



BROWN COUNTY OHIO



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN December 2024

ENVISION

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Brown County, Ohio Comprehensive Plan December 2024

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A special thank you to the many stakeholders who took time to contribute their input to this study!

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 4 Steering Committee Meetings
- 3 Public Forums
- 1 Townships Meeting
- 1 Villages Meeting
- Over 500 Community Survey responses
- Over 150 Public Forum interactions
- Numerous stakeholder discussions

COMMUNITY VISION

Brown County, Ohio is a place where:

- **People want to live**
 - Affordable and abundant housing
- **People want to raise children**
 - Quality school system
- **People want to work**
 - Well-paying quality jobs
- **People feel safe**
 - Low crime rate & quality safety services

Overview

Brown County developed a Comprehensive Plan over a nine-month period in 2024. The Plan will serve as a guide for future growth and investment in the County. The Comprehensive Plan is a guiding document and does not impact private property rights.

Community Engagement

The planning process was guided by a Steering Committee comprised of 11 community representatives selected by the County Commissioners. This committee met four times across the planning process, with the broader public being engaged through a series of public forums, stakeholder meetings, and a community survey (see top left).

Assessment

A data assessment was performed to provide a quantitative analysis of qualitative feedback and preferences provided by stakeholders and the public. Key issues identified in the assessment (see next page) include recent and projected population loss and a lack of employment opportunities in the County to support a vibrant local tax base.

Recommendations

A series of recommendations are organized by eight geographic Concept Areas (see page vii), with accompanying Plan Themes (see page viii), and Potential Strategies (see page ix) for implementation.

Implementation Toolkits

The final chapter of the Plan details a series of potential strategies for conservation/preservation of the Greenbelts, incremental Smart Growth along the SR 32 Corridor, and reinvestment in existing Villages across the County.

Key Findings



Brown County
-2.6%
POPULATION
LOSS
2010 to 2020
First 10-Year
Decrease since the
Great Depression!

Brown County is projected to lose 8.54% of its population by 2050 (see next page for map).

Population loss translates into fewer customers and workers for local businesses and a diminishing tax base for public services. Retaining and attracting new residents is vital to the economic success of rural communities.

Brown County must make concentrated efforts to attract new residents and jobs to the County to avoid this projected population loss becoming reality in the future.

Targeted reinvestment in the County's existing Villages and strategic, incremental Smart Growth development along the SR 32 Corridor (especially Mt. Orab, Sterling Twp., and Green Twp.) can result in sustainable economic prosperity for future generations without compromising the County's rural character.

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 2020 Population (43.7K) was the County's first 10-Year Census decrease (-2.6%) since the Great Depression
- Combined enrollment at Brown County's public schools has decreased over 25% over the past two decades
- \$67K Median Household Income for County is in line with State Average
- County Poverty Rate (15.9%) slightly higher than State (13.4%)
- County Educational Attainment (Bachelors Degree or Higher) of 14.5% is less than half of State 32.0%, a predictor of limited earnings potential for residents
- Brown County is largely a "Bedroom Community" as 80% of residents in the workforce are employed outside Brown County
- Economic Indicators vary greatly locally (e.g. Mt Orab/Sardinia vs Georgetown/Ripley) - Median Incomes Range from \$63K along SR 32 Corridor to \$38K in RiverTowns

CONCEPT AREAS



Greenbelt



Smart Growth



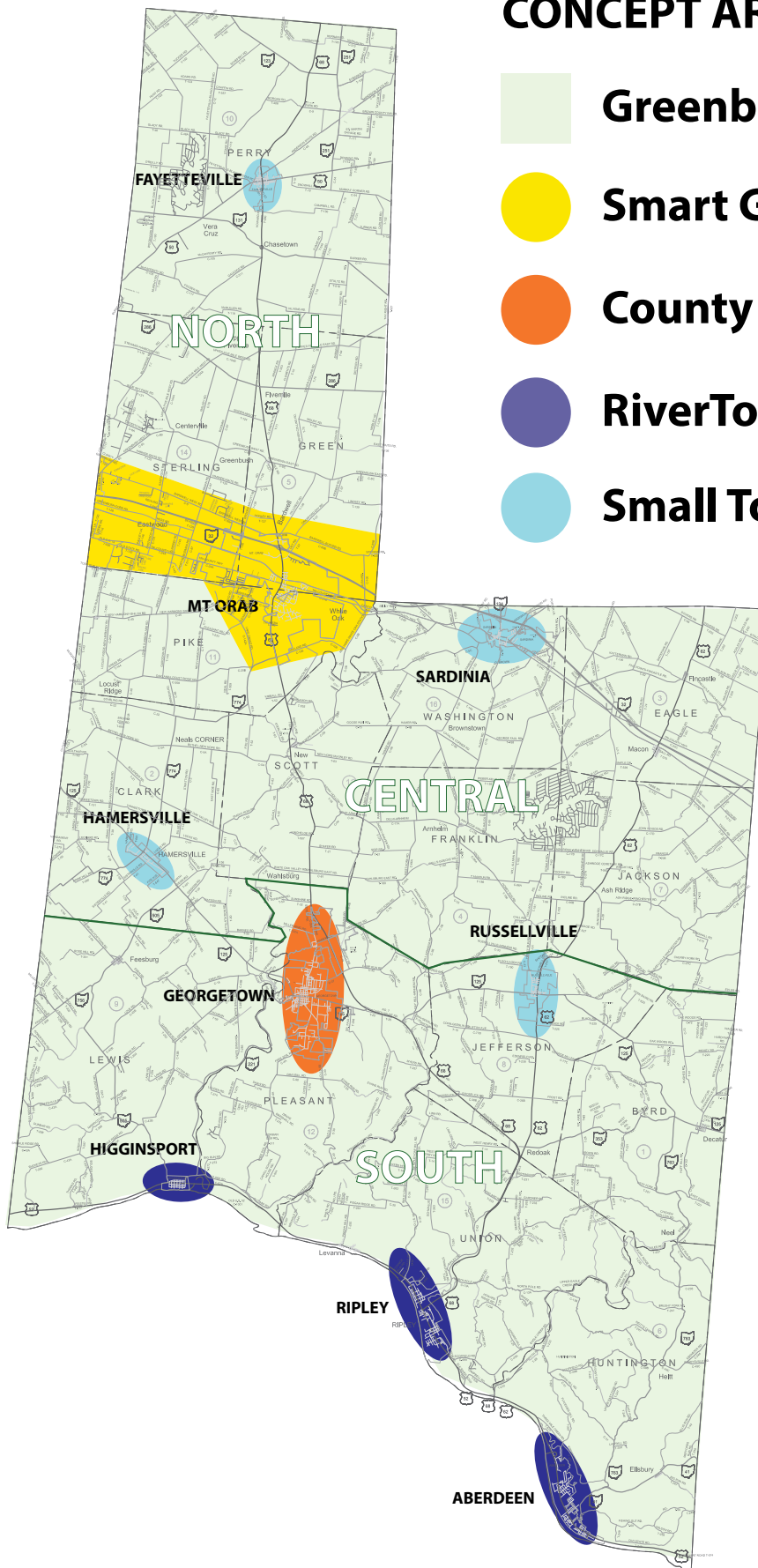
County Seat



RiverTowns



Small Towns



PLAN THEMES BY AREA

Concept Area	Plan Themes
Countywide	Capacity Building for Funding Pursuits (esp. Villages) Publicly Accessible Greenspace Need for Healthcare Facilities Code Enforcement (for zoned communities) Expand employment and tax base Attract and retain young professionals and families Support for small businesses and capital investment
Greenbelt North <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perry Twp Sterling Twp (north of Bardwell West) Green Twp (north of Bardwell-Buford) 	Farmland Preservation SR 68 Corridor Enhancements
Greenbelt Central (Pike, Washington, Eagle, Clark, Scott, Franklin & Jackson Townships)	Farmland Preservation Recreation (esp. Lake Grant)
Greenbelt South (Lewis, Pleasant, Jefferson, Byrd, Union & Huntington Townships)	Farmland Preservation Greenspace Conservation Broadband Access (state investment underway)
Smart Growth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mt Orab Sterling Twp (south of Bardwell West) Green Twp (south of Bardwell-Buford) Sardinia 	Workforce Housing Community-scaled Retail Catalytic Light Industrial Development (Mega Sites) Sewer Service Expansion
County Seat Georgetown	Site Readiness Placemaking (Streetscape / Storefront Facades) Cultural Tourism
Rural Villages (Fayetteville, Hamersville & Russellville)	Infrastructure State of Good Repair Promote & Support Small Business
RiverTowns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aberdeen Higginsport Ripley 	Public Health & Safety Zoning & Code Enforcement Critical Infrastructure Downtown Revitalization / Tourism

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

Concept Area	Plan Themes
Countywide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish working group of Villages to collaboratively identify, monitor, and pursue shared resources for Capacity Building, Technical Assistance & Funding Work with Cardinal Preservation to pursue Ohio Greenspace Preservation Fund project(s) and explore potential of creating a future County Park District Seek Appalachian / Rural Healthcare Funding Allocate percentage of building permit fees to strengthen code enforcement efforts Create a Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) to stimulate business growth and capital investment
Greenbelt North	Agricultural Conservation Tools: (Agricultural Easement Donation Program, Clean Ohio Local Agricultural Easement Purchase Program, Agricultural Security Area Program Natural Resources Conservation Service - Agricultural Conservation Easement, Agricultural Zoning)
Greenbelt Central	Agricultural Conservation Tools – see above <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) on enhancing passive recreational access to public lands
Greenbelt South	Agricultural Conservation Tools – see above <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage potential for landowner enrollment in ODNR Forestland Tax Reduction Protection of ecologically sensitive habitat (Riparian and steep slope setback regulations)
Smart Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate local partners on best practices in Smart Growth zoning (e.g. Conservation Development, Overlays, Design Standards) Utilize Southern Ohio Regional Development Authority (SORDA) developer fees and TIF proceeds for site assembly/readiness Create an Investment Prospectus for site selectors and potential developers Consider implementation of a Joint Economic Development District (JEDD) along the SR 32 Corridor as a catalyst for shared local revenue generation Leverage the area's unique development finance tools (e.g. Opportunity Zones) to incentivize private investment Create a long-range transportation plan to enhance north-south travel in the County, particularly along US 68
County Seat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize Georgetown Port Authority developer fees for site assembly/readiness Capitalize a Revolving Loan Fund for storefront & historic building renovations
Rural Villages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize established economic development partners (e.g. Georgetown Port Authority or Southwest Ohio Regional Development Authority) to assist with project loans and grants
RiverTowns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverage ACGP awards & grassroots redevelopment efforts mobilized (e.g. Ripley Economic Development Corporation) Pursue Appalachian Regional Commission funding support for local placemaking efforts to support revitalizing rural towns through cultural and recreational tourism Work with potential developers to establish and pursue Innovative Finance tools for catalytic redevelopment such as New Markets Tax Credits



CH 1 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION



OVERVIEW

A Comprehensive Plan is a complete review of the community's assets in conjunction with obtaining input from residents, businesses and other stakeholders to determine where the community should be headed in the future. It is an opportunity for the community to develop a guiding document that can be used for directing and implementing how the County develops and changes to make it even better. It includes assessing housing needs and economic development, along with quality of life issues such as placemaking and recreation.

The Plan is important because communities are always changing, either through internal actions or external forces. Development and change is going to occur, but through the creation of a Comprehensive Plan, development can be shaped and directed to best fit the needs and desires of the community.

The Plan culminates in a series of strategies that outline action items, roles, and responsibilities for post-plan implementation activities. Given the wide range of recommendations in a comprehensive planning effort, these strategies include a combination of regulatory tools (e.g. zoning, design standards, etc.), public-private partnerships, policies and programming, innovative financing strategies, economic development incentives/cooperative development agreements, and pursuit of grant funding assistance.

The Comprehensive Plan will include recommendations and implementation tools for County leadership as well as its local partners including townships, villages, and economic development organizations.

Guiding Principles

COMMUNITY VISION

Brown County, Ohio is a place where:

- **People want to live**
 - Affordable and abundant housing
- **People want to raise children**
 - Quality school system
- **People want to work**
 - Well-paying quality jobs
- **People feel safe**
 - Low crime rate & quality safety



A Call to Action

In order to accomplish our Vision, we need to establish a plan. In a recent analysis of student enrollment in Brown County, it was identified that the projected student headcounts by District will decline to a disastrous level (in the not too distant future) if action is not taken. This data alone is a strong indicator that we are not on a path to realizing our vision.

We know that Brown County has much to offer. We know that the talent exists to lead us into a bright future. We also know that we are losing talent to other places and that valuable resource is not returning. We can do better.

Brown County has abundant natural resources that make it prime for investment. If we fail to seize the moment, and fail to plan for proper usage of those resources, someone else (outsiders) will do it for us. We have a desire and vested interest in making Brown County the best it can be. It is for this reason the County has developed a Comprehensive Plan.

Guiding Document

A Comprehensive Plan is advisory in nature and serves as a guiding document. The Plan is not legally binding and does not commit the Commissioners or local governments to take action on any of its recommendations.

ADVISORY DOCUMENT

A Comprehensive Plan is a guiding document that is not legally binding, whereas the Zoning Code is a statutory authority that governs use of property. The Comprehensive Plan may include development recommendations for the type and form of future land uses, but the Zoning Code(s) and Subdivision Regulations would need to be amended in a separate process for any changes in private property rights to take place.

DISTINCTION BETWEEN A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN & ZONING

Comprehensive Plan

Guiding document providing community vision for future growth & redevelopment

Advisory

Zoning Code

Statutory authority controlling use of property, and density & character of development

Legally Binding

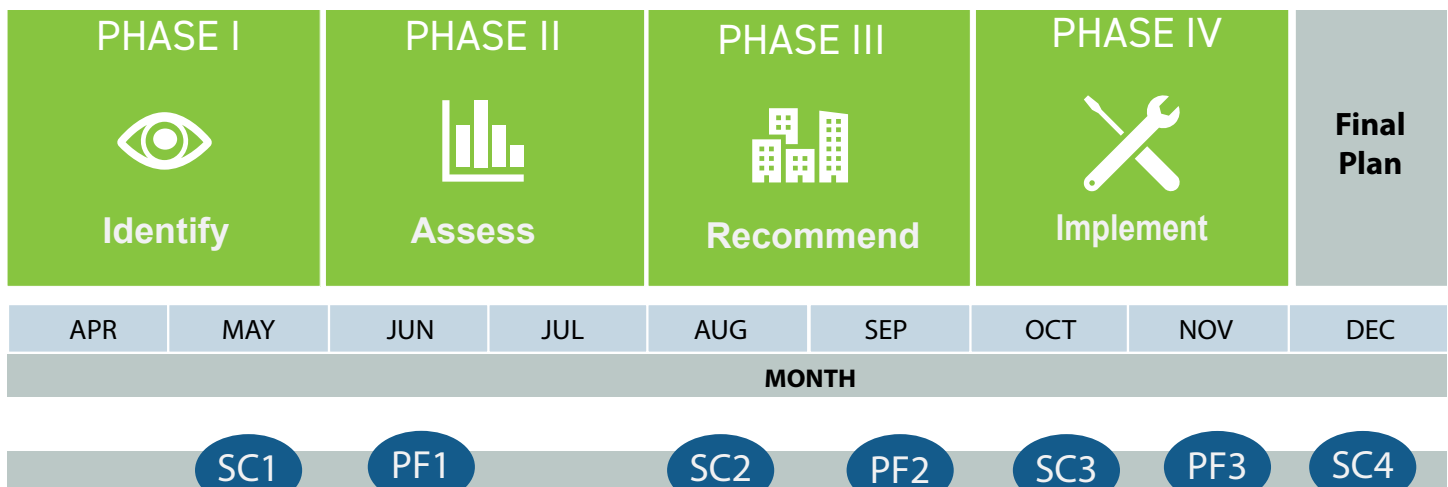
Planning Process

Planning Activities

The Comprehensive Plan was developed over an nine-month period using a streamlined four-step planning process:

1. Identifying a Community Vision
2. Assessing Existing & Future Needs and Conditions
3. Developing actionable and market-tested/technically feasible recommendations
4. Providing a toolkit of strategies for Implementation

Four Steering Committee Meetings and three Public Forums were held over the course of the project as summarized in the timeline below.



Public Engagement Process



**Public
Forum**



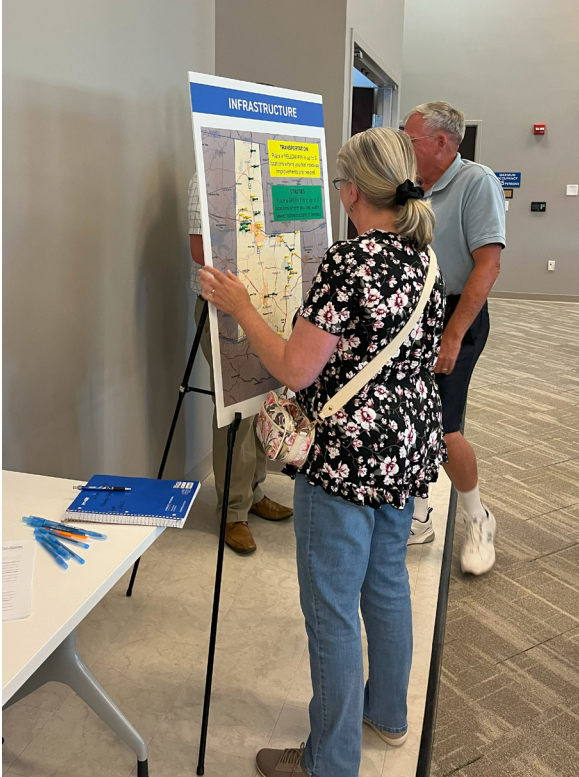
**Steering
Committee Meeting**

Community Engagement

ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

The nine-month public engagement effort for the Comprehensive Plan included:

- 4 Steering Committee Meetings
- 3 Public Forums
- 1 Townships Meeting
- 1 Villages Meeting
- Over 500 Community Survey responses
- Over 150 Public Forum interactions
- Numerous stakeholder discussions



Steering Committee

The Steering Committee established three priority topics that served as the focus of this strategic planning effort, along with three supporting topics that were acknowledged to complement the priority topics.

PRIORITY TOPICS



**LAND USE &
ZONING**



INFRASTRUCTURE



**ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT**

SUPPORTING TOPICS



Natural Resources



History & Culture



Quality of Life

Public Forums

PUBLIC FORUM 1
June 13, 2024

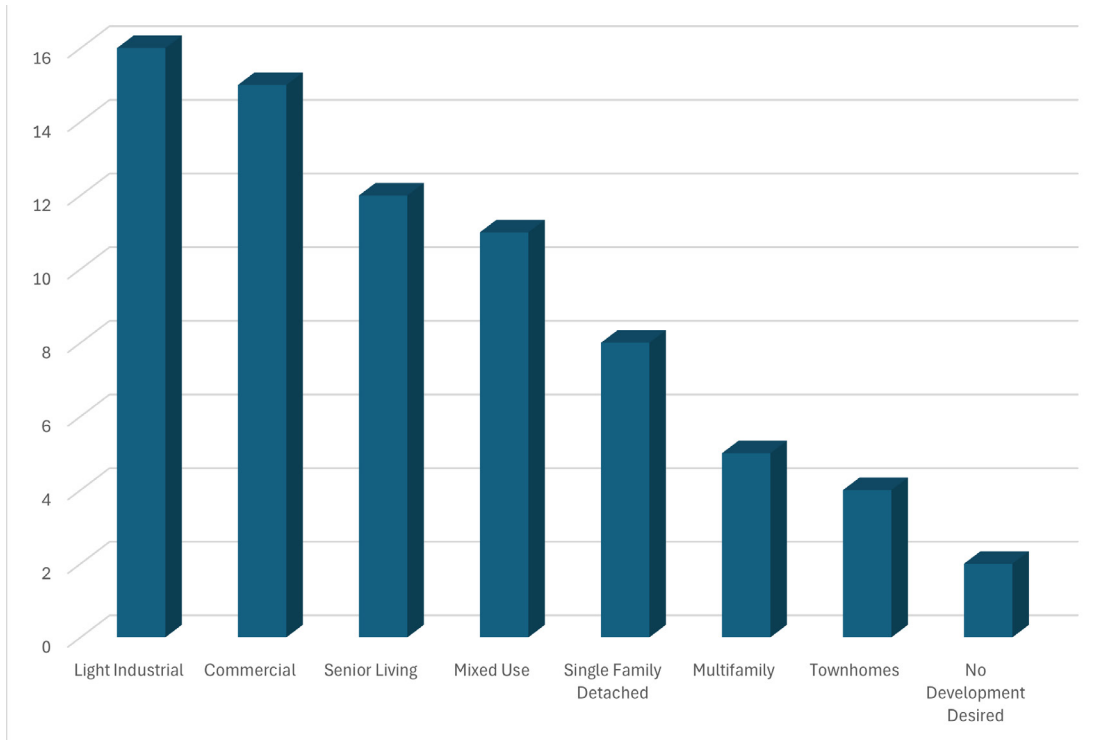
**Southern State
Community College**



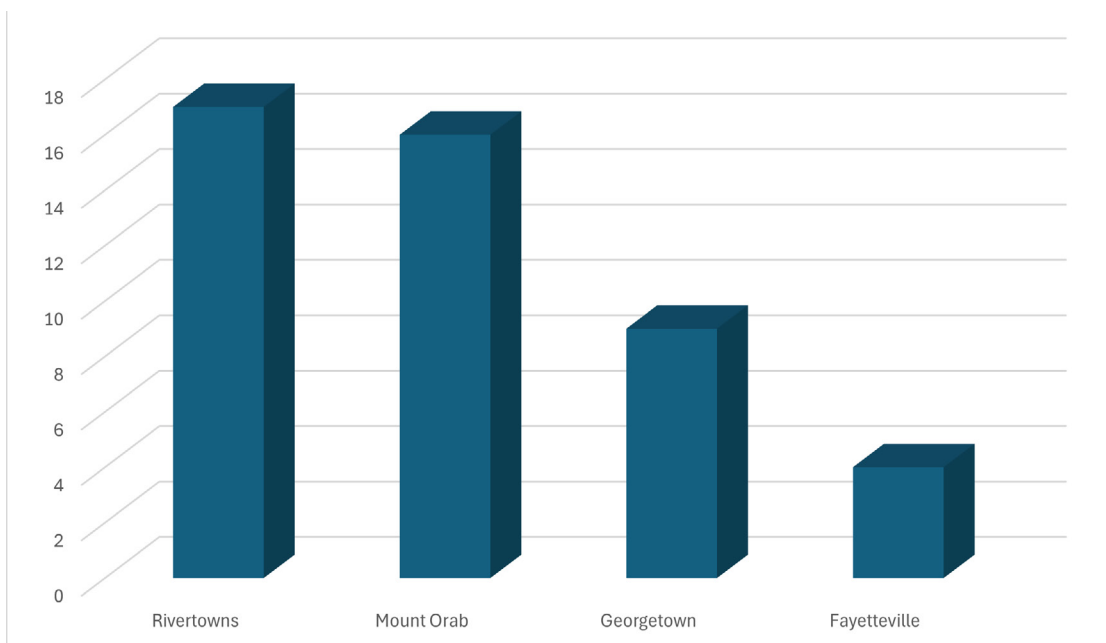
Over 70 participants provided input on development & conservation areas, infrastructure needs, and desired development types

