



Plain Township Master Plan 2020 Update



Prepared By
The Stark County
Regional Planning
Commission

In Collaboration With
Plain Township

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About the Master Plan

In March of 2019, Plain Township contracted with the Stark County Regional Planning Commission to provide an update to the Township's Comprehensive Mini-Master Plan, which was created in 2012 by the Stark County Regional Planning Commission. The purpose of this plan is to provide Township officials with a framework to assist in future decision-making and programming regarding land use, transportation and capital improvements. This document is not a detailed action plan, suggesting step-by-step instructions for specific projects, but is instead a guiding document that aims to set the course for how the Township wants to grow and develop.

Why Update the Plan?

A comprehensive master plan is not meant to be a static, unchanging document. As conditions and trends change over time, the Township should be ready to modify policies and procedures to help ensure that the needs of the entire community are being met. In order to do this, the master plan should be re-evaluated and amended as necessary every five to ten years.

Plain Township is unique in the fact that even though it has changed dramatically over the last thirty years, transitioning from a rural community to a largely developed suburban township, it has managed to maintain a sense of small-town appeal that is somewhat atypical for larger townships. As the Township continues to grow and transform, its distinctive identity must be maintained and enhanced wherever possible so that it does not become indistinguishable from the neighboring cities and townships. The goal of Plain Township is to create a high quality of life for its residents. By having a plan in place that promotes sound, sustainable principles, Plain Township is better poised to be a truly successful, vibrant and livable community.

VISION, GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The Plain Township Board of Trustees, in collaboration with Township staff, the Stark County Regional Planning Commission, and members of the general public developed an updated long-range master plan for the Township, based on sustainable goals and objectives, to serve as a guide in decision-making by Township officials.



Introduction

The following chapters describe existing conditions and future goals and objectives within the Township in terms of population and housing, land use, transportation, economic development, and capital improvements. Identified trends since the 2012 Plan indicate a stable population with the potential for renewed growth, as suggested with the recent spike in new housing permits pulled. The majority of new housing permits were for lower-density, single-family development, which if not controlled, will further the on-going suburban sprawl pattern within the Township. One recent project to help address this trend was the rezoning of approximately 30 acres on Mt. Pleasant Street for a multi-family housing facility with a senior focus. Higher-density housing not only lessens the cost burden of infrastructure extensions, but it also provides more diversity in housing choice.

More housing options also support the Township's aging population, which is one demographic trend that is expected to continue for the foreseeable future. Proactively planning for the elderly population's needs will become increasingly necessary for the Township. The Township has also experienced a surge in commercial infill development since the last plan with the revitalization of Oakwood Square and the installation of The Venue shopping plaza. The redevelopment of these existing areas not only improved blemishes within the Township, but it also provided the local community with increased medical, food and entertainment options. These types of amenities and resources, along with a strong safety, infrastructure and recreation system are what will continue to set Plain Township apart from other jurisdictions. The goals and strategies of this Plan are designed to help further achieve this.

Plain Township Vision Statement

Plain Township is committed to providing a safe, convenient, affordable community offering excellent schools, services, business opportunities, recreation and infrastructure to create an exceptionally high quality of life.

LAND USE PLANNING GOALS

- 01 CONTINUE TO PRESERVE AND PROTECT THE NATURAL RESOURCES OF THE TOWNSHIP INCLUDING RIPARIAN CORRIDORS AND WETLANDS.
- 02 MAINTAIN A SOUND REVENUE BASE FOR THE TOWNSHIP THROUGH AN APPROPRIATE BALANCE OF DIFFERENT LAND USES.
- 03 CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN AN INCLUSIVE AND QUALITY PUBLIC PARK AND RECREATION SYSTEM.
- 04 PROVIDE A VARIETY OF HOUSING TYPES, DENSITIES, AND VALUES.
- 05 ENCOURAGE DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS THAT INCLUDE DEDICATION OF QUALITY OPEN SPACE AND PRESERVE GREEN SPACE.
- 06 CONTINUE TO MEET FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR STORM WATER MANAGEMENT.
- 07 PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES SUCH AS INFILL AND MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT IN APPROPRIATE AREAS.
- 08 ADOPT AND AMEND ZONING REGULATIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE TOWNSHIP'S MASTER PLAN.
- 09 EVALUATE FEASIBILITY OF MODIFYING EXISTING PROPERTY MAINTENANCE CODE AND/OR ESTABLISHING LANDSCAPING REGULATIONS.
- 10 STUDY USE OF TOWNSHIP-OWNED PROPERTIES AND FACILITIES AS CONDITIONS EVOLVE.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT GOALS

- 01 COORDINATE WITH THE STARK COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT AND SANITARY ENGINEER'S DEPARTMENT ON SANITARY SEWER PROJECTS TO CONTINUE PHASING OUT PACKAGE TREATMENT PLANTS AND TO ADDRESS FAILING SEPTIC SYSTEMS.
- 02 CONTINUE DEVELOPING A FOCAL POINT FOR PLAIN TOWNSHIP THROUGH STREETSCAPING AND GATEWAY IDENTIFICATION MEASURES (LOCATIONS INCLUDE OAKWOOD SQUARE AND/OR VETERANS PARK/GLEN OAK COMMUNITY CAMPUS).
- 03 CONTINUE TO PURSUE FUNDING OPTIONS FOR STORM WATER AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS THROUGH STATE AND FEDERAL FUNDING
- 04 CONTINUE WITH TRAFFIC CONTROL PROJECTS AND ROAD IMPROVEMENTS AS RECOMMENDED IN THE ROAD DEPARTMENT FIVE YEAR PLAN.
- 05 CONTINUE TO EXPAND PARK PROGRAMMING OPTIONS AND PARK DESIGN FEATURES GEARED TOWARD THE ELDERLY AND DISABLED.
- 06 THROUGH THE TOWNSHIP'S PARK SYSTEM, IMPROVE AND EXPAND PEDESTRIAN WALKWAYS AND TRAILS TO CREATE A MORE CONNECTED, WALKABLE COMMUNITY.

SERVICE GOALS

- 01 CONTINUE TO COORDINATE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT WITH APPROPRIATE EXPANSION OR CONSOLIDATION OF TOWNSHIP SERVICES IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN QUALITY SERVICE LEVELS. THIS SHOULD INCLUDE FUNDING, PERSONNEL, EQUIPMENT, AND FACILITIES.
- 02 CONTINUE TO PROMOTE A STRONG AND SAFE COMMUNITY IDENTITY THROUGH PLAIN TOWNSHIP'S POLICING SERVICES, POSSIBLY THROUGH NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH GROUPS AND/OR THE UTILIZATION OF COMMUNITY-MINDED MOBILE DEVICE APPLICATIONS SUCH AS NEXTDOOR OR NIXLE.
- 03 CONTINUE DIALOGUE WITH ADJACENT POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS AND AGENCIES TO CREATE PARTNERSHIPS TO EVALUATE AND IMPLEMENT REGIONALIZATION OF SAFETY, MAINTENANCE, AND RECREATIONAL SERVICES AND FLEETS.
- 04 CONTINUE TO EXPLORE CREATIVE FUNDING MECHANISMS TO PROVIDE REVENUE FOR THE PLAIN TOWNSHIP PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT.
- 05 CONTINUE TO EVALUATE ALL EMPLOYEE CLASSIFICATIONS THROUGH A NEEDS ASSESSMENT.
- 06 CONTINUE TO DECREASE THE TOWNSHIP'S INSURANCE SERVICES OFFICE (ISO) RATING.
- 07 CONTINUE TO FURTHER DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN THE QUALITY OF PLAIN PARKS.
- 08 CONTINUE TO PARTNER WITH PLAIN LOCAL SCHOOLS TO OFFER EDUCATIONAL, CULTURAL, AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES TO THE COMMUNITY, AND HELP "BRAND" THE COMMUNITY.
- 09 DEVELOP A PROACTIVE MARKETING PLAN TO PROMOTE AND "SELL" PLAIN TOWNSHIP.
- 10 CONTINUE TO EXPLORE INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS AND COST-EFFECTIVE TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE SERVICES AND REDUCE EXPENSES.
- 11 CONTINUE TO EXPAND COLLABORATIVE DISCUSSIONS WITH VARIOUS COMMUNITY ENTITIES SUCH AS THE LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT, BUSINESSES, AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS TO DEVELOP PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS.

DEMAND CAPACITY ANALYSIS

A demand capacity analysis attempts to balance and compare forecasts of change with the capability of a community to accommodate that change. For Plain Township, the change indicator is population. The following section discusses growth scenarios and the capacity of the Township to accommodate that growth.

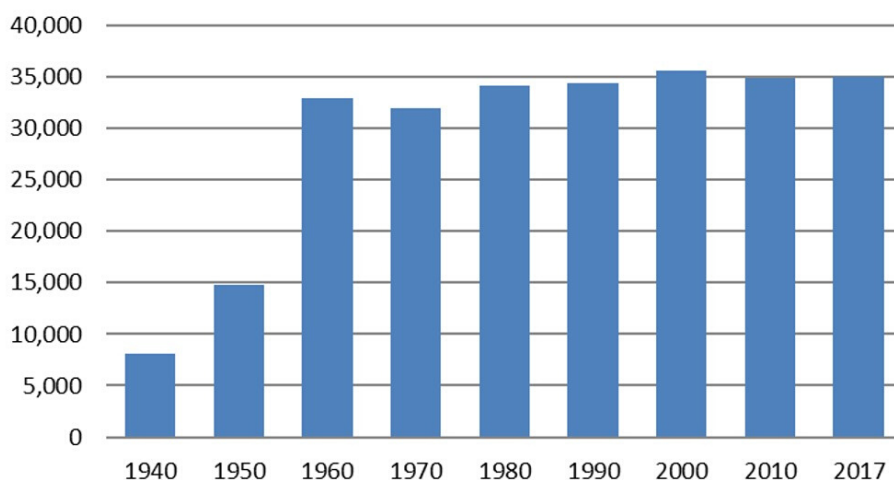
Population Growth

As the chart below illustrates, Plain Township experienced a population boom during the 1950's. Since that time, the population has fluctuated just slightly. From 1970 to 2000, the Township experienced a steady population increase; however, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2010 population count, the population decreased slightly by 1.8% between 2000-2010. This decrease was somewhat unusual for Plain Township, but not altogether surprising considering the ongoing economic recession of the region at that time.

The latest American Community Survey (ACS) 2013-2017 5-Year Estimates show that the population has changed very minimally since that time. Public school enrollment figures from 2010 to 2018 also reflect a similar pattern with enrollment increasing by approximately 76 students between that same period. The 2020 U.S. Decennial Census will be underway shortly after the writing of this plan, and so the findings from that population count will need to be factored into recommendations from this plan.

Due to 2020 U.S. Census data not being available at the time of this plan's creation, 2010 Census data was used where American Community Survey (ACS) data was found to be less suitable. The map on the following page, which utilizes 2010 Census data, demonstrates the concentration of population per Census block. Pockets of high population densities largely correlate with areas of higher numbers of multi-family units or older neighborhoods with smaller lot sizes.

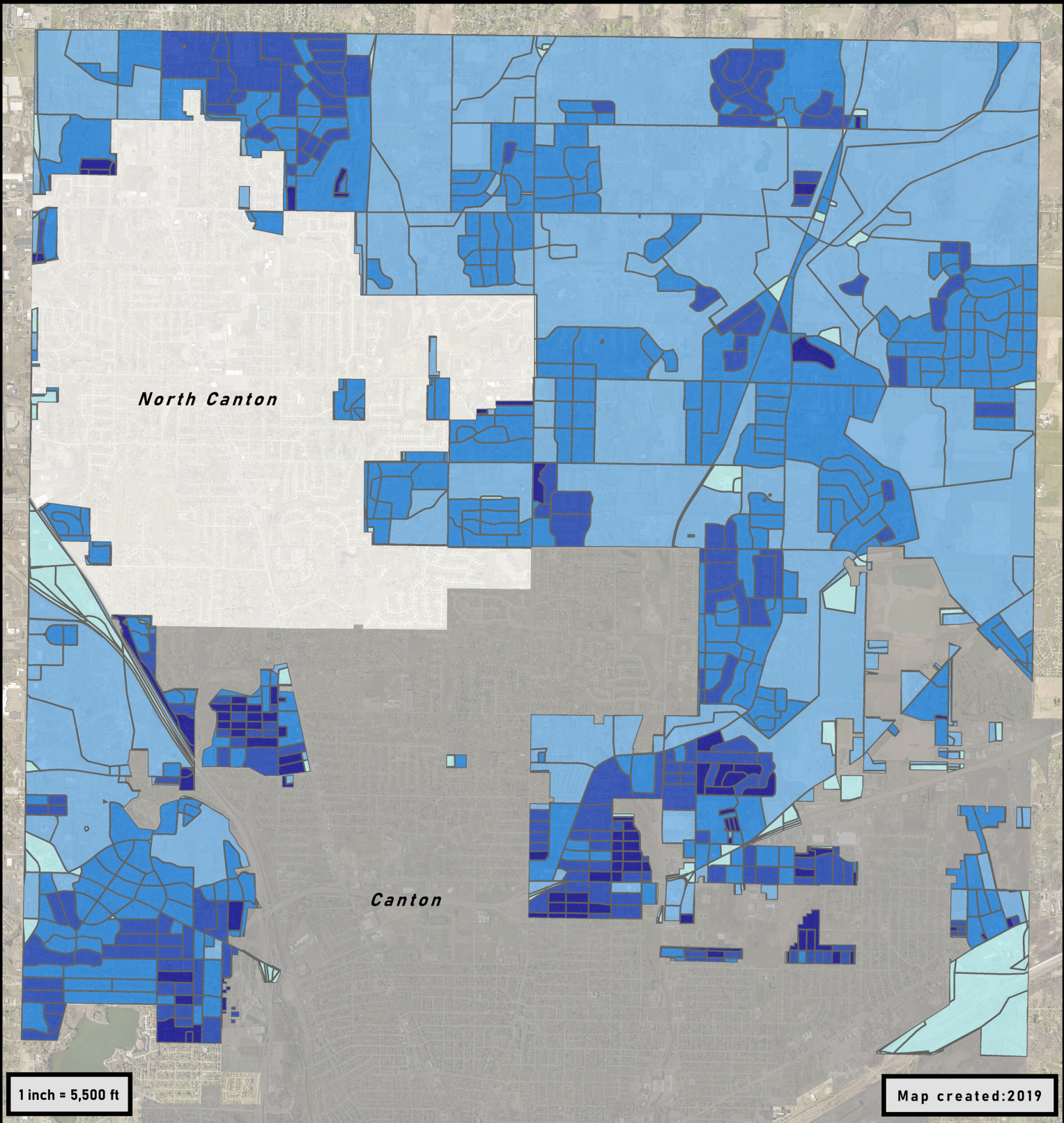
Population 1940-2017



| | 1940 | 1950 | 1960 | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 | 2010 | 2017 |
|-----------------------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Population | 8,096 | 14,821 | 32,931 | 31,945 | 34,084 | 34,318 | 35,543 | 34,900 | 34,967 |
| Percent Change | | 83.1% | 122.2% | -3.0% | 6.7% | 0.7% | 3.6% | -1.8% | 0.2% |
| Annual Rate of Growth | | 8.3% | 12.2% | -0.3% | 0.7% | 0.1% | 0.4% | -0.2% | 0.0% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and the 2013-2017 American Community Survey

Plain Township Population Density



1 inch = 5,500 ft

Map created: 2019

Population Density = People Per Square Mile



- 0
- 1 - 1,250
- 1,251 - 3,200
- 3,201 - 6,000
- 6,001 or Greater

Description: Population Density is the 2010 population of each block divided by its area.

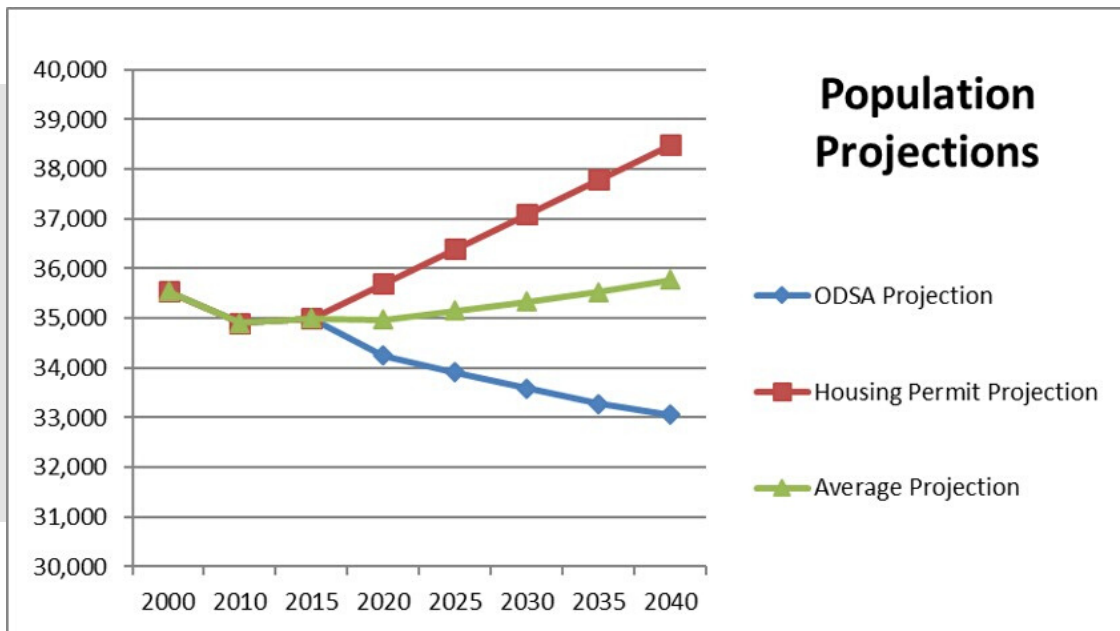


POPULATION PROJECTIONS

The many variables at work in Plain Township and the County as a whole make projecting future population challenging. Therefore, three different projection methods are presented below for the purposes of this plan.

The first projection uses housing permit data to predict how many additional housing units will be built over the next twenty years. Future population is calculated by multiplying the number of projected housing units by the number of persons per household (2.29 according to the 2010 Census). This projection assumes that development will continue at its current rate of approximately 305 new housing permits over a five year period (based on number of permits issued since beginning of 2015).

As the chart below illustrates, this results in a straight-line trend, which suggests a moderate building boom, but at a slightly reduced rate than originally projected in the previous plan. This projection yields a population of 37,088 in 2030 and 38,485 in 2040. Also worth mentioning with this projection method is the fact that the number of housing permits pulled during this 5-year period is higher than that of the previous five years. In addition, the number of new permits pulled in 2019 (84) was higher than that of every year since 2005, and according to the permit data, that equaled 17% of total new housing starts in all of Stark County for that year. While still too early to tell, this may perhaps signify a pending population growth spurt on the horizon for the Township. It should be noted, however, that this projection does not account for the out-migration of current residents and so actual results may be lower.



| | 2000 | 2010 | 2015 | 2020 | 2025 | 2030 | 2035 | 2040 |
|---------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Housing Permit Projection | 35,543 | 34,900 | 34,993 | 35,691 | 36,390 | 37,088 | 37,787 | 38,485 |
| ODSA Projection | 35,543 | 34,900 | 34,993 | 34,244 | 33,912 | 33,585 | 33,277 | 33,062 |
| Average Projection | 35,543 | 34,900 | 34,993 | 34,967 | 35,151 | 35,337 | 35,532 | 35,773 |

Sources: Plain Township, 2010 Census, 2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Ohio Development Services Agency (ODSA)

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

The second projection is derived from the current percentage of Stark County’s population that lives in Plain Township. According to the 2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (most recent available), Plain Township held 9.3% of Stark County’s population in 2017, the same percentage it held in 2010. Assuming this share of the county population remains stable, a Township population projection can be derived from a county projection. The Ohio Development Services Agency (ODSA) provides county population projections based on current Census data. The most recent Stark County profile report predicts a 2030 population of 361,130, which results in a Plain Township population of 33,585. The County has continued to experience a population loss over the last few decades, with the legacy cities of Alliance, Canton and Massillon experiencing the brunt of it.

