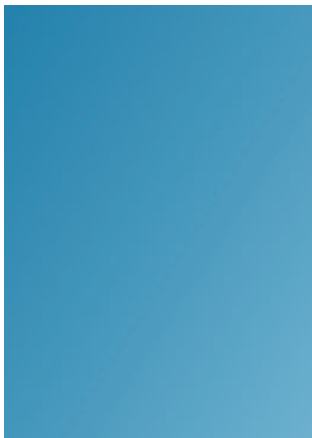




# **Wood County Comprehensive Plan**

**2006/2008 Update**



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## Part 1 Background

In 2006, the Wood County began a planning process aimed at updating the County's Comprehensive Plan. At that time, it was recognized that, while most of the 1998 plan remains relevant, new demographic data was available and there was a need to revisit existing goals in terms of both progress and continued relevance.

This plan is the product of discussions among the Steering Committee, a public input process carried out through a series of town hall meetings with citizens of differing regions of Wood County and their public representatives, and surveys carried out through various means. The 2006/2007 Wood County Comprehensive Plan Update reflects some of the most contemporary demographic and economic data available, along with the most current information on infrastructure systems and the changing geography of the County in general. Some of the most important updates address the County's land use, parks and recreation system, historical preservation, solid waste management, recycling, and environmental regulatory policy. This information provides the foundation upon which local public officials can make informed decisions concerning the continued protection of the County's quality of life and policy formulation regarding the sustainable growth of Wood County, Ohio.

Some priorities for the County have shifted, and some significant demographic changes have occurred which required a reexamination of various public policy issues. Increasing commercial and industrial development, sprawling residential growth and the reduction of prime farmland all signaled the need for more public dialogue about planning issues. During the planning process, it was recognized that sustainable growth increasingly is defined in the context of energy conservation and environmental impacts from land development. This term also draws attention to the fact that patterns of development significantly impact energy consumption and resident costs given increasing distances people must drive between the workplace, home and other destinations. This term was also used in terms of relating the degree to which land development negatively impacts environmental assets and ecological systems. Most commonly, sustainable development is considered to be development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. These concepts create interesting challenges for public representatives and Wood County citizens.

### Purpose of Plan

It is anticipated that the Wood County Comprehensive Plan will remain the centerpiece of public policy decision-making regarding sustainable growth. This plan provides public officials, private developers and citizen groups with guidance in determining the desired vision for growth and change.

## Planning Process

There were four major parts to the planning process. These include:

**Updating Demographic Data and Available Maps:** *The 1998 Comprehensive Plan was obviously produced prior to 2000 census data becoming available. For this reason, issues concerning where growth occurred, how the population is changing and other trends are largely unanswered today. Further, maps from 1998 needed to be updated and better organized into a single GIS data-base using today's technology. This data could then be merged with the most current aerial photography and parcel information.*

**Public Engagement Efforts Through Surveys & Public Meeting:** *Public input was gained from a combination of public meetings (organized by area of the county, or by topic) and through on-line surveys. All four public input meetings were conducted in a similar way.*

**Update of Goals and Objectives:** *Based on the knowledge gained from the previous work elements, effort shifted toward a review and rewrite of existing goals and objectives. Draft material was presented to the Steering Committee for consideration and input.*

**Document Prep. /Public Review/Adoption:** *A final document was produced and made available for public review and comment. A draft document was also posted on the Wood County Website.*

## Brief History

Wood County was named after Colonel Eleazor D. Wood, a graduate of West Point, a gallant soldier, and the engineer who planned Fort Meigs. The County was organized on February 12, 1820 when the legislature carved 14 counties from the lands purchased from the Wyandot, Seneca, Delaware, Shawnee, Potawatomi, Ottawa, and Chippewa tribes as a result of the Lower Maumee Treaty of September 28, 1817. The City of Perrysburg was the County Seat from 1822 through 1868. However, in 1868, the City of Bowling Green was made the County Seat. The County has nineteen townships, twenty-one villages, and five cities.

Wood County is located at the intersection of major transportation infrastructure in Northwestern Ohio. Interstate and intrastate highways, commercial air transportation systems, and numerous railroad lines all provide the County and the region with excellent access to local, state, national, and international markets. Interstate 75, along with State Routes 25, 23, 420, 199 and 235, runs in a North-South direction in the County. Similarly,

U.S. Routes 6, 20, 23 and the Ohio Turnpike (I-80/I-90), State Routes 64, 65, 795, 579, 51, 163, 582, 105 18 and 281 run in an East-West direction in the northern part of the County connecting it with the rest of the State of Ohio. Interstate 475 runs along the North-East corner of the County, with Interstate 280 connecting Wood County to Lucas County on the northern side.

Additionally, the County is home to two higher educational institutions—Bowling Green State University and Owens Community College. Professional services, manufacturing and farming provide the economic foundation for the County. Because of the high quality of the soil, Wood County possesses some of the most prime farmland in the State of Ohio, and indeed the nation. This unique mix of business, education, manufacturing, and farming provides Wood County with excellent potential for economic stability.

## Part 2 Population Trends

Ohio Department of Development estimates indicate that Wood County has a population of 124,183 people in as of July 1, 2006. Compared with the year 2000, when the Wood County population was 121,065, this translates into an average annual growth rate of .4 percent. This rate is considerably faster than Ohio as a whole. Between 1990 and 2006, Wood County has increased by nearly 10 percent (9.6%), while the State as a whole has increased less than 6 percent (5.8%).

According to the prior Wood County Comprehensive Plan, population grew faster in the 1990s than in the 1980s. However, Wood County experienced the greatest increase during the 1960s, with a 23.59% rise in the resident population. Population projections for the County from the Ohio Department of Development Office of Strategic Research indicate that the population for the County is expected to rise nearly 20 percent from the 2000 census count to 141,880 by 2030.

The most populated community within Wood County is the City of Bowling Green with a 2000 population of 29,636. The remaining larger cities and townships include the City of Perrysburg with a population of 16,945; Perrysburg Township (13,613); Lake Township (6,643); the City of Rossford (6,406); and the City of Northwood (5,471).

### Age Groups

Apart from overall population change, it is important to look at key age groups, such as children, the working population and older residents. Obviously, the number of children in an area implies certain things in terms of demands on the local educational system, while numbers of older residents impact demand for other services. All together, the distribution of persons in various key age groups closely mirrors what is found Statewide.

