



Task Force Summary Report 2035 Comprehensive Plan for Richland County

Introduction

Comprehensive Planning has been the core of the planning program of the Richland County Regional Planning Commission since its formation in 1959. The first Comprehensive Plan was completed in the early 1960's by Carroll V. Hill & Associates, a private consulting firm. As the organization grew and assumed new transportation planning responsibilities, funding from various federal, state and local sources supported the completion of a new Comprehensive Region-Wide Plan in 1971. While that Plan dealt with concepts for the "ultimate" development of Richland County, a reevaluation in the mid 1970's produced a Plan for the year 2000.

The 1970's era plan was a valuable tool, but by 2003 it was determined that an update was necessary. Although a multitude of planning projects were completed throughout the years, they were never linked comprehensively.

This is a Summary Report of the 2035 Comprehensive Plan for Richland County. Substantial additional information is available in other reports and studies to support and enhance an understanding of the topics presented. In its role as a regional planning organization serving all of Richland County, this plan has been developed to adhere to the following fundamental principles of community planning¹:

1. The comprehensive plan is a physical plan. Although it reflects social and economic values, the plan is fundamentally a guide to the physical development of the County.
2. The comprehensive plan is a long range plan. This plan for the year 2035 is designed to provide guidance for decision makers through the years to arrive at that point over 25 years in the future. It will be reevaluated on a regular basis to adjust to changing circumstances.
3. The plan is comprehensive. It covers the entire County geographically. It is also comprehensive in that it encompasses all things that make the County work including housing, transportation, land use, infrastructure and others.
4. The plan provides policy choices. The plan offers guiding principles that may be used by decision makers to resolve inevitable conflicts.
5. The comprehensive plan is a guide for decision makers. Good information and data will help elected and appointed officials make good decisions. It may also guide private sector decisions within Richland County.

¹ The Practice of Local Government Planning, International City Management Association, 1979 (pages 153-154).

Process

Comprehensive Planning requires the skills of professional planners and the involvement of the community. Community involvement takes many forms leading to the developing of the final Plan. Leading the three-year process has been the involvement of the Comprehensive Plan Task Force. The Task Force evolved from two other recent community wide planning efforts, the Vision Committee and the Farmland Preservation Task Force. In the mid-1990's a group of local leaders formed an ad-hoc committee to facilitate a visioning process for Richland County. In 1999 a Richland County Farmland Preservation Task Force completed its work, and among its recommendations was the reevaluation of the Comprehensive Plan for Richland County.

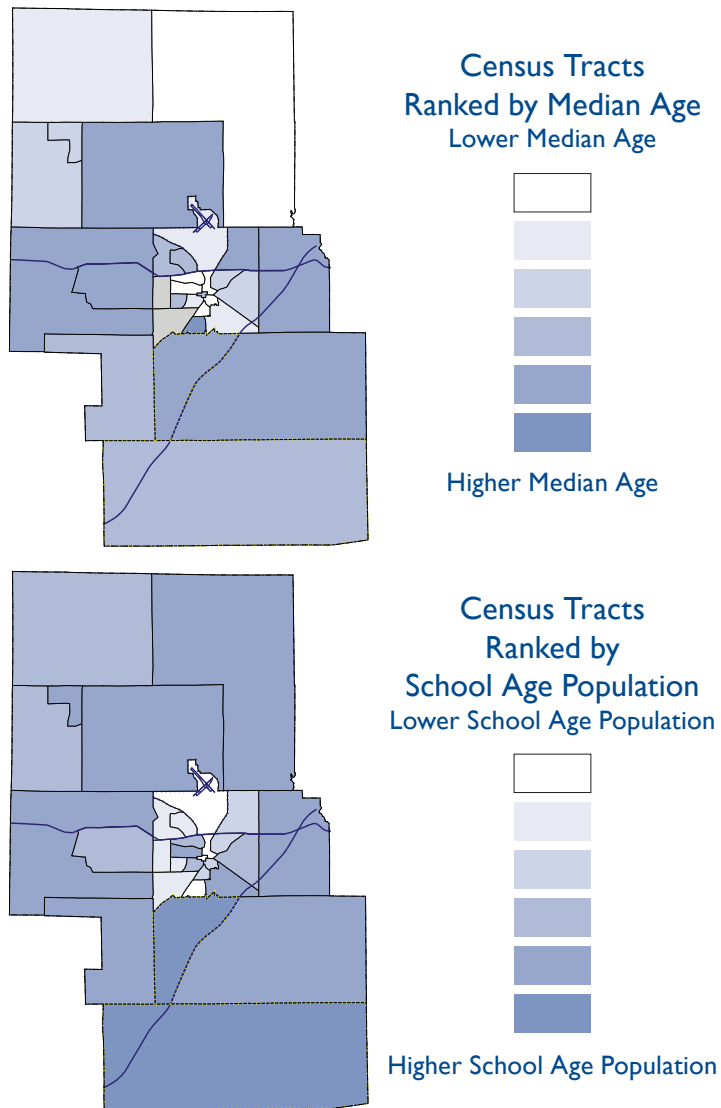
The wide community interest and the cross section of community leaders who were involved with both efforts provided a model for the establishment of the Comprehensive Plan Task Force. Representation was sought from all geographic parts of Richland County as well as from a variety of government, business and civic interests.

A commitment has been made to review and reevaluate the 2035 Richland County Comprehensive Plan on a regular basis. Ongoing community involvement in the process will be essential. The diverse membership of the Regional Planning Commission is a key element for this involvement, and the expectation is that the initial update to the Plan will reinvigorate the community's interest in this aspect of our planning, and draw in even more people to share their thoughts and ideas.

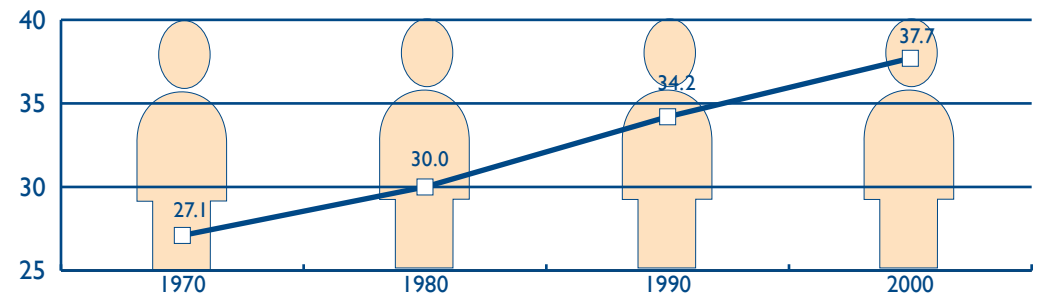
Task Force Member	Interest / Representing
Bridget McDaniel	Education Community
Bob Soulen	Architect
Tim Wert	Commissioners
Dick Stander	Construction/Transportation
Joe Mudra	Youth & Family Council
Tom Beck	County Engineer
Carol Knapp	Shelby Chamber
Maurus Brown	OSU Extension
James DeSanto	Mansfield City Engineer
Jim Hunter	Shelby
Dick McFarland	County Interests
Don Mitchell	Mansfield Fair Housing
Bill Olinger	Architect
Ed Olson	Commissioners
Chuck Pscholka	Lexington Administrator
Stan Saalman	Health Commissioners
Pete Zimmerman	Community Interests
Phil Curren	Shelby Zoning
Kevin Nestor	Mansfield Chamber
Ambrose Metzger	Agriculture
Duane Rader	OSU Extension
Raymond Dominick	Farmland Preservation
Rudy Flores	NAACP
Sarah Mattox	Realtors
Dan Blay	Agriculture
Geneva Cummins	United Way / NAPAC
Dave Williamson	Governor's ED Representative
David Daugherty	Task Force Chairman
Bob Cohen	Braintree
Tom Roberts	Home Builders
Joe Palmer	Library
Ken Bender	Ontario
Andy Neer	Shelby Planning Commission
Chuck Pfoutz	Bellville
Tim Wireman	Shiloh
Mike Greene	REDeC/Economic Development
Keith Markley	Richland County Emergency Management
Doug Versaw	Mansfield Council
Burton Stahl	Main Street Mansfield
Pam Siegenthaler / Ann Seifert	Richland County Foundation
Dan Hardwick	Until 1/2005
Tom Mills	Until 1/2004