Recent data shows that Plain Township’s population has maintained relative stability over the last few years, and therefore, the projection based off of the Ohio Development Services Agency data may be lower for Plain Township than the actual results will show. The third projection is an average of the two previous projections. This blends the two methods together, accounting for the historic slower growth rates and the modest building increase recently. While population growth is not likely to increase as much as the housing data projection predicts, growth is expected to increase slightly over the next ten years. Plain Township’s population is likely to fall close to the predicted figure of 35,337 in 2030. This would bring the Township nearer to the population level it was at in 2000. As noted earlier on, while still too early to decide, the recent increase in new housing permits may indicate a more positive outlook for growth in the Township in the coming years.

LAND USE CAPACITY

The adjacent table illustrates the current land use breakdown in Plain Township. The data was derived using codes assigned by the County Auditor to every parcel within the County. In the table, the Open Land category also includes land uses such as Agricultural Vacant Land, CAUV Agricultural Vacant Land, and Mines/Quarries. These uses are generally included in either the Single-family/Agricultural and Industrial categories; however, they were moved into the Open Land category in this table for better representation purposes as they are all classified as technically “vacant” and have the potential to be built upon in some capacity. The Plain Township Land Use Map included (on page 17) does not reflect this change; instead, the Agricultural Vacant Land and CAUV Agricultural Vacant Land are shown as part of the Single-family/Agricultural category and the Mines/Quarries are mapped as Industrial.

Acres by Land Use

| Land Use | Acres | Percentage of Total |
|----------------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Single-family/Agricultural | 1,977 | 16% |
| Single-family Residential | 6,128 | 50% |
| Two-family Residential | 152 | 1% |
| Multi-family Residential | 291 | 2% |
| Public Service | 1,087 | 9% |
| Business | 814 | 7% |
| Office | 48 | 0% |
| Industrial | 210 | 2% |
| Recreational | 232 | 2% |
| Open Land | 1,270 | 10% |
| Total | 12,209 | 100% |

Source: Stark County Auditor, 2019

Acres by Zoning District

| Zoning District | Total Acres | Percentage of Total |
|---|---------------|---------------------|
| R-R Rural Residential | 2,744 | 23% |
| R-1 Single Family Residential | 6,484 | 53% |
| R-1A Single Family Residential | 78 | 1% |
| R-2 One and Two Family Residential | 1,184 | 10% |
| R-3 Low Density Multi-Family Residential | 346 | 3% |
| R-4 High Density Multi-Family Residential | 1 | 0% |
| R-5 Residential Condominium (PUD) | 0 | 0% |
| R-6 Planned Unit Development (PUD) | 0 | 0% |
| S-1 Suburban Office | 41 | 0% |
| B-1 Neighborhood Business | 70 | 1% |
| B-2 General Business | 581 | 5% |
| I-1 Light Industrial | 231 | 2% |
| I-2 General Industrial | 419 | 3% |
| TOTAL | 12,179 | 100% |

(*total is slightly different from land use table due to different mapping methods)

Source: Stark County Regional Planning Commission, Plain Township, 2019

The table above illustrates the current breakdown of acreage by each zoning district in Plain Township. The table below analyzes the land available for development by zoning district within Plain Township. This data is derived from land use mapping, tax assessments and field surveys to determine different land uses.

Land Available for Development by Zoning District

| Zoning District | Total Acres | Min. Lot Size (sq. ft.) | Lot Capacity | Population |
|---|----------------|-------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| R-R Rural Residential | 409.6 | 25,000 | 713.69 | 1,634 |
| R-1 Single Family Residential | 599.37 | 23,000 | 1044.34 | 2,392 |
| R-1A Single Family Residential | 47.29 | 16,000 | 82.4 | 189 |
| R-2 One and Two Family Residential | 129.8 | 12,600 | 226.16 | 518 |
| R-3 Low Density Multi-Family Residential | 70.37 | 12,000 | 12.61 | 281 |
| R-4 High Density Multi-Family Residential | | 11,300 | \ | \ |
| R-5 Residential Condominium (PUD) | | | \ | \ |
| R-6 Planned Unit Development (PUD) | | | \ | \ |
| R-7 Planned Mixed-Use Development (PMUD) | | | \ | \ |
| S-1 Suburban Office | 5.02 | 20,000 | 8.75 | 20 |
| B-1 Neighborhood Business | 9.15 | 20,000 | 15.94 | 37 |
| B-2 General Business | 31.29 | 15,000 | 54.52 | 125 |
| I-1 Light Industrial | 21.3 | 20,000 | 37.11 | 85 |
| I-2 General Industrial | 60.23 | 20,000 | 104.94 | 240 |
| TOTAL | 1383.42 | | | 5,520 |

Source: Plain Township Zoning, Stark County Auditor, 2019

The previous plan adjusted the acreage available for development by 17% from the total amount of land in each zoning district to account for environmental constraints, land consumed by public right-of-ways and other site planning problems. With more advanced technology, mapping tools were used to remove the acreage consumed by public right-of-way and any acreage within the 100 year flood plain. The resulting acreage was then used to calculate the lot capacity and population figures.

Minimum lot size is taken from the current Plain Township Zoning Resolution. Certain zoning districts provide for different minimum lot sizes depending on what kind of construction is proposed and when the lot went on record (lot sizes were changed in 2005). To account for a possible blending of building types in these zoning districts, this analysis averages the different lot sizes together where more than one minimum lot size is provided for in a district.

Lot Capacity refers to any building that could be constructed in each respective zoning district. For example, in the I-1 district, lot capacity refers to industrial buildings; in the R-1 district, it refers to the number of houses that could be constructed. When all of the potential developable area within the Township is accounted for, an additional 5,520 people could be accommodated at maximum build out. This is using the 2010 Census Data of 2.29 persons per household.

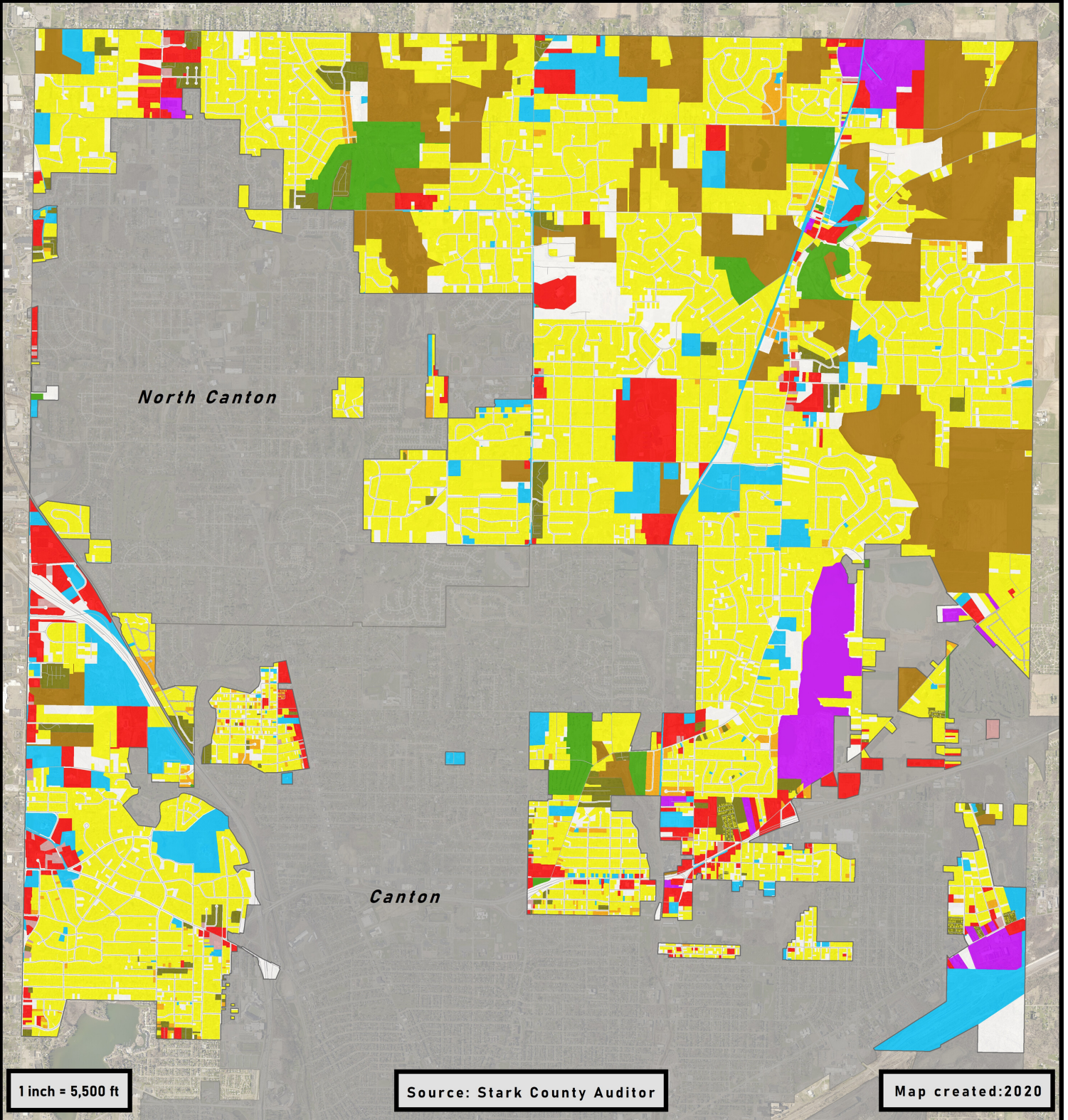
The previous plan showed that there were over 1,400 acres available for development and that the Township could accommodate an additional 6,774 people at maximum build-out. Since the last plan, there have been several factors that have played a role in the acreage available for build-out. These include new tracts being created through the subdivision platting and property split processes; changing of various zoning districts through map amendments;

site improvement development for single-family, multi-family, commercial and industrial properties; annexations; and changes in use classification through the Auditor's Office.

In the last 17 years, the Township has lost over 2,400 acres to development, 100 acres in the last 7 years. While 100 acres is not typically identified as a considerable amount for that time period, the population for the Township has not increased at a comparable rate, meaning that the Township continues to experience suburban sprawl, but at a slower rate than previous decades. However, if not controlled and development continues to pick back up, which recent plan review figures indicate that it may, the Township could lose all remaining developable land in the next 5-10 years.

The available land for build-out is similar to the previous plan, with the majority of land available for development in the Township being zoned for relatively low-density residential uses. Because of current zoning and subdivision regulations, leaving this zoning in place almost guarantees a standard development pattern, which may or may not be sensitive to environmental constraints, rural character, service provision, and other needs of the Township. Several options exist for a more sustainable form of growth and development, including low-impact development, higher-density provisions, smaller lot sizes, and incentives for developing in areas already served with public water and sewer. Changes to the Township's Zoning Resolution, such as those listed above, can help to support continued growth while simultaneously facilitating the preservation of vital open space.

Plain Township Land Use



1 inch = 5,500 ft

Source: Stark County Auditor

Map created: 2020

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
|  Single-Family Agricultural |  Multi-Family Residential |  Industrial |
|  Single-Family Residential |  Business |  Public Service |
|  Two-Family Residential |  Office |  Vacant Land |
| |  Recreation | |



Description: Land use is derived from parcel based use codes created by the Stark County Auditor.



ZONING & DEVELOPMENT

Since much of the land in Plain Township has already developed with a variety of suburban growth from Canton and North Canton, achieving a defining character for the Township, along with environmental protection goals as identified in this plan, will be a challenge. In many places, Plain Township is indistinguishable from these cities as development on either side of the corporation lines is identical to development on the other side. This conventional suburban development pattern has somewhat eroded the Township's separate identity from the two cities. With a population of approximately 35,000, Plain Township has left much of its rural past behind.

As a result, it is more critical than ever that Plain Township enact and/or further promote development policies and more proactive zoning controls to ensure the remaining land in the Township is developed in a way which is sensitive to environmental constraints and maintains a balanced tax base. This includes tailoring zoning controls to help preserve the character of existing neighborhoods while also guiding the appropriate design of new development.

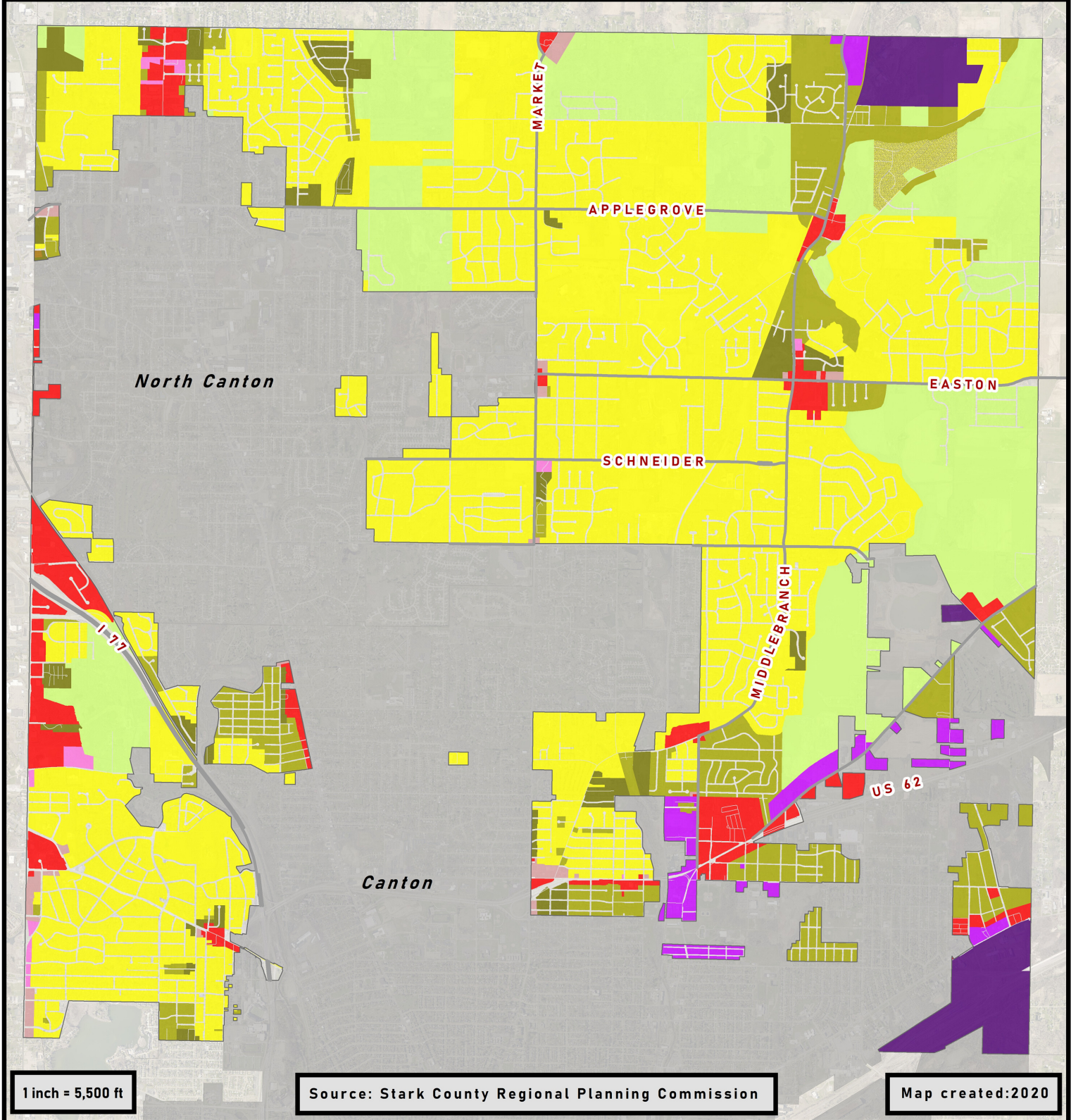


Mt. Pleasant Developable Land

In addition, innovative measures need to be taken to create more housing opportunities for all of Plain Township's population, especially its expanding elderly populations. One innovative measure that the Township has recently undertaken is the creation of the R-7 Planned Mixed-Use Development (PMUD) District. This district, which is discussed in greater detail in later sections, allows for a variety of housing densities to exist within a single area, thereby allowing residents to transition between homes as their lifestyles change. Another option includes partnering with a developer(s) to create more affordable housing options, including rental housing. The Village of East Canton and Osnaburg Township are currently pursuing a similar project in their community that is aimed at providing affordable housing for the elderly population to help those residents remain in the area.

The most important tool Plain Township can use to guide development is the existing Zoning Resolution. While much of the detailed site plan review takes place at the county level, final authority over what land uses are allowable rests with the Township in terms of zoning approvals. Using this authority effectively, as well as coordinating closely with the Stark County Regional Planning Commission and other local regulatory agencies, will be vital to preserving important environmental assets and remaining rural characteristics of the Township, and overseeing a sustainable development pattern that meets the needs of all residents and businesses.

Plain Township Zoning



1 inch = 5,500 ft

Source: Stark County Regional Planning Commission

Map created: 2020

| | | |
|--|--|---|
|  R-R Rural Residential |  R-4 High Density Multi-Family Residential |  B-1 Neighborhood Business |
|  R-1 Single-Family Residential |  R-5 Residential Condo Planned Unit Development |  B-2 General Business |
|  R-1A Single-Family Residential |  R-6 Planned Unit Development |  I-1 Light Industrial |
|  R-2 One and Two-Family Residential |  R-7 Planned Mixed Use Development |  I-2 General Industrial |
|  R-3 Low Density and Multi-Family Residential |  S-1 Suburban Office | |



Description: Current zoning districts for Plain Township.
Disclaimer: This map is for representational purposes only; please contact Plain Township for official zoning map.



RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Of the residentially-developed land within the Township, over 90% of it is currently low-density, single-family residential. To achieve social equity, communities need to have a blend of housing options for all ages, incomes and abilities. Instead of developing traditional pods of multi-family dwellings in defined neighborhoods, the Township should promote a more balanced development pattern where a mixture of single-, two- and multi-family housing units are permitted within a single neighborhood. In 2016, the Township created the R-7 Planned Mixed-Use Development (PMUD) District to assist with this. While no tracts are currently zoned R-7, more proactive marketing of this district may be warranted. As noted previously, a mixed-use development district allows for a blend of housing that would create a neighborhood that is not only socially balanced, but would also allow residents to more easily transition between homes as their stages in life change. For instance, over 20% of the Township's population is 65 and older; if you add in those 55 and older, the percentage jumps to 35%, a modest increase of approximately 2% in the last 7 years. While the percentage of adults over 55 has not changed significantly over the last 10 years, 35% of the population is a large portion of residents that will likely be needing some type of lifestyle modification in the next 10 years.

As the average age of the community continues to increase, housing options for elderly adults need to be incorporated into any future planning efforts. This need was also expressed in the community survey. In 2019, a significant stride was made in this direction with the rezoning of property on Mt. Pleasant Street for multi-family senior housing.

