</i>	<i>2030 (PROJECTED)</i>	<i>CHANGE 2000 - 2030</i>
POPULATION	357,007	351,994	-1.4%
TOT HOUSING UNITS	155,943	158,292	1.5%
LAND AREA (ACRES)			
RESIDENTIAL	37,127.8	39,071.6	5.2%
VACANT USABLE LAND	25,062.7	21,879.9	-12.7%



The South Planning Area consists of the following communities:

- Barberton
- Clinton Village
- Coventry Twp.
- New Franklin
- Green
- Lakemore Village
- Mogadore Village
- Norton
- Springfield Twp.

The South Planning Area projections are, in general, a middle ground between what is projected for the North and Central planning areas. The South Planning Area is expected to lose 4,040 acres of vacant usable land between 2000 and 2030, a loss of -15.3%. The residential land area is projected to increase by 3,010 acres or by 13.4% during this same time period. The 3,010 residential acre increase is fairly close to what is projected for the North Planning Area with a projected increase of residential acres by 3,986 acres. The number of total housing units is expected to increase by 5,952 units or by 13.4% between 2000 and 2030. The total population in the South Planning Area is expected to increase by 9.0% or by 9,702 persons. The City of Barberton is projected to lose .2% of its population, during this same time period.

Table 6: South Planning Area

	<i>2000</i>	<i>2030 (PROJECTED)</i>	<i>CHANGE 2000 - 2030</i>
POPULATION	107,259	116,961	9.0%
TOT HOUSING UNITS	44,489	50,441	13.4%
LAND AREA (ACRES)			
RESIDENTIAL	22,493.0	25,503.3	13.4%
VACANT USABLE LAND	26,468.3	22,428.6	-15.3%

Alternative Direction

If development was encouraged to occur in areas that already have infrastructure and in locations with urban services, then perhaps the future development patterns would be projected differently.

Smart Growth principles would direct development towards communities already served by infrastructure, seeking to utilize the resources that existing neighborhoods offer. By encouraging development in existing areas, communities benefit from a stronger tax base, closer proximity of jobs and services, increased efficiency of already developed land and infrastructure, reduced development pressure in fringe areas, and preservation of farmland and open space.

Regional Tax-Base Sharing

A range of options exists to begin to “level the playing field” between greenfield and infill development and to help direct new investment dollars to strengthen existing neighborhoods. One of which is to institute regional tax base sharing to limit regional competition and to support schools and infrastructure throughout the region. When one community underwrites a new mall with costly incentives like undeveloped land, tax discounts or road projects, other communities in the same region are forced to offer incentives of an equal scale to their malls in order to remain competitive. This type of regional competition can spur development at the edge, because in most cases, the new mall or retail outlet will use undeveloped lands, thus requiring new roads, infrastructure and larger parcels for construction.

Regional tax-base sharing allows the revenues collected (most often property tax assessments or sales tax revenues) to be distributed both to the locality where they were generated and to other localities in the region based on their size, population, or other measures of disparity. By minimizing regional competition for large commercial projects and business, such as malls and corporate headquarters, tax base sharing can ensure that new development occurs where it makes the most sense, not for the sole purpose of raising the tax base of one jurisdiction.¹⁵

Providing Incentives

Another option is to create economic incentives for businesses and homeowners to locate in areas with existing infrastructure. For example, communities can offer favorable lending terms through dedicated bond issues, direct grants or loans through tax-increment financing or from special assessments, tax abatements, credits or waivers, density bonuses or other zoning waivers or expedited permitting treatment.¹⁶

Modify Average Cost-Pricing in Utilities

Another option to encourage development in communities already served by infrastructure, is to modify average cost pricing in utilities to better account for costs of expanding infrastructure in greenfield areas. Low-density, dispersed developments generally enjoy subsidized utility costs because utility pricing is based on average - rather than the actual costs of providing services. Because all customers pay average costs, residents in more urban, higher density areas in effect subsidize those in edge areas. Linear utilities such as cable television, water and sewer, phone service and even mail delivery fail to reflect the efficiencies associated with clustered development. The City of San Diego has created service areas designed for impact fee financing, in which impact fees are lower for areas served by existing infrastructure and higher for those without. This “step” approach to calculating impact fees encourage development to occur in existing service areas by offering lower impact fees to the builders of new units. Conversely, higher fees (that more closely approximate the true cost) discourage development in unserved areas.¹⁷

Residential Build-Out Capacity Analysis

¹⁵ *Getting to Smart Growth - 100 Policies for Implementation.*

¹⁶ *Getting to Smart Growth - 100 Policies for Implementation.*

¹⁷ *Getting to Smart Growth - 100 Policies for Implementation.*



A build-out analysis was performed for all of Summit County communities based on existing residential zoning classifications (see Table 7). For each political jurisdiction, undeveloped residential parcels greater than or equal to the largest minimum single family residential lot size were identified and summed. The unbuildable land area was subtracted according to Scenario 1 or Scenario 2 parameters (see below) to determine buildable land. Total buildable land area was multiplied by the maximum permitted density in each residential zoning district to determine potential dwelling unit capacity. The potential total dwelling units were multiplied by the 2000 Census average persons per household for each community to determine potential population. The following build-out population calculation is an estimate, as it does not incorporate small lot infill opportunities, nor does it take minimum open space requirements into consideration.

- Under Scenario 1, land is deducted if it is unbuildable due to riparian areas and water bodies. Riparian areas are only included if covered under community or county regulation.
- Under Scenario 2, land is deducted if it is considered unbuildable due to the following environmental constraints: riparian areas, water bodies, slopes greater than 12%, wetlands (same environmental constraints as the Summit County Natural Resources Study)

The intent of the data is to guide the decision-making process of the County with respect to future development. The results demonstrate the linkage between zoning regulations and land use policies and the impacts such regulations and policies may have on the long-range development of the community. The County may choose other growth simulation scenarios and the conclusions, of course, will vary accordingly.

In essence, this current build-out analysis reflects that a balance of single-family residential development and environmental protection may be reasonably accommodated. However, the realities of development are that as communities reach the build-out stage, there is more pressure to develop environmentally sensitive lands. So communities need to plan and implement natural resource protection measures before development is proposed, if they wish to preserve natural areas and the public health and safety functions they provide. It also demonstrates that for many communities, build-out is to be expected within 25 years or so. For many communities, the build-out projections and the NEFCO 2030 projections are fairly equivalent.



Table 7:

<i>Summit County Residential Build-Out Capacity Analysis</i>							
<u>Community</u>	<u>2000</u>	Capacity Scenario 1		Capacity Scenario 2		2030 Projection ¹⁸	
	<u>Census</u> <u>Population</u>	<u>Increase from</u> <u>2000 Census</u>	<u>Build-Out</u> <u>Population</u> <u>Estimate 1</u>	<u>Increase from</u> <u>2000 Census</u>	<u>Build-Out</u> <u>Population</u> <u>Estimate 2</u>	<u>Increase</u> <u>from 2000</u> <u>Census</u>	<u>2030</u> <u>Population</u> <u>Projection</u>
Akron	217,074	12.8%	244,872	9.8%	238,340	-7.7%	200,275
Barberton	27,899	16.3%	32,434	8.2%	30,186	-0.2%	27,845
Bath Twp	9,635	13.5%	10,937	9.9%	10,586	13.9%	10,972
Boston Heights	1,186	62.7%	1,929	57.2%	1,865	12.6%	1,335
Boston Twp	1,062	10.9%	1,177	9.3%	1,161	3.5%	1,099
Clinton	1,337	24.8%	1,668	16.1%	1,552	13.3%	1,515
Copley Twp	13,641	37.8%	18,801	28.3%	17,504	29.4%	17,647
Coventry Twp	10,900	10.3%	12,019	6.6%	11,619	3.7%	11,305
Cuyahoga Falls	49,374	5.2%	51,944	3.9%	51,305	2.7%	50,718
Fairlawn	7,307	11.4%	8,138	6.5%	7,785	3.6%	7,568
New Franklin	14,530	34.8%	19,582	30.1%	18,904	7.2%	15,569
Green	22,817	31.2%	29,943	23.6%	28,196	26.4%	28,837
Hudson	22,439	28.6%	28,856	17.8%	26,430	8.6%	24,369
Lakemore	2,561	145.6%	6,291	113.3%	5,463	3.5%	2,650
Macedonia	9,224	52.5%	14,063	47.6%	13,614	27.1%	11,722
Mogadore	2,951	43.2%	4,227	25.5%	3,705	-6.5%	2,758
Munroe Falls	5,314	9.1%	5,796	8.1%	5,744	4.1%	5,532
Northfield	3,827	9.5%	4,192	7.2%	4,104	-6.3%	3,587
Northfield Ctr. Twp	4,931	11.9%	5,519	4.9%	5,171	13.2%	5,581
Norton	11,512	85.1%	21,304	73.2%	19,940	8.7%	12,509
Peninsula	602	3.5%	623	3.4%	622	4.8%	631
Reminderville	2,347	102.1%	4,743	27.4%	2,991	11.3%	2,613
Richfield Twp	2,138	92.0%	4,105	82.8%	3,908	65.7%	3,542
Richfield Village	3,286	25.6%	4,128	24.0%	4,075	24.7%	4,097
Sagamore Hills Twp	9,340	11.9%	10,452	10.5%	10,319	15.4%	10,783
Silver Lake	3,019	1.2%	3,056	0.9%	3,045	-7.0%	2,807
Springfield Twp	15,168	32.2%	20,051	24.3%	18,850	8.6%	16,472
Stow	32,139	17.6%	37,785	9.9%	35,334	11.4%	35,814
Tallmadge	16,180	38.7%	22,446	28.5%	20,788	14.8%	18,577
Twinsburg	17,006	11.6%	18,973	8.2%	18,402	25.3%	21,308
Twinsburg Twp	2,153	164.1%	5,687	89.2%	4,074	93.9%	4,175
Summit County	542,899	20.8%	655,740	15.2%	625,583	3.9%	564,012

¹⁸ NEFCO Draft 2030 Projections

Summit County Natural Resources Study Modeling

A similar build-out projection was done in the Summit County Natural Resources Study (2003). The Natural Resources Study model looked at changes in land use by projections of acres of vacant land converted to residential, commercial and industrial uses. The same natural resource constraints were used to develop Scenario 2 – Build-out with current land use controls and protection of environmentally constrained areas, for the Natural Resources Study and this Plan (which were riparian areas, water bodies, slopes greater than 12%, and wetlands). It was found in the Natural Resources Study model that thirty-six percent more land (23,600 additional acres) was preserved when environmental land use controls were in place.

For the Natural Resources Study a model was used called the “What If Model”, in this model, two scenarios were presented, one with the existing land use controls and the second with more protection of natural resources. In the second scenario, called Scenario Using Environmental Land Use Controls, higher densities and infill development was assumed. In this Scenario Using Environmental Land Use Controls, the same amount of residential, industrial and commercial growth was accommodated using less land because the growth was at higher densities in urban centers that had existing infrastructure. In the Scenario Using Environmental Land Use Controls, there was 10,176 farmland acres preserved between 2000 and 2030, compared to 2,594 acres with the Scenario no change in land use controls. In the Scenario Using Environmental Land Use Controls, there was 24,667 vacant land acres preserved between 2000 and 2030, compared to 5,662 acres with the Scenario no change in land use controls.

Goals and Objectives

The primary goal of the land use element is that smart growth management techniques should be practiced in the county so as to balance development with the preservation of critical, sensitive areas such as wetlands, floodplains, riparian corridors and prime farmland.

Allowing for higher density development, if coupled with natural resource and open space protection programs, can reduce the impact of the built area on the environment. By concentrating development and people within a smaller geographic area, density reduces land consumption and allows communities to protect valuable open space, habitat, farmland and ecologically sensitive areas.

The Ohio Department of Development’s Office of Strategic Planning has projected Summit County to grow by 3.9 % between 2000 and 2030. According to the U.S. Census in 2000, Summit County had a population of 542,899, the Ohio Department of Development’s Office of Strategic Planning has projected the Summit County population will be 564,212 in 2030.

- In contrast to the population patterns that have evolved over the last thirty years, the goal for future population distribution is to direct a greater percentage of population growth to areas that are already served by centralized utilities, near existing transportation facilities, and in close proximity to employment centers. Accommodating the same number of housing units on less land enables communities to shift construction away from sensitive areas to areas more suitable for development.



- To conserve resources, reduce initial building costs, and diminish the long range cost of services, greater consideration should be placed on restoring, rehabilitating and reusing existing structures, and finding sites suitable for infill development in locations near existing services.
- Fewer homes should be constructed on clear and open sites in outlying locations where urban services are not available.

The objectives listed below are intended to guide townships, villages and cities in the preparation of specific local land use goals, priorities and policies. In addition, the objectives provide a policy framework for county decision making.

Land Use Planning Objectives:

- A. Land should be developed efficiently, keeping in mind that it is a finite resource.
- B. Through local zoning, encourage higher density development in urban centers and villages and maintain lower density in the unincorporated areas.
- C. Zoning resolutions should be in accordance with local land use plans.
- D. Guide commercial and industrial development into areas already zoned for it.
- E. Develop and adopt service area plans as a means to manage existing and future infrastructure improvements.
- F. Encourage the preservation of prime agricultural land.
- G. Encourage the conservation of open space, particularly those areas containing sensitive land such as jurisdictional wetlands, floodplains, river corridors and woodlands.
- H. Support local zoning based upon a land capability analysis.
- I. Periodically review all county regulations pertaining to development activity.
- J. Update local land use plans on a continuing basis to ensure that such plans and zoning are in harmony. The County Planning Commission may provide technical assistance in guiding communities during the plan update process.

The majority of vacant land left in Summit County is zoned for residential uses. There is a real opportunity to use Smart Growth housing and development options to preserve many of the current existing natural resources and “special places” that define Summit County. Also utilizing these options will promote quality development. The following are the recommended Smart Growth Development Options:

Smart Growth Development Options:

1. **Open space conservation development** – This type of development provides for the same overall densities on a site that would be permitted with the underlying residential zoning but provides for the clustering of the houses in order to preserve a substantial amount of the site in open space (at least 40% - 50% of the total site). This usually reduces the cost of providing infrastructure as well. Access to quality open space areas with woodlands, meadows or water courses is incorporated into the design of the open space conservation development. Pedestrian circulation is a primary design objective providing opportunities for passive recreation, such as biking, walking, etc.
2. **Compact development:** This is development that provides for higher intensities or densities of use. Instead of development patterns that are spread out, the Smart Growth movement promotes more compact development patterns which can be compatible with the trend in smaller household sizes. Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) is a type of neo-traditional mixed use neighborhood design that has implemented these compact building design principles.
3. **Mixed use development:** Mixed use developments are developments that are patterned often after traditional villages, and that usually include a mix of retail, residential and office uses, and pedestrian friendly sidewalks. A mixed use development contains different land uses that are in close proximity, planned as a unified complementary whole, and functionally integrated to the use of shared vehicular and pedestrian access and parking areas. Mixed use developments are often cited as ways to reduce traffic generation, particularly where homes and jobs are planned and developed within easy commuting distance and shopping is located close to residences.

There is a positive relationship between encouraging more compact patterns of development and making it more feasible for mixed use developments to occur. Well designed mixed use developments encourage more walking and less dependence on automobiles.

4. **Transit oriented development:** Transit Oriented Development (TOD) refers to residential and commercial areas designed to maximize access by transit. A TOD neighborhood has a center with a rail or bus station, surrounded by relatively high density development, with progressively lower density spreading outwards. Encouraging compact, denser types of development promotes transit oriented development.
5. **Infill development/ Revitalization of older urbanized areas:** Infill development is the economic use of vacant land in urban areas where water, sewer, and other public improvements and services are in place and available for immediate use. – Infill development is one of the main antidotes to suburban sprawl. Infill development tends to be more compact than conventional development patterns, so the same number of dwelling units, stores or offices, takes up much less land.

Implementation Strategies

Discussion

Implementation of these goals, objectives and policies should be coordinated with elements described in other Chapters of this General Land Use Development Plan.

NEFCO, AMATS, Summit County, Cuyahoga Valley National Park and other regional agencies must work together to provide information and educate the public about the importance of coordinated planning at the regional level.

At the local level, communities should consider regional issues and consult the General Land Use Development Plan when deciding on local matters. In particular, many local planning and zoning commissions need to understand that they may take more than a passive role in determining their community's future. In addition to reviewing and acting upon requests for zoning changes by others, they are encouraged to become more pro-active in promoting good planning. For example, they may undertake planning studies or initiate zoning changes on their own initiative.

While the quality of local planning activity varies considerably among the county's communities, some communities react principally to proposals by individual owners and developers rather than focusing on the creation of a public vision that is in the interest of the entire community. Cities, villages and townships need to develop comprehensive plans if they have none. Once comprehensive plans are adopted the zoning ordinance or resolution should be amended in a timely fashion to implement the plan. These plans should be used in formulating capital improvements plans, budgets and serve as a guide in making local development decisions.

Implementation Strategies

- A. Natural resources should be protected and utilized as part of the County's "green infrastructure."
- B. Regulatory tools such as zoning and subdivision regulations should be utilized to guide development.
- C. Encourage development in communities already served by infrastructure.
- D. Encourage a lower density of population in locations without existing urban services and where urban services are not likely to be provided within the next two decades.
- E. Create walkable neighborhoods and communities.
- F. Preserve open space, farmland, natural resources and critical environmental areas.
- G. Encourage open space conservation development zoning to conserve natural resources and create livable neighborhoods.
- H. Work with local nonprofit land trusts and affected government agencies to preserve sensitive land through the acquisition of conservation easements.



- I. Promote tax incentives such as the Current Agricultural Use Value (CAUV), agricultural districts and the forestry program. The CAUV program allows owners of farmland the opportunity to have their land taxed according to value in agriculture rather than full market value.
- J. Utilize the State of Ohio farmland preservation program so farmland can be preserved by the purchase of development rights (PDR).
- K. Provide incentives to encourage the extension of central sewer and water utilities according to Smart Growth principles and discourage haphazard and unplanned growth.
- L. Encourage infill development and the revitalization of existing cities and villages.
- M. Encourage transit oriented development and coordinate land use and transportation planning.
- N. Encourage low-impact development techniques to protect Summit County's natural resources where possible and practical.
- O. Institute regional tax base sharing.
- P. Create economic incentives for businesses and home owners to locate in areas with existing infrastructure.
- Q. Modify average cost pricing in utilities to better account for costs of expanding infrastructure in greenfield areas.

Chapter 7

Natural Resources

Introduction

This chapter discusses natural resource issues in Summit County and provides direction for future action. Natural resource topics explored in this chapter include flooding issues, storm water management, soils, wetlands, groundwater protection, steep slopes, wildlife habitat preservation, and parks and recreational opportunities.

Decisions about land preservation or acquisition affect development patterns and open space can assist in structuring the form of urban development. It is also important to preserve open space for park and recreation purposes to meet existing and future needs of residents.

Networks of preserved open space and waterways can shape and direct urban form and by providing "green infrastructure" can help frame new growth by locating new development in the most cost-efficient places. These cost-efficient locations for new development are where roads, sewers, water lines, and other utilities currently exist. Green infrastructure protection also ensures that the preserved areas are connected so as to preserve wildlife corridors, protect water quality and maintain economically viable rural lands.

The goals and recommendations set forth in this chapter are intended to support smart growth development principles. Communities across the country are realizing that open space preservation is an important component to achieving better places to live. Preserving open space supports smart growth goals by bolstering local economies, preserving critical environmental areas, providing recreational opportunities, and guiding new growth into existing communities.

Existing Conditions and Trends

As previously mentioned in Chapter 6, Summit County is running out of vacant land to develop. It is estimated from Auditors Parcel data (2004) that there are approximately 49,000 vacant acres remaining in Summit County. A shortage of suitable land places more pressure on developing land that is not suitable for development, for example, wetland areas and steep slopes. Therefore, now is the ideal time for communities that are concerned about preserving their sensitive environmental resources to consider adopting land use measures to provide better protection.

Summit County experienced severe flooding in 2003 and in 2004. The severe storms and floods of 2003 inflicted an estimated 100 million dollars in property damage (this figure does not include private insurance claims, such as sewer back-up costs). The massive urban development in the County has caused a great increase in the amount of impervious surface. Part of what contributed to these flooding problems was the additional impervious surface created through



the conversion of pervious rural areas into rooftops and pavement. The impervious nature of streets, sidewalks, parking lots and building roofs, coupled with removal of the natural vegetative cover and soil compaction have created significant increases in the amount and rate of storm water runoff. Summit County parcel data indicate almost half of the remaining vacant land was developed (about 50,000 acres) between 1979 and 2004.

A Community Survey was mailed out to Summit County officials in the fall of 2003. From the responses that were received, communities want to: (1) preserve open space and natural areas and (2) address environmental concerns through storm water management, riparian setbacks and greenway connections.

Overview of Natural Resources Study

In 2003, Davey Resource Group, with oversight by the Summit County Department of Community and Economic Development, Planning Division, compiled a report on the natural resources in Summit County and provided Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping data to the County for use in making informed environmental decisions. The name of the report is the "*Natural Resources Study, Summit County, Ohio.*" Davey Resource Group compiled information on woodland resources, watersheds and surface waters, flooding and floodplains, riparian corridors, topography and steep slopes, wetlands, hydric soils, and open space and recreation resources. This information was provided to all the political subdivisions in Summit County as a resource for environmental planning in the County. Developers and the general public have access to these new environmental data via the County web site (www.co.summit.oh.us/).

In addition, as a follow-up to the Natural Resources Study, the County has recently sponsored a Summit County Township Environmental Planning Education Program Report by Enviro-Science consultants. This provides environmentally sensitive zoning models for townships and other political subdivisions to consider adopting.

Planning Issues Overview

Development places considerable pressure on the county's remaining natural resources and green infrastructure. One of the main goals in the General Plan is to protect and enhance the natural environment by minimizing the conflict between existing natural conditions and future patterns of urban development. This is done to prevent abuse of the environment, protect new investments from potential damage, and promote a more healthful and stable quality of life.

Natural resources should be examined as part of the County's green infrastructure. Green infrastructure is a network of waterways, wetlands, and other natural areas; greenways, parks, farms and other open space that support native species, maintains natural ecological processes and provides associated benefits to the health and quality of life for Summit County residents. Green infrastructure can provide free natural services. Natural systems provide important services such as flood control, storm water management and pollution filtration. The loss of these services increases the risk of flooding.

The General Plan discourages development on areas of fragile land, but it encourages higher population densities in areas with natural conditions that are suitable for development. These



policies will enable more land with rural character to be maintained for a longer period of time, preserve more areas with the potential for future recreational development, and reduce the pressure to develop on land that is not well suited for urban uses.

One of the recommendations in the General Plan is that environmental impacts should be carefully evaluated. A key Smart Growth Principle is to preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas. Local governments should establish priority setting criteria for open space acquisition. In addition, local governments should provide integral open space within newly developed areas, especially through a mandatory dedication of local open space in the development process.

The General Plan recommendations support the creation of an open space network to:

1. **Conserve and protect important natural resources**

These lands can be identified by their physiographic, geologic, vegetative, hydrologic, biologic and scenic values, their uniqueness as natural resources and their general unsuitability for urban development.

2. **Assist in structuring the form of urban development**

Open space can provide relief from extensive urbanization, preserve elements of the natural environment near developed areas, provide edges to neighborhoods and links between neighborhoods, thus contributing to a sense of community identity.

3. **Provide recreational opportunities for citizens**

These may be passive or active opportunities that permit citizens to learn about their environment, enjoy nature and participate in sports.

Strategic Policies

- To link local facilities with one another and to the Summit County Trail System, local units of government should search for ways to link existing and planned local parks, schools, libraries, shopping areas, employment centers, other institutions and nodes of activity to encourage walking and biking and to reduce reliance on the automobile. Using the Summit County Trail & Greenway Plan as a guide, each community should develop a local plan for linking these areas with sidewalks, bikeways and/or trails.
- As new subdivisions are approved or new developments occur, negotiations should commence at an early stage to ensure that the intent of the local plan is implemented.

Farmland Preservation

Farmland can provide open space and green infrastructure as well as the value of continued agriculture to the local economy.

County Auditor's parcel data indicate a loss of 6,588 acres of agricultural land, or a 32% decrease between 1979 and 2004. Approximately 8% of Summit County (21,000 acres) is still in



agricultural use. Almost half (47%) of the remaining agricultural land is located in the southern third of Summit County.

The existing rural, agricultural character is greatly valued by many local residents. Although Summit County no longer has the support infrastructure that exists in more rural counties, there is significant community support for small-scale production and sale of locally grown food. Community policies should support and preserve these small-scale farms.

The Cuyahoga Valley National Park is now encouraging farming within the National Park by leasing out farms to private individuals. Through the Park's Countryside Initiative, they have a goal to revitalize some 30 farms, encompassing 1,500 acres over the next decade. One of the reasons to promote farming in the National Park is to preserve the rural landscape and rural character of the Cuyahoga Valley. In June 2004, a farmers market started in Peninsula, with crops produced in the Cuyahoga Valley National Park. In the summer of 2005, there were three farmers markets open in Summit County on a weekly basis, in Akron, Twinsburg and Peninsula.

OSU extension data indicate an increase in the number of farms between 1980 and 2003. There were 330 farms in 1980 and 370 farms in 2003. Farms are becoming smaller and more numerous. This is due, in part, to the increase in landscaping and nursery operations, and smaller vegetable and fruit operations. The growth in the number of farms can also be attributed to the increased enrollment of landowners in CAUV and Agricultural District tax-incentive programs. These programs include operations such as woodlands, bee-keeping, dog kennels, and raising llamas, on as little as five acres. Most of the big grain operations and dairy farms have been sold off in the County.

There are a number of land use tools that can be used to protect agricultural areas. These include conservation easements, agricultural zoning, agricultural districts and security areas, purchase of development rights, transfer of development rights, forestry tax and CAUV tax program, planned infrastructure extensions and adequate public facilities plans and bargain sales. (See Open Space Preservation Tools and Programs later on in this chapter). The Center for Farmland Preservation in Northeast Ohio works with communities in Summit, Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, Medina, Portage and Wayne Counties on farmland protection initiatives (www.centerforfarmlandpreservation.org). The General Plan promulgates recommendations for owners of rural lands who desire to continue farming to stay on their lands and to mitigate the impacts of new development on existing agricultural operations.

