

Fairfield County 2023 Comprehensive Plan

What is the Comprehensive Plan?

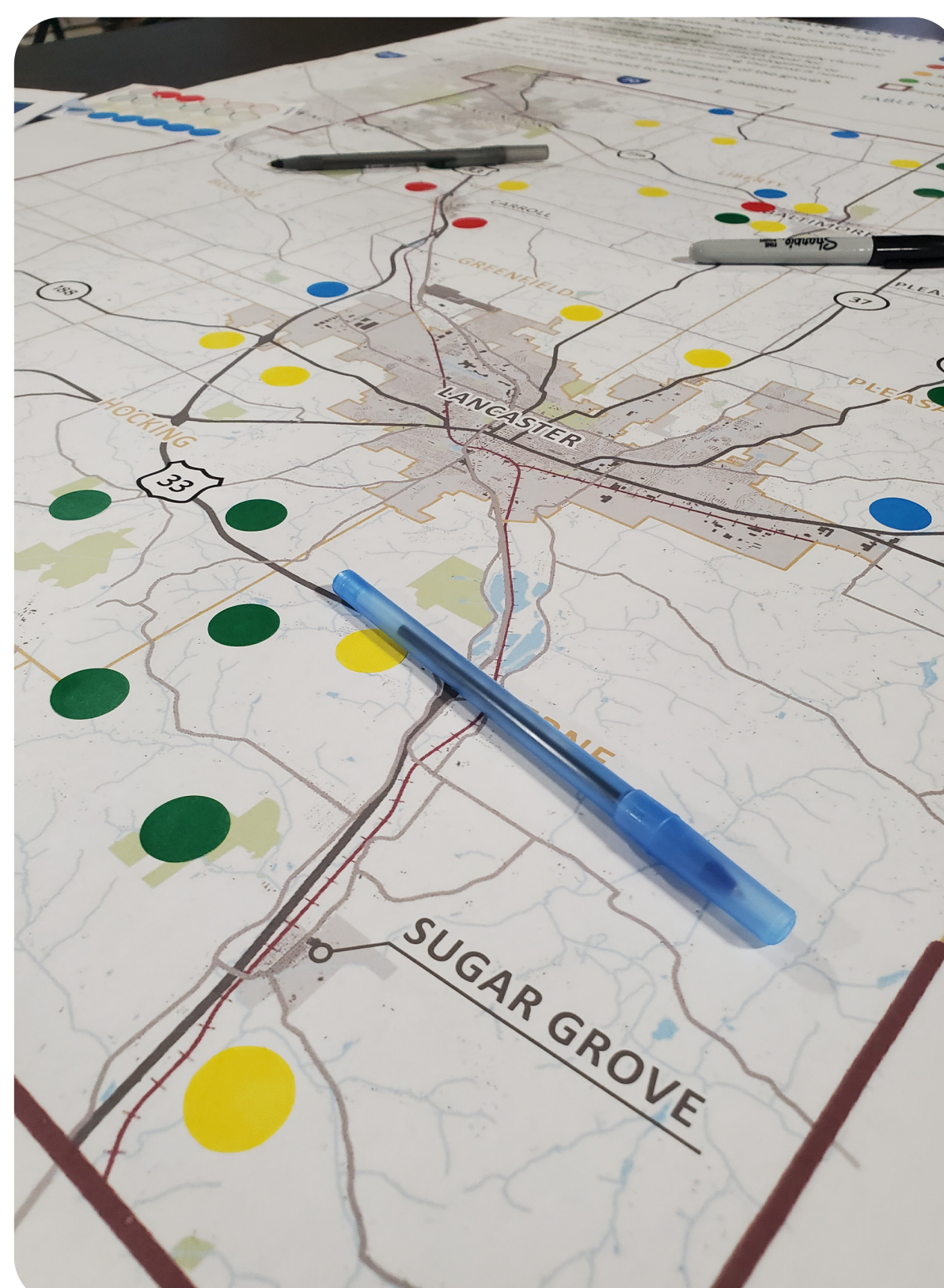
- The Comprehensive Plan is Fairfield County's official set of policies relative to growth, land use, and development.
- It serves as a basis for considering a variety of growth- and service-related policies, programs, regulations, and capital expenditures.
- The plan will serve as a policy basis to consider amendments to the County Subdivision Regulations, updates to local zoning codes, additional joint projects to manage growth, and investments to direct development in appropriate locations.
- The Comprehensive Plan was funded by the Board of County Commissioners as another tool to assist local jurisdictions in addressing the various growth pressures and opportunities facing each community.
- The plan does not replace local zoning but can serve as a resource to consider code and zoning map amendments to further guide development in each community.
- The 2023 Comprehensive Plan replaces all previously adopted comprehensive plans. And can be adopted by local jurisdictions to serve as their policy document for making future zoning and service decisions.

Who was involved?

- County Commissioners
- Fairfield County Economic and Workforce Development Department
- Regional Planning Commission
- Utilities Department
- Engineer's Office
- Steering Committee
- Consultants
- The public

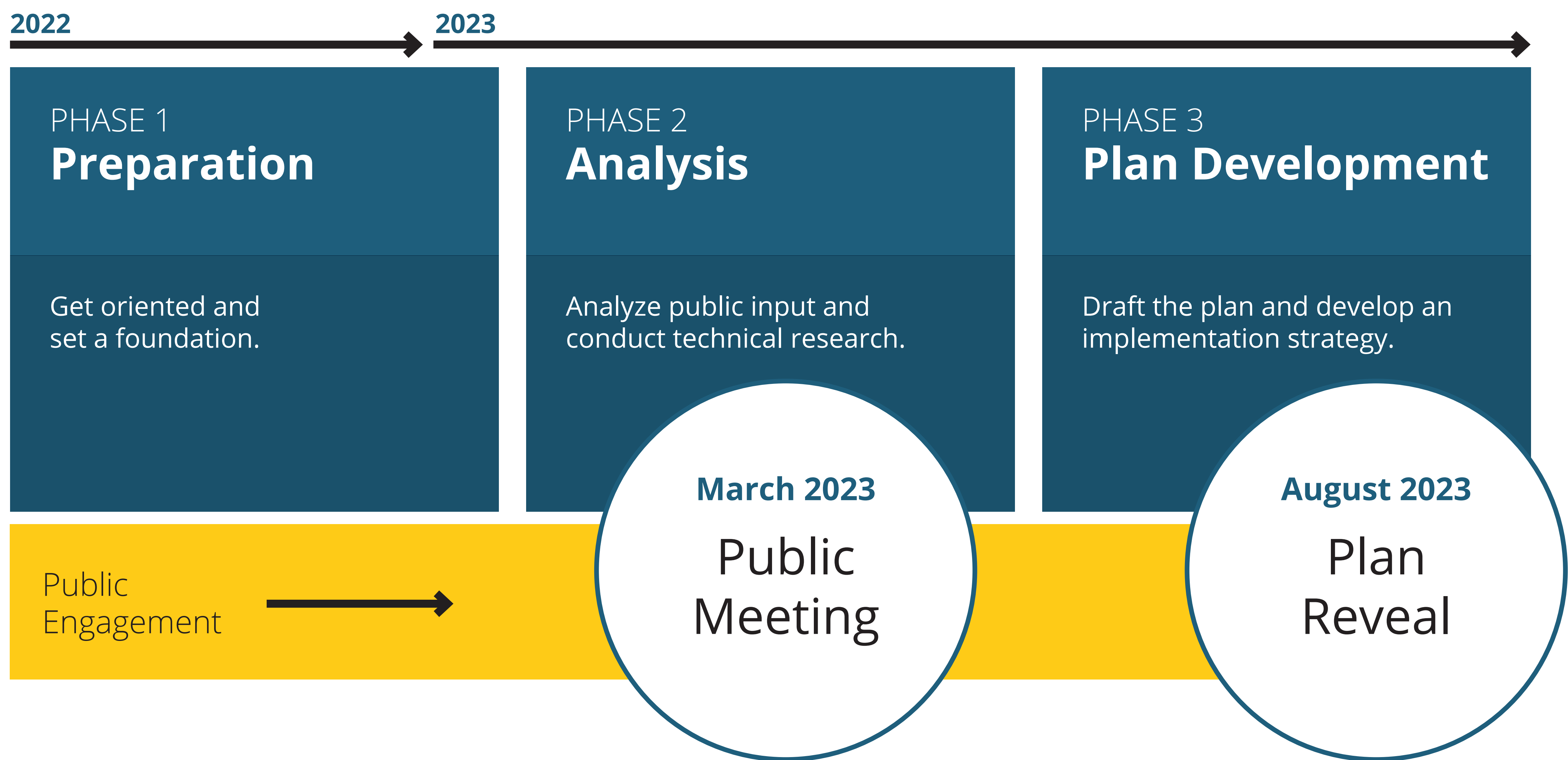
Fairfield County 2023 Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

Josh Anders	Fairfield County Utilities
Mary Boring	Village of Thurston
Stephanie Bosco	Lancaster Port Authority
Greg Butcher	City of Pickerington
Vince Carpico	FC Economic Dev
Aunie Cordle	Fairfield County Administrator
Steve Davis	Fairfield County Commissioner
Joe Ebel	Fairfield County Health Department
Gail Ellinger	Hocking Township
Tamara Ennist	FC Regional Planning
Bryan Everitt	Dagger law
Jeff Fix	Fairfield County Commissioner
Lee Gray	Mayor of Pickerington
Dave Gulden	City of Pickerington
David Hague	Coyote Run
Lucas Haire	Canal Winchester
Ralph Hedrick	Amanda Township
Joe Henderson	One Columbus
Michael Henwood	Mayor of Bremen
Terry Horn	Walnut Township
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Randy Kemmerer	Liberty Township
Dave Levacy	Fairfield County Commissioner
Chad Lucht	Fairfield County Soil and Water Conservation District
Rochelle Menningen	Fairfield County Clerk
Brad Nicodemus	Mayor of Baltimore
Mitch Noland	Fairfield County Engineers
Lori Sanders	Violet Township
David Scheffler	Mayor of Lancaster
Kent Searle	Greenfield Township
Carly Sparrow	Village of Thurston
Rick Szabrak	FC Economic Dev
Joe Taylor	Mayor of Lithopolis
Jeremiah Upp	Fairfield County Engineers
Vince Utterback	Violet Township
Tony Vogel	Fairfield County Utilities



Fairfield County 2023 Comprehensive Plan

Plan Process



What are the Plan's key themes?

Regional growth continues and will impact Fairfield County relative to population, housing, and jobs.

Growth management is jointly handled by various levels of local government: the County manages subdivisions, utilities, and economic development; townships manage planning and zoning; and villages and cities manage planning, zoning, infrastructure, and economic development within their boundaries.

Local officials have various perspectives on growth, some embrace the opportunities that growth offers, while others have mixed feelings and concerns.

Expanding the tax base and attracting a skilled workforce is critical to a sustainable economic future for all of Fairfield County.

Land remains a finite resource; only about 35% of the County remains to accommodate new development, so land use decisions are more and more important. But the low density, single-family development pattern complicates the developability of larger parcels.

Agriculture must remain resilient, working farms and the County's agricultural sector are important to Fairfield County's heritage and culture, but if low density, rural residential sprawl continues its' impact on farmland will only worsen.