83% OF COMMUNITY SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

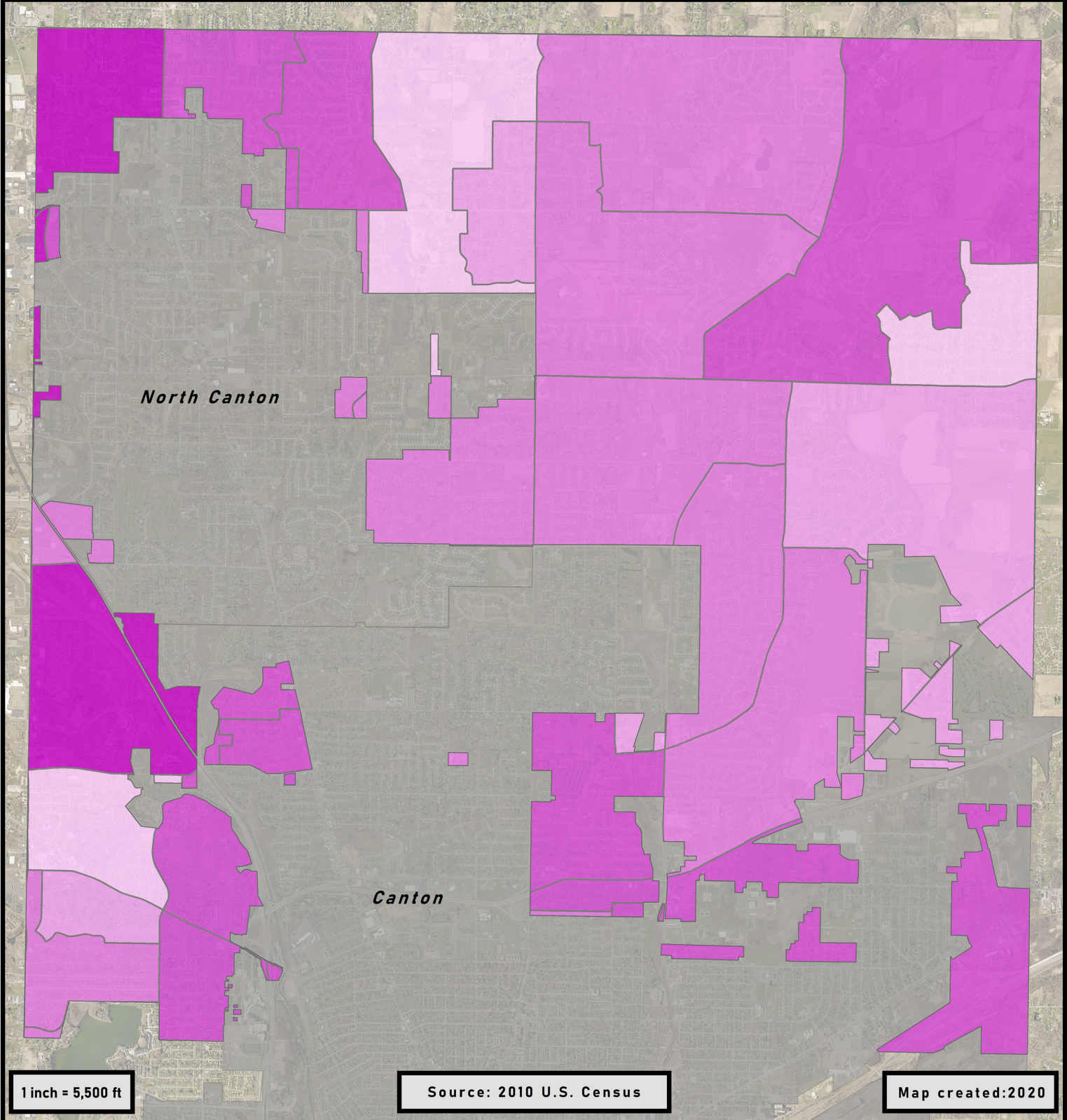
Agreed/strongly agreed that Plain Township is a safe place to live.

This project is expected to create 177 single-story apartment units. While this project will be very beneficial to seniors locally, additional multi-family units in more walkable parts of the Township (so that residents do not have to wholly rely on a vehicle to get to places like grocery stores and pharmacies) is another design concept to encourage when analyzing future development possibilities.

As plans for the Oakwood Square Plaza continue to develop, the Township may want to consider multi-family housing development within a mixed-use environment at that site, or possibly in vacant areas near it.

In terms of residential development, current economic conditions at the national level suggest a continuing trend towards an increasing number of people preferring to rent versus owning a home, particularly the younger workforce and the aging population. The Township has begun taking steps to accommodate this locally with the Redwood development. As this trend continues, the Township should continue to work towards ensuring that affordable, yet high-quality housing options are available in the community for both renters and homebuyers. The following section offers a few sample approaches to help achieve this.

Plain Township Rental Occupancy



1 inch = 5,500 ft

Source: 2010 U.S. Census

Map created: 2020

Rental Occupancy Percentage



3% - 5%

6% - 10%

11% - 25%

26% - 50%

51% - 75%

Description: Rental Occupancy is the percentage of occupied rental units present in each block group.



INFILL DEVELOPMENT & NEIGHBORHOOD ENHANCEMENT

Although not back to its pre-2008 recession rate, current economic conditions show that new housing development has moderately increased within the township in the last 3 years. While accommodating new construction, the township should also continue working on improving existing residential areas, particularly through infill development. Infill development essentially means “filling in the gaps” in existing neighborhoods either through new construction on vacant lots, improvement of dilapidated homes, or demolition and reuse of blighted tracts. Improving existing neighborhoods is the more sustainable approach as these neighborhoods generally have the necessary infrastructure already in place, whereas new allotments typically require the extension of services into outlying areas. Extending infrastructure and community services into undeveloped areas can create a financial burden on local governments if not planned for accordingly, whereas infill development can reduce those financial burdens as once-empty properties are now contributing to the tax base.

80% OF COMMUNITY SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Agreed/strongly agreed that there is a good variety of housing opportunities available in Plain Township.

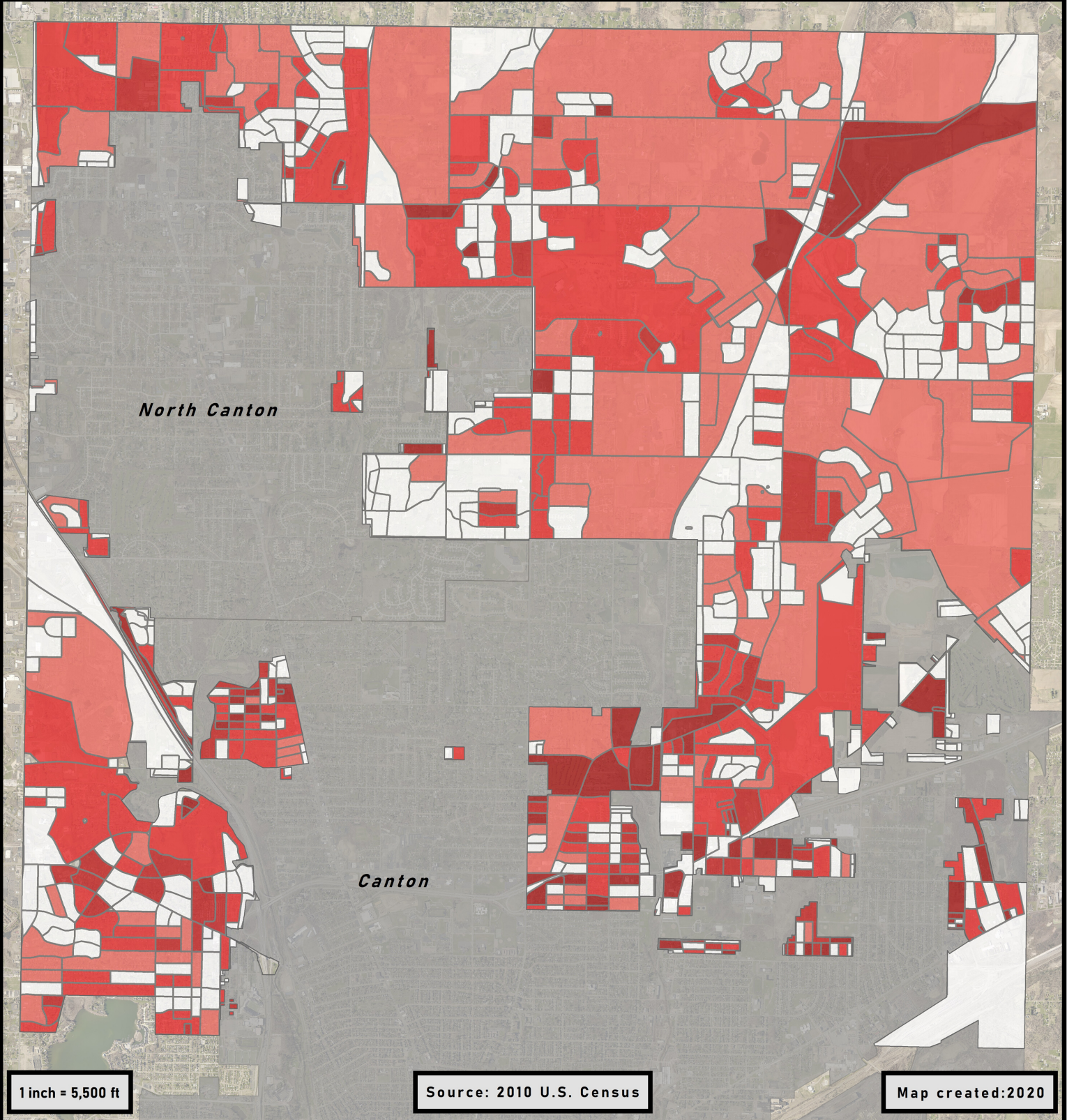
73% OF COMMUNITY SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Agreed/strongly agreed that the cost-of-living in Plain Township is affordable in comparison with the rest of Stark County.

By decreasing the vacancy rate in neighborhoods, this also greatly helps to reduce the perception of neglect and danger in these areas. The following map identifies the breakdown of vacant housing per Census block. The darker-shaded areas signify higher concentrations of vacant housing. While vacancy does not necessarily indicate blight, these are areas that the Township will want to assess and monitor more closely.

To assist with infill development and neighborhood improvement overall, the Township should continue utilizing programs and services offered through the Stark County Land Reutilization Corporation (aka Stark County Land Bank). At the time of this plan, demolition and property acquisition programs were available to communities. The County also runs various housing rehabilitation grant and loan programs for qualified, low-to-moderate income homeowners, which should be promoted by the Township as a way to help stabilize neighborhoods.

Plain Township Vacant Housing



1 inch = 5,500 ft

Source: 2010 U.S. Census

Map created: 2020

Vacant Housing Percentage Per Block



- Zero Vacancy
- 1% - 5%
- 6% - 10%
- 11% - 15%
- 16% - 35%

Description: Vacant Housing Percentage is the vacant housing divided by the total housing units in that block.





COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Land use has changed slightly since the 2012 Plan. Land use categories that have increased since 2012 are business and single-family residential at approximately 2% each. Categories that have decreased include agricultural at almost 2%, and higher-density residential and recreation uses, at approximately 1%. Approximately 80% of the developed land in Plain Township is being used for residential and recreational purposes. That leaves approximately 20% of the developed land being used for commercial, industrial, and public service uses. It is worth mentioning that less than 1% of the current land uses are classified as office use, based on the Auditor's land use classification codes. As noted above, these percentages are largely unchanged since the 2012 Plan. The typical land use breakdown most communities strive for is at least 30% geared towards some type of business or industrial land use. This breakdown contributes to a more balanced fiscal picture in that the property tax revenue generated from commercial and industrial uses offsets the costs for serving residential development. Usually, the tax revenue generated from a residential property does not equal the cost of serving that property with infrastructure and services.

According to the American Farmland Trust, for every \$1 earned in revenue, it costs an average of \$1.16 to provide public services to residential properties, whereas it only costs \$0.30 for every \$1 earned in revenue to provide public services to commercial and industrial properties (for agricultural properties, it only costs \$0.35 for every \$1 earned in revenue). In other words, for every \$1,000 earned in revenue from a residential property, it costs the Township an average of \$1,160 to provide services to it. This situation is not at all unique to Plain Township. Generally, residential development cannot pay for itself if it is taxed at a rate acceptable to residents. This is why it is important for communities to maintain a proper commercial/residential land use ratio. Commercial development requires fewer community services than residential uses, which puts less of a strain on a community's service capacity. At the same time, commercial development generates far more tax revenue than residential development. This revenue offsets the cost of providing services to residential development.

One of the goals of this plan is to "Maintain a sound revenue base for Plain Township through an appropriate balance of land uses." In order to accomplish this, the Township needs to continue taking a strong role in encouraging redevelopment of existing commercial and residential areas, and planning for new development in areas where the appropriate infrastructure is already in place. Any new development should also be encouraged to adopt conservation design guidelines to help preserve remaining open space and reduce the demand on public services.

EXISTING COMMERCIAL AREAS

Redevelopment of existing commercial areas should be emphasized before creating new ones. Infrastructure is already in place for commercial uses in developed areas, and land use patterns have adjusted to a commercial presence. Encouraging redevelopment of existing commercial properties would be an efficient use of the Township's land and public infrastructure resources. An excellent example of this can be seen in the recent redevelopment of the expansive commercial site at Everhard and Whipple Avenue, now known as The Venue at Belden shopping plaza. This intersection node, which was one of the four commercial areas recommended for redevelopment in the 2012 Plan, underwent a complete renovation since then: a massive commercial building was transformed into a shopping plaza that is almost at full occupancy and the intersection underwent a multi-million dollar upgrade to improve driving conditions. As the area continues to develop, the Township may want to consider higher-density residential development for adjacent tracts to create a more walkable, live/work type environment.

Three additional commercial nodes with potential for increased development or redevelopment were identified in the previous plan. While various levels of work have taken place at all three locations, these areas continue to be recommended for further evaluation through this planning process, as well as a fourth area being identified for potential improvements. Each of these areas contains a mixture of uses and will present different challenges for commercial development. These nodes, plus one new addition to the plan this time, are:

- **Whipple Avenue from Avondale to I-77**
- **US 62 from Market to Harmont**
- **Fulton/Hills & Dales corridor**
- **Oakwood Square Plaza area**

Whipple Avenue is the western most part of Plain Township and primarily acts as the dividing line between Plain and Jackson Township. Although already a commercial corridor, some areas along this road have fallen into disrepair. On the west side of the roadway in Jackson Township, commercial development appears to be faring slightly better, but with new development navigating towards Portage Street, competing with that area will be a primary objective for Whipple Avenue redevelopment. The Township should continue to pursue commercial opportunities in this area, while also looking for ways to “connect” this side of I-77 to the rest of Plain Township. The feeling of being isolated from the other parts of the Township was a common issue raised through the community survey. One way to help reduce the feeling of isolation is through branding efforts; in other words, utilizing logos, signage, art displays, landscape improvements, or other marketing strategies to better identify the area as part of Plain Township.

The Transportation section of this plan discusses the idea of corridor planning. Whipple Avenue, including the Everhard Road intersection, has the potential for this type of focused project plan. Encouraging commercial redevelopment (with possible mixed-use concepts as described later) along Whipple Avenue creates a potential for establishing a vibrant mixed-use corridor in this area. Writing a corridor plan for Whipple Avenue would be an excellent method to bring together the various tools of land use planning, zoning and development regulations, transportation planning, and economic development activities.

EXISTING COMMERCIAL AREAS

The **US 62** corridor from Market to Harmont also consists of a predominantly commercial land use pattern. This area is part of a safety and congestion study by ODOT, which if combined with access management and beautification efforts, could considerably enhance the appeal of this corridor for commercial redevelopment. There are a couple of existing economic development agreements between the Township and the City of Canton for a few locations along US 62, which the Township should continue to utilize and promote in any new annexation efforts by the City to help preserve Township land. The Township may also want to consider collaborating with local officials to pursue land banking options along this corridor as a way to help guide new development in a controlled, more sustainable manner.

The **Fulton Road/Hills & Dales corridor** is a new corridor added into the updated plan. Part of the reasoning behind its addition is due to the recent changes surrounding the Pro Football Hall of Fame (HOF), namely the creation of the HOF Village. This "Village", which is being compared to a small Disney World when complete, will have exponential impacts on the surrounding land use and development of the area if its development plays out. The Township will want to be cognizant of new developments within the Village and how they may impact their community.



Fulton Road Corridor

The Township should continue to carefully balance the goals of attracting commercial development with community character and design standards. Attracting development does not necessarily mean that the Township should accept any and all proposed projects. Two of the plan's broad goals are to build a stronger identity for Plain Township and create a better quality of life. Both of these can, in part, be implemented by encouraging higher-quality and more sustainable development.

The Easton Street/Middlebranch intersection currently consists of the Township's government center, a few commercial uses and the **Oakwood Square Plaza**. Since the 2012 Plan, considerable redevelopment has taken place at Oakwood Square, including a medical facility, drugstore, and food/entertainment establishments, which have greatly helped to correct a major problem area for the Township.

EXISTING COMMERCIAL AREAS

Along with a stronger community identity, one of the survey findings was a strong desire for a “town hub/center” in the Township where people could assemble for a common interest, including outdoor festivals and other entertainment activities. With the redevelopment of Oakwood Square, this creates a possibility for this site to serve as a central focal point for the community as it is a large, open area surrounded by multiple venues to partner with, including the Township Hall.

Retention of the existing commercial base is a vital necessity for the Township’s continued success. Local businesses provide a strong and stable economic foundation and have proven to provide both direct and indirect support for the community through their on-going reinvestment and sense of loyalty to the area. As the Township looks to the future, they should consciously seek to grow and maintain a stronger relationship with these local businesses to help ensure their retention.

As noted in the Residential Development section, there is also the option to encourage higher-density residential uses near the plaza to create a mixed-use development area where people can live within walking distance to certain necessary amenities. Studies are finding that both older adults and younger adults desire housing locations that reduce the need for a personal vehicle. The plaza is situated in a Community Reinvestment Area (CRA), so tax abatement assistance should be available through the County’s Tax Incentive Review Council. Designated CRA’s allow for property tax abatement when a company plans to invest in new or expanded facilities and commits to the retention or creation of new jobs. This is 1 of 3 CRA's that currently exist in Plain Township.



Oakwood Square Plaza

NEW COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Opportunities for new large-scale development are limited in Plain Township. A shopping area in a far-flung corner of the Township could benefit from being relatively immune from any annexation attempts by Canton or North Canton, but with the existing land use and infrastructure pattern already in place, redevelopment of existing commercial centers is a more viable and sustainable option. However, that is not to say that any commercial development would be impossible in outlying areas. One option for addressing this is through one of the Township's planned unit development (PUD) zoning districts. Planned unit development districts are intended to generally permit more innovative development of land in exchange for better site controls at the onset of the project.

In 2016, the Township adopted the R-7 Planned Mixed-Use Development (PMUD) District, which largely followed recommendations made in the 2012 Master Plan. The purpose of the PMUD District is to accommodate a mixture of multi-family residential, retail, office and other compatible uses within a more walkable, live/work environment. In general, mixed-use development also creates a better sense of place as buildings and associated development are more congruous with each other; provides expanded housing options, especially for young professionals and older adults thereby helping to keep residents in the Township; and it reduces infrastructure costs by lessening the type and quantity needed to service the area. All of these features were highly requested in the community survey.

The current standards for the R-7 PMUD District require a minimum area of 2 contiguous acres, with 15% of the total land area devoted to common open space. An on-site pedestrian circulation system is required, and a development plan and landscaping plan must be approved before the site will be approved for rezoning to this district.

