MERRIMAN VALLEY - SCHUMACHER AREA
MASTER PLAN

February 2022



Prepared for the Cities of Akron & Cuyahoga Falls, OH

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Merriman Valley – Schumacher study area is located just south of the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, one of the country's most visited national parks. The study area is a special place with immense unrealized potential as both a vibrant neighborhood and as a gateway community. Other national park gateway communities, such as Jackson, Wyoming; Estes Park, Colorado; and Ely, Minnesota, have been able to translate natural landscapes into the backbone of an enviably strong tourist economy. The common element among these successful places is that each town's urban form is authentically beautiful and enhances the surrounding nature.

The natural assets and the economic potential of the Merriman Valley – Schumacher Area are at the core of this master plan. However, today's Merriman Valley is prevented from realizing its full potential by a tragic contradiction: its great natural beauty has been encroached on and devalued by development patterns that do not reflect the beauty of the surroundings. The Valley's post-war sprawl development is the greatest barrier to achieving the area's full potential.

Because of the complex municipal boundary between Akron and Cuyahoga Falls within the study area, it was imperative that the two cities joined forces to commission this study. The master plan focuses on both the natural and the manmade landscapes of the region. The study area has a rich natural history. For example, the banks of the Cuyahoga River were used for centuries by various Indigenous tribes as a portage to the Tuscarawas River, a story that that is brought to life via a stone plaque and bronze statue at the intersection of Portage Path and Merriman Road. In recognition of the area's natural assets, a National Recreation Area was formed in 1974 and re-designated as the Cuyahoga Valley National Park in 2000. The area also encompasses several Summit Metro Parks that are well utilized by residents for outdoor recreational activity. Increasing visibility and accessibility to the Cuyahoga River, the core natural asset within the study area, is fundamental to this plan.

A PLAN AT FOUR SCALES

This 1,059-acre master plan has been conceived at four scales: Overall Vision, Corridors, Conservation Neighborhoods, and two nodes: The Valley and Northampton Corners. This approach is further outlined below.

VISION/STORY

The Cuyahoga Valley has an understated but still remarkable beauty. But when compared to other gateway towns blessed with snow-capped mountain ranges and quaint walkable settlements, the Merriman Valley – Schumacher Area faces substantial challenges. The study area's existing sprawl development and unremarkable architecture are a detriment to its success. Fortunately, the study area can compete, but only by making investments that build on its unique story and assets. This plan proposes to transform the study area into a fundamentally better place to live, work, and play. The plan incorporates interventions that can change the area from an auto-dominated place into one that is human-scaled. It is a vision of a vibrant, walkable place that complements the beauty of its natural environment in ways that make residents' lives better and visitors' experiences richer.

OPEN SPACE CORRIDORS

Interest in conserving unbuilt land in the study area runs high. However, most of that land is privately owned and can be legally developed. New Form-Based subdivision and zoning standards, which are the next phase of this project, can require a portion of developer's land be set aside as open space. This plan proposes to create two different types of open space corridors: (1) Natural Habitats encompassing rivers and dry corridors that create a connected regional wildlife habitat network; and (2) Scenic Byway corridors to preserve scenic beauty along major thoroughfares. Critter crossings—wildlife underpasses—are essential investments in making these areas into viable wildlife habitats and preventing motorist/wildlife collisions. These corridors should also accommodate multi-modal trail networks.

CONSERVATION NEIGHBORHOODS

The master plan identifies six separate areas as conservation neighborhoods, a hybrid combining open space preservation and sustainable urban design. Each neighborhood will offer unique environments with easy access to open space and a wide range of housing choices. These neighborhoods will achieve their full potential through the full exertions of three actors: (1) land conservancies acquiring open space and development rights to steer private development; (2) new aspirational, Form-Based, sustainable development regulations and policies adopted by the two Cities; and (3) private developers aiming to create world-class sustainable developments.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CONT'D

THE VALLEY

The node anchored by the intersection of Merriman Road and North Portage Path is currently a commercial center for nearby neighborhoods. It is characterized by wide, fast streets and strip malls that undercut the surrounding natural beauty. This master plan envisions a 10+-year, multi-phase redevelopment of the area, catalyzed by a placemaking project at the Merriman/ Portage Path intersection. A new Town Green will transform the congested and dangerous intersection into a civic gathering space. The vision for the civic space includes a public art piece as the focal point, depicted here as the world's largest canoe, a multi-purpose open-air events venue that honors the historic use of this site. The plan also proposes that Merriman Road and Portage Path be transformed into safer, pedestrian-friendly complete streets. New Form-Based zoning regulations will steer redevelopment activities into a walkable form. Uptown Normal in Normal, Illinois has had runaway success using a similar strategy. Other key projects in this node include a new Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railway station near Weathervane Lane, and the creation of Riverbend Park on Portage Path, which would offer family-oriented programming and more access to the river's edge as the public requested.

NORTHAMPTON CORNERS

The intersection of Portage Trail Extension West and Northampton Road is a small retail area located halfway between the Portage Crossing shopping district and the Valley. The node is characterized by a large gas station, a pizza shop, two vacant corner parcels, and a spiderweb of powerlines. This master plan envisions a multi-year, parcel-by-parcel redevelopment of the four corners into a lower-speed, walkable, architecturally distinctive place. New surrounding two-to-three story development will feature ground floor commercial uses and upper-story housing. A new street network will allow vehicles to bypass the main intersection, making it more pedestrian-friendly. The small-scale local retail at this node will predominantly serve nearby residents, and will complement rather than compete with the restaurants and shops in The Valley node.

A SUSTAINABLE VISION REFLECTS MANY VOICES

This planning process engaged a broad swath of the community—residents, elected officials, landowners, business owners, and conservation groups. A Review Board provided strategic guidance at critical decision points along the way, while staff from both cities guided the day-to-day process. A values statement adopted at the beginning of the master planning process called for respect and civility among all participants.

The resulting master plan attempts to reflect and incorporate the values and interests of all stakeholders. The plan's mission statement has launched the Merriman Valley – Schumacher Area on an ambitious sustainability path. New Form-Based zoning regulations for the study area will be critical for ensuring that the walkable, sustainable, and equitable place depicted in the plan and renderings can be realized. Adoption of the plan and strong companion development regulations will provide a solid foundation for the implementation of this compelling vision in the years to come.

Towpath Trail
Source: City of Akron

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to guide the development and redevelopment of the Merriman Valley - Schumacher Area in a way that respects nature while providing a healthy, sustainable living environment for all.

THE SITE & LOCATION

STUDY AREA

The master plan study area lies on the northwestern edge of Akron and Cuyahoga Falls and south of the Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CVNP). The study area includes the Merriman Valley and the Schumacher Areas. The Cuyahoga River runs through the western edge of the study area. The river and its valley are defining features of the study area.

MERRIMAN VALLEY

The Merriman Valley portion of the master plan is approximately 780 acres. Current land use is commercial, residential, mixed-use, and open space. The portion also contains the Cuyahoga River, the Ohio and Erie Canal Towpath Trail, Mud Brook, and the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad right-of-way. Akron Peninsula Road and Riverview Road are major entrances into the CVNP.

SCHUMACHER AREA

The Schumacher Area portion is approximately 315 acres. Current land use is residential, industrial, and open space. The Area contains Portage Trail, which is a major east-west connector route, as well as Northampton Road, which is a major north–south transportation route.

CUYAHOGA VALLEY NATIONAL PARK

The CVNP is located just north of the master planning study area. The Park is the seventh most visited National Park in the United States. It provides economic benefit to the area while enhancing the quality of life for many residents. The land within the National Park is zoned NP-1 in Cuyahoga Falls. This zoning strongly restricts development and acts as an urban growth boundary.

Figure 1.1 Site Location Map.w
Source: Farr Associates

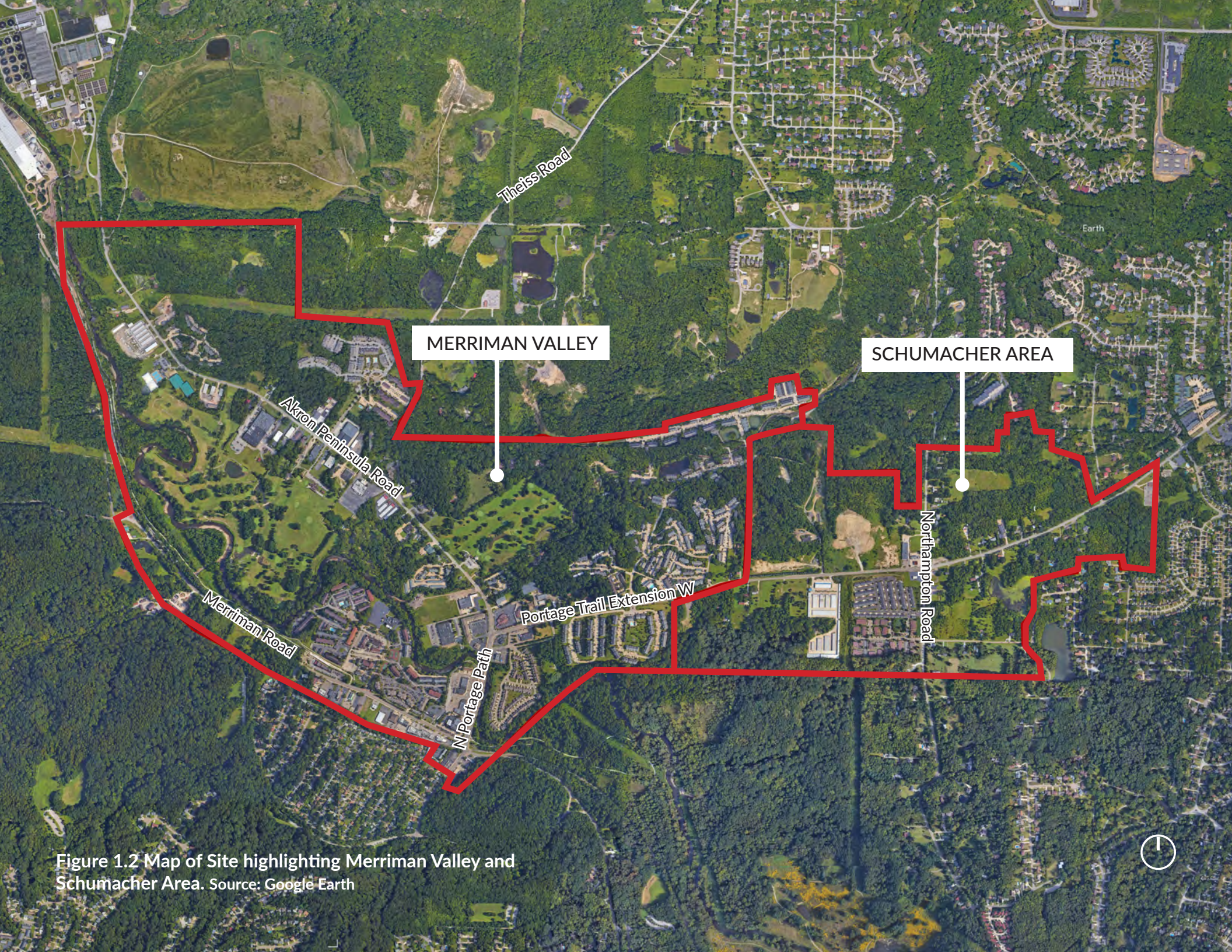


Figure 1.2 Map of Site highlighting Merriman Valley and Schumacher Area. Source: Google Earth

PROJECT BACKGROUND

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Merriman Valley is a place that has been both at the forefront of significant public efforts to preserve and restore the natural environment, as well as one where significant planning and urban development challenges exist.

Both cities have supported and enabled efforts to better steward the natural environment in the Valley, including the establishment of the Summit Metro Parks (1921); the creation of the Cuyahoga Valley National Park (1974); the completion of the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail; and the significant improvements to water quality in the Cuyahoga River enabled by hundreds of millions of dollars of expenditures by water ratepayers to upgrade Akron's sewer system.

At the same time, due to physical geography, outdated zoning regulations, and a meandering, crazy-quilt boundary between the two cities, the built environment in the study area has been haphazard, disjointed, and of a lower-quality than it otherwise could be.

As such, the time was right for both Akron Mayor Dan Horrigan and Cuyahoga Falls Mayor Don Walters to come together and co-create this Master Plan with residents, business owners, institutional partners, and other stakeholders. The Master Plan will build upon the positive legacy of previous environmental successes in the Cuyahoga Valley, while working intentionally and thoughtfully to establish a vision for land use and urban design that reflects the goals, values, and aspirations of all. The Plan is intended to ensure that the Merriman Valley and Schumacher Area neighborhoods will become more walkable, healthy, equitable, beautiful, and resilient places to live, work, and play.

PLAN VALUES

The following values are essential to building a shared vision and this project's long-term success:

- Transparency.
- Seeking understanding while listening.
- All ideas are worth hearing.
- Agreeing and disagreeing respectfully, and respect the process.
- Acknowledging the wisdom and diversity of perspectives involved in the process.
- Respecting the culture and uniqueness of this space and those in it.

VISION & GOALS

VISION STATEMENT

The Merriman Valley is a Gateway to the CVNP.

Let's make this Special Place a Global Model of Land Conservation and Sustainable Development by Piloting Innovations in planning and regulation.

GOALS OF THE PLAN

CONSERVE

Plan and code undeveloped private land as models of sustainability.

TRANSFORM

Transform existing development into beautiful, vibrant, and accessible places.

ACTIVATE

Promote ecotourism by optimizing access to green space, trails, the Cuyahoga River, and the National Park.

2 PREVIOUS PLANNING STUDIES

Prior planning work showcases the planning and policy context in which this plan was created, and highlights key issues for this plan to address.

UNDERSTANDING THE SITE

A TALE OF TWO CITIES

The arbitrary and somewhat confusing boundary between the two cities is the result of annexation of land by Akron and Cuyahoga Falls over the years. Working across two municipal jurisdictions can create complications for planning and development. Therefore, a unified vision and plan are essential for ensuring the long-term success and vitality of the study area. Regulations must be adopted by both cities to achieve the shared community vision.

This master plan builds on previous planning studies from both cities. Policy and planning continuity provides reassurance to residents, government officials, and other stakeholders that these master plan recommendations reflect and amplify long-standing community consensus.

Regulations that reflect a shared vision must be adopted by both cities.

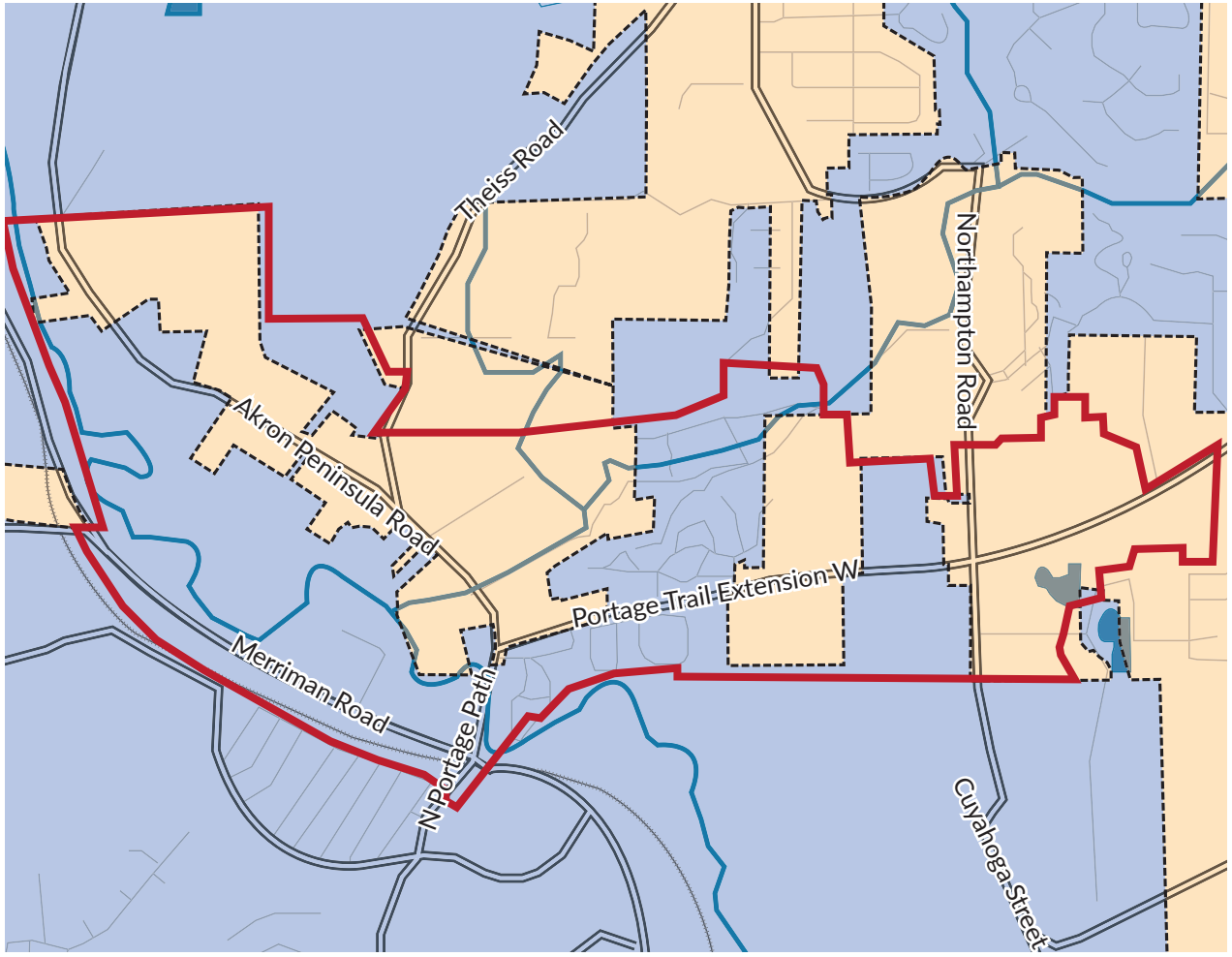


Figure 2.1 City of Cuyahoga Falls & City of Akron Municipal Borders with Study Area Boundary.
Source: Farr Associates

CITY OF CUYAHOGA FALLS PLANNING STUDIES

A PLANNING-FORWARD COMMUNITY

AN EARLY FRAMEWORK FOR GROWTH

In 1973, the Northampton Township Land Use and Thoroughfare Plan acknowledged that the Township was a rapidly developing area that needed solutions to address land development issues. The 1973 Plan established a framework for growth in the Township where viable economic activity would be in harmony with the conservation of manmade and natural amenities of the area.

CUYAHOGA FALLS-NORTHAMPTON TOWNSHIP MERGER 1986

In 1974, a large portion of Northampton Township was included in the Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area designation. In subsequent years, additional land within the Township was annexed by the cities of Akron and Cuyahoga Falls. In 1986, the rest of the Township became part of the City of Cuyahoga Falls by voter referendum in the Cuyahoga Falls-Northampton Township merger.

GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2007

The Cuyahoga Falls General Development Plan was developed after an extensive public participation process throughout 2003 to 2005. The Plan is a comprehensive, long-range statement of community policies, priorities, strategies, and goals. It helps manage long-term change and guide day-to-day decisions for city planning staff.

The plan separates the City into four general planning areas, listed as follows:

- Cuyahoga River Area
- Bailey-Munroe Falls Area
- State-Portage Trail Area
- Northampton Area

The Merriman Valley – Schumacher Area master plan study area includes small portions of the State-Portage Trail and Northampton planning areas. The study area also includes a part of the city referred to as the Schumacher Valley in the 2007 Plan. The following pages summarize key policies/strategies of the 2007 Development Plan that pertain to these three planning areas.

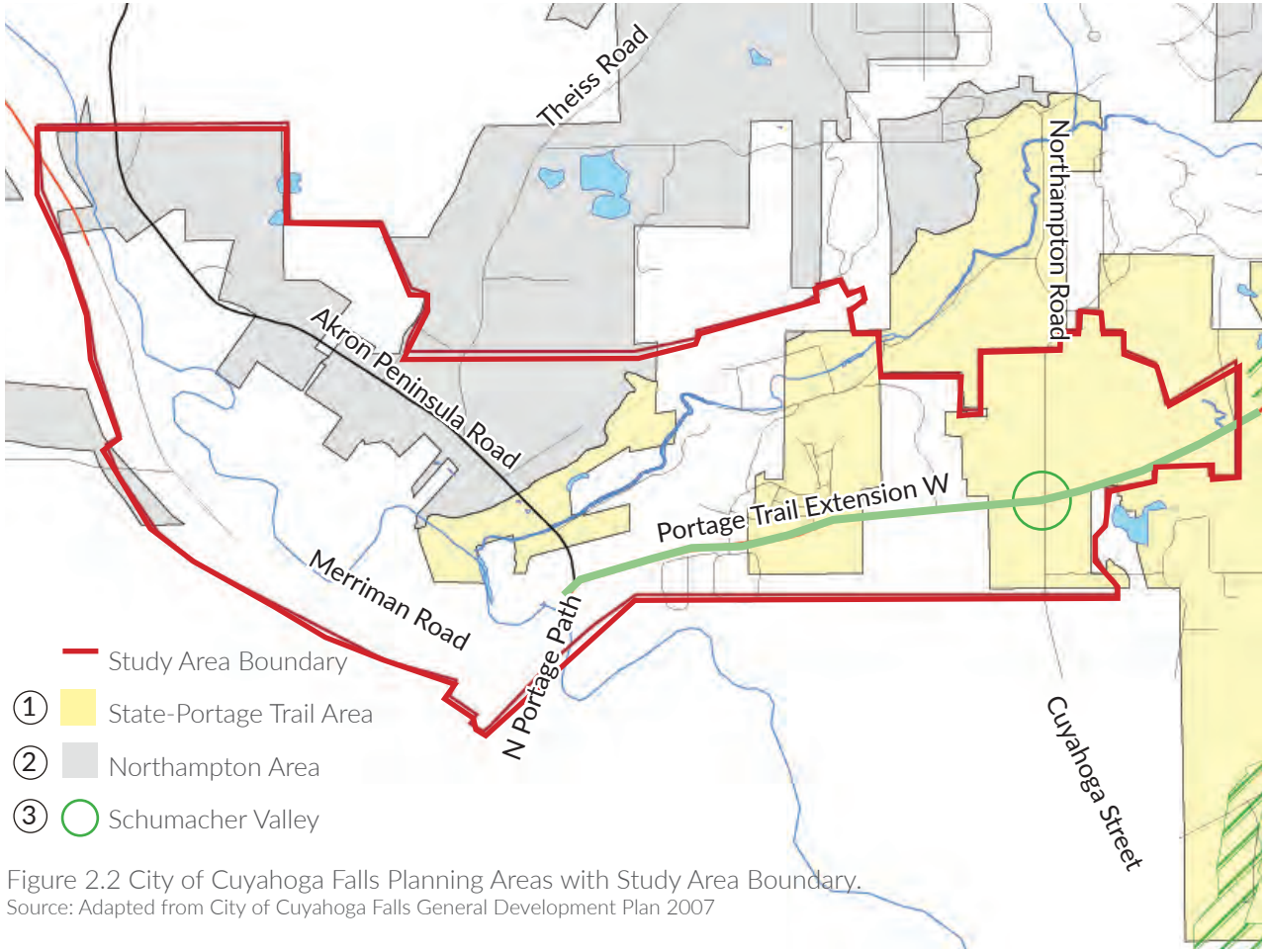


Figure 2.2 City of Cuyahoga Falls Planning Areas with Study Area Boundary.
Source: Adapted from City of Cuyahoga Falls General Development Plan 2007

CITY OF CUYAHOGA FALLS

① STATE-PORTAGE TRAIL AREA (GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN, 2007)

This area is the transition between the older urban and the more rural areas of the City. It represents the City's initial development outside of a "downtown and urban type neighborhood." The area is largely suburban, but also it includes transitions from rural areas and connections to the historical urban development patterns of the City. The area includes the State Road and Portage Trail commercial corridors, post World War II neighborhoods and newer medium density neighborhoods.

The general goals for this area are as follows:
Create a sustainable community that successfully incorporates older walkable neighborhoods with new mixed-use developments and modern neighborhoods. This can be done incorporating the following elements:

- Saving historically significant structures and natural features;
- Revitalizing and appropriately modernizing old urban neighborhoods, post World War II capes, and suburban ranches;
- Allowing new mixed-use development to replace commercial strip areas;
- Creating and preserving natural and formal open space; and
- Attracting a new more technical and diverse employment base.

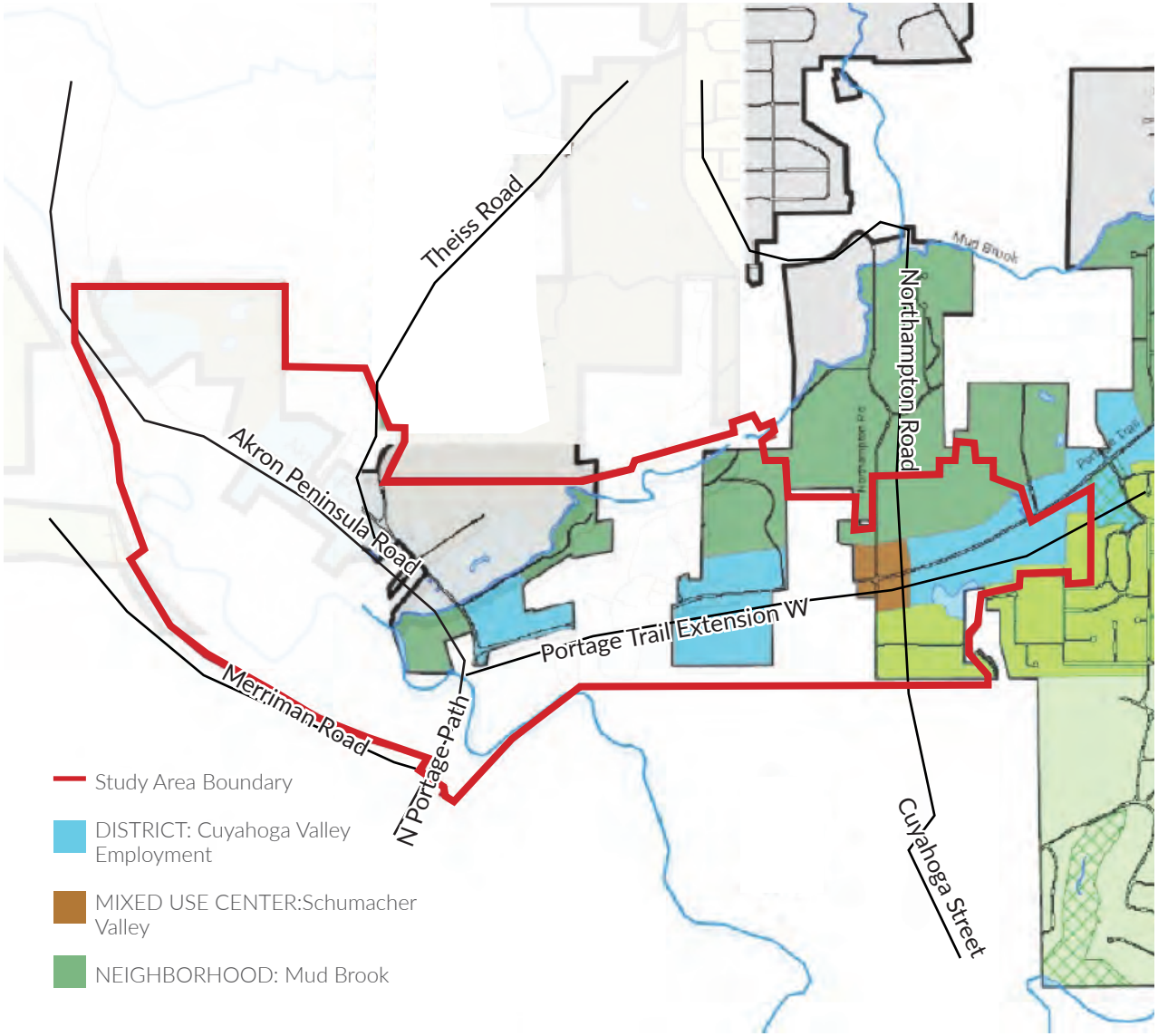


Figure 2.3 State-Portage Trail Area Districts & Neighborhoods.
Source: Adapted from City of Cuyahoga Falls General Development Plan 2007

CITY OF CUYAHOGA FALLS

② NORTHAMPTON AREA (GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN, 2007)

Prior to 1986, this part of the study area was part of Northampton Township. This area has a rural character, including the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, steep and rough topography, and substantial natural features. This area also includes newer lower-density housing developments, as well as some industrial uses. There is a considerable amount of land that is undeveloped in this planning area. Development in this part of the study area should perpetuate, reinforce, and reflect the natural characteristics of the land.

The general goal for the Northampton Area is to make it an appropriate gateway to the Cuyahoga Valley National Park and Summit Metro Parks systems. The following methods are currently outlined in the General Development Code as ways to achieve this goal:

- Preserving the natural resources of the Northampton Area
- Maximizing positive land use impacts by clustering hamlets and rural development patterns
- Providing connectivity and trail networks for pedestrians and bicyclists that is comparable to networks for motorists
- Creating opportunities for clean, green, and sustainable industries
- Allowing mixed-use hamlet development patterns at the major intersections

In general, the area has developed according to the guidance of the 2007 Plan. But the City of Cuyahoga Falls recognizes that more can be done to achieve the stated goals for the Northampton Area. This Master Plan is intended to provide guidance and a regulatory framework that ensures future projects are in alignment with the community's goals.

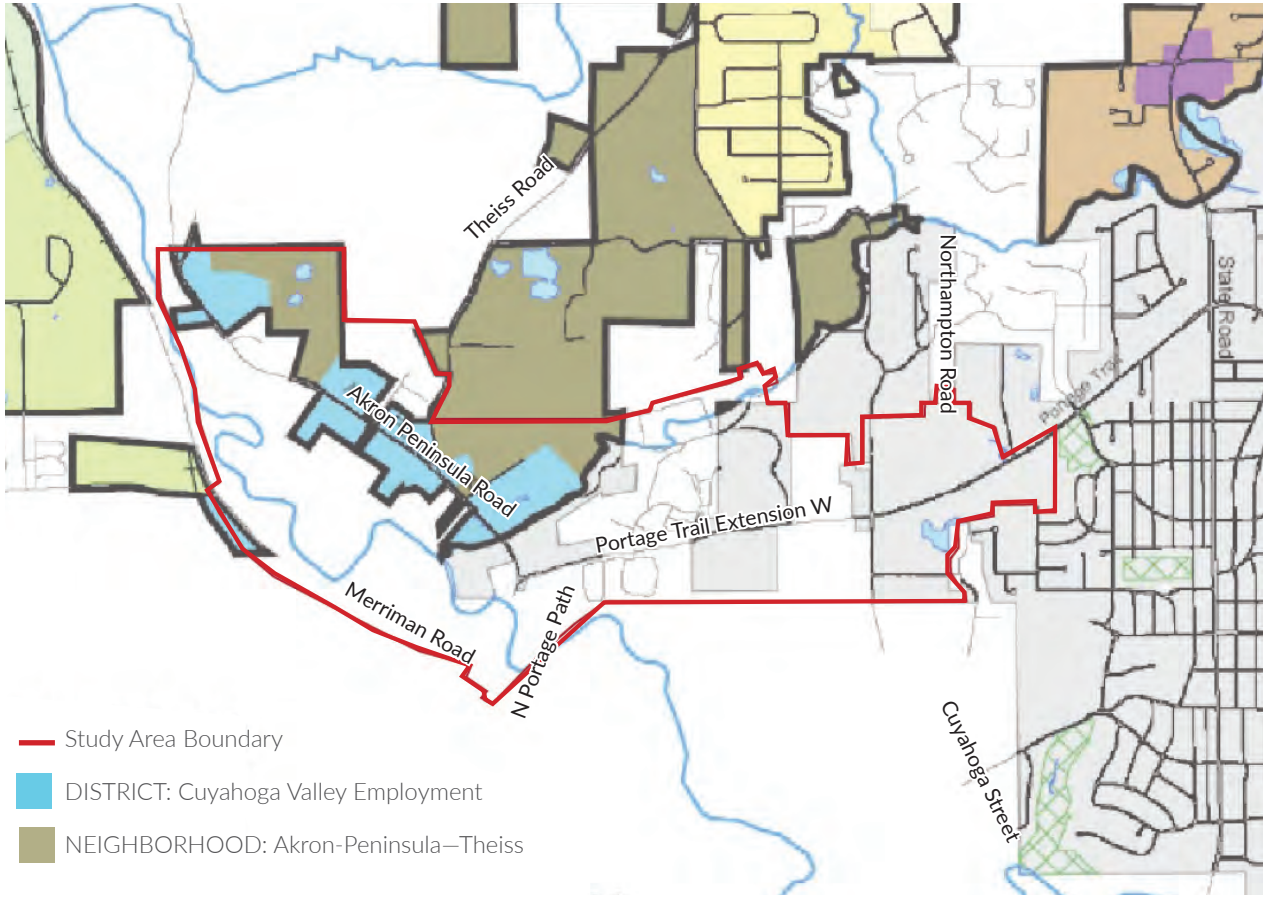


Figure 2.4 Northampton Area Planning Area Districts & Neighborhoods.
Source: Adapted from City of Cuyahoga Falls General Development Plan 2007

③ SCHUMACHER VALLEY (GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN, 2007)

The intersection of Portage Trail Extension and Northampton Road has the potential to become a convenient, walkable mixed-use center for surrounding residents. The intersection is located on the major east-west arterial of Portage Trail Extension. It is adjacent to the Summit Metro Parks Schumacher Trail, and it is on the edge of the Cuyahoga Valley National Park.

For these reasons, the 2007 General Development Plan proposed a mixed-use center at this location. The 2007 Plan includes many beneficial strategies, incorporating a grid road pattern to reduce congestion at the intersection, on-street parking, wide sidewalks for pedestrians, bike lanes and walking trails that connect the retail node to the Schumacher Trail, and preservation of open space.

The plan as shown at right does have several shortcomings. First, it lacks a central sense of place for the community. Neighborhoods benefit from having a compelling central space that can attract people through its placement, design, and accessibility.

Figure 2.5: Peninsula, Ohio provides a local example of a well designed hamlet that is also a CVNP gateway.
Source: Ohio Magazine, Photo by Kevin Kopanski

The buildings at the intersection are shown set far back from the street with parking lots in front. This configuration detracts from the sense of place and also discourages walking.

The Merriman Valley-Schumacher Area master plan proposes a mixed-use hamlet in this location as recommended by the 2007 Plan. The new master plan will propose improvements that address some of the shortcomings of original plan. The master plan will allow controlled housing and retail development, while preserving some open space.

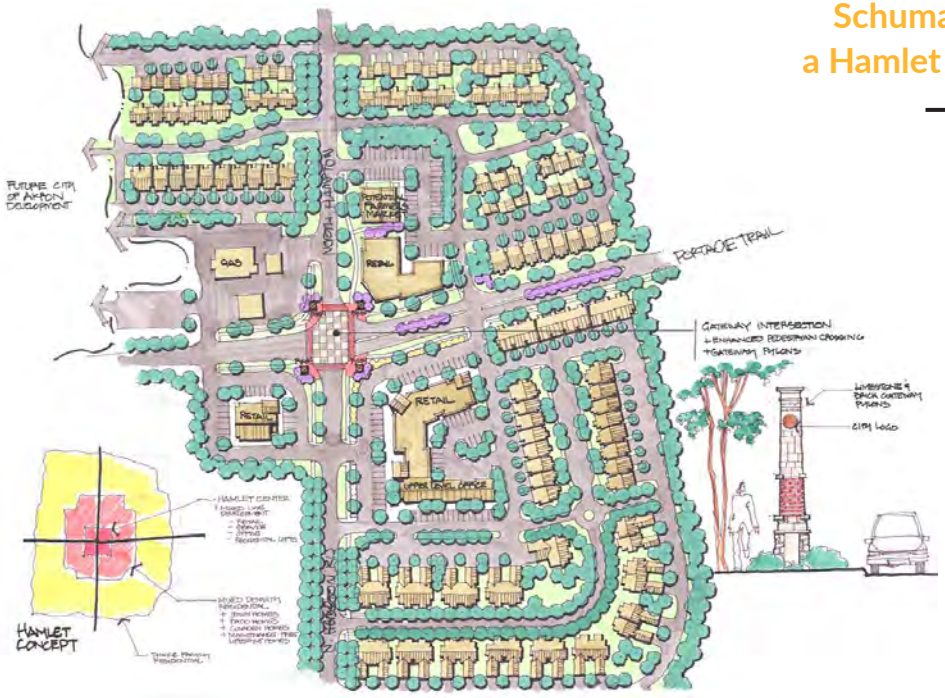


Figure 2.6: Proposed Schumacher Valley Hamlet Mixed-Use Configuration.
Source: Gould Evans, 2005 from Cuyahoga Falls General Development Plan

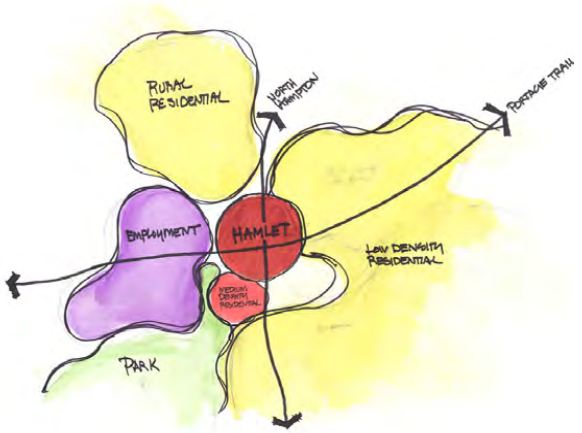


Figure 2.7: Schumacher Valley Hamlet Land Use Bubble. Source: Gould Evans, 2005 from Cuyahoga Falls General Development Plan

Schumacher Valley: a Hamlet in name only.

CITY OF AKRON PLANNING STUDIES

POISED TO GROW THE TAX BASE

HOUSING STRATEGY: *PLANNING TO GROW AKRON*

In 2017, the City of Akron initiated *Planning to Grow Akron*, which proposes to increase the population of Akron by 50,000 residents by the year 2050. The plan focuses primarily on facilitating new housing construction. Investing in new housing construction increases the number of residents living in the city. Increased population means additional income taxes come into city coffers to support vital city services for all. The additional residents also patronize and support the viability of local businesses.

Planning to Grow Akron 2.0 expands the scope of the original Planning to Grow Akron by addressing stabilization of existing neighborhoods. It proposes to achieve this through improvements to housing stock, infrastructure, and streetscapes, promoting adaptive reuse of existing buildings, and updates to the zoning code that promote equitable, pedestrian-friendly development.

GREAT STEETS: MERRIMAN ROAD

In 2018, the city initiated its "Great Streets Akron" program in 12 neighborhood business districts throughout the city, including the Merriman Valley. The program aims to bring renewed energy and investment to Akron's neighborhood business districts through neighborhood engagement, streetscape enhancements, and matching grants for exterior business improvements. Since 2018, over $400,000 in Facade Grants have been awarded to improve businesses in the Merriman Valley.

Merriman Valley Great Streets Boundary

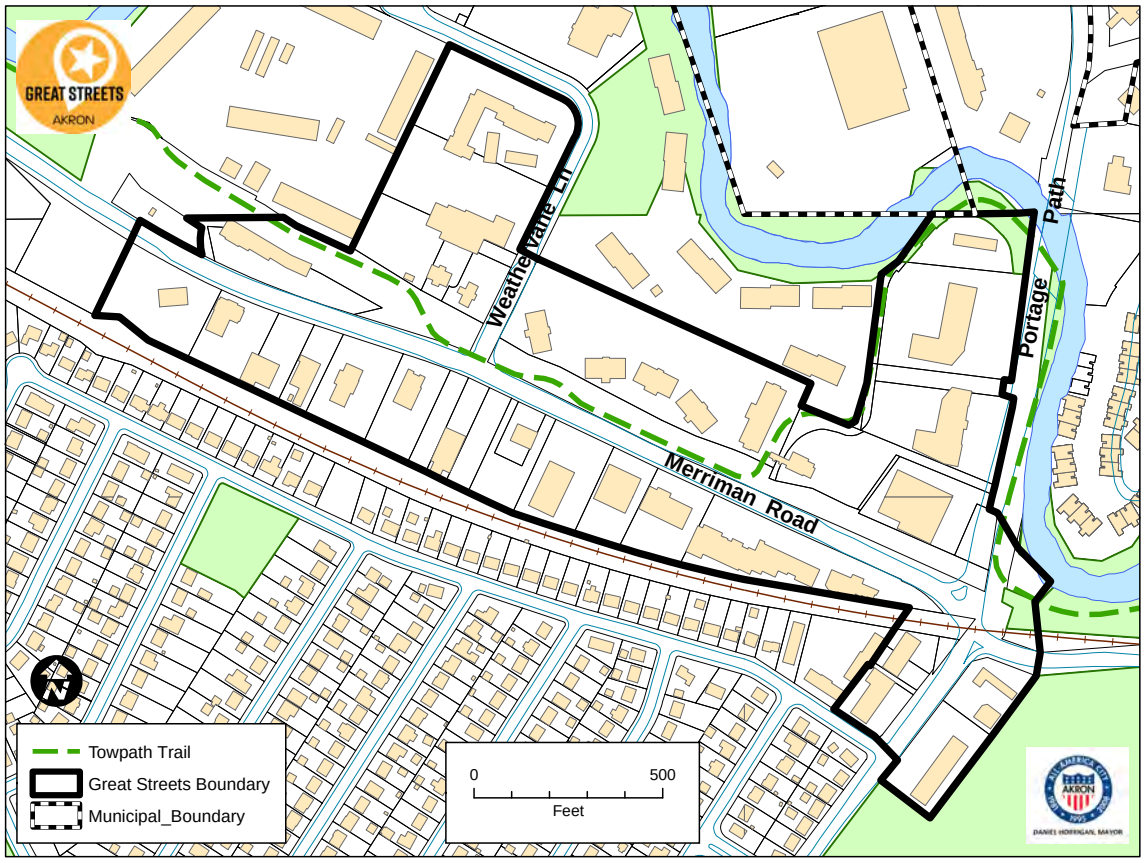


Figure 2.8 Merriman Valley Great Streets Map.
Source: City of Akron, Great Streets Akron

These initiatives are good first steps towards revitalization.

CITY OF AKRON

DUE FOR A ZONING UPDATE

OFFICE OF INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT

The Office of Integrated Development (OID) was formed in 2018 to coordinate planning, zoning, economic development, community development, parks and recreation, and engineering functions within the city. OID's mission is to co-create with residents and businesses, a community that is healthy, equitable, beautiful, and resilient. The OID team strives to achieve holistic solutions to issues affecting the city. OID staff use these principles as the basis for all decision-making.

