

2026

Ross County Comprehensive Plan

Public Hearing DRAFT

IMERCE



Table of Contents (TBD)

INTRODUCTION	1
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW	7
LAND USE	13
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	81
TRANSPORTATION / THOROUGHFARE PLAN	111
HEALTHY COMMUNITIES AND QUALITY OF LIFE	129
AGRICULTURE	157
HOUSING	171
VILLAGES	189
CRITICAL PATH STRATEGIES	201

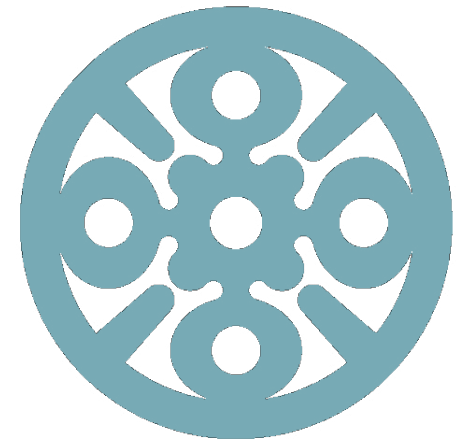


Nestled in the rolling hills of south-central Ohio, Ross County is rich in history, natural beauty, and community spirit. Established in 1798, it is one of Ohio's oldest counties and proudly home to the City of Chillicothe, the State's first capital. With a population of approximately 75,000, Ross County blends small-town charm with access to regional amenities and resources.

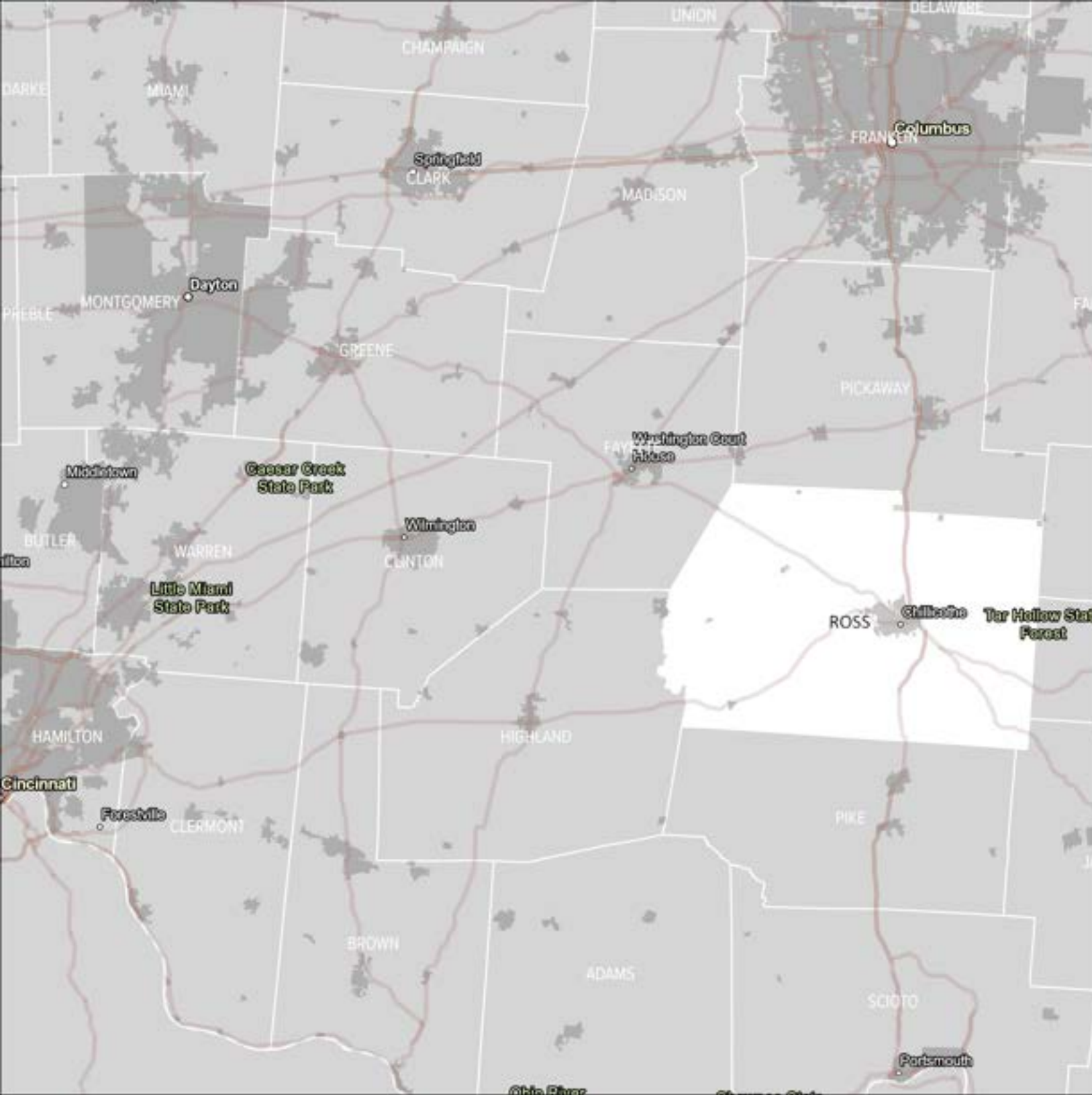
The County is known for its strong agricultural roots, scenic landscapes, and historic landmarks, many of which are tied to Ohio's early statehood and Native American heritage, including the renowned Hopewell Culture National Historical Park. Ross County also features a diverse economy driven by manufacturing, healthcare, education, public service, and small business entrepreneurship.

Outdoor recreation opportunities abound, from hiking in Great Seal State Park to fishing and camping in the county's many lakes and forests. At the same time, its growing infrastructure, educational institutions, and workforce development efforts make it a place of promise and potential for families, businesses, and future generations.

With a proud past and a forward-looking perspective, Ross County continues to cultivate a vibrant, connected, and resilient community at the heart of Ohio. This is best demonstrated by Ross County's response to the 2025 Pixelle paper mill closure that occurred during the development of this Plan. It refocused planning efforts to site readiness and underscored the need for future planning, infrastructure, and other development supports, all of which are integral to a Comprehensive Plan.



The Hopewell copper disc symbol.



Legend

 Incorporated Areas



Scale in Feet:



0 80K 160K

Ross County Regional Context

WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

A comprehensive plan is a long-term strategic document used by local governments and planning agencies to guide a community's growth and development. A plan guides decision-making, helps secure funding, ensures balanced growth that reflects community priorities, and protects resources while promoting economic vitality. It typically spans a time horizon of 10 to 20 years and addresses a wide range of topics that affect the quality of life, economy, and environment.

The planning process gathers input from various stakeholders and sources to develop a plan that reflects community priorities and desires. To ensure that remains the case, the Plan is a living document that should be regularly updated to reflect changes in land use, community attitudes, infrastructure, demographics, and available resources.

ABOUT THE PLAN

The primary purpose of the Ross County Comprehensive Plan is to encourage future growth and targeted development while striving to maintain a scale that reflects Ross County's history and agricultural roots. This Plan acknowledges the natural evolution of a growing community and considers how to meet its residents' expectations. For Ross County, that means creating recommendations for the future to guide the quality, quantity, and location of development and redevelopment, while respecting the rural way of life. This Plan achieves that by providing recommendations to guide physical changes to land use and infrastructure, while also providing justification for community decision-makers to support future projects or initiatives. The critical components of a comprehensive plan include a snapshot of current conditions, a vision for the future, and recommendations on achieving the vision and goals outlined within this document.

The Ross County Comprehensive Plan includes implementation strategies related to the following themes:

- ★ Roadways & Traffic Controls
- ★ Land Use
- ★ Utilities
- ★ Healthcare
- ★ Economic Development
- ★ Housing
- ★ Parks & Recreation
- ★ Villages

HOW IS THIS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ORGANIZED?

The organization of this document loosely follows the three phases of the planning process. In Phase 1, Educate, an existing conditions report was created about Ross County and its people. The Plan's goals and objectives were identified based on the Existing Conditions Report and public input received during Phase 1. The goals and objectives serve as broad guidelines for achieving the County's vision and were developed during Phase 2, Explore. The Community Engagement Overview section discusses the key points heard during public engagement that shaped the community vision.

Following the goals and objectives is the implementation section of the Plan, which includes best practices, recommendations, and Critical Path Strategies developed as part of Phase 3, Empower. Critical Path Strategies include direct, actionable steps with estimated timelines and costs.

Phase 1: Educate – October 2024 to May 2025

- ★ Internal Project Kick-Off
- ★ Data Collection
- ★ Steering Committees Meetings #1 and #2
- ★ Online Survey
- ★ Existing Conditions Analysis
- ★ Stakeholder Meetings
- ★ In-Person and Virtual Engagement Events

Phase 2: Explore – June 2025 to November 2025

- ★ Future Land Use Map Draft
- ★ Draft Goals, Objectives, and Strategies
- ★ Draft Triangle Study
- ★ Draft Economic Development Plan
- ★ Steering Committees Meetings #3 and #4
- ★ Draft Plan Sections

Phase 3: Empower – December 2025 to August 2026

- ★ Steering Committees Meetings #5
- ★ Public Open House/ Engagement Events
- ★ Critical Path Strategies
- ★ Public Review Draft
- ★ Final Draft Plan
- ★ Plan Adoption

EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS VS. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A Comprehensive Plan accounts for a community's past, present, and future. The existing conditions analysis describes Ross County, both as it is today and as it has been in the past. The rest of the Plan focuses on what community stakeholders, particularly residents, envision for Ross County's future.

Existing Conditions Summary

The following is a list of key trends from the Existing Conditions Report that highlight general findings that impact multiple plan themes. More specific findings are listed, along with the corresponding themes, later in this Plan.

- ★ **Population Growth:** Between 2010 and 2020, Ross County may have experienced a slight decline in total population, from 78,093 to 77,049. ODOD anticipates this decline to continue. However, as noted in the Existing Conditions report, multiple population models are considered to add dimension to projections. Steady growth is projected by Woods and Poole into the 2060 horizon, resulting in a total population of 82,311, including approximately 4,000 incarcerated persons.
- ★ **Educational Attainment:** According to the US Census, the percentage of Ross County residents with a bachelor's degree continues to steadily increase, making for a more educated workforce.
- ★ **Daytime Population:** Nearly equal parts of employees commute into Ross County as those who commute out of Ross County, indicating Ross County is a jobs provider and not just a bedroom community. Most jobs are found in the manufacturing, retail, or healthcare industries.



Community Engagement Overview

Community engagement is an essential portion of the planning process. A comprehensive plan is only as strong as the community behind it. Engagement transforms the planning process into a collaborative effort rooted in a shared vision and collective responsibility. Community engagement is the cornerstone of the comprehensive planning process, as it ensures that the Plan reflects the community it serves. It also builds trust and transparency, builds community buy-in and ownership, improves decision-making, and strengthens community resilience.

Ross County Public Engagement By the Numbers:

- ★ 5 Meetings of the Advisory Groups
- ★ 733 Online Survey Responses
- ★ 63 Focus Group Attendees
- ★ 8 Open Houses with 143 attendees
- ★ 1 Virtual Open House with 1,087 views
- ★ 1 County Fair
- ★ 9 Plan Draft Roll-Out Open Houses

ADVISORY GROUPS

Two advisory groups were formed to work with the project team and guide the development of this Plan. These groups were the Steering Committee and the Economic Development Committee. With a few exceptions, these groups had a unique set of members. Members comprised local leaders, business owners, and residents, with the Economic Development Committee having more economic development professionals. These two groups met five times throughout the project.

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

A critical part of the success of the planning process is the participation of residents, property owners, farmers, and other stakeholders within Ross County. The project team met with over 60 individuals who represented housing and real estate, healthcare, Farm Bureau/agriculture, transportation, and travel and tourism during Phase 1 of this Plan.

PUBLIC SURVEYS

The project team created an online survey to engage more people in this comprehensive planning process. Targeted ads were used on social media to capture responses from residents and visitors to Ross County. The survey received 733 responses, with 93.1 percent of respondents living in Ross County.



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The Planning Team attended eight in-person open houses and created a virtual open house for the public to give input into the Plan. Open houses were held from January to March 2025. A combined 143 attendees came to one of the in-person open houses at the following locations:

- ★ Village of Frankfort
- ★ Village of Bainbridge
- ★ Village of Adelphi
- ★ Green Township/Village of Kingston
- ★ Scioto Township/Chillicothe
- ★ Union Township
- ★ Village of Clarksburg
- ★ Richmond Dale

KEY THEMES FROM PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Below is a summary of all the comments received during public engagement.

- ★ **Active Transportation and Walkability.** Respondents wanted to see more sidewalks in villages and connectivity between parks.
- ★ **Attainable Housing.** Ross County housing stock is older and in need of repair, and new housing development is needed. Respondents were interested in exploring more than the single-family dwelling.
- ★ **Economic Development.** Respondents recognize the need to attract more employers, particularly those in the industrial sector.

- ★ **Healthcare.** The Health focus group revealed that many community health programs are losing critical grant monies for operation. Residents expressed an interest in attracting more service providers.
- ★ **Parks and Recreation.** Ross County has a wealth of parks and recreation areas, and respondents value them. Respondents support development that does not come at the cost of the natural viewsheds that make Ross County such a beautiful place to live.
- ★ **Roadways and Traffic Controls.** Respondents noted congestion and safety concerns throughout the County, but notably by “The Triangle,” which consists of SRs 207 and 159 and US 23, and Pleasant Valley Road corridor.
- ★ **Utilities.** Respondents called for sensible utility infrastructure planning and encouraged development to occur in or around existing incorporated areas. Utility improvements should not be limited to new developments, as sewer and stormwater improvements are needed in villages. There are challenges to accessing natural gas in the northern half of the County as existing infrastructure is sparse.
- ★ **Agriculture.** Resounding support for the farming community emerged from public engagement, as farming is seen as a defining asset to Ross County. Farmers expressed a desire to be viewed as an industry alongside healthcare and manufacturing, and to receive small business support. Many farmers do not own the land they cultivate, limiting their options as business owners.

A chart with this information can be found on page 10.

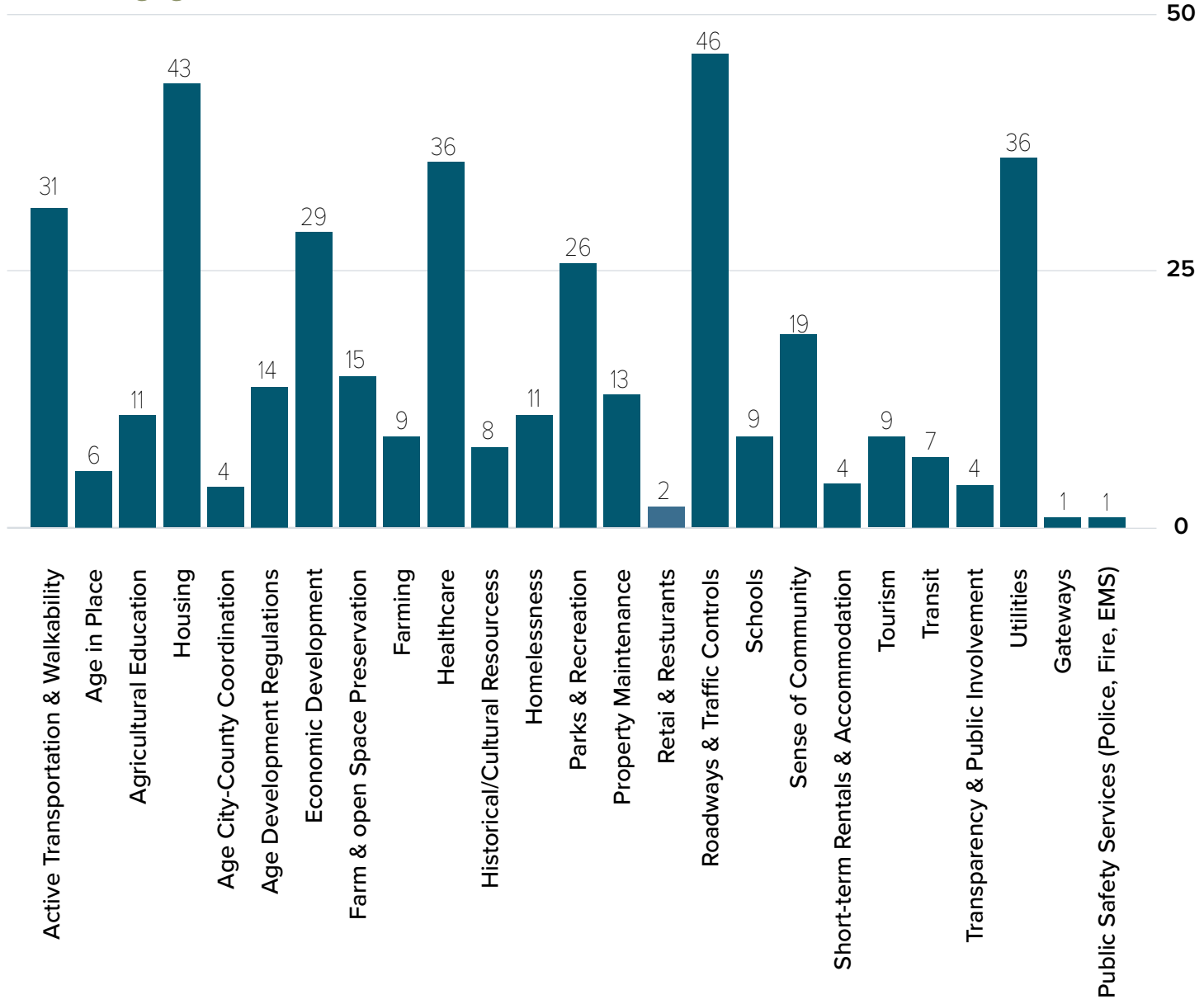
VISION STATEMENT AND GOALS

The themes of this Comprehensive Plan are not stand-alone. They identify policies and action items that work in tandem to achieve a shared vision for Ross County. The Vision Statement represents that shared vision. The Vision Statement outlines the aspirations for Ross County, and the version of the community that leaders and residents strive for, as described in the goals, objectives, and strategies contained within this Plan.

VISION STATEMENT

Ross County envisions a thriving and healthy community where families flourish, businesses grow, and visitors feel welcome. Growth will be balanced to honor our rural character and agricultural roots while prioritizing expansion of housing, workforce opportunities, and an advanced economy.

Public Engagement



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOALS

The following goal statements translate Ross County's vision into guiding principles. While the vision paints a picture of the County's desired future, these goals define broad outcomes the community should strive for over time. Each goal reflects what matters most to Ross County's residents and represents unifying threads throughout the plan. In the following chapters, these goals will lead to more specific objective statements and actionable strategies that turn the vision into reality. Ross County's vision will be achieved by:

Economic Growth

- ★ Promote site readiness for advanced manufacturing, research and development, agribusiness, and employment expansion, and cultivate a strong business community that supports existing businesses while attracting new and emerging industries.

Balanced Growth

- ★ Promote and prioritize development and public improvements in areas best suited for development, while preserving our rural and agricultural core.
- ★ Increase Housing Stock
- ★ A mix of unit types and price points, including a substantial increase in workforce housing, is necessary to address current and future demand.

Transportation Improvements

- ★ Improve roadway and active transportation infrastructure to better serve our residents, workforce, visitors, and businesses, resulting in better connectivity and safer, more efficient, and accessible transportation options.

Utility Expansion and Capacity Building

- ★ Update and expand utilities and infrastructure, including broadband, water, sewer, natural gas, and electricity, to facilitate additional housing and business, manufacturing retention and development, as well as site readiness.

Connect People to Quality-of-Life Assets

- ★ Connect people to parks, trails, and local and regional outdoor recreational amenities to improve the quality of life and health for residents and visitors.

Enhance Law Enforcement, Health, and Safety Services

- ★ Enhance community experience and quality of life by prioritizing access to fire and emergency medical services, as well as safety and security.

Strengthen Agricultural Core

- ★ Support programs that are designed to encourage the continuation and growth of our agricultural economy and heritage.

Cross-Jurisdictional Collaboration

- ★ Encourage collaboration between local governments, including school districts, townships, and municipalities, which is vital to implementing key economic and development initiatives.



Land use describes the type of activity that occurs on a land parcel or in a structure. Land use does not dictate the permitted uses at a specific location. Instead, land use describes the character and how people interface with that portion of the County. For this Comprehensive Plan, land use reflects the desired types of activities for growth areas and existing development patterns.

WHAT WE LEARNED

The following was learned from the Existing Conditions Report:

- ★ The largest existing land use category is Agricultural/Rural Living, accounting for nearly 85 percent of the County's area.
- ★ Most building permits issued in the last five years have been for projects other than new construction, both commercial and residential, indicating slow growth in the County.
- ★ There is an approximate net demand of 500 rental units and 8,500 owner-occupied units.
- ★ Location quotient analysis indicates that Ross County has relative strength in the Manufacturing, Transportation, and Warehousing sectors. Retail gap analysis reveals leakages, or opportunities in Ross County, supporting the need for more retail, such as full-service restaurants.
- ★ What We Heard

The following themes came out of public engagement regarding Land Use:

- ★ Farming is one of the top five favorite things about Ross County, according to survey respondents. The crops, animals, and farming methods in Ross County are uniquely diverse and a boon to the area.
- ★ 95 percent of survey respondents think the conservation of natural resources is "important" or "very important."
- ★ Many residents have visited most Ross County tourism sites within the last three years.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOAL CONNECTION

Three focus areas were identified to address the following plan goals:

Economic Growth

- ★ Promote site readiness for advanced manufacturing, research and development, agribusiness, and employment expansion, and cultivate a strong business community that supports existing businesses while attracting new and emerging industries.

Balanced Growth

- ★ Promote and prioritize development and public improvements in areas best suited for development, while preserving our rural and agricultural core.

Transportation Improvements

- ★ Improve roadway and active transportation infrastructure to better serve our residents, workforce, visitors, and businesses, resulting in enhanced connectivity and safer, more efficient, and accessible transportation options.

Utility Expansion and Capacity Building

- ★ Update and expand utilities and infrastructure, including broadband, water, sewer, natural gas, and electricity, to facilitate additional housing, business, and manufacturing retention and development, as well as site readiness.

SYSTEMS CONNECTIONS

The Land Use chapter functions as an interdependent system within Ross County's broader Comprehensive Plan. Each system influences and depends upon the others at multiple scales, from county-wide infrastructure investments to site-specific development decisions.



Villages and Census-Designated Places. Villages and Census-designated places have downtowns, main streets, or other traditional development patterns worth perpetuating. The Land Use chapter acknowledges the inherent value of villages and Census-designated places by creating a land use character class that will support quality of life for residents by supporting walkability and the aforementioned traditional development patterns.



Housing. Land use is fundamental to housing because it determines where, how, and what types of housing can be built. Density allowances, subdivision regulations, and development patterns directly influence housing supply, attainability, and diversity. Communities that permit a mix of housing types, such as single-family homes, townhomes, and multifamily units, are better positioned to meet the needs of different income levels and life stages. In contrast, restrictive land use policies can limit supply, drive up costs, and contribute to Ross County's housing shortage. Additionally, land use decisions affect proximity to jobs, schools, transportation, and services, all of which play a critical role in housing desirability and long-term community stability.



Healthy Communities and Quality of Life. Land use directly shapes quality of life by determining how people interact with their environment on a daily basis. The spatial arrangement of housing, employment, services, community amenities, and open space influences accessibility, commute times, and transportation choices, which in turn affect stress levels, health outcomes, and economic opportunity. Well-planned development patterns can promote walkability, social interaction, and efficient infrastructure use, while poorly planned, segregated land uses often lead to sprawl, congestion, and limited access to essential services. Additionally, land use decisions impact environmental quality, such as air and water conditions, and the availability of parks and green space, all of which are critical components of overall well-being.



Economic Development. The Future Land Use Map is important for business and investment attraction as it signals the County's intent. Without a plan, development will occur haphazardly, without consideration of community impacts, such as transportation facilities and utility infrastructure. Having a plan breeds confidence through transparency and protects the community's interests, such as quality of life.



Agriculture. Ross County’s strong agricultural tradition will only continue if farmland is guarded jealously. The Future Land Use Map does this by identifying areas the County has deemed most suitable for various forms of development, thereby conserving agricultural land.



Transportation. Development activities must be supported by the appropriate infrastructure improvements. The Focus Areas detailed within this Comprehensive Plan inform where future improvements to meet the Plan’s goals.

The matrix below expresses the relationships between this chapter’s strategies and the rest of the Plan. It shows how interrelated and integral this Plan’s strategies are.

Chapter	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total	
Land Use	This chapter									
Villages										0
Housing										5
Healthy Communities and Quality of Life										5
Economic Development										5
Agriculture										1
Transportation										
Total	5	4	4	4	4					



FUTURE LAND USE MAP

Future Land Use maps are an essential best practice for land use planning and represent a community's long-term intent. Historical development patterns and desired growth are supported by supporting infrastructure extension, incentives, and other tools where appropriate. The land patterns shown on the Future Land Use Map, coded into character classes, maintain agricultural core, rural living, traditional village development patterns, and parks and open space while providing job and tax base opportunities within focused subareas.

INTENT

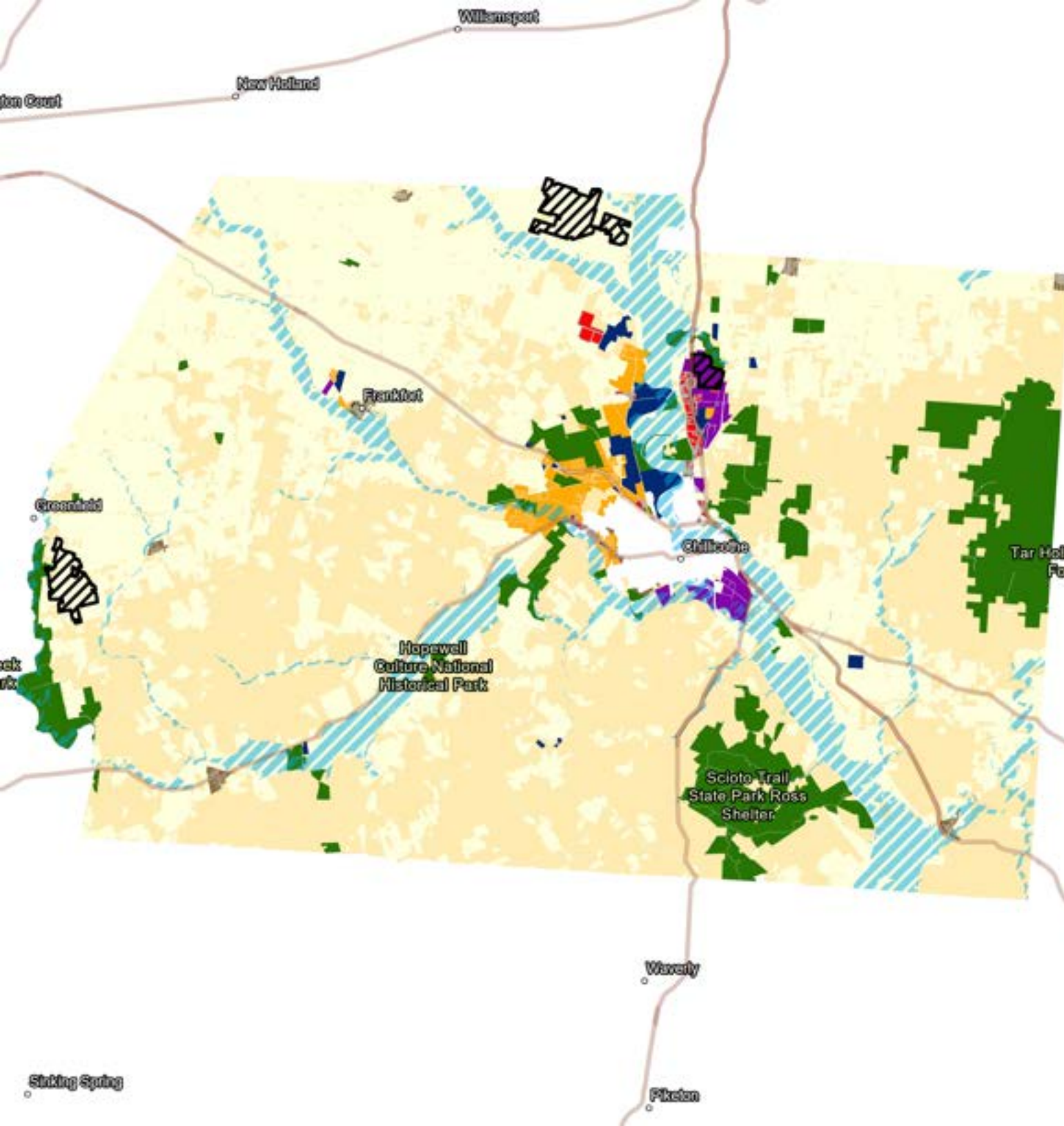
Intent statements explain the thinking behind each character class and clarify what is attempted to be achieved.