The General Plan urges local communities to support farmers markets and the growing market for high quality, locally grown food. These actions will help to support local farms.

The General Plan also recommends that the Center for Farmland Preservation in Northeast Ohio, the Ohio State University Agricultural Extension Office, or Summit County consider hiring an Economic Development staff person that works with rural land owners solely in Summit County to promote rural economic uses, including farming.



Water Resources

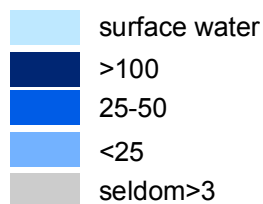
Ground-Water Resources

Summit County has a wide variety of underground aquifer types. Wells drilled in the county's best aquifers can yield up to and more than 1,000 gallons per minute (gpm). The best aquifers, typically yielding 500 to 1,000 gpm, are composed of permeable sand and gravel deposits and are located where major streams run. Other sand and gravel deposits not traversed by major streams may produce yields between 200 to 500 gpm (see Map 7.1 Groundwater Resources).

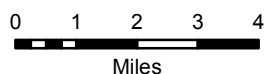
Communities that rely on groundwater for their drinking water can protect their groundwater resources more by incorporating Groundwater Protection Overlay Zoning Districts into their Zoning Ordinances. A Groundwater Protection Overlay Zoning District is an overlay district designed to protect the community's potable water supply against contamination. The City of Dayton, Ohio has a Well Field Protection Overlay District that regulates the land use and storage and handling of potential pollutants within the Well Field Protection Area, which is adjacent to the existing and proposed municipal water well fields.

Map 7.1 Ground Water Resources

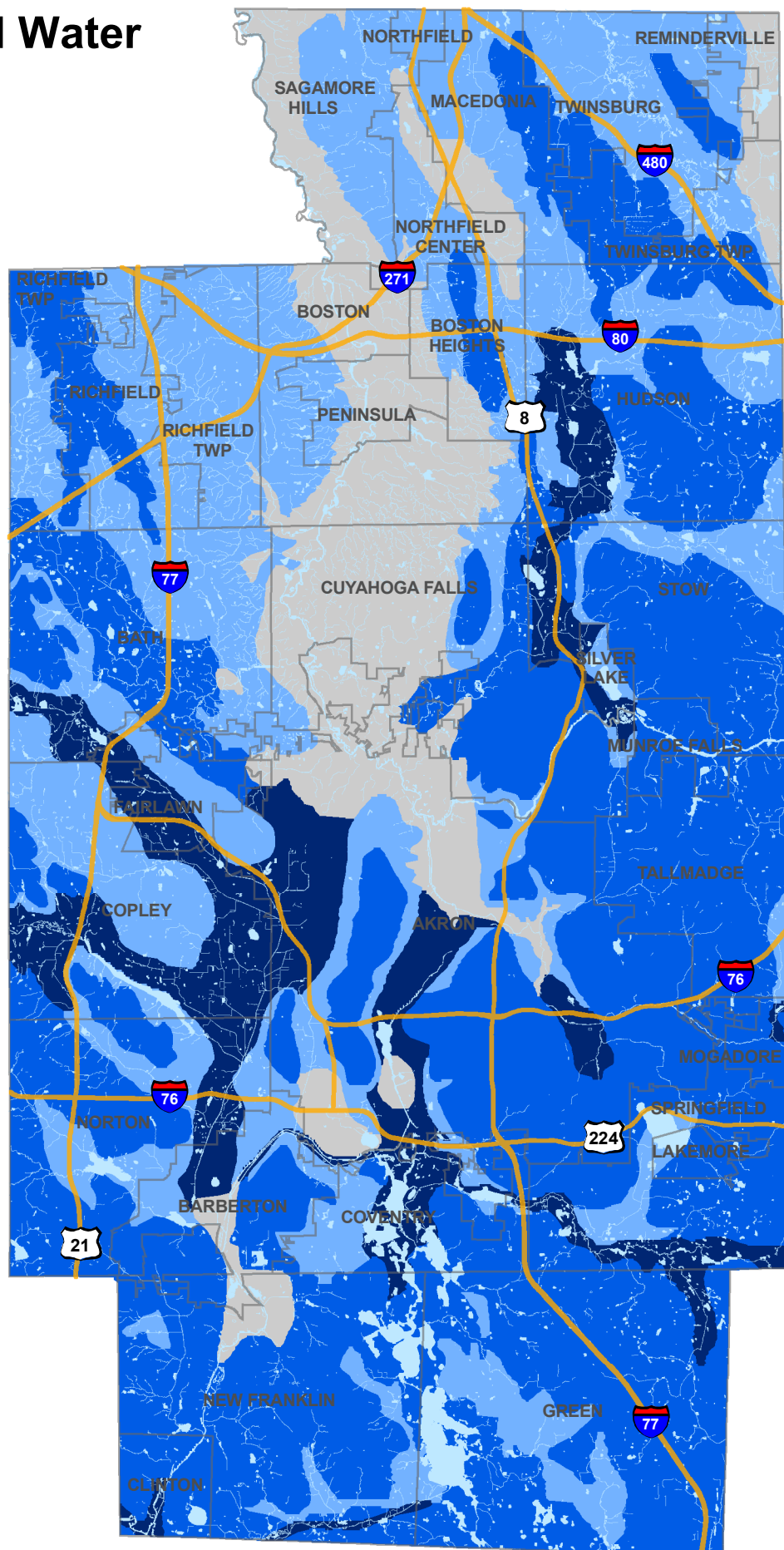
Ground Water Resources: Well Yield - Gallons Per Minute



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James B. McCarthy, Executive



Source:
ODNR
Water Division





Groundwater Pollution Potential

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources has published a series of maps called DRASTIC maps designed to evaluate the susceptibility of groundwater to contamination from surface sources. The groundwater pollution potential maps use hydrogeologic data to rank an area's vulnerability to contamination.

The Groundwater Pollution Potential Map 7.2 represents only the areas in Summit County that have the highest susceptibility to groundwater contamination. The map displays the three highest index values of groundwater pollution potential. The relative rating system uses a combination of weights and ratings to produce a numerical value called the groundwater pollution index. The pink area on Map 7.2 represent areas with moderately high susceptibility to groundwater pollution, while the dark red areas represents areas with very high susceptibility to groundwater pollution. So, for example, if a hazardous substance was spilled in an area with a very high susceptibility to groundwater pollution index rating, then there would be a high probability that the groundwater would get contaminated by the spill.

A pollution potential map can assist in developing groundwater protection strategies. By identifying areas more vulnerable to contamination, officials can direct resources to areas where protection efforts might be warranted. This information can be utilized effectively at the local level for integration into land use decisions and as an educational tool to promote public awareness of groundwater resources.

A pollution potential map can be used by Planning Commissions and Zoning Boards to help them make informed decisions about the development areas within their jurisdiction. Developers proposing projects within groundwater sensitive areas may be required to show how groundwater will be protected.¹

Storm Water Management

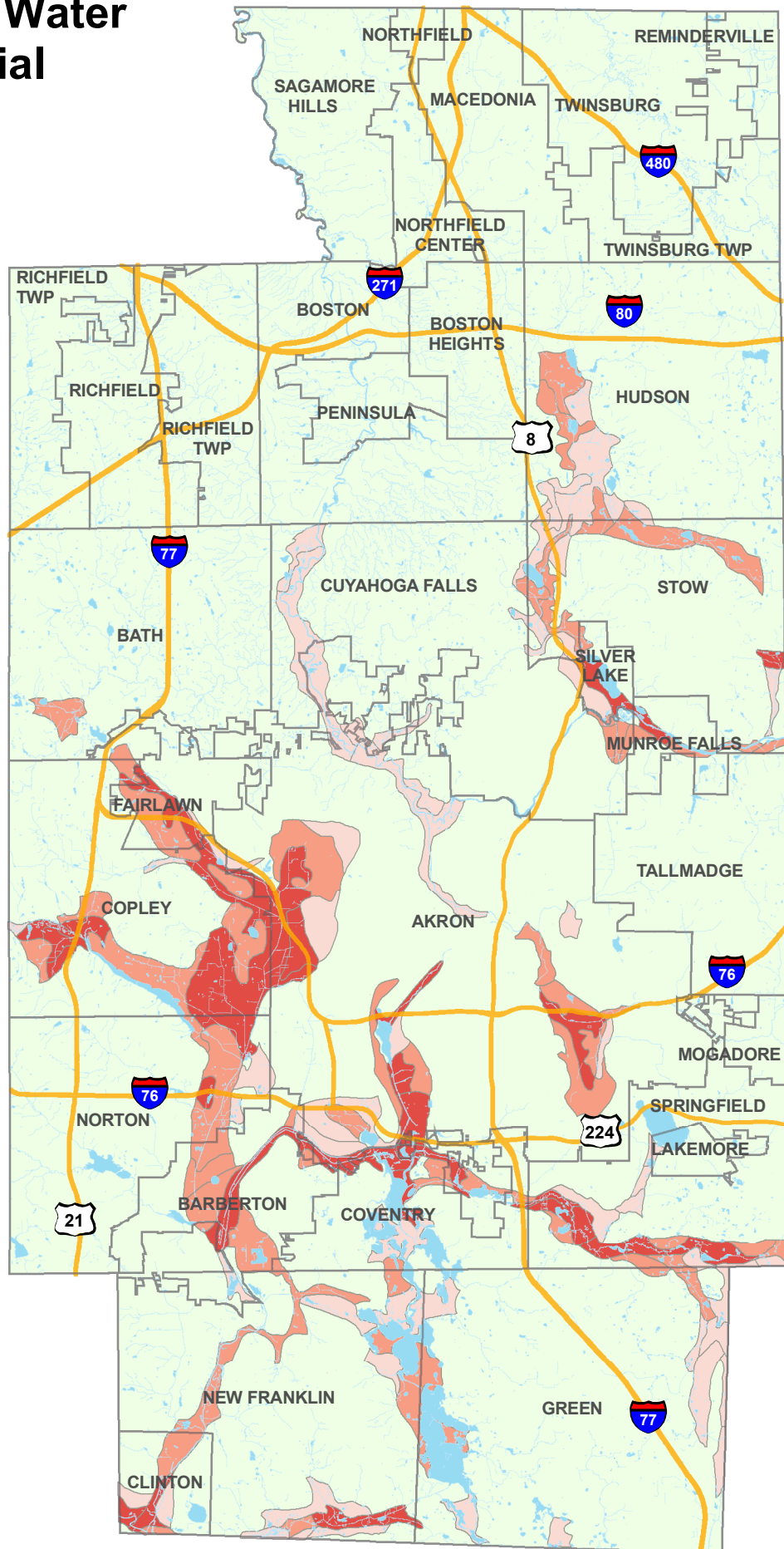
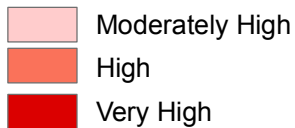
The Need for Storm Water Management

A change in land use (e.g. land development, forest clear-cuts) alters the hydrology and natural water cycle. As land is developed, vegetation is removed, topography is altered, surfaces are compacted, the amount of impervious area (streets, sidewalks, rooftops) increases, and water infiltration decreases. Because rainwater cannot infiltrate through impervious surfaces, more storm water runoff is generated. The increased volume of storm water from developing areas flows through ditches, swales and storm sewers to receiving water bodies such as streams, lakes and wetlands. Storm water runoff picks up contaminants in its path, including lawn chemicals, eroded soil and street residues and carries these pollutants to streams and lakes.

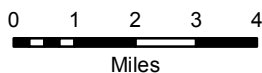
¹ Groundwater Pollution Potential of Summit County, ODNR, Division of Water, 2003

Map 7.2 Ground Water Pollution Potential

Index Range



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 James B. McGarity, Executive



Source:
 ODNR
 Water Division
 Report No. 49, 2003

Development Impacts to Streams

Streams naturally meander in their channels seeking a balance between the volume of water they receive, the topography, sediment type and the volume of sediment they carry. If any of these factors change, the stream responds by changing channel characteristics. For example a stream receiving an increase in storm water volume can increase channel size by meandering over the landscape and by deepening the channel through down cutting. Streams that receive a high amount of eroded sediment respond by depositing the excess sediment within the stream channel (reducing the capacity) or flowing out of bank and onto the floodplain. In terms of water quality, the best response to higher storm water volume is to encourage the overflow of stream water onto the floodplain.

It is imperative that a stream has access to its floodplain during storm events, especially the smaller (.5 to one year) storms that shape the stream channels. Natural, undeveloped, unaltered floodplains provide temporary storage for the high volume storm water, filter pollutants and allow infiltration of storm water. Preservation of floodplains is an essential component of a good storm water management program and is less costly than engineered solutions to controlling floodwaters where streams are denied access to their floodplains.

Low Impact Development

Low impact development (LID) is an approach to site development and storm water management that integrates site design and planning techniques to conserve the natural systems and hydrologic functions of a site.

LID design principles reduce runoff and downstream flooding and better manage drainage. Natural features should be used to store storm water, where possible. The objectives of LID Principles are:

- Runoff reduction
- Groundwater recharge
- Volume control
- Stream protection
- Water quality enhancement

Innovative LID projects will minimize land development and infrastructure costs while protecting a property's natural resources. The following site design elements should be considered in low impact development:

1. Reduce limits of clearing and grading
2. Locate development in less sensitive areas
3. Minimize impervious surfaces by reducing roadway lengths and widths, reducing parking space size requirements and setting standards for the maximum number of parking spaces allowed
4. Use vegetated swales instead of curb and gutter
5. For storm water management also use vegetated filter strips and rain gardens

6. Use rain barrels to collect storm water from roof drainage, water can be used for irrigating gardens
7. Consider using clustered development design such as open space conservation development design

Communities in Summit County that have open roadside ditches should be encouraged to keep these ditches open to promote infiltration into the ground. This strategy of leaving drainage ditches or swales open will reduce storm water volume and meet some of the Clean Water Act Phase 2 requirements. In addition, it reduces the probability of illicit discharges into the drainage system.

The Cuyahoga Valley National Park and Storm Water Management Issues

Recent development pressures around the Cuyahoga Valley National Park have increased imperviousness and storm water problems. The loss of low-lying lands that capture and drain runoff has worried Cuyahoga Valley National Park officials. According to a draft report on the impact of growth on park watersheds, the park and its 22 miles of river lowlands are “serving as the de facto storm water drainage for a substantial portion of developed and developing Northeast Ohio.”² Park managers have begun urging environmentally-sound community planning to combat the storm water impacts of increased development. In 2003 and 2004, the park experienced major flooding, causing more than \$3 million dollars in damage to park infrastructure, recreational facilities and historical/cultural resources.

Park planners are advocating appropriate zoning and local ordinances for reduced developmental impacts. They are promoting land development tools such as open space conservation development, which preserves significant open space (>40% of the site); riparian and wetland setbacks; and protection of steep slopes and sensitive areas.³

Floodplain Management

Floodplains are subject to periodic flooding because of their adjacency to streams. Floodplains are beneficial for water retention, pollutant filtration, and aquifer recharge. Natural vegetation within a floodplain can filter pollutants from storm water runoff before it flows into a waterway. Development occurring in a floodplain can be detrimental to the environment and result in costly property damage. Agriculture, conservation, and passive parkland are the most suitable uses for areas located within a floodplain.

Two floodplain classifications exist under the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA): the 100 – year and 500 – year flood hazard areas, each with separate building standards (see Map 7.3 Floodplains). One-hundred and five-hundred year floodplains are defined by designated recurrence intervals at which a storm of a given magnitude could occur. Due to periodic scouring, floodplains are unstable and potentially dangerous areas for human use;

² The Plain Dealer, October 31, 2005, “Green space losing ground”

³ Skerl, K.L., Winstel, J., and T.E. Ross. 2006. “Development pressures prompt integration of science and planning to enhance storm water management in the Cuyahoga Valley,” In Natural Resource Year in Review – 2005, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, In Press.



however, they have important ecological functions and can support diverse biotic communities. Floodplain wetlands absorb large volumes of water during high flows, reducing local flooding and delaying the release of water downstream.

Development in the floodplain or watershed can be detrimental to the environment and result in costly property damage as well. Development in the floodplain or watershed increases the volume and velocity of storm water runoff entering watercourses. This may result in increased flooding frequency, greater flooding severity, and reduced water quality.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) is currently working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and FEMA consultant FMSM Engineers to remap all the floodplains in Summit County using the latest contours and hydrologic data. The new hydrology by United States Geological Survey (USGS) for Yellow Creek, Mud Brook and Brandywine Creek will be incorporated into the new mapping. Existing hydrology will be used for the remaining watersheds. This is a two year program. The first year will be gathering data and producing the maps. The second year will be local acceptance and revisions.

In the summer of 2003, in Summit County, it was estimated that there were 100 million dollars in property damage from flooding and severe storms. This amount does not include private insurance claims, such as sewer back-up costs.

Map 7.4 Total Household Storm Damage illustrates the number of households with storm damage per zip code in 2003. The darkest blue color on the map shows which areas had the highest number of households with storm damage. These areas include primarily the City of Hudson and the Village of Boston Heights. In 2003 there were at least 573 households that reported storm damage in the City of Hudson. Other areas that reported severe storm damage with ranges from 129 households to 439 households included Bath Township, Silver Lake Village and the cities of Fairlawn, Cuyahoga Falls, Stow and Akron.

It is recommended that all new development be directed away from the 100 year floodplain in Summit County. By preserving floodplains in a natural vegetated state, land use controls can reduce flooding risks to downstream properties and preserve the natural flood control functions of the ecosystem.

Riparian Setbacks

Summit County adopted a riparian setback protection ordinance (2002 - 154) in 2002. The legislation establishes setbacks from stream banks based on watershed size. The purpose of this riparian setback ordinance is to protect the water quality of the streams as well as the health, safety and welfare of Summit County residents. All of the Summit County townships are protected by this ordinance and some have adopted it as part of their Zoning Resolution. In addition, some cities and villages have adopted riparian setback ordinances including the Village of Clinton, Reminderville Village, and the cities of Hudson, New Franklin, Green, Norton, and Twinsburg. Also the City of Stow has adopted setbacks for their Mud Brook Watershed area (see Map 7.5).

Map 7.3 Floodplains

-  100 Year
-  500 Year

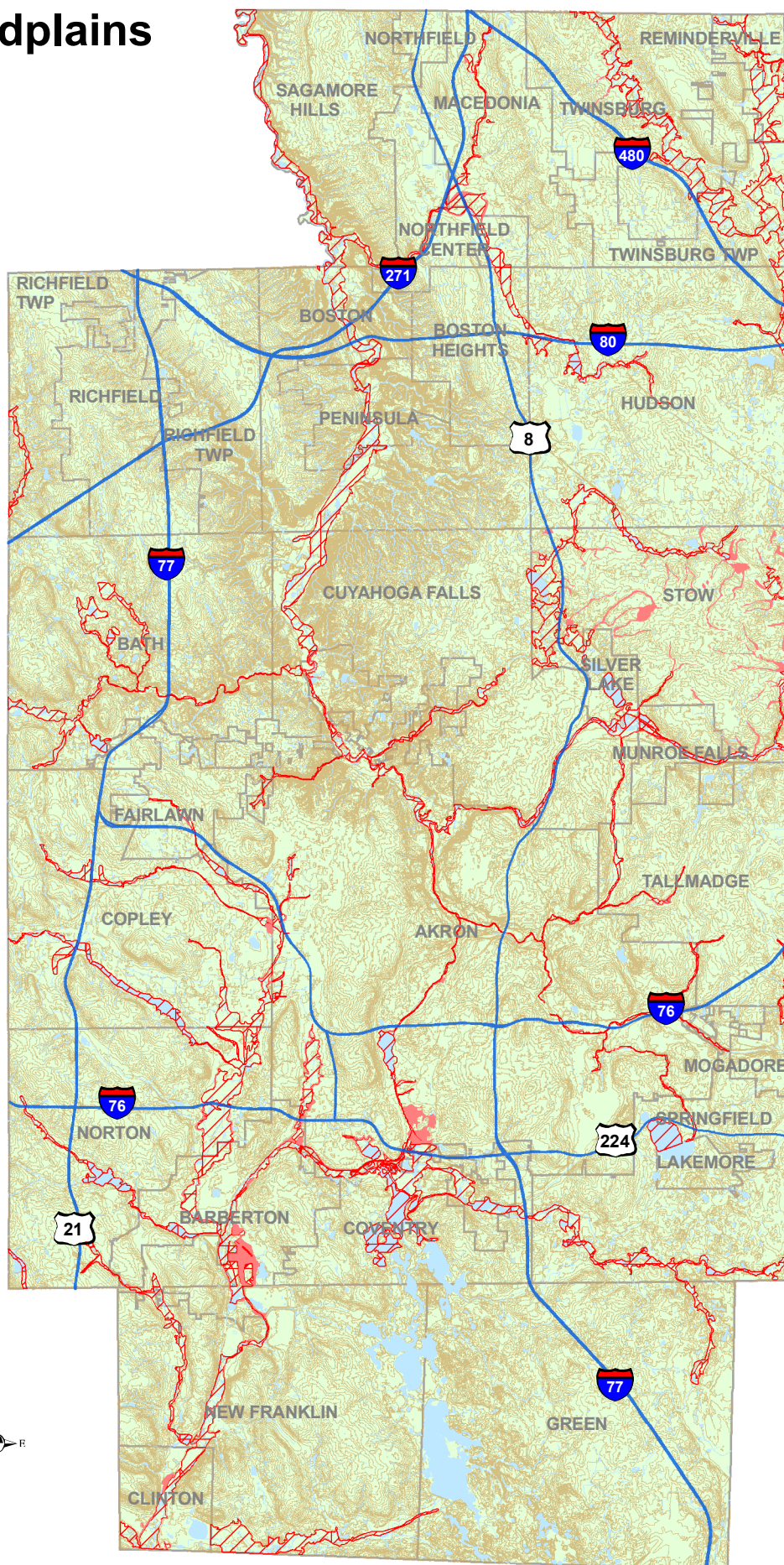


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0 1 2 3 4
 Miles

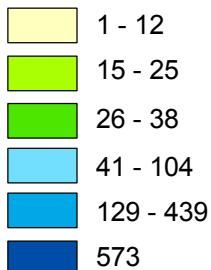


Source:
 FEMA floodplain data



Map 7.4 Total Household Storm Damage by Zip Code 2003, Summit County, Ohio

Total Household Damage Per Zip Code



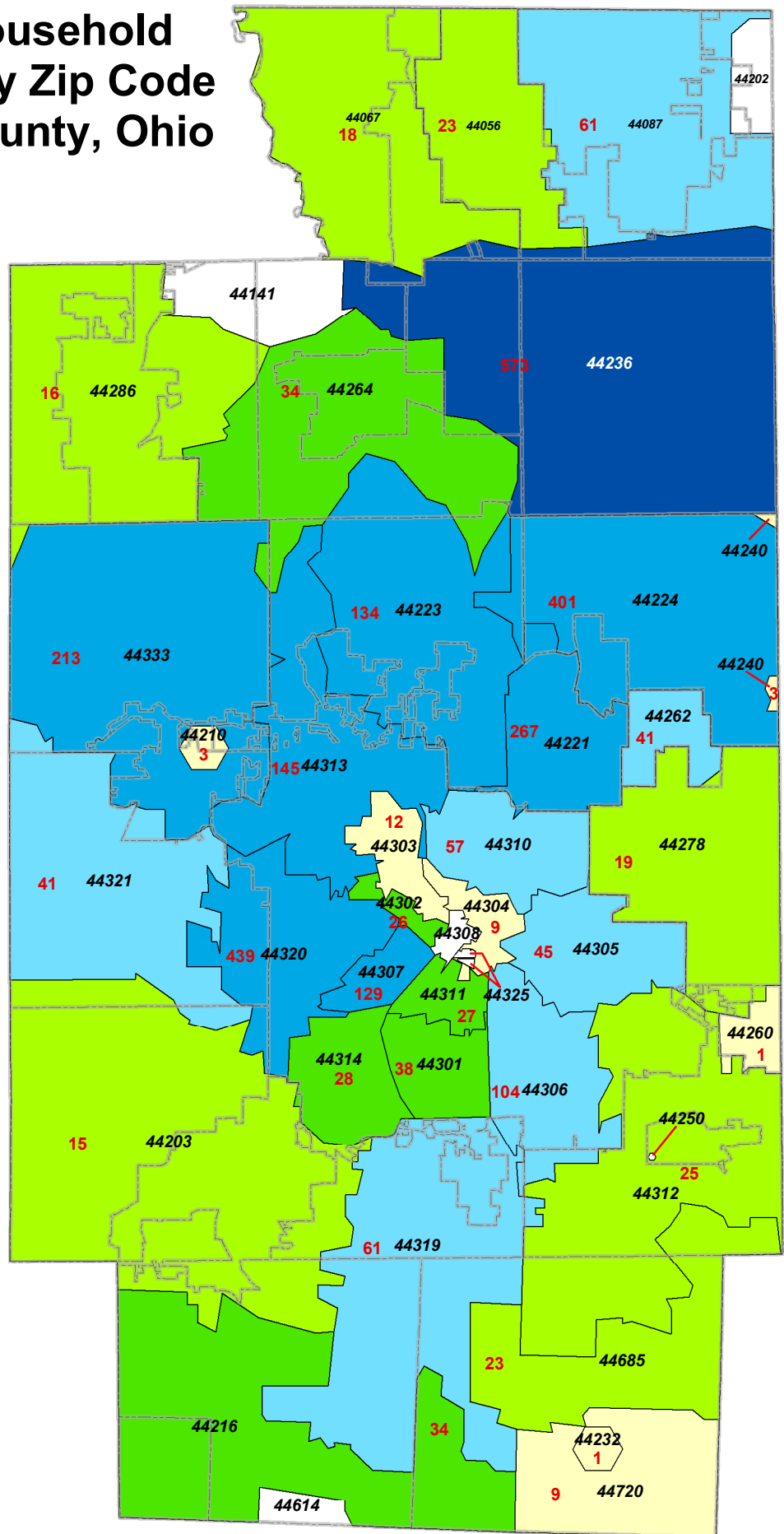
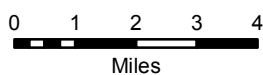
Political Boundary