The Changing Face of Richland County

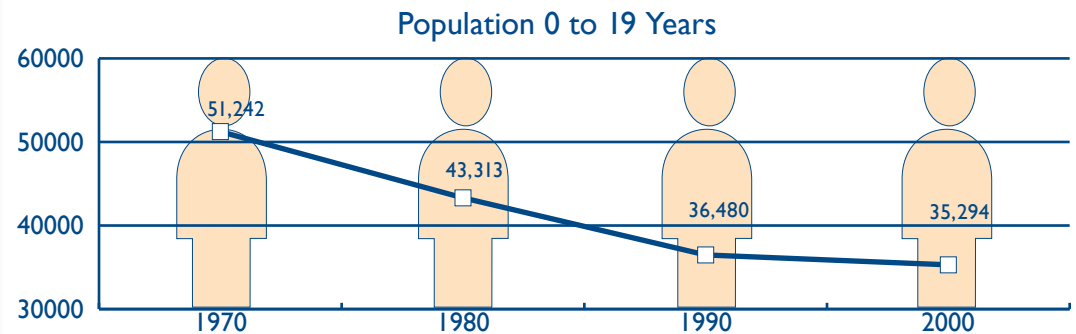
Demographic changes significantly impact land use patterns.



Median Age



School Age



Housing & Demographics

Richland County's population has remained constant over the last 30 years. The higher density urban areas have thinned while townships and villages particularly in the southern half of the county have shown corresponding gains. New home construction along rural roads is the highly visible evidence of this trend.

That the aging baby-boom generation would have housing impacts was long anticipated. Condominium developments catering to empty-nesters, and assisted living centers, have contributed many of the new dwelling units constructed within incorporated areas since 1990.

An unanticipated development was the dramatic fall in the population of school age children. Their numbers in the central urban area have dropped by almost 40%, hitting Mansfield particularly hard. A similar pattern is evident throughout the County, but from a housing perspective, families with school age children have located in suburban and rural school districts.

Median home values have fallen along with owner occupancy in portions of the central urban area. Foreclosure rates have grown. These trends require stabilizing actions. The Chamber District in Mansfield is just such an effort. The goal is to attract owners to feature-rich new homes restoring the balance of renters vs... owners. While prices are kept low with innovative design and construction techniques, the target market includes moderate income buyers. Other stabilizing initiatives include historic districts and neighborhood watches.

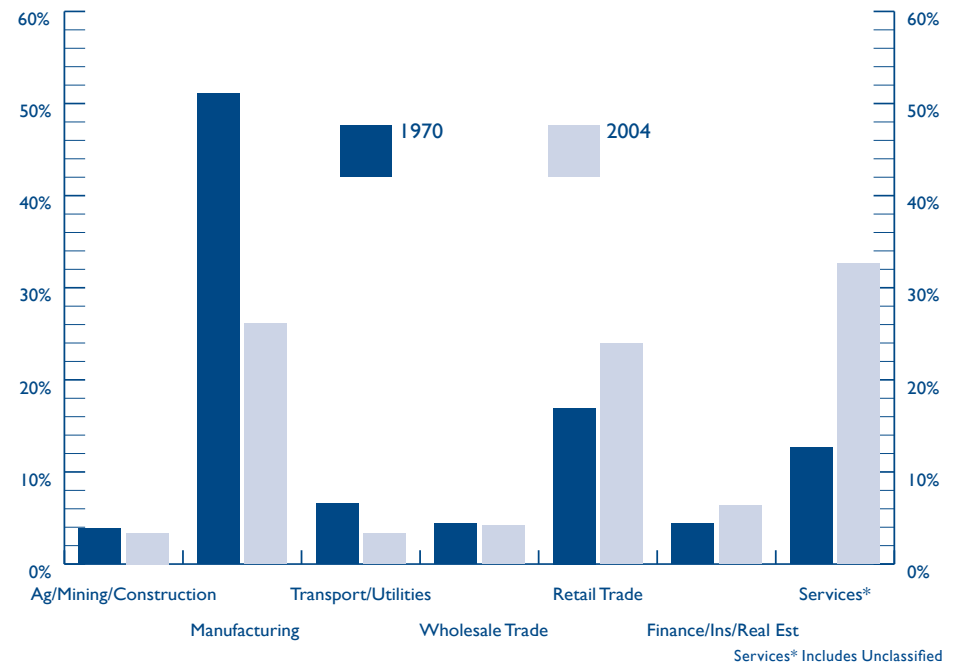
Land use regulations may contribute to our current trends. Zoning can restrict mixed uses, particularly of upper floors within central business areas. No new rural residential subdivisions have been built in the county since the adoption of the current regulations in 1997. Those regulations were developed to decrease the public burden shouldered by the townships and the County for bad development practices by some developers. Unfortunately the developers have chosen to circumvent subdivision regulations by undertaking exempt developments along the rural road system.

Is Richland County becoming a bedroom community for Cleveland or Columbus? Census2000 "journey to work" data does show traffic flows to both points in modest numbers. Clearly improvements to Interstate 71 provide a solid infrastructure. But, other important factors make predictions risky. Gas prices and housing costs in major urban areas remain highly volatile. Technology advances will continue to change the relationship between home and the workplace. The safest bet is that Richland County can anticipate a modest increase in the existing trend. Fundamental and sound planning by local decision makers will enable Richland County to be prepared in advance for any increase, rather than reacting to it after it starts.

Employment by Sector 1970 vs... 2004

Richland County is a regional center for retail and health care.

	1970 Employees	%	2004 Employees	%
Total-All Sectors	44,695		50,569	
Agriculture	12	0%	19	0%
Mining	142	0%	19	0%
Construction	1,580	4%	1,668	3%
Manufacturing	22,845	51%	13,227	26%
Transportation & Utilities	2,942	7%	1,689	3%
Wholesale Trade	1,969	4%	2,120	4%
Retail Trade	7,575	17%	12,110	24%
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	1,963	4%	3,204	6%
Services	5,555	12%	16,513	33%
Unclassified	112	0%	2	0%



Economic Development

Industrial and commercial areas in the 1970's plan were identified to accommodate a variety of uses. Location criteria for industrial areas in the days before the EPA included the placement of residential areas “upwind” of existing and proposed industrial areas. Transportation access was the area's primary advantage for industrial development. Clustered commercial areas were recommended to better serve the population, to avoid intrusions into residential areas and to limit congestion. The Richland County economy is now more diverse. It has shifted away from its dependence on manufacturing jobs to the service, (particularly health service) and retail sectors being the predominant components. The service and retail sectors serve a multi-county region. Health-oriented jobs total 7,346 in 2004, accounting for 45% of all service jobs. Manufacturing remains an essential component of the local economy. In 2004 it still accounted for 26 percent of all jobs, compared to 17 percent for Ohio and 12 percent nationwide. Manufacturing jobs also generate higher wages and were responsible for 40 percent of the total payroll in 2004.

