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Darke County

Comprehensive Plan 2023



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



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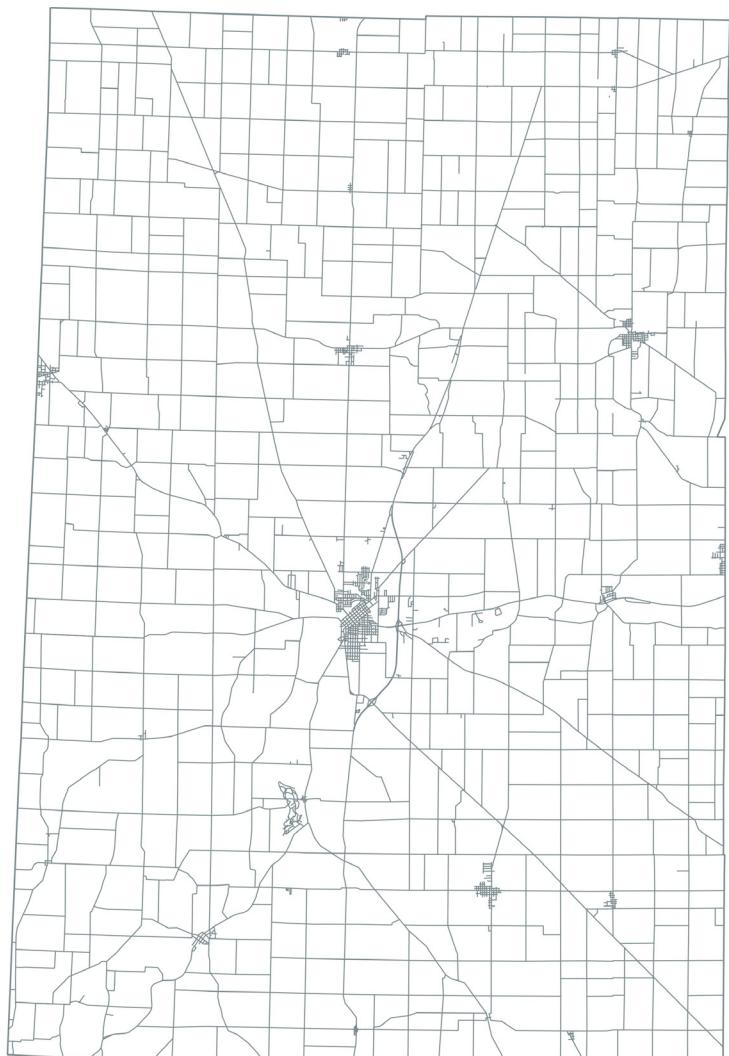
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PROLOGUE



During the spring of 2023, Darke County Commissioner Larry Homes contacted The Ohio State University's Knowlton School regarding a potential land use plan update. A few Zoom meetings and a coffee shop discussion later, it was decided that the autumn 2023 graduate comprehensive planning studio would take on the project. Previous successful partnerships between Ohio's rural counties and The Ohio State University's City & Regional Planning Department also helped pave the way for this project.

Darke County is located on Ohio's western border and has a deeply agricultural heritage. Each year, Darke County is at or near the top of the State's list for crop production, no easy feat for such a prolific farming region! In addition to millions of bushels of high quality corn and soybeans, the County boasts massive egg production/exports as well as significant turkey and chicken farms. Major corporations such as KitchenAid (mixers) and Fram (oil filters) also call Darke County home.

With only 15 weeks to work, six talented graduate students from a wide variety of backgrounds completed vital research and identified case studies which furthered their knowledge of key issues. Site visits were made, and preliminary findings were presented via Zoom near the mid-point of the semester. These efforts gave the students a fundamental knowledge of Darke County, and as a result, the students' recommendations are legitimate and thought-provoking. It has been a privilege for me to lead these outstanding young professionals.

The Darke County Commissioners and local government staff have been welcoming, helpful and candid, which has facilitated a professional-grade product. This document consists of original writings, exhibits and recommendations - it is my sincere hope that the goals, objectives and ideas within this document will be implemented for the benefit of Darke County residents and businesses for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Chad D. Gibson, AICP
Associated Faculty
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CHAPTER ONE

EXISTING CONDITIONS



CHAPTER ONE

Existing Conditions

Introduction

Situated directly to the east of the state of Indiana lies Darke County, Ohio: Home of famed sharp-shooter Annie Oakley and acres of loamy soil. The county seat is the City of Greenville, with a number of villages, townships, and unincorporated communities. This chapter will summarize the existing conditions of the county that were used to make informed land use recommendations in this document. The land use plan has not been updated since 2001. By having an updated plan, we can provide the county with a clear blueprint forward. Issues like industrial use, economic development, housing, transport, and health will be noted in a land use plan. These issues interplay with one another, and by having conditions placed in a single document, we may be able to address multiple problems with simpler solutions.



Maid-Rite restaurant, Greenville, OH

Darke County Demographics

Darke County has a population of 51,207. It is the 41st most populous county in the state, with a sizeable population in comparison to its border-county neighbors. Darke County is a community that consists primarily of families. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 66.8% of households report as family households, with over half of this consisting of 3-person or more families. Total family households amount to 13,908. Less than 1/3 of households reported being nonfamily. Those aged 65+ represent 19.3% of the population, or 10,026 people. The population consists of 11,678 enrolled in some form of school (kindergarten through graduate school), and this represents 23.4% of the total population. 1,962 people are enrolled specifically in tertiary education (undergraduate or graduate school).

In terms of economic status, 13.1% of households in Darke County fall below the poverty line. Out of the 2,718 such households, a steady majority, 1,693 (62.3%), consist of nonfamily households. A notable statistic is that nearly 62.5% of those living below the poverty line have no source of social security income, and an even higher percentage, 72.9%, lack any form of retirement income. Regarding healthcare coverage, 1.6% of residents under 18 in Darke County lack health insurance, while 2.4% of those aged 18-64 are in the same situation. However, only 0.1% of residents aged 65 or older do not have health insurance.

SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis is a strategic planning tool used to assess and evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats involved in a project or situation. This type of analysis is helpful in understanding the current situation and aids in decision-making by highlighting areas that need improvement, potential areas for growth, and challenges to be addressed.

Below is the the SWOT analysis done in preparation for writing the Comprehensive Plan for Darke County:

STRENGTHS

- Farms
- Small town charm
- Attractive downtowns and good overall fabric
- Great economic development
- Robust greenspace
- Airport
- Superb school system
- Strong industrial presence

WEAKNESSES

- Brain drain
- Stagnant growth
- Affordable housing stock
- Rental stock
- Infrastructure
- Daycare accessibility
- 4 townships with no code
- Transit

OPPORTUNITIES

- Workforce housing
- Family – oriented housing
- Open space
- Young professionals
- Farmland preservation
- Downtown design enhancements
- Airport Website

THREATS

- Future water access
- Infrastructure
- Employee retention
- Population decline
- Lack of usable data

Employment

Darke County, Ohio has a bustling industrial economy that is primarily focused on manufacturing and agriculture with corn, soybeans, wheat, eggs, and livestock being major products cultivated in the county. Darke County's fertile land and favorable climate support a robust agricultural sector. As of 2021, Darke County has a median household income of \$57,440 and has a per capita income of \$29,914. Since 2003, the total number of Darke County residents in the labor force has dropped from 28,802 to 26,262 in 2017. Furthermore, the unemployment rate has dropped to 4.2 percent in 2017, from a high of 11.2 percent in 2010, with a labor force participation rate of 88.4%.

As of 2020, those employed in manufacturing represented 27.7% of the workforce, followed by 14.2% in Health care, and 10.1% in retail, respectively. Production Occupations spanned 16.1% of the workforce, followed by Office & Administrative Support roles at 11.6% and Management Occupations at 9.63%. Finance, Administration, Transportation and Warehousing were the highest paying roles, paying an average of over \$50,000, followed by manufacturing, at just below \$50,000, according to the U.S. Census.

The labor force participation rate and unemployment rate in Darke County has varied over the last twenty years. As of 2021, the unemployment rate was around 3.5% to 4.5%. The poverty rate in Darke County was around 15% as of 2021, according to the U.S. Census.



Large agricultural field, Northeastern Darke County



Midmark Headquarters, Versailles, OH

Infrastructure

Darke County is located close to regional interstate highways and major cities. Interstate route 70 passes south of the county, as an Indianapolis to Columbus Connector, while interstate route 75 passes to the east of the county as a Dayton and Cincinnati connector. Most traffic in Darke county must use state and regional roads, with the most notable connection being route 47 between Versailles and Dayton. The sole air transportation asset is the notable Darke County Airport, which has recently had an update to its terminal for small aircraft. The only public transit is the Greenville Transit System (GTS), which is a point-to-point system, with limited pedestrian infrastructure.

Although electric infrastructure is distributed throughout the county, cost and reliability deviate significantly between different locations. Most services originate from outside of the county via high powered lines. When speaking with Darke County Officials, it was clear that internet speed and access was a concern for the county.



Public Square in Versailles, OH

Utilities

Most of Darke County relies on well water and septic. Urbanized areas are often "land locked" by non-incorporated land that are reluctant to host expansion of city services. High cost of installation outside of city service hinders private development beyond these boundaries. Certain water issues have been reported beyond these conditions. Versailles, the fastest growing town, is reaching its maximum water supply. Due to this, a site 4 miles north of the urban complex is slated for wellfield development. Reports of well dewatering from the northeastern areas of the county are beginning to appear, which can compound with long term issues.

Housing

There are about 22,586 housing units within Darke County; 14,982 of these are owner-occupied and 5,844 are renter occupied. At 82% of the existing housing stock, detached single-family homes are the most common type of housing within the county. Duplexes, mobile homes, and multifamily housing developments are also options for residents, but are much less frequent. There are roughly 1,700 vacant housing units within the county as of 2023. Housing is on the older side, with only 51 new units developed since 2020. The median home value is \$166,844 and the average is \$200,593, with most home values falling between \$100,000 and \$199,999, according to the U.S. Census.

Land Use



Housing Structures in Ansonia, OH

80% or more of Land Use for Darke County is dedicated to farmland, with more than 20% being naturally prime farm land and another 70% being able to become prime farmland with the installation of a drainage system. Darke County is comprised of one central city, and numerous villages, towns, and unincorporated land including Greenville, Versailles, Union City, Wayne Lakes, Arcanum, New Madison and other smaller areas, according to the MVRPC. Infill development within these areas is essential to preserving the characteristics of the county. Programs like the Agricultural Security Area also provide some protection to Darke County farmlands. Areas of industry are generally concentrated to specific areas, and some industries use the byproduct of another to provide a meaningful resource. An example of this is an energy power plant's CO₂ being used to create dry ice.

Greenville has the greatest urbanization, with large areas of concrete parking lots for the major big box stores, several distinct neighborhoods, a large park, and a historic downtown street area. Versailles is an area demonstrating growth, as industry grows within the area. Areas like Gettysburg and other communities may be shrinking as the industry leaves, which is of great concern for Darke county.



Greenville Transportation System

Mobility

According to data obtained through the U.S. Census Bureau, 62.6% of residents in Darke County worked within Darke County, as opposed to 32.9% of residents leaving Darke County for work and 4.5% working outside of Ohio at large. 81.1% of workers drove themselves to work, while 10.4% carpooled and 0.2% took public transportation.

Public Outreach and Engagement Summary

Public engagement is a critical aspect of land use planning. Public engagement allows us to spot urgent issues early, build community trust, and provide transparency in our planning process. By engaging with Darke County residents, officials, and stakeholders, we can provide a more equitable and inclusive plan.

To build a land use plan for Darke County, we started with mixed modal- data, collected from various sources. At the beginning of the project, we started with the 2019 Darke County Community Needs Report produced by The Ohio State University, CFAES Extension. This report focused on the desired values of our client, the Darke County commissioners' office. The values included in this report include the needs of young professionals, residents' perceptions of Darke County, and community values drive future residents to move to Darke County.

Along with utilizing this data, we also launched the Fall 2023 Darke County Land Use Survey to collect proprietary information for this report. This survey's goal was to increase general participation within the community by informing residents of the upcoming comprehensive plan and to lower the barriers to joining the planning process. The five questions asked on this survey were:

Q1: What do you feel is missing from Darke county?

Q2: What changes would you like to see in Darke county?

Q3: What do you particularly like about Darke county?

Q4: What do you particularly dislike about Darke county?

Q5: If you're interested in participating in future county planning decisions, please provide your email.

The last question gave the opportunity to collect additional feedback and create a database of stakeholders interested in participating in future planning decisions for the county. We distributed these questions through an Ohio State University Qualtrics Survey and solicitations for responses were sent via the Darke County commissioners' website, the Darke County tourism board, and in-person at the Darke County Fair. We also published this survey through a press release to Darke County media outlets, Darke County and Greenville focused Facebook pages and through word-of-mouth from the commissioners and their connections.

On November 2, we held a small group meeting for all those indicating interest in participating in the survey. The meeting was held on Zoom, a cloud-based internet communications platform that provides simultaneous two-way communication with multiple individuals.. In- person locations were also offered in Darke County, including Greenville, Ansonia, and Versailles. This meeting asked three questions:

Q1: What is going well in Darke County and why do you live here?

Why do you like these things and how can the county support them in the future?

Q2: What is a leading issue (or issue) in your community, or for Darke County broadly?

Q3: Can you access fast, reliable internet from your home?

If not-do you go to cafes or libraries to access internet?

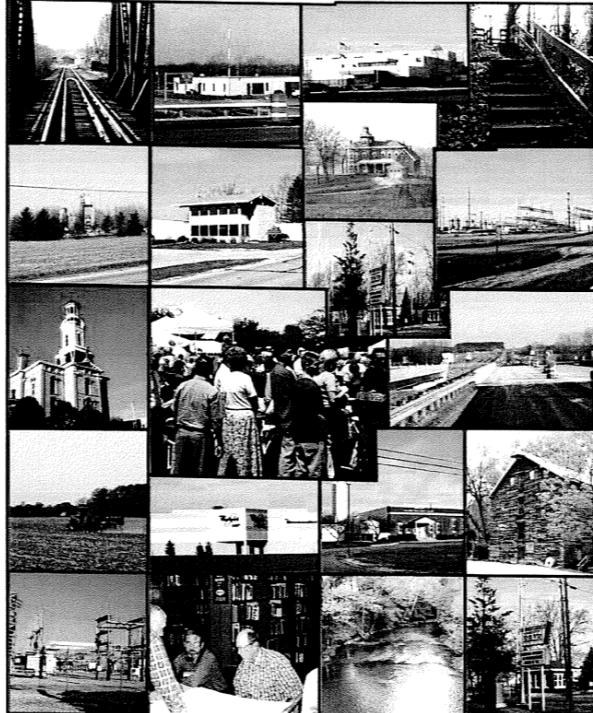
Public Outreach and Engagement Summary

The 2001 Darke County Comprehensive Plan was the precursor to this 2023 Plan. It included the following elements as part of its public engagement strategy, evoking the clear public concerns that existed within the county at the time. These include population management, the economy, land use, and the development of soil erosion mitigation. The 2001 planning process used a seven-step process: Inventory / Analysis, Feedback and Re-Evaluation, Establish Goals & Objectives, Consider Alternatives, Private & Public Action, Decisions and Policies, and Implementation.

The 2023 plan uses a dynamic rewrite of the previous plan to fit the 15-week timeframe, while also providing quality work towards the land use plan. Our focus is to dive deep and explore wide, implementing a 2023 Plan similar to successful county plans with characteristics like Darke County. These case studies can be found in Appendix A of this report.



DARKE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN



MVRPC
Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission
40 W. 4th Centre, Suite 400
Dayton, Ohio 45402

Public Outreach and Engagement Summary

For the 2023 plan, we followed the following structure:

- **Research and Data Gathering**

- Establishment of conditions based on reports received by The Darke County Commission and previous Ohio State Community Report
- Creation of Public Survey for Darke County Residents
- Collection of GIS Data through the MVRPC and the Darke County GIS office
- Reviewing Case Studies from various counties of similar size / style of Darke county for the purposes of refining techniques garnered from this plan and establishing a best practices mindset
- Meeting with public officials and a private developer to establish existing conditions and issues within Darke County
- Site visit to Darke County, Ohio
- Small meeting with those who have taken survey

- **First Pass Implementation and Review**

- Use data gathered to create maps of Darke County, establish prime farmland, watershed, areas of redevelopment, and create an outlined Land Use Plan
- Start a recommendation and SWOT analysis list for the county
- Build out framework for which problems and solutions need to be addressed first based on data collected from previous reports
- Establish goals and promote inter-operability between multiple organizations
- Give "First Pass" (Midterm) Review to Darke County Commissioners and MVRPC
- Collect feedback from first pass and review alternative recommendations
- Build alternative recommendations plan

- **Final Recommendations and Plan**

- Submit a second version of plan to the various interested parties
- Incorporate feedback into the plan and re-analyze inter-organizational connections as frameworks for success
- Clean up language and data collection
- Submit plan to county for final alterations and approval



CHAPTER TWO

COMMUNITY CHARACTER



CHAPTER TWO

Community Character and Placemaking

Vision

Darke County honors its history, serves as a responsible custodian of its abundant historical and cultural heritage, and demonstrates respect for these invaluable assets while planning for the future of urban development, revitalization, and sustainable growth. The county aims to cultivate a unique, predominantly rural, and consistently small-town lifestyle by adeptly balancing the principles of thoughtful expansion with cautious preservation.