44320 ZIP Code and Boundary

44 # Households Damaged



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Map 7.5 Summit County Communities Protected by a Riparian Ordinance

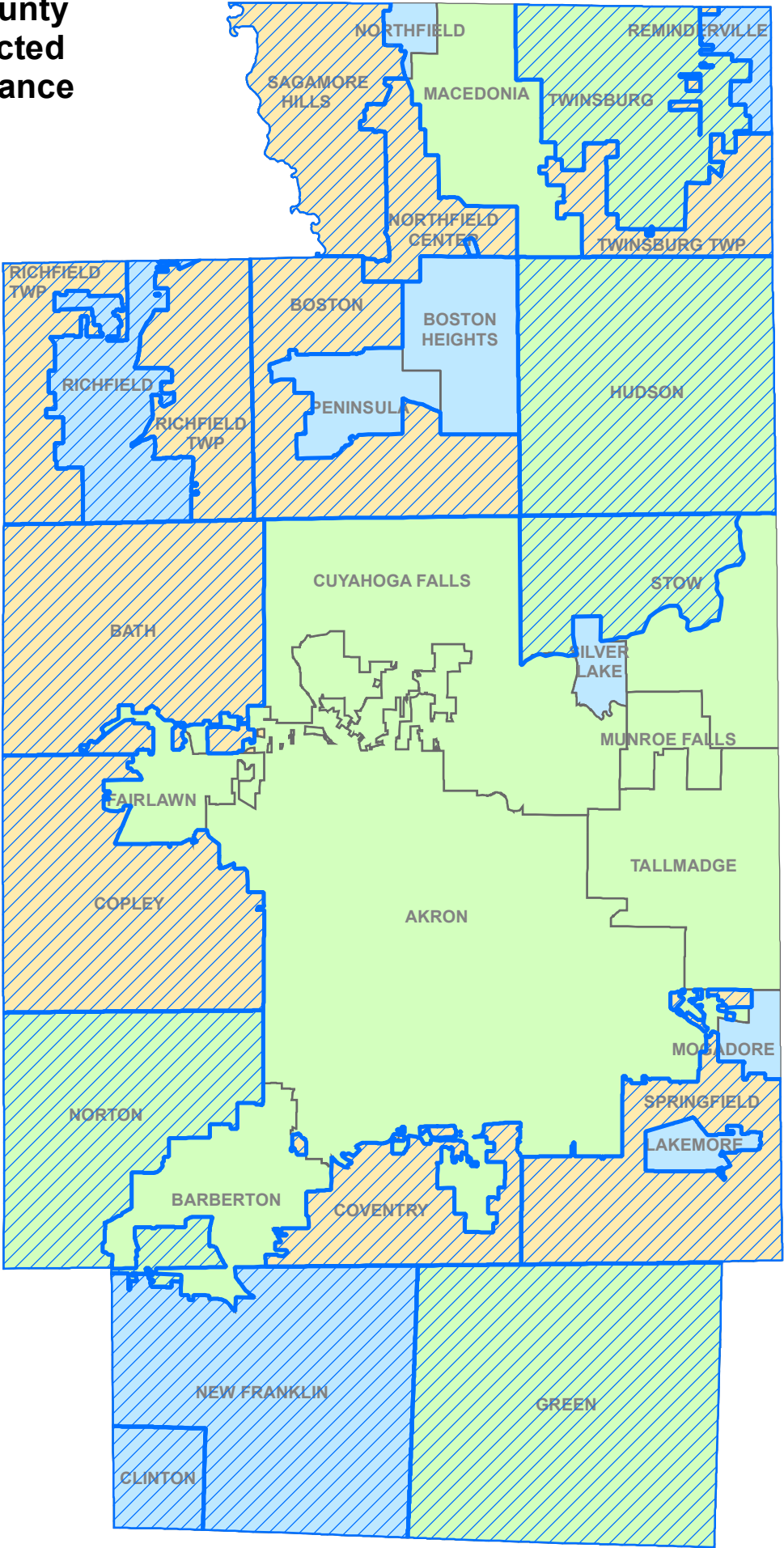
- CITY
- TOWNSHIP
- VILLAGE
- Protected



1 inch equals 3 miles



Source:
Summit County Soil and Water
Conservation District



Riparian areas extend beyond stream banks and are at least periodically influenced by flooding. When left in a natural vegetated state, riparian areas help stabilize banks, limit erosion, reduce flooding, and filter runoff pollutants. Riparian setbacks are distance lines set back from each bank of a stream to protect the riparian area and stream from impacts of development and streamside residents from impacts of flooding and land loss through erosion.

Riparian setbacks help protect headwater streams that might normally be impacted during development. They also help direct development away from sensitive floodplain areas which provide the green infrastructure of storm water management. Riparian areas, especially vegetated floodplains, reduce flow velocity, increase the storage of water and minimize downstream flood impacts.⁴

It is recommended that the Summit Soil and Water Conservation District continue to encourage all the communities in the County to adopt the County Riparian Setback regulations.

Wetlands

Wetlands are those areas inundated or saturated by surface water or groundwater, at a frequency and duration sufficient to support a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Swamps, marshes, bogs, fens, and vernal pools often characterize wetland areas. Wetlands are beneficial, frequently serving as natural water filtration systems which reduce pollutants from surface water, and provide floodwater detention, groundwater recharge, and support for fisheries and other wildlife.

In addition, wetlands provide habitat for aquatic and terrestrial organisms, many of which are on Ohio's endangered and/or threatened species listings. Wetlands provide the following public health and safety benefits:

1. Reducing peak flood flows, storing flood waters, and maintaining stream flow patterns;
2. Minimizing streambank erosion by reducing runoff volume and velocity;
3. Protecting groundwater quality by filtering pollutants from storm water runoff;
4. Recharging groundwater reserves; and
5. Maintaining surface water quality by minimizing sediment pollution from streambank erosion, and trapping sediments, chemicals, salts, and other pollutants from flood waters and storm water runoff

Wetlands cannot continue to provide these functions unless protected from the effects of fluctuations in storm water flow, urban pollutants, disposal of fill or dredged materials, and other impacts of land use change. Furthermore, the replacement of the public health and safety benefits of wetlands including flood control, erosion control, groundwater recharge, and water quality protection will require significant public expenditure. To date, the State of Ohio has lost over 90 percent of its original wetlands. Draining, dredging, filling, and excavating have compromised significant wetland acreage in Northeast Ohio.

⁴ Sardon & Fellerman 1996 as referenced by Chagrin River Watershed Partners



The Summit County Subdivision Regulations, adopted in 2002, have requirements that setbacks from certain wetlands need to be provided in order for higher quality Category 2 and 3 wetlands to be protected from the detrimental impacts of development.

Wetlands were mapped in 2003 for the *Summit County Natural Resources Study* by Davey Resource Group, see Map 7.6 Generalized Wetlands. Wetlands were mapped using Summit County's digital orthophotography (April 26, 2000) and GIS data including hydrology and topography layers. Also, a wetlands inventory (URS, 2002) commissioned by Metro Parks, Serving Summit County was reviewed. The wetlands identified in this study are those visible on the aerial photographs and other resource maps. It is likely that this study has identified between 50 and 75 percent of the actual jurisdictional wetlands within the county. Many of the wetlands within Summit County are small and isolated. These wetlands are typically less than two acres in size and may have saturated soils for portions of the growing season and little standing water. Collectively, these isolated wetlands serve an important hydrologic function in storm water retention and groundwater recharge. These isolated wetlands are extremely difficult to identify on aerial photographs and account for most of the wetlands not identified in the *Summit County Natural Resources Study* by Davey Resource Group.

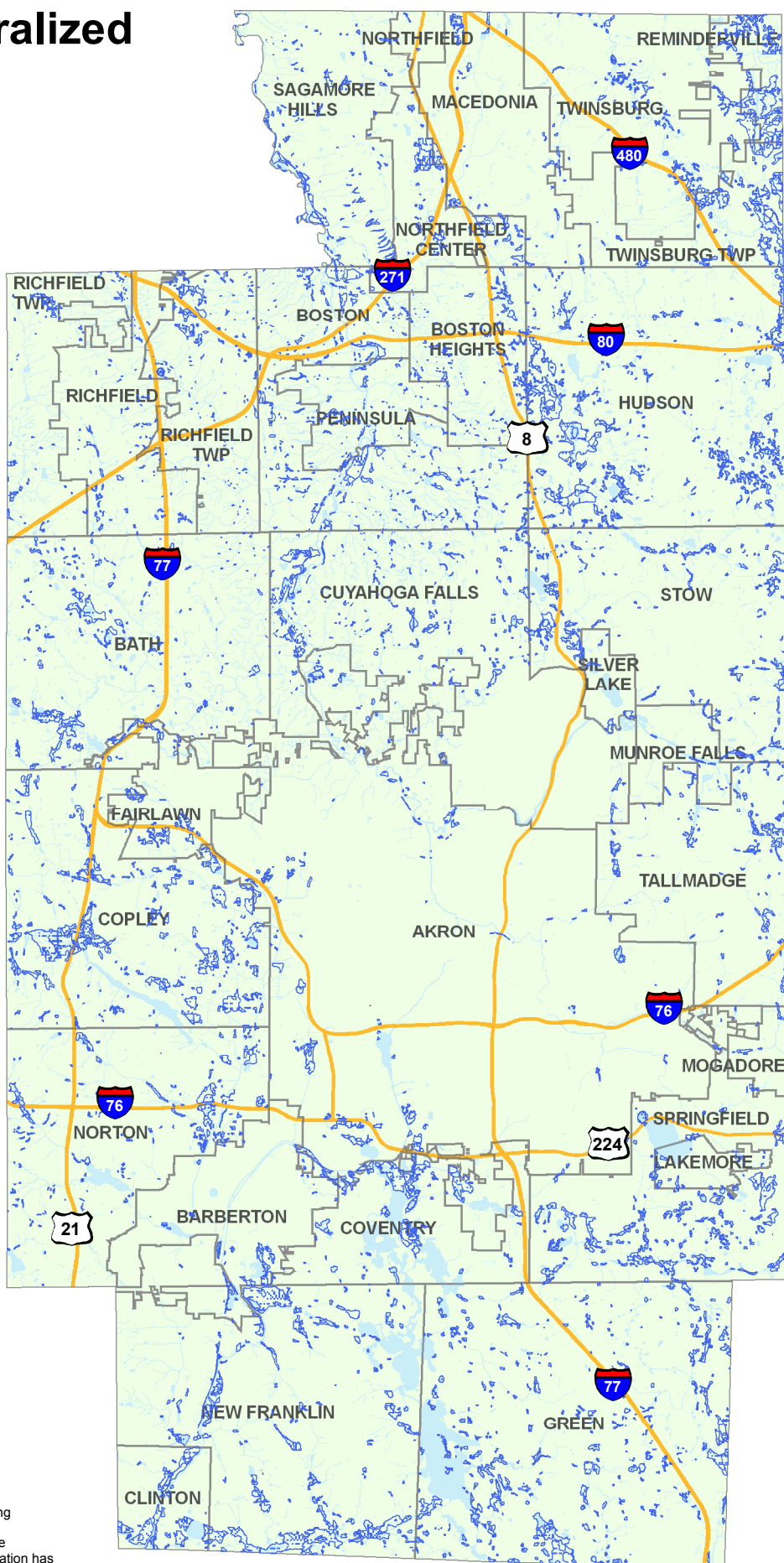
Map 7.6 shows the wetlands mapped in Summit County. Notable large wetlands complexes are located throughout the county, particularly within the Hudson-Twinsburg area, near Barberton reservoir and along Nimisila Creek in the southern part of the County. Most of these wetlands are associated with water courses.

The Summit County GIS wetlands data, which is based on the Summit County Natural Resources Study Davey Resource information, cannot be used as a wetlands delineation for land development. A wetlands delineation is a site specific field study which involves sampling of soils, hydrology and vegetation, as well as surveying of wetland boundaries. A wetlands delineation is necessary if development will occur on any parcel that is likely to contain wetlands.

According to the *Natural Resources Study* done by Davey Resources, there was a total of 11,781 acres of wetlands in Summit County in 2003, or roughly 5.4 % of the total land area in Summit County was wetlands. However, many other smaller wetland areas that could not be detected through remote sensing may exist. According to the Natural Resources Study section on wetlands, "it is roughly estimated that the actual wetlands in Summit County may be ten percent."⁵

⁵ 2003 Summit County Natural Resources Study, Davey Resource Group, page 48

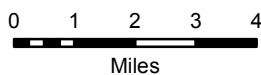
Map 7.6 Generalized Wetlands



Wetlands



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Source:
Summit County
Natural Resource Study

Wetlands were mapped using Summit County's digital orthophotography (April 26, 2000) and GIS data including hydrology and topography layers. The Summit County Soil Survey and National Wetlands Inventory maps were also consulted as wetlands were identified. This information has not been field verified and cannot take the place of a wetlands delineation.

The filling of most wetlands requires some form of wetlands mitigation. It is recommended that all Summit County governments require wetland mitigation or replacement to occur within the same watershed as the impact – either the Cuyahoga or Tuscarawas watersheds. It should be recognized that mitigation for lost wetlands outside of Summit County, yet within the same watershed, will ultimately benefit the County by positively affecting overall watershed health. Although Ohio EPA strongly encourages mitigation to remain within the watershed, it is not a requirement. In addition, current data seems to support that restoration of degraded wetlands may prove more successful in recreating a wetland, rather than creating artificial wetlands from scratch.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regulates wetland development issues, and does not always protect wetlands from being filled or drained. Individual communities should develop their own protection measures if they want wetlands to remain protected, especially since isolated wetlands are no longer regulated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. It is recommended that communities develop local land use controls so isolated wetlands of a certain size be retained in their natural state to assist in flood control, pollution abatement and to protect wildlife habitat. Communities should adopt zoning measures that protect wetlands in their locality. The draining or filling of wetlands should be discouraged.

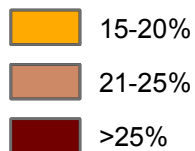
It is also a recommendation that the Metro Parks, Serving Summit County take the lead in wetlands preservation, enhancement, restoration and creation.

Steep Slopes

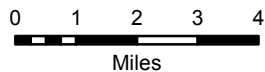
Steep slopes (greater than 12 percent) are environmentally sensitive areas where removal of vegetative cover (e.g. during construction) may substantially increase erosion, downslope sedimentation, and storm water runoff. Increased sedimentation and storm water runoff entering waterways pose public health and safety concerns by decreasing water quality and increasing the risk of flooding. In addition, structures built on steep slopes face an increased risk of collapse through slope failure or streambank erosion. In areas of steep slopes, it is especially important to minimize disturbance and protect vegetative cover, which stabilizes soil and streambanks and slows and stores storm water. Steep slopes occur throughout Summit County, but high concentrations are along the Cuyahoga Valley's riparian corridors, (see Map 7.7 Steep Slopes).

Steep slopes over 12 percent are present in 6 percent of Summit County. Loss of vegetative cover on steep terrain significantly increases soil instability, and thus the risk of erosion. Soil erosion and sedimentation into waterways pose several threats to public health and safety that are difficult and expensive to correct. For these reasons, steep slopes along stream valleys, should be maintained with a vegetative cover to prevent soil loss and siltation. Existing patterns of vegetation should be retained on all slopes over 12 percent to avoid erosion or slippage.

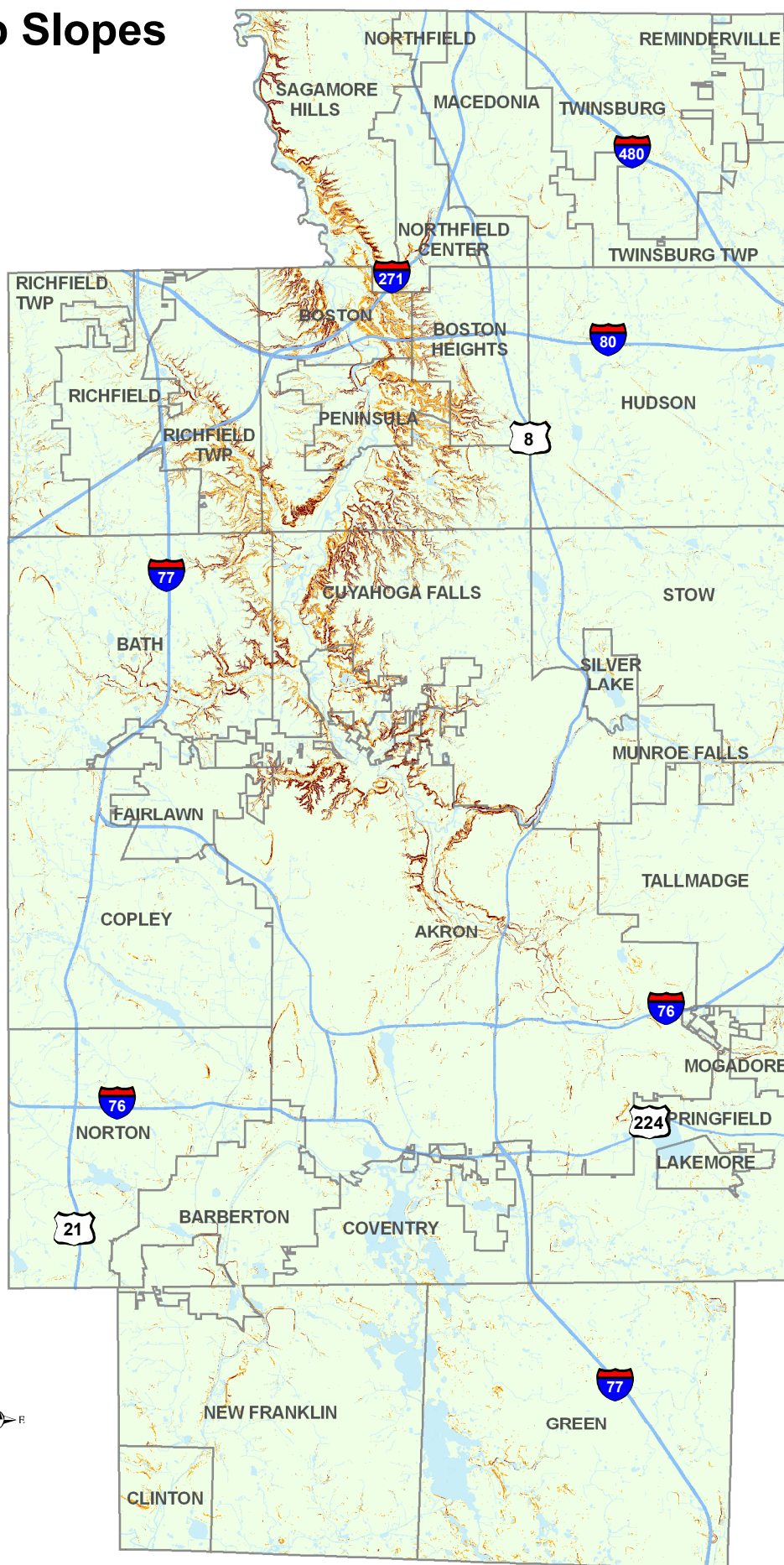
Map 7.7 Steep Slopes



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Source:
 Summit County
 Natural Resource Study





The General Plan recommends minimizing clearing and grading of forests and natural vegetation on slopes over 12 percent and prohibiting these actions on slopes over 20 percent. ⁶

The Summit County Engineer's Office has been working to solve some chronic problems with roadway damage due to slope failures, mostly in the rim of the Cuyahoga River Valley. Some portions of some roads have as much as three feet of asphalt. In 2002, a landslide along Wheatley Road in Richfield Township was repaired at a cost of \$716,000. In 2003, a landslide along Bath Road in Bath Township was repaired for a cost of \$495,000. In 2004 and 2005, the Summit County Engineer's Office repaired 18 additional landslides affecting County roads. The Summit County Engineer's Office has around \$100,000 per year in their capital budget for the next 15 years to repair or reinforce unstable slopes. They have hired a consultant to determine areas susceptible to landslides. The results of this study should be available in 2006.

Development on steep slopes can create erosion and landslide problems. Therefore, communities should adopt environmental review measures to limit development on steep slopes.

Wildlife Habitat Preservation

Biological Diversity

Many of the issues related to protecting plant and animal species have been discussed as important components of the 2003 Natural Resources Study. Another important habitat issue is the protection of rare, threatened or endangered plants and animals. Summit County needs to take a broad view in habitat preservation, including not only the protection of rare and significant species, but also assuring the long-term conservation of the habitats for upland, forest, riparian, wetland and aquatic plants and animals. This broader concept is called biological diversity.

Actions:

- Ensure that significant habitats are identified on development plans and continue to seek cooperation in protecting them through modification of site design
- Seek to increase plant and animal habitats in conjunction with capital improvement projects for stream restoration, wetland creation and reforestation
- Work in cooperation with governmental and non-profit agencies to assess, protect, restore and create habitats

An open space plan should use environmental constraints to identify the most important lands to protect, as well as to determine the type of recreation or open space that should occur there. For instance, where sensitive endangered species are found, it may be advisable to restrict use of the open space. Areas with numerous resources in rapidly developing communities, such as around Singer Lake in Green, may also be important to secure from development. The Summit County Trails and Greenways Plan should be expanded to include additional land in riparian

⁶ 2003 Summit County Natural Resources Study, Dave Resource Group, page 44



corridors, especially where numerous resources occur together, e.g., floodplains, wetlands, or species of concern.

It is important to establish linked systems of open space to provide wildlife migration corridors. By mapping preferred open spaces, Summit County, local communities, land conservancies, and even developers, can focus on setting aside or purchasing the lands that provide the most value in terms of resource protection and linked greenways.⁷ There should be further review of proposed new development to ensure long term survival of key wildlife habitat and movement opportunities to minimize wildlife fragmentation and disturbance.

Woodland Resources

Trees, their canopy cover, and associated plant and animal communities contribute many benefits to Summit County. Trees stabilize soil by controlling erosion, reduce noise levels, cleanse pollutants from the air, moderate temperatures, and provide terrestrial and aquatic wildlife habitat (see Map 7.8 Canopy Cover).

Forests provide a key role in providing habitat for birds, reptiles, amphibians and mammals. The State of Ohio has a Forest Legacy Program for landowners interested in protecting their woodlands. Summit County landowners are eligible for this program and can apply at the ONDR Division of Forestry, www.ohiodnr.com/forestry/.

Summit County governments should consider and develop programs and policies to protect, support, and expand their woodland resources.

Actions:


- Provide incentives for tree preservation on private property during development
- Target disturbed riparian woodlands for restoration
- Promote land use and tree-cutting ordinances that minimize disturbance to woodlands and large trees, especially in riparian corridors
- Identify key woodland resources for acquisition or protection through land use measures

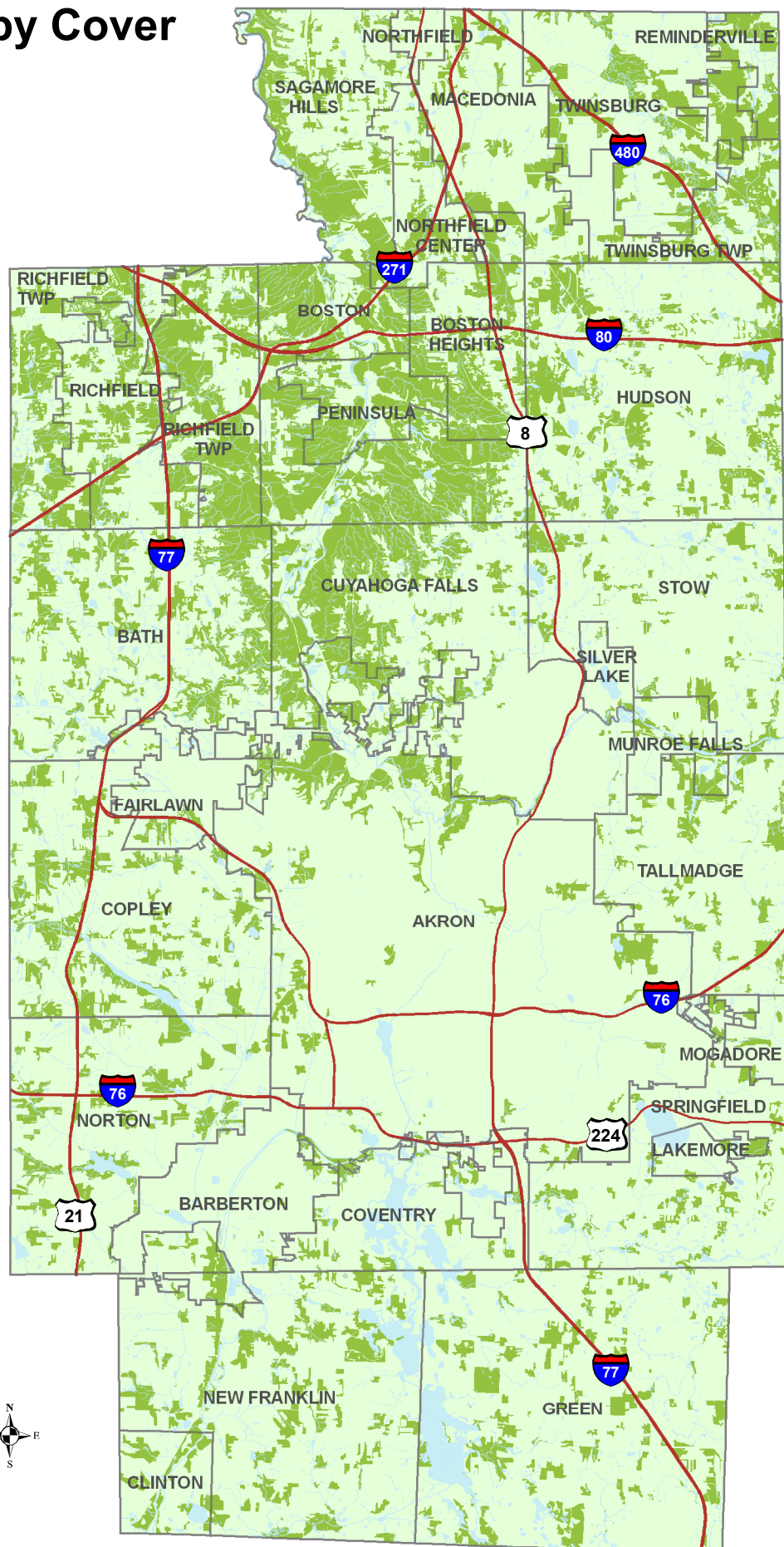
Native Plant Species

Native plants are trees, grasses, shrubs and flowers that have evolved over thousands of years in a particular region. They have become well-adapted to the physical features and climate of the area. Native plants provide habitat for a variety of native wildlife including song birds and butterflies. Because native plants grow in the wild without human intervention, they are sensible choices for low-maintenance gardens and landscapes. Native plants are adapted to local environmental conditions and thus:

⁷ 2003 Summit County Natural Resources Study, Davey Resource Group, page 69

Map 7.8 Canopy Cover

 Canopy Cover



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0 1 2 3 4
 Miles



Source:
 Summit County
 Natural Resource Study



- Need less water
- Require less mowing and maintenance time
- Have lower fertilizer and pesticide needs
- Provide food and shelter for wildlife
- Add color and interest to a landscape

There are definite environmental benefits of landscaping with native plants. The General Plan recommends that communities encourage the use of native plants in landscaping around homes, schools and businesses. Native plants provide food and shelter for birds, butterflies and other desirable wildlife. Many help to enrich the soil. Their root systems help rainfall percolate into the soil, reducing erosion and runoff, and improving water quality. Native plants require fewer pesticides than lawns.