Transportation access continues to be the region's foremost advantage for economic development. Land areas within short distance to the County's four-lane highways, its railroads and its airport delineate the geographic areas best suited to these development activities. Abundant potable water supplies and the necessary capacity for wastewater treatment enhance the development potential for business and industry. Our guide map reflects this. Redevelopment of sites within the service areas of existing infrastructure will benefit public and private interests.

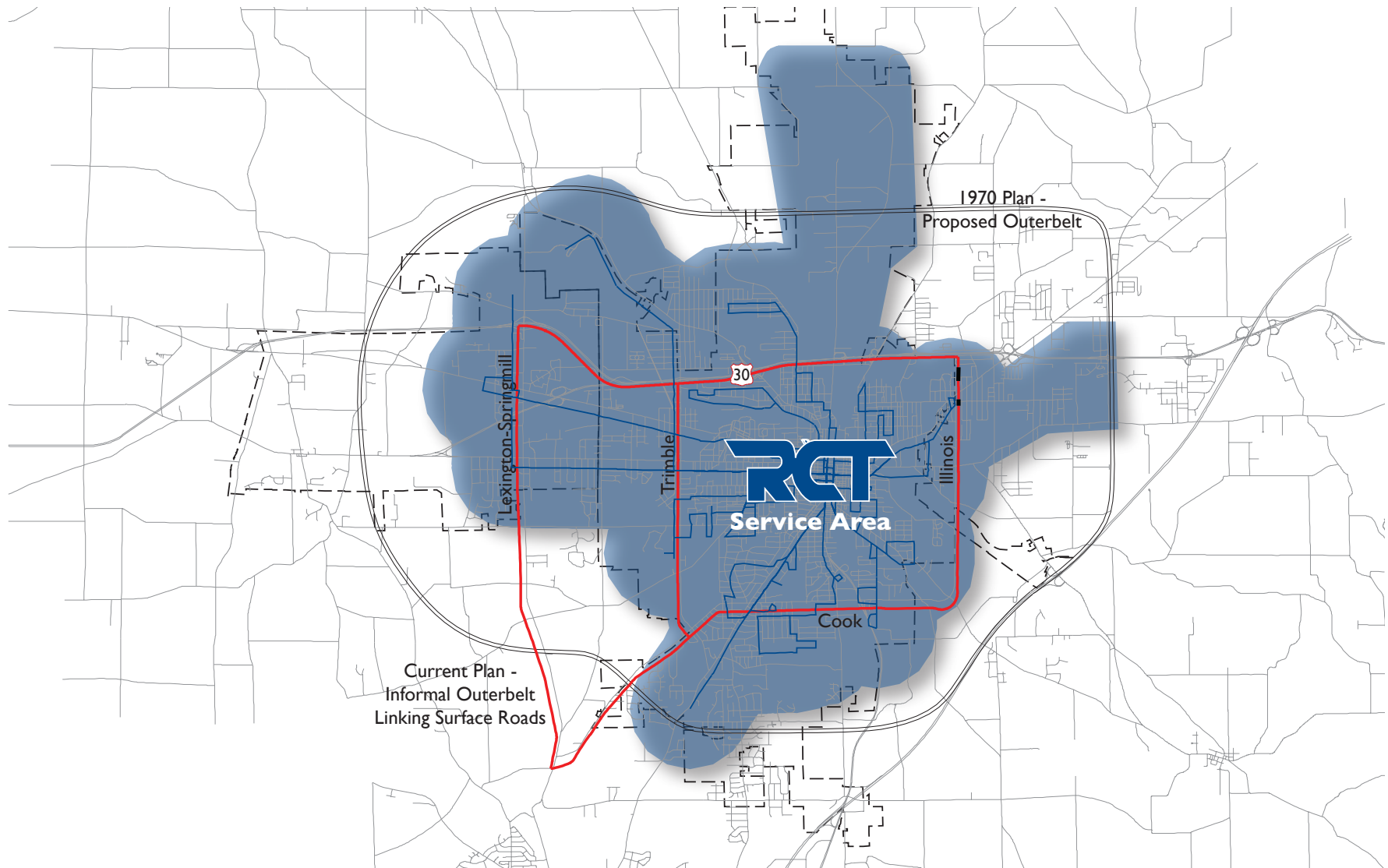
The availability of advanced technology to meet the needs of the economy is now as important as an exit on the Interstate. Public / private cooperation must insure that Richland County is technologically competitive with larger urban areas.

Land use regulations must adapt to change. Distinct divisions between industrial areas and business / office & retail areas must evolve to permit flexible blended planned commercial development districts. Development patterns should be gradients of intensity of use, so that heavy industry with 24 hour operations will be buffered from single family residential by spectrum of progressively less intense uses. The protection is both for the residential area as well as the industry, where the operation needs heavy truck access and machinery and equipment noise is unavoidable. Flexible development regulations will also enhance the redevelopment of downtown areas for mixed commercial and residential use and that “new urban” pattern” may also be appropriate for suburban development areas.

Retail and commercial centers, whether clustered or aligned in a corridor development area should have planned access to reduce congestion and to increase safety. Development clusters at major highway interchanges must be especially careful to manage access.

Urban Transportation Systems

Improving circulation on the existing network & public transit.



Transportation

Regional transportation planning, to be effective, must be multi-modal and be a continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative process. Changing regional growth and development, fluctuating economic conditions, and shifting environmental concerns all impact the need for transportation and the types of improvements required to meet those needs.

The Richland County Regional Planning Commission is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Richland County and has established a process to update and maintain a twenty-five (25) year long range transportation plan. This plan is updated every five years. The MPO continuously monitors the development taking place within the region, and the progress of implementing the goals and recommendations that are adopted in the Long Range Transportation Plan.