The one age group that differs most from the statewide comparison is the 25-34 age group. This is important not only as a static statistic, but also as part of a larger trend. By

comparing what happened between 1990 and 2000 in demographic terms, it is evident that Wood County, like the whole Great Lakes region, experienced an out-migration of young adults aged 25 to 34 years. In Wood County, persons in the 25 to 34-year-old age groups declined by nearly 20% during this time. In comparison, at the statewide level, there was a smaller decline of only 18.1% (275,294) within the 25-34 age group during the 1990s. This demographic trend, often referred to as “brain drain,” relates to concerns that young people are not staying in the area, and/or do not return after college to join the workforce in Wood County.

One segment of the population within Wood County, the 45-54 age group, experienced a growth rate of 57.8% between 1990 and 2000. This exceeded the State’s growth rate of 40.6% for the same group. This segment is occasionally classified as the “middle-age workforce,” and typically includes individuals who are well established in their careers and often working in management or management related positions with increased responsibility. The significant increase for the 45-54 age group in Wood County may be partially explained by similar growth that occurred within the City of Bowling Green. The City’s middle-age workforce population grew by 71.8% between 1990 and 2000.

Along with proportionately fewer people in the 25-34 year old age group, Wood County has proportionately fewer residents 65 and older, than the State of Ohio. These older residents make up 11.1% of the population in Wood County, versus 13.4% statewide. One reason for the lower proportion of older residents may be due to the higher proportion of people aged 18-21 in Wood County, which are somewhat related to the presence of higher learning institutions such as Bowling Green State University and Owens Community College. Given these considerations, it also follows that Wood County has a younger average age. In 2000, the median age of a Wood County resident was 32.6. The Statewide median age was more than three years older at 36.2 years. In comparison to the 1990 median age, the County still has a higher percentage of younger people than what is found Statewide.

## **Racial Distribution**

The majority of people, 94.8%, in Wood County are white, in comparison to the State’s 85%. The largest minority population in Wood County is the Hispanic or Latino population, representing 3.3% of the total population. Wood County also experienced a 40% increase in the Hispanic population between 1990 and 2000.

## **Types of Households**

Apart from looking at only the numbers of people and some descriptive characteristics, it is useful to consider how people form households. One reason this is useful is because the number and types of households in an area drives demand for local housing.

Unlike many other areas, the rate of household formation in Wood County has exceeded the rate of population growth in recent years. During the 1990’s, the total population of Wood County grew by 6.9%, yet the number of households grew considerably faster, by nearly 14%. This local household growth rate was more than the rate of household

growth statewide (8.8%). The somewhat obvious reason for this is the fact that households have been getting smaller as the result of many social factors. This trend has been evident both nationally and statewide. In 2000, the average number of persons per household was 2.51, representing a decline of 5.2% since 1990. Some antidotal evidence of this is found in the substantial amounts of new multi-family construction recently constructed in the Bowling Green, Perrysburg and Perrysburg Township areas in recent years.

One important implication of this trend is an increasing demand for housing units beyond what simple population growth would otherwise suggest, as fewer people occupy each housing unit on average. It also follows that growth in “non-family households” far exceeded growth in “family households” between 1990 and 2000. During this time, “family households” increased 8%, while “non-family households” increased 26.9%. In technical terms, a “non-family household” consists of a householder living alone (a one-person household) or where the householder shares the home exclusively with people to whom he/she is not related.

## **Part 3 Housing Trends**

Overall, residential construction trends indicate significant growth since 2000. However, according to the Ohio Department of Development’s (ODOD) Wood County Profile and Ohio County Indicators (August 2004) the number of residential units being built annually may be declining somewhat in recent years. Between 2000 and 2004, new residential building permit activity ranged between 754 in 2000, to a peak of 1,705 in 2004. Since 2004 however, activity slowed to 1,152 in 2005 and 651 in 2006. Data from 2007 is not available, but given national trends which indicate a nationwide slowdown in residential construction, it is not expected that residential building permit activity in Wood County will reach the levels seen in 2004 for some time.

Based on the Toledo Metropolitan Council of Government’s (TMACOG) population projections, housing units have most likely risen to around 49,386 from 2000 to 2005 (a 4% increase, assuming a constant average household size, based on 2000 U.S. Census data.). By 2010, Wood County could have more than 50,000 housing units, and by 2025, there could be as many as 55,000. However, as noted, if recent downturns in residential construction continue, these projected levels may not be reached until years later.

### **Housing Type, Tenure and Occupancy**

Viewed as a complete picture, housing in Wood County is predominately detached, single-family and owner-occupied units. According to 2000 Census data, of the 47,468 units, roughly 64% were single-family detached units and the majority (70.7%) were owner-occupied. This home ownership rate is above the State rate of 69.1% and well above the national rate of 66.2%. According to the ODOD Wood County Profile, prior to 2004 roughly 60% of those units being constructed were estimated to be single-family



detached units. However, in 2004, around 65% of the units constructed were multi-family, and many were in the Bowling Green area.

This consideration has many positive aspects, including a tendency toward neighborhood and property value stability. On the other hand, the homogeneous nature of the local housing stock means that there may be fewer housing choices available for people at younger and older stages of life. Younger families often have difficulty affording detached, single family units, and older residents (who might be empty nesters or individual persons living alone) sometimes would prefer to live in housing units that are smaller and require less maintenance and upkeep. Sometimes this housing market demand is met by the private sector, but other times, government regulations or other obstacles, prevents construction of condominiums, town homes, apartments, or similar higher density housing units.

### **Condition and Age of Housing Stock**

The overall condition of the housing stock in Wood County is thought to be slightly better than similar areas. A very small fraction of the housing units (less than ½%) exhibit substandard conditions such as lacking complete plumbing facilities, complete kitchen facilities, or are overcrowded. These percentages are slightly better than national and state statistics.

One particularly important housing statistic however, relates to the age of the housing units in Wood County. The 2000 census data shows that about one fifth (20.7%) of all housing units in Wood County were built before 1939. By comparison, only 22.5 and 14.9% of housing units in Ohio and nationwide were built before 1939 respectively. While older housing stock does not necessarily imply distressed housing conditions, it can mean higher maintenance costs which can result in financial burdens on the occupants and declining conditions. Energy use may be a major consideration with these older units.