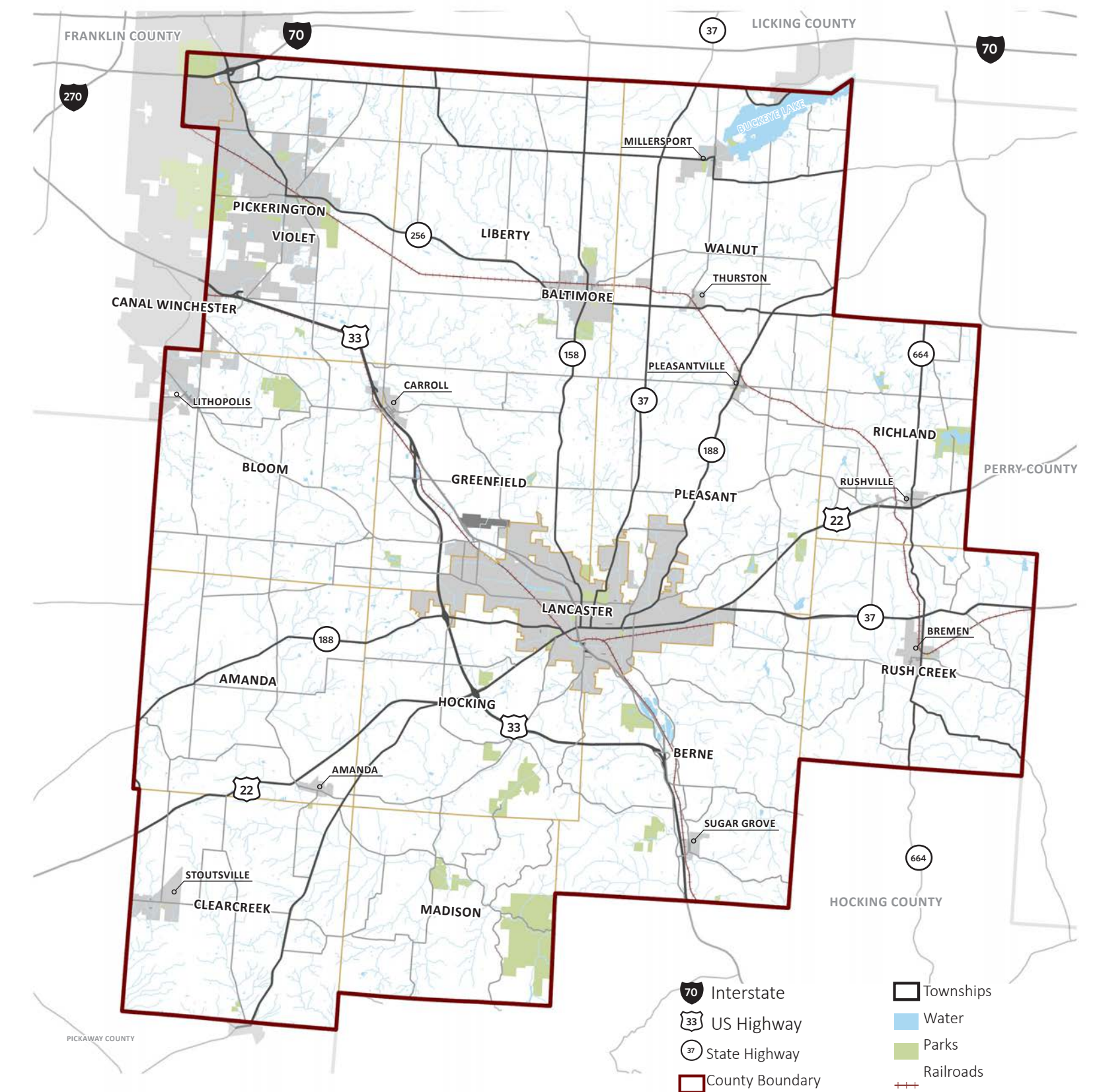
Respecting the natural environment is ever more important in terms of supporting the County's quality of life, managing ongoing weather changes, and preserving open spaces for wildlife and the enjoyment of future generations.

Planning Considerations

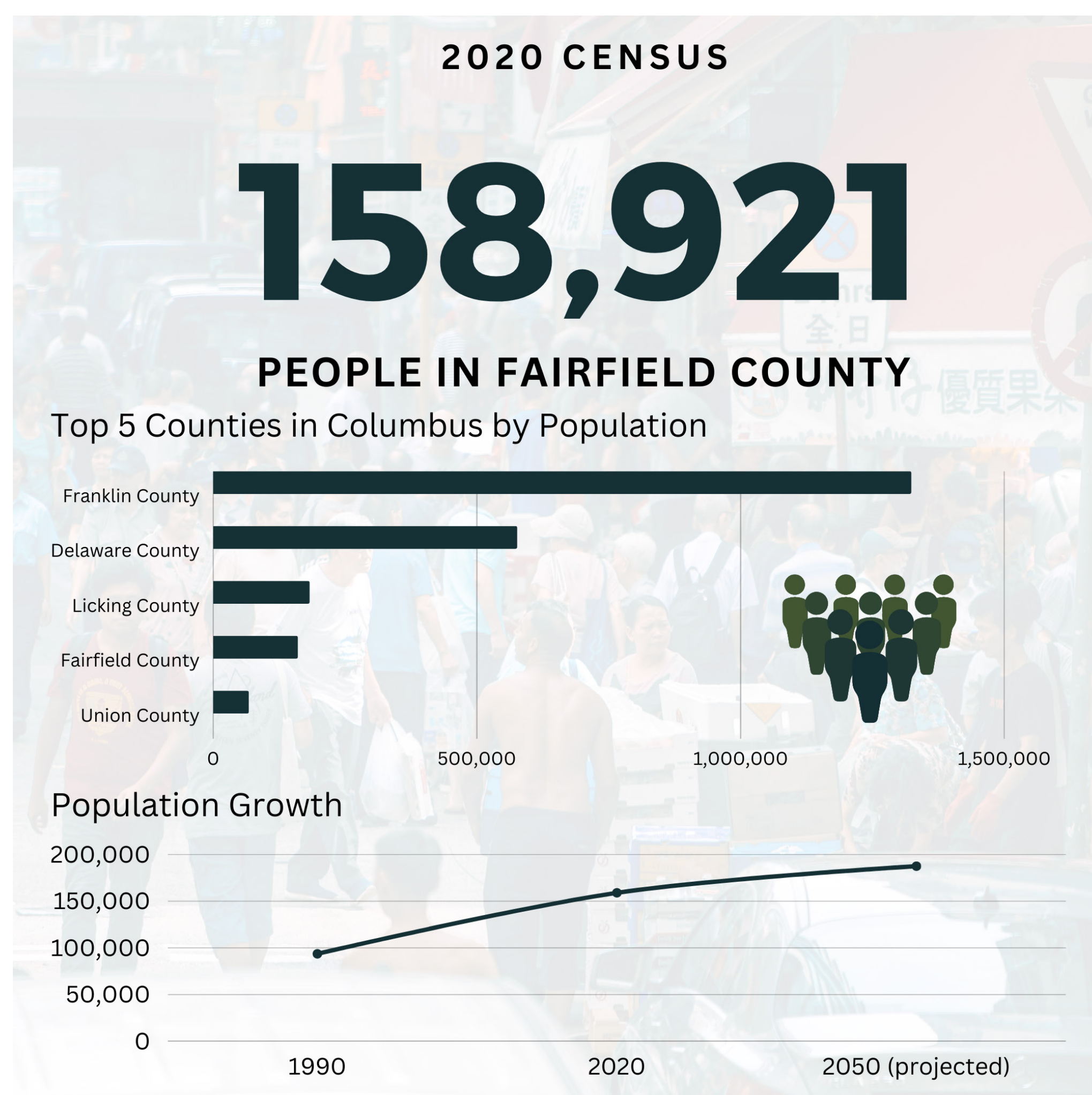
Planning Area

A diverse landscape comprised of growing suburban areas, multiple population centers of various scales, thriving agriculture, and a rich natural landscape.

The planning area is unincorporated Fairfield County. This includes all communities except for Canal Winchester, Lancaster, and Pickerington – although the development activity and related influences of those cities are factors in the preparation of the plan. At the same time, understanding the economy and housing market considers the County in its entirety.



Population



Population growth continues in Fairfield County, but the rate has recently slowed down as Franklin County has captured more regional population growth consistent with national trends.

- Fairfield County is the fourth largest county in the Columbus metropolitan area in terms of total population.
- Fairfield County had a 2020 population of 158,921.
- Over the past 40 years, the County has experienced steady population growth, growing from 93,678 to 158,921.
- Fairfield County is forecasted to grow to 187,500 by 2050, which is an increase of 23,579 residents since 2020, as calculated by the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC).
- Fairfield County is projected to need between 843 and 947 housing units per year, or upwards of 9,470 units total to reach 71,000 units over the next ten years.

Planning Issues

The County and its local jurisdictions are facing a range of planning issues and opportunities related to growth and development. The planning team interviewed representatives of almost every community in Fairfield County and identified the following overriding comments regarding growth, development, and the future of the County:

- Many local jurisdictions have not undertaken formal planning other than the cities and Violet Township.
- Some rural townships continue to support a rural development pattern.
- Expanding (or establishing) a non-residential tax base was critical to all communities to generate the tax revenues necessary to provide public services to residents.
- Providing some degree of new residential development was supported.
- Focusing on future growth in existing urban centers (cities and villages) was supported.
- Infill development and redevelopment in cities and villages was supported.
- Many communities have made significant investments in local infrastructure to support growth.
- Coordinating County utility expansion and local development goals should remain a priority.
- Local partnerships among jurisdictions are critical, especially in terms of saving public tax dollars in providing services and building and maintaining facilities.

Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives serve as the policy foundation for the Comprehensive Plan. They emphasize the direction reflected in the Future Land Use Map, and serve as a framework for organizing strategies and actions.

Managing growth in a sustainable way, revitalizing existing communities, and supporting new development in appropriate locations.

- Ensure future development is sustainable using updated development regulations, targeted incentives, and higher residential densities where appropriate.
- Revitalize existing communities by encouraging private investment, updating zoning codes, adopting zoning incentives, and promoting walkability.
- Support new development in appropriate locations consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, as well as local plans and supported by updated zoning codes.

Ensuring that growth benefits all communities.

- Support development in cities, villages, and other growth centers through the extension of public utilities consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.
- Support development in townships with County economic development incentives and the targeted extension of public utilities.

Supporting appropriate economic expansion and workforce development, a full range of housing options to support current residents and a growing workforce, retail services that meet the needs of local communities, downtown revitalization, and a strong agricultural economy.

- Support employment centers with public and private utilities, supporting transportation improvements, and targeted incentives.
- Support workforce development.
- Meet the growing housing needs of current residents and a expanding workforce.
- Support retail services that meet the needs of local communities.
- Support downtown revitalization.
- Support a strong agricultural economy.

Preserving rural character.

- Preserve the natural landscape by conserving outstanding natural assets, protecting flood hazard areas, and conserving farmland.
- Support working farms and related agricultural uses through conserving farmland, focusing growth on existing population centers, higher residential density, and expansion in appropriate locations.
- Promote architectural character, screening, buffering, and lighting standards that reduce impacts on the rural landscape.

Preserving natural resources.

- Preserve natural resources by conserving outstanding natural assets, protecting flood hazard areas, conserving farmland, and supporting development in existing growth centers.
- Protect the integrity of Federally designated floodplains and promote setbacks and buffering to reduce stormwater impacts on water quality.

Ensuring the provision of public services, utilities, and infrastructure to support communities and growth, while remaining fiscally responsible.

- Promote the use of capital improvement planning at all levels of local government to ensure public services, infrastructure, parks, and other capital needs anticipate growth pressure.
- Identify additional resources at each level of local government to fund capital investments, including creative solutions.
- Continue to ensure fiscal responsibility in the planning, construction, and maintenance of public facilities and infrastructure.
- Undertake studies and projects to improve the transportation network.
- Undertake studies and projects to expand utility coverage (water, wastewater, broadband, electricity, and natural gas) to support future growth.

Supporting appropriate growth management tools at the County and local levels.

- Emphasize local adoption of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Support appropriate growth management tools at the local level.
- Consider increasing resources at the County level to support local planning and development management.
- Promote training opportunities for local staff, appointed boards, and elected officials.
- Promote economic development tools and incentives that facilitate private investment.

Increasing dialogue between citizens and their communities, establishing strategic partnerships.