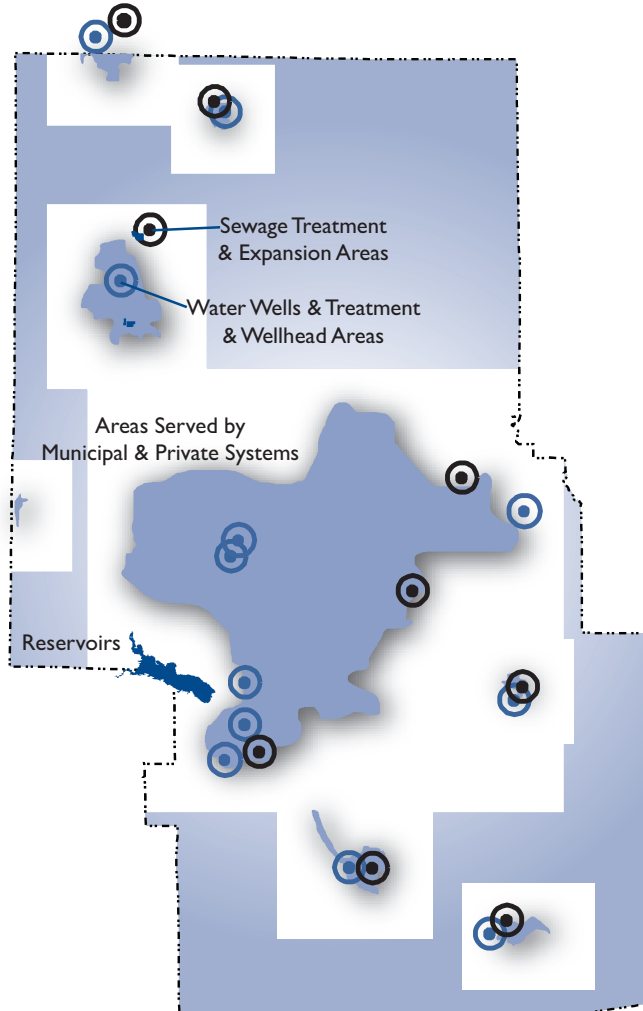
The MPO also works with other agencies to address congestion, system preservation, safety, mass transit, bicycle and pedestrian walkways, enhancements to the transportation system, and transportation for persons who are elderly, disabled, or otherwise disadvantaged. All transportation planning efforts include measures to minimize disproportionately high or adverse effects on human health and/or the environment, including social and economic effects, on minority and low income populations. To this end, extensive public involvement is a major part of the transportation planning process.

A dramatic component of the 1970's Plan was a proposal for a controlled access outerbelt system in a new location to carry traffic around rather than through the congestion of the urban area. While an appropriate concept for a fast growing area, this is no longer planned. An informal outerbelt has been implemented through the years by improving the existing surface roadway network and creating new transportation links. Recent links and improvements have been the Cook Road extension and the Illinois Avenue Railroad Overpass. Most future transportation changes in Richland County will maintain and upgrade the existing network. New bypass roads may be built to relieve heavy commercial traffic and enhance economic development in the Lexington, Shelby, Ontario areas. Additional improvements in the informal outerbelt may also occur.

Public transportation is represented on a comprehensive plan map as a service area. Demand for service will grow as the population ages and the economy evolves. A bus system best serves passengers who can access fixed routes. Fixed routes are only realistic when serving concentrations of people. Residents of the Mansfield metropolitan area and the outlying municipalities will be best able to be served by public transportation.

A \$400 million Investment

Major Facilities Fresh & Waste Water



Mansfield Water Treatment Plant Updated 2005-2006



Infrastructure

Substantial population growth was anticipated in the 1970's Comprehensive Plan, and increasing the water supply and expanding wastewater treatment capacity were the focus of that Plan. Even without the population growth that was projected, many of the Plan's long-range public utility recommendations have been implemented. Central systems have been expanded to serve larger areas, eliminating septic systems and package plants in areas with urban densities. Septic systems are not permitted on small lots and stormwater is being separated from the sewer lines.

The fact that Richland County governments have a \$400 million investment in the water and wastewater utilities dramatically supports the concept that development and redevelopment should be encouraged in existing services areas, or where logical and economical extensions can support growth.

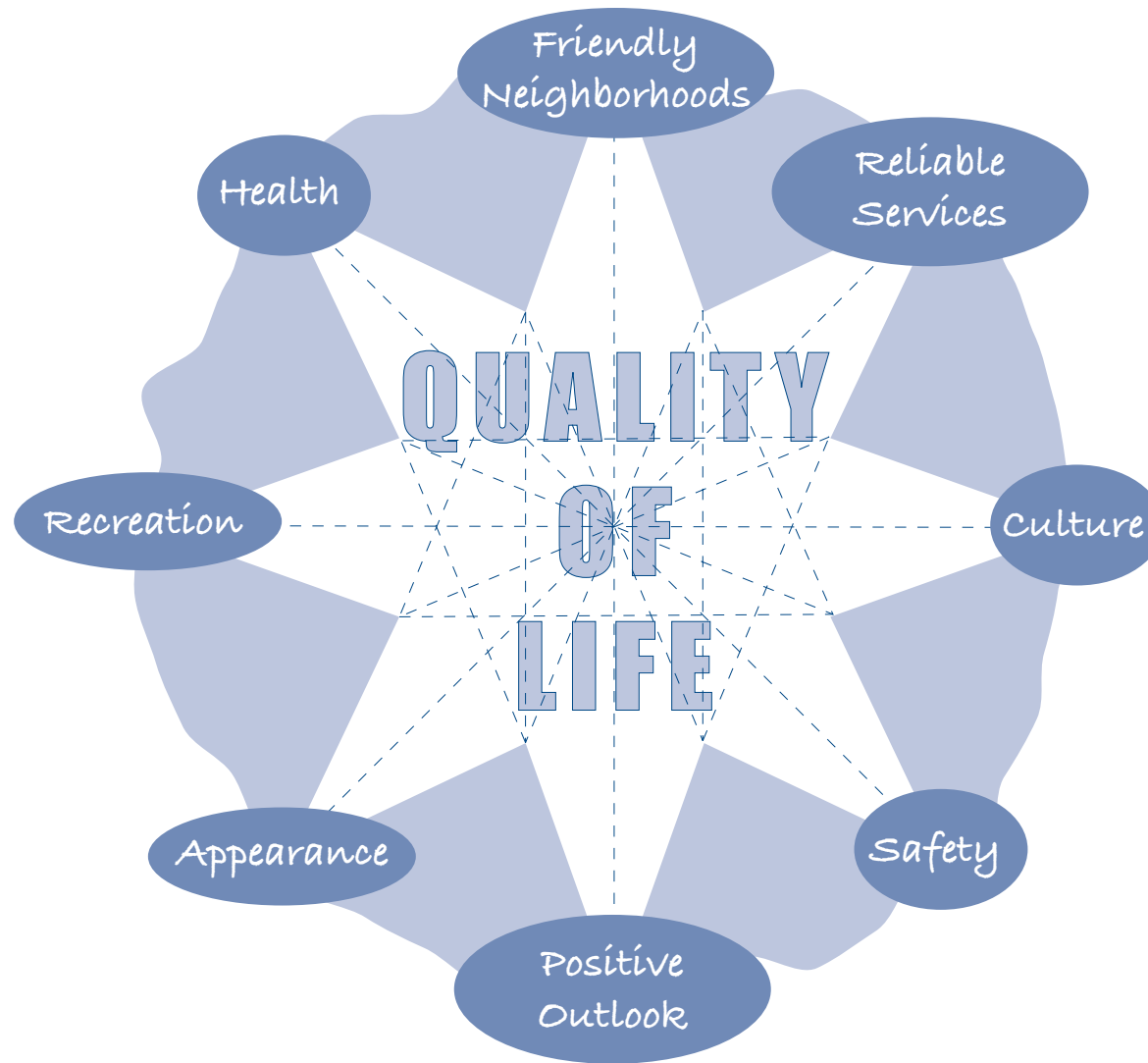
As Richland County is located at the headwaters of several watersheds it can control much of its future clean water needs. Future public policy must protect Richland County's ground water and surface water resources. Since the 1970's the market has expanded for non-farm rural housing sites. This development pattern must be watched over to insure that water wells are protected, and that on-site wastewater treatment is to the highest standards to preserve our clean water. Villages are situated throughout Richland County's rural areas. Decision makers should encourage rural oriented housing developments to cluster around these existing communities to have access to centralized public utility services should they ever be needed. The further a non-farm development is from the potential for central services, the larger the land area associated with a single family housing development should be to insure clean water and wastewater self-sufficiency. Adequate water supply and distribution capacity is also essential for fire protection and public infrastructure is also closely linked to economic development in the County.