Public Forum 2 Feedback

MOST DESIRED DEVELOPMENT BY TYPE

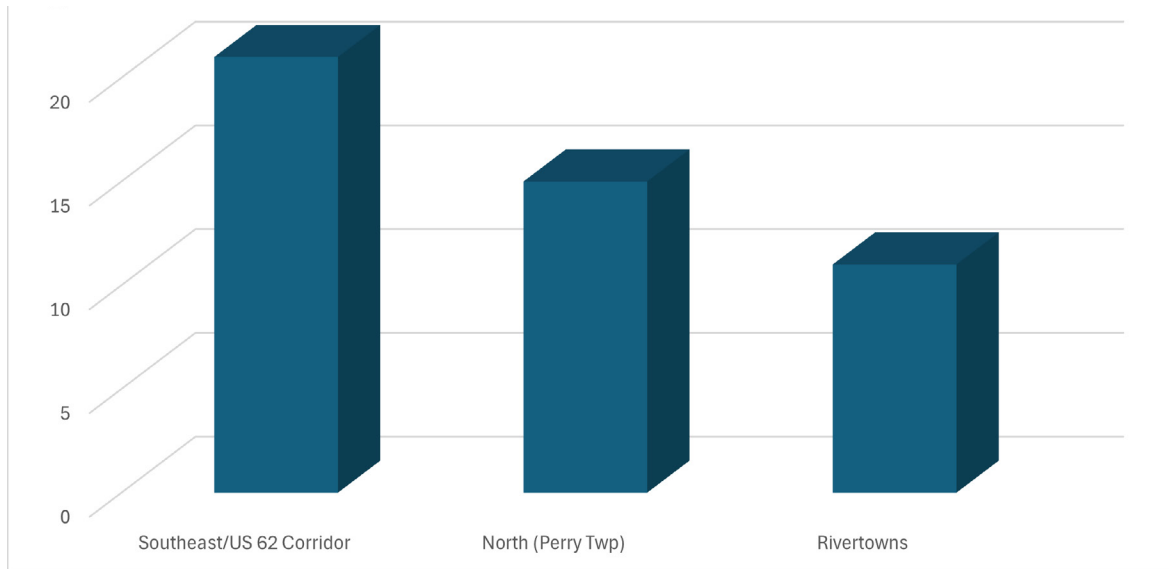


PREFERRED DEVELOPMENT AREAS

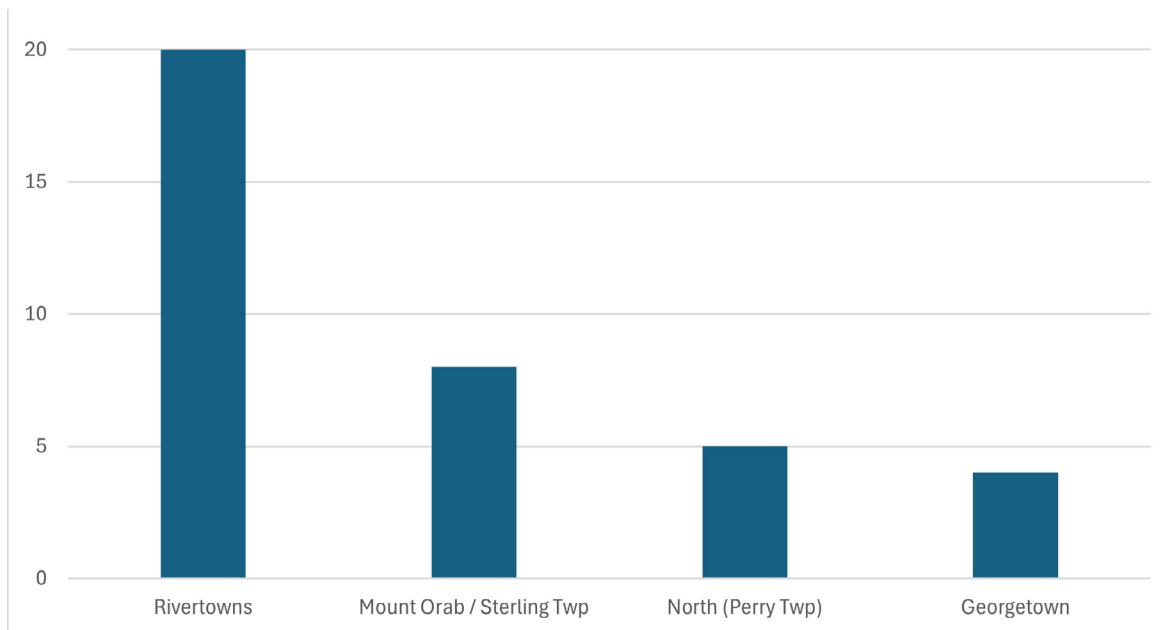


Public Forum 2 Feedback

PREFERRED CONSERVATION AREAS



WATER & SEWER ENHANCEMENT NEEDS



Public Forums

PUBLIC FORUM 3
September 18, 2024

**Southern Hills Career and
Technical Center**



Public Forum 2 Feedback

STRENGTHS

- Rural Character
- Small Towns
- Family farms / Ag
- River / History
- Quality of People & Place
- Family-friendly

OPPORTUNITIES

- Outdoor recreation
- Access to ODNR land/Lake Grant
- Ag/Eco Tourism
- Cultural Tourism (RiverTowns & Georgetown)
- Infill Development in Villages

ASPIRATIONS

- Quality housing options for middle income
- Sewer expansion
- County Parks
- More tourism activities / overnight accommodations for visitors

REALITIES

- Water/sewer issues in RiverTowns
- Limited tax base (esp. Villages)
- Need for zoning / code enforcement
- Need for more jobs in County

Public Forum 2 Feedback

THEMES BY GEOGRAPHY

NORTH / MT ORAB

- Fear of Solar
- Sewer needed (esp. Sterling Twp.)
- Concentrate industrial development along 32
- Secondary roads need improvement around 32

CENTRAL / GEORGETOWN

- Walkability in Village
- Quality senior housing
- Cultural tourism

SOUTH / RIVERTOWNS

- Property maintenance/blight
- Water/sewer
- Bike trails/recreational access
- Tourism- leverage River
- Broadband (esp. SE)

COUNTYWIDE

- healthcare access
- quality middle income housing

Public Forums

PUBLIC FORUM 3
November 19, 2024

**Southern Hills Career and
Technical Center**

**Over 40 participants
provided input the
draft plan Concept
Areas, Themes, and
Potential Strategies**

Additional Suggestions:

- Aberdeen as Tourist Gateway
- County Parks
- Healthcare is a market challenge
- Trail Network / Bike Routes
- Stormwater Management



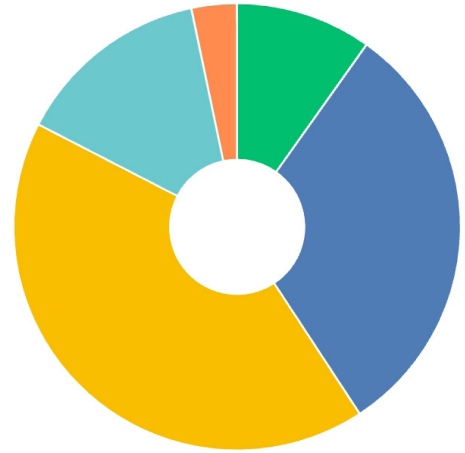
Community Survey

KEY FINDINGS

Over 500 Responses:

- 48% say Farmland is greatest County asset
- 39% River Towns in most need of water/sewer improvements
- 30% no desire for more housing OR zoning
- 39% most desire Parks / greenspace as a civic enhancement
- Recurring comment: “don’t want suburban sprawl”
 - *Residents want to avoid Brown County becoming congested like the I-275/ SR 32 Eastgate area in Clermont County!*

6. How would you rate the quality of life in Brown County?



Excellent	9.84%
Very Good	30.94%
Good	41.8%
Fair	14.14%
Poor	3.28%

Stakeholder Input

Villages Consensus Points

- SR Corridor: orderly growth, quality housing & job creation
- Georgetown: incremental growth; ED consultant in place
- RiverTowns: need for reinvestment; placemaking (ACGP) to entice tourism; tax revenue for services
- Municipal capacity limited at local level to track, pursue & administer grants
 - Need centralized help with monitoring opportunities
 - Regular meetings between communities
 - Identify opportunities for Countywide projects



Stakeholder Input

Township Consensus Points

- Desire for Zoning mostly limited
 - Sterling Twp. expressed some interest in exploring, while Green Twp. previously had zoning in place
 - “The Carrot” (incentive) for zoning may be sewer service
- Economic Development of some interest to Sterling and Green Townships, but history of annexation around Mt Orab make a potential Joint Economic Development District (JEDD) enticing
- Secondary roads a concern (Bardwell West, Homan Way)
- Solar development was a major fear
- Publicly accessible greenspace generally viewed as desirable



Initiatives Underway

Appalachian Community Grant Program (ACGP): Ohio Department of Development

In 2024, the Ohio Department of Development awarded Brown County villages over \$36 million in Appalachian Community Grant Program funding for development project summarized below.

Downtown Courthouse Square Streetscape & US Grant Boyhood Home and Schoolhouse Improvement | Village of Georgetown | Award Amount: \$8,693,300

The Village of Georgetown intends to make improvements across several blocks of the village. First, the four streets surrounding the Brown County Courthouse Square will be realigned to create a more vibrant and walkable downtown core for the village. A shared-use path will also be created to connect the fairgrounds, courthouse, and Ulysses S. Grant's Boyhood Home and Schoolhouse. The National Historic Site will also undergo structural and environmental repairs, in addition to new gathering and recreational spaces for tours and groups. Finally, an existing downtown building will be transformed into the new U.S. Grant Historic Site Visitor's Center, which will feature programming and exhibits.

Mt Orab Healthcare Services Revitalization | Village of Mt Orab | Award Amount: \$5,006,180

The Adams County Regional Medical Center will construct a new medical facility near Mt. Orab to serve Brown County. Healthcare services will include primary care, physical, occupational, and speech therapy, radiology imaging services, and a lab draw station. The facility will also allow specialists in partnership with the University of Cincinnati Physicians Group to provide expanded services.

Slim Sallee Park Redevelopment | Village of Higginsport | Award Amount: \$6,303,288

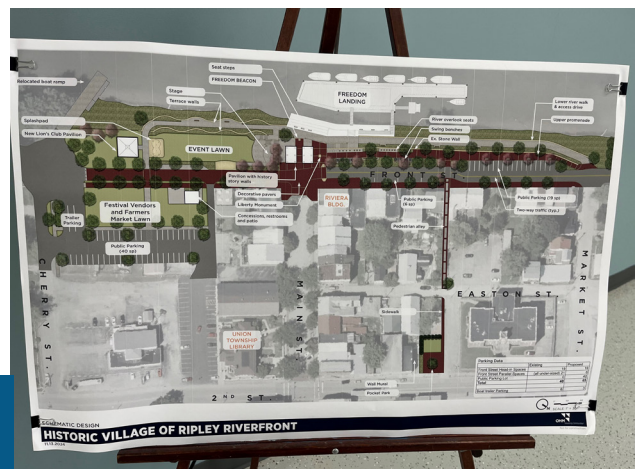
The Village of Higginsport will revitalize an abandoned ballfield into a seven-acre community park, creating a public gathering space and allowing for connection to the Ohio River. A boat dock and launch from the community park will establish public access to water recreation that currently doesn't exist within the village. A fishing pier, bridge, and mural will also be incorporated into the park to create a transformational space for outdoor recreation.

Ripley Riverfront East Improvements |

Village of Ripley | Award Amount: \$16,387,086

Ripley's riverfront will undergo improvements including the amenities to allow better access to nearby Underground Railroad and historic sites. A new public gathering space will also be constructed to improve public access to the scenic riverfront.

**Ripley Riverfront East Improvements
awarded \$16.4 million in ACGP funds**





CH 2 ASSESSMENT

Key Findings



Brown County
-2.6%
POPULATION
LOSS
2010 to 2020

First 10-Year
Decrease since the
Great Depression!

Brown County is projected to lose 8.54% of its population by 2050 (see next page for map).

Population loss translates into fewer customers and workers for local businesses and a diminishing tax base for public services. Retaining and attracting new residents is vital to the economic success of rural communities.

Brown County must make concentrated efforts to retain younger residents from leaving for other communities and attract new residents and jobs to the County to avoid this projected population loss becoming a reality in the future.

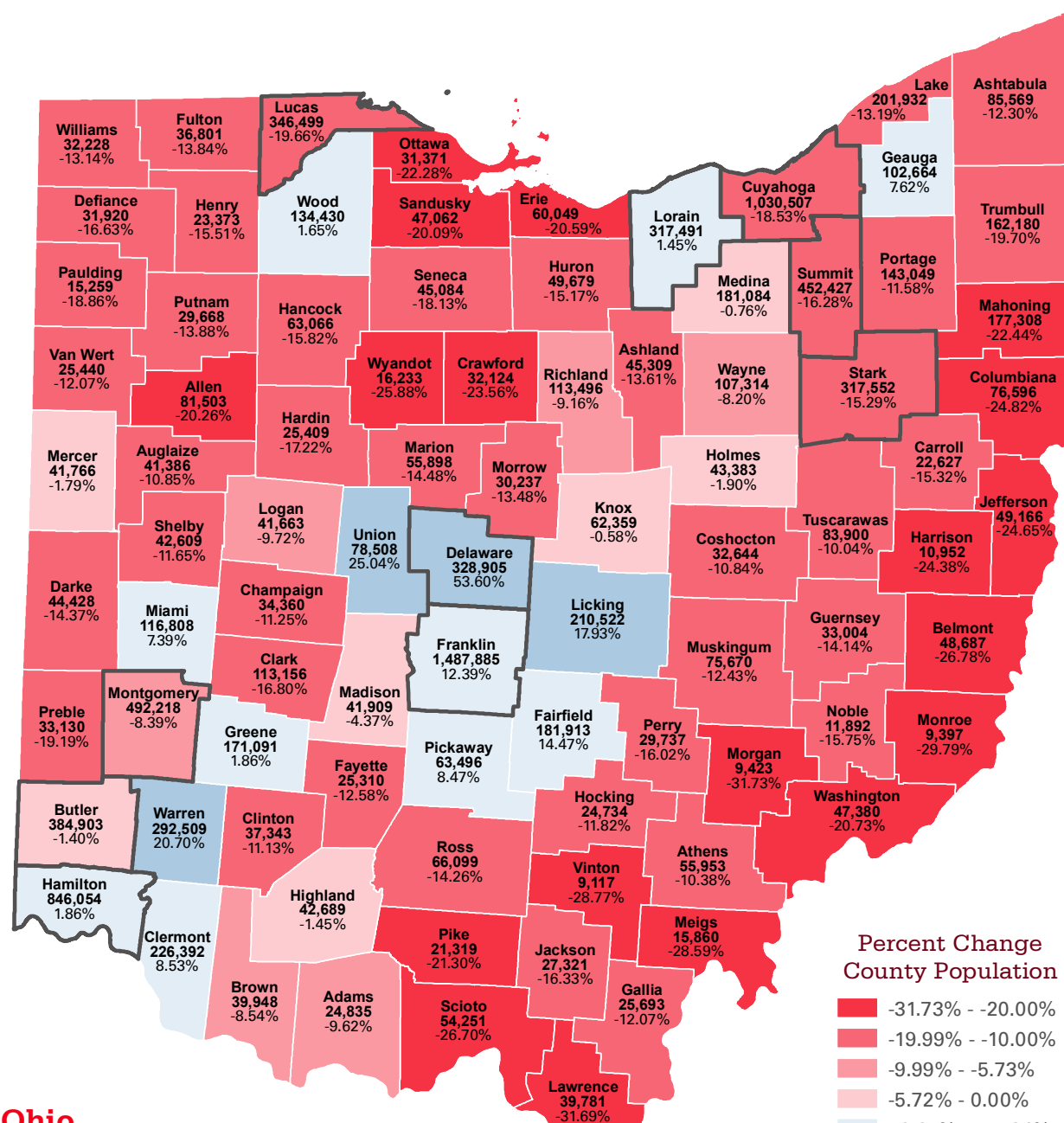
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DATA HIGHLIGHTS

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- Combined enrollment at Brown County's public schools has decreased over 25% over the past two decades
- \$67K Median Household Income for County is in line with State Average
- County Poverty Rate (15.9%) slightly higher than State (13.4%)
- County Educational Attainment (Bachelors Degree or Higher) of 14.5% is less than half of State 32.0%, a predictor of limited earnings potential for residents
- Brown County is largely a "Bedroom Community" as 80% of residents in the workforce are employed outside Brown County
- Economic Indicators vary greatly locally (e.g. Mt Orab/Sardinia vs Georgetown/Ripley) - Median Incomes Range from \$63K along SR 32 Corridor to \$38K in RiverTowns

Population Change

Ohio County Population: Project Percent Change 2020 to 2050



Ohio

2050 Projected Population 11,123,896

2020 Census Population	11,799,448
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Percent Change 2020 to 2050	-5.73%
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U.S.