The R-7 District is uniquely different from the Township's R-6 PUD District in that there is no minimum acreage requirement in the R-7 District for limited business uses to be allowed (the R-6 PUD District will only allow limited business uses on projects over 50 acres and only at 5% of the total project area). The R-6 PUD District may be a more beneficial district in areas where there is significant land available for development. While no tracts are currently zoned as a PUD in the Township, this district type remains an excellent option for the creation of additional commercial development within Plain Township, and to help maintain a good commercial/residential tax base mix.

86% OF COMMUNITY SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Agreed/strongly agreed that a good variety of food, shopping and personal service amenities are available locally.

Some townships within the state have recently implemented PUD's as "overlay districts" within their respective communities. As an overlay district, the township would initiate a zoning map amendment, usually as part of a corridor, and the underlying tracts would have the option of "opting-in" to the new PUD corridor. If a tract does not want to opt-in to the PUD, the underlying base zoning would still apply until such time that they decide to opt-in. By establishing this zoning district on the zoning map, this allows the Township to better market that area to potential developers as the desired zoning would already be in place.

NEW COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Better collaboration and partnerships with local chambers of commerce and regional economic organizations such as Team NEO and the Stark Economic Development Board may also help to improve and expand the Township's commercial base. In addition to assisting with attracting new businesses and retaining existing ones, these organizations also facilitate job creation, preparation and retention. According to the 2017 Strengthening Stark Report (commissioned by the Stark Community Foundation), it is projected that without significant change, the county's population will decline by 6% from 2000 to 2040. Added to that, the average age of the population continues to increase, with expected trends showing that nearly 1 in 4 county residents will be 65 and older, and the number of younger adults age 20-34 will continue to decrease. To help attract young professionals, studies have found that this group of job seekers is specifically looking for communities that emphasize quality of life amenities, specifically the arts, parks and trails, and the after-work scene, in addition to features such as education, earnings and cost of living. While Plain Township has all of these options, more so in fact than many other local communities, they can continue to be strengthened and expanded.

Identity & Gateways

Character and identity are difficult areas to preserve in the face of increasing real estate development. As Canton and North Canton have expanded over the years, the visual difference between town and country has eroded. There is no obvious sense of leaving one of the cities and entering the Township as it historically used to be.

Plain Township should differentiate itself from the sprawling growth of the cities. This can be done partly through the continued pursuit of additional cultural and recreational activities unique to the community. Activities such as outdoor movies, live music and fireworks displays are all activities that were mentioned in the community survey as respondents discussed the need for a better community identity. These activities, most of which can be partnered on with other organizations, are excellent and relatively inexpensive ways to bring a community together. The creation of an outdoor entertainment district, at a location such as Oakwood Square, would help serve as a host site for many of these activities.

Another way to strengthen Plain Township's identity is by encouraging quality development and preservation of open space. Both of these take place through regulatory strategies. By making the conscious effort to require specific site development standards which will consider the aesthetic values of the community, Plain Township can differentiate itself. One way to do this is through the establishment of landscape requirements via the zoning resolution. In other words, every new site plan that is submitted must comply with applicable landscaping requirements prior to plan approval and zoning permit issuance. Landscaping requirements don't need to be overly burdensome, but the addition of trees or other plantings along a busy roadway can easily improve the aesthetics of a corridor.

NEW COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Another area where site development standards can be initiated is through the Planned Unit Development (PUD) zoning district requirements, as defined previously. This type of zoning district allows for more design requirements than typical zoning districts generally do. Beyond regulations, the Township should consider capital investment in projects which can build a stronger sense of Plain Township as a separate place from Canton and North Canton.

In addition to site development standards, gateway features should be promoted throughout the Township to help build the identity of the community. Whipple and Cleveland Avenue are two predominantly commercial areas that could benefit from gateways to help redevelop them into commercial focal points for Plain Township. In addition to these corridors, gateway projects should also be considered for other important roadways in Plain Township. Large road projects are programmed by the Stark County Area Transportation Study (SCATS). Township identity and gateway projects could be incorporated into these road improvements.

Gateway statements could be incorporated on smaller Township-funded road improvements as well. Elements of what these gateway projects entail can vary. A straightforward approach, which the Township already exhibits in a few locations, is the construction of attractive signs indicating the geographical boundaries of the Township. An attractive design could be a ground-mounted or freestanding sign incorporated with a low wall and landscaping. Care should be taken that any signage is low impact and identifies the Township limits in an unobtrusive way. Branding strategies, as discussed previously, would be an important part of any new signage.

62% OF COMMUNITY SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Agreed/strongly agreed that they feel a sense of pride and civic responsibility in this community..

“Streetscaping” elements such as sidewalks, decorative street lighting, street trees, and planters are a relatively inexpensive way to also help improve the identity and aesthetics of a community. Several of the community survey respondent's noted that they would like to see better inclusion and collaboration with the school district, which is an excellent partner for streetscape efforts. One example given was pole banners highlighting student athletes. The logistics of where these banners could be placed, as well as the funding for them, would have to be coordinated with both the school and the Township. Another possibility is the school district's pursuit of Safe Routes to School funding, which could assist in the installation of additional sidewalks, particularly in areas adjacent to local schools, such as Easton Street. Other potential partnerships to pursue regarding streetscaping improvements are the various neighborhood organizations and veterans' groups. Both of these groups appear to be fairly active in Plain Township and so partnering with them to highlight events or other items such as resident veterans are additional examples to consider.

PARKS & OPEN SPACE

Plain Township currently owns 102 acres of parks and recreational lands. This includes Al Leno Community Park (formerly known as Alpine Community Park), Diamond Community Park and Sports Complex, and Veterans Park. Since the 2012 Master Plan, Plain Township has broadened their park recreation and amenities. Although there is always an opportunity to extend the Township's park and recreation lands, primary focus for Plain Township since the 2012 Plan has been to maintain and enhance the quality of space and facilities they currently have.

According to the National Recreation and Park Association, typical communities offer approximately 10 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. Using this standard, Plain Township would need roughly 350 acres of park and recreation facilities to meet the needs of its approximately 35,000 residents. If looking at this standard alone, it would appear that there is an obvious need for additional parkland; however, this is before taking into account the various park and recreation facilities offered at the local schools, nearby parks in the Cities of Canton and North Canton, as well as the trails and greenways of the Stark County Park District.

The Plain Local Schools recreational facilities include numerous sports fields, tracks, courts and playgrounds that equate to approximately 78 acres of recreational area. Taking into account parks in Canton and North Canton located within close proximity to Plain Township, there are 671 additional acres of park area available for use by Plain Township's residents.



All totaled there are approximately 851 acres of park and recreation facilities locally and in adjacent communities available for use by Plain Township's residents. Since the 2012 Plan, the Township has made considerable additions to their park amenities. So, while there are plenty of surrounding park and recreation opportunities for Township residents, the recreational conveniences within the Township has increased. As the Township develops, it should encourage the preservation of open space through the use of conservation districts, infill development, and other growth control measures to help ensure that future parkland may be available if desired.

According to the 2019 Community Survey, the integration of senior-focused activities within the Township's parks, as well as a more age-friendly community,

was an interest of several respondents. When considering future park and recreation facilities, the Township should continue studying alternative-park uses with accessibility features to accommodate an aging population and/or disabled persons. Programming activities for seniors in parks, rather than designing the parks with the seniors in mind, is the norm. However, Plain Township has the opportunity to create more senior-focused public spaces that promote safety, inclusion and respect. Some low-impact options are putting in more accessible trails and paths, additional signs, fitness stations and game tables. Another concept is highlighting the natural beauty that Plain Township parks have to offer. This could mean providing garden spaces such as raised beds or a memory garden that community members maintain. These "therapeutic landscapes" not only enhance the overall appeal of the parks, but offer a sense of place and connectedness for the entire community.



Veterans Park Dog Park



EXISTING PARK INVENTORY

Since the 2012 Master Plan, Plain Township has implemented several of the proposed improvements. In 2006, the Township purchased property on Schneider Street to develop a new park. This park, now known as Veterans Park, completed all of its proposed phases in 2016 and is the third Plain Township Park. The park includes a 1.25 acre small dog park (dogs under 30 pounds), 1.70 acre large dog park (dogs over 30 pounds), ADA playground, picnic shelter, Frisbee disc golf course, second parking lot, flush restroom facility, and a tie-in to the Stark County Park District's county-wide trail system. With the completion of the third Township-owned park, there has been greater focus on enhancing and expanding recreational programming for its citizens. Current programs include both active and passive opportunities for all generations such as indoor golf, walking clubs, senior health and fitness programs, farmers market, boy-scout camp, and leagues/rentals for both youth and adult soccer, Frisbee, and lacrosse.

The Township plans to continue actively soliciting grants to help fund programming and operations. Since 2012, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) NatureWorks Grant was received and helped fund the playground and restrooms at Veterans Park, as well as the new playground at Al Leno Community Park. A community partner donation assisted in developing the Splash Pad at Veterans Park in 2017-18. With the growing popularity of the Diamond Community Park, the Township should consider seeking similar ODNR grants to upgrade the park's restroom facilities.

The main focus for the Township for the near future should be to maintain and enhance existing programs and facilities, rather than necessarily adding more parks. Funding has been identified as a hurdle for the Parks and Recreation Department, which is typical for similar-sized townships. The Township plans to pursue passive recreational uses, as well as funding to develop existing parkland and recreational programs. In addition, the Township should continue to share resources with other Parks and Recreation Departments for further enhancement of the park facilities.

Plain Township Parks & Recreation

| Park Name | Acreage | Classification | Features |
|-------------------|------------|----------------|---|
| Al Leno Community | 18 | Community-wide | Walking track, Game courts, Skate park, Picnic shelters, Chess tables, Disc golf, Playground, Restroom facilities |
| Diamond Park | 42 | Community-wide | Indoor and outdoor game courts, Walking path, Sports fields, Playground, Picnic pavilion, Concession sheds, Recycling center |
| Veterans Park | 42 | Community-wide | Playground, Walking trail, Picnic shelter, Dog park, Disc golf course, Splash pad, Flag depository, Catch and release fishing |
| TOTAL | 102 | | |

SOURCE: PLAIN TOWNSHIP PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT, 2019



Veterans Park Disc Golf

PLAIN LOCAL SCHOOLS

There are nine elementary, middle and high schools within the Plain Local School District offering recreational facilities to Plain Township residents during non-school hours. It is estimated that the schools have approximately 78 acres of recreation facilities. The types of facilities, their space requirements and service radius are listed in the following tables.

| School | Football Field | Baseball Field | Softball Field | Soccer Field | Tennis Court | Basketball Court | Track | Volleyball Court | Playground |
|--------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|------------------|-------------|------------------|------------|
| Avondale Elementary | | 1 | | | | 2 | | | 1 |
| Barr Elementary | | 8 | | | | | | | 1 |
| Frazer Elementary | | 1 | | | 1 | 1 | | | 1 |
| Middlebranch Elementary | 1 | 2 | | | | 2 | | | 1 |
| Warstler Elementary | | 2 | | | | | | | 1 |
| Taft Elementary | 1 | 5 | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | |
| Glenwood Intermediate | 2 | | | | | 2 | 1 | | |
| Oakwood Middle School | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 1 | | | | 1 |
| GlenOak High School | 2 | 2 | 1 | | 1 | | 2 | | |
| Total # of Facilities | 7 | 22 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 8 | 4 | 1 | 6 |
| Total Acres by Facility | 10.5 | 40.8 | 3 | 5.1 | 0.8 | 0.5 | 17.2 | 0.1 | 0.3 |
| Total Acres | 78.3 | | | | | | | | |

SOURCE: PLAIN LOCAL SCHOOLS, 2019

FACILITY STANDARDS FOR RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

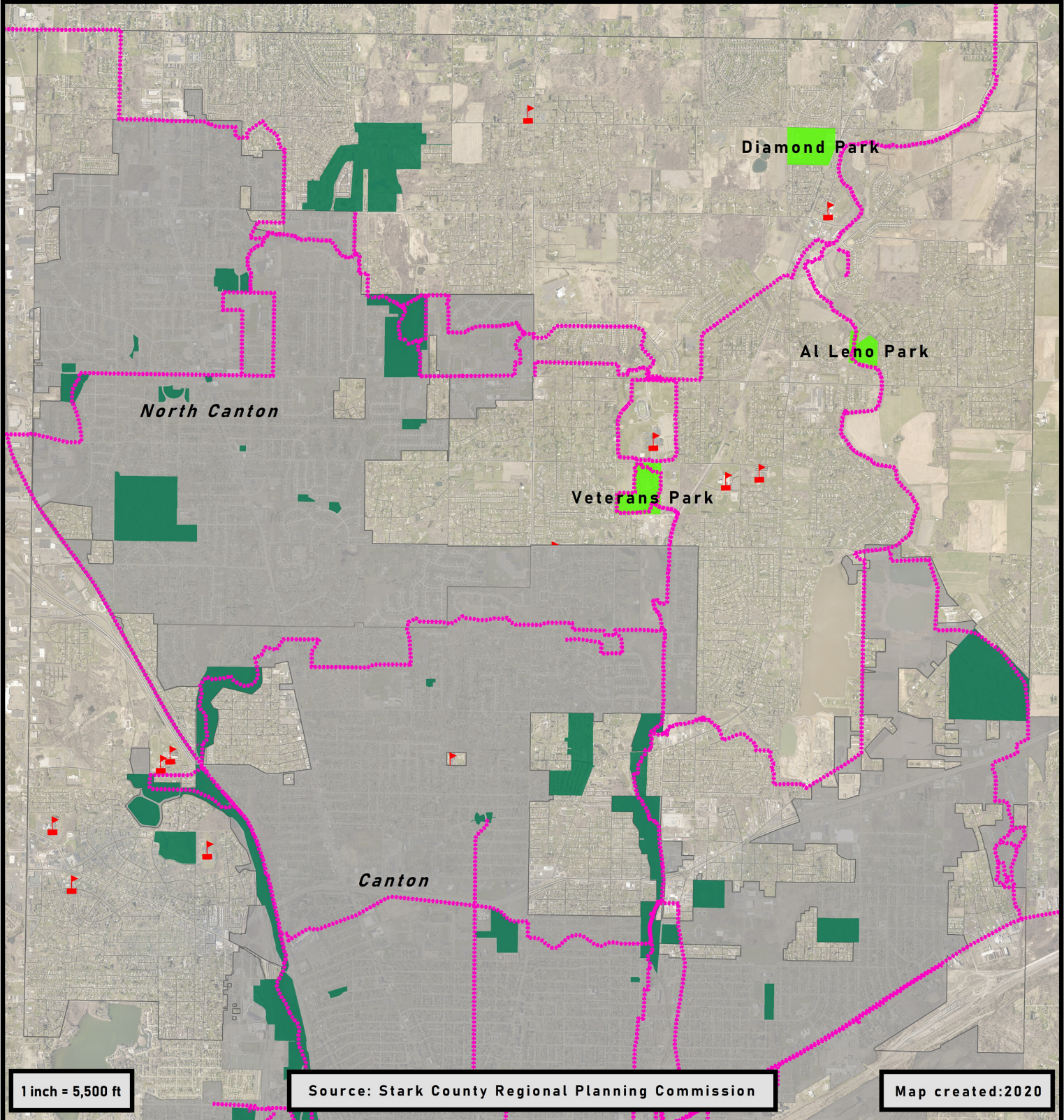
| | Space Requirement | Service Radius |
|------------------|--|---------------------------|
| Football Field | Minimum 1.5 acres | 15-30 minutes travel time |
| Baseball Field | Official 3.0-3.85 acres Little League 1.2 | 1/4 - 1/2 mile |
| Softball Field | 1.5-2.0 acres | 1/4 - 1/2 mile |
| Soccer Field | 1.7-2.1 acres | 1 - 2 miles |
| Tennis Court | Minimum 7,200 sq. ft. single court area | 1/4 - 1/2 mile |
| Basketball Court | 2,400-3,036 sq. ft. | 1/4 - 1/2 mile |
| Track | 4.3 acres | 15-30 minutes travel time |
| Volleyball Court | Minimum 4,000 sq. ft. | 1/4 - 1/2 mile |
| Playground | 2,500 sq. ft. - 1 acre | Less than 1/4 mile |
| Track | 4.3 acres | 15-30 minutes travel time |
| Volleyball Court | Minimum 4,000 sq. ft. | 1/4 - 1/2 mile |
| Playground | 2,500 sq. ft. - 1 acre | Less than 1/4 mile |
| Track | 4.3 acres | 15-30 minutes travel time |
| Volleyball Court | Minimum 4,000 sq. ft. | 1/4 - 1/2 mile |

SOURCE: RECREATION, PARK AND OPEN SPACE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES, A PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL RECREATION AND PARK ASSOCIATION, 2019.

86% OF COMMUNITY SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Agreed/strongly agreed that sufficient variety of park and recreation opportunities are available for everyone in their family.

Plain Township Parks and Recreation



1 inch = 5,500 ft

Source: Stark County Regional Planning Commission

Map created: 2020

Plain Parks
 Canton / North Canton Parks
 Trails
 Schools



Description: Parks, Trails and School data created for the County with contributions from the Stark County Regional Planning Commission, Stark County Auditor and Stark Parks.



ADDITIONAL OPEN SPACE NEEDS

As stated in the Land Use Planning section, much of Plain Township has developed with suburban uses expanding from the cities of Canton and North Canton. As growth continues to expand from Canton and North Canton, the rural areas of the Township are developing with other uses. Planning ahead to preserve open spaces, create new recreation and green spaces, and provide linkages between them will help ensure that rural characteristics of the Township will not disappear entirely.