FIVE YEAR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Many of the priorities of the OID Strategic Framework apply to the master plan study area. One priority of the Framework is a comprehensive zoning code modernization for the entire City of Akron. As part of the Merriman Valley Schumacher Area master plan, a modern form-based zoning code is being developed. This code will ensure that the community's vision for the area is realized in future development and redevelopment. This form-based code will be used as a pilot project to demonstrate the efficacy of this type of zoning code.

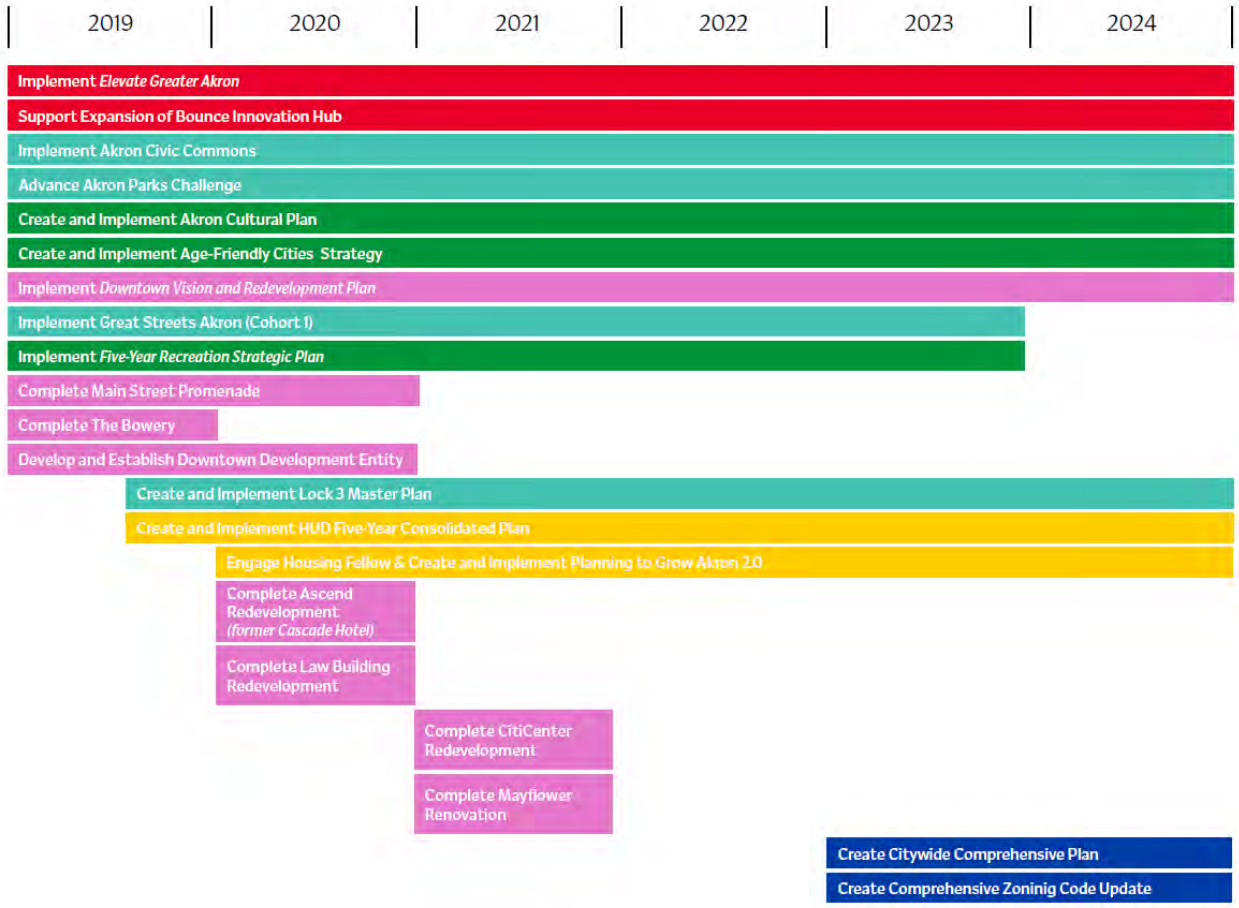


Figure 2.9 OID Five Year Plan Schedule.
Source: City of Akron, Office of Integrated Development Five Year Strategic Framework 2019-2024, page 47

CITY OF AKRON

RESIDENTIAL TAX ABATEMENT PROGRAM, 2017

RESIDENTIAL TAX ABATEMENT

Since 1960, the City of Akron has lost over one-third of its population. This equates to nearly 100,000 residents. With the loss of these residents has come the loss of jobs, economic opportunity, and social opportunity for Akron residents. While the population has declined by one-third, municipal expenditures have not. The same number of miles of streets must continue to be maintained. Police and fire protection, as well as other critical public services, must continue to be provided over the same 62 square mile footprint of the city. Fewer and fewer residents now must bear a larger financial burden to pay for these city services - including new expenditures related to mitigating disinvestment and decline. According to a recent analysis by Cleveland State University, Akron has lost 42% of its property tax base since 1960, falling by $4.3 billion between 1960 and 2018 – a larger decrease than any community in Northeast Ohio, other than Cleveland.

To address the issue of population loss, the 2017 *Planning to Grow Akron* report recommended many strategies to increase the supply of marketable housing and drive up demand for living in the city's neighborhoods. Foremost among these recommendations was a citywide residential property tax abatement program. The program provides abatement on the increased real property taxes for residential remodeling projects and new residential construction. The tax abatement applies only to the property taxes for the improved value of the land or existing structure. The property owner continues to pay taxes on the value of the land and/or structure that existed prior to improvements. Tax abatement is only provided for the residential portion of mixed-used projects.

The tax abatement program has had a measurable impact on housing development in Akron. Prior to implementation of the program, less than two dozen housing units were built in the city each year. Since the tax abatement program began, it has led to the construction of a wide variety of single-family and multi-family residences in a diverse array of neighborhoods throughout the city. More than 500 housing units have been completed since 2017, with another 1,200 under construction or in development.

As the existing housing stock in the Merriman Valley ages (63.5% of the housing units in the City of Akron were constructed before 1960, see Table 2.1), owners of these properties will be well-positioned to take advantage of the tax abatement incentive. The abatement is applicable to both the renovation of these existing structures, as well as to their replacement with new residential units that better conform to the recommendations contained in this Master Plan. New and renovated housing means more economic opportunity and jobs, more stable neighborhoods, more retail options, and, over the long term, it means more property tax revenue for the city.

Table 2.1 Age of Housing in Akron, OH.

Age of Housing	Ohio	Summit County	Portage County	City of Akron
2010 or later	1.0%	0.5%	1.0%	0.3%
2000 to 2009	10.0%	8.0%	13.9%	4.1%
1990 to 1999	11.8%	11.4%	15.5%	4.5%
1980 to 1989	9.0%	8.2%	9.5%	5.5%
1970 to 1979	14.2%	13.1%	17.8%	9.9%
1960 to 1969	12.4%	13.5%	12.2%	12.2%
1950 to 1959	14.4%	17.4%	12.0%	18.2%
1940 to 1949	6.4%	7.7%	4.1%	10.4%
1939 or earlier	20.8%	20.1%	14.1%	34.9%

Source: City of Akron, Community Reinvestment Area Housing Survey (2017)

The Akron Tax Abatement Program encourages revitalization of existing housing stock and development of new housing.

3 SITE ANALYSIS

This plan is built upon site assets. This section explores the study area zoning, history, open space & trails, connectivity & accessibility, character & identity, opportunities & constraints, and market potential.

OVERVIEW

PRESENTING THE ANALYSIS

This planning effort has unfolded with significant site analysis and understanding of the Merriman Valley - Schumacher Area.

As the study area is under two jurisdictions, the following analysis represents the data from both cities on one map/diagram.

Where appropriate, the analyses are presented in three parts:

- Assessment (conclusions from the analysis)
- Importance (a brief statement on why this analysis matters)
- Recommendation (actions based on the conclusions)

Recommendations are called out as key takeaways and highlighted in color on each page.

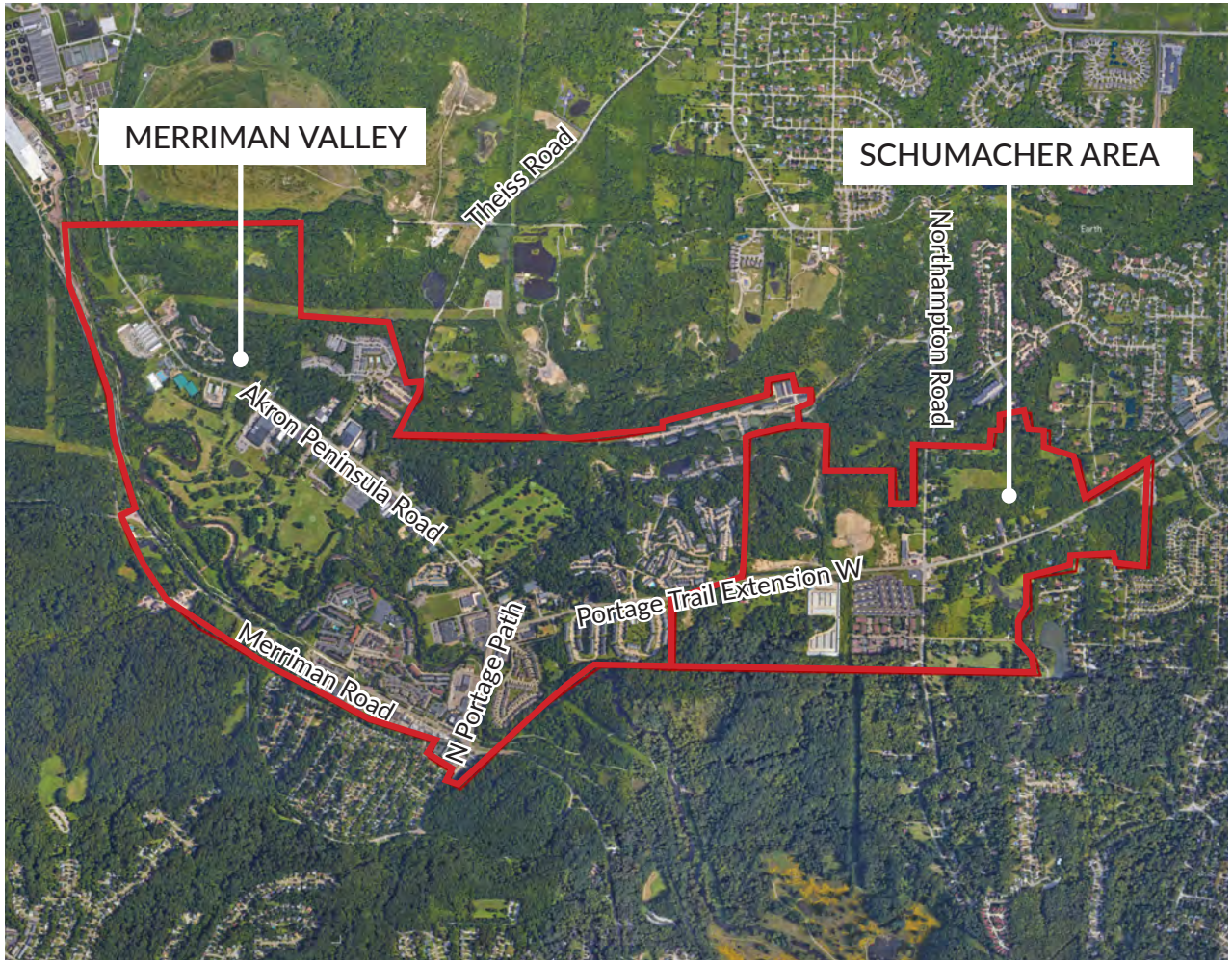


Figure 3.1 Local Areas Within Study Area Boundary.
Source: Farr Associates

SITE HISTORY

EARLY HISTORY

The Cuyahoga River received its name from the indigenous people of this area and means “Crooked River”. The river played a crucial role in the settlement of this region of Northeast Ohio. The river provided an abundant supply of fish and plants for food for indigenous people, and it also served as an important transportation system.

CONNECTING THE CUYAHOGA AND TUSCARAWAS RIVERS

The Portage Path was an eight-mile transportation route utilized by indigenous people to travel with their canoes between the Cuyahoga and Tuscarawas Rivers. This connection allowed them to travel from the Great Lakes in the north all the way to the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico. The takeout point for the canoes was at a bend in the river located at the northeast corner of Portage Path and Merriman Road. Today, the northern terminus of the path is marked by a bronze statue.

Celebrate the area’s rich history through design.

Figure 3.X 2ortage Path Monument.
Source: City of Akron (Artist: Peter Jones)

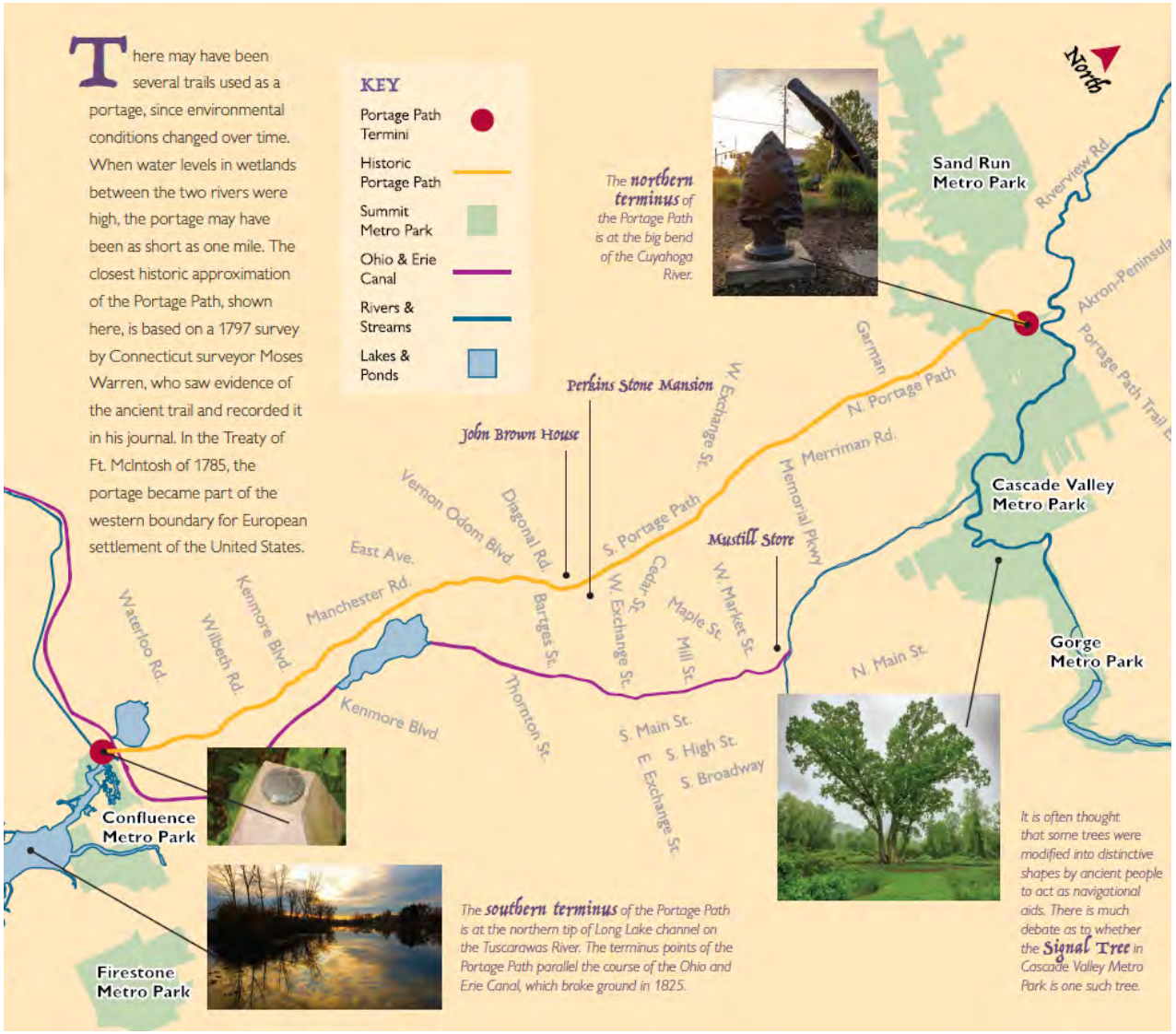


Figure 3.3 Historic Portage Path Map.
Source: The Portage Path, Akron’s connection to America’s first people (Summit Metro Parks & The Summit County Historical Society)

SITE HISTORY CONT'D

CUYAHOGA RIVER

WESTERN BOUNDARY OF THE U.S.

Following the American Revolutionary War, the United States expanded rapidly to the west, and from 1795 through 1803, the Cuyahoga River served as the official western boundary of the United States.

OHIO & ERIE CANAL

Ohio was a sparsely settled wilderness in the early 1800s. Travel was difficult and getting crops to market was challenging. The Ohio & Erie Canal, built between 1825 and 1832, provided a successful transportation route from Cleveland, on Lake Erie, to Portsmouth, on the Ohio River. The canal opened up the interior of Ohio to eastern United States markets. The canal was sited along the Cuyahoga River to ensure a reliable supply of water. The City of Akron thrived as a trade center located at the high point of the canal route.

RUBBER CAPITAL

The Cuyahoga River was an early source of power for mills and manufacturing for many cities along its route, including Cuyahoga Falls and Akron. In the late 1800s, the river provided plentiful water to serve the growing rubber manufacturing plants in the area. As the four major rubber companies located in Akron grew in size and prominence, the city became known as the "Rubber Capital of the World".

CLEAN WATER ACT

Heavily polluted by the rubber and other industries, the Cuyahoga River caught fire multiple times during the twentieth century, with the most notorious fire taking place in Cleveland on June 22, 1969. Although this fire was not the most fatal or costly in the river's history, it inspired Congress to pass the National Environmental Policy Act on January 1, 1970. This act established the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). In 1972, the EPA put forth the Clean Water Act, which mandated that all rivers throughout the United States be safe and hygienic for swimmers and fish by 1983. The Act had a significant impact on the health of rivers throughout the United States, including the Cuyahoga.

A HEALTHIER WATERWAY

To improve the water quality of the Cuyahoga River, Little Cuyahoga River, Ohio and Erie Canal, and ultimately Lake Erie, the City of Akron embarked on its Akron Waterways Renewed project in 2009. The City has spent nearly $1 billion to stem combined sewer overflows into these waterways. In addition, Akron, Cuyahoga Falls, and other communities have been working collaboratively to improve water quality through multiple dam removals on the river. These combined efforts have made the river cleaner, encouraging more kayaking and canoeing on the water, and improving habitat for bald eagles, fish, and other wildlife.

TOWPATH TRAIL

During the canal era, canal boats were towed along the route of the Ohio & Erie Canal by mules walking a narrow path that paralleled the water. Today, the Towpath Trail is a driver of economic activity and an important recreational amenity in the area. The Trail extends 87 miles from Cleveland to New Philadelphia. It is used by 2.5 million hikers, joggers, and cyclists annually.

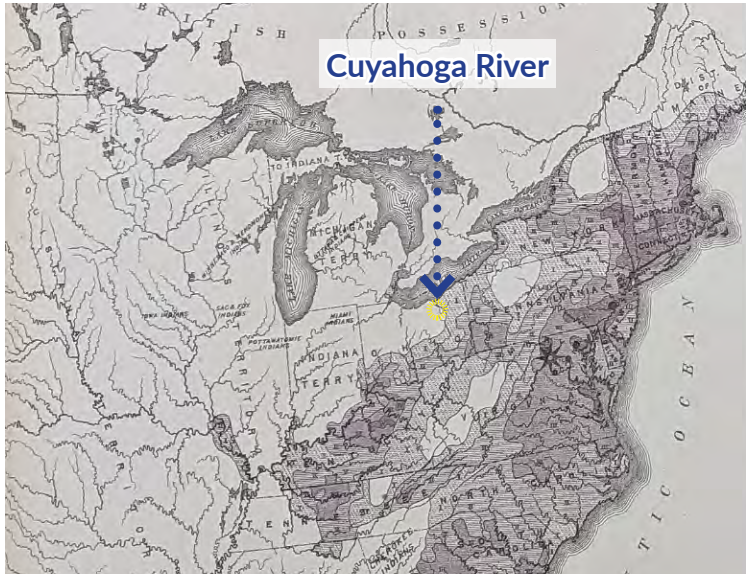


Figure 3.4 States and Territories of the Unites States of America, 1795. Source: VisualCapitalist.com

The Cuyahoga River has an extensive and significant history. Its story should be commemorated for all to see.

Figure 3.5 Perkins Mansion Wall.
Source: City of Akron

SITE HISTORY CONT'D

SETTLEMENT

THE CONECTICUT WESTERN RESERVE

Northeast Ohio was originally part of the Connecticut Western Reserve, a 120 mile wide tract of land owned by the State of Connecticut. In 1796, the Connecticut Land Company sent Moses Cleaveland to survey the area and divide it into townships, 25 square miles each. Northampton Township and Portage Township were two of the original surveyed townships.

NORTHAMPTON TOWNSHIP

The first Caucasian settler in Northampton Township was Simeon Prior, who settled in the area with his wife and ten children from Northampton, MA in 1802. At the time of his settlement, the area was a rich wilderness, and indigenous peoples were still living in the area. Cuyahoga Falls was originally located at the junction of Northampton, Stow, Tallmadge, and Portage Townships.

PORTAGE TOWNSHIP BECOMES AKRON

Settled in 1838, Portage Township was sparsely populated due to land that was either too hilly or muddy for proper agricultural use. The township later became the City of Akron.

Future development and redevelopment should preserve the rural history of the region.

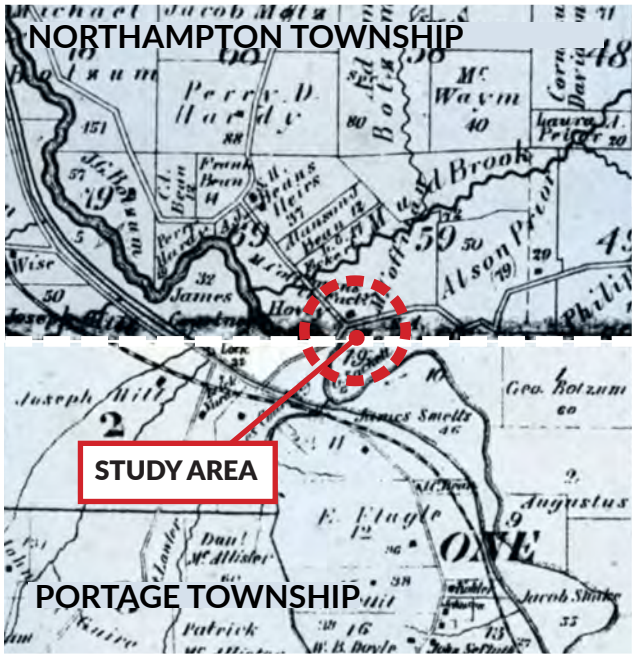


Figure 3.6 Northampton 1880 (top left), Historic Summit County Map, 1874 (bottom left), Northampton Sawmill Mud Brook 1870 (top right), Prior Cabin 1812 (bottom right).
Source: Wolves&Flax, Tackabury, Mead and Moffett

IMPACT OF PARKS

COMMUNITY BENEFITS OF A WORLD-CLASS PARKS SYSTEM

A VITAL ROLE IN OUR LIVES

Much like water, sewer, and public safety, parks provide measurable benefits to communities through economic, health, environmental, and social improvements. With Summit Metro Parks (SMP) celebrating its centennial in 2021 and CVNP approaching its 50th anniversary, these parks have long contributed to the Merriman Valley and beyond. Together, they protect approximately 45,000 acres of green space, including 200+ miles of trail; access to the Cuyahoga River; opportunities for outdoor recreation — and so much more. In 2020, both parks experienced a 20% increase in visitation, as many people found new appreciation for the vital role that access to nature plays in our lives.

Research demonstrates a significant correlation between time spent in nature and improved mental and physical health. According to studies by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, creating, improving, and promoting places to be physically active can improve individual and community health, and result in a 25% increase in residents who exercise at least three times per week.

DRIVING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Because of their many benefits, the real estate market consistently supports higher prices for property located close to parks and open spaces, with higher home values then adding to the tax base of local municipalities. Parks consistently drive economic development, with access to green space cited as a top amenity that businesses seek during relocation.

Parks also create indirect revenues from special events such as sports tournaments, arts, music, and festivals, and economic activity from hospitality expenditures, tourism, fuel, and recreational equipment sales. Communities just outside park boundaries act as "gateways" to and provide important amenities for park visitors. Both the SMP and National Park Service brands boost the advertising reach for nearby communities.

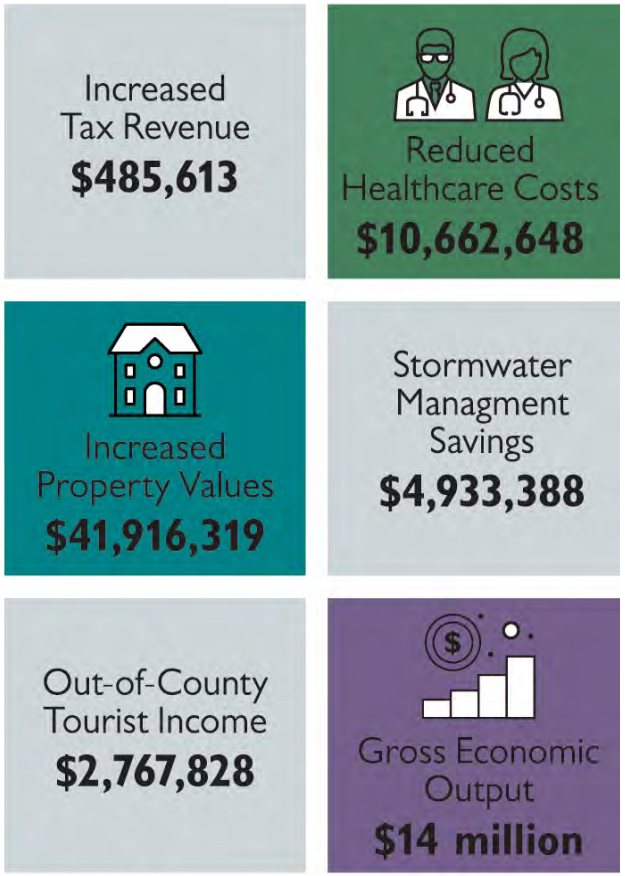
In fact, in 2020, 2.8 million park visitors spent ~$48.5 million in local gateway regions while visiting CVNP. These expenditures supported 709 jobs, $24.4 million in labor income, $40.7 million in value added*, and $70.2 million in economic output in economies surrounding CVNP.^ Figure 3.7 shows a summary of similar economic impacts from SMP.

IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL

Parks are widely recognized for improving air and water quality, protecting groundwater, preventing flooding, reducing stormwater runoff, providing vegetative buffers to development, and protecting connected wildlife habitats. As communities increasingly look for ways to reduce or mitigate the impacts of climate change, parks and trees can be one of the most effective tools to address increasing temperatures. Parks such as Valley View that are designed with smart water management systems can reduce stormwater runoff, helping to guard against costly and dangerous floods.

Perhaps now more than ever, there is recognition of the important role that parks play in a community's quality of life. Parks are open 365 days a year, free of charge, so in addition to their economic, health, and environmental benefits, parks also provide gathering spaces for families and social groups of all ages, abilities, and economic backgrounds, regardless of their ability to pay for access.

Source: NPS Social Science Branch 2020 National Park Service Visitor Spending Effects Report).



Source: An Economic Impact Analysis of Metro Parks, Serving Summit County (The University of Akron), 2012

Figure 3.7 Benefits of Metro Parks.
Source: Summit Metro Parks

**Value Added measures the contribution of National Park Service visitor spending to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of a regional economy. Value added is equal to the difference between the amount an industry sells a product for and the production cost of the product.*

OPPORTUNITIES & CONSTRAINTS

NATURAL WATER & HUMAN UTILITIES

FLOODPLAINS & WETLANDS

The Cuyahoga River and Mud Brook floodplains are extensive (Appendix Figure 7.1). The City of Cuyahoga Falls GIS layer has floodplains that exceed those of the National Flood Hazard Maps. This needs clarification. Floodplains should not be developed with building improvements, but can be an opportunity for trails and green space.

The wetlands within the Study Area are based on Ohio state databases. There are some wetlands outside of the floodplains along Mud Brook and Cuyahoga River. Wetlands disturbances should be avoided.

SLOPES, VEGETATION, & SOILS

Terrain varies within the study area. See Slope Analysis Map (Appendix Figure 7.1). Consideration should be given to restricting development on steep slopes to prevent erosion. In general, the terrain drains to Mud Brook and the Cuyahoga River, which have a confluence within the study area 1000' west of the intersection of Akron Peninsula Road and Portage Trail Extension W. This confluence may be an open space opportunity.

Previous to development, land cover was typically deciduous forest, much of which remains today. According to NRCS soils maps (Appendix Figure 7.2), the soils in the project area vary greatly but are majority terraced formations with good loam top soils with sand and gravel subsoils that drain and infiltrate well.

SEWER

The Akron Water Reclamation Facility is located along the Cuyahoga River, just north of the study area. It is the wastewater treatment plant for the cities of Akron, Cuyahoga Falls, and several other surrounding communities. A large sewer interceptor line runs along Mud Brook, and the City's 144" x 90" main outfall sewer runs parallel to Merriman Road. This main sewer line can be a significant constraint, as it runs underground just north of the Merriman Road right of way between Portage Path and Weathervane Lane, and it is above ground from Weathervane Lane north to the Water Reclamation Facility. The main outfall sewer is located within "canal lands" where deed agreements should be researched for appropriate land use. Buildings on top of the sewer along Merriman are prohibited, but sidewalks, roads, and greenspace may be possible. The presence of sewer and water utilities will have an impact on potential development. Currently, there are no sewer lines on Portage Trail Ext. W.

WATER

The CR 2010 Land Use and Transportation Study recommended that a 12" water line be installed in Portage Trail Ext. W. A new water line is planned for installation on Portage Trail Ext. W. from Northampton Road to Valley Rd. within the next several years.

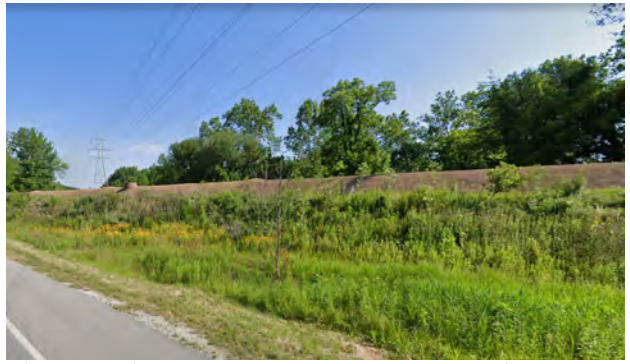
POWER

Large high voltage power transmission lines traverse the project area north of Merriman Road, crossing Weathervane Lane about 480' north of Merriman, and crossing Portage Path about 800' north of Merriman Road. This creates a development constraint and impacts the quality of open space.

Avoid building on floodplains, wetlands, and steep slopes; use these for trails and green space.

Power lines and Pylons

Railroad Crossing



Above grade main sewer on Merriman Road

Figure 3.8 Utilities Within Study Area.
Source: Paul Crabtree

EXISTING LAND USE OVERALL

A RURAL AND SUBURBAN CHARACTER

ASSESSMENT

Merriman Road and N Portage Path are the commercial corridors for the Study Area. Portage Trail Extension W provides access to residential developments and a small commercial corner at Northampton Road. Large expanses of open space surround the study area, which adds to the rural character of the place. However, not all this green space is publicly accessible or developable (see Figure 3.10 on next page).

IMPORTANCE

Ideally, strong neighborhoods should have commercial and civic nodes, gateways, parks within a 5 minute walking distance, and a diverse range of housing and building types. A diverse range of activities and land uses adds to the vibrancy of a community.

Development needs to complement surrounding uses.

- Undeveloped Land/ Low-Density Residential
- Subdivisions/Residential
- Retail
- Office/Light Industrial
- City Owned Parcels
- Parks and Preserved Open Space

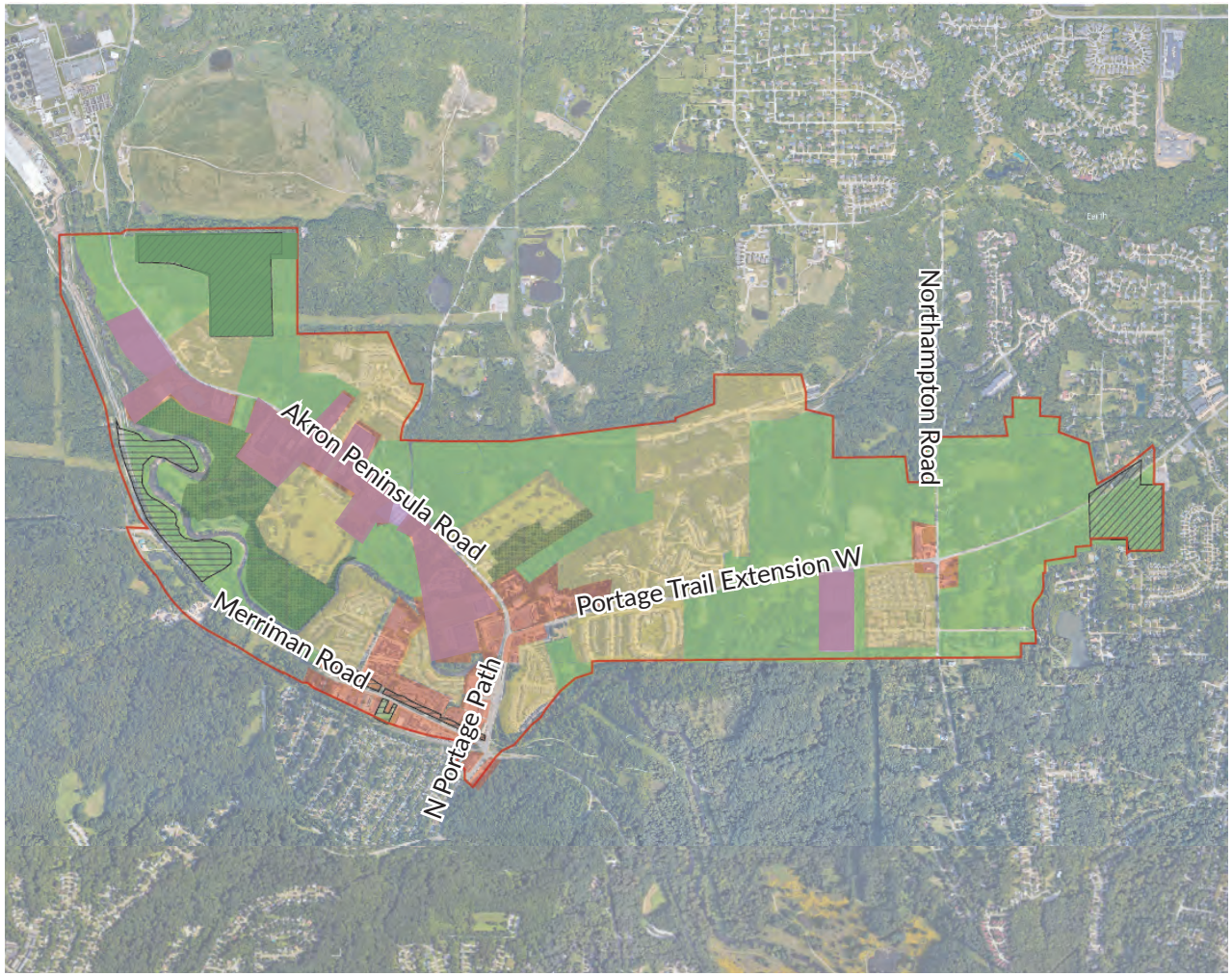


Figure 3.9 Overall Land Use Map.
Source: Farr Associates

UNDEVELOPED VS. DEVELOPED LAND

UNDEVELOPED LAND IN THE VALLEY IS NOT EVENLY DISTRIBUTED

ASSESSMENT

Undeveloped land within the study area is not equally distributed between the two cities. Cuyahoga Falls has much more land that has not been previously developed. 72 percent of the Cuyahoga Falls land within the study area is undeveloped land or low-density residential (337 of 468 acres). Conversely, only 8.9 percent of the Akron land within the study area is undeveloped (40 of 452 acres).

IMPORTANCE

Cuyahoga Falls has greater opportunity for development on undeveloped land; policies will need to clearly favor redevelopment in order to preserve these more open lands. Akron should focus on redevelopment of existing centers.

Both cities need a cohesive approach to development and redevelopment.

- Undeveloped Land/ Low-Density Residential
- Subdivisions/Residential
- Retail
- Office/Light Industrial
- City Owned Parcels
- Parks and Preserved Open Space

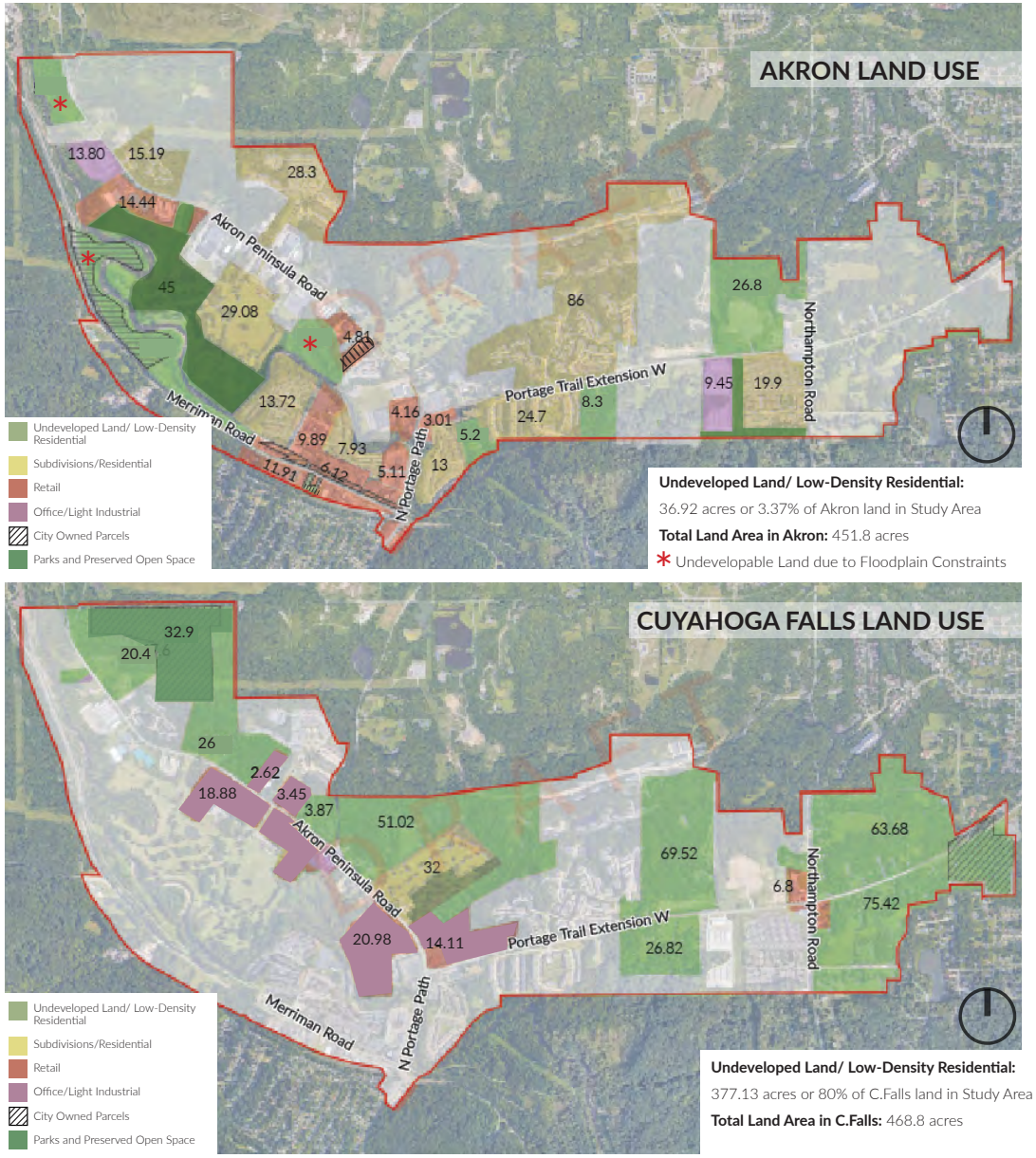


Figure 3.10 Comparison of Land Uses Across Cities.
Source: Farr Associates

ZONING

RESIDENTIAL ZONING DOMINATES

ASSESSMENT

The study area is predominantly zoned for residential uses. Retail and commercial uses line Merriman Road, N. Portage Path, Akron Peninsula Road, and Portage Trail Extension W.

IMPORTANCE

Zoning gives local authorities a mechanism to regulate land and property markets, and to ensure land uses are complimentary. Zoning empowers a community to realize its shared vision for land use.

Current zoning sometimes prevents the community from realizing its shared vision.