Percent Change 2020 to 2050 +17.34%

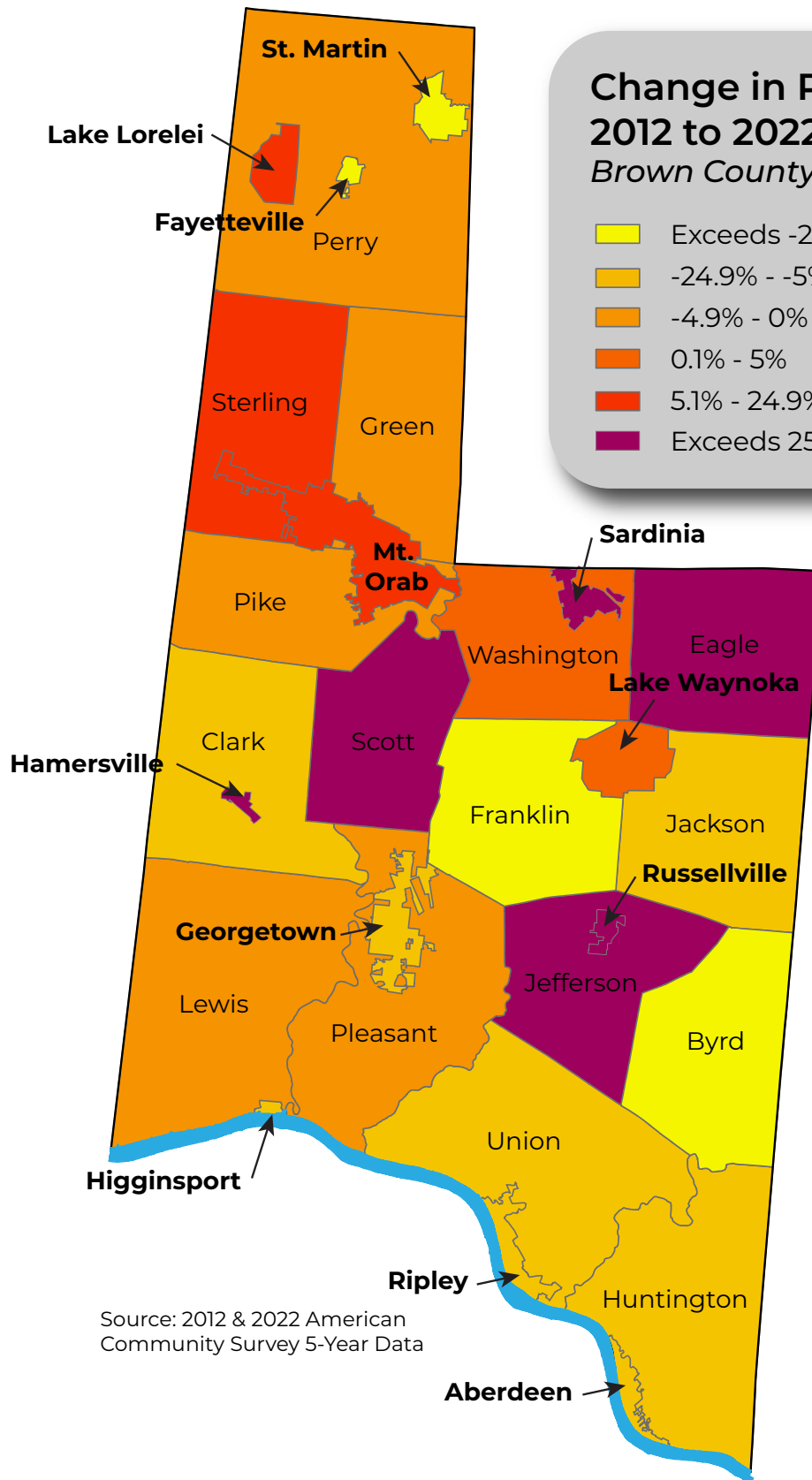
Greater than Ohio

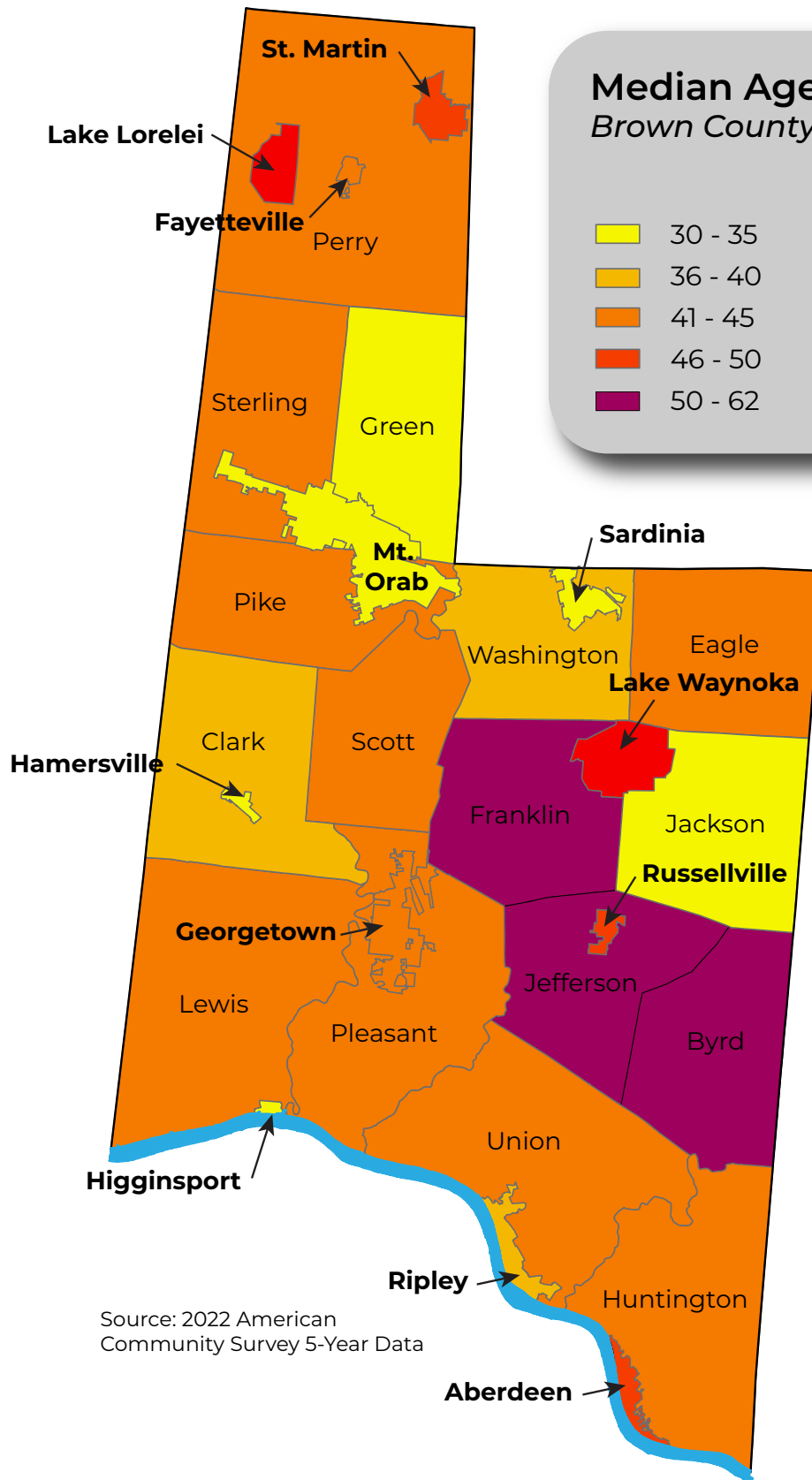
■ Greater than U.S.

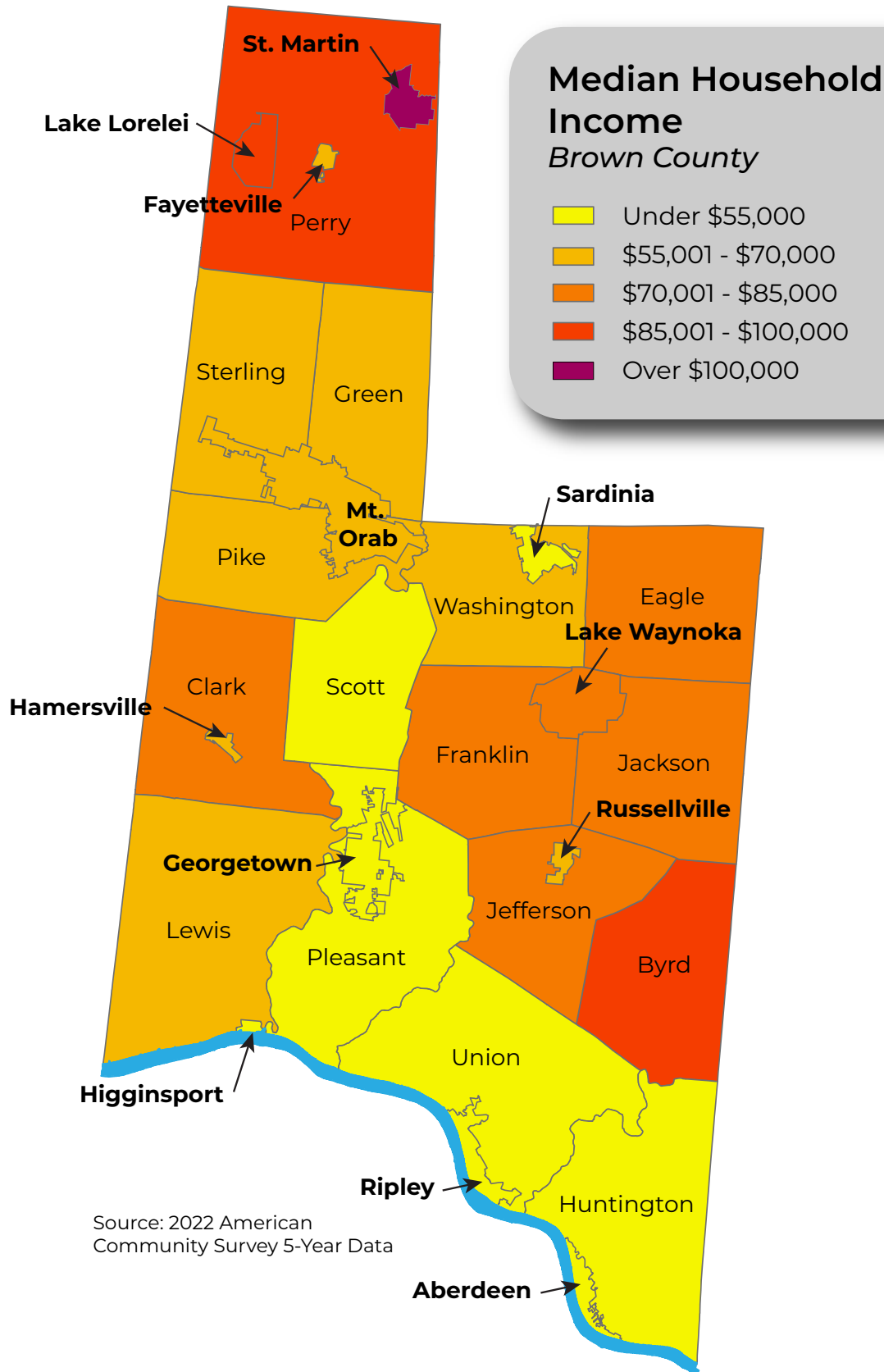
Percent Change County Population

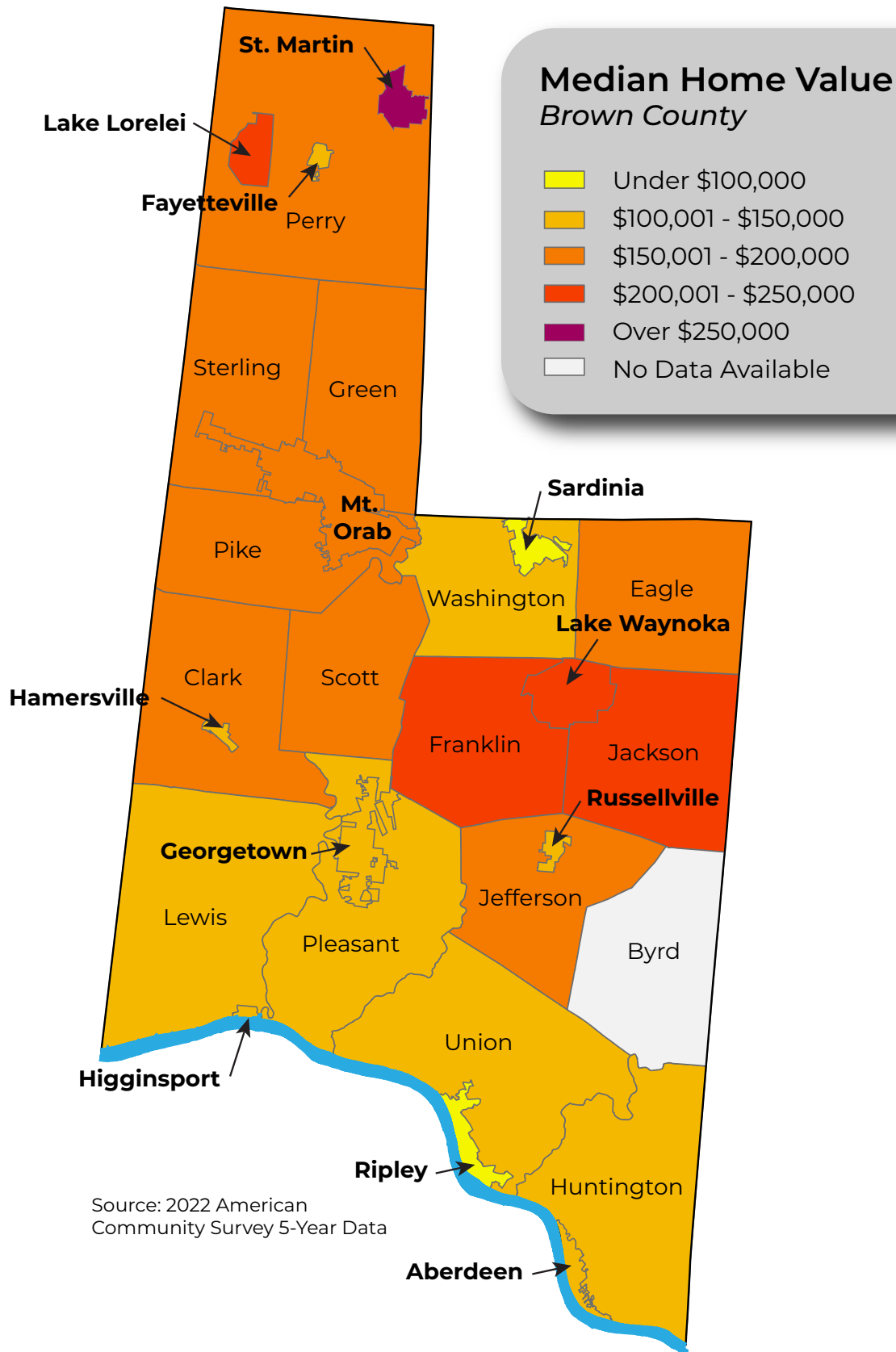
- 31.73% - -20.00%
 -19.99% - -10.00%
 -9.99% - -5.73%
 -5.72% - 0.00%
 +0.01% - +17.34%
 +17.35% - +53.60%
 County with population of 300,000 or more in 2050

Prepared by: Ohio Department of Development,
Office of Research (December 2022)

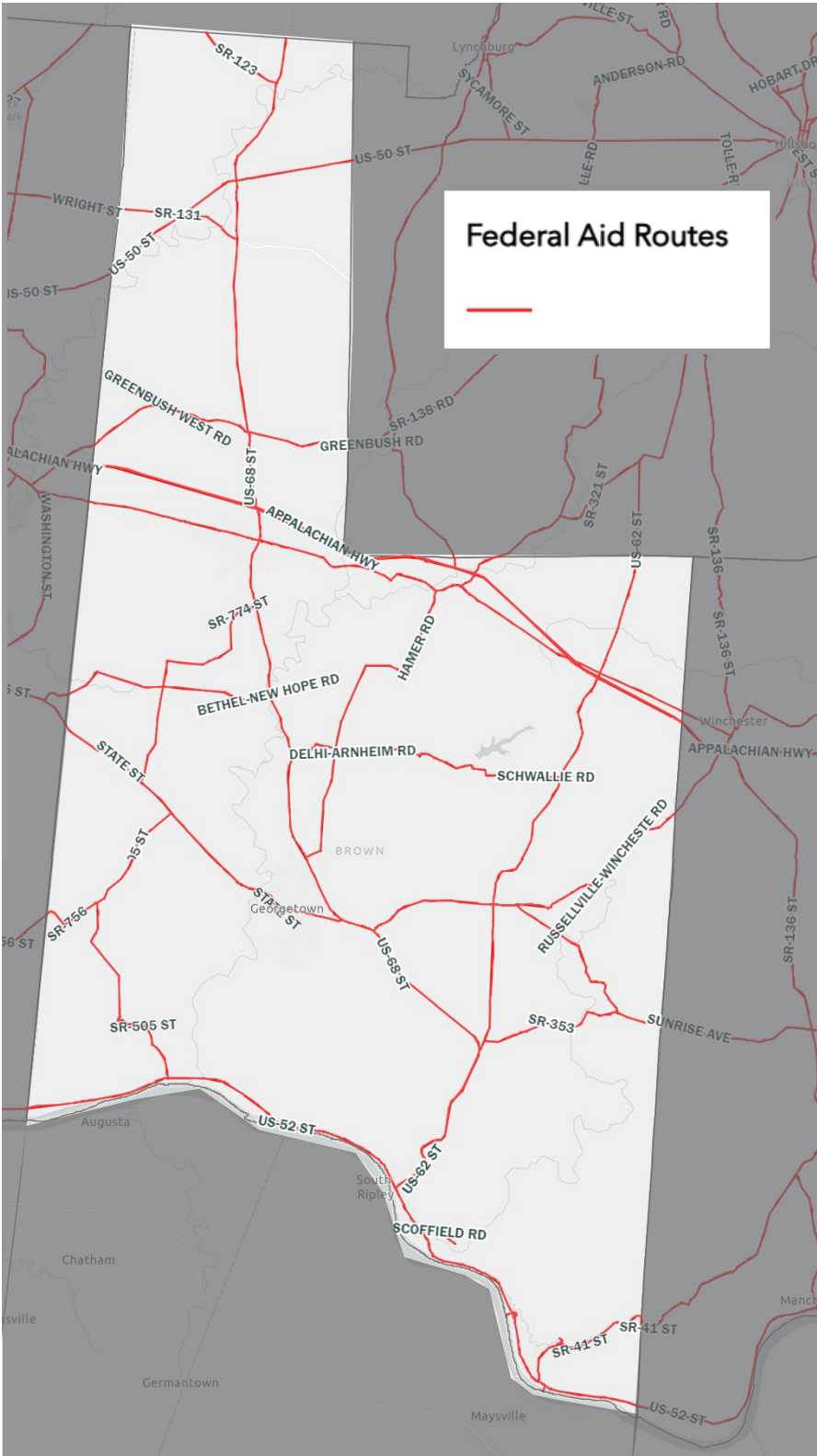




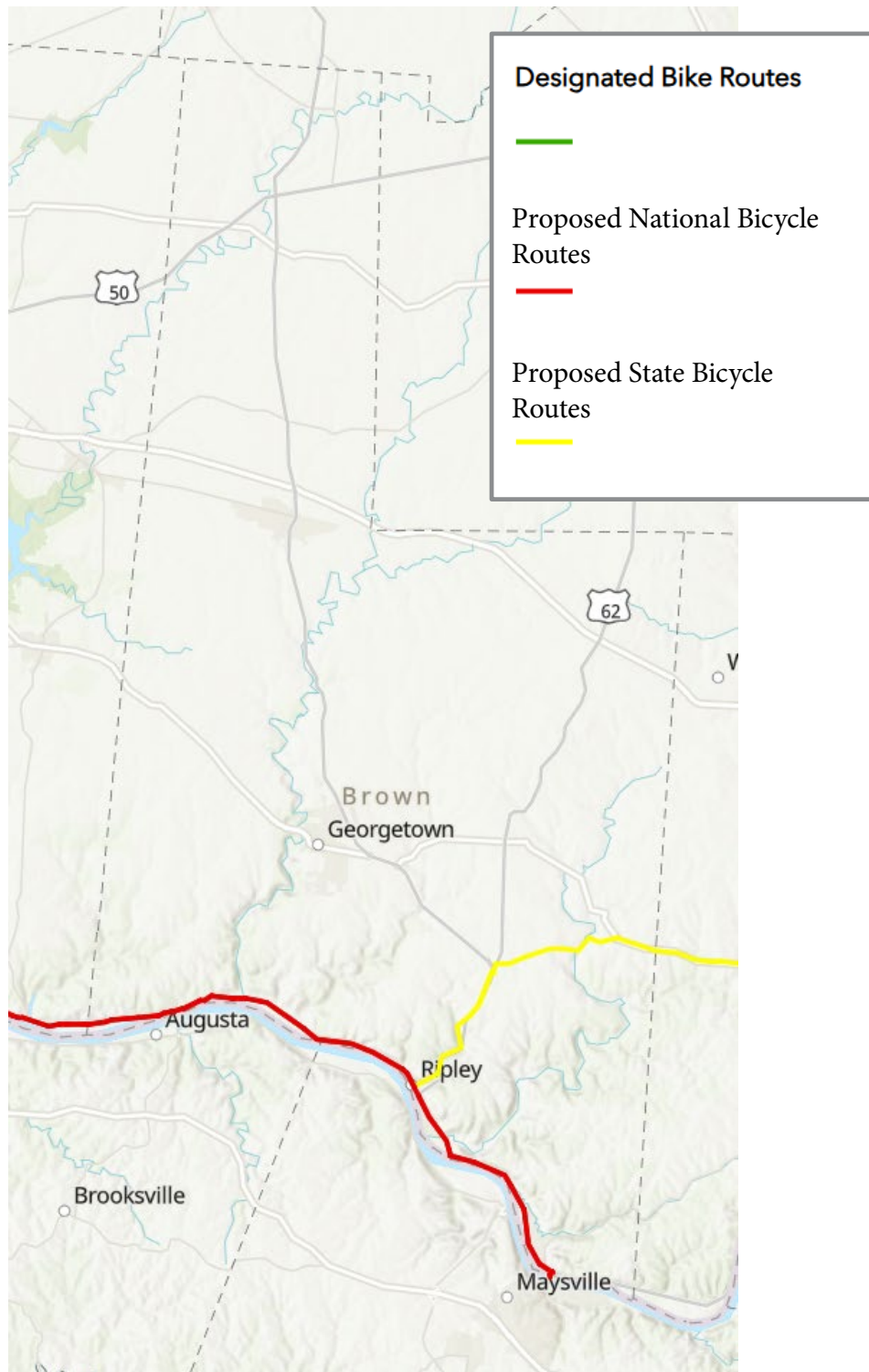




Transportation



Transportation

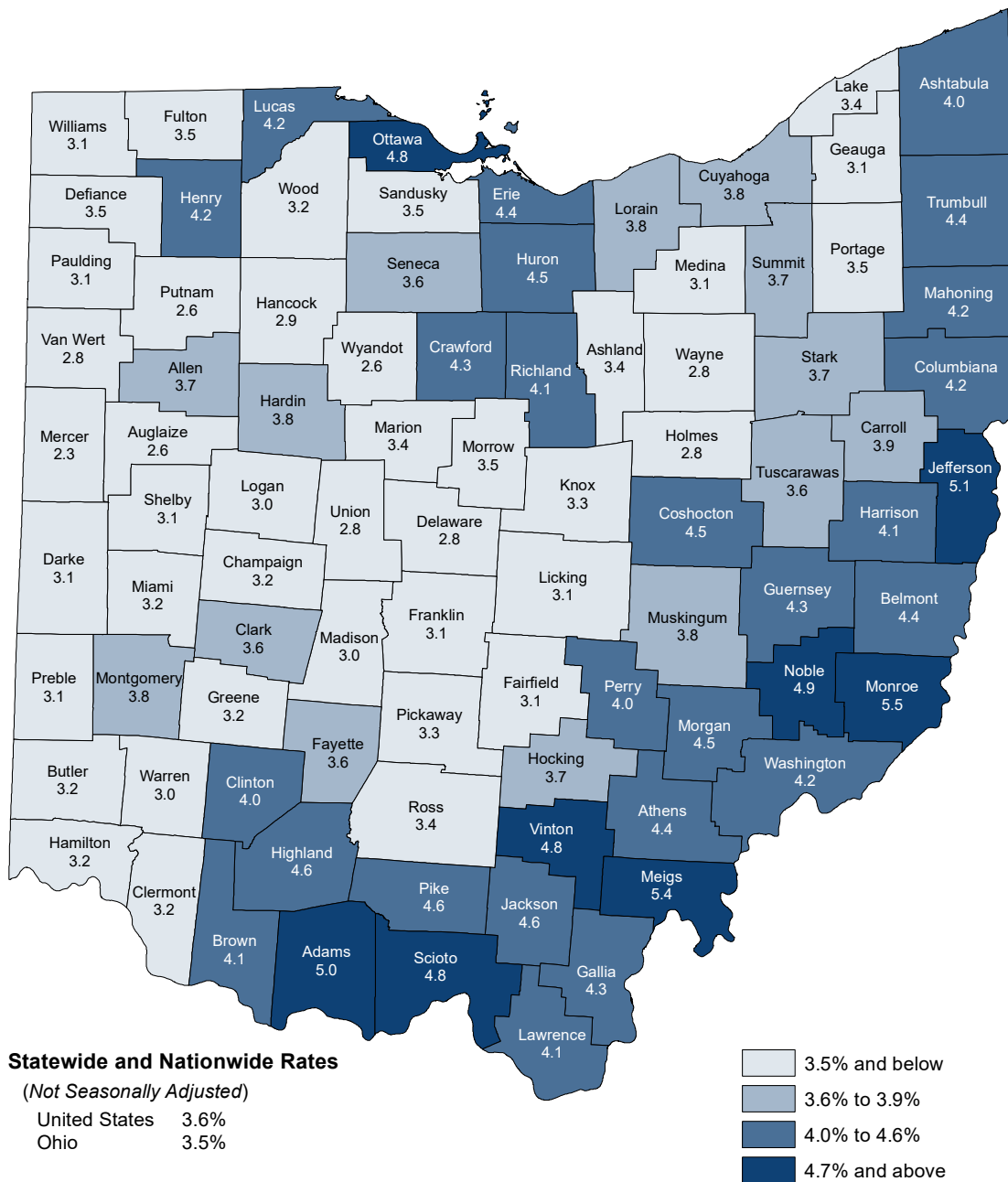


Employment

Unemployment Rate

Brown County, like the vast majority of its Ohio Appalachia counterparts (see map below), had an unemployment rate (4.1%) above national (3.6%) and state (3.5%) averages.