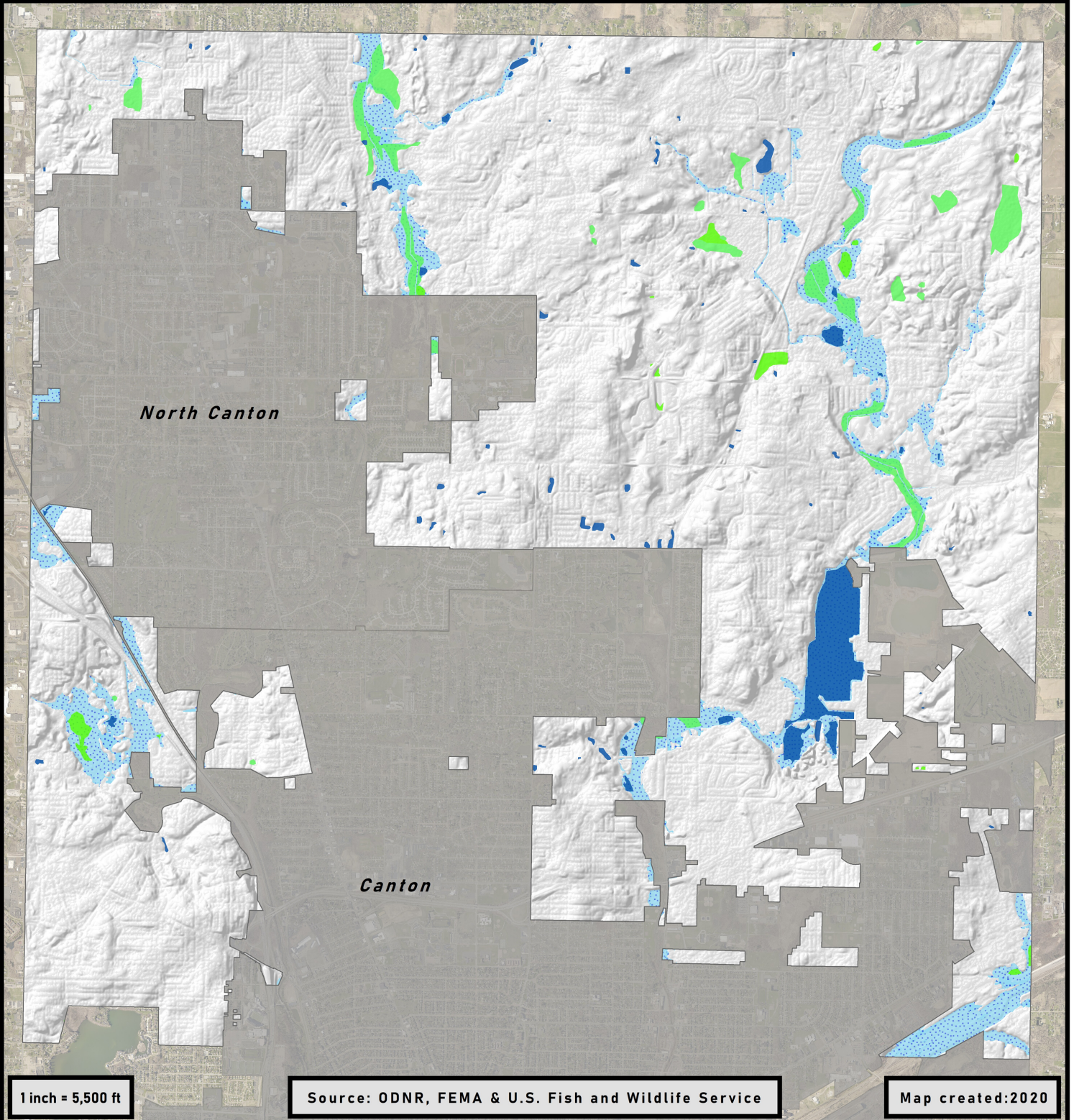
Developing parks and open space in the right areas of the Township can also help with natural resource and stream corridor protection, floodplain management, cultural resource protection, and aquifer recharge area protection.

Approximately 2,400 acres of undeveloped land remain. Some of this land is actively farmed, some is vacant, and other parcels contain woods, wetlands, and other natural features that should not be developed (see map on following page). All of it is important to maintaining and enhancing the character and attractiveness of Plain Township. Much of this remaining undeveloped land is also located in areas key to protecting the local environment and the health, safety, and welfare of current and future Township residents. Although, additional park space is not in the realm of goals for the Township at the present time, there is available space to utilize for park and recreational purposes in the future.



Al Leno Community Park





Plain Township Floodplains and Wetlands



1 inch = 5,500 ft

Source: ODNR, FEMA & U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Map created: 2020

| | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
|  Wetlands |  Bodies of Water |  Floodplain |  |
|---|--|---|---|

Description: Flood data is a 100 or 500 year event of a partial or complete flood of normally dry land. Wetlands are areas where water is present, partially covers, or is near the surface of the soil for varying periods of a year (including the growing season).



RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the 2012 Plan, Plain Township has implemented several of the recommended improvements. While there are still opportunities for additions and improvements to their parks and recreation, the Township should seek to preserve their services and facilities, and strengthen the community's support for the parks. The major hurdle for the Township's Parks & Recreation Department is the lack of funding. With this in mind, the short term goal is to continue to reevaluate programming that is viable based on resources, profitability, and of value to residents.

Niche recreation amenities like the dog park or disc golf will continue to help set Plain Township parks apart from those already provided by Canton or North Canton. Likewise, preserving areas for passive recreation, or unused open space will help build the identity and character of the Township, and provide a higher quality of life for residents.

Some open spaces that are extremely sensitive to development should be preserved entirely free of any construction. Wetlands and riparian areas along the Nimishillen Creek are some examples of this type of resource. The Township's existing riparian corridor zoning restriction assists with this. Other open areas are not so sensitive and could be developed as non-active Township parks with walking trails, bike paths, open un-programmed play areas, dog parks, or nature centers. These kinds of parks would provide residents of Plain Township a recreation experience not readily available in the active playgrounds in the area.

The 2019 Community Survey results showed a strong desire for a community pool. The liability and costs associated with the creation and maintenance of such a project are very high. A recreation center was also frequently requested throughout the survey.



Veterans Park Splash Pad

Currently, there is not enough financial support from the community for either of these to be a priority to the Township. However, as a long-term goal, the Township can work to facilitate greater community approval, and ultimately, either draft a levy that supports the necessary funding and/or develop a public-private partnership with an entity willing to finance these projects (in part or in whole).

The previous Township Mini-Master Plan recommended expanding park space and to increase the recreational activities within existing parks. Plain Township has taken a significant stride towards achieving this goal with the development of Veterans Park. There are various recreational activities offered, and they are inclusive to all community members. Continuing this trend for future parks and open space planning will have many benefits to Plain Township, including engaging a larger percentage of the Township's population, and working to meet the natural resource and community character goals of the land use strategies of this plan.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Plain Township maintains 174 miles of roadway or 348 miles of combined road lanes. Between the years of 2013-2019, an average of 13.2 miles of road have been paved. The Township Road Department is led by a Highway Superintendent and Supervising Foreman who oversee approximately twelve laborers/operators. The Township’s annual budget includes salaries, unemployment, retirement, workers’ compensation, healthcare, equipment purchases, paving and road striping contracts, fuel, salt, materials, and parts for all repairs on equipment such as tires and hydraulics. Currently, the Road Department has a fleet of approximately 12 trucks, which are used all-year. These trucks are responsible for paving, road salting and snow plowing (see Appendix for current equipment list).

The Road Department is funded by two levies of 1.5 mills each, which were approved in 2017 and 2019. The following table demonstrates Plain Township’s average cost per Township road mile (based on 174 miles of Township roadway).

| | Annual Roads Budget | Cost per Township Road Mile |
|------|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2013 | \$3,209,034 | \$19,370 |
| 2014 | \$3,214,169 | \$19,370 |
| 2015 | \$3,147,500 | \$18,089 |
| 2016 | \$3,851,855 | \$22,137 |
| 2017 | \$4,231,442 | \$24,319 |
| 2018 | \$4,106,579 | \$23,600 |
| 2019 | \$4,610,375 | \$26,528 |

SOURCE: PLAIN TOWNSHIP BUDGET WORKSHEET, 2013-2019

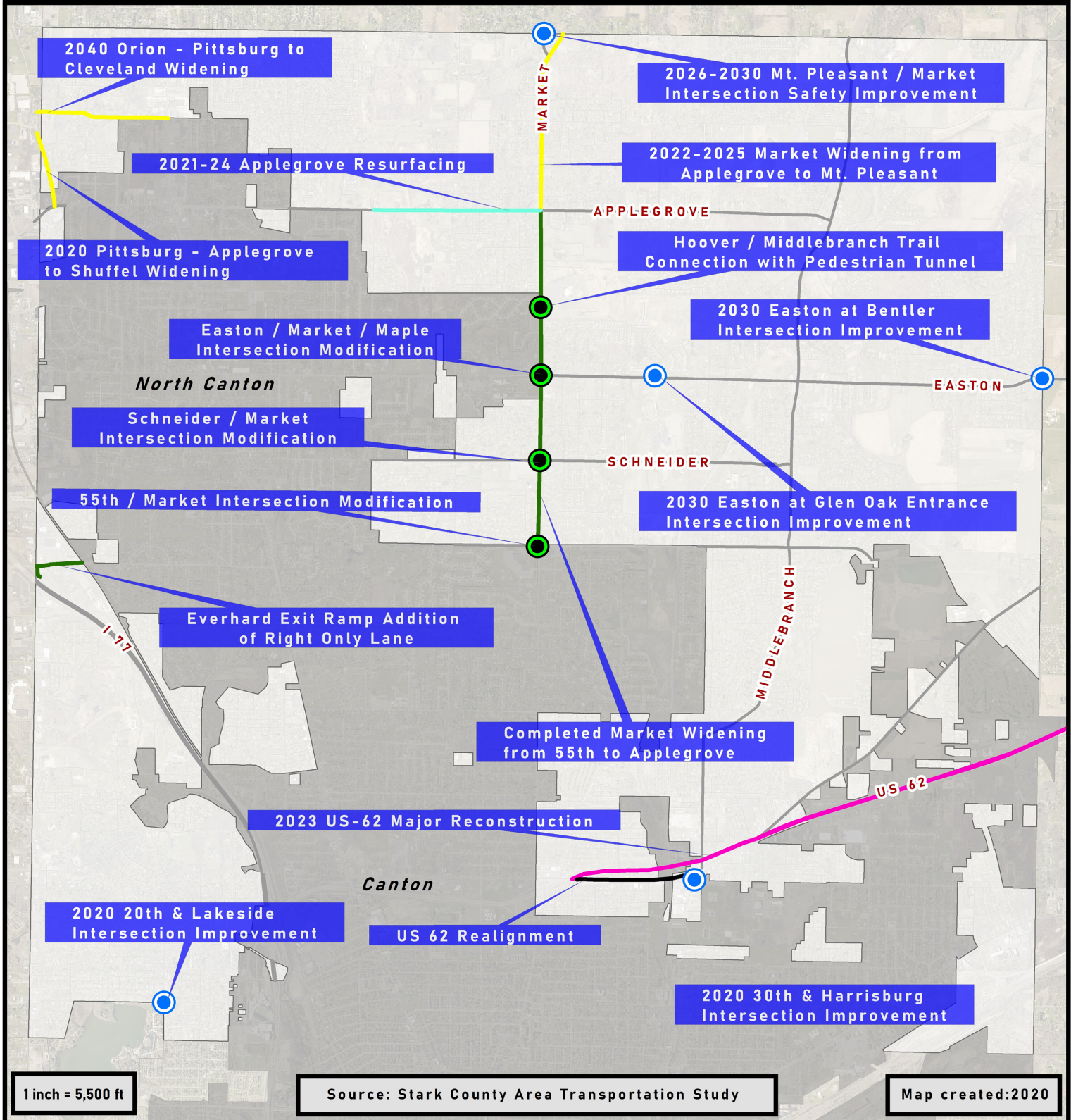
PLAIN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AREAS

| Road | Location | Type of Work | Year of Expenditure Cost | Length (miles) | Complete by |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|--------------------------|----------------|-------------|
| S Main St. | Knoll to Rose Lane | Resurfacing | 608,000 | 0.5 | 2019 |
| E Maple St. | E of Main | Minor Widening | 1,500,000 | 0.1 | 2020 |
| Easton St. | At Glenoak Service Ent | Intersection | 3,720,000 | | 2025 |
| Pittsburgh Ave, CR 216 | Applegrove St. to Shuffel St. | Widen, Add Turn Lane, Curb, Storm Sewer | 935,000 | 0.45 | 2025 |
| SR 43, Market Ave. | Applegrove St. to Mt Pleasant St. | Widen to 4 Lanes | 4,550,000 | 1.12 | 2025 |
| Easton St. | At Bentler | Intersection | 1,860,000 | | 2030 |
| Orion St. | Pittsburg/Cleveland | 3-lane Widening | 5,760,000 | | 2040 |

SOURCE: SCATS 2040 TRANSPORTATION PLAN

In the past, there have been suggestions for greater collaboration between the Stark County Engineer’s office and Plain Township on joint agreements for intersection and paving projects, many of which the Township cannot afford alone. With a joint agreement, road projects in the Township receive additional points in the scoring for Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC) funding. In 2019, OPWC allocated approximately \$8.4 million to project applicants across the state. The County is responsible for maintaining 28.5 miles of county roads in Plain Township. There are currently 2 contracts scheduled for 2020: Cleveland/Bretton traffic light and Hills & Dales storm sewer. The preceding table summarizes ongoing and recently completed transportation projects in the Plain Township and North Canton area. Most of the projects in the table are not the prime financial responsibility of the Township, as they are either County or State roads. The following map shows the Stark County transportation projects in Plain Township that have been completed and/or proposed in the Stark County Area Transportation Study’s (SCATS) 2040 Plan completed in 2017.

Transportation Projects in Plain Township



- | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| | Proposed Intersection Improvement | | Proposed Roadway Reconstruction | | Proposed Roadway Resurfacing |
| | Completed Intersection Projects | | Proposed Roadway Widening | | |
| | Completed Roadway Improvement | | Proposed Roadway Realignment | | |

Description: Recently completed and currently planned local transportation improvements.





TRANSPORTATION ANALYSIS

Field surveys and transportation studies of Plain Township’s roadway system show that there are no severe operational deficiencies in Plain Township. There are select locations with problems, as discussed below, but overall the Township roadway system functions adequately. The original rural nature of the Township is slowly becoming more urbanized and as this continues to occur, steps will have to be taken to provide adequate, safe roadways for residents. Many of the problem areas border other jurisdictions, so joint projects may be required to make improvements. The following locations below are sites identified as the highest volume and impact areas in the Township.

Middlebranch/Easton Intersection

There are left turn lanes on all 4 approaches, but they are very short and need to be lengthened to provide adequate vehicle stacking. On the eastern leg of Easton, a left turn lane for the commercial/retail parcels may be warranted.

There also appears to be too many access points onto Easton in this area. Rite Aid, Township Hall, Oakwood Square shopping center and Pizza Hut all have separate driveways onto Easton. This provides for confusion and sight distance problems. The plaza has been successful in adding vendors; most recently, E&H Ace Hardware is relocating to the former McDonald’s location. As the additions in and around the plaza continue, the Township can encourage the County to close off surrounding access points that are no longer in use to facilitate better access management for the growing Oakwood Square Plaza. This can be facilitated through the site plan review process and roadway improvement process.

US 62

The intersection of Columbus Road and US 62 is awkward and sometimes difficult to navigate. If Maret Place were extended, Columbus Road could terminate at Market, and then a safer intersection provided at or near Middlebranch. West of Middlebranch, US 62 functions as a four-lane arterial, with multiple intersections and driveways.

Since this area is a mix of residential and commercial, there doesn't appear to be an easy way to implement access management; however, in late 2015, ODOT introduced a plan to rework a section of US 62 that is located in part of Plain Township. The project area includes the stretch of US 62 from the ramp at Harrisburg Avenue NE to just east of Roosevelt Avenue NE and involves Middlebranch Avenue NE, Harrisburg Avenue NE and 30th Street NE. The area is identified as having high crash ratings, narrow intersections and greater congestion in the coming years.

Another US 62 project that was completed in late 2018 was near the Pro-Football Hall of Fame at the I-77/US and 62/Fulton Road interchange, where ODOT has aimed to ease congestion and improve traffic flow. The ramps from southbound I-77 and westbound US 62 onto Fulton Road have been widened. A median wall has been constructed to separate traffic on US 62 interchange where traffic splits between continuing onto I-77S and exiting onto Fulton Road. The project also included streetscaping, new traffic signals, resurfacing roads, new markings and other repairs.

Cleveland Avenue

The largely commercial area from 38th to 47th Street has multiple access points, with two drives for one parcel at many locations (service stations, Fisher's grocery store, etc.). Since there are currently left turn lanes at many of the intersections, there would probably not be much widening required to provide a two-way left turn lane throughout this section. Access to/from many of these businesses is not a major problem because many of the drives are wide enough to separate left and right turns and the multiple signalized intersections often provide adequate gaps in traffic to exit safely. In the area of the Bretton Street intersection, traffic has increased due to the addition of businesses along Cleveland.

The Bretton and Cleveland intersection will soon be obtaining a new traffic signal. In 2019, the County and Plain Township requested federal assistance through an OPWC grant, and received \$88,000 to complete this project. This will significantly improve the safety of making a left onto the arterial roadway of Cleveland, especially due to the high volume of residents that live off of Bretton.

Whipple Avenue

The entire stretch from 38th to Everhard is hard to access if a left turn to or from Whipple Avenue is required. Currently, there are turn lanes and between 38th and Everhard, there are several traffic lights, mainly at intersections. Also, there are center turn lanes present from 42nd to Bradley. Consideration should be given to providing a two-way left turn lane or right-in/right-out only restrictions throughout this section. Since Whipple is the dividing line between Plain Township and Jackson Township (Perry and Canton Township from 18th Street south), this would have to be a Stark County or joint-plan between the County and Township. There are not an excessive number of driveways on the east side of Whipple Avenue, and many of the buildings are spaced too far apart to consider combined access points. Furthermore, 38th provides an easy east-west thoroughfare from Whipple to Cleveland.

Everhard Road

During 2018-19, significant work was done to improve the Everhard Road and Whipple Avenue intersection. Constructed in the 1970s, this is one of the busiest intersections in the County. The project goal was to reduce traffic congestion by adding and lengthening turn lanes on all four legs of the intersection, including the addition of dual left turn lanes in the northbound direction. Center turn lanes will be added to the north and east legs of the project. The project also includes replacing storm sewers and two large drainage structures.

During late 2019, the Everhard exit ramp was temporarily closed for the addition of a right only lane. Prior to this, the exit ramp was too short off of I-77 onto Whipple for traffic to safely merge at this intersection. The project was completed in late 2019, with the widening and grading improvements alleviating many of the safety and congestion problems in the area.



I-77/Everhard Exit Right-Only Turning Lane

Access management on the north side seems to function adequately, with The Venue and Fazoli's restaurant connected lots. The only parcel on the north side that doesn't connect to the others is a gas station at the northeast corner of Everhard and Whipple. On the south side, the gas station, pawn shop, dentist office and Denny's all have separate driveways. Turning left out of these lots was prohibited due to the concrete median along Everhard. With the new construction in 2018-19, the concrete median has been removed, and access onto Everhard from the south side businesses has been provided. Access management in exiting The Venue onto Whipple could be improved. Turning left from The Venue onto Whipple is currently dangerous. Adding a right turn only onto Whipple from The Venue could provide easier access management and safety in the area. This is the busiest intersection in the County, and the second most hazardous intersection in the County. However, the recent and future improvements will ideally improve this.

Fulton/Hills & Dales Corridor

In the commercial area east of Broad it should be possible to combine many of the driveways and eliminate some access points onto Fulton. Currently, with so many closely spaced driveways it is often difficult to determine which driveway you need for where you are going. It is fairly easy to turn into the wrong drive, only to find there is no access to the correct parking lot.

Drivers are forced to go back onto the roadway for a short distance to then turn into the proper driveway. Opening up some of the parking lots to provide access between buildings would reduce this and increase both safety and operations. This can be done through the allowance of cross-access agreements, which would be approved by the Township.

With the ongoing development of the Hall of Fame Village, exponential traffic impacts along this corridor can be expected. Access management will be a major component to the success of this corridor. The Township should greatly consider their role in this project, and take careful measures to properly mitigate the various levels of tourism and traffic that may occur.



Fulton Road Corridor

Intersections Along Market Avenue

In October 2016, ODOT began construction along Market Avenue (State Route 43). The project entailed widening the road to five lanes, between 55th and Applegrove. Also involved was the addition of new curbs, gutters, and sidewalks in some areas, and improved turn lanes at the 55th, Schneider, Applegrove and Easton intersections. At Schneider Road there have been left turn lanes added on all points of the intersection. One through lane exists in each direction, with left turn lanes provided on Market in both the north and south directions. At the Easton Road intersection, there were left turn lanes on all four approaches added, with protected phases for northbound and westbound traffic.

Throughout the section from Applegrove Street to Mt. Pleasant there is one through lane in each direction on Market. This is on the County's 2040 Transportation Plan to be widened to 4 lanes, and should ease most of the problems in the area.

