



Plan Themes

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Over the duration of the planning process and based upon input from the residents of Sandusky County, the steering committee, and a number of public and private organizations, three plan themes were identified. These include Prosperity and Renewal, Connectivity, and Land and Resource Management.

1) Prosperity and Renewal
Overview

Sandusky County has proven to be one of the leaders among “micropolitan” counties in maintaining economic success. A balance has been maintained between an agricultural heritage and resources, where cultivated crops still claim three-fourths of the county’s acreage; a predominant manufacturing sector, with solid supply chains and well-established clusters (plastics and rubber, machinery and equipment, food manufacturing), and a varied retail and service base to retain consumer and business expenditures within the county.

Sandusky County has consistently placed within the top 50 Micropolitan areas in the country over the past five years, as determined by Site Selection magazine. In 2019, Fremont/Sandusky County ranked 14th nationwide, with 48 projects, some \$183 million in capital investment, 1,811 retained jobs, and 262 new jobs created.

Business enterprises already established in the county that have made new investments reflect how growth has impacted all sectors of the county economy: Magretech (magnesium recycling), Firelands Federal Credit Union (new headquarters), Kroger (new super center in Fremont), and Columbia Gas.

A balanced and diverse economy has resulted. Unlike many areas in the rural USA, manufacturing remains a predominant sector, with large parcels of each major community developed as an industrial park, and with suppliers for Clyde’s Whirlpool washing machine manufacturing and distribution center existing with automotive, packaging, food processing, and other businesses. Most of the county’s industry is located in strategic proximity to the busy US Route 20 corridor.

Fremont has grown as a commercial center due to the SR 53 N corridor emerging as a center for big box and specialty stores and restaurants. Renewed efforts to restore and revitalize downtown Fremont as a destination and entertainment district have met with success, with new restaurants and restored venues. Other downtown revitalization efforts in the county have met with varied success, and Bellevue and Clyde have witnessed new commercial development along Route 20. Bellevue has experienced growth along its western edge with new investments in office, retail, and residential development.

Current Momentum

Some notable development trends and issues in Sandusky County are as follows:

- Economic development practitioners have cited the following tools and resources as of importance in fulfilling their development missions: public and private sector resources and investment to assist in developing new industrial parks and sites; new developers and investors for housing projects; and the coordinated use of unified community branding throughout the county.
- A renewed effort has been made to coordinate economic development among the disparate practitioners and contributors. The hub for economic development is the Sandusky County Economic Development Corporation (SCEDC), a membership-driven full-time office that coordinates efforts and hosts collaborative projects and initiatives. The SCEDC schedules regular meetings of practitioners, where information is shared between communities and service providers, and statewide and regional information is disseminated from the SCEDC to each practitioner. Key partners include development or community officials from Fremont, Clyde, Bellevue, Gibsonburg, Woodville, and key townships; representatives from Terra State Community College and Vanguard Career Center; officials from the county Chamber of Commerce

and County Convention and Visitors Bureau, and representatives from the Great Lakes Community Action Partnership, the Department of Job and Family Services, and the Regional Growth Partnership centered in Toledo.

- A targeted goal is to undertake a concentrated effort to create and market new, shovel-ready space for industrial growth. Sandusky County’s larger communities (Fremont, Clyde, Bellevue, Gibsonburg) have established industrial parks, most with available acreage. The need to market these prime locations, as well as augmenting them with new and attractive sites, has come to the forefront in recent development discussions. Key existing locations include Fremont’s Bark Creek, Kessler, North 53, and Riverview parks, most of which are in close proximity to the Route 20 bypass, and many of which are at or approaching full occupancy; Bellevue’s industrial parks along West Route 20 and on Goodrich Road on the near north side; Clyde’s east-side Commerce Park and westerly Norwest Industrial Park; and Clearview Industrial Park in Gibsonburg. Many of these parks are nearly or completely built out, and there is a clear need, especially in Fremont, for the availability of new industrial sites, with a focus on the major intersections along the Route 20 bypass throughout Fremont. There is an immediate need to secure funding assistance from state and local

sources, as well as private investment capital, to develop one or more new industrial parks.

- There is a concerted effort to preserve and protect agricultural resources, based on long-held community culture and interests. Sandusky County has some 178,761 acres in farms. With 768 farms countywide, the average size per farm is 233 acres. Agriculture is a vital sector, with total 2017 cash receipts of \$101 million, of which \$91.8 million were for crops, and \$9.2 million for livestock and their products.
- Local officials are in accord in the need to expand and enhance the county’s available housing stock to entice new residents and employees, in management as well as hourly wage earners, to find attractive and affordable residential options in the county. New housing growth has been relatively stagnant in the county, with 20 single family units constructed in 2014, 98 units in 2015 (with 66 in multifamily projects plus 32 single units), 37 single units in 2016, 48 in 2017, and 44 in 2018. Local housing presents a cost-of-living advantage, as owner occupied units’ median value is a relatively affordable \$113,200 (vs. \$204,900 nationwide).
- While developers and investors have exercised caution in creating new residential subdivisions, based on their perceptions of the housing market, one innovative project has been undertaken on

Bellevue’s west side, with the Bellevue Hospital as the lead proponent and developer. The Prairie Ridge subdivision, a block from the hospital campus, is designed for 45 single family homes and 95 condominiums on 37 acres. The first phase will include ten single family lots and nine condo units. The project is targeted primarily to empty nesters and young families. The hospital and its related foundation provided startup capital to develop the infrastructure of the project, and as lots are sold, the foundation will be reimbursed a portion of their proceeds to offset that initial investment. The project site is annexed into the City of Bellevue, and the City’s Community Reinvestment Area (CRA) program offers new residents real estate tax savings. The housing is intended to attract and retain residents who might have moved out of Bellevue with no alternatives in town, as well as newcomers to the city.

Economic Development Priorities

While the SCEDC coordinates a seamless County-wide approach to economic development and produces a unified response to economic development prospects, this concerted effort is the sum of individual, community-level efforts. The county’s three cities have staff devoted to economic development, and the larger villages incorporate development efforts into their work program.

Fremont:

- The current strategic plan for Fremont, “Think Fremont”, cites the following as an industry-based goal: One new industrial park within 3-5 years (100 acres+, railroad access); new spec building of 80,000 square feet, within 4-5 years; and second industrial park within ten years. The optimal location will be in proximity to one of the city’s major intersections along the Route 20 bypass, allowing for easy east-west access, as well as proximity to the SR 53 gate to the Ohio Turnpike.
- Another goal addressing commercial and industrial business states “To compete with larger markets by offering similar shopping experiences and keeping dollars in our local economy.” This is accomplished by assisting developers in the



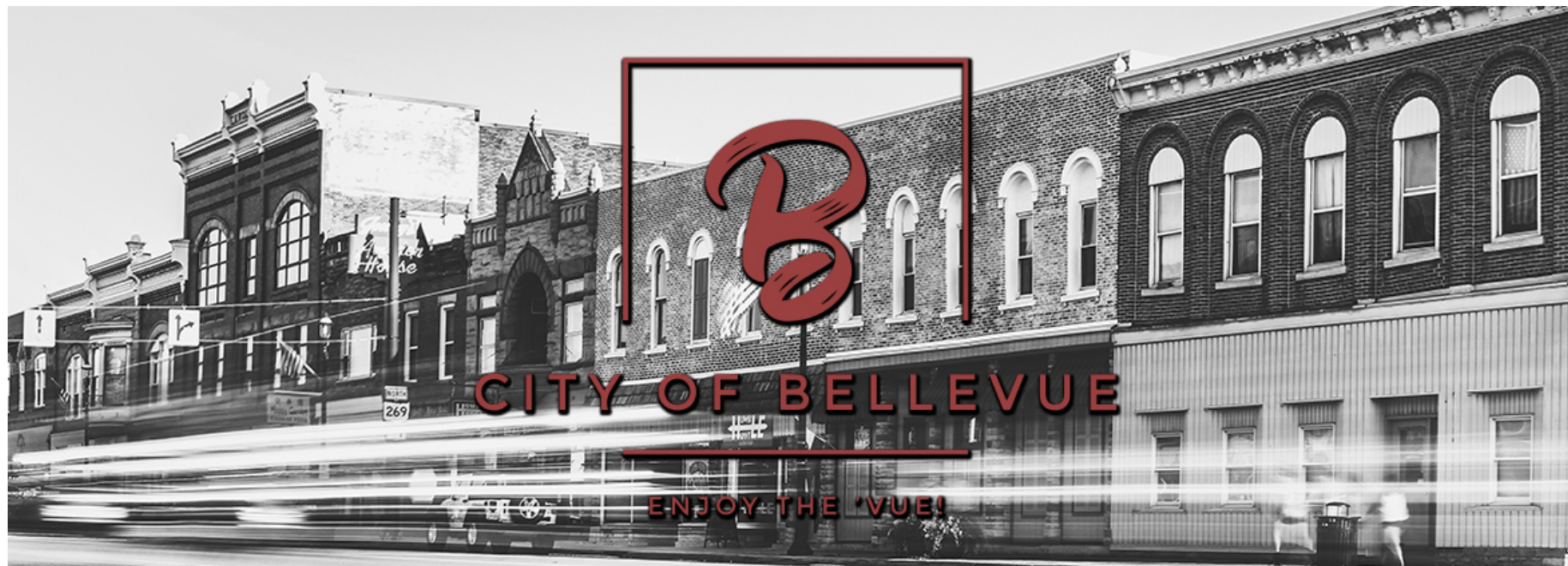
process to quickly and easily become part of the Fremont market. Goals specific to downtown Fremont include creating a shopping and entertainment destination by helping to improve the historic cinema and surrounding theaters for an after-hours activity hub; fostering the Sandusky River front development with a boat basin; collaborating with the Birchard Public library to redevelop the former Fremont Middle School property; reuse of second and third floor spaces; parking expansion through code enforcement, metering, and employee designated lots; further connectivity and walkability downtown; development of neighborhood associations near downtown; and cleaning up debilitated and vacant sites in the historic district for future redevelopment. Goals related to education include working with schools to shape programs that meet the needs of local manufacturers, while being specific with them regarding which programs are needed by manufacturers; and promotion of vocational and training programs.

- Current projects include an expansion to the Fremont Birchard Library, an overhaul and update of city ordinances and regulations, use of a citywide Community Reinvestment Area as an inducement for development, and preliminary plans to improve the functionality of intersections at the eastern and western edges of the city along the US 20 bypass.

- Currently, some 400 homes in Fremont are not receiving municipal water or sanitary sewer service due to cut-offs, and at least 250 of these, many of which are vacant.

Bellevue:

- Bellevue’s economic development goals include creating jobs, encouraging entrepreneurship, enhancing fiscal sustainability by expanding and diversifying the tax base, and improving the quality of life with new services and amenities. The City was the first in the area to initiate a city-wide Community Reinvestment Area, with property tax incentives of up to 100 percent for real property improvements to existing housing and commercial/industrial buildings, as well as new residential and commercial/industrial buildings. The CRA has essentially replaced the City’s Enterprise Zone program. This incentive is coupled with a Job Retention and Creation Incentive Tax Credit, which provides income tax relief. In the industrial realm, Bellevue has experienced recent expansions for Tower Industries and Magretech, two key manufacturers.
- Like most area communities, Bellevue officials have cited a lack of available workforce to meet the needs of their large community of manufacturers, as well as the issue of drug/opioid abuse in impairing available workers.