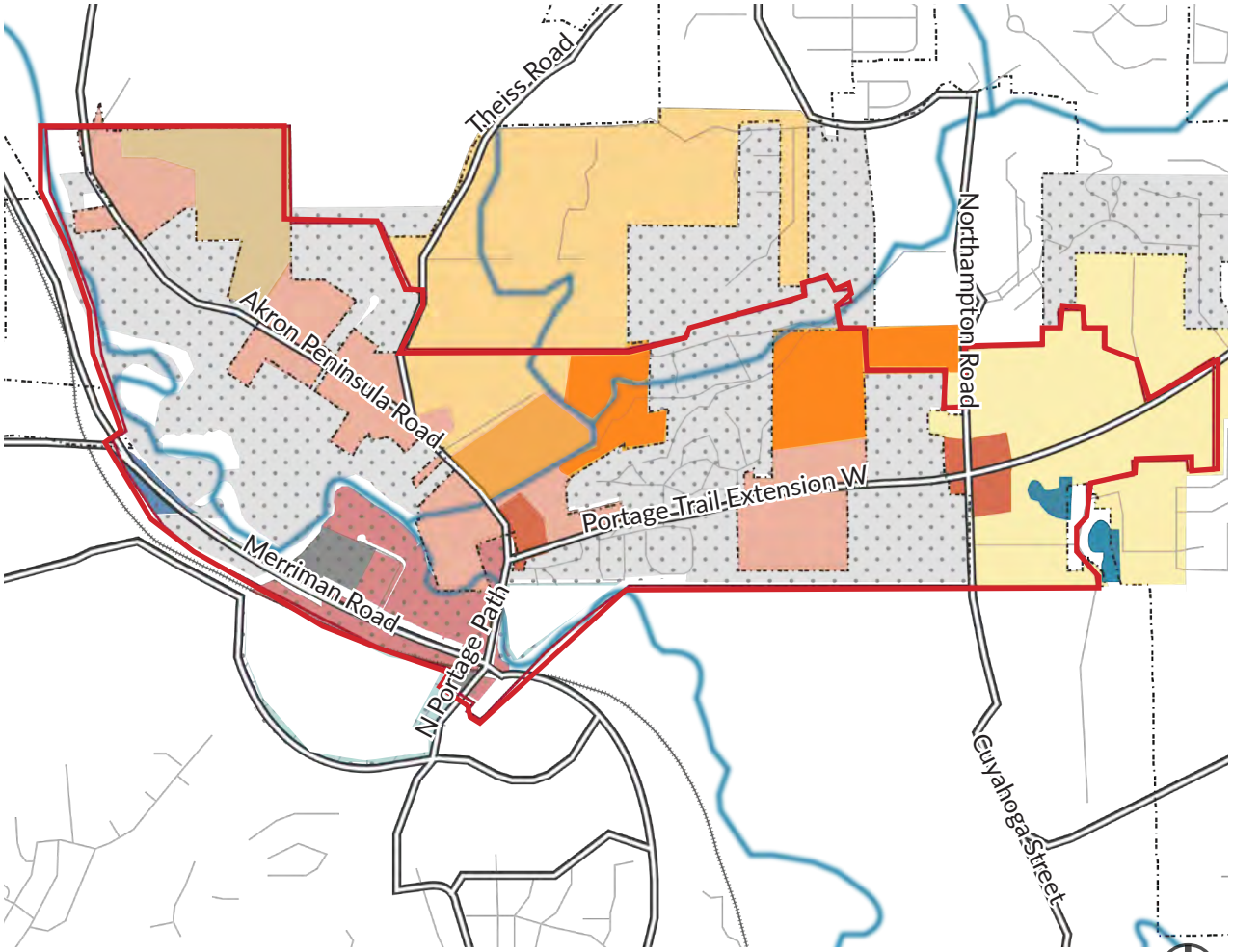


Figure 3.11 Zoning Designations.
Source: Farr Associates

Full details of each zoning category are detailed in the appendix. See page XX

GREEN SPACES & OUTDOOR AMENITIES

AMPLE GREEN SPACES

ASSESSMENT

The study area is surrounded by extensive public parks. Most notably, the Cuyahoga Valley National Park sits just north of the study area. In addition, three Summit Metro Parks are located on the northern and southern boundaries of the study area. These parks provide residents and visitors with trails and ample open space for outdoor activities, such as hiking, biking, bird watching, and kayaking. Furthermore, the Cuyahoga River Water Trail is a marked route for recreation that provides another way to interact with nature in the area.

The natural areas within the study area are utilized as both natural habitats for wildlife and as preserved open space for humans. While there can be cross benefits to green space that is used by both wildlife and humans, there can also be conflicts that arise between these two groups of inhabitants.

IMPORTANCE

Having ready access to public parks and open space improves property values and the quality of life of residents. Natural open space can provide a setting for social interaction, and is important for mental and physical health.

- Cuyahoga Valley National Park
- Summit Metro Parks
- Local Parks & Preserved Open Space
- Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail
- Proposed Mud Brook Trail
- Proposed Kayaking Facilities
- Existing Kayaking Facilities

The Cuyahoga River and the natural green space found in the study area are its greatest assets. They should be preserved and enhanced.

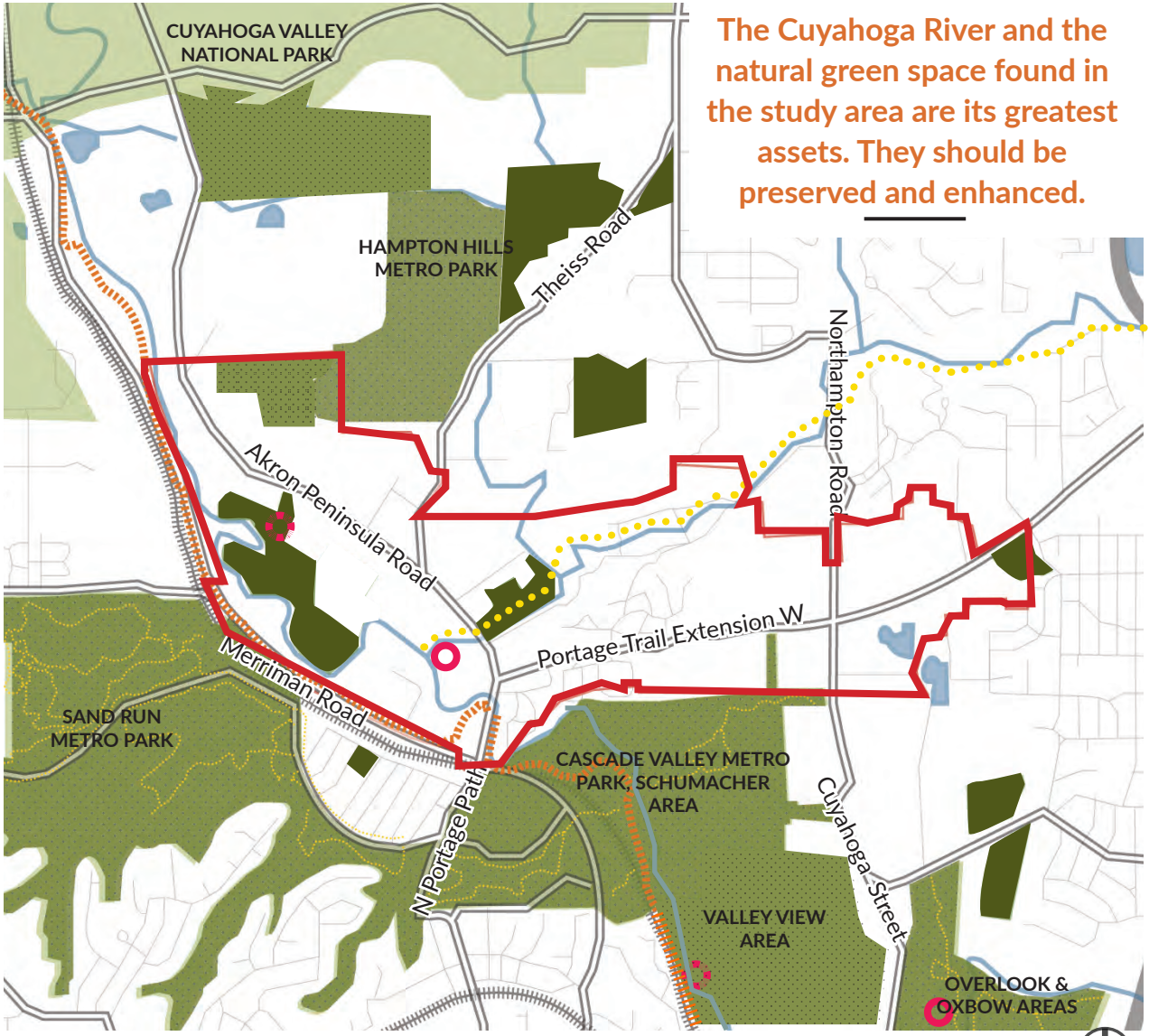


Figure 3.12 Parks & Trails.
Source: Farr Associates

SIDEWALKS & TRAILS

INADEQUATE PEDESTRIAN NETWORK

ASSESSMENT

The sidewalk network within the study area does not support walking and biking. Sidewalks are discontinuous and in some places nonexistent, in particular along Akron Peninsula Road and Portage Trail Extension W. In retail areas, the sidewalks are close to the street and not buffered from fast-moving traffic. Numerous curb cuts give vehicles access to parking lots in front of businesses. The potential for conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians in these areas makes walking feel unsafe and unpleasant.

These infrastructure shortcomings make it difficult for residents to access area restaurants, businesses, and the extensive trail network nearby on foot or by bike. This leaves the young, the elderly, and those without access to a car at a disadvantage, and reduces the quality of life for all.

IMPORTANCE

A safe, continuous sidewalk network is fundamental for creating a walkable, equitable environment for residents and visitors. Increased walking and biking would also help reduce traffic congestion within the study area.

Trail and sidewalk connections need to be seamless.

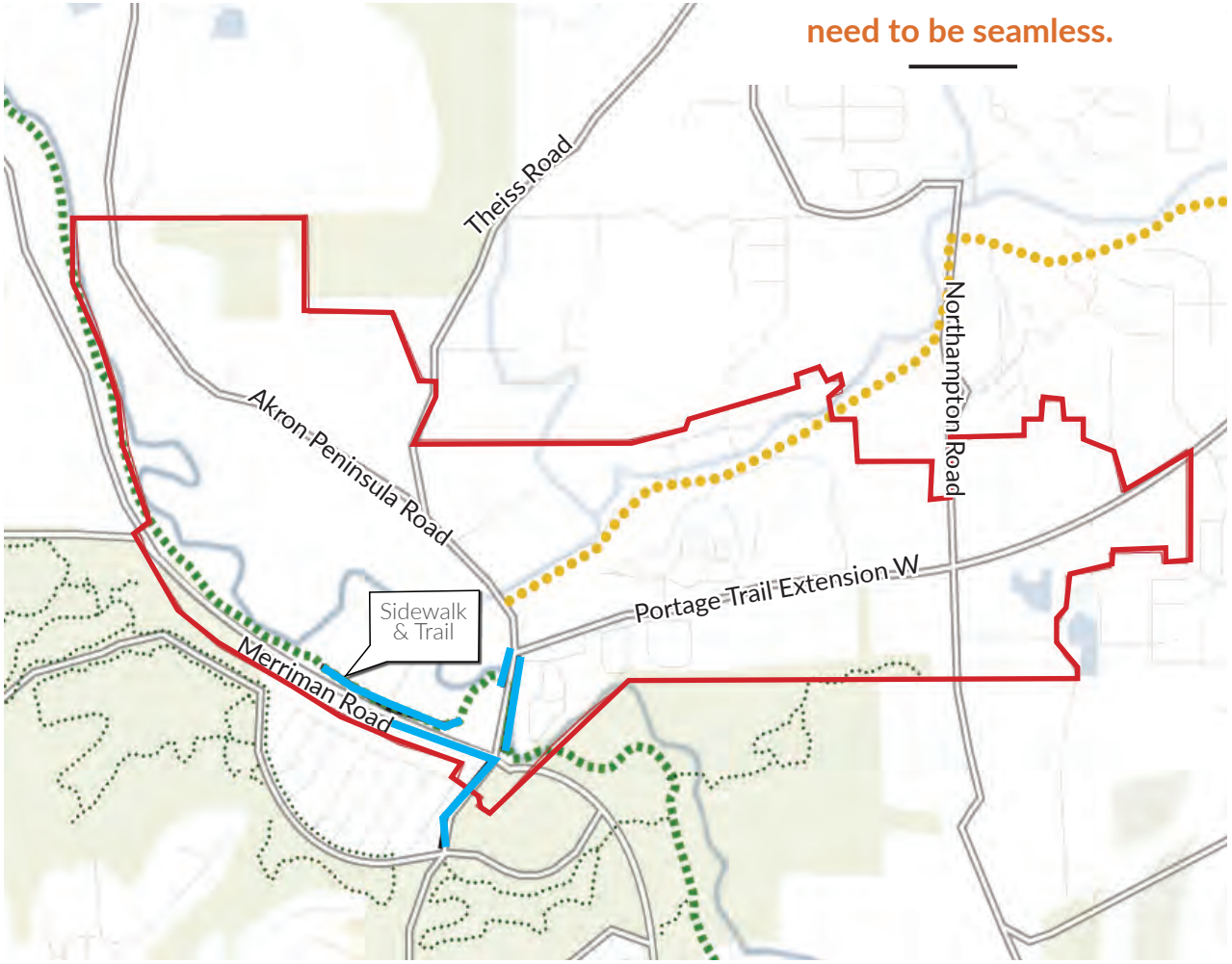


Figure 3.13 Sidewalk and Trails.
Source: Farr Associates

TRAFFIC COUNTS & SPEEDS

TRAFFIC CONDITIONS ARE NOT PEDESTRIAN-FRIENDLY

ASSESSMENT

The linear development pattern along Merriman Road and Portage Path results in a high volume of cross-town traffic passing through this corridor. Additionally, there are varying speed limits throughout the study area. Pre-pandemic traffic volumes in the study area are fairly high, as shown in the diagram of Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) counts at right. These high volumes can lead to congestion at rush hour. The current 4-lane road design can also lead to traffic accidents in the study area. Finally, the traffic and congestion negatively impact businesses and the quality of life for residents.

IMPORTANCE

Current traffic counts indicate that a combination of several traffic intervention strategies could reduce congestion, improve safety, and yield a more pedestrian-oriented environment. These include:

- Roundabout at the intersection of N. Portage Path and Merriman Road.
- Road diet on Merriman Road and N. Portage Path - reduce the traffic lanes from the current four lanes down to three.
- Increase the street grid to offer alternative routes to passing through the N. Portage Path/Merriman Road intersection.
- Some commuters that are just passing through study area may choose alternate routes.
- Speed limits can vary, with the intersection of N. Portage Path and Merriman Road posted at a slower speed (such as 20-25 MPH) and higher speeds permissible along more open stretches.

These intervention strategies require thorough additional engineering study before implementation, to ensure they will achieve the desired results.

A range of traffic interventions would reduce congestion, improve safety, and create a walkable environment.

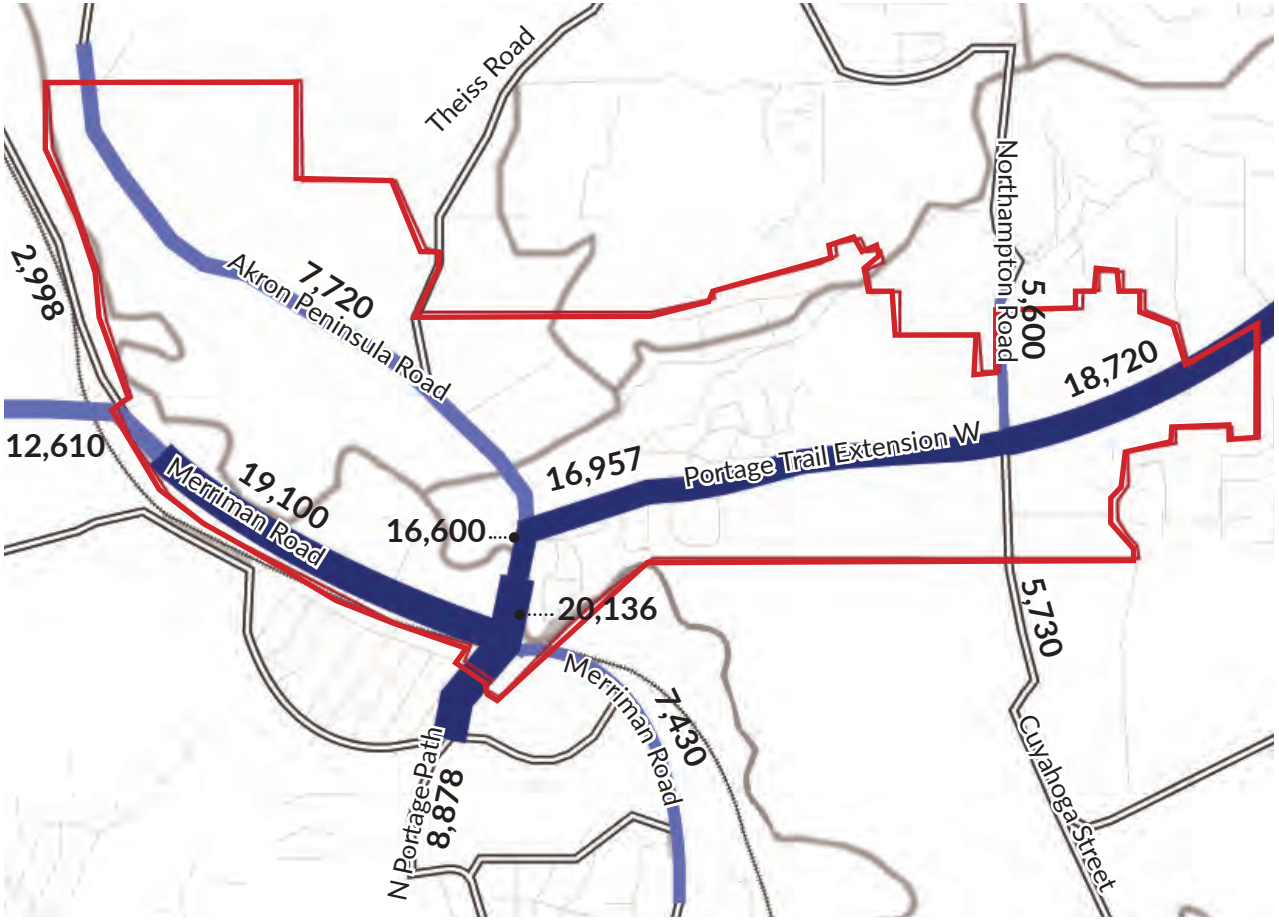


Figure 3.14 Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) Counts.
Source: Farr Associates, City of Akron.

INTERSECTIONS & PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS

SIGNALS ARE NOT SUFFICIENT FOR WALKABILITY

ASSESSMENT

The entire study area has a total of five traffic signals. One signal is located at the intersection of Northampton Road & Portage Trail Extension W. The other four are located in the valley on Merriman Road and N. Portage Path. The traffic signals vary in their effectiveness at providing safe passage for pedestrians. Although the distance between signals 2–5 (Figure 3.15 at right) is only a 3–5 minute walk, this proximity is not sufficient to create a walkable district.

In addition, much of the study area lacks sidewalks and many crosswalks are located in areas where sidewalks are not continuous. A signalized crosswalk is scheduled to be installed on Merriman Road, just west of the intersection with N. Portage Path. This crosswalk will allow pedestrians to safely access retail on both sides of the street.

IMPORTANCE

The constant flow of traffic within the study area (as detailed in the traffic counts in Figure 3.14) means pedestrians can only cross the streets safely at signalized intersections and designated crosswalks. A holistic approach to pedestrian access considers the relationship between sidewalks, signals, crosswalks, retail destinations, public transit stops, and the Towpath Trail.

Identify strategic locations for additional crosswalks.

Northampton Road & Portage Trail Ext W

N Portage Path, Portage Trail Ext W, & Akron Peninsula Road

N Portage Path

Merriman Road & N Portage Path

Merriman Road & Weathervane Road

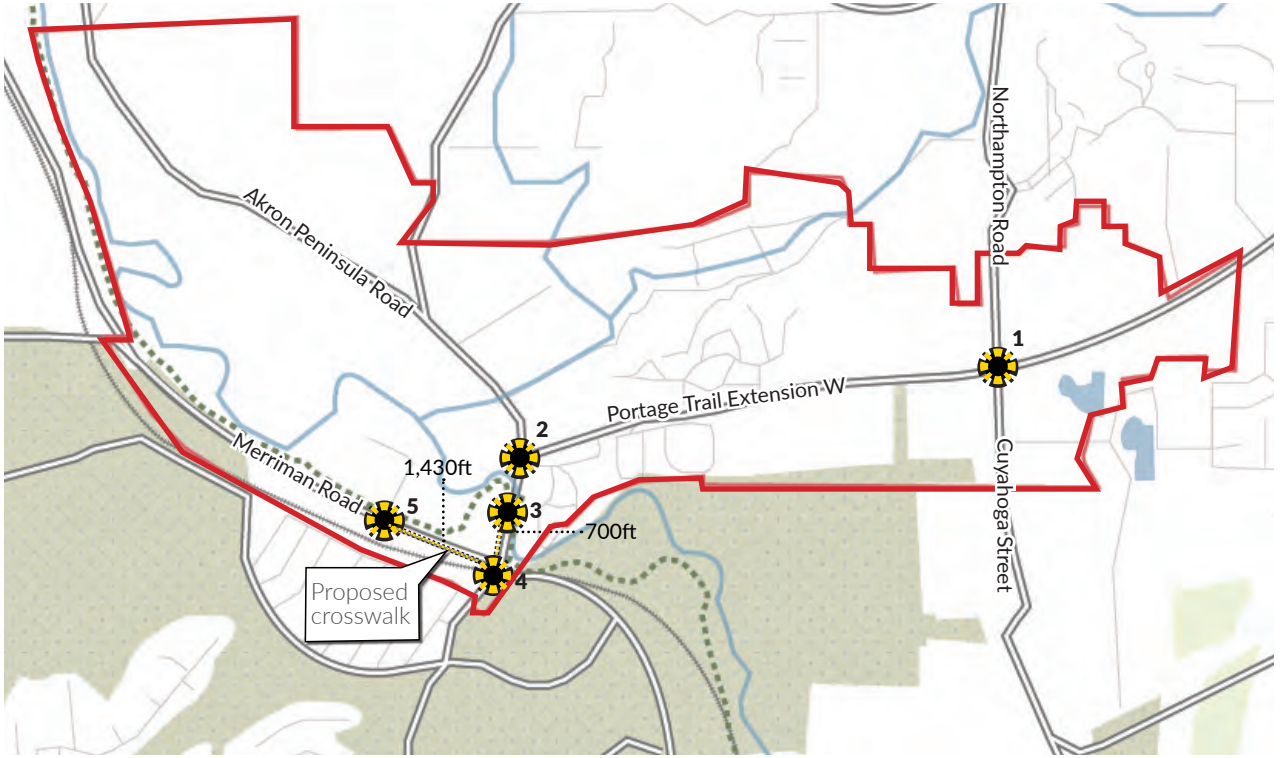


Figure 3.15 Traffic Signals Within the Study Area.
Source: Farr Associates

STREET HIERARCHY

DISCONNECTED STREET GRID DOES NOT SERVE PEDESTRIANS

ASSESSMENT

The two types of streets within the study area are main streets and residential streets. Main streets are vehicular thoroughfares. Residential streets provide access to homes in residential neighborhoods. Currently, most traffic is routed along the main collector thoroughfares. Many residential developments are cul-de-sac neighborhoods, disconnected from adjacent development.

A typical walkable block measures about 300 feet long. This block size encourages a comfortable "walk around the block" that is about five minutes in duration. Few walkable blocks exist in the study area.

The disconnected nature of the neighborhood street network leads to congestion on the main thoroughfares. It also makes it difficult for residents to easily access local businesses and the nearby parks on foot or by bike.

IMPORTANCE

A permeable network of street connections makes getting around easier for both vehicles and pedestrians. Street connections and smaller block sizes make neighborhoods more navigable for pedestrians. Additionally, smaller blocks within a street network provide vehicles with alternate routes, reducing traffic congestion.

Create a complete street network connecting new and existing streets.

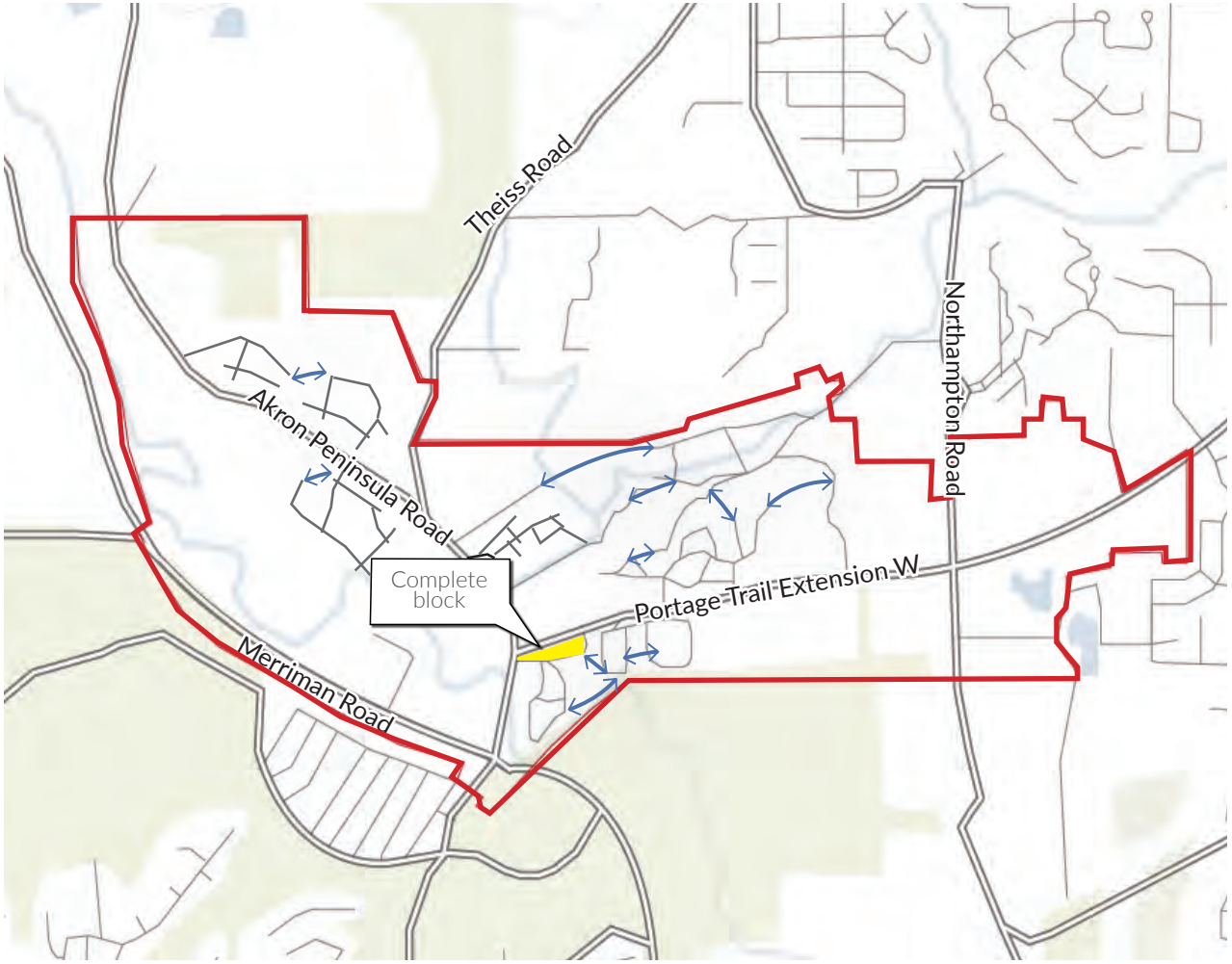


Figure 3.16 Street Hierarchy Map.
Source: Farr Associates

PUBLIC TRANSIT

BUS SERVICE IS LIMITED

ASSESSMENT

The study area's only bus route, Route 28, travels to Downtown Akron. Service is operated by Metro RTA every 45-90 minutes from 7am to 7pm weekdays. The bus stop on Weathervane Lane is a convenient 1.5-minute walk from the proposed Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad train station.

Bus Route 53 used to connect the Merriman Valley to Cuyahoga Falls via Portage Trail Extension W. Service on this route was suspended in June 2021 due to COVID-19-related issues, including social distancing mandates and temporary workforce reductions. Under current plans, this route is not scheduled to be reinstated. However, Metro RTA currently offers a demand-response service to serve residents on Portage Trail.

With such limited bus service, existing destinations and some residential areas in the study area are underserved. Residents who live on Portage Trail do not have adequate sidewalk connections to reach the remaining bus stops on Route 28. Potential development sites at the intersection of Portage Trail and Northampton Road in Cuyahoga Falls would have few transportation options, and would therefore be car dependent.

IMPORTANCE

Readily accessible public transit provides alternative transportation options for all, and provides a vital mobility option for non-drivers. Public transit also reduces traffic congestion and CO_2 emissions. A continuous sidewalk network and bus shelters are necessary to ensure that pedestrians have safe access to bus stops and their desired destinations.

The proposed train station on Merriman Road has the potential to be a multi-modal hub, connecting bus riders, hikers, cyclists, and kayakers with train service. In addition, a proposed extension of the line into downtown Cleveland could allow visitors to travel to the Cuyahoga Valley by train to reach destinations and future overnight accommodations in the study area.

Improve sidewalks for better bus access. Capitalize on connections to train station.

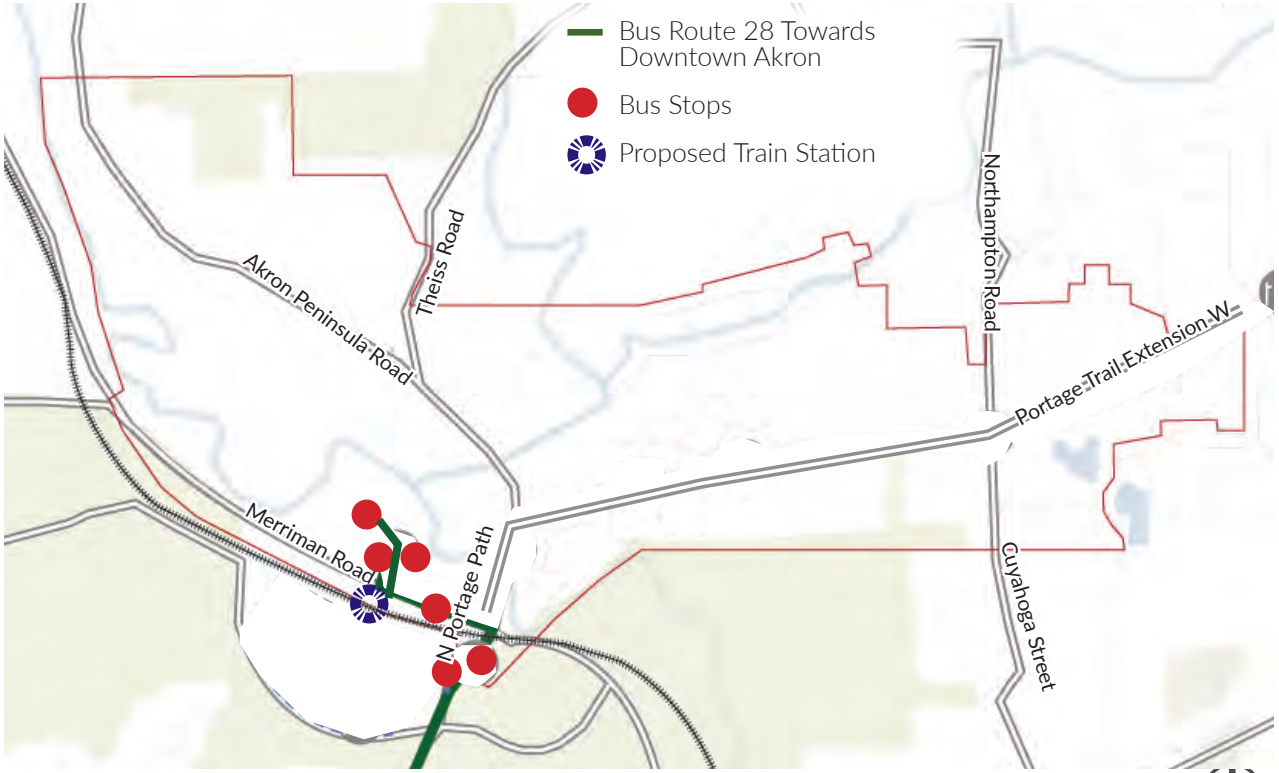


Figure 3.17 Bus Routes and Metro Stops.
Source: Farr Associates

CHARACTER & IDENTITY

NO COHESIVE IDENTITY

ASSESSMENT

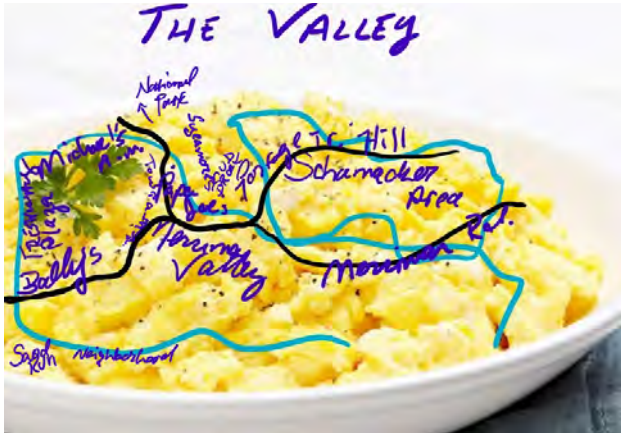
The Merriman Valley/Schumacher study area lacks a cohesive identity or characteristics that make it easily identifiable and recognizable. Additionally, the Cuyahoga River, a beautiful natural feature of the study area, is not easily visible or accessible to residents and visitors.

IMPORTANCE

A clear and concise identity for an area is important. It gives the community a sense of belonging, informs visitors about potential experiences, and provides a method of wayfinding to amenities found in the study area. Also, breaking the area down into distinct neighborhoods makes it a more comprehensible and memorable place.

Create character boundaries based on history, and key identifying features.

1) Parkway Estates
2) Liberty Commons
3) Timber Top
4) "The Valley" proper
5) Not quite Akron, and not quite Cuyahoga Falls. . .
6) "No man's land" - an area that I would say is in "The Valley" but that has no name or identity in my mind.



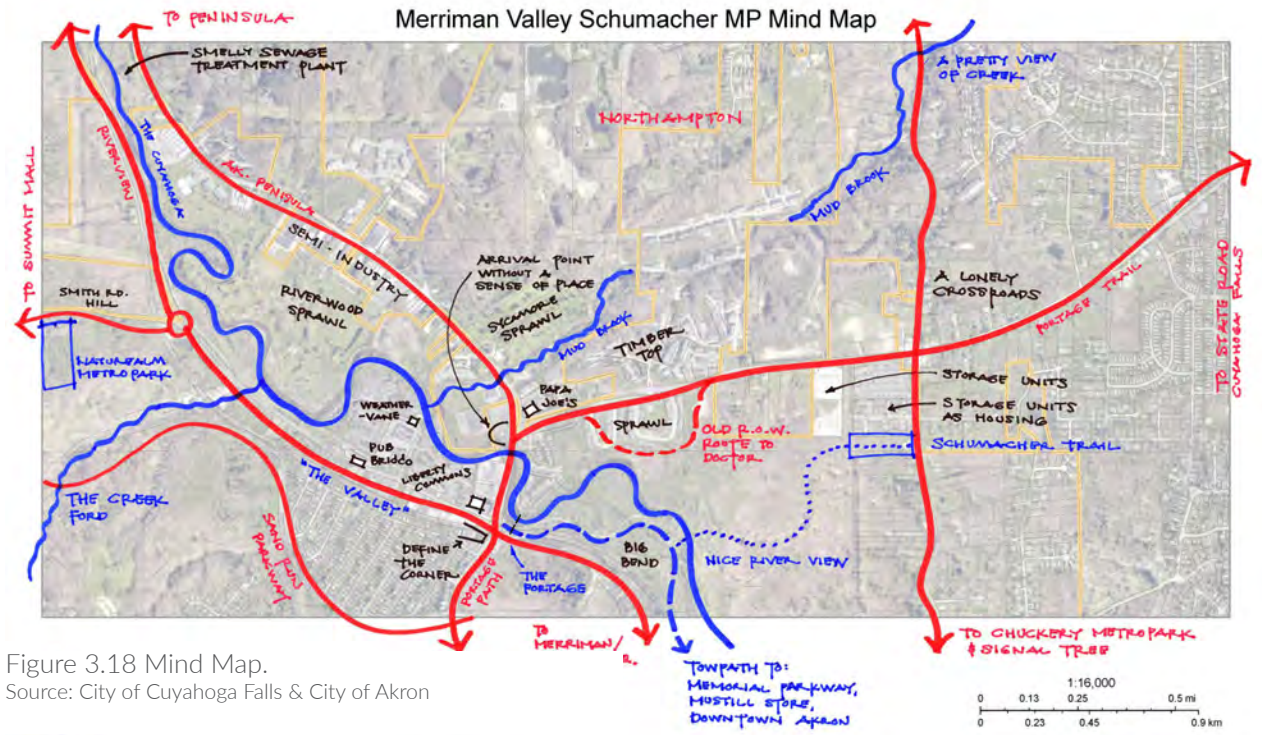


Figure 3.18 Mind Map.
Source: City of Cuyahoga Falls & City of Akron

The adjacent mind maps are the result of an exercise conducted by the consultant team and city staff in which staff was asked to draw a map of the study area and key identifying features.

WAYFINDING & SIGNAGE

DIVERSE SIGNS ADD CONFUSION

ASSESSMENT

Existing signage is varied and inconsistent in character in the study area, leading to a lack of cohesive identity. This can create confusion for residents and visitors alike. In addition, directional signs to some notable sites in the study area, such as Weathervane Playhouse and the Great Blue Heron Rookery Viewing Area on Bath Road are missing.

Summit Metro Parks is currently fabricating new wayfinding signage for use in Cascade Valley Metro Park, a portion of which is located within the study area. These signs will greatly assist locals and visitors alike in accessing these important parks resources.

IMPORTANCE

Signage and wayfinding should be clear and provide direction and information about the community and its assets. Good wayfinding can dramatically improve the area's sense of place.

While Summit Metro Parks is providing better signage for its facilities, branding and identity of the entire area and signs for non-parks facilities should be coordinated within the study area.

Use consistent signage to emphasize the area's identity.

Figure 3.19 New Metro Parks templates for signs guiding to parks (left) and to areas within parks (right).
Source: Summit Metro Parks

Figure 3.20 Variety of Signs Within the Study Area.
Source: Farr Associates

COMMERCIAL MARKET ANALYSIS

POTENTIAL FOR ~55 NEW ESTABLISHMENTS

92,000 SF OF NEW RETAIL POTENTIAL

As part of this Master Plan study, a Commercial Market Analysis was performed by Land Use USA and is available on the Akron and Cuyahoga Falls websites. Based on the results of this analysis, there is a gap and opportunity for up to 92,000 square feet of new retailers and merchants for the entire study area. This is roughly equivalent to about 55 new establishments.

EAST VS. WEST NODE POTENTIAL

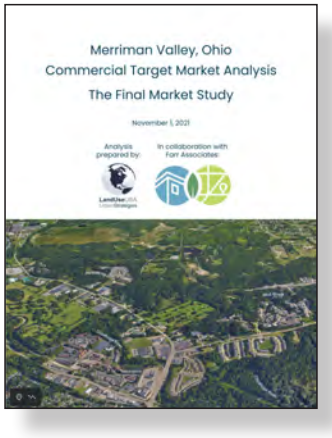
Most of the new retailers should be located within the west node (The Valley), with only a few restaurants, eateries, and conveniences placed strategically in the east node. Again, this is intended to ensure the long-term economic sustainability and viability of the west node. The market potential for the west node includes several relatively small retail anchors like a small neighborhood grocery store, plus stores specializing in hardware, home furnishings, garden supplies, automotive parts, sporting goods, entertainment, and pet supplies.

FOCUS ON ANCHORS

Anchors should be the focus of future recruitment by prospective developers interested in adding retail space in the study area. Letters of interest should be obtained from anchors before attempting to secure leases with small tenants and merchants. New retail centers that lack anchors should not be developed at any location within the study area.

The table at right shows the total potential square footage of each commercial use type. Most new shops would be small, typically about 1,000 square feet in floor area. Big box retail is neither envisioned nor appropriate in the study area. The new retail businesses will better serve neighborhood residents and enable them to walk or bike to more of their daily needs. Additional retail activity will also increase tax revenues that support city services for all residents.

New retail centers that lack anchors should not be developed.



** All businesses listed in this exhibit are viable opportunities for the Study Area. However, most of the market potential should be allocated to the Merriman Valley retail node. The list intentionally excludes square footage numbers for categories that are not enclosed brick-and-mortar spaces (like an outdoor Farmers' Market, for example) or conventional retail categories (like the billiard hall and hotel). This ensures a pragmatic summation of the square footage for real retail stores, shops, and merchants.*

Most new retail should be located in the west node.

Table 3.1 Possible Establishments in the Study Area.

Summary of the Gaps and Potential Opportunities
Merriman Valley Study Area – Both Hamlets Combined
(About 55 New Establishments)

Grocery Store	6,000
Specialty Food Stores	4,500
Farmers' Market	.
Convenience, Pharmacy	4,500
Apparel, Accessories	8,500
Hardware	8,000
Deck, Patio, Hearth	3,000
Other Home Improvement	7,000
Furniture Gallery	3,000
Other Furniture	5,500
Home Furnishings	5,500
Lawn, Garden Supply, Svc	3,500
Automotive Parts, Supplies	4,000
Office Supplies	3,500
Crafts, Arts, Gifts, Studios	8,000
Games, Hobbies, Sports, Pets	9,000
Fitness Center, Gym, Dance	2,000
Bounce House, Arcade	3,000
Billiard Hall, Bowling	.
Hotel - Bed & Breakfast	.
Hotel – Boutique	.
Restaurants, Eateries	3,500
Grand Total	92,000*

Source: Land Use USA

RESIDENTIAL MARKET ANALYSIS

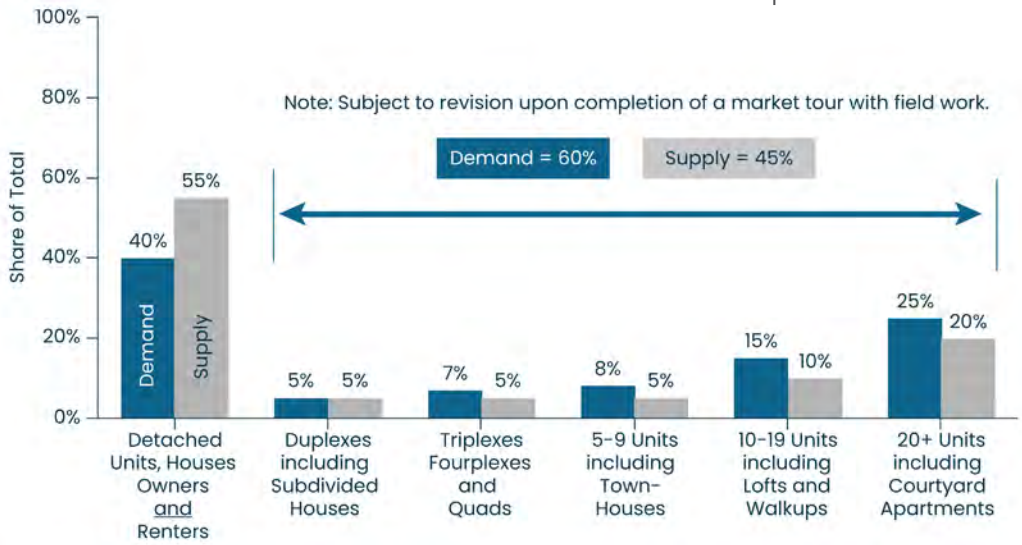
POTENTIAL FOR 450 NEW UNITS PER YEAR

DIVERSE HOUSING IS NEEDED

The results of the Residential Target Market Analysis by LandUse USA (also available on the Akron and Cuyahoga Falls websites) reveal that the study area is a place that people want to live, especially because of the easy access to nearby park amenities. The analysis shows that there is potential for a diverse mix of new-build housing units throughout the study area, including a wider diversity of housing types and pricepoints. Up to 50 detached houses and attached townhouses with private entrances for new homeowners could be built each year for the next five years. In addition, up to 100 townhouses and 300 apartments for new renters could be built each year for the next five years.

In the Akron part of the study area, there is the potential to reuse already developed land and turn it into lively mixed-use residential properties. In the Cuyahoga Falls portion, the public has clearly said they do not want the Business-As-Usual approach to development. An enhanced zoning code is essential for guiding where and how development will occur to ensure that it will yield the walkable, sustainable neighborhoods the community desires.