During the same time as the Market Avenue project, a Stark Parks funded underground pedestrian tunnel was built near the former Edgewood Golf Course. This tunnel links the Hoover Trail to the east and the Middlebranch Trail to the west. The connection creates a 14-mile continuous trail running through Plain Township, North Canton and Canton.



GENERAL SIGHT DISTANCE PROBLEMS

As indicated by the Township, there are many roads with sight distance problems. These include Easton, Middlebranch, 55th, Columbus and Schneider, and also the intersection of Plain Center and Martindale. Most of the problems are related to road profiles. Drivers at side streets or driveways do not have adequate sight distance along the main road to exit safely. Since most of these problem roadways follow alignments from the past when the Township was primarily rural, it would be very expensive to correct the problems in a substantial manner. The Township should consider conducting a site distance study to identify priority areas.

Signage about upcoming intersections or “hidden drives” may help in certain trouble spots. The Township may want to consider initiating a speed study where warranted in some areas, since there are 45 mph speed zones in some locations. There are also some problems caused by vegetation, which could be solved by trimming trees and shrubs, or establishing a setback requirement or height limit for vegetation near intersections and driveways.

HIGH ACCIDENT INTERSECTIONS

There are a few intersections in Plain Township that are among the most dangerous in Stark County. These are: Everhard/Whipple; US 62/Harmont; US 62/Harrisburg & Middlebranch; and Easton/Middlebranch. Several of these intersections are currently part of an ongoing safety study to determine ways to mitigate these problem areas. The most recent findings can be found in the table below.

State/County/Township Accident Intersections

| Street | Intersecting Street | 2016 Crashes | 2017 Crashes | 2018 Crashes | 3 Year Totals |
|--------------|---------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Everhard Rd. | Whipple Ave. | 35 | 50 | 53 | 138 |
| US 62 | Harmont Ave/Lesh St. | 23 | 29 | 28 | 80 |
| US 62 | Middlebranch & Harrisburg | 20 | 27 | 26 | 73 |
| Easton St. | Middlebranch Ave. | 4 | 22 | 16 | 42 |

Source: SCATS 2040 Transportation Plan

RECOMMENDATIONS

The capacity of an existing transportation system in a community must be analyzed in conjunction with the activities on the land. There is an important partnership between the public sector, responsible for maintaining and improving the roadways, and the private sector's development of the land. Since the 2012 Master Plan, Plain Township has worked to strengthen these partnerships in order to implement programs that achieve greater quality of life goals. The increase in trip volumes will impact the ability of key road corridors to effectively carry traffic. In order to ensure acceptable traffic conditions, existing transportation policies should be reviewed and revised as necessary. Also, these roads should be monitored and measures should be taken at appropriate times to maintain acceptable future traffic flow throughout the Township.

In order to meet the demands of future traffic, Plain Township must take steps to continue improving the transportation system. Common physical improvements such as road widening, new or improved traffic signals, intersection improvements or new street construction are recommended. The Township can also adopt policies to maximize the efficiency of the existing street system and protect public investment in future road improvements.

Land use and transportation planning are inextricably intertwined. Land use determines the traffic that will be generated along a roadway. Likewise, how efficiently a road carries traffic will in part determine the attractiveness of that corridor for development. It follows that for the most efficient land use pattern and roadway function, land use and transportation planning should be closely coordinated.

The following policies are recommended throughout the Township:

- Access Management Standards
- Alternative Funding Policies
- Corridor Planning and Design

Access Management Standards

Since the 2012 Plan, the County has adopted Access Management Regulations. The Stark County Access Management Regulations became effective October 1, 2016. These regulations apply to access on County and Township roads constructed and/or modified after the effective date. There are exceptions for access to Township roads. As stated in the regulations, the exceptions are for minimum and low volume drives and access to lots within platted residential subdivisions that are created in accordance with the Stark County Subdivision Regulations. The definition for Minimum and Very Low Volume Drives can be found in the Access Management Regulations but include field/farm drives, utility drives, and single family drives. These drives are approved by the Township using a driveway permit application. The goal for this parallel approach at the County level is to more effectively alleviate issues on local roads. Moving forward with access management matters, the County Engineer recommends that the Access Management Regulations continue to be referenced, especially during the early planning stages of projects.

Plain Township should continue to work with the County Engineer, other townships and developers for local road improvements. One example of this collaboration with the County could be a Traffic Impact Study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The objective a Traffic Impact Study is to:

- Determine whether or not the access request can meet the design standards and requirements of the applicable government agencies;
- Determine the appropriate location, spacing, and design of access connections necessary to mitigate the traffic and operational impacts on the highway system, as well as coordinate with any access management plan adopted by the Township, County, and/or ODOT;
- Determine the need for any improvements to the adjacent roadway system to maintain a satisfactory level of service and safety, and to protect the function of the highway system while providing appropriate and necessary access to the proposed development;
- Assure the internal traffic circulation of the proposed development is designed to provide safe and efficient access to and from the adjacent and nearby roadway system.

Currently, the Township forwards proposed zone changes to the County Engineer to determine if a traffic impact study is warranted. They can also request that the Stark County Engineer's Office require a Traffic Impact Study from a developer whose proposed project will generate enough traffic to significantly impact the road system, or where the types of traffic generated by the project exceed a certain weight or size limit. Recommendations from a Traffic Impact Study can then be used to allocate costs for road improvements fairly between public funds and private developers.

Alternative Funding Policies

Plain Township should continue to pursue traditional funding sources for road improvements and maintenance through the State of Ohio and other funding sources. This especially includes working with the Stark County Area Transportation Study (SCATS) to incorporate the Township's future road needs in regional transportation improvement plans. The Township may also want to consider exploring various funding opportunities through the SCATS Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), which provides funds for projects that advance non-motorized transportation facilities, historic transportation preservation, and environmental mitigation and vegetation management activities. ODOT encourages adding alternatives to planned transportation projects rather than stand-alone projects. TAP funded activities must be accessible to the general public or targeted to a broad segment of the general public.

In accordance with TAP, the Township may want to pursue funding options available to assist with roadway improvements at the pedestrian level and in conjunction with Plain Local School District. The Safe Routes to School program is one to consider. The purpose of this program is to encourage students in grades K-8 to walk or ride their bicycle to school. These projects can be either engineering (improved crossings and sidewalks) or non-engineering (education and encouragement programs).

Since the program began in 2008, the rates of walking and bicycling to school has increased in Ohio communities. There are several plans that the school district could seek in order to improve engagement in active transportation (i.e. walking or bicycling). Some approaches are School Travel Plans (STP) or Active Transportation Plans (ATP). Both types would outline a community's intentions, goals and strategies needed to support and increase engagement in active transportation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Corridor Planning and Design

Improving the transportation system should also be considered as an opportunity to visually enhance road corridors through landscaping, sign controls, and design standards. Plain Township's community image should be considered when making improvements to the transportation system. Accommodating increasing volumes of traffic without considering visual impacts of roadway improvements can destroy the character of a neighborhood. Road improvements can sometimes add to the visual clutter along a road, or eliminate the character of an attractive corridor by not considering visual impacts of the improvements.

There is a hierarchy to the function of the various roads in Plain Township. Future corridor design improvements should continue to follow the hierarchy in place. Physical design improvements to the various roads in Plain Township should address the following:

- Gateway statements;
- Design themes along corridors to define Plain Township's identity;
- Pedestrian and bicycle networks; and
- The appropriate mixture of public and private investment in improvements for corridor design plans.

A coordinated streetscape within a corridor design can visually and physically link different parts of a community together. In Plain Township, opportunities exist to better link neighborhoods that are separated by Canton and North Canton, and to highlight entry corridors into the Township. An attractive streetscape can also build identity and be an integral part of creating a focal point or distinct identity for the Township. Corridors that could greatly benefit from such improvements include Easton Street, Market Avenue, US 62, Whipple Avenue, and Cleveland Avenue.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PLANNING



Fire/Emergency Medical Services

The Plain Township Fire and Rescue Department currently operates out of four fire stations, all of which are staffed 24 hours/day. The station located on 25th Street also serves as a substation for the Sheriff's Office.

Township Fire Station Locations:

- 3625 Middlebranch Avenue NE
- 2625 25th Street NW
- 1742 Schneider Street NE
- 7858 Market Avenue N

Since the last plan, a new station on Schneider Street was constructed, which replaced the station formerly located on Easton Street. This new station also houses the Township Fire Department administration offices, which were formerly located at the Plain Township Hall. A levy successfully passed in 2006 was the primary funding source for this new station. Now that the Schneider station is complete, the former station on Easton has been converted to a fire training facility, which is equipped with victim rescue areas, rappelling capabilities, burn rooms and classrooms. The Parks Maintenance Department also utilizes this facility.

The fire department currently operates on a five-year, \$5.7 million budget. The Township implements "soft-billing", or third party billing, for Township residents as a way to recoup some of the costs associated with providing emergency ambulance services.

The Township will only collect money from the resident's insurance provider, Medicare or Medicaid; residents do not pay for any costs not covered by their personal health care insurance provider. The goal of "soft-billing" is to reduce the amount of additional levy millage needed. Currently, only non-Township residents are billed for these services. The Township should continue to charge non-residents for ambulance services to generate funding for fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) operations.

Another cost-saving measure that the Township implements is automatic aid response agreements between the Township and adjacent communities for fire and EMS. In 2014, Plain Township was one of several local communities that joined a county-wide dispatching system, which is managed through the Stark County Commissioners' Office. There are annual maintenance and user fees for this system, which are based on call volume for the fire department. This system switch allowed the Township to eliminate local dispatcher positions. As the Township looks for other ways to cut costs, they may also want to consider and/or continue vehicle-sharing, and cooperative purchasing of equipment opportunities with contiguous communities where feasible.

FIRE AND RESCUE

The Township has continued to grow in staffing at all four fire stations to respond to the increased demand in service. In 2019 alone, the fire department responded to over 5,200 calls. The fire department has increased the number of firefighters/paramedics since 2012 from 33 full-time and 7 part-time employees to 45 full-time and 7 part time personnel. This increase allows the Township to have approximately 15 firefighters/EMTs available daily to respond to service calls.

The adjacent table lists the equipment needs, as determined by The Township, based on a 20-year replacement cycle for the Township Fire and Rescue Department. In general, as the Township continues to analyze its equipment needs, more economical vehicles should be considered where feasible.

| Full-Time Staff | |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| Position | # of Personnel |
| Firefighters/Paramedics | 45 |
| Fire Chief | 1 |
| Deputy Chief | 1 |
| Secretary | 1 |
| Fire Prevention Officers | 1 |
| Dispatchers | 0 |
| Mechanics | 1 |
| Total | 50 |

Source: Plain Township Fire and Rescue Department, 2019

| Part-Time Staff | |
|----------------------------------|----------------|
| Position | # of Personnel |
| Deputy Chief | 1 |
| Dispatchers | 0 |
| Paid, On-Call Firefighters/EMT's | 10 |
| Total | 11 |

Source: Plain Township Fire and Rescue Department, 2019

| Equipment Needs (Based on 20 Year Replacement Cycle) | |
|---|---------------|
| Year | Equipment |
| 2019 | Pumper |
| 2020 | Ambulance |
| 2021 | Pumper |
| 2022 | Ambulance |
| 2023 | Staff Vehicle |
| 2024 | Ambulance |
| 2025 | Staff Vehicle |

Source: Plain Township Fire and Rescue Department, 2019

| Plain Township Fire and Rescue Department Budget, 2013 - 2019 | | | | | | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|---------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------|
| Year | Operations | Salaries | Tools/ Equipment | Dispatch Communications | New Buildings/ Equipment | Total District Expenditures | Revenues from Levies | EMS Fees |
| 2013 | \$632,158 | \$3,030,397 | \$99,000 | \$166,000 | \$2,100,000 | \$5,861,555 | \$4,544,123 | \$163,310 |
| 2014 | \$627,159 | \$3,130,497 | \$265,498 | \$162,000 | \$600,000 | \$4,094,004 | \$4,523,594 | \$163,370 |
| 2015 | \$601,000 | \$3,220,499 | \$37,033 | \$158,000 | \$300,000 | \$5,125,265 | \$4,515,588 | \$916,559 |
| 2016 | \$1,655,000 | \$3,486,284 | \$550,483 | \$161,225 | \$435,365 | \$6,288,357 | \$5,786,081 | \$907,773 |
| 2017 | \$1,798,668 | \$3,758,774 | \$335,234 | \$184,645 | \$400,000 | \$6,477,321 | \$5,914,844 | \$975,017 |
| 2018 | \$1,617,563 | \$4,053,945 | \$222,337 | \$195,532 | \$700,000 | \$6,789,378 | \$5,908,736 | \$975,549 |
| 2019 e.st | \$1,750,000 | \$4,000,000 | \$200,000 | \$195,000 | \$300,000 | \$6,145,000 | \$5,800,000 | \$970,000 |

Source: Plain Township Fire and Rescue Department, 2019

The above table breaks down the Township's Fire & Rescue Department budget. The atypical increase in Operations figures in 2016 was due to the inclusion of EMS operations, which previously had not been included in the Fire Department's budget (as EMS operates under a different funding mechanism). The difference seen in EMS fees in 2016 was largely due to the change in billing practices for emergency services. Prior to 2016, EMS only billed non-residents for emergency services. This practice switched to soft-billing, which bills both residents and non-residents, but based on insurance coverage. It should be noted that the budget for the fire department is levy-determined and so it does not fluctuate based on needs like other departments may. It is anticipated that a renewal levy for the Plain Township Fire and Rescue Department will be on the spring 2020 ballot. If approved, this will allow operations to continue until 2025.

STARK COUNTY SHERIFF

The Stark County Sheriff's Office contracts with the Plain Township Board of Trustees to provide 24 deputies and one detective to the Township, up from 15 deputies in 2012. The services provided exclusively to Plain Township include general neighborhood and roadway patrol, criminal and civil complaint investigations and six resource officers for the Plain Local School District. The Sheriff's Office invoices the School District for five of the resource officers, and the School District and Township share the cost for the sixth resource officer. The resource officers are not part of the general policing contract for the Township. The Sheriff's Office formerly contracted directly with the Avondale Neighborhood Association to provide a full-time reserve deputy (a volunteer with the Sheriff's Office who has received training) for that neighborhood, but this contract ended in 2016.

The Sheriff's Office provides, at no cost to Plain Township, dispatching and record-keeping services, event speakers on various topics, and certain grant-funded programming and services.

The average yearly contract amount with the Sheriff's Office (not including school resource officers) is approximately \$2.7 million.

The Township owns all of the equipment used by the Sheriff's Office, including 24 police cruisers and 2 unmarked vehicles. This is up from 16 cruisers and 1 unmarked vehicle owned by Plain Township in 2012. The replacement cycle of these vehicles is determined by the Township (see following table). Three new vehicles were currently on order at the time of this plan's creation, which will replace a 2008 Crown Victoria, a 2010 Crown Victoria and a 2012 Dodge Charger.

According to the 2019 online public survey, an increase in crime, particularly vandalism and break-ins, is one of the major threats to the Township. Upon discussing this with local officials, it was noted that a) most of these crimes were likely related to a single group; and b) deputy staffing during that period had not fully increased yet. The staffing increase took almost a year to fully complete and so it is anticipated that now that staffing is at 100%, this concern should somewhat abate.

| Plain Township Vehicles for Use by Stark County Sheriff's Office | | | | | |
|--|--------------|---------|------------|--------------|--------|
| Vehicle ID | Vehicle Year | Meter | Vehicle ID | Vehicle Year | Meter |
| 7637 | 2014 | 65,639 | 7650 | 2018 | 13,648 |
| 7638 | 2015 | 65,294 | 7651 | 2012 | 89,181 |
| 7639 | 2018 | 13,871 | 7652 | 2017 | 25,491 |
| 7640 | 2019 | 6,611 | 7653 | 2017 | 26,105 |
| 7641 | 2015 | 44,642 | 7654 | 2015 | 45,234 |
| 7642 | 2013 | 90,194 | 7655 | 2017 | 27,599 |
| 7643 | 2008 | 137,663 | 7656 | 2016 | 58,572 |
| 7644 | 2019 | 3,725 | 7657 | 2015 | 49,832 |
| 7645 | 2014 | 77,573 | 7658 | 2015 | 63,322 |
| 7646 | 2016 | 52,480 | 7659 | 2017 | 18,303 |
| 7647 | 2010 | 92,994 | PL1 | 2017 | 21,981 |
| 7648 | 2019 | 1,234 | PL2 | 2011 | 72,922 |
| 7649 | 2008 | 142,363 | | | |

Source: Stark County Sheriff's Office

STARK COUNTY SHERIFF

The following table illustrates the main types of police activities that occurred in Plain Township over the last four years. The information shows that the overall total for police activities increased in the last year.

Over 70% of the activities were incident calls, or calls for service to either residences or businesses, which include such things as suspicious persons or vehicles, thefts, etc. According to the data, the number of these types of calls increased by 20% from 2017 to 2018.

This figure is somewhat misleading, however, as the bulk of this increase can be correlated with the increase in deputy staffing; in other words, with the approximately 50% staff increase there are now more deputies available to take calls for service (as opposed to forwarding them to the State Highway Patrol). The number of traffic stops also shows an increase since 2017; however, again this increase can be correlated to there now being more deputies on the road to monitor traffic. It is anticipated that these percentages will be much smaller going forward now that adequate staffing is in place.

| Stark County Sheriff's Office by Activity (2014-2018) | | | | | |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Activity | Year 2014 | Year 2015 | Year 2016 | Year 2017 | Year 2018 |
| Accidents | 1,187 | 1,064 | 763 | 867 | 1,060 |
| Stops | 2,554 | 1,872 | 1,505 | 2,204 | 3,049 |
| Citations | 1,836 | 1,380 | 1,017 | 1,802 | 1,868 |
| Incidents | 11,344 | 10,923 | 10,883 | 11,645 | 14,091 |
| Total | 16,921 | 15,239 | 14,168 | 16,518 | 20,068 |

Key: Accidents - Traffic Accidents; Stops - Traffic Stops; Citations - Traffic Citations (speeding, etc.); Incidents - Calls to Residences or Businesses (suspicious persons/vehicle, theft, etc.)

Source: Stark County Sheriff's Office

One step that the Township can take to help reduce the level of crime (both real and perceived) is to encourage the initiation of additional Neighborhood Watch groups. There is currently one formal Neighborhood Watch group in the Township, which is the Diamond Park Neighborhood Watch group. The County Prosecutor's Office can help with the formation of these groups. Several homeowners' associations also have informal watch groups, which the Sheriff's Department will attend meetings for to speak on crime prevention efforts. These groups provide invaluable service to their respective neighborhoods, and the community's safety overall.

The Sheriff's Department also partners with the Township on a number of other crime prevention efforts: 1) a partnership with Plain Township for an online investigative tool to help deputies track and locate stolen property (and residents can proactively document their own property in the event of a theft); 2) coordination with the OVI Task Force to set up sobriety checkpoints throughout the Township; 3) Coffee with a Cop meetings and numerous other local community outreach events; 4) Township newsletter articles with safety information and tips; and 5) Partnerships with other safety units to provide services as needed.

STARK COUNTY SHERIFF

Social media and cyber technology are also quickly becoming prominent tools for crime intervention/prevention. For example, the Sheriff's Department currently maintains a Facebook page for information sharing. There is also a popular mobile device application ("app") available called Nextdoor, which can help keep communities better connected. This app, which is free to both residents and public agencies, allows residents to share with each other useful, local information and tips; it also allows public agencies to convey critical, targeted messaging and crime and safety updates to its constituents. Several survey respondents commented that this app was one method that they currently utilize to receive local information. It appears that the Township is utilizing a similar emergency notification service called Nixle. These two applications should be compared for similarities and/or differences that may be useful.

