

Land Use

Summary

The Land Use Element of the **Comprehensive Plan** directs future development to the cities, villages and hamlets to protect agriculture and conserve greenspace. The Element does this through incentives and other actions intended to create an environment that supports concentrated development and which discourages sprawl. The land use goal best captures this intent: *Growth and development to be managed, with emphasis on preserving farmland, the current agricultural character and the rural landscape.*

The Element bases these recommendations on a Land Use Plan which creates a series of Resource Management Areas. These areas delineate growth zones for the County with unique characteristics and recommended land use patterns. The majority of future development is recommended to occur in cities, villages and hamlets with central water and sanitary service. Sprawl and leap-frog development patterns are discouraged. Large-lot single-family homesites are recommended outside these areas and the balance of the County is recommended for agriculture and greenspace.

A variety of objectives, strategies and actions are recommended to implement the Plan. These detail public and private initiatives in a variety of areas to guide growth and ensure the County's agricultural sector is protected and strengthened. The 1990's rate of development is supported by this Plan, but its location must be better directed if Wayne County is to remain an attractive place to live, work and raise families. At the same time environmental constraints must be recognized and taken into account as development approvals are considered.

The **Comprehensive Plan** establishes a path that differs from the County's current trends. The Plan supports a population of about 124,000 by 2010, which is an 18,000-person increase over the 1995 level of 106,000. But this is less than the predicted trend of 146,000 persons. The Plan supports a small increase in the urban portion of the County to 14.4 percent, a 1.4 percent increase over 1995.

The Plan projects 5,000 acres of additional development, which is substantially less than current predictions of about 21,000 additional acres. **The Plan would save over 15,000 acres of agriculture and natural resources areas that would be lost if the predicted trend occurs.**

Planning Issues

*The following is an overview of land use-related planning issues. For a detailed discussion, please refer to the report **Planning Issues**.*

Concerns regarding growth and its impact on Wayne County have been the central focus of the Comprehensive Plan. While other issues are commonly raised, the greatest concern has been managing future growth and preserving Wayne County's unique character and way of life, especially agriculture and greenspace.

Central to managing growth is the desire to direct it to areas of the County that can accommodate such growth and to discourage development in the unincorporated area ("out in the county"), and thereby discourage sprawl. Utilities should be upgraded and incentives created to attract future development into the County's cities, villages and hamlets. Many have pointed to Wayne County's neighbors that have already witnessed significant sprawl as the undesirable outcome that should be prevented.

A delicate debate ensued during the planning process regarding zoning and private property rights. Only two of 16 townships in Wayne County have adopted zoning resolutions (most cities and villages have zoning). The current atmosphere is split on the zoning issue. Three recent township ballot issues failed. As a result the implementation emphasis is on non-zoning tools.

Concurrently agriculture should be protected and the natural environment conserved as much as possible. As a traditional way of life in Wayne County, agriculture plays important economic, social and even political roles. The extensive Amish community further accentuates the County's quality of life and is a magnet for tourism.

Greenspace in the County is extensive and resources such as Killbuck Marsh Wildlife Area and Funk Bottoms are important public assets. Development should be sensitive to its impact on the environment and improved site planning should be undertaken. Groundwater resources in particular can be a limiting factor in parts of the County.

Growth Management Issues

Managing growth is fundamental to the various issues currently facing Wayne County, and involves a number of key issues:

- Using land efficiently and productively.
- Positioning local government to manage growth while protecting local character.
- Limiting fiscal and environmental impacts.
- Maintaining quality and steering development to appropriate locations.

The marketplace in Wayne County is the major determinant of land use given the lack of zoning. Managing growth entails carefully managing Wayne County's transition from a rural to a more developed county. Protection of indigenous rural communities has been stressed as this transition continues.

Rural Character Issues

Preserving Wayne County's rural character and landscape is a very high priority. Preservation should be based on both the aesthetics of rural character as well as ensuring farming can continue and be economically productive. Critical to this is:

- Protecting the County's agricultural heritage.
- Preserving greenspace.
- Protecting visual quality.
- Supporting an agricultural economy.

Rural character also includes protection of the indigenous rural communities as an integral part of the larger agrarian community.