Some municipalities have “noxious weed laws” to prevent unsightly or poorly maintained property. Natural landscaping does not pose the hazards that the weed laws are intended to address (e.g. problems with vermin). Fortunately, many municipalities are responding to the current trend toward natural landscaping. Some communities have modified weed laws to allow natural landscaping, but require a “setback” or buffer strip to make the landscape look planned.

Park and Recreation Opportunities

Summit County is blessed with an extensive system of parks and recreational opportunities but the management is quite complex. For example, the National Park Service manages the Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CVNP) in cooperation with others who own property within its boundaries. These include, among others, youth and scout camps, commercial ski areas and golf courses. The Western Reserve Historical Society owns Hale Farm and Village, the Musical Arts Association owns Blossom Center, and Kent State University owns Porthouse Theater. Metro Parks Serving Summit County manages some properties within the boundaries of the CVNP and owns several other large regional parks in southern Summit County. It also manages other properties such as the Bike and Hike Trail along the Cuyahoga River in Silver Lake, Munroe Falls and Stow. The State of Ohio owns and manages Portage Lakes as well as property along the Ohio and Erie Canal. There are also many locally owned community and neighborhood parks throughout the county. These efforts represent an outstanding example of regional cooperation that should continue and expand in the future.

Map 7.9 shows existing parks, proposed greenways and golf courses. The proposed greenways shown are from the Summit County Trail & Greenway Plan. If implemented, the Summit County Trail & Greenway Plan would result in a linked network of parks and greenways.⁸

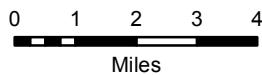
⁸ 2003 Summit County Natural Resources Study, Davey Resource Group, page 69

Map 7.9 Parks and Open Space

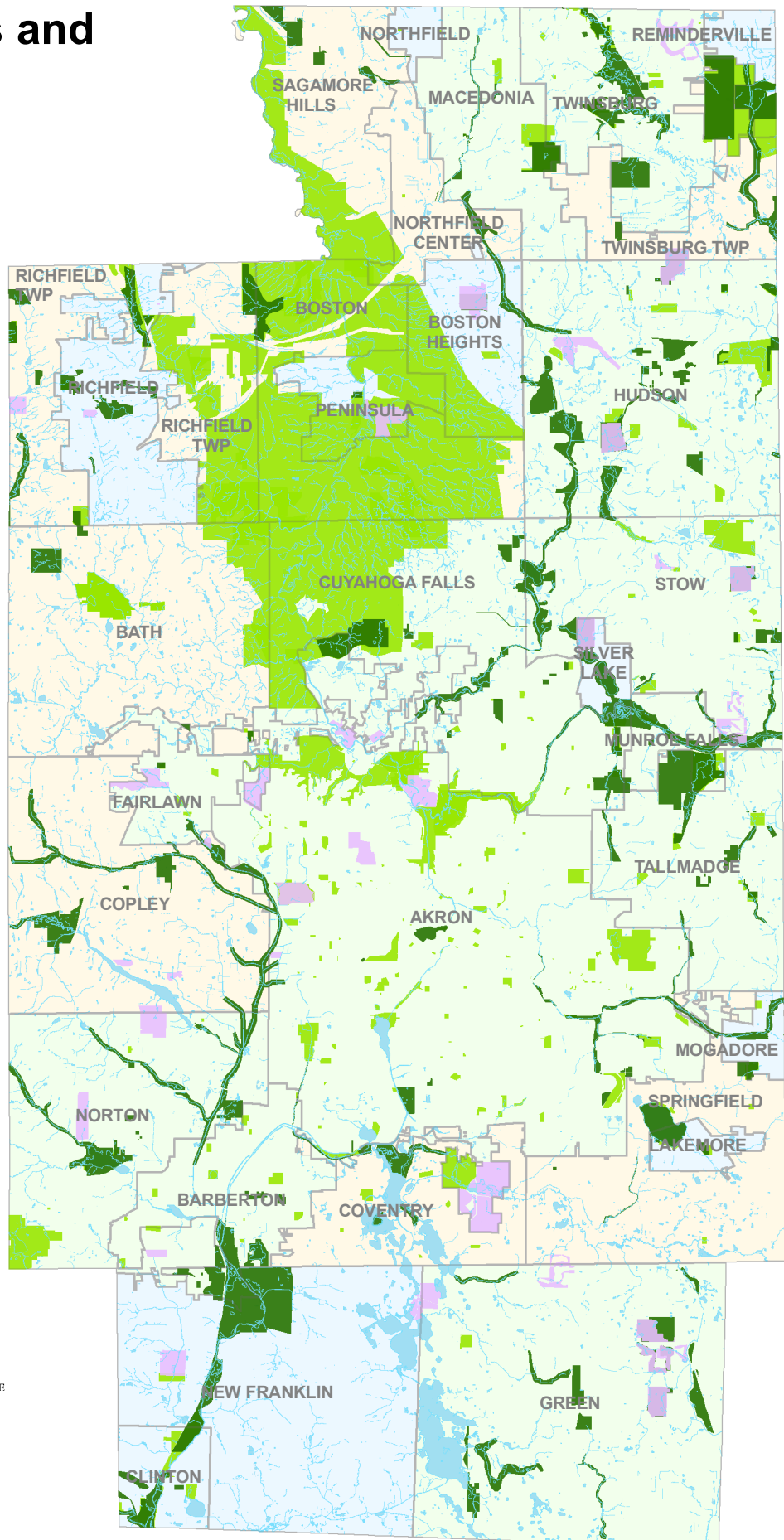
- Park
- Proposed Greenway
- Golf Course



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Source:
 Summit County Trail and Greenway Plan
 Summit Metro Parks





Land conservancies often seek to preserve linked networks of important habitat or other sensitive resources. Lands preserved for trail systems can provide linear protected corridors, ideal for protection of riparian corridors and streams. Providing access to natural resources through recreational opportunities increases the exposure of residents to the County's important natural areas and augments their sense of stewardship.⁹

Land Analysis

2004 land use data indicate that 10.7% of Summit County land is in Park land use (see Table 7). The North Planning Area, which includes the Cuyahoga Valley National Park (16,890 acres), has 21.7% of its land in Park land use. The Central Planning Area has 7.6% of its land in Park land use. The South Planning Area has only 3.6% of its land in Park land use. Although the amount of vacant land in the South Planning Area is fairly equivalent to the Central Planning Area, there is less Park land. As development pressure in the South Planning Area accelerates, it may be necessary to convert some of the existing vacant land to Park land use. This may help maintain the current rural feeling and preserve valuable farmland.

Table 7.

Summit County Land Use 2004

Land Use	Summit County (% of total)	North (% of total)	Central (% of total)	South (% of total)
Agriculture	7.7%	6.2%	5.5%	12.5%
Vacant	18.4%	19.0%	15.5%	21.8%
Commercial Recreation	1.5%	1.2%	1.7%	1.6%
Parks/ Open Space	10.7%	21.7%	7.6%	3.6%
Total Acres	268,852	81,913	109,568	77,371

Source: County Auditor

Parks Planning

Public recreation, be it in the form of participation in team sports or a group activity, enjoyment of a family picnic, or a walk along the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail, is an essential quality of life component. Recreation helps to promote physical and mental well-being and provides a valuable outlet for social interaction and personal growth. Metro Parks, Serving Summit County must lead the way in providing open space and recreation.

⁹ 2003 Summit County Natural Resources Study, Davey Resource Group, page 69

Strategic Policies

- To ensure that adequate open space is provided for this and future generations, each community should formulate an open space plan. To secure the most effective use of resources these plans should be developed in coordination with Metro Parks Serving Summit County.
- To provide adequate open space in higher-density neighborhoods, arrange small open spaces for chance meetings of neighbors. Some of these areas should be furnished with creative play equipment, sand and water features, landscaped sitting areas, and hard surfaced multi-purpose game areas for pre-school children. Other areas may be organized with table games, shuffleboard, horseshoes and conversation/sitting areas for adults. Still others may consist solely of green areas to provide a contrast to the built up areas of the city.
- Within a 15-minute walking distance of every urban residence, provide a five-acre neighborhood park with active and passive recreation facilities for each 1,000 residents.
- Within a 15 minute drive of every home, provide a 25 acre, or larger, park with active recreational facilities and sports areas as well as passive facilities such as picnic areas and walking trails in natural settings with scenic features.
- Throughout the county, seek ways to connect these recreational opportunities with one another

Summit County Trail & Greenway Plan

Summit County is fortunate to have its own Trail & Greenway Plan. The Summit County Trail & Greenway Plan was guided by a multi-agency coordinating committee and received input from numerous agencies and organizations. The Plan provides a bold vision for a regional network of open spaces, cultural and natural resources linked together by public access. This planning effort was completed in two phases. Phase 1 focused on the area commonly referred to as the Ohio & Erie Canal Corridor. Phase 2, completed in 2001, focused on identifying local and regional connections throughout the county. Numerous trails are identified in the Plan as priorities for future development, including the extension of the Towpath Trail in downtown Akron and south to Stark County. To date, of the 35 miles of the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath in Summit County, approximately 25 miles are complete and approximately 10 miles have still to be completed.

Priority Areas for Preservation

Preserving the natural areas of the County is important for many reasons. Watershed protection insures the source, health and ecology of water supplies, and reduces storm water management costs. Habitat protection for plants and wildlife insures a strong ecosystem that can support an abundance of wildlife, and provides people with places to hike, hunt, fish and observe birds, and other wildlife.

The 2001 Summit County Trail & Greenways Plan (see Map 7.10) has identified the following greenways:



Priority Greenway areas for Preservation

1. Little Cuyahoga River Greenway
2. Tuscarawas River Greenway
3. Mud Brook Greenway
4. Brandywine Creek Greenway
5. Wolf Creek/ Pigeon Creek Greenway
6. Tinkers Creek Greenway

The following are "Super Priority Areas" – because they are priority trail connections as well as priority Greenway areas are:

1. Mud Brook Greenway / Trail
2. Tinkers Creek Greenway/ Trail
3. Wolf Creek/ Pigeon Creek Greenway/ Trail

Map 7.10 Summit County Trails and Priority Greenways

Trails and Greenways

- Existing
- - - Proposed
- - - Priority Greenway

Towpath Trail

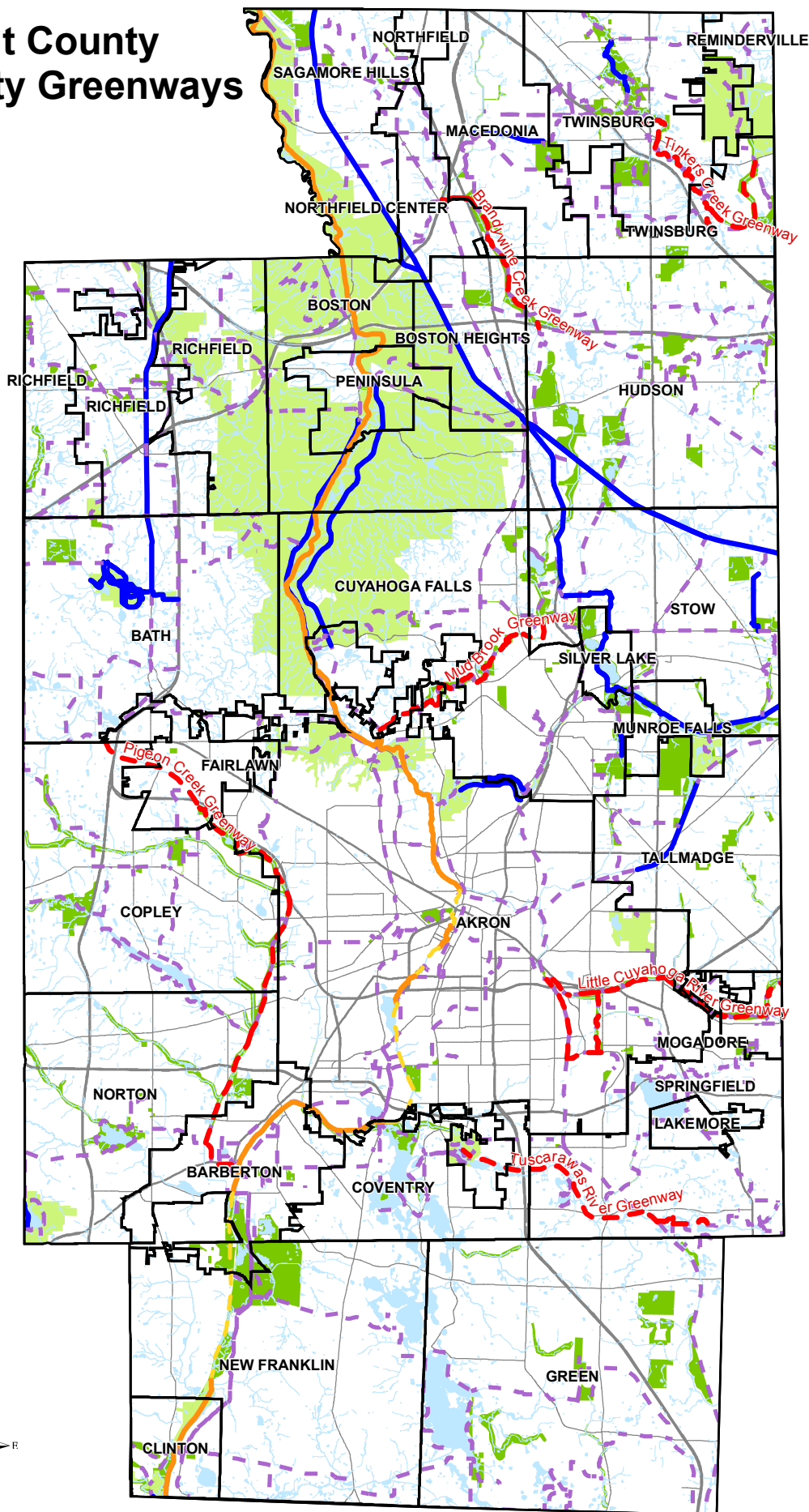
- Existing
- - - Proposed

- Park
- Proposed Greenway



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0 1 2 3 4
Miles



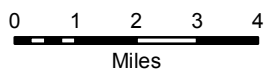


The areas listed below include important ecological areas (see Map 7.11). The proposed Conservation Greenway areas shown on Map 7.11, are from the Summit County Trail & Greenway Plan. The areas that are shown in red are considered to be some of the most ecologically important, unprotected areas within Summit County. However, this map is not inclusive of all the important ecologically sensitive areas within the County. The red areas on the map show proposed 1,000 foot buffers on either side of the streams or lake as a corridor for maintaining ecologically healthy habitats. Most of these areas have been recommended for preservation by Metro Parks Serving Summit County staff:

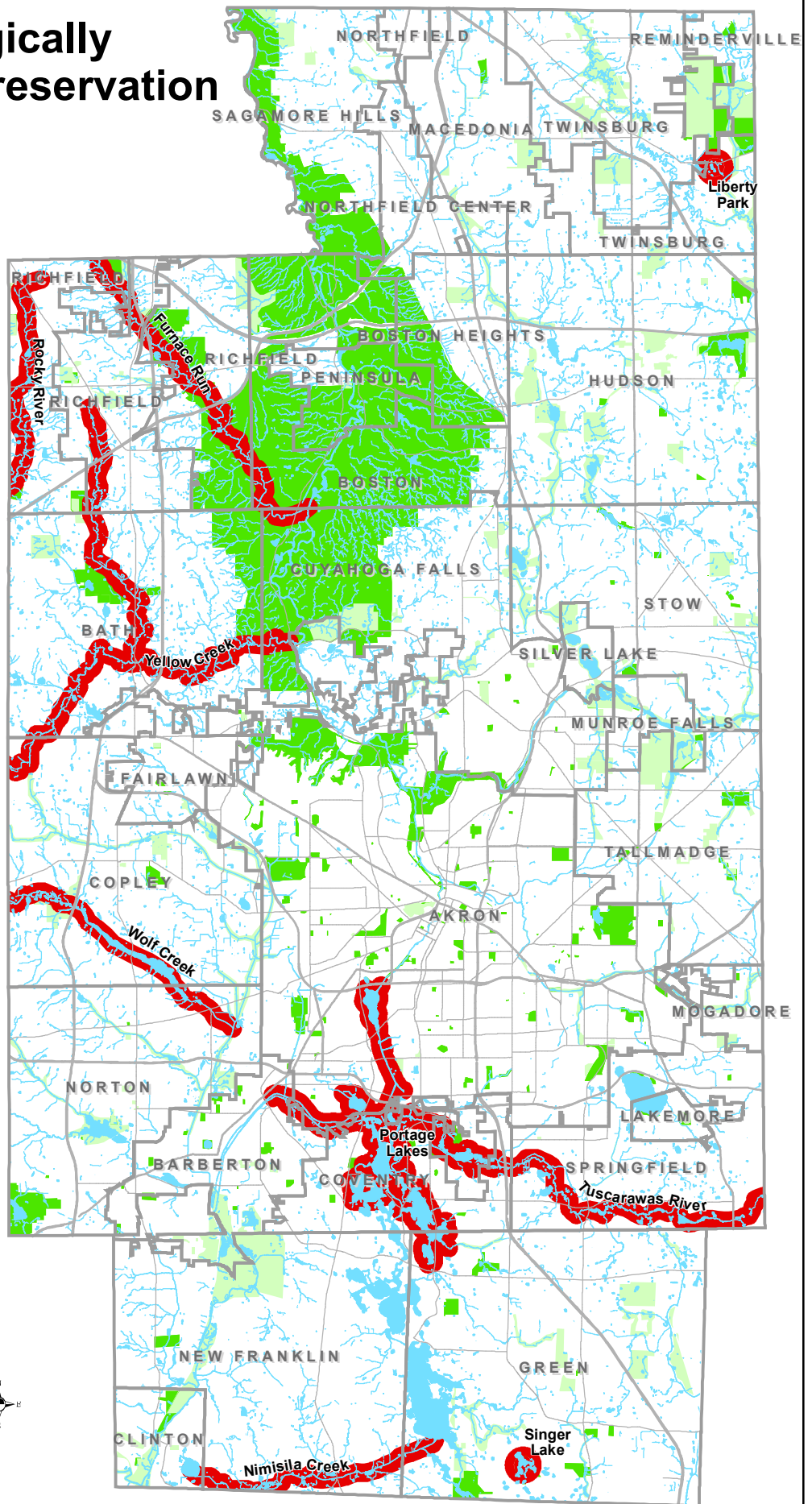
1. Confluence Park Master Plan recommends preservation of undeveloped areas around Portage Lake in Coventry Township. Undeveloped land around the Portage Lakes is a refuge for numerous rare and endangered species. It can also provide useful recreational opportunities for the City of Akron, and Coventry Township residents.
2. Areas around Liberty Park in Village of Reminderville, Twinsburg City/Township are prime areas for endangered species and natural resources. The federally endangered Indiana bat resides in this area and uses the natural environments of Liberty Park and surrounding habitats for summer breeding.
3. Wolf Creek/ Barberton Reservoir area has large tracks of undeveloped land and vast wetlands that should be protected. This area provides significant wildlife habitat.
4. Many of the larger riparian corridors that are still relatively undeveloped in Richfield Township and Bath Township contain significant wildlife habitat that should be preserved, especially along Furnace Run, Yellow Creek and Rocky River. Yellow Creek and Furnace Run are the two largest (and cleanest) tributaries to the Cuyahoga River. They are particularly susceptible to impacts associated with development.
5. The Singer Lake Area – Singer Lake in the City of Green, is one of the largest bog ecosystems in Summit County or the State of Ohio. It is nearly pristine and home to uncounted rare and endangered species. Any undeveloped land around this area is a good candidate for conservation.
6. The Nimisila Creek natural riparian corridor in the City of New Franklin has significant wildlife habitat and quality wetlands areas worthy of conservation.

Map 7.11 Ecologically Sensitive and Preservation Areas

- Ecologically Sensitive Area
- Park
- Proposed Conservation Greenway
- Water
- Stream



Source: Summit County Trail and Greenway Plan.



Land Holders and their Importance in Greenspace Protection

There are a select few agencies working within Summit County that promote the preservation of green space. Supporting the efforts of these agencies and organizations will bolster these preservation efforts. A brief description of the goal of each agency is given below:

1. **Metro Parks Serving Summit County:** The mission of Metro Parks Serving Summit County is to acquire, conserve and manage natural resources and to provide the public with safe, outdoor recreation and educational opportunities through a system of regional natural area parks.
2. **The Cleveland Museum of Natural History:** The goal of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History is to acquire a system of preserves that best represent the bio-diversity of the northeast Ohio region. The Museum works to acquire tracts of viable high quality forest, sand barrens, fens, stream corridors, emergent marshes and shrub swamps.
3. **The Medina Summit Land Conservancy:** This is a private, nonprofit land trust. The goal of this land trust is to preserve the open space, natural areas and the rural atmosphere of Medina and Summit Counties.
4. **The Nature Conservancy:** The Nature Conservancy is a private, nonprofit worldwide membership organization. Its mission is to preserve plants, animals, and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.
5. **Ohio Department of Natural Resources:** The ODNR is dedicated to conserving and improving the fish and wildlife resources and their habitats. It also promotes their use and appreciation by the public so that these resources can continue to enhance the quality of life for all residents of Ohio.
6. **The Trust for Public Land:** The Ohio office of the Trust for Public Land has collaborated with state, county, and city officials to acquire and protect key conservation properties in Ohio since it opened in 1998. The Ohio office has the following goals: (1) preserving open space and land for public access in the watersheds of the Western Reserve, and helping create an infrastructure of parks and protected lands throughout the Ohio & Erie Canal Corridor.
7. **Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition:** The mission of the Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition is to stimulate public interest and support for the protection and preservation of the historical, natural and recreational resources along the route of the old Ohio & Erie Canal. This organization works toward establishing a continuous physical link along or near the planned canal corridor.
8. **The Cuyahoga Valley National Park:** The mission of this National Park is to provide natural resource protection as well as recreation for Northeastern Ohio's residents and visitors. The CVNP is just a short drive from Cleveland and Akron and encompasses 33,000 acres along the banks of the Cuyahoga River. Managed by the National Park Service, this Park combines cultural, historical, recreational, and natural activities in one setting.

Open Space Preservation Tools and Programs

There are many open space preservation tools and programs. The public and private sectors should be encouraged to use the following preservation tools in order to preserve open space.



For more detailed information on these tools and programs, contact the agency or organization listed under each tool or program.

1. Conservation Easements

A conservation easement is a voluntary restriction that the owner agrees to place on a property in order to protect specific resources associated with the property. An easement is a legally binding covenant that is publicly recorded. An easement is given for a specified period of time and is noted on the property's deed. A conservation easement may be used to protect agricultural land and then it is usually referred to as an agricultural conservation easement.

A property owner can either sell or donate the development rights in the easement. The purchaser or holder of the easement has the responsibility to monitor and enforce the development restrictions created by the easement.

Contact: The Medina- Summit Land Conservancy, the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, or Metro Parks Serving Summit County, Summit Soil and Water Conservation District

For Agricultural Conservation Easements Contact: Ohio Department of Agriculture, Center for Farmland Preservation in Northeast Ohio, or USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Summit Soil and Water Conservation District

2. Agricultural Districts

Allow farmers to defer utility assessments until they change the use of the land. They also give farmers legal protection against nuisance suits. Ohio farmers are eligible if they have at least 10 acres of land that have been in agriculture for the past three years. Farmers with smaller acreage may qualify if their land generated a certain amount of gross farm income over the past three years. Property owners must apply to the Summit County Fiscal Office to be considered to be in an Agricultural District.

Contact: The Summit County Fiscal Office, the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation or USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)

3. Forestry Tax Program and CAUV Tax Program

These two programs provide real estate tax reductions for forestry and agricultural purposes. Property owners must apply for the tax deductions. The Summit County Fiscal Office supervises the programs.

Contact: Summit County Fiscal Office, Ohio Division of Forestry, Burton.

4. Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)

A PDR is the option to sell the right to a particular piece of property, but all the other rights remain. It is voluntary and negotiable. Once an agreement is reached between the land owner and a land trust, a permanent deed restriction is placed on the property to ensure that the subject land will not be developed. A PDR may also be referred to as a conservation easement or agricultural conservation easement.