THE HOUSING MISMATCH | MERRIMAN VALLEY
IN-MIGRATION DEMAND V. EXISTING UNITS | 2025



Supply represents all existing housing units as reported by the American Community Survey with one-year and five-year estimates through 2019. Demand is based on the number of new households migrating into the respective geography each year. All figures are unadjusted for out-migration; internal movership among existing households; vacancies; and new projects that might be in pipeline for future development.

LandUseUSA
UrbanStrategies

Based on the results of a comprehensive Residential Target Market Analysis and analysis prepared by LandUseUSA | Urban Strategies in collaboration with Farr Associates; 2020 - 2021.

Figure 3.21 Mismatch of Housing Demand vs. Existing Units.
Source: Land Use USA

For every new unit added, at least one existing unit should be renovated.

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4 PROCESS

This planning process synthesized city, site, and market analyses with extensive public feedback. Engagement with stakeholders throughout the process fundamentally influenced the development of the final master plan.

OVERALL PROCESS

A COMPREHENSIVE YET SYSTEMATIC APPROACH

OVERALL APPROACH

The Cities of Akron and Cuyahoga Falls sought to have a master plan for the Merriman Valley-Schumacher area that was developed through public engagement and built on the area's strengths and assets. The master plan is meant to suggest both short and long-term strategies for the master plan area.

REVIEW BOARD

A review board of local representatives was formed to help guide the design process between community engagement opportunities. Their insight helped to identify potential concerns. The feedback and direction provided was critical to the creation of the plan.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The community was able to provide feedback to the master planning process through various mediums and in different formats. Surveys were taken at both the beginning and end of the project to help define and measure the success of the project. The two cities and the consultant design team met with key area stakeholders to hear their concerns and aspirations for the study area. Local stakeholder groups included developers, business owners, Preserve the Valley community group, Council members, propery owners, infrastructure technical group, and watershed technical group. Virtual and in-person public meetings provided opportunities for the public to give feedback to city representatives and the consultant design team.

MASTER PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Armed with extensive community input, as well as guidance from the two cities and the Review Board, the consultant design team created two development/ redevelopment scenarios for each of two areas of focus. These two focus areas are Node A: The intersection of N. Portage Path and Merriman Rd.; and Node B: The intersection of Portage Trial Extension and Northampton Road. Then the scenarios were refined further into the preferred master plan.

The next few pages detail the public process that supported the design process. The remainder of the document outlines the preferred master plan.

Figure 4.1 Project Schedule.
Source: Farr Associates

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

MANY OPPORTUNITIES TO BE INVOLVED

COMMUNITY SURVEY #1

Two online community surveys were distributed throughout the study process. The first survey asked a series of questions to help the consultant team identify people's attitudes, perceptions, and desires about the community. A key outcome from these surveys was the public's desire for further access to the Cuyahoga River.

Survey #1 Takeaway:
More access to the river!

COMMUNITY SURVEY #2

The second community survey was administered by the Cities after the December Public Meeting to solicit feedback on how the public viewed the planning process. Please refer to the Cities for results from this survey.

STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

The consultant team held 4 stakeholder meetings with the following groups prior to the charrette in order to get a deeper understanding of the site and the core issues of the study area:

- Local developers
- Local business owners
- Preserve the Valley
- Local Council Members

During the charrette an additional 3 stakeholder meetings were held with:

- Infrastructure group
- Watershed group
- Property owners

These conversations proved very helpful to the consultant team in guiding the development of the preferred master plan.

LISTENING SESSIONS

City of Cuyahoga Falls' Council-at-Large Representative Russ Balthis hosted a Listening Tour in October 2021 to hear the public's ideas for the Merriman Valley Schumacher Area Master Plan. Residents spoke about their desire that the Valley remain as rural and green as possible, and hoped that the plan would emphasize redevelopment over new development. The public spoke about the possibility of residents creating a nature conservation easement on their own land. One resident stated that she in fact has already done that, explaining the process to everyone in the room and described it as being fairly simple.

City of Akron Ward 1 councilperson Nancy Holland and Ward 8 councilperson Shammas Malik held a virtual town hall meeting in January 2022. This well-attended meeting gave councilmembers and City staff valuable additional feedback on the Master Plan.

Figure 4.2 Image from Listening Tour, October 2021.
Source: City of Cuyahoga Falls

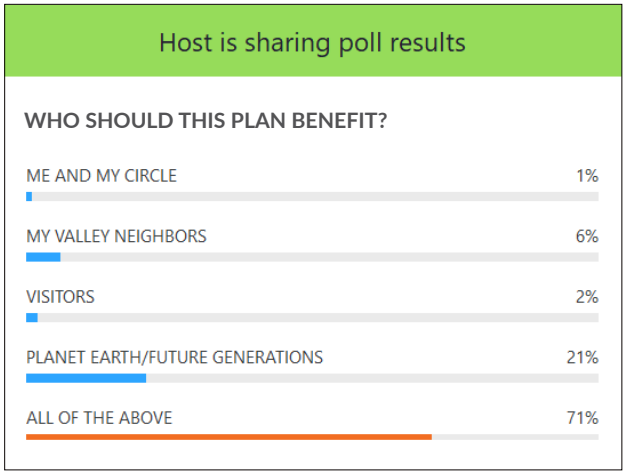
PUBLIC WORKSHOP 1

EARLY IDEAS AND CONCEPTS

PROJECT INTRODUCTION & BUILDING BLOCKS
(Public Workshop 1)

The team held a well attended virtual public meeting in July 2021. This meeting introduced the project team, approach, and foundational principles to urban design relevant to the study area. Engagement activities included a visual preference survey to give the consultant design team initial ideas for the Merriman Valley-Schumacher Area. Results from the survey can be found in the appendix (pages 168-170).

Workshop #1 Takeaway: Prioritize preservation of natural areas.



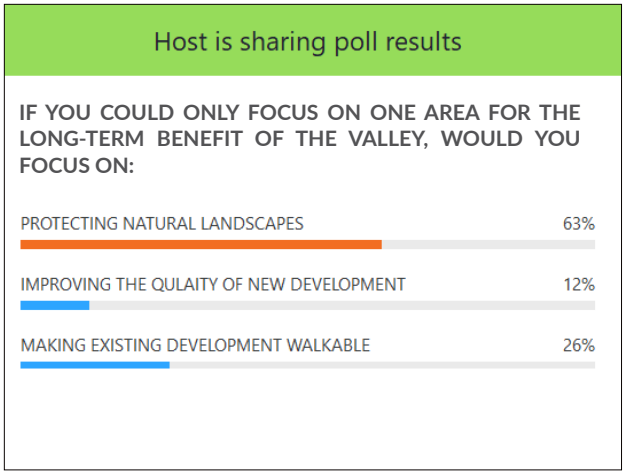


Figure 4.3 Images from Virtual Public Meeting, July 2021.
Source: Farr Associates

DESIGN CHARRETTE

GROWTH PRINCIPLES AND REFINING OPTIONS

DESIGN CHARRETTE
(Public Workshops 2 & 3)

In August, the design team and staff from the Cities of Cuyahoga Falls and Akron held a 3-day interactive charrette to advance the initial ideas for the study area. The intense workshop helped the members of the design team better understand existing conditions and public concerns, and allowed the team to make critical decisions in the planning process. After meeting with both Mayor Walters and Mayor Horrigan, members of the review board, city staff, and key local stakeholders, the design team was able to prepare two conceptual growth scenarios that illustrated different redevelopment strategies for the study area.

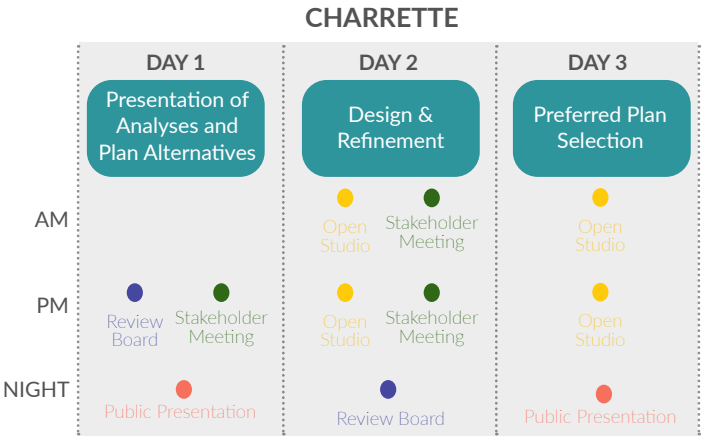


Figure 4.4 Charrette Schedule.
Source: Farr Associates

Figure 4.5 Images from Charrette, August 2021.
Source: Farr Associates

Charrette Takeaway:
Planning issues in the study area are complex. This plan will be an ongoing conversation for the community.

SUBAREA GROWTH SCENARIOS

CHARRETTE FEEDBACK

The team presented two growth scenarios for the areas of focus to the public at the charrette. The implementable project and design features were listed adjacent to the images for public comments.

Given the different nature of the subarea nodes, different approaches were applied for the growth scenarios.

Node A: Portage Path & Merriman Road
The options identified 2 levels of involvement organized from least to most intensive, that the cities must choose from to achieve the desired outcomes.

- Regulate - adapting policy and regulations to guide development
- Participate - deal making, incentives, and assemble parcels for higher quality development.

Node B: Northampton Road & Portage Trail Ext W
The options for development on predominantly undeveloped sites included:

- Respecting natural features
- Habitat forward development

POST-IT WORKSHOP

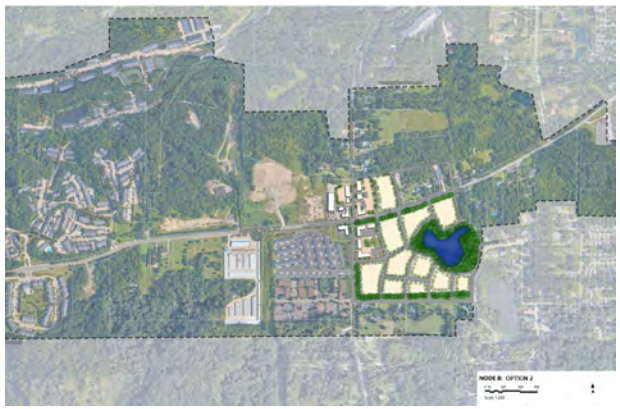
During the 3-day charrette, the team created a post-it workshop. Images of conceptual designs (Figure 4.6) were pinned to the walls of the Todaro's Party Center charrette venue with the list of potential projects. Members of the public were encouraged to provide their comments through post-it notes. The following page provides a summary of the outcome of this exercise.

Node A: Portage Path & Merriman Road Intersection

Regulate

Participate

Node B: Northampton Road & Portage Trail Ext W



Respecting Natural Features

Habitat Forward Development

Figure 4.6 Growth Scenarios.
Source: Farr Associates

SUBAREA GROWTH SCENARIO FEEDBACK

PUBLIC COMMENTS

NODE A

All post-it comments on the displayed growth scenarios were collected and categorized into the table below. Projects that received the most positive reaction are highlighted in green. The projects that received the most negative reaction are highlighted in red. This exercise provided the consultant team with priority projects to include in the preferred master plan.

Table 4.1 Categorized Responses from Post-it Workshop for Node A.

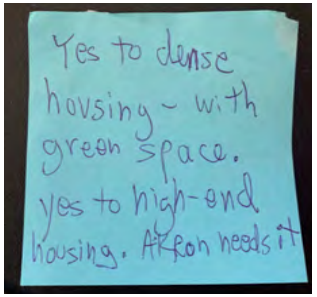
Regulate : Potential projects	Approve	Disapprove	Indifferent
1. Riverside Trail South	15	-	-
2. Pedestrian Bridge	10	1	-
3. Riverside Trail North	7	1	-
4. Riverbend Park	3	-	1
5. Boulevard & Parking	11	-	3
6. Expanded Kayak Livery	12	-	3
7. Ceaderwood Valley Redevelopment	-	1	2
8. Strip Mall Development	14	2	-
Participate Potential projects			
1. Riverside Amphitheater	5	4	3
2. Micro Hotel & Wedding Venue	7	8	2
3. Weathervane Lane Street Extension	2	-	1
4. Rail Depot	7	-	-
5. Access Lane	2	2	-
6. Walkable Development	13	-	3

Source: Farr Associates

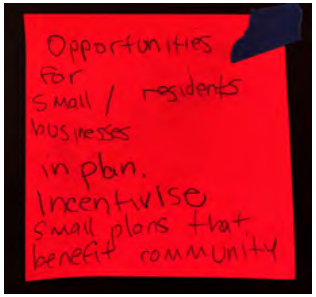
NODE B

The predominant response for Node B is to prevent sprawl and concerns about stormwater runoff. Locals want the area to maintain its rural character.

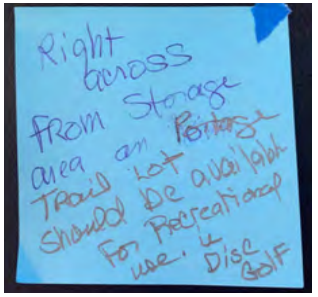
Key takeaways from the comments were to incentivize and encourage green/ sustainable development. Green spaces need to be protected and made accessible through multi-use trails. Where possible, green spaces should be connected and established into the wider existing parks and trail network.



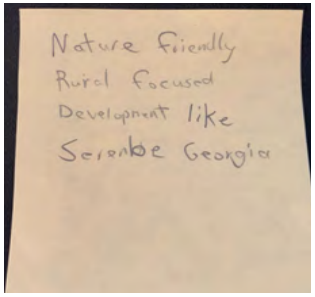
"Yes to dense housing - with green space. Yes to high-end housing. Akron needs it"



"Opportunities for small businesses/residents in plan. Incentivize small plans that benefit community"



"Right across from storage area on Portage Trail lot should be available for recreational use. ie Disc Golf"



"Nature friendly Rural focused Development like Serenbe Georgia "

Figure 4.7 Post-it Responses for Node B, Charrette Aug. 2021.Source: Farr Associates

STUDY AREA GROWTH SCENARIOS

HOW SHOULD THE STUDY AREA GROW OVERALL?

CONSERVATION SCENARIOS

Feedback from most of the public indicated a desire to limit growth to redevelopment sites as much as possible. Little/No development of vacant land was desired. However, property owners in the study area do have the right to develop their land as permitted under current zoning regulations. Zoning cannot typically prevent development, but it can encourage development patterns that are more environmentally sustainable. Note: these schemes include a street grid and blocks of tan residential development with appropriate density to support a small neighborhood center. The following scenarios are not necessarily intended to promote development, but they will guide future development, if it happens, in a way that is in line the community character and values.

These scenarios are defined by one of the main goals of this plan: land conservation. The team developed two frameworks for the preservation and conservation of natural spaces. These are represented in the Human Benefits and Nature Benefits growth scenarios.

While the scope of this project did not include drawing/illustrating a Business-as-Usual approach, it is important to note that as a third scenario that should be considered when weighing alternatives. The Business-as-Usual approach assumes no action from this plan.

Residential Development

Green Spaces

Civic/Community Space

Sample of Study Area

Scheme A: Great Neighborhoods (People-Centered)

Scheme B: Great Habitats (Nature-Centered)

Figure 4.8 Illustrations of Alternative Scenarios.
Source: Farr Associates

ELEMENTS OF PEOPLE-CENTERED SCHEME

- Corridors that branch from a central corridor, resembling "fingers", and reach into sustainably developed neighborhoods.
- Riparian setbacks that follow recognized ecological best practices for local river systems.
- Scenic byway along Portage Trail Extension W that offers human travelers a view of nature.
- Parks and play areas along nature corridors.

A Business-as-Usual approach does not preserve natural areas.

ELEMENTS OF NATURE-CENTERED SCHEME

- Wide natural corridor to provide an ecosystem/ habitat for wild animals.
- Riparian setbacks along the river, but also wildlife corridor setbacks for larger animals.
- Habitat corridor includes multi-purpose trail on outer edge, so humans can enjoy but not interfere with natural area.
- Parks and play areas in addition to nature corridor.
- Architectural/Gateway feature near Node B.

GROWTH SCENARIOS ANALYSIS

A COMPARISON OF SCENARIOS

The table below compares three scenarios analyzed for this project, as measured across a number of key metrics of success.

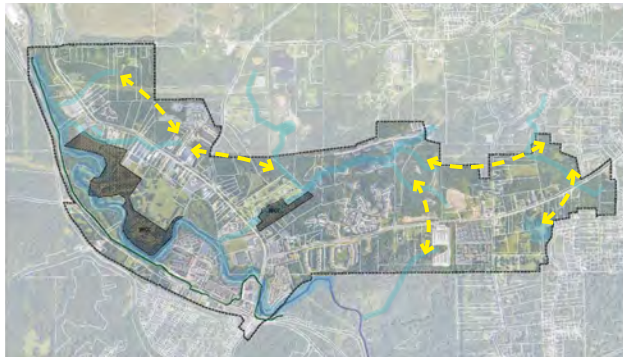


Figure 4.9 Potential Habitat Trails Connecting Riparian Corridors. Source: Farr Associates

Table 4.2 A Comparison of Growth Scenarios.

	Business As Usual (Profit-Centered) *Not Drawn*	**Great Neighborhoods** (People-Centered) 	**Great Habitats** (Nature-Centered) 
Unbuildable Land	None	Streams & Creeks Steep slopes	Streams & Creeks Steep slopes
% Open Space	Minimal by negotiation	15-25%	15-25%
Street Connectivity	Cul-de-sac/Pods	Street Grid with at grade connectors	Warped grid with grade separated connections
Parks (walk-to)	Minimal by negotiation	Min 90% of homes within 3- min walk	Min 90% of homes within a 5-min walk
Scenic Thoroughfare	None	Min 100’	None
Riparian Setback	Akron: None; Cuyahoga Falls: Varies based on stream type	50’ min from high water line	100’ from high water line
Habitat Corridor	None	None	Continuous habitat corridors

Source: Farr Associates

GROWTH SCENARIOS SELECTION PROCESS

HOW SHOULD THE STUDY AREA GROW OVERALL?

YES, AND...

The Design Team consulted the Review Board for input on how to incorporate these growth scenarios into the final plan.

The Review Board liked elements of both; they preferred the strong Great Habitats scheme overall, but wanted to incorporate the Scenic Byway component from the Great Neighborhoods scheme.

This combination of elements from both schemes helped guide the planning of the full study area.

The preferred scheme includes both the Scenic Byway and the Habitat Corridor.

Preferred Scheme: Habitat Corridors with Scenic Byway

Figure 4.10 Illustration of Preferred Scenario Concept.
Source: Farr Associates

Residential Development
Green Spaces
Civic/Community Space

NODE A: ROADWAY FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS

DISCUSSION OF ROADWAY OPTIONS

THE GOAL: RE-BALANCE THE RIGHT OF WAY

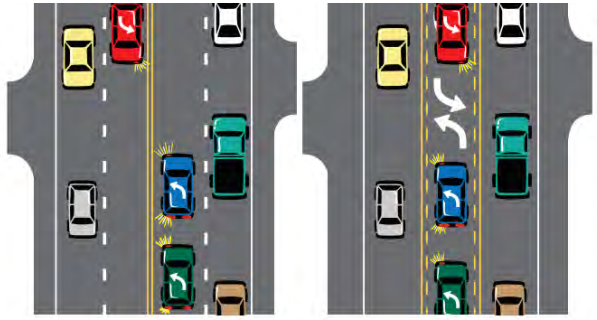
The consultant team conducted a variety of analyses to determine options for improving Merriman Road and N Portage Path, specifically at their intersection. Given the traffic counts along these roads (~19,000 and ~20,000 average annual daily traffic counts, respectively), the team and community wanted to consider a road diet and a roundabout to address congestion and improve the environment for pedestrians and businesses.

TRAFFIC COUNTS ALLOW FOR ROAD DIET

A road diet would reduce traffic lanes from the existing 4 lanes on Merriman and 5 lanes on Portage Path down to 3 lanes, including a travel lane in each direction and a center turn lane. Recommended traffic counts for a road diet are 15,000 – 20,000 cars per day. Pre-covid traffic counts on Merriman Road and Portage Path were within this range. Some engineers may believe that the traffic counts on these two streets are too high for a road diet. However, many engineers, including Crabtree Associates of the consultant team, believe that a road diet is appropriate here. They have seen communities across the country implementing similar road diets with great success.

A road diet along Merriman Road and Portage Path is possible with further study.

It is important to remember that reducing the number of traffic lanes frees up room for other modes of getting around, such as bike lanes and widened sidewalks for more comfortable walking. Using alternative modes of transit can reduce overall car trips. An expanded street grid can divert some traffic around this intersection, further reducing counts. In concert with these other improvements, traffic counts on these two streets can be managed at levels where a road diet would be acceptable to most engineers.



Before
A four-lane undivided road operating as a de facto three-lane cross section.

After
A Road Diet providing a two-way left-turn lane.

Figure 4.11 Before and After a 4-to-3-Lane Road Diet. Source: U.S. Department of Transportation

Single-lane Roundabout (see diagram below)

Motorists

① **Approach:** Slow down to the posted advisory speed. Yield to pedestrians in the crosswalk. They have the right-of-way.
② **Enter:** As you approach the yield line markings (shark's teeth), yield to vehicles in the roundabout. Wait for a gap in traffic, then merge into traffic in the roundabout in a counterclockwise direction.
③ **Proceed:** Continue through the roundabout until you reach your street. Avoid stopping in the roundabout.
④ **Exit:** Signal, then exit the roundabout to your right. Yield to pedestrians in the crosswalk.

Pedestrians (see diagram below)

① **Approach:** At the pedestrian crosswalk, look ***left***.
② **Cross:** Cross to the raised splitter island. Look ***right***. Finish crossing to the opposite sidewalk.

TRAFFIC COUNTS SUPPORT ROUNDABOUT

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, a single lane roundabout can handle a traffic count of 25,000 vehicles per day. The traffic count at the intersection of Merriman Road and Portage Path is 20,136 per day. Therefore, a 4-legged, single-lane roundabout would be possible. A full engineering study of the intersection would be required to verify that the proposed roundabout would improve conditions for both vehicles and pedestrians.

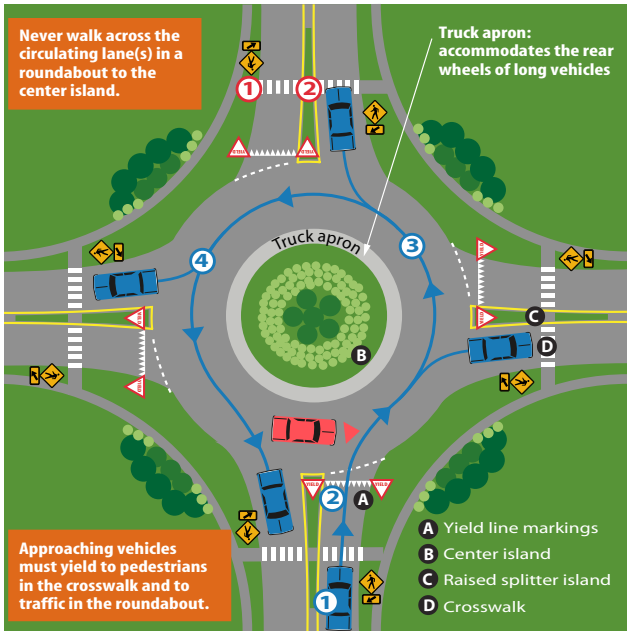


Figure 4.12 Single Lane Roundabout Diagram (legend at left). Source: City of Fort Dodge, IA

NODE A: INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS

PLACEMAKING PROS AND CONS

The Design Team recommends the Town Green option for the intersection of Merriman Road and N. Portage Path, based on its potential for reducing congestion, improving safety, and creating a memorable public place.

Town greens are common in many Northeast Ohio communities that were originally part of the Connecticut Western Reserve. Town founders who came to Ohio from New England in the early 1800s brought with them the tradition of allotting a green space in the center of the village for public use. Typical examples in the area include town greens in Hudson, Medina, and Chagrin Falls. The proposed Town Green in the Valley draws upon this regional heritage.

Similar opportunities for traffic and character improvement exist at the intersection of Akron Peninsula Road and Portage Trail Ext. W. The consultant team recommends further study of this intersection.

See Appendix pages 156-162 for a more in-depth analysis of the Right of Way options and Traffic Circle and Town Green Schemes.

The Town Green solution could reduce traffic congestion while creating a memorable public space.

Table 4.3 A Comparison of Intersection Improvements at Merriman Road & N Portage Path.

	Traffic Circle	Town Green
		
Familiarity	✓	—
Vehicle Speed	Faster	Slower
Pedestrian-Friendly	—	✓
Placemaking Potential	—	✓
Repurposes Public Land Adjcent to ROW	—	✓
Transforms the Space	✓	✓
Activates the Place	—	✓

Source: Farr Associates

PUBLIC MEETING

FEEDBACK ON THE OVERALL PLAN

OPEN HOUSE
(Public Workshop 4)

During a virtual public meeting in December 2021, the Cities presented their introduction of the plan, and the Farr team detailed their recommendations to the public, followed by a moderated discussion. At its peak, the event had more than 230 attendees.

The moderated discussion allowed for two-way feedback between the community and the design team. There were several comments made about Akron's tax abatement program and whether the plan took into account the full environmental and traffic implications. This plan recognizes that there are further studies needed for some of the larger redevelopment projects. Future development projects would be subject to impact analyses as per local, state, and federal regulations.

There were also many comments indicating that the recommendations would be a welcome improvement to the area. Overall, the meeting, recommendations, and draft plan were well received.

Figure 4.13 Images from Public Meeting, December 2021.
Source: Farr Associates

Workshop #4 Takeaway:
This plan is heading in the right direction.

5 MASTER PLAN

This plan lays out a vision for a preferred future in the study area. The illustrative master plan indicates the overall preferred redevelopment patterns, while immersive renderings and narratives provide glimpes into what life may be like in each of the nodes of focus. Action-oriented recommendations explain the strategies needed to obtain this vision.

THE MASTER PLAN

INTRODUCTION

SETTING THE STAGE FOR CONSERVATION

This master plan seeks to set the course of conservation and redevelopment in the Merriman Valley for the next 20 years. The preferred master plan provides overall guidance to the redevelopment of the area based on extensive site analysis, community input, stakeholder interviews, and the Review Board's advice. The illustrative drawing on the opposing page summarizes how the study area, as a result of this master plan, may be transformed into a global model of land conservation and sustainable development.

The remainder of this report unpacks the ideas and innovations proposed and outlines the strategies to achieve them. By fully implementing this plan the Merriman Valley-Schumacher area can realize its full potential as a regional center for ecotourism.

This chapter details the physical changes recommended in a preferred future for the Study Area. The next chapter (Chapter 6: Implementation) will detail the recommended steps needed to achieve this vision. Implementing this plan will require both Cities to work together on all elements, regardless of which jurisdiction a project falls within.

ASPIRATIONAL VS. REALISTIC

This plan lays out an aspirational vision for redevelopment. It proposes some big ideas that could be difficult to implement. So, where appropriate, this plan includes alternatives that are more attainable. These alternatives would be sufficient to meet the goals of the plan, but not necessarily its highest ideals. The Cities should aim for the aspirational, knowing that the realistic still makes for a better future for the study area.

Plan Goals

Plan elements each relate back to the goals of the project:

CONSERVE
Plan and code undeveloped private land as models of sustainability.

TRANSFORM
Transform existing development into beautiful, vibrant, and accessible places.

ACTIVATE
Promote ecotourism by optimizing access to green space, trails, the Cuyahoga River, and the National Park.

MASTER PLAN DIAGRAM

A VISION FOR THE MERRIMAN VALLEY SCHUMACHER AREA

Figure 5.1 Master Plan Diagram.
Source: Farr Associates

MASTER PLAN ORGANIZATION

PLAN SUBAREAS

HOW THE PLAN IS PRESENTED

This diagrammatic plan of the study area reflects this chapter's organization into four distinct subareas:

1. Nature Corridors
2. Conservation Neighborhoods
3. The Valley (Node A)
4. Northampton Corners (Node B)

The unfilled portions of the diagram show already-developed lands with little potential for change.

VACANT LAND UNDER DEVELOPMENT PRESSURE

Undeveloped private land (together with large lot homes) account for a large percentage of land in the study area. These natural lands are among the greatest assets of the Cuyahoga Valley, but their undeveloped status is impermanent. As the numerous subdivision developments of recent years attest, there is strong development pressure in the Study Area. Setting a strategic planning direction for this core asset is among the most complex and nuanced aspects of this project.

DIVERSE CLUSTERS

The illustrative master plan identifies large clusters of undeveloped lands as "conservation neighborhoods." These land clusters vary greatly in terms of terrain and vegetation, the extent of subdivision and buildings, and how susceptible they are to development pressures.

The section in this chapter dedicated to the conservation neighborhoods includes guidance on sustainable design and policy that is applicable throughout the study area, including the two subareas that follow.

A NODE FOR EACH CTY

This plan, with a 1,059-acre study area, provides general guidance for the entire area. Additionally, two areas - one in each City - were given more detailed focus: the area surrounding the N Portage Path & Merriman Road inersection (Node A) in Akron, and the area surrounding the Portage Trail Ext W & Northampton Road intersection (Node B) in Cuyahoga Falls.

RECOMMENDED PROJECTS

Wihin each subarea, recommendations are called out on the map as projects. Each project is then detailed out as an action item in subsequent pages. Projects are organized by the following categories, which relate back to the vision and goals for this plan:

- Connectivity / Right-of-Way
- Redevelopment Opportunities
- Natural Lands

BIG POLICY MOVES

There are some policy moves that need to occur for any of this plan to be implemented. Those include:

- Detailed mapping of natural assets
- Engagement with landowners to encourage cluster redevelopment
- Adoption of new subdivision and form-based zoning regulations

MASTER PLAN SUBAREAS

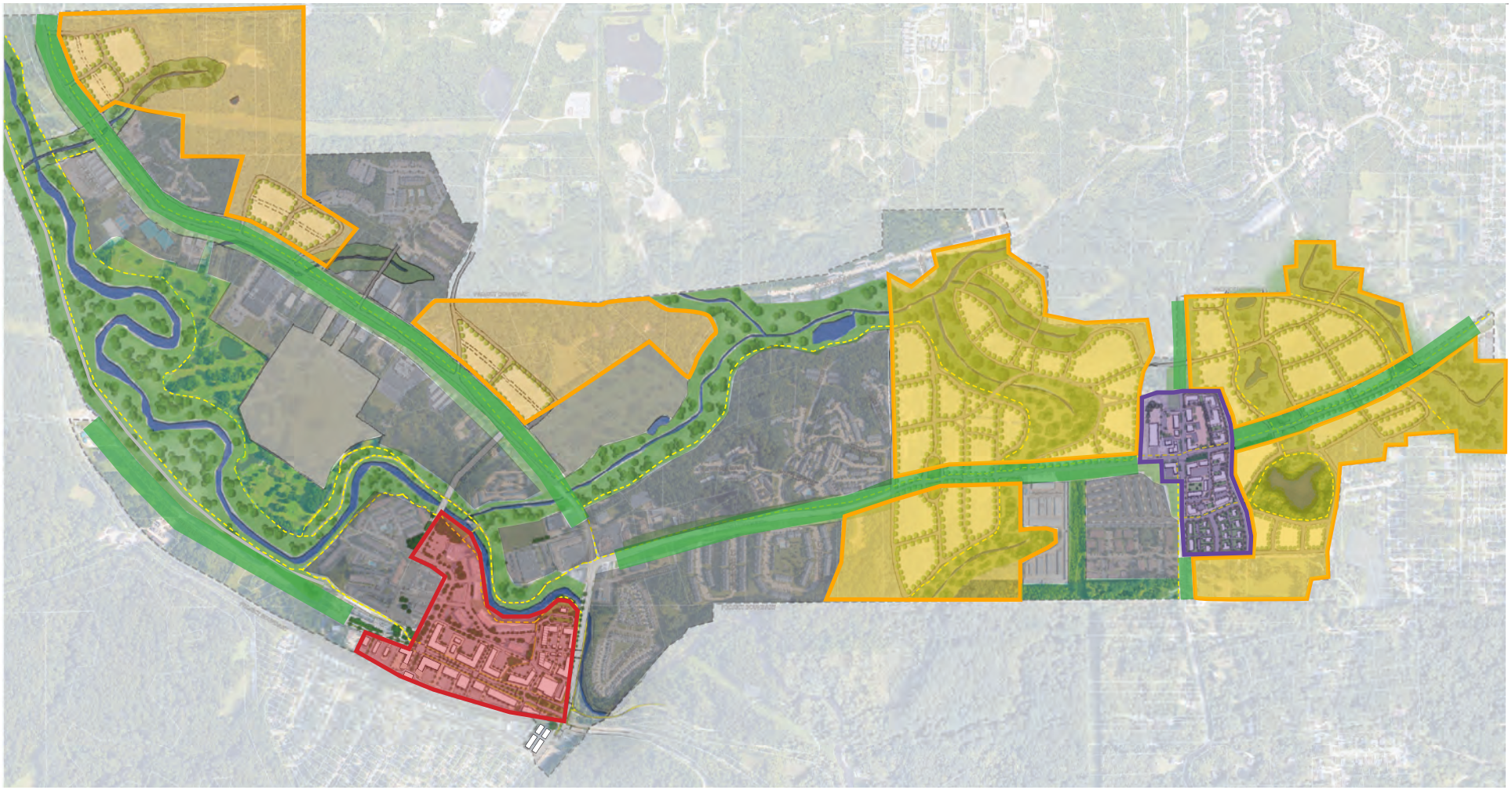
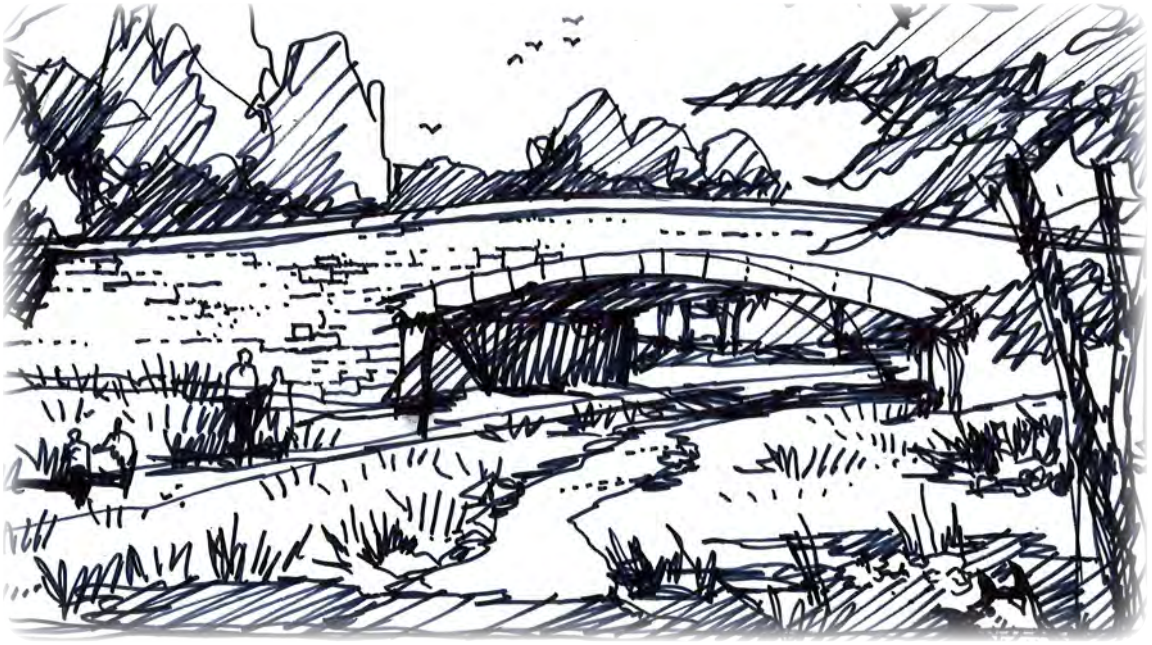


Figure 5.2 Master Plan Diagrammatic Subareas.
Source: Farr Associates

I. NATURE CORRIDORS

Over the River and Through the Woods...



Human developments are on course to displace natural habitats from the study area. All too often animals die as “roadkill”—hit by cars while crossing a road. This need not be. To address this imbalance, the study area needs to provide safe and connected habitat corridors for plants and wildlife. Essential to the success of these habitats is what is affectionately referred to as “critter crossings”, bridges designed to separate cars and wildlife onto separate levels. The master plan calls for public capital budgeting to build several such crossings and a requirement for private development to build their own.

NATURE CORRIDORS MASTER PLAN

NATURAL LANDS

1. Habitat Corridor
2. Scenic Byway Corridor with Multi-Purpose Path

CONNECTIVITY / RIGHT OF WAY

3. Human Crossings
4. Critter Crossings
5. Expanded Bike Network

REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

6. Branded Areas with Clear Identities
7. Wayfinding & Signage
8. Utility Consolidation

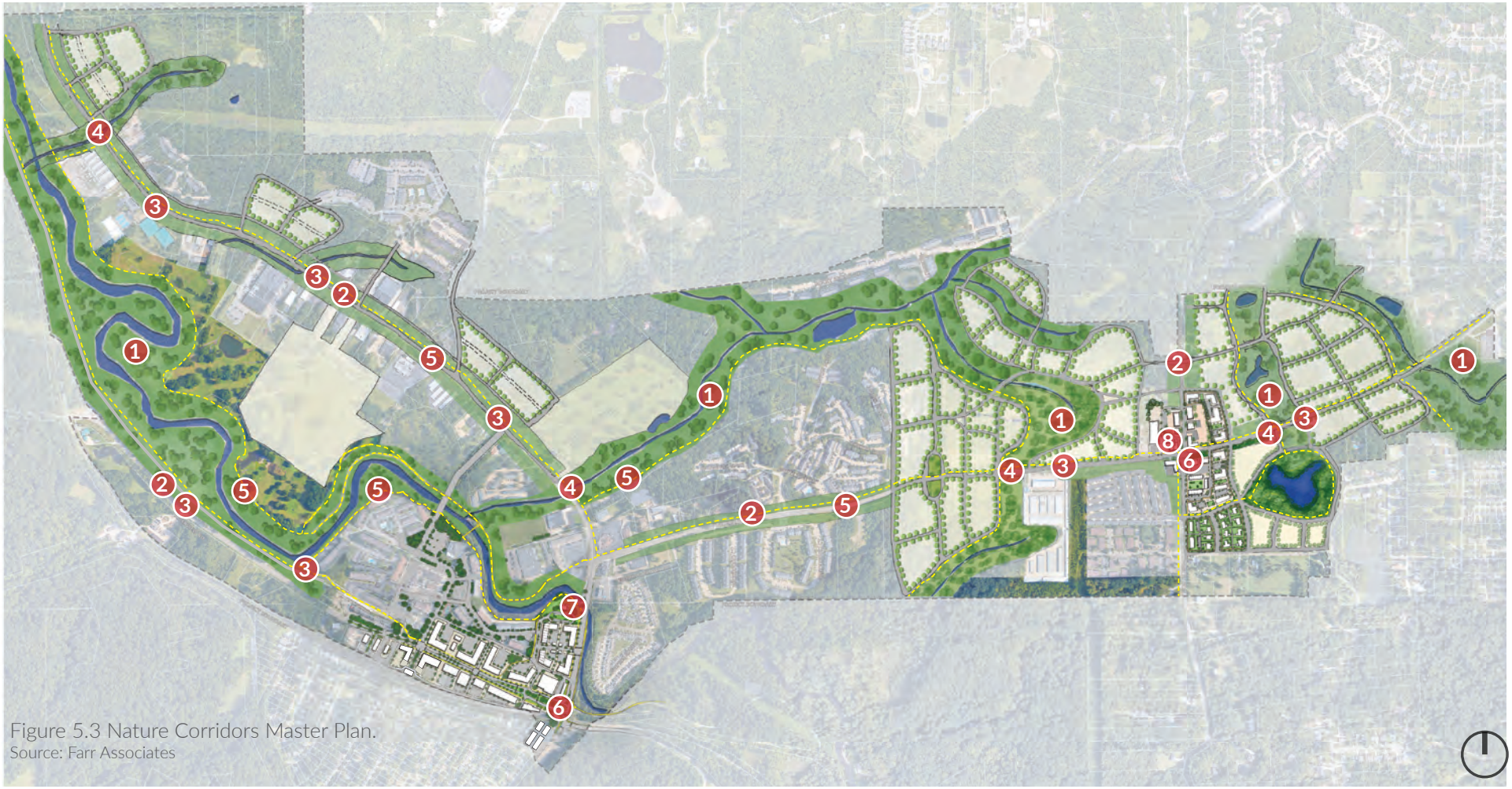


Figure 5.3 Nature Corridors Master Plan.
Source: Farr Associates

HABITAT CORRIDOR PLAN

1 CREATE A CONTINUOUS HABITAT CORRIDOR THROUGH THE VALLEY

CONTINUOUS IS KEY

There is a great deal of literature on the research and design of wildlife corridors that are best suited to preserving natural ecosystems and the organisms that live there. In general, the preferred strategy is to connect areas of existing wildlife and also to areas of high-wildlife traffic, such as food and water sources and courting, mating, nesting, or offspring-rearing areas.

A GUIDE THAT NEEDS VALIDATION

In the study area, this plan proposes a habitat corridor similar to the one presented here. However, as noted elsewhere in this document, this corridor is an estimate and should be designated by a nauralist and other ecological experts to maximize its potential as an effective area for wildlife to thrive.