Ohio Unemployment Rates by County (2023)



Employment-Household Dynamics

Primarily a Bedroom Community:

Workers employed in Brown County are outnumbered by Brown County residents employed outside the County by 2 to 1. The County is a net exporter of workforce which results in less earnings tax collections for local Villages and less sales tax collections for the County.

STRENGTHENING THE TAX BASE


It is in the County's best interest to see that undeveloped and/or underdeveloped land in areas with sufficient infrastructure capacity is put to the highest and best use to maximize county and local revenue streams. As such, efforts should be made to enhance and develop the economic base of the Villages and the SR 32 Corridor.



3,651
LIVE & WORK IN
BROWN COUNTY


→
3,891
WORK IN BROWN COUNTY,
BUT LIVE ELSEWHERE



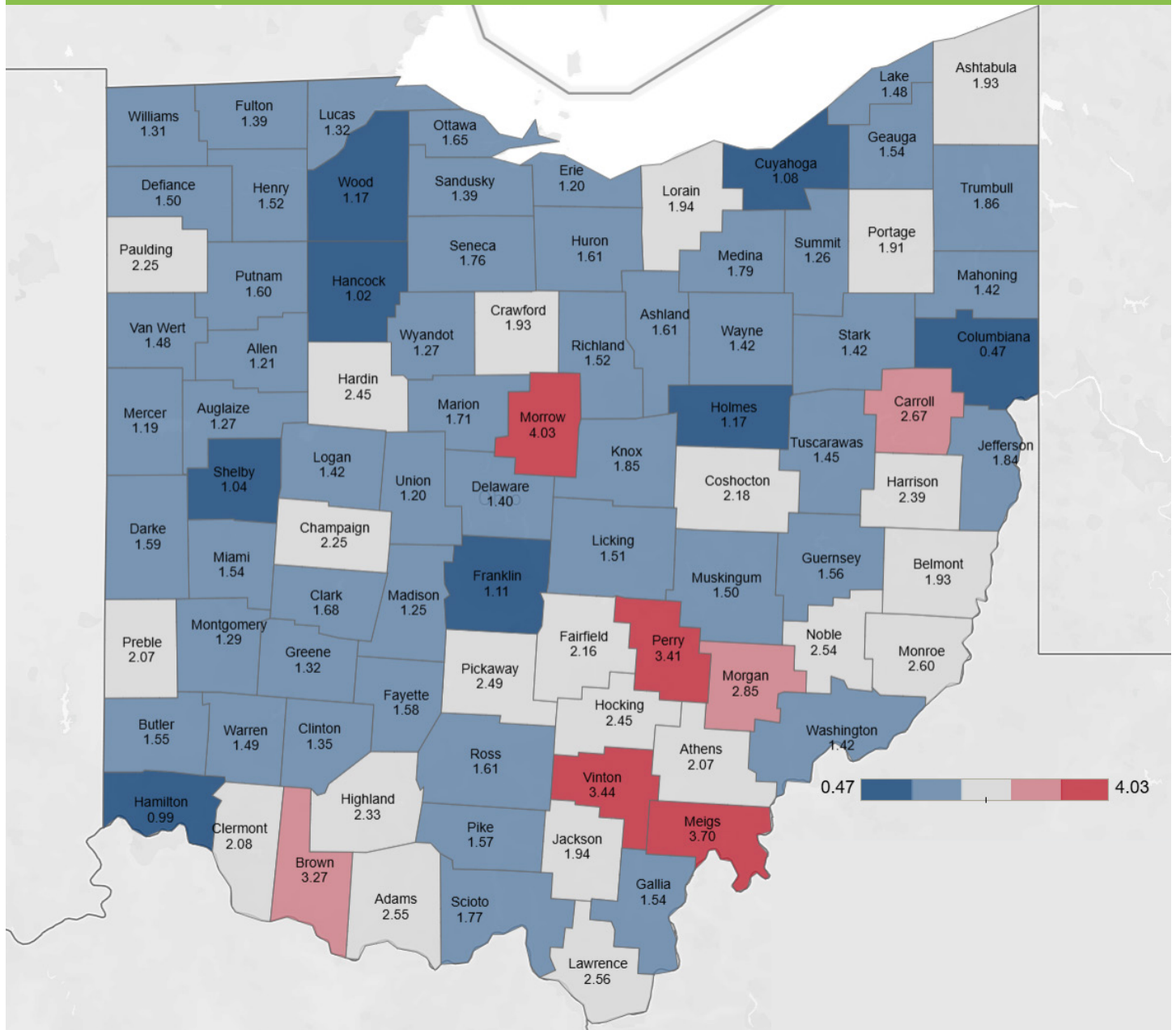

→
15,055
LIVE IN BROWN COUNTY,
BUT WORK ELSEWHERE

Employment-Household Dynamics

Population to Jobs Ratio

Brown County has the fifth highest working-age population (age 18 to 64) to jobs ratio in the state, indicating there are more working-age residents than local jobs, which results in the need for most of the County's workforce to commute to other counties for employment. This data reinforces the need for increased economic development in Brown County.

Ohio Population (age 18 to 64) to Jobs Ratio by County (2022)



Target Industries

Target Industry Sectors

Brown County is an emerging strategic location in the Greater Cincinnati economic development ecosystem. This tri-state (OH-KY-IN) metro area is served by REDI Cincinnati, one of seven JobsOhio Network Partners in the state. REDI Cincinnati has identified four “Core Industries” for the region:

REDI CINCINNATI: Core Industries



**Advanced
Manufacturing**



Biohealth



**Business &
Professional Services**



Technology

These regional Core Industries each contain numerous sub sectors, many of which are established locally in Brown County. A review of Bureau of Labor Statistics location quotient (LQ) data for Brown County provides a more detailed look at some of the most competitive sub sectors countywide. The table on the next page shows industry sectors in Brown County ranked from highest to lowest by their wages LQ as shown in the far right column.

Location quotients are ratios that allow an area’s distribution of employment by industry, ownership, and size class to be compared to a reference area’s distribution. The U.S. is used as the reference area for all LQs within the files. The reference industry is always the all-industry, all-ownerships total for the local area, and for the nation.

If an LQ is equal to 1.0, then the industry has the same share of its area employment as it does in the nation. An LQ greater than 1.0 indicates an industry with a greater share of the local area employment than is the case nationwide.

As shown in the table on the next page, “waste management and remediation services” has the highest wages LQ (6.31) in Brown County indicating a competitive advantage in that North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) industry sub sector for the local economy. More detailed 4-Digit NAICS Industries and 5-Digit NAICS industries, are summarized in similar fashion on the pages that follow. LQ data provides some additional insight on what industries are most viable in Brown County and potential targets in business attraction efforts.

Given the recent trend towards work from home/hybrid work, Brown County should proactively look to diversify industry sectors by supplementing existing local strengths in manufacturing, trucking, and nursing facilities - all sectors which require in-person labor - in order to enhance local employment opportunities and build the local tax base.

Target Industries

COMPETITIVE REGIONAL INDUSTRIES

2023 Census of Employment and Wages - Brown County

Top 10 NAICS Industry Sub Sectors by Wages Location Quotient (LQ)

Rank	NAICS Industry Sub Sector	Annual Establishments	Annual Average Employment	Total Annual Wages (in Millions)	Annual Average Weekly Wage	Annual Wages per Employee	Annual Average Employment Location Quotient	Total Annual Wages Location Quotient
1	NAICS 562 Waste management and remediation services	5	110	\$6.96	\$1,214	\$63,110	4.31	6.31
2	NAICS 321 Wood product manufacturing	4	89	\$4.12	890	46,278	4.13	5.46
3	NAICS 457 Gasoline stations and fuel dealers	29	188	\$4.42	452	23,497	3.49	4.26
4	NAICS 623 Nursing and residential care facilities	15	399	\$15.62	752	39,119	2.46	3.78
5	NAICS 332 Fabricated metal product manufacturing	9	173	\$9.55	1,061	55,176	2.33	3.18
6	NAICS 445 Food and beverage retailers	13	334	\$9.73	559	29,090	2.01	3.15
7	NAICS 624 Social assistance	29	432	\$11.13	495	25,736	1.9	2.57
8	NAICS 441 Motor vehicle and parts dealers	17	153	\$7.59	954	49,583	1.46	1.83
9	NAICS 722 Food services and drinking places	55	931	\$16.58	342	17,803	1.5	1.73
10	NAICS 484 Truck transportation	21	100	\$4.93	944	49,068	1.25	1.62

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Target Industries

COMPETITIVE REGIONAL INDUSTRIES

2023 Census of Employment and Wages - Brown County

Top 10 NAICS 4-Digit Industries by Wages Location Quotient (LQ)

Rank	NAICS 4-Digit Industry	Annual Establishments	Annual Average Employment	Total Annual Wages (in Millions)	Annual Average Weekly Wage	Annual Wages per Employee	Annual Average Employment Location Quotient	Total Annual Wages Location Quotient
1	NAICS 6231 Nursing care facilities (skilled nursing facilities)	3	345	\$13.60	\$759	\$39,465	4.73	6.85
2	NAICS 4572 Fuel dealers	3	16	\$0.90	1,091	56,713	4.37	5.96
3	NAICS 8122 Death care services	4	19	\$0.79	823	42,804	2.71	4.06
4	NAICS 2389 Other specialty trade contractors	16	99	\$6.34	1,228	63,871	2.51	3.96
5	NAICS 4571 Gasoline stations	26	172	\$3.52	393	20,427	3.42	3.96
6	NAICS 4451 Grocery and convenience retailers	10	326	\$9.56	565	29,376	2.26	3.57
7	NAICS 6241 Individual and family services	15	274	\$6.86	481	24,999	1.8	2.47
8	NAICS 4841 General freight trucking	17	81	\$4.07	972	50,523	1.44	1.9
9	NAICS 4238 Machinery, equipment, and supplies merchant wholesalers	7	69	\$3.99	1,120	58,260	1.76	1.89
10	NAICS 7225 Restaurants and other eating places	49	913	\$16.00	337	17,532	1.62	1.88

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Target Industries

COMPETITIVE REGIONAL INDUSTRIES

2023 Census of Employment and Wages - Brown County

Top 10 NAICS 5-Digit Industries by Wages Location Quotient (LQ)

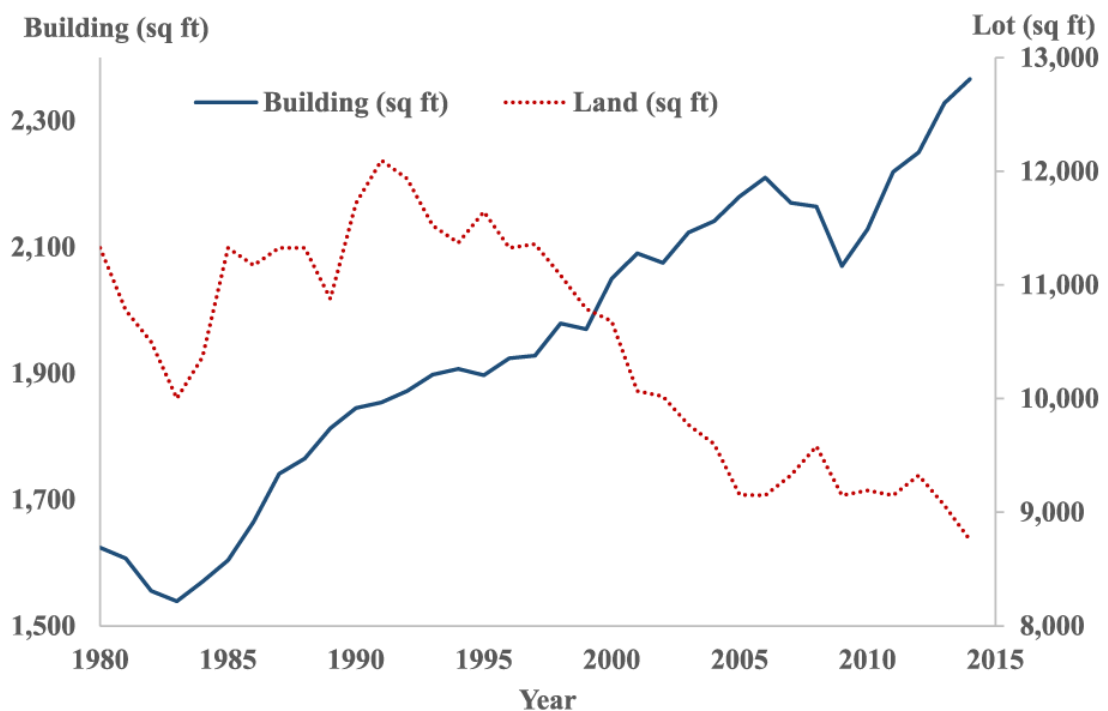
Rank	NAICS 5-Digit Industry	Annual Establishments	Annual Average Employment	Total Annual Wages (in Millions)	Annual Average Weekly Wage	Annual Wages per Employee	Annual Average Employment Location Quotient	Total Annual Wages Location Quotient
1	NAICS 42382 Farm and garden machinery and equipment merchant wholesalers	4	47	\$2.87	\$1,170	\$60,825	7.81	9.95
2	NAICS 62311 Nursing care facilities (skilled nursing facilities)	3	345	\$13.60	759	39,465	4.73	6.85
3	NAICS 23899 All other specialty trade contractors	8	76	\$4.97	1,258	65,433	3.9	6.38
4	NAICS 45721 Fuel dealers	3	16	\$0.90	1,091	56,713	4.37	5.96
5	NAICS 81221 Funeral homes and funeral services	4	19	\$0.79	823	42,804	3.51	5.42
6	NAICS 42491 Farm supplies merchant wholesalers	4	23	\$1.33	1,100	57,199	3.74	4.56
7	NAICS 44511 Supermarkets and other grocery retailers (except convenience retailers)	7	318	\$9.44	571	29,666	2.38	3.8
8	NAICS 44133 Automotive parts and accessories retailers	6	40	\$1.12	543	28,223	1.98	2.39
9	NAICS 62412 Services for the elderly and persons with disabilities	12	202	\$4.16	397	20,630	1.76	2.37
10	NAICS 44414 Hardware retailers	3	18	\$0.44	460	23,902	2	2.21

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Housing

NATIONAL TRENDS

Residential Lot & Building Sizes (National Median)



Increasing Home Sizes, Decreasing Lot Sizes

- National median building-to-lot-size ratio ballooned from 0.14 for houses constructed in 1980 to 0.27 for those constructed in 2014

Source: Federal Reserve: FEDS "Having a Lot Isn't Enough: Trends in Upsizing Houses and Shrinking Lots"

Market Preferences: Housing Types

- National median home size decreased from over 2,500 SF in 2015 to 2,320 SF in 2018
- Baby Boomers over age 65 will account for 20% of US population in 2030
- Millennials, like Boomers, enjoy walkable communities with live, work, play environment
- Nationally, market starting to respond to demand for **"Missing Middle Housing"** (see below)

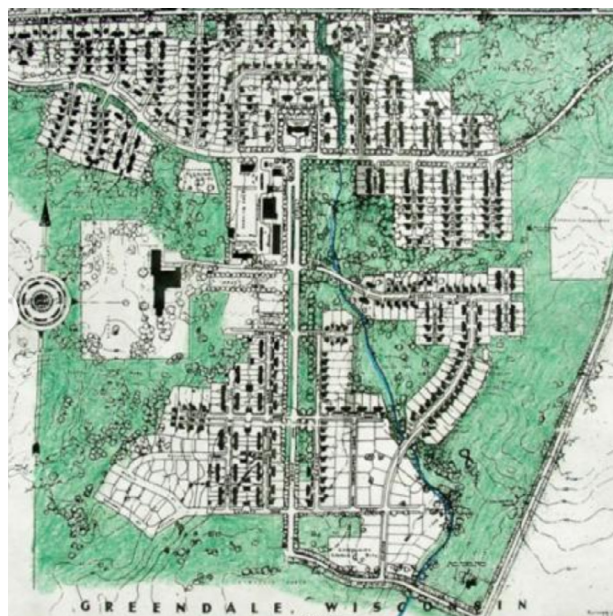
Source: National Association of Home Builders



MissingMiddleHousing.com is powered by Opticos Design.
Illustration © 2015 Opticos Design, Inc.



Market Preferences: Open Space



- **Marketability:** 85% of Americans identify proximity to parks and open space as an important factor in deciding where to live
- **Property Values:** A premium for homes near parks can extend three blocks and start at 20%, declining as the distance from the park increases
- **Walkability:** 88% of Americans feel having amenities within walking distance increases quality of life

Source: National Association of Realtors

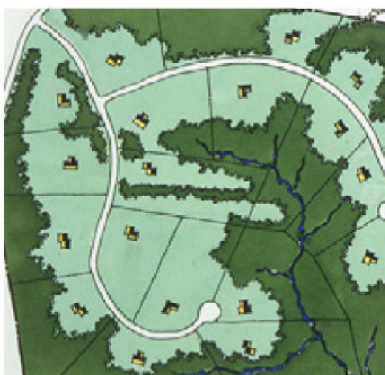
Best Practices: Conservation Development

Conservation Development offers flexibility for denser development on a portion of a site with offsetting open space areas. The result is a density neutral development:

- Developer gets smaller, lower maintenance lots
- Community preserves ecologically sensitive areas

Brown County can utilize Conservation Development to respond to market demand for denser housing types while maintaining the rural character the community desires.

Conventional Development



Conservation Development

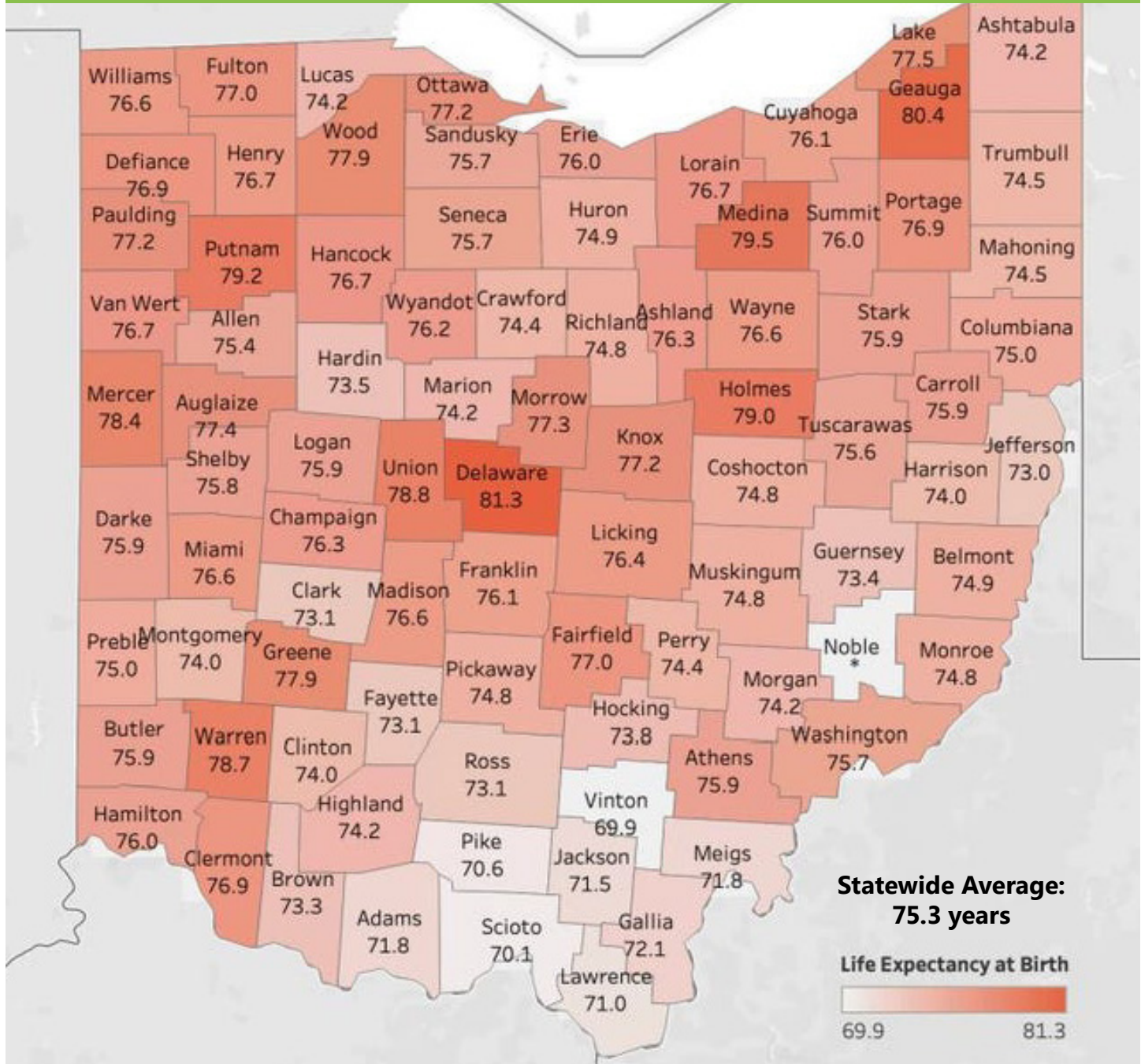


Public Health

Life Expectancy

Brown County ranks below the statewide average for life expectancy at birth by 2.0 years. Access to health care is chief among the reasons why residents of one county may have a longer life span than those living in another one not too far. In rural parts of Ohio like Brown County, hospitals and doctors are likely a further drive than they are in the state's urban areas. This can put both routine and life-saving care out of reach for Brown County residents.