Contact: The Medina-Summit Land Conservancy, the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, or Metro Parks Serving Summit County, Ohio Department of Agriculture, Center for Farmland Preservation in Northeast Ohio



5. Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)

This program offers compensation to a land owner for the protection and restoration of wetlands that exists on a piece of property. The WRP obtains a conservation easement which is managed by the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS).

Contact: USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)

6. Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)

A TDR is a voluntary program, which accomplishes preservation by transferring the right to develop from one area to another. (See Chapter 6 Land Use for further discussion).

Contact: Ohio State University Agriculture Extension Office, or The Countryside Program

7. Open Space Conservation Developments

Conservation Developments can be residential or commercial projects where a particular characteristic of the land is preserved. An analysis of the land is performed to determine where best to locate the structures, typically away from steep slopes, wetland areas or mature trees. This has the effect of retaining rural views, drainage patterns, agricultural uses and historic structures.

This type of development is usually more cost effective for a developer than the typical subdivision because the width and linear feet of streets is often reduced thereby decreasing the total amount of impervious surfaces. Also infrastructure extensions such as water and sewer lines are reduced as well.

Contact: The Countryside Program or the Summit County Department of Development, Planning Division

8. Updating Local Zoning Codes

Local zoning resolutions should be updated periodically. Townships and other local political subdivisions should consider adding Open Space Conservation Districts and Planned Unit Developments (PUD's) to their zoning ordinances and resolutions.

Contact: Individual Township/ pertinent political subdivision, or Summit County Department of Development, Planning Division

9. Planned Infrastructure Extensions and Adequate Public Facilities Plans

The County and each township should perform a comprehensive review of where the water and sewer line expansion would be appropriate in each township.

Contact: Summit County Department of Environmental Services, Individual Township or pertinent political subdivision

10. Bargain Sales

A bargain sale is the sale of land for permanent protection to a conservation organization. The sale price is negotiable but is lower than the fair market value of the property. It benefits the conservation organization in that the land can be bought for a lesser price. The landowner benefits because they receive a profit from the sale, rather than an outright donation of the property. The landowner may be eligible for income and capital gains tax benefits on the land that was donated.



Contact: Metro Parks Serving Summit County, Ohio State University Agricultural Extension Office, the Medina-Summit Land Conservancy, the Cleveland Museum of Natural History or the Countryside Program

11. Land Trusts

Land trusts are local, regional, statewide or national organizations that are established to protect land and its resources. Their goal is to protect land that has natural, ecological, recreational, scenic, or historic value to the community. Land trusts may use land use protection tools such as conservation easements, bargain sales, and land donation.

Contact: The Medina-Summit Land Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy, or The Trust for Public Land

12. Fee Simple Acquisition of land. (See below for the Clean Ohio Fund)

The Clean Ohio Fund

The Clean Ohio Program implements the constitutional authority of Issue 1, which was approved by Ohio voters in November 2000. For the entire state, the program provides \$400 million dollars over four years for "Greenfield" open space conservation and preservation projects and "Brownfield" environmental clean-up projects. The \$400 million bond program works to preserve natural areas and farmland, protect streams, create outdoor recreational opportunities and revitalize urban areas by returning contaminated properties to productive use. The fourth year of funding for the Clean Ohio Greenspace Program has recently been allocated by the State legislature. The Clean Ohio program funding will be drastically reduced after the fourth year unless the Clean Ohio Program is again approved by voters through a bond issue.

For the Clean Ohio Greenspace Program the annual allocation for Summit County has been approximately \$1,495,460, since 2001. Through this program many acres of open space have been preserved in Summit County including 197 acres adjacent to the Singer Lake Basin and Bog area in the City of Green. To date, the total number of acres acquired for open space (through fee simple acquisition) through the Clean Ohio Fund in Summit County has been approximately 452 acres, and additional acres have been protected through the acquisition of conservation easements, local website is www.co.summit.oh.us/executive/capimprov.htm.

Goals and Objectives

This section of the Natural Resources chapter outlines goals and objectives for natural resource decisions, open space preservation and future planning. The overall goal is to preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas. Open space preservation supports smart growth goals by bolstering local economies, preserving critical environmental areas, and guiding new growth into existing communities.

- A. An overall open space network should be created to conserve and protect important natural resources and to assist in structuring the form of urban development.
- B. Using the Summit County Trail & Greenway Plan as a guide, each community should develop a local plan for linking these areas with sidewalks, bikeways and/or trails

- C. Promote compact mixed use developments thereby relieving growth pressures on remaining open space
- D. Invest in the rural economy to preserve agricultural lands. Encourage local communities to utilize land use tools to protect agricultural land and uses.
- E. Use land management techniques and acquisition to protect drinking water sources. Preserving open space upstream can help protect drinking water resources by filtering out contaminants before they enter the community's water system. Critical areas for water quality protection include wetlands, riparian corridors and floodplains.
- F. Educate local communities on the need for groundwater resource protection based on the new mapping information from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources that shows the groundwater pollution potential for Summit County. The groundwater pollution potential mapping program (DRASTIC) ranks areas with respect to relative vulnerability to groundwater contamination.
- G. Preservation of floodplains is an essential component of a good storm water management program. Green infrastructure such as floodplains and wetlands should be preserved because they provide free natural services for flood control.
- H. Encourage the use of low impact design best management practices for better storm water management, to reduce runoff and increase groundwater recharge.
- I. Protect and preserve environmentally sensitive parklands and open space areas, including critical wildlife habitats for the benefit of future generations.
- J. Make sure the entire County is evenly distributed with parks and recreation opportunities.
- K. Preserve the visual integrity of significant scenic views.

Implementation Strategies

- A. Local governments should adopt environmental zoning measures to protect natural resources in their communities. Summit County has recently sponsored a Summit County Township Environmental Planning Education Program Report that provides environmental zoning models for use and adoption.
- B. To ensure that adequate open space is provided for this and future generations, each local community should formulate an open space plan. Metro Parks Serving Summit County should help facilitate this process by helping to coordinate between communities for possible connections.
- C. Communities and local organizations should continue to cooperate to implement the recommendations found in the Summit County Trail & Greenway Plan (2001).
- D. Encourage all the communities in the County to adopt the County riparian setback regulations, if they have not already done so. Riparian areas reduce flow velocity, increase the storage of water and minimize downstream flood impacts.

- E. Since the County has experienced flooding problems and so little of the original wetlands remain, it is recommended that communities should adopt a policy of requiring that there be no net loss of wetlands permitted in any watershed.
- F. Communities should develop local land use controls so isolated wetlands (of a certain size) be retained in their natural state to assist in flood control, pollution abatement and to protect wildlife habitat.
- G. Floodplain regulations in the County should be strengthened so that there is a stronger policy for redirecting development away from the 100 year floodplain. By preserving floodplains in a natural vegetated state, land use controls can reduce flooding risks to downstream properties.
- H. Development on steep slopes can create erosion and landslide problems. Therefore, communities should adopt environmental review measures to try to limit development on steep slopes.
- I. Local governments should consider and develop programs and policies to protect its woodland resources by providing incentives for tree preservation on private property during development.
- J. Local governments should encourage more use of native plants in landscaping because this reduces water and energy consumption and provides habitat for wildlife.
- K. Encourage setbacks in the new developments to protect floodplains, wetlands, and river corridors.
- L. Strictly regulate erosion, sedimentation, and storm water runoff from new developments.
- M. Provide integral open space within newly developed areas, especially through a mandatory dedication of local open space in the development process.
- N. Improve air quality by minimizing sprawling land use patterns and promoting compact development.
- O. Encourage energy conservation and the use of cleaner burning fuels.
- P. Local communities should support farmers markets and the growing market for high quality, locally grown food, and thereby support local farms.
- Q. The Center for Farmland Preservation in Northeast Ohio, the Ohio State University Agricultural Extension Office, or Summit County should add an Economic Development staff person that works with rural land owners to promote rural economy uses just in Summit County. This targeted effort should help to preserve some of the remaining agricultural uses and open space in the county.



- R. It is important to preserve biological diversity and protect wildlife habitat. There should be more review of proposed new development to ensure long term survival of key wildlife habitat and movement opportunities to minimize wildlife fragmentation and disturbance.
- S. A County wide study should be done to determine what and where is the key critical wildlife habitat left that should be preserved. This Wildlife Habitat Study could be done in cooperation with Metro Parks Serving Summit County.
- T. Preserve the priority areas for preservation identified in the Natural Resources chapter. Habitat protection for plants and wildlife insures a strong ecosystem that can support an abundance of wildlife, and also provides passive recreational opportunities. Form a Countywide Open Space Committee that will work on developing a county open space plan based on the priority areas for preservation that have been identified in this Plan.
- U. Public parks and recreational facilities should be fostered. The need for more trails for walking, running and bicycling should be examined.
- V. Metro Parks, Serving Summit County should take the lead in wetlands preservation, enhancement, restoration and creation.

Chapter 10 Transportation

Introduction

Over the last century the portion of the average household budget devoted to transportation has risen from 2% to 20%, and there are more cars on the road than licensed drivers. More than 50% of land in many city centers is now devoted to streets and parking lots.¹

Transportation and transportation-related issues are a major component of daily life and impact many of the other subjects previously discussed in the Summit County General Plan. Summit County's history and development pattern is based largely on the completion of the Ohio & Erie Canal in the 1830s. Construction of the railroads and highway system further directed development. Land use, housing and economic development are all intricately tied to availability of, and access to, transportation. Finally, transportation certainly impacts quality of life.

Historically, urban communities and neighborhoods in Summit County and across the United States were designed and built to accommodate pedestrians. However, over the past fifty years, dispersed development patterns and separation of land uses have led to increasing reliance on personal automobiles and to the elimination of many characteristics that support walkable communities.

As people spend more and more time in cars traveling between work, home, school, shopping and entertainment venues, traffic congestion becomes an increasingly vexing part of everyday life. Over the past two decades, congestion has spread significantly. In 1982, 68% of peak travel in the U.S. occurred in uncongested conditions; by 2003 only 33% of peak travel was uncongested. While not as dramatic as the national figures, the figures for the Akron and Cleveland urban areas show that only 6% of peak travel in 1982 was congested. This increased to 32% in 2003.²

It has long been observed that new road capacity fills up almost as fast as it is constructed. Known in the transportation world as "induced demand," studies show that as large new roads and highways are constructed, people actually change their driving habits to take advantage of the new infrastructure. In the short term, people may switch from carpooling or using transit to take advantage of traveling on the new (temporarily) less-congested road. In the long term, with increased accessibility of adjacent land, development patterns shift to create more growth and new traffic in the area.

In response, communities are beginning to implement new approaches to transportation planning, such as better coordinating land use and transportation; increasing the availability of

¹ Project for Public Spaces, June 2005 newsletter

² Texas Transportation Institute, 2005 Urban Mobility Study, <http://mobility.tamu.edu/ums/report/>



high quality transit service; designing well-connected road networks; and ensuring connectivity between pedestrian, bike, transit, and road facilities. These smart growth approaches involve matching different transportation types with supportive development patterns to create a variety of transportation options.

Overview

Summit County is an important part of the Northeast Ohio region, which contains the metropolitan areas of Akron, Cleveland, Canton, and Youngstown. Together, these four areas are home to over four million people. Because of the close proximity of these major urban centers, Akron area highways carry a large amount of intercity commuter traffic and a high volume of intrastate and interstate freight traffic.

In order to serve regional transportation needs, the Akron metropolitan area (which includes Summit County, Portage County and the Chippewa Township area of Wayne County) contains approximately 165 miles of freeways and expressways. These include I-76, I-77, I-80 (the Ohio Turnpike), I-271, I-277, I-480, and portions of US-224, SR-8, SR-21, and SR-59 (the Akron Innerbelt). The METRO Regional Transit Authority is the major public transportation provider serving Summit County. Major freight railroads in the area include Norfolk Southern, CSX, Wheeling & Lake Erie, and the Akron-Barberton Cluster Railway. The rapidly growing Akron-Canton Regional Airport serves the area with several major commercial airlines.

The population of the Akron metropolitan area is expected to increase approximately 4.4%, to 737,000, by 2030. The Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS) estimates that an additional 24,000 housing units will be built and 43,000 new jobs will occur in association with this population growth. Most of the population and housing growth will likely take place outside of the established central cities, with the largest part of the growth expected in northern Summit County. The area's changing economic structure and continued suburbanization will result in further dispersal of population and employment. These factors, together with a declining household size and increased auto ownership, are expected to have an impact on travel patterns, increasing traffic congestion.

As the region grows over the next 25 years, it is clear that transportation improvements must be made to accommodate this growth. The influx of new residents, households, and jobs will require improvements to existing highways, a restructuring of public transportation services, and the construction of new pedestrian and bicycle facilities. The challenge of long-range transportation planning is to accommodate this growth while maintaining the long-term social, economic, and environmental well-being of the area.³

³ This section of the plan borrows heavily from the AMATS *2030 Regional Transportation Plan*.



Summit County Transportation Organizations

- Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS). AMATS is one of seventeen Ohio regional transportation planning agencies, known as metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs). AMATS is the federally designated agency responsible for directing the comprehensive transportation planning process in Summit and Portage counties and the Chippewa Township area in Wayne County. This responsibility entails the development of regional transportation policies, plans and programs. AMATS prepares a long-term Regional Transportation Plan that is updated every few years and a short-term Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).⁴
- METRO Regional Transit Authority. METRO Regional Transit Authority operates public transportation bus service throughout Summit County. It also administers the RIDESHARE! Program in Summit County. This is a federally supported program that helps commuters find potential carpool or vanpool partners. METRO operations are supported with a permanent 0.25% countywide sales tax.
- Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT). ODOT is one of Ohio's largest state agencies, with 12 regional district offices that administer a number of different funding programs. Although most of ODOT's annual expenditures are devoted to the maintenance and preservation of the existing highway network, a fairly significant amount of funding is available for local and regional projects. Summit County is located in District 4, which also includes Ashtabula, Mahoning, Portage, Stark and Trumbull counties.
- Summit County Engineer. The office of the Summit County Engineer works with AMATS, ODOT and other transportation planning agencies in transportation projects to help meet the specific transportation needs within Summit County using local, state, and federal monies. Along with other members of the local communities, the Summit County Engineer plays a pivotal role in assuring that state and federal funds are put to the best use throughout Summit County. Communities can partner with the Summit County Engineer to apply for funding of roadway improvements along County and township highways. The Summit County Engineer also employs a qualified staff that can perform project management, engineering design, and construction inspection services.

⁴ The most recent long-term plan is the *2030 Regional Transportation Plan*. It is available on the AMATS website, along with the *2006-2009 Transportation Improvement Program*, at <http://ci.akron.oh.us/AMATS/>.

Transportation System Inventory & Existing Conditions

In its broadest sense, a transportation system can be defined as any means used to move people and/or products from one place to another. Taken together, these individual transportation options create the larger community or regional transportation system. The regional transportation system of which Summit County is a part accommodates a variety of modes of travel including driving, public transportation, bicycling and walking.⁵

Roads and Highways

The Akron metropolitan area (Summit and Portage counties and Chippewa Township in Wayne County) contains 4,157 miles of roadways. More than half (2,722 miles) are located within the more urbanized Summit County. Each roadway is categorized in accordance with its federal functional classification, which includes the following seven categories: interstates, freeways/expressways, principal arterials, minor arterials, urban collectors/major rural collectors, minor rural collectors and local roadways. These roadways are shown on Map 10.1. Interstates, freeways, expressways, arterials, and most collectors are eligible for federal funding. Local roadways are not eligible for federal funds and are the sole responsibility of the local jurisdiction in which they are located. The roadway categories are described below.

- Interstates, freeways, and expressways are divided highways with limited access to abutting properties and intersecting highways. They provide a high-speed option for passenger vehicles and trucks traveling long distances. The Akron metropolitan area is well served by the existing highway system. Summit County contains 121 miles of these roadways, including: I-76, I-77, I-80 (the Ohio Turnpike), I-271, I-277, I-480, and portions of SR-8, SR-21, SR-59 (the Akron Innerbelt), and US-224. The local interstate system was completed in the 1970s and no new interstates are anticipated to be constructed in the area between now and 2030.
- Arterials primarily serve longer through trips at a moderate speed. They provide access to the major commercial and business areas and serve as a connection between the freeway system, collectors, and local streets. Summit County contains 364 miles of these roadways.
- Collectors serve as a connection between arterials and local roadways. They usually have lower speed limits than arterials and serve shorter trips. Collectors provide direct access to residential, commercial, and

Table 1:

Federal Roadway Functional Classification: Summit County

Rural Roads (total)	257
Interstate	14
Principal Arterial	0
Minor Arterial	11
Major Collector	26
Minor Collector	10
Local	196
Urban Roads (total)	2,464
Interstate	76
Freeway & Expressway	31
Principal Arterial	105
Minor Arterial	248
Collector	271
Local	1,732

Total 2,722

Source: AMATS

⁵ The information contained within this transportation system inventory is derived from the AMATS 2030 Regional Transportation Plan unless otherwise noted. Additional detail for each element is available in the AMATS plan.



industrial areas. They also help to divert traffic from local roadways. Summit County contains 307 miles of these roadways.

- Local roadways primarily serve residential neighborhoods and rural areas. Through traffic is discouraged on local roadways by maintaining low speed limits and limiting the number of direct connections to collectors. Summit County contains 1,928 miles of these roadways.

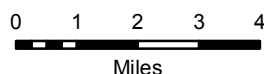
Map 10.1 Federal Functional Classification of Highways



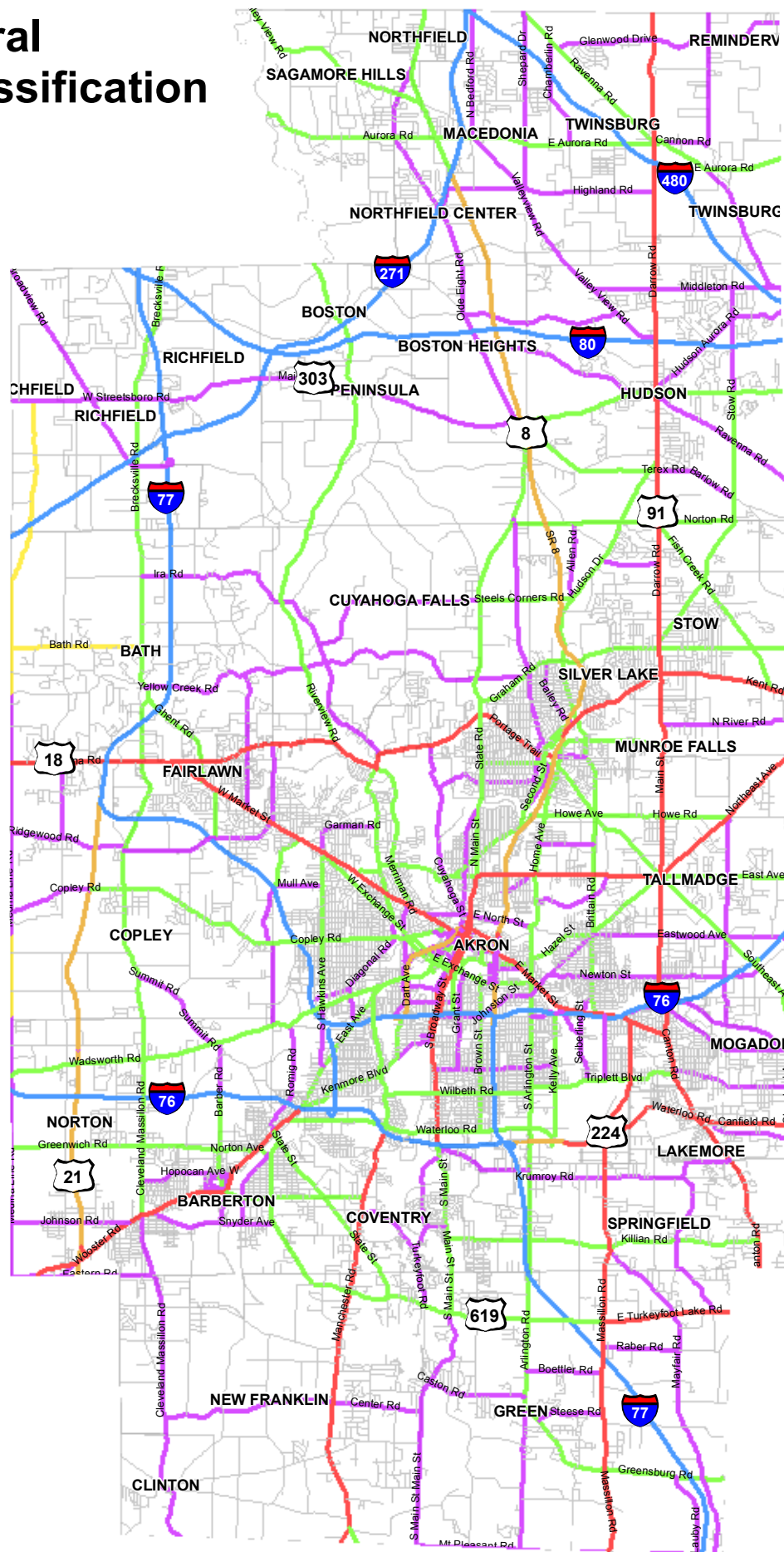
- Interstate
- Freeway/Expressway
- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Urban Collector/
Major Rural Collector
- Minor Rural Collector
- Local



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Source:
AMATS



Public Transportation

Public transportation service is an important element of the regional transportation system. It helps meet the needs of area residents by: (1) providing basic mobility for those persons who, due to age, disability, income, or other circumstances, have inadequate access to a personal automobile to meet their travel needs; and (2) providing an effective means of transportation for many people who want an alternative to driving a car. Public transportation also contributes to many regional goals including energy conservation, improved air quality, and reduced traffic congestion.

METRO Regional Transit Authority currently operates 22 local bus routes, 2 neighborhood circulator routes, 5 town center routes, and 3 long-distance express bus routes. METRO also provides service under contracts with the Akron Board of Education and the University of Akron. METRO's Special Citizens Area Transportation (SCAT) service provides a comprehensive set of demand responsive services including: (1) door-to-door service for the elderly and disabled; (2) ADA paratransit service; (3) enhanced medical transportation; and (4) contract paratransit service for several social service agencies. Five "grocery store" routes (one per weekday) operate between senior apartment complexes and nearby grocery stores as a supplement to the SCAT service. METRO also contracts with the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad to operate seasonal roundtrip service from downtown Akron to the Cuyahoga Valley National Park. METRO's bus fleet is currently comprised of 135 large buses and 71 small buses.

METRO operates a number of facilities that support the services it provides. The Main Street Transitway, completed in 1991 as a joint project with the City of Akron, features widened sidewalks, landscaping, and substantial passenger shelters on Main Street in downtown Akron. This facility is currently the primary transfer location for the METRO system. METRO is in the process of developing an off-street intermodal facility in downtown Akron, which will replace the Main Street Transitway as the primary transfer location for METRO in the downtown area. When completed the facility should provide a secure, comfortable waiting area for METRO passengers and offer connections to other transportation services, including taxis, long distance bus service, and possibly rail service.

METRO operates three other transit centers located in Barberton, at the Akron Zoo and near the Rolling Acres Mall. METRO also serves eight park-and-ride lots, where passengers can park their cars and board METRO buses to reach their final destination.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

Bicycle and pedestrian facilities and other transportation enhancements are an important part of the transportation system in the Akron metropolitan area. Bicycle and pedestrian travel provide increased independence for children and are economical forms of transportation for adults making short trips.

Bicycling and walking also continue to increase in popularity as recreational activities in the region. Major Summit County cycling and pedestrian facilities include: (1) the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail, which will eventually run for 110 miles from Cleveland to New Philadelphia; (2) the



Summit County Hike & Bike Trail; (3) trail facilities in the MetroParks, Serving Summit County; and (4) trail facilities in the Cuyahoga Valley National Park.

The pedestrian system is the primary transportation mode for short trips within the central business, or downtown, districts of denser cities and villages. The ability of these areas to succeed as mixed-use centers of activity is directly affected by the quality of the pedestrian environment. Pedestrian facilities also provide improved access for pedestrians in urban, suburban, and rural areas. They promote neighborhood cohesion, reduce travel time and distance, and play a role in reducing traffic congestion and improving air quality.

Pedestrian facilities include more than just the traditional sidewalk. These facilities also include walkways, crosswalks and pedestrian signals; curb cuts and wheelchair ramps which provide access to people with disabilities; bus stops and other transit loading areas; bridges and tunnels; and stairs and escalators.

Rail Facilities

Rail facilities in Summit County are generally limited to freight transportation (see Map 10.2). Summit County is served by two Class I railroads: Norfolk Southern and CSX Transportation.⁶ Norfolk Southern's primary route between Chicago and the eastern United States passes through Macedonia, Twinsburg and Hudson, with 55-65 trains per day. One of CSX's two primary east-west routes also passes through Summit County (Clinton, New Franklin, Barberton, Akron, Cuyahoga Falls, Munroe Falls and Stow), with 35-45 trains per day. Summit County is also served by one Class II regional railroad, the Wheeling & Lake Erie Railway.⁷ While the 2-7 trains per day on its routes is much lower than the area's Class I railroad, the Wheeling & Lake Erie lines carry most of the carload freight traffic that originates or terminates in central and southern Summit County. Four rail yards are located within Summit County: one each in Macedonia and Twinsburg, and two in Akron (Hill Yard and Brittain Yard). The Akron Barberton Cluster Railway is a short line subsidiary of the Wheeling and Lake Erie Railway that provides service on several segments of rail lines in Summit County. Two other short lines, the RJ Corman Railroad and the Ohio Central Railroad, enter the extreme southwestern corner of Summit County in order to interchange cars with CSX.

Although Amtrak currently does not service Summit County, it has provided passenger rail service with a stop in Akron in the past. Service was most recently discontinued in March 2005. Two Amtrak trains still stop in Cleveland on daily runs between Chicago/Washington DC and Chicago/New York City.

⁶ A Class I railroad has more than \$266.7 million in annual revenue.

