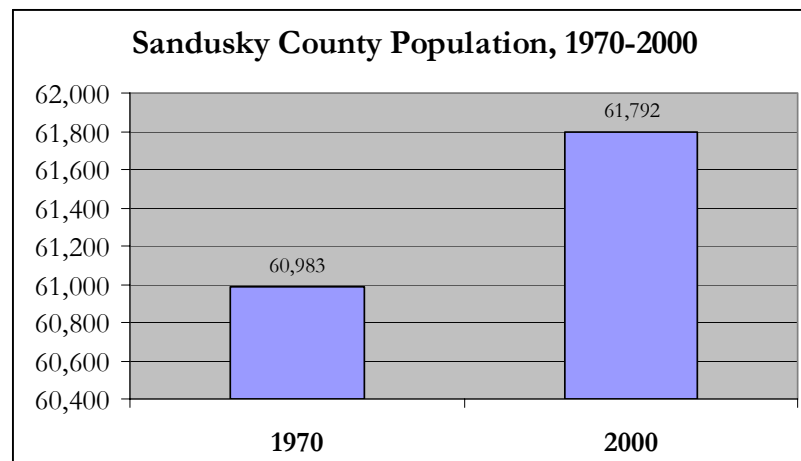


Summary

Land is a limited resource. The amount and location of various land uses affect the overall quality of life for all Sandusky County residents. This Plan intends to promote a balanced expansion of residential, commercial, and employment opportunities while protecting the County’s rich agricultural land base, sensitive environmental resources, and unique cultural heritage.

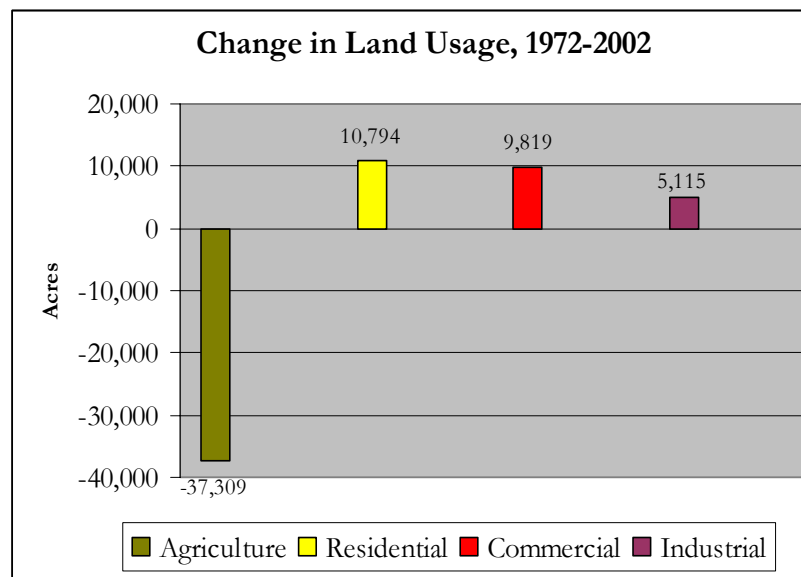
During the course of the Plan’s development, the County’s political subdivisions provided input as to which areas were best to accommodate future growth and classified these areas either by general, residential, or industrial growth areas.

It is very important for Sandusky County to utilize appropriate land use mechanisms to ensure future development occurs in an orderly and compact manner. Since 1970, Sandusky County’s population has increased marginally by less than 1000 residents. Yet, acreage dedicated for land uses such as residential, industrial, and commercial have increased triple digits.



Planning Issues

Like most counties in the State of Ohio, Sandusky County has the standard mechanisms in place to ensure that the land development process meets the basic elements of health and human safety and property rights. These mechanisms are promoted by the health and sanitary sewer departments, the county engineer, a countywide regional planning commission, and several local planning and zoning boards. All of these departments play a key role in guiding land use and promoting growth and development. One department ensures that new and existing development meets certain environmental standards, while the county engineer’s office sets standards for curb cuts and ensures that traffic generated from new development can be accommodated safely. The regional planning commission, comprised of several member political subdivisions across the county, ensures that all new and existing development “fits” within standards defined and redefined by the public. And lastly, the local planning and zoning



boards promote and set development standards created by their local residents. With all of these agencies involved with the growth and development of Sandusky County, it is very important that additional mechanisms are developed to allow for these agencies and actors to keep each other informed as to how their respective missions promote orderly growth (**Please see Chapter: Planning Tools**).

However, it can be argued that land use in Sandusky County is more the result of a compilation of the actions of individual property owners, rather than the result of the individual or combined actions of government or quasi-government agencies. Over the last 30 years, the increase of land uses dedicated for uses other than agricultural has been dramatic and at a much greater consumption rate than normally necessary to accommodate the usual living and consumption patterns of the less than 1000 net new residents that migrated to Sandusky County since 1970. Commercial land uses have increased 909%; residential uses 104%; and industrial uses 176%.

To ensure the next 30 years does not mirror the last 30 years, it is necessary that everyone involved in the growth and development of Sandusky County interact on a higher level than normally warranted. Public concern about the potential negative effects of rapid growth on the quality of life was repeatedly expressed during the series of meetings with community officials held during the summer and fall of 2002. Strong support was voiced for concepts related to growth management and the preservation of the County's rural atmosphere. To ensure the public's concerns are addressed, it is mandatory that planning- as it pertains to the County's built environment- receives more attention and resources for any substantial and continued results to be achieved.