Existing Conditions and Trends

*The following is an overview of existing conditions and trends. For a detailed presentation please refer to the report **Existing Conditions and Trends**.*

Data sources used to assess land use in Wayne County included data from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources' Ohio Capability Analysis Program.

Regional Perspective

Wayne County is located on the edge of Ohio's major metropolitan region - the Cleveland-Akron Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA) which had a 1990 population of 2.8 million. The metropolitan area is projected to reach 2.98 million by 2015, an increase of 4.1 percent. The Akron metropolitan area (as a portion of the greater CMSA) is expected to experience the greatest increase, at 9.2 percent (60,625 persons).

To the northeast of Wayne County is Summit County and to the east is Stark County. Wayne is also adjacent to Medina County, which has been growing as part of the Cleveland suburban ring. To the west is Ashland County and situated to the south is the more rural Holmes County. A map depicting the Wayne County region accompanies this section. Wayne County is a member of the Northeast Four County Regional Planning and Development Organization (NEFCO), where membership also includes Summit, Stark and Portage Counties.

As these metropolitan regions grow, suburban growth continues to expand. Wayne County has been a witness to this trend, which has significantly impacted parts of Medina and other neighboring counties. According to *Suburbanization of Ohio Metropolitan Areas 1980-2000*, this trend is expected to grow as suburban families seek new housing in exurban regions. Population loss for the City of Cleveland is projected to exceed 19 percent during the 1990's.

Wayne County's immediate region (Ashland, Holmes, Medina, Stark, Summit and Wayne counties) grew by 2.2 percent between 1970 and 1990, while Wayne County grew by 16.5 percent.

Land Use

Wayne County is about 551 to 557 square miles (depending on source) or about 352,640 acres. In 1992 the County contracted with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) to prepare a complete land use and soils analysis under the Ohio Capability Analysis Program (OCAP). This data was used as the basis for analyzing existing land use and for environmental and land capability assessments. The OCAP assessment classifies land based on its use and not ownership or other factors.

In 1995 about 86 percent of Wayne County was characterized by agriculture (233,749 acres) and natural resources (72,943 acres), with developed areas encompassing the remaining 14 percent of the entire County. The urbanized portion of Wayne County is an increase over 1976 when an estimated 11 percent was developed.

Development has been concentrated around Wooster, the centrally-located county seat, Orrville and the Rittman-Doylestown area in Chippewa Township. Smaller development concentrations are found in several village locations, especially Apple Creek, Creston, Dalton, Fredericksburg, Kidron, Marshallville, Shreve, Smithville, Sterling and West Salem. Commercial development has spread along several major corridors: US 30 between Wooster and Stark County; SR 3 north of Wooster; and SR585 between Smithville and Doylestown.

Additional development (residential and nonresidential) is scattered throughout the County along public roads. This is typified by large-lot single-family home sites and scattered businesses. In the Southeast Planning Area several Amish-owned businesses are found such as lumber mills, as well as Amish homesteads which create a different land use pattern given their average smaller sizes.

Regulatory Environment

A conservative regulatory environment is found locally in Wayne County. Of 16 townships only two have adopted zoning resolutions and three recent township ballot issues failed. About 20 years ago a countywide ballot issue to adopt zoning also lost at the polls. Every city and almost every incorporated village has adopted zoning. But as a tool to manage growth, zoning has been the focus of an ongoing debate during this planning process. The County Commissioners currently support the policy that zoning should be a local decision decided at the township level.

Agriculture

Wayne County is the 14th largest dairy county in the United States, in terms of production. Wayne County leads the state in several major categories: oats and hay, cattle and calves, and dairy products. Agriculture is a dominant land use in Wayne County and plays a major role in defining the County's physical character. Concurrently agriculture is a very important component of the County's economic base.

The County has a rich tradition of introducing new and innovative farming practices, such as contour farming, winter cover crops, no-till planting and consolidated dairy, meat and egg operations. The Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (OARDC) in Wooster is a leading national research facility. Some of the innovative practices conflict with the aesthetics of earlier farming methods. But agricultural innovation should continue to be supported.