### **Affordability**

The median home value in Wood County was \$120,000 in 2000. This median home value was higher than the median home value of \$103,700 statewide and \$119,600 nationwide. In Wood County, these median home values vary considerably from place to place, from lows around the forty-five thousand dollar range in the small Village of Hoytville, to much higher levels that approach \$170,000 in places such as Center Township which surrounds the east side of Bowling Green.

Countywide, over one third of renters (37.8%) are cost burdened by paying more than 30% of their monthly household income to housing costs. Only 16.1% of homeowners are considered cost burdened. The high cost of renting may be attributable to some degree to the large transient student population in the County and the associated need for rental housing. High demand, low supply and high turnover rates may have caused historic rental rates to remain higher, specifically in and around Bowling Green. However, it has also been noticed that the large number of multi-family housing units

added to the local housing stock in more recent years (i.e., 2004) is helping to reduce rental costs and increase housing choices.

## **Part 4 Economic Vitality**

Given the national economic uncertainty, Wood County is relatively healthy. The County enjoys relatively low unemployment and a diversified tax base as a continuing legacy of economic development work done during the more prosperous 1990's according to the Wood County Economic Development Commission.

### **Employment**

Top employers include Bowling Green State University, Daimler-Chrysler AG, Owens Community College, Wood County Government, Cooper Standard Automotive, Rudolph-Libbe Companies, Magna/Norplas, Inc., NFO Word Group, Inc., Owens-Illinois, and Great Lakes Window. This is a shift from 1990, where a greater proportion of the population was employed in the manufacturing industry. Other major manufacturing employers include: Walgreen's Distribution Center, Equity Group, and Modine Manufacturing. Future outlook calls for Wood County to attract more attention (and investment) from the logistics/distribution industry as a reflection of our geographical position.

The pace of economic growth has been strong and sustained for many years in Wood County. According to the Wood County Economic Development Commission's annual report, there were ten major job-creating projects in 2006 that corresponds to 439 new jobs and 619 retained jobs. These jobs were created or retained as part of new investments of more than 71 million dollars. Among these projects was Bass Pro Outdoor World that will help to attract other investments in Northern Wood County. Other projects included manufacturing, warehousing, office and research and development.

### **Agriculture**

While agricultural industries have been declining over the past 16 years, agricultural land still accounts for nearly 90% of the land cover in Wood County. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (NASS-Factfinders for Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2002 Census of Agriculture, Wood County Profile), from 1997 to 2002, the number of farms declined by 3% and the acreage of farmland declined by 1%.

These trends indicate that Wood County farms are declining in number while getting larger, most likely due to the need for small farmers to sell their land, or combine operations to compete with larger more efficient operations. This results in projected declines in overall farming employment nationally. According to the United States Department of Labor, employment in the agriculture, forestry, fishing and Hunting sector has been declining for some time and is projected to continue to decline well into the next

decade. However, at the same time the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics finds that an increasing number of “small-scale” farmers have developed successful market niches that involve personalized, direct contact with their customers in terms of farm markets that cater directly to urban and suburban consumers. Still others can find opportunities in organic food production.

While agriculture may be a slowly declining force in the growing and increasingly diverse Wood County economy, it remains an important agricultural leader statewide. According to the Ohio Farm Bureau, Ohio ranks in the top ten nationally in the production of corn, soybeans, oats, tobacco, pork, eggs, Swiss cheese, ice cream, flowers, tomatoes, grapes, strawberries, and maple syrup. According to the U.S Department of Agriculture’s 2002 Census of Agriculture, Wood County ranks tenth in the State of Ohio for total market value of agricultural products sold (Specifically, nursery and greenhouse crops produced in Wood County rank third in the State for total market value. Wood County was the number one producer of grains, oilseeds, dry beans and peas (collective) for the State as of 2002. For this same period, they also ranked first in both quail and duck livestock (individual) production. Wood County also ranked second in wheat for grain production; third in corn for grain production and popcorn; fourth for soybeans; and fifth for vegetables, melons, potatoes and sweet potatoes.

## **Income and Poverty**

Countywide, the median family income was \$56,468. Technically, the median income level is the middle value when all incomes are arranged in order from lowest to highest. A family comprises a group of people consisting of a married or cohabiting couple with or without child(ren), or a single parent. It also includes a grandparent(s) raising their grandchild(ren) where there are no parents in the home. This median family income statistic was significantly higher than the statewide median family income which was \$50,037. One explanation for higher family incomes in Wood County is the shift in the occupational distribution throughout the County. Those with management and service occupations increased, while sales, agricultural, and manufacturing occupations declined. Construction-related occupations also increased. Those occupations that showed increases generally paid higher incomes than those that decreased. Further, these shifts may be attributed to the increase in “white collar” jobs in Wood County stemming from the various firms that are moving to Wood County from other areas.

Countywide, families in Wood County are less likely to be below the poverty level. Only 4.7% of Wood County families and 9.6% of Wood County individuals were classified as below the poverty level 1999. This compares with 7.8% and 10.6% statewide respectively. However, there are some areas that have a higher concentration of low to moderate income (LMI) persons. An area is considered to have a concentration of LMI persons if 51% or more residents earn 80% or less of the area’s median income. The Villages of Bradner, Custar, Cygnet and Hoytville meet these criteria, according to Wood County’s 2005-2009 CHIS data.

## Part 5 Employment and Workforce

According to the 2000 census, 69.4% of all residents older than 16, are in the labor force. This labor force participation rate is slightly above the statewide rate of 64.8%. Between 1990 and 2000, the workforce in Wood grew faster than the population (8% and 6.9%, respectively). This was probably due in part to the expanding local economy driven by growth in the professional services sector. Wood County workers are most likely to be engaged in Educational, Health and Social Services (24%), Manufacturing (21.1%), or Retail (10.9%).

### Unemployment

Unemployment figures from February 2006, indicate that the unemployment rate for Wood County is 5.8%. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' table from February 2006, the State of Ohio's unemployment rate stood at 6.6%. This compares with a U.S. rate of 5.1%.