Ohio Life Expectancy (in years) at Birth by County [2023]





CH 4

RECOMMENDATIONS

BROWN COUNTY

CONCEPT AREAS



Countywide
All communities



Greenbelt North
Townships North of Bardwell-West



Greenbelt Central
Townships south of SR 32 to Georgetown



Greenbelt South
Townships along Ohio River Valley



Smart Growth



County Seat



Rural Villages



RiverTowns

CONCEPT AREAS



Greenbelt



Smart Growth



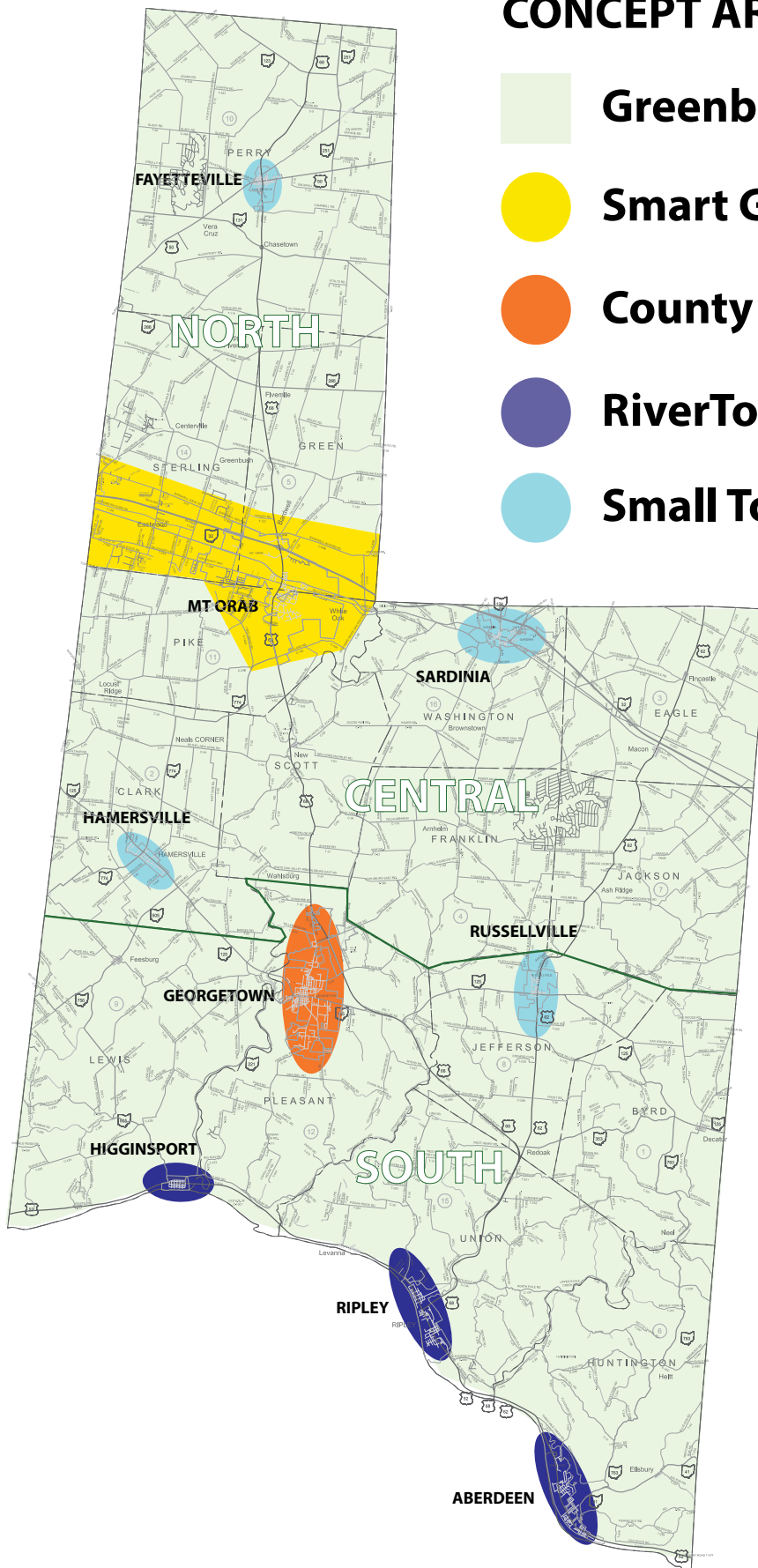
County Seat



RiverTowns



Small Towns





Countywide

CONCEPT AREA

- Countywide

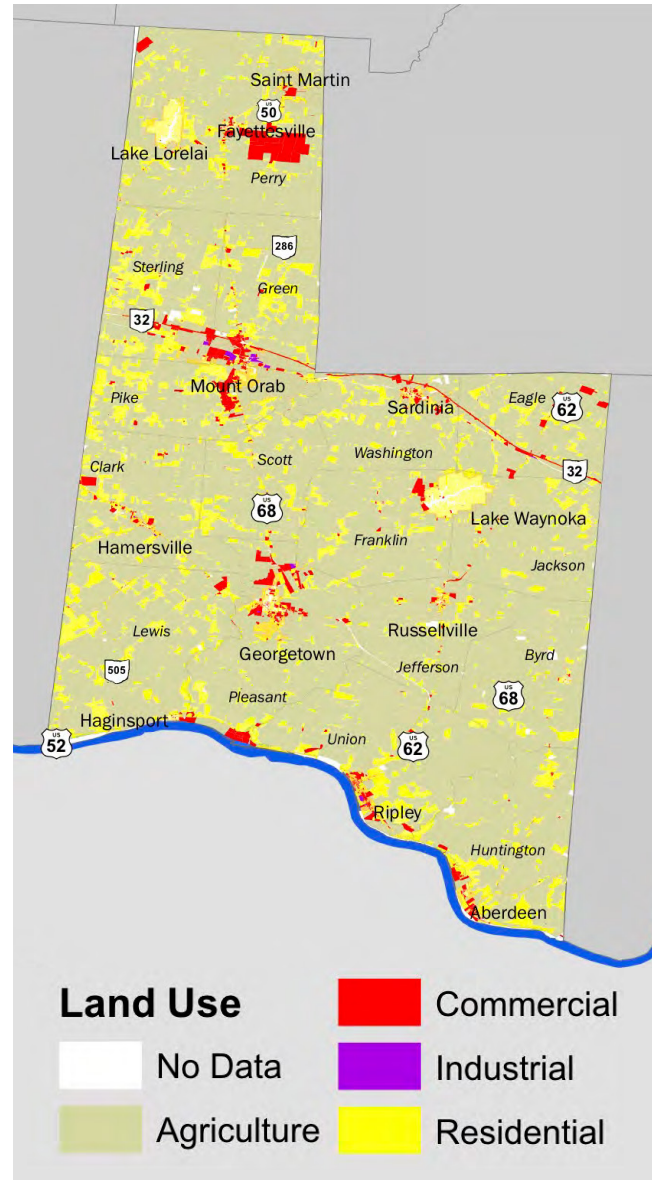


THEMES

- Capacity Building for Funding Pursuits (esp. Villages)
- Publicly Accessible Greenspace
- Need for Healthcare Facilities
- Code Enforcement (for zoned communities)
- Support for small businesses and capital investment

STRATEGIES

- Establish working group of Villages to collaboratively identify, monitor, and pursue shared resources for Capacity Building, Technical Assistance & Funding
- Work with Cardinal Preservation to pursue Ohio Greenspace Preservation Fund project(s) and explore potential of creating a future County Park District
- Seek Appalachian / Rural Healthcare Funding to restore and expand local healthcare options
- Allocate percentage of building permit fees to strengthen code enforcement efforts
- Create a Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) to stimulate business growth and capital investment



LAND USE

Land usage in Brown County is dominated primarily by agricultural uses, with cultivated crops accounting for 35% of land coverage and pasture/hay accounting for 20% of land coverage.



Greenbelt North

CONCEPT AREA

- Perry Twp
- Sterling Twp (north of Bardwell West)
- Green Twp (north of Bardwell-Buford)

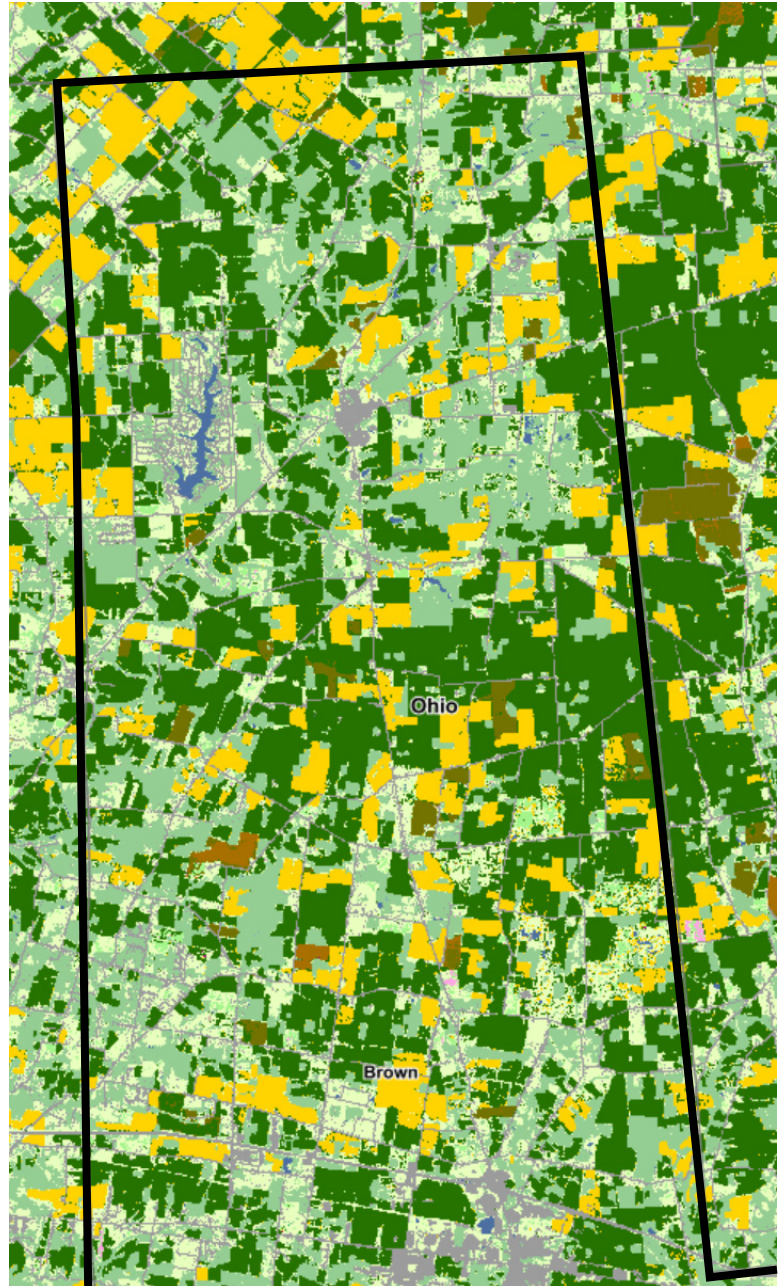
THEMES

- Farmland Preservation
- SR 68 Corridor Enhancements

STRATEGIES

Potential Ag Conservation Tools

- Agricultural Easement Donation Program (AEDP)
- Clean Ohio Local Agricultural Easement Purchase Program (LAEPP) (Purchase of Development Rights)
- Agricultural Security Area Program
- Natural Resources Conservation Service - Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
- Agricultural Protective Zoning



Soybeans



Corn

CROPS

Soybeans (~24,500 acres) and corn (~8,500 acres) are the major crops in the Greenbelt North.



Greenbelt Central

CONCEPT AREA

- Pike, Washington, Eagle, Clark, Scott, Franklin & Jackson Townships

THEMES

- Farmland Preservation
- Public Recreation (esp. enhancing access to Lake Grant)

STRATEGIES

Ag Preservation Tools

- Agricultural Preservation Tools – see previous page

Public Recreation

- Work with ODNR on enhancing passive recreational access to public lands



PUBLIC RECREATION

Lake Grant Wildlife Area

Grant Lake Wildlife Area is a 412-acre state wildlife area located one mile south of Mt. Orab that presents opportunities for enhanced passive recreation access.



Greenbelt South

CONCEPT AREA

- Byrd Twp.
- Jefferson Twp.
- Huntington Twp.
- Lewis Twp.
- Pleasant Twp.
- Union Twp.

THEMES

- Farmland Preservation
- Greenspace Conservation
- Broadband Access (state investment underway)

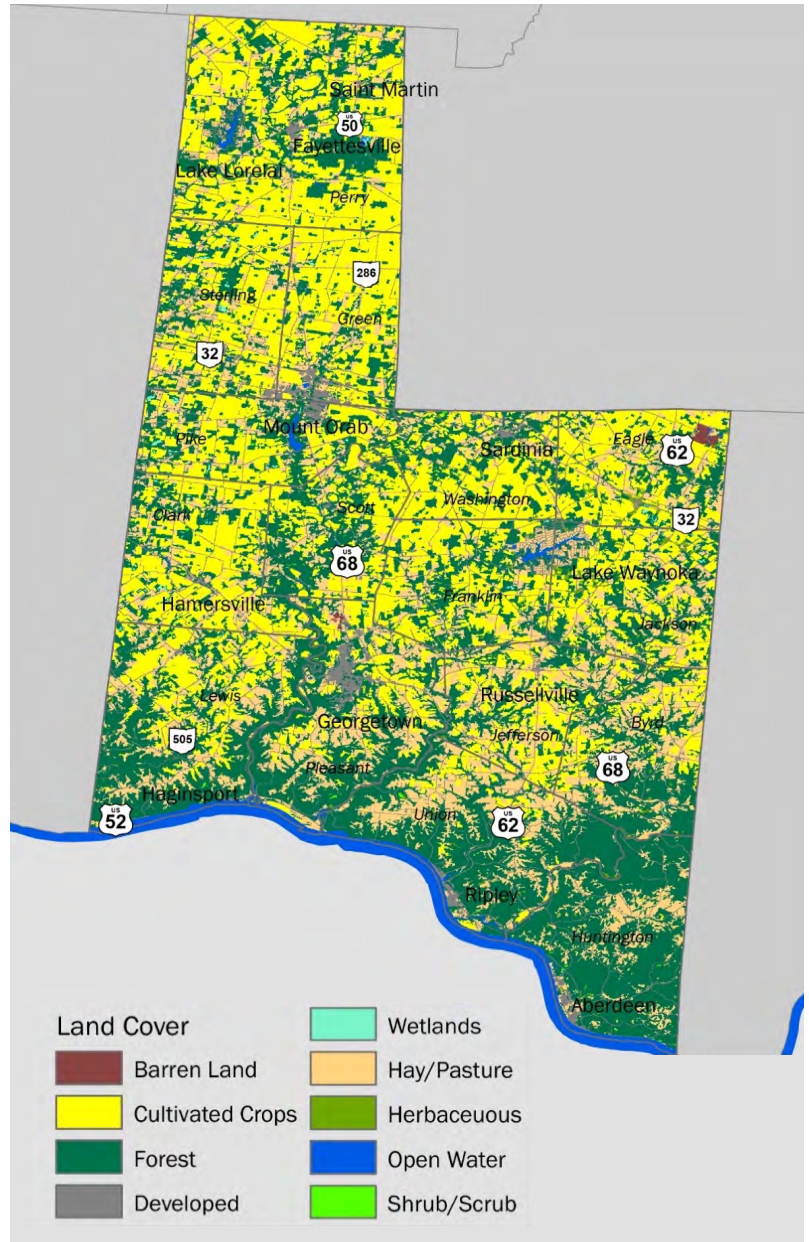
STRATEGIES

Ag Preservation Tools

- Agricultural Preservation Tools – discussed in Greenbelt North

Greenspace Conservation

- Landowner enrollment in Forestland Tax Reduction through ODNR
- Protection of ecologically sensitive habitat (Riparian and steep slope setback regulations)



LAND COVER

The Greenbelt South Concept Area - comprised of the Townships along the Ohio the Ohio River Valley - contains most of the forest land within Brown County.



Smart Growth

CONCEPT AREA

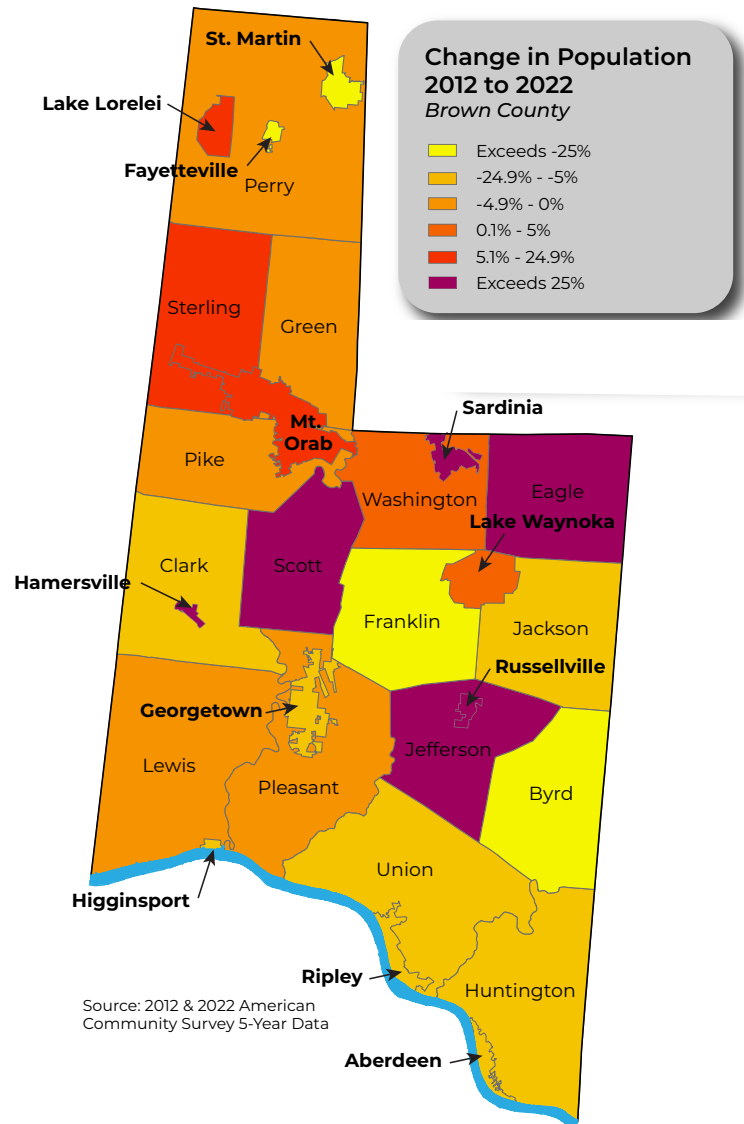
- Mt Orab
- Sterling Twp (south of Bardwell West)
- Green Twp (south of Bardwell-Buford)
- Sardinia

THEMES

- Workforce Housing
- Community-scaled Retail
- Incremental development pattern consistent with rural character
- Catalytic Light Industrial Development (Mega Sites)
- Sewer Service Expansion

STRATEGIES

- Educate local partners on best practices in Smart Growth zoning (e.g. Conservation Development, Overlays, Design Standards)
- Utilize SORDA developer fees and TIF proceeds to invest in site assembly/readiness
- Create an Investment Prospectus for site selectors and developers
- Consider implementation of a Joint Economic Development District (JEDD) along the SR 32 Corridor as a catalyst for shared local revenue generation
- Leverage the area's unique development finance tools (e.g. Opportunity Zones) to incentivize private investment
- Create a long-range transportation plan to enhance north-south travel in the County, particularly along US 68



POPULATION GROWTH

Mt. Orab and Sterling Twp. have experienced the highest rate of population growth in the County which points to the value of adopting Smart Growth development regulations.



County Seat

CONCEPT AREA

- Georgetown

THEMES

- Site Readiness
- Placemaking (Streetscape / Storefront Facades)
- Cultural Tourism

STRATEGIES

- Utilize Georgetown Port Authority developer fees to invest in site assembly/readiness
- Capitalize a Revolving Loan Fund for storefront & historic building renovations
- Leverage recent ACGP grant award (see right) to enhance placemaking and increase cultural tourism



PLACEMAKING

A recently awarded state grant will fund several enhancements to Georgetown's cultural district. Improvements include the realignment of streets at Courthouse Square to create a more vibrant and walkable downtown and the construction of a shared-use path to connect the fairgrounds, courthouse, and Ulysses S. Grant's Boyhood Home and Schoolhouse.