Over 90 percent of the agricultural land use in Wayne County is comprised of croplands and an additional eight percent is pasture. About 1,500 acres are comprised of orchards, groves and nurseries, and about 270 acres are confined feeding operations. Undeveloped or vacant land comprises another 2,326 acres or 0.7 percent of the County.

Over the past 30 years agriculture has changed in Wayne County in several profound ways, according to the U.S. Census of Agriculture. These show an overall reduction in farm acreage, but a consolidation of operations with fewer, but larger farms. The trends have been:

- Number of farms has decreased by 34 percent.
- Total land area occupied by farms has decreased by about 17 percent.
- Average size of farms has increased by 25 percent.
- Hired farm labor has decreased by about 42 percent.
- Market value of agricultural products sold has increased by about 389 percent.
- Average value per farm has increased by about 640 percent.

Planning Areas

*For detailed information on planning areas, please refer to **Existing Conditions and Trends - 1**.*

Wayne County is divided into five planning areas (a map delineating the boundaries is enclosed). This section summarizes existing issues and conditions affecting each area.

Northwest Planning Area

The Northwest Planning Area is one of the least developed and populated planning areas in Wayne County, despite its accessibility to the interstate system via I-71 with

interchanges at SR 301 and SR 539. The area had a 1990 population of 10,736 persons and 3,918 dwelling units. Between 1990 and 1995 an additional 261 single-family homes were constructed (an increase of seven percent) which boosted population to 11,450. Residential development is somewhat concentrated in West Salem, Burbank and Creston, and several hamlets.

Agriculture dominates the area, with natural resources also significant. Major stream corridors include the Killbuck Creek, Little Killbuck Creek and Muddy Fork, which are significantly wooded. The Killbuck Creek valley divides the planning area topographically by its slopes of 30 percent and higher.

The following **physical planning issues** were noted:

- Limiting development factors include septic constraints, limited groundwater availability, extensive floodplains and significant aquifers along the Killbuck. West Salem has previously investigated utility service. Burbank is undertaking a study to implement a water and sanitary sewer district.
- Public support for township zoning may not be strong in part of the planning area. Voters rejected a proposed zoning resolution at elections in March, 1996, and November, 1995, in Chester Township.
- A 205,000 square foot outlet retail center opened in Harrisville Township, Medina County on SR 83 north of I-71. Issues have been raised relative to the extent to which this development will impact Wayne County with related development pressure, increased traffic and increased crime.

Northeast Planning Area

The Northeast Planning Area is the most populated planning area and has a strong relationship with the Akron metropolitan area, partly serving as a bedroom community. The 1990 population was 34,116 and 12,451 dwelling units were present. Between 1990 and 1995 an additional 626 single-family homes were constructed, boosting population to an estimated 35,831. This area captured 27 percent of residential development in the County for the period. Residential development is concentrated in the Rittman, Doylestown and Chippewa Township areas, and around Orrville and Smithville. Industrial clusters are found in Orrville's northeast quadrant and in Rittman.

Agriculture dominates the area and natural resources are also significant. Stream corridors include Chippewa, Little Chippewa, Newman and Sugar Creeks. Chippewa Creek has been significantly improved to better drain the area and reduce flooding impacts. Significant wooded and wetland areas are found along Chippewa Creek and in a major concentration in northeastern Baughman Township.

The following **physical planning issues** are noted:

- Limiting development factors include septic constraints, groundwater availability, floodplains, severe slopes, woodland and wetland resources. Doylestown and Chippewa Township have begun discussions regarding a new, joint water and sanitary sewer district. Smithville is currently considering upgrading its wastewater plant. Milton Township is discussing implementing a water and sewer district.
- Wayne County Airport is a focus for future economic development, but impacts adjacent land use due to airport operations. The recent airport zoning amendments were not approved. But the Comprehensive Plan

should recognize the airport's continuing land use impacts and recommend appropriate development patterns and densities in the affected areas.

- Chippewa Township which has been preparing a comprehensive plan, is one of two townships in Wayne County that have adopted a zoning resolution. Rittman, Orrville, Smithville, Marshallville and Doylestown have also adopted zoning ordinances.
- US 30 is to be realigned east of Wooster (in the Southeast Planning Area) by the Ohio Department of Transportation. Interchanges are proposed at Geyer's Chapel Road and Apple Creek Road, which will affect local traffic patterns, infrastructure and land use patterns in this planning area. A recommendation of this Element is preparation of a development plan for the corridor.
- A large area in Chippewa Township contains an underground gas storage facility, southwest of Chippewa Creek.