### Educational Attainment

Education attainment levels in Wood County are marginally higher than those found statewide. For example, around one third (33.5%) of people 25 years old or older in Wood County have a college degree; statewide only 28% have college degrees. Based on TMACOG population projections, the elementary and high school student populations will most likely increase roughly 2.9% every five years, leading to a total increase of around 13% from 2000 to 2025. College students are projected to grow at a slightly lower rate of 2.4% every five years reaching a total growth of around 12.7% by 2025 (assuming the student population figures to population ratio remains constant from the 2000 U.S. Census data).

Among the educational resources available to residents is the The Wood County Employment Resource Center. This organization is a one-stop location to access workforce training and re-training services in Wood County and provides a full range of services including employment, training, and educational services for job seekers, and comprehensive employer services. Target user groups include adults, dislocated workers, youth and employers.

Wood County offers several post-secondary educational options to its residents. Bowling Green State University is a four-year institution and is obviously a major educational resource, drawing students from the local area and throughout the nation. Other local educational resources include Owens Community College. This center provides educational opportunities to those pursuing an associate's degree and various professional certifications. The University of Toledo and the University of Findlay are both within easy commuting distance from most Wood County locations.

## Part 6 Growth Trends

General growth trends can be examined by determining the rate of development based on the transference of rural populations to urban. Since 1990, the distribution of population in Wood County has shifted from 35.5% rural and 63.5% urban to 32.6% rural and 67.4% urban; this represents a 3.9% shift.

Generally, most of the growth in Wood County occurred in and around Perrysburg; in and around the Village of Luckey and Pemberville; along State Route 65, south of the Waterville Bridge to Grand Rapids; east and southeast of Bowling Green; southwest of Bowling Green and south to in and around North Baltimore; and outside of Fostoria. Growth in the Villages of Luckey, Haskins and Pemberville could partially be attributed to their locations along State routes, and their convenient access to US 75 and more urban areas in the County.

The retail commercial demand of the estimated 2006 population is about 3.725 million square feet (based on the assumption of 30 sq. ft. of retail space per person). By 2030, the amount of retail space could rise to 4.256 million square feet to meet the demands of a growing population. Some of this expansion of retail space is evident in and near Perrysburg and Rossford where there has been a large amount of commercial growth.

### Urban Expansion

Urban areas are essentially various municipalities located in Wood County. They are mostly occupied by younger individuals and families. The northern Cities of Perrysburg and Rossford saw significant population growth between 1990 and 2000. Between 1990 and 2000, the population of the City of Perrysburg increased the most by 4,394 people (35%). However, the City of Northwood experienced a decline in population during the 1990s. Projections from the recently completed Water and Sewer Master Plan for the Northwestern Water and Sewer District indicate that the population of the City of Rossford is estimated to increase by 28.8%, and the City of Perrysburg's population is projected to grow by 19.4%. These northern cities lie within close proximity to the City of Toledo, which is recognized as the primary urban center for the region. The growth in these communities may be attributed to the national trend of migration out of urban centers to outlying communities. Within the central to southern portion of the County, the City of Bowling Green saw a population increase from 1990 to 2000, with a growth rate of 5.1%. However, the City of Fostoria actually declined in population during the same period.

City residents occupy approximately one-third of the County's housing units. Most residents in these areas own their homes, with a median value of \$113,100. Most homes in these areas are older and were most likely built between 1940 and 1970, although, the City of Perrysburg has seen relatively steady residential construction in recent decades. Moreover, Rossford retains the highest percentage of older homes, with most of the homes there built before 1960. In addition, Fostoria has the lowest median value of housing and highest homeowner vacancy rate when compared to its other four urban counterparts. Bowling Green and Perrysburg have witnessed the highest increases in

residential growth. Because of newer housing, coupled with a shortage of available rental homes, median rent for both cities is the highest in the County.

Nowhere in the County is demand for rental units as high as it is in Bowling Green, due to a high demand by university students for off campus housing. In Bowling Green, 57.8% of its homes are rental properties. This is an increase from the 1990 housing market share. Northwood has the highest rental vacancy rate. Due to the County having below average availability for rental homes, higher rental costs are typical of most locales in Wood County.

**“Small Town” Development**

Most villages are populated with married-couple families of more than 3 persons. The Villages of Bloomdale, Bradner, Grand Rapids, Haskins, Luckey, Millbury, and North Baltimore all saw significant population growth between 1990 and 2000. Most of the small town areas that experienced growth in the past are located along a major transportation route or within close proximity to a larger urban area. Moreover, annexation may have occurred in these areas causing an impact on all municipal growth. More recent estimates of growth from the Census Bureau however suggest that these past growth trends may have peaked. Naturally, the numbers below are only estimates, but in all cases, estimated populations are lower than they were in 2000.

	2006 est.	2000 Census
Bloomdale	706	724
Bradner	1,153	1,171
Grand Rapids	993	1,002
Haskins	635	638
Luckey	983	998
Millbury	1,151	1,161
North Baltimore	3,326	3,361

The Villages of Custar, Cygnet, Portage and Risingsun showed only marginal change in population. Meanwhile, the Villages of Hoytville, Jerry City, and Milton Center actually lost residents, and are projected to continue to decline. The Village of Walbridge experienced an out-migration of 7.5% during the 1990s, but population estimates from the Census Bureau suggest a substantial increase in population in this decade which is due to residential construction activity. Estimates for all of the villages mentioned above are shown below:

	<b>2006 est.</b>	<b>2000 Census</b>
Custar	206	208
Cygnnet	555	564
Portage	426	424
Rising Sun	604	620
Hoytville	295	296
Jerry City	466	453
Milton Center	194	195
Walbridge	3,080	2,546

Population projections supplied as part of the Northwestern Water and Sewer District's February 2006 Water and Sewer Master Plan suggests that the Village of Haskins population will increase the most by 29.1% by 2025. Other villages projected to grow include the Village of Pemberville by 24% and Grand Rapids by an additional 23.4%. The Villages of Pemberville and Grand Rapids are situated toward the northern part of Wood County and have both water and sewer services available to residents. However, the Village of Jerry City is projected to lose 26.5% of its population within the next 20 years.

The median household income among Wood County Villages is around \$41,000 (2000 Census Data). The Village of Millbury had the highest median household income, while North Baltimore had the lowest. Business activity most characteristic of these areas includes primarily manufacturing, health and educational services and retail. However, the construction and transportation and warehousing sectors also provide employment for a significant number of small town residents.