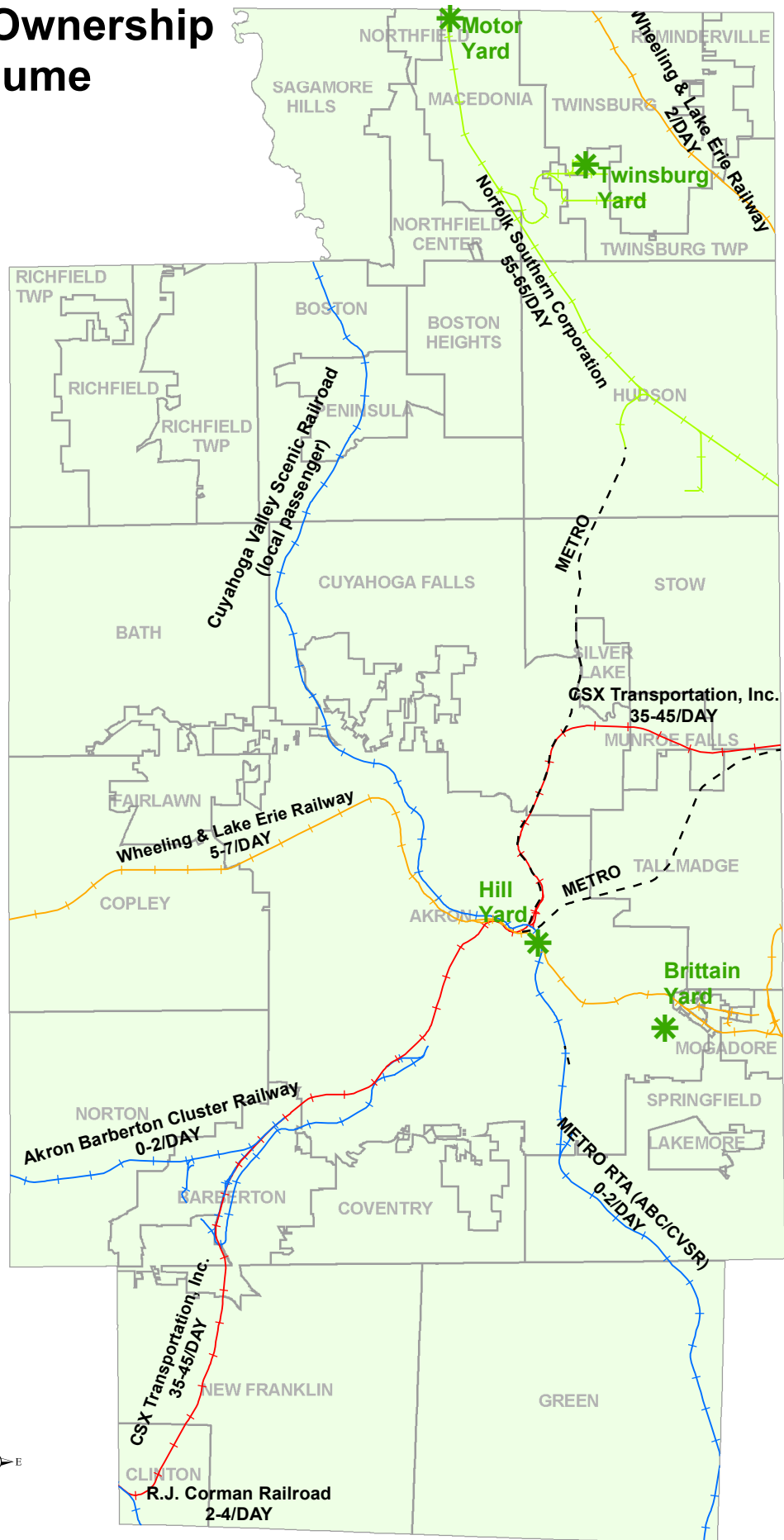
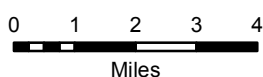
⁷ A Class II railroad has \$40-266.7 million in annual revenue.

Map 10.2 Rail Ownership and Traffic Volume

- +— CSX Transportation, Inc.
- +— Norfolk Southern Corporation
- +— Wheeling & Lake Erie Railway
- +— all others
- - - Out of Service
- ✱ Rail Yards



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The Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad (CVSR) provides Summit County's only passenger rail service along the old Valley Railway between Cleveland and Canton. Built in 1880 to primarily transport coal from south of Canton to Cleveland's growing industries, the Valley Railway also served the farmers, merchants and factories along its route. The popularity of the automobile caused a decline in passenger traffic on the line and passenger service ended in 1963. The last freight train operated by the Chessie system ran in 1985.

Today, the historic rails are owned by the National Park Service. The CVSR operates recreational excursion train service through the Cuyahoga Valley National Park in cooperation with the National Park Service.⁸ Bicyclists and hikers can flag the train at any of the boarding stations along the route. Since 1999, METRO has contracted with the CVSR to operate roundtrip service from downtown Akron to the National Park on summer and fall weekends.



Figure 1: The Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railway operates recreational excursion trains in Summit County and the Cuyahoga Valley National Park.

In Summit County, the rail line travels through the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, Akron, Springfield Township and Green. Currently, the northernmost station is located in Independence (Cuyahoga County) and the southernmost station is located in Canton (Stark County). Six additional boarding sites provide access along the route. The CVSR hopes to extend excursion rail service into downtown Cleveland by 2008, providing Greater Clevelanders easy access to the ski areas, parks and other attractions located in Summit County.

Map 10.2 also shows rail lines that are currently out of service in the AMATS area. These lines may be candidates for preservation in the future, should the current owners decide to dispose of them. These rail rights of way could be preserved to provide local freight service, passenger rail service, or bike and pedestrian trails.

⁸ The Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad <http://www.cvsr.com>

Airports

The Northeast Ohio region is served by two major airports—Cleveland Hopkins International Airport, located in Cuyahoga County, and the Akron-Canton Regional Airport, located in Summit County in the City of Green. Summit County is also home to the publicly-owned Akron Fulton International Airport and the Kent State University Airport.

Major passenger airlines at the Akron-Canton Regional Airport include AirTran, Delta, Frontier, Northwest Airlines, United Express, and US Airways. The airport has experienced significant growth in passenger traffic over the past several years, and is in the midst of \$50 million in capital improvements, including runway extensions, redesign/expansion of departure gates, terminal improvements, baggage claim extension, and improved access.

The Akron Fulton Airport has been serving the general and business aviation community since 1929, and currently offers FBO (fixed-base operator) services including fuel, passenger and pilot lobbies, car rental, catering, aircraft repair and avionics service, flight training, aircraft rental and charter, and pilot supplies.

Table 2:

<i>Summit County & Northeast Ohio Airports</i>				
Airport	Akron-Canton Regional	Akron Fulton International	Cleveland Hopkins International	Kent State University
Location	Green	Akron	Cleveland	Stow
Runways	3	2	4	3 (2 closed)
Airlines	6	0	22	0
Aircraft operations (avg/day)	361	71	708	198
commercial aircraft	7%	0%	51%	0%
local general/private aviation	12%	66%	0%	82%
transient general/private aviation	50%	33%	8%	15%
air taxi/charter aircraft	19%	1%	41%	2%
military	12%	<1%	<1%	<1%

Source: AirNav.com

Freight Transportation

Freight transportation is defined as the movement of goods from one location to another. Freight transportation tends to be more multimodal than passenger transportation, meaning that goods frequently change modes of transportation (i.e., planes, trains & trucks) between origin and destination. Also, freight traffic has a greater negative impact on the transportation infrastructure than passenger traffic due to the heavier vehicles needed to transport goods and the longer distances those goods are transported.⁹

Summit County's highways and rail lines are both key components of freight transportation in Northeast Ohio. While the Akron-Canton Airport has experienced a substantial increase in usage by passengers, it does not have a significant role in movement of freight by air. No substantial increase in air freight activity is expected at this time.

Freight transportation is an important aspect of the AMATS area's transportation network. Despite the nationwide shift towards more of a service based economy, the AMATS area continues to be home to a significant amount of manufacturing activity. This translates into a large number of freight movements originating or terminating in the AMATS area. In addition, due its location roughly midway between the Chicago region and the metropolitan areas along the east coast, a large amount of freight traffic simply passes through the AMATS area. Thus, the routes utilized in the movement of this freight traffic are not only important to the AMATS area, but also to the nation.

The highest average daily truck volumes (10,001 to 15,000 trucks per day) in Summit County are found on I-76 between Akron and Portage County, and on I-77 between Akron and Green. Between 5,001 and 10,000 trucks per day can be found on the remaining interstates in Summit County, including the northern leg of I-77, I-271, I-480 and the Ohio Turnpike. These routes carry not only the freight originating or terminating in the area, but also the interstate goods movements mentioned above. A number of arterial and collector roadways also have significant truck volumes due to the concentration of industrial and warehousing land uses in the areas served by those facilities (see Map 10.3).

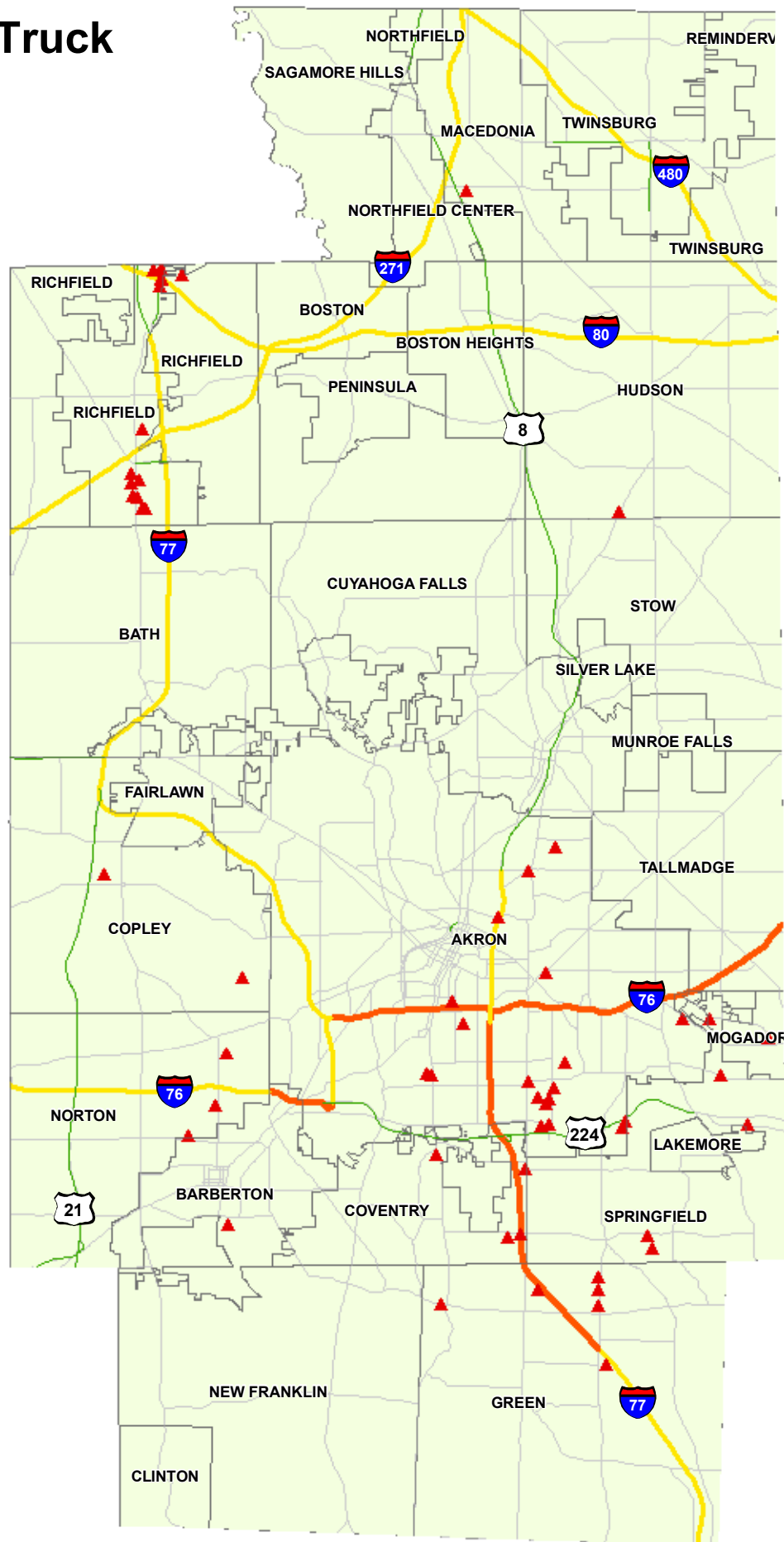
Based on Federal Highway Administration criteria, there are no major intermodal freight terminals in Summit County. There are, however, two major truck/rail intermodal terminals in adjacent Cuyahoga County: (1) the Norfolk Southern Maple Heights Intermodal Facility in southeastern Cuyahoga County; and (2) the CSX Transportation Cleveland Intermodal Terminal in northeastern Cuyahoga County. Due to their close proximity, these facilities function as the primary truck/rail terminals for Summit County. There are a number of truck terminals in Summit County. Two primary clusters are located in southeast Akron near the I-224/I-77 interchange and in Richfield, near the I-271/I-77 interchange (see Map 10.3).

⁹ The 2030 *Freight Transportation Needs* report prepared by AMATS provides additional detail on this topic. The report is available at <http://ci.akron.oh.us/AMATS/>.

Map 10.3 Daily Truck Volume

Average Daily Trucks

- 1000 - 5000
- 5001 - 10000
- 10001 - 15000
- ▲ Truck Terminal



Summit County, Ohio
"Charting a Course for the 21st Century"
 James B. McCarthy, Executive

0 1 2 3 4
 Miles



Source:
 ODOT 2001
 AMATS

Smart Growth & Transportation

Smart growth aims to build upon and take advantage of existing resources. Directing growth to already developed areas, rehabilitating and reusing existing buildings, and encouraging infill development are examples of this approach. In much the same way, there are many opportunities to improve elements of the existing transportation system instead of building new roads and highways. For example: existing roads can be repainted with slightly narrower lanes to accommodate a bike lane; on-street parking can be added to overly wide roads to slow traffic; and strings of parking lots along major roads can be interconnected to allow for internal navigation between businesses.

Providing people with more choices in housing, shopping, communities, and transportation is a key smart growth concept. Many communities are seeking to expand these choices and improve their quality of life by focusing on people instead of cars.

The Land Use & Transportation Link

Transportation needs and concerns are directly related to where and how people live, work, and shop. Through the land use planning process, local communities can influence the location and design of new development. These land use decisions, in turn, have a great impact on transportation issues at all levels. Similarly, transportation-related decisions may affect land use, both directly and indirectly. Understanding the land use and transportation link is critical to ensuring good planning (and good results) within a community.

One of the transportation/land use issues that many communities struggle with is the jobs housing balance. Because the distances between where people live and work have gotten larger and larger, commuters face longer drives. Many people would like to have shorter commutes, but there are few housing choices where they work or few jobs where they live. Other people simply need jobs close to where they live because they don't own a car or don't have access to public transportation that goes where they need to. A jobs-housing balance tries to create a relative equilibrium of jobs to homes in a given area, with a goal of providing more housing opportunities in major employment centers and more employment opportunities near residential concentrations.

Another transportation/land use issue common in Summit County involves commercial development patterns. Much of today's commercial development lines the county's major roads in long, seemingly never-ending "strips." This style of development leads to traffic congestion, safety concerns, and unattractive development. Many of the land use-transportation issues are addressed by the smart growth principles discussed below.

Although there are some transportation problems that cannot be addressed at the local level, there are many actions local communities can take to reduce traffic congestion, improve safety, improve livability and quality of life, and give residents more transportation options.

Smart Growth Principles

A number of the ten smart growth principles set forth by the Smart Growth Network involve transportation and transportation-related issues:¹⁰

- Create Walkable Neighborhoods. Walkable communities enhance mobility for people that are not able (or do not want to) drive, reduce air and groundwater pollution by fuels and emissions, and create increased opportunities for social interaction among residents. As a smart growth strategy, simply establishing walking trails is not enough; instead, walking should be an attractive option for accomplishing daily tasks.
- Foster Distinctive, Attractive Communities with a Strong Sense of Place. While roads, highways and other transportation networks are part of every community, distinctive, attractive communities use them to help create a strong sense of place. Attention to design details such as road width, landscaping, signage, access and circulation patterns, parking options and treatments, and accommodation of pedestrians and bicyclists all contribute to a community's pride and sense of place.
- Mix Land Uses. Mixing land uses—commercial, residential, recreational, educational and others—in specific neighborhoods and districts or throughout the community allows people to make a transportation choice. Mixing land uses makes it possible for people to walk, bike or drive a short distance to their destinations. Kids can bike or walk to school or the library; adults can choose to walk, bike or drive to run errands or go to work. This is typically not the case in most existing suburban areas, where developments often have one use and one use only – all residential, all office, or all commercial. Public transit is often able to provide better service to more people in mixed-use neighborhoods, and people that can't or don't want to drive have multiple options for getting from one place to another.
- Provide a Variety of Transportation Choices. Providing more transportation choices reduces the need to use a car to get from one place to another. Walking, bicycling and taking the bus or train become viable options for trips to work or the store.
- Strengthen and Direct Development Towards Existing Communities. Directing development towards areas already served by infrastructure allows communities to utilize existing resources (and reduce development costs), conserve open space and preserve irreplaceable natural resources on the urban fringe. Often, these areas are the traditional downtown cores which feature compact, mixed-use development. These types of areas create opportunities for more transportation options.

¹⁰ See Smart Growth Network website (www.smartgrowth.org) for additional information on smart growth.

Planning Issues

Summit County Subdivision Regulations¹¹

The Summit County Subdivision Regulations address the planning, general design and arrangement of streets within new subdivisions in the unincorporated areas of the county. Summit County Engineer standards regulate the detailed design and construction of streets. Generally, the Subdivision Regulations require that proposed streets and public access to adjacent unplatted lands be designed so that the entire area can be served with a coordinated public street system. The street systems of proposed subdivisions are also required to coordinate with existing, proposed and planned streets outside of the subdivision.

The Subdivision Regulations also address other transportation-related issues in new subdivisions such as sidewalks, bike paths and trails. The Summit County Planning Commission may require sidewalks/walkways where the Summit County Planning Commission Office or Summit County Engineer determines that pedestrian access to schools, playgrounds, shopping centers, transportation, and other community facilities is necessary (after consultation with the Township in which the Subdivision is located). Right-of-way or easements for bicycle paths and trails shall be required if such paths or trails have been specified as part of a Township Plan or as part of a local or regional bikeway or trails Greenways Plan adopted by the Summit County Planning Commission.

Safety & Security

The prevention of accidents, assurance of passenger safety on public transportation, recovery from natural disasters, and the safe handling of hazardous materials have been traditional transportation and safety concerns. Since September 11, 2001, the possibility of terrorist attacks on vital transportation facilities is of greater concern. AMATS has integrated security into its Regional Transportation Plan in ways that complement other transportation goals.

To increase safety for motorists at some dangerous intersections, the Summit County Engineer is recommending the use of roundabouts in place of traditional intersections with traffic signals or stops signs. Additional information on roundabouts is included later on in this chapter.

Safe Routes to School

In the 1960s, more than 60% of children walked or rode their bikes to school. Today, that figure is approximately 15%. The primary reason for this dramatic decrease is linked to development patterns that have changed considerably since the 1960s. Suburban development has sprawled outward from more compact cities and towns, and new schools are typically built on large parcels of land at some distance from the homes they serve. But children that live close enough to their school to walk or ride their bike often don't, primarily due to safety concerns.¹²

Enabling and encouraging children to walk and bicycle to school clearly has many benefits, such as providing them with fresh air and exercise, reducing automobile traffic around schools,

¹¹ The Summit County Subdivision Regulations are available on the Summit County website at <http://www.co.summit.oh.us/executive/planning.htm>.

¹² http://www.americabikes.org/resources_policy_saferoutes.asp.



reducing fuel consumption and pollution, increasing community involvement, and encouraging healthy, active lifestyles from an early age.

Safe Routes to Schools is a popular program designed to decrease traffic and pollution and increase the health of children and the community. The program promotes walking and biking to school through education and incentives that show how much fun it can be. The program also addresses the safety concerns of parents by encouraging greater enforcement of traffic laws, educating the public, and exploring ways to create safer streets. Successful programs exist throughout the U.S. and Canada.

Complete Streets

In the past fifty years or so, roads have been built to allow cars and trucks to get from point to point as quickly as safely possible. Little, if any, consideration has been given to accommodating pedestrians or bicyclists.

However, in the last three federal transportation bills, ISTEA (Intermodal Surface Transportation Equity Act, 1991-1997), TEA-21 (Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, 1998-2003), and SAFETEA – LU (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users 2005-2009), Congress established the principle that the safe accommodation of bicycling and walking is the responsibility of state and local transportation agencies and that this responsibility extends to the planning, design, operation, maintenance and management of the transportation system. Current federal transportation law says that bicycle and pedestrian improvements are an eligible activity in all the major funding programs, and that state and local transportation plans are required to include consideration of bicycle and pedestrian projects and programs.

In April 2005, the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) issued a policy statement on the topic, which states: "When developing a transportation improvement project as part of the ODOT Project Development Process, ODOT will consider and analyze as appropriate how, when and where to accommodate bicycle and/or pedestrian travel within the planning study area. Consideration should be based on...safety, feasibility, and local desire and potential for use." ¹³

The vision of "complete streets" embodies the goal of roads that routinely accommodate travel by all modes of transportation—whether by motor vehicle, foot, bicycle, or other means. A complete street in a rural area may look quite different from a complete street in a highly urban area, but both are designed to balance safety and convenience for everyone using the road. ¹⁴

¹³ Policy 20-004(P) is available at <http://www.dot.state.oh.us/>.

¹⁴ More information on complete streets can be found at http://www.americabikes.org/bicycleaccomodation_factsheet_completestreets.asp.

Benefits of Complete Streets

- ❖ Improve safety.
- ❖ Encourage more walking and bicycling for health.
- ❖ Can help ease congestion by providing travel choices and increasing overall capacity of the transportation network.
- ❖ Help children get physical activity and gain independence by providing room for bicycling and walking.
- ❖ Can improve air quality by allowing driving trips to be replaced with walking or bicycling trips.
- ❖ Make fiscal sense, because integrating sidewalks, bike lanes, transit amenities, and safe crossings into the initial design of a project spares the expense of retrofits later.

Source: America Bikes

Accommodating Pedestrians

Although cars are an important part of our transportation network, so are people. Unfortunately, pedestrian and bicyclist needs are often addressed second to the needs of the automobile. Walking is an important transportation mode for several reasons:

- Walking is the primary transportation mode for short trips in downtown areas and areas with higher intensities of development.
- Walking is an alternative mode of transportation for those individuals who are not able to drive or choose not to drive.
- Walking is a supplemental mode of transportation that is universally used. Nearly everyone who uses a car, bus, plane, train or some other form of transportation must walk at least a short distance to reach his or her destination.
- Walking is the least disruptive mode of transportation since it requires little space, generates no air pollution, and makes no noise. Walking is a form of exercise with measurable health benefits, and the presence of pedestrians adds vitality and life to an area.

A solid pedestrian network helps to promote walkability (which in turn, cuts down on vehicle use); promotes public safety for those who can't drive; and allows public transit to be more useful to its users. Local governments can best create a good pedestrian network by requiring sidewalks along all streets, major driveways, parking areas and other appropriate locations in their subdivision and land development ordinance.

Accommodating Bicyclists

Accommodating bicycles is important for many of the same reasons as those for pedestrians; primarily, it is an alternative mode of transportation for those individuals who are not able to drive or choose not to drive. Bicycling requires little space, generates no air or noise pollution, and promotes improved fitness and health benefits.

Communities can help ease their traffic problems simply by improving bicyclist safety and infrastructure. Bicycle networks need not be expensive - space on existing roads can be

upgraded to be more inviting to cyclists. Generally, arterial and collector streets should include bike lanes or wide curbside or parking lanes whenever possible. These types of roadways provide key access for bicyclists and help move bicyclists over barriers such as freeways, rivers and rail lines. Most neighborhood streets with existing low speeds and auto volumes do not require bike lanes or other special accommodations, as they already provide good bike access. Bicycle and multi-use paths are best located adjacent to rivers and lakes or within greenways or abandoned rail line corridors so that crossing conflicts are minimized.

The *Summit County Trail and Greenway Plan* identifies existing trails and regionally significant trail and greenway opportunities within the county, with the objective of creating a system of interconnected trail and greenway corridors. The plan builds upon and identifies connections to the existing Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail and the MetroParks, Serving Summit County Hike & Bike Trail. The multi-purpose trails envisioned would provide for a variety of recreational opportunities, including pedestrian, bicyclist and equestrian use.

The Summit County Engineer has a plan for adding/ widening asphalt berms on County roads leading into and out of the Cuyahoga Valley National Park (see Map. 10.4). This will enable people to bicycle more easily and with more safety to the National Park. This can also reduce the amount of vehicles in the National Park.

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)

Transit-oriented development creates mixed-use, higher density communities that encourage people to live near transit services and decrease their dependence on driving. This type of development improves transit efficiency and reduces traffic congestion. Residents benefit through easy access and convenience to jobs, retail, schools, and other destinations. This takes advantage of transit infrastructure while relieving pressure on congested roadways and decreasing air pollution associated with automobile travel.