Figure 5.4: Grey Fox in Cuyahoga Valley National Park.
Source: US Fish and Wildlife Service

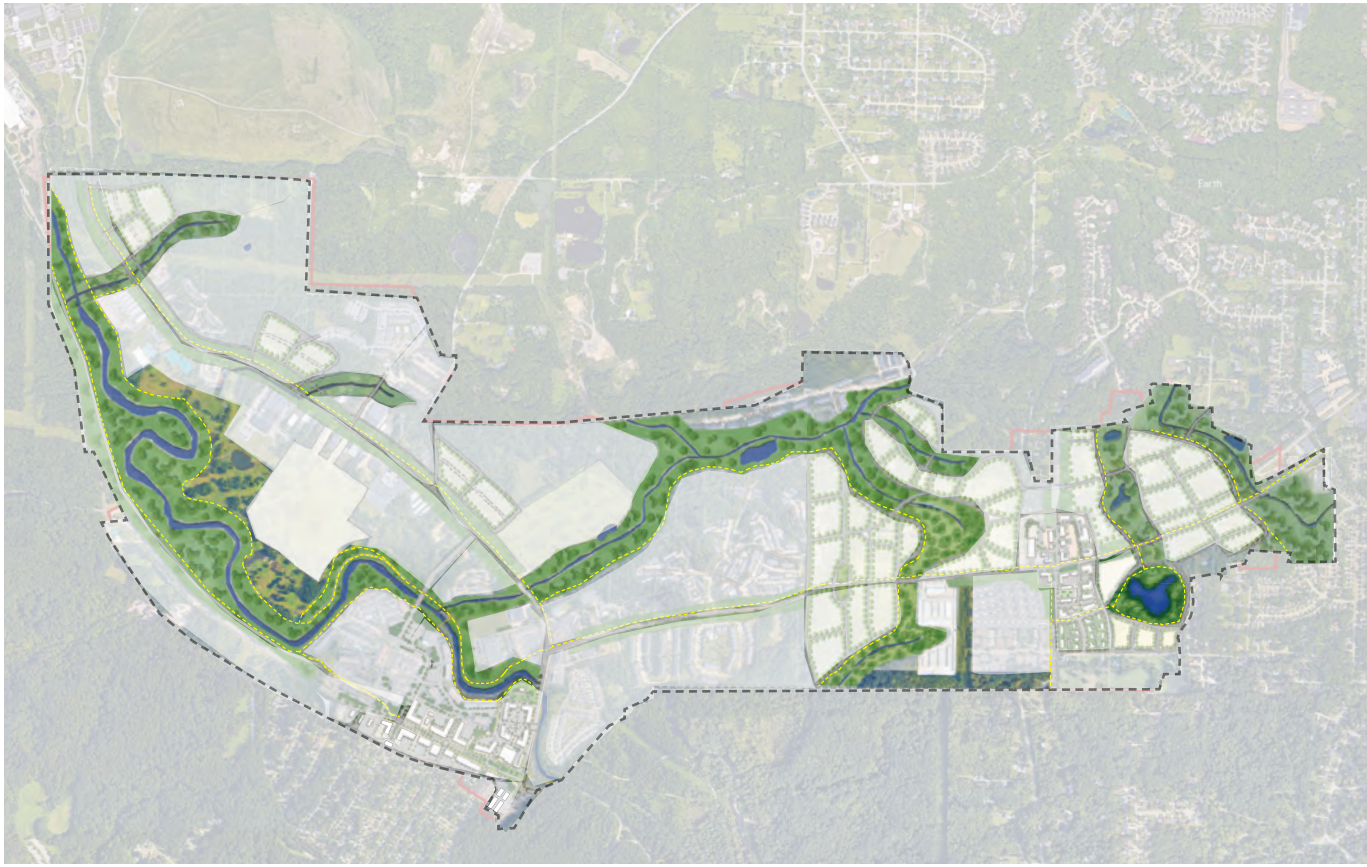


Figure 5.5 Habitat Corridors Master Plan.
Source: Farr Associates

SCENIC BYWAY PLAN

2 CREATE A SCENIC BYWAY ALONG MAIN THOROUGHFARES...

SCENIC ROADWAY

A drive through the Valley today offers a range of immersive experiences—from beautiful, inspiring forests to depressing seas of parking. To preserve the desired rural character of the area, this plan proposes the establishment of scenic byways along major roads in the study area.

Increasing vegetation along the street network and placing development behind this buffer will help maintain the rural character of the area and assure a landscaped corridor experience both for drivers and bicyclists.

MULTI-PURPOSE TRAIL

This buffer is a great opportunity to add a multi-purpose path, set back from the road so a variety of users can travel along it safely.

Figure 5.6: Precedent Image of Multi-Use Trail in Byway. Source: vpm.org

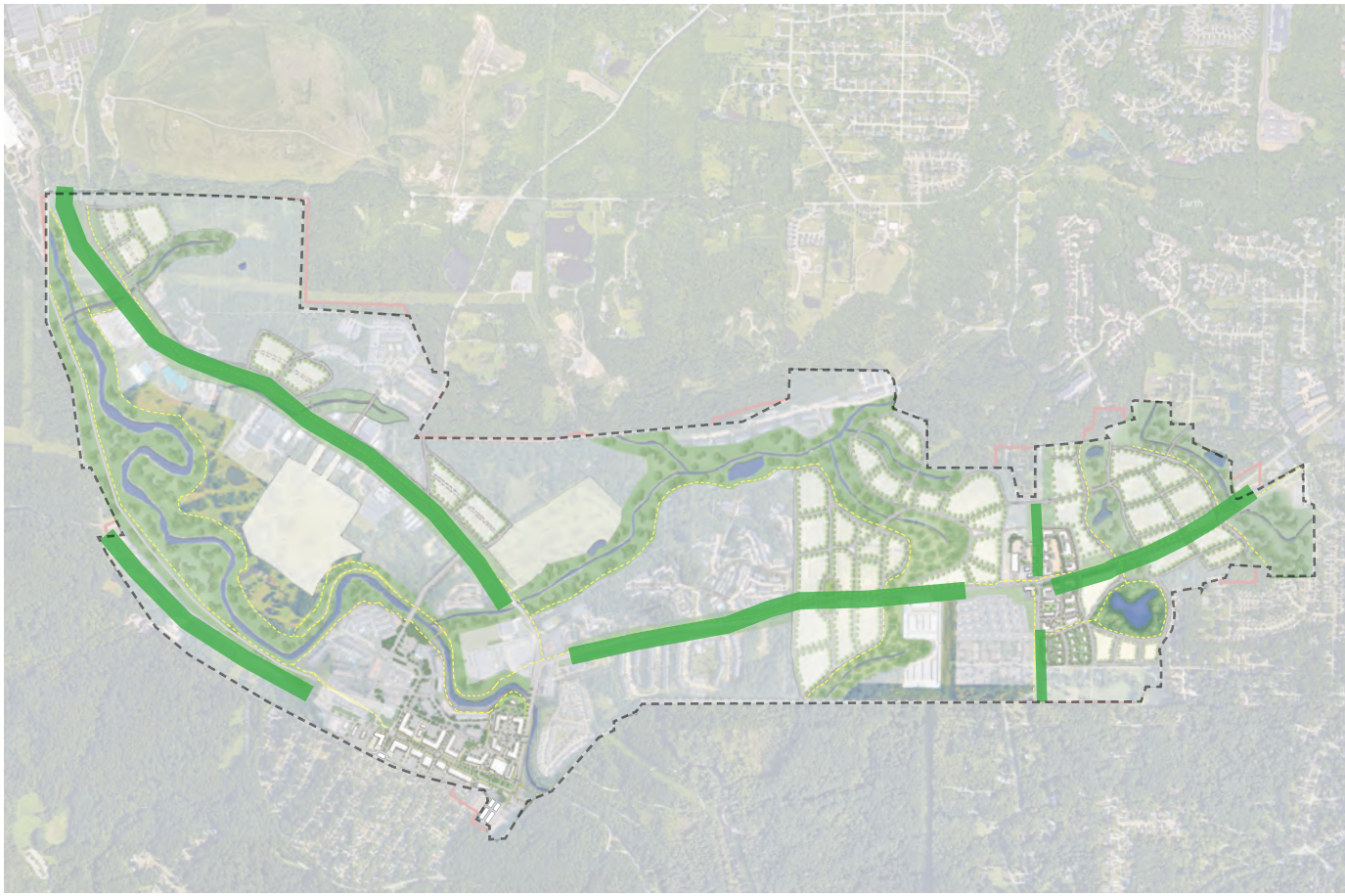


Figure 5.7 Scenic Byways Master Plan.
Source: Farr Associates

SCENIC BYWAY BUFFER

...THAT HAS A 100' BUFFER

While vegetation along the street provides a benefit in the form of scenic drives and walks, roadside vegetation has different impacts for different wildlife species. Where some species benefit from the larger amounts of vegetation acting as a screen and buffer, others do not. The forest habitat may provide food resources close to the road network and reduce visibility of wildlife to vehicle drivers. These conditions may increase the risk of vehicle/wildlife conflicts. Ecological and habitat studies are needed to determine type and size of buffer along scenic byways.

Ecological buffers encourage the growth of local ecosystems and can improve air and water quality.

MEADOW BUFFER

Figure 5.8 Meadow Buffer Example.
Source: Code Studio

Figure 5.9 Sketch of a Meadow Buffer 100ft Set-back.
Source: Farr Associates

FOREST BUFFER

Figure 5.10 Forest Buffer Example.
Source: Code Studio

Figure 5.11 Sketch of Forest Buffer 100ft Set-back.
Source: Farr Associates

HUMAN CROSSINGS

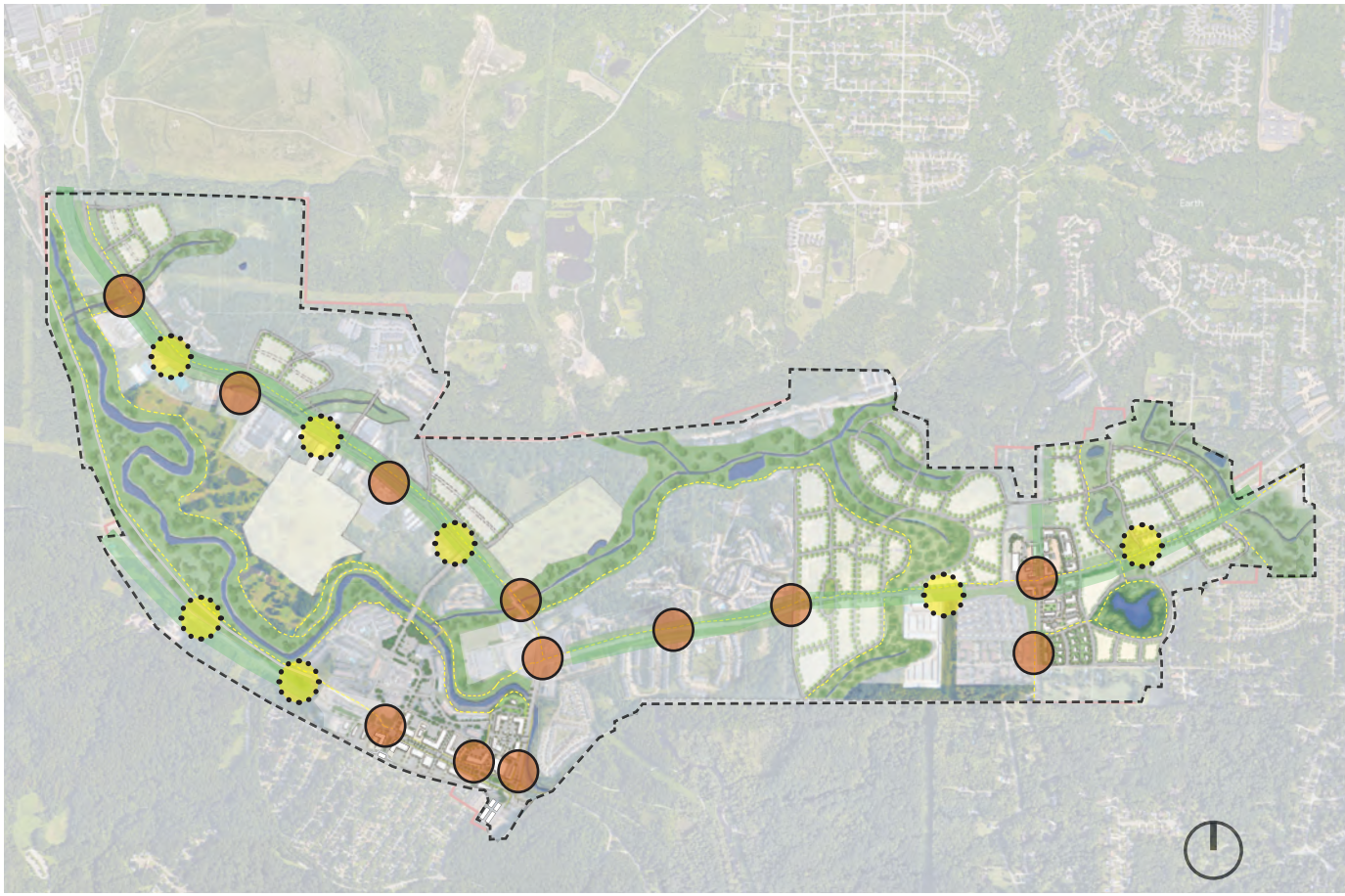
3 INSTALL CROSSWALKS THROUGHOUT THE STUDY AREA

CROSSWALKS EVERY 500'

Crosswalks are needed at both existing intersections and non-signalized mid-block locations throughout the study area. Crosswalks up to 500 feet apart are appropriate in the study area. Where warranted at midblock crossings, use Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons or Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons.

Figure 5.12 Four-Corners Crosswalk in West Union, IA. Copyright: Conservation Design Forum

Figure 5.13 Beacon Pedestrian Hybrid.
Source: Federal Highway Administration, U.S. DOT



Phase 1: Existing Intersections

Phase 2: Mid-Block Crosswalks

Figure 5.14 Crosswalks Master Plan.
Source: Farr Associates

NATURAL CROSSINGS

4 INSTALL ANIMAL CROSSINGS AT KEY POINTS

AVOID UNINTENDED CONFLICT

Critter crossings are another tool proven from wildlife conservation research. They allow wildlife to safely pass underneath a road, walkway, or other human connection above, therefore avoiding physical conflict between humans and wildlife, including roadkill. As an added bonus, some animals including bats find the critter crossing underpasses to be good homes.

Wildlife underpasses must provide a wide, clear, and inviting passage. Ideally the span is as wide as it is long and the clearance is at least 12', or the animals will still take the road.

A TIERED APPROACH

Critter crossings are recommended wherever there is a chance for human/wildlife interaction. However, crossings along the main roads will be most important for reducing conflict.

Figure 5.15 Critter Crossing Example.
Source: Farr Associates

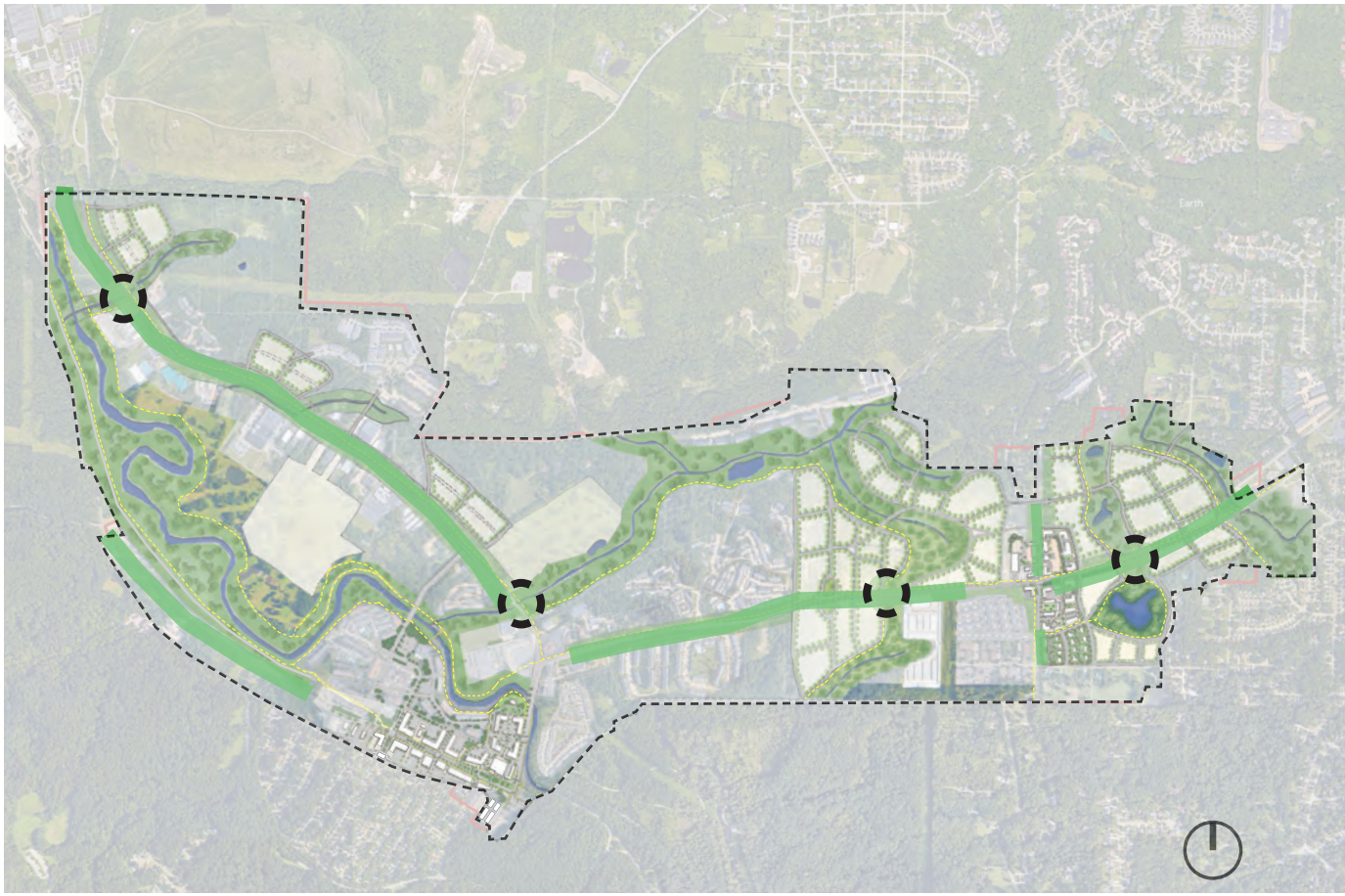


Figure 5.16 Critter Crossings Master Plan.
Source: Farr Associates

EXPAND TRAIL NETWORK

5 CREATE A MORE COMPLETE TRAIL NETWORK THAT CONNECTS PEOPLE WITH DESTINATIONS

The Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail is one of the biggest assets to this study area and loved by local residents and visitors alike. This plan proposes the trail network be expanded and more loops be created. This will provide users the opportunity to conduct shorter or longer walks/bike rides.

It will also create more linkages between residential areas and destinations including parks, which will improve walkability. Footbridges should be installed in strategic locations to further improve accessibility. These footbridges can double as viewing platforms to the Cuyahoga River.

The multi-purpose path within the scenic byway buffer should be 10 feet wide and connect to the habitat corridor trail. A multi-purpose trail on Portage Trail Ext. W would allow new and existing residents to access the retail node at Northampton Road by bike or on foot. Note that the steep terrain in portions of the study area may prevent this multi-purpose trail from serving as an official bike route, particularly along Portage Trail Extension W. This portion of the network should include a bike dismount area.

Figure 5.17 Biking on the Towpath Trail.
Source: Century Cycles

Figure 5.18 Continuous Bike Trails Master Plan.
Source: Farr Associates

BRANDING & IDENTITY

6 MARKET THE STUDY AREA WITH CLEAR IDENTITY AREAS THAT PEOPLE CAN BELONG TO

WHAT'S IN A NAME

Neighborhoods need to first have a name. The key nodes in this study area are currently referred to by a number of things, and some names include larger areas than just these nodes.

To give these subareas a firmer sense of identity, this plan proposes naming the western node "The Valley." This is current nomenclature being used for parts of the study area, so it is recognizable already. Future branding studies may want to consider a stronger, more specific name such as "Portage Walk". The eastern node is proposed to be called "Northampton Corners" and is referred to as such throughout this document.

A SENSE OF BELONGING

After it's got a name, the next most important element of a neighborhood is whether community members know where it is, what it is, and whether they belong to it. This plan proposes the 'where' areas outlined here. In the next sections, this plan includes vignettes and accompanying narratives that start to define what each of these areas could be, and the types of elements that can contribute to a sense of belonging.

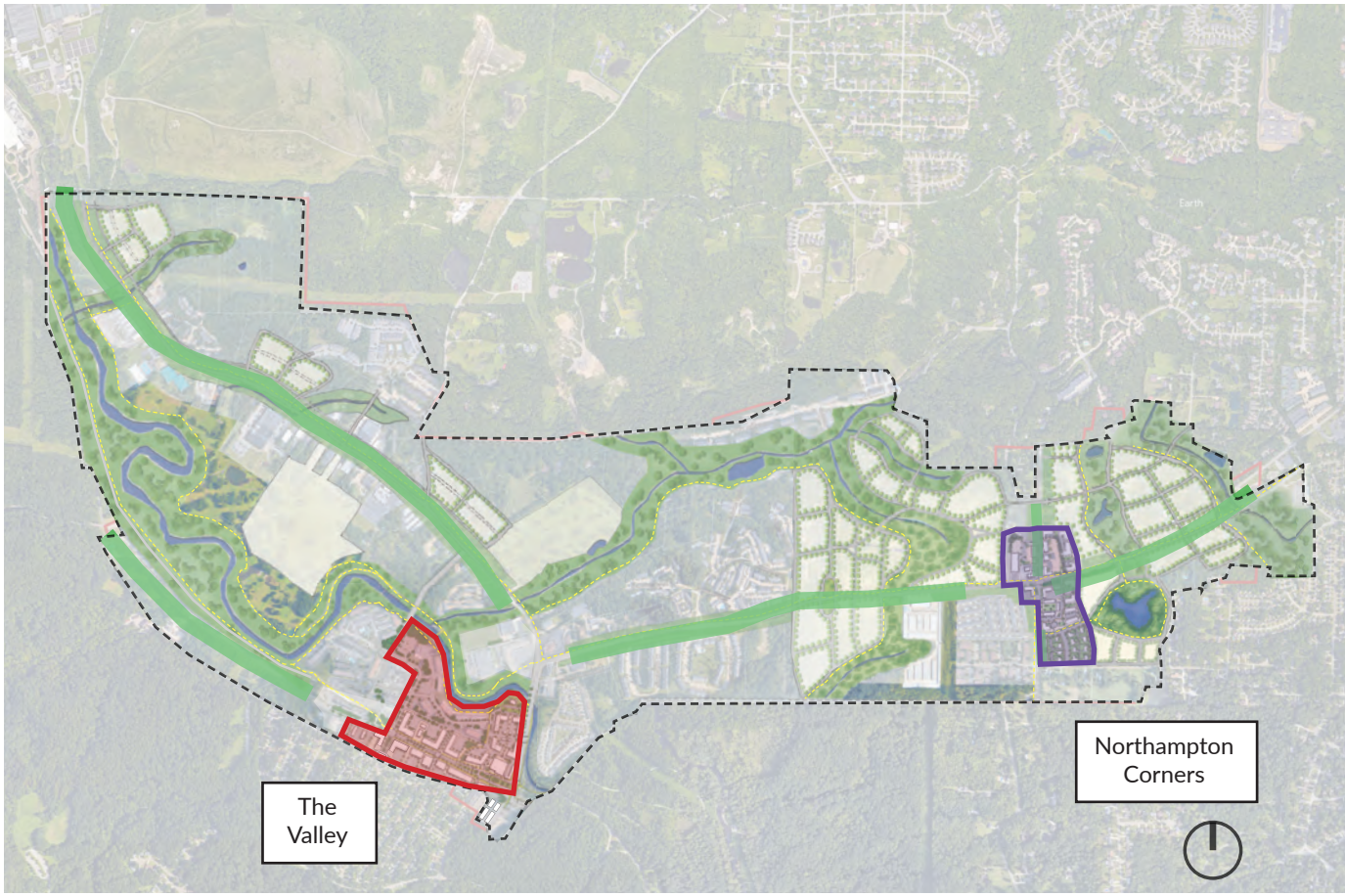


Figure 5.19 Identity Areas Master Plan.
Source: Farr Associates

WAYFINDING & SIGNAGE PLAN

7 EMPLOY A COMPREHENSIVE WAYFINDING STRATEGY

This plan recommends conducting a comprehensive wayfinding strategy and a set design palette to make navigating Merriman Valley easier for locals and visitors.

A comprehensive wayfinding and signage plan should be developed that can evolve and adapt as entities are added and/or enhanced in the future.

This plan has identified the following categories of signage types and specific areas that could benefit from wayfinding signage. Precedent images of clear, effective signage are provided as examples of what could be applied in the study area.

Signage Types

All signage should be simple, clear, and to the point. Consider the following four main types of wayfinding:

- **Identification** - Tells a person they have arrived at their destination for example: landmark signage, historical marker.
- **Directional** - Helps people get to where they're going. Continuity is key for directional signage, getting lost anywhere between the two points using directional signage, it's immediately invalidated. For example junction signage, colored marking on trails.
- **Informational** - This signage pertains to the overall facilities within the area. Amenities available ranging from bathroom and cafeteria, to viewing platforms and other activities.
- **Regulatory** - Is focused on safety and setting boundaries. Examples include speed limits and ADA accessibility points.

ACCESS TO ACTIVITIES

CUYAHOGA RIVER

The Cuyahoga River is mostly hidden from sight within the study area. Directional signs informing locals and visitors of where to access the river is needed. Also as the river has played a significant role in shaping Merriman Valley (see history of Cuyahoga River on p. 28), a visible and detailed plaque should be placed in the proposed River Bend Park and other such strategic locations for visitors and residents to enjoy and learn about its importance.

CUYAHOGA VALLEY NATIONAL PARK

Direct visitors to points of interest in the Park that are near the study area.

OHIO & ERIE CANAL TOWPATH TRAIL

The trail currently has a large identification sign well placed at the trail head along N Portage Path. However, it may benefit from additional directional and regulatory signage and a larger map showing the extent of the trail and other trails it connects to.

OTHER TRAILS

To promote ecotourism, it is important to highlight every opportunity for outdoor activities and recreation. Provide signage to promote the Cuyahoga River Water Trail and direct boaters to river access points. Signage should be conceived with the user in mind.

Figure 5.20: Wayfinding Signage Example.
Copyright: Town of Vail

INTERPRETING HISTORY

HISTORIC BOUNDARY OF THE USA

Use larger plaques to more appropriately commemorate significant parts of history. This could increase visitations to Merriman Valley.

OLD PORTAGE PATH BRONZE STATUE

This public artwork marks the northern terminus of the historic Portage Path used by Indigenous Peoples. It is positioned at the busy intersection of Merriman Road and Portage Path, but seems to be lost among all the traffic. Improvements could include better pedestrian access to the sculpture and removing some of the brush on the riverbank to open up views of the water. These improvements can lead to increased understanding of the important cultural history of the Cuyahoga Valley.

FINDING AMENITIES

LIBERTY COMMONS

A great social space that needs signage and identification markers.

WEATHERVANE PLAYHOUSE

Currently there is no wayfinding for Weathervane Playhouse. Installing directional and identification signage is needed to highlight this cultural asset.

CONSOLIDATING UTILITIES

8 BURY UTILITIES UNDERGROUND

Develop a long-term plan to consolidate and underground the overhead powerlines and improve the visual impact of the scenic byway. Burying powerlines also improves infrastructure resiliency to harsh weather conditions and climate change.

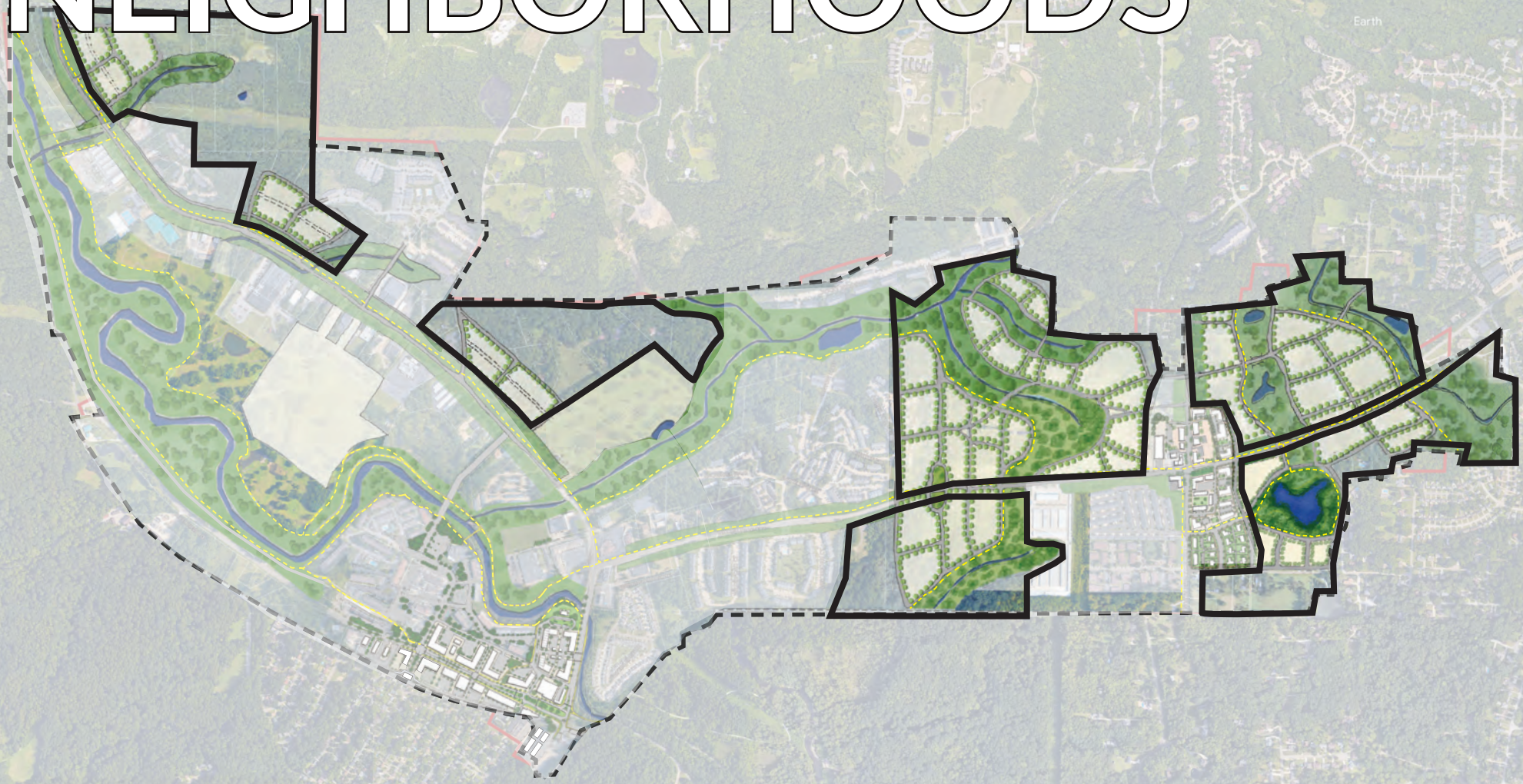
Focus efforts on the main thoroughfares for the most impact. This work can be done as development and redevelopment projects are built.

If undergrounding the lines is not feasible or too expensive, an alternative could include installing poles along easements between adjoining backyards, or along alleys in the conservation neighborhoods. The goal is to get them out of the scenic byway.

Figure 5.21 Before (left) and After (right) the Burial of Overhead Utility Lines.
Source: Scenic America, Hilton Head

Figure 5.22 Maze of Power Lines Above Portage Trail Ext W / Northampton Road Intersection. Source: Google Street View

II. CONSERVATION NEIGHBORHOODS



The Future is Here

Conservation Neighborhoods, also known as sustainable urbanism, combine aspects of walkable urbanism, conservation development, and sustainable building practices. They are yet another way that the Study Area can distinguish itself as a global exemplar of sustainable development. Walkable urbanism has a street grid, an identifiable neighborhood center, and a mix of housing types. Conservation development concerns itself with maintaining a tree canopy and infiltrating stormwater into the ground in ways that mimic natural systems. Sustainable building practices emphasize energy-efficient, all-electric buildings (without gas connections), with rooftop photovoltaic solar panels, battery storage, and equipped to charge electric vehicles.

CONSERVATION NEIGHBORHOODS

CONNECTIVITY / RIGHT OF WAY

1. Walkable Street Grids

REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

2. Bike-Oriented Development
3. Identifiable Neighborhood Center
4. Diverse Housing*
5. Sustainable Buildings*
6. Low-Impact Development*

NATURAL LANDS

7. Conservation Dedication by Landowners*
8. Natural Landscaping*
9. Dark Skies*

*Not shown on map

Figure 5.23 Conservation Neighborhoods Master Plan
Source: Farr Associates

LAND CONSERVATION STRATEGIES

CONNECTED DEVELOPMENT PRESERVES THE MOST OPEN SPACE IN THE VALLEY

Not all development is created equal. There is a gradient of development types, spanning from inefficient and land-intensive to more sustainable and land-preserving. This plan recommends Connected Development as the preferred strategy for the Conservation Neighborhoods.

X Cul-de-Sac Development (sprawl)

Sprawl, or cul-de-sac development, is an inefficient use of space, increases car trips, and decreases the amount of land remaining for open space. This isolated development type should be avoided throughout the Merriman Valley and beyond.

X Clustered Development

Next on the spectrum is Clustered Development. This type of development is an improvement upon sprawl in that it preserves some open space and usually has decent connectivity within the development. However, these developments tend to be set back from the road (creating a barrier through portions of the open space) and connect once to the main street, which means that almost all trips still require a vehicle. These development types can be improved upon.

✓ Connected Development

Finally, and preferably, Connected Development provides multiple connections to the main road, a connected street network within the development, and connects to other developments as well. These multiple connections allow for many more trips to be taken via something other than a car. By building slightly denser, but on a smaller footprint of land, more continuous open space can be preserved for habitats and nature.

Figure 5.24 Diagram of Land Conservation Strategies.
Source: Farr Associates

WALKABLE STREET GRID

1 STREETS SHOULD BE ADAPTABLE, WITH SMALL BLOCKS AND ALLEYS

WALKABLE STREET CONSIDERATIONS

Over several millennia the street grid has proven to be an adaptable way to provide organizational and spatial structure to human settlements.

Therefore, the basis for the conservation neighborhoods proposed herein is the walkable street grid with the following design considerations:

- Blocks can be rectangular or curvilinear.
- The smaller the block perimeter, the more walkable they are (maximum block perimeter is 1,750 feet).
- Blocks with alleys are safer: they have none/fewer driveways, which are points of pedestrian/car conflict.

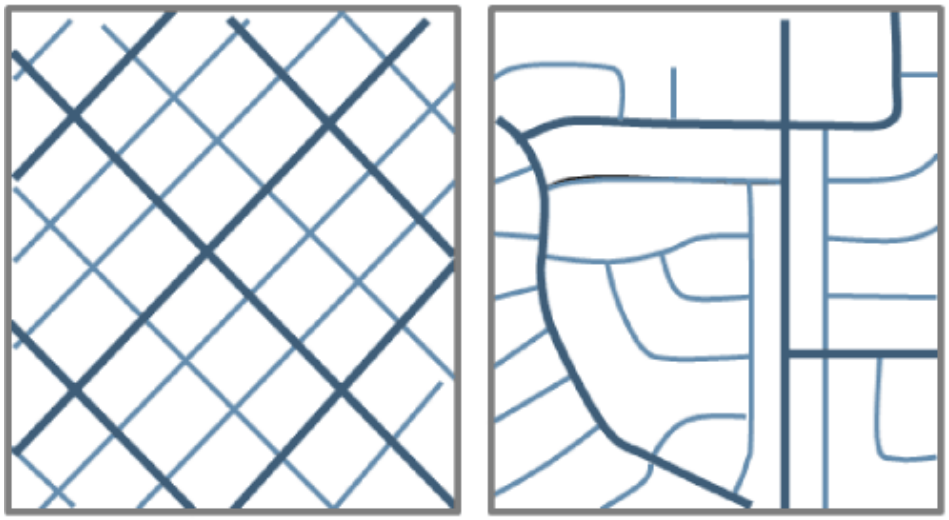


Figure 5.25 Street NetworkTypes: Grid (left) and Curvilinear (right).
Source: www.transportgeography.org

Figure 5.26 NW Portland, OR.
Source: Google Earth

BIKE-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

2 CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT THAT IS BIKE-FRIENDLY

WELL WORTH THE EFFORT

Travel within the valley today is done almost entirely by car. An alternative put forward in this plan is called Bike-Oriented-Development (BOD). The idea is to cluster new development tight to the back of the scenic setback and allow trips "into town" to occur by bike. There are some specific conditions in the study area that will pose a challenge, but the possibility of creating an alternative to the car is well worth the effort.

Village Homes in Davis, CA is a classic example of this type of development. Its bike trails connect the community to communal open space. This is an example of the types of development appropriate in the conservation neighborhoods.

Figure 5.27 Sketch of Bike Riders.
Copyright: Bondy Studio

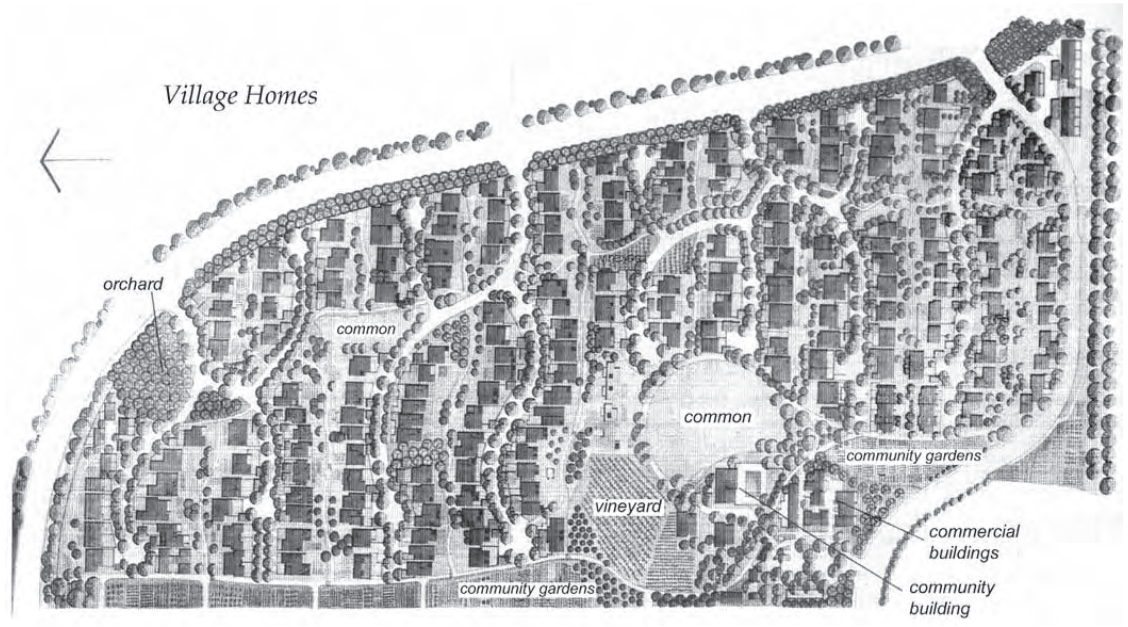


Figure 5.28 Bike-Oriented Development Community of Village Homes in Davis, CA.
Source: digitalcommons.calpoly.edu

Figure 5.29 Bike "Alleys" in Village Homes in Davis, CA. Copyright: https://gardenerofgoodandevil.wordpress.com/

Figure 5.30 Street View of Village Homes in Davis, CA.
Source: Google Earth

IDENTIFIABLE NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

3 PROVIDE A PUBLIC OPEN SPACE WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE OF THE ENTIRE NEIGHBORHOOD

SEE AND BE SEEN

Humans are social beings drawn to places where they can see and be seen by other people. One traditional response to this need is to provide a public open space (green, park, or plaza) within walking distance of the entire neighborhood. Thoughtful, intuitively designed public space is important so that people feel welcomed and drawn to it.

Figure 5.31 Sweet Corn Festival Gathering at Uptown Normal Circle. Source: Scott Shigley

Figure 5.32 Diagram of a Typical Sustainable Neighborhood. Source: Farr Associates

DIVERSE HOUSING

4 PROVIDE A MIX OF HOUSING TYPES THAT ARE ATTAINABLE FOR ALL INCOMES

LOCAL HOUSING FOR ALL

Many jobs that keep our economy going do not pay enough to support housing choices. In fact, very few new housing choices are available even for households with incomes from two "service" jobs. These conservation neighborhoods should include a diversity of dwellings with lower price points within each neighborhood.

MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING

The concept of Missing Middle Housing is that there is a wide range of multi-unit or clustered housing types- the "Missing Middle" - that is not often supplied by the market. These housing types fit between traditional single-family houses and larger apartment buildings. In these conservation neighborhoods, these typologies should be the same size, or compatible with, single-family homes. These types include duplexes, fourplexes, and bungalow courts.

HIDDEN DENSITY ON LOTS

Provide options for owners and renters alike by granting single-family homeowners the flexibility to add dwelling units on their lots. These additional dwelling units could be in the form of a traditional added structure like a laneway home, but could also provide options for a caregiver to live in an upstairs unit or a mortgage helper to live in a basement unit.

DIVERSE BUILDINGS ON BLOCKS

Do not regulate conservation neighborhood zoning by density, because that discourages small units. Rather, a form-based code will allow for a range of building types within each form-based zone. This will allow for a mix of housing types on each block. This variety could be spread throughout single-family homes; placed on the end of a single-family block (see below), or used to transition from a neighborhood street to a Main Street with commercial and mixed-use buildings.

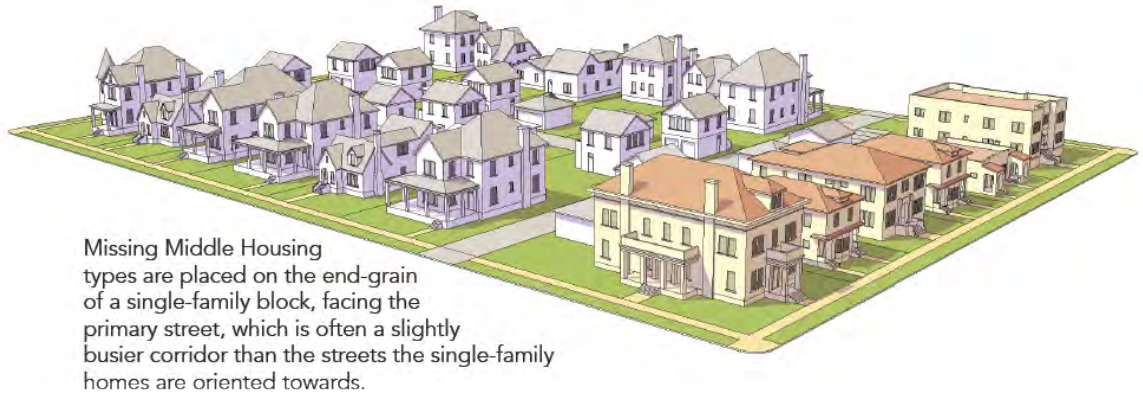


Figure 5.33 Diagram of Diverse Housing Offered at the Block Scale.
Copyright: Opticos Design, Inc.

SIDE-BY-SIDE DUPLEX

Lot Width: 45-70 ft
Lot Depth: 100-150 ft
Net Density: 8-20 dwellings per acre
Units: 2 units, 600-2,400 sf *
Parking: 2-3 on-street/ max. 1 per dwelling off-street

FOURPLEX

Lot Width: 50-65 ft
Lot Depth: 100-150 ft
Net Density: 18-73 dwellings per acre
Units: 4-8 units, 500-1,200 sf *
Parking: 2-3 on-street/ max. 1 per dwelling off-street

BUNGALOW COURT

Lot Width: 100-150 ft
Lot Depth: 100-150 ft
Net Density: 20-22 dwellings per acre
Units: 5-10 units, 500-800 sf
Parking: 5-7 on-street/ max. 1 per dwelling off-street

SMALL MULTIPLEX

Lot Width: 50-65 ft
Lot Depth: 100-150 ft
Net Density: 28-70 dwellings per acre
Units: 6-10 units, 500-1,200 sf *
Parking: 2-3 on-street/ max. 1 per dwelling off-street

Figure 5.34 Missing Middle Housing Typologies.
Copyright: Farr Associates

SUSTAINABLE BUILDING PRACTICES

5 DESIGN NEW AND EXISTING BUILDINGS TO A HIGHER ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARD

A NEW APPROACH

To make future development in the study area a global model of sustainability requires going beyond planning best practices to consider the details of construction. Two areas merit mention: rainwater and energy/fossil fuels.