In this chapter, critical concerns regarding the preservation of historical and cultural elements are explored in connection to various cherished community assets. Well-planned communities are those that establish a distinct sense of identity rooted in the history and culture of the region; they actively safeguard these significant resources to establish a meaningful link from the past to the present. The principles outlined in this chapter will strengthen the county's initiatives to promote positive growth, foster lively arts and entertainment districts, and enhance a sense of connection and community.

Chapter Sections

- I. Historic Preservation and Utiliazation
- II. Urban Design & Placemaking
- III. Tourism Opportunities



Arcanum Opera House

I. Historic Preservation & Utilization

Historical preservation honors the legacy of those who diligently worked to build their communities; it enhances people's lives by offering insights into their past, strengthening local economies, and telling stories that serve as reminders of the legacy and beauty of their hometowns. Showing regard for the historical context of a place can inspire new construction and compatible infill that harmonizes with a creative past and present. Maintained and well-utilized historical buildings foster a sense of continuity and memory, offering an awareness of achievements that is significant to the community's sense of identity.

Darke County currently has one historic district, located in central Greenville. The premier historical resource of Darke County is the Darke County Historical Society (DCHS), a member organization of the Ohio Local History Alliance (OLHA). The DCHS is located within Region 7 of the OLHA, alongside 10 other counties of west-central Ohio. The DCHS operates the Garst Museum in Greenville, a key asset at the core of Darke County's historical collection, education, and direction. The Garst Museum's impressive offerings include over 300,000 artifacts and 8 major exhibits. According to the National Register of Historic Places, Darke County has 26 sites on the register, with 7 of these sites being of statewide significance.

I. Historic Preservation & Utilization Cont.

GOAL I: Ensure upcoming developments within the county will honor and elevate the rural character of the region.

Strategies:

- Promote the harmonious design of new constructions with existing historic structures and advocate for the safeguarding of rural historic buildings within the context of their natural surroundings;
- Encourage developers to connect undeveloped lands with existing areas and conserve existing woodlands and mature trees to the greatest extent possible during and after development;
- Promote the adoption of cluster development within municipalities' growth zones and advocate for conservation subdivision design, also known as "buffered subdivisions," in the rural areas of Darke County.

GOAL II: Enlarge and stratify the existing Greenville Historic District, and consider similar historic zoning districts for other sizeable Darke County communities.

Strategies:

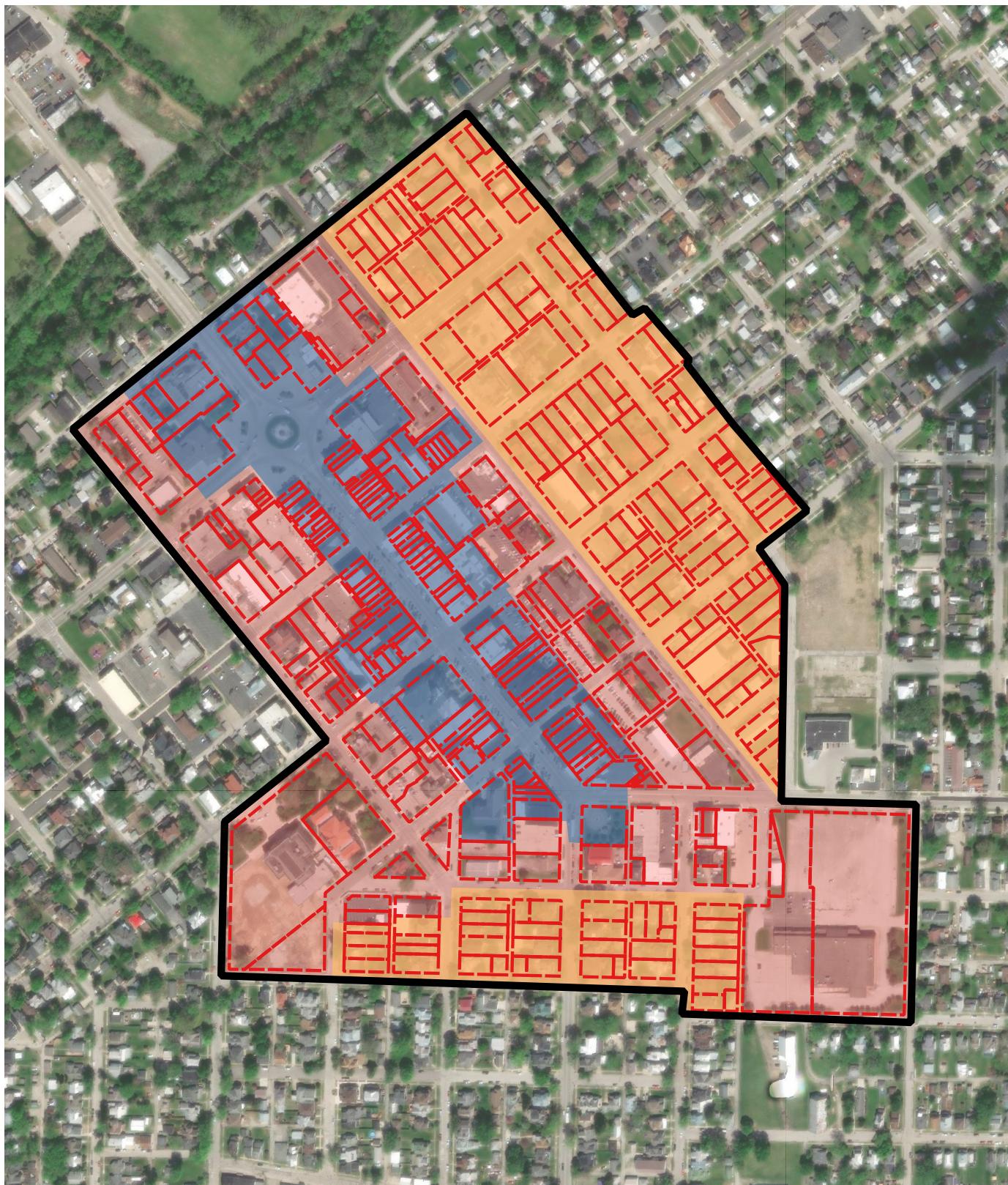
- Aim for a visionary Greenville Historic District through enlargening the existing boundary and strategically tapering the zoning districts. This improved historic district would be divisible into the broad categories of historic core, historic transition, and historic residential zoning districts. This would require expansion of the Architectural Review District in accordance;
- Coordinate with key stakeholders in Versailles and Arcanum to establish historic zoning districts and subsequent boards/commissions. Although smaller than Greenville, any potential historic districting should follow a similar stratification system to that proposed in the Greenville improvements.

GOAL III: Collaborate with state, county, town, and historic and cultural heritage preservation organizations to ensure long-term conservation of the cultural, historical, and archaeological assets within the county.

Strategies:

- Encourage eligible owners of historic properties and communities with eligible historic districts to actively pursue inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, enabling them to qualify for historic tax credits. This includes creating an informational pamphlet for property owners detailing tax incentives available for historic preservation;
- Guarantee that the historical resources inventory in the County's GIS system is regularly updated with the latest data, facilitating its utilization in conjunction with county planning, zoning, subdivision, and development efforts;
- Explore and promote avenues to establish connections with schools for the educational exploration of Darke County by facilitating visits to historical sites. This is a vital step in building public appreciation by ensuring greater knowledge of these places.

Potential Greenville Historic District Map



Historic
District
Boundary

Historic Core

Historic
Transition

Historic
Residential

Parcel
Boundary

0 250 500 750 1,000 ft

Scale 1:4500

Potential Greenville Historic District Map showing a larger and more stratified zoning area intent for historic preservation.





Bear's Mill, c. 1849



Anna Beir House, c. 1865



Broadway Bridge, c. 1909



Brown Township Building,
c. 1883



Carnegie Library, c. 1901



Clemens Farmstand, c. 1850



Coppess House, c. 1882



Courthouse, Sheriff's House,
& Jail, c. 1870



William English House,
c. 1881



Fort Jefferson, c. 1791



Garst House, c. 1852



Greenville Mausoleum,
c. 1913



Greenville S. Broadway St.
Commercial District



Holy Family Catholic Church,
c. 1866



Knights of Pythias Hall,
c. 1904



Lambert-Parent House,
c. 1881



Lansdowne House, c. 1870



Leftwich House, c. 1875



Robeson House, c. 1902



St. Louis Catholic Church,
c. 1914



St. Nicholas Catholic Church,
c. 1907



St. Peter's Church, c. 1850



Studebaker-Scott House &
Beehive School, c. 1835



Versailles Town Hall Complex,
c. 1876



Walker House & Farm
c. 1879



Waring House, c. 1869

National Register of Historic Places, 2023

Darke County, Ohio

II. Urban Design and Placemaking

To further guard community character, appropriate urban design and placemaking policies are imperative. The design of the built environment must comprehensively consider places, people, and future development goals. An adjacent concern is that of placemaking. Placemaking encompasses a multifaceted strategy involving the planning, design, and administration of public spaces. It leverages the assets, inspiration, and potential inherent in local communities, aiming to craft public spaces that enhance urban vitality and contribute to the health, happiness, and well-being of the residents. Effective placemaking transforms underutilized spaces into enriched “third places”, where residents can safely, comfortably, and seemlessly spend time outside of work or the home.

Darke County cities, notably Greenville and Versailles, have a strong and established sense of place thus far. Further developments in Darke County should prioritize sound design principles, as well as strive to rejuvenate and maximize the potential of public areas through creative placemaking. The Darke County Center for the Arts functions as a community arts council, with a mission of fostering all forms of art within the county and broadening avenues for cultural enrichment. The DCCA consistently partners with the National Endowment for the Arts, Arts Midwest, and Ohio Arts Council, and will serve as a key partner in the enrichment of public spaces.

GOAL I: Establish and uphold design guidelines for all new developments, prioritizing planning decisions that are sensible, appealing, and site-contextual.

Strategies:

- Encourage developers to opt for street layouts that promote connectivity and flexibility, steering clear of cul-de-sacs whenever possible. In instances where a cul-de-sac is essential, contemplate allocating space for potential extensions to adjacent properties in the future;
- Promote the placement of parking on the sides and rear of buildings rather than in the front yard whenever feasible, and advocate for interconnected parking lots and driveways to enhance on-site access to adjacent developments;
- Encourage the positioning of loading docks, dumpsters, mechanical equipment, and outdoor storage areas behind buildings or shielded from public view through the incorporation of landscaping or architectural features;
- Recommend use of premium building materials, such as kiln-fired brick, stucco, terra cotta, cultured stone, wood siding, fiber cement, etc., and designs that mirror the rural character of Darke County.

GOAL II: Enhance public spaces by engaging in renovation and repurposing initiatives that create inviting and functional spaces.

Strategies:

- Execute “tactical urbanism” initiatives to temporarily convert streets and parking spaces into public gathering areas, such as parklets and pedestrian plazas, as a preliminary step before committing to permanent alterations;
- Utilize the Eleven Basic Principles of Placemaking as outlined in the Project for Public Spaces, encouraging lively streetscapes and infill development that provides a thorough sense of security, purpose, and place to areas throughout Darke County;
- Continuously coordinate with partners such as the Darke County Center for the Arts and Darke County Parks to transform neglected urban spaces into “third place” opportunities.
- Ensure cities carry out their dutiful tasks of introducing street lighting, benches, planters, tar strip removal, etc.

II. Urban Design and Placemaking Renderings

The following are examples of downtown Arcanum generated using Adobe FireFly. These demonstrate how landscaping and adding furnishings can transform a streetscape into a more pedestrian-friendly environment and can generate foot traffic for local businesses.

Downtown Arcanum, Before and After with Streetscape Improvements



Downtown Arcanum, Before and After with Streetscape Improvements



III. Tourism Opportunities

In contrast to various industries, tourism lacks an overt physical presence; nonetheless, the economic advantages stemming from thriving tourism ventures can significantly influence the overall financial health of a region. Its role in the local economy is intricate, delivering not only direct economic benefits but also serving as a driving force for preserving a substantial portion of county land as farms and open space. The multifaceted impact of tourism extends beyond immediate financial gains, playing a crucial role in shaping the broader economic and environmental landscape of a county.

Darke County's natural beauty and historical richness are advantageous to its hospitality industry. With an attractive portfolio of events, parks, trails, and waterways, there is strong potential to grow and diversify the tourism industry. The Darke County Visitors Bureau serves as the designated destination marketing organization for the county. The DCVB consistently partners with the Ohio Travel Association, Ohio Tourism, and the Ohio Association of Convention & Visitor Bureaus, and will serve as a key partner in championing tourism in Darke County.

GOAL I: Emphasize heritage tourism as an immersive experience that authentically represents the stories and people of Darke County, past and present.

Strategies:

- Promote local businesses, eateries, festivals, and events that honor and celebrate the cultural history of Darke County, fostering community engagement and preserving the rich heritage of the region;
- Encourage activities such as farm tours, hayrides, corn mazes, seasonal petting farms, farm museums, guest farms, pumpkin patches, and opportunities to pick or cut your own produce. Additionally, encourage classes related to agricultural products or skills, and the availability of picnic and party facilities in conjunction with these agricultural experiences;
- Offer comprehensive education and information services to both tourists and the local community, this will ensure a well-informed and engaged audience wanting to explore Darke County further and return later.

GOAL II: Tap into the emerging market that is agritourism by thoughtfully highlighting agricultural activities that attract the public for educational, recreational, or retail purposes.

Strategies:

- Encourage the diversification of farm-related activities by expanding business horizons through the incorporation of value-added products, additional uses, and services within working farms;
- Explore tourism-related agribusinesses, including farm-to-table establishments, alcohol production facilities such as wineries, distilleries, and breweries, as well as farmers' markets and community-supported agriculture (CSA);
- Enhance opportunities for direct farm sales, ensuring increased access to affordable and nutritious food options.





CHAPTER THREE

HOUSING



CHAPTER THREE

Housing

Vision

Darke County's housing supply is primarily detached, single-family homes (82%) with a median construction year of 1961. The median home value in Darke County was approximately \$163,325 (about \$110 per square foot). As of August 2023, there were 128 homes listed for sale in Darke County. The average selling price of homes increased by 3.7% compared to a year ago. Nearly half of all homes (47.5%) were sold below their initial asking price. Of these homes, 19 were sold under asking, ten were sold at asking, and one was sold over asking. This data potentially counters the prominent presumption that Darke County has a housing shortage, as the housing demand is not high enough for home sellers to sell at their asking price.

Affordability of housing was one of the main concerns of the results from the community outreach survey. The SWOT analysis lists a lack of affordable housing as a weakness, while promoting workforce and family-orientated housing are opportunities for Darke County. Despite a lack of major demand currently or for the near future, community requests and current residential development in communities (like Versailles) demonstrate the need for a housing plan for Darke County that will center around construction. Therefore, Darke County should address housing with a vision to promote the construction of housing of various typologies to meet current and future demand.

Chapter Sections

- I. Housing Typologies
- II. Grants & Incentives
- III. Infrastructure & Development
- IV. Intergovernmental Partnerships



I. Housing Typologies

Building housing also requires considering the types of housing, as different typologies have different intended audiences and prices. Therefore, new construction of housing should focus on various typologies: starter homes for young families and professionals, workforce housing, mixed-income, obtainable housing, and senior housing opportunities. For further reference, please consult Appendix D.

GOAL I: Starter Homes

Strategies:

- Starter homes cater to the needs of young families and professionals at the early stages of their housing and career journey. Regarding employment factors, there is a distinction between career jobs, which are long-term and provide a sense of professional development, and limited-duration jobs, which offer short-term financial benefits and workers are either unable to purchase homes or do not plan on staying in the same location for long.
- One concern is that while officials project job growth for the county, it will mainly occur in the limited-duration jobs sector rather than in career occupations like management or other senior roles. Nevertheless, focusing on limited-duration housing remains important, as there will continue to be a demand for these “paycheck” jobs even if career opportunities increase in the county. An unexpected outcome of development in Versailles, particularly with Benanzer Homes’ successful and community-approved introduction of duplexes with zero-lot lines (i.e. homes with little to no setbacks) is that appeal to younger and older demographics. Therefore, future opportunities can include similar designs with duplexes or zero-lot line homes.