Lastly, the Sheriff's Office offers free security camera registrations for informational purposes, which could be useful if an incident took place near an area with a known security camera. Law enforcement would not have access to the actual cameras; they would only have basic camera location and owner information.

STORMWATER RUNOFF CONTROL

Stormwater runoff control is another important capital improvement need that the Township assists with. Plain Township has identified the following drainage projects as priority projects (see table below). The Township is pursuing funding from the Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC) to help cover the costs of the Orion Street drainage project. The OPWC assists in financing local public infrastructure improvements; eligible projects include improvements to roads, bridges, culverts, water supply, and wastewater and stormwater systems. Each project is evaluated by a local committee that scores the proposals based on a number of criteria, including: level of critical safety importance, alleviation of serious traffic problems or hazards, impact on economic development, availability of other sources of funding, etc. A review of the budget shows that the Township spends approximately \$50,000-\$75,000 per year to meet ongoing storm sewer improvements.

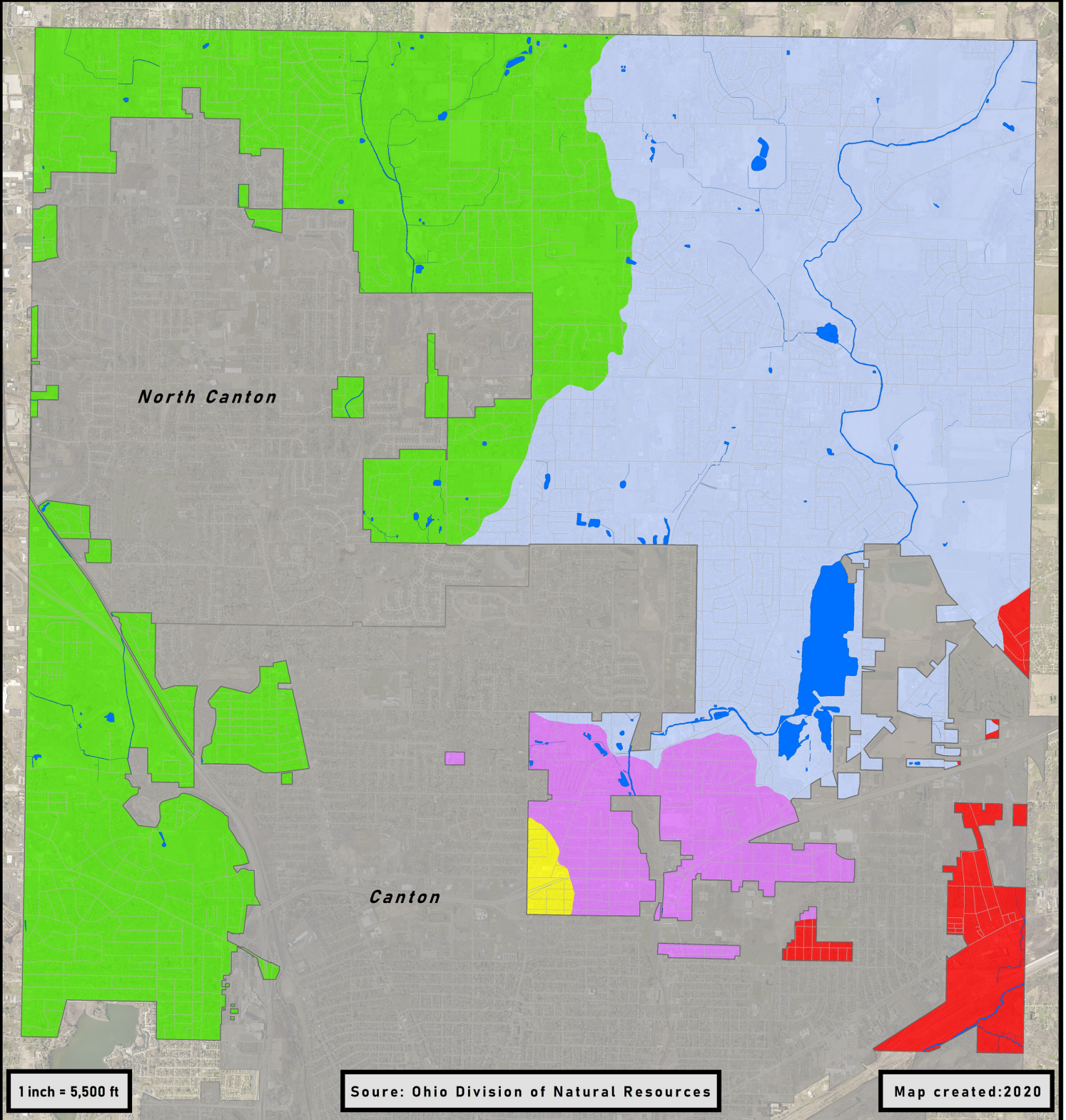
While OPWC funding is very competitive, the Township should continue to explore applying for it as new projects arise, to help offset costs

One of the recommendations in the 2012 Plan was for the Township to establish riparian setbacks to help mitigate flooding problems and water pollution. Riparian setbacks are “no-build zones” established between water bodies and buildings or other soil-disturbing activities. In 2017, the Township adopted riparian corridor regulations for areas along the Nimishillen Creek. These regulations were a significant stride made by the Township to lessen the impacts of stormwater runoff. Also being aware of where certain watersheds are and where they drain to can assist with stormwater mitigation (see following map).

| Proposed Drainage Projects | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Project | Year | Estimated Cost |
| Lindford Avenue Storm Sewer | 2019-2021 | \$1.3 million |
| Orion Rd. Drainage | 2020-2022 | \$700,000 |
| Steiner Heights Storm Sewer | NA | \$2.7 million |
| Bentler-East Center Storm Sewer | NA | NA |
| Zimber Ditch | NA | NA |

Source: Plain Township Highway Improvement Plan, OPWC

Plain Township Watersheds



- | | | | |
|--|---|---|-----------------------------------|
|  | East Branch Nimishillen Creek at Mouth |  | Nimishillen Creek above W. Branch |
|  | Middle Branch Nimishillen Creek above E. Branch |  | West Branch Nimishillen Creek |
|  | Middle Branch Nimishillen Creek at Canton | | |

Description: Watersheds delineate where surface water and storm water runoff drain to other bodies of water.



WASTEWATER TREATMENT

The Stark County Metropolitan Sewer District contracts with the City of Canton for Plain Township’s wastewater disposal. As of 2019, there are no County-owned or managed wastewater treatment plants located in the Township; however, there are six County sanitary lift stations located throughout the Township. These facilities help move water from lower to higher elevations, where gravity is not sufficient.

No major sewer projects are planned in Plain Township over the next 10 years, only minor projects are currently identified.

The below projects are not assessed, but for an assessed project, property owners are responsible for approximately 40-50% of the total cost of construction through a standard equation that uses the Engineering News construction index number to account for monthly construction cost changes. This number changes monthly as the construction cost index fluctuates. The homeowner would also be charged a connection fee and excavator fees to abandon any existing septic tank and connect the building sewer to the installed service sewer.

| Proposed Sewer Projects (Public) | | |
|--|--|--|
| Location | Project | Description |
| Middlebranch/Easton – Holly Hills/Sherwood Village | Install new, and connect existing, sewers to the County’s system | Connect dry sewers and install new sewers for approximately 400 parcels |
| Meyers Lake sanitary lift station | Improve lift station | Improve structure, install new pumps controls and force main |
| Various Line Maintenance Projects | Repair and replacement of trouble spots throughout the Township | Replace and adjust manhole castings seal manholes and perform sewer line repairs |
| Proposed Sewer Projects (Private) | | |
| Location | Project | Description |
| Saratoga/Winchester Hills | New development and sanitary lift station | Install sewer to allotment and construct new sanitary lift |

Source: Stark County Metropolitan Sewer District, 2019

WASTEWATER TREATMENT

The Stark County Metropolitan Sewer District also allows for the creation of petition areas. These are usually in neighborhoods where an individual wishes to investigate the possibility of installing a public sewer. The Sewer District investigates the potential for sewer, but the individual petitioner is responsible for convincing their neighbors to sign a Petition of Interest. If the petition contains signatures of 70% of the designated petition area, a neighborhood meeting is held to discuss the potential project including estimated assessment costs. A ballot is also sent to all participants in the petition area, and if 51% or more agree to proceed with the project, it is designed.

After the design is complete, the Board of Commissioners holds a public hearing at which time property owners may send letters for or against the project. If the objections do not exceed 49% of the petition area, the project is installed.

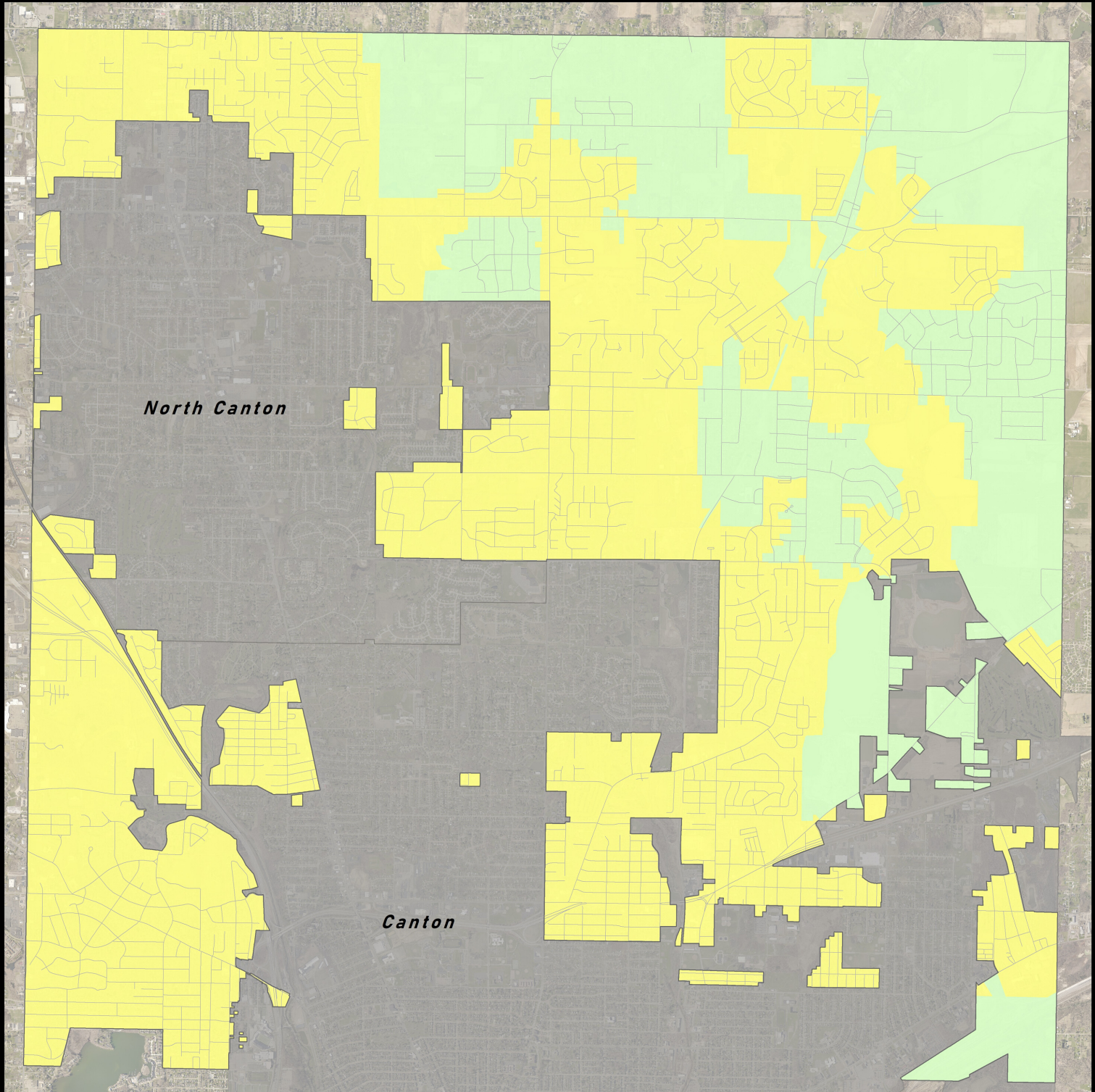
The below table highlights the City of Canton’s treatment capacity levels at their Water Reclamation Facility. Recent improvements in late 2017 allowed the City to increase their peak flow levels from 67 million gallons/day (mgd) to 88 mgd. This means that in times of peak flow, there is an increased availability to store and treat more wastewater before it overflows into local waterways.

The average flow in 2019 was approximately 29 mgd; this is down from 34 mgd in 2011.

| City of Canton Treatment Plant Daily Capacity Levels | |
|--|-------------------------|
| Type of Capacity | Per Day Capacity Levels |
| Design Capacity for Average Flow | 39 million gallons/day |
| Design Capacity for Peak Flow | 88 million gallons/day |
| Average Flow (in 2019) | 29 million gallons/day |

Source: City of Canton Water Reclamation Facility, 2019

Plain Township Facility Planning Areas



1 inch = 5,500 ft

Source: N.E. Ohio Four County Regional Planning and Development

Map created: 2020

208 Clean Water Plan Prescriptions



- Areas Served by Home Sewage or other Disposal System
- Areas Served by Sanitary Sewer

Description: Section 208 of the Clean Water act sets forth requirements for water quality management.



HOME SEWAGE

The Stark County Health Department oversees home sewage treatment (septic) systems, including inspections. As of 2019, there were approximately 4,000 septic systems located within Plain Township. The Health Department has identified two septic problem areas within the Township; these include the Laurel Ridge allotment area northwest of Bentler Avenue and Easton Street, and the Sherwood Village allotment area northeast of Middlebranch Avenue and 55th Street.

Problem areas are determined based on a number of factors, including soil type, year of system installation, lot size, and type of treatment system. The most common resolution methods include connecting to sanitary sewer or package treatment plants, or installing a new sewage treatment system.

The County Health Department has been actively working to replace failing septic systems in troubled areas; however, the two areas identified above are not the worst in the County and so they are lower down on the replacement schedule.

The map on the previous page was created by the Northeast Ohio Four County Regional Planning and Development Organization (NEFCO) who was designated by the Governor of Ohio under Section 208 of the federal Clean Water Act to perform area wide wastewater planning. The latest version of the Section 208 Plan includes updated information and maps for the wastewater facilities planning areas, and also relevant information on protecting and restoring water resources in the NEFCO region including nonpoint source pollution, stormwater runoff, protection of regionally important water resources, and watershed planning.

DRINKING WATER

Plain Township receives water from the Cities of Canton and North Canton, and a private water company, Aqua Ohio. The City of Canton has the capacity to provide 24 million gallons of water per day. The Canton Water Department obtains its water from underground wells. There are three separate well fields that supply water to the City's three water treatment plants. The first is referred to as the Northeast Well Field, which is located in the northeast section of Canton. The second is referred to as the Northwest Well Field, which is located in the northwest section of Canton. The third is the Sugarcreek Well Field, which is located south of Navarre near SR 21 and SR 212. As a backup measure, the City also has nearly 30 million gallons of drinking water stored in enclosed reservoirs.

The City of North Canton has the capacity to provide 9 million gallons of water per day. Their system serves approximately 25,000 customers. The City obtains water from 9 different groundwater wells in five different locations, including Dressler Field, Price Park, near the Treatment Plant along Freedom, the East Maple ball fields, and off of Salway and 38th. The North Canton Water Treatment Plant also has an emergency connection with the City of Canton Water System and Aqua Ohio Water System.

TRASH/RECYCLING

According to the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, Ohio disposed of nearly 19 million tons of waste in 2017. Studies show that roughly 80 percent of what Americans throw away is recyclable, yet Ohio's recycling rate for residential/commercial waste was only 29 percent as of 2017. This rate has remained relatively stable since 2010. As landfills are reaching capacity, additional measures should be applied to help further reduce the amount of materials reaching them. Through the public meetings and survey responses, repeated comments were received regarding recycling and/or yard waste improvements. Some of the requests included longer yard waste drop-off hours, more drop-off sites, curbside pickup of yard waste, yard waste/recycling sites needed on the western side of the Township, and availability of curbside recycling containers.

Regarding yard waste, until recently the Township had been receiving grant funding from the Stark-Tuscarawas-Wayne Joint Solid Waste District to operate its yard waste site (with the stipulation that the site be open to all tri-county residents). However, the funding was not enough to cover the full costs of operating the site and so the Township had been subsidizing the program through its general fund. Consideration had been given to closing the site completely; however, in September of 2019, the Township decided to privatize its yard waste site, limiting the service to township residents only with the goal to reduce its burden on the general fund. While the long-term future of this program is still uncertain, the Township has an agreement with Earth-N-Wood, its yard waste collection site, to continue operating at least through 2022.

In terms of general recycling, the Township currently has a number of locations with recycling bins stationed at them. These include Diamond Community Park, Saint Michael's Church, Taft and Day School grounds, and most recently, the former fire station on Easton Street that now has approximately 13 bins located at it. These facilities, which are self-service, are open seven days a week during daylight hours. Currently, all of the bins are owned and operated by the Joint Solid Waste District. To further assist with recycling, the Township should encourage the Joint Solid Waste District to consider installing additional containers in under-served areas, such as the southeastern part of the Township, or in areas with higher demands, including the western part of the Township.

As recycling centers across the county are struggling to make ends meet, the likelihood of establishing physical recycling centers in various parts of the Township may be unfeasible, but curbside recycling should continue to be explored. Currently, several different trash haulers serve the Township. If large enough neighborhoods joined together to utilize a single hauler, the likelihood that curbside recycling would be offered by them increases considerably. To help incentivize this, the Township could consider a cost-share agreement to offset the cost to those neighborhoods, at least in the initial phase. While not an item to necessarily pursue immediately, it should continue to be analyzed in the coming years.

OVERALL PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

Sustainable Development Practices

Sustainable development means “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundlandt World Commission Report on Environment and Development, 1987). Sustainability can be broken down into three broad categories: economic, environment, and social equity. It takes an equal balance of all three for a community to establish a truly sustainable framework. Listed below are just a few common zoning and development practices that many communities currently utilize to achieve sustainability. As the Township looks to the future, implementing these policies where feasible will help develop a more vibrant, successful and sustainable community for many years to follow.