Central Planning Area

The Central Planning Area is the most developed and most densely populated planning area in Wayne County, and accounts for the majority of local commercial and industrial development. The 1990 population was 31,067 with 11,338 dwelling units. Between 1990 and 1995 an additional 844 single-family homes were constructed, boosting population to an estimated 33,379.

A large concentration of residential development, with some limited commercial development is located south of Wooster outside the City limits. This area is served by Wooster sanitary sewers and on-site wells, but was developed in the County. Also located in the planning area is a portion of the state's land holdings in Wayne County at OARDC and Agricultural Technical Institute.

Agriculture dominates the area but to a lesser extent than other planning areas and natural resources are also significant. Killbuck and Little Apple Creeks are the major stream corridors and an important groundwater aquifer is located along the Killbuck. Significant wooded areas and wetlands are also found. The far northern portion of Killbuck Marsh Wildlife Area is located in southern Wooster Township.

The following **physical planning issues** are noted:

- Limiting development factors include septic constraints, groundwater availability, extensive floodplains, significant aquifer along the Killbuck, and slope.
- Continued retail and housing expansion on Wooster's north end will extend suburban, low-density development into the rural area.
- Improvements to the Wayne County Airport will be a factor relative to development in the airport vicinity, both in terms of discouraging residential development and encouraging industrial development adjacent to the facility. A large portion of the planning area is covered by airport zoning requirements. Utilities are currently unavailable, however.
- A proposal to modify Wooster's utility and annexation policies to permit utility extensions outside corporate boundaries could impact development patterns in unknown ways.

- Expansion of industrial areas on Wooster's west, south and east sides are important to ensuring adequate developable sites, but will impact adjacent areas. Mitigation should be undertaken to ensure these areas are appropriately buffered. Industrial expansion is under consideration in the Long Road area of Wooster, northeast of the Rubbermaid headquarters. This is at least a 70-acre site which could be developed in three phases. Utility extensions and road improvements are necessary to support development.
- Expanding quarry operations are located in the southern part of the planning area.

Southwest Planning Area

The Southwest Planning Area is the least populated planning area in Wayne County and is dominated by an agricultural and natural resource physical character. The 1990 population was 8,274 persons and 3,020 dwelling units were in the area. Between 1990 and 1995, an additional 210 single-family homes were constructed, boosting population to about 8,850.

The area is dominated by agricultural uses, as well as the largest portion of natural resources, such as Killbuck Marsh, Funk Bottoms and Brown's Bog, a Nature Conservancy property.

The following **physical planning issues** are noted:

- Shreve is preparing a comprehensive plan.
- Expanding quarry operations are located in Franklin Township.

Southeast Planning Area

The Southeast Planning Area is one of the least populated and developed planning areas, and is identified as the center of the Amish communities in Wayne County. The 1990 population was 17,266 persons and about 6,301 dwelling units were in the area. Between 1990 and 1995 an additional 349 single-family homes were constructed, boosting population to 18,221. About one percent of the area is occupied by commercial and industrial uses due to development along US 30 east of Wooster Township, one of the highest concentrations in the County.

The area is the most heavily agricultural and is also occupied by natural resources. Major stream corridors include North Branch and Sugar, Apple, Little Sugar and North Fork Sugar Creeks. Wooded areas are smaller in size and well distributed.

The following **physical planning issues** are noted:

- Fredericksburg is initiating development of a sanitary sewer system.
- East Union Township has acquired a 21-acre tract as a public park.
- Dalton is considering undertaking long-range planning and is also looking at new groundwater wellfields.
- US 30 realignment also impacts this area, which will affect local traffic patterns, infrastructure and land use patterns.
- The Wayne County Landfill is a factor to consider land use development for its immediate vicinity.
- The Southeast Planning Area is the center of the Amish community in Wayne County.

- The State of Ohio has large land holdings around Apple Creek Development Center.
- Quarry operations and coal mining are located east of Mt. Eaton.