USE CHARACTERISTICS

Each character class has use characteristics, primary and secondary. Use characteristics describe the types of development to be encouraged. Primary use characteristics are those uses or kinds of uses that may be incentivized, supported by infrastructure, or otherwise actively encouraged by Ross County. Secondary use characteristics are also consistent with the described character class; however, incentives for secondary uses will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

INCENTIVIZATION/PUBLIC FINANCE PARAMETERS

Ross County can utilize incentives and/or public finance parameters to encourage the desired development patterns outlined in the Future Land Use Map, thereby promoting desirable primary use characteristics.



Legend

- Agricultural Core
- Commercial Center
- Industrial
- Institutional Campus
- Parks and Open Space
- Rural Living
- Suburban Living
- Village Mixed-Use
- Solar Overlay
- Floodplain Overlay



Scale in Feet:



Ross County DRAFT Future Land Use Map

CHARACTER CLASSES

The following Future Land Use Character Classes descriptions correspond with the Future Land Use Map. These categories outline the types of land uses that may evolve in specific parts of the county within each class, ensuring that changes or future development align with the Vision and Goals of this Comprehensive Plan. This is a tool to aid local government in recognizing areas that are best suited for collaborative public infrastructure finance and economic development mechanisms such as JEDDs and TIFs to influence future economic growth.

SUBURBAN LIVING AND SERVICES

Suburban Living and Services areas are characterized by relatively low to moderate development density, featuring single-family residential homes along curvilinear local streets and cul-de-sacs, with off-street parking in most cases, access to public water and sewer, and may include sidewalks and shared-use paths. With few exceptions, these areas lie outside the Floodplain Overlay areas. Public input clearly indicated the need for additional housing to meet current unmet demand and future needs for multiple housing types and various price points. Infill development within areas served by existing water and sewer providers is a priority.



Source: NearMap



SUBURBAN LIVING AND SERVICES INTENT:

- ★ Increase workforce and market-rate housing stock to reduce pressure on existing affordable housing. According to the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), affordable housing is generally defined as “housing in which the occupant is paying no more than 30 percent of gross income for housing costs, including utilities.” Market-rate housing is housing priced without a subsidy from HUD or another governmental agency.
- ★ Enhance connectivity between neighborhoods and adjacent compatible development or transitional areas, where feasible.
- ★ Develop “complete streets” including sidewalks, lighting, and other neighborhood amenities where feasible.
- ★ Encourage infill development in areas where water and sewer are available.

Primary Use Characteristics:

- ★ Single-unit detached residential
- ★ Townhouses and condominiums/single-unit attached residential
- ★ Open space and parks
- ★ Compatible Institutional uses (e.g., schools, township services, fire/EMS, etc.)

Secondary Use Characteristics:

- ★ Compatible Commercial (e.g., gas stations, low-intensity commercial)
- ★ Multi-unit residential (market rate)
- ★ Agricultural

Economic Development/Public Finance Tools:

Community Reinvestment Area (CRA). The CRA program allows the County and municipalities to designate areas of their community for real property tax abatement to remodel existing structures and construct new structures. The tax abatement provided under the CRA program exempts from taxation the assessed value of a new structure or the increase in the assessed value of a structure that has been remodeled. The program does not provide an exemption from taxation of the increase in the value of the land underneath the new structure or remodeled structure. The CRA program allows for an exemption of one hundred percent (100percent) of real property taxes for a period not to exceed fifteen (15) years. The County or municipality offering the CRA tax abatement must seek the approval of the board of education to provide the tax abatement for an exemption greater than seventy-five percent (75percent). Ross County and Municipalities can use the CRA program to make housing projects more financially feasible through this reduction in property taxes. The CRA program abates the property tax on the increase in property taxes on the building, but not on the land.

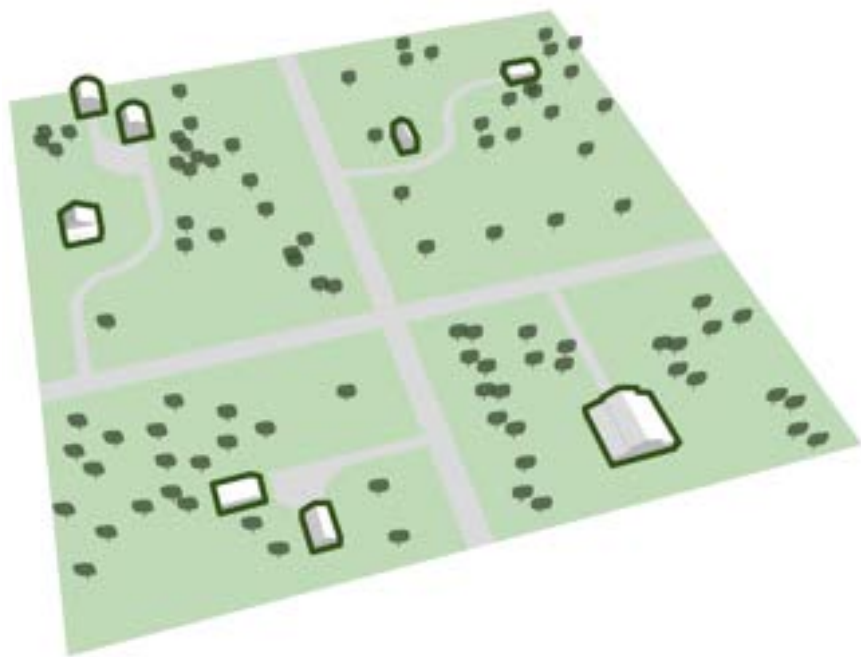
Tax Increment Financing (TIF). The TIF program allows the County, townships, and municipalities to use real property taxes created from the increase in the assessed value of land, new structures, and remodeled structures to pay for the provision of public improvements. A TIF is a tax exemption in which the property owner makes Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) to the County Auditor in the same form as it would make real estate tax payments. The County, township a municipality establishes a fund to deposit the PILOT service payments. TIF Service payments can pay debt service, reimburse public infrastructure costs, or refund projects on a “pay as you go” basis. The County, township and municipalities may establish a TIF district not exceeding ten (10) years and for an exemption of not more than seventy-five percent (75percent). The TIF district may be established for up to thirty (30) years and for an exemption of one hundred percent (100percent) with the approval of the impacted school district.

RURAL LIVING

The Rural Living character class embodies country living at its finest, with its diverse landscapes, varied housing mix, and high quality of life. These areas are characterized by very low development density, featuring larger residential lots, small farms and farmsteads, open space, and wooded areas along non-subdivision local township roads and county collector roads, with limited or no access to public water or sewer. The topography is diverse, ranging from flatlands to rolling hills, steep V-shaped ridges, and valleys with relatively high relief. Large lot development typically ranges between 5 acres and 20 acres, interspersed with larger forested tracts along ridges and stream valleys, as well as mixed pasture and cropland. These properties may also have areas for growing produce and/or raising livestock and accessory structures, such as barns, animal pens, sheds, etc.



Source: NearMap



RURAL LIVING INTENT:

- ★ Maintain rural character and quality of life

Primary Use Characteristics:

- ★ Single-unit detached homes
- ★ Agricultural
- ★ Open space and parks
- ★ Compatible Institutional (e.g., schools, township services, fire/EMS, etc.)

Secondary Use Characteristics:

- ★ Compatible Commercial uses (e.g., gas stations, convenience stores, feed stores, and greenhouses)

COMMERCE CENTER

The Commerce Center land use character class encompasses areas that serve as hubs for business activity, retail services, office employment, and economic exchange. These centers are designed to support a high concentration of jobs, commerce, and services, often as focal points for regional or community-level economic activity. They typically are comprised of developments with access along major transportation corridors. These areas can feature a variety of business types, including retail, professional services, medical offices, restaurants, and personal services.

COMMERCE CENTER INTENT:

- ★ Generating jobs, particularly for Ross County residents

Primary Use Characteristics:

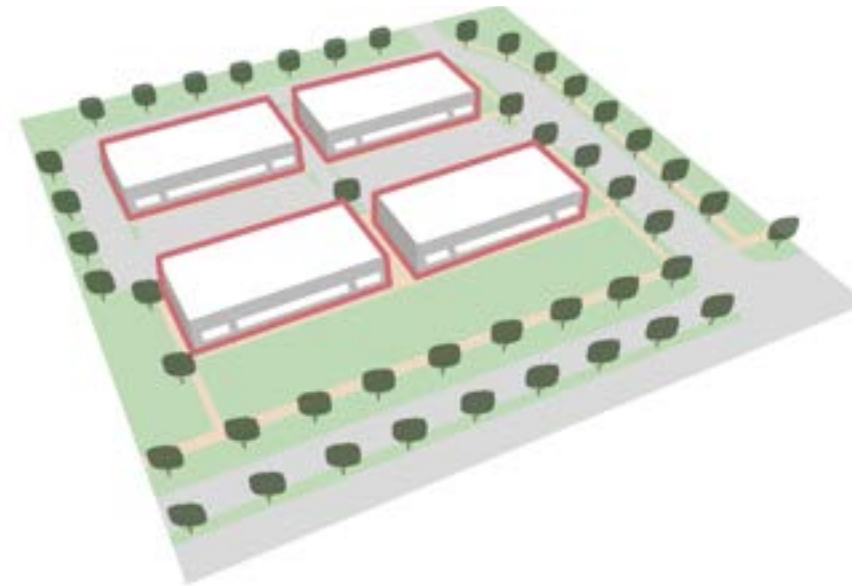
- ★ Offices
- ★ Other Commercial
- ★ Compatible Institutional (e.g., schools, township services, fire/EMS, etc.)

Secondary Use Characteristics:

- ★ Light Industrial
- ★ Multi-unit residential
- ★ Retail
- ★ Restaurants



Source: NearMap



Economic Development/Public Finance Tools:

- ★ **CRAs.** The CRA program allows the County and municipalities to designate areas of their community for real property tax abatement to remodel existing structures and construct new structures. The tax abatement provided under the CRA program exempts from taxation the assessed value of a new structure or the increase in the assessed value of a structure that has been remodeled. The program does not provide an exemption from taxation of the increase in the value of the land underneath the new structure or remodeled structure. The CRA program allows for an exemption of one hundred percent (100percent) of real property taxes for a period not to exceed fifteen (15) years. The County or municipality offering the CRA tax abatement must seek the approval of the board of education to provide the tax abatement for an exemption greater than seventy-five percent (75percent). Ross County and Municipalities can use the CRA program to make housing projects more financially feasible through this reduction in property taxes. The CRA program abates the property tax on the increase in property taxes on the building, but not on the land.
- ★ **TIFs.** The TIF program allows the County, townships, and municipalities to use real property taxes created from the increase in the assessed value of land, new structures, and remodeled structures to pay for the provision of public improvements. A TIF is a tax exemption in which the property owner makes Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) to the County Auditor in the same form as it would make real estate tax payments. The County, township a municipality establishes a fund to deposit the PILOT service payments. TIF Service payments can pay debt service, reimburse public infrastructure costs, or refund projects on a “pay as you go” basis. The County, township and municipalities may establish a TIF district not exceeding ten (10) years and for an exemption of not more than seventy-five percent (75percent). The TIF district may be established for up to thirty (30) years and for an exemption of one hundred percent (100percent) with the approval of the impacted school district.
- ★ **Joint Economic Development Districts (JEDD).** JEDDs are special-purpose districts created by a contract between a combination of municipalities and townships. JEDDs allow for the levying of a district-wide income tax and the provision of municipal services in unincorporated areas for the purpose of making public infrastructure and other investments in the JEDD.
- ★ **Construction Materials Sales Tax Exemption.** Under Ohio law, Ohio Revised Code Section 4582, Port Authorities in Ohio can enter into transactions through a capital lease with private entities to offer an economic development incentive by exempting the sales tax on construction materials. The Ross County Port Authority (RCPA) is organized under ORC 4582 as a port authority. The Ross County sales tax is 7.25percent. For a \$10,000,000 capital investment project, a conservative sales tax estimate is \$362,500, which is a significant amount for an economic development project. The RCPA, like many other port authorities in Ohio, takes a fee of 20-25percent of the estimated sales tax savings, and the remainder of the savings goes to the benefit of the project. Many port authorities in Ohio use this same fee structure. Some port authorities charge a higher fee, upwards of 50percent, and use the savings to fund transportation projects in conjunction with the economic development project or transportation projects elsewhere in the county.

PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

The Open Space and Parks land use character class includes areas designated for public or private outdoor recreation, natural resource conservation, and community gathering. These spaces are crucial for enhancing the quality of life, promoting ecological health, and offering recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. Accessory amenities, such as picnic areas or recreational facilities, are standard. Forests, wetlands, meadows, water bodies, historic resources, heritage sites, and other ecological or culturally sensitive areas may also be included.

Parks and Open Space Intent:

- ★ Promoting healthy communities
- ★ Preserving ecologically or culturally sensitive areas and natural viewsheds
- ★ Providing accessible areas for active or passive recreation

Primary Use Characteristics:

- ★ Open space and parks

Secondary Use Characteristics:

- ★ Public campground
- ★ Park amenities
- ★ Nature centers
- ★ Public restrooms

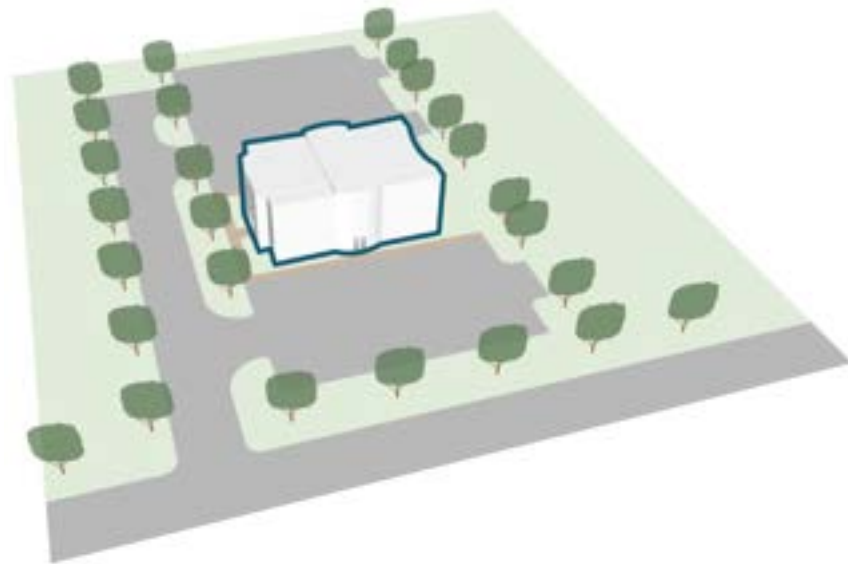


Source: NearMap





Source: NearMap



INSTITUTIONAL CAMPUS

The Institutional Campus character class encompasses large, unified sites dedicated to major public or private institutions that serve educational, governmental, medical, correctional, or religious functions. These campuses are typically composed of multiple buildings and facilities organized around a central mission, with integrated infrastructure and open spaces that support institutional operations and community engagement.

Source: NearMap

Institutional Campus Intent:

- ★ Consolidate public services

Primary Use Characteristics:

- ★ Medical facilities
- ★ Correctional institutions
- ★ Government administration or similar facilities
- ★ Educational facilities
- ★ Religious institutions

Secondary Use Characteristics:

- ★ Compatible commercial uses (e.g., pharmacies, offices, etc.)
- ★ Residential
- ★ Industrial

INNOVATION AND MANUFACTURING CENTER

Innovation and Manufacturing Center is a land use character class designated for areas that support a concentration of industrial activities, including manufacturing, warehousing, logistics, and related services. These centers are strategically located to facilitate the movement of goods and materials. Robust infrastructure and transportation networks often support them. The Innovation and Manufacturing Center is characterized by large parcels or clusters of smaller parcels, such as industrial parks, often located adjacent to highways, railroads, or airports.

Innovation and Manufacturing Center Intent:

- ★ Generate large employment centers and strengthen the County's tax base
- ★ Concentrate industrial activity in areas with adequate utilities

Primary Use Characteristics:

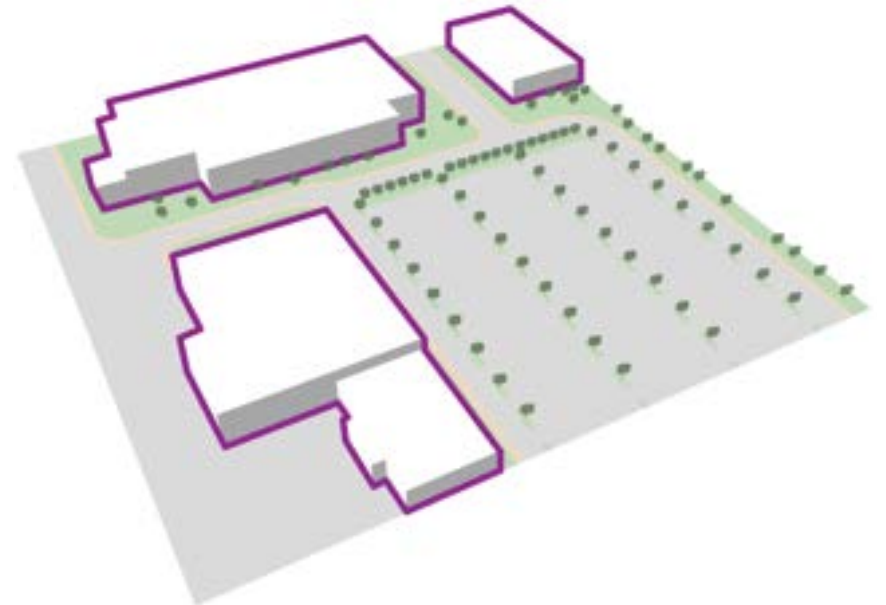
- ★ Warehousing and logistics
- ★ Research and development
- ★ Manufacturing and industrial processing

Secondary Use Characteristics:

- ★ Accessory office uses
- ★ Institutional
- ★ Commercial



Source: NearMap



Economic Development/Public Finance Tools:

- ★ **CRAs.** The CRA program allows the County and municipalities to designate areas of their community for real property tax abatement to remodel existing structures and construct new structures. The tax abatement provided under the CRA program exempts from taxation the assessed value of a new structure or the increase in the assessed value of a structure that has been remodeled. The program does not provide an exemption from taxation of the increase in the value of the land underneath the new structure or remodeled structure. The CRA program allows for an exemption of one hundred percent (100percent) of real property taxes for a period not to exceed fifteen (15) years. The County or municipality offering the CRA tax abatement must seek the approval of the board of education to provide the tax abatement for an exemption greater than seventy-five percent (75percent). Ross County and Municipalities can use the CRA program to make housing projects more financially feasible through this reduction in property taxes. The CRA program abates the property tax on the increase in property taxes on the building, but not on the land.
- ★ **TIFs.** The TIF program allows the County, townships, and municipalities to use real property taxes created from the increase in the assessed value of land, new structures, and remodeled structures to pay for the provision of public improvements. A TIF is a tax exemption in which the property owner makes Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) to the County Auditor in the same form as it would make real estate tax payments. The County, township a municipality establishes a fund to deposit the PILOT service payments. TIF Service payments can pay debt service, reimburse public infrastructure costs, or refund projects on a “pay as you go” basis. The County, township and municipalities may establish a TIF district not exceeding ten (10) years and for an exemption of not more than seventy-five percent (75percent). The TIF district may be established for up to thirty (30) years and for an exemption of one hundred percent (100percent) with the approval of the impacted school district.
- ★ **JEDDs.** JEDDs are special-purpose districts created by a contract between a combination of municipalities and townships. JEDDs allow for the levying of a district-wide income tax and the provision of municipal services in unincorporated areas for the purpose of making public infrastructure and other investments in the JEDD.
- ★ **Construction Materials Sales Tax Exemption.** Under Ohio law, Ohio Revised Code Section 4582, Port Authorities in Ohio can enter into transactions through a capital lease with private entities to offer an economic development incentive by exempting the sales tax on construction materials. The Ross County Port Authority (RCPA) is organized under ORC 4582 as a port authority. The Ross County sales tax is 7.25percent. For a \$10,000,000 capital investment project, a conservative sales tax estimate is \$362,500, which is a significant amount for an economic development project. The RCPA, like many other port authorities in Ohio, takes a fee of 20-25percent of the estimated sales tax savings, and the remainder of the savings goes to the benefit of the project. Many port authorities in Ohio use this same fee structure. Some port authorities charge a higher fee, upwards of 50percent, and use the savings to fund transportation projects in conjunction with the economic development project or transportation projects elsewhere in the county.

AGRICULTURAL CORE

Agricultural Core is characterized by active farmland, whether for livestock or crops. Agricultural Core parcels are five acres or more and have been identified by the USDA as being 50 percent or more dedicated to agricultural use. Structures like barns are an integral part of active agricultural land and are a characteristic feature of the rural environment.

Agricultural Core Intent:

- ★ Promote continued agricultural activities

Primary Use Characteristics:

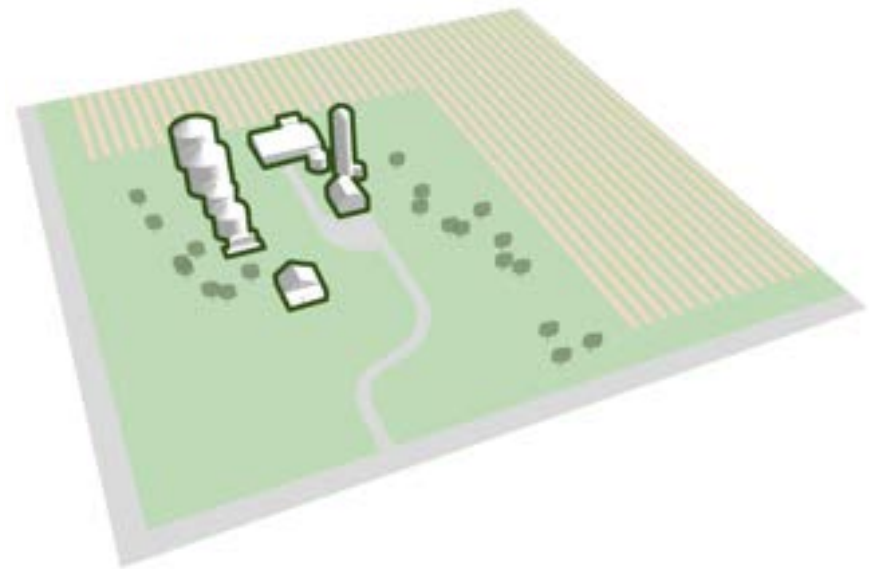
- ★ Agricultural

Secondary Use Characteristics:

- ★ Single-unit detached homes
- ★ Barns
- ★ Grain and agricultural product storage



Source: NearMap





Ross County Flood Zone. Source: [Floodplain Management](#).



Water damaged roadway in Ross County in 2019. Source: [Chillicothe Gazette](#).

FLOODPLAIN OVERLAY

The Floodplain Overlay consists of the regulatory floodplain. Due to the hazards and additional development standards associated with flooding, intensive commercial and residential development is generally discouraged.

TRANSITIONAL AREA OVERLAY

The Transitional Area Overlay is a specialized land use designation applied to zones that serve as buffers or bridges between distinct land use types, such as residential neighborhoods and commercial or industrial districts. The overlay is intended to guide development and redevelopment in a way that ensures compatibility, mitigates land use conflicts, and supports gradual changes in character and intensity.

Transitional Overlay Intent:

- ★ Reduce conflict and nuisance between land uses.

Primary Use Characteristics:

- ★ Commercial
- ★ Institutional
- ★ Multi-unit residential
- ★ Parks and open space

Secondary Use Characteristics:

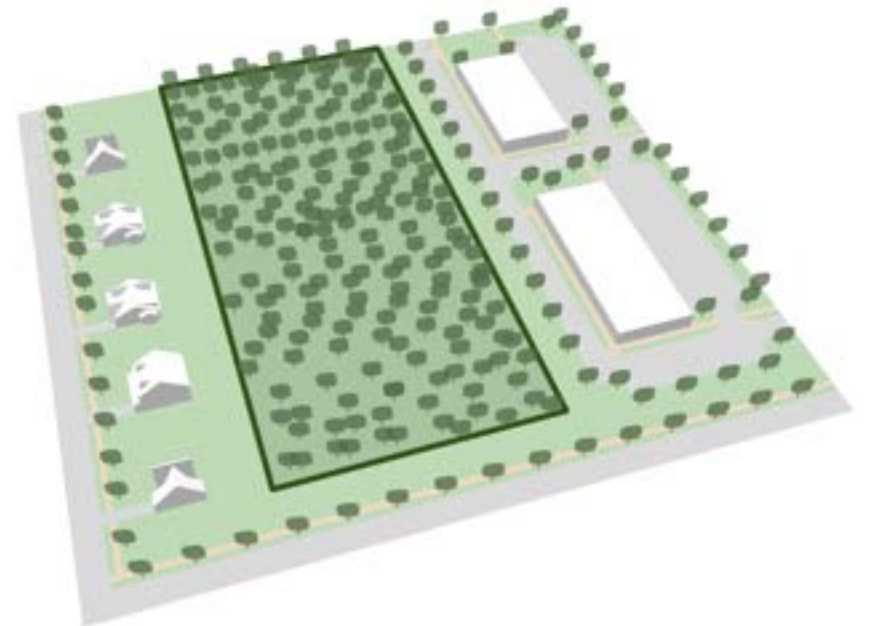
- ★ Light industrial

Incentivization/Public Finance Parameters:

- ★ N/A

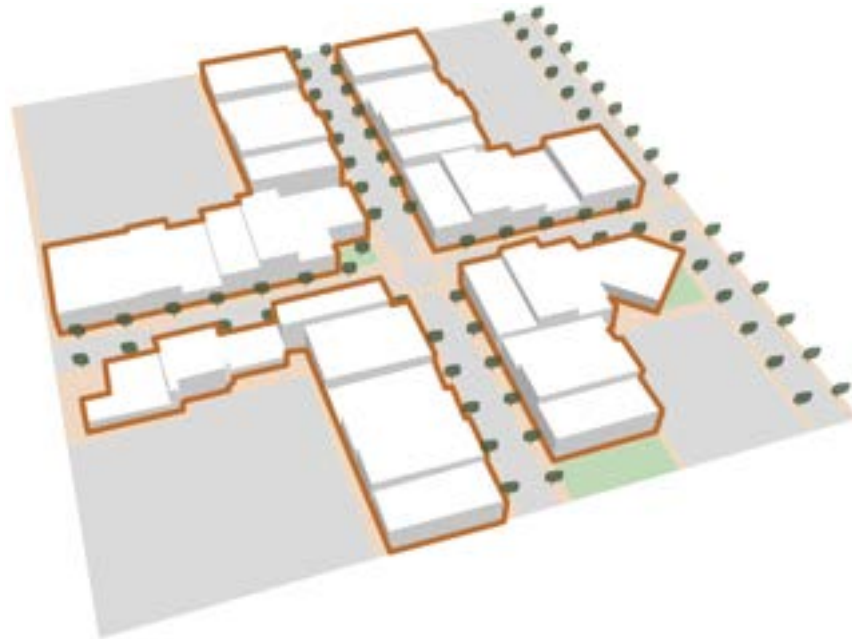


Source: NearMap





Source: NearMap



VILLAGE MIXED-USE

Village Mixed-Use is a general category that enables villages to maintain their traditional development patterns and characteristics. Lots are typically smaller with shallow front yard setbacks for residential, institutional, and commercial development.