Planning for solid waste and stormwater has emerged since the 1970's plans. Specialized planning groups are focusing on these aspects of local infrastructure and both should be addressed for a region that extends beyond Richland County.

Electricity, natural gas and telecommunications providers must be involved in the long range planning for Richland County to insure dependable service, the capacity for growth and service extensions. Private utilities must also insure that they bring to this area the latest technology to serve community needs and to maintain our competitiveness in the world marketplace.

It All Matters

Like our electrical grid, any fault can short-circuit public satisfaction.



Open Space, Recreation and Quality of Life

Parks, open space and recreation facilities can all be physically placed on a map. Quality of Life covers a range of topics interwoven with every aspect of this Plan and these are factors that determine whether or not we are **satisfied** with our community life.

Improving public health led to the creation of plans in the 19th century. Then, the crisis was infectious diseases. Now, the major health challenge is lifestyle. Sedentary Americans suffer from many ailments. Exercise is for many, a separate pursuit, rather than a natural part of the day. Adults rarely walk to work and children walking or biking to school is increasingly rare. Decreasing population density contributes to the trend. People live too far away from where they need to go, making automobiles the only practical option.

Safety impacts our behavior and outlook. Cautious parents drive their children to school. Isolated incidents on trails and in parks help to shape a perception that they may be unsafe. If our recreational assets are not perceived to be safe, they may as well be physically eliminated. Being statistically safe and feeling emotionally safe are absolutely crucial to a good quality of life.

Having everything functional in the Richland County community is absolutely essential. Utilities must work. Services must be efficient and cost effective. Though government carries most of the burden for service delivery, citizens – including property owners and tenants - have responsibilities. Community appearance conveys to outsiders a perception of what the community thinks of itself. It is an intangible part of the quality of life.

Human connections are our lifeblood. The growth of 2-income active family lifestyles along with scattered development patterns has severed many traditional connections particularly among children. Connections are vital to outlook and outlook is vital to meeting challenges. Making our community great requires believing that it is good.

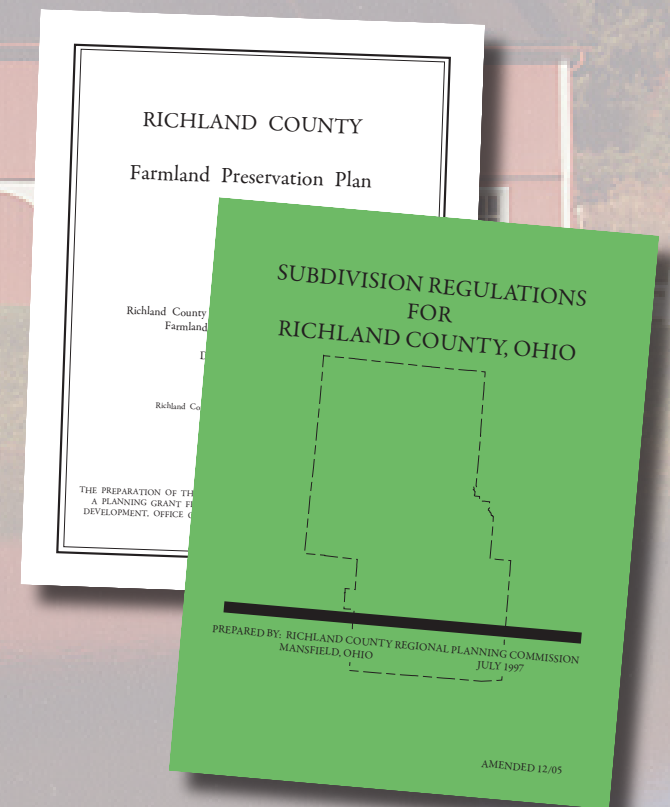
If equally divided, public and private park lands provide each of our citizens with a 37'x37' plot of recreational space. National planning guidelines suggest that our park and recreational assets appear to match our present and future needs, though our use of that space is uneven. Ball fields are heavily used while some older parks seldom see visitors. The B&O Trail - a long, skinny park- is well used while golf courses, also part of the calculation, are often for sale, and could change use. Park and recreation lands in Richland County must be well maintained and decision makers must insure that they are geographically accessible to the population served. Just as the existing infrastructure may make community redevelopment an attractive and economical alternative for housing, those same areas may already be close to appealing neighborhood parks that may also trigger renewed family interest.

The Comprehensive Plan identifies physical and natural features that may lend themselves to parks. The Richland County Parks District and various community park boards, committees and other agencies must continue to methodically work to acquire or protect the County's most environmentally significant or sensitive sites.

Much More Than a Pretty Picture

Census of Agriculture - 2002

Farms (number)	1,086
Land in Farms (acres)	158,653
Average Size of Farm (acres)	146
Median Size of Farm (acres)	83
Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold	\$46,354,000



Farmland Preservation

Little specific mention was made in the 1970's Plan of farmland preservation, a planning focus that has emerged in recent years. Many farm related issues were indirectly covered in the context of our economic shift away from farming and toward industrialization. The old plan discussed how scattered subdivision development in rural areas made utility extensions more difficult. The new plan reestablishes agriculture as an economic base.

Prime agricultural land areas have been identified in Richland County. Northern Richland County is the location for prime grain and livestock farming, while the southern part of the county is identified for forest and livestock. Urban areas are buffered on the prime farmland map, to permit normal community growth, as well as to provide space for development that may be attracted to tie into the community's infrastructure.

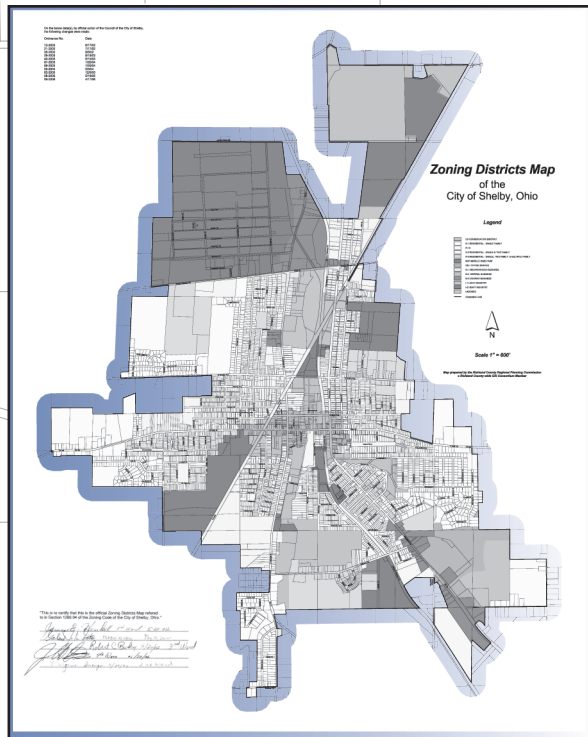
Agriculture is a part of the economy, in the jobs it provides and in the sales of its products. Planning decisions and public policy must not regard farmlands as the blank spaces on the County's map to fill in with other uses. The decisions to build a bypass around a town, or to subdivide road frontage for country home sites may make farming more difficult. Policies can be developed that balance the interests of the farmer with those of the entire County. Extreme approaches will not work in Richland County. A blanket prohibition against any other type of development in prime agricultural areas will deprive the farm "land owner" of the ability to profit from the value in the land. It is also true that the unregulated and unplanned subdivision of road frontage into five-acre lots makes farming more difficult, creates access and safety issues along country roads, changes rainwater run-off and can degrade the pastoral beauty that attracts so many families to the country.