- ➔ Development in Bellevue has occurred on the western edge of the City along the US 20 corridor. The Bellevue Hospital has been a major player, purchasing a newly constructed strip development and refurbishing it for medical offices and services. More recently, the hospital and its Foundation have undertaken a residential construction project described previously, reacting to a known demand for new housing for professionals associated with the hospital and other community employers.
- ➔ Industrial prospects are directed to the city's two industrial parks, one in Huron County north of Goodrich Road, and the other south of Route 20 on the western edge of town. There are also several sites, ranging from 22 to nearly 70 acres, being marketed on the city's south side, in an existing industrial area flanking SR 269. Many of the city's

sites are served by or close to rail lines operated by the Norfolk Southern or Wheeling and Lake Erie railroads. The Norfolk Southern Railroad has recently idled its Bellevue “hump yard” operation, in which a major investment was made in 2012, and has converted to flat switching due to declining traffic and the adoption of Precision Scheduled Railroading (PSR). This transition to PSR, which involves running longer trains on tighter schedules with minimized en-route handling, is intended to create greater efficiencies and customer service. Though downsized, the yard remains an important facility within the Norfolk Southern system.

Clyde:

- ➔ The City of Clyde works in partnership with a nonprofit economic development entity,

Clydescope, and its Director. The mission of Clydescope is stated as “stimulating growth and development by advancing the retail, commercial, industrial, educational, agricultural, professional, financial, and civic interests of Clyde.” Further, the entity intends to promote integrity, goodwill, and cooperation to accomplish their mission. The public/private partnership is currently marketing eleven sites and eighteen buildings for development.

- ➔ One goal for the City is to enhance its available business incentive tools. Several officials have expressed an interest in matching neighboring Fremont and Bellevue with a Community Reinvestment Area offering property tax incentives. The City is also completing a raw water line from the Sandusky River to its reservoir system, providing backup and additional water capacity for growth.
- ➔ Key locations for industrial prospects include the Clyde Commerce Park (Premier Drive and environs) on the east side of the city, south of US 20, and Norwest Industrial Park, on the western edge of the city, north of US 20. Both parks are close to the sprawling Whirlpool Corporation manufacturing plant and distribution facility. Indeed, several manufacturers in Sandusky County are in the supply chain for the Whirlpool plant, which specializes in producing washing machines.

Villages:

- ➡ The Village of Gibsonburg is marketing available acreage in its Clearview Industrial Park. A new water line is being constructed to service that park. Officials from the Village of Woodville, at the western edge of the county on US 20, would like to convert a former bowling alley property to a manufacturing use. Woodville has largely been a residential, “bedroom” community, and among its goals are to capture the need for housing for new employees in from expansion projects occurring in Wood County, including a new Amazon distribution facility. Woodville officials aspire to witness new housing and restaurant development capitalizing on the Amazon project.

Employment by Industry

Total employment has remained relatively steady in Sandusky County, with 33,272 jobs recorded in 2018. Manufacturing remains the largest employment source, with growth in employment by 1,334 jobs over the past eight years. Retail trade has remained relatively steady, with 3,303 jobs in 2018. Accommodation and food service have grown by over ten percent since 2010, to 2,339 jobs. Construction continues to play an important role in the local economy, with 1,576 jobs. Also, the public sector contributes greatly to local employment, with nearly ten percent of the workforce in government jobs.

Employment by Industry	2001	2010	2018	Change 2010-2018
Total Employment (number of jobs)	32,749	31,668	33,272	1,604
Non-services related	12,872	10,692	12,294	1,602
Farm	1,095	790	839	49
Forestry, fishing, & ag. services	105	125	129	4
Mining (including fossil fuels)	22	54	56	2
Construction	1,635	1,363	1,576	213
Manufacturing	10,015	8,360	9,694	1,334
Services related	13,396	13,719	14,179	460
Utilities	76	78	51	-27
Wholesale trade	552	656	717	61
Retail trade	3,731	3,351	3,303	-48
Transportation and warehousing	803	846	1,109	263
Information	317	176	172	-4
Finance and insurance	861	842	946	104
Real estate and rental and leasing	602	982	1,254	272
Professional and technical services	700	767	766	-1
Management of companies	174	244	281	37
Administrative and waste services	1,197	1,475	1,041	-434
Educational services	na	na	na	na
Health care and social assistance	na	na	na	na
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	499	501	490	-11
Accommodation and food services	1,854	2,091	2,339	248
Other services, except public admin.	2,030	1,710	1,710	0
Government	3,811	3,358	3,187	-171

All employment data are reported by place of work. Estimates for data that were not disclosed are indicated with tildes (~).

Employment and Wages in 2018

The following table presents data on the number of jobs in each sector in 2018, the portion of total employment represented by each sector, the average annual wage earned in each sector, and the relation of that sector’s average to the overall average wage.

Service jobs account for nearly half (47.9%) of all jobs, while non-service private jobs are 40.5% and governmental jobs are 11.6% of the total. Manufacturing accounts for over one-third (36.5%) of all jobs, with a relatively high average wage. While health and education service, and leisure and hospitality, provide significant employment opportunities, they do not offer as lucrative a paycheck as some other sectors.

Sandusky County Compared to RGP Region

A review of 2017 data for Sandusky County, and its comparison with matching data for the region in which Sandusky County is located - a group of those northwest Ohio counties within the region served by the Regional Growth Partnership, the State-supported regional economic development entity, reveals the following relationships:

- Population decreased at a slightly higher rate in Sandusky County than in the region as a whole: -4.2% vs. the region’s -3.2% between 2000 and 2017.

Employment and Wages in 2018	Wage & Salary Employment	% of Total Employment	Avg. Annual Wages (2018 \$s)	% Above or Below Avg. of Total Wages
Total	26,015		\$41,131	
Private	22,999	88.4%	\$40,834	-0.7%
Non-Services Related	10,546	40.5%	\$50,636	23.1%
Natural Resources and Mining	146	0.6%	\$41,281	0.4%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing & hunting	na	na	na	na
Mining (incl. fossil fuels)	na	na	na	na
Construction	899	3.5%	\$53,360	29.7%
Manufacturing (Incl. forest products)	9,501	36.5%	\$50,522	22.8%
Services Related	12,454	47.9%	\$32,531	-20.9%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	3,948	15.2%	\$34,888	-15.2%
Information	123	0.5%	\$42,118	2.4%
Financial Activities	848	3.3%	\$46,180	12.3%
Professional and Business Services	1,339	5.1%	\$45,090	9.6%
Education and Health Services	3,152	12.1%	\$35,511	-13.7%
Leisure and Hospitality	2,371	9.1%	\$14,387	-65.0%
Other Services	672	2.6%	\$24,760	-39.8%
Unclassified	0	0.0%	na	na
Government	3,016	11.6%	\$43,397	5.5%
Federal Government	107	0.4%	\$55,802	35.7%
State Government	103	0.4%	\$55,774	35.6%
Local Government	2,806	10.8%	\$42,470	3.3%

- Employment held relatively steady over this period within the county (-0.1%), while declining more markedly regionally (-5.7%).
- Changes in income and earnings from 2000 to 2017 are consistently less in Sandusky County:
 - Personal income: up 9.8% in the county, up 11.8% regionally;
 - Average earnings per job: up 5.4% in the county, up twice as much – 9.2% - regionally; and
 - Per capita income: up 14.7% in the county, up 15.4% regionally.
- Average earnings per job were \$48,061 in the county and \$53,920 regionally. Per capita income was \$40,546 in the county and \$44,505 regionally. County/regional average annual wages continued

Indicators		Sandusky County	County Benchmark	Ohio	U.S.
Demographics	Population Growth (% change, 2010*-2017*)	-2.8%	-1.8%	0.8%	5.6%
	Median Age (2017*)	41.7	40.1	39.3	37.8
	Percent Population White Alone (2017*)	89.9%	86.0%	81.9%	73.0%
	Percent Population Hispanic or Latino (2017*)	9.7%	5.0%	3.6%	17.6%
	Percent Population American Indian or Alaska Native (2017*)	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.8%
	Percent of Population 'Baby Boomers' (2017*)	27.7%	26.3%	27.3%	24.5%
Income	Median Household Income (2017*)	\$50,370	\$50,527	\$52,407	\$57,652
	Per Capita Income (2017*)	\$25,219	\$25,774	\$29,011	\$31,177
	Percent Individuals Below Poverty (2017*)	13.6%	15.2%	14.9%	14.6%
	Percent Families Below Poverty (2017*)	10.9%	10.9%	10.8%	10.5%
	Percent of Households with Retirement and Social Security Income (2017*)	57.0%	55.4%	52.7%	49.0%
	Percent of Households with Public Assistance Income (2017*)	21.4%	22.9%	23.0%	20.6%
Structure	Percent Population 25 Years or Older without High School Degree (2017*)	10.5%	10.1%	10.2%	12.7%
	Percent Population 25 Years or Older with Bachelor's Degree or Higher (2017*)	15.2%	21.5%	27.2%	30.9%
	Percent Population That Speak English Less Than 'Very Well' (2017*)	1.4%	1.6%	2.4%	8.5%
	Percent of Houses that are Seasonal Homes (2017*)	1.2%	2.3%	1.1%	4.0%
	Owner-Occupied Homes where > 30% of Household Income Spent on Mortgage (2017*)	19.9%	22.1%	23.3%	29.3%
	Renter-Occupied Homes where > 30% of Household Income Spent on Rent (2017*)	37.1%	41.5%	43.1%	46.8%

to follow this pattern, with non-services sectors (manufacturing, construction) paying a significantly higher wage: Services: \$32,087 vs. \$37,693; Non-Services: \$50,315 vs. \$58,429; and Government: \$43,618 vs. \$47,826.

- ➡ The structure of the economy, as indicated by the share of total jobs among sectors, reveals a greater proportion of jobs in the non-service sector: Portion of jobs in services was 42.1% in Sandusky County vs. 63.8% in the region, portion in non-

service jobs was 37.6% in the county vs. 22.9% regionally, and governmental jobs comprised 9.5% of the total in the county, vs. 11.2% in the RGP region.

- ➡ The net inflow of labor earnings (reflecting the relative excess of workers bring income into the county from jobs outside the county) was 2.9% for Sandusky County, as opposed to a much smaller 0.1% regionally.

A similar comparison with the State of Ohio, using 2018 data, shows some differences. While the state experienced population and employment growth, Sandusky County did not. Again, the county’s average and per capita wages and income were consistently beneath statewide norms.

Workforce Issues

The focus in economic development has shifted to an intensified effort to prepare a local workforce that is responsive to the current and projected needs of employers, especially those employers who offer career paths. This effort is led by the county’s two major career-based educational institutions. Terra State Community College offers sixty degrees and certifications in nineteen program areas, and Vanguard Career Center provides 31 programs in thirteen “career clusters”, while addressing noted skills gaps, from its campuses in Fremont and Tiffin. Vanguard’s AIM Industries allows in-school students to run a manufacturing lab in partnership with local businesses.