Rural Villages

CONCEPT AREA

- Fayetteville
- Hamersville
- Russellville

THEMES

- Infrastructure State of Good Repair
- Promote & Support Small Business

STRATEGIES

- Utilize established economic development partners (e.g. Georgetown Port Authority or Southwest Ohio Regional Development Authority) to assist with project loans and grants





RiverTowns

CONCEPT AREA

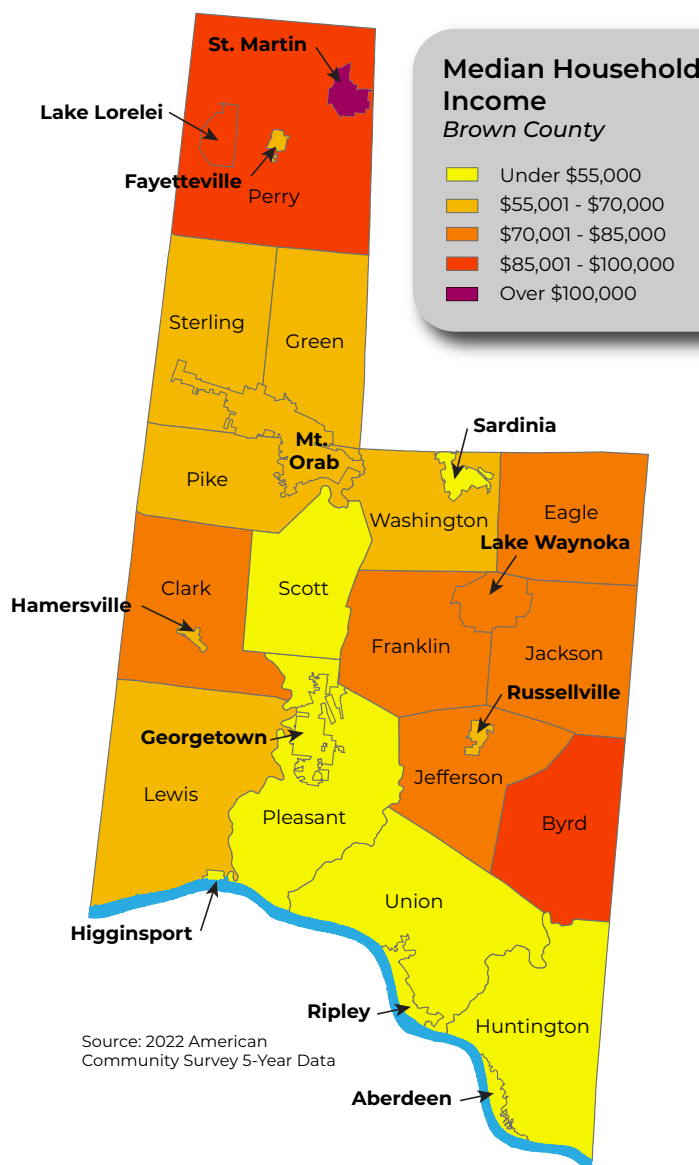
- Aberdeen
- Higginsport
- Ripley

THEMES

- Public Health & Safety
- Zoning & Code Enforcement
- Critical Infrastructure
- Downtown Revitalization / Tourism
- Lack of Local Capacity to Pursue Funding/Grants

STRATEGIES

- Seek technical support from OVRDC/County for catalytic project funding
- Leverage ACGP awards & grassroots redevelopment efforts mobilized (e.g. REDC)
- Pursue Appalachian Regional Commission funding for local placemaking to support revitalizing rural towns through cultural and recreational tourism
- Work with potential developers for to establish and pursue Innovative Finance tools for catalytic redevelopment such as New Markets Tax Credits



HOUSEHOLD INCOMES

Median Household Incomes in the RiverTowns are among the lowest in Brown County, reinforcing the need for financial incentives and outside funding assistance to spark catalytic reinvestment in these riverfront communities.



CH 4

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLKITS

Potential Strategies

Tools for Implementation

This final chapter of the Comprehensive Plan provide details on a series of “Implementation Toolkits” highlight some of the conversation programs, regulatory tools, and innovative finance mechanisms most applicable to implementing the vision in various Concept Areas.

Pages 81-83 conclude with a summary of implementation monitoring moving forward.



Greenbelt

North, Central & South

PAGES 54-57

- Agricultural Easement Donation Program
- Local Agricultural Easement Purchase Program
- Agricultural Security Area Program
- Agricultural Protective Zoning



Smart Growth

SR 32 Corridor

(also applicable to Georgetown site readiness efforts)

PAGES 58-72

- Zoning
- Conservation Development
- Rural-themed Architectural Standards
- Innovative Finance (JEDD, Opportunity Zones, New Community Authority)



Village Revitalization

Sparking Investment in Historic Town Centers

PAGES 73-79

- Incentive Toolkit Overview
- New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) program
- Downtown Redevelopment District (DRD) / Innovation District
- Development Process

Countywide: Park District

PAGE 80

- Park Districts Overview

Greenbelt



Agricultural Easement Donation Program (AEDP)

The Agricultural Easement Donation Program (AEDP) is a tool for landowners to protect their farm's soils, natural resource features, and scenic open space.

It provides landowners the opportunity to donate the easement rights on viable farmland to the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA). The department assures the land remains in agricultural use forever. The standard cost for services needed to secure the easement (i.e., title examination, title policy, escrow, closing and recordation) are covered by ODA. All easement transactions are permanent. They are recorded on the property deed and will transfer with the land to successive owners.

Requirements:

- To be eligible for the program, the land must meet the following criteria:
- The applicant farm must be enrolled in CAUV and the Agricultural District Program through the county auditor's office.
- The farm must be a minimum of 40 acres unless the farm is adjacent to a preserved farm, then it must be a minimum of 25 acres.
- Any liens or mortgages on the farm must be subordinated to the easement.
- The farmland owner must certify the property does not contain hazardous substances.
- The farmland owner must have been in compliance with state and federal agricultural laws for the past five years.
- The farmland owner must have possession of clear title to the applicant property.

Clean Ohio Local Agricultural Easement Purchase Program

The Clean Ohio Local Agricultural Easement Purchase Program (LAEPP) provides funding to farmland owners for placing an agricultural easement on their property. Monies are issued for up to 75 percent of the appraised value of a farm's development rights. A payment cap has been set at \$2,000 per acre, with a maximum of \$500,000 per farm. All easement transactions are recorded on the property deed and transfer with the land to successive owners.

Funds from the purchase of these easements are invested in the local economy by the landowners who use them by expanding their farming operations, purchasing new equipment, reducing debt, adding conservation practices, planning for retirement, sending their children to college or for other purposes. When the state purchases a farmland easement, the proceeds are plowed into Ohio's economy.

Requirements:

The following requirements must be met by the farmland and owner at the time of application submission:

- The farm must be enrolled in CAUV and the Agricultural District Program through the county auditor's office.
- The farm must be a minimum of 40 acres unless the farm is adjacent to a preserved farm, then it must be a minimum of 25 acres.
- NOTE: Farms that are 10-24 acres and also share a substantial border with permanently protected land compatible with agriculture must submit a written request with supporting documentation before eligibility for application can be determined.
- The farmland owner must certify that the property does not contain hazardous substances.
- The farmland owner must have been in compliance with state and federal agricultural laws for the past five years.
- The farmland owner must have possession of the clear title to the applicant property.
- The local sponsor must agree to share monitoring and enforcement responsibilities.
- A minimum of 25 percent of the points-based appraised value of the agricultural easement must be provided either in cash match by the local sponsor, donation by the landowner, or a combination of donation and cash match.

Agricultural Security Area Program

The Agricultural Security Area (ASA) Program is a tool that promotes agricultural retention by creating special areas in which agriculture is encouraged and protected. ASAs provide certain benefits to farmers, including protection from non-agricultural development, a critical mass of land to help keep farming viable, and possible tax benefits for investing in new real-agricultural property. The ASA program authorizes one or more landowners, with at least 500 acres of contiguous farmland, to request enrollment into an ASA for a 10-year period from the boards of county commissioners and township trustees.

Eligible landowners, who individually or collectively own 500 or more contiguous acres of farmland, must submit an application to both the boards of county commissioners and township trustees requesting enrollment in an ASA for 10 years.

As an attachment, a map must be prepared identifying the proposed ASA boundaries, parcel numbers of the land, and names and locations of all water ways, utility rights-of-way, and roadways. The map must show any existing residential, recreational, commercial, or industrial facilities that are situated on the land or within 500 feet of the perimeter of the boundary of the proposed ASA.

The commissioners or trustees may hold separate or joint public hearings prior to approving or rejecting an application. Approval of an ASA requires passing a resolution by the trustees and commissioners.

Requirements

To be eligible for the program, the following criteria must be met:

- The ASA must consist of at least 500 contiguous acres of farmland.
- The land must be in the unincorporated area of the county or counties.
- Landowners must be enrolled in the CAUV tax program and enrolled in the Agricultural District Program.
- Landowners must be using “best management practices.”
- Landowners must not have any civil or criminal actions in violation of Ohio or U.S. environmental law in the 10 years prior to the date of application.

If the ASA straddles more than one township or more than one county, an ASA application must be submitted to and approved by each county’s board of commissioners and/or township trustees.

Greenbelt

Agricultural Protective Zoning

Agricultural zoning strives to protect the viability of agriculture in a region and is generally used by communities that are concerned about maintaining the economic viability of their agricultural industry. A carefully written agricultural zoning ordinance can:

- Prevent farmland from being converted to nonfarm uses
- Prevent the fragmentation of farms,
- Prevent land-use conflicts
- Protect agricultural producers from nonfarm intrusion into agricultural areas as well and as vigorously as residential zoning can protect housing areas from commercial or industrial intrusions

Many agricultural producers are finding that they can no longer afford to purchase land for agricultural purposes. Residential development in agricultural areas drives up the cost of public services and the price of land to the point that it is not profitable for agricultural production.

Establishing agricultural zones in areas of prime farmland can, in conjunction with other agricultural protection methods, reduce competition and keep the cost of farmland reasonable. Protecting large blocks of farmland through agricultural zoning will also aid in preserving the rural character of a community and in preventing constant increases in property taxes.

Agricultural zoning limits the density of development and restricts nonfarm uses of the land. In many agricultural zoning ordinances, the density of residential development is controlled by establishing a minimum lot size that corresponds to the amount of land needed to sustain an individual farm. Densities may vary depending upon the type of agricultural operation. The list of permitted uses in an agricultural zone should be consistent with viable farming alternatives. (Ohio State University)

Advantages

Agricultural zoning can help to protect a farming community from becoming fragmented by residential development. Individuals purchasing land in an agricultural zone know up front what is permitted in that area, and agricultural zoning is often less expensive than other voluntary incentive methods, such as Purchase of Development Rights, for protecting agricultural lands. It is also more comprehensive and effective than programs that rely on individual owner initiative.

Disadvantages

Like other zoning ordinances, agricultural zoning is vulnerable to change. If community attitudes or political leadership shift, an ordinance may be dismantled. As a result, some communities have implemented agricultural zoning in conjunction with other farm-protection measures. As with other zoning ordinances, intentions are not always fully communicated in the ordinance, so they must be written very precisely, which in turn does not always allow for flexibility for new practices or technology. Zoning is enacted on a community scale, and some landowners, if in a minority, may become part of a plan they individually oppose.

Smart Growth



How is Zoning Initiated?

The provisions relating to township zoning are contained in ORC Chapter 519. Ultimately, the question of whether or not zoning shall be adopted must be submitted to the electorate. Zoning proceedings are commenced, however, by one of two methods. Under the first method, O.R.C. 519.03, would authorize the board of township trustees to initiate the proceedings on its own motion by adopting a resolution declaring its intention to proceed under O.R.C. 519.02 to 519.25, inclusive. The second method by which the zoning proceedings may be initiated is upon the presentation of a proper petition to the board of township trustees, requesting the board to proceed with township zoning. Such a petition would be properly brought only if "signed by a number of qualified voters residing in the unincorporated area of the township or part thereof to be included in the zoning plan equal to not less than eight per cent of the total vote cast for all candidates for governor in such area at the most recent general election at which a governor was elected....." O.R.C. 519.03(B)

Zoning

Zoning regulation is an important planning tool that benefits communities economically and socially, improves health and wellness, and helps conserve the environment. Local zoning regulation allows communities to plan for the use of land transparently, involving residents through public meetings. Zoning regulates the kinds of uses a property may be used for - typically residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural uses. This prevents overlapping incompatible uses, like having a home next door to a factory.

Benefits of Zoning

Economic benefits:

- Balance property uses for residential, industrial, commercial, and agricultural users.
- Incentivize the types of structures needed in the community, including workforce housing.
- Ensure optimal transportation options, which drives commerce and promotes community livability.

Civic benefits:

- Create space for new residents and innovative mixed-use spaces (such as residential and commercial uses in the same area).
- Preserve historic and culturally significant buildings and sites.

Public health benefits:

- Ensure adequate public infrastructure like sewer, water, and stormwater.
- Maintain parks and trails.

Environmental benefits:

- Preserve unique natural resources like riparian (e.g. stream) corridors, wetlands, steep slopes and other terrain, and protect air and water quality.
- Prevent or mitigate flooding and soil erosion.

Smart Growth

Agriculture and Local Zoning in Ohio

Ohio Revised Code sections 303 and 519 contain the “agricultural exemption” from county and township zoning authority, is the first step toward understanding whether a county or township can regulate an agricultural land use. Different laws apply for cities and villages.

Agriculture is exempt from rural zoning authority in many, but not all, situations

While Ohio law grants counties and townships the authority to utilize zoning, the law limits how much authority these local governments have over agricultural land uses. Generally, a county or township may not prohibit the use of any land for agricultural purposes in any unincorporated area, with a few exceptions that are noted below. This exemption applies in any zoning district, whether residential, industrial, commercial, agricultural or otherwise.

An exempt activity must be in the definition “agriculture.” Ohio agricultural zoning laws apply to “agriculture,” which the law defines to include: farming; ranching; algaculture; aquaculture; apiculture; horticulture; viticulture; animal husbandry, including, but not limited to, the care and raising of livestock, equine, and fur-bearing animals; poultry husbandry and the production of poultry and poultry products; dairy production; the production of field crops, tobacco, fruits, vegetables, nursery stock, ornamental shrubs, ornamental trees, flowers, sod, or mushrooms; timber and pasturage. “Agriculture” also includes activities involving the processing, drying, storage, and marketing of agricultural products if those activities are conducted in conjunction with but secondary to actual production of those products.

Agricultural buildings and structures can also be exempt from zoning authority

If a building or structure is directly related to an agricultural activity on the same parcel of land, then Ohio zoning law does not allow a county or township to require a zoning certificate or prohibit the construction or use of the building. For example, local zoning cannot require a zoning permit or prevent the construction of a barn being built for housing cattle or storing farm machinery that is used for farming on the same property. Also, zoning may not regulate or prohibit any building or structure that is used primarily for vinting and selling wine that is located on land where grapes are grown.

Smart Growth

Special rules for farm markets

Ohio law also says that local zoning cannot prohibit the use of land for a farm market in any industrial, residential, commercial or agricultural zoning district if 50% or more of the market's gross income is from produce raised on farms owned or managed by the farm market operator. But where necessary to protect public health and safety, local zoning may regulate the size of the farm market building, parking area size, set back lines and access to the market. This provision is commonly known as the "farm market 50% test."

Special rules for on-farm energy production

Several energy production activities are not subject to local zoning if they occur on land qualified for CAUV (Current Agricultural Use Valuation). These activities include biodiesel, biomass energy, electric and heat energy production, as well as biologically derived methane gas production of less than five megawatts.

Some agricultural activities can be regulated by local zoning

There are a few exceptions to the agricultural exemption. Local zoning may regulate agriculture in the following situations if the parcel of land is five acres or less and is located in a platted subdivision containing 15 or more lots:

- On a lot that is one acre or smaller, zoning may prohibit or regulate all agricultural activities.
- On a lot between one and five acres, zoning may regulate set back lines, height and size of buildings used for agriculture and may prohibit or regulate dairying and animal/poultry husbandry if 35% or more of the lots in the platted subdivision are developed.



Smart Growth

Conservation Development

Conservation Development is a development technique that allows design and layout of an entire development parcel, to conserve resources while allowing development to occur at the same density as the underlying zoning. Conservation development can be designed to meet a range of goals including conserving open space, conserving natural and cultural resources, creating amenities attractive to buyers, and creating a new neighborhood that is an asset to the community. In many cases, concentrating development on just a portion of a development tract can minimize the cost of providing and maintaining public services and utilities.

Conservation development is a technique that applies to transitional areas, those that we know are going to develop, but where we would like to balance the impact of the development with the protection of water and other resources, including maintaining rural community character.

Conservation Development regulations are to:

- Provide for permanent protection of the open space, including provisions for maintenance and capital improvements
- Be designed to minimize fragmentation of open space, and to ensure adequate access to the open space by the residents/users of the site
- Include requirements for the developer to demonstrate that the highest quality resources on the site were evaluated and are protected via the open space; primary conservation areas (wetlands, streams, and floodplains)
- Designate a minimum project size to ensure a viable open space result and the support of a viable homeowner's association
- Include minimum criteria for homeowners' associations, and for bylaw provisions to support the conservation development concept
- Define that a minimum open space requirement must be included for various lot sizes
- Define perimeter setbacks that meet the underlying zoning requirements at minimum.



*Conventional Development
(map: Community Planning Program, CSU)*



*Conservation Development
(map: Community Planning Program, CSU)*

Smart Growth

Sample Conservation Development:

Weatherstone - West Vincent Twp., Chester County, PA



Pre-Development Natural Resources

Post-Development Site Plan avoiding Natural Resources



Smart Growth



Create a rural-themed architectural standard

Local governments along the SR 32 Corridor should consider implementing a rural-themed architectural standard as part of any potential future zoning regulations.

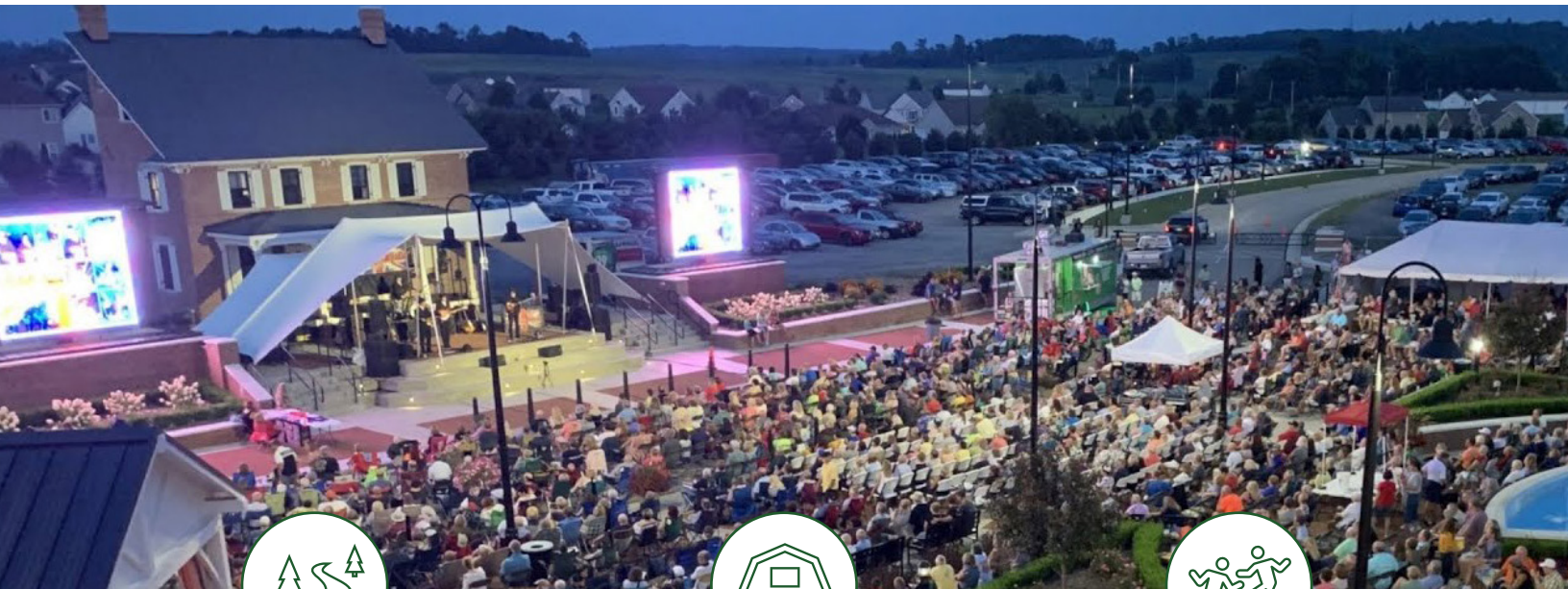
Rural-themed architectural standards would permit community-scaled mixed-use development within the Smart Growth area, but with an aesthetic that is consistent with the County's small-town, rural charm. Standards should regulate the character and style of buildings, such as the proportion of windows, building materials, colors, trim design, and even the vertical and horizontal division of materials. Jerome Village, a planned community in Union County, Ohio, is an example of a new development that has implemented a rural, architectural theme.



SMALL TOWN MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

Case Study: Firestone Farms, Columbiana, OH

Firestone Farms in Columbiana, Ohio is an example of a small-scaled mixed-use development with rural themes. The development is located on the edge of the City and has a small retail area with a community space and a variety of housing options.



The development is located on the edge of the City, along two rural state routes on what was a farm, typical of a potential development site in Brown County.



The Barn at Firestone Farms is a premier banquet and event center that maintains the rural character of the development.



The Courtyard (illustrated above) hosts outdoor concerts, movie nights, and seasonal events, which features a stage and two outdoor big screens.

Retail: The TownCenter

TownCenter at Firestone Farms is a unique outdoor shopping, dining, and business destination in a relaxed yet sophisticated 1930s Harvey S. Firestone inspired environment. The development offers multiple local retail options, a brewery, and restaurants. The development is themed with a rural aesthetic and is scaled (two stories maximum) similar to Brown County's desire to avoid sprawling urban development. Existing half houses and barns were incorporated into the development to enhance the rural character.