County Trends

Several trends are readily apparent relative to the County's future. But trends are not destiny and it is the intent of this Plan to alter these trends in line with the goals of the Plan. The following summarizes these major trends:

- **Population** - Between 1950 and 1990 the County experienced a population increase that was double the state, 73 percent compared with 37 percent. In 1990 the population was 101,461. Since 1990 the County has issued over 3,000 building permits for single-family. Current forecasts project a 2010 population ranging from about 114,000 (low) to 146,000 (high).
- **Housing** - Between 1950 and 1990 the County experienced an increase in the number of households by 121 percent, nearly 1.5 times the state increase of 77 percent. In 1990 the County had 35,619 households. Household size has steadily declined (following a national trend) and currently stands at 2.85 persons per household. Current population forecasts through 2010 would result in an increase in the number of households, from 40,000 (low) to 52,000 (high).
- **Large-Lot Development Pattern** - The residential development pattern found in unincorporated Wayne County is low-density in character and results in an inefficient use of land. Current Health Code standards and planning regulations require a minimum one acre for on-site utilities, which represents a low density pattern, but also may not adequately provide sufficient space given the County's poor soil conditions. Under state law farms are often divided into five-acre lots to avoid the public subdivision review process. This results in an even less-dense development pattern, inefficient use of land and in some cases, lots poorly suited as homesites. The continuation of this trend will result in a major loss of agricultural land, natural resources and increased public costs for constructing, operating and maintaining public facilities and services.
- **Employment** - Between 1950 and 1990 the County experienced a 127 percent increase in employment, over twice the state average of 65 percent. In 1990 the County had a labor force of 50,482 workers. Employment forecasts through 2010 project an increase in the labor force of from 55,000 (low) to 69,000 (high).
- **Urbanized Area** - In 1990 the urbanized portion of Wayne County was 13 percent. Housing and employment trends could boost the urbanized area by 2010 to 19 percent (worst case) which would result in a loss of about 15,000 acres of agricultural land and 5,000 acres of natural resources.

Goals, Objectives and Strategies

Policies are the basis of the Comprehensive Plan and this section presents the Land Use Goal and 11 objectives and related strategies. Together these policies are the driving force behind the Land Use Element. The Implementation section presents actions for each objective. The land use goal is:

Growth and development to be managed, with emphasis on preserving farmland, the current agricultural character and the rural landscape.

The objectives and their respective strategies are:

Objective 1 - Efficient Use of Land - Encourage the efficient use of land in cooperation with local units of government, by:

- 1.1 Appointing the County Planning Commission to oversee implementation of the Comprehensive Plan with support by the Planning Department.
- 1.2 Issuing an Annual Growth Report that measures changes in development, updates population and building forecasts and summarizes implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.
- 1.3 Sponsoring an annual meeting among local government officials to consider growth and planning-related issues.
- 1.4 Encouraging a higher-density development pattern through zoning bonuses in Growth Areas - cities, villages and townships with adopted zoning codes.
- 1.5 Encouraging infill development in areas with supporting infrastructure and utilities through zoning and tax incentives in Growth Areas - cities, villages and townships with adopted zoning codes.
- 1.6 Clustering future development adjacent to existing and compatible concentrations of similar development.
- 1.7 Directing future development to identified Growth Areas and Future Expansion Areas.

Objective 2 - Residential Development - Target countywide residential growth rate at one percent per year (measured as dwelling units) and target average residential density at 2.0 dwelling units per acre, by:

- 2.1 Managing infrastructure improvements to maintain the target.
- 2.2 Encouraging higher-density residential development (2.0 to 6.0 dwelling units per acre) in cities and villages.
- 2.3 Encouraging lower-density residential development in townships (0.5 to 1.0 dwelling unit per acre) and discouraging very-low-density residential development in townships (less than 0.5 dwelling units per acre).

Objective 3 - Commercial Development - Target countywide commercial growth rate at a maximum of 0.75 percent per year (measured as square footage), by:

- 3.1 Managing infrastructure improvements to maintain the target.
- 3.2 Strongly managing commercial rezonings to limit the amount of such development in cities, villages and townships with zoning.
- 3.3 Encouraging retail infill in downtowns, especially in underused or vacant structures.