- Promote a variety of communication techniques to facilitate two-way dialogue, including education and input into public decision-making at all levels.
- Implement ongoing reporting of Comprehensive Plan implementation, including annual reporting and public meetings.
- Implement an annual growth report and related mechanisms to track development activity, including housing, business development and infrastructure in the County.
- Promote strategic partnerships that coordinate growth, jointly deliver public services, and expand on growth tools.

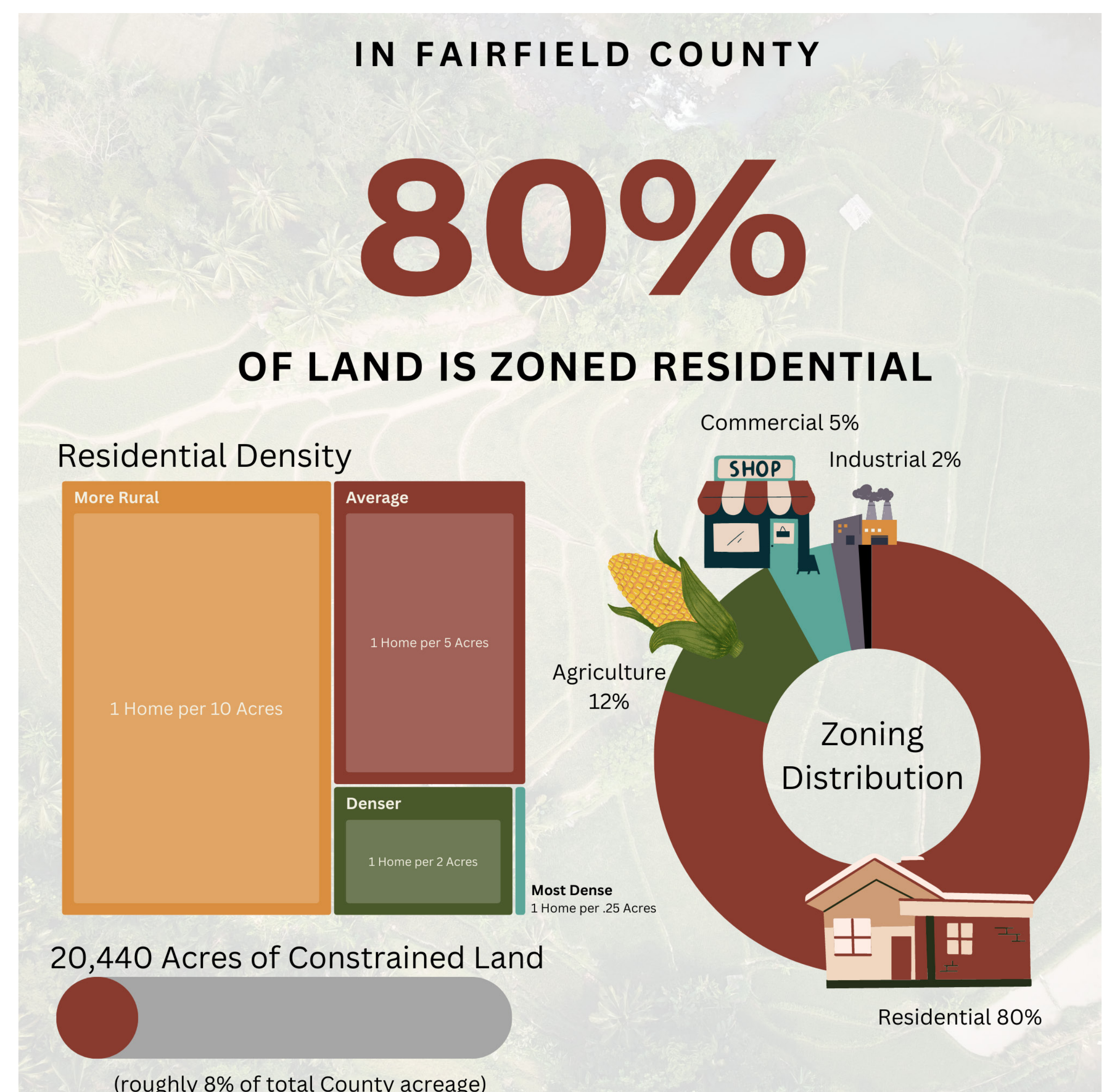


Growth Considerations

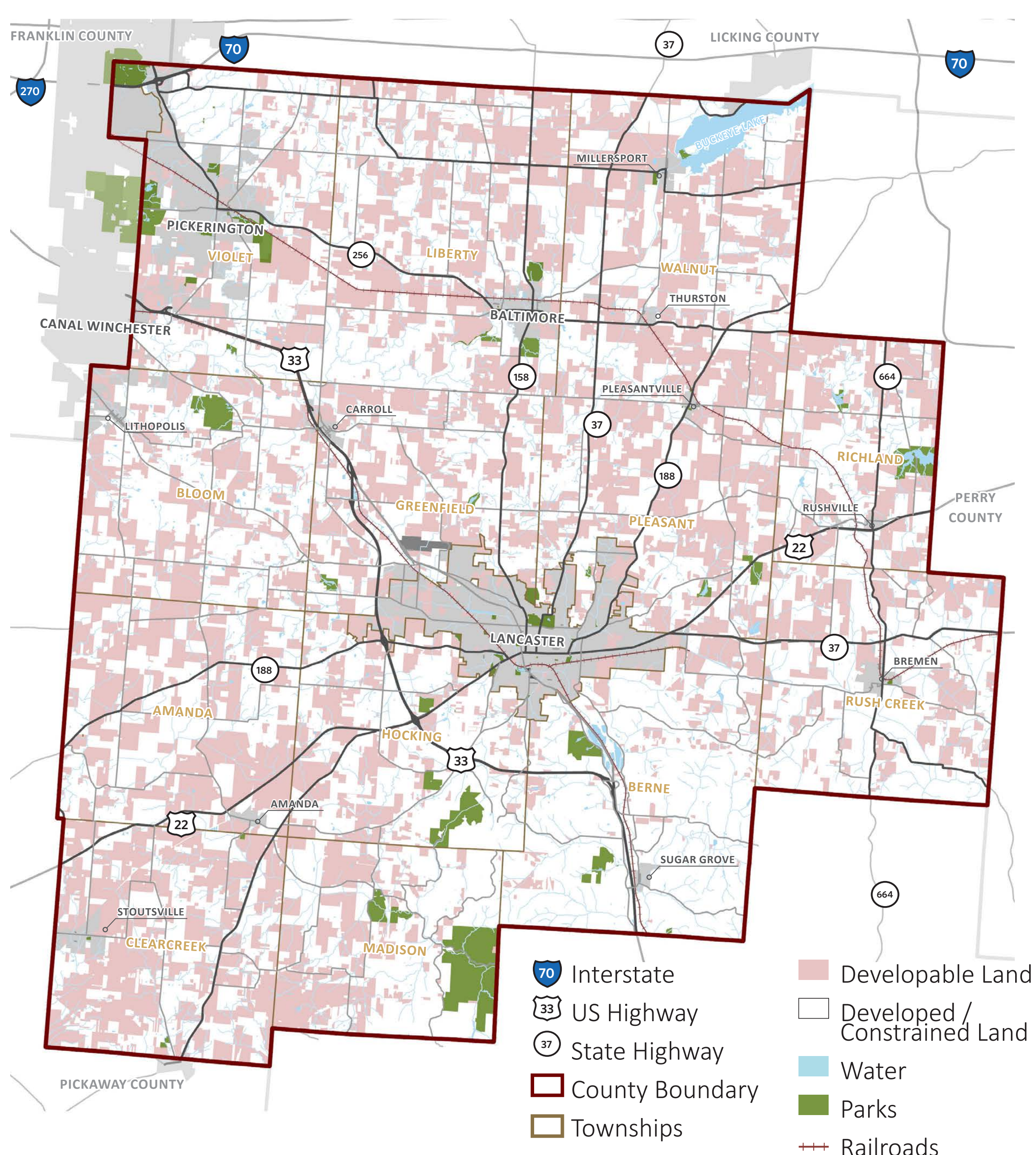
Existing Conditions

Fairfield County finds itself at a pivotal point and has been transitioning from a traditional rural county to one dominated by suburbs in the northwest, an expanding County seat, and a growing local economy with national and international companies.

- Growth trends are concentrated development in cities and villages.
- Growth trends in Licking County along I-70 are building pressure in northern Fairfield County.
- The County is predominantly rural and agricultural. Almost 16% of the County is residential, while commercial occupies less than 2% and industrial occupies less than 1% where such development is concentrated.
- Zoning trends promote residential development.
- Residential density varies significantly across the County. Overall, the County has an average of one home per five acres of land, though 4 du/ac is necessary to financially justify public utilities.
- Environmental assets help to provide character to the landscape (floodplains are 9%, forested areas are 22%) and constrain development.
- Oil and gas wells and underground transmission lines are extensive.



Development Capacity



Based on an analysis to support the plan, **only 35%** of Fairfield County is currently available to accommodate new development. Land is a finite resource and local decisions regarding development are becoming ever more important.

- About 35%, or 116,000 acres, of Fairfield County is available to accommodate future development (land that isn't developed, conserved, or constrained with natural features).
- Projected 2032 housing growth would consume half of it based on current densities in each community.
- One-third of communities are planning for employment growth. Taking into consideration the plan's Future Land Use Map, additional communities should consider supporting employment zoning at recommended locations.
- Only 10 communities in the County have commercially zoned land set aside to support employment growth. For certain communities, any growth would require rezoning land from another use to allow for new development.

Future Land Use

Future Land Use

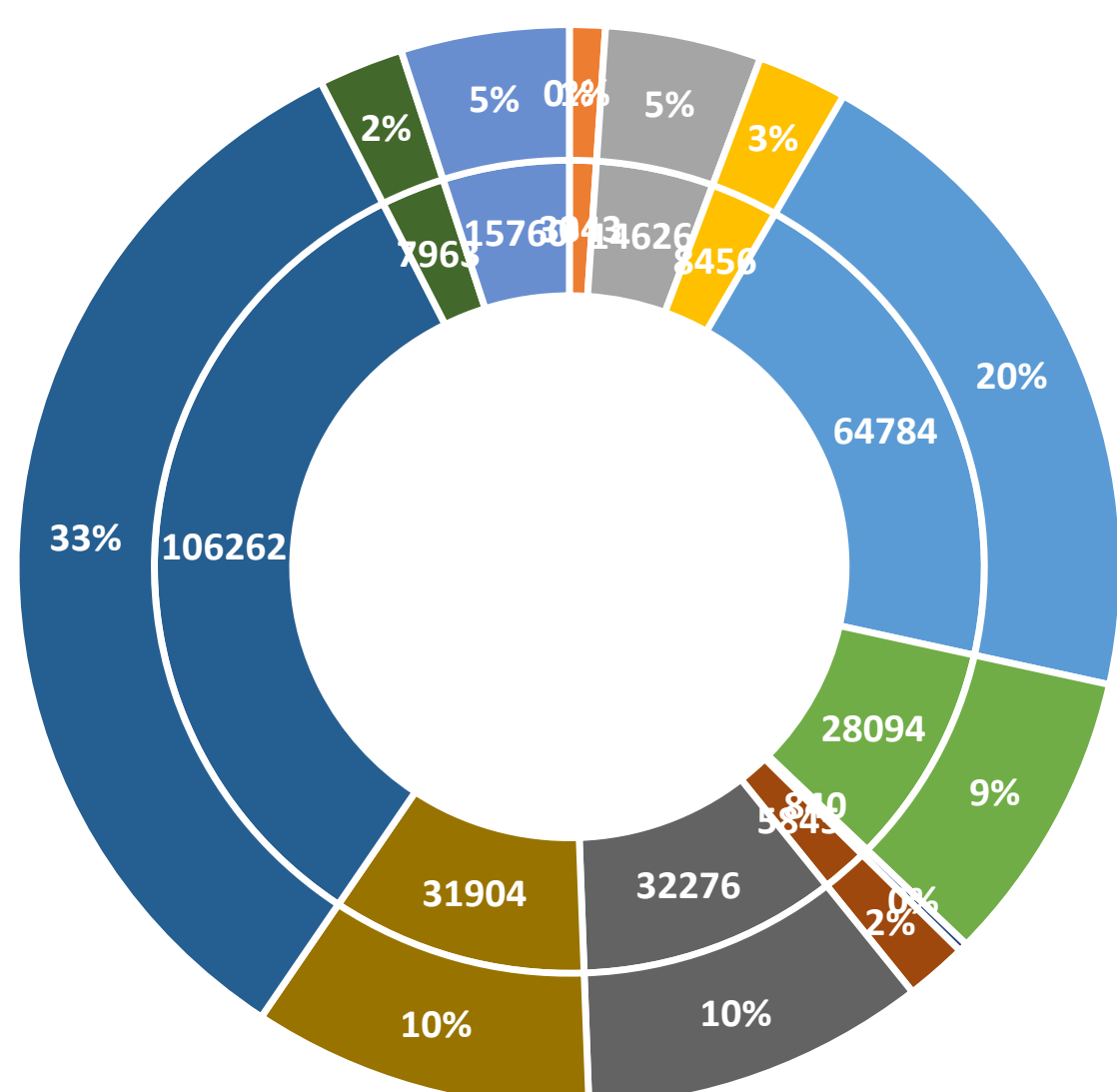
A vision for balanced growth, providing a strong economic future with housing and commercial services for residents, and conserved environmental and agricultural assets.