Goals and Objectives

Land Use Goal: To promote the coexistence of all land uses, with sensitivity to the needs and impacts of each.

Objectives:

1. Guide growth patterns to promote efficiency of travel and offer the best return on public investment, placing special emphasis on areas currently experiencing growth or designated for future growth by local officials:
 - ✓ Areas identified by municipal and township officials
 - ✓ The Sandusky County Airport as a site for future industrial development
 - ✓ The US 20 corridor throughout the county, from Woodville to Bellevue; SR 53 north and south from Fremont, and SR 51 from the Turnpike at Elmore south.
2. Encourage neighborhood commercial and mixed-use business areas, especially outside larger municipalities.
3. Encourage the creation of zoning in unzoned political subdivisions.

4. Encourage the use of planned unit developments to mix housing densities and offer incentives for open space.
5. Protect areas that are sensitive to change: wetlands, other environmentally sensitive areas and habitats including the Sandusky River, historic artifacts and cultural facilities, prime farmland.
6. Utilize methods that preserve prime farmland and special resource areas.
7. Encourage the development and use of innovative tools that promote community history and community revitalization, such as the Fremont downtown historic overlay district.
8. Encourage the use of tools that assist coordination between adjoining and nearby jurisdictions, with the emphasis on minimizing land use conflicts and promoting revenue sharing arrangements.
9. Continue to incorporate broad public involvement within the land use planning processes.

Trends and Characteristics

Development Trends

Recent development trends over the last decade throughout Sandusky County appear to be following the pattern of growth typical of most counties across Ohio, with most residential growth occurring outside of incorporated cities and villages, yet in areas that are still in reasonably close proximity to the city or village (**See Map: Existing Land Use**).

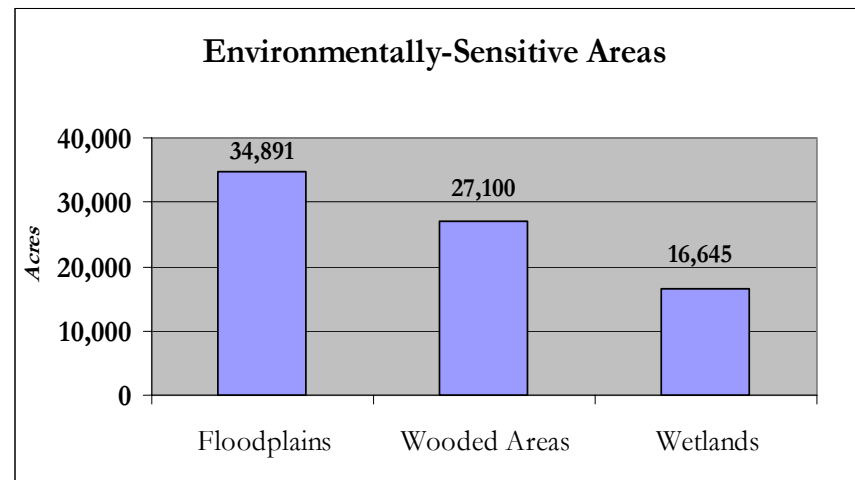
Typically, farmland is “split” and sold off in smaller parcels along roadways to developers. This situation can lead to both potable water service and sanitary sewage service problems. If a parcel (s) is developed, yet too small for the soil conditions present, failing septic and leach field systems can lead to the contamination of both groundwater and surface waters. Usually, because these small developed areas are isolated, providing water and/or sanitary sewerage services is not economically feasible. Unless changes in County subdivision regulations and Township zoning occurs, this type of development pattern will continue.

Other areas of potential future development are located in several unique locations throughout Sandusky County. These areas, highlighted and discussed in the Future Land Use section of this chapter, were selected primarily due to their good location on key thoroughfare routes, or that they were contiguous or near existing development (s) or infrastructure. The areas were identified by public and private officials of political subdivisions in the county during meetings with the planning consultants over the course of the planning process. These areas, further denoted as “growth areas” are highlighted on the Future Land Use map.

Environmentally-Sensitive Areas

Currently, Sandusky County contains 34,891 acres (13.46% of total acres) of floodplains, 27,100 acres (10.45%) of wooded areas, and 16,645 acres of wetlands (6.42%).

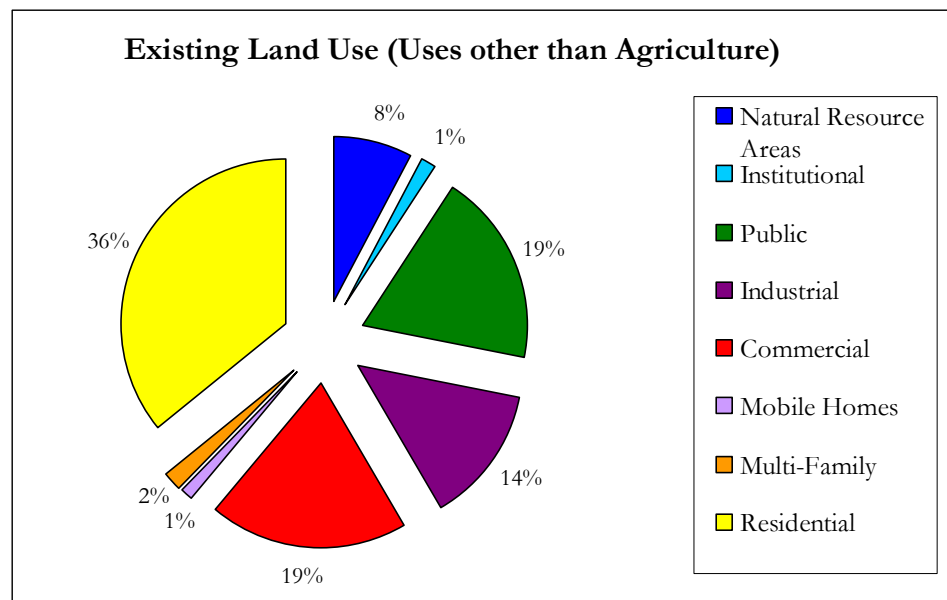
There are some areas in the County that will not be developed due to environmental or land management constraints. There are six natural areas delineated in Sandusky County. The Pickeral Creek Wildlife Area and the adjacent Blue Herring Reserve is the largest consisting of approximately four square miles. They are located in the northeastern part of the County with U.S. Route 6 on the south, the Sandusky Bay on the north, and Riley and Townsend Townships to either side. Wolf Creek Park is approximately one square mile and is located between State Route 53 and the Sandusky River in the southern portion of Ballville Township. It consists of approximately 200 acres. The Portage Trail Park is located between South River Road and the Sandusky River in Ballville Township. It is about 1.5 miles southeast of the Fremont corporate limits, consisting of approximately 20 acres.