Residential

Firestone Farms offers a small community feeling overlooking The Links at Firestone Farms Golf Course. The development offers a variety of neighborhoods and housing types (single family, cluster, and townhome) with variable price ranges and settings. The Residents Community Center houses a large party room with kitchen, lounge area with fireplace, exercise room with flat screen TV and a beautiful in-ground heated pool. All housing development is located behind the retail TownCenter area.

Smart Growth

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

Beyond reducing flooding and improving water quality, local zoning codes and County subdivision regulations should encourage the installation of sustainable stormwater systems to:

- reduce urban heat island effects through evaporation of infiltrated water and through shade provided by urban forests
- improve air quality through increases in vegetation to filter pollutants, as well as indirectly from lowering temperatures (smog forms more easily at higher temperatures)
- absorb carbon, because vegetation uses carbon dioxide as part of photosynthesis
- provide urban recreational and open space

Sustainable Stormwater Inspirations

Below are samples of potential stormwater management treatments that future local Zoning Codes could require in accordance with Smart Growth principles:



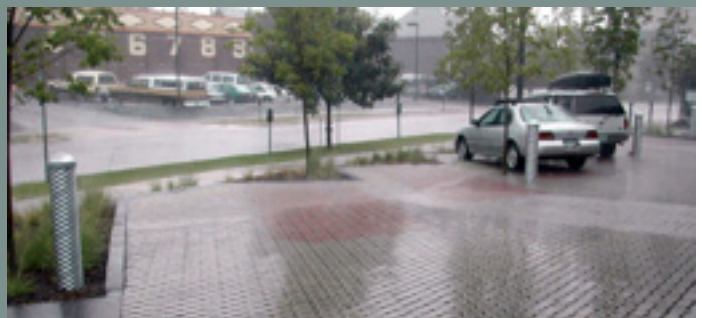
Bioswales



Tree Trenches



Rain Gardens



Permeable Pavement

Smart Growth: Catalytic Partnerships



IMPLEMENTATION TOOLKIT:

Joint Economic Development District (JEDD)

Facilitating Partnerships

Potential for a Joint Economic Development District (JEDD) between the Village of Mt. Orab and adjacent unincorporated areas (e.g. Sterling and Green Townships) could be implemented in a mutually beneficial manner. A JEDD could facilitate improvements in infrastructure and public services to facilitate desired growth by:

- Extending utility infrastructure (i.e. sewer service);
- Upgrading roadways to better accommodate truck freight and workforce commuters;
- Providing shared emergency response and public safety services; and
- Offering technical staff expertise for planning, zoning, legal services, and marketing.

To create a JEDD, there must first be a public inspection of the contract and the economic development plan for the JEDD, which consists of a schedule of the new, expanded or additional services, facilities or improvements to be provided, and a schedule for the collection of any income tax to be levied within the JEDD. There must also be a description of the area to be included within the JEDD, including a map. Next, a public hearing must be held to promote public discussion of the contract and the JEDD. Each contracting party must then adopt legislation approving the contract. Finally, the contract must be executed.

Business owners located in a proposed JEDD area may “opt out” of the JEDD by filing an action in a court of common pleas on or before six months after the effective date of the JEDD contract. The owner must show: (1) that it operated within the JEDD area before the effective date of the JEDD contract; (2) that it did not sign a petition in support of the JEDD; and (3) that neither the business nor its employees has derived or will derive any material benefit from the new, expanded, or additional services, facilities, or improvements described in the economic development plan for the district, or the material benefit that has, or will be, derived is negligible in comparison to the income tax revenue generated from the net profits of the business and the income of employees of the business.” The Court of Common Pleas must render a decision within 60 days of receiving the complaint, unless the parties agree to a longer period of time.



JEDD Case Study:

City of Middletown, City of Mason & Liberty Township (Butler County/Warren County)

- Partnering with the Cities of Middletown and Mason.
- The JEDD contract calls for the levy of a 1.5% income tax on individual earnings as well as business net profits derived from businesses and employees within the JEDD.
- The City of Middletown will provide the tax collection. The JEDD contract calls for the City of Mason to provide for the improvement and construction to such roads that provide an improved transportation network to and from the JEDD area - this helps with transportation flow with the region as a whole.
- City income tax and JEDD tax follow the same rules with respect to reciprocity. If a city (where the employee lives) allows credit for other city tax paid, they must allow credit for JEDD tax paid. This is required by Ohio Revised Code 718.16.
- The contract is a voluntary JEDD which requires support from 51% of the property and 51% of the business owners in the JEDD area - which number approximately 200 combined.
- Approximately 685 acres included in the JEDD area which is currently zoned for General Business Districts and Office Districts.
- 40 year agreement with entities coming together to decide if they want to extend another 10 years.
- JEDD Board includes a Liberty Township representative, Employee representative, Business owner representation and a Mason / Middletown representative. These four choose a chairperson.
- Anti-Annexation - agreement includes comprehensive anti-annexation covenants for the entirety of Liberty Township for the life of the JEDD.

Smart Growth: Site Assembly & Readiness

CATALYTIC DEVELOPMENT SITES

SR 32 Corridor

- The County and the Village of Mt. Orab should continue working to market the SR 32 megasites to prospective corporate site selectors.
- Should development efforts continue to stall at this location, the County/Village should consider taking a more active role in the development of the site, possibly by authorizing a Port Authority or Community Improvement Corporation (CIC) to procure a developer with the requisite track record to bring the project to fruition.

Economic Development Toolkit

Community Improvement Corporation (CIC)

A Community Improvement Corporation (CIC) is an Ohio non-profit corporation created under Chapters 1702 and 1724 of the Ohio Revised Code. A CIC board of directors may have any number of members, but if the CIC is a designated agent for a municipality then at least 40% of the board members must be elected or appointed officials of the political subdivision.

CICs have the ability to:

- Acquire property
- Acquire property from political subdivisions without public sale requirements
- Sell or lease property
- Sell or lease property owned by a political subdivision as agent and on behalf of such political subdivision without complying with public sale requirements
 - Such sale or lease may be below fair market value
 - Are not required to comply with competitive bidding laws
- Borrow money as any corporation would
- Issue un-voted revenue bonds secured by a mortgage or lease of the property and by a pledge of the revenues of the CIC
- Enter into agreement with political subdivision to lease or purchase project in connection with political issuance of industrial or economic development bonds

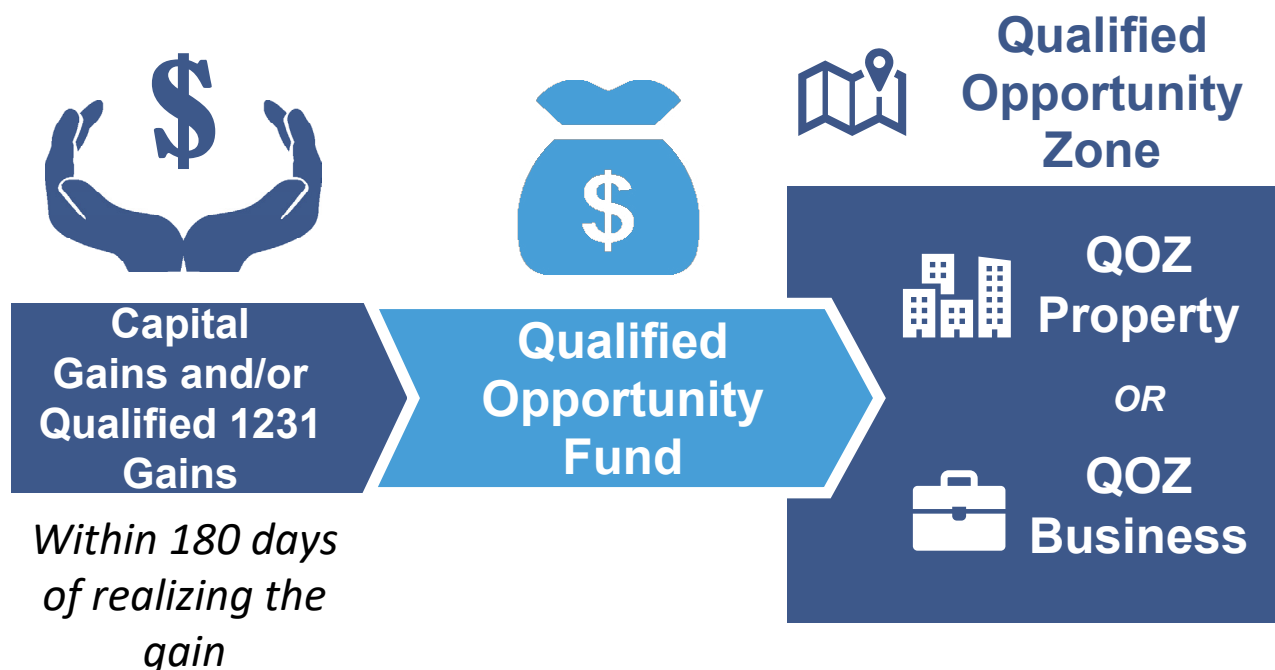
Smart Growth: Innovative Finance

Opportunity Zones

A federally designated Opportunity Zone offers financial incentives for individuals who invest their capital gains in a Qualified Opportunity Fund (QOF). There are established QOFs that invest in projects nationwide or in target geographies. QOFs generally have one or more targeted types of development which may be broad (e.g. multifamily residential) or specific (e.g. student housing). Some QOFs have a social impact mission, while others are only focused on generating the highest possible return on investment. While some established QOFs are active in smaller Appalachian communities, many QOFs are focused on Opportunity Zone census tracts in larger, high-growth metro areas where gentrification is taking place and investment yields are higher.

The next two pages highlight some of the established QOFs that cover the Appalachian Ohio service area.

OPPORTUNITY ZONE BASICS



Innovative Finance: Opportunity Zones

Qualified Opportunity Fund	Project Type	Geography	Description
LNWA OZ Fund I, LLC	Real Estate - Workforce Housing	Delaware, Maryland, the District of Columbia, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Maine, Ohio, Virginia & West Virginia	Leon N. Weiner & Associates (LNWA) is a nationally recognized homebuilder and developer of affordable housing. LNWA works, in concert with our partners, to catalyze the development of urban infill, suburban, and rural communities.
PNC OPZONE Community Development Fund, Inc.	Real Estate & Businesses	PNC's Community Development Banking portfolio which covers 20 states including Ohio.	Projects include affordable housing for low- or moderate-income (LMI) individuals; community services targeted to LMI populations; activities that promote economic development by financing small businesses or farms; and neighborhood revitalization or stabilization activities.

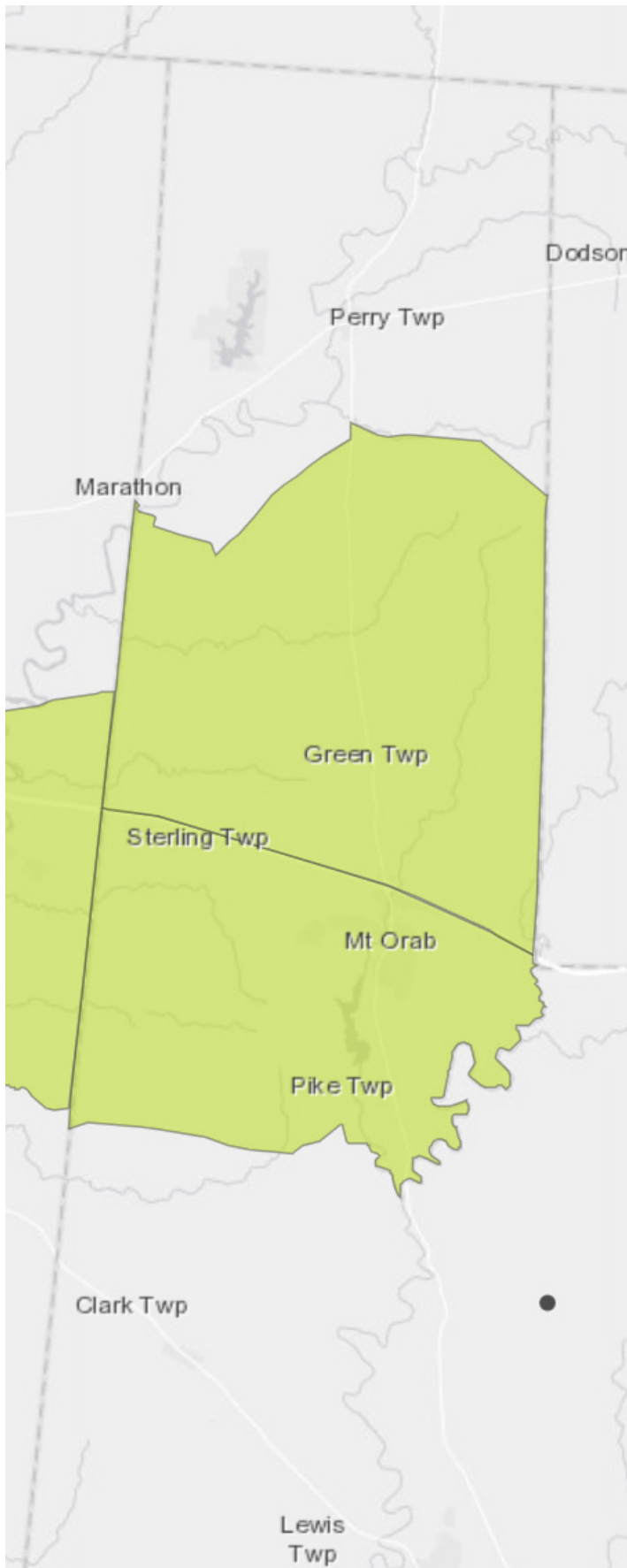
PNC APPALACHIAN CASE STUDY:

The Doris on Main is a 46-unit general occupancy apartment community by Woda Cooper Companies that broke ground in 2022 in Downtown Wheeling, WV and received a QOF investment from PNC.



Innovative Finance: Opportunity Zones

Qualified Opportunity Fund	Project Type	Geography	Description
Savage Grant Opportunity Zone Fund	Businesses - Energy, Infrastructure & Technology industries	Appalachia - Businesses that are located in or are committed to employing through remote work individuals from communities in Appalachia.	Investments are primarily focused on companies that have durable competitive strengths and good returns on the net tangible assets required to operate the business. Goals are promoting (1) environmental sustainability, (2) human capital growth, and (3) economic equality.
Woodforest CEI-Boulos Opportunity Fund	Real Estate – Workforce Housing	Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia	The fund's Social Impact Advisory Board provides input related to the social and environmental impacts of proposed investments by using metrics that align with goals of CRA and the "Opportunity Zones Reporting Framework" developed by a partnership of the U.S. Impact Investing Alliance, the Beeck Center on Social Impact and Innovation at Georgetown University, and the Federal Reserve Bank of New York.



OPPORTUNITY ZONES IN BROWN COUNTY

Innovative Finance: New Community Authority



NCA CASE STUDY:

New Albany Community Authority Franklin County, OH

The New Albany Community Authority imposes a “Special Assessment” called a Community Development Charge (CDC) collected on all real property within the Community District. The CDC was established for the benefit of the Community Authority, as a charge on each Chargeable Parcel within the Community District. The purpose of the CDC is to cover all or part of the cost of the acquisition, development, construction, operation and maintenance of land, Community Land Development and Community Facilities including safety services, infrastructure, and civic space.



New Community Authority

A New Community Authority (NCA) is a separate public body governed by a board of trustees oversees the development of public infrastructure improvements and community facilities. An NCA is:

- Governed by O.R.C. Chapter 349
- Implemented through the “Commissioners” of the local government which includes municipal councils and Twp. Trustees (only for Townships with a population greater than 5,000)
- Creates a mechanism for development by imposing “community development charges” on property assessments, income of residents, and/or profits of businesses in the district

Powers of an NCA

- Purchase of real or personal property
- Improve or sell real or personal property and community facilities
- Provide recreation, educational, health, social, vocational and cultural activities primarily for residents of the district
- Collect service fees to cover community development programs
- Enforce collection of community development charges
- Issue debt and pay costs of operation and maintenance of community facilities

NCA Limitations

An NCA does not have authority over:

- Zoning
- Subdivision regulations
- Police or fire protection
- Water supply or sewer treatment or disposal

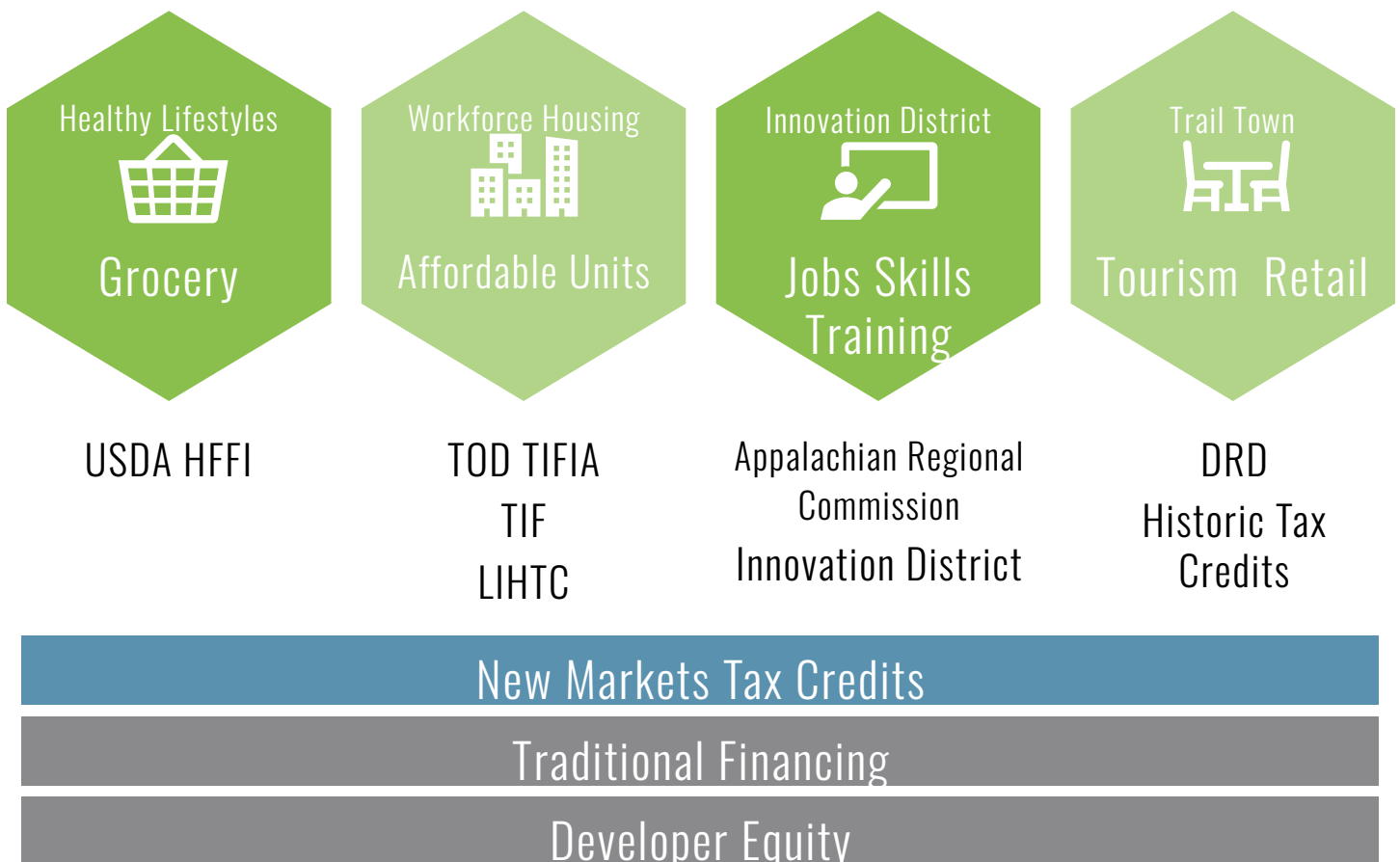
Village Revitalization: Incentive Toolkit

Building a Capital Stack

Incentivizing private development in Brown County's more challenging distressed census tracts are likely to require multiple layers of public subsidy, private investment, and grant funding. For example, even if a developer is able to secure a NMTC investment in one of Brown County's eligible Census Tracts, NMTC is unlikely to be the sole incentive used in their financial "capital stack". In order to entice commercial real estate investment in a economically distressed RiverTown or historic town center, multiple layers of financial incentives will likely be required.

Several relevant options are summarized by project theme below with the most relevant tools to the County's historic Town Centers and RiverTowns being detailed on the pages that follow. It should be noted that County and regional partner technical support will be needed to implement these more complex finance tools, especially in communities with limited staff capacity, such as the RiverTowns.