Zoning and subdivision regulations are the primary tools for controlling land use and development patterns in farmland areas. There is inherent balance in zoning in Ohio because agricultural uses are exempt. Zoning can impose limits that restrict non-farm residential development, but that approach needs to be a local decision motivated by a desire to protect farming rather than to enhance up-scale housing prospects. Subdivision regulations may now oversee the creation of lots up to 20 acres. The ability to deal with these large-lot subdivisions in rural areas provides an opportunity for a reasonable, balanced and planned approach.

Preservation of prime agriculture land may also be accomplished with programs to purchase or trade development rights. Development within urbanized areas may be enhanced by negotiating special considerations, such as increasing urban density per acre in return for preserving an area of prime farmland.

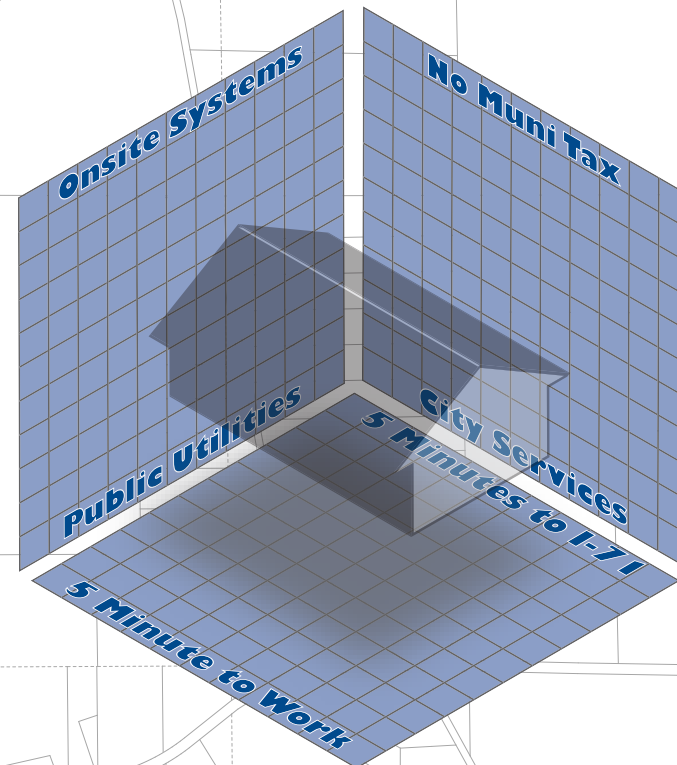
Land Use Tools Change with the Times

Understanding markets will help us guide development.



**On the drawing board,
the world is flat**

**Reality is
more complex**



Land Use Planning & Regulation

Regulation of land uses is a modern concept; but, clear-cut control and regulation of real property transactions dates to Ohio's earliest years. Good land regulation clearly benefits the community and provides protection of private property. The standard of living we enjoy today can be directly traced to early administrative decisions regarding land.

Much of Richland County had already embraced zoning and subdivision regulations by the time the 1970's era comprehensive planning effort was begun. All of the County's municipalities and twelve of eighteen townships first adopted zoning in the 1950's and 1960's. Subdivision regulations were also first enacted in this era.

Subdivision regulations are the most basic local land laws. Their purpose is:

- to promote the proper arrangement of streets
- to provide direct and proper access to parcels
- to provide for open spaces, utilities and access for service and emergency vehicles
- to provide adequate water, drainage, sewer and other sanitary facilities

The hottest land issue in the county may not be so much the use, but the way land is being divided. Residential growth outside municipalities is along rural public roads where frontage is being sold, often in 5 (or greater) acre parcels. The State, responding to the trend, has enabled counties to expand subdivision regulations to cover lots up to 20 acres. Counties have wide latitude in how they exercise these large lot development standards. Richland County will need to find the proper balance between guiding development toward more efficient use of the land, create fewer points of conflict along county and township highways without eliminating the property owners ability to sell land, or a buyer's ability to purchase a suitable piece of land for a price meeting local market standards.

Ninety percent of Richland County residents live in the 22 zoned townships or municipalities. Zoning was intended as a tool for implementing plans. For townships, it also provides a means of dealing with matters which, when uncontrolled, become nuisances. A common example of this is signs. The Regional Planning Commission provides technical assistance and mapping functions in zoning but administration and decision making is local. Though models are followed, zoning regulations vary significantly between jurisdictions.

Market forces, infrastructure and even schools have as much or more impact on land uses as zoning. Improving our capacity to understand the land market will help planners and decision makers to find publicly acceptable levels of regulation to guide development. Planners and local officials must be prepared to help zoning change with the times. Clear-cut distinctions between heavy industry and light manufacturing in 1970 are not always as clear in 2006. Certainly by 2035 there will be more changes in what land uses really are. Flexibility will be important but must be based on a long range vision rather than an impulse.

Drawing the Line Depends Upon the Service Delivered

In the digital age, boundaries are virtual.

Multi-County	Highway Maintenance
	Watersheds
County	Stormwater
	Subdivisions
	Social Services
	Planning
	Emergency Management
Municipalities	Urban Safety Services
	Water
	Sanitary Sewers
	Zoning Administration
Townships	Rural Road Maintenance
	Rural Fire Protection
	Rural Zoning

Daily News

Business to Governments

"Service expected - we don't care about the political framework behind that service."

Regional Innovation

The 1970's Plan identified planning matters that would benefit from expanded regional cooperation. Sewer and water infrastructure cooperation are a monumental example of how regional cooperation has evolved in thirty-five years. Furthermore, cooperation among local governments on issues of common interest has become routine. The Regional Planning Commission includes public officials from across the County. Major transportation improvements and infrastructure projects are prioritized by this group. Clearly each local government leader has a portfolio of needed projects, but the process of cooperation has grown so the regional need becomes as significant a factor in the selection process as is the political geography associated with a project.

Education, technology and public awareness will continue to ease the Richland County community across barriers to regional cooperation through the years of this updated plan. Grassroots elected leadership at the township, municipal and county level must be there to identify matters important at a local level, and then apply 21st century technology, communications and teamwork to respond. Market forces, both local (where the taxpayer wants the best value for their money) and nationally and internationally (where private business expects a government service and does not care the political framework behind that service) may also enhance cooperation.

Community planning must fit the community. Many cutting edge and innovative planning concepts emerge but are not necessarily right for Richland County. Among planning concepts, the following have potential for Richland County in the coming years:

Multi-Modal Transportation Facilities The convergence of highways and railroads in Richland County is enhanced by the presence of a world class airport. These modes can benefit the community's economy and expand the attractiveness for warehousing and distribution enterprises. Public transportation modes may also interconnect in the region if passenger rail returns to fill service gaps.

Regional Water & Wastewater The abundant clean water in Richland County should be nurtured and shared to support existing residential, commercial and industrial users. Planning should also consider how this resource may become a feature which attracts future growth, possibly from other parts of the country that do not have the luxury of abundant clean water.

Layers of geographic data were analyzed to show the most beneficial pattern of development.

[illegible]

Creation of the Map

Modern GIS technology helps us draft the map, so that what once took weeks in 1970 can now be accomplished in hours. Instant comparison of alternative scenarios enables better informed planning and decision making.

At least 25 layers of data have been used to build a map. The data includes natural and physical features, infrastructure, land use patterns, demographics, political and regulatory jurisdictions, as well as other planning calculations such as distances and densities. We considered general categories separately, and then merged them into a final presentation. The finished map, of necessity, indicates priorities. Without making choices, it is practically impossible to develop a map that is understandable to the public and helpful to decision makers. That is why documenting our development process is important. Ultimately, others will repeat the process and draw their own conclusions.

The map foundation is the original Comprehensive Plan map presented in 1971 and updated in 1975. The map also draws on the long range transportation map, the farmland preservation map and a wide variety of other studies completed through the years. The farmland map is significant because that planning effort in the late 1990's triggered the Comprehensive Plan update. The farmland preservation map is also important because, as noted elsewhere, the farm areas are not just blank spots on the map to be filled in by other uses.

To draft the map, we also drew a boundary around existing municipal utilities service areas and assumed that they could be extended one mile. Developed land outside this extension was considered transitional.

Major parks and sensitive natural sites were mapped. Expansion or possible conflicts require that they be noted. Critical infrastructure in the context of our guide map, are wellheads, treatment plants, landfills, hospitals and institutions. Our future depends on the ability of these assets to operate efficiently and grow without geographic restriction.

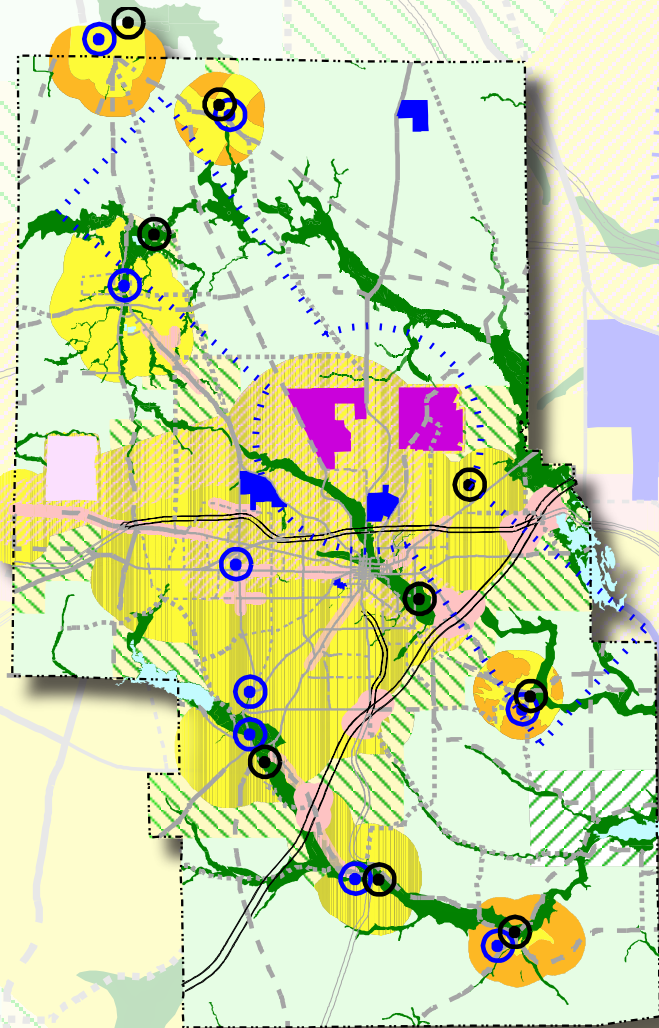
Priority was assigned to ground water recharge areas where the potential for pollutant infiltration is high. Equally important are areas of high ground water production. Flood zones present obstacles to development. Our guide map merges the areas where water is important as a resource or as a hazard.

We enjoy strong advantages in transportation. Of particular importance is land adjacent to both 4-lane highways and rail service. Modern industries demand the intermodal options found there. Maintaining an industrial component in our economy is important for our future prosperity and stability. Our map delineates these prime industrial areas.

While our guide map does **not** reserve areas for particular uses, the intent is to clearly communicate a pattern of development that would offer the most benefit to the public health, safety and general welfare.

Guiding Development

The guidance map can only become a comprehensive plan map after significant public involvement. Planners do not know everything, and plans are not based totally on technical factors. The Plan has benefited from comments by the Task Force and other community groups. Local government leaders, who have had opportunities to participate throughout the process, may then take this big picture and focus it on their city, village or township as a guide for development, as a master plan, and as a foundation for a land use and zoning map.



- Intermodal Opportunity
- Possible Large Industrial Sites with Existing Service
- Possible Large Industrial Sites Contingent on Service
- Magnet
- Urbanized
- Airport Restrictions Zone
- Policy Assets
- Sewage Treatment Expansion
- Water Treatment Expansion
- Farmland/Forest/Rural
- Conflict Corridors
- Pollution/Flood/Ground Water Protection
- Transition Zone
- Malabar/Mohican Transition

Conclusions

By the year 2035 the Region's population is projected to reach 132,000. The population of Richland County has been stable, and has varied little since the completion of the 1970's Comprehensive Plan. The constant population count does not mean change will not occur. Housing patterns will continue to transform, as households relocate within the County and as the demographics of the households continue to evolve as individuals live longer and family composition changes. Development will also reflect the County's continued growth as a regional retail and service center. It is anticipated that regional health care services will continue to drive development. Unanticipated technology advances may also affect development patterns. Manufacturing has changed and will continue to evolve. The once clear definition of heavy industry and light industry will not as be obvious, but the Region's access to multiple modes of transportation will support our old economy as it evolves as well as the new growing sectors.

Deciding the future of the County means "planning" soundly and effectively for what its future should be. A map to guide decisions for the future has been drafted. It proposes that future development be encouraged within and adjacent to the Mansfield and Shelby urban area and also in magnet areas surrounding the County's smaller municipalities. In these areas, opportunities exist for the economical provision and logical extension of public services to accommodate growth and development. The map also identifies general areas where land may be best suited to accommodate large economic development projects to take advantage of the transportation and utility infrastructure already in place. Location decisions concerning rural development must not only consider where people wish to live but how development relates to farming, to protecting natural areas and natural resources such as clean water, and to the safe use of the road network.

The map also identifies developed areas where there are land use conflicts that will need to be resolved in the future. Residential neighborhoods have seen business corridors grow along busy thoroughfares. The suitability of localized areas for redevelopment and / or an evaluation of the need to preserve the existing character will be decisions that can be guided by good data, information and hopefully from an understanding of the big picture presented in this Plan.

Determining a physical plan for the Region for the future depends on an understanding of many complex and interrelated elements of the community. This Plan can build on the "Vision" already accepted for our future. The vision statement provides a framework for planning. It states:

The people of Richland County are working towards a future where everyone can live in safety, get a quality education and a good job, and where our youth will want to live today and tomorrow.



Another non-physical aspect of the Plan is regional cooperation. This cooperation will hopefully be aided by an understanding of the county-wide / region wide picture that is this Plan.

Strategies and Recommendations

The following strategies and recommendations have been drawn from the Plan preparation process. Presented in six categories, there are many common threads among items. This section carries forward the approach of unifying implementation strategies with comprehensive goals.

What do we want to Promote?

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What do we want to Protect?

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What do we want to Prevent?

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I. Land Use Regulations:

Reasonable, effective and up-to-date land use regulations should serve as a primary local tool to implement the Comprehensive Plan. Zoning regulations which govern how the land is to be used are established and administered at the municipal and township level. Subdivision regulations which regulate land parcels are the responsibility of municipalities and the County for unincorporated areas.

ID	Strategy	Recommendation
I-A	Promote	Continue to work with the five un-zoned townships to develop a zoning document and map that is suitable and appropriate to their individual needs.
I-B	Promote	Provide ongoing technical assistance to zoned municipalities and townships to up date existing zoning in response to local changes as well as to regional and national trends.
I-C	Promote	Flexibility within zoning regulations can enhance good planning. Once firm delineations between uses can be softened to blend compatible uses such as mixed industrial and commercial or residential associated with business and retail.
I-D	Promote	Subdivision regulations should be updated to cover large-lot developments and to insure a balance between good planning and property owners' rights.
I-E	Prevent	Land use regulations must consider the impact of development on ground water, stormwater runoff, flood plains and other natural features. Development must not degrade clean water.

II. Infrastructure:

Planning should support and sustain the public investment that has provided an infrastructure network that ensures clean water and effective wastewater treatment.

ID	Strategy	Recommendation
II-A	Protect	Clean water is abundant in Richland County. Planning should always give high priority to evaluating potential impacts on streams, rivers and groundwater.
II-B	Promote	Redevelopment of land within areas already served by community water and waste water facilities can be an advantage to both public and private interests.
II-C	Promote	Development on the fringes of existing infrastructure service areas makes planning sense. Service can be immediately extended or can be offered in the future if needed.
II-D	Prevent	Development that is not sensitive to environmental circumstances and conditions should be discouraged. For example, best development practices should apply to redevelopment of industrial corridors in flood plain areas. Consideration of well head protection, stream quality and stormwater runoff should be universal in any development plan. Agricultural runoff that could impact clean water should not be exempt.

III. Transportation:

Richland County's transportation network and its central location are a remarkable asset. Planning should continue to build on the foundation of roads railroads and airports that already provide outstanding access to the Region and support all things that make the County work.

ID	Strategy	Recommendation
III-A	Protect	The existing system should be maintained and upgraded to insure user safety, convenience and efficiency. Homes and business enterprises should have access to the system that is safe, economical and efficient.
III-B	Promote	Economic development projects should be identified that can take advantage of the proximity to major transportation assets and the interrelationship of the various modes of transportation.
III-C	Promote	Creative and economical transportation solutions should be identified. For example, growing traffic needs are being addressed by creating a mini-outerbelt by enhancing the existing basic road network.
III-D	Prevent	The primary use of roads to carry vehicle traffic should not be compromised for private business and development purposes. Traffic flow and safety considerations should be top priority. Cooperative planning can result in private improvements that complement the public transportation network and public investments that enhance private development goals.
III-E	Promote	Development patterns that facilitate expanding public transportation to meet future needs in the community should be considered.

IV. Economic Development:

Development sites, with appropriate infrastructure and transportation access must be available. The development sites should be available in a range of sizes to meet diverse needs, and also in a variety of use types, covering manufacturing, warehouse & distribution, office/service and retail. Redevelopment sites and buildings should be available as an attractive alternative to new, previously unused sites.

ID	Strategy	Recommendation
IV-A	Promote	Fully serviced industrial sites and industrial parks should be available to provide choices for business expansion.
IV-B	Promote	Potential large scale development sites should be identified.
IV-C	Promote	Business and office sites and parks should be available to provide choices for business expansion.
IV-D	Promote	Vacant industrial and commercial sites and buildings should be redeveloped to provide choices for development and to restore economic vitality to deteriorating areas.
IV-E	Protect	Public infrastructure (sewer, water, stormwater) should be developed and maintained to serve the needs of existing and future business and industry.
IV-F	Protect	Private infrastructure (electric, gas, telecommunications) should be developed and maintained to serve the needs of existing and future business and industry.
IV-G	Promote	Private infrastructure (electric, gas, telecommunications) must, in a very timely fashion, provide this region with the same technological advances as are offered elsewhere.
IV-H	Protect	The transportation network (road, bridge, bus, rail & airport) should be developed and maintained to serve the needs of existing and future business and industry.
IV-I	Promote	Land use regulations must become increasingly flexible to accommodate to the changing nature of business and industry.
IV-J	Prevent	The Region should not forego the fundamental zoning principles that separate potentially incompatible uses. A blending of residential and retail business may work, but residential uses and industrial production are likely to be incompatible.
IV-K	Prevent	Agriculture is an important part of the Region's economy, and efforts should be made to protect prime farmland from unplanned intrusions that disrupt the ability to farm.

V. Housing:

A variety of residential densities and housing types should be available throughout different parts of the Region.

ID	Strategy	Recommendation
V-A	Protect	Existing residential areas should be maintained and protected from the incursion of incompatible uses.
V-B	Promote	Revitalization and redevelopment of neighborhoods will take advantage of existing infrastructure networks and other public investments and will generally offer more affordable housing choices.
V-C	Promote	Planned rural housing development standards should be considered that will encourage the logical subdivision of parcels, promote a common sense approach to road safety and water runoff, and will anticipate future possible environmental constraints to development, such as stronger on-site sewage treatment standards.

VI. Community Quality of Life:

Richland County public and private policy decisions should reaffirm those things which have already created a well regarded quality of life for all demographic sectors in the community. The policy decisions should also look for ways to enhance the quality of life, and to improve the lives of the “people” - who are ultimately the most important component of Richland County future.

ID	Strategy	Recommendation
VI-A	Protect	Natural areas should be considered in all planning decision, both to protect them from consequences associated with development as well as to preserve them for the use and enjoyment and their enhancement to the quality of life.
VI-B	Promote	Individuals must have pride in their property, in their neighborhood, and in the community. The personal care and attention they give to the community this year may guide this area’s future more than all the enlightened and well informed decisions that are made over the next 25 years.
VI-C	Prevent	Short range public and private development decisions should not be made without considering all aspects of the proposal - ideally balancing existing and proposed land uses, economic impacts, public costs for improvements, and potential precedents.
VI-D	Promote	The community should plan for parks of the quality, quantity and location to serve the region’s needs. The use of parks and recreation facility can improve the community’s health and well-being and healthy planning can also be incorporated into community development in the future, with sidewalks, paths and trails connecting residential area, neighborhood shopping areas, and other community features.
VI-E	Promote	It would be beneficial for decision makers to have a vision for the future. Not all visions need to be precisely the same as the Richland County “Vision,” but there is a need for a big picture framework help guide public policy to the year 2035.

The Richland County Regional Planning Commission

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Richland County Regional Planning Commission