Another large area where development is constrained is near the mouth of the Sandusky River. The 100-year flood plain covers a great deal of land in both Riley and Rice Townships. The Wightman’s Grove Conservancy District is also in this area on the east side of the Sandusky River in Riley Township. Another planning/conservation group with concerns in the County is the Sandusky River Watershed Coalition. This group’s main objective is to protect and enhance the Sandusky River by promoting responsible river development and reasonable watercraft controls.

Existing Land Use

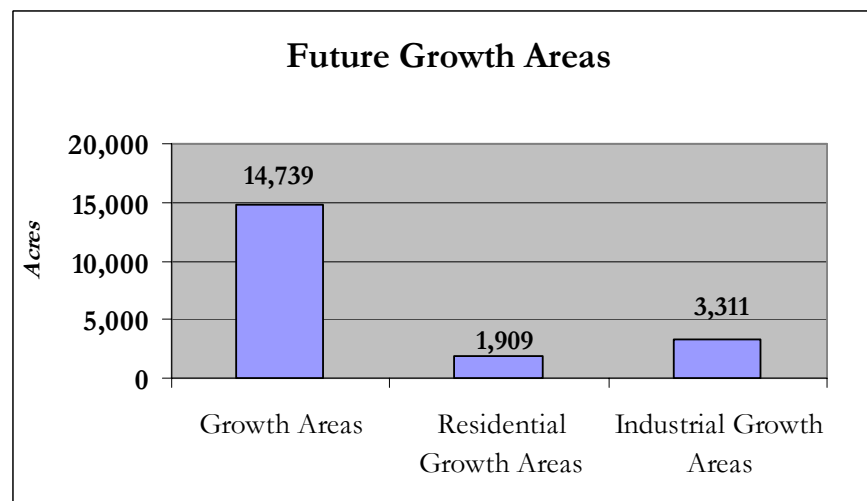
Of the 260,000+ acres that comprise Sandusky County, approximately 200,000 acres are utilized for agricultural purposes. Of the remaining acreage used for developed purposes, residential uses comprise the largest land use (36%). Land uses dedicated for public and commercial uses account for 19% respectively. Fourteen percent of developed lands in Sandusky County are used for industrial uses, while multi-family (2%), institutional (1%), and mobile homes (1%) account for smaller percentages of the county’s overall developed lands. Natural resource areas, which include lands with significant pristine qualities (and may include lands not denoted as state or county parks) account for 8% of the county’s “other-than agricultural” land mass.



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

Future Land Use

During the development of the Comprehensive Plan, the consultants met with public and private officials in all of the county’s townships and its municipalities. Maps of the existing land usage within these subdivisions were used to get a better indication of the existing built environment and where future land uses would be best accommodated by the existing infrastructure. Future land uses were selected on the bases of



several things, including:

- ✓ The existing land use of contiguous parcels
- ✓ The ability of the current infrastructure to properly serve new land uses
- ✓ The thoroughfare network
- ✓ The ability of these new land uses in promoting economic growth
- ✓ Physical and other environmental constraints

Because of Sandusky County’s rural atmosphere, most of the County’s townships noted no new changes in land uses and their respective built environments. These would include the townships of: Madison, Scott, Jackson, Washington, Townsend, Riley, Rice, and York.

Due to the location of urbanized areas being located in or contiguous to some of the townships, the townships of Woodville, Sandusky, Ballville, and Green Creek expressed a variety of predictions or desires on how future land uses would be best accommodated in their communities.

Woodville Township

Woodville Township representatives, encouraged to promote better land uses and increase economic growth within the township, selected a variety of areas off of US 20 as either industrial or general growth areas. Industrial growth areas were designated in areas of the township north and east of Woodville (**see Map: Future Land Use and Growth Areas**), as well as southeast of the corporation limits south of US 20. General growth areas were also highlighted near the US 90- SR 51 turnpike exit and at the US20/23 junction. The Woodville Township Trustees also selected an area on Dutch Road, north of Woodville’s corporation limits as a potential “joint economic development zone” (JEDZ) or cooperative economic development agreement area (CEDA). As a JEDZ or CEPA, both Woodville and Woodville Township would share in both the costs of development and any future revenue such growth in this area may bring.