RAINWATER

Sites should be designed to capture and retain a large stormwater event on site and to use stored rainwater to offset the need for potable water. See p. 87.

ENERGY - ALL-ELECTRIC

The Climate Emergency compels society to stop burning fossil fuels to heat and power our buildings and vehicles. New and existing buildings can be designed to use very little energy (PHIUS Certified), and to operate without burning fossil fuels for heating (heat pump technology) or cooking (induction technology).

Investing in gas connections - both in terms of replacing existing gas-burning appliances and the construction of new gas connections - is counter to the sustainability and environmental goals of this plan. Futhermore, burning gas for heating and cooking contributes to poor indoor air quality and leads to negative health outcomes including asthma and other respiratory issues.

Consider requiring that new and majorly renovated buildings be solar-ready. While solar is not always feasible right away, buildings should include the infrastructure needed to one day add solar panels when appropriate.

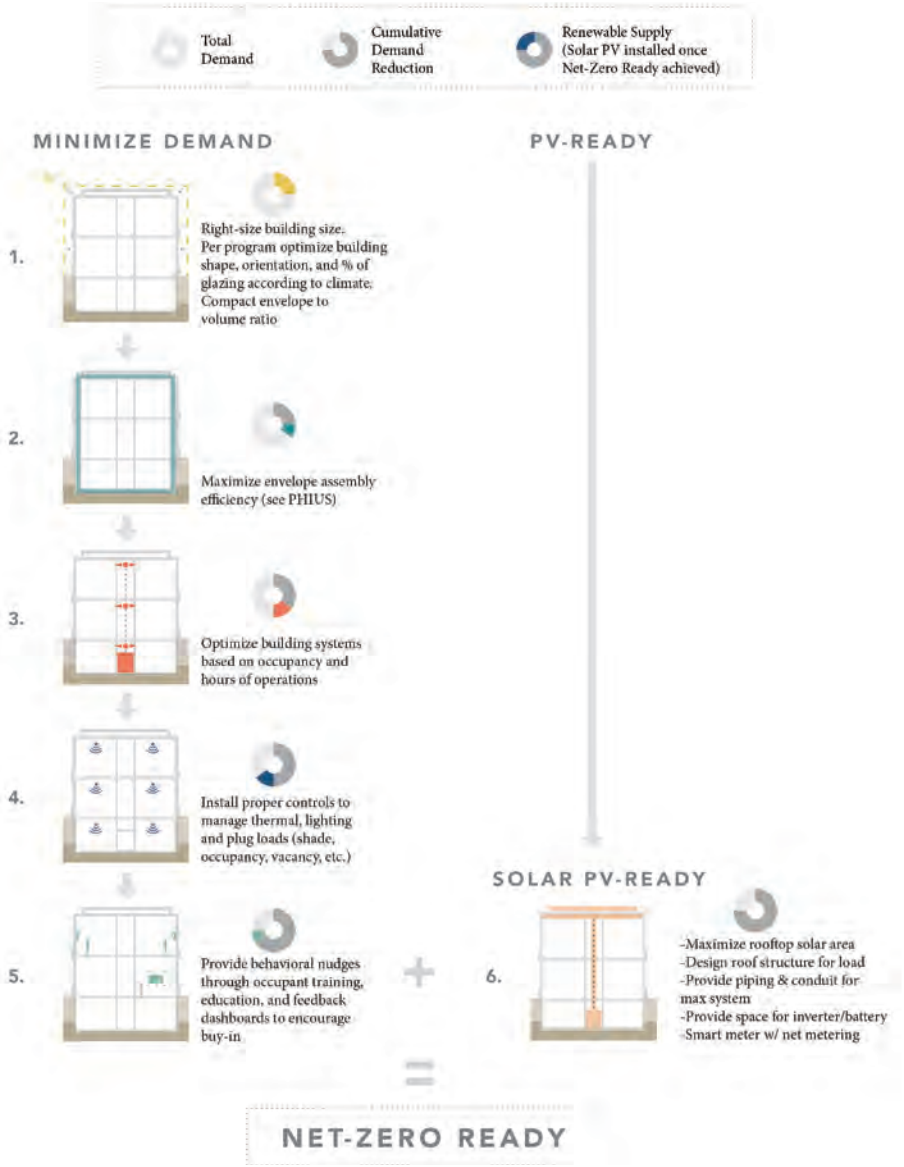


Figure 5.35 Steps to Make a Net-Zero Ready Building.
Source: Farr Associates

LOW-IMPACT DEVELOPMENT

6 LET STORMWATER INFILTRATE NATURALLY

MANAGE RAINWATER WHERE IT FALLS

Every project should incorporate water where it falls. Well-designed green infrastructure can reduce wastewater treatment loads, lower costs, preserve water quality, prevent erosion, and provide joy to human and animal inhabitants of the conservation neighborhoods.

For reducing runoff and increasing infiltration, use permeable paving in alleys and parking lots and anywhere else appropriate. Incorporate bioretention systems (such as rain gardens, parking-lot bioswales, and sidewalk planters) to receive and manage runoff from nearby impermeable roads, sidewalks, and other areas.

DEMAND BEAUTY

Systems that are not beautiful will not last, and therefore lack true sustainability and resilience. However, beauty on its own is not enough. Systems must be engineered to be functional AND beautiful.

WHAT *NOT* TO DO

Avoid rip-rap pits. Use bioegineering to create more productive landscape edges, rather than gravel. Also, avoid fountains, which are often very energy-intensive. Rather than having water as a byproduct of fountain designs, focus on the sound, light reflection, and waves that water expresses.

DELIGHT THE SENSES

Water is an essential element of life. It has many complex functions, including providing a sense of grounding. With the Cuyahoga River in the study area, water should continue to be celebrated both (1) as a natural element of ecosystems and landscape, but also (2) as a surprising and exciting element for people to experience in their communities.

Strategies for experimenting with water include exposing water whenever possible, celebrate falling water from roofs, interrupt flow to create turbulence, and make it interactive in public places.

Figure 5.36 Sustainable Water Feature in Public Plaza.
Copyright Scott Shigley, Courtesy of Hoerr Schaudt Landscape Architecture.

Figure 5.37 Permeable Paving.
Copyright: Conservation Design Forum

Figure 5.38 Exposed Water Draining from a Rooftop.
Copyright: Conservation Design Forum

LANDOWNER CONSERVATION DEDICATION

7 ACQUIRE CONSERVATION EASEMENTS FROM STRATEGICALLY-LOCATED PARCELS

HUMAN SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

The health of animal populations is directly related to the quality of the habitat they occupy. The same is true for humans. Conservation Neighborhoods embrace two big ideas:

- The conservation of riparian corridors, animal habitats, and other sensitive lands should be based on the best available science.
- Lands to be used for human settlements should be developed intensely and sustainably to promote both human and planetary health.

PREVENT DETRIMENTAL LAND ASSEMBLAGE

Developers prefer to develop larger parcels. When no such larger parcels are available, they may assemble multiple smaller land parcels. A common pattern is for a developer to acquire a larger "landlocked parcel" (one not fronting on roads) and then the land (and often homes) necessary to provide that landlocked parcel with road access. This type of land acquisition often leads to sprawl or cluster development that inhibits the sustainable development goals of this plan (see p. 81). To deter this type of land assemblage, a land conservancy could acquire conservation easements from landowners of strategically-located parcels.

Figure 5.39 Conservation Easement Sign on Private Property.
Source: Eastern Shore Land Conservancy

NATIVE LANDSCAPING

8 MAINTAIN EXISTING TREE CANOPIES AND PROMOTE NATIVE PLANTS

PRESERVE EXISTING TREES AND CANOPIES

Preserving mature trees is essential to maintaining healthy ecosystems, natural environments and combatting climate change. Trees provide numerous benefits, including sequestering carbon, removing pollutants from the air, slowing stormwater runoff, reducing local temperatures and thus home energy consumption, and improved home values. Mature trees provide far more environmental benefits than smaller, younger trees. Therefore the practice of issuing credits to developers for planting saplings to offset cutting mature trees should not be allowed.

New development and significant redevelopment should be designed to preserve specimen trees and maintain the greatest amount of tree canopy as possible. The business-as-usual developer practice of clearcutting development sites is not appropriate in the study area. Canopy preservation standards that apply to both Cities should be developed to protect natural areas in the conservation neighborhoods.

PROMOTE NATIVE PLANTS

Native plants should be used wherever possible. They provide important habitat and food for both local and migrating species. They also help support native pollinators such as bees, and other organisms that play important roles in our ecosystems. Sometimes the use of a cultivar that is closely related to a native species is preferred in order to combat the encroachment of invasive species into the landscape.

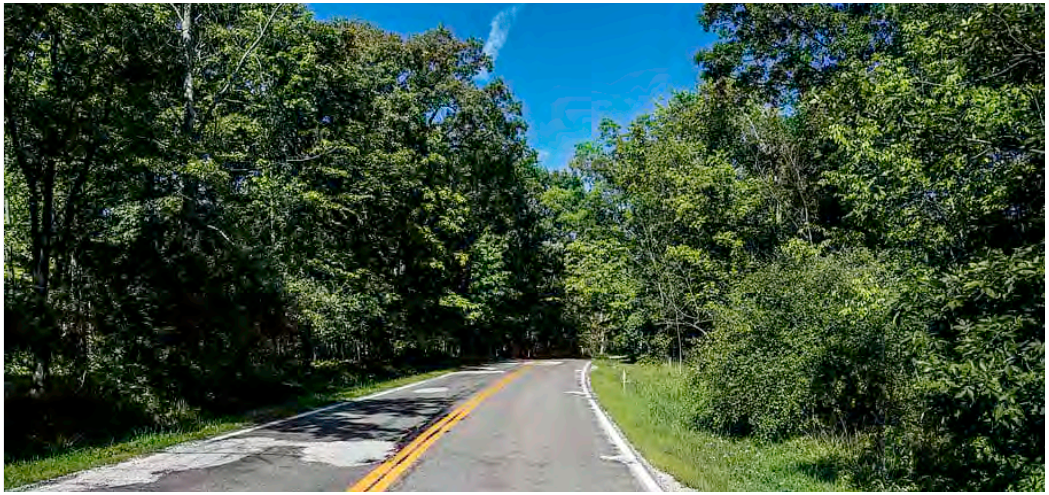


Figure 5.40 Cuyahoga Valley National Park.
Source: Public Domain

DARK SKIES

9 KEEP LIGHT POLLUTION TO A MINIMUM

LAYERS OF LIGHT

Humans and other species can be negatively affected by light at night, including disrupting natural circadian rhythms and visual cues (such as signals from others, navigational landmarks, etc.). To minimize these and other negative effects, require adjustable, minimal street-level lighting throughout the conservation neighborhoods. Here are the layers of light that should be provided:

- Layer 1: Architectural features like facades, columns, bell towers, or other features.
- Layer 2: Fill in with general low-glare ambient lighting, such as pedestrian poles, and light key destinations like key entries and refuges.
- Layer 3: Always light stairs and other obstacles.
- Layer 4: Add interest by lighting art, water features, etc.

BEAUTIFUL FROM EVERY ANGLE

Regardless of which angle it's being viewed, lighting effects should be beautiful and without glare or annoyance. Minimize uplighting of all kinds, mount light at the top of facades and aim inward, and avoid cobra-style streetlights with a lot of spillover light. Do not aim across a path with a floodlight or use high-glare lights.

LIGHT LIKE THE SETTING SUN

Respect the biological circadian rhythms of all species by eliminating, or at least greatly reducing, blue light outdoors. Limit the color temperature of street and pedestrian lighting to no more than 3,000 Kelvin (K). Light sources should ideally change throughout the evening to accomodate context and mimic the natural lighting of the setting sun. For example, some blue light will enhance visibility during rush hour periods; as traffic subsides, lighting can adjust to favor the red range of light.

Figure 5.41 Appropriate Stair Lighting.
Copyright: Clanton & Associates, Inc.

Figure 5.42 Appropriate Street Lighting.
Photo courtesy of Walker Christensen, DHM Design

Figure 5.43 Lighting the Facade of a Key Entrance. Copyright: Clanton & Associates, Inc.

Figure 5.44 Appropriate Park Lighting.
Copyright: Clanton & Associates, Inc.

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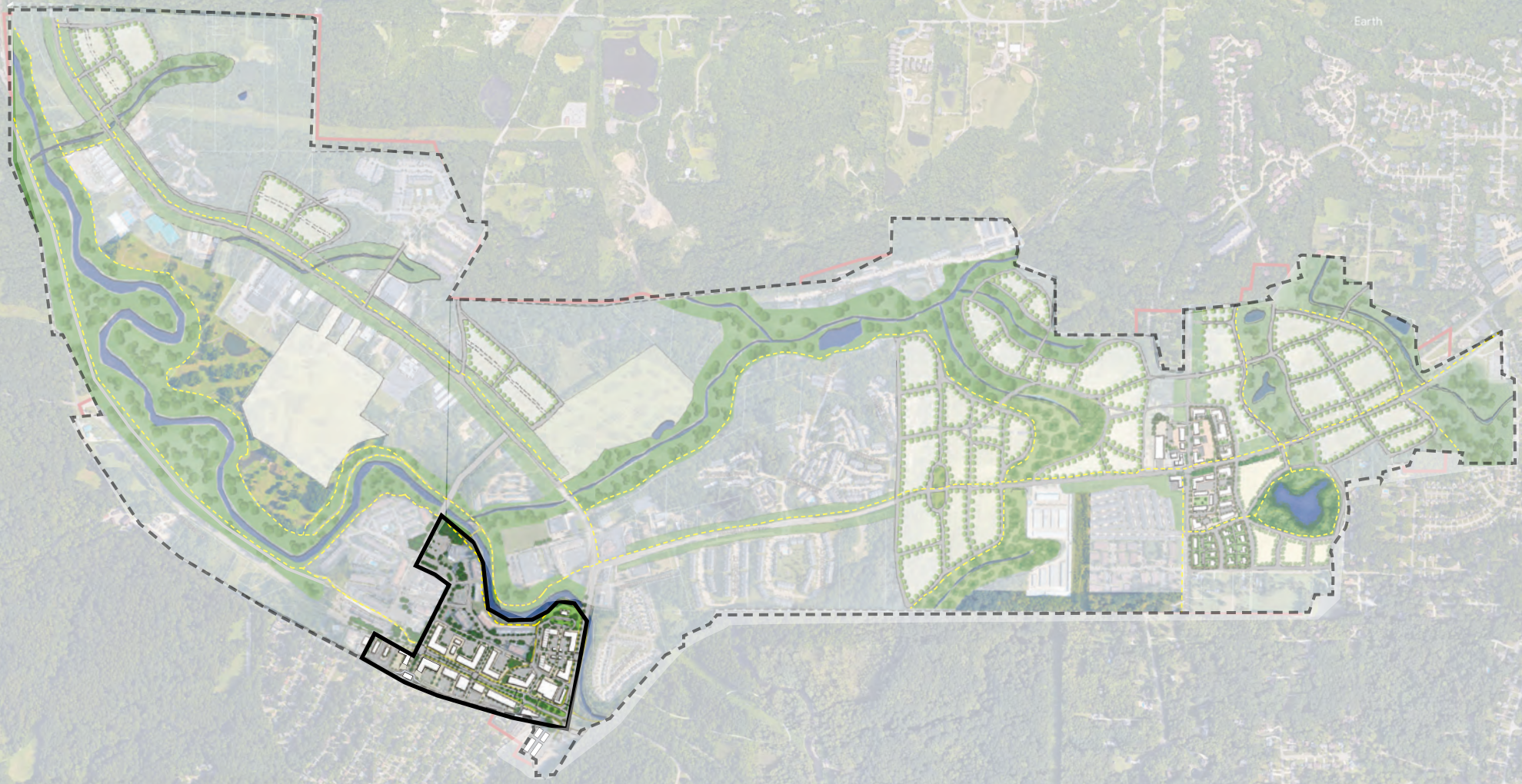
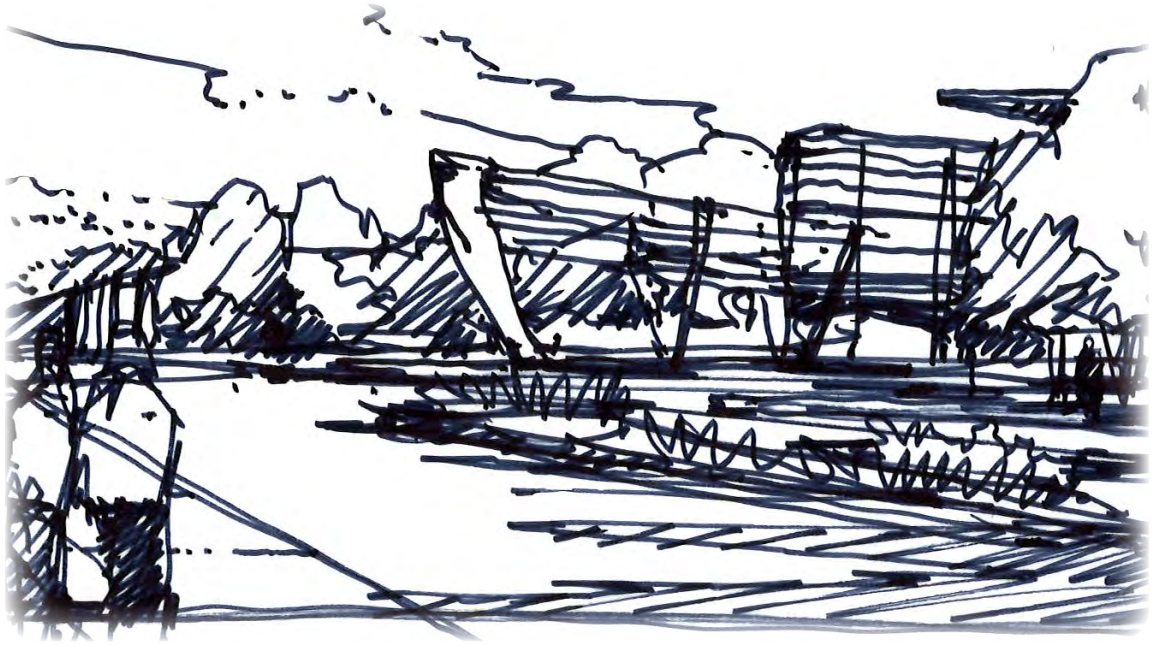
III. THE VALLEY

N PORTAGE PATH / MERRIMAN ROAD



Thanks for the Memories!



Today a visit to the Merriman Valley leaves no lasting impression. Part of what makes a place special, especially in our social media age, is having a memorable image—a postcard view. To promote eco-tourism and serve as the Gateway to the National Park, this plan proposes a massive piece of conceptual art, the world's-largest interactive canoe.

Figure 5.45 Aerial rendering of The Valley looking down Merriman Road to the left and N Portage Path to the right.
Source: Farr Associates, Copyright Bondy Studio

Wow, I Need to Visit That!

This plan guides the transformation of Merriman Road and Portage Path from unattractive, dangerous, high-speed arterials into a global exemplar of walkable, sustainable, development. The key steps are as follows: an innovative makeover of the central intersection from a vehicular facility into a civic gathering place; the adoption of form-based zoning and sustainable regulations to guide investment, a twenty-year, quadrant-by-quadrant, City-guided, connectivity-centered, redevelopment program; and a promotional campaign to tell the world about this great place.

Figure 5.46 Street-level rendering of The Valley looking west down Merriman Road.
Source: Farr Associates, Copyright Bondy Studio

Please Stay a While

The success of “Gateway Towns” (jumping off points to national parks) in attracting multi-day visits hinges on two things: 1) inspiring natural experiences, and 2) an exciting place to return to at night. Today the Cuyahoga Valley offers worthy day-long hiking, biking, and paddling experiences but lacks a compelling place for people to return to at night. This plan proposes a walkable hub of street-facing small-scale hotels, bars, restaurants, and other attractions centered around a new civic space, anchored by an enormous conceptual canoe.

Figure 5.47 Aerial rendering of an activated Riverbend Park, just south of the bridge on Portage Path.
Source: Farr Associates, Copyright Bondy Studio

Meet You at Riverbend Park!

Along the Towpath Trail just west of where the Cuyahoga River passes under North Portage Path, the master plan proposes a prominent river-edge amenity: Riverbend Park. The family-friendly park would unite land, bike, and water activities. Its features would include playground equipment, a picnic lawn, an amphitheater for outdoor performances, bike parking, and a dock to pull up to. Active programming could include music and theater performances, yoga and dance classes, and other opportunities for engagement.

N PORTAGE PATH/MERRIMAN ROAD

CONNECTIVITY / RIGHT OF WAY

1. Central Civic Place/ Town Green
2. Re-balanced Right of Way
3. Access Management
4. Increased Connectivity

REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

5. Train Station
6. New Buildings

NATURAL LANDS

7. Connected Trails
8. Riverbend Park

Multi-Purpose Trails Network

Figure 5.48 Detailed Master Plan for The Valley Subarea (Node A).
Source: Farr Associates

CENTRAL CIVIC PLACE

1 CREATE A LOVABLE CIVIC PLACE AT THE PORTAGE PATH / MERRIMAN ROAD INTERSECTION...

TOWN GREEN TO IMPROVE TRAFFIC FLOW

The N Portage Path and Merriman Road intersection is the perfect place to create a center civic place. A town green can calm traffic and make navigating this area safer for all, including cars, pedestrians, and bikers. The town green should include shown crosswalks and pedestrian refuges, and include usable space in the median.

PUBLIC ART TO ACTIVATE THE PLACE

This plan calls for a unique civic art istallation at the center of the town green. To celebrate and honor the community's history, a large canoe can sit in the center of the green, serving as a monument to the past as well as to the area's present and future. Having a well-known gathering space that people use and love adds priceless value to community members and visitors alike.

This space can be programmed year-round to include lecture series, concerts, yoga classes, local art, seating, etc.

The canoe itself is just one of infinite possibilities for this space. The community should participate in the selection of the final art installation. Identifying and selecting local artists, fabricators, and installers would add a sense of ownership and local pride to the area.

A placemaking study should be conducted to further analyze and design the town green civic space and related traffic engineering.

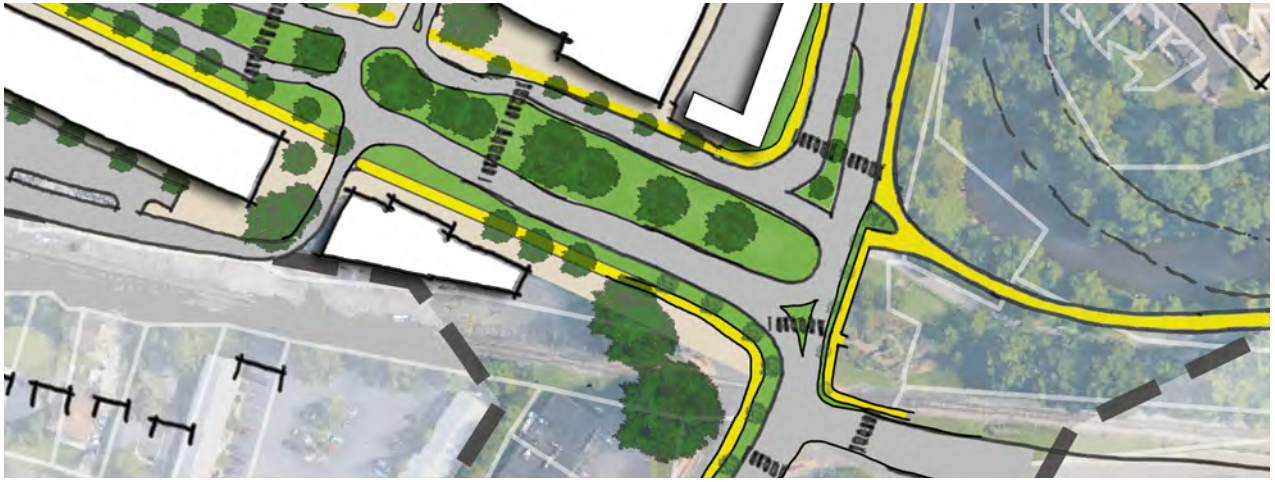


Figure 5.49 Town Green Conceptual Drawing at Merriman Road and Portage Path. Source: Farr Associates

Figure 5.50 Interactive Art.
Copyright: Project for Public Spaces

Figure 5.51 Sketch of Canoe Sculpture from Inside Being Used for Public Yoga Class. Source: Farr Associates

RIGHT OF WAY CASE STUDIES

...INSPIRED BY OTHER SUCCESSFUL PLACES

CASE STUDY: Eighth Street Road Diet
Traverse City, MI

Eighth Street, an important cross-town connector, was a wide street that promoted speeding traffic through nodes of walkable development. The area was also confusing to cyclists looking for connections to nearby off-road trails. In 2017, traffic counts on the corridor were as high as 23,879.

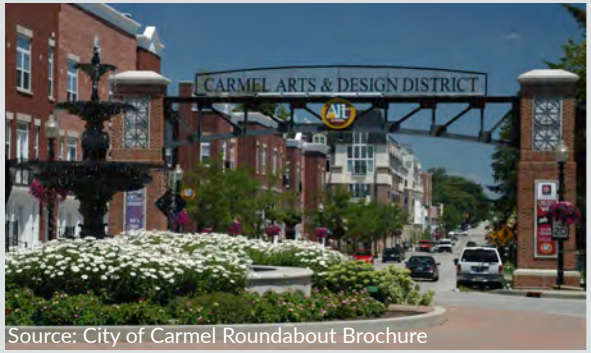
In 2014, the City implemented a controversial road diet that shrunk the street from four lanes to three, with added on-street bike lanes. In 2016, a week-long charrette process unpacked the road diet, led the community through a visioning process, and delivered a consensus-based plan for a new street section along the corridor that was implemented with great success in 2018. It keeps three traffic lanes, with a very popular off-street cycle track.

Credit: Gary Howe

CASE STUDY: Roundabouts Community-Wide
Carmel, IN

According to its website, Carmel has over 138 roundabouts, the most of any city in the U.S. City statistics show an ~80% reduction in the number of injury accidents, and an ~40% reduction in the number of accidents overall. Carmel has traffic circles on intersections with as few as 14,000 to as many as 47,000 cars per day.

A traditional roundabout is an efficient way of moving vehicles; however it does not activate the space for pedestrians in the same way that a town green can.



Source: City of Carmel Roundabout Brochure

Source: City of Carmel website

CASE STUDY: Smith Road Roundabout
Akron, OH

Just down the road from The Valley node at Smith Road and Riverview Road, there is already a roundabout. Traffic counts are between 12,600 and 14,000 on the two roads, according to the City of Akron. The roundabout was installed to improve traffic flow and to reduce accidents at this busy intersection.

Source: Google Earth

Source: Google Earth

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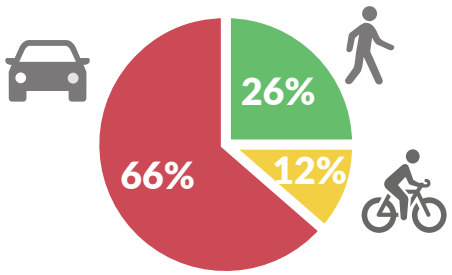
RE-BALANCE THE RIGHTS-OF-WAY

2 CONDUCT A ROAD DIET ALONG MERRIMAN ROAD AND N PORTAGE PATH...

The preferred configuration for Merriman Road is a 3-lane road with wide sidewalks and on-street parking. While this option lacks on-street bike lanes, bikers will be able to use the trail network through this area to access destinations throughout The Valley. Implementing a road diet along both Merriman Road and Portage Path is a best practice that the design team recommends to meet this plan's walkability and placemaking vision. These and all node streets should be designed for ~20-25 MPH speeds.



The placemaking study should include a more in-depth analysis to demonstrate the viability of this road diet configuration.

Figure 5.52 Potential Merriman Road Streetscape.
Source: Farr Associates

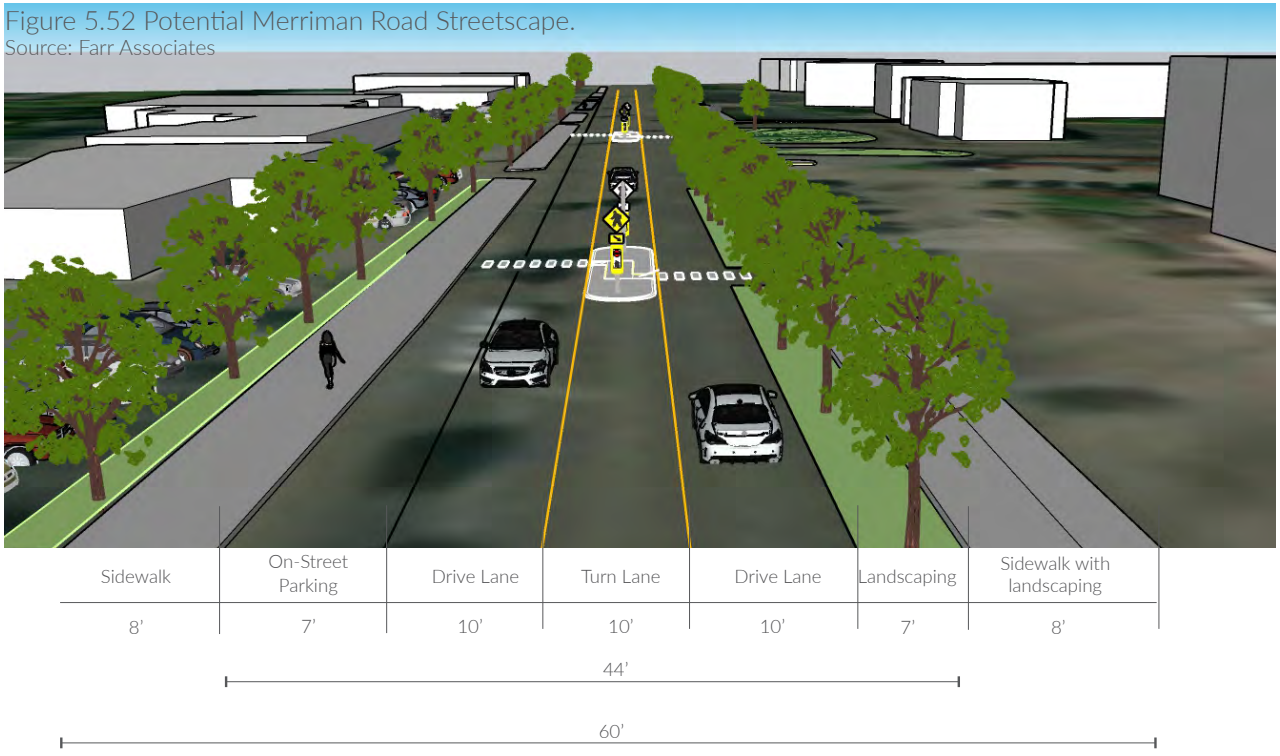


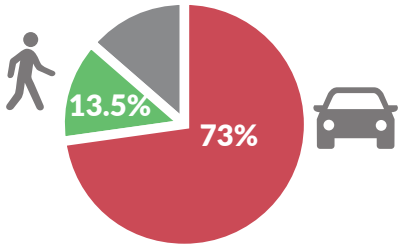
Figure 5.53 Urban Cyclists.
Source: Momentum Mag

Figure 5.54 Successful Road Diet Implemented in Traverse City, MI, 23,000 ADT. Source: Farr Associates

RE-BALANCE THE RIGHTS-OF-WAY

...TO IMPROVE EXISTING CONDITIONS

The existing conditions of Merriman Road are not pedestrian friendly and do little to encourage walkability, despite providing access to the Towpath Trail. The percentages below indicate the amount of space dedicated to each user of the public right of way.



*The remaining 13.5% is landscaping along the northern side of Merriman Road.

Figure 5.56 Existing Conditions of Merriman Road.
Source: Farr Associates

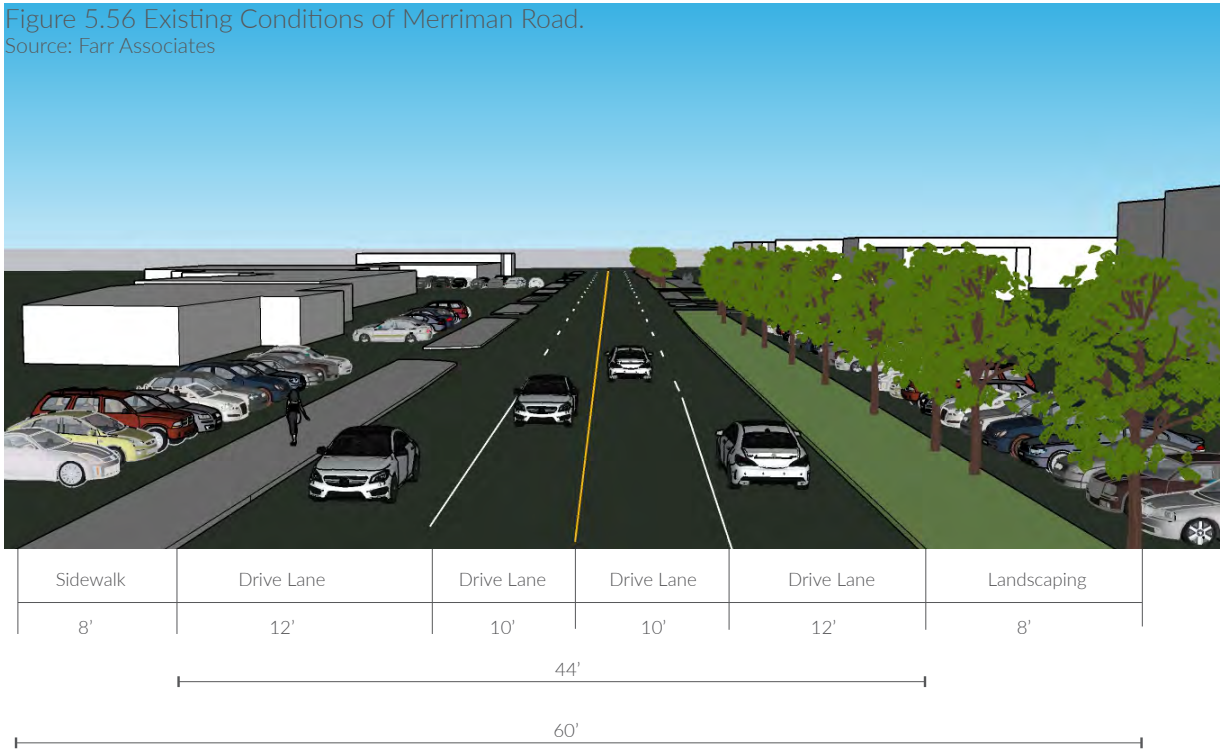


Figure 5.55 Key Plan - Direction of Street Sections.
Source: Farr Associates

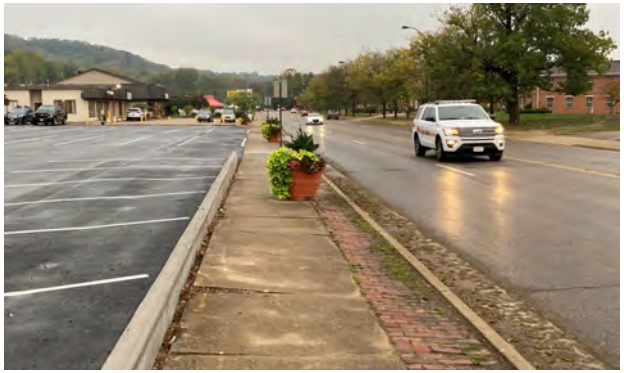


Figure 5.57 Merriman Road - Existing. The walking conditions here are hostile, unpleasant, and unrewarding.
Source: City of Akron

ACCESS MANAGEMENT

3 CLOSE DRIVEWAYS ALONG MERRIMAN ROAD AND ADD A PARALLEL SLIP LANE

A major impediment to walking along Merriman Road are the numerous and frequent curb cuts. Consolidating curb cuts as development happens will help turn Merriman Road into a more rewarding experience for pedestrians and bikers. Consolidation of curb cuts also improves traffic flow and reduces accidents. With consolidation, left turns into businesses are concentrated at traffic signals, rather than happening randomly along the roadway. This makes traffic movements more predictable for all. Many accidents are caused when cars turn into businesses or pull out into traffic. (See diagrams p. 154) This plan proposes adding a slip lane behind the buildings on the south side of Merriman Road. The slip lane would connect to Weathervane Lane. Drivers can access parking and all the buildings along Merriman Road via this new road.

On its own, curb cut consolidation would improve traffic conditions. Consolidation would be even safer and effective if combined with the road diet and its dedicated center turn lane.

Figure 5.58 Proposed New Slip Lane in The Valley.
Source: Farr Associates

1 Rear access
This back street allows parking to be accessed from the rear of the buildings. This will reduce curb-cuts along Merriman Road and allow for a more pleasant pedestrian experience.

2 Station Boulevard
This plan proposes the station have a boulevard street. This will not only create a sense of arrival for visitors and residents alike, but will support the creation of an access street for the retail south of Merriman Road.

INCREASE CONNECTIVITY

4 ALLEVIATE CONGESTION ALONG MAIN STREETS BY ADDING ALTERNATIVE STREET NETWORK

The lack of alternative routes creates congestion on the existing street network. This plan proposes creating additional through routes within this part of the study area to alleviate some of the congestion and to create smaller blocks for both drivers and pedestrians. These routes all include sidewalks to equip pedestrians with the same access as vehicles.

1 Connecting N Portage Path to Weathervane Lane
This new street runs parallel to Merriman Road and provides direct access between Portage Path and Weathervane Lane. It allows some drivers to bypass the Merriman / Portage Path intersection.

2 Convert access routes into connections
1257 Weathervane Lane has an access street running through the apartment buildings. This existing paved surface has the potential to connect to proposed streets.

3 Connecting Akron Peninsula Road to Weathervane Lane
An additional connection can be made to Weathervane Lane via a new street from Akron Peninsula Road and crossing the river by bridge. This would have a huge impact on reducing traffic along N Portage Path, and reducing congestion at the intersection with Merriman Road.

Further study of this connection will be required.

Figure 5.59 Proposed New Street Network in The Valley.
Source: Farr Associates

TRAIN STATION

5 DEVELOP THE TRAIN STATION AS A LANDMARK FOR THE VALLEY

The Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad travels north-south through the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, between Independence and Akron, OH. The three main boarding stations are:

- Rockside Station
- Peninsula Depot
- Akron Northside Station

The Merriman Valley sits on this route and the City of Akron and CVSR plan to add a boarding station in the next several years.

This station has the potential to encourage transit-oriented development (TOD), which would be beneficial for the sustainable growth of the area. Further study will be required to determine station building size, platform length, and parking requirements.

The Station also has the power to be a landmark in the Merriman Valley, perhaps with a clocktower or similarly appropriate architectural feature.

Figure 5.60 Proposed Station Site.
Source: Farr Associates

Figure 5.61 Glendale Station, CV Terminal Vista.
Source: Google Street View

Figure 5.62 Elizabeth Station, NJ.
Source: Google Street View

NEW BUILDINGS

6 REDEVELOP BUILDINGS ALONG MERRIMAN ROAD & PORTAGE PATH

LINKED DEVELOPMENT

To transform The Valley from auto-dependent sprawl into a walkable place, the master plan envisions an almost-complete redevelopment of the existing building stock in this node. With leadership from the City of Akron, willing property owners, and investment by private developers, this transformation could take place within a decade or two.

The plan anticipates a tight relationship between public investments in placemaking and connectivity (civic green, new streets and paths, etc.) and private building redevelopment. One analogy for this relationship is that the city 'sets the table' and then the private sector 'serves the meal.'

Three such linkages are as follows:

- The Civic Place/Roundabout links to the redevelopment of the flatiron site.
- Riverbend Park and the creation of a street network to bypass the intersection links to the redevelopment of the two strip malls on the west side of Portage Path.
- The Train Station/Platform and access lane links to the redevelopment of the buildings along Weathervane Lane.

BUILDING HEIGHTS

There is an important relationship between street width and building height. Buildings help create the sense of an 'outdoor room' along a street, which provide benefits including safer driving speeds, pleasant pedestrian experience, sidewalk dining/retail, etc. Ratios of 1:1 or 1:2 are preferred. When the 'walls' are relatively far apart, as they will be along Merriman Road, buildings of only 1-2 stories just don't provide the sense of enclosure needed to create a desired, walkable, activated streetscape.

Therefore, this plan recommends building heights of 2-3 stories along Merriman Road and Portage Path, as well as throughout The Valley node. In addition, corner buildings at the Merriman / Portage Path intersection surrounding the Town Green can and should be 4 stories. Building heights of 4 stories are also appropriate near the train station.

THE FLATIRON

The proposed building on the southwest corner of Merriman Road and N Portage Path has the potential to be a building that serves as a 'marker' and creates a visual path through The Valley. It should be 4 stories. In time, this building could, once the community is ready for it, be a wonderful place for a small hotel to support overnight guests who may come in on the train and spend the day enjoying the community.

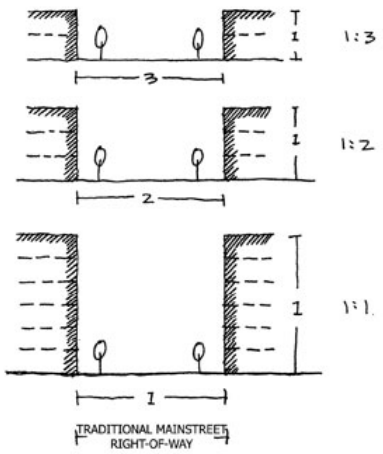


Figure 5.63: Diagram of Building Height to Street Width Ratios. Source: Ottawa, ON, Canada Design Guidelines

Figure 5.64 Image of 4-story Mixed-Use Main Street in Superior, CO. Source: KTGY

CONNECTED TRAILS

7 OPEN CONNECTION BETWEEN PROPOSED AND EXISTING TRAIL AT WEATHERVANE LANE

The trail network proposed in this plan connects new and existing trails together. To ensure these are appropriately connected, the design team recommends sharing the access at 1257 Weathervane Lane. This could happen as aging housing stock gets replaced or renovated. Some trees may need to be trimmed along this path to provide enough space for the public trail. Maintain private open space and fence for the residents.