Villages in Wood County consist of only 15.6% of the County's entire number of residential housing units. A vast majority of these homes were built before 1940. The median home value is almost \$77,000. Only the Village of Millbury fosters a median housing value above the countywide average. Only Luckey, Pemberville, and Millbury exceed statewide averages. Most of the small town areas south of the City of Bowling Green account for the lowest range of median home values. Villages with higher median home values tend to be located closer to the Cities of Toledo and Perrysburg.

The County's highest median rent is in Millbury at \$608. Most villages in Wood County have median rental costs between \$400 and \$500. Generally, small town areas retain fewer rental units and more vacant units.

## **Rural Development**

Rural areas in Wood County are those located in the townships that lie outside the limits of the County's cities and villages. Township households are usually made up of married couple families with more than 3 persons. Between 1990 and 2000, the populations of

Perrysburg, Portage, Troy and Washington Townships grew substantially. Townships experiencing the most growth are located adjacent to the larger urban areas. Bloom Township experienced the greatest loss, with a 22.5% population reduction. Other areas that dropped in population included Plain and Weston Townships, which lost between 16 and 18% of their residents during the 1990s.

Current estimates of township population as provided by the Census Bureau are as shown in the following table. These statistics exclude incorporated areas. In some cases, it is believed that annexation has impacted township population change.

	<b>2006 est.</b>	<b>2000 Census</b>
Bloom Twp.	1,123	896
Center Twp.	1,297	1,246
Freedom Twp.	1,520	1,330
Grand Rapids Twp.	727	629
Henry Twp.	934	709
Jackson Twp.	689	455
Lake Twp.	6,195	6,643
Liberty Twp.	1,947	1,730
Middleton Twp.	2,301	1,960
Milton Twp.	851	630
Montgomery Twp.	2,096	1,872
Perry Twp.	2,043	1,856
Perrysburg Twp.	13,612	13,613
Plain Twp.	1,936	1,706
Portage Twp.	1,203	988
Troy Twp.	3,507	3,357
Washington Twp.	1,442	1,324
Webster Twp.	1,477	1,277
Weston Twp.	820	741

The recent Water and Sanitary Sewer Master Plan completed in February 2006 for the Northwestern Water and Sewer District indicates that the population for Center Township is projected to increase the most significantly by 33.7% by 2025. This projected population increase for Center Township is based upon the anticipated growth that would occur when a third Bowling Green interchange in Interstate 75 is completed. The population for Weston Township is projected to increase the least by only 3.5%. Portage Township is projected to experience an out-migration, losing 32.1% of its population.



Township residents are mostly employed in the manufacturing or educational, health and social services sectors. Unemployment rates for the Townships are typically low. On average, the median household income is around \$50,000. Center Township has the highest median household income of \$64,583. Portage Township recorded the lowest median household income of \$40,238. Household types are a mix of married-couple families, single-parent families, and singles. The average median family income for the Townships is around \$52,000.

The majority of housing found within the Townships are single-family units. Washington, Webster, and Troy Townships have the highest proportion of single-family homes, representing over 96% of all housing units in these areas. Twenty percent or more of the housing units within Plain, Perrysburg, Liberty, and Troy Townships consist of mobile homes. The median home values within the Townships are approximately \$115,000. Housing within the Townships is predominantly older, with the majority of homes having been built before 1939. However, over 25% of all housing units within Perry, Perrysburg and Plain Townships are newer and were constructed during the 1970s.

## Part 7 Public Participation

Apart from public reviews of a draft plan, public participation in the development of this plan update was generated in two ways - community meetings and surveys.

### Community Meetings

Three community meetings were held throughout the County late in 2006 to help assess local attitudes, needs, and desires regarding development. The meeting dates and times were as follows:

***Lake Township – September 6, 2006***

***Northwest Water and Sewer District – September 13, 2006***

***Elmwood Community Center – September 20, 2006***

All three of these sessions were conducted in a similar manner and were scheduled in different parts of the county for the convenience of area residents. Newspaper articles appeared prominently before the three sessions began, and then again before each session. The sessions generally lasted between an hour and a half, and two hours and began with a brief PowerPoint presentation that provided background to participants. Most of the time spent at these sessions included discussions about the existing goals and objectives in the Wood County Comprehensive Plan. Specifically, participants were asked to discuss and respond to the following questions:

***Are the Goals and Objectives from the last Wood County Comprehensive Plan still relevant?***

***What are the top three priorities for Wood County's future? This question was addressed by allowing the participants to vote using stickers. Each participant was given colored stickers that represent their first, second and third priorities, and then a "vote" could be cast for items generated from the previous plan, as well as the session discussion.***

***If the citizens, business community and government work together over the next 5 years to make Wood County the very best it could be, what would you like to see result from that effort?***

The priorities emerging from each community meeting were as follows:

**Place of Meeting**

**Top Issues and Priorities**

Lake Township Hall September 6, 2006

- #1 Senior Housing
- #2 Alternative Energy
- #3 Cross Township Cooperation (tie)
- #3 Develop Measurable Results (tie)
- #4 Public Education and Outreach (tie)
- #4 Balancing Residential Growth and Economic Dev. (tie)
- #5 Encouraging Quality Design
- #6 Discouraging Spot Zoning (tie)
- #6 Make Sure Development Keeps up with Infrastructure (tie)

**Place of Meeting**

**Top Issues and Priorities**

Northwest Water/Sewer Dist., September 13, 2006

- #1 Add Mixed Land Uses to Zoning Codes and Comp. Plans
- #2 Encourage Townships to Adopt Land Use Plans
- #3 Uniform Planning and Zoning (tie)
- #3 Cooperation on Uniform Planning and Zoning (tie)
- #4 Diversity Tax Base
- #5 Encourage More Reference to National Codes/standards
- #6 Continued Coordination Between Planning Commission & Park District (tie)
- #6 Encourage Mixed Land Uses and Densities (tie).