Land use speaks to the ways in which land is used for conservation or development purposes. It can reflect not just the actual use of the ground (today or in the future), but also the character of that development as a key descriptor.

This land use vision is built upon the input and analysis undertaken during this planning process. Its fulfillment will depend upon updating local zoning maps, the extension of public utilities to priority locations that can be feasibly and financially serviced, and ongoing development demand, which is not expected to lessen.

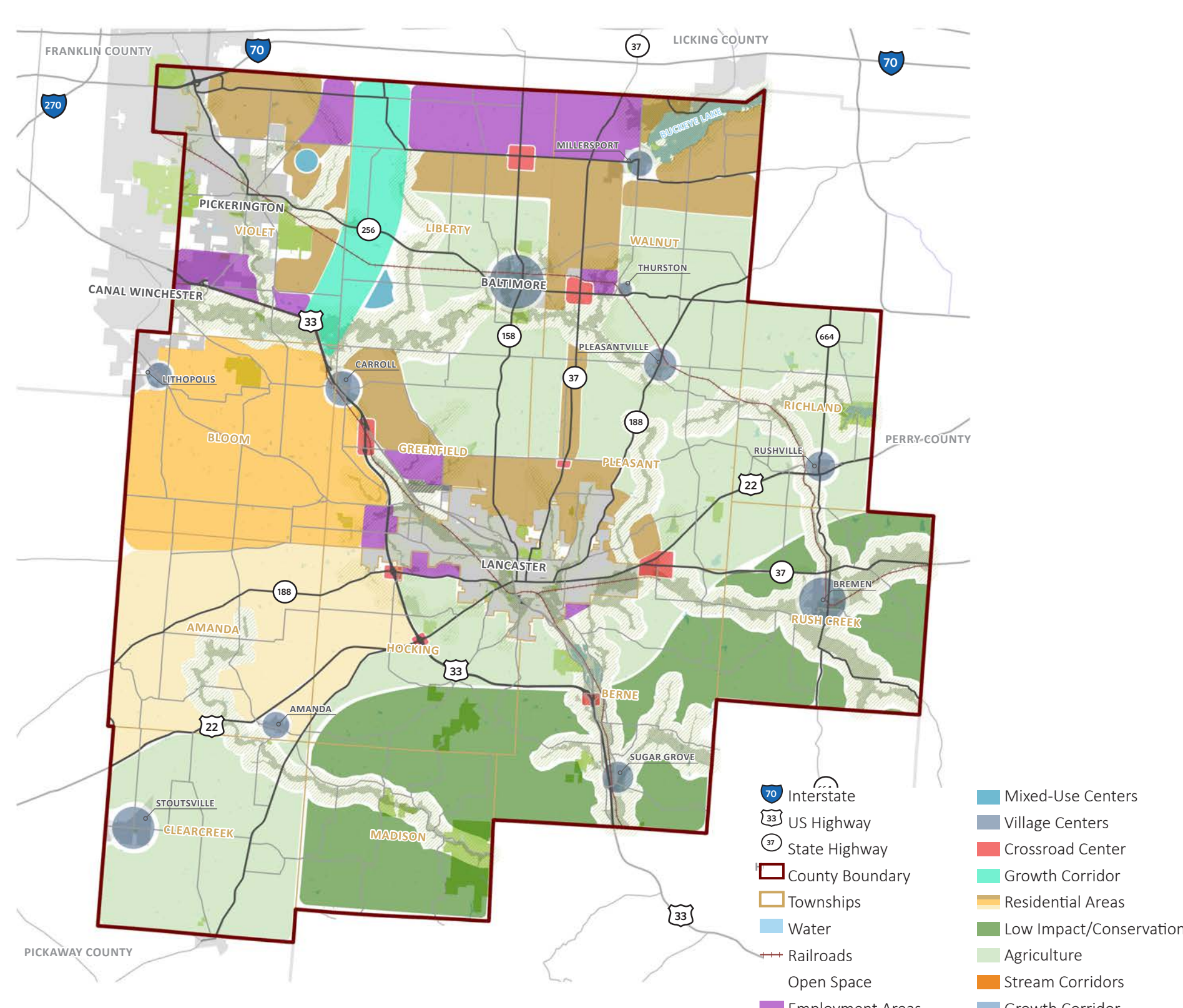
Overriding goals include:

- providing for employment opportunities for residents,
- housing to support those employees,
- commercial services to support residents,
- conservation of key environmental assets and prime agricultural areas.



Future Land Use	Total Acreage	% of Area
Crossroad Center	3343	1.04%
Employment Center	14626	4.57%
Growth Corridor	8456	2.64%
Low Impact	64784	20.24%
Mixed Rural	28094	8.78%
Mixed Use Center	840	0.26%
Open Space	5845	1.83%
Rural Residential	32276	10.08%
Suburban Residential	31904	9.97%
Traditional Agriculture	106262	33.19%
Village Center	7963	2.49%
None	15760	4.92%
Grand Total	320154	100.00%

Growth Concept Map



The Future Land Use Map seeks to balance development and conservation into a seamless and integrated growth pattern that responds to the growth potential of Fairfield County. Specifically:

- More intense development is focused on the existing population centers, both large (Lancaster and Pickerington) and small (Baltimore, Carroll, Pleasantville, Thurston, etc.).
- Suburban-scale development is recognized and expected to continue a development path in the northwest, as well as the northern portions of Liberty and Walnut townships given available access to I-70 and the related short commutes into Franklin County.
- Employment uses will be the focus of several Priority Growth Areas to provide an expanded tax base and employment opportunities for current and future residents.
- Less dense residential development continues in the balance of the County, often integrated with larger, conserved agricultural areas.
- Conservation should continue along all stream and river corridors, in recognition of the regulatory floodplains, extensive woodlands, and species habitat, and in recognition that a variety of recreational activities can be accommodated.

Future Land Use

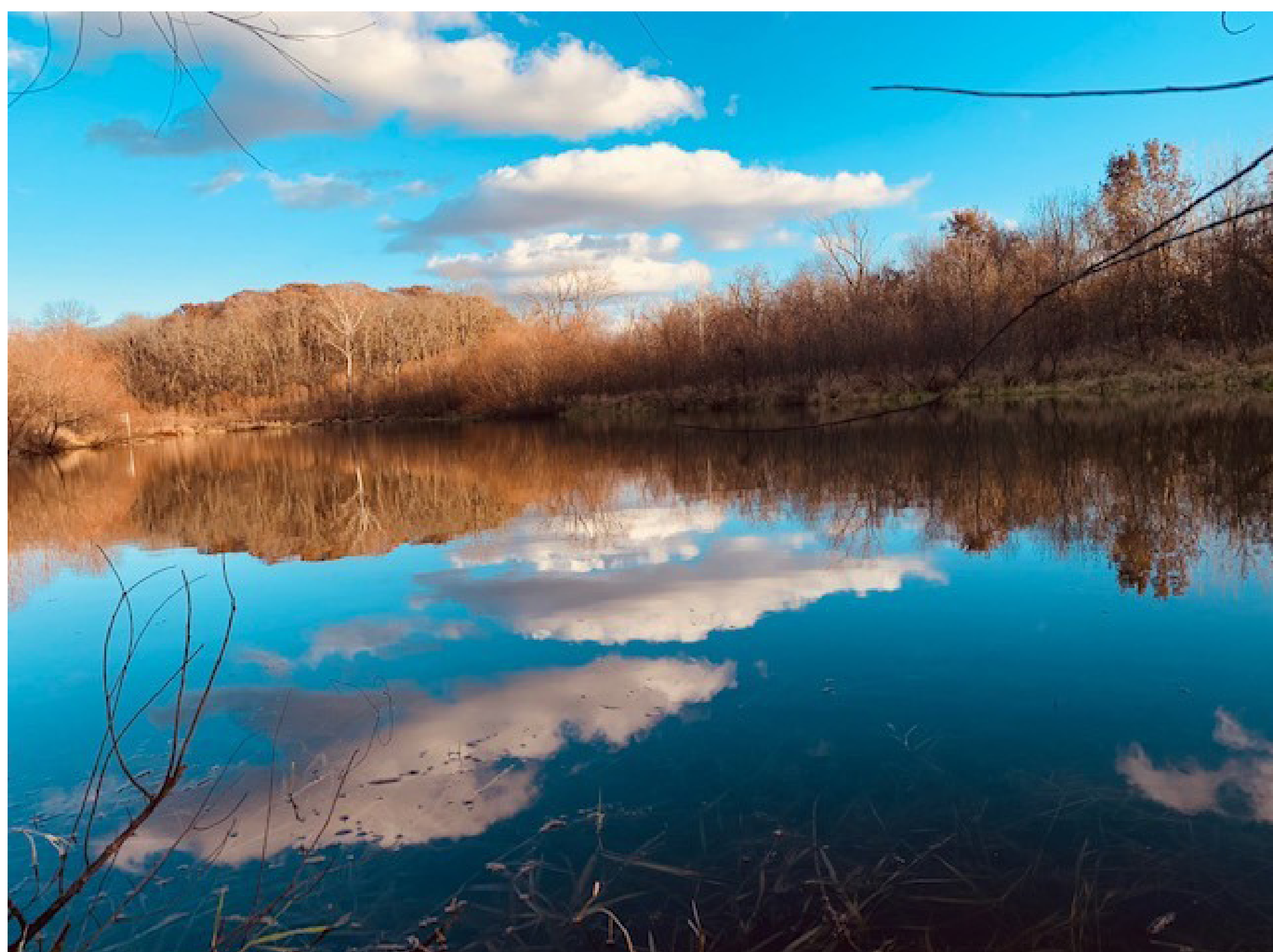
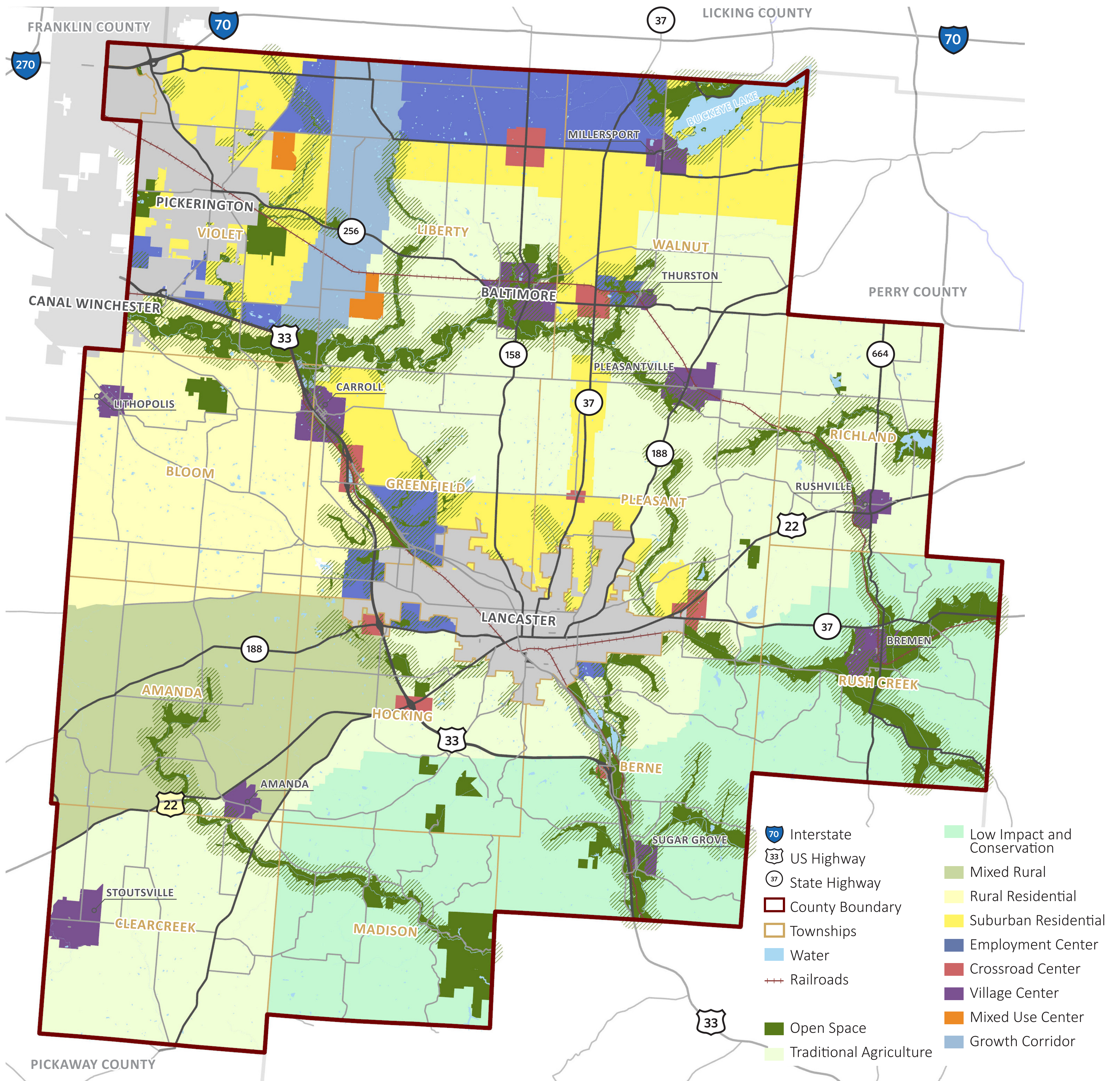