Figure 5.66 View of 1257 Weathervane Ln, Akron - Existing (left) and Recommended Connection Point (right).
Source: Farr Associates

Weathervane Lane connection point

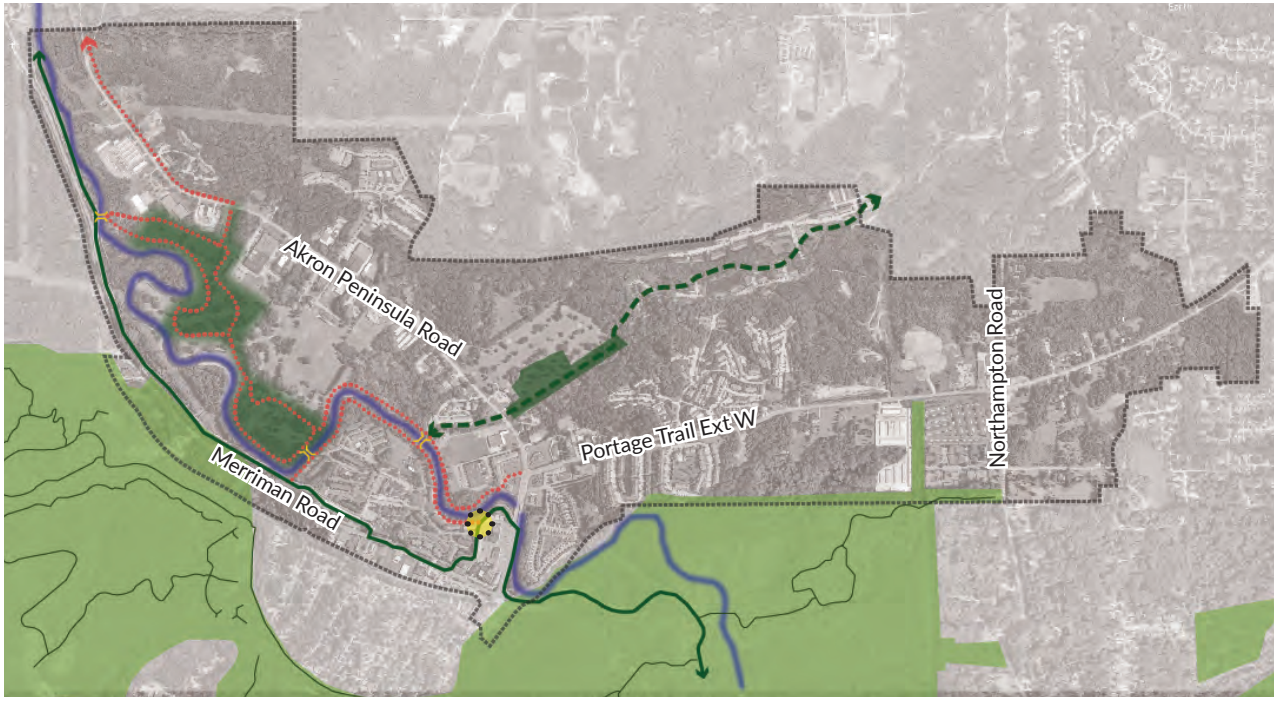


Figure 5.65 Weathervane Lane Connection Point.
Source: Farr Associates

5.X RIVERBEND PARK

8 REDEVELOP RIVERBEND PARK INTO A COMMUNITY DESTINATION

While the Merriman Valley is surrounded by high quality public parks for recreation purposes, there are no true civic spaces within the study area where the residents can gather as a community. This former car wash site has the potential to be a wonderful community space, with a diversity of experiences for a variety of people. This site can be repurposed into a beautiful river park, with small amphitheater for performances, and provide a leisurely spot for people to hang out after a hike and enjoy the views of the river.

This transformation could start with a food truck, which could then become an established cafe or pub once nearby sites are redeveloped.
A central green within the parking provides space for public art - similar in concept to the Town Green down the street.

Figure 5.68 Example of a Small Park Being Used for an Event, with Food Trucks.
Source: wafflecakes.com

TEN THINGS TO DO

Leverage the Project for Public Space's "Power of 10+" rule of thumb by programming the park so there are at least 10 things to do within the park. Examples include lounge seating, interactive art, shaded tables, a food stand, drinking fountain, games, etc. Some should be unique to this particular place and community.

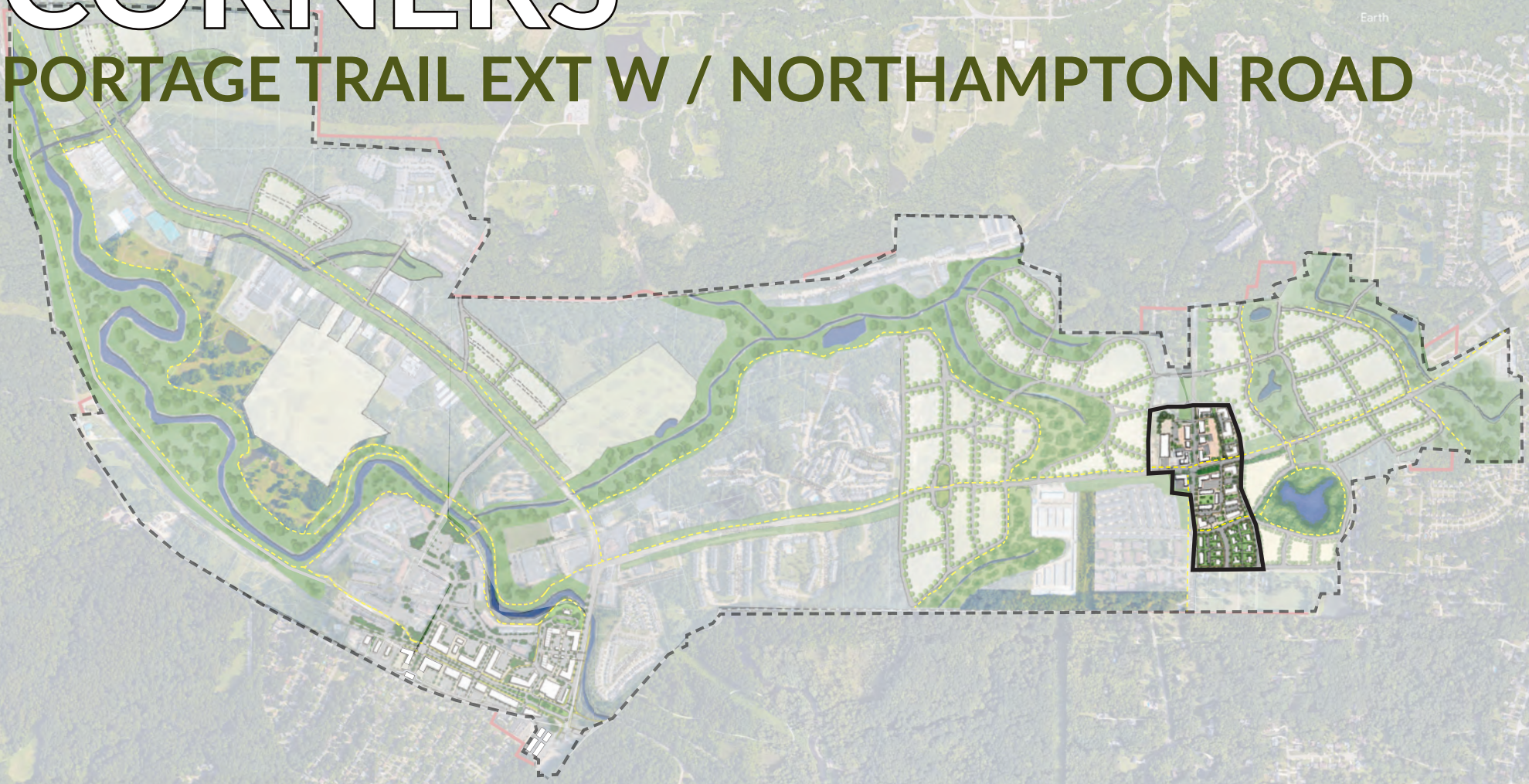
Figure 5.67 Car Wash Before Demolition.
Source: Google Street View

Figure 5.69 Key Plan of Riverbend Park.
Source: Farr Associates

Figure 5.70 Edison Lights Add Charm to Outdoor Seating. Source: Pixabay

IV. NORTHAMPTON CORNERS

PORTAGE TRAIL EXT W / NORTHAMPTON ROAD



A Place to Call Home

Access to Northampton Corners is via a scenic byway. This buffer allows the buildings to be more prominent. In the distance a pair of 50 foot tall oars, located on both sides of the road, will foreshadow passing by the large sculptural canoe in the Valley.

Figure 5.71 Aerial rendering of Northampton Corners looking southeast at the Portage Trail Ext W / Northampton Road intersection.
Source: Farr Associates, Copyright Bondy Studio

A Stage for Life to Happen

Through thoughtful planning, zoning and development, the intersection of Portage Trail Extension and Northampton Road "Northampton Corners" can become a walkable place. By requiring new buildings to be built tight to the street/corner with entrances facing the intersection, the space will have a sense of enclosure, slowing down traffic. Retail or commercial uses will occur right on the corner with residential uses set back further from the intersection. A form-based code will regulate this outcome and architectural guidelines and review will assure that the corner buildings are of the highest design quality.

Figure 5.72 Aerial rendering of Northampton Corners looking northwest at the Portage Trail Ext W / Northampton Road intersection.
Source: Farr Associates, Copyright Bondy Studio

Let's Take a Walk

Having building entrances on all four corners and substantial pedestrian crossings and plazas will reclaim this intersection for pedestrians and dismounted bicyclists. Essential to retrofitting this sprawly intersection is the partial redevelopment of the gas station parcel. This illustration shows how the gas station site can accommodate an "out building" tight to the intersection. The upper left portion of this rendering shows an abstracted habitat corridor in the distance.

Figure 5.73 Street-level rendering of Northampton Corners residences along Northampton Road south of Portage Trail Ext W, as seen from the multi-use trail in the scenic byway across the street.
Source: Farr Associates, Copyright Bondy Studio

Honey, Come See This!

One of the unique spatial attributes of conservation neighborhoods is their ability to have edges clearly defined by wildlife corridors. This “hard” edge makes for a dramatic place that straddles nature and development. And for the benefit of the wildlife, human activities should be limited to the edges of the habitat. Humans also benefit from having a beautiful, functional natural system to walk/ride through, as well as enjoy from one’s window.

PORTAGE TRAIL EXT W

CONNECTIVITY / RIGHT OF WAY

1. Retrofitted Intersection for Pedestrians
2. Retained Right of Way Width
3. Alternate Street Network

REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

4. Walkable Gas Station
5. New Sustainable Buildings to Frame Intersection
6. Varied Neighborhood Densities

NATURAL LANDS

7. Naturalized Area
8. Scenic Byway with Multi-Purpose Path (see p. 70)

Figure 5.74 Detailed Master Plan for The Northampton Subarea (Node B).
Source: Farr Associates

MAINTAIN STREET WIDTH AT INTERSECTION

1+2 RETROFIT INTERSECTION FOR PEDESTRIANS, COMMIT TO NO ADDITIONAL LANES

STREET WIDTH

Portage Trail Ext W and Northampton Road both widen from 2 lanes to 3 as they approach their intersection to accomodate left-turn lanes. Maintain this configuration and do not widen these Rights-of-Way.

CROSSWALKS

Add crosswalks at all four sides of the intersection to improve walkability. These crosswalks should include pedestrian refuges at least on Portage Trail Ext W; refuges would be recommended but not required on Northampton Road.

Figure 5.75 Intersection Plan for Northampton Road and Portage Trail Ext W. Source: Farr Associates

Figure 5.76 Pedestrian Refuge Example.
Source: Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 2.0

ALTERNATE STREET NETWORK

3 CREATE A STREET NETWORK THAT BYPASSES THE INTERSECTION

To make the intersection successful in the long term, additional streets that allow some travelers to bypass the intersection altogether will be necessary. This plan proposes creating the following street network on private land within this part of the study area to alleviate some of the congestion and to create smaller blocks for both drivers and pedestrians. These streets allow for intersection bypass in a majority of the quadrants. These routes all include sidewalks to equip pedestrians with the same access as vehicles.

1. **Connecting Portage Trail Ext W to Northampton Road to the North**
   These provide access to both streets and allow drivers to avoid the intersection.

2. **Connecting Portage Trail Ext W to Northampton Road/Cuyahoga Street to the South**
   This plan proposes parallel streets in this portion of Northampton Corners. This will reduce curb-cuts along Portage Trail Ext W and allow for a more pleasant pedestrian experience. Parallel routes prevent too much through traffic being diverted to any one road.

Figure 5.77 Proposed New Street Network in Northampton Corners.
Source: Farr Associates

WALKABLE GAS STATION

4 REDEVELOP GAS STATION AS WALKABLE ANCHOR TO THE HAMLET

LANDSCAPE AND CONSOLIDATE DRIVEWAYS

Drive-through gas stations have a large impact on the overall "feel" of an intersection. They usually include many curb cuts with pumps out front, making non-motorists feel like they are walking in a world built for cars. To counteract that, this plan proposes to add landscaping along the sidewalk, and to consolidate curb cuts. This will create a more pedestrian- and bike-friendly environment.

MOVE SERVICE BUILDING TO THE CORNER

Relocate the gas station building to the corner of the intersection to allow both drivers and others to easily access services from either the street or pumps.

The complete rearrangement of the pumps and canopy to match the preferred site plan will likely require the relocation of the underground gas storage tanks. Therefore, the gas island and canopy are unlikely to be relocated as long as it remains a gas station. However, it is physically viable to add a retail outbuilding at the corner of the intersection.

Figure 5.79 Ideal Gas Station Site Plan.
Source: Farr Associates

Figure 5.80 Alternate Gas Station Site Plan.
Source: Farr Associates

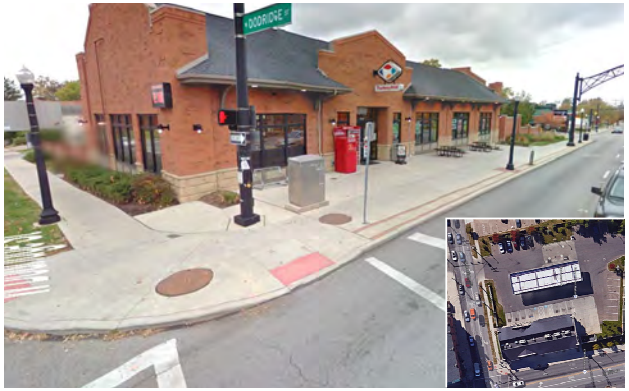


Figure 5.78 Corner Gas Station in Columbus, OH.
Source: Google Street View

Figure 5.81 Prototype Site Plan for Corner Gas Station.
Source: Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company

NEW BUILDINGS

5 REDEVELOP BUILDINGS AT FOUR CORNERS OF INTERSECTION

The auto-oriented, generic development at the intersection of Portage Trail Extension W and Northampton Road is mismatched with the natural beauty of the area and adjacent parks.

As the gateway to the Valley beyond, this currently unremarkable intersection at Northampton Corners needs to undergo a dramatic change into a walkable place. Cuyahoga Falls can set the stage by adopting a form-based code and architectural standards for Northampton Corners.

Due to the hamlet plan's compactness and emphasis on architectural form, developers currently active in the Valley may not readily see the development potential of this vision. The design team recommends that Cuyahoga Falls prioritize the proper redevelopment of this intersection and to deploy the necessary staff and funding resources to make it a reality.

GAS STATION

Until the world shifts to electric vehicles, the gas station is likely to be a profitable land use. Interestingly, a majority of gas stations earn most of their profits from their non-gas activities, chiefly food and beverage sales. This plan proposes adding a retail outbuilding at the corner of the intersection. If permitted, it is important that this building not present a blank wall to the intersection.

OTHER THREE CORNERS

On the remaining three corners the master plan proposes mixed-use developments that engage the intersection.

The ground floor use on the corner needs to be commercial, ideally a retail use with a door facing the intersection/street. The remainder of the ground floor may be residential, which could be set back further from the street. The upper floors are envisioned as residential but could be commercial. To keep construction costs down, the buildings may be "walk-ups" not served by elevators.

Figure 5.82 Orenco Station, Hillsboro, OR.
Source: Google Maps

VARIED NEIGHBORHOOD DENSITIES

6 ENCOURAGE REDEVELOPMENT THAT PROPORTIONALLY FRAMES OPEN SPACE

DEVELOPMENT TYPES RADIATING OUTWARD

Use a "transect-based" approach when redeveloping this node. To create a special sense of place in this Node, redevelopment near the Portage Trail Ext W / Northampton Road intersection should be relatively dense, with a mix of uses and appropriate building heights to create a small neighborhood town center that frames the street.

Radiating out from the intersection, the next type of redevelopment should include a diversity of housing types that resemble a more "Village" feel. Beyond that zone, redevelopment can have a more "Hamlet" feel, where lot sizes are somewhat bigger.

In all zones, open space, including streets, should be framed proportionally by the surrounding buildings.
It is apporpriate to have taller buildings facing public spaces, up to a 3:1 ratio (building height up to 3 times the width of the public space). A form-based code that outlines relevant building types and character for each of these zones can help achieve this desired effect.

Figure 5.83 Proportional Open Space in Vauban, Freiburg, Germany. Source: Copyright Daniel Schoenen.

Figure 5.84 Northampton Corners Transect Zones Plan. Source: Farr Associates

Figure 5.85 Transect Diagram of Post Falls, IA. Source: Center for Applied Transect Studies, courtesy of PlaceMakers and Dede Christopher

NATURALIZED AREA

7 STOP MOWING THIS AREA AS A PILOT PROJECT FOR THE SCENIC BYWAY

This strip of naturalized area is a great place to make a quick, cheap change that will result in large benefits. The area is currently mowed; this plan recommends to stop mowing and let the land grow naturally. Not only will this provide a more scenic section of road in Northampton Corners, but it will also allow the community to see, relatively quickly, what the scenic byway could be like.

Either right away or at a later stage, this area could be part of a partnership with the Ohio Pollinator Habitat Initiative, or other local organization, that could offer assistance with the creation and/or maintenance of a natural habitat for local wildlife.

Figure 5.86 Natural Roadside Vegetation.
Source: wemu.org, credit Wikipedia Media Commons

Figure 5.87 Roadside Pollinator Habitat in Ohio.
Source: The Ohio Pollinator Habitat Initiative

Figure 5.88 Sketch of Natural Area with Muti-Use Trail: the Long-Term Vision for the Scenic Byway.
Copyright: Bondy Studio

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6 IMPLEMENTATION

The Cities will need to work together to realize the plan's vision. Compatible zoning, including setbacks and a form-based code, will ensure the design of redevelopment respects natural space and creates a vibrant community throughout the study area.

IMPLEMENTATION PROTOCOL

ALL FOR ONE AND ONE FOR ALL

To be successful, this plan must involve both cities working together on all initiatives. This plan recommends the formalization of a Working Group (relevant City staff plus the Review Board) to continue moving this project forward.

SIGNING AN MOU

Since some elements of this plan are complex to implement, it may be appropriate to pursue a Memorandum of Understanding amongst the responsible parties called out in this implementation plan. With their signature on the joint MOU, each party will agree to pursue their portions of this plan, and to provide support for the plan wherever possible.

HOW THIS SECTION IS PRESENTED

The projects outlined in the prior Chapter 5: Master Plan chapter are consolidated into matrices on the following table. There is one matrix for each of the four plan subareas: (1) Nature Corridors, (2) Conservation Neighborhoods, (3) The Valley, and (4) Northampton Corners.

Projects and the short-, mid-, and long-term actions associated with each are organized by the same three categories used in the Master Plan chapter:

- Connectivity / Right-of-Way
- Redevelopment Opportunities
- Natural Lands

Selected projects are indicated and implementation of these is further elaborated upon with Step-by-Step guidance on subsequent pages.

STEP-BY-STEP

While some projects have their own Step-by-Step guidance, there are a few steps that apply first and foremost:

STEP 1: ADOPT THIS PLAN

- The municipalities will use this plan to guide all decision-making in the study area going forward.

STEP 2: ADOPT NEW ZONING

- The municipalities will adopt new form-based zoning to implement this plan (see p. 131).

STEP 3: ASSIGN STAFF

- Assign Planning / Economic Development staff from both cities to implement the plan. These staff members could form a joint cities working group that meets periodically to plan initiatives and address shared issues within the study area.

APPLYING A FORM-BASED CODE

A FORM-BASED CODE HAS THE POWER TO TRANSFORM

A DIFFERENT TYPE OF CODE

This study includes the development of a form-based code (FBC) to transform the vision illustrated in this plan's renderings into reality.

The current City zoning codes, which are based on more traditional Euclidean zoning that defines zones based on use, fall short of creating the sustainable walkable environment that is desired. A FBC is a different type of zoning code that focuses more on the form of the development, including height, setbacks, transparency, parking, and pedestrian access, rather than on the use of building. While use is still considered and specified, it is secondary to the form of the building. FBCs also tend to include many more graphics illustrating the design and form required.

The diagram at right is an example of how a FBC can transform an auto-oriented parcel into a sustainable redevelopment.

STEP 1: DEFINE DISTRICTS

- Use the Master Plan concepts to determine the different types of places in the Merriman Valley, and define what building form, neighborhood character, and specific land uses are appropriate in each area.

STEP 2: PREPARE AND ADOPT CODE

- Cities work together to prepare and adopt new regulations for development in the project area.

STEP 3: APPLY CODE THOUGHTFULLY

- Work with developers to implement the Plan and help projects comply with the new code requirements.

STEP 4: AUDIT OUTCOMES

- As projects are completed, the outcomes should be reviewed for consistency with the Plan, and where necessary, the new code should be revised.

(1) First, a plan offers a proposed form and character to zones within an area:.

(2) Then, a more detailed plan provides guidance on recommended building siting and phasing:

(3) Once built, the thoughtful form provides the type of community envisioned in the plan.

Figure 6.1 Using a Form-Based Code to Transform an Auto-Oriented Parcel into a Sustainable Redevelopment. Source: CodeStudio

FORM-BASED CODE EXAMPLE

ELEMENTS OF A FORM-BASED CODE

A FBC includes two elements: (1) a regulating plan, which is a map showing where zones are geographically located; and (2) a text section detailing out definitions and requirements for each zone. Zones can be organized in a number of ways. For example, by building type, street typology, or frontage. In a FBC organized by building type, a "neighborhood center" zone for example would define which types of buildings are appropriate in that zone.

To ensure neighborhoods are walkable, safe, and vibrant, specific elements of site layout and building façade design are regulated by the FBC. For example, parking is generally located behind buildings to make the streets more interesting for pedestrians to walk on. Buildings in retail districts are placed close to the street and have a minimum prescribed amount of glass facing the sidewalk to invite passersby to look in and window shop. In residential areas, homes have front porches or stoops to encourage engagement between residents.

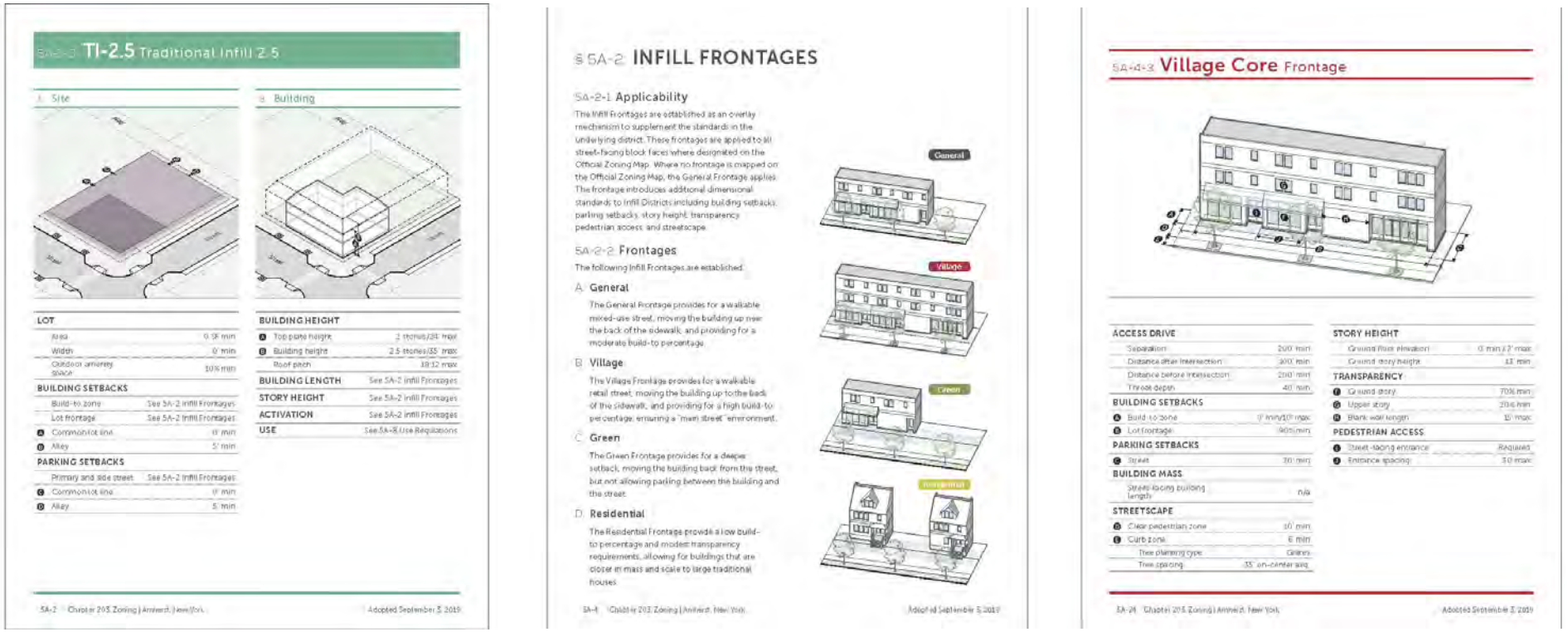

Figure 6.2 Sample Pages from a Form-Based Code.
Source: CodeStudio

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IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR NATURE CORRIDORS PROJECTS

WHAT SHOULD WE DO?		WHAT PLAN GOALS DOES IT MEET?			HOW WE DO GET THERE?			WHO WILL HELP IMPLEMENT?					
Recommendation		Conserve	Transform	Activate	Short-Term (1-2 Years)	Mid-Term (3-5 Years)	Long-Term (6+ Years)	City of CF	City of Akron	CVNP / Summit Metro Parks	Land Conservancies	Private Developers	Private Landowners
Connectivity/ROW	Install crosswalks throughout the study area		●		Add new projects to capital budget plans	Build crosswalks opportunistically/concurrently with other projects		●	●				
	Install animal crossings at key points	●	●		Perform studies	Install opportunistically/concurrently with other projects		●	●				
	Create a more complete trail network that connects people with destinations		●		Add new projects to capital budget plans	Continue to coordinate with trail partners, incorporate into private developments		●	●	●	●	●	●
Redevelopment Opportunities	Market the study area with clearly identified neighborhoods that people can belong to		●	●	Do comprehensive marketing/branding study	Implement initial marketing efforts	Evaluate branding efforts, adjust as needed	●	●	●			
	Employ a comprehensive wayfinding strategy		●	●	Do study of modular wayfinding system	Install basic elements	Update to reflect new destinations	●	●	●			
	Bury utilities underground	●			Engage utilities, evaluate costs, set priorities	Complete opportunistically with other road improvement projects		●	●				
Natural Lands	Create a scenic byway along main thoroughfares with a landscape buffer and multi-purpose path*	●			Education; demonstration projects	Accelerate based on successful projects	Adjust policy as needed	●	●			●	●
	Create a continuous habitat corridor through the valley*	●			Perform studies	Accelerate based on successful projects	Adjust policy as needed	●	●	●	●	●	●

* Detailed in subsequent pages in this chapter

HABITAT CORRIDORS & SCENIC BYWAYS

FOCUS ON CREATING CONTIGUOUS HABITAT CORRIDORS

ENGAGE A NATURALIST, ADOPT SETBACKS

The key to accomplishing this network of natural spaces is to engage a naturalist and use local expertise on native ecosystems, habitats, and organisms to inventory the riparian and habitat areas, map center lines, and establish consistent development setbacks. These steps are itemized further here:

STEP 1: MAP ALL RIPARIAN CORRIDORS

- Map the creeks and tributaries to the Cuyahoga River (existing and filled)
- Establish center lines and high water marks as regulatory criteria (includes filled-in rivers)

STEP 2: MAP ALL HABITAT CORRIDORS

- Study ecology and migratory patterns in the study area
- Establish center lines of habitat corridors as regulatory criteria
- Recommend alignments for habitat corridors

STEP 3: ADOPT CONSISTENT CRITERIA

- Adopt a consistent development setback (buildings and impervious surfaces) along the Cuyahoga River (undeveloped land)
- Adopt a consistent development setback (buildings and impervious surfaces) along the habitat corridors (undeveloped land)

STEP 4: BUDGET FOR CRITTER CROSSINGS

- Budget for three to five (3-5) critter crossings in the long-term Capital Development Budget along Merriman Road, Akron Peninsula Road, and Portage Trail Ext W.
- Require private developers to build wildlife-friendly “critter crossings” when new streets cross creeks, tributaries, or habitat corridors.

Figure 6.3 Habitat Corridor and Pedestrian Trail Under Bridge, Colorado. Source: www.denver80238.com

THE SCENIC BYWAY WILL UNFOLD OVER TIME

Implementing the scenic byway fully could take many years. The process is complicated by the fact that this byway and bike path would impact both developed and undeveloped parcels. To navigate this situation, this plan proposes the following steps:

STEP 1: REFINE BYWAY

- Conduct an in-house field survey to refine scenic byway width and extent.

STEP 2: ADOPT OVERLAY

- Integrate scenic corridor as zoning overlay in Akron and Cuyahoga Falls.

STEP 3: LIMIT MOWING, PLANT NATIVES

- Limit mowing to a 10’ strip at roadway edge
- Plant native plants and trees on private properties.

STEP 4: CONSTRUCT MULTI-PURPOSE TRAIL

- Construct a 10’ wide multi-purpose trail on one side of the road (see p. 70)

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR CONSERVATION NEIGHBORHOODS

WHAT SHOULD WE DO?		WHAT PLAN GOALS DOES IT MEET?			HOW WE DO GET THERE?			WHO WILL HELP IMPLEMENT?					
Recommendation		Conserve	Transform	Activate	Short-Term (1-2 Years)	Mid-Term (3-5 Years)	Long-Term (6+ Years)	City of CF	City of Akron	CVNP / Summit Metro Parks	Land Conservancies	Private Developers	Private Landowners
Connectivity /ROW	Streets should be walkable, with small blocks and alleys		●		Amend subdivision ordinance to limit max. block size	Educate and promote		●	●			●	
Redevelopment Opportunities	Cluster development that is bike-friendly	●	●		Amend Zoning Code	Educate and promote		●	●			●	
	Provide public open space within walking distance of the entire neighborhood			●	Incorporate into Zoning/Dev. Code	Educate and promote		●	●			●	
	Provide a mix of housing types that are attainable for all incomes	●	●		Amend zoning code to allow a range of building types within a single zoning district			●	●			●	
	Design new and existing buildings to a higher environmental standard	●			Educate, promote early adopters	Aim for at least one green building in each Node	Both cities consider adopting natural gas ban	●	●			●	
	Let stormwater infiltrate naturally	●		●	Evaluate existing stormwater management regs	Amend stormwater regulations to require green infrastructure		●	●				●
Natural Lands	Acquire conservation easements from strategically-located parcels*	●			Identify key parcels, negotiate acquisition, educate, promote					●	●		●
	Maintain existing tree canopies and promote native plants	●			Adopt ordinance	Educate and promote		●	●			●	●
	Keep light pollution to a minimum	●			Evaluate existing regulations	Amend regulations as needed		●	●				

* Detailed in subsequent pages in this chapter

CONSERVATION NEIGHBORHOODS

WORK STRATEGICALLY ON EACH CONSERVATION NEIGHBORHOOD

PURSUE MULTIPLE STRATEGIES AT ONCE

Implementing these conservation neighborhoods is a complex task. Consecutive steps are not as straightforward here because we don't have the perfect tools to get the outcome we want in each case.

Implementation will include all three of the following strategies at once:

- land conservation
- policies
- regulations

AGGRESSIVE MOVES

Property owners have a right to develop their land unless they choose not to do so. The West Creek Conservancy can continue its work in this area and assist landowners in securing the conservation of their property in perpetuity if desired. The priority is to avoid development in areas designated as open space in this plan.

If property owners choose to develop, aggressive policies need to guide development to be clustered close to the roads, as indicated by the bike-oriented development along Akron Peninsula Road (Figure 6.4).

Additionally, tighter regulations are needed to support the review of development plans so that they still satisfy the area's sustainable vision. Regulations can also require connectivity or street easements between new and existing developments. This can be accomplished through the regulating elements of the new Form Based Code.

Figure 6.4 Bike-Oriented Development.
Source: Farr Associates

Figure 6.X: Conservation Neighborhood.
Source: Farr Associates

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE VALLEY PROJECTS

WHAT SHOULD WE DO?		WHAT PLAN GOALS DOES IT MEET?			HOW WE DO GET THERE?			WHO WILL HELP IMPLEMENT?					
Recommendation		Conserve	Transform	Activate	Short-Term (1-2 Years)	Mid-Term (3-5 Years)	Long-Term (6+ Years)	City of CF	City of Akron	CVNP / Summit Metro Parks	Land Conservancies	Private Developers	Private Landowners
Connectivity/ROW	Create a lovable civic place at the N Portage Path / Merriman Road intersection*		●	●	Undertake interdisciplinary placemaking study	Build civic space	Advance programming (concerts, etc.)		●				
	Conduct a road diet to improve existing conditions on Merriman Road & N Portage Path*		●		Do feasibility analysis	Prioritize Merriman Road	Complete both road diets within 10 years		●				
	Close driveways along Merriman Road and add a parallel slip lane / rear alley*		●		Adopt policy regarding driveway consolidation	Close driveways opportunistically as triggered by redevelopment			●			●	
	Alleviate congestion along main streets by adding alternative street network*		●		Do feasibility analysis	Prioritize intersection bypass	Continue building out network		●			●	
Redevelopment Opportunities	Develop the CVSR train station as a landmark for the valley		●	●	Design new station	Build new station	Promote overnight stays in the area arriving by train		●	●			
	Redevelop buildings along Merriman Road and Portage Path		●	●	Approach landowners individually to assess interest; prioritize Flatiron site		Continue ongoing redevelopment		●			●	●
Natural Lands	Open connection between proposed and existing trail at Weathervane Lane	●	●		Research funding opportunities; engage river-edge landowners regarding converting fire lane into public trail		Continue building out network		●				●
	Redevelop Riverbend Park into a community destination		●	●	Engage property owner, try food truck pop-ups, other events	Acquire parcel, identify funding	Build park, program events suited to the Valley community		●				●

* Detailed in subsequent pages in this chapter

THE VALLEY AS AN ACTIVE CIVIC PLACE

THE PRIORITY IS TO CREATE A SPECIAL PLACE THAT ALSO SERVES A TRANSPORTATION FUNCTION

MAKING A SPECIAL PLACE IS HARD

Making an unattractive place is easy. Making a special place is hard.

Placemaking requires an entire phalanx of elected leaders and planning specialists to unite behind a bigger vision: to cooperate. To avoid a political veto, key elected officials have to buy in to the vision. To avoid crippling tunnel vision, the team needs a leader who has the big picture in mind.

Placemaking is hardest to do when it involves innovation in the design of public Rights-of-Way. Placemaking often requires some small tradeoffs/ compromises from what a narrow technical viewpoint would consider ideal. If some specialty professionals are unfamiliar with a new approach they will resist the ideas, choosing to view innovation as risky and something to avoid.

THIS VISION IS VIABLE AND DEFENSIBLE

The master plan vision for The Valley is viable and professionally defensible. However, the conventional design process grants to any number of narrow specialists the power to derail the placemaking vision. But this need not be the case in The Valley. With strong leadership and careful consultant selection this vision can be implemented.

IF ONLY TWO THINGS CAN BE DONE...

...make them the Town Green and the redevelopment of the flatiron building site. These two projects together are catalytic and can spark additional transformation in The Valley.

To succeed the consultant team recommends the following:

STEP 1: ENGAGE PARTNERS & FUNDING

- Get local elected officials on board with the recommendations for this node.
- Engage ODOT to prepare for an innovative placemaking approach.
- Secure adequate funding to prepare a Placemaking and Engineering feasibility study.

STEP 2: ISSUE A REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

- Issue an RFP for Placemaking and Engineering, require that the project be led by a firm with a placemaking focus.
- Encourage responses from regional and national planning and engineering firms with experience in innovative street design.
- List the following uniquely qualified traffic engineers in the RFP as resources for respondents: Hall Engineering (Rick Hall), TND Engineering (Rick Chellman), Peter Swift.
- Hire only innovative national traffic engineers to work with local engineering staff and consultants.

STEP 3: MANAGE AN OPEN PROCESS

- Maintain credibility in the process by continuing to involve the public often.

DO:

- Make this a popular public cause, a rallying point for the community.
- Insist that the placemaking study be led by a planner or urban designer (not an engineer).
- Take the time to educate local elected officials and connect them with leaders from elsewhere.
- Travel to see innovative projects that achieve the vision/overcame similar barriers.

DON'T:

- Let elected officials quietly derail the project behind the scenes.
- Let conventional/risk-averse local design professionals drive decision-making.

Figure 6.5 Placemaking Study Needed Here. Source: Farr Associates

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR NORTHAMPTON CORNERS PROJECTS

WHAT SHOULD WE DO?		WHAT PLAN GOALS DOES IT MEET?			HOW WE DO GET THERE?			WHO WILL HELP IMPLEMENT?					
Recommendation		Conserve	Transform	Activate	Short-Term (1-2 Years)	Mid-Term (3-5 Years)	Long-Term (6+ Years)	City of CF	City of Akron	CVNP / Summit Metro Parks	Land Conservancies	Private Developers	Private Landowners
Connectivity/ROW	Retrofit intersection for pedestrians, minimize additional lanes	●			Evaluate intersection, budget for improvements	Continue pedestrian improvements along Portage Trail Ext W, explore gateway art installation		●					
	Create a street network that bypasses the intersection		●		Engage property owners, Incorporate public ROW connections on private land, implement as parcels develop		Educate, promote	●				●	●
Redevelopment Opportunities	Redevelop gas station as walkable anchor to the hamlet		●		Engage property owners, Adopt new development code with mandatory architectural design guidelines		Educate, promote	●				●	●
	Redevelop buildings at four corners of intersection*		●	●	Engage property owners, Adopt new development code with mandatory architectural design guidelines		Educate, promote	●				●	●
	Encourage redevelopment that proportionally frames open space		●		Adopt zoning that permits greater intensities on parcels facing open space		Educate, promote	●				●	●
Natural Lands	Stop mowing this area as a pilot project for the scenic byway, invest in tactical plantings as protoype	●			Educate, approach landowners to pilot the scenic byway	Implement	Educate, promote	●			●		●

* Detailed in subsequent pages in this chapter

NORTHAMPTON CORNERS REDEVELOPMENT

A CURATED NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

The form-based code has the ability to regulate the form of the four corners of this intersection to enhance its presence as one of the CVNP gateways.

STEP 1: RETROFIT LANDSCAPING

- The city of Akron's landscaping requirements are minimal, while Cuyahoga Falls requirements are fairly comprehensive. Enforce existing requirements and adopt new landscape requirements that apply to already developed commercial frontages when they undergo substantial modifications or change in use.

STEP 2: ADOPT FORM-BASED CODE

- Adopt form-based zoning to require pedestrian-friendly development.
- Require non-residential uses at the corners.
- Include mandatory architectural guidelines regarding build-to zones, minimum 80% street frontage, minimum transparency, projecting cornice lines, main door entrances that face the center of the intersection, rear parking, appropriate lighting, etc.

STEP 3: PERMIT OUTBUILDINGS

- Revise zoning to permit outbuildings in front of setback buildings (for example on the gas station corner.)

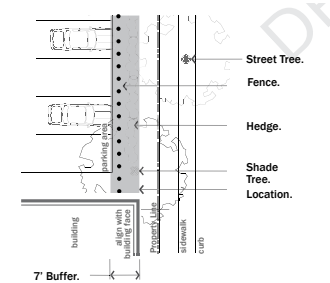


Figure 10-21-5C (1). Frontage Buffer Plan and Section.

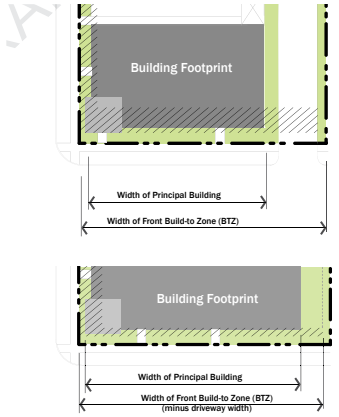


Figure 10-21-4B (1). Measuring Front Lot Line Coverage

	Permitted Districts	
	District A	District B
(e) Roof Type Requirements		
Permitted Roof Types	Parapet, Pitched, Flat	
Tower	Permitted	

Table 10-21-4B (5). Example Roof Type Requirements Table from a Typical Building Type.

Measuring Ground Floor Transparency on a Storefront Base.

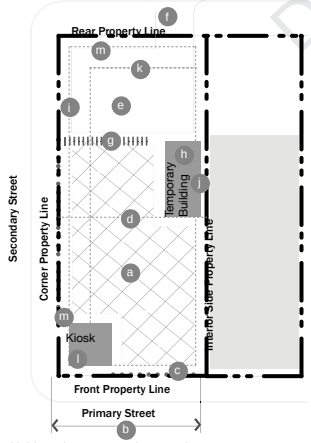


Figure 10-21-5E (1). Temporary Structure Siting

Figure 6.6: Sample Images from Form-Based Codes: landscape design guidelines, build-to lines, roof types and facade transparency, and corner outbuildings.
Source: Farr Associates

7 APPENDIX

This master plan is supported by the following supplemental materials: additional detailed conditions analyses, scenarios and feasibility studies for the subarea Nodes A and B, and materials from public workshops.

CONDITIONS ANALYSIS

CITY OF CUYAHOGA FALLS ZONING

CF ZONING DISTRICTS IN THE STUDY AREA

MU-1 RURAL NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

This is a mixed-use district with primarily civic, retail, and service uses permitted. Some uses are subject to specific use standards to be allowed in the district; other uses may be permitted on a conditional basis. In the study area, the MU-1 districts are located at the intersections of Portage Trail Extension W with Akron Peninsula Road, and of Northampton Road with Portage Trail Extension W. The minimum lot size is 2,400 square feet, and the minimum lot width is 24 feet. See Sec. 1132.09.

E-1 EMPLOYMENT

This is a office/light industrial district with varying lot standards based on the Planning Area. In the study area, the E-1 districts north of the Cuyahoga River are in the Northampton (NH) Planning Area, where the minimum lot size is 15,000 square feet and the minimum lot width is 100 feet. The E-1 districts south of the Cuyahoga River are in the State-Portage Trail (SPT) Planning Area, where the minimum lot size is 11,250 square feet and the minimum lot width is 75 feet. See Sec. 1132.16.