Recent years have brought a series of activities under the “Think Sandusky County” workforce development banner. These activities, which create improved understanding and facilitate improved and effective coordination between the educational community and the county’s employers, have included:

- ➡ A bus tour for school officials and “coaches of influence” to visit choice local businesses and learn first-hand of career opportunities and workforce needs.
- ➡ An annual Manufacturing Career Showcase for ninth graders from throughout the county, in which students participate in hands-on activities while learning skills that are important to local manufacturers.
- ➡ A Job Fair for high school juniors and seniors, held every spring since 2017.
- ➡ Quarterly meetings of a Business Advisory Council, providing an avenue by which to communicate workforce development programs with school superintendents and business leaders, and providing two-way communication concerning the alignment of career education with business developments.
- ➡ A teachers’ Manufacturing Bootcamp, in which 24 educators toured six county business facilities and obtained first-hand information about good-paying jobs and needed skills.

Entrepreneurial Enterprise

In the table below, the number of proprietors indicates the relative presence of entrepreneurial activity in an area. In Sandusky County, the number and percentage of proprietors has increased from 2000 to 2018 from 4,988 proprietors representing 14.9 percent of the county’s

total employment to 6,057 proprietors comprising 18.2 percent of employees.

	1970	2000	2018	Change 2000-2018
Total Employment	24,902	33,457	33,272	-185
Wage and salary jobs	20,412	28,469	27,215	-1,254
Number of proprietors	4,490	4,988	6,057	1,069
Total Employment				-0.6%
Wage and salary jobs	82.0%	85.1%	81.8%	-4.4%
Number of proprietors	18.0%	14.9%	18.2%	21.4%

Central Business Districts and Downtown Revitalization Efforts

Central business districts contain some of a region’s oldest and most historic structures, and local officials are aware of these important assets. Clyde’s downtown was the target of a revitalization effort in the 1990’s, and individual building owners have maintained the downtown building stock to varying degrees over the intervening years. Some properties have been noted as deteriorating, with diminished amenities over time. Some feel a renewed revitalization effort would be appropriate.

In Bellevue, efforts are underway to restore a landmark historic building, the Tremont House, and a number of buildings have been restored or renovated, especially in the western portion of the district, while several structures in the long block from Northwest to North Sandusky Streets have fallen into disrepair and are in

need of intensive rehabilitation or demolition. In addition to the condition of these properties, downtown issues in Bellevue include out of town building owners and coping with busy traffic on Route 20 through the district.

The downtown districts in the smaller communities of Woodville and Gibsonburg have maintained their role as community service centers, losing some retail outlets, and with them a prevalent position as a retail center, over the years. Woodville, with a downtown district along busy US 20, has some vacancies in the downtown, and leaders cite a parking problem and need for additional restaurants, a reception hall, and a stage for outdoor music and events, all creating reasons to build on the downtown as a destination.

Fremont’s downtown has received significant attention, with the formation, leadership, and community support for Downtown Fremont, Inc. This entity, with a full-time director and two assistants, has been charged with recruiting new businesses, coordinating twenty events every year, and coordinating the planning the future development of businesses and infrastructure. Downtown Fremont officials see a need to remove some dilapidated buildings in the district, but they face few resources to demolish commercial properties. Other needs include increased accessible parking, and a designated area for outdoor theater and entertainment space.

The three top priorities of Downtown Fremont include: growing downtown with new retail businesses, creating new entertainment businesses, and solving parking shortfalls downtown. Fremont’s blueprint, “Think Fremont”, cites as short-term goals the continued search for new quality retail shops, improving signage, continued beautification, with street, parking, and pedestrian/bicycle improvements, and more art installations and façade improvements. Longer term goals include enhancing the downtown as an entertainment destination, fostering the Sandusky Riverfront development with a boat basin and public access, collaborating with the Birchard Memorial Library on development of the former middle school property, development of second and third floor spaces, parking expansion through code enforcement, metering, and employee designated lots, and further connectivity through brick alleyway development, creation of inner ring neighborhood associations, and cleanup and demolition of debilitated and vacant sites throughout the district.

Economic Development Incentive Programs

Various programs exist to help incentivize economic development across Sandusky County (See Map: Economic Development Incentive Areas). These programs are promoted by the Sandusky County Economic Development Corporation and local municipal economic development practitioners in Bellevue, Clyde and Fremont.



This area in Helena located along SR 6 would be an ideal redevelopment opportunity. Buildings such as this can often have a negative effect on the community’s image.

Enterprise Zones

The Enterprise Zone Program provides local officials with the ability to negotiate a tax incentive agreement with a prospective commercial and industrial projects that create and retain jobs and operate in the inside the City of Fremont (Zone #145), Bellevue (Zone #130), Clyde (Zone #130), and Gibsonburg (Zone #204) and in the townships of Ballville, Green Creek, Jackson, Sandusky and York (Zone #142). The program offers the following incentives:

- ➡ Exemption of real and/or personal property assessed values of up to 75% for up to 10 years or an average of 60% over the term of the agreement on new investments.
- ➡ Permits unincorporated areas to offer an exemption of real and/or personal property assessed values of up to 60% for up to 10 years or an average of 50% over the term of the agreement on new investments.

Community Reinvestment Areas

The Community Reinvestment Area program provides eligible residential, commercial, and industrial properties up to 100% - 15-year abatement for new real property valuation in conjunction with residential, commercial and industrial projects, and up to 12 years of abatement for renovation projects. The program is delineated into two distinct categories, those created prior to July 1994 ("pre-1994") and those created after the law changes went into effect after July 1994.

Five Community Reinvestment Area zones exist in Sandusky County. Four pre-94 zones exist; two in Bellevue (Zones 6 & 7) and two in Fremont (Zone 1 & 2). Bellevue officials designated the entire community as a Post-94 CRA in 2018, while Fremont officials expanded the boundaries of one of their pre-94 CRA zones to encourage additional neighborhood revitalization adjacent to their downtown core.

Opportunity Zones

There is one opportunity zone comprised of one census tract (9616) in Sandusky County. The Opportunity Zone Program was enacted as part of the 2017 federal tax reform and the goal is to drive investment in rural and low-income urban communities that have struggled to recover post-recession. The program consists of the three elements:

- ➡ Temporary deferral for capital gains reinvested into an Opportunity Fund
- ➡ Reduction in capital gains through basis adjustment
- ➡ Exclusions for capital gains on the new opportunity zone investment if the investment is held for 10 years.

Job Retention and Creation Program

The City of Bellevue offers a Job Retention and Creation Incentive Program to eligible businesses that are create new, full-time equivalent jobs. The annual grant payment is based on a percentage of the annual payroll withholding taxes generated by jobs that are new to the City.

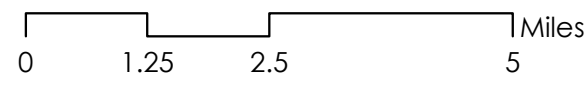
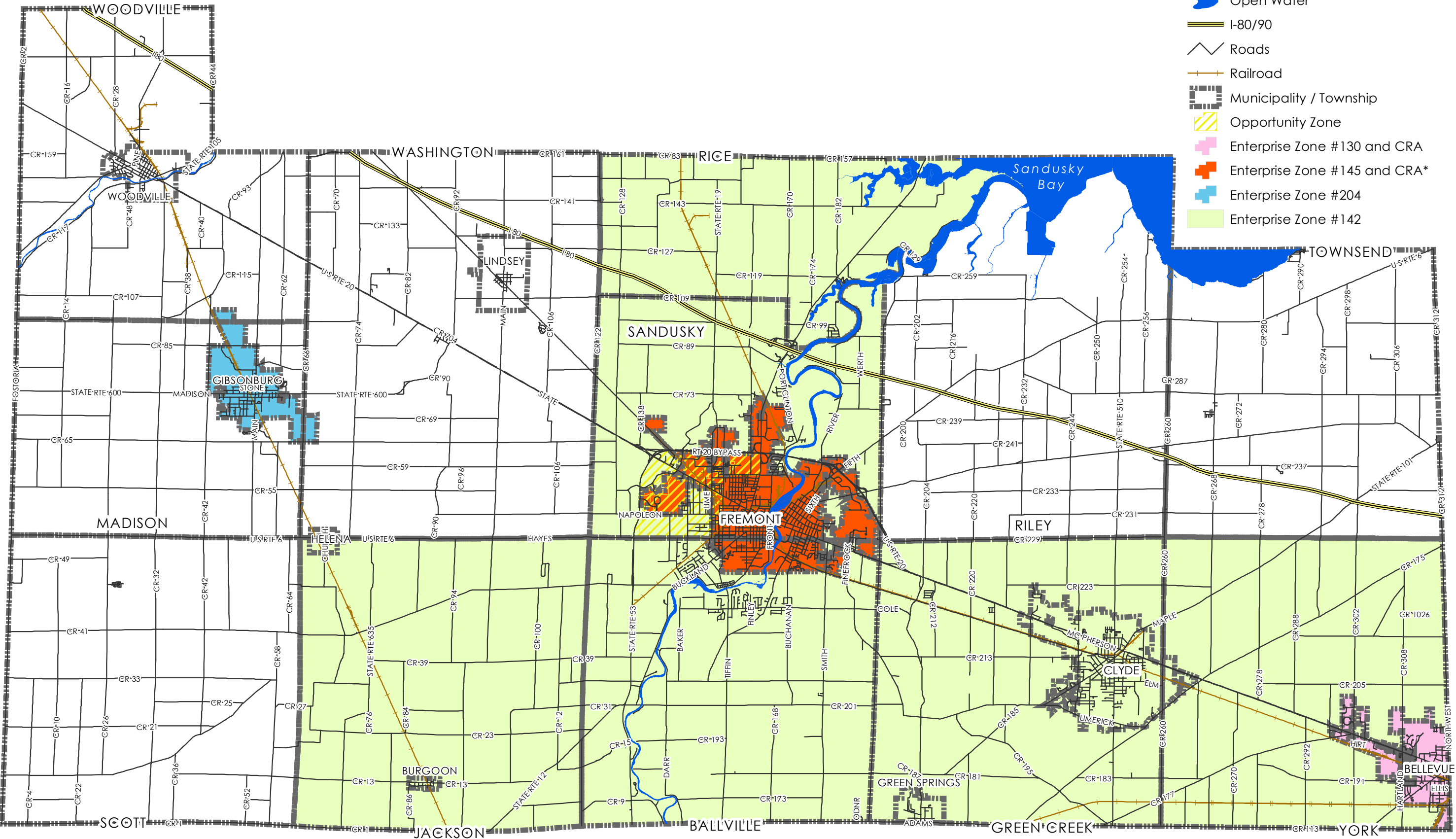
Revolving Loan Fund

The Revolving Loan Fund is a gap financing program to supplement small businesses administration loans and private financing. Loan rates are below prime rate and terms vary in accordance with the project and CDBG guidelines must be met. The City of Fremont administers a Revolving Loan Fund; a small county-wide fund has also been utilized by small businesses.



LEGEND

- Open Water
- I-80/90
- Roads
- Railroad
- Municipality / Township
- Opportunity Zone
- Enterprise Zone #130 and CRA
- Enterprise Zone #145 and CRA*
- Enterprise Zone #204
- Enterprise Zone #142



Source: Sandusky County Auditor, Engineer, Ohio Development Services Agency, Reveille
Note: Incentive Areas as of February 2020. * Not all of Fremont is CRA-eligible.



Strategies

Implementation Timeframe:	
Short Term (S), Less than 2 years.	Medium Term (M), 3-5 years.
Long Term (L), 6-10 years.	Ongoing (O)

1. Develop Effective Nuisance and Property Maintenance Standards

Parties – County Commissioners; Land Bank; Health Dept.; Sheriff; Fire Depts.; Neighborhood Groups; Homeowner Associations; Townships

Timeframe – S

There is a county-wide recognition of the need to address property maintenance and community appearance, promotion of maintenance standards, and elimination of safety and health hazards. When asked about unappealing areas within their jurisdiction, many township officials cited specific areas with cluttered properties, open dump sites, and other areas that were visibly unappealing; every township rated the issue of blight as a “4” or “5” in a survey of issues, in which 5 was “most important”. In addition to Fremont’s recognition of property conditions as critical to moving forward, blight and property maintenance, and the need for continual care for Clyde’s central business district, have come to Clyde City Council’s attention. Bellevue leaders have also promoted infill and adaptive reuse of empty buildings.

Additional remedies to alleviate property maintenance issues could include:

- Identifying sources of financial and other incentive programs (CRA, etc.) that can be used by property owners facing code enforcement actions for major renovations.
- Allocating the appropriate resources to property maintenance and enforcement.
- Develop vacant property ordinances that require the registration of vacant properties, to include residential, commercial and industrial.
- Adopt a property maintenance code, which can be easily adopted from the International Property Maintenance Code.
- Pursuing the feasibility of various forms of inspection programs (exterior and interior) and point of sale inspections in targeted neighborhoods.
- Identifying sources of financial and other assistance that can be used by property owners facing code enforcement actions for major renovations. City officials could increase the fees for new residential and commercial development and allocate a percentage of the new fees towards additional inspection services.
- In order to minimize the conversion of single-family homes into rentals, municipalities could adopt

neighborhood preservation overlay districts along with neighborhood associations.

- Partner with local jurisdictions and departments to create a unified and comprehensive property maintenance code enforcement system using the County’s GIS located in the Auditor’s office.

2. Improve Public Infrastructure in Targeted Neighborhoods and Growth Areas

Parties – Commissioners; Land Bank; Sanitary Engineer; Engineer; Local Econ. Dev. Depts.; RGP-Jobs Ohio; Ohio Dev. Services Agency; Consultants

Timeframe – O

A key principle incorporated in this plan is to make best and sustainable use of existing properties, neighborhoods, and other assets within the bounds of the county’s communities. Terms such as “infill” and “adaptive reuse” speak to a push to reimagine and redevelop locations within a community for new development or new uses, rather than breaking new ground on the community’s edge.

Various programs and resources exist to promote growth and neighborhood revitalization, to include tax increment financing, special improvement districts, and community development block grants.

Certain areas in the County may be eligible for community development block grant program funds

(competitive and formula) that help to mitigate slum and blight issues and to assist low and moderate income (LMI) neighborhoods, among other issues. Currently LMI Census Tracts that are eligible include: 9611, 9614, 9616, and 9618.

As a multiplier, local officials should utilize and target the Community Reinvestment Area (CRA) Program to specific neighborhoods to provide for property tax abatement for existing residential property investments (for a better understanding of the location of the CRA areas, see Map: Economic Development Incentive Areas). Bellevue, Clyde and Fremont utilize the CRA program for eligible residential, commercial and industrial projects. CRA programs could also be created in townships and used to help promote residential revitalization in neighborhoods where there is blight and a lack of residential reinvestment, or to promote the development of new subdivisions that help to retain and attract residents in Sandusky County. School district officials should also be part of these discussions.

3. Heighten Workforce Development and Business Retention and Expansion Efforts

Parties – Commissioners; SCEDC; Jobs and Family Services; Chamber of Commerce; Area Colleges; Vanguard; RGP-Jobs Ohio; GLCAP; Employers; OSU Extension

Timeframe – O

According to input received, residents, County officials, and economic development practitioners feel one persistent challenge to local economic development and the county's competitive position as a location for employers is a relative skills gap and lack of trained and ready employees. This is affecting certain employers within the County, especially those which rely on continuous learning and improvement as technology, tools, and techniques for production change. One possible way to address this concern is to utilize the Ohio Incumbent Worker Training and Ohio Investment Training voucher programs to provide resources to employers in relevant industries. These voucher programs provide financial support of up to 50% reimbursement for instructional costs, materials, and training related activities. In the case of the OIWT program, the voucher is limited to \$4,000 per employee and up to 50% of the workforce. The business is reimbursed after it pays for full training.

Clearly, the county's workforce development collaboration should continue in a lead coordinating

role, with all appropriate entities represented, and with an inclusive pipeline for input from the county's employers. In a broader context, the findings and recommendations of the multi-county workforce and development initiative recently undertaken should be implemented in concert with neighboring counties. Finally, the presence, expertise, and potential of Terra State Community College and Vanguard/Sentinel Career and Technology Centers should be utilized to best advantage, particularly in identified sectors such as manufacturing, skilled trades, and health care.

4. Expand Economic Incentives

Parties – Commissioners; SCEDC; Local economic development depts.; Developers; RGP-Jobs Ohio; ODSA; TLC Port Authority

Timeframe – S

While primary factors in location or expansion decisions, such as location, distance to market, and presence of a supply chain and workforce, are often unchangeable, economic incentives often play a secondary role and can tilt the balance in favor of a locality. One incentive being increasingly used throughout Ohio is the state's Community Reinvestment Area program, ostensibly created as a housing revitalization incentive, but available to any project involving investments in real property. The CRA program has been embraced by Bellevue, where the investment area incorporates the entire city and

was used to spur new residential investments (Countryview and Prarie Ridge subdivisions), and Fremont, whose CRA is citywide.

Coupled with property tax incentives can be income tax relief based on long term job creation, such as Bellevue's Job Creation and Retention Incentive Tax Credits. These can be coupled with State job development incentives described in the preceding strategy.

The county's network of economic development practitioners extend into virtually every community and locality within the county, and this network, fueled with information from the SCEDC and the Regional Growth Partnership (RGP), should strive to match the array of federal, state, and local incentives to specific pending projects. This matchup of resources to specific projects can often be achieved during the county's rigorous pursuit of business retention and expansion (BRE) visitations with county employers, and also through the State's business prospect outreach program conducted through RPG.

The SCEDC and its partners should continuously research available incentives and apply them to specific projects where they can make a positive impact on the realization of that project. Their interaction with RGP, the Toledo Port Authority, and others can help bring a project-based, unique mix of

assistance from the plethora of incentives for workforce, infrastructure, and capital investment to each individual project.

5. Improve the Housing Supply

Parties – SCEDC; Chamber of Commerce; Downtown Businesses; Local ED Depts.; Main Street Groups; ODSA; Heritage Ohio; GLCAP

Timeframe – O

Revitalization of an aging housing stock and the inner-ring built environment in Sandusky County’s historic communities requires a concerted and focused effort, as well as adherence to basic standards of property maintenance and the elimination of nuisances. Fully one third (33.4 percent) of the county’s housing units were built in 1939 or earlier. However, incentives can help catalyze the renovation and rehabilitation of these properties.

Examples of such incentives include the Community Reinvestment Area (CRA) program actively practiced in Fremont and Bellevue, where new investment in existing and new, residential, commercial, and industrial properties is rewarded with the exemption of property taxes. Several new homes were built in the Countryview and Prairie Ridge subdivisions as many residents of Bellevue took advantage of the city-wide CRA program and the 15-year real estate tax abatement.

Rehabilitation of housing occupied by low- and moderate-income households can be subsidized through the Sandusky County and Fremont Community Housing Investment Program (CHIP) funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Other programs practiced throughout the county, including Weatherization offered through the Great Lakes Community Action Partnership and housing construction offered by Habitat for Humanity, can assist in boosting the value, safety, and affordability of a segment of the county’s housing stock. Further, the relatively newly designated Opportunity Zone on Fremont’s west side offers incentives for investment within that zone.

Incentives should be utilized in conjunction with other strategies. The City of Fremont’s “Think Fremont” plan cites three related objectives concerning housing stock revitalization. The plan cites a widespread housing shortage and encourages the use of incentives to promote and assist the preservation of aging homes, including expanding the Community Reinvestment Area to a citywide reach, education on tax incentives, promotion of creation of neighborhood associations, and a monthly seminar for first time homebuyers. Second, the plan promotes the establishment of a local building department that would handle residential construction, in order to create an easier, faster process. Third, noting that properties needing cleaning and repair negatively

impact property values and project a detrimental appearance. Stronger code enforcement is advocated, with advocacy for being more assertive toward property owners in violation of city codes, increasing the amount of time spent enforcing codes, expediting the process for compelling property owners to correct violations, and working to create and enforce more significant consequences for violations.

One method to help the housing supply is to keep it free of nuisances. In this vein, local officials should work closely with the Sandusky County Land Bank in identifying vacant, foreclosed, or soon-to-be blighted properties and utilize the County’s GIS to map and inventory them. The benefits of the Land Bank will help to:

- ➡ Reduce the time it takes to take control of vacant, abandoned and tax delinquent properties
- ➡ Reduce flipping
- ➡ Repurpose properties through demolition or rehabilitation
- ➡ Put properties back on the tax rolls

6. Heighten Downtown Planning Efforts

Parties – SCEDC; Chamber of Commerce; Downtown Businesses; Local ED Depts.; Main Street Groups; ODSA; Heritage Ohio

Timeframe – O

The county’s central business districts need attention. Downtown areas contain some of the county’s oldest and most vulnerable buildings, requiring special attention to meet fire, safety, and accessibility codes, while accommodating the needs and preferences of modern business. Many downtowns today suffer from business turnovers and a high vacancy rate, which will be exacerbated by the challenges of a post-pandemic world.

The trend for many, including Fremont, has been to supplement the changing retail and office environment with an emphasis on entertainment, dining, and downtown experiences. Investments in a downtown district, as well as other targeted neighborhoods and districts throughout the built community, can also be catalyzed through accelerated government design review, zoning, and permitting processes, coupled with zoning policies that promote compatible mixed uses and innovative and attractive uses of existing properties.

To this end, officials should help preserve their architectural and historical assets through the

adoption of tools such as historic preservation overlay districts and design review legislation. This legislation typically involves the creation of a design change application process, a design review committee that reviews and approves such applications, a set of standards by which design modifications must be reviewed, and an enforcement mechanism. Also, zoning variances that allow for walkable neighborhood businesses in compatible residential areas should be encouraged.

There are many other things the County can do to heighten its downtown planning efforts. For example, the creation of an informal network of downtown promoters within the county that is not competitive but rather cooperative can lead to a more attractive business environment for consumers and investors.

On this theme, the County could also actively promote unified downtowns, through joint promotional advertising; events, contests, and promotions involving as many downtown businesses as will participate. An inventory can also be taken of the County’s central business districts. This inventory could answer questions such as what is the condition of streets, sidewalks, landscaping, signage, parking, and lighting in some of the County’s popular business areas? The County could also consider conducting a survey of customers, downtown property owners, and

merchants within the County’s downtowns to capture the perceptions of the “market”.

7. **Develop One or More Site-Ready Industrial Parks**

Parties – SCEDC; Commissioners; Sanitary Engineer; Engineer; Local ED Depts; RGP- Jobs Ohio; Developers; Private Businesses

Timeframe – S

Many of the county's existing industrial parks, especially in the Fremont area, are reaching full capacity, or can only offer limited acreage. Other communities are marketing individual sites but cannot assemble a large-acreage parcel in an existing park. Gibsonburg's Clearview industrial Park has a number of smaller sites, and that park should continue to be marketed for projects that provide a good match. Indeed, both the SCEDC and local economic development practitioners should continue to market available industrial sites, both in existing industrial parks and existing as isolated sites and match them where practical to state prospects and local business inquiries.

Developers in the Fremont area recognize the need to plan and develop a new industrial park. Preferred locations are at any of a number of interchanges along the US 20 bypass. Fremont's strategic plan, “Think Fremont”, calls for the construction of a local

industrial park within five years, construction of a speculative industrial building also within five years, and development of a second industrial park within the decade.

As noted in Fremont's plan, the realization of one or more new industrial parks involve a number of steps and participating entities. One or more private developers can help promote and develop the park and may be involved more directly through their investment in the park or a spec building. Property owners must be approached, and local government must be involved in the design and construction management of the public roadway and utility extensions as needed, as well as conducting design review and sponsorship of any state or federal project funding applications.

8. **Increase Accessibility to Healthy and Locally-Sourced Food**

Parties – Farm Bureau; Commissioners; Health Dept.; Chamber of Commerce; SWCD; Farmers; Farmer's Markets; USDA-Farm Services Agency; Downtown Business Assn; OSU Extension; Event Planners

Timeframe – M

In order to achieve continued vitality, Sandusky County must cultivate its local food system to reduce food deserts that exist throughout the county. There

are a number of measurable objectives the county can adopt to reach the goal of increased accessibility to healthy and locally-sourced food. For example, the County could partner with hospitals, schools, and other major institutions to create and enhance education programs that provide a better understanding of the benefits of local foods.

This program could be supplemented with a plan detailing community outreach efforts. Perhaps the most visible objective that can be achieved with relative ease is to encourage the creation of a series of regional farm markets located throughout the County and implement an active marketing program to promote them. This will demonstrate to residents Sandusky County’s commitment to locally-sourced food and provides a fun environment for residents to enjoy.



2) Connectivity
Overview

Sandusky County is well connected through the creation and evolution of a number of collaborative, multi-disciplinary efforts to address significant issues: drug addiction, workforce, public health, and others. Organizationally, connectivity is further aided through organizations which bring peers and related interests together. The SCRPC brings municipal, township, and county officials together to examine land use and related issues, projects, and trends. Likewise, the Sandusky County Economic Development Corporation brings local economic development practitioners together in scheduled update meetings to share information, and constantly interacts with combinations of private employers, public officials, workforce and development agencies, and state and federal resource persons to effect positive economic change.

Physical connectivity between people and communities is achieved through a system of US, state, county, and township/municipal roadways. With increased interest in alternative forms of transportation, these highways and streets are augmented by a growing system of trails and bikeways, following the 2017 Active Transportation Plan.

Active Transportation (See Map: Development Plan for Active Transportation) is developed in concert with the goals and purposes of the county’s 2017 Active Transportation Plan.



The North Coast Inland Trail stretching for 28 miles from Bellevue to Elmore was converted into a paved hike/bike path with ODOT funding. The path is open year-round for walking, jogging, bicycling, in-line skates, etc.

Development Plan for Active Transportation



LEGEND

- Community Identified Destinations
- Potential Trail Hub
- Existing NCIT/US Bike Route 30
- Existing On-Road Facilities
- Existing Unpaved Trails/Proposed Paved Trail
- Proposed Shared Use Paths
- Proposed On-Road Facilities
- Alternate Proposed Shared Use Paths
- Alternate Proposed On-Road Facilities
- US Bike Route 30A

That document, which promotes provisions for walking and bicycling as healthy means for recreational as well as functional transportation, identified a number of priority destinations and focus areas, including clear signage for routing within Fremont, and safe and accommodating routes providing connectivity to Terra State Community College, the SR 53 shopping district north of the US 20 bypass, Christy Farm Nature Preserve, Hayes Presidential Library, Downtown Fremont, Ballville Township parks, Fremont schools, the Potter Village shopping district, Sandusky County Fairgrounds, Creek Bend Farm nature area in Lindsey, and White Star Park in Gibsonburg.

- ➡ Connectivity is further facilitated through the operation of the county’s public transit system, TRIPS, which makes special provisions for elderly, disabled, and low-income populations seeking transportation. The transit system operates within a network of public and private service providers, all outlined in the county’s “Getting Around” source book.

Public transportation in Sandusky County is provided by TRIPS, a demand response rural public transit system operated through the GLCAP, based in Fremont. Individual rides must be reserved 24 hours in advance of the scheduled time, and the trip must originate in Sandusky County.

TRIPS is coordinating with other public and private transportation providers under the auspices of a Coordinated Public and Human Services Transportation Plan. The current plan covers the period 2018-2022, and it incorporates six goals related to gaps in services and needs identified through an inclusive input-gathering process. The six goals derived to address shortcomings and strive for a more coordinated and effective transportation service.

Inter-county coordination is pursued by a Mobility Manager based at GLCAP, who coordinates transportation services among the area’s county-based transit systems, and who convenes regional meetings of transportation providers.

The state of connectivity in Sandusky County appears to be secure, but continued efforts are warranted to ensure that the best, most well-informed conclusions, are reached among a diverse group of local stakeholders and leadership in designing optimal solutions to the challenges facing the county.

Because of the direct link between transportation and land use, it is very important that the Sandusky County Engineer’s office, the SCRPC, ODOT, and other related agencies work in unison to promote growth and encourage the conservation of land resources.

Strategies

Implementation Timeframe:	
Short Term (S), Less than 2 years.	Medium Term (M), 3-5 years.
Long Term (L), 6-10 years.	Ongoing (O)

1. Implement the Active Transportation Plan

Parties – Commissioners; Park District; Health Dept.; Terra Community College; Bike Groups; GLCAP; Consultants

Timeframe – O

Sandusky County's Active Transportation Plan was completed in 2017 with participation from a coalition of interested parties, headed by the county's Park District. Other participants included Fremont and adjacent townships, Terra State Community College, Downtown Fremont, and several local tourism and recreation destinations.

The plan's central focus was described as to develop a connected physical network of existing on-road and separated facilities that will serve bicyclists and pedestrians for all trip types, reducing gaps and eliminating barriers.

The plan outlined a number of focus areas pointed out during an input gathering stage that included a survey by the North Coast Inland Trail, a general survey, a public meeting, and an open house, as well as a fact-finding bicycle tour. These areas included a need for signage within on-road Fremont bicycle routes, and

concentration on the SR 53 north shopping area, Christy Farm, Hayes Presidential Library, downtown Fremont, several parks in Ballville Township, Fremont schools, the Potter Village shopping area, Sandusky County fairgrounds, Creek Bend Farm nature center near Lindsey, and White Star Park in Gibsonburg.

Next, several specific routes were outlined as targeted projects for future implementation.

These recommendations included 58.5 miles of new route designations along existing roadways and 42.8 miles of separated routes requiring construction or reconstruction. These routes cover much of the county, including Gibsonburg and Woodville. Fremont to Burgoon, Ballville Township toward Tiffin, Northern Sandusky County to Creek Bend, Green Springs to Castalia, Fremont to Castalia, and several connections in Fremont including access to Terra State Community College. These routes largely make use of existing roads and abandoned rail lines or energy company easements.

Future actions to help implement this Plan include:

- Strategically pursue infrastructure projects and pursue necessary funding;
- Develop a capital improvement plan that evaluates existing infrastructure for all users;

- Develop a public awareness campaign for bicycle safety, including analysis of feasibility for “lane diets” and “road diets” to reconfigure lanes or reduce lane widths to accommodate alternative transportation; and
- Update the Bicycle Development Plan, with routes included in the plan based on safety, public input, transportation benefit, feasibility, and cost.

2. Expand Pedestrian Infrastructure and Mobility Opportunities

Parties – Commissioners; Engineer; Park District; ODOT (SRTS); ODSA; ODNR; Terra; Bike Groups

Timeframe – O

Supporting pedestrian connectivity was a clear expressed interest of the residents surveyed in Sandusky County. There are many things the county can do to promote and encourage walking, biking, and other pedestrian methods of transportation. For example, the county can promote pedestrian safety near schools, exercise quality signal placement, provide continuously linked walkways, and provide illumination for pedestrians approaching intersections.

The Active Transportation Map shows existing multi-use path locations as well as conceptual planned pedestrian and bicycle connectivity routes that are

being explored around Sandusky County. These future facilities involve incorporating pedestrian/bicycle facilities into existing roadways as well as on potential future roadway connections. These connectivity routes would involve a mix of the various types of facilities mentioned above depending on right of way availability.

Additional planning and outreach efforts should be combined with recreational planning to help build a unified approach in planning and funding road improvements. Additional planning initiatives that should be embraced to implement this strategy are:

- Develop a transportation master plan to address vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian mobility, as well as the long-term capital improvement planning of the City’s road and riverfront infrastructure.
- Prepare a sidewalk inventory identifying sidewalk condition and areas where gaps exist in the network.
- Develop a phased repair and replacement plan utilizing a combination of local, CDBG, and private funds from participating homeowners. Some of these county neighborhoods may be located in eligible census block groups that are designated as LMI and therefore eligible for grant funding.
- Enforce existing local codes relative to sidewalk repair.

- Work with interested stakeholders in connecting active trail system promoted in the Active Transportation Plan. Officials should pursue funding sources like Clean Ohio and ODNR’s Recreational Trails Program to extend and connect trails to new destinations locally and regionally.
- Team with local schools in developing a School Travel Plan and participating in ODOT’s Safe Routes to School Program. This program will provide up to \$500,000 in funds for improvements that assist K-8 students bike and walk to school.
- Sidewalk construction requirements should be enforced on all new development.
- Consider timed “walk” signals in key locations, especially new public facilities and schools.

3. **Develop a Complete Streets Policy**

Parties – Commissioners; Engineer; Park District; Health Dept.; ODOT; National Complete Streets Coalition; SCRPC

Timeframe – S

Improving connectivity throughout Sandusky County was a visible theme that emerged during the planning process. This is evident by the efforts that generated the County’s first ever Active Transportation Plan in March 2017. This plan discusses methods on creating a vast network of pedestrian and bicycle facilities through new or existing road and trail networks.



**COMPLETE
STREETS**

To help implement this initiative, County and local officials should consider the developing a Complete Streets Policy. To date, over 1450 agencies at the local, regional, and state levels have adopted Complete Streets policies, totaling more than 1500 policies nationwide.

Complete streets elements can provide for improved sidewalks, lighting and street furniture, better markings and signals at intersections and crosswalks, dedicated bike lanes, and improved landscaping solutions in rights of ways that that better manage storm water.

County and local officials could utilize pedestrian and bicycle checklists throughout its project planning and programming, scoping, and final design processes to ensure improvements to transportation facilities that consider pedestrian and bicycle facilities when roadways are being improved and development projects are being considered.

Complete streets can greatly improve residents' quality of life, as building healthy communities is a primary goal embodied in numerous county department programs and policies. The infrastructure that Complete Street policies help to promote allows residents of all ages and abilities to stay active, safe and comfortable while going about their daily routines.

A Complete Street policy can be developed as a stand-alone policy/guideline, or it can be developed in an Access Management Policy.

4. **Implement the Coordinated Public & Human Services Transportation Plan**

Parties – Commissioners; Health Dept.; SCEDC; GLCAP; Stakeholders

Timeframe – S

Transportation is a critical component in any rural county, as it provides access to jobs, education, health care and human services. To this end, the Coordinated

Public & Human Services Transportation Plan was updated in 2018. Proper implementation of this plan will serve to address many of the transportation-related issues in this plan including increased access to pedestrian connectivity networks and increased signage.

Local officials should work to implement the Plan's six goals that include:

- Retain, expand, and improve transportation options for special needs populations (finding resources for subsidized transportation to disabled, seniors, and low-income Medicaid eligible persons; finding resources for those with developmental disabilities to find transportation especially to work; and resources for seniors, including frail seniors)
- Increase flexibility, affordability, and availability of public and private transportation options (expand choices at non-traditional times; improve response times and flexibility to increase use of public and private transportation, for travel to work; address gaps in meeting needs of the public and developmentally disabled)
- Increase in-County and coordination among providers, and regionally with adjacent county providers (coordinate asset utilization among county providers; coordinate with adjacent counties to provide better options and

- opportunities; produce a “Getting Around” county guide)
- Promote increased ridership across the network (create a marketing campaign to promote use by the general public and special needs groups, and step up travel training for understanding of available transportation and requirements)
- Expand efforts to promote safe transportation and healthy personal transportation habits (Promote the “six E's” with Fremont City Schools and the City of Fremont: education, encouragement, enforcement, equity, engineering, and evaluation; update and review the Countywide Active Transportation Network and plan)
- Address capital needs to support the other stated goals of the Sandusky County transportation network (Promote and facilitate upgrades to software, new vehicles, and equipment)



5. Develop Access Management Policies

Parties – Commissioners; Engineer; SCRPC, ODOT, Township Trustees

Timeframe – M

The Sandusky County Engineer’s Office currently does not utilize an access management plan, although the Engineer supports investigating the development of such a plan. The purpose of access management is to establish uniform and equitable standards and procedures. An access management plan, when administered properly, can reduce highway capacity up to 20% of its design and help to prolong the service life of the county’s roads and reduce public maintenance costs. Most importantly, access management also assists in promoting orderly development while preserving traffic mobility. Some of the reasons to utilize a policy of access management is that an access management policy will provide rules and regulations for managing access to land development from roadways, while preserving traffic flow in regard to safety, speed, and capacity.

The intent of an access management policy is to establish long-range planning for:

- ➡ Functional Class
- ➡ Traffic Volumes
- ➡ Right-of-Way Needs
- ➡ Lane Needs

- ➡ Traffic Control Devices Policies
- ➡ Turn Lane Requirements
- ➡ Traffic Impact and Access Management Studies

In framing the County access management policies, stakeholders should work closely with the SCRPC and township zoning boards to align access management with existing township zoning regulations. In some instances, access management regulations may require the issuance of permits, including interim and temporary permits. If County Commissioners or Township Trustees adopt regulations that require permits, the regulations must include standards that will be used for the approval or denial of a permit. Assess management policies must also be consistent with county zoning regulations and must be coordinated with any existing township zoning regulations.

6. Leverage Grant Resources

Parties – Engineer; Park District; ODOT; CCEO; ODNR; Consulting Engineers

Timeframe – O

County and local officials should continue to pursue transportation funding to provide for safe and active transportation infrastructure. County and local officials could find alternative means of capital financing, private investment, partnerships, and other

available resources for recreational programs. If the county utilized recreation districts, they could pass levies for financial support for new transportation projects. Some programs like ODOT’s Transportation Enhancement program provide up to 80% of the total construction cost for a new project. This includes construction engineering, inspection and testing. Other funding sources like Clean Ohio and Ohio Department of Natural Resources’ (ODNR) Recreational Trails Program can be used to extend and connect trails to new destinations locally and regionally.

In 2015, officials commissioned a study of a new SR 53 entrance for Terra State Community College. In 2019, the Sandusky County Engineer received ODOT Safety Program Funding for improvements to the US 20 Bypass in Fremont. To promote safety in other locations of the county, safety fund requests may be developed for the Intersections of US 20/TR 138, CR 229/198, and CR 175/312 (in coordination with Erie County Engineer)

In addition to the TID and ODOT’s Safety Program, there’s other funding programs that can be pursued to help fund identified transportation improvement needs.

The most common types of funding programs include:

- ➔ CEAO for funds that the County Engineer can apply to for grants to improve County Roads.
- ➔ ODOT’s Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) is a funding source for pedestrian and bicycle related improvements.
- ➔ ODOT’s Safe Routes To Schools (SRTS) Program is a funding source to improve infrastructure to enhance the safety of students walking/biking to and from school.
- ➔ ODOT’s Job & Commerce is a program that provides money for public roadway improvements associated with jobs coming to a specific site where minor roadway improvements are needed.
- ➔ ODOT’s Small City Program is a program that provides funding for small communities with populations between 5,000 and 24,999 that are outside of Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) jurisdictions. This would include the cities of Bellevue, Clyde, and Fremont in Sandusky County.
- ➔ Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC) is a State of Ohio program that allows a governmental entity to apply for funds for infrastructure improvements, including roadways.
- ➔ State Infrastructure Bank (SIB) is a low interest loan program for projects.

7. Deploy Branding Elements (Wayfinding) and Market Community Assets

Parties – Commissioners; Chamber of Commerce; CVB; Engineer; Park District; SCEDC; Terra; Targeted Stakeholders; Private Businesses

Timeframe – M

From the input gathered in the surveys, it is clear that residents of Sandusky County feel that their community has a lot to offer. Deploying wayfinding is a way to ensure that the county is effectively marketing its best assets. The signage that is implemented will serve to link the community together and promote and brand the county. Three types of signage could be deployed: large scale gateway signs, medium, vehicular scale directional signs, and small, pedestrian scale directional signs. The signs should be designed in a way that can be implemented along state highways. The sign types should be innovative but based on uniform guidelines including the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials’ Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities (AASHTO), and the National Association of City Transportation Officials’ (NACTO) Urban Bikeway Design Guide.

To help market the tremendous recreational value of the Sandusky River, Sandusky County Regional Planning Commission should consider working with

the Seneca County Regional Planning Commission and other parties to obtain a water trail designation from ODNR. Benefits of the program, aside from the economic value from the tourism, include improved advertising materials like signage and enhanced mapping.

8. Create Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Parties – Commissioners; Sandusky Parks; Engineer; Sanitary Engineer; Local Park Depts; Stakeholders

Timeframe – M

A plurality of the residents surveyed indicated a desire for sustained park quality and diverse recreational and social activities for residents of all ages. Developing a Parks and Recreation Master Plan will serve to maintain a high quality of life in the county. Elements such as parks, recreation lands, and preservation of the natural environment are vital to sustaining a high quality of life and should all be discussed in the master plan. The plan will also help address the development of active and passive recreation opportunities such as bike trails, the development of new park programming, and the creation of additional recreational facilities throughout the county.

9. Enhance Public and Private Partnerships

Parties – Commissioners; SCEDC ; Hospitals; Terra; CVB;
Sandusky River Watershed Coalition; TMACOG;
Private Sector

Timeframe – O

Enhancing the relationship between public and private entities serves to benefit the entire community. For example, county planning officials could work with local community leaders to encourage the development of neighborhood associations and organize community forums to address strategies that affect their neighborhoods. Private, more localized, efforts could help make the job of code enforcement a bit easier and result in greater impact and more successful enforcement. These groups could ensure that the rental and other property owners in their neighborhoods are abiding by the law and are reporting all rental properties to local officials.

These neighborhood groups could not only work with local officials and neighborhood associations, but also with the School District; businesses, churches and agencies within their neighborhoods; civic and fraternal groups in the community; the local police, parks, service departments; local banks; and, residents of the neighborhoods.



Sandusky County is ranked by Site Selection Magazine among the best economic development organizations nationally based on the number of business development projects. In 2019, Fremont-Sandusky County has been recognized as one of the top 20 micropolitan regions in the country for business investment and expansion. Sandusky County had a total of 48 projects and \$183M in Capital Investment, resulting in 1,811 retained and 262 new jobs. Out of those projects, nine of them qualified for the Governor’s Cup, including ABC Inoac, CDSF, Crown Battery, Evergreen Plastics, Goodwill Industries in Bellevue, Quality Steel, Revere Plastics, Total Distribution, Tower Automotive and Whirlpool.

3) Land and Resource Management

Overview

Of the 260,000+ acres that comprise Sandusky County, approximately 214,000 acres are utilized for agricultural purposes. Of the remaining acreage used for developed purposes, residential uses comprise the largest land use (53%). Land dedicated for public and commercial uses account for 23% and 14% respectively. Ten percent of developed lands in Sandusky County are used for industrial purposes.

Most of the residential development that has occurred since the last comprehensive plan was written has taken place either as a continuation of growth outward from the county’s established cities or villages, or along township and county roads in manner widely labeled as “sprawl.” Because lot splits are not recorded by any of the county’s agencies, it is difficult to ascertain the intensity by which rural residential growth has occurred.

Agricultural Development

Agribusiness in Sandusky County is a multi-million-dollar sector, with the market value of products in 2017 reaching \$101 million (of which \$91.8 million were from crops, nurseries, and greenhouses and \$9.2 million from livestock, poultry, and their products). The unadjusted total in 1997 was \$66 million.

The number of farms and acreage in farming throughout the county diminished slightly, from 795 farms and 199,446 acres in 1997 to 768 farms and 178,761 acres in 2017. This indicates that some 20,000 acres were converted from farm to non-farm use over those twenty years, including sale of frontage property for new residential use.

The average size of a farm decreased from 251 to 233 acres; the median from 115 to 77 acres. However, the number of farms, when categorized by the value of their sales, skewed toward the smaller “hobby” farms (167 farms with sales of less than \$2,500) and the larger ones (209 farms with \$100,000 or more in sales).

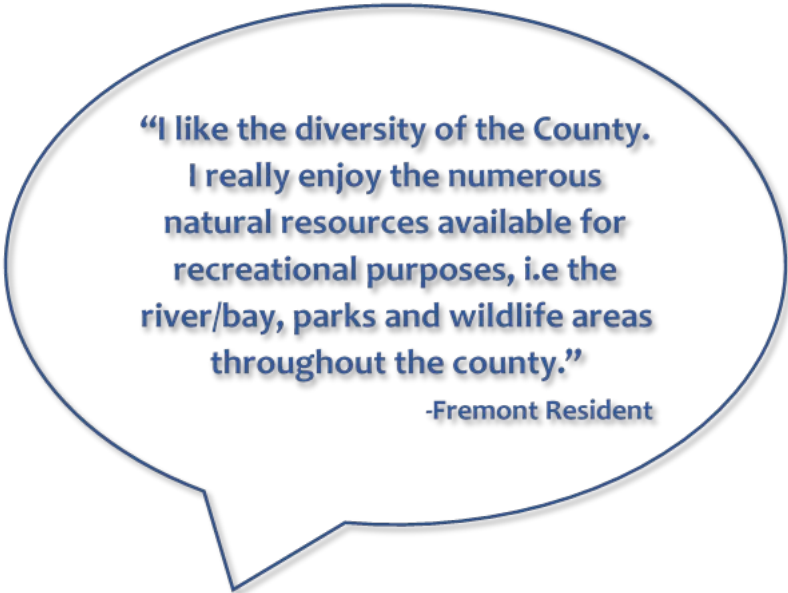
In 1997, 741 farms grew 185,638 acres of crops; this decreased to 696 farms growing 168,414 acres in 2017. Crops occupying the greatest acreage in 2017 included soybeans (89,116 acres; 482 farms), corn for grain (58,248; 378 farms), and wheat (6,504 acres; 157 farms). While the acreage devoted to each was similar in 1997, more farms participated, with 617 growing soybeans, 516 growing corn, and 428 with wheat.

Livestock have taken a relatively smaller role in Sandusky County agribusiness, accounting for just 9.1 percent of total sales. In 2017, 161 farms had 5,036 cattle and calves, 98 had 939 beef cattle, 38 had 10,651 hogs and pigs, 22 had 515 sheep and lambs, 53 had 1,619 laying hens, and just five had 1,619 broiler or roasting chickens.

Most farms in the county rely largely upon family members for their labor needs. However, there were 176 farms employing outside help, with 581 workers employed county-wide, accounting for a payroll of \$4,296,000. Eight farms employed ten or more workers, and of those 581 workers, 187 worked 150 days or more. As farming became more capital-intensive, the need for farm labor diminished. In 1997, 139 farms employed 1,723, with a payroll of \$4,831,000, significantly greater in current dollars than the payroll for 2017.

Future Land Use Planning Areas

Promoting good growth and development patterns at a scale friendly to community character and natural resources is a primary goal of this Plan. To help encourage these patterns, County and local leaders should utilize the most appropriate tool and best practices that are highlighted in the Plan Implementation Toolbox.



A number of assumptions have gone into the development of the five future land planning areas (See *Map: Future Land Use Planning Areas Map*). These assumptions are:

- 1) Intense development should be encouraged within incorporated areas and Potential Growth Areas (and in some cases, Rural Commerce Areas) whenever possible through the use of zoning, available infrastructure and community services.
- 2) Best Management Practices should be implemented in all Future Land Use Planning Areas, but should first be implemented in Environmentally-Sensitive Areas (See *Map: Environmental Considerations*) and areas where additional water quality measures have been adopted like 208 Facility Planning Areas, karst areas, and watershed areas along the Sandusky River (See *Map: Water Quality Considerations*). This Plan assumes a level of local responsibility to ensure BMPs and other sustainable land use techniques are implemented.

Five Land Use Planning Areas were developed to assist the identified stakeholders (See: *Plan Implementation Toolbox*) in utilizing the optimal set of tools to accomplish the Plan’s Strategies and to manage growth, development, and farmland preservation activities. These Land Use Planning Areas are:

➡ Potential Growth Areas

- ➡ Conservation Resource Areas
- ➡ Environmentally Sensitive Areas
- ➡ Rural Conservation Areas
- ➡ Rural Management Areas

Potential Growth Areas (PGA)

These areas represent areas adjacent to municipal boundaries, key corridors, public utility service areas, and township areas zoned for business, commercial, and industrial uses.

While these areas have been selected as Potential Growth Areas, this Plan recommends that development occur in these areas only when the provision of public services and facilities, such as police and fire protection, roads, water and sanitary sewer service, and parks, is suitable enough to accommodate it. Some locations within these Growth Areas also have conditions that will require the proper deployment of best management practices, incentives and other regulatory program to guide growth, and conserve and protect natural and environmental resources.

- ➡ Recommended Land Uses: Single family attached, and detached residential, multi-family residential, commercial, industrial, public and institutional.
- ➡ Development Intensity: 6 DU+/Acre for single family residential in similarly developed areas served with public utilities, with density bonuses

provided for dedicated open spaces and; 0.25 - 0.50 DU/Acre for single family residential land uses in areas not yet served with public utilities, with density bonuses possible where best management practices are utilized and supported by the County Department of Health based on septic suitability considerations and other regulatory agencies.


Conservation Areas

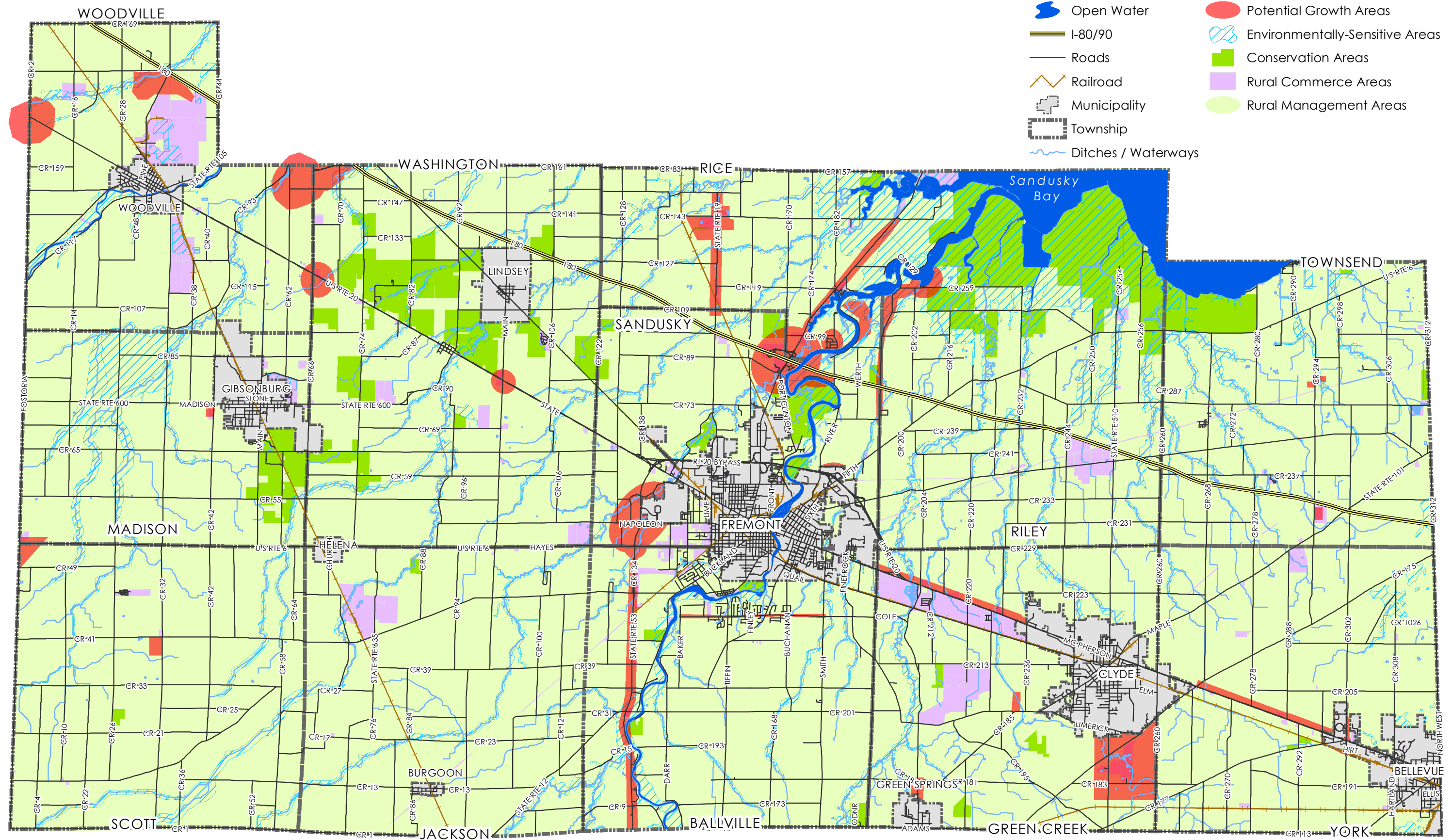
The Conservation Resource Areas represent areas of the county where farmlands have been permanently protected through one or more agricultural preservation program like easement purchase and/or the conservation easement programs through conservancy groups like Black Swamp Conservancy and park organizations. At the present time, roughly 5,000 acres are in conservation easement programs.

The purpose of these programs is to isolate these areas from development conditions that are not mutually-beneficial to the farming community. It is recommended that the SCRPC continue to work with township and county officials, and the farming community to implement the most appropriate tools found in the Plan Implementation Toolbox to limit development in and adjacent to these areas.

- ➡ Recommended Land Uses: Agricultural land uses and Parks and Preserves.

Legend

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
|  | Open Water |  | Potential Growth Areas |
|  | I-80/90 |  | Environmentally-Sensitive Areas |
|  | Roads |  | Conservation Areas |
|  | Railroad |  | Rural Commerce Areas |
|  | Municipality |  | Rural Management Areas |
|  | Township | | |
|  | Ditches / Waterways | | |



Source: Sandusky County Auditor, SCRPC, Black Swamp Conservancy, Reville
Note: Map to be used for general planning, not scientific, purposes.

- ➡ Development Intensity: Because development is often limited as a condition of the easement, all future development in these areas should be determined on a case-by-case basis to minimize incompatibility issues.

Environmentally-Sensitive Areas

Environmentally-Sensitive Areas are identified as separate Future Land Use Planning Area to assist county and local officials in delineating where additional development constraints may be warranted, and where hydrological resources may be located. Development that occurs in the 100-year flood plain is subject to the County’s Flood Damage Prevention Regulations that is administered by the SCRPC.

- ➡ Recommended Land Uses: Development is discouraged in these areas, especially in the Flood Hazard Areas. However, in cases where development advances, it should be limited to extremely low density residential that occurs in accordance with conservation design and best management practices at densities deemed appropriate by the County Department of Health and other regulatory agencies. Other potential land uses would include agricultural uses and park and recreational uses.
- ➡ Development Intensity: As determined by the regulatory agencies upon review of specific site constraints.

Rural Commerce Areas (RCA)

Rural Commerce Areas (RCA) are areas outside of designated growth areas but are areas in townships zoned for business, commercial, and/or industrial uses. A primary theme of the 2020 Sandusky County Comprehensive Plan is to support economic development to the fullest extent possible, and several of the county’s economic generators are located in these areas. These areas include, but are not limited to Carmeuse Lime, Area Aggregates, Martin Marietta, Waste Management, private recreational “sportsman’s clubs”, and agricultural-related businesses.

- ➡ Recommended Land Uses: Supportive commercial and industrial land uses, and supportive public/institutional land uses. New residential land uses should be minimized in areas directly adjacent to these commerce areas.
- ➡ Development Intensity: Determined on a case-by-case basis to minimize incompatibility and nuisance issues, and dependent upon best practices, surrounding land uses, and utility needs.

Rural Management Areas (RMA)

Rural Management Areas (RMA) are generally outside of the designated growth areas and generally typified by low or very low density rural residential development. The management of these areas should be supported by the Plan Implementation Toolbox in a manner that promotes sustainable development and other best

practices for issues like access management and combined access drives (CADS), conservation / compact development, and the protection of environmentally-sensitive areas and critical water resources.