**Place of Meeting**

**Top Issues and Priorities**

Elmwood School September 20, 2006

- #1 "Mega" Dairies
- #2 Flood Regulations and Advanced Planning
- #3 Comprehensive Planning with an Integrated Approach
- #4 Oil Wells and Record Keeping



## Community Survey

As part of the comprehensive planning process, coupled with Town Hall Meetings, a survey was designed to draw insights from residents pertaining to the development of policies and initiatives. Several hundred paper surveys were distributed during the months of August and September 2006 to local schools, libraries, BGSU, post offices and senior centers, at Town Hall meetings, as well as to each of the governmental jurisdictions. Boxes were on site to collect the completed surveys. Hard copies of the survey were also made available and collected during the Wood County Fair at various booths manned by Wood County Department and Steering Committee members. The various surveys were coded to distinguish the groups and locations from one another. Additionally, the survey was made available on the Wood County website. Nearly 600 surveys were returned, and the majority of them were completed online or turned in during the Wood County Fair. In the Appendix, survey responses from each venue are provided, and a summary of the survey data is provided below:

Source	Number of Surveys
Public "town hall" meetings	5
Wood County Townships	13
Wood County Fair	135
Wood County Libraries	39
Wood County Post Offices	79
Wood County Cities and Villages	26
Wood County Senior Center	82
Wood County "On-Line" Surveys	197
<b>Total</b>	<b>576</b>



	Response Total	Response Percent
<b>1. Where do you live in wood County?</b>		
City	205	36.0%
Village	125	21.9%
Township	240	42.1%
Total Responses	570	
<b>2. Do you work within the County?</b>		
Yes	334	59.0%
No	232	41.0%

**Total Responses** 566

	Response Total	Response Percent
<b>3. Do you own a business in Wood County?</b>		
Yes	82	14.5%
No	484	85.5%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>566</b>	

<b>4. How old are you?</b>		
15-18	8	1.4%
19-25	17	3.0%
26-35	40	7.0%
36-45	128	22.4%
46-55	123	21.5%
56-65	115	20.1%
66-75	80	14.0%
76-85	46	8.0%
85 or older	15	2.6%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>572</b>	

<b>5. In what local school district do you live?</b>		
Otsego	73	12.7%
Eastwood	67	11.7%
North Baltimore	22	3.8%
Fostoria	2	0.3%
Northwood	4	0.7%
Rossford	60	10.5%
Perrysburg	61	10.6%
Bowling Green	170	29.6%
Lake	23	4.0%
Anthony Wayne	4	0.7%
Elmwood	67	11.7%
McComb	14	2.4%
Patrick Henry	0	0.0%
Lakota	5	0.9%
Don't Know	2	0.3%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>574</b>	

6. The following questions address "quality of life" issues. Please check the box that best reflects your feelings on each of the following statements

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>		<b>Agree</b>		<b>Neutral</b>		<b>Disagree</b>		<b>Strongly Disagree</b>		<b>Don't Know</b>		<b>Total Responses</b>
Wood County's natural resources should be protected	355	62.9%	180	31.9%	19	3.4%	3	0.5%	1	0.2%	6	1.1%	564
Preservation of Wood Co. historic sites and buildings is important	241	42.5%	252	44.4%	59	10.4%	7	1.2%	5	0.9%	3	0.5%	567
There are adequate cultural opportunities in the area	68	12.1%	213	37.9%	182	32.4%	59	10.5%	14	2.5%	26	4.6%	562
Housing is affordable	28	5.0%	179	31.7%	158	28.0%	130	23.0%	52	9.2%	17	3.0%	564
The cost of living in Wood Co. is low	15	2.7%	118	21.2%	194	34.8%	163	29.3%	51	9.2%	16	2.9%	557
More housing choices (condominiums, apartments, townhouses, etc.) are needed	33	5.9%	70	12.5%	127	22.6%	190	33.8%	125	22.2%	17	3.0%	562
Conflicts between neighboring land uses (e.g. residential/ industrial) are common	77	14.0%	203	36.8%	144	26.1%	66	12.0%	10	1.8%	51	9.3%	551
Taxes are reasonable	13	2.3%	149	26.4%	145	25.7%	181	32.0%	63	11.2%	14	2.5%	565
Water services are adequate	66	11.7%	271	48.1%	107	19.0%	71	12.6%	30	5.3%	18	3.2%	563
Wastewater services are adequate	54	9.6%	252	45.0%	129	23.0%	71	12.7%	27	4.8%	27	4.8%	560
Traffic congestion is minimal	52	9.2%	303	53.8%	93	16.5%	78	13.9%	31	5.5%	6	1.1%	563
Crime rate is low	60	10.7%	318	56.9%	102	18.2%	61	10.9%	9	1.6%	9	1.6%	559
There are ample shopping opportunities in the County	108	19.2%	270	48.0%	67	11.9%	86	15.3%	30	5.3%	2	0.4%	563
There are ample employment opportunities in Wood County	38	6.8%	180	32.0%	154	27.4%	119	21.2%	43	7.7%	28	5.0%	562
Agriculture is vital to Wood County's economy	262	46.5%	223	39.6%	57	10.1%	12	2.1%	4	0.7%	5	0.9%	563
Denser land development should occur closest to existing urban areas	176	31.7%	192	34.5%	102	18.3%	43	7.7%	19	3.4%	24	4.3%	556

7. In 2000, Wood County had a population of about 121,000 people. On average, between 2000 and 2004, about 1,000 new residential units were built. By 2030, it is expected that Wood County will have about 142,000 people. In terms of residential growth, would you prefer to see...

	Response Total	Response Percent
A lot more	20	3.6%
Slightly more	112	20.4%
Stay the Same	220	40.1%
Slightly Less	96	17.5%
Much less	100	18.2%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>548</b>	

8. Where do you see yourself living in 10 years?

In Wood County	458	83.4%
Somewhere else in Northwest Ohio	24	4.4%
Somewhere else in Ohio	13	2.4%
Somewhere else out of State	54	9.8%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>549</b>	

9. What types of areas or neighborhoods would you be likely to choose?

Urban	74	12.8%
Suburban	189	32.7%
Rural	315	54.5%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>578</b>	

10. What type of housing would you be most likely to choose next time you move?

Lower-cost single-family starter homes	21	3.9%
Affordable single-family homes	130	23.9%
Mid-priced single-family homes	138	25.4%
Apartments and townhouses	21	3.9%
Condominiums	67	12.3%
Assisted living/retirement	40	7.4%
Senior housing	57	10.5%
other	70	12.9%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>544</b>	