Village Mixed-Use Intent:

- ★ Preserve traditional village development patterns.

Primary Use Characteristics:

- ★ Residential
- ★ Compatible Institutional (e.g., schools, township services, fire/EMS, etc.)
- ★ Compatible Commercial uses (e.g., gas stations, convenience stores, grocery stores, retail, personal services, restaurants, banks, offices, etc.)

Secondary Use Characteristics:

- ★ Neighborhood or smaller Parks and Open Space

SOLAR OVERLAY

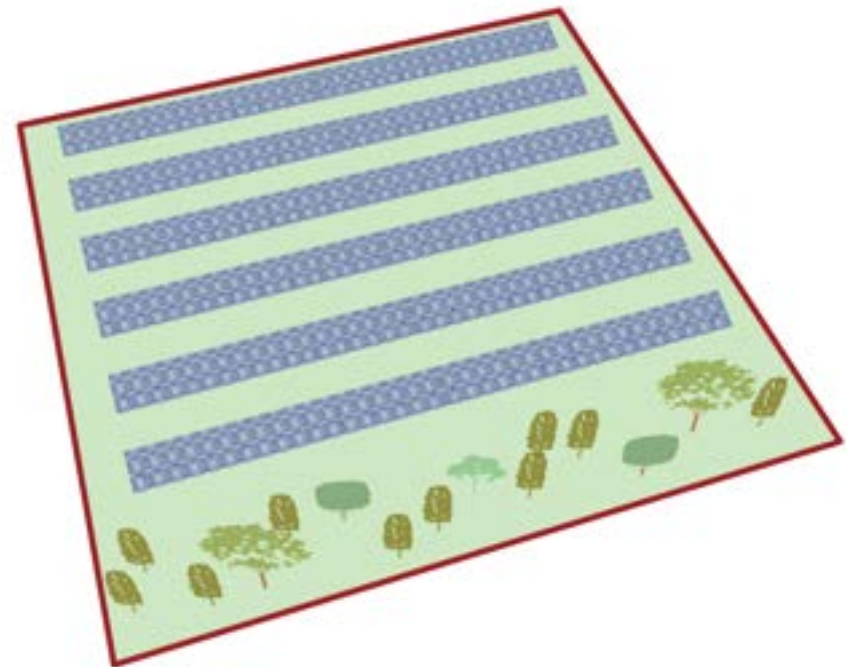
The Solar Overlay is any area within Ross County that currently has a constructed solar farm. It is an overlay that allows the underlying character class to be supported if a solar farm is ever decommissioned.

Solar Overlay Intent:

- ★ Encourage desired, underlying character classes if solar is decommissioned.



Source: NearMap



DEVELOPMENT READINESS FRAMEWORK

The Focus Areas identified in this Plan are not equally positioned for immediate development. Each area varies in terms of infrastructure capacity, service availability, and required public investment. To guide decision-making, Ross County will prioritize infrastructure improvements based on development readiness and return on investment.

TIER 1: NEAR-TERM DEVELOPMENT (0–5 YEARS)

Areas where existing infrastructure can support development with targeted extensions or upgrades. These areas represent the County’s most competitive opportunities for immediate job creation and tax base growth.

TIER 2: MID-TERM DEVELOPMENT (5–10 YEARS)

Areas where development is feasible but requires moderate infrastructure upgrades, such as lift-station expansion, water-main upsizing, or system modeling and coordination.

TIER 3: LONG-TERM / CATALYTIC DEVELOPMENT (10+ YEARS)

Areas with significant development potential but requiring major infrastructure investment, including new utility extensions, treatment capacity expansion, or new service provision.

This framework aligns capital improvement planning, economic development efforts, and infrastructure investment decisions.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEMAND ASSUMPTIONS

Infrastructure recommendations are based on projected development within each Focus Area under both near-term (5-year) and full buildout (20-year) scenarios. These projections reflect anticipated land uses, including industrial, commercial, residential, and institutional development.

Water and wastewater demands were estimated using standard planning-level assumptions and used to evaluate system capacity, identify constraints, and determine required infrastructure improvements.

This analysis supports planning and capital investment decisions. Final infrastructure design and capacity confirmation may need to be coordinated with utility providers during project development.

FOCUS AREAS

Focus Areas ensure concerted development efforts that result in site readiness for targeted development.

FOCUS AREA 1

Focus Area 1 is a 1,230-acre area shown along US 35/23 at the southeast corner of Chillicothe's corporate limits. The location features large parcels of land adjacent to an existing industrial cluster, offering access to both rail and highway interchange. Access to adequate electric, gas, and water utilities is essential. The types of development predicted in the area are illustrated in the Character Classes developed for this plan or supplemented by additional information. For more detailed information about the character class definitions, refer to the full Character Class descriptions in the Character Classes section of this Plan.

DEVELOPMENT READINESS SUMMARY

Readiness Tier: Tier 1 – Near-Term Development

Focus Area 1 represents Ross County's most development-ready industrial site. The area benefits from proximity to existing industrial uses, access to rail and highway infrastructure, and partial utility availability.

Key Strengths:

- ★ Existing industrial zoning alignment within the City of Chillicothe.
- ★ Access to dual rail corridors (Norfolk Southern and CSX).
- ★ Proximity to existing water and sewer infrastructure.
- ★ Existing electric and gas capacity suitable for industrial users.

Key Constraints:

- ★ Wastewater treatment capacity will limit long-term buildout.
- ★ Existing 8-inch water line is insufficient for industrial demand.
- ★ Rail crossings create infrastructure coordination challenges.
- ★ Portions of the site require lift stations for sewer service.

Critical Path Infrastructure Improvements:

- ★ Upsize water infrastructure and extend service to development sites.
- ★ Coordinate with the City of Chillicothe on wastewater capacity planning.
- ★ Plan for long-term wastewater treatment plant upgrades to support full buildout.
- ★ Construct lift stations and force mains to enable phased development.

DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATION:

Focus Area 1 is suitable for immediate marketing and development. However, the full buildout will depend on wastewater system upgrades, making early coordination with the City of Chillicothe essential.

CITY OF CHILLICOTHE INDUSTRIAL

Portions of Focus Area 1 are within the corporation limits of the City of Chillicothe, located in the northern portion of the Focus Area. In March 2023, Chillicothe adopted its first comprehensive plan since 1948, called “Choose Chillicothe.” The City’s document indicates these areas are planned for “Industrial” development. According to the Choose Chillicothe plan, Industrial areas “include large or intense operations such as factories, plants, and assembly warehouses.” The General Industrial zoning designation further supports this on the current Zoning Map. The industrial portion of the Focus Area in Chillicothe totals 381 acres. That was included with the knowledge that redevelopment areas in Chillicothe align with the desired growth of this plan, and to help coordinate those activities.

INNOVATION AND MANUFACTURING CENTER

The Innovation and Manufacturing Center is the only character class shown in Focus Area 1. It aligns well with the direction outlined in the Choose Chillicothe plan. The Focus Area covers 849 acres.

RECREATIONAL/BLUEWAY OPPORTUNITY

While not a formal character class, the Paint Creek corridor defines much of the southern boundary of Focus Area 1. The development of Focus Area 1 also presents opportunities to connect neighborhoods and workers to additional recreational and quality-of-life improvements, such as creek-side trails, boat and kayak access, fishing access, and parks. The Ross County Active Transportation Plan calls for an outer belt shared-use path along the abandoned railroad track on the southern boundary of Chillicothe to connect the existing bike trail on the west side of Chillicothe to Paint Street. The development of the Focus Area presents a unique opportunity to connect the Focus Area and its surrounding neighborhoods to regional recreational facilities, promote alternative modes of work and travel, and conserve or create additional open space along the corridor.

* [Choose Chillicothe](#)

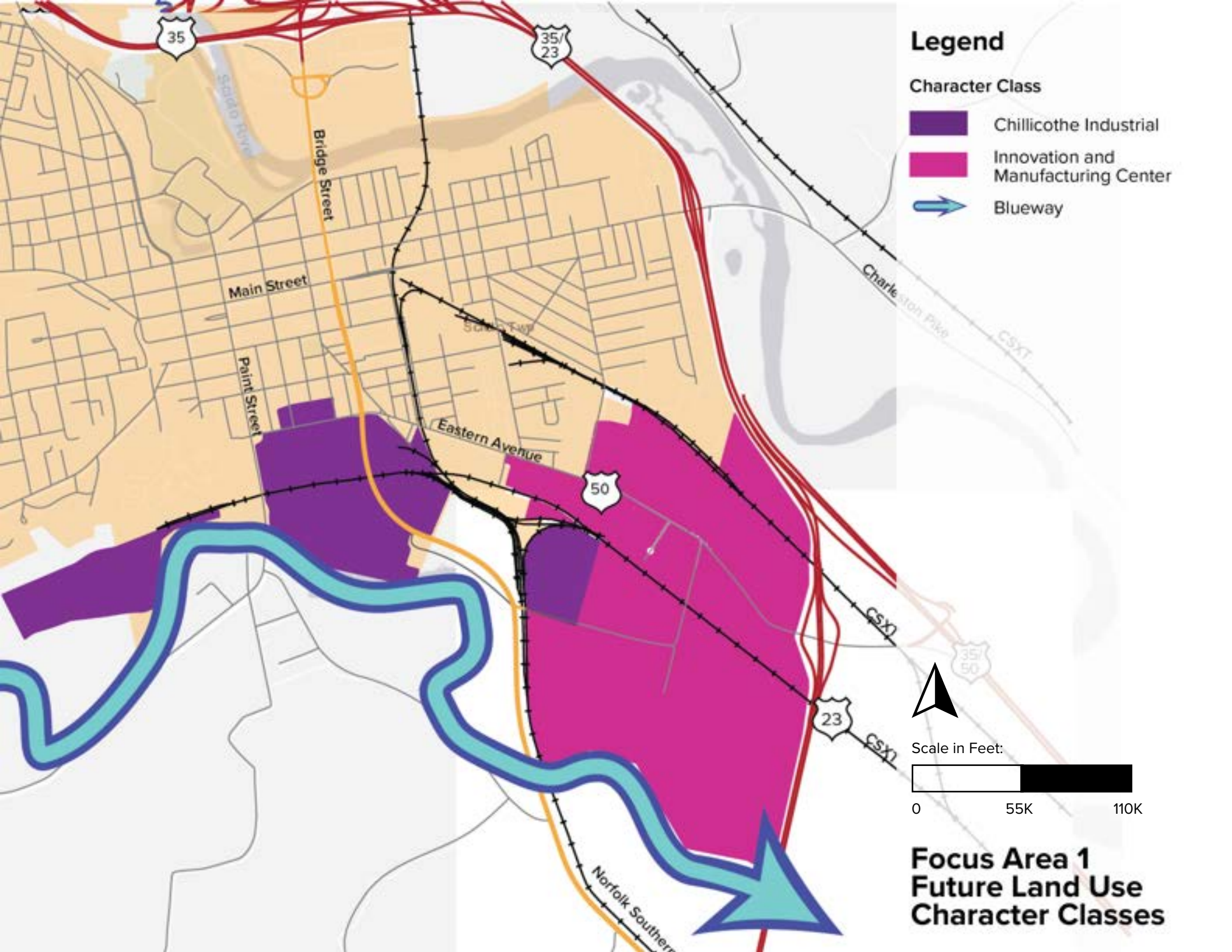
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/PUBLIC FINANCE TOOLS

Focus Area 1, with its large land area and access to utilities including sewer, water, and electricity, has great potential to attract new jobs and capital investment to the area and/or expand existing Ross County companies. To attract jobs and investment, Ross County can offer a combination of economic development incentives and public finance tools, including the following.

- ★ **CRA**s. The City of Chillicothe has a CRA area in place for Focus Area 1. The City can consider offering a 100percent tax abatement for 15 years, with a Payment instead of Taxes (PILOT), to the Chillicothe City School District and Pickaway-Ross Career Center for industrial projects seeking to locate in Focus Area 1.
- ★ **TIF**s. The City of Chillicothe can offer a 100 percent, 30-year, non-school TIF to help fund public infrastructure in the area. The TIF can be layered on top of the CRA. For years 1-15, the TIF will generate revenue from increases in taxes on land, and for years 16-30, it will generate revenue from increases in taxes on land and buildings.
- ★ **JEDDs**. For the area in Scioto Township, the City and the Township may consider developing a JEDD to allow the collection of income tax from the industrial development and to pay for needed infrastructure.
- ★ **Construction Materials Sales Tax Exemption**. The Ross County Port Authority can offer a construction materials sales tax exemption for industrial projects that choose to locate in this area as an economic development incentive, saving up to 80 percent on sales tax for building construction.

Growth Projections

To help align these plans' recommendations, potential growth scenarios were developed to identify how potential land development may stress the area's utilities. Two timeframes were examined: a 5-year build-out and a 20-year build-out.



UTILITIES

The following analysis examines the utilities currently located in or near Focus Area 1 and how they, along with future expansion of those utilities, will support Focus Area 1.

Water

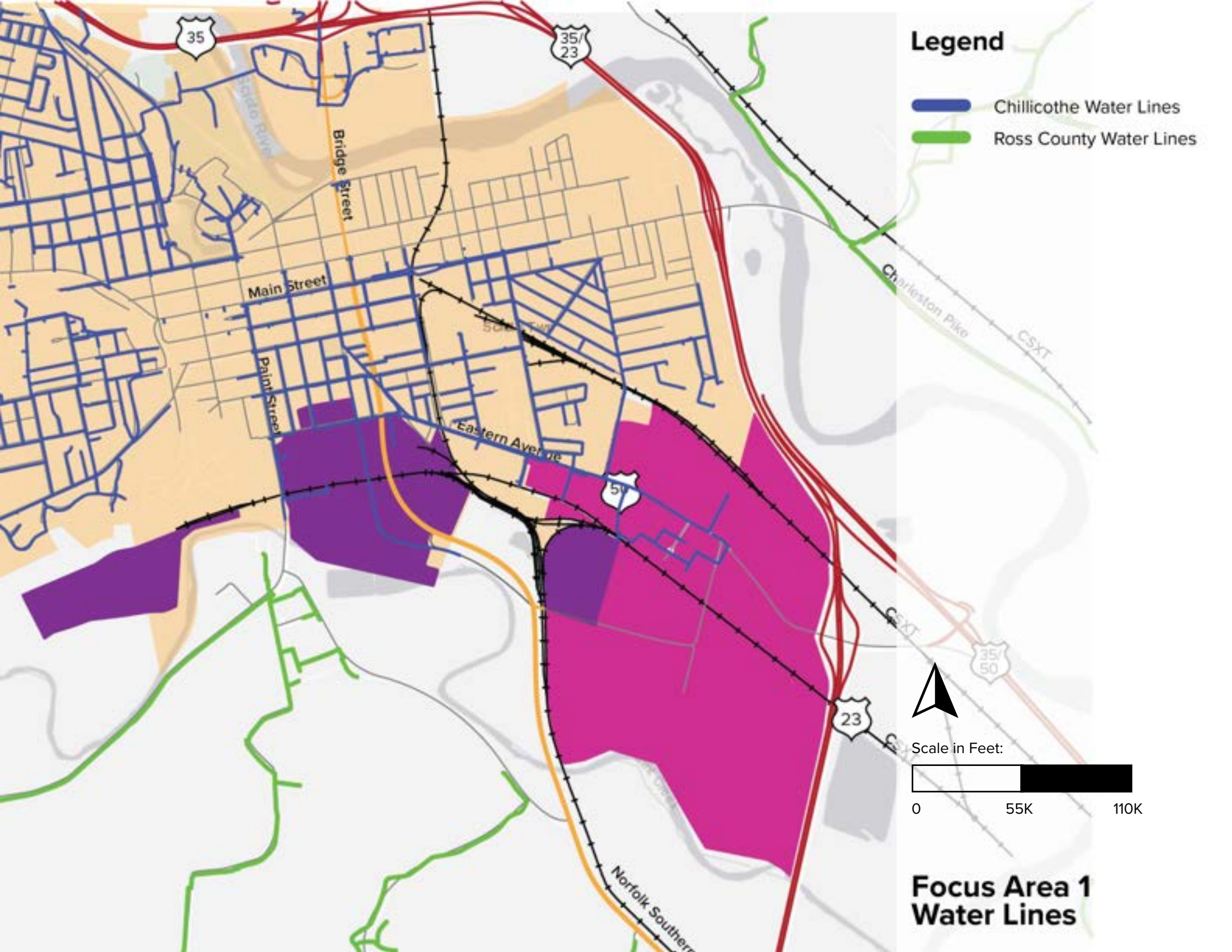
Two water providers are adjacent to Focus Area 1, the City of Chillicothe to the North and Ross County Water to the south. The current water service varies depending on the location within this area, as illustrated in the map on page 41. The 235 acres adjacent to the Medical Glove/former Pixelle site have a eight-inch-diameter water line from the City of Chillicothe at the intersection of South Paint Street and East 8th Street. The former Pixelle operation used nine on-site private wells for industrial water service. At the time of this report, the capacity of those wells is unknown. A future user of the site may have access to the wells for industrial use, but will need to confirm the wells' capacity before use.

The City of Chillicothe is likely to provide water to Focus Area 1 as it develops and redevelops, given its proximity. Per Greater Chillicothe and Ross County Development, Ross County Water is 10,660 feet away from the eastern portion of Focus Area 1. North of the majority of Focus Area 1 there is a 30 inch raw water main along Easter Avenue east of the former mill property. While this water main does not supply potable water, it can provide water for industrial cooling purposes. Potable water is available from a 12 inch diameter water main available at the CSX railroad tracks west of Lincoln Street. To facilitate future industrial development of the site, a water main extension would need to be bored beneath the adjacent railroad tracks.

Proposed Water Recommendations

Water demand will vary by the type of proposed development. Industrial water uses vary significantly by the type of industrial development. For this report, the water used for the proposed developments was assumed to be equivalent to the wastewater output from the development. See the sanitary section below for projected wastewater flows for Focus Area 1. Waterline extensions will be necessary to serve development in this area. Focus Area 1 is a large development area, and development is likely to occur on an individual-user basis rather than a full buildout.

- ★ Heavy new demand may result in a water model or an update to the current model. Plan periodic updates to the City of Chillicothe and Ross County Water models to ensure new development can be served, or additional capacity is needed.
- ★ Waterline extensions will be necessary to serve the Manufacturing Innovation section to the east and west, with sizing determined by demand and water model results.
- ★ Waterline extensions will be required for the Chillicothe Industrial sections, and the existing eight-inch waterline needs upsized to accommodate future use depending on the water demand needed by a potential end user..



Legend

- Chillicothe Water Lines
- Ross County Water Lines

Scale in Feet:



Focus Area 1 Water Lines

Sanitary Sewer

The inverse of water service is sanitary sewer, as water leaving the future end user must be treated. For this report, a high-level evaluation was conducted for these sites based on land-use designations and wastewater flows for the proposed land-use types. Overall, the 5-year projections for Focus Area 1 yielded an additional average flow of 0.35 MGD, with a peak flow of 1.2 MGD. The 20-year projections added an average flow of 1.2 MGD, with a peak flow of 3.7 MGD (these do not include the 5-year flows).

The City of Chillicothe has a sewer system north of the Focus Area, which would serve future development within Focus Area 1. This sewer system goes to the City of Chillicothe wastewater treatment plant, which has an average design flow of 3.8 MGD, a maximum daily flow of 7.5 MGD, and a design capacity of 10 MGD. Based on the assumptions used to develop the 5-year and 20-year growth projections, the existing system has sufficient capacity to support anticipated development over the next five years. As the community grows, the City should continue to monitor system capacity to ensure it remains aligned with future needs. Over the longer term, targeted improvements to the treatment plant may be considered to support higher-intensity users and sustained growth. This analysis does not account for any additional flows from other areas of the system to the wastewater plant; it considers only Focus Area 1.

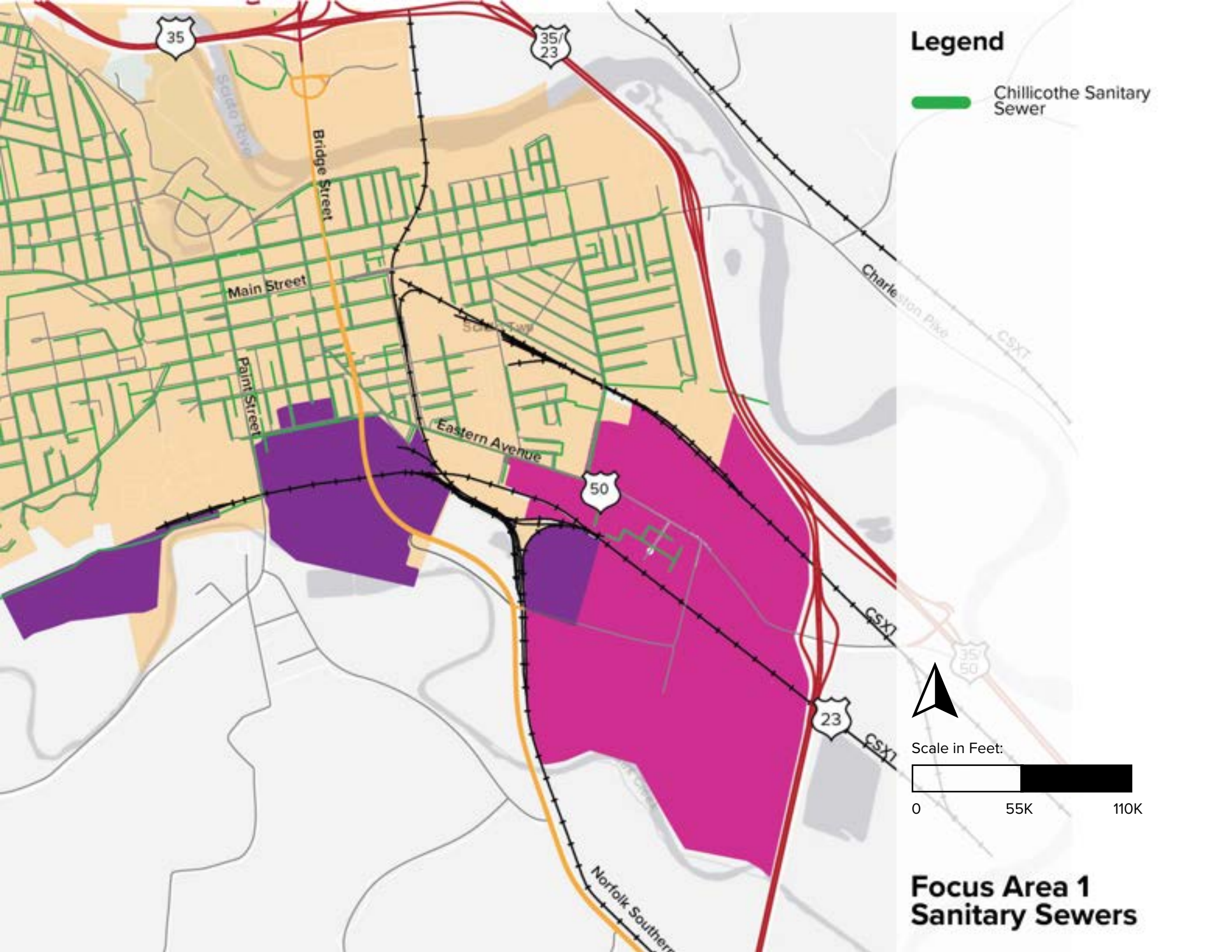
The existing sewer in the area is located north and east of the railroad within the Manufacturing Innovation Section. Any future connections to the sewer system would have to cross the railroad. Focus Area 1 also generally grades to the south, toward the Blueway land designation. As a result, sanitary lift stations will be needed to connect to the existing City of Chillicothe sewers. Due to the size of this area, individual users will likely connect to the sanitary system as it is built rather than a regional system being built for all projected development.

Proposed Sewer Recommendations

As additional information becomes available about potential developments, it is recommended to research their water-use requirements further and ensure that any proposed sanitary facilities can handle the expected flow. It is also recommended to continue involving the City of Chillicothe in any sanitary facility sizing, as the city will need to confirm that the connection point and any downstream utilities are adequately sized to accept the additional sewer flow. Steps for this process are outlined below.

- ★ Calculate the wastewater flow from proposed developments, using standard wastewater flow rates from the Ohio Greenbook.
- ★ Coordinate with the developer of the site and the City of Chillicothe for connection into the existing sanitary system.
- ★ Lift stations will be required to connect new development(s) within the Innovation and Manufacturing Center area, and at least the southern portion of the Chillicothe Industrial area. The new force main(s) will cross existing railroad, requiring permits.

Staff and partner agencies need to incorporate these infrastructure improvements into the County's Capital Improvement Plan and coordinate with local utility providers to align funding, timing, and development readiness.



Legend

 Chillicothe Sanitary Sewer



Scale in Feet:



0 55K 110K

Focus Area 1 Sanitary Sewers

Fiber

As shown in the map on page 45, fiber lines follow roads throughout Focus Area 1, and all use Spectrum as the carrier.

Electric

AEP power transmission lines currently traverse Focus Area 1, as shown in the map on page 46. The nearest transmission electric line voltage is 138 kV. Electric service currently exists on site.

Gas

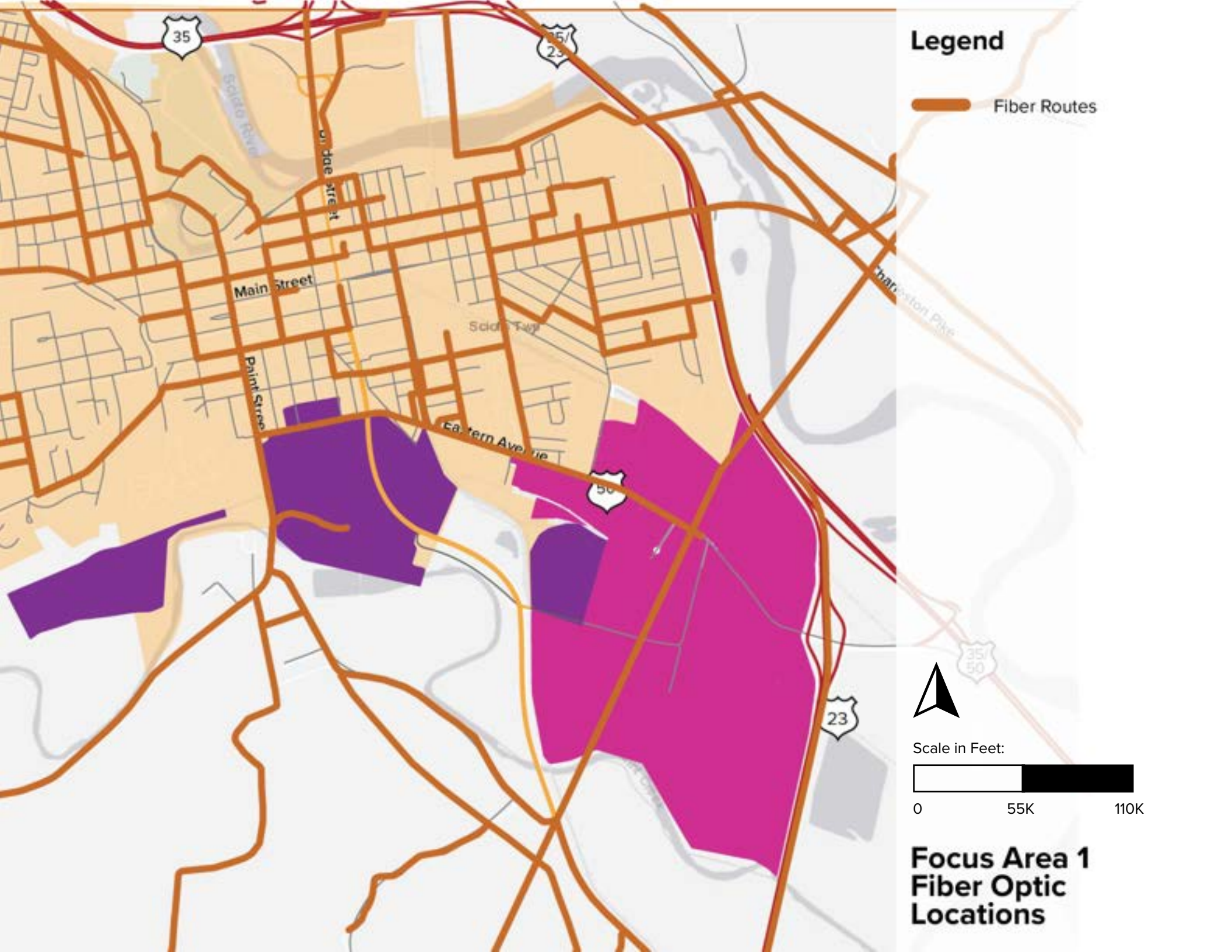
Columbia Gas currently serves Focus Area 1, and service varies by location within it. Overall, the site is well-positioned to accommodate a large gas user, given its existing infrastructure. The highest capacity point will be on East 8th Street, where a combination of 12-inch and 10-inch lines is immediately adjacent to the former Pixelle building.

- ★ An 8-inch line runs down the split between buildings (i.e., Gate 10 of the Pixelle site).
- ★ A 4-inch line runs down Eastern Avenue and ends at the corner of Eastern Avenue and Stauffer Lane.
- ★ A 4-inch line is available running down Commercial Circle and
- ★ No gas lines run south of Paint Creek in the Cooks Hills Road area.
- ★ No gas lines run west in the westernmost portion of the Focus Area.
- ★ Line extensions would be required to serve the properties in the southeastern portion of the proposed site.

The middle portion of the Focus Area has an existing large service associated with the paper mill, which requires a minimum draw to maintain pressure. However, with expected changes in those operations, the service demands of that site will need to be re-evaluated.

FLOODPLAIN

Focus Area 1 is bordered to the South by Paint Creek, as shown in the map on page 47. Portions of Focus Area 1 are located within the Special Flood Hazard Area (Zone AE) and encompass regulatory floodway locations. Areas within the floodway are not to be considered developable and are to be reserved for the aforementioned Blueway Recreational character class. However, areas within the flood fringe are considered at-risk and developable, with the understanding that fill and additional development regulations apply.



Legend

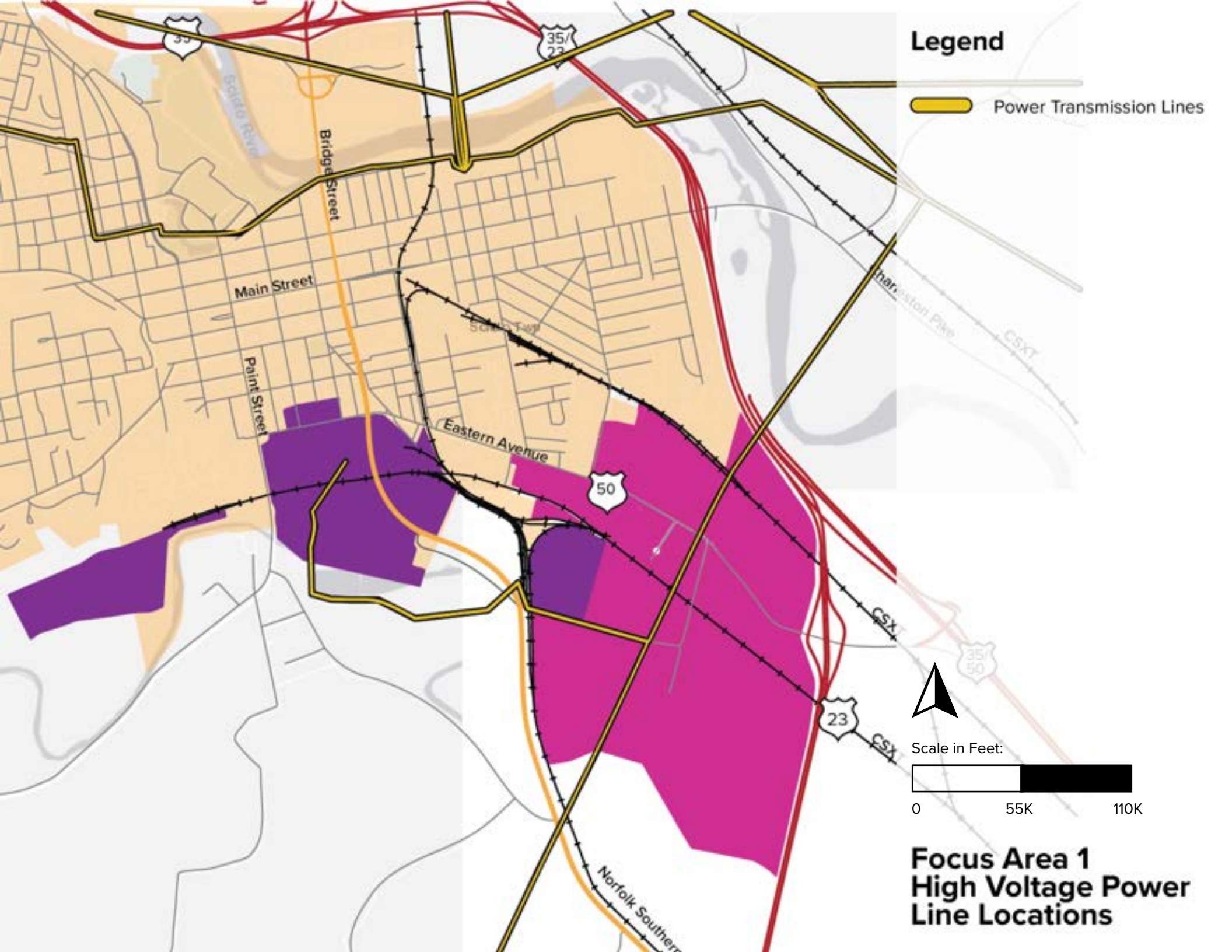
 Fiber Routes

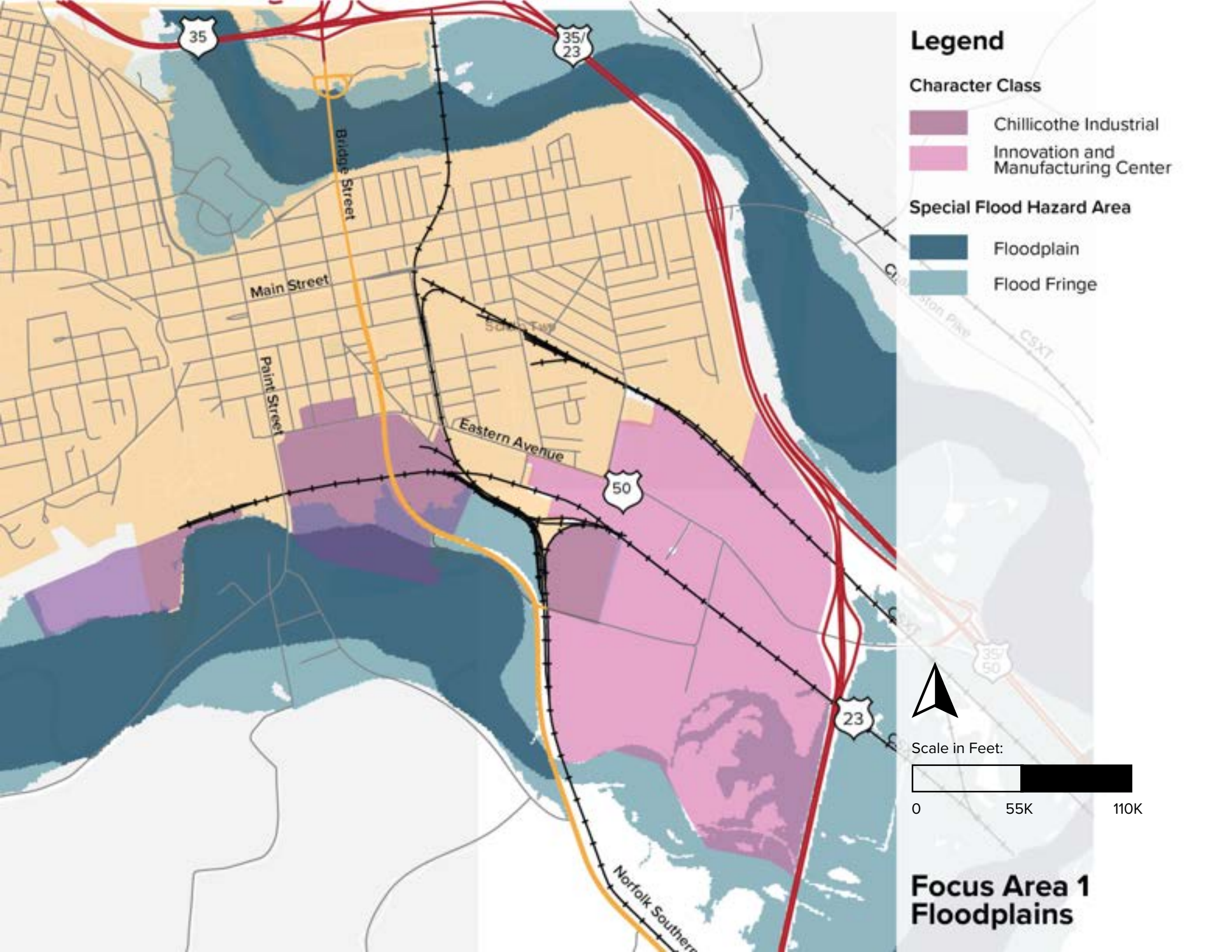
Scale in Feet:



0 55K 110K

**Focus Area 1
Fiber Optic
Locations**





Legend

Character Class

- Chillicothe Industrial
- Innovation and Manufacturing Center

Special Flood Hazard Area

- Floodplain
- Flood Fringe



Scale in Feet:



Focus Area 1 Floodplains

TRANSPORTATION

The transportation assets of Focus Area 1 are numerous. The summary below provides a detailed inventory of existing transportation and rail infrastructure and outlines strategic recommendations to support future development.

Existing Surface Transportation Infrastructure

The key surface transportation infrastructure is highlighted in the map on page 49.

US 50: A principal east-west corridor that runs directly through Chillicothe and provides access to the surrounding area, offering vital regional connectivity.

US 35/23: Combined US highways are located to the east of the Focus Area. That central north-south corridor connects Chillicothe to Columbus, providing access to regional and interstate highway networks. US 35 splits from US 23 north of Chillicothe, providing access to the Dayton area, and heads east to West Virginia.

SR 104 (Bridge Street): A significant arterial route running north-south through the city, connecting to both US 35 and US 50, and providing direct access to industrial zones.

Eastern Avenue and Paint Street: Local arterials that serve as connectors between the city's commercial core and the industrial/manufacturing areas. These roads provide access for employee commuting and delivery vehicle routing.

Existing Rail Infrastructure

Key rail infrastructure is highlighted in the map on page 49.

Norfolk Southern (NS): A Class I rail line runs through the southeastern edge of the area. The mainline provides opportunities for direct rail siding and spur access to serve major manufacturing tenants.

CSX Transportation: Another Class I rail line is located to the northeast of the Focus Area and crosses US 23. While not directly adjacent to all parcels, it provides potential dual rail service when coordinated with NS.

Rail Crossings: Multiple at-grade crossings exist along Eastern

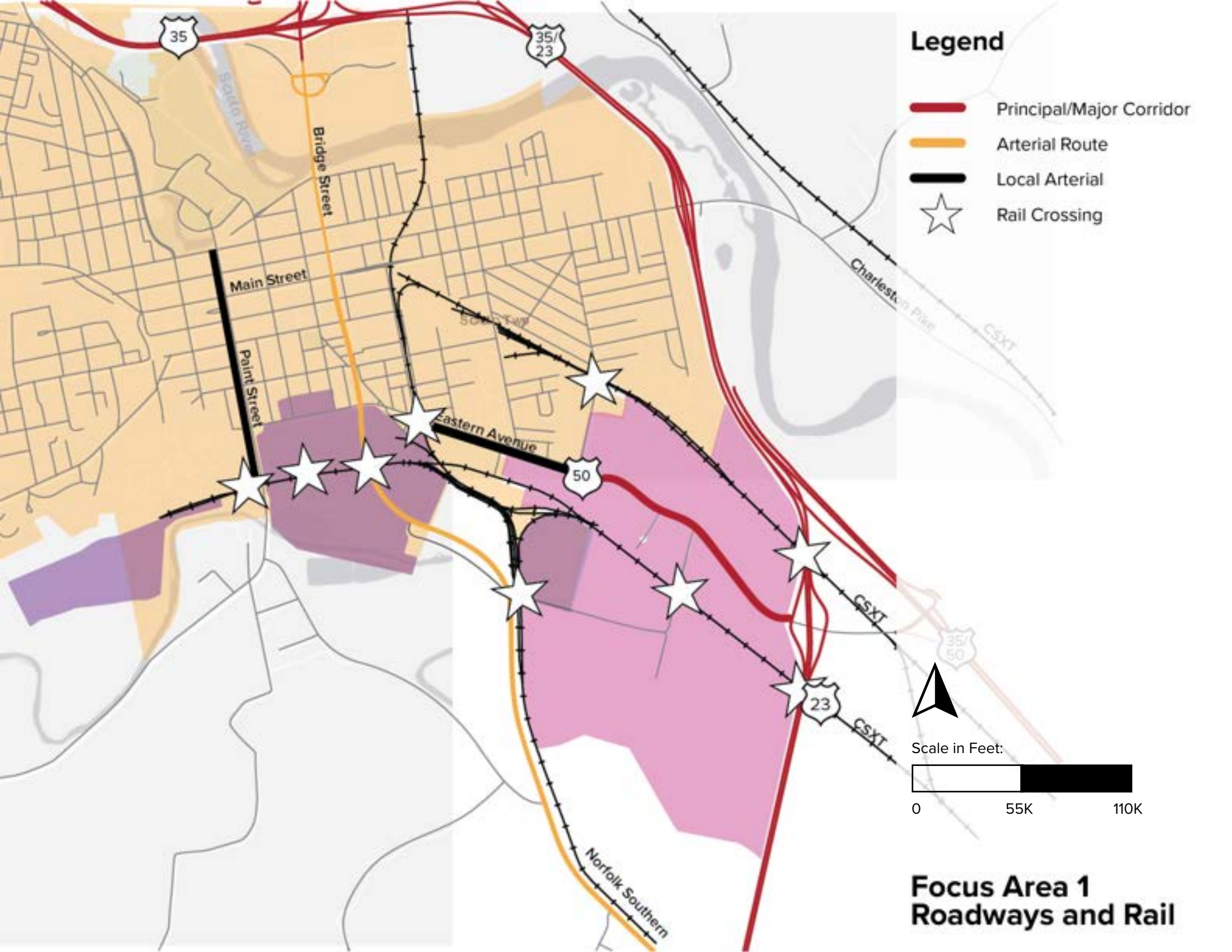
Avenue and nearby arterials. These crossings are crucial for rail access but may require future upgrades to ensure safety and operational efficiency. They are shown in the map on page 49.

Potential Transload Sites: Several parcels near both rail corridors, particularly in the 849-acre and 55-acre zones, are ideally positioned for future transload or intermodal facilities.

Proposed Recommendations

To leverage the area's multimodal advantages, the following infrastructure and planning recommendations are proposed:

- ★ Upgrade Eastern Avenue to support increased freight traffic, including road widening, signal improvements, and pavement reinforcement.
- ★ Coordinate with Norfolk Southern and CSX to establish or extend industrial rail spurs into high-priority parcels.
- ★ Implement grade-separated crossings or active warning systems at key rail crossings to enhance safety and minimize delays.
- ★ Develop a freight and logistics master plan that incorporates truck staging areas, access management strategies, and designated freight corridors.
- ★ Promote dual-rail access for the 849-acre Innovation and Manufacturing Center area to increase competitiveness for large-scale industrial users.
- ★ Incorporate bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvements along arterial corridors in line with the ODOT Multimodal Design Guide (MDG).
- ★ Ensure future development complies with ODOT Traffic Engineering Manual (TEM) guidelines for signal coordination and access spacing.



Objective: Encourage Innovation and Manufacturing Center character development in Focus Area #1 of this Comprehensive Plan.

- ★ Strategy 1: Establish utility infrastructure for Focus Area #1. One key component of a targeted, shovel-ready development site is the availability of utility infrastructure. For planning purposes, the five-year build-out anticipates 350,000 square feet of heavy industrial water user and 1,000,000 square feet of light manufacturing/warehousing. To support these anticipated uses, the following steps are recommended:
 - Research the proposed water use requirements further and ensure that any proposed sanitary facilities will be able to handle the expected flow.
 - Involve the City of Chillicothe in any sanitary facility sizing, as the city will need to confirm that the connection point and any downstream utilities are adequately sized to accept the additional sewer flow.
 - Bore a 24-inch water main extension beneath the adjacent railroad tracks.
 - Work with Columbia Gas to extend appropriately sized gas lines to the central portions of the Focus Area.
- ★ Strategy 2: Make transportation facilities, road and rail, upgrades to support the development of Focus Area #1. Surface transportation, both road and rail, is essential to support industrial development of any kind. Below are steps that can be taken to support the future development of Focus Area #1:
 - Upgrade Eastern Avenue to support increased freight traffic, including road widening, signal improvements, and pavement reinforcement.
 - Coordinate with Norfolk Southern and CSX to establish or extend industrial rail spurs into high-priority parcels.
 - Implement grade-separated crossings or active warning systems at key rail crossings to enhance safety and minimize delays.
 - Develop a freight and logistics master plan that incorporates truck staging areas, access management strategies, and designated freight corridors.
 - Promote dual-rail access for the 849-acre Innovation and Manufacturing Center area to increase competitiveness for large-scale industrial users.
 - Incorporate bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvements along arterial corridors in line with the ODOT Multimodal Design Guide (MDG).
 - Ensure future development complies with ODOT Traffic Engineering Manual (TEM) guidelines for signal coordination and access spacing.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

A potentially toxic groundwater plume exists at the former WearEver site within Focus Area #1. The plume is regulated by the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA), and the current property owners are responsible for ongoing management and remediation activities. Continued coordination with OEPA and other stakeholders will help ensure that any additional actions are identified and addressed as needed. Addressing environmental conditions and advancing site readiness efforts can enhance the attractiveness of Focus Area #1 for future industrial investment and redevelopment.

Reference Materials

Documents related to the former WearEver facility are available through the Ohio EPA's eDocument Search. Use Secondary ID 471000894 to locate and review the relevant records.

Strategy 3: Collaborate with local, state, and private-sector stakeholders to pursue grant funding and other resources that support environmental assessment, remediation, and site readiness efforts within Focus Area #1, including the former WearEver site and other potential brownfield properties. These efforts should be coordinated with OEPA requirements and aligned with Critical Path Strategy 9.

This area is positioned for near-term development and should be prioritized for infrastructure investment and marketing.

FOCUS AREA 2

In Green township just north of Chillicothe, Focus Area 2 is centered on “the Triangle,” defined by US 23 and SRs 159 and 207. That high-traffic Focus Area is a cluster of institutional uses, including Adena Regional Medical Center, and manufacturing facilities, such as Kenworth Truck Company. Focus Area 2 encompasses 2,508 acres. The area is strategically located near major surface transportation corridors and close to shopping destinations. It is supported by rail infrastructure, making it an ideal location for logistics, manufacturing, commercial, residential, and industrial development.

DEVELOPMENT READINESS SUMMARY

Readiness Tier: Tier 2 – Mid-Term Development

Focus Area 2 is strategically located and well-positioned for a mix of employment, commercial, and residential uses. However, infrastructure constraints, particularly within the sanitary sewer system, limit its immediate development capacity.

Key Strengths:

- ★ Strong access to US 23 and the regional transportation network.
- ★ Existing institutional anchors (Adena Regional Medical Center).
- ★ Available water infrastructure from multiple providers.
- ★ Rail access supporting industrial and logistics uses.

Key Constraints:

- ★ Marietta Road lift station is at capacity and requires upgrades.
- ★ Wastewater system constraints limit additional development without improvements.
- ★ Gas system pressure limitations may restrict high-demand users.
- ★ Transportation recommendations pending completion of Triangle Study.

Critical Path Infrastructure Improvements:

- ★ Upgrade or replace the Marietta Road lift station.
- ★ Conduct system-wide sanitary sewer capacity analysis and modeling.
- ★ Coordinate water service expansion and main extensions.
- ★ Evaluate gas system expansion to maintain pressure for future users.
- ★ Integrate findings from the Triangle Study into transportation improvements.

DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATION:

Focus Area 2 is appropriate for phased development but requires upfront infrastructure investment, particularly in sanitary sewer capacity. The area is best positioned for light industrial, medical, and commercial uses that align with existing utility capacity.

The types of development predicted in that area are illustrated in the Character Classes developed for this plan or supplemented by additional information. For more detailed information about the character class definitions, refer to the full Character Class descriptions in the Character Classes section of this Plan.

Innovation and Manufacturing Center

The Innovation and Manufacturing Center future character class accounts for 953 acres of the Focus Area. It supports the continued business patterns that originate in the southeastern portion of the area and extend north along SR 159 and the Norfolk Southern railroad. That development pattern is already present north and south of Delano Road, encouraging further job creation. The Innovation and Manufacturing Center class is shown as the desirable future use of these properties if the solar panels were removed.

Commerce Center

Located primarily along the western side of Focus Area 2, following US 23, and near the CSX railroad corridor. While some of these areas are already developed, there are 375 acres of undeveloped land suitable for that use.

Institutional Campus

The two portions of Focus Area 2, represented by the Institutional Campus character class, indicate the presence of existing development. The northern portion of the character class is the Adena Regional Medical Center, and the southern portion is the Rulon Center Residential area, part of the Scioto Paint Valley Mental Health Center. While no new land is dedicated to that type of activity, having these facilities in proximity to existing and future businesses highlights the potential and opportunities of Focus Area 2. It represents a tremendous business-attractiveness quality-of-place discussion point.

Suburban Living and Services

A portion of the Focus Area, designated Suburban Living and Services, contains existing single-family residences. Given parcel sizes, approximately 14 undeveloped acres could accommodate workforce housing.

Solar Overlay

The Solar Overlay portion of the Focus Area to the north documents only existing conditions. If the solar farm is retired, the underlying land will retain the character class of Innovation and Manufacturing Center, as well as some Commerce Center.


ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/PUBLIC FINANCE TOOLS

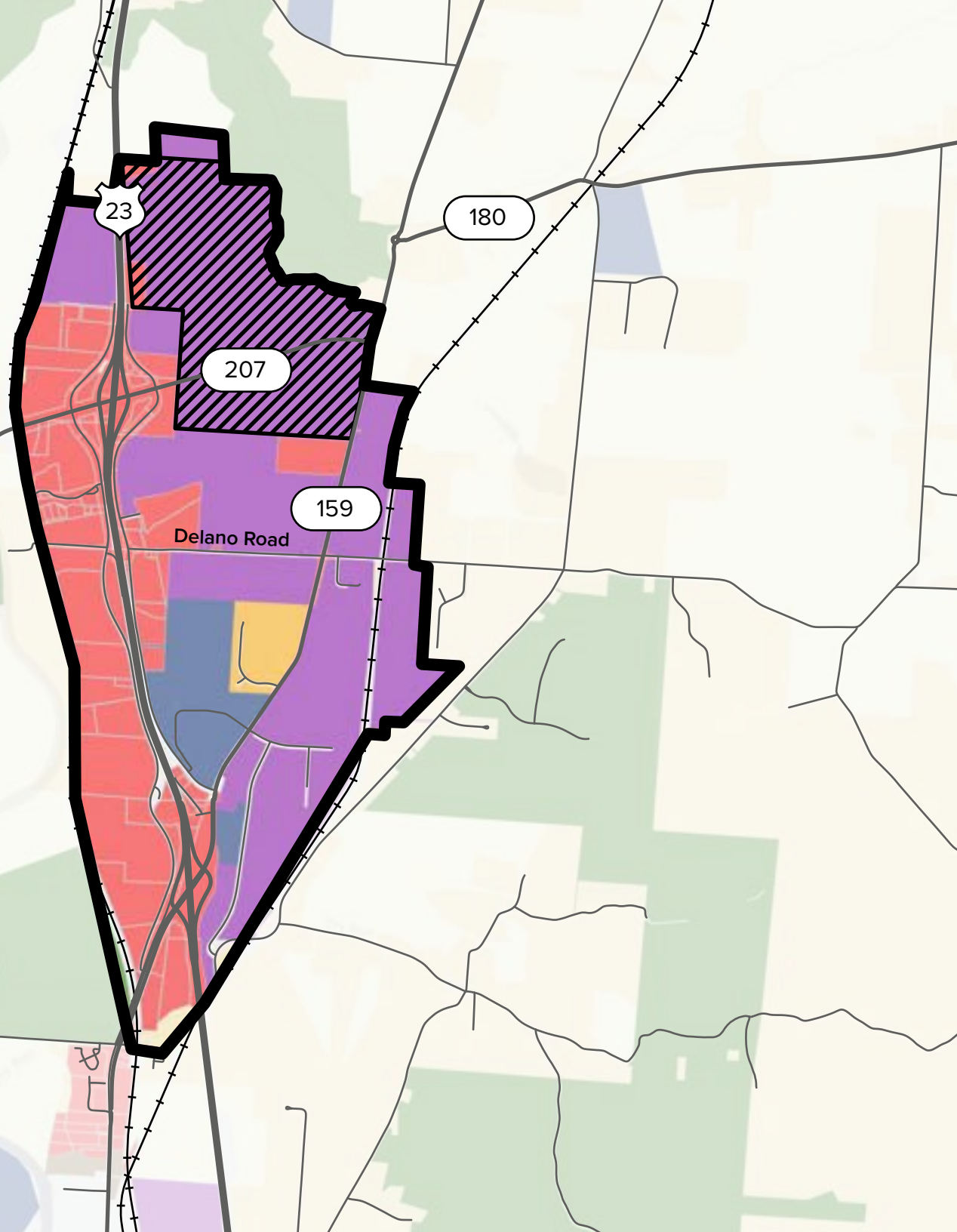
Focus Area 2, with its mix of uses including industrial, commercial, and residential, and access to utilities including sewer, water, and electricity, has great potential for the attraction of new jobs, capital investment, and residents to the area. To attract jobs and investment, offer a combination of economic development **incentives and public finance tools, including:**

- ★ **CRAs.** Ross County has a CRA area in place for Focus Area 2. The County can consider offering a 100 percent, 15-year tax abatement, with a Payment instead of Taxes (PILOT), to the Zane Trace School District and Pickaway-Ross Career Center for industrial projects seeking to locate in Focus Area 2. For residential projects, the County may consider a tax abatement scenario similar to that for industrial projects, but also conduct a school impact analysis to determine how the tax abatement and new students from the residential development will affect the schools.
- ★ **TIFs.** The City of Chillicothe can offer a 100 percent, 30-year, non-school TIF to help fund public infrastructure in the area for residential, industrial, and commercial projects. The TIF can be layered on top of the CRA. For years 1-15, the TIF will generate revenue from increases in taxes on land, and for years 16-30, it will generate revenue from increases in taxes on land and buildings.
- ★ **JEDDs.** The City of Chillicothe and Green Township may consider developing a JEDD for the industrial and commercial portions of Focus Area 2 to collect income tax from development and fund needed infrastructure.
- ★ **Construction Materials Sales Tax Exemption.** The Ross County Port Authority can offer a construction materials sales tax exemption for industrial projects that choose to locate in this area as an economic development incentive, saving up to 80 percent on sales tax on construction materials.

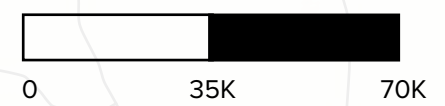
Legend

Character Class

-  Innovation and Manufacturing Center
-  Commerce Center
-  Institutional Campus
-  Suburban Living and Services
-  Solar Overlay



Scale in Feet:



Focus Area 2 Future Land Use Character Classes

UTILITIES

The following analysis examines how utilities currently support and will continue to support Focus Area 2.

Water

Ross County Water serves the northern portion of Focus Area 2. Major water mains exist along Delano Road (parallel 10-inch and 16-inch water lines) and US 23/River Road. Ross County Water has two water treatment plants, each with a capacity of 3.5 MGD. Depending on the area's water needs, the development may require expanding the water treatment plant. A water main must also be extended to any proposed development sites.



Depending on location, the southern portion of Focus Area 2 could be served by Ross County Water or the City of Chillicothe. If development were to target parcels south of Delano Road, the City of Chillicothe could provide water service to these areas. The City of Chillicothe currently provides water service to the Adena Regional Medical Center, Kenworth, and residential customers on Clayburne Boulevard. There is a 12-inch water main extension north of Clayburne, and a 12-inch water main along River Road. The City of Chillicothe has one water treatment plant with a capacity of 7 MGD.

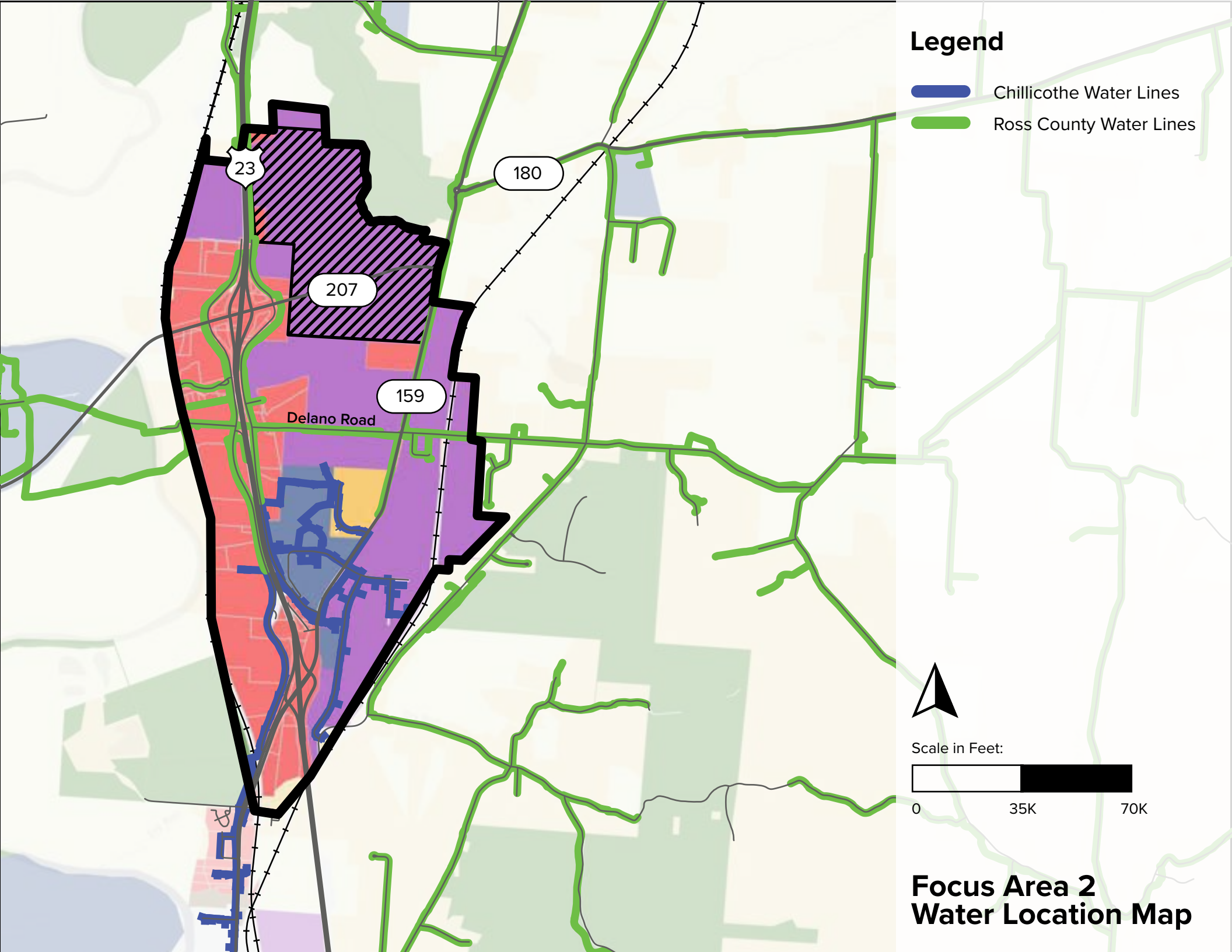
For this report, the water use for the proposed developments was assumed to be equivalent to the wastewater output from the development. See the sanitary section below for projected wastewater flows for Focus Area 2.

Proposed Water Recommendations

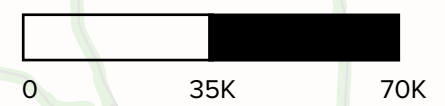
- ★ Coordinate with Ross County Water and the City of Chillicothe for the connection point to existing water - individual parcels may connect to either Ross County Water or the City of Chillicothe.
- ★ Update existing water models to include the proposed development and its required fire flows. Depending on location, new water mains may need to be installed or existing mains upsized to provide adequate water service for both new and existing customers.
- ★ For full buildout of the area, a capacity study of the water treatment plants is recommended.

Legend

-  Chillicothe Water Lines
-  Ross County Water Lines



Scale in Feet:



Focus Area 2 Water Location Map

Sanitary Sewer

The City of Chillicothe would provide sanitary service for Focus Area 2. The existing sanitary sewers in the area primarily serve residential and business customers, mainly south of Delano Road. These sewers flow by gravity to a 15-inch-diameter sewer main along Chamber Drive. The sewer main flows south to an existing lift station near 375 Marietta Road. The lift station has a dry-weather capacity of 1.4 MGD to serve existing customers and was not designed to handle additional significant wastewater flows. Future connections may require expanding the lift station's capacity or installing a new one.

Additionally, further information is needed to determine the available capacity of the sanitary sewers, both upstream and downstream of the Marietta lift station. If it is determined that additional capacity in the sanitary sewers is needed to get the proposed additional flows to the Marietta lift station, or to take the flow after the lift station to the treatment plant, it is recommended to study the system and available options to expand sanitary service for the proposed developments. The development of any parcel in this focus area would also necessitate a connection to the existing sanitary system, either via gravity or a lift station, depending on the site and the desired connection point.

In addition to the 15-inch gravity sewer, there is also a 2.5-inch sanitary force main on 159 heading north from Clayburne Boulevard. The area is linked to newer developments at SR 159, Delano Road, and North Park Drive, as well as Chillicothe's sanitary system to the south. A second force main is also located along US 23 to help provide service in the area. All of these take sanitary flow to the Marietta lift station.

The City of Chillicothe has one wastewater treatment plant, with an average design flow of 3.8 MGD, a maximum daily flow of 7.5 MGD, and a design capacity of 10 MGD. The plant has an available capacity of 2.5 MGD to treat additional flows. For this report, a high-level evaluation was conducted based on land-use designations and wastewater flows for the proposed land-use types. Overall, the 5-year projections for Focus Area 2 yielded an additional average flow of 0.52 MGD, with a peak flow of 2.0 MGD.

The 20-year projections added an average flow of 0.53 MGD, with a peak flow of 1.8 MGD (these do not include the 5-year flows). The Chillicothe wastewater treatment plant may be able to accommodate the growth of Focus Area 2. The City should continue to monitor system capacity of this system to ensure it remains aligned with future needs. Over the longer term, targeted improvements to the treatment plant, lift stations, and pipe system may be considered to support higher-intensity users and sustained growth. This would also depend on the timeline of the other Focus Areas in this report. The Marietta lift station, which would convey sanitary flows from this area to the treatment plant, would need to be upgraded before any additional development in Focus Area 2, as it is already at its design capacity.

Due to the large size of Focus Area 2, it is anticipated that each end user would have a separate connection to the sanitary system, which would be built as needed.

Proposed Sewer Recommendations

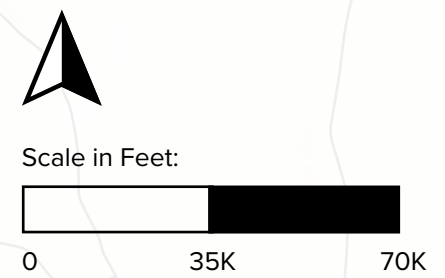
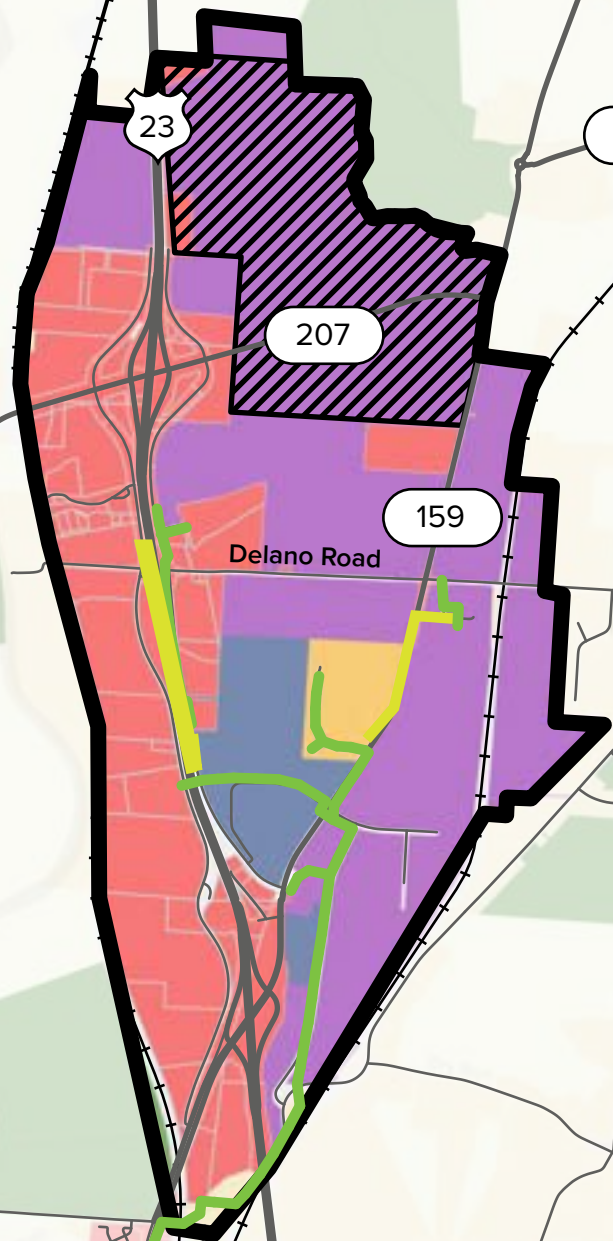
Before development, the following items are recommended to provide sanitary service to the area:

- ★ A flow monitoring study, survey, and sewer model to evaluate the existing sanitary sewers and Marietta lift station.
- ★ Determine sanitary wastewater flows from proposed developments using the Ohio Greenbook.
- ★ Coordinate with the City of Chillicothe to determine final connection points and approve proposed flows into their system.
- ★ Install lift stations and gravity sewer as required. These will be site-specific for each development.

Staff and partner agencies need to incorporate these infrastructure improvements into the County's Capital Improvement Plan and coordinate with local utility providers to align funding, timing, and development readiness.

Legend

-  Chillicothe Sanitary Gravity Sewer
-  Chillicothe Sanitary Presurized Sewer



Focus Area 2 Sanitary Sewers

Fiber

As shown in the map on page 61, fiber routes follow roads throughout Focus Area 2. Spectrum, ZAYO, and Glo Fiber are carriers within the Focus Area. To develop it, a new service would have to be established.

Electric

AEP Ohio's power transmission lines currently traverse Focus Area 2. The nearest transmission electric line voltage is 138 kV. South Central Power serves a site at State Route 159 and Delano Road with a three-phase line along SR 159 supplied from a 69-kV source with about 3 MW of available capacity.

Gas

The Columbia Gas system is split between the west and east sides of US 23 in Focus Area 2.

★ West Side:

- 6-inch main runs along River Road.
- Downsizes to 4-inch west of Adena, continues along River Road.
- Downsizes to 2-inch near Kenworth dealership, continues along River Road.
- Ends at the 254 Delano Road building.

★ East Side:

- 6-inch main runs roughly along Chamber Drive.
- 6-inch main along Hospital Road - Northern edge is the Budweiser facility.
- 6-inch and 8-inch main along SR 159 near Kenworth.
- Past Kenworth, transition to 4-inch main along SR 159 through Kinnikinnick.
- New 4-inch line serving Delano Road Industrial Park to be installed soon, serving the new Spec Building.
- Delano Road west of SR 159 does not have a natural gas line; it could feasibly be extended to serve industrial and mixed-use projects under consideration.
- The northern edge is Pickaway-Ross Career Center; the line also extends east along SR 180 to Zane Trace High School.

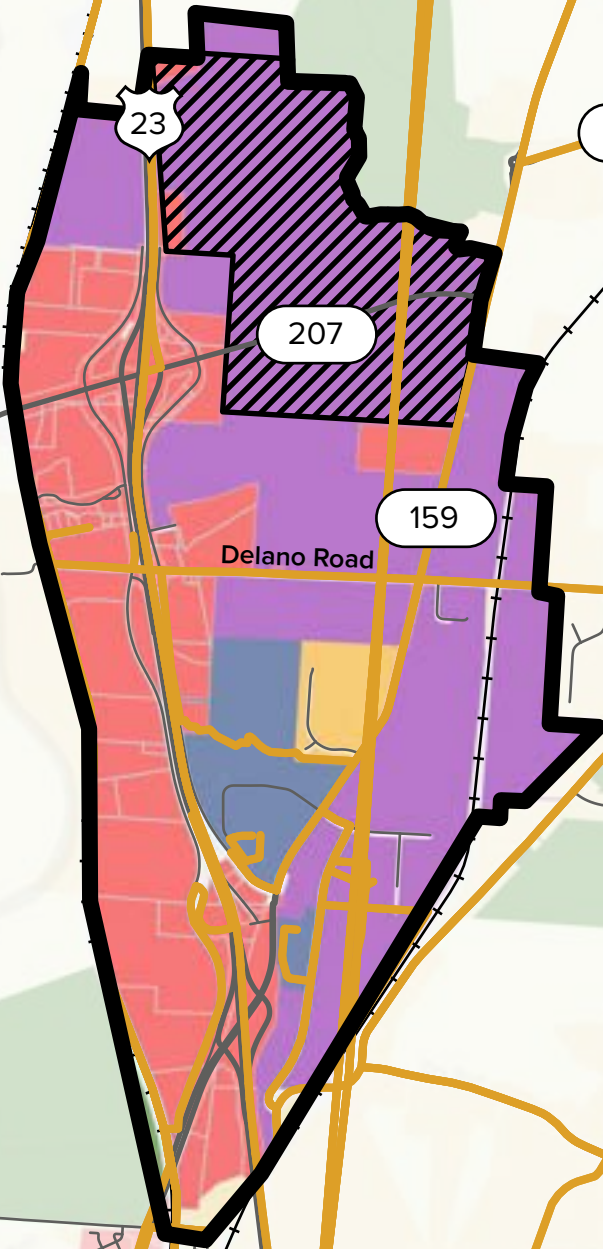
The primary challenge for Focus Area 2 is expected to be pressure loss, as these lines are so far from the Chillicothe Point of Delivery Station. All lines noted above are medium-pressure lines, which typically serve pressures up to 10 PSIG. That level of pressure below is ideal for the existing industrial uses, including assembly, light manufacturing, warehousing, and medical. From a gas perspective, the continued expansion of these types of companies would best "match" the existing gas system and help Ross County put forward competitive proposals for business attraction and expansion.

FLOODPLAIN

No portions of Focus Area 2 lie within the regulatory floodplain. However, there are known localized ponding issues between SR 207 and Delano Road along Dry Run to the Scioto River.

Legend

-  Fiber Routes
-  Fiber Routes



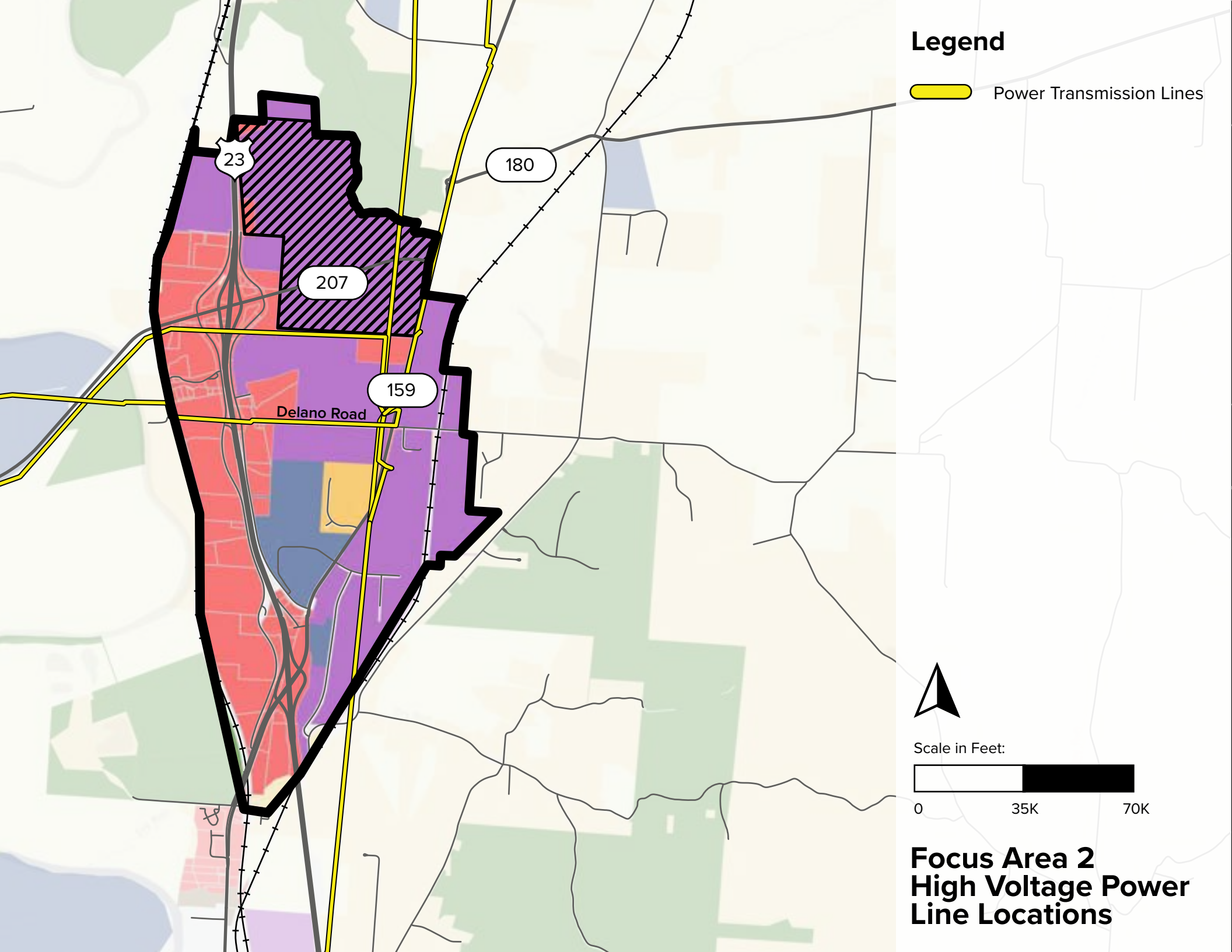
Scale in Feet:



Focus Area 2 Fiber Optic Locations

Legend

 Power Transmission Lines



Delano Road

23

180

207

159



Scale in Feet:



0 35K 70K

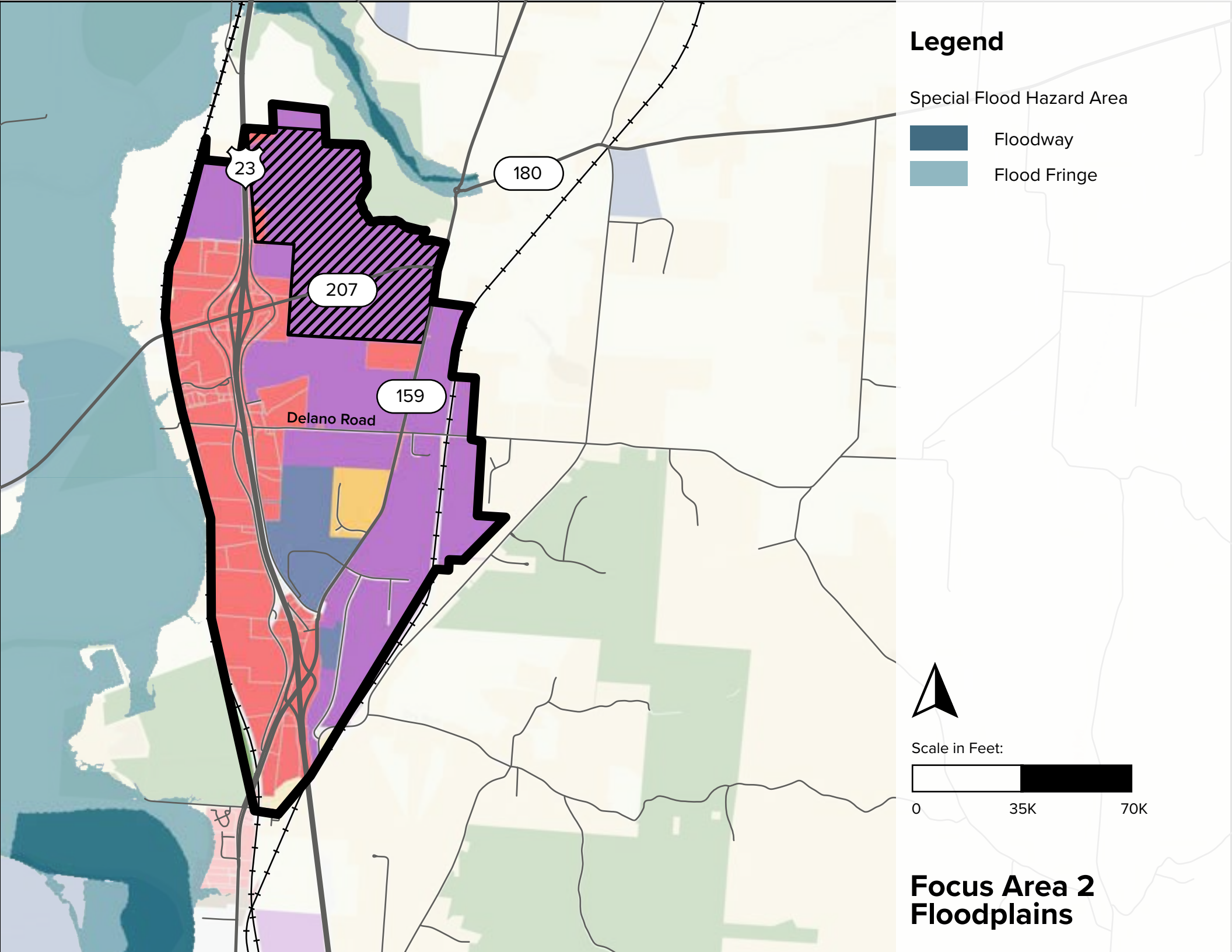
Focus Area 2 High Voltage Power Line Locations

Legend

Special Flood Hazard Area

 Floodway

 Flood Fringe



Scale in Feet:



Focus Area 2 Floodplains

TRANSPORTATION

The sections below provide a detailed summary of existing transportation and rail infrastructure and outline strategic recommendations for future development.

Existing Surface Transportation Infrastructure

- ★ SR 207 Connector: An east-west corridor that runs through the Focus Area, offering regional connectivity.
- ★ US 23: Running through the western part of the Focus Area, this major north-south corridor connects Chillicothe to Columbus, providing access to regional and interstate highway networks.
- ★ State Route 159: A minor arterial route running north-south through the eastern part of the Focus Area, connecting to both US 23 and SR 207, and providing direct access to industrial areas.
- ★ Delano Road, Hospital Road, and Kenworth Drive: Local roads that connect the Focus Area's manufacturing, institutional, and commercial spaces and the county's arterial routes. These roads provide access for employee commuting and delivery vehicle routing, and serve as a secondary network for commuters.

Existing Rail Infrastructure





- ★ Norfolk Southern (NS): A Class I rail line runs through the eastern side of Focus Area 2, through Innovation and Manufacturing Center and Commerce Center character classes. The mainline provides opportunities for direct rail siding and spur access to serve major manufacturing tenants.
- ★ CSX Transportation: Another Class I rail line runs through the western side of the Focus Area and crosses SR 207. That line runs almost exclusively through the Commerce Center character class and could be served by rail sidings or spurs for freight delivery.

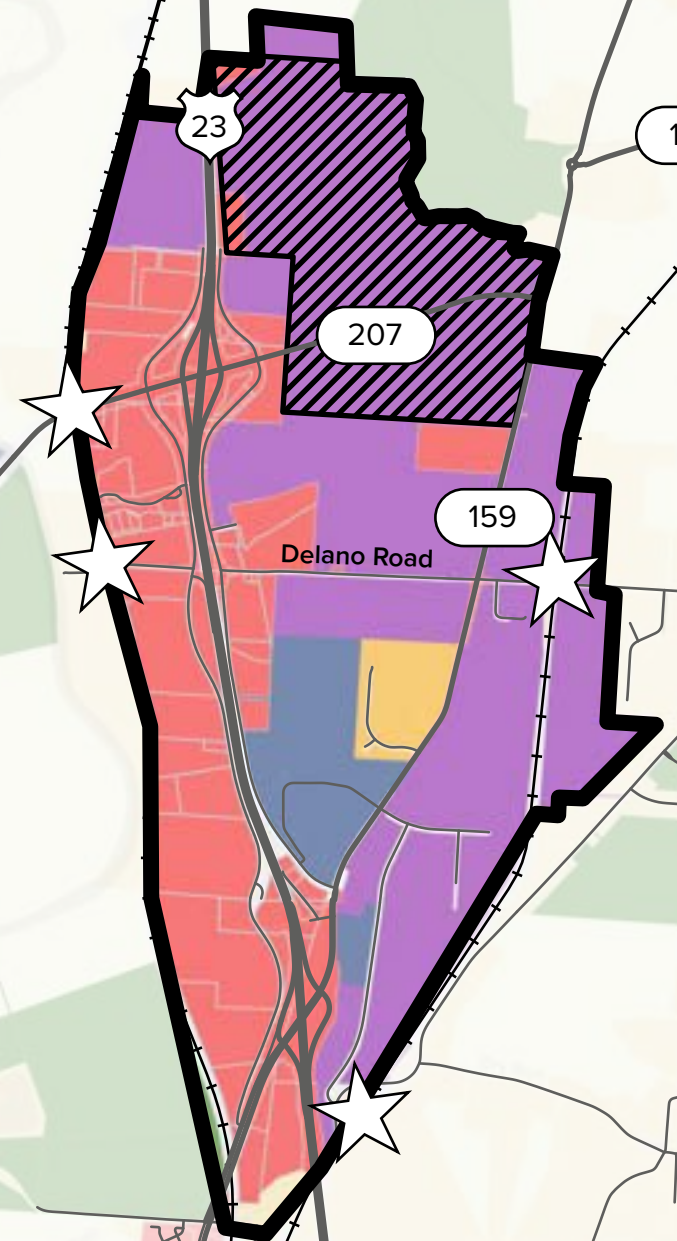
- ★ Rail Crossings: Four rail crossings exist in the focus area, which are critical for rail and road freight access. The following two of the four are already grade-separated, which assist with freight access:
 - SR 207 west of US 23.
 - Hopetown Road between Chamber Drive and Marietta Road.
 - Two rail crossings are not currently grade-separated:
 - ◆ The one at Delano Road, west of the Focus Area boundary, is not grade-separated. However, the road it crosses is not expected to serve many businesses and will therefore have minimal impact on development.
 - ◆ The crossing east of SR 159 on Delano Road be examined for future separation to facilitate the movement of goods from the county's eastern portion.
- ★ Potential Transload Sites: Several parcels near both rail corridors, particularly within the 375-acre Commerce Center zone along the CSX line and portions of the 953-acre Innovation and Manufacturing Center along the Norfolk Southern line, are well-positioned for future transload or intermodal facilities. A transload or intermodal facility along the CSX line to the west benefits from adjacent access to US 23 and large parcels with adequate storage space. Developing an intermodal facility along the Norfolk Southern line would require upgrading the route to US 23, with improvements to SR 159 and, possibly, Delano Road, to make it more desirable for freight routing.

Potential Recommendations

To be determined. This Focus Area is undergoing a more in-depth study with the Ohio Department of Transportation, which will directly inform the transportation recommendations for this section. Once that information is available, specific recommendations will be included.

Legend

-  Principal/Major Corridor
-  Arterial Route
-  Local Arterial
-  Rail Crossing



Scale in Feet:



**Focus Area 2
Roadways and Rail**

Objective: Encourage Innovation and Manufacturing Center and Commerce Center character development in Focus Area #2 of this Comprehensive Plan.

★ Strategy 1: Establish utility infrastructure for Focus Area #2. One key component of a targeted, shovel-ready development site is the availability of utility infrastructure.

For planning purposes, the five-year build-out anticipates:

- Hotel of 90 Rooms.
- 2,000,000 square feet of Light Manufacturing/Warehousing.
- 75,000 square feet of Medical Office.
- 358 units of Multi-Unit Residential.

To support these anticipated uses, the following steps are recommended:

- A flow monitoring study, survey, and sewer model to evaluate the existing sanitary sewers and Marietta lift station.
- Determine sanitary wastewater flows from proposed developments using the Ohio Greenbook.
- Coordinate with the City of Chillicothe to determine final connection points and approve proposed flows into their system.
- Install lift stations and gravity sewer as required. These will be site-specific for each development. Coordinate with Ross County Water and the City of Chillicothe for the connection point to existing water - individual parcels may connect to either Ross County Water or the City of Chillicothe.

- Update existing water models to include the proposed development and its required fire flows. Depending on location, new water mains may need to be installed or existing mains upsized to provide adequate water service for both new and existing customers.
- For full buildout of the area, a capacity study of the water treatment plants is recommended.
- A gas line extension study is recommended to provide service while maintaining the pressure desired by prospective development.

★ Strategy 2: Make transportation facilities, road and rail, upgrades to support the development of Focus Area #2. Surface transportation, both road and rail, is essential to support industrial development of any kind. Below are steps that can be taken to support the future development of Focus Area #2:

- TBD based on Triangle Study results

This area is appropriate for phased development, with infrastructure upgrades required to support full buildout.

FOCUS AREA 3

Focus Area 3 centers on the Ross County Airport as an underutilized County asset. The entire focus area, including the existing airport and the new Commerce Center Area, totals 636 acres. The location is situated between two regional arterials, making it well-suited for Commerce Center development from a logistics perspective. However, there are other utility-related challenges described in the following sections.

DEVELOPMENT READINESS SUMMARY

Readiness Tier: Tier 3 – Long-Term / Catalytic Development

Focus Area 3 represents a high-potential, long-term development opportunity centered around the Ross County Airport. While the site offers strong locational advantages, it currently lacks the utility infrastructure necessary to support development.

Key Strengths:

- ★ Proximity to Ross County Airport and regional transportation corridors.
- ★ Large, contiguous parcels suitable for commerce and logistics uses.
- ★ No floodplain constraints impacting development.
- ★ Sewer is currently being installed as of summer 2026.

Key Constraints:

- ★ Limited water infrastructure requiring extension and capacity evaluation.
- ★ No existing natural gas service.
- ★ Electric capacity may require upgrades for larger users.

Critical Path Infrastructure Improvements:

- ★ Extend sanitary sewer service and construct a pump station and force main.
- ★ Coordinate with the Chillicothe Correctional Institution wastewater treatment plant for capacity expansion.
- ★ Extend water service and evaluate system capacity for full buildout.
- ★ Conduct a feasibility study for natural gas extension.
- ★ Evaluate electric system upgrades for high-demand users.

Development Implication:

Focus Area 3 is a long-term strategic investment. Significant infrastructure expansion is required before development can occur, but the area has the potential to serve as a major economic catalyst once utilities are in place.

The types of development predicted in that area are illustrated in the Character Classes developed for this plan or supplemented by additional information. For more detailed information about the character class definitions, refer to the full Character Class descriptions in the Character Classes section of this Plan.

Institutional Campus

The Ross County Airport is shown on the Future Land Use Map as the Institutional Campus character class due to its public purpose. The facility's footprint remains unchanged in the county-wide land use map and in this Focus Area.

Commerce Center

The Commerce Center character class comprises 636 acres west of the airport. The opportunity for this type of development near the airport aims to provide a location that benefits entrepreneurs and existing companies, specifically those that utilize airborne logistics for shipping, new aircraft parts, research, or aircraft-specific maintenance.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/PUBLIC FINANCE TOOLS

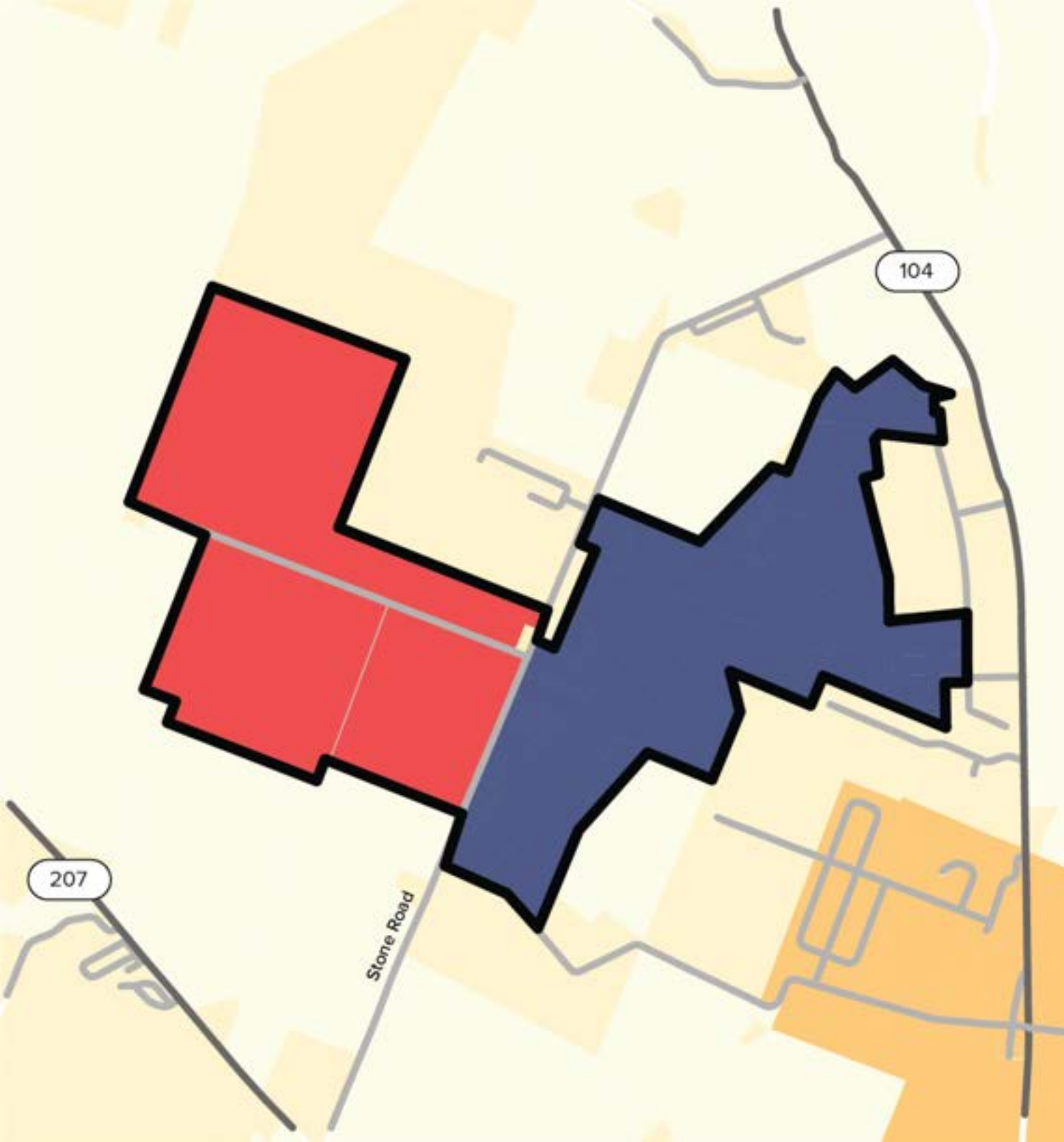
Focus Area 3, which contains the Ross County Airport and is situated between two regional arterials, has potential for light manufacturing uses by existing Ross County businesses and for attracting new jobs and capital investment. To attract jobs and investment, Ross County offers a combination of economic development incentives and public finance tools, including the following.

- ★ **CRAs.** The County does not currently have a CRA in this area. The County developed a CRA for Focus Area 3. Once the CRA area is in place, the County will consider offering a 50-75percent, 10-year tax abatement to industrial projects looking to locate in Focus Area 3.
- ★ **TIFs.** Ross County offers a 100 percent, 30-year, non-school TIF to help fund public infrastructure in the area. The TIF can be layered on top of the CRA. For years 1-10, the TIF will generate revenue from increases in taxes on land, and for years 11-30, it will generate revenue from increases in taxes on land and buildings.
- ★ **JEDDs.** Union Township and the City of Chillicothe may consider developing a JEDD to allow for the collection of income tax from the industrial development and pay for needed infrastructure.
- ★ **Construction Materials Sales Tax Exemption.** The Ross County Port Authority offers a construction materials sales tax exemption for industrial projects with a capital investment of more than \$5,000,000 that choose to locate in this area as an economic development incentive, saving up to 80percent of the sales tax on construction materials.

Legend

Character Class

-  Commerce Center
-  Institutional Campus



Scale in Feet:



Focus Area 3 Future Land Use Character Classes

UTILITIES

The following analysis examines how current utilities and future expansions may support development in Focus Area 3.

Water

Ross County Water serves Focus Area 3. Ross County Water operates treatment plants approximately three miles from the area, each with a total capacity of 3.5 MGD. There are existing water lines of unknown size along SR 104 and Stone Road through this location.

For the purposes of this report, the water use for the proposed developments was assumed to be equivalent to the wastewater output from the development. See the sanitary section below for projected wastewater flows for Focus Area 3.


Proposed Water Recommendations

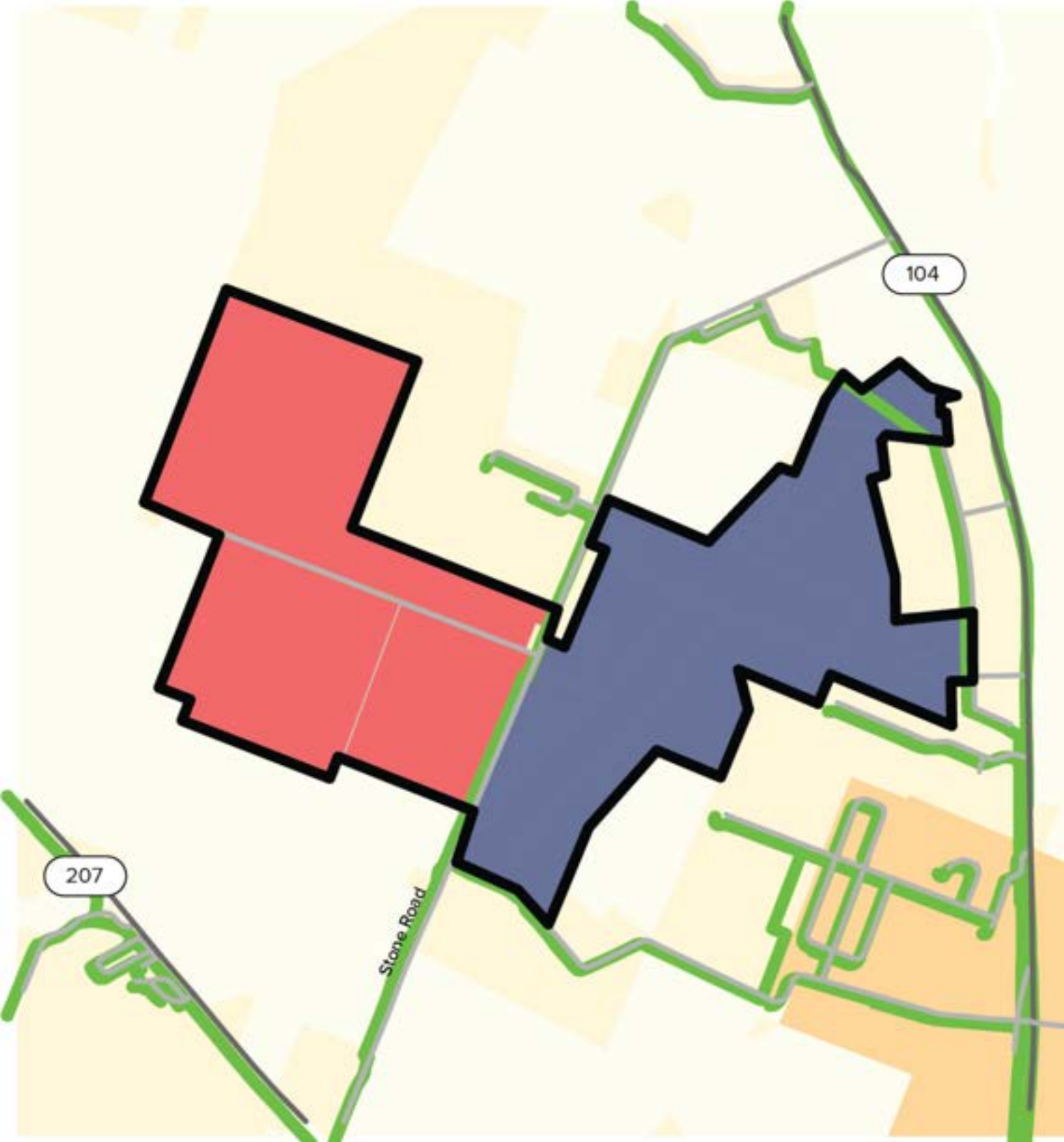
- ★ Update the existing water model for Ross County water to include the proposed development(s).
- ★ For full buildout of the area, a capacity study of the water treatment plants is recommended.

Sanitary Sewer

Currently, there is no sanitary service provider in or near the area. However, a proposed sanitary line under development at the time of this report will take sanitary flows from Focus Area 3 via a gravity line to the northern side of the focus area on Stone Road. A pump station is needed and proposed on Stone Road to address the area's topography. From there, a force main would take the sanitary flows to a connection point on Moundsville Road, near the Chillicothe Correctional Institution Wastewater Treatment Plant. The plant has an average design flow of 2.0 MGD and a peak daily flow of 3.5 MGD. For this report, a high-level evaluation was conducted based on land-use designations and wastewater flows for the proposed land-use types. The 20-year projections added an average flow of 0.43 MGD, with a peak flow of 1.4 MGD. These developments would require an upgrade at the Chillicothe Correctional Institution Wastewater Treatment Plant. In addition, it be confirmed that the sanitary sewer in development will be sized appropriately and able to handle the new sewer flows from these proposed future developments.

Legend

 Ross County Water Lines



Scale in Feet:



Focus Area 3 Water Line Locations

PROPOSED SEWER RECOMMENDATIONS

Significant improvements to the sanitary system are required before any development in this area can proceed. The development timeline for the area include the time required to study, design, and install the sanitary sewers needed to provide service to the end user(s).

- ★ Coordinate with the Chillicothe Correctional Institution wastewater treatment plant to determine whether the plant has adequate additional capacity.
- ★ Evaluate the connection point from the proposed Chillicothe Sanitary Sewer for capacity.
- ★ Design and install required sanitary connections to the proposed sewer.

These infrastructure improvements be incorporated into the County's Capital Improvement Plan and coordinated with local utility providers to align funding, timing, and development readiness.

Fiber

As shown in the map on page 73, broadband internet connections border and run through the middle of Focus Area 3 on Stone Road. Spectrum is the carrier and only provider accessible to that area as of the creation of the plan document.

Electric


AEP Ohio power transmission lines run along SR 104, just east of Focus Area 3. The nearest source is a 69-kV transmission line along SR 104, which can serve users of the Commerce Center character class. Larger loads may require extending higher-voltage facilities. For larger electrical uses, new, higher-voltage lines would need to be installed in the area, in addition to the existing line along SR 104.

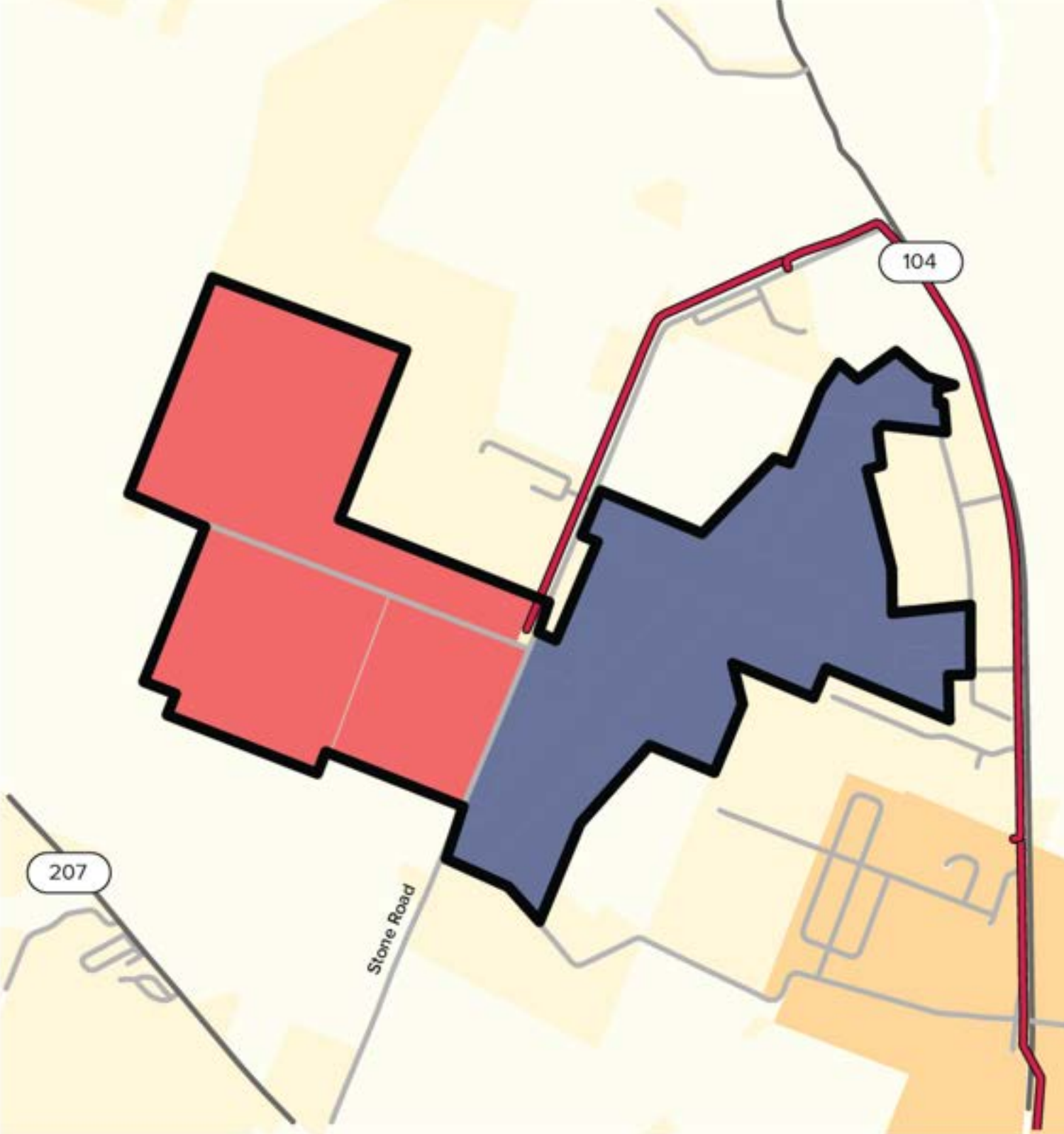
Gas

Columbia Gas does not have facilities within Focus Area 3. There are two options for connecting to the nearest facilities:

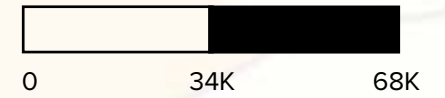
- ★ Option 1:
 - A 6-inch medium-pressure line, west of the Scioto River at the VA Hospital campus, may be extended along SR 104 to Andersonville Road (3.3 miles).
 - A line could be extended along Andersonville Road to Stone Road to reach airport property, utilizing existing rights-of-way (5.2 miles).
- ★ Option 2:
 - A 4-inch medium-pressure line east of the Scioto River near the Pickaway-Ross Career Center. There is a possibility of extending underneath US 23 and the Scioto River to SR 104, then extending into Andersonville Road (2.5 miles). That option is unlikely to be cost-effective due to the need to drill a directional bore beneath US 23 and the Scioto River, as well as the required property easements.

Legend

 Chillicothe Sanitary Sewer (Proposed)




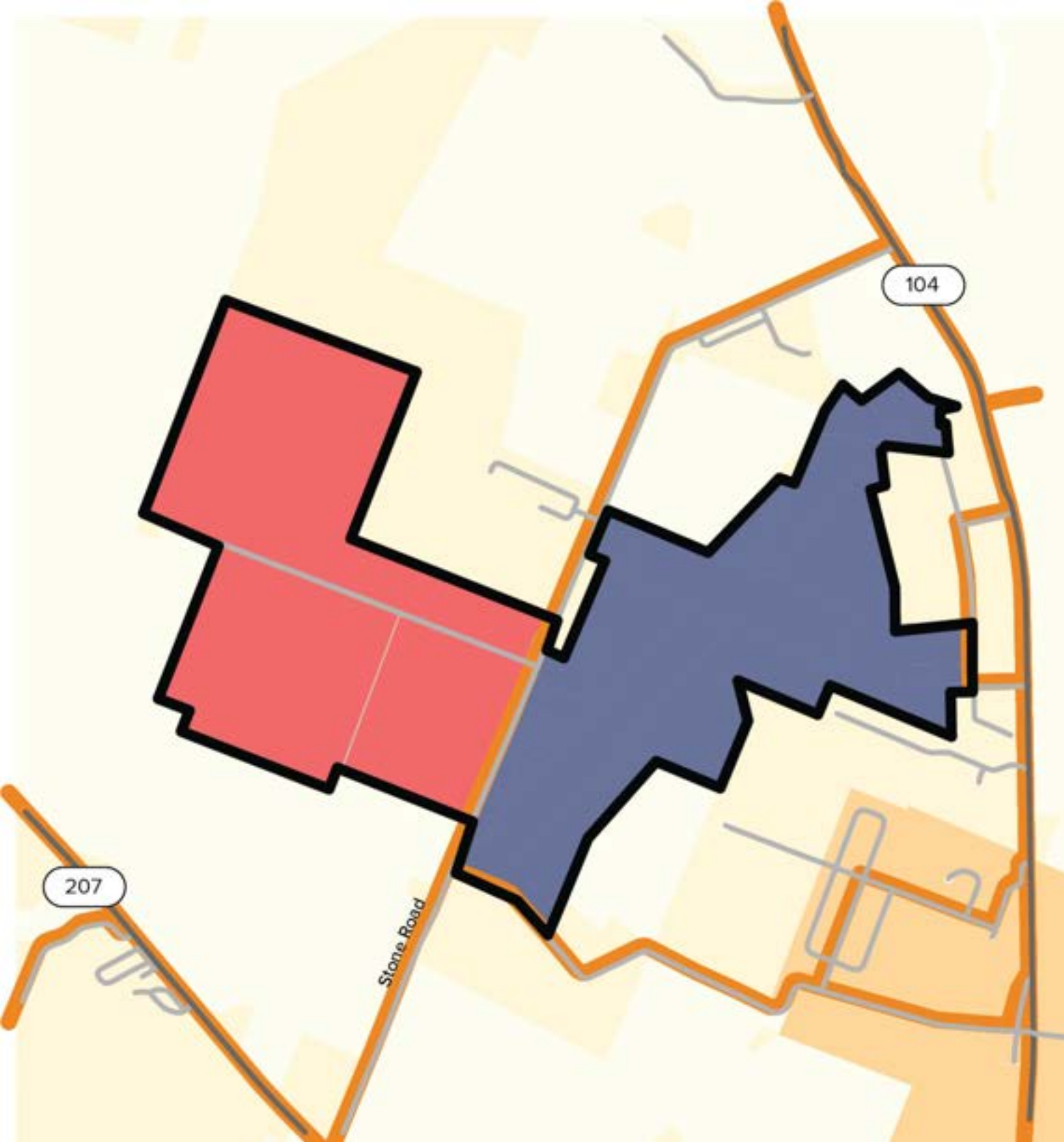
Scale in Feet:



Focus Area 3 Sanitary Sewers

Legend

 Fiber Routes




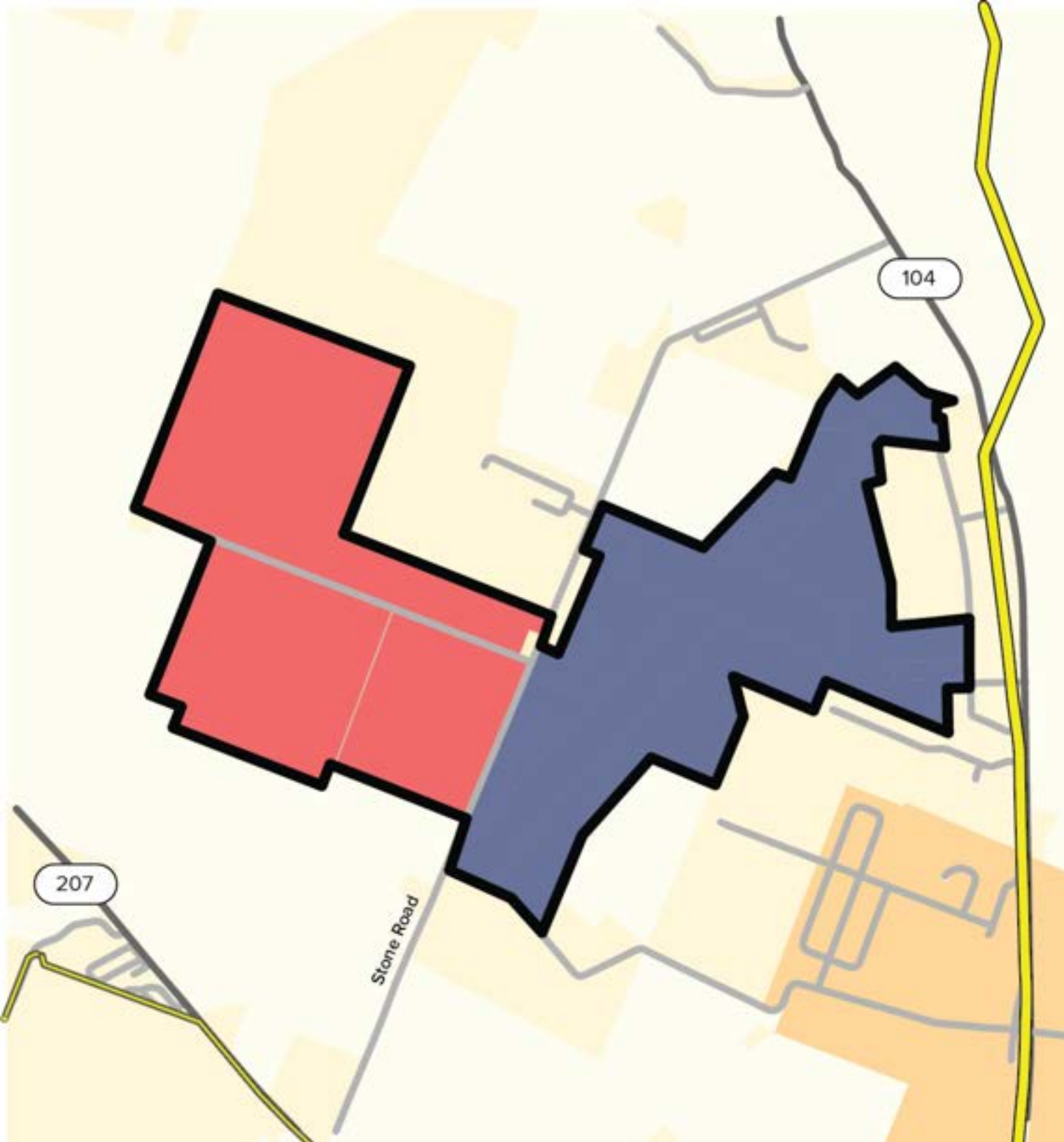
Scale in Feet:



**Focus Area 3
Fiber Optic**

Legend

 Power Transmission Lines



Scale in Feet:



Focus Area 3 High Voltage Power Lines

FLOODPLAIN

The map on page 77 shows that no portions of Focus Area 3 lie within the regulatory floodplain. That geographic asset will benefit the area's future development.

TRANSPORTATION

The sections below provide a detailed summary of existing transportation infrastructure and outline strategic recommendations to support future development.

Existing Surface Transportation Infrastructure

- ★ SR 207: A northwest-southeast corridor located southwest of the Focus Area, intersecting Stone Road and offering regional connectivity.
- ★ SR 104: A minor arterial route running north-south on the east side of the Focus Area, connecting to US 22, US 23, and US 35, and providing direct access to Chillicothe and Circleville.
- ★ Stone Road: That local road connects the two arterial state routes. It could provide access to commuters and delivery vehicles.

Existing Rail Infrastructure

There is no existing rail infrastructure adjacent to or within this Focus Area.

Proposed Recommendations

To move the area towards shovel-ready status, the following infrastructure and planning recommendations be considered:

- ★ Upgrade Stone Road and Betts Lane to support increased traffic, including road widening, signal improvements, and pavement reinforcement.
- ★ Another consideration is incorporating bicycle and pedestrian facilities along these arterial corridors, which may be needed to comply with the ODOT Multimodal Design Guide (MDG).
- ★ Ross County's access management regulations will be used for Stone Road and Betts Lane.

Airport


The eastern half of the Focus Area is the existing Ross County Airport. Under the Airport Zoning Districts (AZD) regulation, certain restrictions will apply to new development within these AZDs.

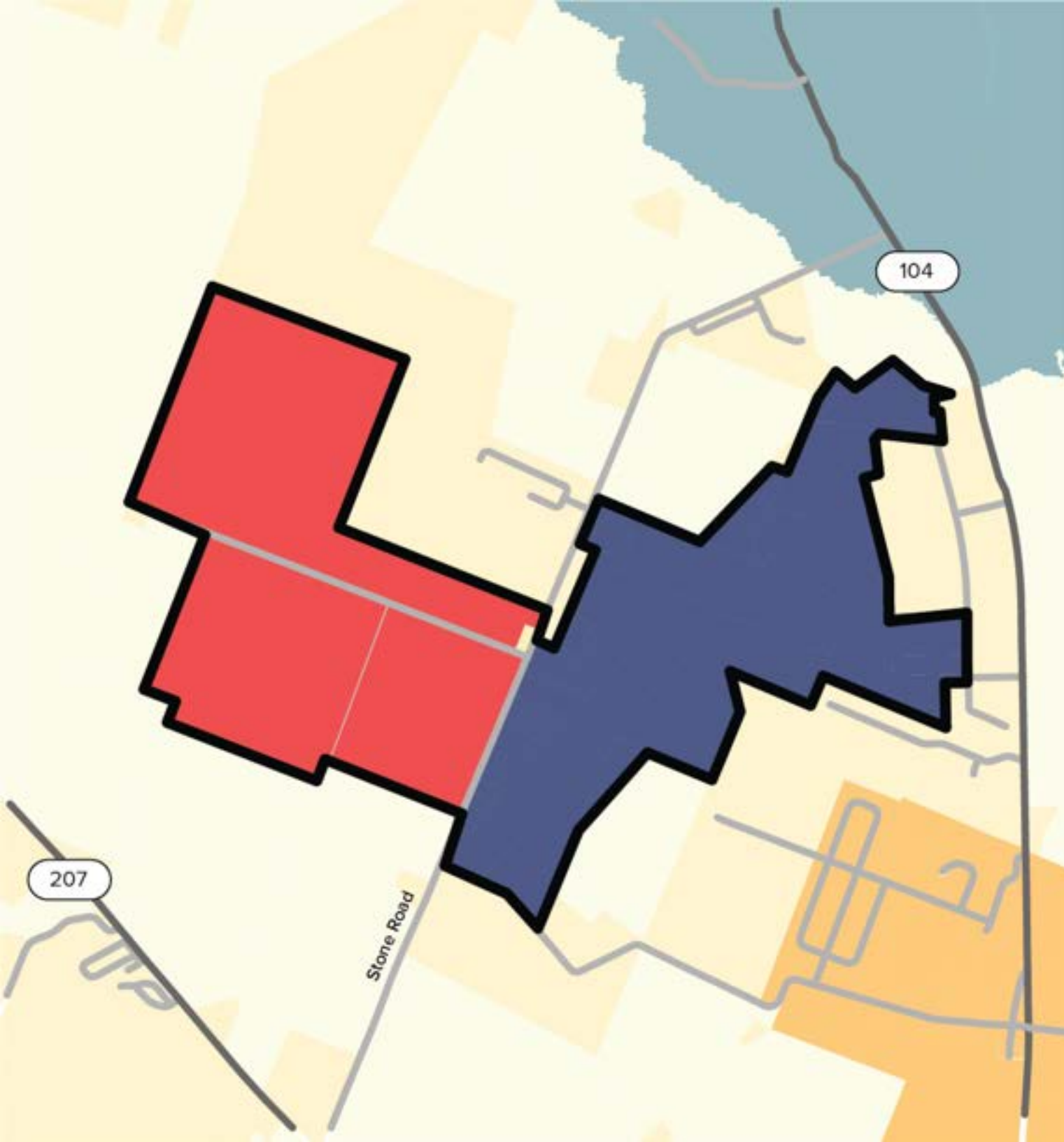
- ★ AZD1 permits open space and airport-related uses.
- ★ AZD2 permits AZD1 uses plus agricultural uses.
- ★ AZD3 permits all uses except residential.
- ★ AZD4, which covers most of the Commerce Center, permits a full range of non-residential uses, creating flexibility for development.

Legend

Special Flood Hazard Area

 Floodway

 Flood Fringe



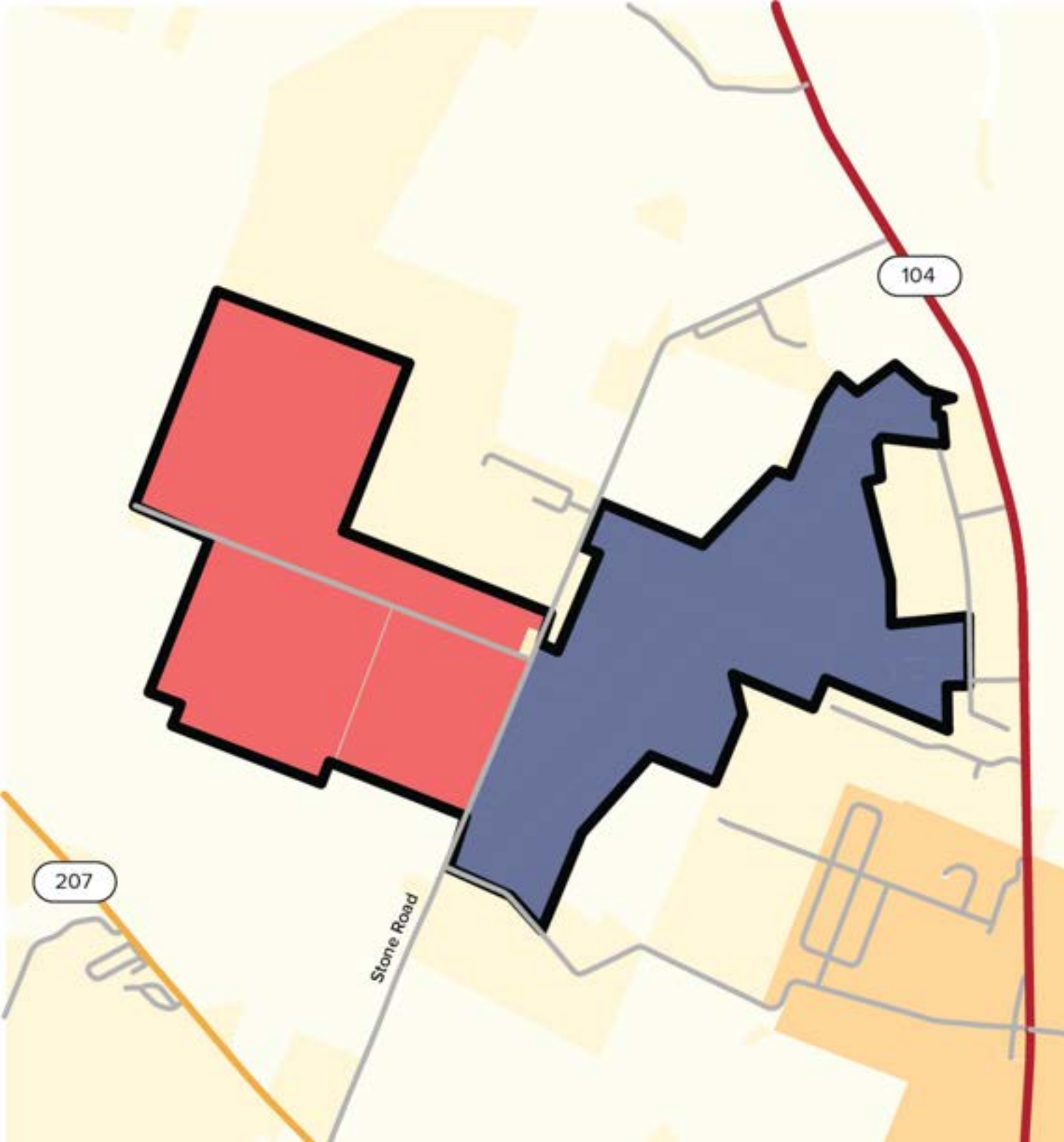
Scale in Feet:



Focus Area 3 Floodplains

Legend

- Principal/Major Corridor
- Arterial Route
- Local Road



Scale in Feet:



**Focus Area 3
Roadways and Rail**

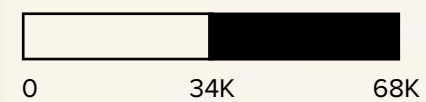
Legend

Airport Zones

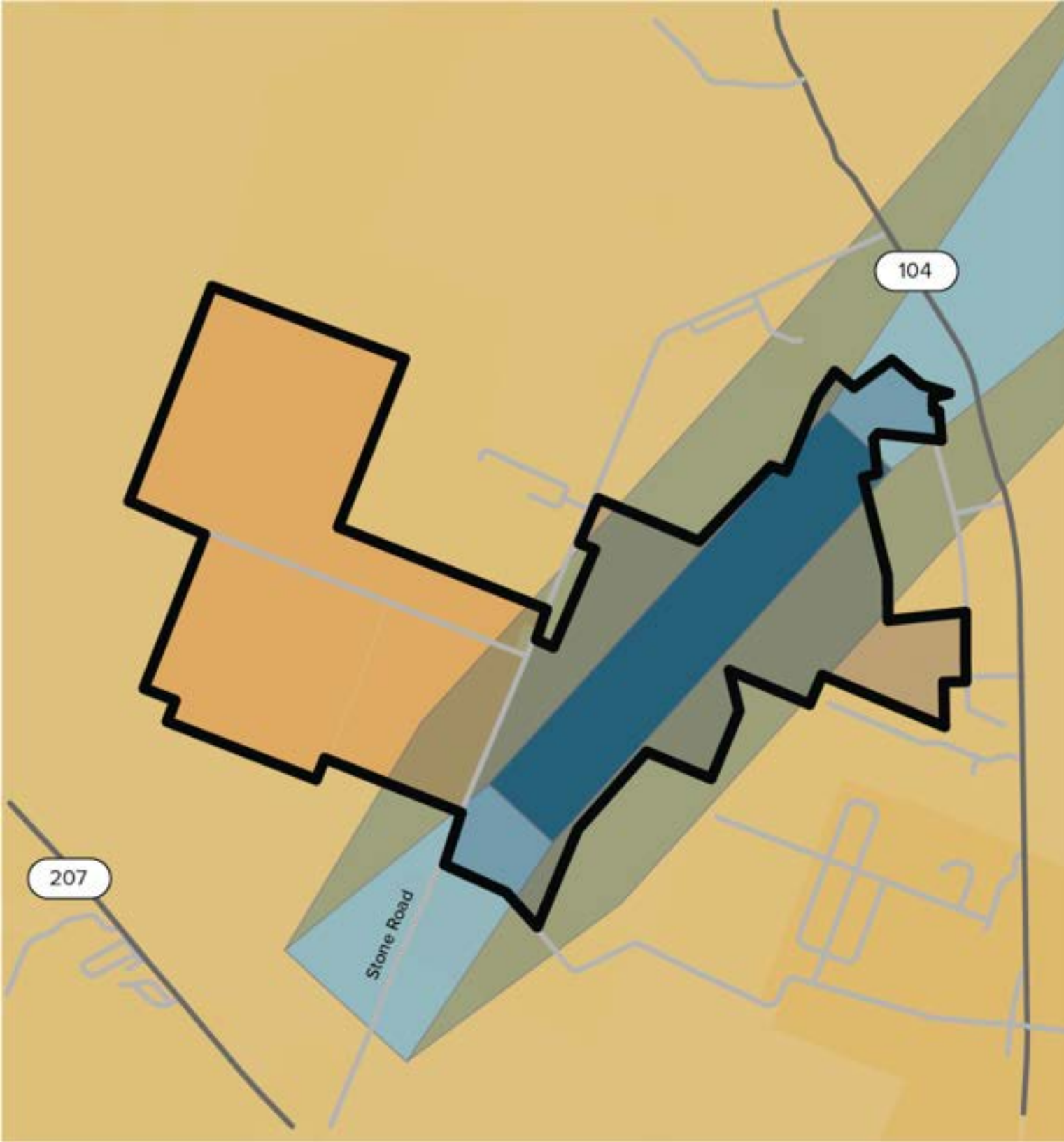
- AZD1
- AZD2
- AZD3
- AZD4



Scale in Feet:



Focus Area 3 Airport Zones



Objective: Encourage Commerce Center and Institutional Campus (airport) character development in Focus Area #3 of this Comprehensive Plan.

- ★ Strategy 1: Establish utility infrastructure for Focus Area #3. One key component of a targeted, shovel-ready development site is the availability of utility infrastructure. For planning purposes, 6.3 million square feet of Commerce Center development is anticipated in the next 20 years. To support these anticipated uses, the following steps are recommended:
 - Update the existing water model for Ross County water to include the proposed development(s).
 - For full buildout of the area, a capacity study of the water treatment plants is recommended.
 - Coordinate with the Chillicothe Correctional Institution wastewater treatment plant to determine whether the plant has adequate additional capacity.
 - Evaluate the connection point from the proposed Chillicothe Sanitary Sewer for capacity
 - Design and install required sanitary connections to the proposed sewer.
 - For gas, an extension feasibility study will need to be conducted for the Stone Road versus the SR 104 routing.

- ★ Strategy 2: Make transportation facilities upgrades to support the development of Focus Area #3. Surface transportation is essential to support the commercial development of any kind. Below are steps that can be taken to support the future development of Focus Area #3:
 - Upgrade Stone Road and Betts Lane to support increased traffic, including road widening, signal improvements, and pavement reinforcement.
 - Another consideration is incorporating bicycle and pedestrian facilities along these arterial corridors, which may be needed to comply with the ODOT Multimodal Design Guide (MDG).
 - Ross County’s access management regulations will be used for Stone Road and Betts Lane.

This area represents a long-term development opportunity that requires significant infrastructure investment before development can proceed.





Welcome to
Frankfort

FAIR

WELCOME TO FRANKFORT

WELCOME TO FRANKFORT

Home of the
Bluegrass State

Home of the
Bluegrass State

Economic Development

OVERVIEW

Economic development is essential to sustaining Ross County's long-term prosperity, strengthening its communities, and enhancing quality of life for residents. Building on the county's strategic location, skilled workforce, agricultural heritage, and growing business sectors, this chapter outlines a vision for fostering a resilient and diverse economy. It identifies opportunities to support local businesses, attract new investment, expand workforce development, and encourage coordinated growth that benefits both urban and rural areas throughout Ross County.

GOALS

An economic development strategic plan goal is a high-level, long-term objective designed to foster sustainable economic growth, create jobs, and improve community quality of life. These goals guide policy, attract investment, and enhance economic resilience by capitalizing on local assets. Key goals typically center around:

- ★ Supporting existing businesses
- ★ Attracting new investment
- ★ Encouraging entrepreneurship
- ★ Training and attracting a skilled workforce to meet industry needs
- ★ Improving infrastructure, downtown, and commercial districts to boost competitiveness
- ★ Enhancing community amenities, aesthetics, and safety to attract talent and residents





GOAL

- ★ Transform Ross County into a growing regional economic leader



OBJECTIVES

- ★ Grow Ross County's population by 5.0 percent by 2031
- ★ Create 500 net new jobs by 2031
- ★ Prepare 750 acres for industrial and mixed use sites for development by 2031
- ★ Create 500 new residential units by 2031
- ★ Prepare 200 acres for residential sites for development by 2031
- ★ Grow median income by 10 percent by 2031



STRATEGIES

- ★ Connect to Southern and Central Ohio
- ★ Adopt a County-wide economic development incentive policy
- ★ Prepare workforce for tomorrow
- ★ Prepare future sites for industrial, residential and mixed-use investment and job creation
- ★ Prepare Ross County Brownfield site(s) for future power production
- ★ Enhance the quality of place in Ross County to become a population magnet



TACTICS

- ★ Build stronger economic links to Southern and Central Ohio
- ★ Adopt a County-wide economic development policy that builds a Public-Private Partnership model to promote industrial, residential and mixed-use development through the use of Community Reinvestment Area property tax abatements to make projects more competitive, Tax Increment Financing, Joint Economic Development Districts and JobsOhio Ohio Site Inventory Program to fund public infrastructure, New Community Authorities, and Ohio Transformational Mixed Used Development tax credits to spur residential development
- ★ Prepare future large scale sites for new industrial, residential and mixed use investment through the control of 700 acres for industrial and residential development and 50 acres for targeted mixed-use development and apply the Ross County model PPP to these sites and recruit developers or companies to those sites
- ★ Create the Ross County Works program to build a employer-education partnership to develop tomorrow's workforce
- ★ Prepare Ross County Brownfield site(s) for future power production to provide electricity for industrial, residential and mixed use development
- ★ Build a global tourism initiative to promote the Ross County UNESCO site through the State of Ohio and JobsOhio

These goals are achieved through specific, actionable strategies, such as developing workforce training programs, enhancing digital infrastructure, or offering business incentives. Goals are broad outcomes or general intentions that build upon the vision and are often intangible. Each goal should have a rationale that is clearly understood and publicly supported.

The Ross County Economic Development Plan Goal is really a vision statement that should answer the question: "Where do we want to be in the next ten to twenty years?" The goal focuses on broad transformation to spur greater creation of high-wage jobs and capital investment through industrial, commercial, and residential development, all aimed at driving wage and population growth.

OBJECTIVES

Economic Development Strategic Plan Objectives provide the basis for formulating the action plan and serve as milestones to evaluate regional progress. Objectives are more specific, measurable, concrete, and support the attainment of the goals. Objectives provide benchmarks by which area officials, economic development stakeholders, and the community can measure performance. The objectives should align with the community’s aspirations for economic prosperity. The goals and objectives should be prioritized to provide a basis for decisions on the use of available resources. Establishing priorities at the goal-setting stage is a critical step toward formulating an economic development strategic plan.

The US Economic Development Administration recommends the following factors be considered when crafting economic development plan objectives:

- ★ The effect that achieving each goal will have on the development potential or problem.
- ★ Actions related to the goals and objectives that are already underway or planned.
- ★ The relationship of this goal and objective to the accomplishments of the other goals and objectives.
- ★ The successful establishment of a vision with corresponding goals and measurable objectives—properly prioritized and grounded in a reasonable view of the region’s strengths and capabilities—will result in a well-defined strategic framework that drives overall implementation of the economic development strategic plan.

The Ross County Economic Development Plan Objectives need to be actionable and metrics-driven, providing a regular benchmark and timeframe for the community to measure the plan’s overall success.

The Ross County Economic Development Plan Objectives focus on key demographic measures, such as population growth, as well as traditional job-creation metrics and critical residential growth.

SYSTEMS CONNECTIONS

The economic development portion of this combined planning effort provides a much more detailed and specific look at all economic development functions for Ross County. While this economic development strategy is treated as a separate plan, it is also part of the overall system outlined in each chapter of the comprehensive plan. The matrix below shows how the Economic Development Plan is linked to the entire system of all topics addressed in this comprehensive planning effort.

Strategy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Land Use							
Housing							
Villages							
Healthy Communities and Quality of Life							
Economic Development							
Agriculture							
Transportation							
Total	2	6	6	5	3		

This chapter



- ★ Land Use – A key component of economic development. It needs to be in the right place near utilities and the road network. This economic development Plan ties directly to the future land use and focus areas described in the Comprehensive Plan. The Focus Areas specifically combine land use and economic policies to implement this systems approach.
- ★ Quality of life – A strong economy creates prosperity, enabling residents to enjoy the numerous recreational and cultural benefits available or planned in Ross County, which include amenities that help people be happy and healthy. Healthcare provides jobs and the comfort of knowing that access to healthcare is close.
- ★ Housing – The job provides residents with the means to purchase or lease homes. Having available housing stock also helps support a local workforce, which is vital to economic success.
- ★ Agriculture – A big business in Ross County for many families. Continuing to foster land use and economic development policies that support this industry through food co-ops or better access to markets.
- ★ Villages – An important part of providing a variety of housing options and a small-business platform for local entrepreneurs.
- ★ Transportation – A vital system for economic development, enabling workers to reach their places of employment. Most industries rely heavily on a network of highways to ship both raw and finished goods to their destinations.

ROSS COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN TACTICS

Economic Development Plan Tactics are really the action plan for the strategy. The action plan answers the question “How do we get there?” It is based primarily on the prioritized goals and objectives of the strategic direction. The action plan distills the vision, goals, and objectives into concrete, specific actions to achieve the aspirations of the region’s stakeholders. Building on the well-defined strategic direction, the action plan explicitly describes how the region will work together to achieve its goals and measurable objectives, including activity ownership, timetables, and committed resources.

The action plan, however, is not simply a list of projects, and it does not exclusively reflect those activities that local, state, and federal government programs alone could potentially support. The action plan includes a wide range of activities (e.g., housing, transportation, broadband, environmental, sector-specific, or cluster asset-leveraging efforts). It is clearly linked to the goals and objectives of the strategic framework. A limited number of activities with the highest priority and potential for regional impact should be identified and described. Descriptions of these high-priority activities of regional significance include:

- ★ An outline of the steps required to take each selected high-priority activity from inception to successful completion.
- ★ A roster of the key individuals and institutions that will be responsible for implementing and supporting these steps.
- ★ A reasonable estimate of the costs associated with implementing the activity.
- ★ A list of the integrated funding sources (e.g., public, private, and non-profit) to support the costs; and
- ★ A realistic time frame for execution (e.g., implementation schedule), with relevant benchmarks and performance measures that speak to overall impact.

A detailed, well-considered action plan increases the overall value of the Economic Development Plan and makes it relevant and useful. While the action plan should provide a guide to prioritizing resources and efforts, it should not be used to limit the identification and implementation of other activities that support the strategic direction that was established as part of the development of the vision, goals, and objectives within the Economic Development Strategic Plan, and tied to the goals of the companion Ross County Comprehensive Plan.

Identification of priority activities includes broad-based participation from regional stakeholders, involving those affected by the proposed activities and those who can ensure their success. Partnerships with a variety of organizations and the private sector in the region are key to successful implementation. Identifying elements for action may be undertaken using the following questions for guidance:

- ★ What are the activities and what are their expected benefits?
- ★ Which activities address the area’s greatest need or best enhance the region’s competitive advantages?
- ★ Do these activities represent the best use of limited resources?
- ★ Will the activities have positive economic, environmental, and social impacts, and how can these be measured?
- ★ Will the activities contribute to the overall economic resiliency of the region?

The existing conditions influence the Ross County Economic Development Plan Tactics, the community’s strategic location for future economic growth, the infrastructure needed to achieve greater economic success, and the economic development tools available to Ross County as a leading Ohio county in Southern Ohio.

ROSS COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN TACTICS

1. Build stronger economic links to Southern and Central Ohio.
2. Adopt a county-wide economic development incentive policy to promote industrial, residential and mixed-use development through the use of incentives.
3. Prepare future large scale sites for industrial, residential and mixed-use investments.
4. Create the Ross County Works program to build a employer-education partnership to develop tomorrow's workforce.
5. Prepare Ross County Brownfield site(s) for future power production.
6. Ross County should build a global tourism initiative to promote the Ross County UNESCO site through the state of Ohio and JobsOhio.

ACTION PLAN TACTIC #1. BUILD STRONGER ECONOMIC LINKS TO SOUTHERN AND CENTRAL OHIO.

Location is a fundamental driver of economic development, shaping income growth, trade capability, and industry productivity through access to resources, markets, and labor. Strategic locations minimize transportation costs, foster industrial clusters, attract investment, and enhance operational efficiency. Geography, including climate and connectivity, determines the potential for regional growth and prosperity. Proximity to ports, highways, and logistics hubs reduces transport costs, enabling easier access to markets and suppliers. Industries that cluster together create specialized labor pools, foster knowledge sharing, and stimulate innovation. Businesses often choose locations near consumers to reduce shipping costs for finished products, fostering higher economic activity. Specific locations also provide better access to skilled workers, which is essential for business growth and productivity.