R-1 LARGE-LOT RESIDENTIAL

This is a residential district with lots over 1.5 acres and many civic uses permitted by-right. Some uses are subject to specific use standards to be allowed in the district; other uses may be permitted on a conditional basis. In the study area, most of the R-1 districts are located north of Akron Peninsula Road and east of Theiss Road, with some exceptions. The minimum lot size is 1.5 acres, and the minimum lot width is 150 feet; unless the use is Detached Single-Family on a Rural Lot, in which case the minimum lot size is 8 acres and the minimum lot width is 300 feet. See Sec. 1132.03.

R-2 LOW-DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

This is a residential district with lots over 0.5 acre and many civic uses permitted by-right. Some uses are subject to specific use standards to be allowed in the district; other uses may be permitted on a conditional basis. In the study area, the R-2 districts are located north of Akron Peninsula Road and west of Theiss Road. The minimum lot size is 0.5 acre, and the minimum lot width is 100 feet. See Sec. 1132.04.

R-3 SUB-URBAN DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

This is a residential district with lots over 0.25 acre and many civic uses permitted by-right. Some uses are subject to specific use standards to be allowed in the district; other uses may be permitted on a conditional basis. In the study area, the R-3 districts are located along Portage Trail Extension W and east of Northampton Road. The minimum lot size is 0.25 acre, and the minimum lot width is 70 feet, or 40 feet is on a curved frontage. See Sec. 1132.05.

R-5 MIXED DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

This is a residential district with lots under 0.5 acre and many civic uses permitted by-right. Attached dwellings are permitted in this district. Some uses are subject to specific use standards to be allowed in the district; other uses may be permitted on a conditional basis. In the study area, the R-5 districts are located north of Portage Trail Extension W and west of Northampton Road. The minimum lot size is 2,400 square feet, and the minimum lot width is 50 feet for detached dwellings; for attached dwellings, the minimum lot width is 24 feet per dwelling unit with an additional 10 feet for end units and corner lots. See Sec. 1132.07.

CITY OF AKRON ZONING

AKRON ZONING DISTRICTS IN THE STUDY AREA

U-3 RETAIL BUSINESS

This is a commercial district with only retail and service uses permitted. This district is subject to H1 Height District standards (Sec. 153.335) and A1/A2 Area District standards (Sec. 153.215), as well as landscaping requirements under the Akron Development Guide. Parking requirements are determined by land use (Sec. 153.310.D). In the study area, most of the U-3 districts are located along Merriman Road to the west of N Portage Path, with some exceptions. There is no minimum lot size or minimum lot width for commercial districts. See Sec. 153.280.

U-2 APARTMENT HOUSE

This is a residential district with single-family residential, two-family dwellings (A2 Area Districts only), apartment house, rooming house, certain agricultural uses, and certain civic uses permitted. This district is subject to development standards under Sec. 153.300, H1 Height District standards under Sec. 153.335 and A1/A2 Area District standards under Sec. 153.215, as well as landscaping requirements under the Akron Development Guide. Parking requirements are determined by land use (Sec. 153.305.F). In the study area, the U-2 districts are located north of Merriman Road. The minimum lot size is 7,000 square feet, or 4,000 square feet for a single-family dwelling. The minimum lot width is 60 feet (does not apply to single-family dwellings). See Sec. 153.245.

U-1 SINGLE-FAMILY

This is a residential district with single-family residential, two-family dwellings (A2 Area Districts only), rooming house, certain agricultural uses, and certain civic uses permitted. Only single-family residential uses are permitted in the A1 Area District (Sec. 153.215). This district is subject to development standards under Sec. 153.300 and H1 Height District standards under Sec. 153.335, as well as landscaping requirements under the Akron Development Guide. Parking requirements are determined by land use (Sec. 153.305.F). In the study area, the U-1 districts are located near the Merriman Road and N Portage Path intersection. The minimum lot size is 7,000 square feet, or 4,000 square feet for a single-family dwelling. The minimum lot width is 60 feet (does not apply to single-family dwellings). See Sec. 153.240.

UPD-22

This is a planned development district with commercial, light industrial, and warehousing uses permitted. No other uses are permitted. The maximum building height is 35 feet. This district is subject to development standards under Sec. 153.549.B. as well as landscaping requirements under the Akron Development Guide. Parking requirements are determined by land use (Sec. 153.510.D.). In the study area, most of the UPD-22 districts are located along Akron Peninsula Road and south of Portage Trail Extension W, with some exceptions. The minimum lot size or minimum lot width for UPD-22. See Sec. 153.549.

UPD-23

This is a planned development district with garden-type apartment house, townhouse apartment house, townhouse dwelling units, single-family dwelling, and two-family dwelling uses permitted. No other uses are permitted. The maximum building height is 35 feet. This district is subject to development standards under Sec. 153.550.C. as well as landscaping requirements under the Akron Development Guide. Parking requirements are determined by land use (Sec. 153.305.F.). In the study area, most of the UPD-23 districts are located north of Akron Peninsula Road and along Portage Trail Extension W, with some exceptions. The minimum lot size is 4,000 square feet and the minimum lot width is 60'. See Sec. 153.550.

UPD-28

This is a planned development district with only office uses permitted. The maximum building height is 35 feet. This district is subject to landscaping requirements under the Akron Development Guide. Parking requirements are determined by land use (Sec. 153.310.D.). In the study area, the UPD-28 districts are located south of Merriman Road. There is no minimum lot size or minimum lot width for UPD-28. See Sec. 153.559.

UPD-29

This is a planned development district with limited business uses (Sec. 153.270.A.), garden-type apartment house, mid-rise or high-rise apartment house, townhouse apartment house, and townhouse dwelling uses permitted. No other uses are permitted. The maximum building height is 35 feet for retail uses and 100 feet for residential uses. This district is subject to development standards under Sec. 153.560.B. as well as landscaping requirements under the Akron Development Guide. Parking requirements are determined by land use (Sec. 153.305.F.); note that there is no vehicular access on Theiss Road. In the study area, the UPD-29 districts are located north of Akron Peninsula Road. The minimum lot size is 7,000 square feet, and the minimum lot width is 60 feet. See Sec. 153.560.

UPD-32

This is a planned development district with townhouse apartment house, townhouse dwelling units, single-family dwelling, and two-family dwelling uses permitted. No other uses are permitted, except those present at the time of annexation. The maximum building height is 35 feet. This district is subject to development

CITY OF AKRON ZONING CONT'D

AKRON ZONING DISTRICTS IN THE STUDY AREA

standards under Sec. 153.565.C.. as well as landscaping requirements under the Akron Development Guide. Parking requirements are determined by land use (Sec. 153.305.F.). In the study area, the UPD-32 districts are located north of Akron Peninsula Road between Theiss Road and Northampton Road. The minimum lot size is 4,000 square feet, and the minimum lot width is 60 feet. See Sec. 153.565.

OPPORTUNITIES & CONSTRAINTS

SLOPE ANALYSIS MAP

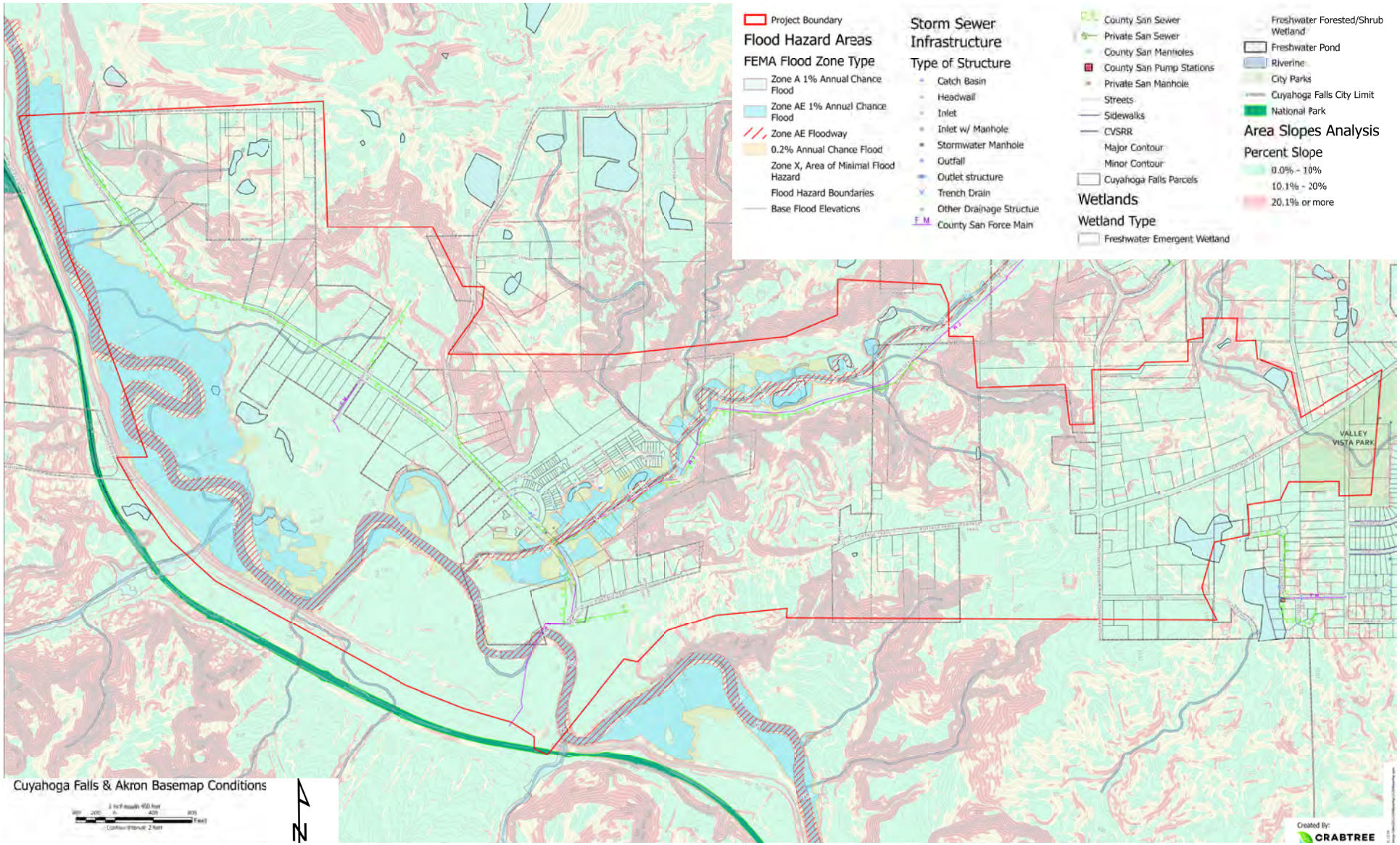


Figure 7.1 Slope Analysis Map.
Source: Crabtree Group

OPPORTUNITIES & CONSTRAINTS CONT'D

BASEMAP CONDITIONS

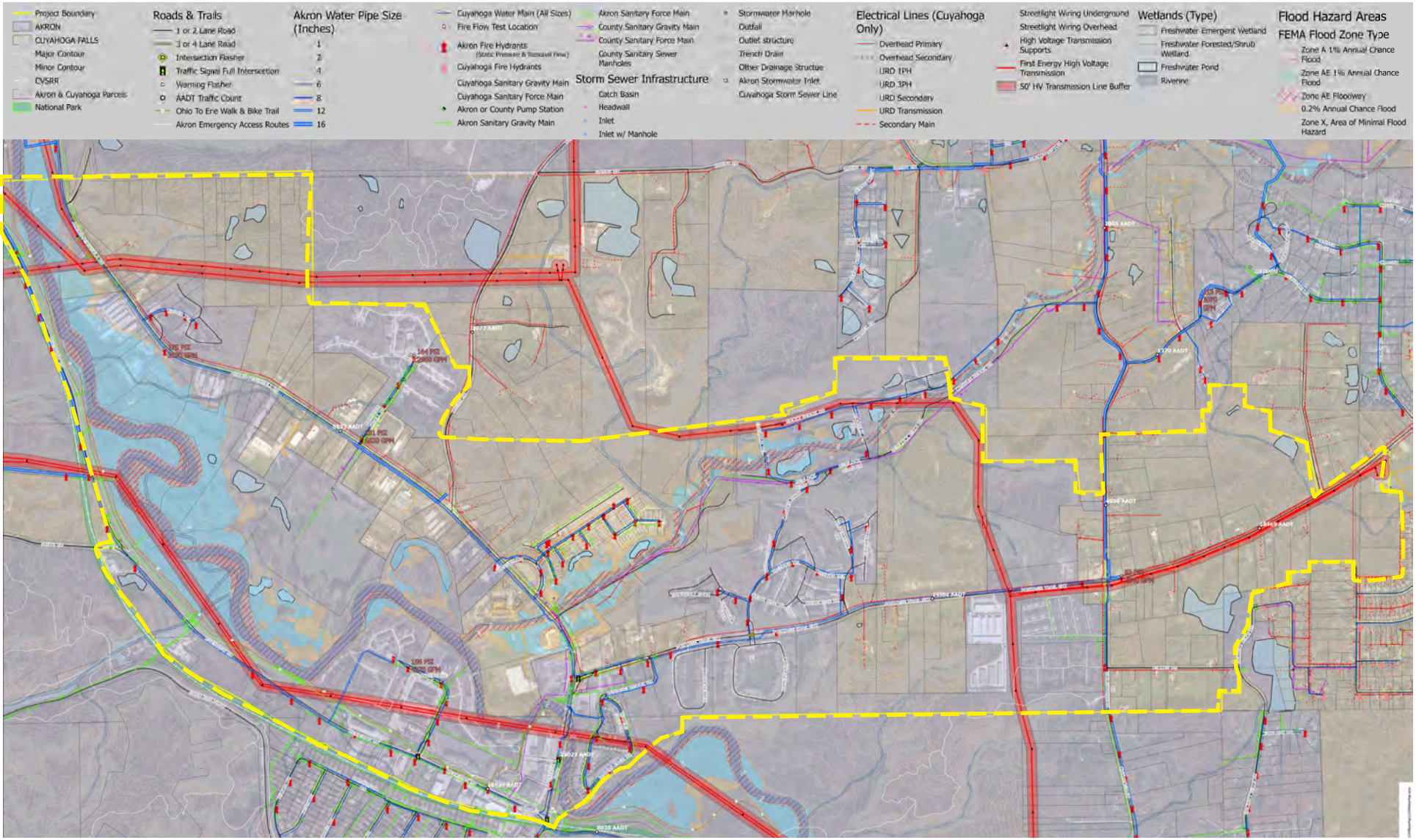


Figure 7.2 Opportunities and Constraints Diagram.
Source: Crabtree Group

EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVES

MERRIMAN ROAD ROW SCENARIOS

REBALANCE THE RIGHT OF WAY

DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS

The scenarios presented over the following pages illustrate the potential design options for how the public right of way could serve the community along Merriman Road. These same principles can be applied to other streets within the study area, particularly N Portage Path.

FINDING THE RIGHT-OF-WAY BALANCE

As communities grow in popularity and size there is often a friction between place and flow. The more space dedicated to flows through the community, the more difficult it is to create high-quality public spaces. Conversely, the more space we dedicate to high-quality public spaces, movement through the area becomes less efficient.

The demand for right-of-way is increasing. Many communities are heavily dependent on the automobile for everyday travel. The infrastructure to support this reliance on cars is extensive and frequently overwhelms the space available for people walking, biking, running, shopping, and recreating. Rebalanced streets are intended to make people feel safe, and is an opportunity to make our streets more vibrant and multimodal.

The way we travel is evolving. There have been significant shifts in travel patterns over the past year during the pandemic, due to an increased number of people working from home. More local trips are being made, including increased trail use, biking and walking, and traditional peak hour commute trips have decreased. We have yet to see if these changes become permanent, but they offer us an opportunity to rethink how, when, and by what means we travel today, and in the future.

BENEFITS OF BALANCED STREETS

Potential co-benefits of rebalancing the public right of way include opportunities for landscaping, lighting, and stormwater management, which can also serve as a buffer from traffic for pedestrians and cyclists, act as traffic calming measure, and reduce the crossing distance for pedestrians at curb extensions and crosswalks. In addition, it helps fill gaps in the non-motorized transportation network (sidewalks, bikeways, off-street trails) and promotes prosperity for local businesses as well as designing for people of all ages and abilities. Rebalancing the public right-of-way provides greater opportunities to walk, roll, scoot, stroll in an environment that promotes healthy, active travel to, from and between neighborhoods.

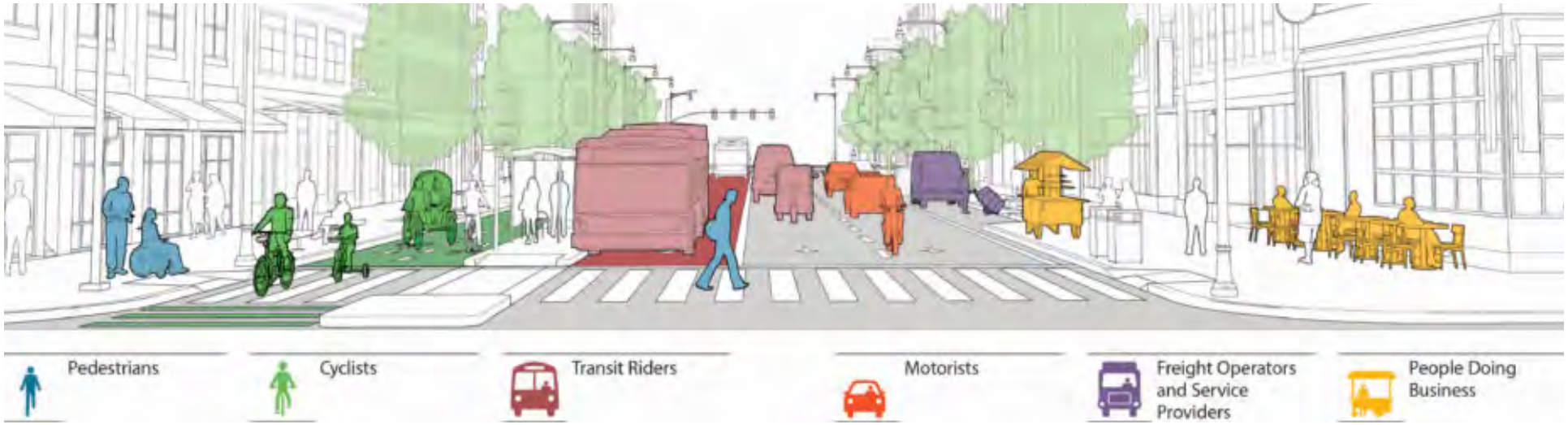


Figure 7.6 A Complete Street Accomodates a Variety of Street Users.
Source: NACTO Designing Cities Initiative

BENEFITS OF A ROAD DIET

REDUCED ROW WIDTH CREATES SAFER ROADWAY CONDITIONS FOR ALL

- **DIVERTS TRAFFIC OUT OF THE VALLEY**
- **IMPROVES WALKABILITY**
- **FEWER LANES FOR PEDESTRIANS TO CROSS**
- **OPPORTUNITIES TO INSTALL REFUGE ISLAND, BIKE LANES, ON STREET PARKING**
- **TRAFFIC CALMING & MORE CONSISTENT SPEEDS**
- **TRAFFIC ACCIDENT REDUCTION**

The 3 most common collisions caused on 4 lane roads are rear enders, side swipes, and broadsides; each of which is explained with the accompanying diagram.

REAR ENDERS
On a 4 lane road, the interior lanes double as left turn lanes. Vehicles stop in the interior travel lane as they wait for traffic to clear before turning. A driver not paying attention as it approaches the waiting car will result in a rear-end collision.

SIDE SWIPES
As a vehicle approaches a stopped car waiting to turn, it has two options, firstly to wait behind the car waiting to make a turn and hope not to get rear ended in the meantime. Alternatively, the driver can merge into the right hand travel lane. A lane configuration that encourages reactive and frequent lane changes increases the odds of a collision.

BROADSIDES
When a left turning car must cross two lanes of oncoming traffic, an oncoming vehicle in the left travel lane can block the line of site to an oncoming vehicle in the right travel lane. This blind spot increases the likelihood of a collision.

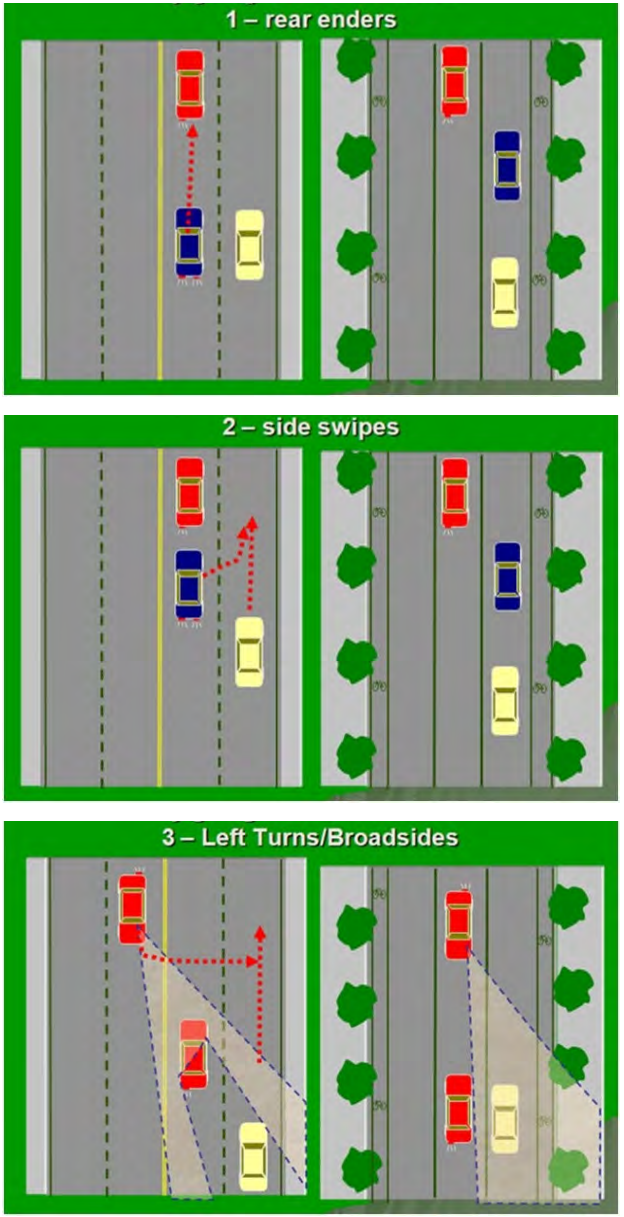
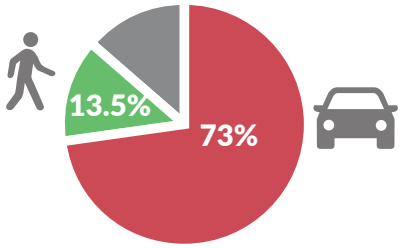


Figure 7.7 Common Collisions Caused on 4-Lane Roads. Source: https://ladotlivablestreets.org

MERRIMAN ROAD ROW TODAY

EXISTING CONDITIONS ALONG MERRIMAN ROAD

The existing conditions of Merriman Road are not pedestrian friendly and do little to encourage walkability, despite providing access to the Towpath Trail. The percentages below indicate the amount of space dedicated to each user of the public right of way.



*The remaining 13.5% is landscaping along the eastern side of Merriman Road.

Figure 7.9 Existing Conditions of Merriman Road.
Source: Farr Associates

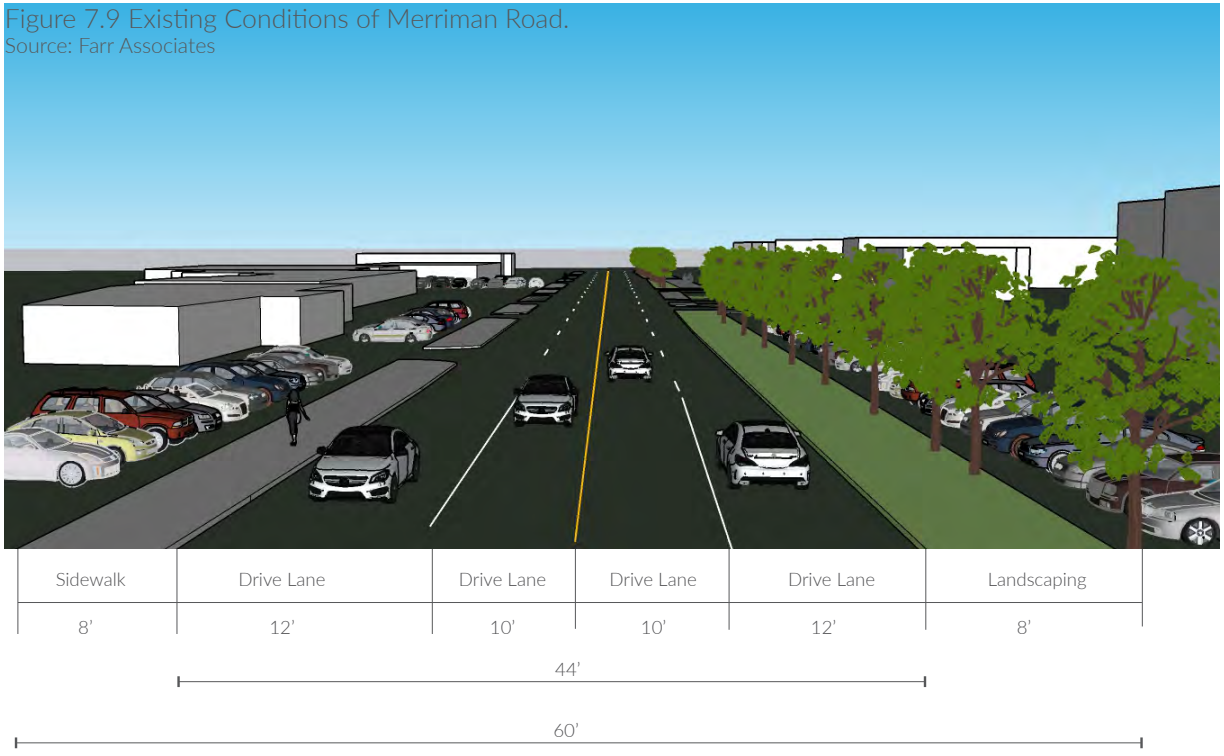


Figure 7.8: Key Plan - Direction of Street Sections.
Source: Farr Associates

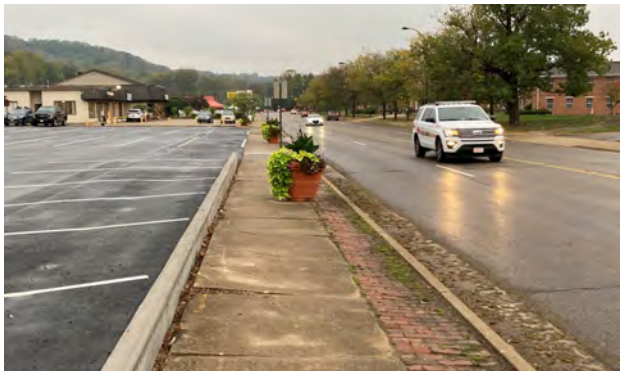


Figure 7.10 Merriman Road - Existing. The walking conditions here are hostile, unpleasant, and unrewarding.
Source: City of Akron

RIGHT OF WAY SCENARIO 1

1. ADDITIONAL SIDEWALK & STREET TREES

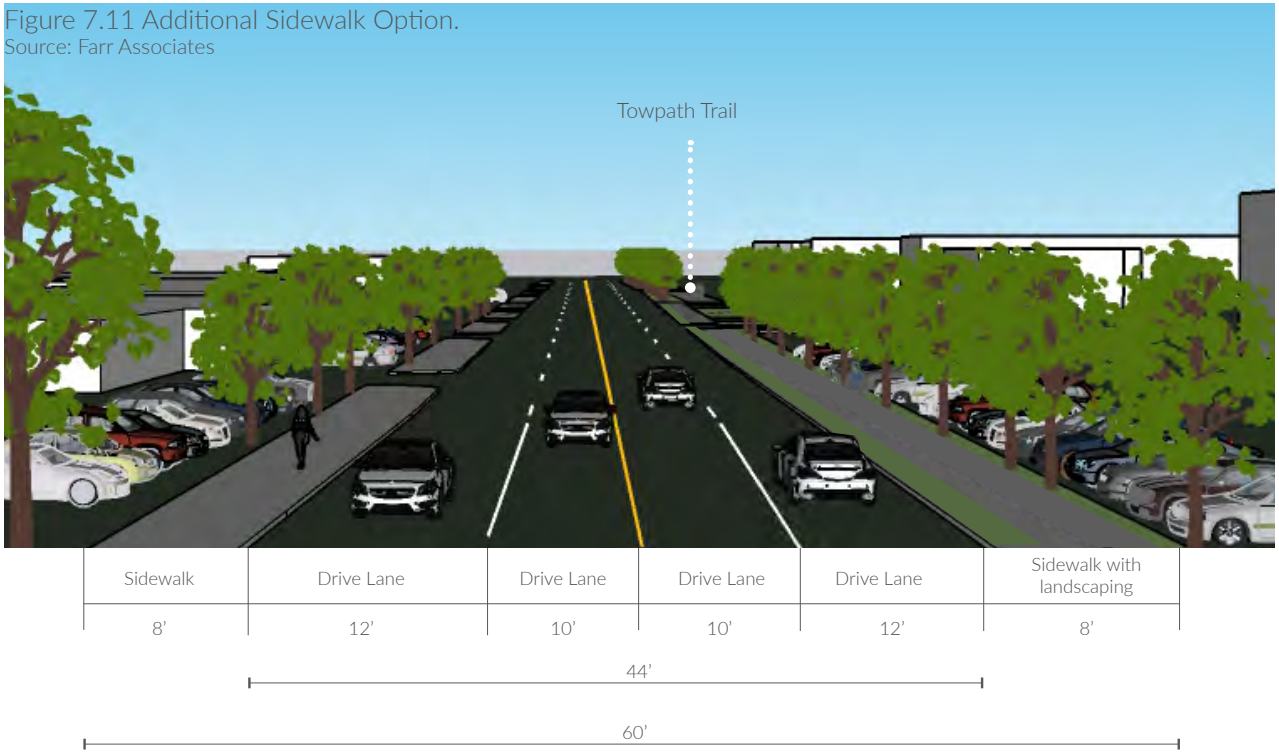
The landscape median on the eastern side of Merriman Road provides enough space for an additional sidewalk. This would provide additional pedestrian access to the Towpath Trail. Adding street trees along the western side of Merriman Road will also enhance the pedestrian experience.

27%

0%

73%

Figure 7.11 Additional Sidewalk Option.
Source: Farr Associates



PRECEDENT IMAGES

Figure 7.12 Gardening in the Planting Strip Example.
Source: Seattle.gov

Figure 7.13 All-Purpose Streets Example.
Source: Jersey Water Works

Figure 7.14 Green Infrastructure Example.
Source: Jersey Water Works

RIGHT OF WAY SCENARIO 2

2. CONSOLIDATE CURB-CUTS

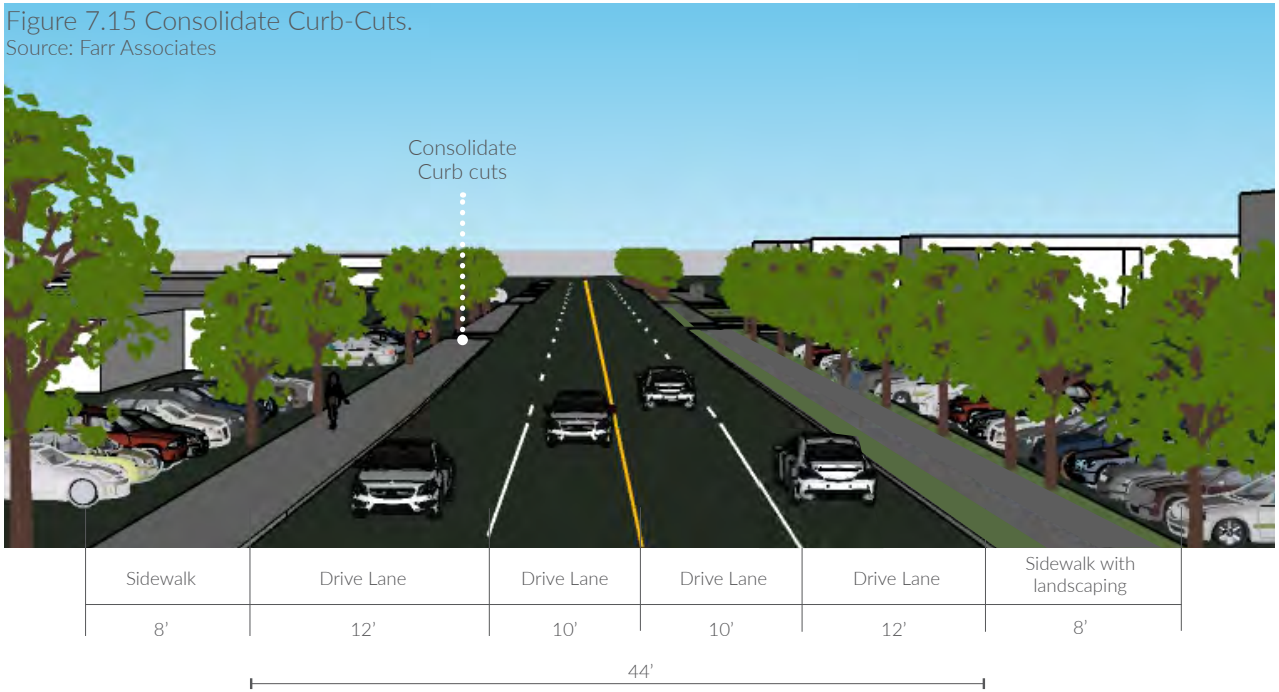
The sidewalk on the western side of Merriman Road has a lot of curb-cuts. This creates pedestrian - vehicle conflict zones. Conflict zones are areas where pedestrians and vehicle infrastructure overlap through curbcuts in the sidewalk. Conflict zones interfere with the flow of pedestrian travel and could lead to interactions between pedestrians and vehicles. To reduce curb-cuts, only allow one combined entrance/ exit for each parcel.

27%

0%

73%

Figure 7.15 Consolidate Curb-Cuts.
Source: Farr Associates



EXISTING

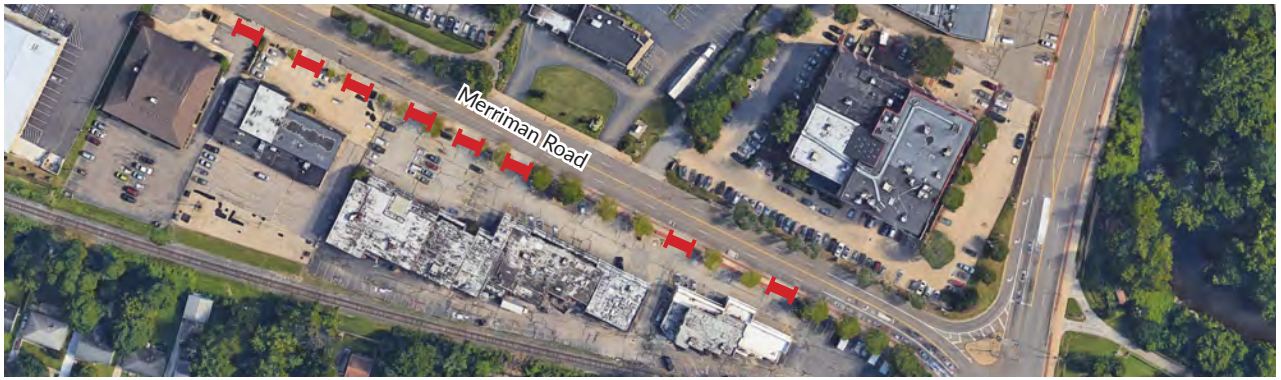


Figure 7.16 Conflict Zones Along Merriman Road for Pedestrians to Navigate.
Source: Google Earth

RECOMMENDATION

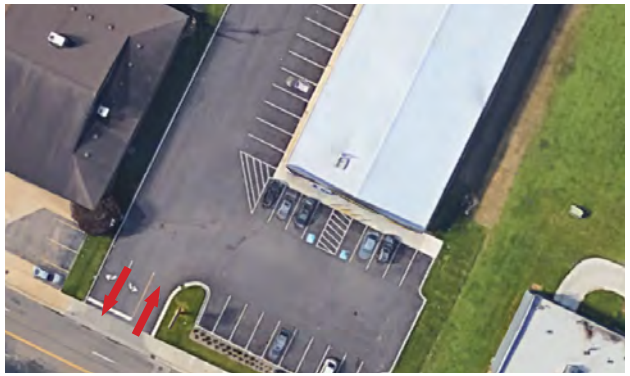


Figure 7.17 Consolidate to Single Entrance/Exit Points. Source: Google Earth

RIGHT OF WAY SCENARIO 3

3. ON-STREET PARKING & CROSS WALKS

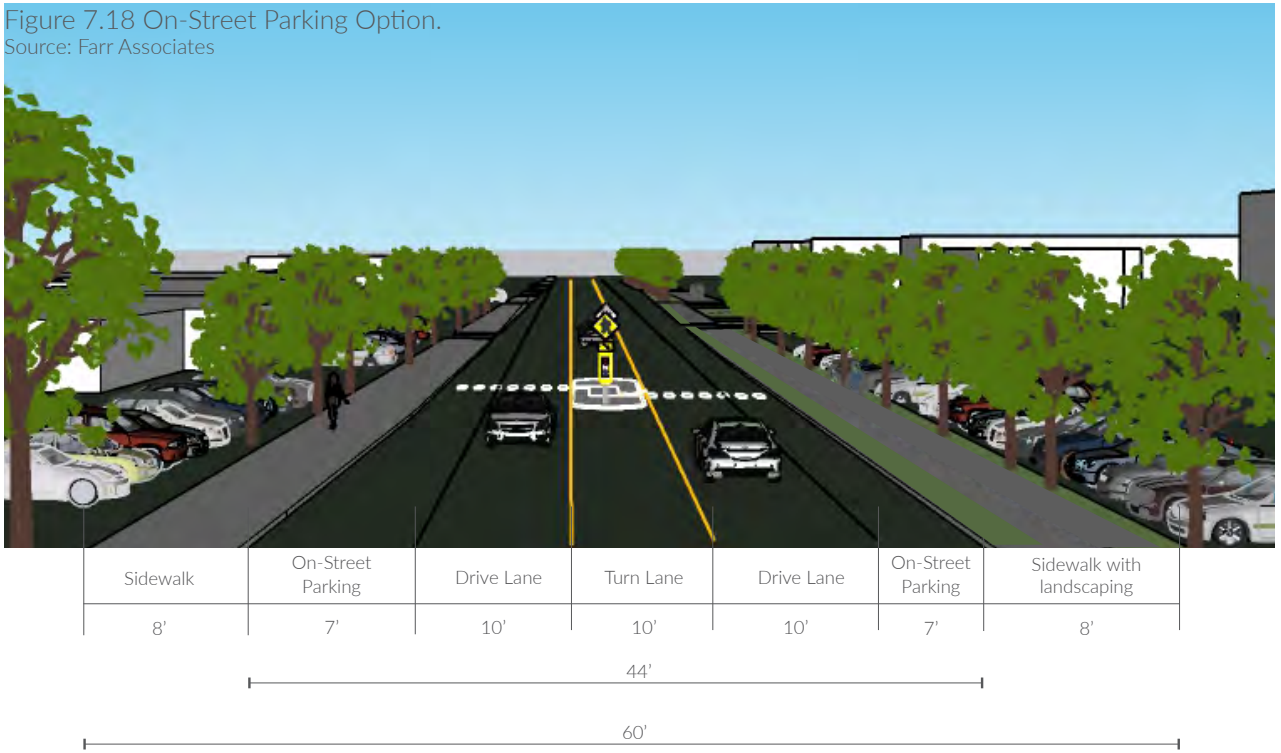
There are many benefits to reducing 4 lanes down to 3. In this scenario the extra space is used for on-street parking. This is a great solution if parking spaces in front of buildings are re-purposed for outdoor dining and other similar activities. It also acts as a buffer for pedestrians using the sidewalk. These parking spaces could also be used in creative ways, such as parklets to animate the street.

27%

0%

73%

Figure 7.18 On-Street Parking Option.
Source: Farr Associates



PRECEDENT IMAGES

Figure 7.19 Reclaiming the Streets.
Source: WebUrbanist

Figure 7.20 The Transportable Garden.
Source: finediningloversc.com

Figure 7.21 Make Plant Sit Enjoy.
Source: GoParksLondon

NODE A INTERSECTION SCENARIOS

IMPROVE THE INTERSECTION AT MERRIMAN ROAD & PORTAGE PATH

OPTION 1: TRAFFIC CIRCLE

OPTION 2: TOWN GREEN

Figure 7.22 Street-view sketch of canoe art sculpture in median, as seen from Merriman Road.
Copyright: Bondy Studio

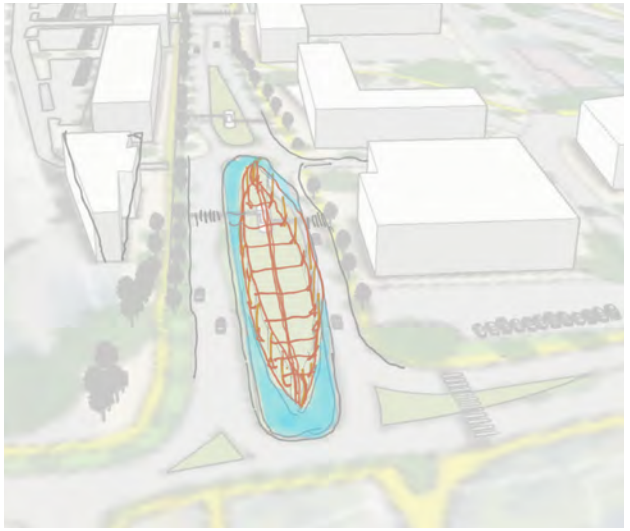


Figure 7.23 Options for a Roundabout or an Elongated Town Green at Merriman Road and Portage Path.
Source: Farr Associates

NODE B PLACE TYPES

POTENTIAL DENSITIES IN NORTHAMPTON CORNERS

	Description	Gross Dwelling Units	BUILDING TYPES					
			Large Lot Single Family	Small Lot Single Family	Attached Single Family (2-4 units)	Courtyard	Mixed-Use	Commercial
Hamlet	Lowest-Intensity Place Type	6 DU/AC Max						
Neighborhood	Baseline Walkable Place Type	6 DU/AC Max						
Village	Mixed Use in Some Intensity	8– DU/AC Max						
Town	Walkable Commercial Node with Intensity	10 DU/AC Max						

OPEN SPACE REQUIREMENTS

POSSIBLE PORTION OF PARCEL DEDICATED TO OPEN SPACE, PER BUILDING TYPE

OPEN SPACE	DETACHED	TOWNHOUSE	DUPLEX, TRIPLEX, FOURPLEXES	COURTYARD	SMALL APARTMENT BUILDING
					
15%	✓	✓	✓		
20%	✓	✓	✓	✓	
25%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