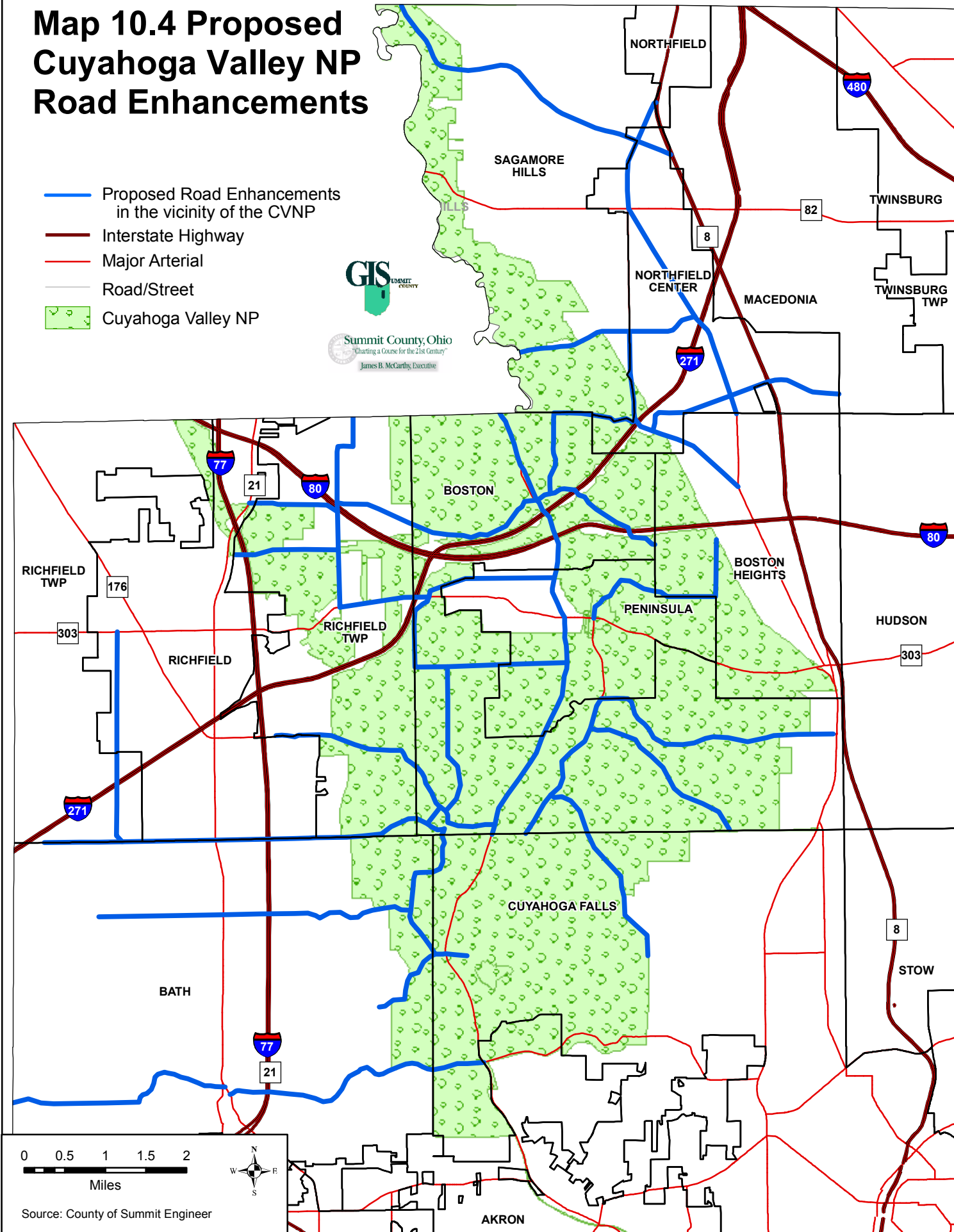
Some of the defining characteristics of TOD include:

- Good access, on foot or bicycle, to fast, frequent transit service (usually, but not necessarily, with a rail component)
- Housing options ranging from multi-family condos and rentals to single-family homes
- A variety of goods and services available in the immediate area, often in a mixed-use setting
- Safe, pleasant and universal access to those goods and services for pedestrians, bicyclists and people with disabilities
- Public space that is accessible and inviting

Transit-oriented design is a viable strategy for urban redevelopment in Summit County. With its emphasis on dense, walkable neighborhoods, TOD can help revitalize older neighborhoods by bringing people back into areas where housing, shopping, and transportation to other destinations are available. This reduces pressure for developing in more remote locations, reduces automobile dependency and improves access to economic and educational opportunities for everyone. It also plays a role in the revitalization of street life and the public

Map 10.4 Proposed Cuyahoga Valley NP Road Enhancements

- Proposed Road Enhancements in the vicinity of the CVNP
- Interstate Highway
- Major Arterial
- Road/Street
- Cuyahoga Valley NP



Source: County of Summit Engineer

realm, a critical component of a vibrant and healthy mixed-use neighborhood. Transit should be strengthened or developed in areas where there is the potential ridership to support it, and, in turn, development efforts should be directed to areas where transit resources already exist. Various experts suggest that a successful "transit village" should extend roughly a quarter mile in all directions from a transit node, or a distance that can be covered in about five minutes on foot.

Parking

Parking plays an important role in creating a balanced transportation system. The availability and cost of parking at local destinations influences an individual's choice to drive, walk, bike or take transit. Parking also has a significant impact on: the type of development that takes place; the affordability of that development (particularly with regard to housing); and the look and feel of the community that results.

A delicate balance must be achieved—too much parking reduces transit or other alternative transportation use; too little parking can make an area undesirable to certain tenants and customers. Local zoning regulations are often at fault for requiring far too many parking spaces for businesses. Such regulations base the minimum, year-round parking requirements on the parking needs for one or two days or events (i.e., the huge shopping day on the day after Thanksgiving).

An overabundance of parking, especially when it is low-cost or free, seems to encourage more people to use their cars to get from place to place. However, if alternative forms of transportation are readily available and the parking is expensive, people may be more inclined to rely on alternate forms of transportation.

Parking in most areas of Summit County is provided in the form of surface lots, which use large amounts of land and cover it with pavement. This arrangement has negative impacts on a community's bottom line (parking eats up large amounts of land that could be used for more productive purposes), appearance (most parking lots are not attractive) and natural resources (increased impervious services leads to stormwater runoff problems).¹⁵

Local communities can change the way parking influences transportation choices with a variety of potential efforts. The ideas presented below are just a few of the many ways that an individual community (large or small, urban or rural) can improve its treatment of parking:

- Allow on-street parking to meet parking requirements, or reduce the amount of parking required for infill sites in mixed-use or transit-oriented areas.
- Revise zoning ordinances to establish maximum parking requirements, allow payment of fees in lieu of parking spaces or allow "land banking" of parking not immediately needed.¹⁶

¹⁵ See Chapter 8 for additional discussion of impervious services and impacts on stormwater runoff.

¹⁶ For example: 50 parking spaces are required by zoning, but analysis indicates that only 25 are needed. The 25 spaces are constructed and land for the remaining 25 spaces is reserved or "land banked" for future construction if necessary.

- Work with large employers to reduce parking fees for carpools or allow employees to “cash out” their parking benefits (i.e., receive a monthly cash payment instead of free parking).
- Encourage developers to locate parking behind buildings (in garages, especially) or in courtyards rather than in surface parking lots in front of buildings, or to design surface parking more like a park, courtyard, or plaza that doubles as public space in off-peak hours.
- Design public parking garages as mixed-use buildings with storefronts that match neighborhood commercial buildings.
- Work to ensure that parking is located in areas that serve residents and businesses throughout an entire district.
- Encourage neighboring businesses to work together and be creative in resolving parking and pedestrian issues.
- Ensure parking is located to allow drivers to access pedestrian networks once they have parked, so that they can access a day’s worth of activities on foot.
- Develop public parking garages/lots that allow nearby local businesses to fulfill parking requirements by purchasing credits for spaces, offering valet parking, or by sharing parking if peak hours are different (i.e., office buildings and entertainment venues have peak parking needs at different times).

Access Management

The degree of access control onto and off of a road or highway can impact the type and amount of development that will occur along that transportation facility. The goal of access management is to limit the number of, and control the spacing of, access points to a road in order to reduce the number of potential conflict points a user (i.e., motorist, pedestrian or bicyclist) may encounter. Access management techniques are typically either development-related or roadway-related. Development-related techniques address the potential impacts of decisions made for land abutting a roadway. Roadway-related techniques consider how traffic flow is managed on the roadway, often through design considerations. AMATS produced a publication in 2001 called, “Transportation Access to Development: A Guide for Local Officials and Developers” that provides access management guidance and it can be downloaded from their website: <http://ci.akron.oh.us/AMATS/>.

Access Management Techniques

Development-Related

- ❖ Avoid strip-style development along roadways
- ❖ Require master planning for large tracts of land
- ❖ Require traffic impact analyses for large developments
- ❖ Require developers to provide a connected road/pedestrian/bike system to minimize using main arterials for short trips
- ❖ Plan & design transportation improvements that fit with character of your community

Roadway-Related

- ❖ Evaluate location, design and spacing of driveways, streets, medians & turn lanes
 - ❖ Consider proper spacing & timing of traffic signals
 - ❖ Protect intersections and interchanges from increased traffic
 - ❖ Encourage shared access points and inter-connectivity between parcels along a roadway
 - ❖ Plan & design transportation improvements that fit with character of your community
-

A key element of access management is the treatment of driveways and parking lots. Driveways have an important role in traffic congestion, as they funnel vehicles in and out of businesses, homes and other establishments. A large number of driveways in a given area can create significant traffic backups on high volume roads during peak travel times. Poorly-designed driveways can present a safety risk, as vehicles turning into traffic can conflict with through traffic. Whenever possible, common driveways or other alternatives, such as marginal access roads, should be used.

When adjacent parking lots are not interconnected, traffic going from one use to another is forced back onto the main road, adding a slow moving vehicle with multiple turning movements to this road and creating congestion and safety problems. To solve this problem, the parking lots of commercial uses along busy roads should be interconnected wherever possible. Parking areas should also be properly lit, have adequate speed control to protect pedestrians, and contain landscaping islands to regulate traffic flow, improve appearance, and reduce environmental problems.

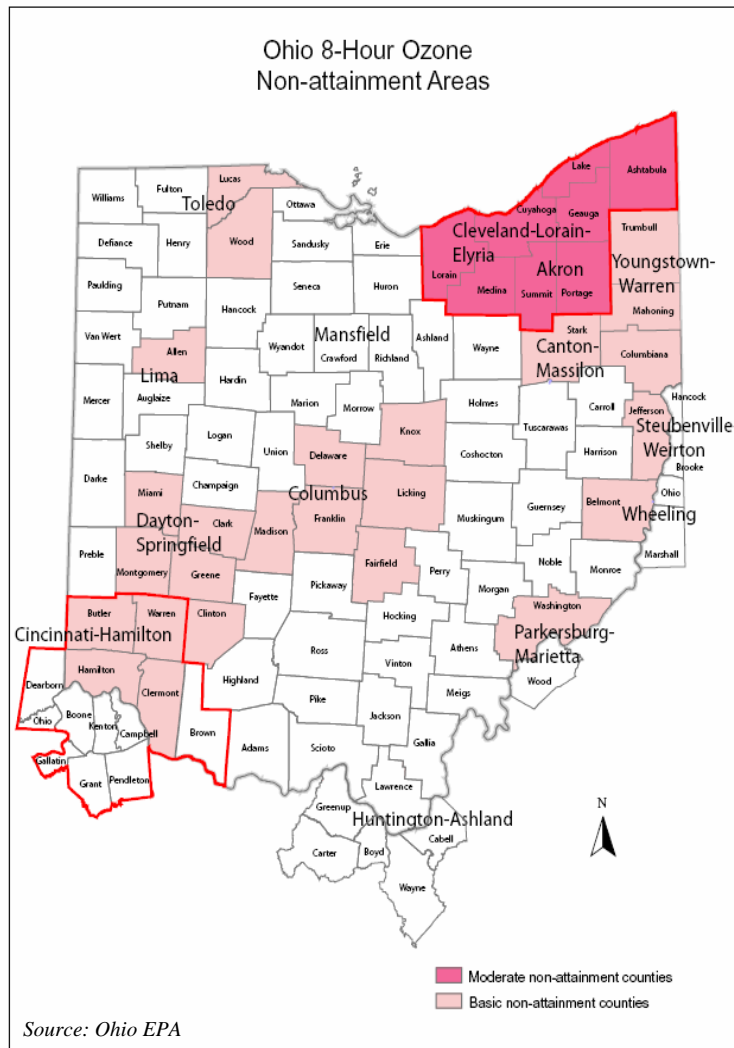
Air Pollution/Air Quality

While air pollution and poor air quality is caused by numerous sources, automobiles are the chief culprits, causing between one-third and one-half of all air pollution. As a result of regulations in the 1970s and the introduction of emission control technology, emissions of carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons, and nitrogen oxides from U.S. cars have decreased to just 60-90% of 1970 levels.

Despite this technological progress, air quality has improved only slightly. This is because more people are driving more cars on longer trips. Development patterns and the transportation systems that link land uses contribute greatly to the amount of air pollution in a region. Sprawling land use patterns that require long drives from homes to schools, jobs, and shopping/entertainment areas increase the amount of air pollution. In Summit County:

- Driving a private car is a typical citizen's most air polluting activity.
- Residents spend an average of 22 minutes each way commuting to work.
- Eighty-six percent of these workers drive to work alone.
- Only 1.6% of workers use public transportation to get to/from work.
- Each single-family household generates approximately 10 vehicle trips per day.

The biggest pollution problem in Northeast Ohio comes from ozone. Harmful, ground-level ozone is created when sunlight generates a reaction between hydrocarbons and nitrous oxides. Hydrocarbon emissions come from a variety of sources including cars, trucks, lawn mowers, industries, oil-based paints, solvents, and charcoal lighter fluid. Nitrous oxide emissions come from motor vehicles and industries, but also from fossil-fuel-powered boilers and power plants.



At ground-level, high ozone concentrations can be a health-threatening air pollutant. Ozone can irritate the respiratory system, causing coughing, throat irritation, and/or an uncomfortable sensation in the chest. Ozone can also reduce lung function and make it more difficult to breathe deeply and vigorously.

The U.S. EPA designated the eight-county Cleveland-Akron area (of which Summit County is a part) as a moderate non-attainment area for ozone in April 2004. This means that the air quality in Northeast Ohio does not meet the national standard for ozone levels established in the Clean Air Act.

Transportation plans and programs supported with federal funds must be able to demonstrate air quality conformity for ozone by 2010 in order to receive future federal funding. Plans



prepared by AMATS are required to maintain or improve the region's air quality. Based on the complete air quality analysis documented in an April 2005 report assembled by NOACA (Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency), AMATS and the Ohio Department of Transportation, it appears that the region will be able to demonstrate air quality conformity.¹⁷

Table 3:

To Keep Air Pollution At A Minimum:

- ❖ Ride the bus or carpool with coworkers.
- ❖ Walk or bike whenever possible.
- ❖ Combine trips and eliminate unnecessary trips.
- ❖ Keep all cars tuned, all tires inflated, and drive the newest car possible.
- ❖ Don't top off a gas tank. Make certain gasoline caps are tightly sealed.
- ❖ Drive smoothly; avoid "jack rabbit" starts. Don't speed.

Source: NOACA

Smart growth principles can be used to reduce air quality problems by reducing sprawl and so much reliance on automobiles. Communities can integrate and use smart growth principles to:

- Increase opportunities for walking, bicycling and transit use
- Create transportation options by mixing development and land uses within existing downtowns and new town centers

Design Considerations

"If you plan cities for cars and traffic, you get cars and traffic. If you plan for people and places, you get people and places." –Fred Kent, Project for Public Spaces

Roads, highways and other elements of the transportation system impact our communities in many different ways. Most practically, they serve the purpose of allowing travelers, primarily in motor vehicles, to move from place to place in a relatively efficient and safe manner. Roads and highways also play a significant role in the visual quality of our communities, making transportation design a key component of smart growth and scenic stewardship.

Roads and highways act as community gateways—public spaces that provide visitors and residents with lasting impressions (both positive and negative) about the place they are experiencing. On fast-moving highways and busy arterials, often it is the bridge color/design, or landscaping in a median, along the side of the road, or at an exit ramp that sets the tone. On slower moving main streets and local roads, the streetscape design either invites passers-by to stop and visit or to continue with their journey as quickly as possible. Design considerations are

¹⁷ See the *2030 Regional Transportation Plan* prepared by AMATS for additional information.

especially important in encouraging people to get out of their cars, walk along the sidewalk, and visit local shops and restaurants. Streets that are designed with people in mind instead of cars will be friendly and accommodating to walkers, joggers, bicyclists, baby strollers, wheelchairs, children and the elderly.



Figure 2: Pedestrian-friendly streets in Hudson include sidewalks, landscaping, attractive street furniture and an interesting mix of uses. On-street parking buffers pedestrians from passing cars.



Creating streets that function as places through attention to detail and design is one element of placemaking—the idea that communities should be designed for people, with walkable streets, welcoming public spaces, and lively neighborhoods. In the process of placemaking, transportation is the journey, but community is the goal.

Context Sensitive Design

Context sensitive design considers the environmental, aesthetic, historic, community and scenic impacts of various types of development, including buildings and transportation facilities. An important concept in highway and road design is that every project is unique. The community values and character must be considered along with the projects individual challenges and opportunities. Whether the design is for a modest safety improvement or 10 miles of new rural freeway, there are rarely off-the-shelf solutions that will work. Each project should balance the need for the transportation improvement with the need to safely integrate the design into the surrounding natural and human environments.



Figure 3: The Wye Road bridge in Bath Township was designed to allow views through the side railings—drivers, cyclists and pedestrians can “see the water.”

One good example of context sensitive design is the Wye Road bridge in Bath Township. The community determined that it was important to “see the water” from its numerous bridges. This ability to see through the sides of a bridge connects the drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians to the landscape below, and allows them to enjoy the natural beauty of the community.

Traffic Calming Measures

When streets are wide and/or straight, particularly in more dense residential areas, traffic often moves too fast. Communities can reduce traffic speeding and traffic volumes, and also make streets more hospitable to pedestrians and bicyclists, by implementing traffic calming measures. In general, traffic calming serves two purposes:

- Increases the safety and comfort of most travelers, especially slower-speed users of public streets like pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Increases the quality of life for those near public streets, including residents, children at play, and anyone else who simply enjoys being outdoors in cities and towns.

Traffic calming involves measures such as narrower street design, roundabouts, curves in roads, speed bumps, changes in road materials, use of on-street parking, curb extensions, etc. All of these techniques can be used to retrofit existing streets or be incorporated into new streets, and may be used singly or in combination. Several traffic calming measures are briefly described below.¹⁸

- Roadway Narrowing. Roadway narrowing can be achieved in two different ways. The lane width can be reduced, with excess asphalt then striped with a bicycle lane or paved shoulders. These treatments make the driving area appear to be narrow without adding

¹⁸ Additional information on traffic calming techniques can be found at <http://www.walkinginfo.org>.



curbing to physically narrow the roadway. The street can also be physically narrowed by extending sidewalks, providing landscaped areas, or adding on-street parking within the former curb lines. This often reduces vehicle speeds along a roadway section and enhances movement and safety for pedestrians. Adding bicycle lanes on higher-volume streets with speeds in excess of 20 mph enhances bicycle travel by increasing the predictability of both car and bicycle movements. Such treatments are particularly desirable for a neighborhood when several streets are treated in this way to create a connected system of bike lanes.

- Textured/Colored Paving Materials. Paving materials are important to the function and look of a street. Occasionally, paving materials in and of themselves act as a traffic-calming device (i.e., when the street is paved in brick or cobblestone). However, some of these materials may be noisy and unfriendly to bicyclists, pedestrians, wheelchairs, or snowplow blades. High visibility markings, including textured treatments such as brick or stamped concrete, reflective lines, or colored paving sends a visual cue about the function of a street, creates an aesthetic enhancement, and delineates a separate space for pedestrians and/or bicyclists.



Figure 4: Textured/Colored Paving Materials (photo by Dan Burden).

- **Roundabouts.** A roundabout is a circular intersection that is used as an alternative to a traditional intersection with stop signs or traffic signals. Traffic maneuvers around the circle in a counterclockwise direction, and then turns right onto the desired street; left-turn movements are eliminated. Unlike a signalized intersection, all traffic yields to motorists in the roundabout, and vehicles generally flow and merge through the roundabout from each approaching street without having to stop.

The primary reason for considering the use of roundabouts is increased safety. A roundabout eliminates much of the conflict traffic, such as left turns, that causes crashes at traditional intersections; a roundabout has 75% fewer conflict points than a traditional 4-way intersection.



Figure 5: Roundabout (photo by Portland Office of Transportation)

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety Study found that roundabouts resulted in a 39% reduction in total crashes, and an 89% reduction in fatal/incapacitating crashes.¹⁹ Use of a roundabout may improve traffic flow efficiency through intersections, reduce traffic speeds, and create gateway opportunities. Roundabouts do need to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists just like traditional intersections. Splitter islands at the approaches to the roundabout slow vehicles and allow pedestrians to cross one direction of travel at a time (as shown in photo, below). Single-lane approaches can be designed to keep speeds down to allow pedestrians to cross and bicyclists to navigate the area

safely. The Summit County Engineer is interested in implementing roundabouts at certain problem intersections in Summit County.

The Summit County Engineer has obtained \$387,000 of funding from the Ohio Department of Transportation to install a roundabout at the intersection of Hametown and Ridgewood roads in Copley Township. This roundabout will be constructed in 2006 and will be the first roundabout in northeast Ohio. Roundabouts have been a hot topic among traffic engineers for years, over 1,000 have been built nationwide. Ohio has just two, both in the Columbus suburb of Dublin. Now the third will be constructed at this dangerous Hametown Road intersection near Copley High School.

The following intersections are also being discussed as the location for some potential roundabouts, (1) the intersection of Ridgewood and Cleveland-Massillon Roads in Copley Township (2) the intersection of Olde Eight Road and State Route 82 in Northfield Township (3) the intersection of Old Mill Road and Ravenna Road in Twinsburg Township and (4) the intersection of Northeast Avenue, Howe Road and Munroe Road in the City of Tallmadge.

¹⁹ See Summit County Engineer website for additional information on roundabouts at <http://engineer.co.summit.oh.us/1>.

Goals & Objectives

This section of the Transportation chapter outlines goals and objectives for transportation decisions and future planning. These goals and objectives are intended to coordinate with the goals and objectives set forth in other chapters of the Summit County General Plan. They are also intended to encourage, facilitate and support transportation improvement efforts at a local and regional scale. This chapter is also intended to complement the more specific plans and recommendations set forth in the AMATS Regional Transportation Plan.

Managing traffic congestion will save time and frustration for residents and employees, limit air pollution, save energy and allow goods to be moved more efficiently. Providing viable transportation alternatives to driving (i.e., public transportation, walking and biking) will help to limit traffic congestion and also increase transportation access for those Summit County residents that can't drive or don't want to drive.

The overriding goals are to improve transportation efficiency and transportation options by providing safe, reliable movement of people and goods through intermodal and multimodal transportation systems.

- A. Maintain the existing transportation system.
- B. Manage traffic congestion.
- C. Improve transportation safety.
- D. Increase opportunities to take public transportation, walk, ride a bike, or other non-automotive means of transportation.
- E. Create hospitable environments for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- F. Move goods efficiently and considerately.
- G. Fix it first! Improve and repair existing roads and highways before building new ones.

Implementation Strategies

- A. Utilize the AMATS Regional Transportation Plan and other regional and local plans to direct and prioritize transportation improvements.
- B. Develop a County Thoroughfare Plan in 2006 in cooperation with the County Engineer's Office that is based on Smart Growth principles.
- C. Continue implementation of the Summit County Trail & Greenway Plan.
- D. Properly maintain existing roads to ensure safe driving, biking and walking conditions.
- E. Interconnect major roads to provide multiple routes for drivers.
- F. Improve problem intersections and coordinate traffic signal timing.

- G. Use traffic roundabouts and other intersection improvement techniques to improve safety and facilitate traffic flow.
- H. Reduce the number of cars on the road by making public transportation, biking and walking safe, easy and affordable alternatives.
- I. Reduce the number of cars on the road during peak travel times by encouraging flex time, telecommuting, variable work hours, carpooling and use of park-and-ride lots.
- J. Ensure site design and land use decisions don't exacerbate traffic congestion.
- K. Closely examine access management issues when approving new development and explore ways to address access management issues for existing development.
- L. Require appropriate paving widths for the function of the road, neither too wide nor too narrow.
- M. Improve road signage with the use of advance signing, larger sign lettering, better lighting, and more highway identification signs.
- N. Provide adequate on- and off-street facilities and utilize traffic-calming techniques to improve safety for bicyclists and pedestrians.
- O. Expand and improve public transportation to encourage increased utilization.
- P. Install bike racks and other bike facilities on METRO buses and at major destinations.
- Q. Establish Safe Routes to School pilot program(s) in Summit County.



Chapter 11 Implementation and Policy

Introduction

The Summit County General Land Use Development Plan is meant to be a working document that results in changes to the way Summit County and local jurisdictions manage growth. In a sense the Plan presents a blueprint for action that provides direction and assists decision makers over the next ten to twenty years. The intent is to fulfill the goals, objectives and strategies that embody the civic contract that is a result of this effort.

The Summit County General Land Use Development Plan seeks the further implementation of Smart Growth land use planning principles in Summit County.

The main idea behind smart growth is to direct development to older, underused sites that have existing infrastructure and thereby preserving green space and watersheds. Smart Growth has four straightforward goals:¹

- (1) Support existing communities by targeting resources to support development in areas where infrastructure exists;
- (2) Save our most valuable natural resources before they are forever lost;
- (3) Save tax payers from the high cost of building infrastructure to serve development that has spread far from existing population centers
- (4) Provide Summit County residents with a high quality of life, whether they choose to live in a rural community, suburb, small town, or city.

The National Smart Growth Network formed in 1996. The Network was formed in response to increasing community concerns about the need for new ways to grow that boost the economy, protect the environment, and enhance community vitality. The Smart Growth network is comprised of 32 organizations including the National Association of Counties, the United States Conference of Mayors, Institute of Transportation Engineers, Joint Center for Sustainable Communities, National Association of Counties, National Association of Realtors, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the State of Maryland. The State of Maryland has been a leader in implementing the principles of Smart Growth. Many planners and land use professionals have proposed that the principles of smart growth provide a solution to the dispersed land use patterns that have created sprawl, and have contributed towards the country's increasing obesity related health problems.