11. Choose two characteristics that are most important to you when selecting a place to live?

Proximity to schools, libraries & churches	102	10.5%
Walkability	93	9.5%
Good traffic flow & access	62	6.4%
Proximity to shopping & services	145	14.9%
Safety	241	24.7%
Open Space	264	27.1%
other	68	7.0%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>975</b>	

**12. Choose the most important attribute that you think residential developments should exhibit in order for it to be an attractive addition to Wood County communities.**

	<b>Response Total</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>
Homeowners Association	39	4.9%
Diversity of architectural styles	83	10.3%
Access to open space	127	15.8%
Sidewalks	96	12.0%
Access to active recreational areas (ballfields, soccer fields, et al)	90	11.2%
Walkways and bike trails	130	16.2%
I don't favor new residential development	195	24.3%
other	42	5.2%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>802</b>	

**13. How would you rate employment opportunities in Wood County?**

Very good	30	5.5%
Good	194	35.9%
Needs some improvement	253	46.8%
Needs lot of improvement	64	11.8%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>541</b>	

**14. In your opinion, is the Wood County economy adequately diversified?**

Yes	206	37.5%
No	142	25.9%
I don't know	201	36.6%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>549</b>	

**15. In your view, are employment opportunities expanding adequately in Wood County with population growth?**

Yes	141	25.6%
No	223	40.5%
I don't know	186	33.8%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>550</b>	

**16. In our opinion, what is the most important transportation issue facing Wood County?**

Lack of adequate public transportation	167	27.4%
Congestion	59	9.7%
Improved road maintenance	236	38.7%
Lack of accommodation for pedestrians/bikes	86	14.1%
More car pooling/ride share programs	21	3.4%
other	41	6.7%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>610</b>	

**17. What are the 3 most significant development issues facing Wood County?**

	<b>Response Total</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>
Natural resource protection	187	11.6%
Historic preservation	57	3.5%
Water/sewer service in rural areas	131	8.1%
Public transportation	75	4.6%
Ditch maintenance	65	4.0%
Develop system of bike/walking trails	49	3.0%
Storm water management	65	4.0%
Provide more housing choices	39	2.4%
Greater employment opportunities	142	8.8%
Impact on infrastructure	64	4.0%
Farmland preservation	251	15.6%
Expand active and passive park systems	32	2.0%
Control sprawl	187	11.6%
Upgrade roads	129	8.0%
Railroad crossings	63	3.9%
other	77	4.8%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>1613</b>	

## **Part 8 Updated Goals and Initiatives**

After consideration of input provided by the residents, the existing goals and objectives defined for Wood County have been updated. The general categories of these goals and objectives have been kept the same and include:

- I. Promote Orderly and Sustainable Growth
- II. Promote Cooperation between Political Subdivisions
- III. Maintain and Enhance the Quality of Life for All Citizens
- IV. Preserve Prime Land for Agricultural Protection.



## Promote Orderly and Sustainable Growth

### **Land-Use**

**Goals:** *To utilize a land use plan that maximizes the efficiency of existing and future infrastructure, agricultural resources, community facilities, and services throughout Wood County by:*

- Promoting urban densities within, or adjacent to designated areas containing appropriate urban services and infrastructure;
- Encouraging land use patterns, building and zoning regulations that encourage or provide incentives for the conservation of prime agricultural land;
- Continuing to develop effective relationships with local zoning and planning authorities in various political subdivisions through educational and supportive efforts;
- Encouraging more innovative zoning techniques that will allow for higher levels of mixed uses.
- Establishing and maintaining a model township zoning resolution, supporting efforts to include up-to-date and effective land use regulations and provide development consistency across Wood County;
- Utilizing development regulations and standards that recognize unique land use patterns and community character in existing villages and townships; and,
- Minimizing the encroachment of random residential development and water and sewer utilities into rural Wood County.

### **Residential**

**Goal:** *To encourage residential development in environmentally-respectful locations with services adequate enough to meet the needs of residents by:*

- Utilizing various zoning and land-use tools enumerated throughout this Plan.

**Goal:** *To provide adequate housing for Wood County residents by:*

- Monitoring housing conditions and developing strategies to preserve Wood County's existing housing resources;
- Promoting housing programs that provide County residents with a broad range of choice among housing types, designs, and costs; and,
- Concentrating residential development in areas that have sufficient infrastructures such as water and sewer utilities, roads, and parks and recreation; and,
- Continuing to be supportive of efforts to develop and maintain a range of housing options for older residents of Wood County; and,
- Continuing to participate in the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) - Community Housing Improvement Program (CHIP) program to help maintain the housing stock of Wood County and assist low-moderate income households become homeowners.

### **Commercial**

**Goal:** *Develop and maintain commercial facilities needed to serve an expanding population by:*

- Encouraging commercial facilities that will enhance, preserve and complement CBDs; and,
- Supporting the economic viability of existing commercial centers by encouraging compact development patterns that avoid negative consequences of strip development.

### **Industrial**

**Goal:** *To diversify the economy, reducing dependency on a single industry by:*

- Promoting sustainable economic growth consistent with regional resources resulting in a diverse and stable economic base;

- Providing support to area businesses for expansion and retention purposes; and,
- Guiding industrial development toward planned industrial parks with supportive infrastructure and transportation services.

## **Infrastructure**

**Goal: To provide adequate infrastructure for area residents, and commercial and industrial entities by:**

- Creating a series of public districts classified according to the current and anticipated levels of service, i.e., suburban, rural, and partial service districts.

**Goal: To provide effective and efficient solid waste services and removal to Wood County residents by:**

- Heightening planning in order to ensure adequate landfill space is available when needed;
- Continuing to exceed the State Solid Waste Advisory Committee's recycling recommendations;
- Adopting standards that eliminate the initial production of wastes and pollutants at the source;
- Continuing to maintain a balanced budget at Wood County Landfill; and,
- Continuing to work towards the goals of building gas recover facilities.

**Goal: To provide effective water and sewer service commensurate with both the needs of the County's industrial, commercial, and residential sectors and future growth by:**

- Establishing acceptable water distribution/rates and wastewater collection systems;
- Providing consistent water pressure to customers; and,

- Strategically extending water and sewer utilities, in conjunction with planning and zoning controls, to ensure projected growth in Wood County occurs in an orderly manner, i.e., growth occurring outward from existing villages and population centers.