Objective 4 - Industrial Development - Target countywide industrial growth rate at a minimum of 1.25 percent per year (measured as square footage), by:

- 4.1 Implementing the Strategic Economic Development Plan.
- 4.2 Managing infrastructure improvements to maintain the target.
- 4.3 Implementing a thorough retention and expansion program.
- 4.4 Developing two industrial parks.

Objective 5 - Farmland Conservation - Conserve farmland, by:

- 5.1 Adopting a county-level Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program.
- 5.2 Creating a nonprofit land trust to purchase or obtain through gifts conservation easements on prime agricultural land.
- 5.3 Encouraging participation in the Current Agricultural Use Valuation (CAUV) Program and Agricultural Districts.
- 5.4 Amending the Subdivision Regulations to include more stringent environmental assessment requirements, more restrictive minor subdivision provisions to limit number of lot splits, more restrictive lot frontage requirements to reduce the number of flag-shaped lots, adopting soil erosion and sediment control regulations, and give emphasis to new regulations which would promote the perpetuation of the family farm.
- 5.5 Directing future development to identified growth areas and future expansion areas.
- 5.6 Adopting agricultural protection zoning districts.
- 5.7 Supporting agribusiness.
- 5.8 Adopting Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program.
- 5.9 Promoting estate planning.
- 5.10 Supporting other opportunities.

Objective 6 - Rural Character - Protect and enhance rural character, by:

- 6.1 Implementing farmland preservation strategies in Objective 5.
- 6.2 Inventorying historic agricultural structures and providing incentives to encourage rehabilitation.
- 6.3 Creating a county-level Barn Again Program under the guidance of the OHPO.
- 6.4 Creating a mechanism for brokering the preservation of barns through a seller/buyer network.
- 6.5 Recognizing outstanding preservation efforts.
- 6.6 Encouraging preservation of fencerows and vegetative stream corridors.
- 6.7 Encouraging acquisition as public greenspace of unique natural features that define rural character, such as outstanding woodlands, wetlands and stream corridors.

- 6.8 Directing future development to identified growth areas and future expansion areas.

Objective 7 - Update Regulations - Update County Development Regulations as a means of implementing the Comprehensive Plan, by:

- 7.1 Formally incorporating open-space subdivision design and submittal requirements, including incentives, and requiring open space land dedication requirements in residential subdivisions.
- 7.2 Expanding lot frontage requirements and placing further restrictions on the number of permitted lot splits.
- 7.3 Requiring an environmental assessment of proposed subdivisions as part of the preliminary plat submittal requirements and encouraging appropriate (and sensitive) development and construction practices that reflect the intentions of the Comprehensive Plan.
- 7.4 Requiring "urban" engineering standards in all subdivisions in transitional areas, revisit stub street policy and study fee structure.
- 7.5 Strengthening health code requirements relative to on-site wastewater systems.

Objective 8 - Model Township Zoning Resolution - Provide a model township zoning resolution to encourage township-based zoning in Wayne County (at the discretion of township residents by referendum) and to encourage consistency among separate township zoning programs, by:

- 8.1 Preparing a model township zoning resolution.
- 8.2 Sponsoring educational workshops with township officials and distributing the model.
- 8.3 Providing technical assistance to townships as they consider adopting a zoning resolution.

Objective 9 - Update Local Comprehensive Plans - Encourage cities, villages and townships in Wayne County to update existing comprehensive plans or to prepare a comprehensive plan where one does not exist, by:

- 9.1 Sponsoring an orientation session for local government officials on the Comprehensive Plan, the benefits of planning and a typical process to undertake comprehensive planning.
- 9.2 Sharing with cities, villages and townships the data collected for the Comprehensive Plan, including the Planning Department's geographic information system and Ohio Capabilities Analysis Program data base.
- 9.3 Providing technical assistance and guidance to communities as plans are prepared.
- 9.4 Providing County funding assistance to cities, villages and townships to finance preparation of plans.

Objective 10 - Local Zoning Regulations and Development Standards - Encourage cities, villages and townships with zoning regulations to update those regulations and update development standards in line with Comprehensive Plan recommendations, by:

