
As recommended by
The Oberlin Plan Steering Committee
8 June 2004

and by
The Oberlin City Planning Commission
5 October 2004

Approved by Oberlin City Council
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City of Oberlin, Ohio
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The City of Oberlin benefits from residents who continuously contribute their time and talents for the good of the community.

Many residents participated in preparing this plan update by serving as members of the Steering Committee, by participating in public forums, and by contributing their questions and ideas.

We are thankful for all who participated in this important project.

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OVERVIEW

- **Preparing for the Future**
- **Past and Current Plans**
- **Setting Directions: Goals for the 2004 Plan Update**

Preparing for the Future

The 2004 Plan Update

This Plan Update for the City of Oberlin was set in motion in 2002 by City Council, the Planning Commission, and City Staff. The City's leaders recognized the need to move forward with the City's planning program and determined to undertake this update, building upon the past and current plans.

Responding to Council's request for participants, a group of twenty-four Oberlin residents (including several members of City Council and the Planning Commission) were selected to serve on the Plan Steering Committee. The Steering Committee met nearly monthly from September 2002 through May 2004. These residents spent many hours studying, discussing, debating, reviewing, and shaping this Plan Update. They poured their hopes and dreams for the Oberlin community into the work of preparing this Plan.

The planning process has been supported by the professional talents of the City's Staff and by the planning consulting firm Northstar Planning and Design.

As documented in the following pages, Oberlin has a long history of planning for its future. Planning should be – and is, in Oberlin – a continuous, renewing process through which the community prepares for, shapes, and responds to changing trends and conditions. This Plan Update again moves Oberlin's

planning process forward to address the opportunities and issues of the current and projected environment.

Building the Future of a Very Special Place

Throughout the process of preparing this Plan Update, residents have unabashedly expressed their love for Oberlin. Many spoke of the architectural and historic resources, the small-town feel, the friendliness of residents, the downtown, the cultural opportunities, the importance of the College, and other features. Few were shy about identifying the community's problems, but critical remarks were almost always prefaced with "Don't get me wrong, I really love it here, but we need to work on.....".

The affection which Oberlin residents feel for this community is infectious. Oberlin is known nationally and internationally and continues to attract visitors from many places. Oberlin students often have difficulty making the break from their adopted home community after graduation, but many go into the world and encourage others to visit and study here.

A challenge for this Plan Update is to address the basic land use and infrastructure needs of this community while protecting and enhancing those elements of character which Oberlin's people value. It is expected that effective planning for the form and structure of the community will create an even better environment for enjoying and enhancing that character.

Oberlin is now in a time when the outside world is knocking more urgently at its door. This area of Lorain County is experiencing residential and commercial growth. Traffic and environmental impacts are increasing. The visual environment is changing. It is becoming an ever greater challenge to preserve while moving forward in this changing milieu.

A Summary of the Plan Update

This Plan Update makes recommendations for the future pattern of land use, streets, public utilities, open space, and other features of the Oberlin community. Emphasis is given to preserving and infilling areas already developed, while recognizing that the community must provide a greater variety of housing and commerce by building in carefully planned new areas.

It is expected that the City will grow toward the south, along the SR 58 corridor, and to the southeast and east toward the US 20 limited access highway. New areas of commercial and industrial development are planned in the southeast area where both the City and Pittsfield Township will benefit from new tax revenues under their joint revenue sharing agreement.

Street extensions are planned to create a more intentional and functional system for both local traffic and regional through traffic. At the local scale, these street patterns complete the historic grid on which the City was established, help to interconnect neighborhoods, and encourage sustainable methods of transportation such as walking and biking. The planned pattern of development will also facilitate efficient planning and extension of public utilities.

This document concludes with an Implementation program which sets forth the tasks which the community must undertake in the short-term in order to move these recommendations into action.



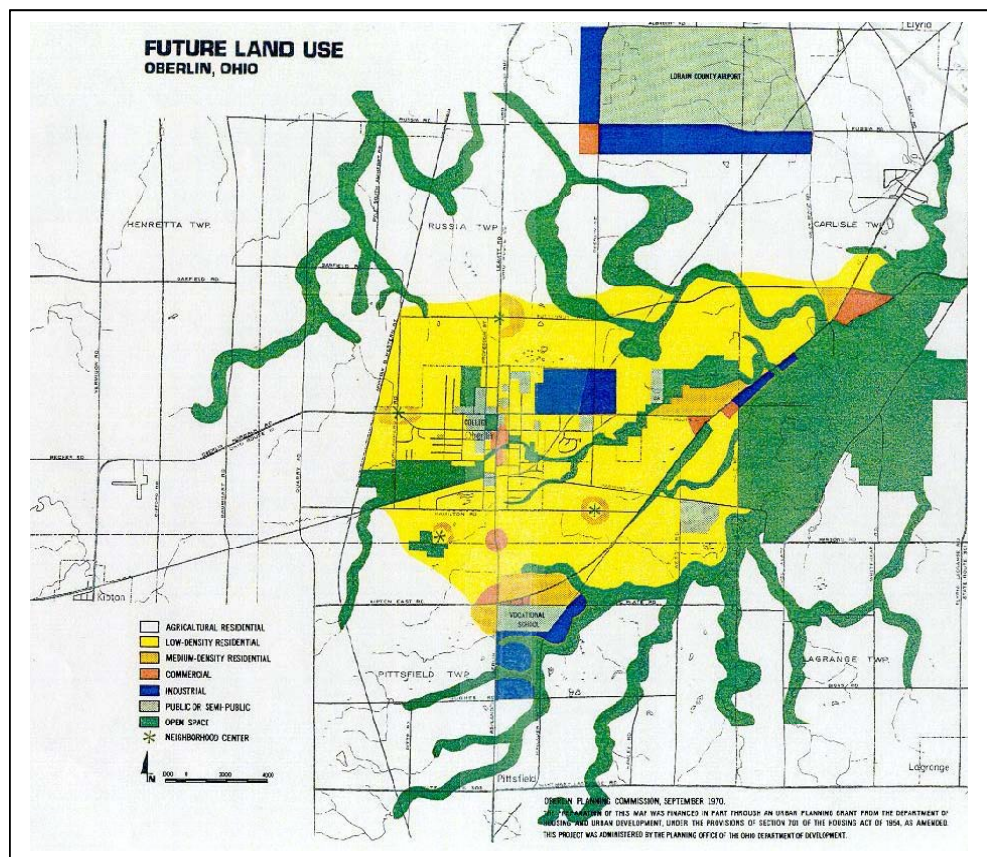
Past and Current Plans

The City of Oberlin has prepared several plans in past decades, reflecting the conditions of their times and establishing objectives for the community's future. This current planning effort builds upon and updates those prior plans.

Plan for Oberlin, 1970

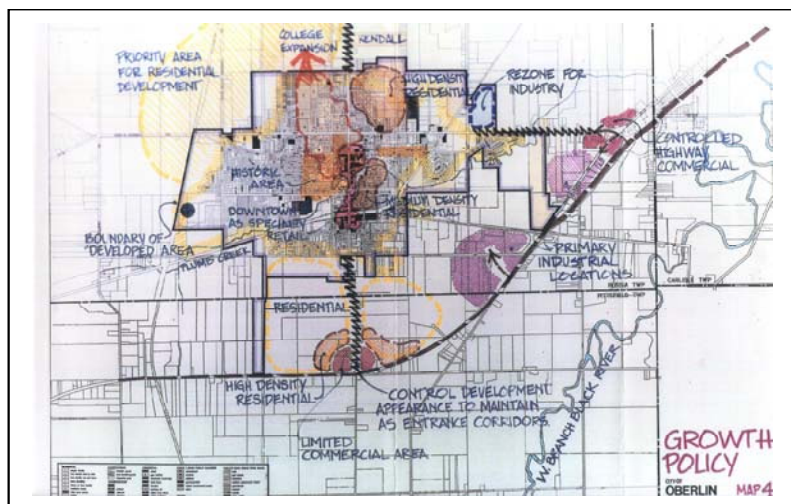
The Plan for Oberlin (1970) planned future land use in and around the City, anticipating residential expansion in all directions. The 1970 Plan projected a population of 13,229 persons by 1985, based in part on observation of growth trends in the 1950's and 1960's. As will be seen in the population data in this document, these trends faltered as population declined into the 1990's and population counts never exceeded about 8,800 persons. It is of interest to note that the 1970 Plan proposed the growth of several sizable commercial areas at the outer edges of the city, accompanied by "medium density" residential areas.

*Plan for
Oberlin, 1970*



Mid-Range Strategic Plan, 1991

The most recent city-wide plan for Oberlin was the Mid-Range Strategic Plan of 1991. This Plan involved several committees of citizens and public officials addressing issues such as neighborhood maintenance and housing development, pedestrian facilities, finances, education, downtown, recreation, and economic development. The 1991 Plan established numerous objectives, many of which have been accomplished in the past decade. A generalized “Growth Policy”, reprinted below, established several targets for future land uses.



1991 Mid-Range
Strategic Plan

1977 Open Space Plan

The most comprehensive open space and recreation plan for the area was prepared in 1977. An Open Space Heritage: Conservation of Open Space in Oberlin and Surrounding Area projected open space needs and identified suitable natural areas in and around the City.



1977
Open Space Plan

Downtown Plans

Downtown Oberlin has been the subject of several studies. The Downtown Oberlin Improvement Plan (1981) focused on physical improvements such as façade restoration, street furnishings, signs, lighting, and landscaping.

Current studies address similar issues, but with greater attention given to market position and commercial district organization. The Marketing Strategy for Downtown Oberlin (1998) and the Comprehensive Market Study Phase I (2002) evaluated the position of downtown in the market, including competitive strengths and weaknesses. The Downtown Revitalization Plan (2002) was prepared in support of an application for revitalization grant funds which were awarded to Oberlin in 2003. The City and merchants organizations continue to plan and implement improvements in this core area.

Oberlin Trail Plan

The Oberlin Historical and Improvement Organization (O.H.I.O.) prepared the Oberlin Trail Plan in 1997. Key features of this plan are the proposed Heritage Trail in the historic core of the city and three bicycle loop routes. *(These routes are included in the bike path system proposed in this document. See page 43.)*

Lorain County Plans

Although not specific to development planning within the City, recent plans prepared by Lorain County identify trends which clearly will impact Oberlin and its surrounds. The Lorain County Comprehensive Plan (2000) and the Lorain County Multi-Modal Transportation Plan (2002) project continued suburban growth spreading southward through the County around and beyond Oberlin. It is apparent that these trends, and the impacts and projects which may attend them, will affect the character, quality of life, and markets of Oberlin.

Township Plans

Both townships surrounding Oberlin have recently prepared plans. The New Russia Township Land Use Plan (2001) proposed a park south of Butternut Ridge from SR 58 to Oberlin Road along the north edge of Oberlin. Land for this park has been acquired and construction of improvements is underway. The Plan also proposes light industrial uses on the north side of East Lorain from Oberlin Road to the US 20 interchange. Much of the area north of the City is proposed for farmland preservation, although spots of commercial use line the SR 58 frontages.

The Pittsfield Township Comprehensive Land Use Plan (2002) emphasizes farmland preservation and development of the SR 58 corridor area north of US 20. Development in this area is subject to a negotiated agreement with the City of Oberlin and has been the focus of the State Route 58 Corridor Plan (2001). The acceptable form of development in the corridor area and the provisions of the tax sharing agreement have been the subject of protracted discussions between the communities.

Setting Directions: Goals for the 2004 Plan Update

The following are the principal goals shaping this Plan Update.

Community Character

- Preserve the character of Oberlin as a small urban community in the midst of a rural setting.
- Preserve and enhance Oberlin's unique historic and architectural features.
- Promote and build upon Oberlin's special arts and cultural resources.
- Build new elements of community character.

Planning and Development

- Infill and redevelopment are priorities.
- In all development, respect the function, character and capacities of natural resources.
- Mitigate development impacts through careful and creative planning, design, and construction.
- Require a high quality of site and building design.
- Design new development areas to fit with existing areas and the city-wide development plan.
- Guide public and private investment, code enforcement, and zoning amendments with the elements of this [Plan Update](#).
- The City of Oberlin and Oberlin College must plan together.
- The Oberlin, Pittsfield Township, and New Russia Township communities must plan together.

Residential Areas

- Maintain and improve existing homes.
- Provide amenities such as open space, access to schools and parks, and access to city-wide pedestrian and bike facilities for all existing and new neighborhoods.

Commercial Areas

- Strengthen the role of downtown Oberlin as the functional and symbolic core of the community.
- Plan new commercial areas in focused, accessible locations. Avoid unplanned commercial strips and piecemeal commercial zoning amendments.

Industrial Areas

- Attract light industry and compatible uses to create jobs and diversify the tax base.
- Plan one or more new industrial parks.

Recreation and Open Space

- Ensure access for all residents to parks, schools, and other public uses and areas.
- Preserve natural areas such as the Plum Creek watershed for the purposes of preserving natural environmental functions and for recreation and bike/walkways.
- Create connecting corridors between natural areas to support wildlife habitat and movement.
- Preserve and create open spaces throughout the community.

Economic Development

- Develop a diverse and stable tax base.
- Create employment at all income and skill levels and in diverse market segments.
- Promote local production of basic goods and services such as food and energy supplies.

Movement and Transportation

- Build a complete and functional road system for efficient access and movement around and through the community.
- Build neighborhood road systems which provide trip flexibility for residents, discourage through traffic, and improve connections between neighborhoods. Complete the street systems in existing neighborhoods.
- Expand the historic grid street pattern for development consistent in character with the existing and to promote effective wayfinding.
- Build pedestrian and bike systems linking key public areas within Oberlin. Encourage walking and biking as alternatives to local automobile trips.
- Reduce dependence on auto commuting for jobs and other trips.

Infrastructure: Water, Sanitary Sewer, Drainage, Electric

- Serve all properties efficiently, safely, and cost-effectively.
- Utilize municipal infrastructure as an economic development resource.

Becoming a Sustainable Community:

People in Society + Economy + Environment

An over-riding and pervasive goal of this Plan Update is the desire to make Oberlin a sustainable community.

Sustainability is becoming a more common theme in community planning practice. Many communities are exploring the concepts and devising workable practices of sustainability.

Many of the goals and specific strategies of this Plan Update will contribute to making Oberlin a more sustainable place. It may also be argued that some of the goals and elements in this Plan Update do not contribute to sustainability and may, in fact, conflict with one or another perspective on sustainability.

Such is the environment within which this Plan Update has been forged. It is expected that debate over the most sustainable practices for Oberlin will continue. The debate must be encouraged. In this way, the community will continue to learn to be more sustainable and may devise sustainable practices which benefit other communities as well.

This Plan Update is focused on planning for land use and supportive infrastructure. In this regard, it is not as all-encompassing as the broad scope of sustainability which includes issues of political process and social justice. While it is hoped that this Plan Update does not seriously conflict with social welfare needs, those needs must be addressed in another forum.

The goals and strategies of this Plan Update which most clearly support a sustainable future include:

- Planning for interconnected streets.
- Planning for expanded walking and biking facilities.
- Promoting infill development and redevelopment of existing structures.
- Planning for preservation of natural areas, including waterways and habitat.
- Planning for efficient infrastructure extension.

Oberlin Today: **BACKGROUND & ANALYSES**

- **Regional Perspectives**
- **Population and Housing**
- **Economics**
- **Environmental Features**
- **Existing Land Use and Development**
- **Transportation and Movement**
- **Utilities**

Regional Perspectives

Oberlin is located in northern Ohio, approximately 10 miles south of Lake Erie. The nearest large cities are Elyria (4.5 miles to the northeast), Lorain (8 miles to the north) and Cleveland (25 miles northeast). Oberlin is surrounded by rural and semi-rural townships. To the north, these townships separate the community from the cluster of municipalities covering northern Lorain County.

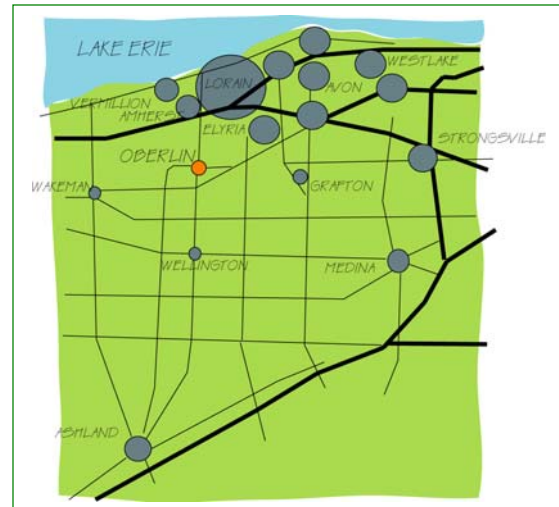
While physically distinct, Oberlin is connected to its surrounds. State highways provide easy access to the interstate highway system and to work, education, shopping, and entertainment opportunities in the region.

The community serves central and southern Lorain County residents as a source of goods, services, educational and entertainment activities. While some elements of the old “central town in the country” role remain, the role has also changed due to the expanded regional highway system, the sprawl of shopping areas, and other developments.

Oberlin’s regional identity is dominated by the presence of Oberlin College, a nationally known liberal arts college. Less well known, but important to the region, is the FAA Regional Air Traffic Control Facility.