The Village of Woodville

Village representatives selected an area south of US 20 and east of Finch Road as a possible residential growth area, in anticipation that future residential development would be a continuation of residential development that’s occurred in this area over the past several years.

The Village of Gibsonburg

A variety of new areas were highlighted by village officials as either future residential growth areas or industrial growth areas. Future residential areas were chosen in areas south of the corporation limits, east of Blair Road and north of Jones Road. Industrial growth areas were selected within the easterly corporation limits, near existing industrial areas and where current infrastructure exists.

The Village of Lindsey

In an effort to promote residential development, village officials designated areas off of SR 590, Kingsway, and Overmyer Roads as potential areas for future residential development.

Sandusky Township

In an effort to promote growth in specific areas of the township most conducive to such growth, the Sandusky Township Trustees agreed with Fremont officials in continuing to promote an area of the township through the existing mutual “economic development” agreement. This area is bounded by Kingsway Road to the north; Hendricks Road to the west; US 20 to the south; and Oak Harbor Road to the east.

Another area identified by County, Fremont, and township officials was the general area surrounding the US 80/90 Turnpike and SR 53 junction. This area continues to witness increased commercial and industrial growth, and should continue to grow in the future with the planned widening of SR 53 between US 20 and US 90. The area west of Port Clinton Road, south of Hawk Road, was also selected as an industrial growth area because of its rail access and prime location within the thoroughfare network.

The City of Fremont

City officials continue to embrace programs designed to revitalize and reuse existing properties within the city’s boundaries, such as the newly-remodeled industrial building on 1035 Napoleon Avenue. Currently, the City of Fremont has over 394,000 square feet of industrial and commercial space for lease or sale and approximately 56 acres of land readily available in 2 industrial parks.



During the planning process, city officials designated several growth areas in the future land use map. These areas, which were also selected by Sandusky Township and County Officials, are areas northwest of Fremont in the vicinity of US 6, US 20, SR 410, US 90 and SR 53, and the areas in Sandusky Township in which the city has an economic development agreement with the township.

Ballville Township

To assist the township capitalize on economic growth, township trustees highlighted SR 53 from US 6 south to SR 12 as a growth corridor. The area at the intersection of US 6 and SR 53 is also highlighted as a future growth area.

Green Creek Township

In anticipation of future growth contiguous to the Sandusky County Regional Airport, the Green Creek Township Trustees (as well as the Airport Board, Comprehensive Plan Advisory Board, and County Commissioners) selected an area around the airport as an Airport-related

growth area. Denoted as such, it is encouraged that future land uses in this growth area be airport-related and be a “value-added” asset for the regional airport. Such examples of land uses and development “user-friendly” to airport operations are:

- ✓ Fixed Base Operator
- ✓ Air Freight Terminals and Air Cargo Forwarders
- ✓ Aircraft & Parts Manufacturers and Aircraft Repair Shops
- ✓ Aerial Survey Companies
- ✓ Aviation Research & Testing
- ✓ Trucking Terminals and Taxi & Bus Terminals
- ✓ Car Rental Agencies
- ✓ Restaurants and Motels
- ✓ Storage Facilities, Warehouses and Wholesale Distribution Centers
- ✓ Golf Courses

Another area north of Dewey Road to US 20 is also selected as a growth area and is designated as such to encourage airport-related (if possible) development.

The City of Clyde

City officials selected a variety of industrial growth areas to be included in the future land use map. These areas, as denoted on the Future Land Use map, are primarily located on the US 20 corridor and are contiguous to the city’s boundaries, with utilities and infrastructure readily available. Residential growth areas were selected in areas adjacent to existing residential uses and currently served with public utilities.

The Village of Green Springs

To encourage growth in areas most suitable to the village’s existing infrastructure, village officials designated areas at the northern-most boundary limits as future growth areas. Village officials indicated a desire to let the market dictate the appropriateness of the development, providing it is compatible with the village’s ability to properly serve it with public utilities.

The City of Bellevue

Like Clyde, the City of Bellevue is also located on the US 20 corridor. City officials designated several areas as either growth areas or residential growth areas. Most of these areas are located within the corporation limits, with the exception of a growth area south of US 20 on the west corporation limits, and one residential growth area south of Gardner Road and north of SR 18.

Strategies and Recommendations

Encourage Compatible Land Uses Contiguous to Sensitive Areas

Meets Land Use Objectives: 1,4,8,9

Sensitive areas can range from those with environmental constraints to the Sandusky County Regional Airport, where compatible land uses around the airport are absolutely vital to health and human safety, but to its overall economic viability.

It is recommended that areas sensitive to incompatible land uses receive additional attention in land use or zoning documents prepared by the encompassing political subdivision.

Some areas around the county that may require buffering from incompatible land uses are:

- ✓ Sandusky County Regional Airport
- ✓ Pickeral Creek Wildlife Area
- ✓ Blue Heron Reserve
- ✓ White Star Park
- ✓ Existing Industrial Areas or Designated Industrial Growth Areas

Utilize Tools That Promote Intergovernmental Cooperation

Meets Land Use Objectives: 1,2,3,4,7,8,9

The use and promotion of these tools may allow participating political subdivisions to guide growth and development closest to established areas with suitable infrastructure. The common theme amongst these tools is all parties that participate, both public and private, benefit from growth. There are several methods that can be used, such as Joint Economic Development Zones¹ (JEDZ), Cooperative Economic Development Agreements² (CEDA), Enterprise Zone Agreements³, and Community Reinvestment Area⁴ (CRA).

In 1999, the Ohio legislature passed legislation which allows political subdivisions to enter into cooperative economic development agreements with each other to address concerns associated with economic development, growth, and annexation.

¹ Ohio Revised Code (ORC) 715.69

² ORC Sections 701.07 and 709.192

³ ORC Sections 5709.61-69

⁴ ORC Section 3735.671

In summary, CEDA's allow the cities and villages to annex undeveloped portions of a township in return for sharing income tax (12.5%) with the township on future developments. The township pledges support of the annexations but also must continue to provide specified services. Current single-family residences can access city or village utilities without annexation. Future residences as well as current and future industrial and commercial areas must annex to the city to access utilities. Any of the surrounding townships contiguous to the participating city or village can negotiate similar agreements that would allow for the expansion of the respective municipality while maintaining the integrity of their respective township.

Such types of cost/revenue sharing mechanisms can be "Win/Win" propositions for the various political subdivisions in Sandusky County. Benefits to both jurisdictions may include:

City or Village Benefits

- ✓ Allowance for annexation of future commercial, industrial and residential development
- ✓ Potential of more jobs for the community and increased tax base

Township Benefits

- ✓ Provides current Township residents the ability to obtain utility services without annexing.
- ✓ Provides for sharing of income tax from new commercial and industrial development
- ✓ Maintains the integrity of Township boundaries

As previously mentioned, the City and Township will share income tax revenue. Such an arrangement requires that both jurisdictions provide services to the area. The service provisions in a CEDA could be as follows:

City or Village Service Provisions could include:

- ✓ Fire Response
- ✓ EMS Response
- ✓ Rescue Services (ie confined space, etc.)
- ✓ City Police Coverage
- ✓ Utility Maintenance (sanitary and storm sewers)
- ✓ Traffic Signal Maintenance (if not maintained by the county or state)
- ✓ Planning and Zoning Services
- ✓ Building Inspections
- ✓ Code Enforcement Street Lighting

Township Service Provisions could include:

- ✓ Snow Clearance (plowing and salting)
- ✓ Roadway Maintenance (including sweeping, pothole patching, crack sealing, etc.)
- ✓ Pavement Replacement (up to 2" resurfacing)
- ✓ Right of Way maintenance (including mowing, trash/litter, retention areas, etc.)
- ✓ Major Road Reconstruction in the CEDA areas will be split 50/50

Sandusky County Service Provisions could include:

- ✓ Bridge Replacement and Maintenance
- ✓ Ditch Cleaning and Watercourse Maintenance
- ✓ Road Reconstruction of all County Roads
- ✓ Utility Maintenance (Sanitary Sewer and Water)

Encourage the Use of New Technologies to Encourage and Guide Growth and Development

Meets Land Use Objectives: 1,4,8, 9

Several new tools exist that may be beneficial in the land use and development arena. Seeing land-use changes over years and decades helps citizens understand the repercussions of unplanned growth. Impacts of development over time can be significant. By using geographic information system applications and analyzing land-use data collected over time, county residents and private and public officials may be more apt to support quality growth and the necessity for holistic and comprehensive planning.

Currently, the Sandusky County Auditor's Tax Map department utilizes GIS technology on their public access systems. Residents can use the systems to access specific information concerning their property, school districts, soil types, and other information. However, data such as environmental constraints (floodplains, wetlands, groundwater pollution potential-DRASTIC Index), specific soils data (prime soils, soil productivity, septic constraints, etc.) should be available from the Sandusky County Regional Planning Commission in the future. Sandusky County residents should have the necessary tools to understand how development has occurred in the past and how the same patterns may occur in the future.

Encourage Local Political Subdivisions to Pursue Sound Land Use Mechanisms

Meets Land Use Objectives:1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8

To ensure that Sandusky County develops in a planned and orderly manner, it is encouraged that all local political subdivisions (especially the non-zoned townships of Madison, York, and Townsend) begin to implement creative tools that guide future growth and development. For most of Sandusky County's localities, this may mean one or more of the following:

- ✓ Developing comprehensive land use plans designating future areas for specific land uses;
- ✓ Working with contiguous townships in developing joint economic development zone agreements or cost-sharing agreements to promote economic development in selected areas closest to public infrastructure and populated areas;
- ✓ Becoming more proactive in residential development by land purchases and increased marketing efforts;
- ✓ Revising/updating zoning regulations to facilitate flexibility and permitting developers to be innovative during the zoning and development process; and,
- ✓ Working more closely with the Sandusky County Planning Commission and other development oriented agencies for professional advice.
- ✓ Encouraging the townships of Madison, York, and Townsend to development zoning resolutions.

Attempting to promote any of these planning concepts will require a good line of communication among all parties involved. One method in building the bonds and relationships necessary to promote these concepts is to establish an annual planning and development forum facilitated by the Sandusky County Regional Planning Commission or by an outside facilitator. This forum would provide a platform by which all political subdivisions can voice their unique problems and concerns, and allow those concerns to be handled in a timely manner and under professional advice.

In becoming more aware of the different types of planning and zoning tools available, all actors involved in this forum will understand that planning is essential for their community's future. These tools are flexible, provide local land use management, and do not require private property rights to be usurped or infringed upon. Both the public and private sector's interests can be accommodated in the planning process, but the channels of communication must be clear and accurate. This annual forum will work to solidify planning in Sandusky County.

Develop Incentives and Innovative Tools for Clustered and Non-Sprawl Residential Growth

Meets Land Use Objectives: 1,2,3,4,5,7

Over the next several decades, Sandusky County will surely grow. The types of development mechanisms currently available to the county and its political subdivisions will shape the county's landscape in the future. With over 55.5% of Sandusky County soils having a

productivity index of 80⁵ or higher, coupled with the fact that over 95.8% of the county's soils have severe septic limitations, it makes clear sense that additional mechanisms are needed to offer developers and individual property owners an alternative to the "one-size" fits all development standards.

Create a Rural Residential District

One method to promote proper land usage across Sandusky County, and yet still provide for residential development, is to create a new rural residential zoning district. This district would be flexible in nature and be recommended in areas that are suitable to accommodate it. To promote this concept, political subdivisions (primarily townships) would amend their respective zoning ordinances or resolutions to require all new platted subdivisions within these newly zoned areas to be developed in accordance with clustered and conservation design principals. Minimum lot sizes could be reduced (especially if public water and sewer is available) as needed in these rural residential areas to allow the developer and owner to capitalize on larger profit margins if such conservation and clustering design principles developed by the respective jurisdiction are met.

The new zoning district boundaries could be determined by the township or by land owners who could voluntarily pursue rezoning of their property (subject to the limitations on subdivision/plat requirements). This method will allow political subdivisions to provide for residential growth in areas that have the greatest potential to be served with public utilities and other health and human services, including fire and EMS. However, this method should not be applied to areas primarily agricultural in nature, and in those areas of the county that are lacking the greatest potential to be served with public service and support amenities.

Promote Cluster Development Zoning

If growth is allowed to perpetuate under historical patterns, it will consume several thousands of acres of highly productive farmlands in the County. Through the formulation and promotion of cluster development design standards, the county will witness a reduction of unnecessary land consumption from new development, and will allow residents to enjoy a balanced relationship between preserving rural character and permitting growth.

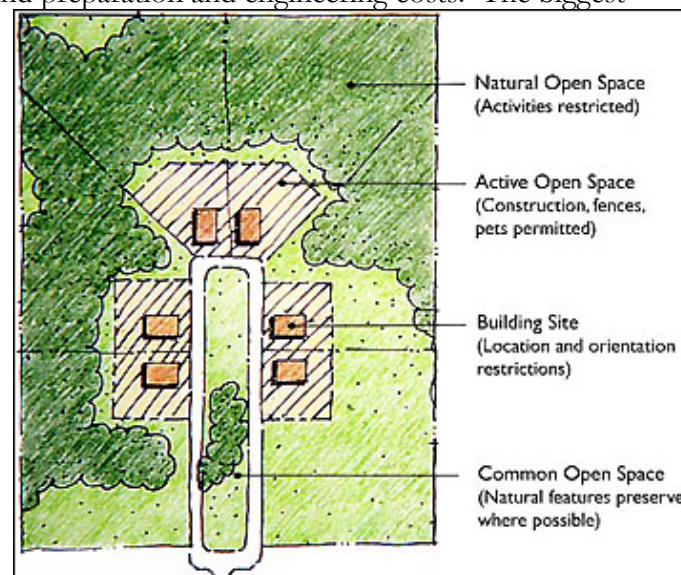


⁵Please see the Natural Resources Chapter for more information of Sandusky County's soils and their productivity.

The cost and benefits of cluster development vary depending upon location and land preparation and engineering costs. The biggest benefit to clustered development is a savings in development costs (see table below concerning development costs ⁶) and a more efficient use of land. While cost estimations may vary from location to location, this comparison shows that clustering residential units can reduce site development costs by up to 50%, allowing for the developer to attain higher profit margins, while promoting housing availability and preserving agricultural lands.

In an effort to promote this pattern of development in selected areas, clustered development should be placed on equal footing with conventional development by allowing: 1). The developer to submit two plans (conventional and cluster), from which the respective planning or zoning commission may choose and approve; and, 2). Allowing clustered development to occur in selected zoning classifications.

For this type of clustered approach to be utilized in the unincorporated areas of the county, certain regulatory devices, such as the Sandusky County Subdivision Regulations, may need to be updated accordingly. The Sandusky County Regional Planning Commission, Engineer, Sanitary Engineer, Health Department, Prosecutor, Board of County Commissioners, and the respective township officials should also begin a discussion on how such compact land development alternatives can occur and under what circumstances across Sandusky County.



Establish Preferred Development Zones and Growth Areas

Meets Land Use Objectives: 1,4,5,7

Certain areas within Sandusky County are simply better suited for development of certain land uses than others (see maps in Natural Resources chapter highlighting development constraints). This is generally true because these areas are accessible to key transportation networks and public utilities, have proximity to established population centers, and/or contain better soil types (or lack of soil constraints). With this principle in mind, the Sandusky

Cost Variable	Conventional Subdivision	Clustered Subdivision
Site Preparation	16 acres \$939,000	7 acres \$411,000
Street Development	2,625 linear ft. \$328,000	1,125 linear ft. \$141,000
Sewage Disposal	24 On-Site Septic \$181,000	1 Clustered Separated \$124,000
% of Unplatted Residential Lots	\$1,448,000	\$676,000
Cost Per Unit	\$60,333	\$28,167

⁶Development costs assume general site conditions and may vary depending upon the site, infrastructure costs, and any other exigent circumstances costs.

County Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, in conjunction with the Sandusky County Regional Planning Commission and public input, have established “Concept” and “Growth” areas, across the county that are best suited for selected types of development.