GOAL II: Workforce Housing

Strategies:

- Workforce housing targets middle-income residents, bridging the gap between affordable and market-rate housing options. Construction and temporary workers are likely to find their housing needs met within the workforce housing segment. Workers in education, social services and public services often can reside in Workforce Housing communities. This strategy could employ both rentals and homes for purchase, targeting the 80-120% Average Median Income (AMI) demographic.

GOAL III: Mixed-Income and Obtainable Housing

Strategies:

- With anticipated population growth and escalating housing prices in Darke County, it is imperative to incorporate mixed-income and obtainable housing within our comprehensive planning process. This need could be met by targeting the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program offered by HUD through OHFA and attracting affordable housing developers to the area through government incentives or grants (see Goal II under Grants & Incentives).
- Prioritize the creation and maintenance of land banks. Land banks offer advantages to communities by repurposing vacant, abandoned, and tax-delinquent properties, contributing to neighborhood revitalization and promoting affordable housing.

GOAL IV: Senior Housing Opportunities

Strategies:

- Regardless of future population growth, Darke County anticipates a significant growing senior population. To enhance their well-being, policies promoting the construction of senior housing should be coupled with zoning changes aimed at creating more walkable communities, including sidewalks and green spaces (see Infrastructure & Development below).

II. Grants & Incentives

Constructing housing of various typologies requires funding, and obtaining grants or offering incentives can assist with development.

GOAL I: Apply for various grants through Ohio HUD to assist with housing development.

Strategies:

- Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC)
- The Housing Development Assistance Programs (HDAP)
- Ohio Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (OLIHTC)

GOAL II: Offer incentives to developers to assist with housing development.

Strategies:

- Tax Increment Financing (TIFs) is a tax abatement for development that 'freezes' a lot's property taxes for a period of time, thereby preventing the improvement to the land from affecting its value. The new taxes generated by the development for a set period are used to pay for public improvements like infrastructure (utilities, parking, roadways, etc.).
- Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTs) "are Federal payments that help local governments offset losses in property taxes due to the existence of nontaxable Federal lands within their boundaries." (Dept. of Interior, PILOTs, see Appendix D).
- Requests for Proposals (RFPs) are another option for Darke County to draw developers to the area (see Chapter 4 and Appendix E).
- Search for and encourage non-profit developers to construct housing units.

III. Infrastructure & Development

Not all areas in Darke County have the infrastructure or present conditions necessary for development. Utilities, such as water, sewer, and electricity, affect where housing could expand. This is crucial in areas that have limited utility infrastructure, like New Madison. Installing this infrastructure can be burdensome and costly for the county, developers, and other parties. In addition, expanding infrastructure and development into the countryside puts Darke County's agriculture, a crucial economic sector, at risk.

GOAL I: Officials and developers need to focus on areas with the infrastructure capabilities and present conditions necessary for development.

Strategies:

- Focus housing development within larger communities with existing infrastructure capabilities for larger projects before planning to expand to areas with fewer utilities and conditions.
- Promoting infill development on vacant lots in urbanized areas helps preserve agricultural land, preventing excessive sprawling greenfield development. This approach safeguards agricultural, a crucial economic sector for Darke County.
- Infill development also assists with mixed-use development. By replacing vacant lots with housing, residents can benefit from existing amenities, such as parks and trails, along with possibilities of new additions. This could also potentially bring grocery chains to the area (see Chapter 7 Land Use).
- Enable construction of a variety of housing typologies and densities to avoid excessive sprawl.

IV. Intergovernmental Partnerships

With the complicated nature of the proposals in the 2023 Comprehensive Plan, along with the changes and trends within and outside Darke County, many communities, especially smaller villages and townships, may have difficulty meeting these demands. Therefore, Darke County should work closely with communities across the county so they can adequately respond to these trends in compliance with the 2023 Comprehensive Plan's recommendations.

GOAL I: County officials should work with and assist municipalities through the creation of Intergovernmental Partnerships.

Strategies:

- Contact all townships, villages, and cities in Darke County and arrange for preliminary meetings to discuss initial topics.
- Assign positions to fulfill Intergovernmental Partnerships and host regular meetings for planning to achieve the goals in the 2023 Comprehensive Plan.

GOAL II: Utilize Intergovernmental Partnerships as assistance for updating local zoning codes.

Strategies:

- Many zoning codes, especially older resolutions, may have updated procedures and land uses that are not compatible with the goals of the 2023 Comprehensive Plan. Therefore, revising zoning codes is paramount to achieve the housing goal.
- See Appendix C for advice and examples of Zoning Best Practices that Intergovernmental Partnerships can utilize.

September 2023 Months Supply of Inventory

Darke County, Ohio

Single Family + Condo/Townhouse/Apt.



Courtesy of Stephan Ho, RE/MAX Traditions, OH Lic# 2022000184

Source: Realtors Property Resource® analysis based on Listings



CHAPTER FOUR

ECONOMIC & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



CHAPTER FOUR

Economic & Workforce Development

Vision

Darke County is home to a variety of opportunities for prosperity in multiple industries. Land use for economic purposes in the county is typically industrial or agricultural, with some central business districts in the more densely populated areas. Residents are drawn to the county because of the rural character and quality of life, which is maintained through agricultural land preservation and open space. Still, they can be further improved through growth and development management. This can include strategies like smart growth and infill development, providing opportunities for more housing throughout the county.

The county must seek to attract new business partners and retain existing relationships with major employers. Darke County has capitalized on its prime agricultural land and rural character to establish a robust economy and is home to many major employers and manufacturers. To maintain strategic viability, diversifying employment type and opportunity should have strategic importance to mitigate downward spirals and increase resilience within the area.

Chapter Sections

- I. Employment
- II. Innovative Opportunities
- III. Economic Development & Workforce Retention

Top Employers in Darke County (2023)

- Whirlpool - 1,200 Employees
- Midmark - 1,056 Employees
- Greenville Technology Inc - 510 Employees
- Fram - 450 Employees
- Wayne Healthcare – 387 Employees
- Beauty Systems Group - 280 Employees
- Weaver Brothers – 273 Employees
- Dick Lavy – 223 Employees
- King's Command – 189 Employees
- Brethren Retirement – 179 Employees
- BASF Corporation – 115 Employees
- Ramco Electric Motors – 112 Employees
- JAFE Decorating – 97 Employees
- Continental Carbonic Products – 89 Employees

I. Employment

Despite businesses having an interest in Darke County, the county's population is decreasing with few workers moving in for employment. Therefore, the county should create a plan to attract employees to the county.

GOAL I: Provide ideas and incentives for workforce.

Strategies:

- Develop more starter homes aimed at young families and individuals looking to begin or further their careers. See Housing Chapter: Housing Typologies.
- Promote the unique attractions of Darke County to influence visitors to the county to move here as well. See Chapter 3.
- Collaborate with regional organizations to ensure the regional promotion of tourist attractions and community events.
- Increase visibility of the county by working with the Darke County Tourism Board to create welcoming events that draw those who have left Darke County and young families.
- Possibilities for these include:
 - Small business festival days
 - Closing the "main street" for cars and encouraging businesses to stay open late, increase food trucks and improve streetscaping designs (See chapter 3).
- The Darke Skies Festival
 - Implement technology to reduce "uplighting", thus increasing the ability to see the stars, work with astronomy organizations in Ohio to provide large telescopes and cool presentations.
- Darke County Meet and Greet
 - Provide families that are looking to move to a rural environment, particularly Darke County, with informal tours of homes in Darke County, home cooked dinner and drinks, and facts about the county that set it apart from other rural areas. Provide an instant connection.

GOAL II: Discuss methods to improve economic conditions in Darke County with local officials and residents.

Strategies:

- Create an Intergovernmental Partnerships Program between county and local officials to assist them in dealing with the rapid changes around the area (see Housing Chapter).
- Work with stakeholders at the local level (such as chambers of commerce and community organizations) and the regional level to facilitate connections between various perspectives and parties.



II. Innovative Opportunities

An opportunity identified for Darke County is free public Wi-Fi in downtown Greenville. Providing complimentary public Wi-Fi enhances societal connectivity and enables rapid interactions between citizens and businesses. Additionally, tourists and business travelers visiting the area would enjoy a more delightful stay.

GOAL I: Implement public Wi-Fi in downtown Greenville.

Strategies:

- There are a variety of grants Darke County can apply for to cover the costs of introducing free public Wi-Fi, below are a few examples of grant opportunities the county can take advantage of:
 - USDA Community Connect Grants (specifically for rural regions);
 - T-Mobile Hometown Grant Program (specifically for rural regions);
 - Continued application of BroadbandOhio grant funds, including grant opportunities from Internet for All.

III. Economic Development & Workforce Retention

Utilizing strategies outlined in this chapter, Darke County can start implementing policies to attract and retain businesses and employees.

GOAL I: Implement incentives to attract economic development.

Strategies:

- Attract businesses outside the county and draw them in with the unique character of Darke County that makes it stand out from the rest. See Chapter 3.
- Requests for Proposals (RFPs) are a method to reach developers, either for- or non-profit, by providing the procedures for them to submit proposals with desired incentives. In other communities, RFPs allow developers to apply to develop on city-owned parcels with several requirements, such as following zoning code, consistency with neighborhood aesthetics, or providing a certain number of housing options of specific typologies.
- South Bend, Indiana provides a recent example for RFPs. Through these RFPs, South Bend has announced several development projects of various densities, fully residential, or mixed-use.
- For more information, see Appendix E.

III. Economic Development & Workforce Retention Cont.

GOAL II: Create database to centralize information and assign tasks to partners with deadlines

Strategies:

- Create a detailed list of economic development tools and a market condition analysis targeting retail business demand (see Whiteside County Chapter 5: Economic Prosperity).
- Utilize Intergovernmental Partnership Program and community outreach (from Employment section above) to develop a marketing strategy for local agricultural products.
- Incentivize the development of independent farm-based businesses focused on food for local and regional markets (such as small-scale food processing, fresh produce, organics, like what is seen in downtown Tipp City, OH).
 - This would be extremely important in the city of Versailles, which has a bustling hotel and beautiful downtown, lending itself to be a perfect location to host farmers market and boutique "niche" food establishments.

GOAL III: Reestablish small town and main street prominence to promote infill development and reduce sprawl

Strategies:

- Increase small business prominence through marketing avenues, work with these small businesses to create Darke County loyalty programs that are inter-transferable through the county's small businesses.
 - See case studies on small towns printing their own cash, this would be a lighter version of that program.
- Foster idea-making through "idea foundries" or innovation hubs in unused real estate in small town areas. Partner with local colleges or universities to help fund and build out "small town; big idea" entrepreneurship spaces.





CHAPTER FIVE

INFRASTRUCTURE & UTILITIES



CHAPTER FIVE

Infrastructure & Utilities

Vision

Infrastructure is a major constraint for any county including Darke; whether it be electricity, water, internet or transit, infrastructure plays a critical role in resident's everyday lives. The difficult terrain and rural nature of the county can exacerbate access problems and dissuade development which hinders assistance to residents of the area. However, by thinking of infrastructure as systems and networks that span the county, we can start to build connections that will benefit residents. By focusing on accumulating knowledge and encouraging collaboration, the county can meet these infrastructure demands and exceed them. This will increase the competitive advantage for development and resident retention compared to other surrounding counties. The vision for infrastructure for Darke County is one of informed, collaborative, and proactive group efforts by the many towns and cities to adapt for growth and resiliency in its core systems. By working together to apply for larger grants, share information, and provide outreach to the residents, Darke County can emerge as a leader for rural connectivity and resiliency which will serve as a bedrock to the other efforts of this plan and incentivize future growth.

Chapter Sections

- I: Electricity
- II: Water
- III: Internet and 5G



I. Electricity

Electric infrastructure is prevalent throughout the county and is distributed throughout the developed areas. Cost and reliability deviate significantly between different locations within the region. Many areas receive electricity from outside of the county via high powered lines, where power stations convert them to lower watt residential/commercial power. Due to this, many smaller villages and rural areas have somewhat limited access in their provider and long down times, even when disruptions are minor. Pricing and reliability are more competitive in the vicinity of large manufacturing or agricultural operations where residential rates are matched. Substation construction and alternative energy is often met with public disapproval as well as financial hurdles, limiting hardening of the current grid to more urbanized areas. A split system of outside power purchasing from different counties, various coops and some internalized infrastructure to township creates a complex system to navigate and increase rates for residents. A combination of public engagement, innovative technologies, and improved development standards can ease these burdens.

GOAL I: Understand the current system performance and needs to a finer detail.

Strategies:

- Collectively assess the needs of Darke County and the state of the current system.
- Multiple jurisdictions should collaborate, reporting their outages, costs per watt to residents, sources, and future development goals. A unified effort can help harden the whole grid, which benefits all townships, residents, and stakeholders.

GOAL II: Organize public outreach and engagement to acclimate and inform residents on the needs of grid resiliency.

Strategies:

- Whether it is solar or standard infrastructure improvements to current grid systems, there has been significant pushback with residents on these projects. Understanding and addressing these concerns is paramount to the success of any new infrastructure development.
- Outreach both to inform these residents of the utility and need for these assets and also receive feedback that guides future planning should be pursued throughout major townships.

GOAL III: Assess regulation and implementation of wind, solar, and urban design characteristics.

Strategies:

- There is significant opposition to solar and wind characteristics, and these voices must be noted while planning future considerations towards any new power expansion. Drafting guides with public input for the responsible use of solar and allowing local governments to decide how best to implement solar for their area should be completed to best represent the voices of the constituency while allowing the innovation of solar in specific areas to be completed under those more specified authorities. Simultaneously, at the county level cooperation between multiple agencies must occur to mitigate land use conflicts with agriculture for energy use production.
- Solar already exists within Darke county. Assessing the performance of these existing installations and studying the potential for sublimination could serve to reduce burdens on the energy grid, especially in high growth areas.

II. Water

Most of Darke County relies on well water and septic, as jurisdictional city facilities are limited. These limitations are due to two main roadblocks:

1. Urbanized areas are often “land locked” by non-incorporated land. This could be for rural uses such as agriculture or individuals who purposely built outside of city jurisdiction and have no desire to host expansion of city services.
2. Many areas are rural and do not have preexisting sewers and septic, which necessitates extensive costs both to individuals and future developments to install their own systems.

Certain water issues have been reported beyond these conditions. Versailles is one of the fastest growing developed areas in the county and has found that they are very close to meeting their maximum water supply. Due to this, test wells have been installed approximately 4 miles north of the urban complex and is slated for development of resources to be pumped back to the town. Furthermore, reports of well dewatering from the northeastern areas of the county have been reported. Although no definitive cause had been identified, this is still a major concern of residents and potentially will be exacerbated by climate concerns. Growth should be driven in areas that already contain appropriate infrastructure and water resources. This not only protects from costly development outside these serviceable zones, but also allows focal investment to improve core water systems that will yield larger gains to more people than a dispersed system.

GOAL I: Increase knowledge of existing conditions and disperse this across the county

Strategies:

- Conglomerating the townships data and surveys of water resources and making it available at the county level will help provide a gauge of capacity and current weaknesses in the system. This is especially critical given the reliance on well water and future concerns of developers and industry to build and maintain in water resilient areas. Collective understanding and planning around these resources will ease the mind of future developers and bring in more capital to improve these systems.
- Drafting definitive service boundaries and provide estimate on maximum serviceable capacity should be made mandatory for the county. Developers and planners need this critical knowledge in order to project growth boundaries and attest to site suitability analysis. Without this knowledge, the county will have to either agree to invest in costly and potentially unsuitable infrastructure or lose competitiveness in attracting growth.

GOAL II: Incentivize growth in current systems.

Strategies:

- Crossing over between placemaking and housing development goals within the constraints of current water infrastructure is important. Mitigating greenfield development outside of serviceable area by attracting commercial, industrial, and residential growth within urbanized cores will reduce the number of resources necessary to scoping and expanding current water infrastructure. TIF's, land acquisition assistance, and expedited approval measures for projects that fall inside urbanized cores can help guide future development to areas of strength within preexisting systems.

III. Internet & 5G

Connectivity is critical not only for serving current residents but attracting new residents to the county. Up until recent projects, service providers were limited with only one option for residential internet. Household internet access is sparse and of varying quality depending on location. 5G and mobile access is also limited mostly in the southern part of the county. A hillier terrain and lack of towers within southern Darke county makes mobile internet nearly inaccessible in many areas. Steps have been taken within the county to mitigate some of these issues, such as supporting new providers for competition and tower to line systems that can bridge long distances. Infrastructure relating to 5G, and towers has seen public pushback, providing some limitation to its implementation. However, this could be a huge asset of improvement that not only provides for current resident needs but puts Darke County at a competitive advantage compared to surrounding counties if invested in appropriately.

GOAL I: Continue increasing the number of providers in the county.

Strategies:

- Increasing the number of internet providers would increase the completion. This would not only lower rates but also increase resiliency to outages and investment in proper infrastructure investments.
- Consider ways to attract a spectrum of options such as home 5G, hard line and satellite options. Keep updated on current industry advancements as some areas will offer testing of new services (examples, Starlink, mobile modems, etc.). Showing interest to participate at an early level will put Darke county on a captative track in acquiring better services.

GOAL III: Use adaptive infrastructure strategies to fill gaps in service.

Strategies:

- Current projects in the county include towers that receive internet from fixed positions over satellite/radio waves and transfer it to line for residential use. Continue investing in these "last mile" efforts to provide coverage to the entire county.
- Consider when it's appropriate to bury lines or change the type of infrastructure used in areas that have constant outages and poor service. Providing a top-down approach to overcoming obstacles will remove the need for consumers to attempt to adapt and provide better consistency for the county overall.

GOAL II: Consider Public Wi-Fi.

Strategies:

- Consider public Wi-Fi installment in urbanized areas. This will not only increase general access but provide economic incentive and can aid in placemaking objectives.
- Consider mobile deployable internet options such as 5G hotspots or satellites as a tool for townships, government agencies and schools. This can increase public engagement in areas that are hard to reach and increase collaborative capacity of appointed officials between jurisdictions.



CHAPTER SIX

TRANSPORTATION



CHAPTER SIX

Transportation

Vision

Darke County delivers and maintains an exemplary and multimodal system of transportation, accommodating residents, visitors, and commuters of all kinds. The county fosters intra-city coordination on existing and future traffic patterns and mobility considerations, including adoption of modern and innovative modes of travel. Through engaging in a comprehensive improvement process for transportation, the county strives to create places for living, working, and visiting that are safer, finer, and more interconnected.

Darke County, situated in proximity to regional interstate highways and major cities, is intersected by Interstate Route 70 to the south (serving as an Indianapolis to Columbus connector) and Interstate Route 75 to the east (functioning as a Dayton and Cincinnati connector). The primary conduit for local traffic within the county is State Route 47, linking Versailles and Dayton. The Darke County Airport, recently upgraded in terms of its terminal and stands as the sole air transportation facility. The following chapter considers these networks in crafting a thoughtful approach to transportation development in Darke County.

Chapter Sections

- I. Roadway & Walkway Improvements
- II. Public Transit
- III. Cycling Infrastructure

I. Roadway & Walkway Improvements

Improving existing roadways and walkways is crucial for various reasons, playing a paramount role in enhancing overall transportation efficiency and safety. Well-maintained and upgraded roads bolster economic development by facilitating the seamless movement of goods and services. Enhanced road safety features can significantly reduce the incidence of accidents and fatalities, creating a secure and reliable network for daily commuting. In essence, investing in the improvement of existing roadways is an investment in the economic vitality, safety, and well-being of Darke County.

Many sidewalk crossings in the towns and cities of Darke County currently lack pedestrian walk signs and wayfinding measures, contributing to safety concerns. Implementing safety measures, such as installing walkway signage and wayfinding elements, can significantly enhance residents' comfort in utilizing the existing infrastructure. By addressing fundable objectives within the framework of the current infrastructure, even a modest investment can yield substantial improvements in residents' mobility within their immediate surroundings.

GOAL I: Provide for a safe, efficient, multimodal, and well-maintained transportation network for all residents, farmers, commercial and emergency vehicles.

Strategies:

- Encourage maximizing the utilization of the current road network before considering the construction of new roads for future development. This approach aims to reduce land disturbance and optimize the cost-effectiveness of tax dollars;
- Give precedence to the requirements of Darke County residents over transient populations by establishing dependable roadways. Initiate intergovernmental planning initiatives to alleviate congestion caused by through-traffic;
- Approach transportation planning thoughtfully at the city level. Incorporate visually appealing traffic calming techniques into new roadway projects on busy thoroughfares where suitable (this may involve the incorporation of boulevard-style medians, center circles adorned with plantings, and aesthetically pleasing roadway signs).

GOAL II: Enhance the usability and safety of current sidewalks within towns and cities by implementing measures to improve pedestrian accessibility and security.

Strategies:

- Collaborate with residents, community groups, businesses, civic associations, and property owners to extend the network of pedestrian pathways within current public rights-of-way and newly acquired open spaces;
- Set crossover objectives with placemaking to increase signage and wayfinding. This will also increase the comfort for pedestrians whether they are residents or visitors. Being mindful of ADA access and pedestrian comfort in developments will ensure better use of publicly available infrastructure;
- Utilize funding mechanisms, especially grants. The Safe Streets for All (SS4A) grant provided by the Federal Department of Transportation runs until the year 2026. Programs such as Safe Routes to School and Ohio Department of Transportation community assistance grants can also aid in funding this infrastructure.

I. Roadway & Walkway Improvements Cont.

GOAL III: Create and enhance existing digital resources to better organize and provide transportation data.

Strategies:

- Create a shared resource of data and surveys between all villages and townships to facilitate collaboration and empower individual projects, as well as system wide improvements. Working with GIS data collection and surveys yields better insight into problematic areas in higher need;
- Create a website for the Darke County Airport. This is a preliminary step towards the resources and development necessary for larger-scale commercial flights.



II. Public Transit

Public transit in rural counties offers a myriad of advantages, enhancing overall community connectivity and accessibility. It can provide an essential lifeline for individuals who may not have access to private transportation, ensuring they can reach essential services such as healthcare, education, and employment. It also plays a pivotal role in bolstering local economies by improving access to businesses and supporting the workforce. An efficient public transit system in rural areas enhances the overall quality of life for residents, providing them with a reliable and affordable means of transportation.

Darke County is served by a singular public transportation system, the Greenville Transit System (GTS). This on-demand service caters to Greenville residents, offering one-way transportation. The GTS, comprising of small buses, extends its services throughout Darke County and, under specific circumstances, facilitates transit to Dayton and Miami County. The Greenville Transit System boasts a robust connection network; operating on a near point-to-point model, the service allows riders to reach their destinations directly or with minimal stops. The GTS exemplifies the possibilities and demand for public transit in the county.

GOAL I: Manage access and design of a public transportation network in order to effectively maintain safe and functional integrity of transportation within the county's jurisdiction.

Strategies:

- Continue ongoing goals to improve public transit, particularly for people with limited access to automobiles such as the elderly, disabled, and economically disadvantaged. This includes exploring ridesharing and revisiting rides-to-work program options;
- Explore low-intensity shared mobility options in the larger communities of Darke County. This includes micro-mobile options such as shared bike and scooter transport, appropriate for Greenville and potentially appropriate for Versailles/Arcanum;
- Promote and encourage the establishment of commuter and passenger rail services within Darke County. This involves fostering initiatives and policies that facilitate the growth of such transportation options.

III. Cycling Infrastructure

A growing consideration amongst Americans of all ages is availability of cycling infrastructure: dedicated bike lanes, well-maintained cycling paths, and supportive facilities. Cycling offers an affordable, resourceful, and pleasant means of transportation for many people. By integrating cycling into the transportation network of Darke County, local economies can benefit from increased tourism, improved public health, and a reduction in environmental impact, ultimately creating more vibrant and sustainable communities.

Darke County is currently served by the Tecumseh Trail multi-use pathway. This pleasant cycling opportunity offers a mixed biking experience, featuring approximately half of the trail as a dedicated pathway and the remaining portion as a shared-road experience. The initial paved segment of the trail extends nearly 2 miles from downtown Gettysburg to North Harrison-Bradford Road. From this point, cyclists can continue eastward on-road to Bradford and reach the border between Darke and Miami counties. This trail allows for activities such as running, cycling, walking, and horseback riding. The Tecumseh Trail is a principal starting point in the development of a bike-friendly Darke County.

GOAL I: Craft a county-wide cycling infrastructure plan in an effort to take a proactive approach in identifying trail and route alignments.

Strategies:

- Continue to coordinate with the Darke County Park District towards an entirely off-road and shared-use Tecumseh Trail, with eventual connections expanding to both Union City, Bradford, and beyond. This will involve tactful utilization of funding opportunities;
- Examine all proposed projects for highways and county roads to identify possibilities for incorporating striped shoulders conducive to safe bicycling, or allocating additional right-of-way for the integration of bicycle lanes or paths in designated areas planned for such facilities;
- Encourage municipalities to require that new developments consider the importance of ensuring sufficient bicycling routes in both residential and commercial areas.

GOAL II: Create a corridor land bank that holds potential multi use trail land in public domain.

Strategies:

- Designate critical rail line segment as future trail expansion, and protect them for private sell off to increase the ability of future planners to provide interjurisdictional connectors. Some rail line segments are already owned by the county or publicly by the townships;
- Assess other corridors, such as publicly owned park or wildlife areas and utility easements as potential for multi-use trail routes. This will aid greatly to fill gaps in the current decommissioned rail parcels;
- Convert share-the-road and dedicated bike lane segments into separate multi-use paths to increase their utility. Share-the-road systems and bike lanes on streets are intimidating for cyclists and off-putting to other forms of non-automotive transit. These improvements can be done within the existing roadway easements already in public hands.



CHAPTER SEVEN

LAND USE



CHAPTER SEVEN

Land Use

Vision

This chapter's vision, coming from the input of multiple leaders throughout Darke County, the 2019 Community Needs Report, and a survey conducted by our studio, reflects where concentration of growth and preservation of farmlands are needed throughout the county. Through reviewing these needs, areas of growth, strategies for building coalition & consensus, and best practices towards creating a well-planned Darke County have all been identified. Darke County is a place that can provide the highest quality of life in the state, meeting the needs of all people at various places within their life. Whether they are just graduating high school, raising a family of their own, or finally retiring, this plan aims to make Darke County a charming and fulfilling place to live, work, and play.

Through building more housing, promoting small business downtowns, and enhancing the ability of industry within Darke County, the use of strategies outlined in this chapter will ensure that the individuals and families of Darke County can prosper. This chapter demonstrates goals and strategies that will maintain rural charm and preserve a rich heritage that is conducive towards business activities, meeting the varied needs of residents. Goals include promoting development that will last generations while preventing unnecessary spending to the taxpayer through smart and meaningful development. In Darke County, future generations will have ample opportunities and resources which will enable them to thrive.

Methodologies

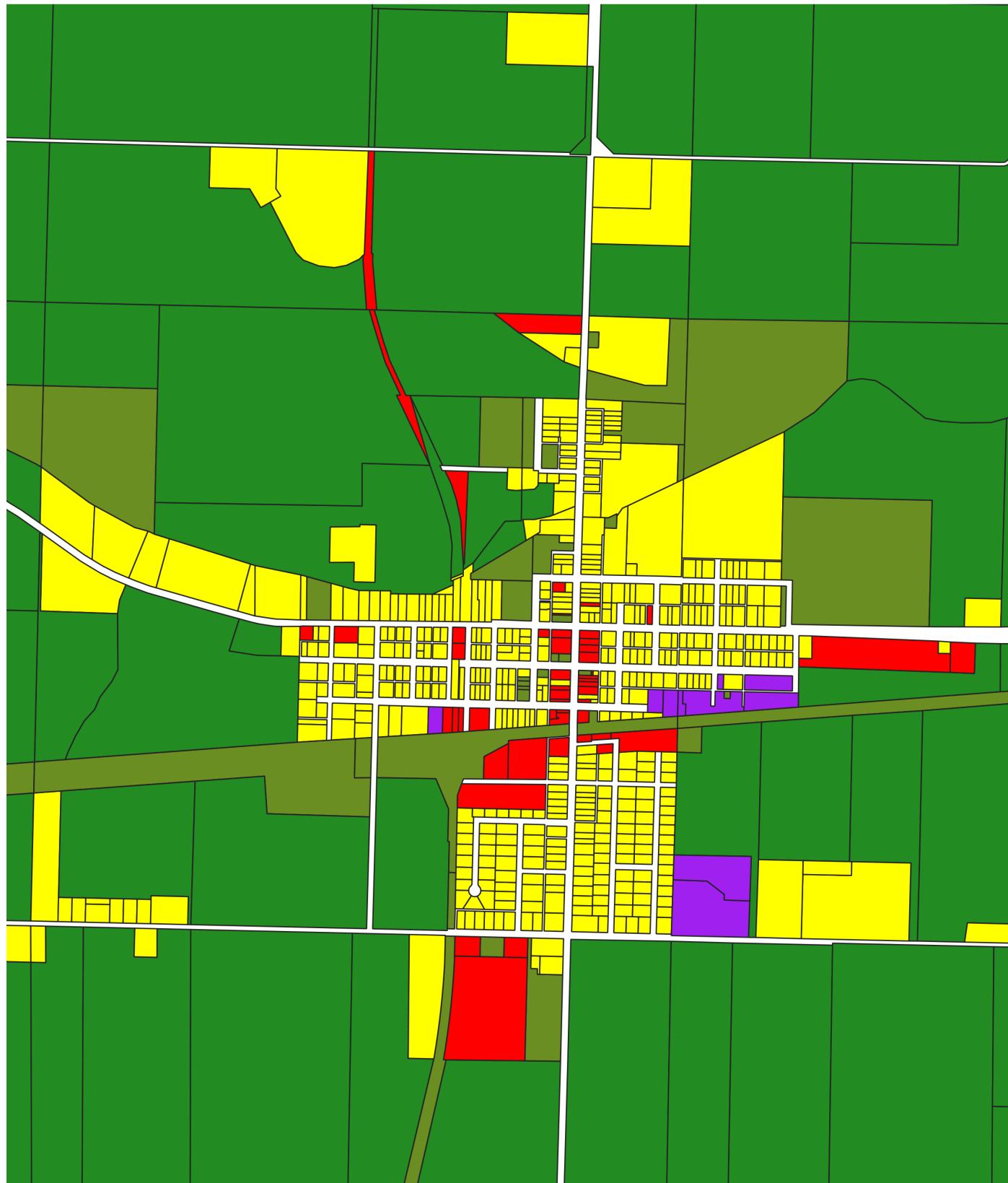
Methodologies used for these projections are based on the concerns and needs of the community. The maps were created with the understanding that growth should be done in patterns that are spatially strategic and thoughtfully designed. With these goals, we strategized adding residential near existing residential communities, industrial near industrial, and commercial in historic areas that will prosper with the creation of smart placed businesses. Individual parcels were assessed for their location, current use, and shape to provide a context that would be best for the growth of the county-at-large and the individual community. By using this "isolate and build" approach, a "one-size-fits-all" plan was avoided and can allow for targeted growth so that it can be synergetic with the stated goals and strategies for 2050.

The following chapter will include maps of existing land use and projected land use for the year 2050 for Ansonia, Arcanum, Gettysburg, Greenville, Versailles, and Union City, followed by tailored recommendations for each locality. The colors and land use codes are standardized from the American Planning Association.

Chapter Sections

- I. Ansonia
- II. Arcanum
- III. Gettysburg
- IV. Greenville
- V. Versailles
- VI. Union City

Darke County Land Use Plan: Ansonia Existing



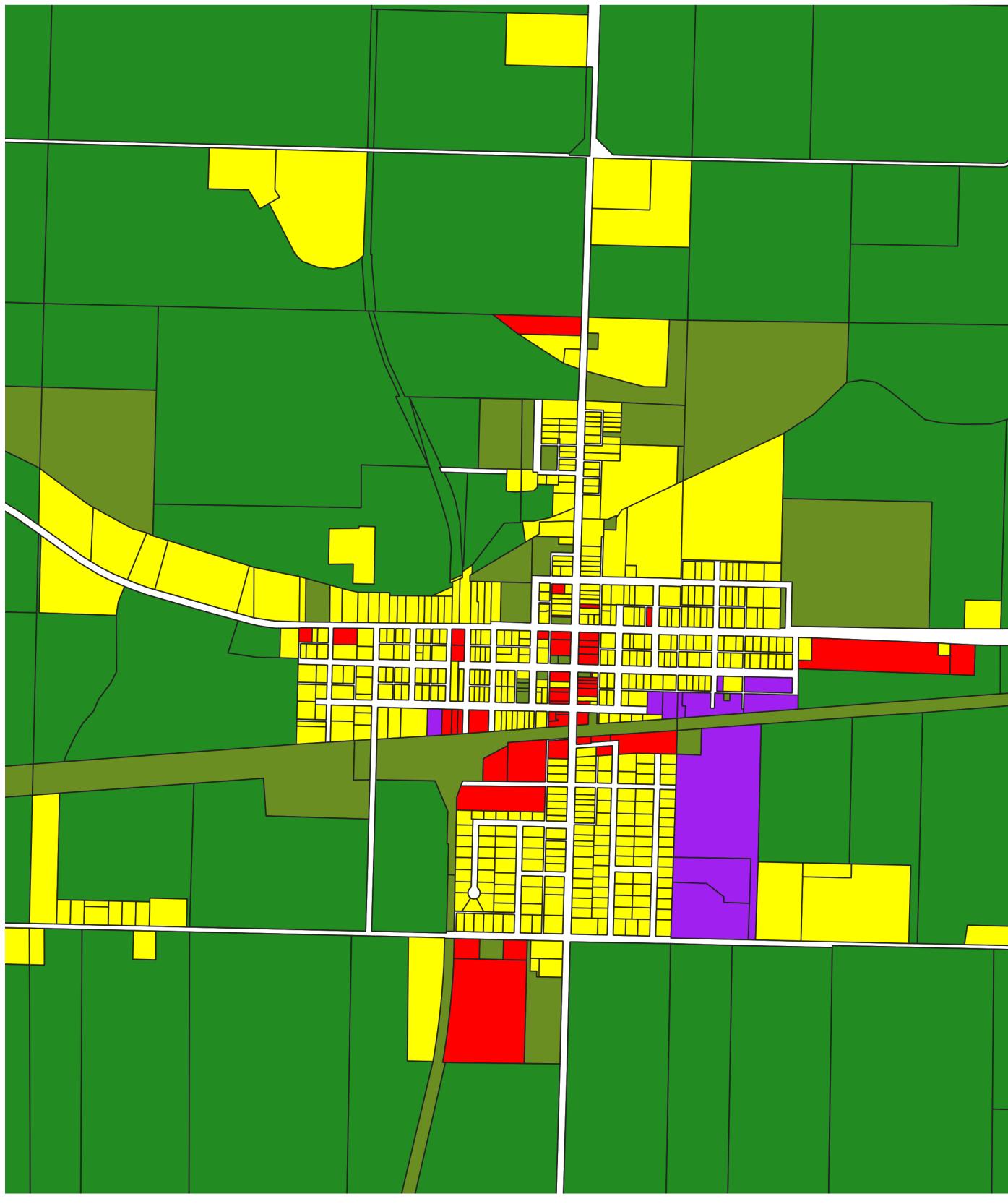
Agricultural Industrial Commercial Residential Public

0 0.25 0.5 mi
Scale 1:12000

Darke County Auditor CAMA automated appraisal data, bound to parcel shapefiles and altered by Ohio State University graduate students for 2050 projected land use planning.



Darke County Land Use Plan: Ansonia 2050



Agricultural Industrial Commercial Residential Public

0 0.25 0.5 mi
Scale 1:12000

Darke County Auditor CAMA automated appraisal data, bound to parcel shapefiles and altered by Ohio State University graduate students for 2050 projected land use planning.



Ansonia

Ansonia, originally known as "Dallas" is a small, close-knit community located in Darke County, with a population of 1,160 as of the 2020 census. The village has 0.81 square miles of land and is roughly 6 miles north of Greenville, the county seat. Whistle Stop Bar & Grill is an iconic restaurant, serving the village since the late 1800's. Much of the development happened along Main Street, including a mix of single-family homes and commercial buildings. The main drivers of the village's economy are nearby agricultural farms and logistics companies that have made bases in Ansonia.

Main Street is a 2-lane thoroughfare bisecting the town, with little to no street trees lining the road. The outer-most lanes are used for street parking and the speed limit is 35 mph. This area is a good starting point for creating a "village center," and exploring some design options would enhance the appeal of this area. Residential occupies the outer ring of the town, with agricultural uses and industrial on the outskirts. Goals for Ansonia mainly involve improving town aesthetics and amenities, while improving access to food and making quality of life improvements for residents.

Goals

- I. Community Revitalization
- II. Health & Resilience
- III. Planning for a Declining Population

Recommendations

Revitalize the Downtown section of Main Street to encourage walkability and enhance the Central Business District

- Plant Street Trees
 - Trees provide shade for pedestrians in the summertime and encourage more walking or biking. In addition, street trees narrow the streetscape which can slow cars down, making the street more suitable for residential uses.
- Remove some street parking
 - The businesses have more than enough parking for visitors, and the houses have rear-loaded garages and parking. This space is better suited for either bike lanes, expanding sidewalks, or adding a street median.
- Street median
 - Adding a street median to Main Street in conjunction with removing the on-street parking would create a more attractive street, while also partitioning the road and is designed to slow cars down. Medians can have trees or plantings to improve the greenery in addition.



Gipps Street Median in Melbourne, AUS

Recommendations Cont.

- Centralize the business district
 - A lot of residential development is on the prime strip of Main Street that would be better served by businesses. While mixed-use is popular in planning right now, Ansonia is small enough to remain walkable and having a centralized business district where the most foot and car traffic occurs would have a positive effect on the economy.
 - Parking lots
 - Underutilized parking spots in town could be used on the weekends for farmers markets to sell fresh produce and food to residents. There is a distinct lack of fresh food options in the village, and this would be a great way for residents to get fresh, local produce weekly.
 - Development/Infill opportunities
 - There is a lack of existing commercial facilities and at this point, no new businesses or chains would be drawn to establish franchises in Ansonia. There are vacant buildings lining Main Street that would be a great opportunity for re-development and could be used to bring in more businesses to the town.
- Building Design
 - A lot of the existing buildings are in the Italianate architectural style, featuring low-pitched roofs, ornate decorative details, and overhanging eaves. A great way to create more space for business, add more housing options, and keep to the same style of architecture is mixed-use Italianate buildings. Multi-family units would be on the second floor and commercial space would be on the ground floor. Building design can be integrated into zoning code or design guidelines.
 - The central business district, once established, would benefit from a distinct zoning code to protect aesthetics and promote a community feel.

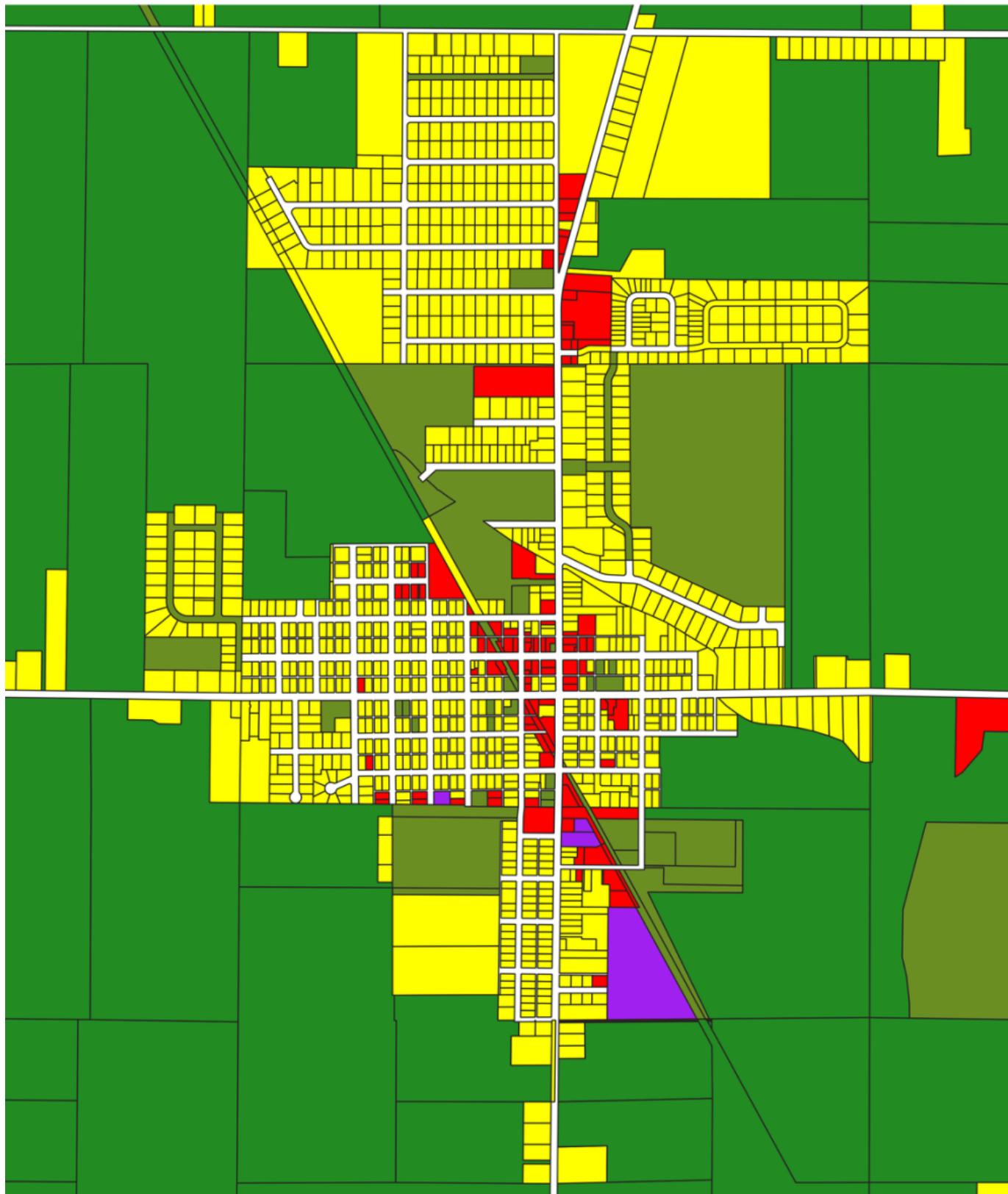


Italianate Building in Adrien, MI



Oconomowoc, WI Summer Farmers' Market

Darke County Land Use Plan: Arcanum Existing



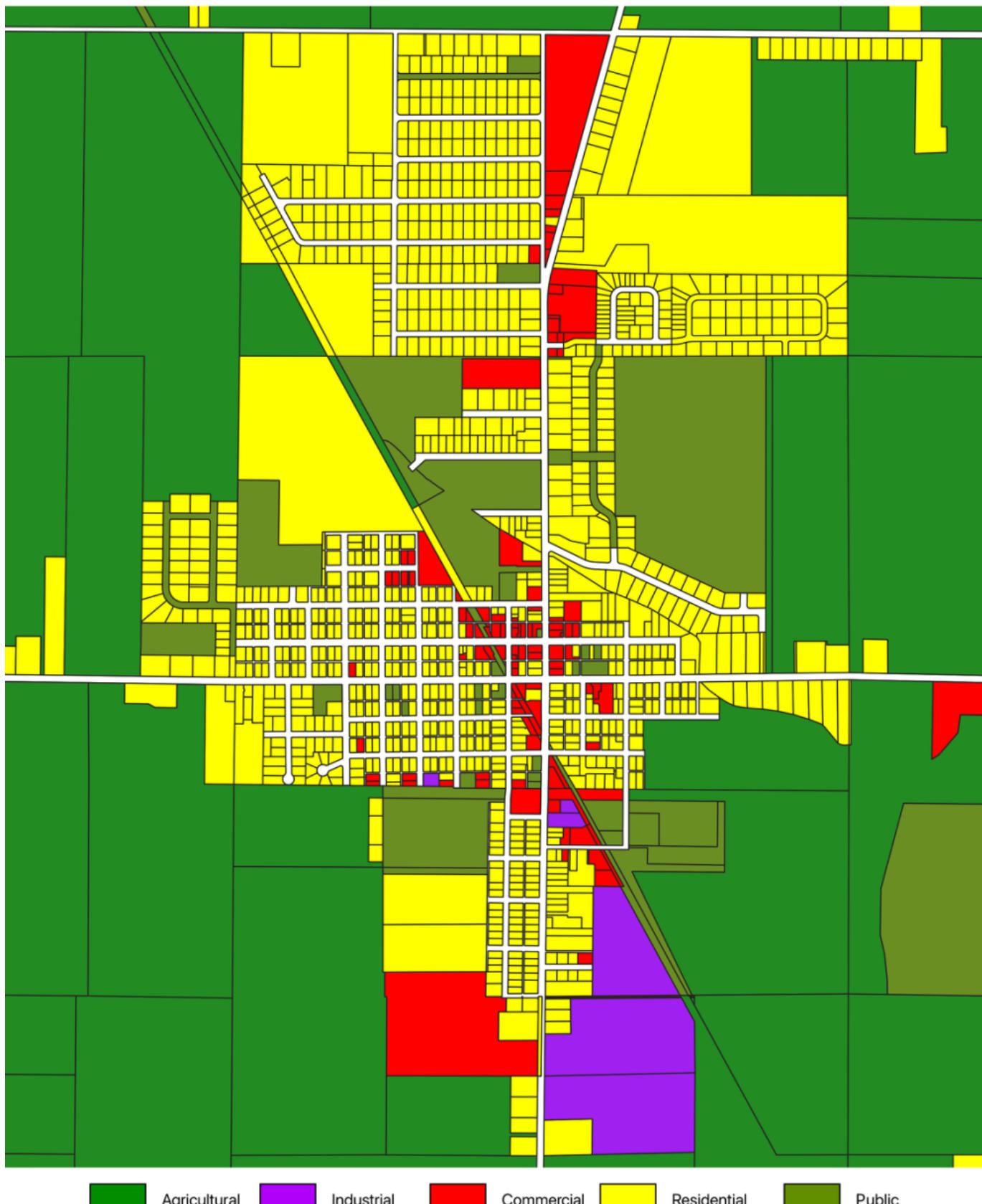
Agricultural Industrial Commercial Residential Public

0 0.25 0.5 mi
Scale 1:12000

Darke County Auditor CAMA automated appraisal data, bound to parcel shapefiles and altered by Ohio State University graduate students for 2050 projected land use planning.



Darke County Land Use Plan: Arcanum 2050



0 0.25 0.5 mi
Scale 1:12000

Darke County Auditor CAMA automated appraisal data, bound to parcel shapefiles and altered by Ohio State University graduate students for 2050 projected land use planning.



Arcanum

Arcanum is the third largest city within Darke County, with a population of about 2,457. The village is the primary nodal city of southeastern Darke County. Central Arcanum is just two miles southwest of OH-49, and North Main Street is the main arterial road extending vertically through the village. Similarly to Versailles, Arcanum is home to a historic central downtown with a lively central business district. The historic red-brick roads of George Street and North High Street make Arcanum unique amongst sizeable Darke County cities. Downtown Arcanum is also home to the historic Arcanum Public Library and Old Village Hall, two medallions of American Italianate architecture. As of 2023, namesake attractions of downtown Arcanum include Cruizers Cafe, Miller's Tavern, and Arcanum Community of Faith Church.

To the north of downtown lies the Arcanum School Complex, a campus strategically containing the village's elementary, middle, and high school in one location. The Arcanum School Complex is directly east of the village's principal recreational park, Ivester Park. Ivester Park is a lovely wooded park, with Painter Creek snaking near the two basketball courts, sand volleyball, and playground. Ivester Park has a number of planned improvements as of 2023. The park is adjacent to the Arcanum Community Swimming Pool and two athletic facilities of the Arcanum School Complex, making this area of north-central Arcanum a key place for community gatherings and events. To the south of downtown lies the new Municipal Building, home to the Arcanum Village Office and Arcanum Police

Department directly southeast. The Arcanum Community Baseball Field, like Ivester Park, is another focal point for the community. Approximately four miles southwest of downtown Arcanum is the Beechwood Golf Course, a premier golfing opportunity for southeastern Darke County.

Arcanum has a charming history. In November of 1848, two engineering apprentices were sent out to survey the land that is now Arcanum. The two students, weary from the cold, came across a lone log cabin in the winter forest. The log cabin was home to Mr. John Gunder, who welcomed them to a warm fire and hearty dinner with his wife and daughters. After finishing their survey, John asked the boys to "select a name and have one that is not on the map of the globe", insisting it did not end in -ville as there were "too many 'villes' in Ohio". The students, looking out at the windy and glum countryside, created the word "Arcanum" to fit both the sullen atmosphere and John's request. Thus, the village of Arcanum had been laid down.

The overarching goal for Arcanum's land use is to adopt policies, legislation, regulations, enforcement, procedures, incentives and appropriate funding necessary to encourage a quality of life in adjacency with the 2023 Comprehensive Plan.

Goals

- I. Examine existing site design guidelines with the aim of enhancing visual appeal, vernacularity, and walkability. Additionally, prioritize the safeguarding of scenic beauty, expansive views, and undisturbed forest and farmland by implementing compact residential design.
- II. Increase the presence of commercially zoned land, ensuring these lands are appropriately located and serviced adequately.
- III. Oversee and effectively execute Arcanum's expansion, using strategies that align with the County's envisioned development.

Recommendations

Continue initiatives aimed at cultivating a revitalized, vibrant downtown Arcanum that retains its historical charm.

- Incentivize businesses within the central business district to beautify, especially those lining the red-brick roads of George Street and North High Street. Promote infill development that is complementary to both existing development and the needs of Arcanum residents.
- Execute dutiful city responsibilities, including but not limited to the introduction of street lighting, benches, planters, tar strip removal, etc. Potentially expand the red-brick roads towards the Old Village Hall and along West South Street. Consider the parking lot directly north of Old Village Hall as a prime location for much-needed green space in downtown Arcanum. Envision a better pedestrian connection from Ivester Park to downtown Arcanum.
- Promote vernacular development, from building-to-bench, for downtown Arcanum. Both redevelopment and new development should be resemblant of traditional Midwestern vernacular, with cautious considerations towards design layouts, building materials, and color palettes not directly outlined in code.

Emphasize economic development as a prime goal for Arcanum, with increased zoning for commercial development north of Woodside Drive and south of Price Street.

- Persist in managing and encouraging the utilization of grants, loans, and incentives aimed at bolstering business investments. Utilize the competitive incentive packages provided by the Darke County Economic Development Office and the State of Ohio Department of Development, as well as the Arcanum Community Reinvestment Plan. Advantage Arcanum through continued conversations and requests with DCED and ODOD.
- Seek a better residential-commercial ratio by an increase in commercial zoning and subsequent development. The 2023 Comprehensive Plan identifies the triangular set of parcels (between Hollansburg-Sampson Road, North Main Street, and Alternate State Route) as ideal for commercial development due to its proximity to OH-49 and location relative to downtown Arcanum.
- Promote businesses, both new and established, that incorporate local agricultural products or offer essential agricultural inputs such as farm equipment and innovative farming technologies. Business promotion of this nature is congruent with the necessary farmland preservation of outer Arcanum and Darke County broadly.

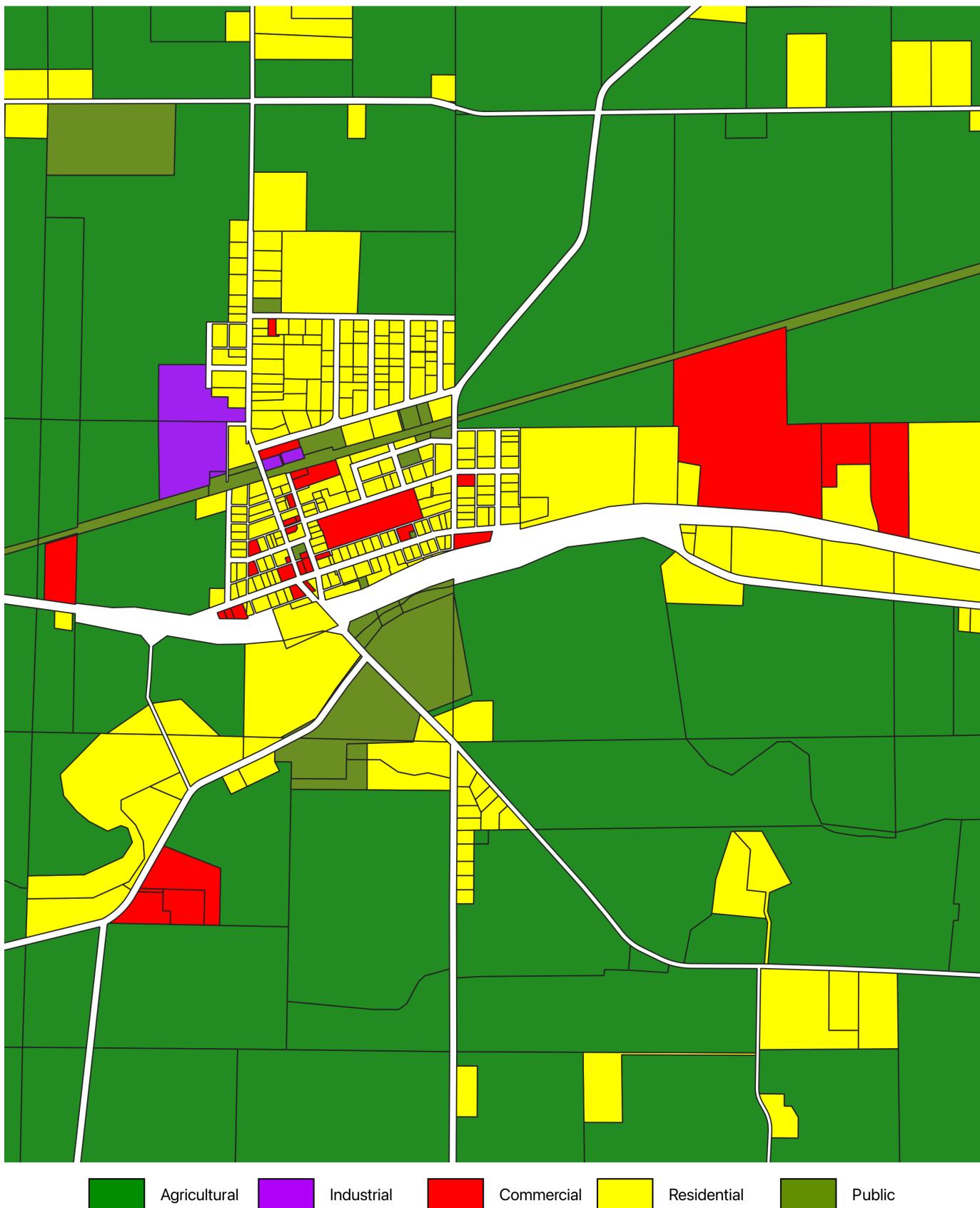
Recommendations Cont.

Harmonize the allocation of land and infrastructure to facilitate new development while concurrently safeguarding agriculturally productive areas, natural resources, and open spaces across Arcanum.

- Encourage redevelopment and infill development to occur in areas that are already supported by established public services and facilities, fostering a strategic utilization of existing infrastructure for sustainable and efficient growth. New development should fringe the existing core of Arcanum, as opposed to low-density lining of Hollansburg Arcanum Road, Apple Street, and East South Street.
- Promote the adoption of cluster and conservation subdivision design strategies to preserve the prime farmland and environmentally sensitive areas within Arcanum. Provide developers with a density bonus to incentivize the utilization of this approach. The 2023 Comprehensive Plan identifies the areas directly south of the Arcanum Community Baseball Field, directly west of Ivester Park, and flanking the intersection of Alternate State Route and Hollansburg-Sampson Road as ideal for further subdivision development.
- Dissuade non-agricultural development in prime farmland regions by consistently employing the LESA system, zoning regulations, and subdivision regulations. Strategic farmland preservation will also act as a natural growth boundary for Arcanum.



Darke County Land Use Plan: Gettysburg Existing

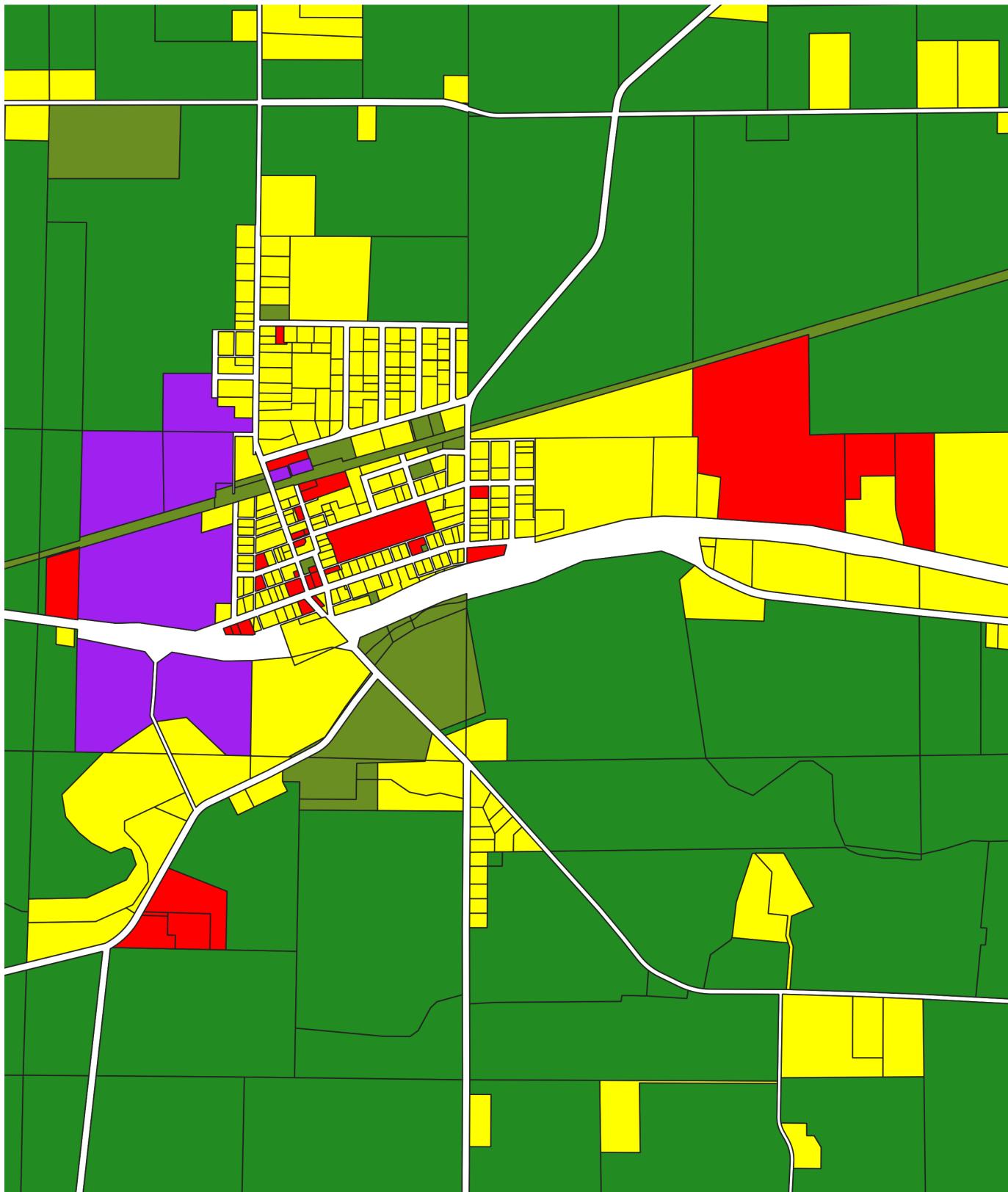


0 0.25 0.5 mi
Scale 1:12000

Darke County Auditor CAMA automated appraisal data, bound to parcel shapefiles and altered by Ohio State University graduate students for 2050 projected land use planning.



Darke County Land Use Plan: Gettysburg 2050



Agricultural



Industrial



Commercial



Residential



Public

0

0.25

0.5 mi

Scale 1:12000

Darke County Auditor CAMA automated appraisal data, bound to parcel shapefiles and altered by Ohio State University graduate students for 2050 projected land use planning.



Gettysburg

Gettysburg is a small town with a population of about 463 residents at the time of the 2020 Census, and land use in the village is primarily residential with an industrial complex. The town historically prospered in the early 1900's, with the construction of a portion of the Pennsylvania Railroad running through the village. Gettysburg became recognized for the Petersime Incubator Co., which produced incubators and hatchery equipment for the poultry industry. This was a village staple, employing many of the village residents and supporting the local economy. The Petersime Incubator Co. Gettysburg location closed in 2006, leaving the village without its core economic driver. Norcold, INC's Cooling Unit Manufacturing Plant occupied the site and produced components for refrigerators following the closure of Petersime, but also closed their Gettysburg location in 2022.

A need to anchor the community as its own identifiable place will help retain workforce and reduce sprawl from extending with private land purchases outside of the township. A wider variety of residential housing options including rent and small multifamily housing options will also increase the flexibility of the township. Given Gettysburg's critical point between multiple major cities in Darke County, its preservation as a midway point can help combat sprawl and ex-migration that may further increase sprawl that threatens agricultural uses and strains current infrastructure. It also can be useful for providing a place for more affordable housing options with immediate access to jobs that will attract young workers and give current young residents a place to start their life within the county itself.

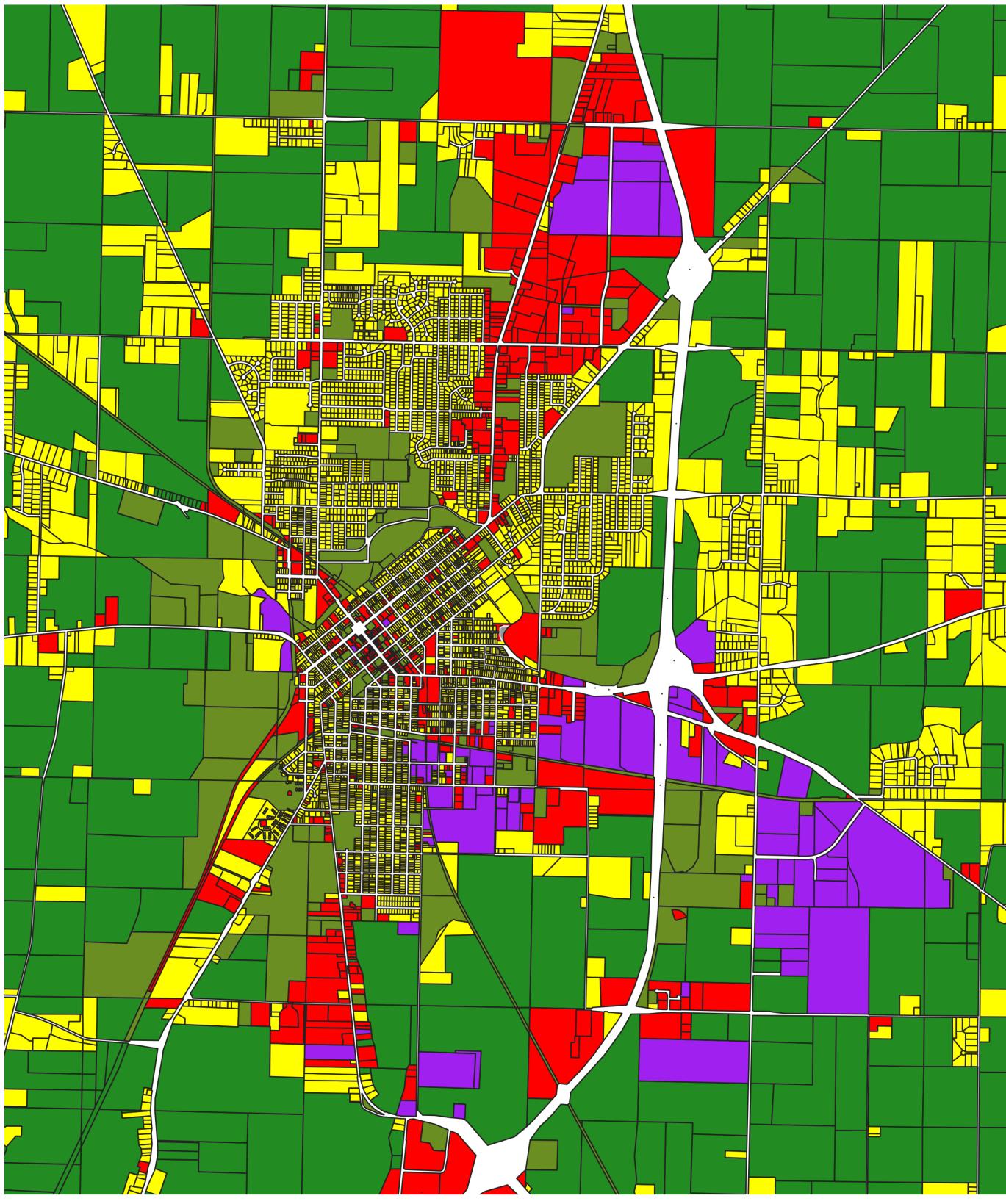
Goals

- I. Enhance the industrial complex to increase its appeal to larger and more permanent industrial enterprises.
- II. Incorporate higher-density workforce housing and affordable accommodations, not only to address residents' needs but also to ensure the capacity to locally support new industries.
- III. Introduce additional parkland and placemaking initiatives to anchor the community and retain its workforce.

Recommendations

- Expand the industrial complex to make it more attractive to larger and permanent industry.
- Include work force higher density and affordable housing not only to aid residents needs but assure the ability to support new industry locally.
- Add extra park space and placemaking measures to anchor the community and retain this workforce.
- Focus on workforce development, integrating these opportunities with current efforts in the Dark County public school system as an option for affordable housing and rent with pathways into the new industry.
- Regulate private expansion between Gettysburg and other major cities to reduce sprawl and focus funding and resources within existing urban cores or Gettysburg itself.

Darke County Land Use Plan: Greenville Existing



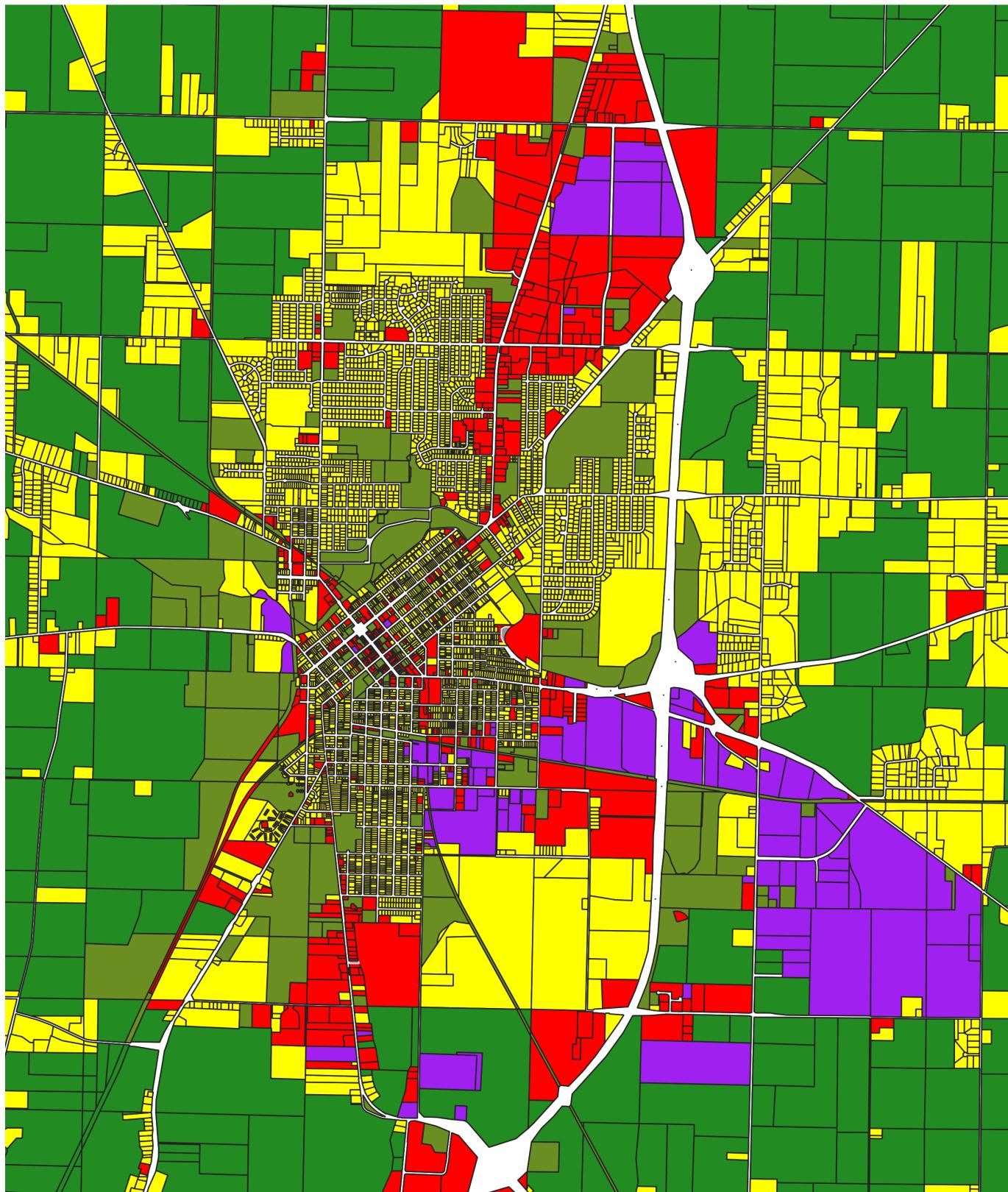
Agricultural Industrial Commercial Residential Public

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 mi
Scale 1:35000

Darke County Auditor CAMA automated appraisal data, bound to parcel shapefiles and altered by Ohio State University graduate students for 2050 projected land use planning.



Darke County Land Use Plan: Greenville 2050



Agricultural Industrial Commercial Residential Public

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 mi
Scale 1:35000

Darke County Auditor CAMA automated appraisal data, bound to parcel shapefiles and altered by Ohio State University graduate students for 2050 projected land use planning.



Greenville

Greenville, boasting a population of around 12,786, holds the distinction of being the largest city and county seat in Darke County. Centrally positioned within the county, Greenville serves as a pivotal nexus connecting numerous surrounding communities. The heart of Greenville is situated approximately 1.8 miles northwest of US-127, with Martin Street, Broadway Street, and Main Street serving as the primary arterial roads extending northwest through the city. Distinguished as having the largest central business district in Darke County, Broadway Street itself holds the honor of being listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The city's historic Public Square and roundabout further set it apart from Darke County's cities and villages. Downtown Greenville proudly hosts iconic landmarks, including the renowned Darke County Courthouse, the Sheriff's House and Jail, and the Carnegie Library, showcasing exquisite examples of Renaissance Revival architecture. In 2023, notable attractions in downtown Greenville include the Darke County Courthouse, Wayne Theatre, and a number of enjoyable offerings along Broadway Street including The Merchant House and Coffee Pot.

To the north of downtown Greenville lies Greenville High School, Greenville City Park, Wagner Avenue commercial district, and Greenville City Schools K-8 complex. To the south of downtown lies the new Wayne HealthCare Hospital, Darke County Fairgrounds, and Sweitzer Street commercial district. Southeast of downtown, off OH-571, lies the Greenville Industrial Complex, home to major industry players including Spartech and Marathon.

Other industry giants including Whirlpool, KitchenAid and Koenig Equipment reside within the city limits. Greenville famously hosts the annual Darke County Fair, bringing in tourists from around the region and providing a source of fun for all ages with its concert, demolition derby, harness racing, motorcycle rally and tractor pulls. The week-long event marks traditional farm living, with a 167-year history towards education on farming and significant entertainment for all.

Greenville has a rich history. Established in late 1793 under the command of General Anthony Wayne, Greenville originally served as a pioneer fort. Its name pays homage to General Nathanael Greene, a close associate of Wayne. Spanning over 55 acres, Fort Greenville holds the distinction of being the largest wooden fortification ever constructed. The historic site is particularly notable as the location where the Treaty of Greenville was signed on August 3rd, 1795, ushering in a period of peace to the region. This pivotal treaty not only brought tranquility but also paved the way for settlement in the Northwest Territory. It is for this reason Greenville is also known as the "Treaty City".

The overarching goal for Greenville's land use is to adopt policies, legislation, regulations, enforcement, procedures, incentives and appropriate funding necessary to encourage a quality of life in adjacency with the Greenville Comprehensive Plan and 2023 Comprehensive Plan.

Meta-Objectives

- I. Consult the existing Greenville Comprehensive Plan for a long-term vision of development and redevelopment opportunities.
- II. Without neglecting other communities, embrace Greenville's existence as the county seat and thus the premier economic, cultural, and industrial hub of Darke County. Center and prioritize Greenville necessarily in county-wide discussions.
- III. Thoroughly utilize all goals and strategies listed throughout the 2023 Comprehensive Plan, using Greenville as a positive example for development for smaller communities within Darke County.

Goals & Strategies

Target key development goals outlined in the existing Greenville Comprehensive Plan, with strategies and resources listed therein.

- The Greenville Comprehensive Plan includes the five detailed planning principles of strategic economic development, diverse housing opportunities, retaining Greenville's core character, strategizing a coordinated approach to infrastructure improvements, and recognizing the importance of community aesthetics. The overriding planning principles take the issues identified through the planning process and establish a framework for converting them into fundamental recommendations that will guide future development in Greenville.
- Continue the commendable department-level strategic plan system to accurately and consistently navigate planning concerns and developments.
- The Greenville Comprehensive Plan prioritizes planning goals (by highest to lowest priority) for chapter-level topics in the 2023 Comprehensive Plan. Continuously acknowledge and update these goals by their level in priority or completeness.

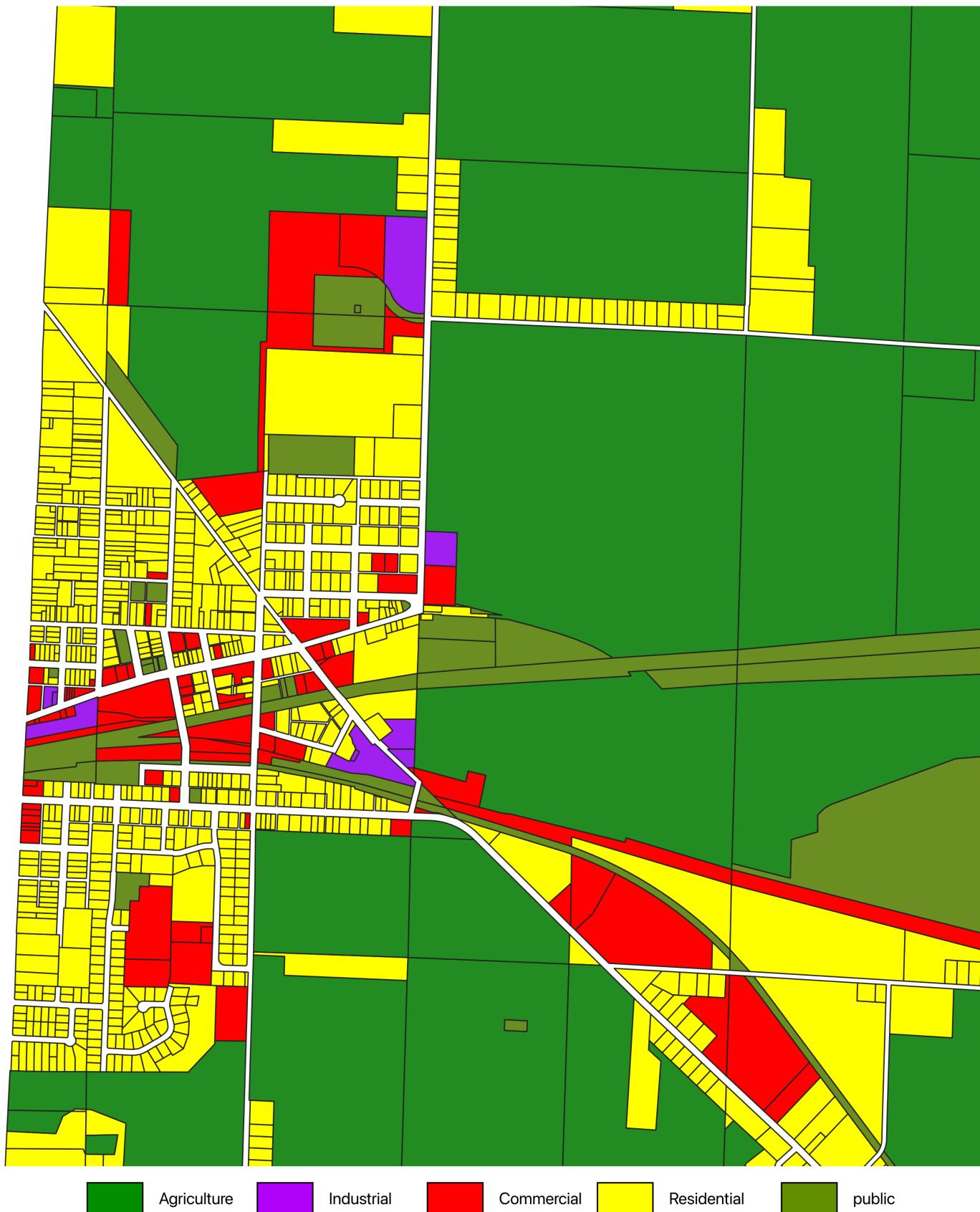
Coordinate the distribution of land and infrastructure to support new development, ensuring the simultaneous preservation of agriculturally productive areas, natural resources, and open spaces throughout Greenville.

- Promote the revitalization and infill development in regions already serviced by established public amenities, encouraging the strategic utilization of existing infrastructure for sustainable and efficient growth. Rather than low-density development along non-thoroughfare roads, new development should border the existing core of Greenville.
- Encourage the embrace of cluster and conservation subdivision design strategies in Greenville to protect prime farmland and environmentally sensitive regions. Provide developers with a density bonus to motivate the adoption of these approaches. The 2023 Comprehensive Plan identifies the areas between US-147 and Fort Jefferson Avenue, as well as OH-118 and Greenville-Celina Road, as ideal for compact residential development.
- Discourage non-agricultural development in prime farmland regions by consistently implementing the LESA system, zoning regulations, and subdivision regulations. The strategic preservation of farmland will also serve as a natural growth boundary for Greenville. Any increase in land zoned commercial or industrial, which the 2023 Comprehensive Plan identifies as necessary, should primarily adjoin existing commercial and industrial land use as shown on the map. commercial development towards the airport.

Emphasize infrastructure and transportation development as leading priorities of Greenville.

- Although the Greenville Comprehensive Plan identifies goals pertaining to community character, housing, economic development, etc., there is a level of precedence for improvements in infrastructure and transportation especially.
- Regarding infrastructure, there is a call to develop a comprehensive Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that strategically addresses deficiencies in the infrastructure. Improvements need to be made to the current sanitary system, and progress should continue in respect to repavings and replacement of Fire and Police Department resources.
- Regarding transportation, the Greenville Comprehensive Plan pinpoints three crucial areas for improvement focus: Wagner Avenue/Russ Road Commercial area, Sweitzer Street, and Martin Street. Anticipate future traffic needs when reconfiguring traffic flow, improving rights-of-way, and providing pedestrian crossings.

Darke County Land Use Plan: Union City Current

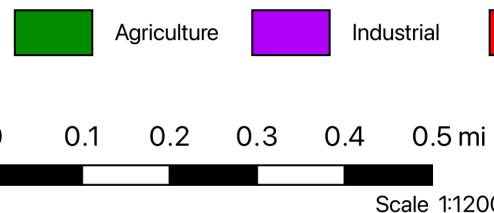
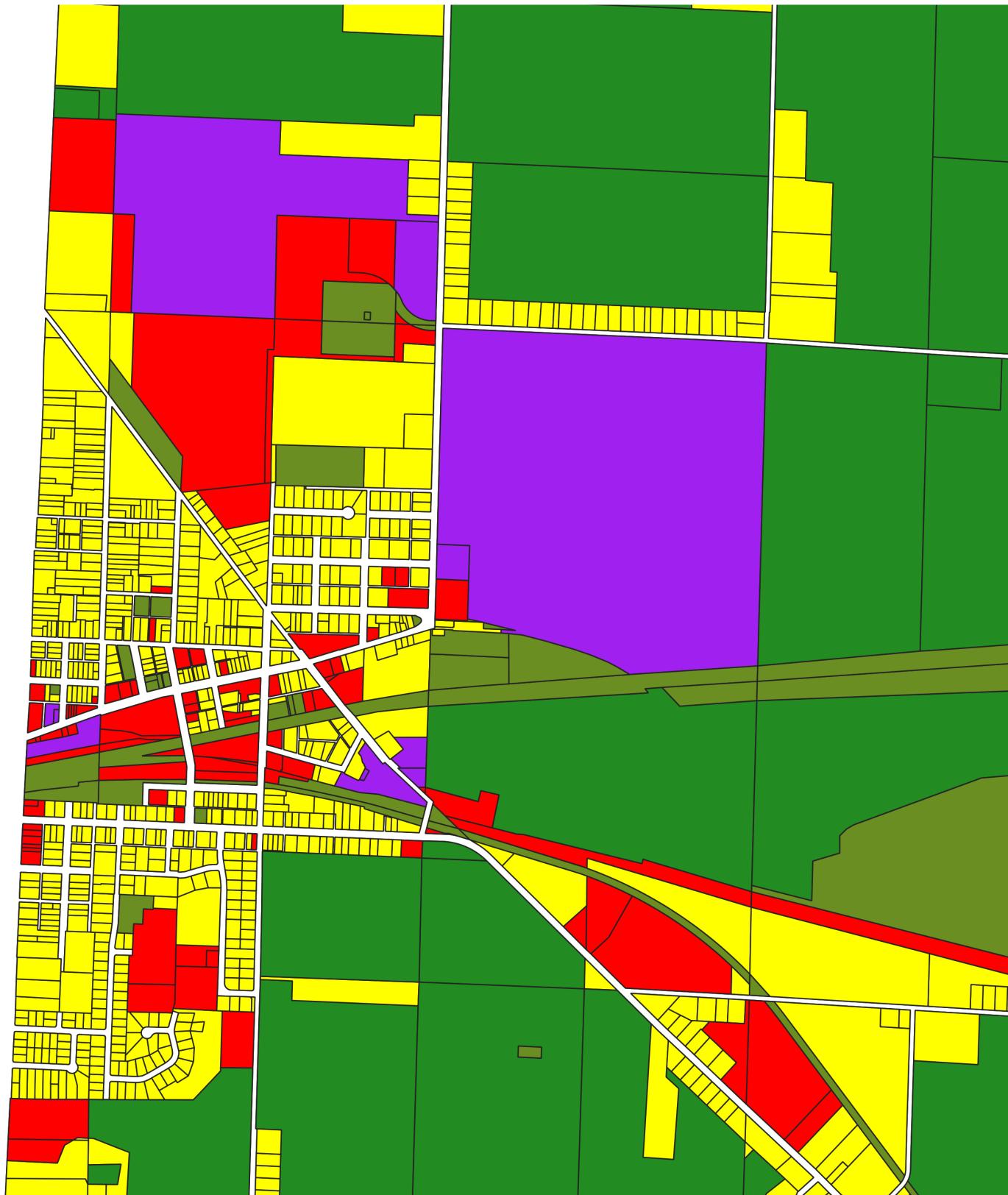


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Scale 1:12000

Darke County Auditor CAMA automated appraisal data bound to parcel shapefile and altered by OSU students for 2050 projected land use planning: 2023



Darke County Land Use Plan: Union City 2050



Darke County Auditor CAMA automated appraisal
data bound to parcel shapefile and altered by OSU
students for 2050 projected land use planning: 2023



Union City

Union City, Ohio is a village with a population of 1,582 as of the 2020 US census. Located just across the state line from its counterpart, Union City, Indiana, the village has a rich history dating back to its platting in 1838, followed by its incorporation on December 6, 1853. This period of growth coincided with the opening of a line of the Greenville and Miami Railroad on December 12, 1852, contributing to Union City's initial development. Union city encompasses a total area of 0.97 square miles. The Lambert-Parent House stands as a testament to the village's history, being listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The economics of Union City showcase a median income of \$26,442 for households, with a median income of \$30,603 for families. The village faces poverty challenges, with 18.8% of families and 20.8% of the population falling below the poverty line, including 30.4% of those under age 18 and 6.4% of those age 65 or over.