There is a Smart Growth Education Foundation that was formed in 1999 in Northeast Ohio that represents homebuilder association members in the 11 county region of Summit, Portage, Medina, Geauga, Cuyahoga, Erie, Huron, Ashtabula, Lake, Lorain, and Stark Counties. One of the major goals of this organization is to educate Northeast Ohio communities concerning

¹ See the Maryland State Department of Planning website, www.mdp.state.md.us/smartintro.htm



planning and development concepts and the principles of smart growth in urban and suburban settings. They are also striving to promote smart land-use planning and present such options to local governments.

The Smart Growth Community Excellence Awards Program presents annual awards to Smart Growth projects in Northeast Ohio; this program is sponsored by the Smart Growth Education Foundation. "The Smart Growth movement promotes and stimulates responsible land use planning, so the new development can be accommodated, while preserving open space and natural resources, protecting the environment, and not over extending our infrastructure." (Beacon Journal, Oct. 29, 2005) quoted from John Galehouse, chairman of the Smart Growth Education Foundation and Home Builders Association past president.

Local Health Departments and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are also recognizing that the principles of Smart Growth can be applied to encourage healthier life styles by encouraging more compact forms of development that provide more opportunities for walking and biking. According to the publication, Increasing Physical Activity Through Community Design, A Guide for Public Health Practitioners (May 2002), physical inactivity combined with overeating has made us a nation of overweight and out-of-shape people. The incidence of overweight or obesity among adults has increased from 47% in 1976 to 64% in 2000. This is a concern because obesity is a significant risk factor for developing chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease. Physical inactivity and obesity now rank second only to tobacco use in their contribution to total mortality in the United States.

Health Departments are now promoting Active Living Communities or Smart Growth communities that are designed with a pedestrian focus and thereby will provide opportunities for people to engage in routine daily physical activity. In this model, government leadership should promote policies that support active living such as:

- ❖ Bicycle and pedestrian oriented design
- ❖ Mixed use development
- ❖ Ample recreational facilities
- ❖ Locating schools in walkable neighborhoods

The Summit County Combined General Health District is increasingly interested in the health effects of urban sprawl and how the design of our communities affects health habits. The Division of Community Health Services has several grant projects. Within these grant projects, it has been established as a grant objective to further pursue the environmental links of urban planning and design to health outcomes. The Summit County Combined General Health District has most of its programming around chronic disease prevention and the lifestyle behavior choices involving physical activity and nutrition. Additionally, the Health District works with local communities to assist with GIS mapping for green space use planning efforts.

So there is a certain amount of synergy and agreement between the development community, health department community, government officials and planners, that these Smart Growth principles should be applied to promote growth that is healthier for people, that can also reduce traditional infrastructure costs, as well as help to preserve fast diminishing open space by promoting more compact development.



Smart Growth development is already occurring in Summit County. For example, the City of Akron has been partnering with the Home Builders Association serving Portage & Summit Counties (HBA) to construct new infill housing on vacant lots in the City of Akron. Past housing projects included Coburn Street in 1999 (9 homes), Blake Place in 2000, Cityview and Bisson Avenue in 2003-2004 (28 homes), and Newton Crossings Phase I in 2004 (20). Once completed, Newton Crossings will offer 38 new homes. Newton Crossings is part of a larger development district, the Seiberling Neighborhood Development Area, which includes street improvements and technical and financial assistance for existing home rehabilitation. The project brought together 15 builders to work on 38 homes in phases one and two. This was a private – public partnership with the City of Akron investing monies in property acquisition and in roadway improvements. This is a good example of Smart Growth because it supports a couple of Smart Growth principles, including directing development towards existing communities by promoting infill construction as well as taking advantage of compact building design.

Another prime example of Smart Growth being implemented in Summit County is the First & Main project done in the City of Hudson in 2005. This mixed use infill development project was recognized at the Ohio Planning Conference in September, 2005 and won an OPC award for Contribution and Excellence. First & Main is a planned 200,000 square-foot mixed-use development includes retail, restaurants, office space, library and town homes. (This project is described in more detail in Chapter 6). Mixed use developments provide more opportunities for walking between home and shopping, and encourage less reliance on automobiles. This project supports the Smart Growth principles of creating walkable neighborhoods, fostering distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place, and mixing land uses.

The Summit County Trail & Greenway Plan is another example of a Smart Growth initiative in Summit County. It is a Smart Growth initiative because it supports the Smart Growth principle of preserving open space, natural beauty and critical environmental areas. Some of the main goals of the Summit County Trail & Greenway Plan (2001) are to make connections to the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail and its associated greenway by extending linkages throughout the County and to identify trails and greenways of regional significance as a framework for expansion by local communities. The Summit County greenway trails (once constructed), also will provide opportunities for physical exercise and thereby support active living.

Land Use Decisions

Various boards, commissions, and other appointed officials make land use decisions on a regular basis in the County. The Summit County General Land Use Development Plan may be utilized whenever a decision involves a land use issue or has an environmental impact. In this context, some examples of potential uses for the Plan may include the following.

- ❖ Is the development proposal generally in harmony with the Plan's land use component?
- ❖ Is adequate infrastructure available to serve the intended use or is it within a service area planned for the installation of infrastructure?
- ❖ Is the development proposal providing opportunities for a healthy lifestyle by providing sidewalks or trails for walking or bicycling?



In addition, this General Plan can provide a framework for local planning efforts. The General Plan can provide guidance for communities as they draft their own comprehensive plans. In addition, a community that doesn't have a Comprehensive Plan or Land Use Plan could also adopt the Summit County General Land Use Development Plan as a guide for their community.

Infrastructure Improvements

Decisions made with respect to infrastructure may have a profound effect on a community's growth pattern. The Summit County General Land Use Development Plan recommends an initiative to guide (to the extent possible) more intensive residential, commercial and light industrial growth to the municipalities and to those areas with existing or planned infrastructure (central sanitary sewer in particular). A more compact development pattern within such areas may allow for a reduction of infrastructure costs to users and may limit some of the negative side effects associated with intra-county, and ultimately, regional sprawl. In essence, community based service area plans in harmony with local zoning should be adopted to contain the unwarranted spread of infrastructure. Decisions pertaining to the installation of central sanitary sewer and water lines should be conducted on a comprehensive basis, as opposed to simply reacting to a particular development proposal.

In that vein, it is recommended that the County, through the Department of Environmental Services (DOES), should begin sewer master planning in 2006. Such planning should provide incentives to encourage extension of public utilities according to smart growth principles and discourage haphazard or unplanned growth. In addition it is recommended that an annual roundtable be convened of Summit county officials, local agencies, community representatives and JEDD officials to discuss issues related to smart growth planning, JEDD issues, utilities and land use. Further, it is recommended that this attendance should be encouraged for those communities who wish to receive SCIP/ LTIP funds, CDBG or other county-distributed funding for infrastructure improvements, by giving them extra incentive points for attending such roundtable meetings.

There is also a need in terms of transportation planning for the County to develop and adopt a Summit County Thoroughfare Plan. It is recommended that the County develop a County Thoroughfare Plan based on Smart Growth principles in 2006 in cooperation with the Summit County Engineer, and the cities, villages and townships. This Thoroughfare Plan should provide incentives to encourage the extension and improvement of roads according to smart growth principles and to discourage haphazard or unplanned growth.

Economic Development Programs

The land use and the economic analysis components of the Summit County General Land Use Development Plan should be examined as a basis for the allocation of economic development programs. For instance, businesses seeking assistance should locate in areas that are in harmony with the land use policies. Requests for assistance may include an assessment of land use compatibility with nearby properties, infrastructure availability and capacity, environmental limitations, current zoning, and related matters.



Private Sector Decisions

The private sector may use the Summit County General Land Use Development Plan to forge decisions regarding the development or redevelopment of land. Information on the environmental constraints involving development sites, either from the Plan or from the County's GIS internet mapping system, may assist in subdivision design. Actions by the private sector consistent with the Plan's recommendations should be encouraged.

Future Revisions

The Summit County General Land Use Development Plan should be subject to periodic updates. It may be reviewed annually for any minor adjustments and should receive a more substantial overhaul at ten-year intervals consistent with the census. The level of development activity may be a driving force toward updating the goals, objectives, and implementation strategies in the Plan.

Implementation

The leadership capabilities of the Summit County Executive and County Council will be necessary to carry out many of the policies outlined in the Plan. The Summit County Planning Commission and County Council should formally adopt the General Plan. A cooperative effort among county departments, townships, and municipalities is warranted to successfully implement the General Plan as well.

The Summit County Planning Commission will be looked upon to assist in implementing the Summit County General Land Use Development Plan through its own responsibilities and decisions. The Commission should use the Plan's land use recommendations and information on natural constraints to suggest modifications to subdivision proposals, in line with the Plan's policies. In addition, the General Plan can be used to provide guidance on planning issues where a local comprehensive plan has not been done for a locality.

To assist the Commission in these responsibilities and to provide additional consistency following the conclusion of this planning effort, the Plan recommends that members of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee be appointed by the Planning Commission to a special subcommittee of the Commission. The subcommittee would meet on a regular basis with the full Commission to consider the status of Plan implementation. The full Steering Committee would also be convened annually to review implementation progress, forecasts and recommended changes to Plan policies.

In addition, a Smart Growth Subcommittee could be formed to work with local communities on these issues. For example, the County Health District is interested in promoting walking trails in each community in the County. This work could be better accomplished if coordinated with the work of other groups in the County such as the Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition, Metro Parks Serving Summit County, Summit County Planning Commission staff and the local Home Builders Association (HBA) group.



Another issue that has been raised is the lack of conservation open space design in residential developments (that cluster development and preserve abundant open space on the remaining land being built in the County). More work could be done in terms of developing conservation open space design residential development types of zoning and adopting it in the local political subdivisions. The County has recently sponsored a Summit County Township Environmental Planning Education Program Report which provides environmentally sensitive zoning models for townships and other political subdivisions to consider adopting.

An educational team could be formed to promote how more of these conservation open space design residential subdivisions could be developed in the County, in partnership with the HBA group, the Summit County Planning Commission and the Township Association of Summit County. In conjunction with this effort, the Summit County Planning Commission could partner with other communities, and Metro Parks Serving Summit County to develop a Countywide Open Space Plan. Such open space areas that are preserved in these Conservation Developments could then be linked together to provide an open space network.

SUMMARY OF STRATEGIES

The following is a summation of the major strategies to implement the Plan.

Quality of Life Issues

Promote Smart Growth principles in the County to ensure livable, walkable communities and to maintain the existing high quality of life.

Cultural/ Historic Resource Preservation Implementation Policies

- ❖ Ensure infill development is compatible with the positive character and development patterns of the local community or neighborhood
- ❖ Encourage rehabilitation and reuse of vacant, historic structures (i.e., surplus schools, warehouses/ industrial buildings, old homes).
- ❖ Create, adopt and utilize local enforcement tools such as local historic preservation ordinances, historic zoning district or overlay district regulations, and design guidelines encouraging the preservation of and sensitivity to historic resources.

Housing Implementation Policies

- ❖ Increase the supply of affordable, owner-occupied housing
- ❖ Educate homebuyers (particularly low-to-moderate income persons) and local officials about the public and private homeownership assistance programs available.



- ❖ Adopt and implement a property maintenance and point-of-sale inspection program to insure that Summit County's housing stock is properly and safely maintained.
- ❖ Review and update local zoning and building codes to permit a wider variety of housing types at a range of price points

Land Use Implementation Policies

The majority of vacant land left in Summit County is zoned for residential uses. There is a real opportunity to use Smart Growth housing and development options to preserve many of the current existing natural resources and "special places" that define Summit County. Also utilizing these options will promote quality development. The following are the recommended Smart Growth Development Options:

Recommended Overall Smart Growth Development Options

1. Open space conservation development
2. Infill development
3. Compact development
4. Mixed-use development
5. Transit oriented development
6. Revitalization of older urbanized areas

Recommended Land Use Implementation Policies

- ❖ Conservation open space design residential development is encouraged as a means to preserve permanent common open space. Such open space areas may be linked to protect environmentally sensitive land and river corridors.
- ❖ Large lot zoning within the unincorporated areas of the County without central sanitary sewers should be retained as a means to maintain the semi-rural atmosphere and to protect the environment from potential negative effects of development. Conservation open space design should be easily permitted by local zoning to allow these developments to maintain the same overall low density as the underlying zoning but preserve more of the remaining open space (such as 40%) by clustering the houses. The County has recently sponsored a Summit County Township Environmental Planning Education Program Report that provides environmental zoning models for use and adoption, including a Conservation Design Planned Unit Development zoning model.
- ❖ Direct a greater percentage of population growth to areas that are already served by centralized utilities, near existing transportation facilities, and in close proximity to employment centers.

- ❖ Encourage a lower density of population in locations without existing urban services and where urban services are not likely to be provided within the next two decades.
- ❖ Create walkable neighborhoods and communities. Develop review processes that ensure new development plans include pedestrian and bicycle friendly elements.
- ❖ Encourage transit oriented development and coordinate land use and transportation planning. Stimulate development of mixed-use projects, reduce parking requirements, and create more open spaces and parks. Creating incentive programs and changing zoning requirements are a few ways to achieve these goals.
- ❖ Encourage higher-density, mixed use development along major roads and within walking distance of public transit, using a transit-oriented development (TOD) ordinance or an overlay zone.
- ❖ Where mixed uses are appropriate, encourage communities to adopt a traditional neighborhood development (TND) ordinance or overlay zone that encourages an environment built to the human scale (narrow streets, interconnected streets and paths, mixed uses, and smaller lot sizes). Commercial strip development along roads should be avoided.
- ❖ Zoning regulations should be based upon comprehensive land use plans that are periodically updated.
- ❖ Institute regional tax base sharing to create economic incentives for businesses and homeowners to locate in areas with existing infrastructure.
- ❖ Modify average cost pricing in utilities to better account for costs of expanding infrastructure in greenfield areas.
- ❖ Natural resources should be protected and utilized as part of the County's "green infrastructure".
- ❖ Utilize the State of Ohio farmland preservation program so farmland can be preserved by the purchase of development rights.

Natural Resources Implementation Policies

- ❖ Local governments should adopt environmental zoning measures to protect natural resources in their communities. Summit County has recently sponsored a Summit County Township Environmental Planning Education Program Report that provides environmental zoning models for use and adoption.



- ❖ To ensure that adequate open space is provided for this and future generations, each local community should formulate an open space plan. Metroparks Serving Summit County should help facilitate this process by helping to coordinate between communities for possible connections.
- ❖ Communities and local organizations should continue to cooperate to implement the recommendations found in the Summit County Trail & Greenway Plan (2001).
- ❖ Encourage all the communities in the County to adopt the County riparian setback regulations, if they have not already done so. Riparian areas reduce flow velocity, increase the storage of water and minimize downstream flood impacts.
- ❖ Since the County has experienced flooding problems and so little of the original wetlands remain, it is recommended that communities should adopt a policy of requiring that there be no net loss of wetlands permitted in any watershed.
- ❖ Local governments should develop land use controls so isolated wetlands (of a certain size) be retained in their natural state to assist in flood control, pollution abatement and to protect wildlife habitat.
- ❖ Floodplain regulations in the County should be strengthened so that there is a stronger policy for redirecting development away from the 100 year floodplain. By preserving floodplains in a natural vegetated state, land use controls can reduce flooding risks to downstream properties.
- ❖ Development on steep slopes can create erosion and landslide problems. Therefore, communities should adopt environmental review measures to try to limit development on steep slopes.
- ❖ Local governments should consider and develop programs and policies to protect its woodland resources by providing incentives for tree preservation on private property during development.
- ❖ Local governments should encourage more use of native plants in landscaping because this reduces water and energy consumption and provides habitat for wildlife.
- ❖ Encourage setbacks in the new developments to protect floodplains, wetlands, and river corridors.
- ❖ Strictly regulate erosion, sedimentation, and storm water runoff from new developments.
- ❖ Provide integral open space within newly developed areas, especially through a mandatory dedication of local open space in the development process.
- ❖ Improve air quality by minimizing sprawling land use patterns and promoting compact development.
- ❖ Encourage energy conservation and the use of cleaner burning fuels.



- ❖ Local communities should support farmers markets and the growing market for high quality, locally grown food, and thereby support local farms.
- ❖ The Center for Farmland Preservation in Northeast Ohio, the Ohio State University Agricultural Extension Office, or Summit County should add an Economic Development staff person that works with rural land owners to promote rural economy uses just in Summit County. This targeted effort should help to preserve some of the remaining agricultural uses and open space in the county.
- ❖ It is important to preserve biological diversity and protect wildlife habitat. There should be more review of proposed new development to ensure long term survival of key wildlife habitat and movement opportunities to minimize wildlife fragmentation and disturbance.
- ❖ A County wide study should be done to determine what and where is the key critical wildlife habitat left that should be preserved. This Wildlife Habitat Study could be done in cooperation with Metro Parks Serving Summit County.
- ❖ Preserve the priority areas for preservation identified in the Natural Resources Chapter. Habitat protection for plants and wildlife insures a strong ecosystem that can support an abundance of wildlife, and also provides passive recreational opportunities. Form a Countywide Open Space Committee that will work on developing a county open space plan based on the priority areas for preservation that have been identified in this Plan.
- ❖ Public parks and recreational facilities should be fostered. The need for more trails for walking, running and bicycling should be examined.
- ❖ Metro Parks, Serving Summit County should take the lead in wetlands preservation, enhancement, restoration and creation.

Utilities & Stormwater Management Implementation Policies

- ❖ Use the 208 Clean Water Plan prescriptions prepared by NEFCO to direct sewer extensions and plan for future services.
- ❖ In addition, it is recommended that the County, in cooperation with the Department of Environmental Services (DOES), should begin sewer master planning in 2006. Any sewer master planning that is done should provide incentives to encourage extension of public utilities according to Smart Growth principles and discourage haphazard or unplanned growth.
- ❖ Ensure local comprehensive plans and zoning regulations reflect community goals for development. Zoning densities should not be based only on availability of central sewer/water utilities.



- ❖ Encourage communication and coordination between local governments, county government and related agencies regarding provision and extension of public utilities, particularly when the creation of JEDDs is being considered.
- ❖ Convene an annual Smart Growth Planning Annual Roundtable Meeting to discuss issues related to smart growth planning, JEDD issues, utilities, land use, and community goals and objectives. Participants should include Summit County officials, local agencies (i.e. NEFCO), community representatives, JEDD officials, etc.
- ❖ Utilize and implement the 208 Clean Water Plan recommendations for proper management of home sewage and semi-public sewage disposal systems.
- ❖ Inventory and map existing onsite septic systems and wells.
- ❖ Develop fair and consistent countywide policies and incentives to eliminate failing septic systems in urbanized areas and encourage connection to available central sewer systems. This should be done on a cooperative basis with Summit County, local communities and local health departments.
- ❖ Utilize and implement the 208 Clean Water Plan recommendations and the Summit County Stormwater Management Plan for management of nonpoint source pollution and storm water management.
- ❖ Ensure commercial site plan review in all communities involves planning and engineering representatives at the community and/or county levels.
- ❖ Encourage the use of low-impact development techniques to protect Summit County's natural resources and water quality where possible and practical.
- ❖ Utilize regional storm water detention basins to reduce potential for and impacts of flooding.
- ❖ Develop storm water/water quality guidelines for Summit County.
- ❖ Utilize and implement the 208 Clean Water Plan recommendations to protect regionally important water resources and to facilitate urban stream restoration.

Economic Development Implementation Policies

- ❖ Ensure local comprehensive plans are in line with and support local economic development goals. Update and/or prepare local plans as necessary.
- ❖ Create, update and/or enhance brochures, websites and other information products to market the amenities and potential growth sites in a community.
- ❖ Inventory available business properties and make information readily accessible via community, county and industry websites.
- ❖ Encourage start-up, home-based businesses and facilitate establishment of small, local businesses. Pool resources and technology to increase competitiveness of small, local businesses.



- ❖ Update and adjust local zoning to accommodate small, home-based or start-up businesses with concepts such as live-work and mixed-use zoning.
- ❖ Utilize GIS (Geographic Information Systems) to identify customer locations and build customer profiles. Establish website with basic information necessary (i.e., tax forms, business name registration, permits, etc.) on how to establish a small business in Summit County.
- ❖ Capitalize on unique resources or features of community (i.e., proximity to National Park, historic resources, natural resources, etc.) to encourage appropriately-scaled development.
- ❖ Continue and expand Summit County Business Partnership visitation program to encourage communication among business owners/executives, community officials, local agencies, and other interested parties.
- ❖ Focus economic investment and assistance in areas identified as preferred growth areas by local communities, and in areas with existing or planned infrastructure. Give priority to economically disadvantaged areas.
- ❖ Concentrate government subsidies and funding on programs that support Smart Growth principles. Require accountability and transparency whenever economic development assistance is provided to a company.
- ❖ Recommend new jobs be created (not just transferred from one local community to another). Agree, together with other Northeast Ohio communities and agencies, to respect this qualification measure when offering economic development assistance to companies.
- ❖ Encourage development of industries that support Northeast Ohio's industry clusters as identified by the "Clusters Project." (Such as metalworking, polymers, chemical, motor vehicles, biomedical, insurance, electronics (ICE), information technology).
- ❖ Research, explore and discuss regional tax base sharing alternatives with Northeast Ohio political and business leaders. Establish a pilot tax base sharing program to test effectiveness.
- ❖ Aid employers in improving work force equality through educational programs, employment counseling, and social services such as day care, and health services.
- ❖ Coordinate housing and transportation planning with economic development efforts.

Transportation Implementation Policies

- ❖ Utilize the AMATS Regional Transportation Plan and other regional and local plans to direct and prioritize transportation improvements.
- ❖ In addition, it is recommended that the County develop a County Thoroughfare Plan in cooperation with the Summit County Engineer in 2006 that is based on Smart Growth principles. This Plan should provide incentives to encourage extension and improvement of roads according to smart growth principles and discourage haphazard or unplanned growth.



- ❖ Continue implementation of the Summit County Trail & Greenway Plan.
- ❖ Properly maintain existing roads to ensure safe driving, biking and walking conditions.
- ❖ Interconnect major roads to provide multiple routes for drivers.
- ❖ Improve problem intersections and coordinate traffic signal timing.
- ❖ Use traffic roundabouts and other intersection improvement techniques to improve safety and facilitate traffic flow.
- ❖ Reduce the number of cars on the road by making public transportation, biking and walking safe, easy and affordable alternatives.
- ❖ Reduce the number of cars on the road during peak travel times by encouraging flex time, telecommuting, variable work hours, carpooling and use of park-and-ride lots.
- ❖ Ensure site design and land use decisions don't exacerbate traffic congestion.
- ❖ Closely examine access management issues when approving new development and explore ways to address access management issues for existing development.
- ❖ Require appropriate paving widths for the function of the road, neither too wide nor too narrow.
- ❖ Improve road signage with the use of advance signing, larger sign lettering, better lighting, and more highway identification signs.
- ❖ Provide adequate on and off-street facilities and utilize traffic-calming techniques to improve safety for bicyclists and pedestrians.
- ❖ Expand and improve public transportation to encourage increased utilization.
- ❖ Install bike racks and other bike facilities on METRO buses and at major destinations.
- ❖ Establish Safe Routes to School pilot program(s) in Summit County.
- ❖ Planned pedestrian walkways, trails and bikeways should be provided for in new developments and an overall plan devised to link them.

SUMMARY

The Summit County General Land Use Development Plan is meant to guide the decision-making process with respect to growth management and related development issues. The Plan represents a framework for action, as set forth in the Implementation Strategies as listed above, and at the end of each Chapter.

The expected total lifespan of the Plan may be twenty years; however, during intervening years certain components should be revised and updated. For example, it is recommended that Summit County adopt a County Thoroughfare Plan. As elements are reviewed and adopted, the General Plan can be amended to include these elements.

It is the responsibility of the policy makers in the County to address and implement the goals and objectives. At the County level, the County Executive and County Council, the Planning



Commission, the County Engineer, Environmental Services, the Health District, the Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Building Department, are some of the key departments and agencies that play a role in the execution of the Plan.

The municipalities and townships in the County, however, have a part in the implementation of the Plan as well. There should be a bottom-up approach to growth management, with the Summit County General Land Use Development Plan being a framework for discussion and general guidance on development issues. In addition, the Summit County General Land Use Development Plan may be a catalyst for local communities to review and update their land use plans. Such plans should complement the recommendations set forth in the County General Land Use Development Plan.

The following summary is offered for review.

General Recommendations

Redirect and Concentrate Development: The plan seeks to guide future high-density development to the urban centers and villages to reduce the overall amount of land consumed by development. The result may be savings in land otherwise developed, less intra-county sprawl, and reduced public expenditures for infrastructure.

Encourage Economic Development: The need for a strong and diverse local economy should be recognized as integral to the plan. Economic considerations should be integrated into the various elements of the plan.

Plan for Future Parks Needs: Preserve open space that can be used and developed for passive and active recreational opportunities. As the County develops there will be a need for more park and community facilities.

Utilize more Innovative Development Patterns: It is recommended that communities develop plans which integrate "smart growth" principles in all development programs to increase opportunities for walking, bicycling and transit use. Create transportation options by mixing development and land uses within existing downtowns and new town centers. Make positive public health impacts a priority in land-use planning and development decision making. Utilize innovative development patterns such as open space conservation development, compact and mixed use development and transit oriented development design. Coordinate thoroughfare planning in harmony with desired land use patterns.

Coordinate Infrastructure Expansion: The relationship between water and sewer service extension and land use development patterns must be coordinated to implement Smart Growth principles.

Specific Objectives

The planning process is dynamic and ongoing. The next phase of the comprehensive planning process will concentrate on specific plans for three crucial elements needed to control and direct growth:



- 1). Sewer system infrastructure expansion and extension
- 2). County thoroughfare planning
- 3). County open space plan

Sewer System Planning: Develop goals, objectives, priorities and strategies for sewer system expansion and infrastructure extension as a guide to future land use development in cooperation with the Summit County Department of Environmental Services.

County Thoroughfare Plan: Assist the Summit County Engineer to develop a County Thoroughfare Plan which designates road classifications in harmony with desired land use patterns.

Open Space Planning: In the General Plan's Natural Resources Chapter there are areas that are identified as being ecologically important within the County. More work should be done to identify these and other significant natural resource areas as part of developing an overall Open Space Plan for the County.