Lands in these areas should also be developed at densities deemed appropriate by the County Department of Health based upon septic suitability considerations. However, compact, denser developments, where compatible, could be warranted in these Areas. RMAs also make logical annexation areas and potential long-range economic development areas as many of these areas are adjacent to municipal corporations and the Sandusky County Regional Airport.

- ➡ Recommended Land Uses: Single family residential, neighborhood commercial, planned business park, public and institutional, and park and recreational land uses.
- ➡ Development Intensity: Determined by local zoning standards but should range between 0.20 to 0.50 DU/Acre (single-family residential). Density credits could be warranted in situations where best management practices, like combined access drives and cluster development techniques, are utilized and supported by adjacent property owners.

Strategies

Implementation Timeframe:	
Short Term (S), Less than 2 years.	Medium Term (M), 3-5 years.
Long Term (L), 6-10 years.	Ongoing (O)

1. Utilize Sustainable Land Use Tools

Parties – Commissioners; SWCD; Health Dept.; Black Swamp Conservancy; USDA-NRCS

Timeframe – O

While future growth in Sandusky County will be best accommodated by local communities utilizing density-friendly zoning techniques expanding outward, proper methods should be deployed to minimize the development footprint in the unincorporated areas of the County. Utilizing sustainable land use tools requires a great deal of cooperation among the involved entities. One method in building the bonds and relationships necessary to promote the use of sustainable land use tools is to establish an annual planning and development forum facilitated by county officials or by an outside facilitator. This forum would provide a platform by which all political subdivisions can voice their problems and concerns. It would also allow those concerns to be handled in a timely manner and under professional advice.

This discussion should include the advancement of sustainable land use tools to address the following situations:

- ➡ Discouraging the growth of well and septic systems within critical resource areas and/or areas with identified development constraints. This is especially important in areas with Karst conditions, high groundwater pollution potential, or source water protection areas, especially in the inner management zones.
- ➡ Developing comprehensive plans and working with township and village officials to develop or update their zoning ordinances / resolutions. At the present time, three townships (Townsend, York, and Madison) do not have zoning and many city/village officials expressed a desire to update their zoning ordinances.
- ➡ Developing additional oversight tools are in place to address development that occurs on and near Karst areas.
- ➡ Adopting conservation development zoning practices to strengthen environmental assessment requirements specifically in the four source water protection areas identified on the Water Quality Considerations Map.
- ➡ Updating subdivision regulations to strengthen environmental assessment requirements, minimize minor subdivisions (lot splits), flag lots, and reduce the footprint of exempted 5+ acre development patterns.

2. Create/Update Zoning Resolutions/Ordinances

Parties – Planning/Zoning Commissions

Timeframe – O

Zoning is a fundamental planning tool for local governments. At the current time, 3 of the County’s twelve townships are unzoned: Townsend, York, and Madison.

The SCRPC is tasked, by law, with reviewing and commenting on any proposed Zoning amendments in the unincorporated areas. The ultimate decision to adopt or reject an amendment always remains with the elected Township officials.

The SCRPC has worked with Townships by providing model zoning amendments for emerging issues such as alternative energy generation and changing preferences for housing types and lot sizes.

3. Conserve Prime Farmlands and Environmentally-Sensitive Areas

Parties – Commissioners; Park District; Health Dept.; SWCD; Farmers; Farm Bureau; USDA-NRCS; Black Swamp Conservancy; Land Trusts; Sandusky County Watershed Coalition; TMACOG

Timeframe – O

Agricultural lands can be preserved through programs such as the Current Agricultural Use Valuation Program, Agricultural Districts, Grasslands/Ranchlands Protection Programs, and ASAs.

County officials ought to implement the strategies highlighted in this Plan to increase the awareness of conservation and incentive programs within the farming community. In addition, an agricultural easement is the single most powerful legal tool for the permanent protection of farmland, allowing the owner to permanently protect the land from non-farm development without giving up ownership. Under federal tax law, an agricultural easement is treated the same as a conservation easement. It is a flexible agreement between a landowner and a government entity and is filed with the County Recorder.

The “Fremont-Sandusky Bay Corridor” that runs along the Sandusky River directly to the north of the City of Fremont is an example of a priority conservation area as it contains productive farmland soils and

encompasses the main stem of the Sandusky State Scenic River. Other areas to target for potential conservation easements could include lands adjacent to existing conservation easement area along with key locations along the Sandusky River, Sandusky Bay, and its major tributaries like the Greencreek River.

There are many additional benefits associated with source water protection, such as protecting water quality for wildlife and recreational use and protecting the availability and quantity of water supplies. To this end, the Ohio EPA designated a portion of the Sandusky River from US 30 (RM 82.1) to the Roger Young Park in Fremont as an Outstanding State Water with exceptional ecological value.

Regulation and management of development activities within the floodplain is vital to public health and safety, as well as the natural environment. Although federal and state regulations set specific standards for development in designated floodplains, it is recommended that additional alternative development methods be pursued that mitigate future flooding problems.

Over 16,600 acres of various types of wetlands are scattered across the County, with the largest percentage of them being shallow marshes with emergent vegetation and wetlands comprised of shrub or scrub vegetation. To ensure a “no-net-loss”

of wetlands, it is imperative that public and private officials develop additional planning and oversight tools that can expedite the development process and also protect wetlands.

Preservation of undeveloped and functioning wetlands and riparian corridors serves to decrease downstream flooding, improves water quality, preserves soil resources, and provides natural habitat.

4. Expand the County’s GIS Capabilities

Parties – Auditor-GIS Div.; Health Dept.; Sanitary Engineer; Engineer Realtors; Conservation Groups

Timeframe – M

Sandusky County’s Auditor’s Office utilizes GIS and has an online platform that could be expanded to help citizens understand the repercussions of unplanned growth. Impacts of development over time can be significant. By using geographic information system (GIS) applications and analyzing land-use data collected over time, county residents and private and public officials may be more willing to support quality and sustainable planned growth and the necessity for holistic and comprehensive planning.

In particular, data such as utility planning areas (208 FPAs and CSAs), environmental constraints (floodplains, wetlands, groundwater pollution potential, soils, bedrock), and future land planning

areas should be publicly available from the SCRPC in the hopes that residents and future developers can plan for growth while understanding areas where best management practices will be required.

5. **Implement/Update the Water and Sewer Master Plan**

Parties – Sanitary Engineer; Commissioners; Engineer; SCEDC Consulting Engineer; NORW; Developers; Landowners

Timeframe – M

Parties – Sanitary Engineer; Commissioners; Engineer; SCEDC Consulting Engineer; NORW; Developers; Landowners

Timeframe – M

Water and sewer services in the unincorporated areas of the County are guided by Water and Sewer Plan that was updated in 2014/5. Throughout the planning process, various concerns regarding the county’s sewage and water infrastructure arose. To address these concerns, county officials should begin discussions to update and implement the Water and Sewer Master Plan. The plan will act as a guide for tactical infrastructure investments, especially in areas where growth areas overlap with 208 FPAs and CSAs, and the priority improvement areas designated by the Sanitary Sewer Engineer. These areas include:

Wightman’s Grove Sanitary Sewer Collection System & Treatment

Installing sanitary sewers in this area coincide with a 2007 EPA Findings and Orders and the 208 Plan. The continued installation of sanitary sewers to the Wightman’s Grove area will revitalize this area along the Sandusky River, as many homes in this area are in need of public sewers. This will be the first of up to 5 improvements that will improve multiple areas along the Sandusky River, including Barkshire Hills Subdivision, which is designated as a CSA.

District #1 Sewer Rehabilitation

Replacement of aging infrastructure including two lift stations installed in the early 1970s along with a mainline trunk sewer that runs between Sandusky River and Cole Road. Both lift stations are smaller lift stations that are past their design life and need to be replaced.

Shorewood Water Plant Replacement and/or Upgrades

Upgraded the plant for fire protection for the Shorewood Village would improve the infrastructure and also allow for expansion of water service along the SR 53 corridor. Upgrades could also include connection to another entity for water redundancy for both water entities. Expansion of the County Water System would be beneficial to the entire County especially where County sewer customers exist in

order to provide sewage service based on a meter rate. This is difficult to achieve when other outside water entities are providing water service.

Adams Acres Wastewater Plant Replacement

Replacement of the Wastewater Plant as the old plant will be 50 years old in 2026 and is starting to show signs of its age. Added features that are missing from the current plant would be an Equalization Tank, Fixed Media, and UV Disinfection in which would improve the treatment of the sewage for this subdivision.

Merger of the County Sanitary Sewer Districts

The Commissioners originally formed multiple sanitary sewer Districts to represent different areas within the County. This has created multiple budgets to track and purchasing general items are divided amongst the districts based on the number of customers. In recent years, the Countywide District (General) has pulled financially equal to District #1 and is stable with a newer infrastructure. Merging the districts could help District #1 with its aging infrastructure along with streamlining the Sanitary Engineers operation with not tracking multiple sewer budgets.

Some issues this plan should address are:

- ➡ Age of infrastructure and equipment, and lack of equipment like portable generators. Both County portable generators are over 20 years old and

storage is limited for any additional needed equipment (not to mention costly).

- Lack of staff and difficulty in attracting/retaining qualified operators/staff. Trained Licensed Operators are becoming more difficult to find, as individuals need to pass exams along with maintaining the Ohio EPA licenses.
- Maintenance plan. Pump repairs by third parties have become increasingly lengthy.
- Infrastructure security plan. Threats to infrastructure in terms of terrorism and security of each site have been a focus in the past.
- Increased EPA reporting and licensing requirements. Ohio EPA's Asset Management Plan would be an example of the planning that is being required by all water entities.
- Limited grant funding opportunities. Grant funding of rehabilitation and new sanitary sewer and water construction is very limited and/or difficult to obtain which puts most of the costs back on the private property owners.
- Cost/benefit analysis for infrastructure improvements and I/I reduction. For new sanitary sewer improvements, typical costs per residence are higher than installing a new septic system. For instance, Wightman's Grove Sanitary Sewer Improvement is estimated over \$30,000 per structure. With grants that have been applied for or

are available, the costs are still over \$20,000 per structure.

- A public outreach plan to work with homeowners in CSAs / FPAs.
- The adoption of new and alternative sewage treatment technologies such as land treatment, wastewater irrigation, mound systems, and wetlands systems to lower operating costs, reduce energy demand, reuse wastewater, and eliminate pollutant discharges.

Such technologies should be utilized to service problematic areas around the county in designated growth areas and in other rural areas of the County with documented public health emergencies and polluted water supplies.

6. Update the Sandusky County Subdivision Regulations

Parties – Commissioners; Engineer; Sanitary Engineer; Health Dept.; SWCD Local Developers; Consultants

Timeframe – S

Subdivision regulations are an important element in better managing land use patterns. They should include more restrictive minor subdivision provisions to minimize lot splits, flag lots and promote pedestrian connectivity within and between subdivisions. Sandusky County officials, in updating the subdivision regulations, should also encourage bike path connections from major developments to the nearby pedestrian assets, parks, and other residential developments and destinations. Officials should remain firm in requiring subdivisions to connect to adjacent developments and, most importantly, public destinations. Bike lanes could be added to roads in subdivisions where sidewalks are not present and road width allows.