**Goal: To improve and maintain Wood County's transportation system in order to address present and future traffic challenges by:**

- Employing access management techniques to limit points of ingress/egress, and maintain the level of service on principle and minor arterials (as defined by Wood County's Major Street and Highway Plan, 1989 and in conjunction with ODOT standards and requirements);
- Maintaining a systematic maintenance program for streets and bridges to accommodate the level of current services;
- Supporting public transportation networks and other multi-modal transportation alternatives (biking, walking paths, etc.) to link population centers, areas with employment opportunities, and other destinations that are economically feasible; and,
- Cooperating with federal, state, and local planning agencies to enhance transportation networks in the region.

**Goal: To ensure telecommunications advancements occur in a uniform manner commensurate with both the needs of County business and residents by:**

- Ensuring zoning ordinances are non-discriminatory in nature and treat similar facilities and services in the same manner;
- Developing a major list of potential sites for tower construction;
- Encouraging the use of co-location through the use of various incentives; and,
- Educating County political subdivisions on the necessity and importance of formalized telecommunication ordinances and policies.

**Goal:** *To encourage alternative energy production to help serve the needs of County business and residents by:*

- Developing appropriate local zoning regulations that address how and where wind and solar power systems can be installed and utilized on private property.

## **Cooperation between Political Subdivisions**

**Goal:** *To ensure development strategies utilize current data concerning Wood County and its several political subdivisions by:*

- Developing data collection and dissemination measures that provide public and private officials with current, accurate Countywide data;
- Maintaining strong relationships between the Wood County Planning Commission and individual Townships.
- Increasing awareness concerning the importance of future growth predictions and patterns and socioeconomic changes; and,
- Heightening cooperation of information sharing among public agencies.

## **Planning Tools**

**Goals:** *To establish more uniform planning and zoning procedures throughout Wood County by:*

- Mentoring the various political subdivisions in Wood County on the planning, zoning, and land-use tools discussed in this section;
- Educating County citizens on the benefits of a Countywide approach to development or preservation; and,
- Establishing methods by which to update the local officials regarding new incentives and growth - preservation strategies that are available; and,
- Defining special urbanizing corridors (such as Route 20, 18 and 25) that require additional and special planning and regulatory attention to guide development in positive ways.

## Maintain and Enhance the Quality Of Life

### ***Parks and Recreation***

***Goal: To preserve and heighten Wood County's natural and recreational resources by:***

- Preserving and protecting open space through various conservation programs;
- Retaining areas for recreational purposes that are: 1) near or adjacent to existing parks; 2) near or adjacent to rapidly developing areas; or 3) exhibit unique natural features and amenities;
- Encouraging the use of modern technology to reduce storm water runoff and pollutants, both urban and rural, from entering into bodies of water; and,
- Protecting identified areas from flooding; limiting the intensity of development of unprotected areas to reduce property damage.

### ***Physical Setting***

***Goal: To protect and preserve Wood County's natural resources and characteristics by:***

- Following development recommendations identified in various portions of this Plan and in Section 8, such as;
- Discouraging development on prime agricultural soils (Class 1 and 2 soils), environmentally-sensitive areas and within 100-year floodplains;
- Encouraging development near existing lines of infrastructure; and,
- Utilizing various growth management/land-use strategies and planning tools enumerated throughout the Plan.

### ***Wetlands***

***Goal: To encourage the preservation of wetlands by:***

- Minimizing development adjacent to wetlands and other sensitive areas;
- Placing buffer zones around wetlands;
- Heightening Measures to assist in the identification of wetlands; and,
- Protecting wetlands to assist in the purification of the Maumee River and the drinking water supply.

### ***Floodplains***

***Goal: To limit development in "100-year floodplains" by:***

- Educating the community of the hazards of developing in floodplain areas; and,
- Continuing to discourage development within floodplain areas.

### ***Air and Water Quality***

***Goal: To ensure air and water quality meets or exceeds federal and state air and clean water standards by:***

- Monitoring ozone levels to ensure safe air quality for the residents of Wood County;
- Performing public outreach in order to educate the public about methods for reducing ozone levels;
- Monitoring Wood county's water quality to ensure that it meets federal and state water quality standards;
- Taking a proactive approach in assisting the federal, state, local and nonprofit agencies with remedial actions taken to improve the Maumee, Portage, and Toussaint Rivers; and,
- Discouraging development over or adjacent to groundwater recharge or aquifer areas.

## ***Historic Preservation***

***Goal: To continue to preserve Wood County's vast array of historical and cultural resources by:***

- Encouraging development/protection of municipal downtown areas with unique historical worth;
- Informing property owners of various programs available for historic buildings;
- Strengthening County efforts to preserve historically significant sites and buildings;
- Maintaining or increasing the quality of sites and buildings already under the authority of the County; and,
- Removing structures that lessen the visual attractiveness and utility of historic areas.

## ***Emergency Management and Services***

***Goal: To ensure the health, welfare, and safety of Wood County residents by:***

- Ensuring that coordination exists in the emergency management plan at all times;
- Maintaining a comprehensive list of all potentially hazardous sites;
- Continuing to up-date the all hazard and hazardous materials policies in order to incorporate any recent changes; and,
- Encouraging political subdivisions to use partnerships for fire and EMS services.

## **Preserve Prime Land for Agricultural Production**

### ***Agricultural***

***Goal: To maintain agriculture as a strong component of the economic base of the County by:***



- Making efficient use of prime farmland;
- Encouraging residential growth in municipal areas and discouraging lot splits and sprawl;
- Heightening mechanisms by which to preserve prime farmland;
- Supporting efforts to regulate and otherwise address the complex issue of “mega farms” in southern Wood County.
- Creating programs and policies to keep agriculture a strong part of the economy; and,
- Increasing the overall number of farms enrolled in agricultural district and CAUV programs.

## Part 9 Updated Land Use Plan Map

The following map represents an updated view the planned physical development of Wood County. This map is intended to be a guide for county-wide land use decision-making. It is also the intent of this document to present a framework or “guidebook” for more local planning to be conducted by townships and municipalities. Land use issues that received the most attention from a county level of concern are those that involve more than one local government such as key transportation corridors, employment centers of regional significance, and natural systems such as river corridors. These areas of concern involve multiple jurisdictions and have the most potential for long term impact in the county.

PLACEHOLDER FOR MAP

## **Part 10 Appendix – Individual Surveys**