The criteria that were used in defining Sandusky County’s concept and growth areas consisted of the following factors:

- ✓ Proximity to developed areas, preferably incorporated areas, with similar land use types
- ✓ Proximity to county or municipal utilities
- ✓ Located on or near key transportation routes with good accessibility
- ✓ Documented and potential health and safety issues⁷
- ✓ No environmental constraints (floodplains, wetlands, other significant natural or “pristine” areas)
- ✓ Areas with increasing growth trends or areas with growth potential

These criteria were developed taking a holistic approach to the development, and do not override any specific methodology for development currently in place by any of the county’s political subdivisions.

Utilize Established Criteria in Assessing Development Proposals

Meets Land Use Objectives: 1

By establishing ascertainable criteria in rating development proposals, the respective actors involved with planning and development in Sandusky County will be able to identify the most promising development projects, and be able to attain several principles under which this plan is developed. In addition, these criteria should be used in developing new (or amending existing) zoning ordinances and resolutions in order to promote flexible development options within areas having the most development potential. The criteria should be as objective as possible, and utilized in a worksheet format (**see Development Proposal Ratings and Site Assessment Worksheet on Page 22-23**).

Encourage Residential Development Guidelines

Meets Land Use Objectives: 1,3,4,5

Residential land use for rural non-farm residential lots is the second largest land use in Sandusky County after agriculture. The dominant housing type in the rural portion of the unincorporated areas is a single family detached house on large lots - rural lots. The result of this trend is that more land (farmland) is being used to accommodate residential growth outside of the urban service boundary.

⁷The issues include ground water quality and supply, increased on-site sewage disposal systems, and increased curb cuts onto low capacity roads.

In the rural areas of the townships, home sites have been occurring mainly as rural non-farm lots scattered sporadically over the townships along existing roads, some of which may be heavier thoroughfare routes than others. If this trend continues, more farmland will be used for non-farm purposes and more traffic related injuries could occur.

The purpose of these types of residential guidelines is to establish clear policies for the creation of rural non-farm residential lots to further the efforts of farmland preservation within Sandusky County. There is a need for Sandusky County to develop a rational rural non-farm residential lot policy to protect the current agricultural areas of the County.

Rural residential developments can be expected to occur within some areas currently used for agricultural purposes. Almost all of these areas will be outside municipal boundaries. Recently, there has been a trend, where rural residential development has occurred where public water distribution systems are available. With this public utility (water) a modest increase in densities can be allowed.

The location of rural residential developments within the County should be considered on an individual, case-by-case basis by the respective local political subdivisions. Specifically, each case should consider the physical capability of the site to accommodate the proposed density and the existing patterns of the surrounding land uses. Rural residential development is encouraged to be located in areas that are not productive or outside the outer edge of active prime agricultural lands, to act as a buffer between the agricultural lands and denser residential development and should be discouraged (if possible) within an active agricultural area. The intrusion of rural residential development into these areas can be considered a direct conflict with the countywide goal of preserving prime agricultural land. In addition, rural residential development building sites, together with all residential development-building sites, should not be permitted within any area where building sites are subject to periodic flooding and/or within the regulatory flood plain.

Due to the non-agricultural orientation of most rural residential developments, the residents require locations with accessibility to employment centers and shopping facilities via an adequate road network. In order to maintain the efficiency of such a road network, strip-type development/low density sprawl of rural residents, requiring driveway access to existing roadways, should be discouraged.

With On-Site Well and Wastewater Disposal- The lot size of new rural residential developments should range between one and five acres per dwelling unit. However, since utility services may not be expected outside of the projected urban area, the density of each individual development should be guided by the overall capability of the entire site to accommodate on-site water supply and wastewater disposal for an extended period of time. A soil evaluation for septic tanks and a well test to evaluate the availability of groundwater should be completed by the Sandusky County Health District prior to the approval of any rural residential development in order to insure the public health and safety. In cases where no utility services are projected within the planning period, it is encouraged that the average density of proposed developments should not exceed one (1) dwelling unit per three (3) acres (gross density) with the smallest lot not being less than one (1) acre (or as specifically-determined by the Sandusky County Health Department or local zoning inspector).

With Public Water and On-Site Wastewater Disposal - The lot size of new rural residential developments with a public water supply should range between one and five acres per dwelling unit. Since public water is available, the density of each individual development should be guided by the capability of the site to accommodate on-site wastewater disposal and to maintain the rural character of the area. The Sandusky County Health District, prior to the approval of any rural residential development, should complete a soil evaluation for septic tanks and leach fields in order to insure the public health and safety. In cases where public water is available or will be provided, the average density of proposed developments should not exceed one dwelling unit per two and a half (2.5) acres (gross density) with the smallest lot not being less than one (1) acre.

An option for rural residential development could be the cluster/open space concept as illustrated on page 13-14 of this section. Cluster development is a design technique that concentrates building on a part of the site to allow the remaining land to be used for recreation, common open space, and preservation of environmentally sensitive features. Clustering permits a rural atmosphere to be preserved for the residents of both the development and the surrounding community. Open space areas can be preserved:

1. Along public roadways bordering the development, so that views from the roads are largely of open space, rather than ones of conventional acreage house lots lining the road; and/or
2. Along rivers, streams, and creeks and their associated flood plains and wetlands, to protect the natural functions of these water bodies; and/or
3. To protect agricultural land by clustering development of agricultural land in the forested/wooded areas of the farm or on the marginal farming areas of the site, thus allowing agricultural practices to continue in the open spaces; and/or
4. To protect woodlands by locating development in fields or along open areas, etc.