FINANCIAL INCENTIVES TOOLKIT



Village Revitalization: Incentive Toolkit

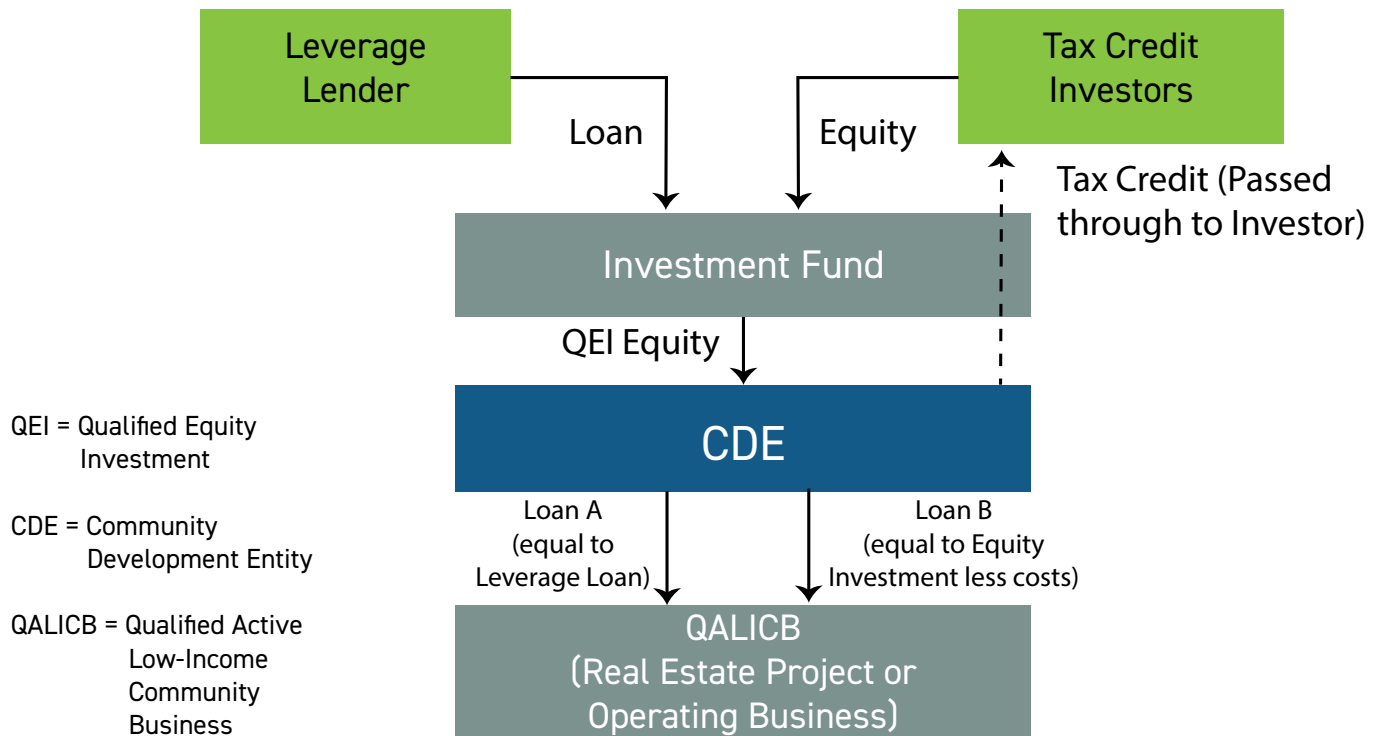


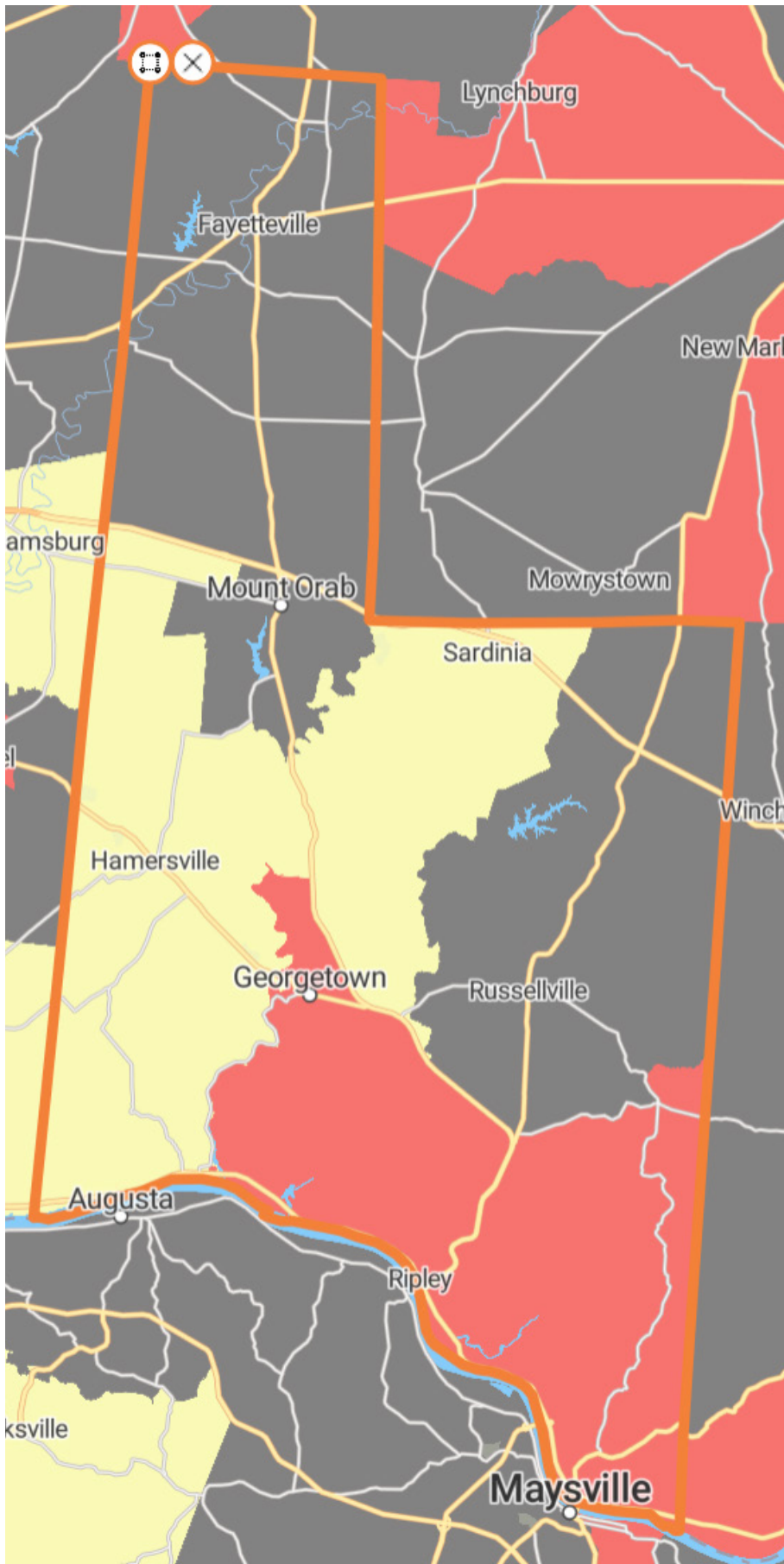
IMPLEMENTATION TOOLKIT: New Markets Tax Credits (NMTC)

Historically, low-income communities experience a lack of investment, as evidenced by vacant commercial properties, outdated manufacturing facilities, and inadequate access to education and healthcare service providers. The New Markets Tax Credit Program (NMTC Program), established in 2000, helps economically distressed communities attract private capital by providing investors with a federal tax credit.

The NMTC program attracts private capital into low-income communities by permitting individual and corporate investors to receive a tax credit against their federal income tax in exchange for making equity investments in specialized financial intermediaries called Community Development Entities (CDEs). The credit totals 39% of the original investment amount and is claimed over seven years.

New Market Tax Credit (NMTC) Flowchart

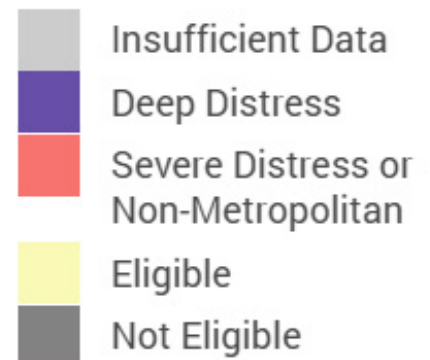




NEW MARKETS TAX CREDITS Eligibility by Census Tract

New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) Program Eligibility, Deep Distress Status, Severe Distress Status, and Non-Metropolitan Status, for CY 2024, using 2016-2020 eligibility data. ⓘ

Source: CDFI Fund and PolicyMap



Village Revitalization: Incentive Toolkit

Funding Tool/Program	Potential Application
Port Authority Site Assembly & Financing	SORDA and Georgetown Port Authority have broad powers under Ohio Revised Code Section 4582 gives port authorities a wide range of powers to facilitate site assembly, infrastructure development, and project financing through bonds and lease structures.
Tax Increment Financing (TIF)	The land value capture of future improvements to real property through a TIF district is a logical source of funding for catalytic infrastructure such as placemaking enhancements (e.g. streetscape, civic space, etc.), especially in a municipality that is fiscally constrained.
Downtown Redevelopment District (DRD) & Innovation District (see next page)	A 10-acre maximum DRD(s) could be formed around one or more building on the National Register of Historic Places to allow for TIF-like mechanism that provides additional flexibility to use DRD proceeds for not only public infrastructure but also for historic building rehabilitation loans or grants, non-historic building rehabilitation loans, and marketing and promotion of the district. If 100 Gbps upload/download broadband speeds are provided in the DRD, it can also be designated as an Innovation District that can provide loans/grants to tech-related businesses and business incubators/accelerators.
Appalachian Regional Commission / Governors Office of Appalachia - Area Development Grants	The Area Development grants promote a diversified regional economy through strategies that help communities create and retain businesses and jobs. They help communities develop an educated, skilled workforce and create access to affordable health care. They also support the development and improvement of infrastructure, including water and sewer services and the development and use of Internet access.

Development Process

The next page summarizes the parallel development tracts that will need to be advanced to leverage transformation public-private investment in Brown County's RiverTowns and other distressed Villages. While local partners will need to champion this effort, County and OVRDC support will be critical to implementing the vision for revitalizing Brown County's Villages.

Village Revitalization: Incentive Toolkit



IMPLEMENTATION TOOLKIT: Downtown Redevelopment District (DRD)

STOREFRONT REINVESTMENT

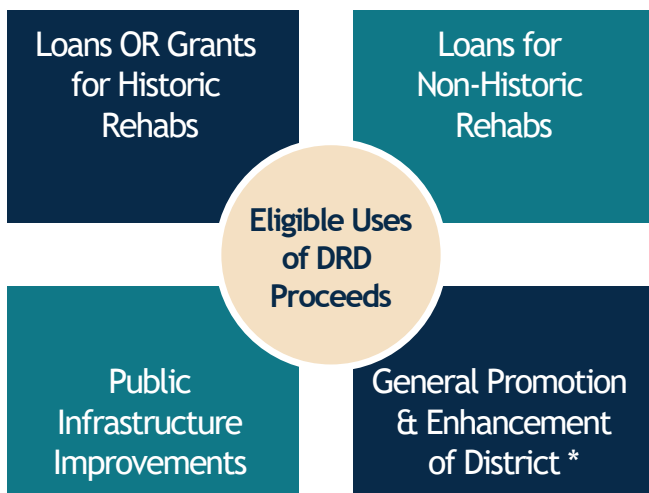
In 2016 Ohio General Assembly enacted House Bill 233 enabling municipalities to create Downtown Redevelopment Districts (DRDs). A DRD functions similar to a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District, but offers municipalities additional options in funding projects and programs with DRD proceeds including building rehabilitations and marketing of the district.

Property owners within the DRD make service Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTs) on a tax exemption up to 70% of the increased value of real property over the course of the 10-year DRD period. A DRD may have a 30-year term with approval by the local school board.

SPARKING INNOVATION

A municipality can identify a contiguous part or all of a DRD as an Innovation District. An Innovation District must be equipped with a high-speed broadband network capable of download speeds of 100 Gbps. DRD proceeds within an Innovation District may be used for loans or grants to qualified businesses (i.e. tech or R&D) or to incubators and accelerators that provide services to qualified businesses.

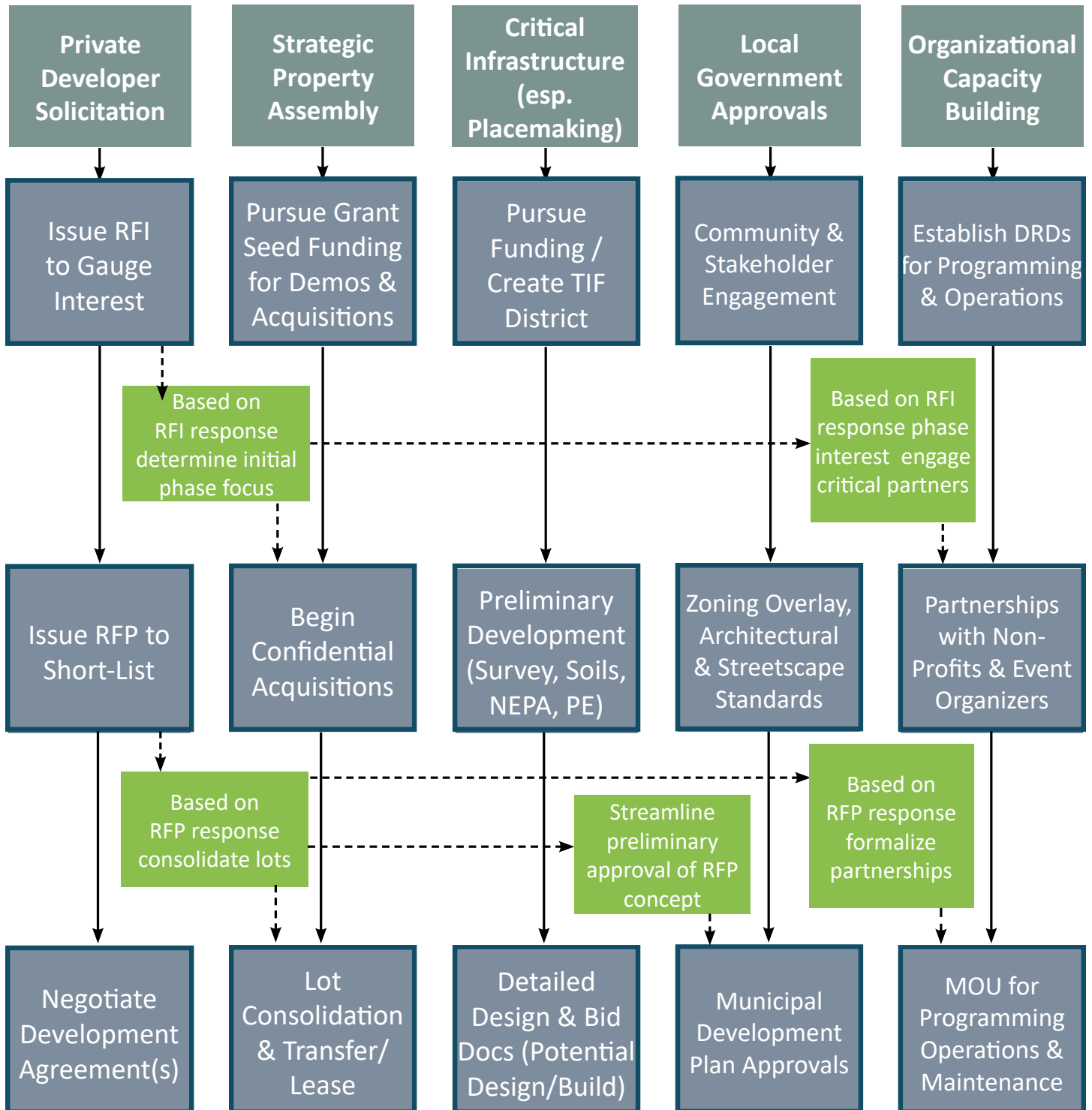
Qualified businesses are those primarily engaged in (1) Research and Development, (2) Technology Transfer, (3) Bio-Technology, (4) Information Technology, or (5) application of new technologies.



* Limited to 20% of revenue from exempted property taxes

Village Revitalization: Development Process

DEVELOPMENT PROCESS FLOWCHART



Countywide: Park District

PARK DISTRICTS

Park districts may be formed following the procedures contained in ORC Chapter 1545. Park districts may include all or any part of land within a county as long as the boundary does not divide any existing township or municipality.

FORMATION OF PARK DISTRICTS

To form a park district, an application must be submitted to the probate judge by any of the following:

1. A majority of the electors from the proposed district.
2. A resolution of the county commissioners.
3. A resolution of any board of township trustees within the district.
4. A resolution of any municipal legislative authority within the proposed district (ORC 1545.02).

The probate judge then holds a hearing on the application after giving public notice. After the hearing the judge may then establish the district if the judge finds that the creation of the district would be conducive to the general welfare (ORC 1545.03).

BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

After the creation of the district, the probate judge appoints three park commissioners. The terms are for three years, except the first members are appointed to staggered terms so there is a new appointment each year. The county auditor and treasurer are ex-officio members as a result of the role they play in park district financing and administration. The park commissioners must take an oath and file a \$5,000 bond with the county auditor. Park commissioners receive no pay but may be reimbursed for expenses. Park commissioners may be removed by the probate judge at his discretion after a hearing. Vacancies are filled for the unexpired term. County commissioners may also serve as park commissioners (OAG 73-064).

The board of park commissioners may acquire land for two broad purposes: (1) for conversion into forest reserves, and (2) for conservation of natural resources. The board of park commissioners has the ability to acquire land through purchase, lease, or donation. The board of park commissioners may designate security personnel, and when so designated, they may exercise all the powers of police officers within the parks and on lands adjacent to the park.

The board of park commissioners may levy up to .5 mills annually "subject to the combined minimum levy..." (ORC 1545.20). This section allows a levy of inside millage by park districts, however, the county budget commission has some discretion when determining if it should certify the levy. The board may also submit an outside millage levy to the electors of the district. The levy can be for up to two mills and can run for any number of years (ORC 153.351 and 1545.22).

MOVING FORWARD

SUPPORT FOR LOCALS



COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

County-level leadership and technical support for smaller Villages and Townships with limited staff capacity will be critical to the success of future projects and initiatives.

PRIORITIZE INVESTMENTS



PROJECT PRIORITIZATION

Administration and County Commissioners should meet after adoption of the Plan to prioritize near-term and longer-term projects based on current financial considerations, funding opportunities, market demand, and partner interest.

LEVERAGE OPPORTUNITIES



IMPLEMENTING THE VISION

Each month the County Commissioners could have a recurring “Old Business” agenda item to discuss Plan Implementation and capitalize on the latest opportunities to advance strategic initiatives and leverage public-private investment.

UPDATE DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS



DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

The County should serve as a technical advisory resource to any Townships or Villages who might consider updating or adopting zoning in their local political subdivision.

MONITOR & RECALIBRATE



MONITORING SUCCESS

County Administration could conduct annual reviews of progress made towards implementing the Plan. The following questions should frame this discussion:

- Did we achieve the goals we set out to?
- What went well?
- What were the challenges?
- What improvements should we make and how?

Based on the annual reviews, reprioritization of projects and adjustments to implementation strategies may be necessary.

Advocacy

The County can serve as a champion and convener of local advocacy efforts to help implement legislative policy and executive action that helps implement the Comprehensive Plan. Proactive policy advocacy efforts at the state and federal level can help ensure that the local needs of Brown County and its constituents are met. Brown County should consider participating in the following efforts with their local and regional partners:

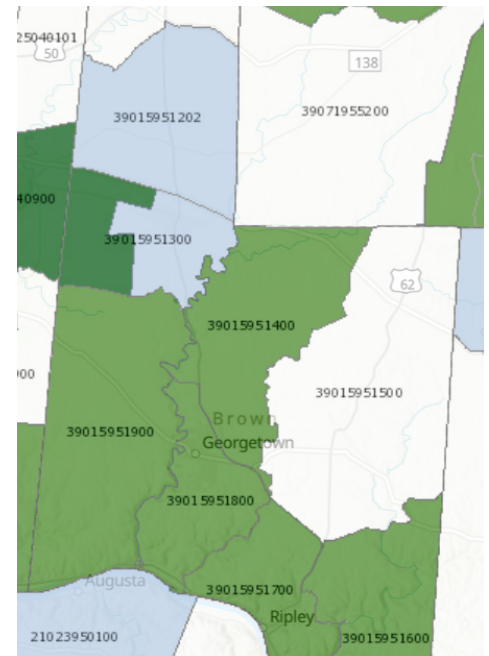
- **Statehouse “Drive-In”:** Meet annually with state legislators and agency leadership as part of a coordinated effort to advance legislative policy requests and executive decisions that advance Brown County’s economy.
- **County Prioritization of State Capital Budget:** Convene local partners to screen local funding requests and provide the state with a singular Capital Budget request for Brown County.
- **DC “Fly-In”:** Attend Greater Cincinnati Regional Chamber’s annual trip to Washington, D.C. to meet congressional leadership and federal agency officials to advance legislative policy requests and executive decisions that advance Brown County’s diverse economy.

FEDERAL POLICY ISSUES IN 2025

Brown County benefits from the suite community and economic development finance tools available to incentivize private investment in an Appalachian region. In economically distressed rural communities like the Rivertowns, transformational development simply does not occur without substantial and layered financial incentives.

As such, 2025 federal tax legislation should include extension, renewal, and permanence of the following existing programs such as New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC), Opportunity Zones (OZs), Historic Tax Credit (HTC), and Tax-Exempt Bonds. In addition, Congress should act to establish new programs to address local housing needs including the Neighborhood Homes Tax Credit and the Workforce Housing Tax Credit.

Ensuring the full suite of community and economic development finance tools are included in 2025 federal tax legislation is critical to implementing Brown County’s Comprehensive Plan, the region’s collaborative effort to increase economic prosperity and improve the quality of life across each of its communities.



NMTC & OZs:

Most of Brown County is currently eligible for either NMTC or OZ investment.

Implementing the Vision



FROM VISION TO REALITY

It is important to understand that the Comprehensive Plan is only a starting point in the identification of various improvements and initiatives that will each undergo their own respective project development processes.

The flowchart to the left provides a high-level overview of a hypothetical project and the steps that may need to be taken to implement it. While each project is unique, most if not all will require additional study and refinement. Most importantly, as feasible projects are confirmed and advanced, the public will be reengaged in the iterative process of determining a final course of action. For capital improvements this means input on proposed details such as project limits, accessibility, and design features. For potential zoning this would include an opportunity to share feedback on proposed regulations relative to permitted/conditional uses, district boundaries, and density.

As the County and its partners move forward in implementing the vision, projects will be developed based on current priorities and financial considerations. Ultimately, the Comprehensive Plan will constitute to serve as a guiding document that the County Commissioners, administration, and staff and can reference and leverage as they continue to maintain and enhance Brown County as one of the premier communities in the State of Ohio.