Photo Credit: Coyote Run

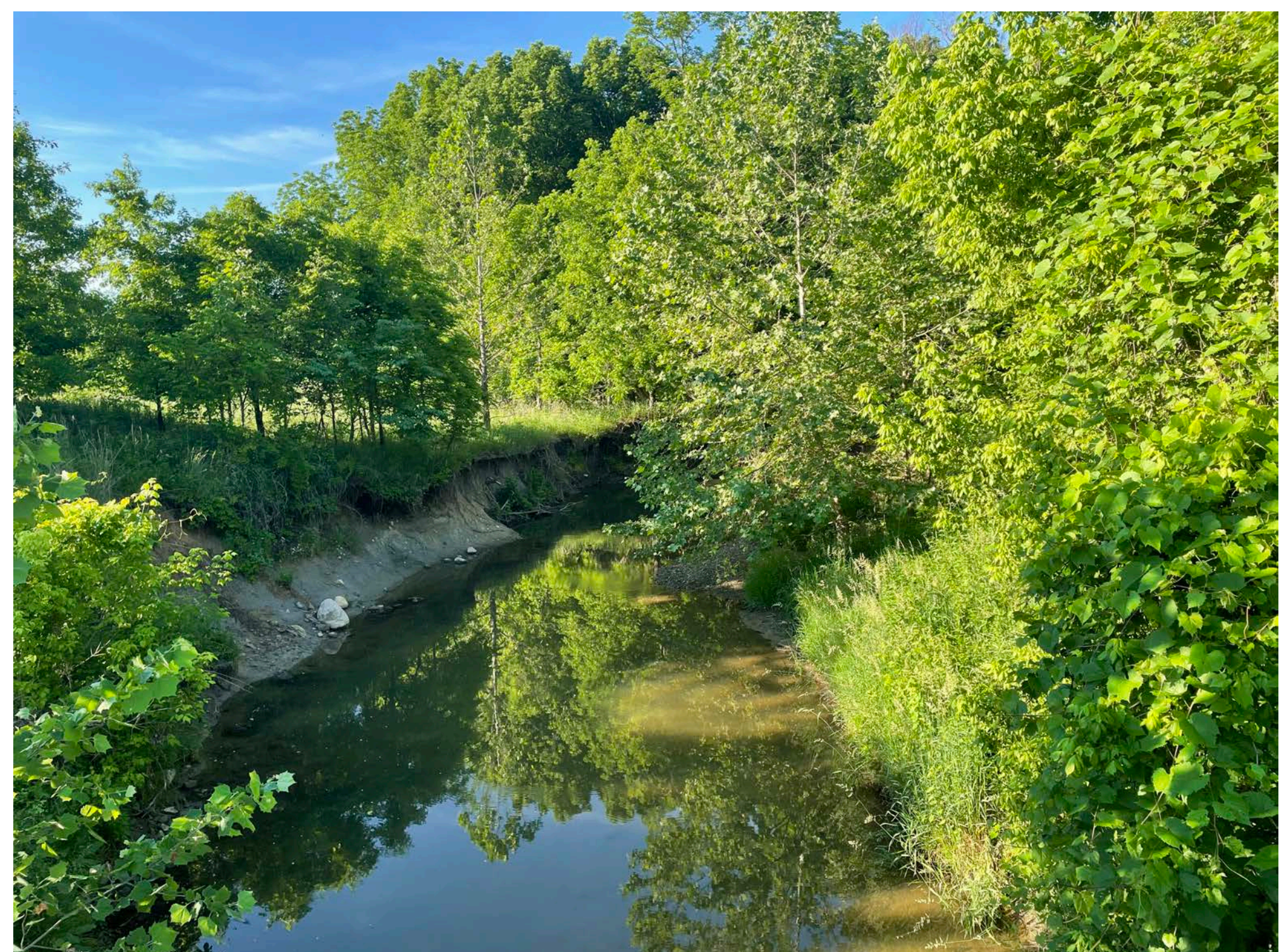


Photo Credit: Coyote Run

Character Types

Translating future land use into character types provides a richer discussion of the County's intentions from a policy and development standpoint.

- Character Types provide a visual explanation of policy direction for the categories in the Future Land Use Map.
- The following character types can serve as the basis for new zoning districts.
- The plan includes several policies intended to implement the character types through the zoning process and whether public utilities are appropriate.

OPEN SPACE

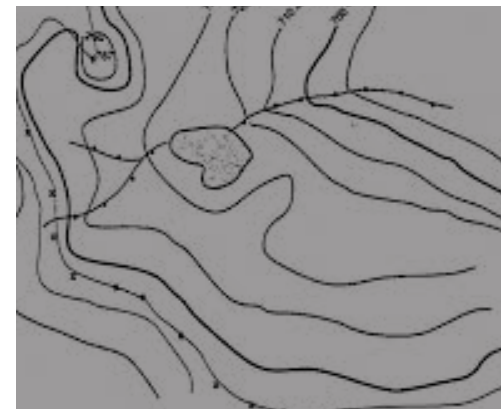
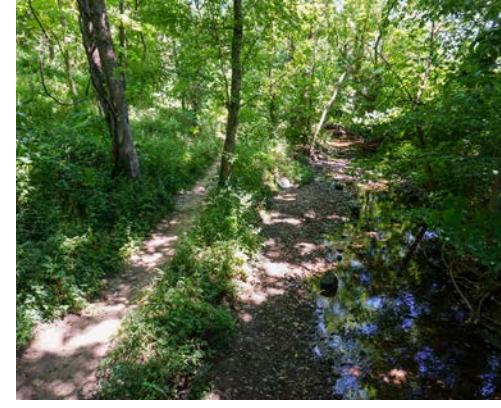
Natural areas, floodplains, and conserved properties protected as permanent open space. These areas may be improved with amenities and other enhancements based on community desire. These areas feature large open parcels or wooded areas, as well as regional greenways, trails, and bikeways.

PRIMARY USES

- Floodplains and Conservation

SECONDARY USES

- Parks



TRADITIONAL AGRICULTURE

Areas that are primarily in agricultural use and may also include single-family residential, agriculture-related buildings, civic uses and specific small-scale retail. Buildings are generally set far back from the roadway on large lots (over two acres). Traditional agriculture aesthetic is maintained. These areas may not be served by municipal water and sewer utilities.

PRIMARY USES

- Agriculture

SECONDARY USES

- Rural Single-Family Residential
- Civic/Institutional
- Commercial
- Light Industrial



LOW IMPACT AND CONSERVATION

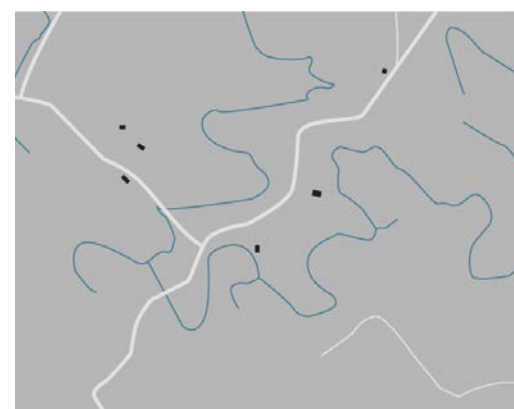
Areas with a unique landscape, heavy woodlands, and natural features. These areas include large lot, single-family homesites. Public parkland and conservation areas are appropriate. Public water and sewer services not intended for these areas outside of existing villages.

PRIMARY USES

- Open Space
- Conservation Areas
- Parks and Low Density
- Large Lot Single-Family Residences

SECONDARY USES

- Civic/Institutional
- Small-Scale Retail and Services



MIXED RURAL

Blend of residential uses and development with agriculture. These areas are largely agricultural in character but may see more large lot subdivisions, lot splits, and very limited suburban style patterns in the rural setting. Buildings setbacks and lot size may vary more widely than in Traditional Agriculture. These areas are not served by public water and sewer utilities.

PRIMARY USES

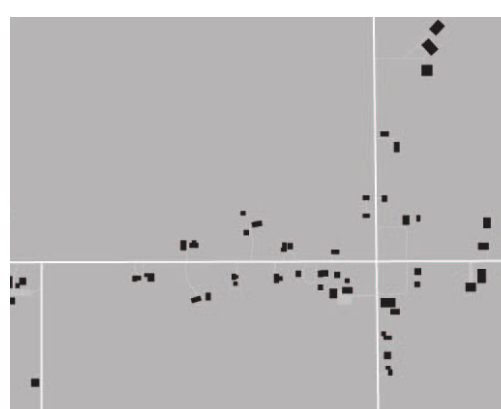
- Single-Family Residential
- Agriculture

SECONDARY USES

- Civic/Institutional
- Parks and Open Space

RESIDENTIAL DENSITY

- 1 du/10 ac



RURAL RESIDENTIAL

Areas with a mix of large-lot residential and agricultural uses. These areas may include unincorporated county land or annexed areas that have maintained a rural character with large lot single-family homes. Homes may be clustered near one another with large setbacks but are not arranged in a typical subdivision or neighborhood. These areas may not be served by municipal water and sewer utilities.