Cluster development can be used for a wide variety of open space preservation priorities. These priorities can vary according to the type of resources that are valued most highly by an individual community. Cluster development also has benefits for the developer. By clustering the development, the cost of infrastructure improvements, site clearing, and environmental mitigation's are generally decreased.

Urban Residential Requirements

For the purpose of the Comprehensive Plan, urban residential development has been divided into three density types: Low Density, Medium Density, and High Density. Residential uses include single family; multi-family (two, three and four family dwellings); condominiums; townhouses; and apartments. Gross density, which accounts for all of the land within the development, will be used to define the residential densities described in this section. This list of criteria will help guide the decision making process to determine the appropriate density of a specific parcel on a case-by-case basis. The density to be administered to a specific site should be determined by:

1. The density range provided by urban density classification (and the current zoning ordinances of each municipality);

2. Surrounding adjacent densities and land use(s);
3. Capacity of existing and proposed utilities;
4. Capacity of the existing/affected thoroughfares;
5. Consistent with community goals; and
6. Characteristics of the site:
 - ✓ Topography and natural buffers,
 - ✓ flood plains and wetlands,
 - ✓ unique geologic features and groundwater sensitivity, etc.
 - ✓ unique/threatened/endangered plant and animal species, and

Low Density - Low Density Urban Residential development is encouraged to occur at densities greater than one and three dwelling units per acre. The dominant dwelling type should be the single-family unit with occasional two-family development at appropriate locations. Cluster development maintaining an overall density of 1-3 dwelling units per acre is encouraged. Both public water supply and sanitary sewer must be available to the site.

Medium Density - Medium Density Urban Residential development describes areas allowing from three to six dwelling units per acre. The dominant dwelling type is encouraged to be the single-family unit and two-family, with multi-family development at the greater densities of this range. Cluster development maintaining an overall density of 3-6 dwelling units per acre is encouraged. Public water supply and sanitary sewer service shall be required for areas designated as Medium Density Urban Residential in the future.

High Density - The High Density Urban Residential category designates areas that are encouraged to develop at densities greater than six dwelling units per acre. The dominant dwelling types should be two-family and multiple-family structures; however, single family zero lot line structures are acceptable. Both public water supply and sanitary sewer service shall be required for areas designated as High Density Urban Residential.

Recommended Development Standards for Various Types of Residential Development in the Unincorporated Areas of Sandusky County

Land Use Type	Gross Density	Utility Services	Dominant Type of Dwelling Units
Rural Residential Development	1-5 acres per dwelling unit with average lot size of three (3) acres (depending on septic systems requirements)	On-site well and soil conditions necessary for on-site wastewater disposal	Single Family (detached)
Rural Residential Development (with public water)	1-5 acres per dwelling unit with average lot size of 2.5 acres (depending on septic systems requirements)	Public water supply is required and soil conditions necessary for on-site wastewater disposal	Single Family (detached)
Low Density Urban	1-3 dwelling units per acre	Public water supply and sanitary sewer are required	Single family (detached) Two family
Medium Density Urban	3-6 dwelling units per acre	Public water supply and sanitary sewer are required	Single family and two family. Multiple family at the greater densities of this range.
High Density	6 or more dwelling units per acre	Public water supply and sanitary sewer are required	Zero lot line single family, two family and multiple family

General Requirements - Urban residential development should be located on sites offering a diversity of both man-made and natural physical features. Public utility services must be provided for urban residential areas prior to development or as a function of the development. These services should possess adequate capacity, flow, and pressure for the type and density of the potential urban residential development.

Urban residential land uses should be adequately buffered from incompatible land uses such as industry, commercial centers, agricultural areas, or other potentially incompatible activities. Incompatibility should be determined by:

1. Differences in the intensity of each use;
2. The physical relationships among each use; and
3. The external effects generated by each use.

Urban residential areas of substantially different densities should also be adequately buffered by open space or transitional urban residential uses of an intermediate density. Urban residential development should preserve or create a completely unified neighborhood, having safe, convenient access to school(s), churches, park sites, and other community activity centers and encourage pedestrian and bike access. Small local shopping facilities oriented to the every day needs of the neighborhood residents may be encouraged at appropriate locations.

Promote Agricultural Easements to Conserve Prime Agricultural Resources

Meets Land Use Objectives: 4,5

An agricultural easement is the single most powerful legal tool for the permanent protection of farmland, allowing the owner to permanently protect the land from non-farm development without giving up ownership. Under federal tax law an agricultural easement is treated the same as a conservation easement. It is a flexible agreement between a landowner and a government entity. It is filed with the County Recorder and its terms are binding on future landowners as well as current ones. When a landowner donates an agricultural easement, he or she still owns the land, manages the land for farming, pays taxes on the property, and retains the right to sell it or pass it on to heirs.

If implemented according to IRS requirements, donated agricultural easements can also be treated as charitable gifts and can be deducted from income tax. The amount of the gift is the difference between the appraised value of the land before the easement, and the appraised value of the land after the easement is in place. Additionally, a permanently donated agricultural easement reduces the appraised value of a farm and can result in lower or zero estate taxes. There is also an added benefit of a second estate tax reduction of up to 40%, or a maximum of \$500,000.

The Ohio Department of Agriculture is enabled under Ohio law to receive donations of agricultural easements. This allows donors to be eligible for federal tax benefits, depending on compliance with applicable tax laws, and with regard to individual circumstances. Other organizations in Northwest Ohio that are also able to accept conservation easements to ensure land remains in agricultural use include the Black Swamp Conservancy.