Planning Policy Areas

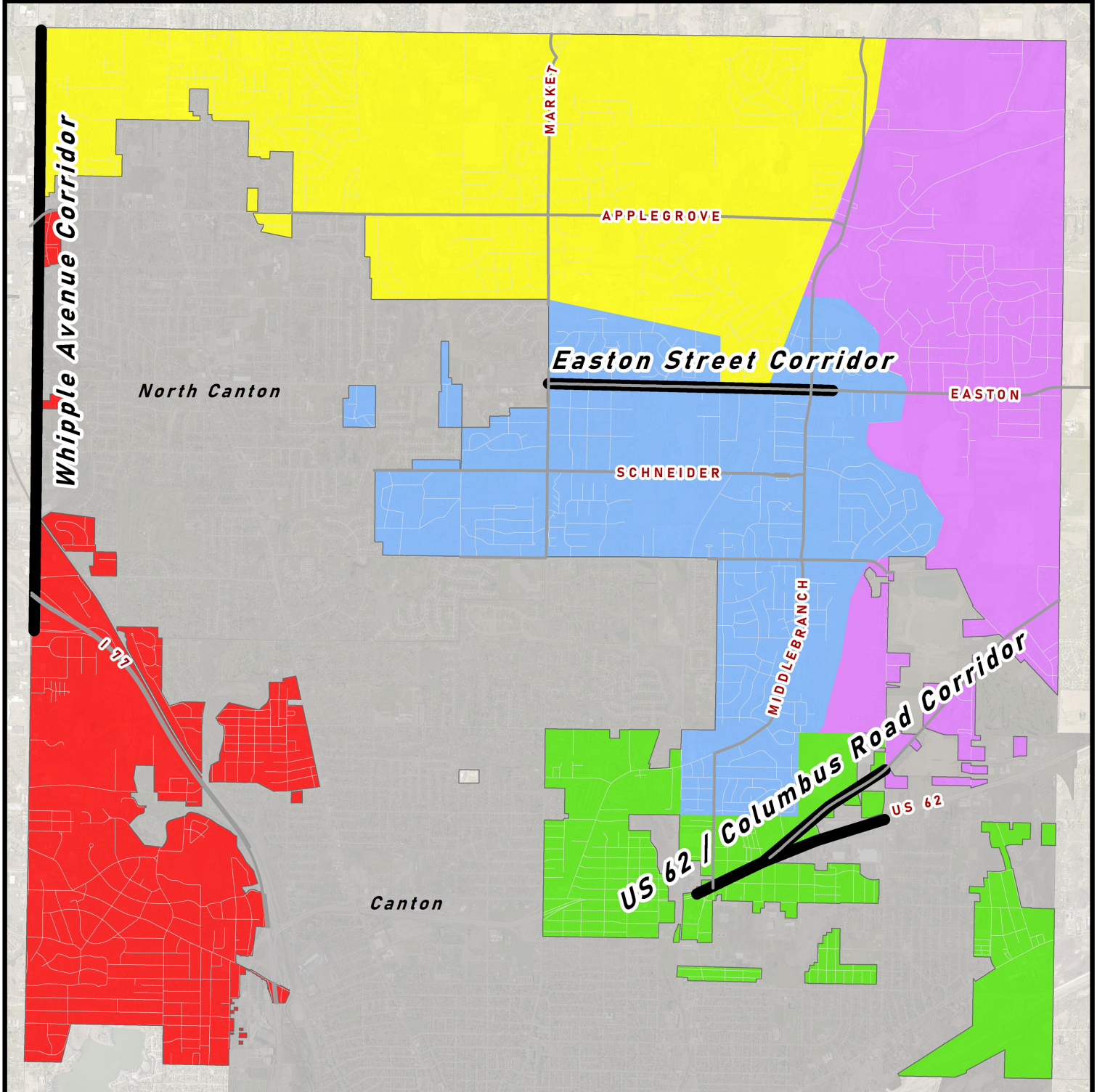
Plain Township contains a variety of different land uses and development areas. Some areas are indistinguishable from the cities of Canton and North Canton. Others are rural and relatively undeveloped. This plan recommends the Township focus land use strategies through the use of different Planning Policy Areas. One blanket approach to land use planning will not be able to accommodate the unique situations of each Policy Area. Fine-tuning sustainable policy decisions and land use planning based on the unique situations in each Policy Area will result in a better overall plan approach. The following map shows the Planning Policy areas for recommendations which follow.

Sustainable Development Tools

| Principle | Description | Implementation |
|------------------------|---|---|
| Mixed-use Development | Combination of compatible land uses to allow people to live, work and play within a walkable area | Create mixed-use zoning district for appropriate areas such as Fulton/Hills & Dales corridor, Whipple and Cleveland Avenues |
| Site Design | Design elements and beautification efforts to improve attractiveness of an area | Add landscaping and other site design requirements for all new development |
| Pedestrian-orientation | Development that takes non-motorists into consideration | Modify regulations to reduce setback requirements; promote rear/side-yard parking; require pedestrian paths in new allotments |
| Housing Diversity | Housing options for all ages, incomes and abilities | Increase elderly housing options; promote inclusionary zoning and mixed-use; increase density |
| Water Management | Stormwater runoff control and conservation | Undertake "green" stormwater infrastructure projects on all township-owned properties |
| Renewable Energy | Energy sources that are not reliant on natural resources | Promote renewal energy usage in all renovations/new constructions; explore options for more eco-friendly vehicles in the replacement schedule |

Source: Stark County Regional Planning Commission

Plain Township Planning Policy Areas



1 inch = 5,500 ft

Source: Stark County Regional Planning Commission

Map created: 2020

| | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|---|----------------------|---|-----------|---|
|  | Southwestern Residential/Whipple |  | Northern Residential |  | Central |  |
|  | Southeast Commercial |  | Eastern Residential |  | Corridors | |

Description: Planning Policy Areas are determined based on recommended land use strategies.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Northern Residential

Boundary

The Northern Residential Policy Area is generally bounded by Lake Township to the north, Jackson Township to the west, the City of North Canton to the south, and the Wheeling and Lake Erie Railroad right-of-way to the east.

Existing Conditions

- Transitioning from undeveloped to developed area
- Substantial tracts of farmland, wooded areas and vacant property
- Commercial uses in northwest corner along Whipple Avenue
- New single-family residential development becoming dominant land use
- Portions of the area not served with public sanitary sewer
- Township Park: Diamond Community Park

Priority Planning Issues

- Preservation of open space and rural character as area continues to develop with residential subdivisions
- Existing soil conditions are creating problems with continued suburban residential development on septic systems
- Impact from Shuffel/Interstate 77 interchange

Planning Strategies and Development Policies

- Possible purchase of environmentally sensitive properties to preserve open space
- Discourage development in areas without public sewer available
- Encourage purchase of properties to the northwest for economic development purposes tied into airport and I-77 expansion

- Implement design standards to ensure compatibility between commercial development to the northwest and the predominant residential land uses
- Encourage installation of public sanitary sewer and water service in appropriate areas that are already developed
- Additional signs and Plain Township signature elements should be considered where they may strengthen community identity
- Promote beautification efforts along Cleveland Avenue, Whipple Avenue and Market Avenue

Zoning Recommendations

The Northern Residential Policy area has some of the largest parcels still available for development in Plain Township. Much of this open land is zoned R-R Rural Residential and R-1 Single Family Residential. It also contains significant areas with wetlands and 100-year floodplains. If the current zoning remains in place, it is likely this area of the Township will develop with a standard suburban pattern that will not be sensitive to environmental features or the need to provide neighborhood parks and open space. Plain Township should consider rezoning these areas to one of their Township's Planned Unit Development (PUD) Districts and using the development review authority of these districts to encourage a more innovative development pattern.

In addition to residential areas, the Township should identify properties to the northwest, which have the most industrial and commercial development potential related to the Akron/Canton Airport, and zone these areas appropriately.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Eastern Residential

Boundary

The Eastern Residential Policy Area has a highly irregular boundary. It is generally bounded to the north by Lake Township, to the east by Nimishillen Township, to the south by State Route 62, and to the west by Nimishillen Creek & the Lake Erie Railway.

Existing Conditions

- Large areas of farmland and open space with significant amounts of floodplain and wetlands along Nimishillen Creek
- Some older, rural residential development along with a large area of single-family subdivision development abutting Nimishillen Township
- Some industrial uses in the southern portion of the policy area, and some industrial zoning in the northern portion abutting Lake Township
- Septic and stormwater runoff problems in some older allotments
- Historically higher demand for development
- Township Park: Al Leno Community Park

Priority Planning Issues

- Continued use of Cooperative Economic Development Agreements (CEDA's), Joint Economic Development Districts (JEDD's), and/or other economic development incentives for any annexation attempts of southern portions of this Policy Area
- Lack of sewer and water infrastructure
- Stalled development in new allotments
- Maintaining existing residential property values
- Encourage preservation and renovation efforts in Middlebranch

Planning Strategies and Development Policies

- Provide sewer and water infrastructure to industrial properties in southern portion of Policy Area
- Alleviate failing septic issues in identified problem areas
- Continue to be proactive in addressing JEDD's, CEDA's or Tax Increment Financing (TIF's) where possible annexation may occur
- Additional signs and Plain Township signature elements should be considered where they may strengthen community identity
- Code enforcement efforts should be increased and County programs for housing rehabilitation should be encouraged for qualified homeowners

Zoning Recommendations

The proactive delineation of a PUD overlay district in large, undeveloped areas or along a major corridor should be considered to help guide sustainable development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Central

Boundary

The Central Policy Area is generally bounded to the north by Easton Street, to the east by Nimishillen Creek, to the south by Cathy Drive, and to the west by the Cities of North Canton and Canton.

Existing Conditions

- Stable residential neighborhoods built primarily prior to 1980
- Some older core residential neighborhoods- initial suburban development from Canton and North Canton
- Some existing commercial plazas to the north along Easton Street (which includes Plain Township Hall)
- Township Park: Veterans Community Park

Priority Planning Issues

- Lack of central focal point, or community hub, within Township.
- Aged infrastructure is also located in this area, and some areas lack sewer and water service

Planning Strategies and Development Policies

- Continued redevelopment of existing commercial areas along Easton Street, including Oakwood Square
- Analyze feasibility of developing the Middlebranch/Easton/Oakwood Square area with a variety of land uses to help create a Township focal point or district. Development of this corridor should take place in conjunction with development standards and design review, to help maintain existing property values by encouraging high-quality development

- Consider land banking options for delinquent properties
- Continued maintenance within existing residential neighborhoods possibly through County programs for housing rehabilitation (for qualified homeowners)
- Extension of sewer and water service to appropriate areas which lack it
- Analyze feasibility of establishing a community/recreation center near chosen focal point of Township

Zoning Recommendations

The Township should consider rezoning several large parcels available for development from the current R-1 Single Family Residential district to R-7 Planned Mixed-Use Development (PMUD). This would encourage more innovative and flexible development and would give the Township additional development review authority. Reserving enough land for neighborhood parks and/or ensuring that existing parks are fully adequate should be a priority as this area continues to develop. Mixed-use development affords people the opportunity to live, work and play in a single area, which consequently reduces the need for an automobile. The Middlebranch/Easton/Oakwood Square area may also be a good location for this type of district.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Southeast Commercial

Boundary

The Southeast Commercial Policy Area is bisected by the City of Canton and has irregular boundaries. It is bounded generally to the north by Martindale and US Route 62, to the east by Nimishillen Township, to the south by Canton Township, and to the west by the City of Canton.

Existing Conditions

- Non-contiguous boundaries and landlocked parcels due to Canton annexations into the area
- Industrial uses along southern border
- Viable commercial uses along Atlantic/Columbus corridor
- Older residential neighborhoods with mixture of unstable housing stock

Priority Planning Issues

- Residential and industrial property decline
- Continued use of Cooperative Economic Development Agreements (CEDA's), Joint Economic Development Districts (JEDD's), and/or other economic development incentives for any annexation attempts
- Zoning code and building code violations, related to small lot sizes and poorly maintained rental properties
- Stormwater management concerns near Martindale and Plain Center
- Establishing/maintaining sense of Plain Township identity, especially along US 62

Planning Strategies and Development Policies

- Increase code enforcement efforts, especially in targeted problem areas, to encourage investment in residential property repair, purchase, and upgrade

- Implement and/or promote economic development grants and programs to make industrial and commercial areas more attractive for investment, development, and redevelopment
- Pursue state and/or federal funds for potential brownfield remediation and redevelopment
- Continue to be proactive in addressing CEDA's, JEDD's, or TIF's where possible annexation may occur
- Increase stormwater management efforts in targeted problem areas
- Install signs and Plain Township signature elements along targeted thoroughfares to strengthen identity and improve aesthetics
- Redevelopment of Atlantic Boulevard/Columbus Road corridor, including beautification efforts
- Utilize the Stark County Land Reutilization Corporation to help stabilize and improve neighborhoods
- Pursue funds to encourage additional housing rehabilitation and infrastructure programs for targeted problem areas, possibly through County programs for housing rehabilitation (for qualified homeowners)

Zoning Recommendations

The majority of this policy area is built out, and most of the remaining open land appears to be zoned for uses appropriate for future development. One exception is the existing R-1 Single Family Residential zoning. The Township should consider rezoning certain target areas to an R-7 Planned Mixed-Use Development (PMUD) District, which has a minimum of just two acres rather than the 20 acres required by the R-6 PUD, in order to encourage more innovative development, and to attract investment to the area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Southwestern Residential/ Whipple Avenue

Boundary

This policy area contains the neighborhoods southwest of Canton and North Canton and the commercial development which runs along Whipple Avenue. It is bounded generally by Canton and North Canton to the north and east, Meyers Lake Village and Canton Township to the south, and Jackson Township to the west.

Existing Conditions

- Along Whipple Avenue, the majority of land uses are commercial with some scattered single-family residential development
- Residential areas between Cleveland Avenue and I-77 include generally modest houses on smaller lots, with a large percentage of renter-occupied units. There is evidence of zoning code violations and property dis-investment
- Neighborhoods southwest of I-77 are generally stronger with stable housing stock and successful commercial areas, including the Professional Football Hall of Fame. There are also several parks and schools nearby

Priority Planning Issues

- Property dis-investment in neighborhoods east of I-77
- Stormwater runoff problems
- Maintaining a separate identity from Canton and North Canton
- Lack of township-owned parks in neighborhoods east of I-77
- There is a large tract of land north of Salway Avenue and west of I-77 that is owned (not annexed) by the City of North Canton. The City's plans for this property are unknown
- Areas along Whipple Avenue are indistinguishable from the City of North Canton

- Possible annexation attempts
- Impact from Shuffel/Interstate 77 Interchange

Planning Strategies and Development Policies

- Whipple Avenue Corridor should focus on development/redevelopment of commercial sites, design standards for ensuring compatibility between land uses, and taking advantage of development opportunities presented by the Akron/Canton Airport and I-77 expansion
- Additional signs and Plain Township signature elements should be considered where they may strengthen identity
- Code enforcement efforts should be increased in residential neighborhoods east of I-77, especially related to absentee landlord-owned properties
- Increase stormwater management efforts in targeted problem areas
- Plain Township should explore purchasing additional land in order to provide more Township-owned park facilities
- Maintain a dialogue with the City of North Canton regarding plans for the property they own within this policy area
- Continue to be proactive in addressing CEDA's, JEDD's, or TIF's where possible annexation may occur
- Promote streetscaping efforts along Whipple Avenue
- Encourage housing rehabilitation efforts, possibly through various Housing and Urban Development grant programs, in targeted neighborhoods
- Utilize the Stark County Land Reutilization Corporation to help stabilize and improve neighborhoods

RECOMMENDATIONS

Zoning Recommendations

The majority of this policy area is already built out. Some vacant parcels remain zoned R-1 Single Family Residential. The Township should consider rezoning these parcels available for development to an R-7 Planned Mixed-Use Development (PMUD) District to encourage more innovative and flexible development and it would give the Township additional development review authority. There are also some significant floodplain areas which should be considered for purchase by the Township for use as parks or open space preservation. For the commercial areas, the Township should also consider a mixed-use zoning district, especially where adjacent to residential areas.

APPENDIX

| VEHICLE # | VEHICLE MAKE | MODEL YEAR | YEAR BOUGHT | |
|-----------|---------------------------------|------------|-------------|--|
| 2 | INTERNATIONAL DUMP TRUCK | 2009 | 2008 | |
| 3 | INTERNATIONAL DUMP TRUCK | 2009 | 2008 | |
| 4 | INTERNATIONAL DUMP TRUCK | 2009 | 2008 | |
| 5 | STERLING DUMP TRUCK | 2004 | 2003 | |
| 6 | INTERNATIONAL DUMP TRUCK | 2015 | 2014 | |
| 7 | STERLING DUMP TRUCK | 2004 | 2003 | |
| 8 | INTERNATIONAL DUMP TRUCK | 2015 | 2014 | |
| 9 | INTERNATIONAL DUMP TRUCK | 2016 | 2015 | |
| 10 | INTERNATIONAL DUMP TRUCK | 1996 | 1996 | |
| 11 | INTERNATIONAL DUMP TRUCK | 1996 | 1996 | |
| 12 | INTERNATIONAL DUMP TRUCK | 2016 | 2016 | |
| 14 | INTERNATIONAL DUMP TRUCK | 2016 | 2016 | |
| 15 | INTERNATIONAL DUMP TRUCK | 2018 | 2017 | |
| 16 | INTERNATIONAL DUMP TRUCK | 2018 | 2018 | |
| 17 | INTERNATIONAL DUMP TRUCK | 2020 | 2019 | |
| 20 | INTERNATIONAL TANDEM DUMP TRUCK | 1999 | 1999 | |
| 21 | INTERNATIONAL PIPE TRUCK | 1999 | 1999 | |
| 22 | INTERNATIONAL VACTOR | 2009 | 2008 | |
| 23 | SCHWARZE STREET SWEEPER | 2016 | 2016 | |
| 24 | INTERNATIONAL BRINE TRUCK | | | |
| 25 | FORD F-350 BUCKET TRUCK | 1989 | 1999 | |
| 26 | ELGIN PELICAN SWEEPER | 2010 | 2010 | |
| 28 | GRADALL XL 3100 | 2005 | 2005 | |
| 29 | CASE 621 LOADER | 2012 | 2012 | |
| 30 | CASE 621 XR LOADER | 2019 | 2019 | |
| 31 | BOBCAT E-50 MINI TRACKHOE | 2011 | 2011 | |
| 32 | CASE 580 SK BACKHOE | 1993 | 1993 | |
| 33 | BOBCAT S 650 SKID LOADER | 2012 | 2012 | |
| 34 | CASE 485 TRACTOR | 1988 | 1988 | |
| 36 | MASSEY FERGUSON MOWER | 2008 | 2008 | |
| 39 | EAGER BEAVER TRAILER | 2012 | 2012 | |
| 41 | FORD F-250 SIGN TRUCK | 2015 | 2015 | |
| 43 | CRONKHITE TRAILER | 2007 | 2007 | |
| 44 | INTERSTATE TRAILER | 1998 | 1998 | |
| 46 | SULLAIR 185 AIR COMPRESSOR | 2008 | 2008 | |
| 47 | FORD F-550 BLOCK TRUCK | 2003 | 2003 | |
| 49 | FORD F-250 PICKUP TRUCK | 2013 | 2013 | |
| 50 | FORD F-550 DUMP TRUCK | 2017 | 2017 | |
| 51 | FORD F-550 DUMP TRUCK | PARKS | 1999 | |
| 52 | FORD F-550 DUMP TRUCK | 2002 | 2002 | |

| | | | | |
|-----|------------------------------|-------|------|--|
| 53 | FORD F-150 PICKUP TRUCK | 2016 | 2016 | |
| 54 | FORD F-350 PICKUP TRUCK | 2018 | 2018 | |
| 55 | FORD F-350 PICKUP TRUCK | 2004 | 2004 | |
| 55 | FORD F-350 PICKUP TRUCK | 2018 | 2018 | |
| 56 | FORD F-350 PICKUP TRUCK | 2008 | 2008 | |
| 57 | BOMAG BW 120 AD ROLLER | 2011 | 2011 | |
| 58 | CAT ASPHALT PAVER | 2016 | 2016 | |
| 59 | GEHL ROLLER | PARKS | | |
| 60 | MILLER CURB MACHINE | 2000 | 2000 | |
| 61 | ZANETIS ROAD HOG GRINDER | 2005 | 2011 | |
| 62 | BANDIT 250 BRUSH CHIPPER | 2004 | 2004 | |
| 63 | STRAW BLOWER | | | |
| 101 | FORD F-350 PICKUP TRUCK-SEAN | 2018 | 2018 | |
| 102 | FORD F-150 PICKUP TRUCK-PAUL | 2016 | 2016 | |