PRIMARY USES

- Single-Family Residential
- Agriculture

SECONDARY USES

- Civic/Institutional
- Parks and Open Space

RESIDENTIAL DENSITY

- 1 du/2 ac



SURBURBAN RESIDENTIAL

Primarily single-family residential with a higher percentage of attached units, with some connectivity between neighborhoods and other non-residential areas. May also have small scale multi-family residential. Building and lot size may range in size and density. These areas are served by public water and sewer utilities.

PRIMARY USES

- Single-Family Residential
- Multi-Family Residential

SECONDARY USES

- Civic/Institutional
- Parks and Open Space

RESIDENTIAL DENSITY

- 4 du/2 ac



EMPLOYMENT CENTER

Employment-oriented uses are characterized by light industrial-style development, hi tech, advanced manufacturing, data centers, logistics, and office. Large footprint structures, offering flexible space to accommodate market demand for various users. Buildings are oriented to the street and can be adapted to support different uses such as light manufacturing, high-tech industries and research and development. Buildings are set far back from the roadway and landscaping and lighting standards to reduce light pollution buffering are used to minimize impacts on surrounding areas.

PRIMARY USES

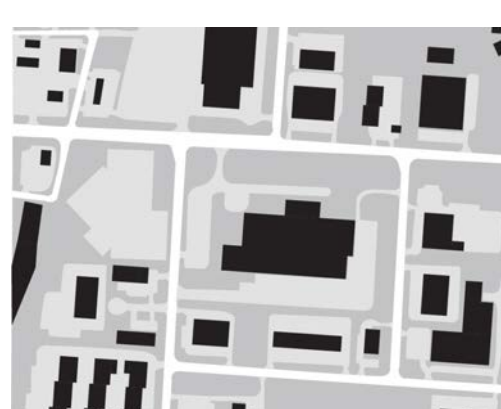
- Light industrial
- Hi Tech
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Data Centers
- Office
- Commercial
- Logistics
- Flex-Office

SECONDARY USES

- Civic/Institutional
- Parks and Open Space
- Surface Parking
- Service

COMMERCIAL DENSITY

- 5,000 sq/1 ac



CROSSROAD CENTER

Crossroad centers are characterized by small scale retail, services, and office in concentrated locations, principally at key intersections. Provides services to support nearby rural and lower density residential areas, as well as drive-by consumers.

PRIMARY USES

- Commercial
- Office

SECONDARY USES

- Civic/Institutional



VILLAGE CENTER

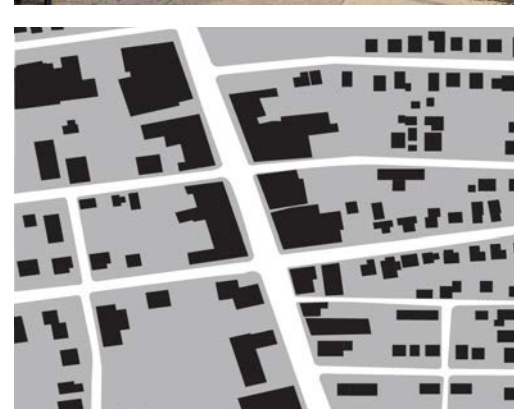
Traditional activity centers with a mix of small-scale commercial, office and residential uses. They may be located in either incorporated or unincorporated areas. These areas may also include institutional and public facilities. Buildings are set closer to the road on smaller lots but setbacks and lot size may vary. Streets accommodate moderate traffic at slow speeds and may include on-street parking and feature amenities for pedestrians and cyclists such as wide sidewalks, street trees, benches, and bike facilities such as multi-use trails and bike racks.

PRIMARY USES

- Vertical Mixed Use
- Residential
- Commercial
- Office

SECONDARY USES

- Civic/Institutional
- Parks and Open Space



MIXED USE CENTER

Areas and developments that integrate places to live, work, and shop. These areas include a variety of commercial, office, and residential uses, arranged in a compact and walkable pattern. These are located along major corridors and intersections. May be characterized by vertical mixed use buildings (minimum of two stories in height) where residential or office uses exist above ground floor retail or offices, or horizontal mixed-use where uses exist adjacent to one another in a connected development.

PRIMARY USES

- Vertical Mixed-Use
- Horizontal Mixed-Use
- Multi-Family Residential
- Commercial

SECONDARY USES

- Civic/Institutional
- Parks and Open Space



GROWTH CORRIDOR

Acknowledges potential construction of a connector linking US33 and I-70. Employment uses located at each terminus of the corridor, with Suburban Residential completing the corridor, except where an intersection is provided, where a Crossroad Center is appropriate. Connector should be heavily buffered and screened, walking and biking facilities provided as appropriate to interconnect adjacent development.

PRIMARY USES

- Employment Center Uses
- Suburban Residential
- Crossroad Center Uses

SECONDARY USES

- Civic/Institutional
- Multi-Family Residential
- Parks and Open Space

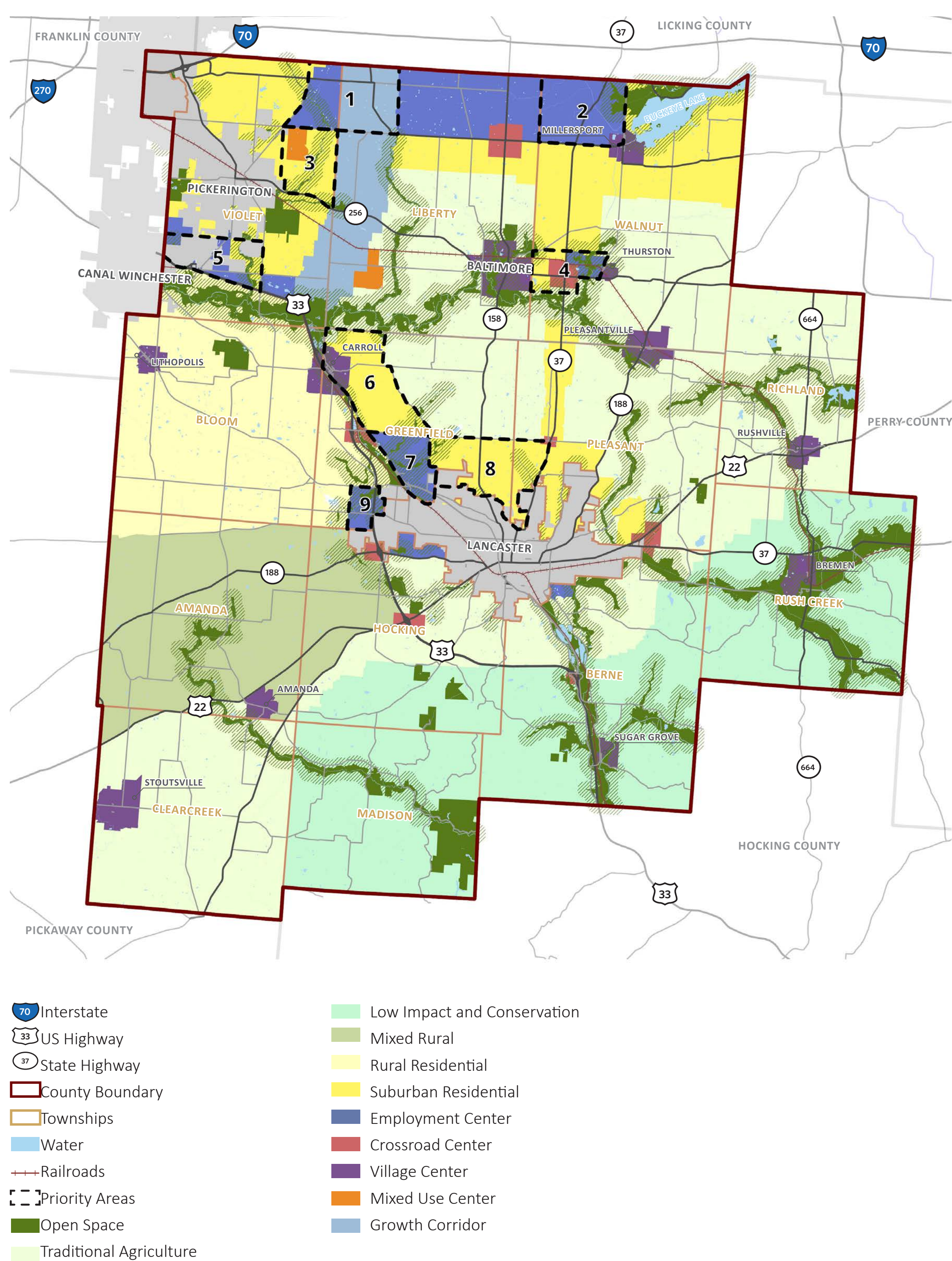


Future Land Use

Priority Growth Areas

Establishing the County's priorities for attracting and supporting new development over the next decade, fulfilling the vision of the Comprehensive Plan.

- The short-term priority areas are areas in which new development pressure is supported, public and private utility services are or can be available, and the supporting road network is in place (or improvements can be made).
- All growth areas are dependent upon the extension of public utilities to facilitate any significant development.
- The nine Priority Growth Areas represent a combined 9,340 acres of developable land.
- Four of the areas (4,000 acres) are recommended for residential development and could accommodate a total of 16,004 housing units.
- For non-commercial (employment) uses, the remaining 5,340 acres could accommodate 26,700,000 square feet of employment uses with a gross average density of 5,000 square feet per acre.



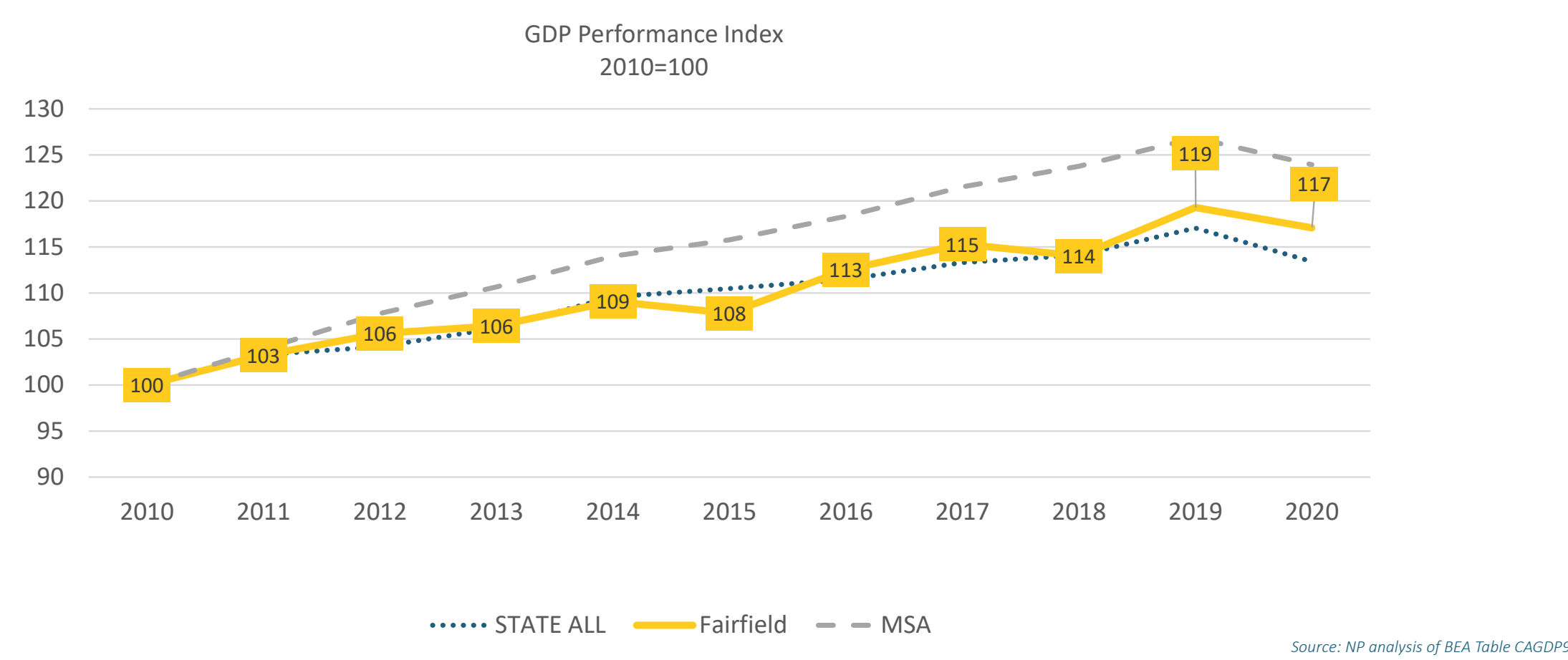
Economic Development

Economic Development

Key Findings

A strong local economy but with opportunities to grow local jobs and strengthen the workforce to attract future companies.