The City's urban character and density, the presence of Oberlin College, commercial core, public facilities, municipal services and municipal utilities have made it the preferred location for uses and facilities which are needed by - but often not suitable in - the surrounding rural areas. These uses include multifamily housing, senior facilities, a public library, post office, worship facilities, and educational facilities such as the Joint Vocational School (JVS).

Suburbanization trends, particularly the spread of rural housing and the growth of competing utility providers (e.g., water, sewer, and electric), have challenged and diluted Oberlin's "central town" role. This situation is typical of many small communities which face the impacts of regional sprawl and changing markets.



Oberlin has had the traditional location characteristics of a freestanding community in the midst of a rural hinterland

Population and Housing

Trends

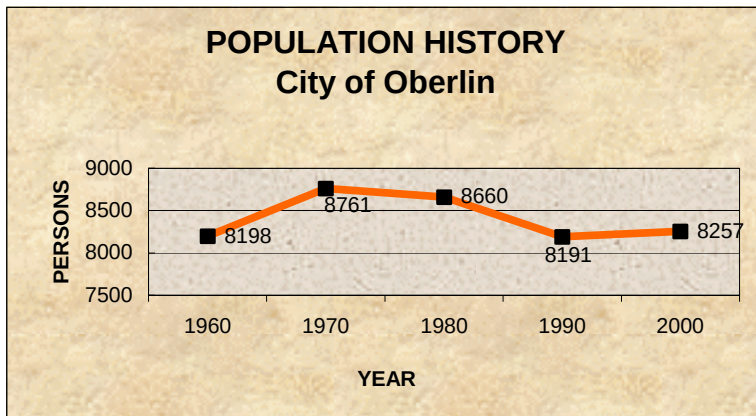
Oberlin's population peaked at a level of about 8,700 persons in the 1970's and 1980's and then declined to about 8,300 by the year 2000, roughly the same population as in 1960. The 2000 Census recorded the population as 8,257 persons, an increase of only 0.8% since 1990.

The population of Lorain County (of which Oberlin is a part) has increased by 31% since 1960. From 1990 to 2000, the County population increased by 5%.

The populations of communities near Oberlin generally increased from 1990-2000. The increases in some villages were due in part to annexations, but several areas to the east and south of Oberlin, notably Lagrange Village and Township, Grafton Township, Penfield Township, and Wellington Village and Township, experienced significant increases due to new housing construction.

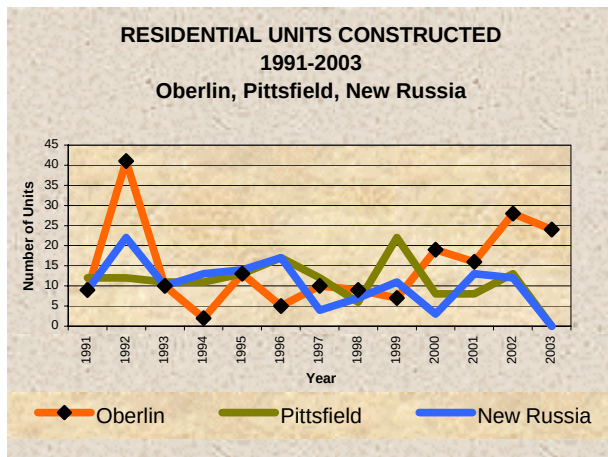
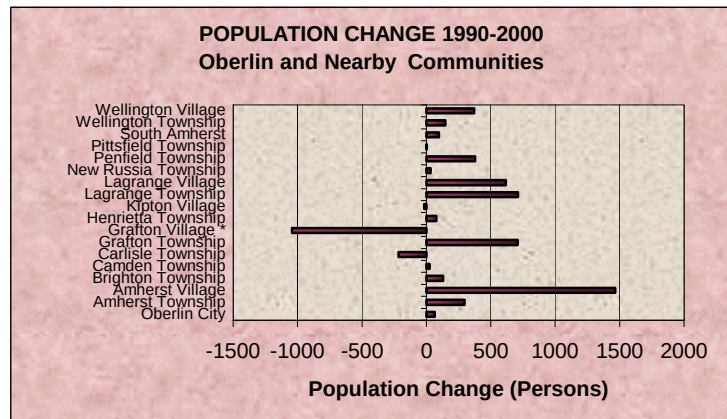
The Census reports that from 1990 to 2000, Oberlin's housing stock grew to 2,688 units, an increase of 256 units or 9.9%. This trend is comparable to several surrounding communities with the exception of the much larger increase in Lagrange Township.

In the past four years, Oberlin's new housing construction has averaged 22 units per year. An increasing rate of construction can be seen in the chart on the next page. Given that many of these units are new single-family homes in new subdivisions (and may be attractive to "family-forming" households), this construction trend may portend population increases.



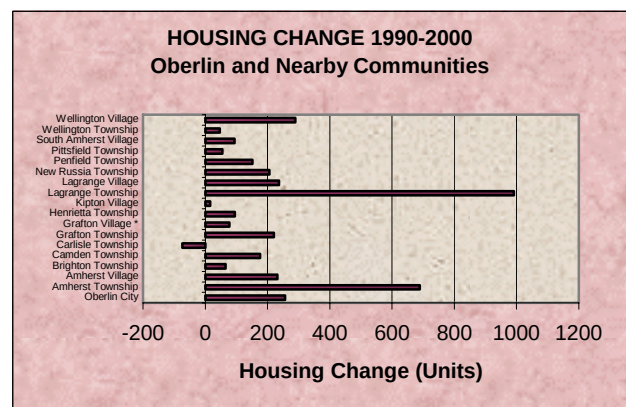
After peaking in the 1970's and 1980's, Oberlin's population has returned to a level nearly the same as in 1960...

The populations of communities near Oberlin generally increased from 1990-2000.



Housing construction in Oberlin shows an increasing trend since 1999

Housing growth in Oberlin was similar to most other nearby communities



During the past decade, the volume of population growth has not been as great as the volume of housing growth. This is believed to be the result of several factors:

- Oberlin has high proportions of college-aged and elderly persons, categories which generally do not contribute to increasing household size via births
- Many new housing units of the past decade have been new senior housing units
- Many of the new homes in the rural areas appear to be attracting young families
- Trends toward decreased household size, nationally and locally, have resulted in decreasing population counts within existing housing

Projections

Projecting future population and housing demand is an important step in updating this Plan. The projections are the basis for anticipated growth in housing, service demands, and other future needs of the community.

Projecting population and housing is difficult for small communities, but reasonable assumptions and judgments can be used in lieu of the more complex mathematical models applicable to larger communities and regions. The paragraphs below describe several sets of assumptions and judgments yielding alternate projections for future population and housing in Oberlin. These are illustrated on the graph on the next page.

All of the draft projections anticipate some level of population growth. Growth is deemed likely because: (1) the population decline of the 1980's appears to have leveled off and slightly reversed in the 1990's; (2) population growth has continued in the areas surrounding Oberlin; (3) the Lorain County Comprehensive Plan projects continued population growth in these areas as residential development spreads south and west from Cleveland and northern Lorain County; and (4) housing construction increased in Oberlin in the past four years.

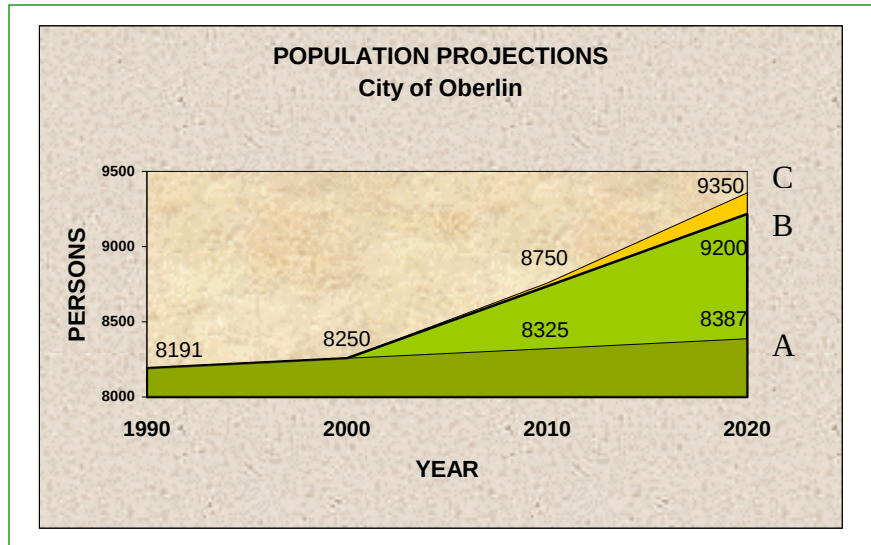
Draft Projection A: This projection makes the assumption that the population trend of the past decade will extend into the future decades (an increase of approximately 65 persons per decade). This projection is deemed low and unlikely given that housing development is projected to increase in this area of Lorain County, and given that actual construction within the City has increased in the past four years.

Draft Projection B:

This projection extends the recent (2000-2002) housing construction trend (21 units per year) and assumes that each new unit brings a population increase of 2.3 persons. Given these assumptions, Oberlin's population would increase by 48 persons per year or 480 persons per decade.

Draft Projection C:

This projection reflects both the increased housing activity of Projection B and the potential that the City and development interests will accelerate efforts to promote new housing construction in both infill areas and new subdivisions. Even a modest 2% annual increase in the volume of housing construction would (again at 2.3 persons per new household) increase the population by 500 persons in the decade 2000-2010 and by 610 persons from 2010-2020.



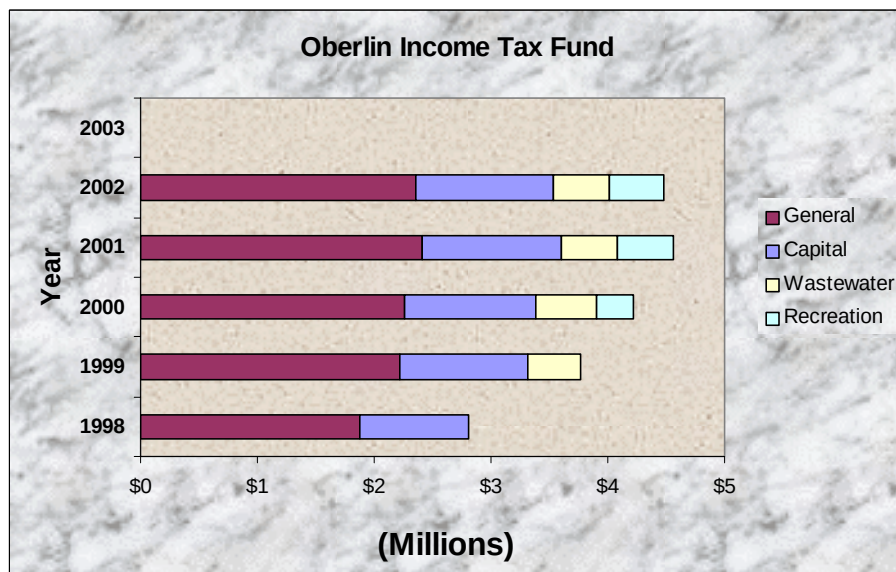
Draft projections B and C are judged to be reasonable estimates of the future housing and population growth. For the purposes of this Plan Update, therefore, a projected annual increase of approximately 50 persons and 22 new households will be anticipated per year.

It has been noted that an important factor which will influence the rate of population growth will be the rate of production of new sublots. While a limited amount of new housing can be constructed on infill lots, most new housing will require new sublots.

Economic Factors

Several economic characteristics are highlighted as key issues to be addressed in this Plan Update.

- Oberlin College is the 9th largest employer in Lorain County with approximately 975 employees. (Crain's Cleveland Business, March 2003) and is the single largest employer in the City of Oberlin.
- 36% of employed residents of Oberlin reported walking to work...most likely due to employment at Oberlin College.
- Poverty levels reported by the US Census for Oberlin are high relative to Lorain County as a whole. While some part of this statistic may be due to the reported "incomes" of college students, reducing poverty for all residents is an important economic concern.
- Compared to other Lorain County communities (14% average), Oberlin has a high proportion (45%) of tax exempt properties. These exempted properties are excluded from the local real estate tax base which supports City and School Board operations.
- Taxable properties consist of approximately 70% residential, 24% commercial, and 6% industrial.
- The trend of Oberlin income tax revenues is illustrated in the following chart. In recent years, residents have voted for tax increases in support of wastewater treatment and recreation facilities.

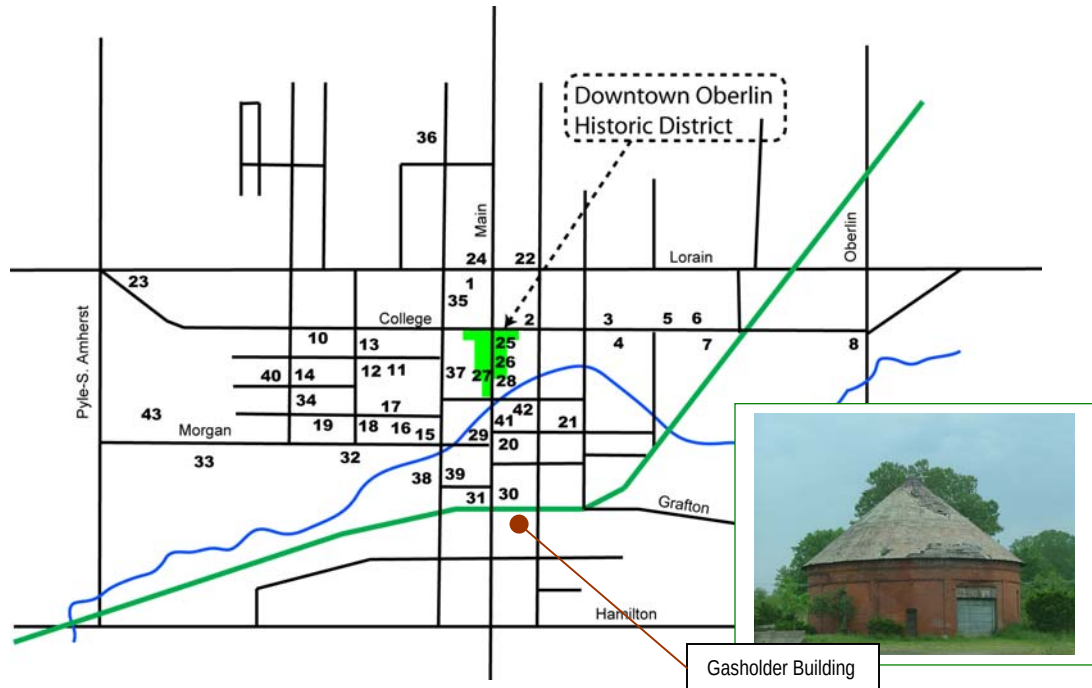


Historic Resources



History and historic structures are abundant in Oberlin and are essential elements of the community's character. Many of these features are documented, landmarked, preserved, celebrated, and treasured.

The locations of the Downtown Oberlin Historic District and of 43 historic structures are indicated on the map below.



Map No.	Street Address - Name
1	Tappan Square
	East College Street
2	64- Hall House
3	174 - Metcalf-Leonard House
4	207 Langston House
5	228 Stevens Wood House
6	270 Richards House
7	315 Burrell King House
8	525 Hart House
	West College Street
9	Carpenter Block
10	265 Kinney House
	Elm Street
11	155 Rice Moore House
12	171 Wright Carter House
13	172 William Evans House
14	291 Doolittle House

	Forest Street
15	111 Edward Johnson House
16	123 AA Wright House
17	154 Oberlin College President's House
18	181 Arnold House
19	251 Andrus House
	Groveland
20	37 Hollingsworth House
21	128 Rust United Methodist Church
	East Lorain Street
22	64 Smith Baumann House
	West Lorain Street
23	461 West House
	North Main Street
24	First Church (NW Corner Main & Lorain)
	South Main Street
25	Commercial Block
26	39 Union School (New Union Center)
27	68 Post Office
28	69 Old City Hall
29	162 Christ Church
30	221 Penfield Grills House
31	Railroad Depot

	Morgan Street
32	Old Water Tower
33	429 Westwood Cemetery
	Oak Street
34	273 Cargill Blanchard House
	North Professor Street
35	Memorial Arch (Tappan Square)
36	270 Glider Papworth House
	South Professor Street
37	73 Jewett House
	73 rear Monroe House
	731/2 School House
38	216 Albert Johnson House
39	227 Dascomb House
	Reamer Place
40	310 Savage House
	East Vine Street
41	33 Wilson Evans House
42	43 Wack Dietz House
	Woodhaven Street
43	127 Welzheimer Johnson House

Environmental Features

Topography

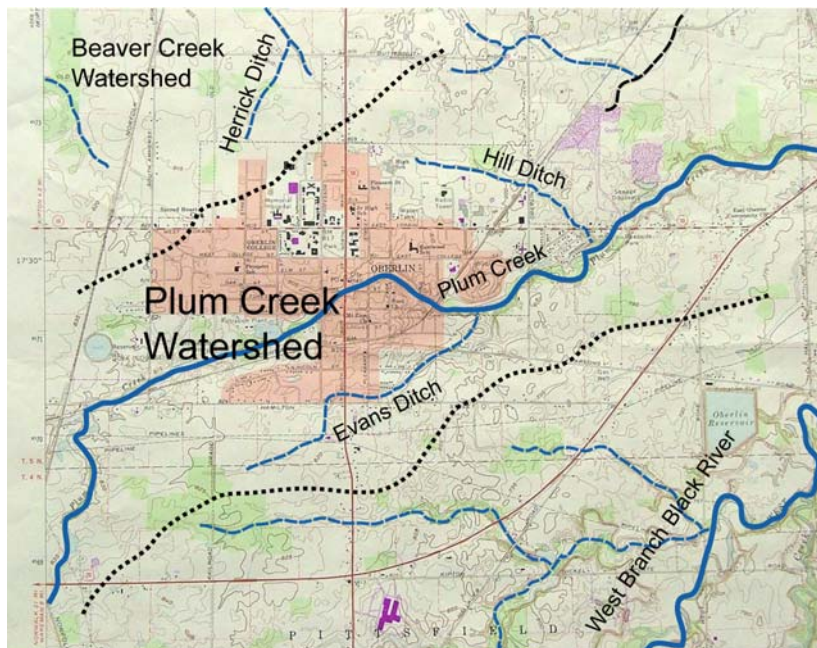
With the exceptions of some downstream parts of Plum Creek (northeast of Oberlin) and the valley of the West Branch of the Black River, topography in the Oberlin area is generally level. The most significant topographic variations occur in the areas immediately abutting these major watercourses.

Impervious soils and flat grades complicate storm water management. In these conditions, storm water disperses more slowly, collecting in natural areas such as wetlands or in “unplanned retention” areas such as streets and parking lots, low areas of yards and fields. This is often the result of increased or redirected runoff from new development. Construction of site grades which protect structures and other facilities can be difficult. The construction, operation, and maintenance of storm sewers is complicated by the flat grades, particularly over long distances in which gravity flow is difficult to establish.

Watercourses and Watersheds

Plum Creek is tributary to the West Branch of the Black River. It joins the West Branch at a point near the Carlisle Reservation (Lorain County Metropark), approximately 1.5 miles east of the city limits. Plum Creek has been identified by Ohio EPA as a non-attainment warm water habitat - meaning that its conditions are seriously impaired.

Plum Creek flows directly through the center of Oberlin and contains over 90% of the area of the City within its watershed. A significant part of the Plum Creek watershed is upstream of Oberlin. Development in that area can result in significant downstream storm water impacts within the City. The downstream area of the watershed includes the City’s wastewater treatment plant.



*Plum Creek flows through the
center of the City
...over 90% of the City is within
the Plum Creek Watershed*

Area
Watersheds

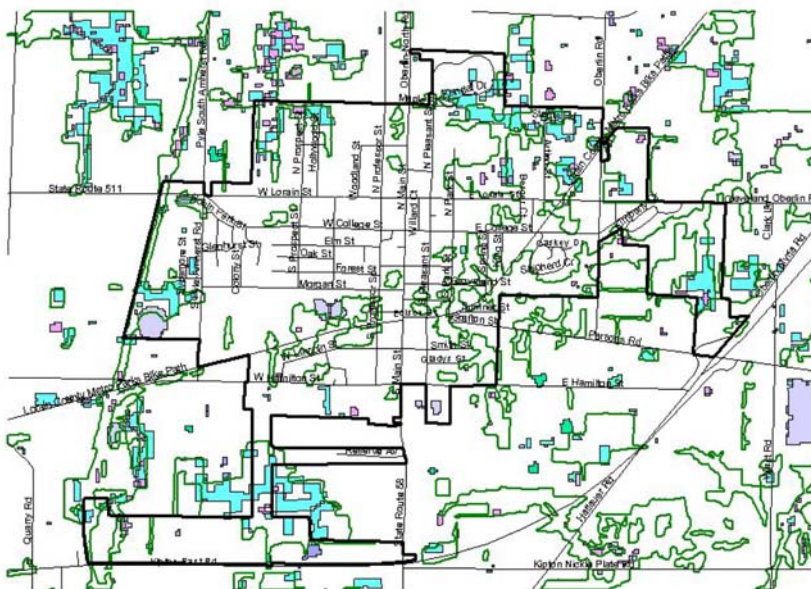


It is apparent that the Plum Creek watershed – and its characteristics and environmental conditions – is the central feature of the natural and man-made storm water systems of the City. Development within the City has significant impacts on the parts of Plum Creek within the City and downstream. Via Plum Creek, Oberlin may also have impacts on the West Branch of the Black River and on Lake Erie.

Two other areas of the City flow to tributaries other than Plum Creek. A small area on the southeast edge of the City drains to a tributary of the West Branch of the Black River. A small area in the northwest corner of the City drains to Beaver Creek, which flows through Amherst to Lorain to Lake Erie.

Wetlands and Woodlands

As previously noted in the discussion about topography, the low slopes in and around Oberlin result in a number of wetland areas. Wetlands serve many important environmental functions, including providing habitat for many types of animals and plants. The Ohio Wetland Inventory, shown below, illustrates the general locations of conditions which are found in wetlands. The map also provides a generalized illustration of the locations of woodlands in and around Oberlin. Woodlands also have important environmental benefits.

1987
Ohio Wetland Inventory

Existing Land Use and Development

Oberlin's development pattern reflects its history. From the original grid, various additions have been added on all sides. The most recent are residential developments including the Clark subdivisions on the west, Oberlin Commons on the northwest, Kendal on the north, and Reserve Drive on the south.

The shape of the municipal boundary is relatively compact with two notable exceptions: (1) the eastern leg extending from Plum Creek to the Parsons Road overpass at US 20 and (2) the south legs in the area between Hamilton Street and US 20, including 1.5 miles of US 20 frontage and the Reserve Subdivision. These "legs" pose challenges for planning the future of the community, clearly expanding the area of potential annexation and the area for which the City may ultimately become responsible for planning and serving. Both extend the city limits out to the US 20 right-of-way. They enclose a large area of rural uses, all or parts of which may be important for the future of the city.

Residential Areas

With the exceptions of some of the newer subdivisions, residential areas are generally clustered around the city core. The residential areas themselves are separated from one another by barriers such as Plum Creek and the bikeway, by blocks of non-residential land uses such as the College, commercial areas and the golfclub and cemetery area south of Morgan Street.

Commercial Areas

The traditional commercial core is, of course, the downtown. It remains the largest concentration of commercial and service uses in the City.

Two smaller commercial areas have developed on the east side of SR 58 south of downtown. Other small concentrations are located at the intersections of Lorain/Pyle-South Amherst and SR 58/Butternut Ridge, and on Lorain south of the industrial park. Additional businesses are scattered along SR 58 between Hamilton and US 20, along Oberlin-Elyria Road, and along US 20.

As noted previously, Pittsfield Township's land use plan encourages future commercial development in the SR 58 corridor, south of Hamilton Street, as a source of future tax-sharing revenues.

Industrial Areas

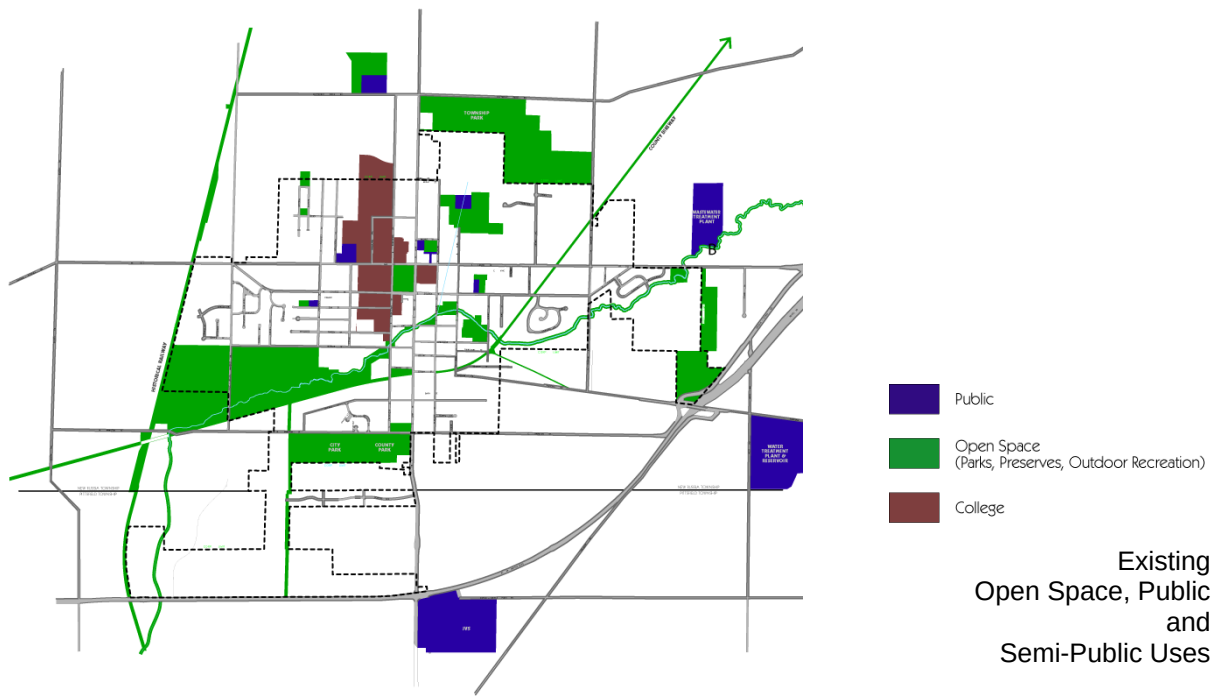
The primary industrial area is the Artino Street subdivision and the NACS facility. The FAA traffic control facility is also located there. Additional undeveloped land, zoned for industrial use, is located in the northwest corner of the Lorain/Oberlin intersection.

The New Russia Township land use plan encourages industrial development in the area of East Lorain Street, between Oberlin Road and US 20.



Generalized Map of
Existing Land Use
November 2002

- Residential - Low Density (One & Two Family)
- Residential - High Density (Multi Family)
- Residential - High Density (College Housing)
- Commercial (Retail & Services)
- Industrial
- Public, Semi-Public Uses
(Churches, Schools, Government Buildings)
- Open Space
(Parks, Preserves, Outdoor Recreation, Athletic Fields)
- College Instructional, Administrative &
Other Non-Housing



Recreation and Open Space

Open spaces, preserves, and recreation areas are found throughout the community. The amount of land set aside in Oberlin as parks, preserves, public use spaces, and semi-public open spaces far exceeds the amounts found in many communities.

- Tappan Square is a large and attractive formal open space in the core of the community. It is a dominant element of the visual image of Oberlin.
- An immense open space is located between Morgan Street and the bikeway, including the Oberlin Golf Club, the Bill Long Preserve, city cemetery, old water plant, and other college-owned properties along Plum Creek. This area narrows and extends east along Plum Creek through college-owned and city properties to Spring Street.
- The city and county parks have collaborated to develop the new recreation complex in the southwest quadrant of the SR 58/Hamilton intersection. This area includes the Splash Zone water recreation facility and other outdoor sports facilities.
- The local school sites provide important small pockets of neighborhood recreation and open space. The open space surrounding the high school is extensive.
- The county bikeway passes through Oberlin from the northeast to the southwest.
- The City owns an unimproved greenway extending from the county bikeway south across Hamilton, along the east edge of the new park property and south through “The Great South Woods” to US 20. The City has recently obtained a grant which will be used to extend a bike path from the county bikeway south to the new city/county park on Hamilton Street.



Landscaping at Oberlin College

- Oberlin College properties dominate the core areas of the community. While privately-owned, they are accessible to the public. The extensive formal landscaped spaces and informal natural spaces contribute to the character of the community.
- New Russia Township has established park areas along Butternut Ridge, including those located at Township Hall and extensive new park properties between SR 58 and Oberlin Road.

Public and Semi-Public Uses

Public and Semi-public uses (schools, churches, government facilities, social service facilities) are distributed throughout the community, with a greater concentration along Main and Lorain. The most significant concentration is the cluster on the south edge of downtown, comprising City Hall, the Library, FAVA, and the Post Office.

Oberlin College

While the influence of Oberlin College extends throughout the community, its physical focus is a wide band northwest, west, and southwest of Tappan Square – and including the Square itself. Instructional and administrative facilities are focused on College, Lorain and Professor Streets. Dorm areas are located on the north and south ends of this core.

Agriculture

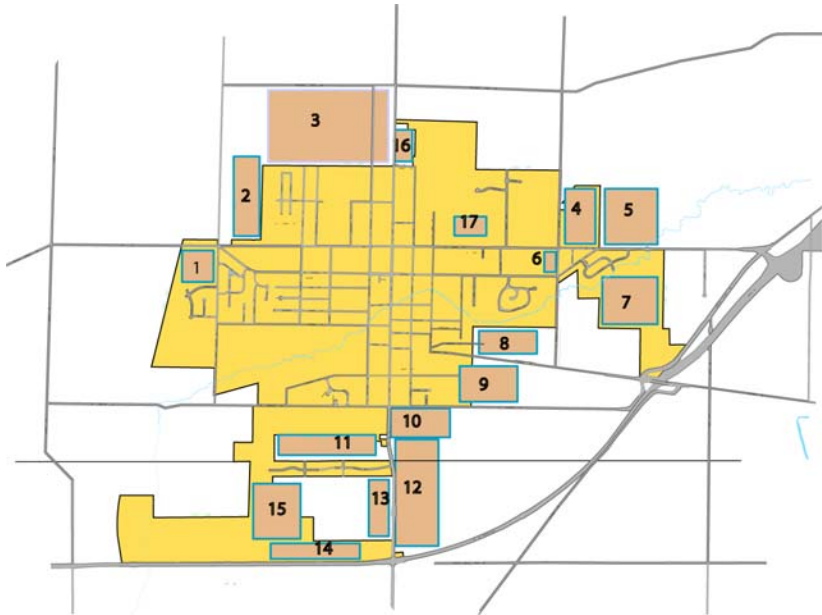
Active agricultural areas are limited within the city limits. Properties in agricultural production surround the city in the townships. Both New Russia Township and Pittsfield Township have declared farmland preservation as goals of their plans.



Tappan Square

Vacant Land

Key vacant areas are identified on the map below. They are considered significant due to their adjacency to the city limits or their potential for completing city land use, street, and utility patterns.



Key Vacant
Areas

Map No.	Inside/Outside of City Limits	Description
1	Inside	Zoned for single family residential and commercial – southwest quadrant of intersection of Lorain and Pyle-South Amherst
	Inside & Outside	Zoned for residential use
3	Outside	College properties from north city line to Butternut Ridge
4	Inside	Owned by City of Oberlin – zoned for industrial use
5	Outside	Located between city limits and city water plant
6	Inside	Green Acres county property
7	Inside	
8	Outside	
9	Inside & Outside	
10	Inside and Outside	Southwest quadrant of Hamilton and SR 58
11	Outside	Farm between Park and Reserve Ave
12	Outside	East frontages of SR 58
13	Outside	West frontages of SR 58
14	Inside	North frontages of US 20, west of SR 58
15	Inside & Outside	General area of “Great South Woods”
16	Outside	Long property
17	Inside	College property

Transportation and Movement Issues

Roads



Illustrated on the map below are the major vehicular transportation issues. These include several gaps in the roads pattern which affect both current and future traffic movement.

Volume of Thru Regional Traffic.

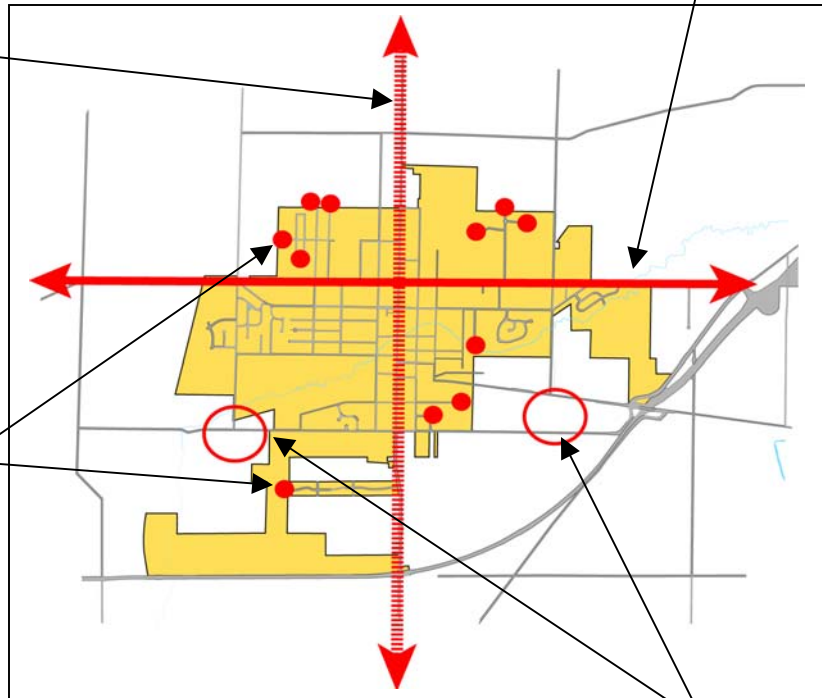
SR 58 is the primary north-south route through Oberlin and through this part of Lorain County, carrying significant volumes of traffic through the City. Benefits include the accessibility to the region which this road affords for Oberlin residents and businesses and high volumes of potential customers. The typical negative impacts of traffic – congestion, noise, hazards – also occur. Of concern is the potential impact of the traffic volumes which will be generated by the new SR 58/Ohio Turnpike interchange 5½ miles to the north.

Dead-end Streets, Incomplete Street Systems.

Analysis of existing street patterns identified several areas in which neighborhood street systems are incomplete. These gaps limit the routes available to residents and other local traffic as well as to service and safety vehicles. The social separations resulting from these gaps have also been recognized. Effective layout of future street extensions will be hindered if these gaps are not intentionally addressed.

Industrial Traffic Through Town.

SR 511 passes east/west through Oberlin. Two significant sources of truck traffic – Artino Street Industrial Park and the BFI Landfill - are located on this highway. The segment of SR 511 which passes through Oberlin is the sole available route between these locations and the areas to the west and north. Heavy trucks are prohibited on many other rural roads and are thus directed through the City.



Incomplete Outer Road Grid. Four major roads form an important outer grid for local traffic movement: Butternut Ridge, Oberlin, Hamilton, and Pyle-South Amherst. This square outer pattern is broken in two locations; (1) the south end of Oberlin Road where it terminates at Parsons; and (2) the south end of Pyle-South Amherst where it terminates at Hamilton. The effects of these gaps will become increasingly apparent as local traffic volumes increase and the need for alternative local routes also increases. It should be noted that these two gaps in the outer grid limit movement in the southern area of the city and its surrounds (Hamilton south to US 20).

Pedestrian Facilities

The size and layout of central Oberlin – coupled with an extensive sidewalk infrastructure – result in a very walkable environment. Walking is a common mode of collegiate transportation and is thus ingrained in the campus and downtown cultures.

Studies of pedestrian movement indicate that a radius of roughly $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ mile is conducive to frequent pedestrian trips. From Oberlin's core intersection at Main and College, this radius would extend south and east roughly as far as the bikeway, north to about Maple Street, and west to Prospect. While many Oberlin residents walk into the core from greater distances, locations outside of this radius may not be considered part of the "pedestrian market" for this center.



A downtown sidewalk

Bike Facilities

Bicycles are an integral part of Oberlin's college culture, although reportedly more so in the past than in the present. Nonetheless, the grid pattern and relatively low traffic volumes on neighborhood streets make the community very bikable. The arrival of the Elyria-Kipton multi-use trail undergirds local bicycle transportation potential.

The Heritage Trail and bicycle loops proposed in the Oberlin Trail Plan (by Schmidt, Copeland, Parker, Stevens for the Oberlin Historical and Improvement Organization, 1997) are as yet unrealized. Consideration should be given to a broader, community-wide bike system which includes and complements the core system recommended in the Oberlin Trail Plan.

On-Street Parking

Parking demand is one of the significant impacts of the College on the community. In both residential and commercial areas, long-term vehicle parking of vehicles owned by students and college employees consumes space in both public rights-of-way and in parking lots. In some locations, these vehicles displace vehicles of residents and those of potential business customers.

In recent years, the College has invested in several off-street lots, in part due to insistence by the City when new facilities are constructed. The College undertakes periodic efforts to further resolve these impacts.



Downtown on-street parking

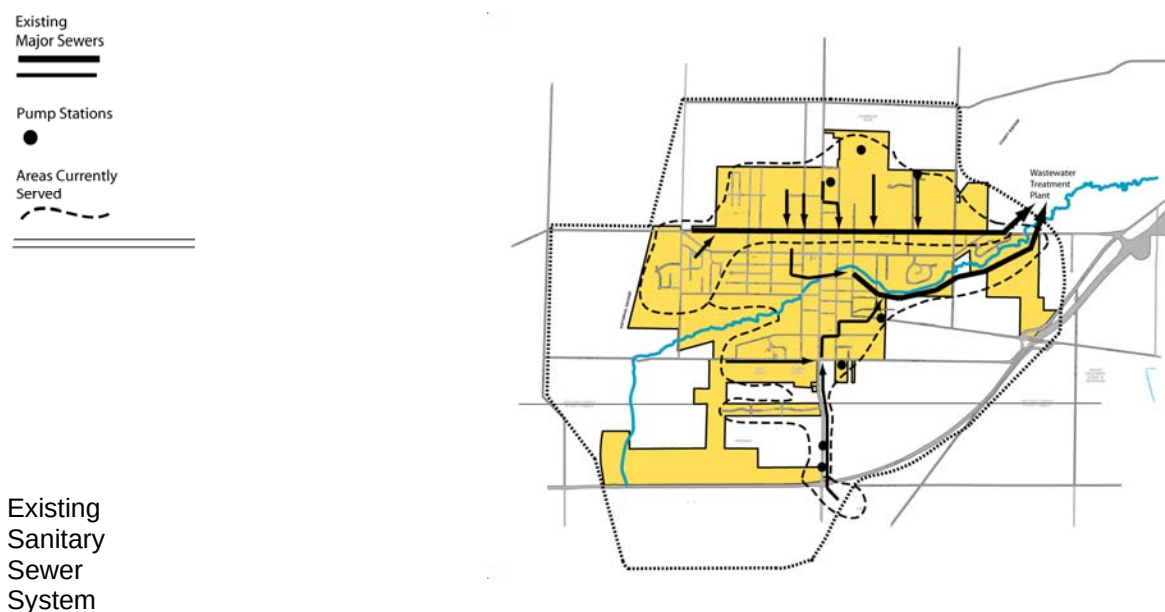
Sanitary Sewer

The utility which has the greatest significance for land use patterns is the sanitary sewer system. While development is possible in areas where sanitary sewer access is not available, the nature and intensity of development is typically limited by the cost (installation and ongoing operation) and capacity of on-site waste disposal systems.

Intensive development, particularly those uses which generate significant volumes of sanitary waste, are most feasible in areas served by sanitary sewers, such as the City of Oberlin. Sewer extension decisions are therefore important influences on future land use patterns. This is particularly true where a sanitary sewer system is freestanding and there is limited potential for extension of competing sewer lines.

The map below illustrates the general area currently served by Oberlin Sanitary sewers. The pattern is relatively compact, consistent with the patterns of developed land uses, with the exception of the south SR 58 corridor. The sanitary sewer in this corridor extends through significant areas of undeveloped land in order to serve the uses in the intersection of SR 58 and US 20. It is anticipated that future development in this corridor will be stimulated by the presence of this sewer and fill out the land use pattern. This area is within the facilities planning area established by the City in cooperation with OEPA and NOACA. Oberlin City Council has established a policy of providing sanitary sewer service only in areas annexed into the City limits.

A major problem with sanitary sewers in Oberlin, as in many older communities, is the infiltration and inflow of storm water into older sanitary sewer pipes. The increased volume of sewage and storm water (particularly during periods of wet weather) must be treated by the wastewater treatment plant before release into Plum Creek. It is obvious that the increased volume results in increased demand on the plant and higher treatment costs. The City continues to conduct repair and replacement of sewers to reduce sources of infiltration and inflow. Complete resolution of this problem will take an as yet undetermined amount of time and money.



The wastewater treatment plant has rated capacity of 1.5 mgd (million gallons per day). Average flows in 2002 were 1.16 mgd and in 2003, 1.30 mgd. In times of wet weather, wastewater flows reaching the plant may exceed the plant's rated capacity. Holding tanks and special operating strategies make it possible to manage excessive flows for short periods.

The planned land uses in this Plan Update will provide a basis for calculating future wastewater flows and guidance for a master plan for the wastewater plant. This will ensure that planning for the plant keeps pace with growth in the designated Oberlin Wastewater Service Area as established by NOACA (Northern Ohio Area Coordinating Agency). The limited size of the plant site also necessitates master planning.

Water

Public water service has been extended into essentially the same areas as served by sanitary sewers. The growth of rural water systems has lessened the land use control effect of water supply.

Of significance for Oberlin is its water source. The intake for the Oberlin Reservoir is located on the West Branch of the Black River at a point upstream of the point at which Plum Creek is tributary to the same West Branch. Oberlin's water source is therefore protected from contamination from Plum Creek. Another unnamed tributary in the south end of the City, however, drains the SR 58 areas south of US 20 and enters the West Branch upstream of the water intake. A much greater tributary area extends to the areas south of Wellington and Rochester. While the source protection area is largely rural, there are numerous potential sources of contamination including erosion, sedimentation, agricultural runoff, and other non-point sources.

Water is taken from the West Branch and stored in the reservoir (capacity 386,000,000 gallons) until treated in the plant and pumped into the water system. The potential for summer drought conditions makes winter – when the quality and quantity of winter water tends to be better - an advantageous time for filling the reservoir.

The water treatment plant was constructed in 1959. It has a production capacity of 2.25 MGD. Water demand has been relatively steady over the years (approximately 0.8 million gallons per day), although seasonal impacts of the College are apparent. The plant meets current regulations, although its age and anticipated new regulations will make improvements necessary in the next few years.

The water distribution system extends into most areas of the City where improved streets have been constructed. In the long term, the City anticipates distribution system upgrades to improve flow and pressure on the south and west parts of the community.



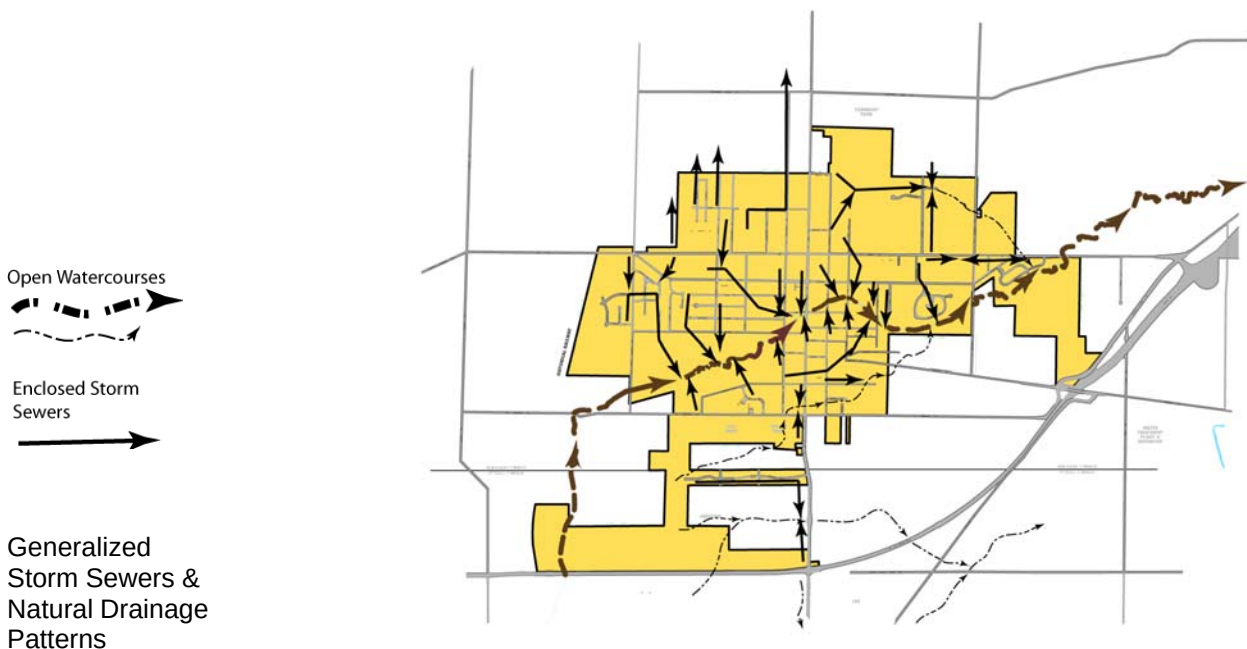
Storm Water

Enclosed storm sewers are located through most of the more densely developed areas of the city, notably those with fully improved rights-of-way (curbs, gutters, and sidewalks). Enclosed storm sewers are a necessity in such areas where high density development results in high densities of impervious surface and increased rates of storm water runoff. Relatively flat topography complicates the task of designing and maintaining storm water systems in these areas. Flat surface grades and shallow outfalls necessitate shallow pipe grades which may have limited capacity, flow slowly, and clog easily. As noted previously, the dense impervious clay soils of the area limit the amount of groundwater absorbed and result in rapid runoff rates.

Many of the City's storm sewers were constructed in an earlier era and are smaller (10-inch diameter) than those planned and constructed in recent years (12-inch minimum diameter). The 12-inch minimum was established, in part, with the intent of collecting and conveying storm water as quickly as possible.

Ironically, recent trends in federal environmental law may cause the older 10-inch pipe standard to again be adequate in some circumstances. Contemporary practices seek to keep storm water near to the spot on which it lands for as long as possible in order to reduce downstream flooding and degradation of the nation's waterways,

Unfortunately, pipe diameter is not the only issue in Oberlin's storm water system. Many sewers – and sewer appurtenances such as inlets (catch basins), manholes, headwalls, and culverts - have aged and deteriorated. Pipes have been damaged by construction, penetration by gas service lines, crushing of shallow pipes by vehicle loads, and tree root intrusion. Storm sewers and open waterways on private land are often poorly maintained and are located outside of public easements, inhibiting the City's ability to perform maintenance, repairs, and replacement.



As noted, increased attention is being given to the pollutants in storm water. Recent EPA mandates require communities to improve storm water management practices and reduce pollutants. In addition to sewer repairs, construction and storm water treatment, land use planning, high quality site design, and “best management practices” (BMPs) for the design and operation of storm water facilities are important tools for meeting these mandates. The City has recently established updated standards and a 5-year program for reducing pollutants. The City of Oberlin is a Phase II Community under the USEPA Storm Water Regulations and is currently in its first 5-year authorization to discharge storm water to the nation’s waterways. Continued storm water planning and improvements will be required for future authorizations.

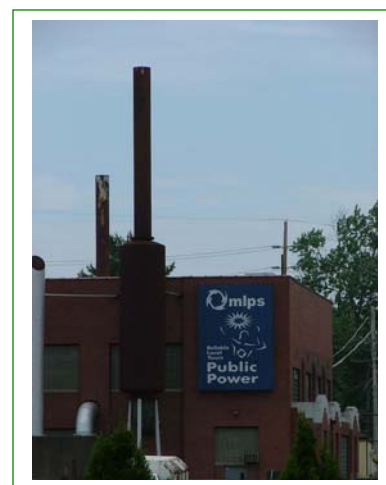
Of particular concern for Oberlin should be the condition and management of the Plum Creek watershed. A significant portion of the watershed is upstream (southwest) and downstream (northeast) of the City. These areas may be subjected to agricultural surface runoff pollution sources. The area to the northeast (in New Russia Township) must be protected from groundwater seepage from the landfill and from any untreated outfall from the City’s wastewater treatment plant. The portion of the watershed located within the City may be subjected to urban pollutants such as lawn fertilizers and pesticides, oils, salt, and other materials draining from yards and pavements.

Electric

The electric system is owned, operated and maintained by the City’s municipal electric system, Oberlin Municipal Light & Power System (OMLPS). OMLPS serves most areas inside the City limits and several areas outside City limits as indicated on the attached map. The Ohio Constitution authorizes the City to extend its service and rate-paying base to any area as long as energy sold outside the city does not exceed 1/3 of the total energy sold. OMLPS competes with Ohio Edison (First Energy) and Lorain-Medina Rural Electric Cooperative in supplying power to nearby rural areas.

OMLPS is a full requirements wholesale electric consumer of AMP-Ohio, a statewide joint action agency serving 89 municipalities. Power and energy are provided by OMLPS’s participation in AMP-Ohio’s Richard H. Gorsuch Coal-fired Generating Station, the Ohio Municipal Electric Generating Agency (OMEGA) Joint Venture 1, Joint Venture 2, Joint Venture 5, Joint Venture 6 and in AMP-Ohio’s Northeast Area Service Group (NEASG) pool. OMLPS owns and operates a dual-fuel (diesel and natural gas) power plant located at 289 S. Professor Street. The Professor Street power plant is rated at 19,716 kilowatts of capacity and is utilized for peak-shaving operations and for emergency back-up capacity. Installation dates of the generation capacity range from 1949 to 2001. An additional 940 kilowatts of generation capacity is located at the Water and Sewage Treatment Plants that can be remotely dispatched for peak-shaving operations. OMLPS has a long-term contract with AMP-Ohio to provide peak-shaving capacity for the NEASG pool in exchange for capacity payments.

An independently owned landfill gas generating station (on East Lorain Street) is also connected to the City’s electric system. This station is capable of delivering up to 10,000 kilowatts of power to the grid via the City’s 69Kv system. Peak power demand on the electric system in 2003 was 19.613 Mw. The firm transformation capacity of the electric system (defined as the capacity of all substations with the largest transformer out of service) is 28 Mw. It is



OMLPS dual-fuel power plant

expected that this capacity will be adequate until around 2007 after which installation of additional transformation capacity will be needed.

The City is a joint owner-participant in two sustainable energy projects. The first project (in which the City owns a 3.2% share) is a 42 megawatt run of the river hydro-electric facility on the Ohio River in West Virginia. The second project (in which the City owns a 3.47% share) is a 7.2 megawatt wind turbine farm located in Bowling Green.

The City's interconnection to the grid is located at the Switch Station near the corner of Pyle Road and Butternut Ridge Road. This station is served by two 69Kv lines. The first originates at First Energy's Johnson Substation in Elyria. The second line originates at First Energy's Shinrock Substation located near Berlin Heights. These are connected in a closed loop configuration giving OMLPS a very reliable redundant feed. This station also forms the beginning and ending of OMLPS's internal 69Kv loop that feeds substations at Butternut Ridge, Oberlin Road, the landfill plant, and two substations at the OMLPS power plant on Professor St.

The capacity of these lines is not certain since they serve other First Energy loads and other municipal and rural cooperative loads. There are indications that the lines are becoming overtaxed such as the number of times the voltage drops near alarm limits. The OMLPS power plant remains an asset in this regard since it can be used to support sagging voltage. In extreme cases, the city can be served by the power plant while isolated from the power grid.

The most significant needed improvement is distribution capacity for the purpose of ensuring adequate and continuous power supply in the areas south of Hamilton Street. This will also be the area best suited for locating new substation capacity when it becomes necessary as described above. (*See plan map on page 47*).

The Future of Oberlin: **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE**

- **General Policies**
- **Land Use Plan**
- **Transportation Element**
- **Infrastructure Element**
- **Preferred Annexation Areas**

General Policies

Encouraging Infill and Density

Infill development has been identified as a high priority for future development and redevelopment in Oberlin. In this context, “infill” has two meanings. The first is construction of new or replacement structures and uses (particularly dwellings, but also business uses) on unused or underutilized lots within the developed areas of the City. The second meaning is construction of new structures on larger areas of vacant land within the city limits which may be suitable for new subdivisions.

The intent of both types of infill is to make full, efficient use of the infrastructure in which the community has already invested (streets, sidewalks, utilities) and to intensify the use of areas already devoted to urban development. The benefits of infill may include more efficient use of established services (police, fire, schools, etc) by making it less necessary to stretch the service areas. Infill may also reduce the extent of sprawl of new development.

Intensification of the core areas also means that more people will be within walking distance of local commercial areas, schools, parks, and other community amenities. A greater density of neighbors may also contribute to the liveliness of the neighborhoods, the number of “eyes on the street” for neighborhood security, and other social benefits.

Connecting Neighbors and Neighborhoods

A consistent theme in the discussions leading up to this Plan Update has been the desire to connect neighborhoods. It is recommended that these connections be made through interconnection of the movement systems - streets, walkways, and bikeways. Connection can also be increased through intentional infill of land use patterns. Examples are the construction of new housing in a manner which joins older neighborhoods together, a new park which provides a common area for recreation and socialization, or a commercial area which conveniently serves the needs of two or more neighborhoods.

Becoming a More Sustainable Community

The issues of sustainability are the stuff of which community plans are made. Advocates of sustainable community life direct their efforts toward (1) preservation and improvement of the environment, (2) improvement of the local economy in a manner which supports a good quality of life for all residents while preserving and even restoring the environment; and (3) encouraging social equity and participatory democracy.

Many of the strategies recommended in this land use plan fit under the broad umbrella of sustainability. Most important are those which encourage and reward infill or close-in development, alternative transportation such as walking and biking, and the use of environmentally-sound site development practices.

It is recommended that Oberlin continue to seek additional ways to increase the sustainable characteristics of the community. It will take many years to identify learn, teach, practice, and become more creative with the values of sustainability. There may be a day, however, when every decision begins with a measure of the impacts upon the sustainability of the community.

Land Use Plan

Overall Concept

The Land Use Plan illustrates a future land use pattern which builds upon the best features of the present, encourages infill and preservation, and provides for an expanded Oberlin community of homes within interconnected neighborhoods, areas of commerce, and recreation.

The Plan anticipates residential growth in a variety of housing types and development patterns, extending and linking new neighborhoods to old on both sides of and across South Main.

New industrial and commercial areas are planned to address the needs for goods and services, employment and tax base of the expanded community. These retail, office, and industrial areas also reflect the position of Oberlin as the service community for the extensive rural township areas to the south and southwest.

Attention to increased preservation and restoration of natural areas will be essential as the community grows and development pressures threaten these resources. The Plum Creek corridor, significant woodlands and wetlands, and interconnecting walk/bikeways will promote a healthy natural environment and healthy community.

The key features of the future land use pattern include:

- ***Reshape the Core.*** Extend and intensify (infill and increase density) in a linear community core extending from the existing downtown area south to and including the Station Square area. The linear core will include subareas of commercial intensity interspersed with subareas of residential intensity.
- ***Strengthen Older Neighborhoods.*** Focus on rehabilitation, infill, and amenities in older neighborhoods to maintain and improve the market position of these neighborhoods, increase housing values, and ensure stability and improvement of existing older housing. In the short term, mitigate the impacts of reduced demand for off-campus student housing. Promote home ownership. Preservation of the historic features and character of the older neighborhoods should be a priority.
- ***Protect and Strengthen Existing Commercial Areas.*** Focus public resources on maintenance and improvement in these areas. Expand these areas only by carefully-considered amendment of the Plan. Phase out existing isolated business uses by attrition of non-conforming uses.
- ***Create New Commercial in Limited, Planned Areas.*** New commercial areas should only be established after careful consideration of impacts and market demand and subject to design guidelines. Isolated new business properties should rarely be approved.
- ***Establish a new business development focus area*** in the location where the major regional traffic movements intersect - at the intersection of US 20 and SR 58. Promote development of highway-oriented uses more dependent on auto access and larger scale sites in contrast to downtown business uses. Develop consistent with a planned

It is important to understand that this Plan Update is not the Oberlin Zoning Map. The Land Use Plan is a guide for future development and for changes to the Zoning Map, but does not have the force of law. Persons interested to know the zoning and subdivision regulations effective on a specific property should refer to the current, adopted Zoning Map, Zoning Code, and Subdivision Regulations of the City of Oberlin.



design pattern and design guidelines. Access management and a complete public street system will be essential.

- ***Establish New Neighborhoods.*** New residential neighborhoods may develop on both sides of SR 58 (south of Hamilton) and in the northwest quadrant of the City, interconnected with and expanding upon the traditional residential grids of the older Oberlin neighborhoods. Higher density, clustered housing may be established abutting and buffered from SR 58 and in selected “high amenity locations” such as facing formal neighborhood parks. Moderate density, traditional single family housing may be established away from the SR 58 frontages. Access management along the entire corridor (planned street intersections, very limited points of traffic conflict) is essential.
- ***Expand Existing and Establish New Industrial/Office Areas.*** Extend the industrial/office pattern along East Lorain from Oberlin Road to US 20. Develop a new, highly accessible industrial/office district on the southeast edge of the community.
- ***Increase Natural Preserve/Recreation Areas Inside and Outside of the City.*** Community growth will increase development impacts on environmental resources and increase demand for access to natural areas. The key environmental resource is the Plum Creek corridor, including segments within, upstream, and downstream of Oberlin. Additional major woodlands, notably “The Great South Woods”, should be preserved and linked.

Residential Areas

Five residential land use strategies are emphasized in this Plan.

- ***Rehabilitation and Maintenance.*** The top residential priority is to promote rehabilitation and maintenance of existing housing. Existing homes have a long history of serving the needs of Oberlin residents past and present, are already connected to the community’s infrastructure, and are recognized as a significant element of the community’s wealth. Reinvestment in these homes - with upgrades for energy efficiency and other contemporary features - is a cost-effective means of preserving and strengthening neighborhoods.

Many Oberlin homes are historic and deserve special attention to protect those important qualities. It should also be recognized that the rehabilitation of some homes, even if very old, may not be practical or economically feasible. In such cases, the community may be better served by demolition and replacement with new homes.

- ***Infill.*** Some existing residential neighborhoods contain vacant or underutilized lots on which new, infill housing may be constructed. Infill housing increases the number of customers utilizing existing utility infrastructure, and reduces the amount of new pavement needed for new neighborhoods. Infill housing also increases the population density in existing neighborhoods, increasing the size of the market for businesses, increasing the potential number of school children, and increasing the potential patrons of public and semi-public facilities and institutions.



It should also be recognized that “infill” may, in some locations, conflict with other values such as preservation of natural areas. In such cases, the community’s choice will involve consideration of both the value of the natural resource and the value of the new housing. Preservation has a price.

- ***Neighborhood Connections.*** Past development projects and uncompleted street patterns have resulted in disconnections between some neighborhoods and contribute to the physical and social isolation of others. This Updated Plan recommends completion of connections among existing neighborhoods and the construction of new neighborhoods which are well-connected to the existing residential pattern.

There are several purposes for connecting neighborhoods including: providing alternative routes for vehicle trips of all kinds; more efficient service delivery; alternative routes for emergency response; increased walkability; and increased social interaction among neighbors.

“Connections” include such physical features as continuous street patterns, walkway/bikeway and park linkages, and sidewalks throughout the community. Use of cul-de-sac streets should be limited.

- ***New Residential Areas.*** Several areas are identified as preferred locations for new residential neighborhoods. These areas have been selected with the intent of completing existing neighborhood development patterns and ensuring well-planned extension of the municipal corporate limits in areas such as the SR 58 corridor south of Hamilton Road. The neighborhoods in the area of Hamilton Road will have excellent access to the new city/county recreation complex.
- ***Encourage Conservation Development.*** Several areas have been identified for low density residential land use (*See Land Use Plan Map*). It is recommended that these areas be considered for “conservation development”. This development format evaluates the land to determine the areas most suitable for preservation and the areas most suitable for development. Flexible development standards encourage clustering of dwellings in the developable sections and preservation of the balance. The preserved areas may be owned by a homeowner association or may be transferred to the City, a land trust, or other organization with the capability to ensure maintenance and preservation in perpetuity.

While conservation development may be approved within the City’s current planned development regulations, consideration should be given to amending the regulations so that conservation development principles can be applied to any property without the burden of the rezoning process.

Commercial Areas

The following basic land use strategies are recommended for maintaining and developing viable commercial areas providing retail, services, and office facilities.

- ***Focused Areas, Avoiding Strips and Spots.*** Commercial development should be established in attractive, highly-visible locations which are most accessible to their intended markets. They should be designed to manage potential impacts upon more sensitive use areas such as single-family neighborhoods. Scattered locations contribute to marginal businesses and unmarketable structures.

It should be recognized that the local Oberlin market today consists of approximately 5,000 permanent residents, approximately 3,000 students, and an unknown number of non-resident employees. This relatively small local market is not likely to attract some of the businesses found in larger communities. The scale of the market makes focused commercial development even more important.

In contrast, the intersection of SR 58 and US 20, on the south side of the community, is accessible and attractive to a larger regional market.

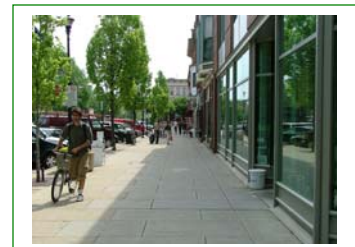
As discussed in the following strategies, three types of commercial areas in six locations are planned.

- ***Downtown Commercial/Mixed Use.*** The traditional commercial core of Oberlin is downtown. The downtown is comprised of a total of roughly five block frontages in a T-shaped pattern. The structures, mostly two and three stories, have small footprints (by contemporary standards) and front onto the street sidewalk. Parking is provided on-street and in rear parking lots. A significant part of the downtown is dedicated to public uses – city hall, post office, and the library – a cultural arts facility, and a telephone exchange.

The market experience of local merchants and recent market studies confirm that the position and role of downtown is changing as a result of changing customer shopping habits, the construction of new and competitive commercial locations, and changing needs of potential commercial tenants. In response, downtown interests have organized in joint efforts to evaluate the market, to identify effective market strategies, to undertake joint marketing efforts, and to find other cooperative projects which sustain and renew the downtown.

While commercial market analyses have not been completed at the time of this writing, it is anticipated that at least one important strategy for downtown will be to encourage construction of greater numbers of new housing units in the upper floors of existing buildings and as infill or new construction.

- ***Neighborhood Commercial.*** Three locations are identified as small, neighborhood service commercial areas (intersection of Lorain/Pyle-S. Amherst, intersection of SR 58/Butternut Ridge, southwest quadrant of Lorain/Orchard). These small developments, together with the downtown, Station Square, and SR 58/US 20, place almost all residential neighborhoods within ½ mile of a commercial area. This



The potential for creating additional small, neighborhood service sites has been discussed in preparing this plan. These may be appropriate when the community increases in size or density and the market for such additional areas is assured. Attention must be given to the hazards of creating weakly-supported commercial structures and spot districts, potential commercial impacts on residential areas, and dilution of the markets and values of existing or planned districts.

- The second area is located at the intersection of US 20 and SR 58. It is expected that this area will provide regional shopping and service uses, in addition to auto-oriented uses. It is likely that a large-scale retail structure will be attracted to this area. In the interests of promoting sustainable new development which has a character compatible with the community and is integrated into the planned development patterns of the community, it is essential that the development of this area be carefully planned and controlled.

Creation of these areas will necessitate adoption of special areas plans (for public streets, access management, and general arrangement of uses and structures), new design guidelines, and possibly a new zoning district.

Two areas of office and light industrial development are proposed.

- Several issues attend this land use recommendation:

-
- Oberlin Industrial Park**
- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Quikrete World | Johnson Controls, Inc. | Shuler Sales Corp. |
| Warner Bros. Center | Expansive Steel Co. | AgChemicals, Inc. |
| Smith-Whitaker | Expansive International, Inc. | Industrial Lumber Parts & Services, Inc. |
| Land Available
Call 440-373-1206 | | Building Materials
Call 440-373-1206 |
- Arline Street

Township and the City. The Township Land Use Plan has identified some of these properties as suitable for future industrial use.

- ***South Side Office/Industrial District.*** A new office and industrial area is proposed in the area east of SR 58, north and northwest of US 20. The extension of Oberlin Road south from Parsons and westward to SR 58 is proposed to provide access for new office/industrial lots in this area. While significant replatting and infrastructure investment will be required to make this area a reality, the effort is justified by the important city-wide access and circulation improvements, the great potential for increased land values, and the job and tax revenue generation potential (for both Oberlin and Pittsfield Township). There is also need for an expansion of the electric distribution system in this area which may be coordinated with the right-of-way project.
- ***Growing Sustainable Industries.*** With regard to industrial development generally, it is recommended that the City and Oberlin College collaborate to encourage, incubate, and grow new industries which are environmentally friendly, encourage recycling of materials, promote energy efficiency, and attract walk-to-work employees. These industries may be spun-off from education and research programs of the College.



Parks, Preserves, Planned Open Spaces, and Public Properties

The relatively slow rates of development of the past have resulted in “preservation-by-default” of some important areas of the community. Anticipated increases in the rate of development in the future make it essential to more aggressively plan and implement preservation. Preservation of key areas, as recommended herein, will also make it possible to undertake long-term environmental restoration projects.

It should be noted that limited resources will necessitate focused acquisition of fee simple or easements (or voluntary deed restrictions, or other methods of preservation) on the most important preservation targets. The following list provides a general description of target areas, within which each property must be carefully evaluated and strategically preserved on a case-by-case basis.

- ***Plum Creek Watershed.*** Plum Creek is the central water feature of Oberlin, both physically and functionally. The City and the College have acquired many parcels along the creek within the city limits. It is recommended that additional parcels along the entire watershed be acquired or subject to easements for one or more of the following purposes:
 - Storm water management (water quality, flood protection).
 - Habitat preservation and restoration
 - Public access for passive recreation
 - Public access for elements of the city-wide bike/pedestrian system
- ***The Great South Woods.*** An area of 80-100 forested acres is located north and west of the US20/SR 58 intersection. The property is

bisected by the “Ramsey right-of-way”, a future bike/walk facility owned by the City of Oberlin.

- ***The Great North Woods.*** An area of 60-80 forested acres is located north of the city limits, west of SR 58, and south of Butternut Ridge Road. The forested area is located in New Russia Township and is owned by Oberlin College and others.
- ***Jones Farm and Preserve Area.*** The George Jones Farm and additional areas north and west thereof on the south side of Plum Creek may provide an opportunity for a unique collaborative conservation development project. Planned and developed as a whole, this area could become a special neighborhood combining open space and habitat preservation, sustainable community agriculture, and low-density clustered residential areas. Realization of this vision would require cooperation among the several property owners (including Oberlin College), but could result in significant benefits for all parties.
- ***New Neighborhood Parks.*** In the interest of providing recreation space in the midst of new neighborhoods, several locations are indicated for future neighborhood parks. The exact locations, dimensions, and character of the parks should be determined in detailed neighborhood planning as those areas begin to develop. The intent is to provide meaningful open space, whether formal or informal, active or passive, which will provide recreation opportunities and identity for each neighborhood.
- ***Linking Open Spaces.*** The proposed bike routes will provide functional linkages among the various existing open space and recreation areas of the City.

Plum Creek and its tributaries have great potential for development of an extensive system of linked green corridors given that so many properties along the Creek are already owned by the City and Oberlin College. The Creek’s central position in the community and its importance for storm water management will make acquisition of additional linking properties valuable.



Transportation Element

General

The community's transportation infrastructure is the skeleton upon which all land uses rely. Movement of people and goods, by foot, bicycle, and motor vehicles is essential.

Resident college employees and college students contribute to a high proportion of walk-to-work trips. The scale of the community and the character of development make this transportation mode feasible in the central neighborhoods. Planning and developing new pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure into the development pattern will promote even more non-auto trips – for work, school, shopping, and other purposes – as the community grows.

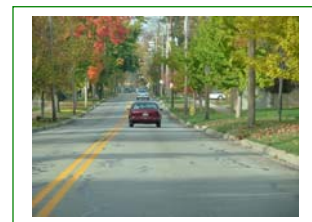
Oberlin exists within a larger auto-oriented society. It is expected that internal combustion vehicles (or perhaps some equally flexible, but less environmentally destructive alternative vehicle) will continue to dominate the society for the coming decades. Given this reality, this Plan proposes completion and extension of street patterns which contribute to efficient auto movement.

Basic Transportation Policies

- Regional traffic will be accommodated on the existing state highway system in and around Oberlin. A bypass for through traffic is deemed impractical and potentially destructive to the local economy at this time.
- To the extent feasible, local streets will be interconnected as extensions of the existing grid street patterns. Cul-de-sac and dead end streets will be discouraged.
- All new developments should contribute to extension and interconnection of walking and bicycle facilities (sidewalks and trails).
- Access management policies should be implemented along major roads - notably Main, Lorain, Pyle-South Amherst, Oberlin, and US 20 – in order to maintain and promote road efficiency and safety.

Improving the Road System

Several major road improvements are recommended in support of planned land uses and to improve local traffic movement. The improvements are identified on the map on the facing page.



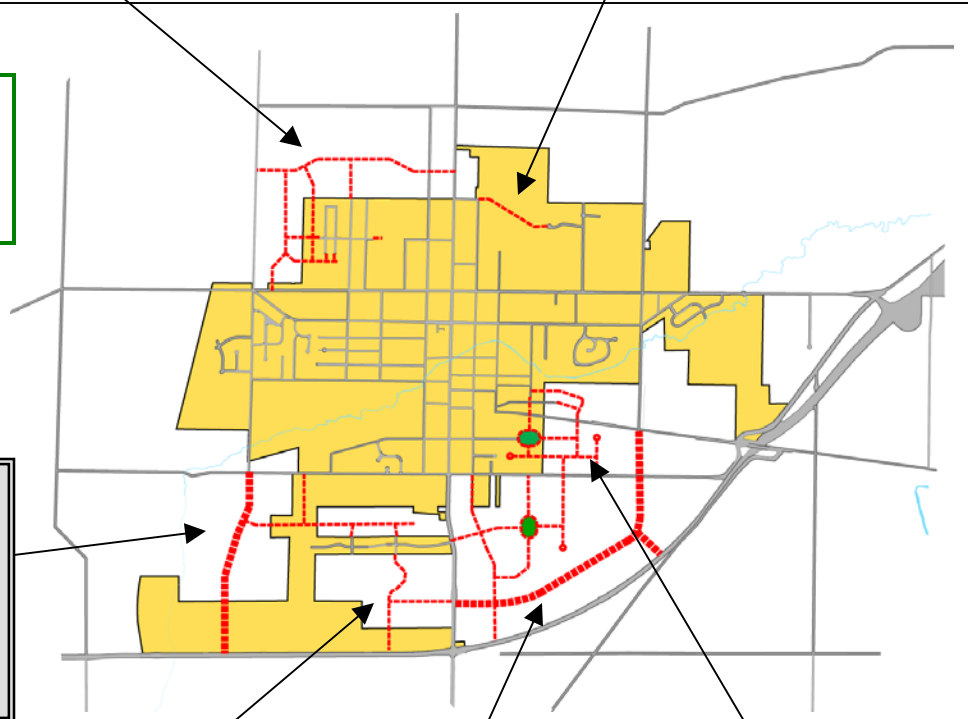
SR 58 to Pyle-S. Amherst Connector/Collector. An east-west mid-block collector street is proposed to connect existing and future neighborhood streets, as an alternative route for local traffic, and to improve access for future college development in the north end properties.

Artino Street Industrial Road. The dead-end condition of the Artino Street industrial area is a major shortcoming in the city street system because industrial traffic is focused on the Artino/Lorain intersection and Lorain Street. Although both are complicated, the following two alternatives have been considered:

- * A new road connecting the north end of Artino Street to Oberlin Road. This new road could provide access for new industrial development on land owned by New Russia Township (which the Township has planned for a cemetery).
- * A new road connecting the west end of Creekside through Maple Street to SR 58. This alternative has the advantage of an existing utility right-of-way, but is obstructed by Kendal maintenance facilities and has limited value to the abutting properties.

Planned Street Improvements

Pyle-South Amherst Extension. Extension of Pyle-South Amherst Road from Hamilton to US 20 should be planned to provide an alternative north-south route on the west side of the community.



Southwest Neighborhood Streets. An interconnected pattern of extended and new streets is proposed for the neighborhood west of SR 58 and south of Hamilton Road. These streets would interconnect existing neighborhoods and planned new neighborhoods, including the planned commercial area. Key elements of this pattern are north and south extensions from Reserve Avenue and an extension west crossing the proposed bikeway.

Street interconnections must be carefully designed to protect residential areas from excessive thru traffic.

Oberlin Road Extension. Oberlin Road is proposed for extension south of Parsons Road, crossing Hamilton, thence south and west to a new intersection at SR 58. A new intersection with US 20 is proposed south of the Parsons Road overpass of US 20. The purpose of this new roadway and intersection is to provide an alternative north-south route for industrial and other local traffic and to provide access for new industrial/office development. This roadway should be designed and designated as a route for commercial truck traffic.

This proposed road project also has potential to provide a corridor for a needed electric power supply loop.

Southeast Neighborhood Streets. An interconnected pattern of extended and new streets is proposed for the neighborhood east of SR 58 and south of Grafton/Parson Road. Key elements of this pattern are extensions of Pleasant, Spring, and Reserve. These streets would interconnect existing neighborhoods and planned new neighborhoods. The pattern also recommends connection into the proposed Oberlin Road extension and to US 20.

Promoting Sustainable Transportation

Community livability and sustainability are supported by low-impact alternative modes of transportation. For many local trips, walking and bicycling are inexpensive, efficient, healthful and environmentally-appropriate alternatives.

- **Sidewalks.** Construction of sidewalks should be required in all areas of medium to high density residential, commercial, office, public, and industrial use. Where density or potential pedestrian traffic are lower, consideration may be given to less construction-intensive facilities.
- **Walkable Neighborhoods.** The design of neighborhoods should encourage walking through interconnection of streets and/or walkways. Orientation of streets and walkways toward major destinations (shopping, schools, downtown, etc.) should be encouraged to make walking convenient.
- **Local Bikeway System.** There are many attractive routing opportunities for bikeway facilities in Oberlin. It is recommended that the local bikeway system ultimately interconnect all residential neighborhoods, shopping areas, employment areas, schools, downtown, library, and parks.

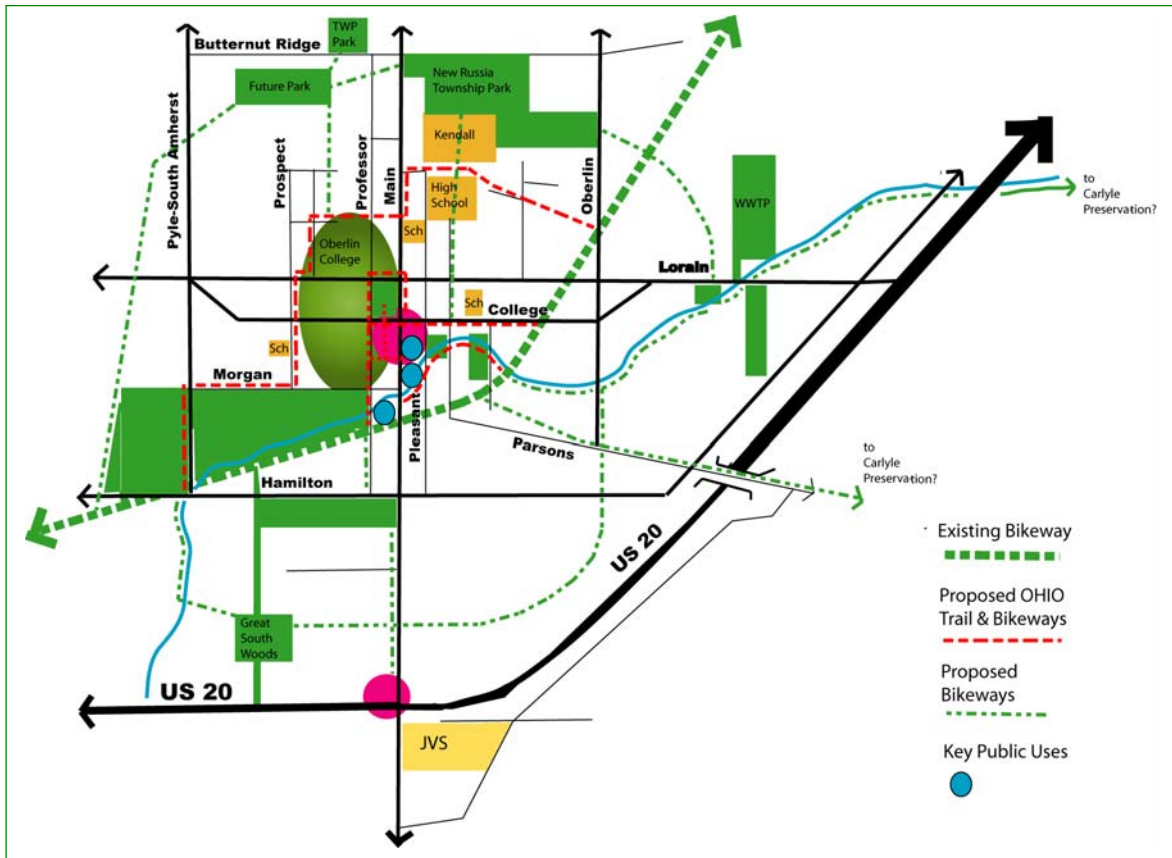
The Northcoast Inland bike trail passes diagonally through Oberlin, providing nearly three miles of paved, multi-purpose path on a separated right-of-way. This facility provides opportunities for many interconnecting loops through the remainder of the City.

A Heritage Trail and three bike loops were proposed in the Oberlin Trail Plan (by Schmidt, Copeland, Parker, Stevens for the Oberlin Historical and Improvement Organization, 1997). These routes, included on the drawing on the next page, focus on core areas of the community, primarily north of the existing bike path.

A more aggressive and widespread plan, as illustrated, will facilitate walking and biking throughout the community. The routes indicated (which include a combination of signed on-road routes, bike lanes, and separated rights-of-way) interconnect current and planned schools, parks, residential, industrial, and commercial areas.

As discussed in the Implementation section of this Plan, this bikeway system can be built incrementally over several decades through public investment, required dedications, recreation/transportation impact fees, and other means.





Utilities Element

General Utility Policy

To the extent possible, new development should be encouraged as infill (within the bounds of existing developed areas) or in areas abutting the developed areas. This practice will minimize the costs of extending utilities through undeveloped areas which may not support new rate payers for some time. This practice will also encourage use of existing facilities which are already in the ground along the street frontages of vacant or underutilized lots, thus increasing the use and revenues from the existing system and minimizing the costs attendant to new improvements.

The City must continue efforts to coordinate utility planning and land use development patterns with the abutting communities and regional utility providers. The expansion of rural utility services may conflict with the city's policies of preference for compact development.

Water System

The policy of providing municipal water service to all developed areas within the city limits will continue. As noted previously, anticipated major improvements to the system are likely to include plant upgrades to replace outdated equipment to comply with water treatment regulations, completion of looped systems, and upgrades of antiquated pipe lines.

Development in the south, northwest, and northeast areas of the city, as indicated in this plan, will require additional planning and expansion of the distribution system. Some elements of this expanded system will be financed by private developers (new streets, for example). Other elements, such as new and replacement water mains, will be financed by the water fund. Special fees for new service areas may be considered.



*Oberlin Water Treatment
Plant*

Storm Water Management System

The following strategies are recommended for management of storm water impacts.

- Plum Creek Watershed. Because of the importance of this natural watercourse to the core of Oberlin, special attention must be given to its protection, management and restoration.
- Riparian setback areas should be established along both sides of Plum Creek and its tributaries for their entire length. The depth of the setback areas should be based on expert assessment of the creek. Public control is preferred in fee simple ownership or easements (which may also provide public access for recreation and walk/bike facilities), but appropriate private management of these setbacks will also contribute to protection of the resource.
- A "Friends of Plum Creek" organization should be established, involving residents of Oberlin and New Russia and Pittsfield Townships, for the purpose of carrying out research, education, and improvement activities in the watershed. This non-profit group can

serve a special advocacy role and perform functions which the local governments cannot.

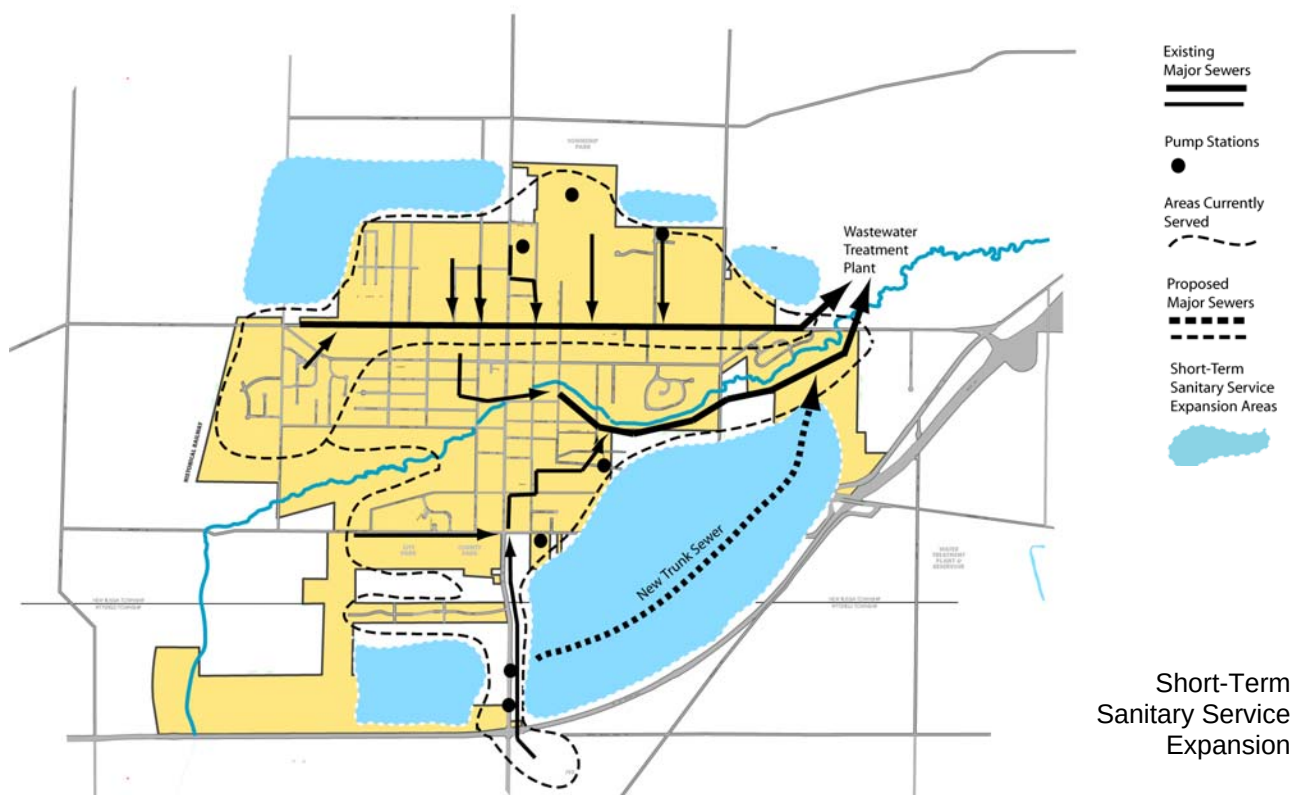
- On-site storm water management must be required in every new development, ensuring design which manages water flow characteristics and limits contaminants.
- Pursuant to study and recommendations by qualified water quality professionals, projects which restore and enhance water quality, stream function and the natural characteristics of Plum Creek should be funded and implemented.
- The City should utilize Best Management Practices (BMPs) in constructing and replacing storm water facilities.
- The Subdivision Regulations should be updated to require BMPs in the design of all new subdivisions.
- Consideration should be given to establishing a “storm water utility” and fees proportionate to the storm water impact of each property. These revenues will be utilized to upgrade the storm water system, restore natural watercourses, educate the public about storm water issues, and related projects and programs.
- The seemingly simple act of installing name signs at the crossings of Plum Creek and other major watercourses can increase public awareness of local waterways.

Sanitary Sewer System

Development in the areas south of Hamilton Road on the east and west of SR 58 will generate added sanitary flows. In the short term, these additional flows will be accommodated in the existing sewer system. Analysis of probable sanitary sewer demand in this southern area indicates, however, that a new trunk sewer facility will be needed in the longer term in order to provide the necessary capacity. The general location for this sewer will be in a diagonal route extending roughly from the US 20/SR 58 intersection area northeast toward the wastewater treatment plant (although other routes may be considered). The improvement could be coordinated with all or parts of the planned Oberlin Road extension, planned electric system loops, and the proposed future area of office/industrial use. Construction of the sewer and road may be important future stimulators for economic development.



Scheduling and financing this project is critical due to its size and its location in an area which is, at this time, largely undeveloped. Commercial development in the interchange area will likely precede the proposed office/industrial parks. As a result, the waste generated is also likely to precede the needed improvements. As discussed in the Implementation chapter, the City should consider establishing a mechanism for collecting revenues over several years in anticipation of financing this sizable project.

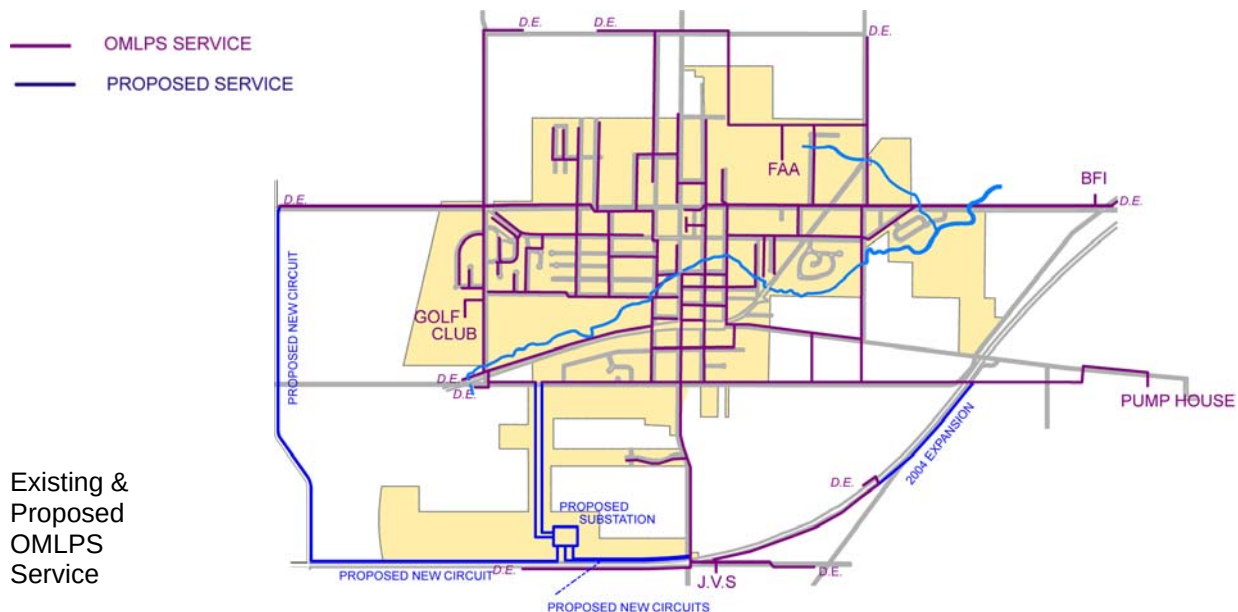


Electric System



While many electric system improvements are planned, the following have particular relevance to the land use and development strategies of this Plan:

- Construction of a loop north of US 20 and west of SR 58 is needed. The added electric service capacity provided by this loop will be available to support development in this area.
- Construction of a loop on the north side of US 20 and east of SR 58 is also needed. . The added electric service capacity provided by this loop will be available to support development in this area. Acquisition and development of electric service right-of-way may be coordinated with and supportive of the planned street, water, and sanitary utility improvements in this area, particularly the southerly extension of Oberlin Road to US 20.
- Construction of a 10/14 Mva 69 Kv to 12 Kv substation. This station would be fed at 69Kv in a loop configuration in order to maintain the redundancy and reliability of the existing 69 Kv loop. Three 12 kv circuits would be fed from three distribution circuit breakers. Each circuit would have it's own set of voltage regulators to independently maintain proper voltage. This new substation would raise the firm substation capacity to 42 Mw. The distribution improvements described above would feed from this new facility.
- There is an area west of State Route 58 on State Route 20 inside the City's corporation limits which is served by Lorain-Medina Rural Electric. About 15 customers along State Route 20 West are served by LMRE. Distribution circuits need to be extended by OMLPS to serve these customers.



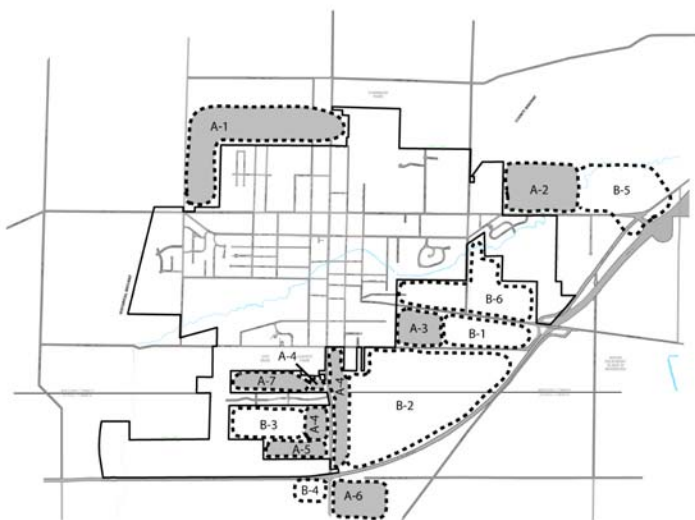
Preferred Annexation Areas

This Plan Update does not encourage aggressive annexation and expansion of the City. It is clear from this Plan Update, however, that some annexations must occur, when timely, in order to implement some of the important planning recommendations. Providing a rough evaluation of the suitability of properties for annexation is helpful for public officials of the City and abutting Townships as well as for the owners of properties having potential for annexation.

As a result of the studies and analyses precedent to this Plan Update, it is apparent that certain areas abutting the current Oberlin municipal limits are more suitable for annexation than others. This “suitability” is roughly determined based on a number of factors, including but not limited to potential “fit” with the existing or planned pattern of development and potential for utility service. While other factors relevant at the time of a specific annexation petition may shape the City’s decision to annex or to deny annexation, it is helpful to assess the “more preferred” and “less preferred” annexation areas as part of this Plan Update.

It should also be recognized that, although this Plan Update emphasizes infill development as a priority, some annexation opportunities must be weighed in terms of other values such as the potential for completing a street or utility network, connecting areas of the City which are now isolated by intervening township areas, and potential for economic development.

The following map and table identify and rank major locations having annexation potential.



PREFERRED ANNEXATION AREAS

“More Preferred”	
A-1	Street & neighborhood completion, major connector street
A-2	Industrial dev’t, annex WWTP owned by City
A-3	Street & neighborhood completion
A-4	Manage dev’t of critical highway frontages
A-5	Street and district completion
A-6	Annexation agreed as part of utility service extension
A-7	Street and neighborhood completion
“Less Preferred”	
B-1	Major connector street
B-2	Major connector street, business development in tax sharing area, future residential areas
B-3	Street and neighborhood completion
B-4	Quadrant completion, access management
B-5	Business development area, access management
B-6	Neighborhood completion

SPECIAL AREAS

- **Downtown**
- **Gasholder Commercial Area**
- **SR 58 South Corridor**
- **Southeast Neighborhood**
- **Oberlin College**
- **Coordination with Townships**

Several areas have been identified in this section for special attention and concept planning. They were selected due to special opportunities or challenges highlighted in the general planning process. The policies and sketches for each area indicate a general intent, but will require additional more detailed examination, planning and policy-setting in the future.

Downtown

Several key strategies must be pursued to preserve and strengthen downtown. Some of these strategies are already underway through the efforts of business owners, property owners, non-profit organizations, and the City. Many of these and other important strategies are identified in the [Downtown Revitalization Plan](#).

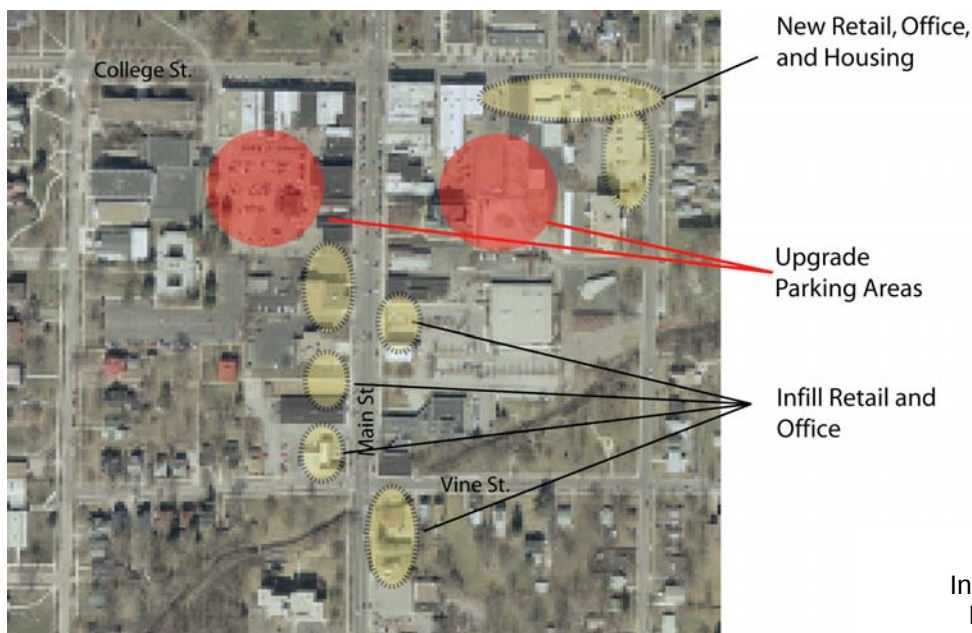
- The downtown area must continue to expand joint promotion and coordination programs, including joint marketing, which build its identity in the regional market as a specialty shopping/tourist/arts destination, encourage attendance at annual special events, and increase service to the local resident/student market.
- The downtown organizations should identify specific retail, service, and office uses which fit the location in terms of market demand and character. Direct recruitment of local and regional businesses fitting those niches should be continuous.
- Existing frontages should be filled with retail and personal service uses preferred over office uses.

- Retail density should be increased by constructing additional structures along Main Street and East College. Relocation of the telephone exchange and replacement with commercial use should be encouraged. Commercial/office construction on the corner of Main and Vine should also be considered.
- The visibility and utility of off-street parking facilities should be improved by repairing pavement, installing pedestrian amenities (walkways, lighting, landscaping) and parking directional signs. The rear elevations of commercial structures facing these parking areas should be upgraded. A “pedestrian arcade” should be constructed, through the existing buildings, to provide a direct connection from the parking areas to the center of the commercial area.
- Construction of new housing in and around the downtown should be encouraged to increase the walk-in market.
- Attention must be given to preserving and enhancing the historic resources of downtown which are the essential fabric of the district.



Mixed Use Area. Extensive discussion ensued during meetings of the Steering Committee regarding the viability of promoting mixed use areas, notably in the blocks along Main Street between downtown and the bikeway. The mixed use concept would provide design guidelines and zoning standards for small businesses, dwellings, and other uses. The intent would be to intensify the use of this area and to provide alternative business and living situations such as live/work structures.

The concept of mixed use is attracting attention in many communities. The City should more thoroughly evaluate the concept and its potential for one or more areas of the City.

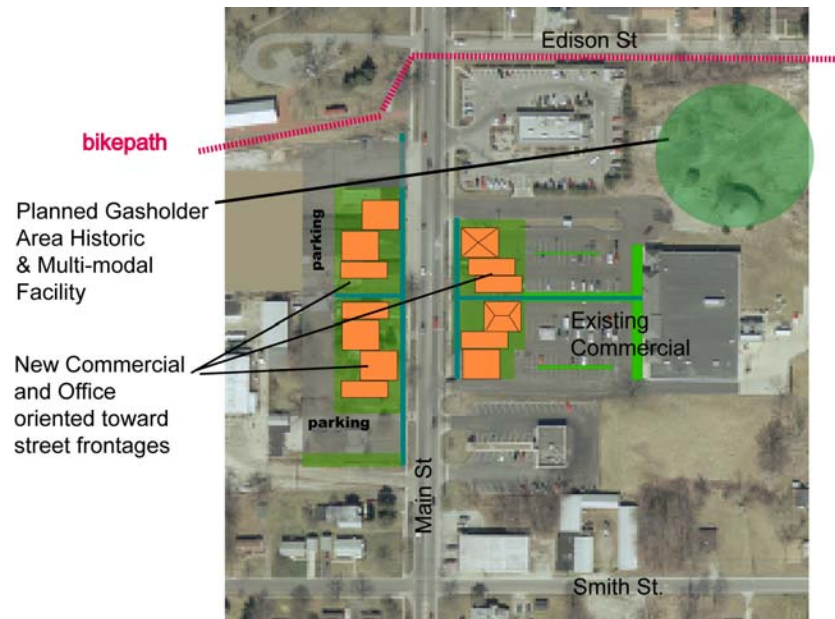


Opportunities for
Infill & Redevelopment
In Downtown Oberlin

Gasholder Commercial Area

Intensive retail, personal services, and office development should be encouraged on the Main Street frontages from Edison to Smith/Lincoln, including retail/service structures abutting the right-of-way. This area will benefit from increasing walk-in and drive-in patronage. Intensified development in the core of the community and expansion of the neighborhoods to the east and south will create a larger local market for this commercial district.

The planned redevelopment of the historic Gasholder Building will create a unique feature for this area and increase its attractiveness to local and tourist visitors. The plan includes restoration of the 1899 structure, construction of a park-and-ride facility, bike facilities, and other amenities. The structure may also house an Underground Railroad Center.



Opportunities
For Infill & New Development
Gasholder Commercial Area

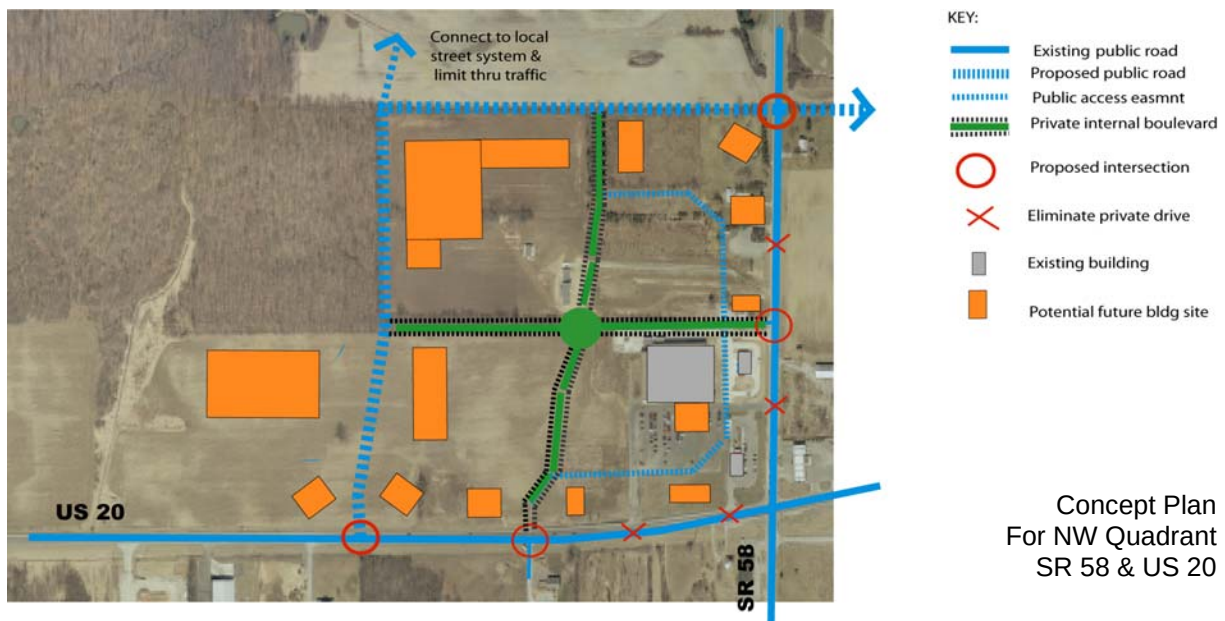
South Corridor

The area surrounding SR 58 south of Hamilton Street is attracting the interest of residential and commercial developers. Parts of the area, including the northwest quadrant of the US 20/SR 58 intersection, have been annexed into Oberlin. Other parts remain within New Russia Township and Pittsfield Township. The development interest, coupled with the jurisdictional divisions, make cooperative planning for this corridor urgent but complicated.

A joint planning effort involving Pittsfield Township and City of Oberlin representatives resulted in a corridor plan (State Route 58 Corridor Plan) in 2001. The intent was to promote cooperative planning for the future of this corridor, an area subject to a longstanding tax sharing agreement between the two communities. While adopted by Pittsfield Township, and subsequently reflected in zoning resolution and map amendments, many elements of the plan were not acceptable to the City. Notable among these is the potential for extensive commercial development on both sides of SR 58 from the south edge of the Reserve Subdivision to the US 20 intersection.

While the City recognizes the economic development potential of this corridor, the land use planning implications differ when viewed from the perspectives of a relatively compact municipality and of a rural township. The proposed commercial corridor looms large on the south side of the City, but appears small and isolated on the north side of the immense agricultural township.

This Updated Plan for Oberlin anticipates and provides for a limited commercial development area in the SR 58 Corridor. Commercial development should be focused and well-planned. As the area becomes developed, the City and the Township may re-evaluate the plans and zoning and make amendments appropriate for the circumstances of the future and the needs of the communities. As noted later in this text, cooperative planning, zoning, development control, and economic development efforts should continue.



Southeast Neighborhood



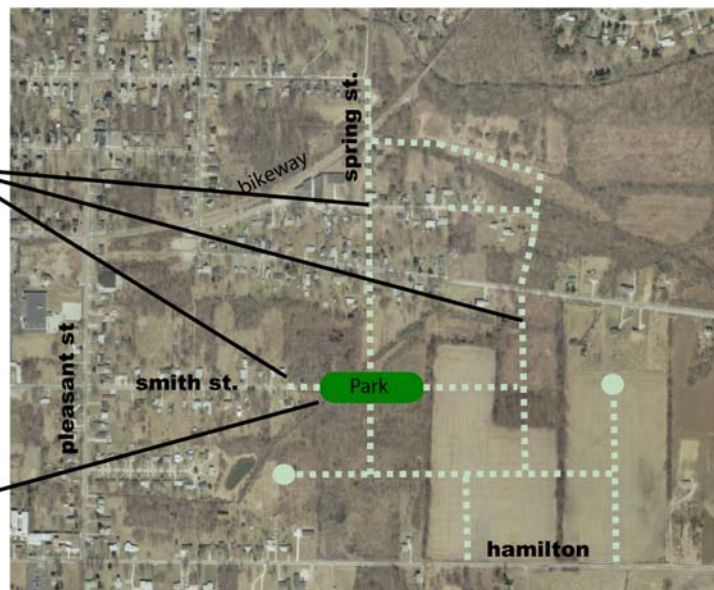
Smith Street in the southeast neighborhood

This area is roughly bound by the county bikeway on the north, Main Street on the West, and Hamilton Road on the south.

- The neighborhood street system should be extended and completed to improve connections to other neighborhoods, to provide frontages for new housing development, and to expand the neighborhood to the east and south.
- Coordinated development to the east can provide several opportunities. A new park site could address drainage issues in this area as well as providing a new open space recreation area and an attractive spatial focus for the neighborhood. Street extensions, both within the current city limits and in abutting areas of the township (to be annexed) could encourage both private and non-profit housing development.

Possible street extensions
for new residential
developments

Create neighborhood
focus with new
park area



Southeast Neighborhood:
Concept for
New Streets
And Homes

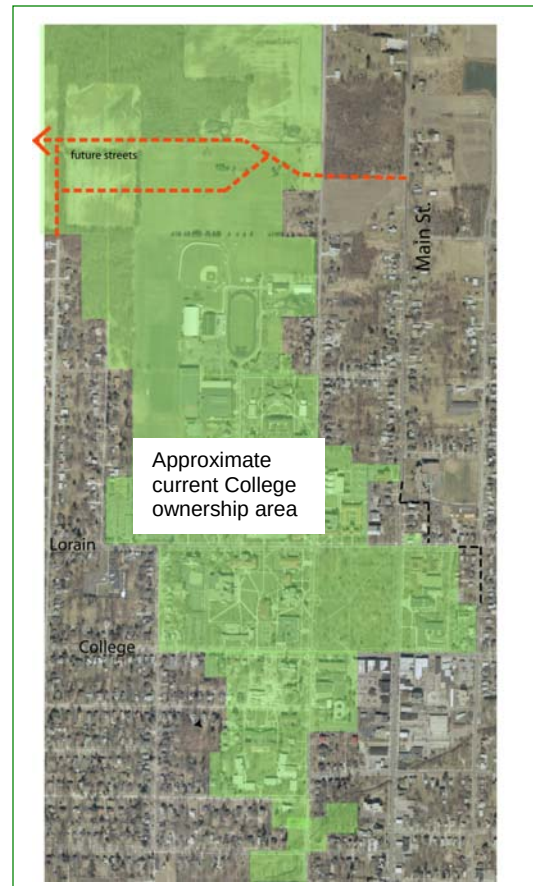
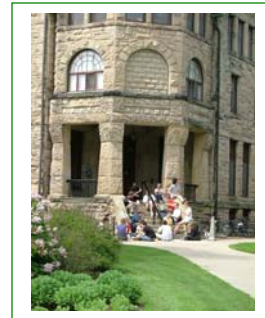
Oberlin College

Oberlin College is the most prominent and dominant institution in this community, an essential feature of the community's character and a major element of the local economy. College activities and development have significant positive and negative impacts upon the commercial and residential areas of the city.

While the College's most important buildings and properties are clustered in the Tappan Square area, College properties also extend far to the north (into New Russia Township) and south of the Square, and include properties scattered in other areas. The College is thus in a position, through its own development plans and operational policies, to contribute to or detract from its surrounds.

It is important that Oberlin College and the City of Oberlin continuously plan together for their mutual benefit. Key recommendations include:

- The College should prepare a campus concept plan which will promote coordination of planning and development with the City. This will facilitate planning for future land uses, public streets, green spaces, and other infrastructure around the campus.
- The college concept plan should help to preserve complete neighborhoods, i.e., protect neighborhoods from inappropriate incursions of institutional uses and parking lots.
- The potential benefits of locating new developments close to the center of the community should be considered. While contributing to efficient and convenient movement among campus facilities, close-in locations may cluster the employee/student market near to the downtown.
- The College concept plan should be coordinated with the planned street, bikeway, and walkway systems of the City. This will benefit students, employees, and other Oberlin residents and visitors.
- The College should plan for parking facilities to meet parking demand for all facilities. Use of public streets and public parking areas for daily campus parking needs should be discouraged except where such use is jointly planned with the City.
- The City and College should collaborate to design and adopt an "institutional zoning district" which addresses the uses and needs of the College, provides for buffers between high impact college uses and residential neighborhoods, and facilitates the College's campus concept plan. The district regulations should enable the City and College to negotiate site development plans which are creative and open to the ever-changing needs of this institution.



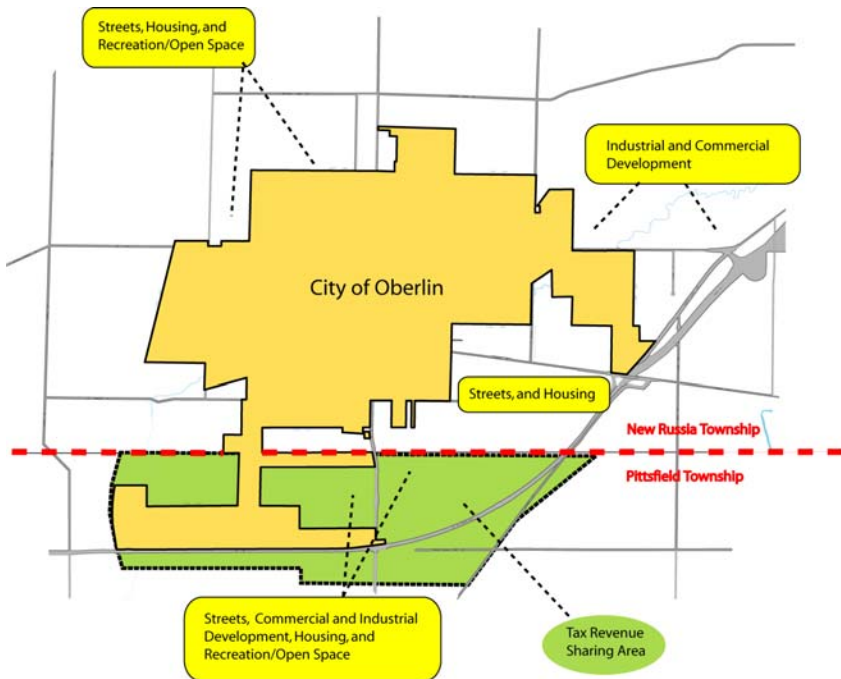
Coordination with Townships



The communities of Oberlin, New Russia Township, and Pittsfield Township are so strongly intertwined that the need for coordinated planning and development management is unquestioned. While economic and political realities may make consensus difficult from time to time, efforts to coordinate and cooperate must be maintained. These efforts are increasingly likely to bear fruit as the impacts of regional growth expand into this area and the importance of intergovernmental cooperation becomes more apparent.

In recent years, both townships have adopted their first plans. As a result of this Oberlin Plan Update, the city's land use and development strategies are also becoming better defined. In this environment, all three communities have the opportunity to evolve in their ability to plan and regulate in a manner which contributes to the welfare of the entire region. Relevant subjects may include: land use/zoning; planning for streets, utilities, and storm water management; economic development; and annexation.

Illustrated below are several key locations which, from the perspective of this Plan, are important opportunities for future coordination with the townships. This map may serve as a discussion starting point to identify additional locations which the townships find important. Several other jointly-held objectives (not specifically illustrated on this map), such as the desire to preserve agricultural areas, should also be on the discussion table.



Key Coordination Areas

See Land Use Plan for details

Work To Be Done: **IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN**

- **Plan Adoption**
- **Planning and Regulatory Activities**
- **Capital Improvements**
- **Special Programs**
- **Economic Development Tasks**

The planned future of Oberlin described in this Plan Update will only become reality if action is taken by city officials and residents. This chapter outlines key actions which must be accomplished and a rough schedule for implementation.

Adopt the Plan Update

It is critical that this Plan Update be reviewed and recommended by the Planning Commission and **formally adopted by City Council**. The plan should be adopted as the City's development policy and as a guide for future planning, zoning, capital improvements, economic development investments, annexations and related activities. As a guide, it sets directions and recommends specific actions, but should not lock the City into those specific actions where changing circumstances may warrant other approaches toward meeting the Plan goals.

The formally adopted Plan will provide important evidence for the City in defense of future zoning actions where those actions are reasonably consistent with the Plan.

Planning and Regulations

The following planning and regulatory activities should be completed within the next three years.

Amend the Zoning Code

- Conduct a **general evaluation** and update of the code provisions **relating to commercial districts** as they relate to the objectives of this Plan Update.
- Add provisions for **Conservation Development** to encourage cluster housing and preservation of open space
- Add provisions for an **Institutional District** to address the development needs of Oberlin College and to protect surrounding neighborhoods from impacts.
- Add provisions for an **Office District**
- Add provisions for a **Highway/Regional Commercial District** including design guidelines and district infrastructure plans.
- Consider amendment to or clarification of Section 1329.03 of the Zoning Code to **allow annexation with a zoning designation other than R-1A Single family Residential**

Amend Subdivision Regulations.

- Upgrade **standards for on-site storm water management** and use of BMPs (storm water best management practices) on site developments and subdivisions. (Updated regulations are being prepared by city staff).
- Require **traffic impact studies**. Establish **access management** standards targeting the major routes, SR 58 and SR 511, but also establish basic site standards
- Conduct the necessary studies to justify and establish **recreation/open space impact fees and bike/walk facility impact fees**.
- Add provisions which **measure the quality of certain open space features such as woodlands, wetlands, watercourses** on properties proposed for site development or subdivision. Where high-quality open space is threatened by the development, provide for a delay of process to allow for purchase for preservation.

Practice Continuous Planning.

The Planning Commission and Staff should assess progress on the Plan each year, report to Council, and advise of any needed additions or updates to the Plan. This assessment could be expanded to include a “stewardship committee” of community members.

Coordinate with New Russia and Pittsfield Townships.

The City should initiate an annual meeting with the Trustees and Zoning Commissions of the Townships to discuss matters of common opportunity and concern. Over time, these meetings may result in improved coordination of planning, cooperative projects, and benefit for the residents of the three communities.

Special Study Projects.

The Planning Commission should evaluate the concept of **live-work structures** and **mixed use districts** and their potential for Oberlin. These contemporary concepts were raised in several meetings of the Steering Committee for consideration.

Capital Improvements

Storm Water Improvements

- Evaluate potential and costs for a **storm water utility** as a means to pay for the increasing costs of storm water management. Key areas are the Plum Creek Watershed and the unnamed watershed serving the south side area south of Reserve. These may be two different storm water “districts”, related to the proposed sanitary sewer districts. Fees collected from existing and future developments can be used to finance improvements and operations including new facilities and BMPs complying with federal and state regulations
- Establish a non-profit **Friends of Plum Creek** organization to partner with the City and Townships in preserving and improving the watershed as well as educating the public

South End Sanitary District

This plan recognizes the necessity of expanded sanitary sewer service in the south end of the planning area. It is recommended that planning for potential routes for sanitary sewers (notably a trunk sewer from SR 58 east and north to the wastewater treatment plant) and alternative financing proceed within the next year. The concept of creating a special sanitary sewer service district should be evaluated.

Extensions of the Outer Street Grid

- **Oberlin Road south across Parsons and west to SR 58.** This is an important road system completion project and an economic development tool. It may be initiated by and coordinated with sanitary sewer, water, and electric power infrastructure installations. This project may be built in stages, perhaps by assessment. Because it will likely involve annexation, coordination and cooperation of the townships and property owners is essential.
- **Pyle-South Amherst south from Hamilton to US 20.** This is a longer term need in the road system., but it is timely to begin to identify and reserve future right-of-way.
- The **connector from SR 58 to Pyle-S Amherst**, south of and parallel to Butternut Ridge is also likely to be accomplished in stages and in part by assessment. Coordination with Oberlin College will make this project feasible.

Other Proposed Roads

- It is essential that the City maintain and continuously update its plan for future roads and coordinate the locations of subdivision roads. Most **subdivision roads** should be financed and installed by developers.
- Certain roads may be so essential to the overall street pattern as to justify public financing or sharing of the cost of design/construction.

Bikeway/Walk Facilities

Priority elements of the bikeway plan should be identified, notably those which are located where most useful to the greatest number of residents. Successful and popular first bikeway segments tend to build support for continued expansion of the system. Financing of part of the costs may be borne by impact fees. Codes should be amended to require that subdivisions and site developments commit targeted bikeway segments (as open space exactions) or that these segments be made available for purchase by City.

Special Programs

Promote Infill Development

The City should continue to **identify individual infill lots and sites for infill subdivisions**. Owners should be encouraged to market these properties for development. The City should require design of infill structures compatible with or better than their surrounds. Specific examples of incentives may include tax abatement, reduced tap-in fees, fast-track approval of permits.

Promote Conversion and Rehabilitation of Rooming Houses and underutilized housing in the core neighborhood

In response to likely reduced demand for some residential structures in the core housing market resulting from new housing construction (including new college housing), efforts should be made to encourage conversion and rehabilitation to owner-occupied housing.

Open Space Preservation

The City should establish a fund to **acquire rights to the major open space areas** identified in the Plan including “The Great South Woods”, “the great north woods”, the three neighborhood parks proposed in the southeast neighborhoods, extension of the Oberlin Reserve storm water/open space site, and additional properties along Plum Creek. Open space acquisitions may be financed in several ways, including fees from the proposed storm water utility (for those properties which can be justified for storm water impact), parks and open space grants, temporary financing from the Trust for Public Lands and similar organizations, and a municipal bond issue.

Economic Development Tasks

Downtown Improvement Projects

The ongoing efforts of the City, merchants, and property owners must continue to be supported and expanded in order to **strengthen the position of downtown** as the heart of the community. Marketing efforts must be directed toward attracting and maintaining viable merchants and building the image of downtown Oberlin as a shopping and arts tourism destination. Merchants and property owners must increase coordination of marketing outreach and events, hours of operation, and other district operational strategies. Physical improvements in the parking lots, walkways (and pedestrian arcades?), and directional signs, are essential to demonstrate that this is a quality district of unique character which values its customers.

The downtown district should consider establishing a SID (Special Improvement District) which earmarks property tax funds in the district for improvements.

Downtown Infill and Expansion

The City should, in cooperation with the owners and merchants, prepare a plan which identifies specific downtown infill and expansion sites. The Downtown Plan should be appended to this Plan Update. The Plan should encourage development and redevelopment by providing reasonable assurance to property owners and potential investors of the acceptability and approvability of specific projects.

Industrial Retention, Infill and Development

Recognizing that the City has lost several industrial residents in the past years, top priority must be given to retention of existing industries and refilling vacant buildings. The City should undertake aggressive recruitment of businesses to ensure that the existing industrial areas are fully utilized and productive and to create a market for future industrial and office growth.

The City should prepare and distribute an “Oberlin Welcomes Office/Industrial Business” package which includes information about the advantages of the location, available sites, labor market, and other data helpful to industries and office-based businesses in seeking sites. Distribution can be targeted to industry group mailing lists, followed up by telephone calls and invitations to visit the City.

The City (Planning, Engineering, Utilities Departments) should proceed with long-range planning for the proposed southeast office/industrial park in coordination with Pittsfield and New Russia Township, the property owners, and ODOT. The concepts of this Plan Update should be further detailed, incentives offered, and financing established to cause the first phases of the new park(s) to take place.

ACTION CHART 2010-2015 City of Oberlin Plan Review