Improving Union City, Ohio, involves considering various aspects, including economic development, community engagement, infrastructure enhancement, and quality of life.

Goals

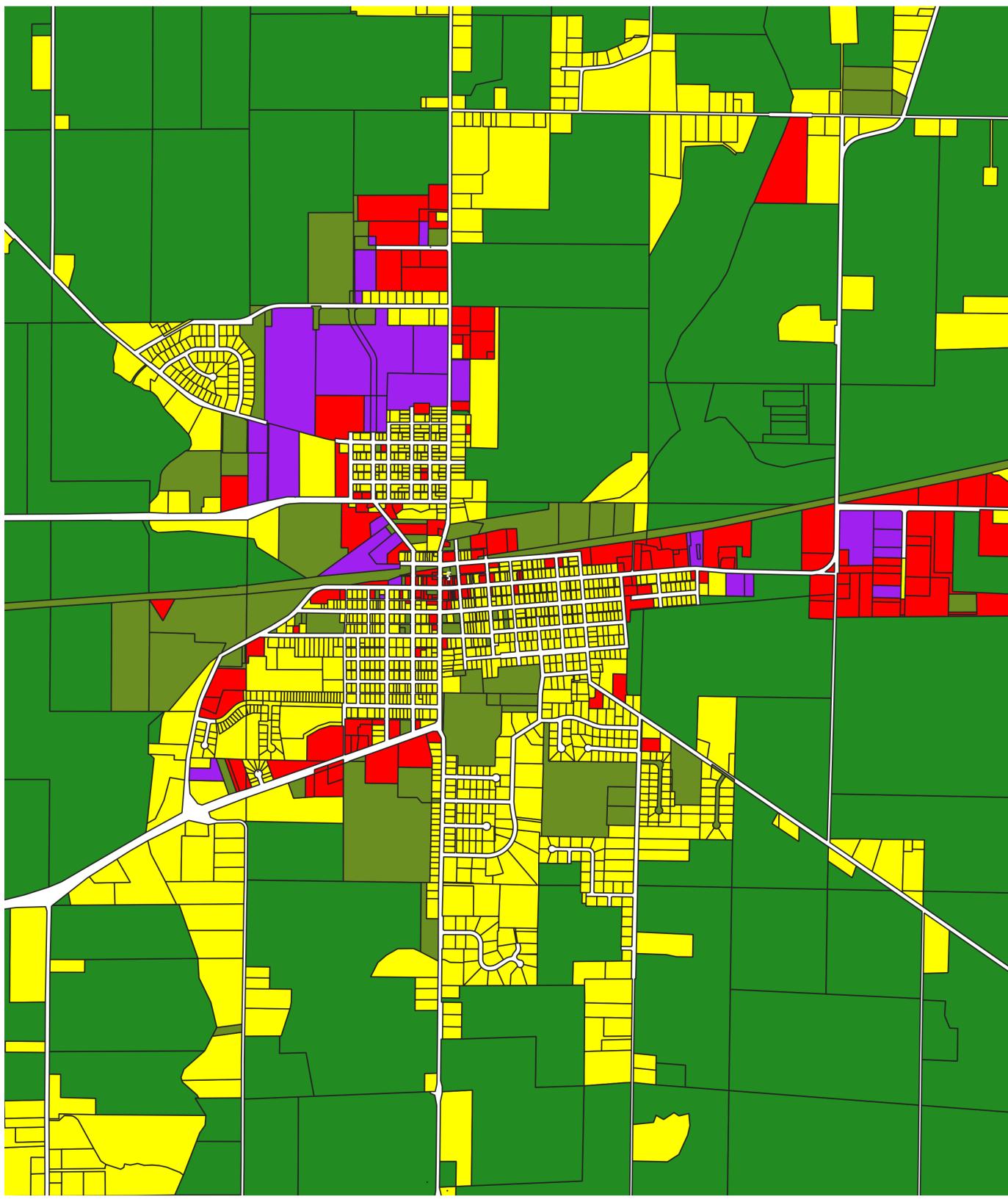
- I. Enhance the industrial complex to increase its appeal to larger and more permanent industrial enterprises.
- II. Incorporate higher-density workforce housing and affordable accommodations, not only to address residents' needs but also to ensure the capacity to locally support new industries.
- III. Introduce additional parkland and placemaking initiatives to anchor the community and retain its workforce.



Recommendations

- Economic Development:
 - Attract Local Businesses: Encourage and support local entrepreneurship to foster economic growth. Provide incentives for small businesses to establish and thrive in the community, and this can be accomplished through a Request for Proposal process, similar to Versailles.
 - Revitalize Main Street: Invest in the revitalization of the main commercial areas to make them more attractive, welcoming, and pedestrian-friendly. This can be combined with attracting local businesses on the same RFP.
- Community Engagement:
 - Community Events: Organize regular community events and festivals to bring residents together and attract visitors. This not only enhances community spirit but also boosts the local economy, allowing local business owners to increase their revenues and visibility in the regional area.
 - Public Spaces: Invest in public spaces like parks and recreation areas to provide residents with places to gather, relax, and engage in recreational activities, and participate in events.
- Quality of Life:
 - Housing Development: Encourage the development of affordable and market rate housing options to attract new residents and retain existing ones.
 - Education: Support local schools and educational programs to ensure that residents have access to quality education.
- Tourism:
 - Historical Preservation: Emphasize and promote the historical aspects of Union City, especially downtown, in order to attract tourists
 - Marketing and Branding: Develop a marketing strategy to promote Union City as a destination, highlighting its unique features, attractions, and community.

Darke County Land Use Plan: Versailles Existing



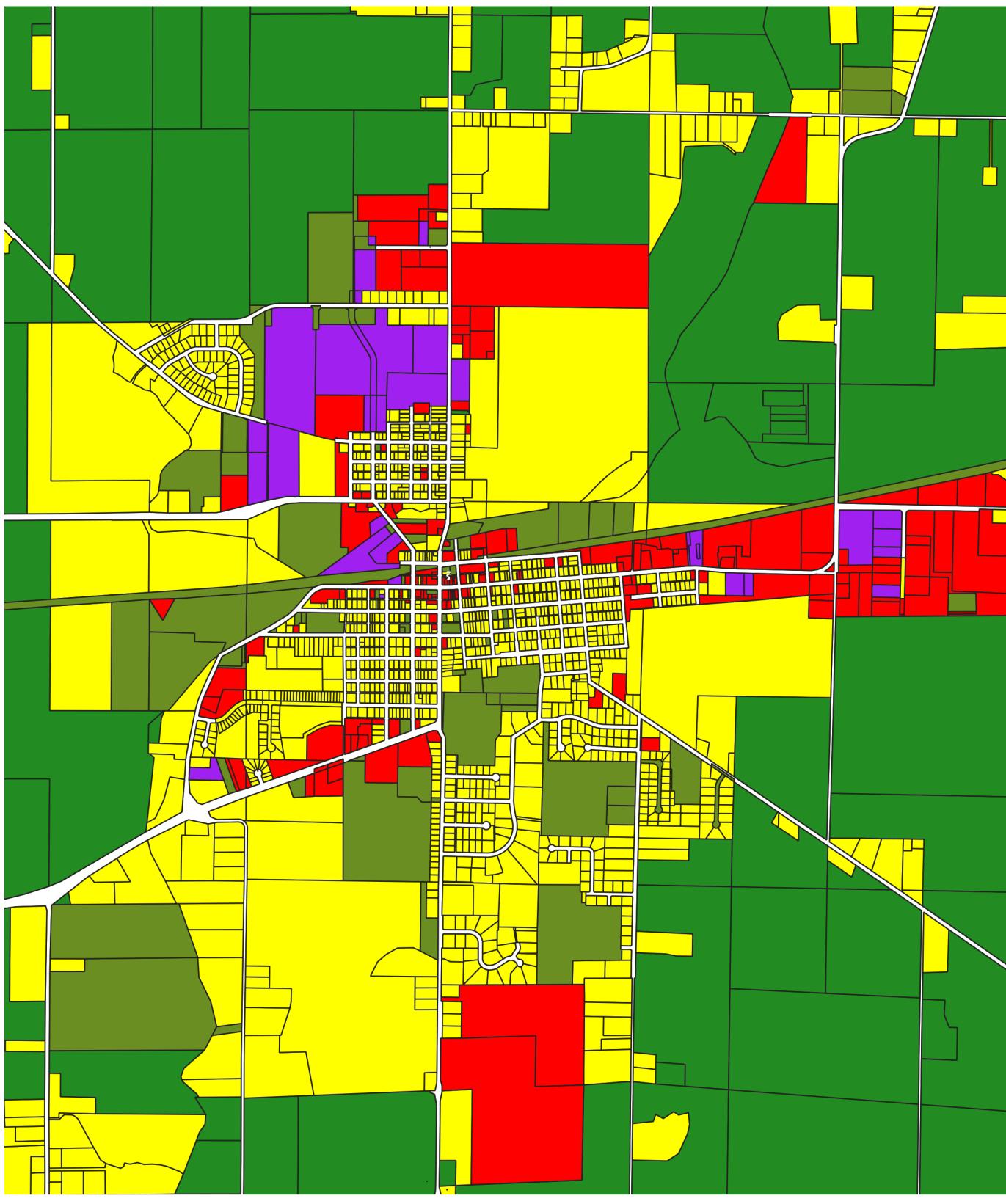
Agricultural Industrial Commercial Residential Public

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 mi
Scale 1:20000

Darke County Auditor CAMA automated appraisal data, bound to parcel shapefiles and altered by Ohio State University graduate students for 2050 projected land use planning.



Darke County Land Use Plan: Versailles 2050



Agricultural Industrial Commercial Residential Public

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 mi

Scale 1:20000

Darke County Auditor CAMA automated appraisal data, bound
to parcel shapefiles and altered by Ohio State University
graduate students for 2050 projected land use planning.



Versailles

Versailles is the second largest city within Darke County, with a population of about 2,692. The village has experienced growth in population since 2010. The village serves as the hub city of northwestern Darke County. Central Versailles is situated about 6.8 miles east of US-127, and the main thoroughfare, Main Street, runs horizontally through the village. Versailles boasts one of Darke County's most noteworthy historic downtowns, featuring a vibrant central business district with street landscaping and various amenities rivaled only by Greenville. Downtown Versailles is notable for the historic and NHRP-listed Versailles Town Hall and Wayne Township House. As of 2023, key attractions in downtown Versailles include the village's Town Square, Hotel Versailles, and Silas Creative Kitchen.

South of the downtown area is the Versailles Exempted Village School, a strategically designed campus housing the village's elementary, middle, and high schools in one location. This school complex is situated directly southwest of the primary recreational campus, which features Ward Park, the Versailles Swimming Pool, and various athletic facilities belonging to VEVS. Ward Park is a keystone public park with three shelter houses, a swimming pool, a tennis court, a baseball diamond, concession and restroom facilities, and playground equipment. Other notable features in southern Versailles include the Worch Memorial Public Library, YMCA - Versailles, and Heritage Disc Golf Course. Heading north from downtown leads to the industrial hub of Versailles.

Meta-Objectives

- I. Increase the presence of commercially zoned land, ensuring these lands are appropriately located and serviced adequately.
- II. Continue Versailles's existence as an economic hub through workforce development and housing strategies outlined in the 2023 Comprehensive Plan.
- III. Remain steadfast in principled planning techniques as the community begins to grow.

Significant players in the local industrial scene include Mid-Mark, Weaver Eggs, and Kings Command, all playing crucial roles in America's food and medical supply chains.

Versailles has a unique history. The village was originally known as "Jacksonville" until its change to "Versailles" in 1837 and subsequent incorporation in 1855. The soldiers of Wayne's Army and the Militia of the War of 1812 recognized the appeal of the fertile soil in the upper Miami Valley as they traversed the local terrain. Following the signing of peace treaties in 1795 and 1812, it was deemed safe to establish settlements in the areas by 1819. The village was first named "Jacksonville" in honor of Andrew Jackson, but a large influx of French settlers in 1833 eventually resulted in the village's renaming to "Versailles". Throughout its history, Versailles has served as the economic hub of northwestern Darke County and a pit-stop between Greenville and Sidney.

The overarching goal for Versailles's land use is to adopt policies, legislation, regulations, enforcement, procedures, incentives and appropriate funding necessary to encourage a quality of life in adjacency with the 2023 Comprehensive Plan.

Goals & Strategies

Encourage commercial development that is necessary to the current needs of Versailles.

- Promote infill development that is complementary to both existing development and the needs of Versailles residents.
- Make a concerted effort to attract additional grocery stores and more diversified retail establishments as the population grows. Versailles flourishes in the realm of boutique goods and services, but further larger-scale commercial development will alleviate potential burdens on families and enhance the perceived attractiveness of the community.
- Any larger-scale commercial development should be considerate towards the design principles outlined in the Community Character Chapter of the 2023 Comprehensive Plan.

Plan for a better transportation network through roadway improvements, public transit opportunities, and airport improvements.

- Identify and plan for a new outer ring road. An arterial road expanding south from Kley Road, circumscribing far-south Versailles and re-connecting north at Boyer Road, is one possibility. Another arterial road in this general vicinity is crucial for envisioned development in Versailles.
- An arterial road north of the village's industrial base, extending horizontally through Frenchtown and connecting to US-127, will provide industrial traffic an alternative option outside of downtown Versailles. This will prevent increasing the increasing truck traffic consuming downtown Versailles, promising a more pedestrian-friendly environment.
- Explore public transit options in Versailles similarly to the existing and proposed options in Greenville.
- Increase the awareness and prominence of the Darke County Airport through creation of a website, as well as appropriate land-use decisions that encourage industrial and commercial development towards the airport.

Increase housing diversity and availability in Versailles to meet current and future population growth.

- Promote the adoption of cluster and conservation subdivision design strategies to preserve the prime farmland and environmentally sensitive areas within Versailles. Provide developers with a density bonus to incentivize the utilization of this approach. The 2023 Comprehensive Plan identifies the areas surrounding the Versailles Exempted Village School, flanking Versailles Southeastern Road, and encircling the northern industrial complex (particularly off OH-185) as ideal for further subdivision development.
- Due to the industrial nature of Versailles, compounded by its growing population, the goals and strategies outlined in the Housing Chapter of the Community Plan are particularly prescient to the village. Utilize the formative and funding strategies to provide an array of adequate and well-planned workforce housing.
- To ensure that new residential development is not only walkable, but walkable to essential commercial services, strategically increase the presence of commercially zoned land in Versailles. The 2023 Comprehensive Plan identifies the parcels south of Cambridge Drive, east of Baker Road, and along East Main Street as ideal for commercial development.

APPENDICES



Scan the QR code above with a cellphone camera for a link to the Appendices,

or

follow this link: <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/vh0abmh9wln7aglj6h47b/h?rlkey=8hl51kt9lak1zgqobfxsyz95e&dl=0>