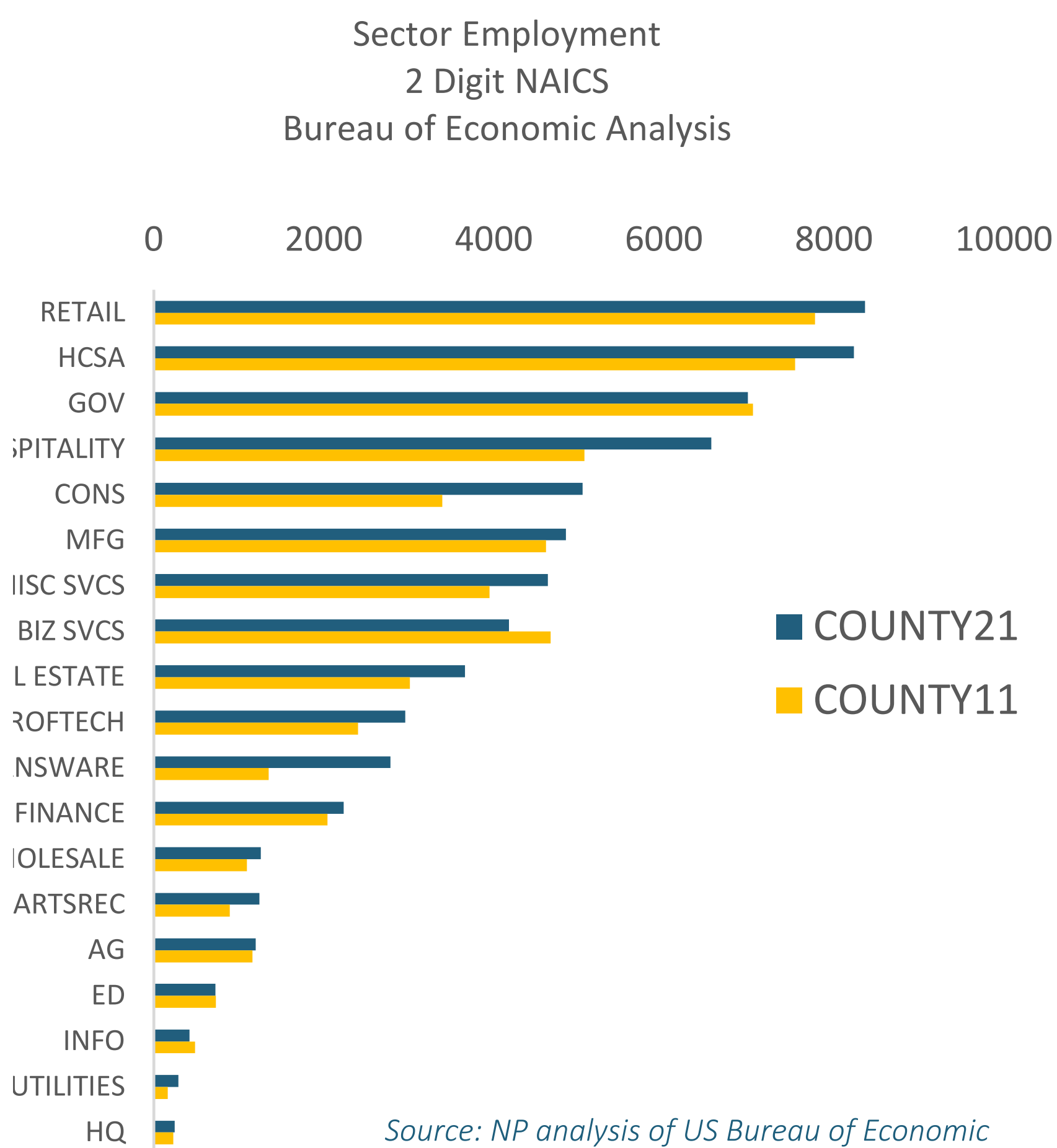
- Fairfield County's economy continues to grow, but at a slower pace than the region. The County's economy grew approximately 17% between 2010 and 2020, from \$3.5 billion to \$4.1 billion, based on the latest available data, which is slower than the regional growth rate of 24%.



the job mix for the County's residents is different than the opportunities available in Fairfield County. For example, approximately 8,000 residents work in office-based jobs in finance or corporate headquarters, whereas Fairfield County hosts about only one-half of that number of jobs.



- Jobs within the County are dependent on consumer spending. The County's job base is very dependent on consumer driven spending. Retail and Hospitality equal 23% of the local job base versus 16% for the Columbus metropolitan area, by example.



- Commuting is extensive in that a significant portion of the workforce commutes outside the County. Fairfield County has a resident workforce of 72,000, but only 43,000 jobs are located within the County, resulting in a large amount of commuting to Franklin County.
- There is a disconnect between available jobs in the County and the skill set of the residents. It appears

Policies and Strategies

- Continue the workforce development efforts of the Workforce Center, including expanding educational responses to technology changes.
- Develop additional land to support employment growth, by focusing on priority employment sites.
- Monitor the evolution of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria in the site selection process and respond as needed, by increasing staff knowledge, working with One Columbus, and sharing gained knowledge with local partners.
- Support implementation of the Fairfield Growing Agricultural Economic Development Plan, including revitalizing the local food council, identifying market opportunities for value-added agriculture, and clarifying and streamlining processes and additional support to increase direct-to-consumer linkages.
- Launch an effort to revitalize the town and village centers of Fairfield County, including creating local façade programs and streetscape programs for villages.
- Create a tourism economic development strategy.



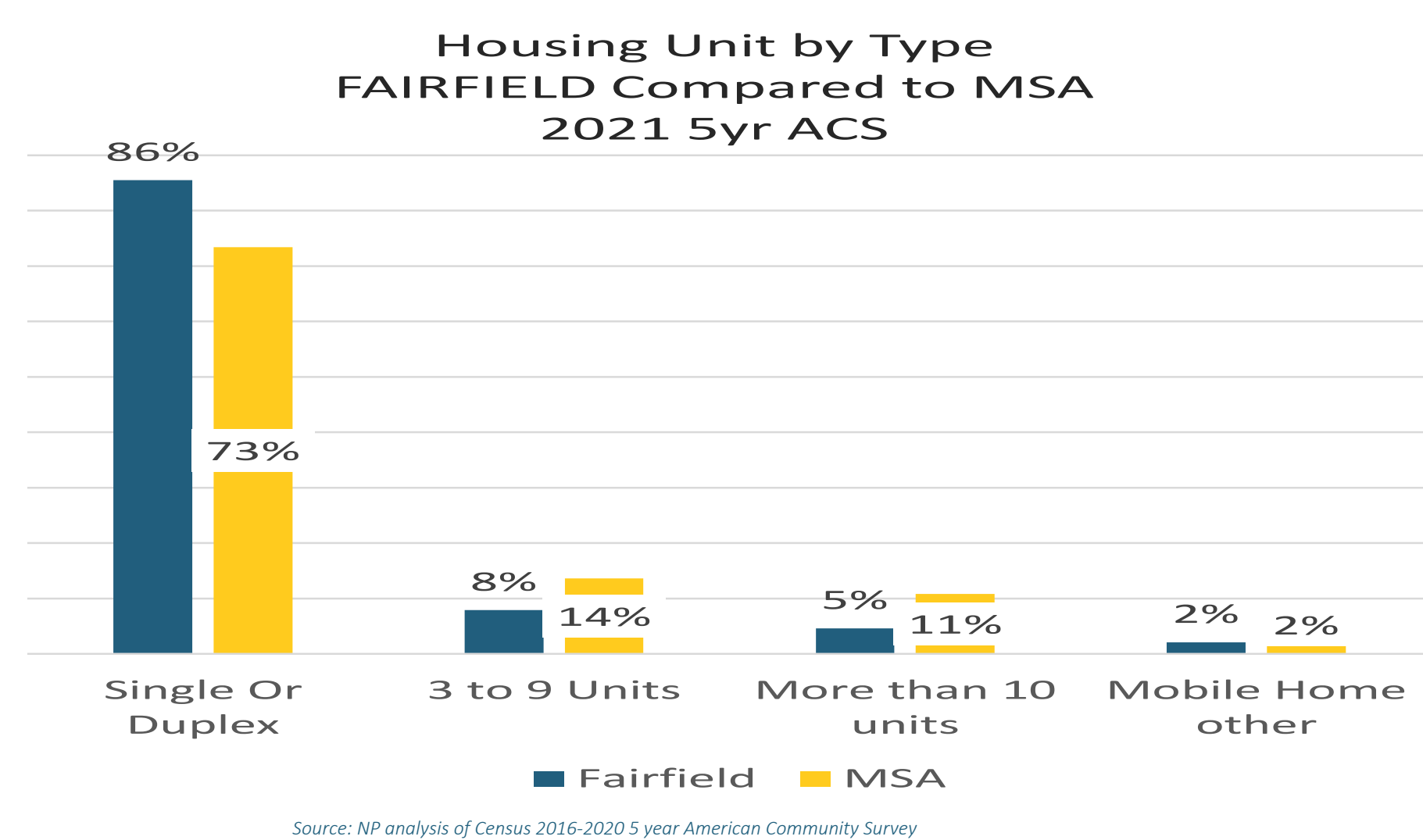
Housing

Housing

Key Findings

While a strong housing market, there are segments missing that are necessary to support local residents and attract the workforce of the future.

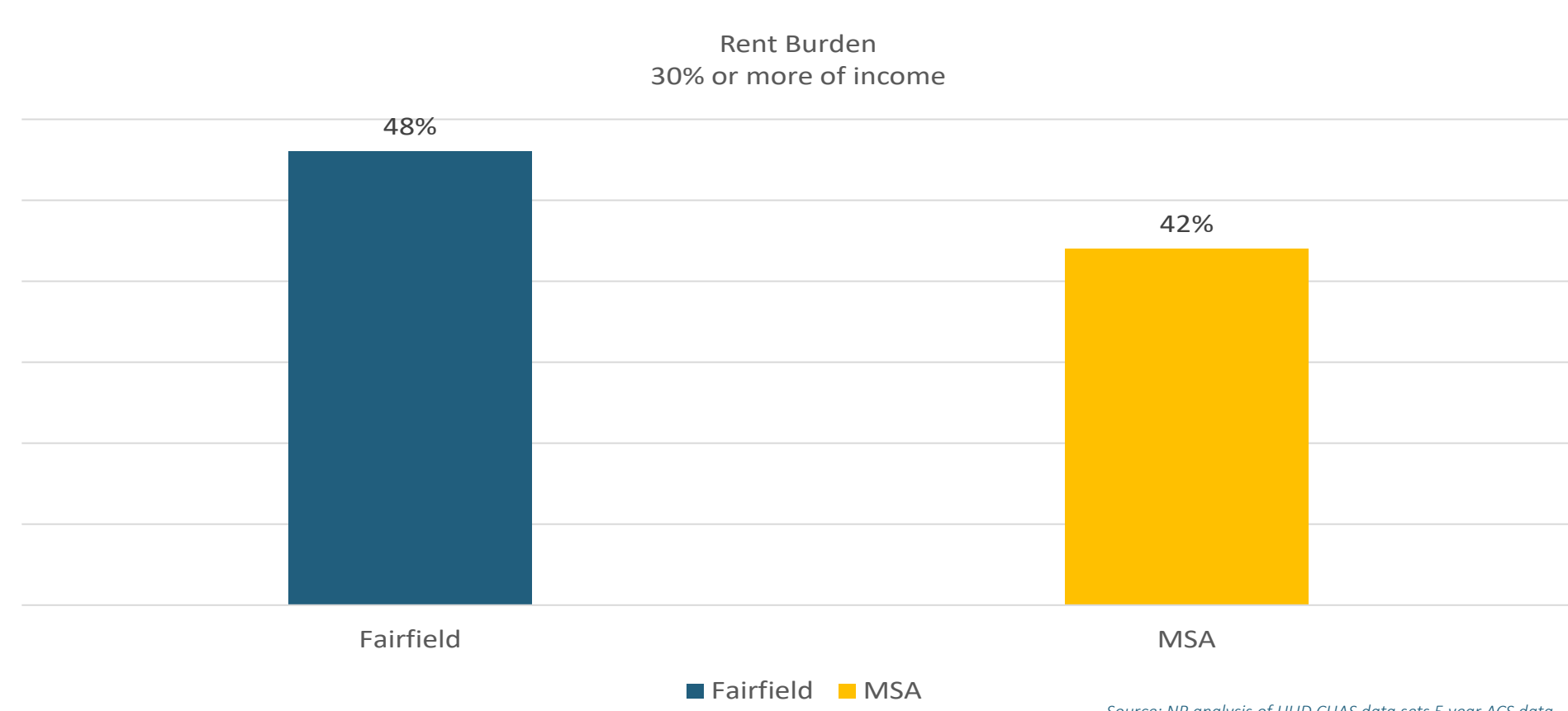
- The Fairfield County housing market is dominated by single family housing with housing prices that have been rising slower than the region but still nearly doubling in a decade. The lack of housing options (e.g., doubles, townhouses, condos, empty nester product) constrains the County in both serving the needs of current residents, as well as attracting new residents of various demographics (e.g., young professionals, young families, etc.).



- Renters in Fairfield County pay a higher percentage of their income on rent than renters in other parts of Central Ohio, especially Franklin County. The rental market is an important component of the housing market, in that many demographic groups cannot afford or are choosing not to purchase housing, including young singles, young professionals, and young families, as well as seniors.
- The Central Ohio Building Industry Association (BIA) forecast a potential demand of 9,470 housing units in Fairfield County between 2022 and 2032, an increase of 15% as compared to the current housing stock of 63,340 units noted by the U.S. Census (2021). This is a significant increase in housing demand that currently is not being met.

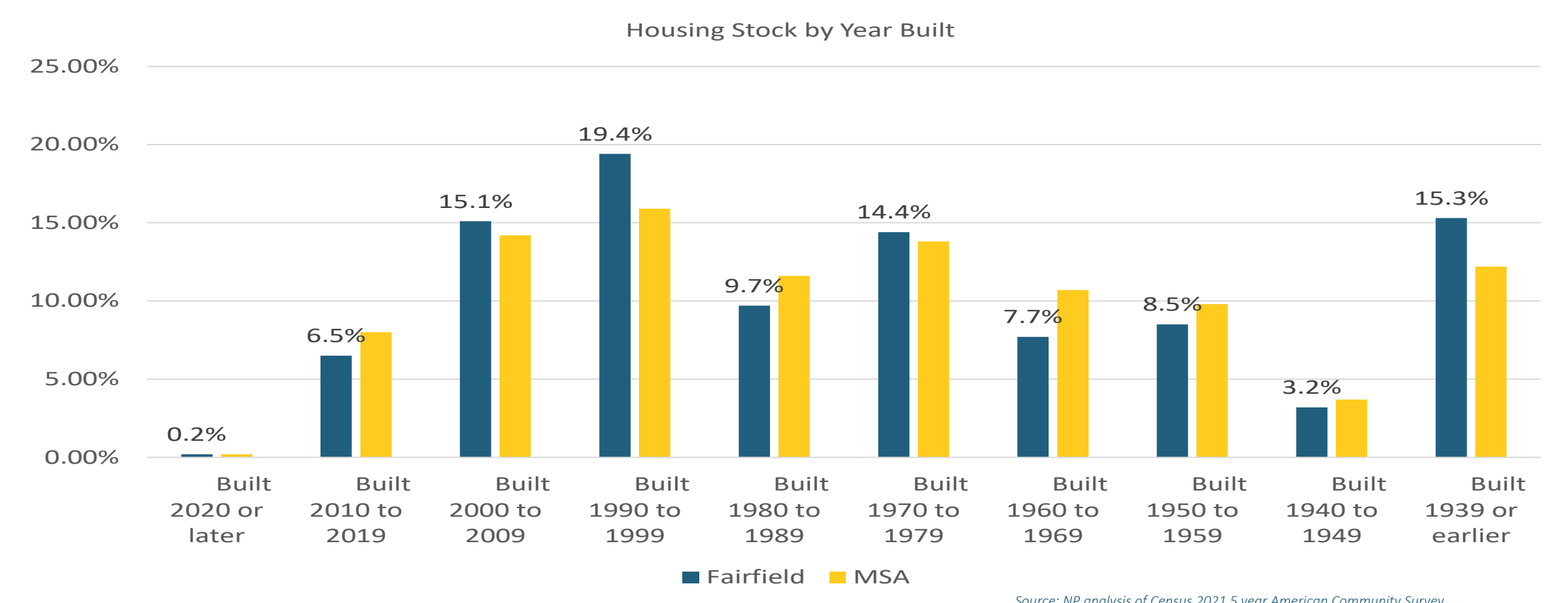
Policies and Strategies

- Increase housing options by supporting downsizing and “aging in the community” housing options, facilitating zoning and other regulatory changes to support new housing investment, by



offsetting development costs in exchange for an affordability commitment, and by promoting Fairfield County as a suitable investment for “empty nester” housing.

- Develop programs to support renovation of older housing stock by exploring regulatory and financial obstacles that hamper renovation, by developing a plan regarding public sector support for housing development, and by commissioning a Housing Study.



Transportation

Transportation

Key Findings

Improving transportation network but challenges and investment needs remain in order to reduce congestion, improve safety, and meet the needs of a growing county.

- US-33 is the County's most critical transportation corridor, yet congestion is caused by at-grade intersections and traffic is increasing the length of commutes and decreasing travel-time reliability. The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) is initiating additional improvements in the northwest portion of the County to address these issues. Additional attention may be needed at other locations as growth continues throughout the County.
- Time-of-day congestion is increasingly an issue at intersections along key cross-city and cross-county routes, as well as in Violet Township. This congestion will necessitate intersection and other roadway improvements over time, based on increasing rates of congestion, development pattern changes, and as funds are available to design and construct such improvements.
- Local agencies are working to advance projects to improve opportunities for economic development. Additional improvements will be necessary as such development continues, given the strong growth trends expected in Fairfield County.
- The County's transportation policy framework and regulations should be updated to provide a stronger policy basis and regulatory authority to manage the network as growth and development continues. In particular, the Thoroughfare Plan would benefit from additional modeling and updated access management standard will assist in obtaining the necessary right-of-way to support road improvements.

Policies and Strategies

- Undertake a Corridor Study Program focusing on US-33 from Pickerington Road west to the County line, Congestion in Northwest Fairfield County, and Lancaster-Newark Road NE (SR-37) between Lancaster and I-70 (in Licking County).
- Develop a Countywide Transportation Master Plan that includes an updated Thoroughfare Plan, access management standards, a financing and cost containment strategy, and expanding public transit.
- Pursue development of the US-33 to I-70 connector.



Utilities

Utilities - Water and Wastewater

Key Findings

A multitude of service providers creates opportunities and obstacles (lack of capacity) to ensuring sufficient services in targeted growth areas.

- Fairfield County has 17 separate water and/or wastewater utility providers that provide service to more than 11 percent of the land area within Fairfield County. The County has studied service expansion and given expected growth in the short- to mid-term, additional pressure will be placed on public providers to expand services to support expected development.
- Based upon available data and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA) planning assumptions, available wastewater capacity is sufficient to support an additional 72,000 new residents (or about 27,000 new homes) or equivalent demand from businesses and others (for comparison data centers can require up to 50 million gallons per day of water, which is comparable to an additional 41,660 new residents or about 15,600 new homes). However, two-thirds of this capacity is available in the city of Lancaster, with the balance spread between Violet Township and Baltimore. Since expanding plants or building new ones can take years, there is a risk that development demand will exceed current treatment capacity over the next five to 10 years, if not sooner.
- The most recent County-approved planning area boundaries are over 20 years old. Given the amount of growth that has occurred in the intervening years and the amount forecasted for the next 10 years, it would be helpful to have new boundaries established.

Policies and Strategies

- Undertake Priority Growth Area utility studies as part of identifying immediate locations under development pressure and conduct the studies.
- Undertake a countywide Utility Master Plan and integrate the Priority Growth Area utility planning.
- Consolidate providers where fiscally appropriate including consideration of management agreements and where possible, enhancing local services.
- Use JEDDs and other instruments to finance improvements by working with developers and establishing additional mechanisms for finding expansions.

Utilities – Electricity and Gas

Key Findings

Extensive service areas for electric and gas provide sufficient capacity to accommodate growth, but will need individual investments to ensure economic development can be accommodated.

- Electric and natural gas are readily available in the County, with transmission facilities crisscrossing the County. Natural gas distribution lines and three-phase electric power—needed to support commercial and industrial customers—are most common in and near developed areas.

Transmission infrastructure is available in some places to support high-demand users, such as hyper-scaler data centers and manufacturing facilities with transmission taps or substations. Other locations may require distribution system upgrades for commercial customers. For residential purposes, the current system is generally sufficient to meet that level of demand.

- Investments into electric and gas infrastructure occur concurrent with new development where capacity and distribution are insufficient, especially relative to commercial users. Early coordination with the utility provider will be necessary to ensure sufficient timing of such investments.

Policies and Strategies

- Focus on Priority Growth Areas by working with utility providers and communicating with potential developers, companies, and property owners.
- Continue ongoing coordinating with utility providers.



Implementation Steps

Introduction

- Key to long term success in comprehensive planning is implementation.
- This chapter presents an overview of the key County implementing agencies, a summary of short- to mid-term implementation priorities, and a summary of plan recommendations, organized by goals and objectives, and indicates the level of local government(s) that plays a role relative.

Short- to mid-term priorities

- Promote the Comprehensive Plan to local jurisdictions and the public.
- Implement Priority Growth Areas to focus future growth while conserving agricultural land and open spaces.
- Prepare Model Zoning Districts and update local zoning codes consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.
- Establish Growth Management Agreements as a coordinated tool among townships and the County to further development priorities.
- Coordinate review of residential development among townships and the County to expedite approvals in support of appropriate development.
- Undertake the countywide transportation plan to update the Throughfare Plan, adopt access management standards, and identify new funding mechanisms.
- Undertaken utility studies for priority growth areas and follow-up with a countywide utility master plan.
- Continue to expand economic development efforts in response to the ever-evolving regional economy.
- Undertake a housing study to ensure all housing needs are met in the County for current residents and to attract an expanding workforce.