Regions with abundant natural resources, favorable climates, and strong infrastructure support higher levels of production and economic activity. Location influences a region’s competitive advantage and dictates the efficiency and success of businesses operating there. The strategic location of Ross County, or, more importantly, the perceived strategic location of Ross County, matters for the economic future of the County. Ross County is just 50 minutes from Columbus and even closer to industrial mega-projects like Anduril and Honda LG, and it offers a strong location for the supply chain to support these projects or the next Central Ohio mega-project. Additionally, Ross County needs to take advantage of the large investments to its south, including the Centrus Energy HALEU Expansion and the SB Energy Data Center Campus.

Ross County needs to continue its strong connections with its neighbors to the South. In September 2025, Centrus Energy announced that it would invest \$1.2 billion to expand its uranium enrichment operations in Piketon. This expansion will create 300 full-time, permanent jobs and 1,000 construction jobs. In addition, a massive partnership between SB Energy, AEP, and the US Department of Energy and Commerce will bring a \$33 billion investment across 3,000+ acres, including a 10-gigawatt power plant and an artificial intelligence data center, with 2,000 full-time permanent jobs and 10,000 construction jobs.

The energy sector in the United States is projected to grow by 78.0 percent by 2051, with 1.0 percent growth in 2026 and 3.0 percent growth in 2027. That growth is driven by several factors, including the rise of data centers and artificial intelligence, the lack of investment in electricity transmission over the last two decades, and the disinvestment in energy generation capacity. Tying Ross County's economic and workforce development efforts to the massive energy projects to its south in Pike County will create jobs for Ross County's citizens and offer potential economic development opportunities for suppliers and vendors of Centrus and SB Energy to locate in Ross County.

Ross County needs to take steps to connect itself to the Central Ohio marketplace. The 10-county Columbus metro area is the fastest-growing region in Ohio, adding over 30,000 residents in 2024 to exceed 2.2 million people, with a 1.38 percent growth rate that outpaces the national average.

Key growth drivers for Central Ohio include large-scale industrial projects like Anduril—4,000 manufacturing jobs for this tech defense firm in Pickaway County—and the planned Intel facility in Licking County, the announced Amgen biomanufacturing facility in New Albany, and Honda's continued growth in Marysville. Central Ohio has become a global industrial leader.

JLL reports that the Columbus industrial market experienced a strong, high-performing year in 2025, with net absorption nearing 11 million square feet, marking the strongest performance since 2021. Vacancy improved to 6.1 percent–6.7 percent by year-end, driven by robust demand from e-commerce, third-party logistics, and manufacturing, particularly in the Licking County and Rickenbacker submarkets. Key industrial market metrics for Central Ohio from 2025 include:

- ★ Net Absorption: Approx. 10.8 million to 11 million square feet.
- ★ Vacancy Rate: Dropped to 6.1 percent–6.7 percent by Q4 2025.
- ★ Leasing Activity: Approximately 16.1 million square feet in total for the year.
- ★ Construction: 11.4 million square feet were under construction as of late 2025, with major activity driven by Anduril's Arsenal-1 project in Pickaway County and Intel in New Albany (Source: Colliers).

Central Ohio has 363,000,000 square feet of industrial space, ranking it 16th in the United States, just behind the Cleveland region, which has a century-long history in the manufacturing industry but is not growing at the pace of Central Ohio, and other regions in Ohio lack the available industrial sites of the Columbus Region.

INCREASE ECONOMIC TIES TO SOUTHERN OHIO

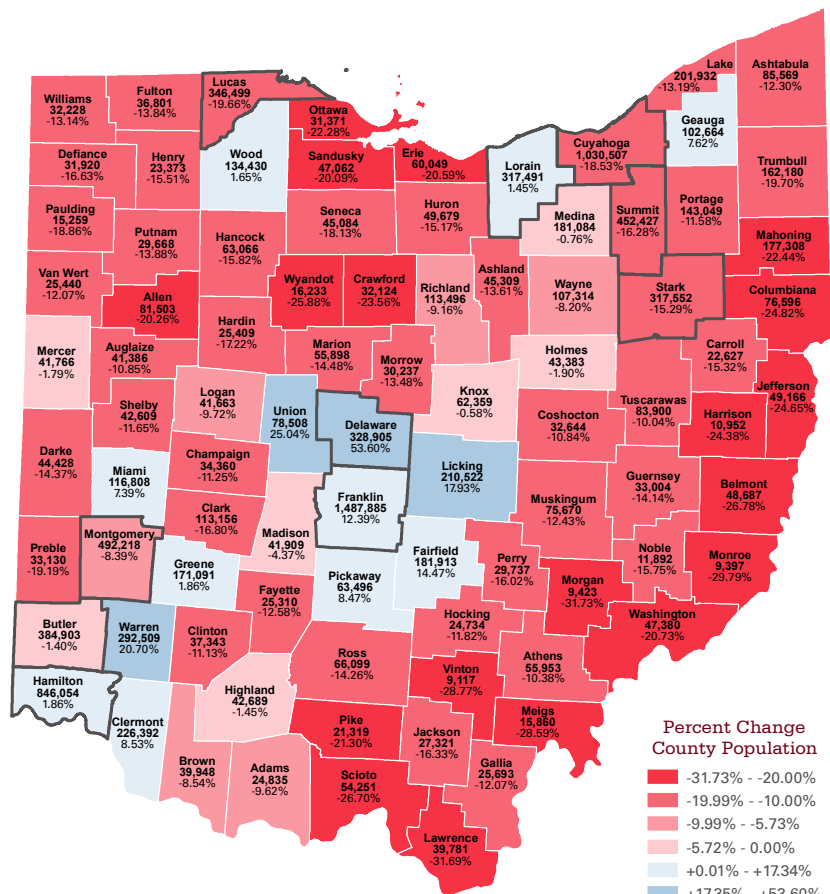
- ★ Increase housing stock to capture growth from energy sector workers
- ★ Attract suppliers and vendors of energy companies
- ★ Support the development of energy workforce programs locally to train Ross County Citizens for Energy Jobs

2025 TOP INDUSTRIAL MARKETS FOR NET ABSORPTION

- ★ Dallas/Ft. Worth (31.1 msf)
- ★ Indianapolis (13.7 msf)
- ★ Phoenix (13.7 msf)
- ★ Kansas City (11.8 msf)
- ★ Columbus (9.8 msf)

Projected 2050 Ohio County Populations

Percent Change 2020 - 2050



Ohio

2050 Projected Population 11,123,896
 2020 Census Population 11,799,448
 Percent Change 2020 to 2050 -5.73%
 U.S. Percent Change 2020 to 2050 +17.34%

Greater than Ohio
 Greater than U.S.

Percent Change County Population

- 31.73% - -20.00%
- 19.99% - -10.00%
- 9.99% - -5.73%
- 5.72% - 0.00%
- +0.01% - +17.34%
- +17.35% - +53.60%

County with population of 300,000 or more in 2050

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

R110722A

Central Ohio's population growth is another reason for Ross County to improve its connections to the region. As the Ohio Department of Development map on this page illustrates, Ohio's population growth is driven primarily by Central Ohio, which is the epicenter of current and future population growth in the Buckeye State. In fact, the State projects Ross County to lose over 14 percent of its population by 2050, while its similar neighbor to the north, Pickaway County, is projected to experience steady growth, exceeding the estimate made before the announcement of the Anduril Project. Population growth acts as a primary catalyst for regional US economic development by expanding labor pools, driving consumer demand, and fostering innovation. High-growth regions like Texas and Florida leverage this influx to boost tax revenue and attract businesses.

However, it requires initiative-taking management of infrastructure, housing, and resource demands. A growing, particularly young, population provides the workforce necessary for business expansion, and attracts industries, such as in tech-driven growth in areas like Orlando. Also, more residents lead to higher demand for housing, goods, and services, accelerating economic activity. Influxes of new, diverse, or skilled residents, including retirees with savings or younger, educated talent, often spark new business ventures and specialized industries.

Source: [Projected 2050 Ohio County Populations Percent Change 2020 - 2050](#).

ROSS COUNTY SHOULD BUILD STRONGER CENTRAL OHIO CONNECTIONS

- ★ Join the Columbus MSA
- ★ Market to the Columbus Region
- ★ Support efforts to develop a second Columbus Outerbelt

Better connections for Ross County to the growing Central Ohio marketplace are essential for future economic success. Ross County can enhance its economic connections to Central Ohio through three primary steps: join the Columbus Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), market to the Columbus Region, and explore supporting key transportation infrastructure investments, such as a “second outer belt” or regional transportation connector to link the counties directly connected to Franklin County.

An MSA is a geographical region designated by the US Office of Management and Budget (OMB) consisting of a core urban area with at least 50,000 people, plus adjacent counties with high social and economic integration, usually measured by commuting ties. MSAs are vital for analyzing economic/demographic data and determining federal funding allocations, as they reflect functional economic regions rather than arbitrary city limits. What county an MSA is in matters for a variety of reasons, including:

- ★ **Federal Funding and Policy:** Government agencies use MSA delineations to allocate funding, determine grant eligibility, and set policy guidelines for housing, transportation, and healthcare.
- ★ **Economic Analysis:** They provide a more accurate picture of local economies by grouping suburban areas with their core cities, capturing the full scope of commuting and labor markets.
- ★ **Real Estate and Investment:** Developers and investors use MSAs to assess market demand, risk, and growth potential, as the MSA’s economic strength heavily influences property values and financing terms.
- ★ **Data Collection:** Agencies like the Bureau of Labor Statistics publish employment and economic data based on these, aiding in comparative research.

Ohio Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs)

Developed by the United States Office of Management and Budget, Metropolitan Statistical Areas are integrated geographic regions comprised of at least one city or urban area (with a population of at least 50,000) and adjacent communities. Metropolitan Statistical Areas make it possible for federal statistical agencies to utilize the same boundaries when publishing statistical data.



- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| A. Akron MSA | F. Dayton MSA | L. *Weirton-Steubenville MSA, including Brooke and Hancock Counties in West Virginia |
| B. Canton-Massillon MSA | G. *Huntington-Ashland MSA, including Boyd and Greenup Counties in Kentucky; Cabell, Lincoln, Putnam, and Wayne Counties in West Virginia | M. *Wheeling MSA, including Marshall and Ohio Counties in West Virginia |
| C. Cincinnati MSA, including Dearborn, Ohio, and Union Counties in Indiana; Boone, Bracken, Campbell, Gallatin, Grant, Kenton, and Pendleton Counties in Kentucky | H. Lima MSA | N. Youngstown-Warren-Boardman MSA, including Mercer County in Pennsylvania |
| D. Cleveland-Elyria MSA | I. Mansfield MSA | |
| E. Columbus MSA | J. Springfield MSA | |
| | K. Toledo MSA | |

*United States Office of Management and Budget Bulletin No. 20-01.

Source: [Ohio Metropolitan Statistical Areas \(MSAs\)](#).

The OMB designates whether a county is included in an MSA. To get a county added to an MSA by the OMB, the county must meet specific, data-driven criteria based on commuting patterns to a core urban area of at least 50,000 people. OMB typically updates these delineations once every 10 years following the decennial census.

MSAs are not legal, incorporated entities but rather statistical, geographic units. They are part of the larger “Core Based Statistical Areas” (CBSAs) definition, which also includes micropolitan areas. However, Ross County would benefit from a perception of being better connected to a growing region through the Columbus MSA rather than having no MSA connection at all, which is its current state. Joining the Columbus MSA would provide key data points for corporate site location projects, as the region is among the fastest-growing in Ohio and reflects its economic and transportation realities. SR 23 provides direct highway access to Central Ohio, which is actually the transportation spine of Columbus, as this road is actually High Street, which is a main transportation artery in Franklin County in Columbus that travels from the industrial sector in the southside to Downtown Columbus to the Ohio State University through Northern Columbus and the north Columbus suburbs into fast-growing Delaware County.

Ross County would also benefit from marketing to the Central Ohio region. Ross County should market its industrial, multi-family, and residential sites to real estate brokers and developers in Central Ohio. Commute times to the 4,000 jobs coming to Pickaway County from the Anduril Project and the growing logistics and manufacturing sectors, as well as the LG facility in Fayette County, create industrial supply chain and residential development opportunities for Ross County. Ross County could conduct briefings with Central Ohio industrial real estate brokers to promote the County’s benefits and use social media posts and web-based ad campaigns to illustrate the close connection Ross County has to Central Ohio. Ross County needs to create messaging through their economic development marketing and their governmental websites that defines their community as located in Central Ohio.

Finally, to build a stronger connection to the growing Central Ohio market, Ross County should support efforts to develop a “Commerce Connector,” which could serve as a second outer belt for Columbus, better connect regional industrial markets surrounding Franklin County, and bring investment and population growth closer to Ross County.



Source: The Montrose Group.

A 2009 study found that an additional dollar invested in public infrastructure yielded an ROI of 28 to 36 cents. Ohio's mega-projects, such as Anduril, Intel, and the Honda-LG EV facilities, provide opportunities across the state. Building a stronger transportation corridor between the new LG facility and the existing Honda facility in Union County can support the success of this critical project and spur advanced manufacturing along it. Central Ohio's seven counties have added 500,000 residents since 2000. However, the state's spending on highway infrastructure is simply not keeping up with Central Ohio's 13.9 percent population growth over the last decade.

Investments in Central Ohio transportation infrastructure are needed to connect the region to all of Ohio. Organizations like the Toledo Chamber of Commerce have called for better transportation connections to Central Ohio. The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) is looking at ways to improve safety and reduce congestion by reducing the number of traffic signals and intersections along the US 23 corridor. Plans for a major highway transportation connector are underway, connecting I-71 north of Columbus to I-70 east of Columbus, traveling through Delaware and Licking counties. Developing a major highway connector traveling south from I-70 to State Route 23, then east to I-70, can serve the Rickenbacker Intermodal. This connector can serve as a traffic relief valve from the State Route 23 corridor, but also bring development closer to Ross County.

ACTION PLAN TACTIC #2. ADOPT A COUNTY-WIDE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVE POLICY TO PROMOTE INDUSTRIAL, RESIDENTIAL, AND MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE USE OF INCENTIVES.

Residential, industrial, and mixed-use development opportunities need substantial economic development incentives to occur in rural markets like Ross County. Ross County and its cities need to understand the local and state economic development incentive tools, aggressively adopt local economic development incentives, and seek state of Ohio economic development incentives to spur residential, industrial, and mixed-use development. Ohio offers Ross County's local governments a range of economic development incentives to encourage residential investment. Ohio offers a wide range of economic development incentives.

Ohio Local and State Economic Development Incentives

- ★ Community Reinvestment Area Program
- ★ Enterprise Zone Program
- ★ Construction Materials Sales Tax Exemption
- ★ Ohio Site Inventory Program
- ★ Brownfield Remediation Program
- ★ Rural Residential Development Revolving Loan Program
- ★ Welcome Home Ohio Program
- ★ Historic Preservation Tax Credit
- ★ Transformational Mixed Used Development Tax Credit
- ★ Vibrant Community Program
- ★ Downtown Redevelopment Districts
- ★ New Community Authority
- ★ Special Improvement Districts
- ★ Tax Increment Financing
- ★ Joint Economic Development Districts

Community Reinvestment Area (CRA) Program

Ohio’s CRA permits local governments to provide property tax abatements on new investments up to 100 percent through the CRA program, which does not require local school board approval for districts created before 1994. The Ohio CRA program is an economic development tool administered by municipal and county governments that provides real property tax exemptions to property owners who renovate existing buildings or construct new ones. CRAs are areas of land in which property owners can receive tax incentives for investing in real property improvements. The program is divided into two distinct categories: those created before July 1994 (“pre-1994”) and those created after the law changes went into effect in July 1994. The program permits municipalities or counties to designate areas where investment has been discouraged as a CRA to encourage the revitalization of the existing housing stock and the development of new structures. Local municipalities or counties can determine the type of development to be supported by the CRA Program by specifying the eligibility of residential, commercial, and/or industrial projects.

The exemption percentage and term for commercial and industrial projects are to be negotiated on a project-specific basis. If the proposed exemption exceeds 50 percent, local school district consent is required unless the legislative authority determines, for each year of the proposed exemption, that at least 50 percent of the amount of the taxes estimated that would have been charged on the improvements if the exemption had not taken place will be made up by other taxes or payments available to the school district. Upon notice of a project that does not meet this standard, the board of education may approve the project even though the new revenues do not equal at least 50 percent of the projected taxes prior to the exemption.

CRA Program Benefits Exemption Levels		
Exemption Levels	Pre-July 1, 1994, CRA	Post-July 1, 1994, CRA
Real Property	Must be 100%	Up to 100%
Personal Property	None	None
Inventory	None	None

Source: The Montrose Group.

Term Exemptions	Pre-July 1, 1994, CRA	Post-July 1, 1994, CRA
Residential Remodeling (2 units or less; minimum \$2500)	Up to 10 years as specified in the legislation that creates the CRA	Up to 15 yrs as specified in the legislation that creates the CRA
Residential Remodeling (more than 2 units; minimum \$5000)	Up to 12 years as specified in the legislation that creates the CRA	Up to 15 years as specified in the legislation that creates the CRA
Residential New Construction	Up to 15 years as specified in the legislation that creates the CRA	Up to 15 years as specified in the legislation that creates the CRA
Commercial and Industrial Remodeling (minimum \$5000)	Up to 12 years as specified in the legislation that creates the CRA	Up to 15 years as negotiated and approved in a CRA agreement
Commercial and Industrial New Construction	Up to 15 years as specified in the legislation that creates the CRA	Up to 15 years as negotiated and approved in a CRA agreement

Source: The Montrose Group.

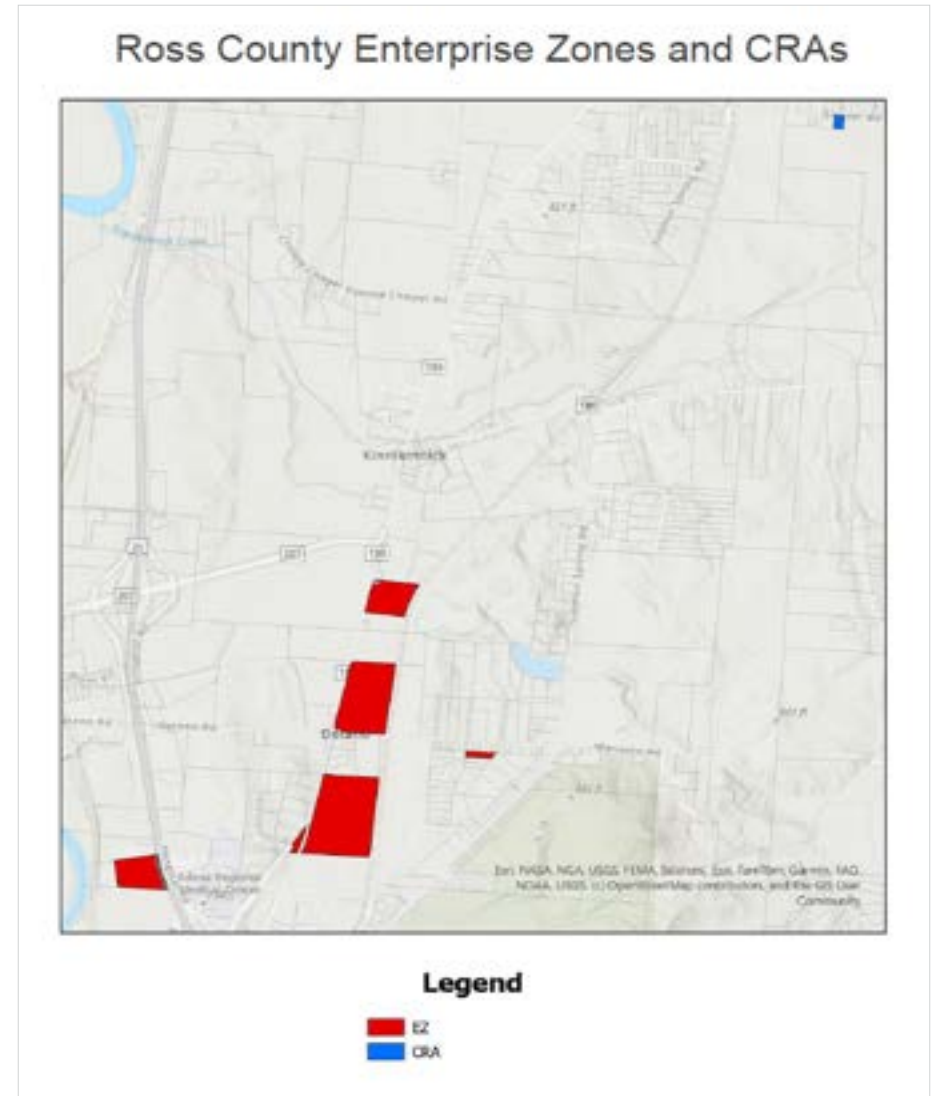
Ohio Enterprise Zone Program

The Ohio Enterprise Zone Program is an economic development tool administered by municipal and county governments that provides real and personal property tax exemptions to businesses making investments in Ohio. Enterprise zones are designated areas of land where businesses can receive tax incentives, including tax exemptions on eligible new investment. The Enterprise Zone Program can provide tax exemptions for a portion of the value of new real and personal property investments (when that personal property remains taxable) when the investment is made in conjunction with a project that includes job creation for non-retail companies. Existing land values and existing building values are not eligible (except as noted within rare circumstances).

As the map to the right illustrates, Ross County has a limited number of tax abatements geared to promote economic investment by target companies.

Construction Materials Sales Tax Exemption

This program permits Ohio port authorities to offer a sales tax exemption on construction materials used for economic development projects. An Ohio port authority such as the Ross County Port Authority issues taxable bonds to finance the project, they hold the title to the building and enter into a long-term lease with the client (typically five years), the client's bank may purchase the bonds or a related entity of the client itself, the port authority could place the bonds in the capital markets, at the end of the lease term, the building's title would be transferred to the client for a nominal amount, and the client would be viewed as the building's owner for federal tax purposes and therefore would be able to take depreciation on the building.



Source: [Enterprise Zone \(EZ\) Company Tax Incentives](#).

Ohio Site Inventory Program (OSIP)

JobsOhio's OSIP program provides \$50 M annually with \$2M in grants and combination of grant/loan up to \$5M for businesses, developers, port authorities, and local governments preparing speculative industrial or office sites with eligible costs including site preparation, land option or acquisition, new building construction, infrastructure like utilities, roads, rail, docks, redevelopment costs such as demolition, environmental remediation, environmental testing and lab fees, building renovation, removal and disposal of universal and construction waste: asbestos abatement and lead based paint abatement.

Ohio Brownfield Redevelopment Program

The Ohio Department of Development administers the Brownfield Redevelopment Program that had \$200 M for competitive grants for the cleanup of brownfields that includes costs such as site acquisition, demolition, and minimal infrastructure with eligible applicants to include counties, townships, municipal corporations, port authorities, park districts, county land reutilization corporations, and for-profits eligible with site control, "clean hands" (did not contribute to the contamination) and environmental assessments completed. There is a \$1 million per county set-aside, with the remainder allocated to projects based on economic merit in 2026. Assessment Grants are capped at \$300,000, and Remediation Grants are capped at \$1,000,000, with no more than 10 percent administrative costs, but no local match is required. Projects must be ready to begin within the quarter following the award announcement, with grant agreements effective for one year. They will be evaluated on economic merit, readiness, local support, geographic distribution, completed assessments, and gap financing requests.

Rural Residential Development Revolving Loan Program

Ohio's Rural Residential Development Revolving Loan Program is available to local governments with a population of 75,000 or less that issued fewer new construction permits for single-family homes than the average number of such permits issued in Ohio counties. The program funds are only for projects involving the development, repair, or upgrade of water, sewer, road, electric, or gas infrastructure, with a loan amount limited to the lesser of 50 percent of the cost of the infrastructure developments, repairs, or upgrades, or \$30,000 per single-family residential dwelling to be served by that infrastructure.

Local government receiving loans under the program to waive certain building, zoning, and planning requirements for project, projects are exempt from the Prevailing Wage Law, local governments must exempt the improvements constructed from loan proceeds from property taxes, collect payments instead of taxes, and use those payments to pay off the loan, and \$90 million is available for FY 2026 and allows for any unused funds to be carried over into FY 2027.

Welcome Home Program

The Welcome Home Ohio Program provides funding to land banks, land reutilization corporations, electing subdivisions, and non-profit developers for the cost of purchasing qualifying residential property at foreclosure sales after July 1, 2025, with a maximum grant of \$100,000 per residential property at foreclosure sales, \$22,812,500 available in each fiscal year, with the ability to roll funds forward into the next fiscal year. Funding is also available for the cost of rehabilitation or construction of qualifying residential property, with a maximum grant of \$100,000 per qualified residential property and \$22,812,500 available in each fiscal year, with the ability to roll funds forward into the next fiscal year. A Welcome Home Tax Credit can be issued once the qualifying residential property is sold to a qualifying individual with a maximum of \$90,000 or 90 percent of the cost of rehab/construction, whichever is less, and \$20 million in tax credits is available over the biennium, with no credits issued after June 30, 2027.

Ohio Historic Preservation Tax Credit

The Ohio Historic Preservation Tax Credit provides a state tax credit up to 25 percent of qualified rehabilitation expenditures incurred during a rehabilitation project, up to \$5 million is applied to applicable financial institutions, foreign and domestic insurance premiums or individual income taxes with a total budget of \$60M per fiscal year but prohibits building vacancy or underutilization to be used as award criteria, and increases rehabilitation costs may claim as a credit from 25 percent to 35 percent for a project not located in a municipality with a population of at least 300,000.

Downtown Redevelopment Districts (DRD)

This Ohio program permits a municipality to capture up to 70 percent of future property tax growth within a 10-acre area around a historic structure for public infrastructure, historic preservation, building renovations, and innovation districts. Ohio's DRD program is a critical tool for municipalities to redevelop important historic structures. Downtown Redevelopment Districts work like Tax Increment Financing in that they capture new growth in property taxes in a defined 10-acre district, contiguous to a certified historic structure. Unlike a TIF, which is restricted to public infrastructure improvements, a DRD can be used to redevelop historic buildings, encourage economic development in commercial, mixed-use, and residential areas, build public infrastructure, or fund local economic development groups associated with the projects.

Transformational Mixed-Use Development Tax Credit (TMUD)

Ohio's TMUD tax credit has a \$125 million annual budget, with \$85 million reserved for projects within 10 miles of a major city, \$40 million reserved for projects more than 10 miles from a major city, and a \$20M cap on Major City Projects. Eligible TMUD project costs include due diligence and hard and soft construction; the project cannot be completed in phases; tax credits can be transferred; expenditures and economic impact before TMUD certification; and major sports facilities are excluded. Mixed-use is defined as uses from office, residential, hotel and hospitality, recreation, and retail & restaurants, and eligible projects in Major Cities must be fifteen stories tall or 350,000 square feet or have an annual payroll of \$5,000,000.

Non-major Cities must be two stories tall. All projects must have 51 percent committed funding, cannot have started construction, but must include demo and Brownfield remediation, have an economic impact limited to the TMUD site, and require local government entitlement approvals.

Vibrant Community Program

The JobsOhio Vibrant Community Program provides grants for catalytic development projects in targeted, distressed, small, and mid-sized cities that fulfill a market need and represent a significant reinvestment in the community, with one identified end-user. Projects must improve the quality of place, employer and employee retention and attraction, be catalytic in nature, make the surrounding area more attractive for future development, and demonstrate leverage of outside funds in cities with populations under 75,000 and poverty rates at or above the state's average poverty rate. Public or private sector entities are eligible; the grant cap is \$1 million per project, and the grant should not exceed 50 percent of eligible costs.

New Community Authority (NCA)

NCA's are a special unit of government authorized under Chapter 349 of the Ohio Revised Code. They permit landowners to create a special assessment known as a Community Development Charge to finance and construct community facilities that include any public improvement within the district, and include facilities that are used in furtherance of community activities such as cultural, educational, governmental, recreational, residential, industrial, commercial, distribution, and research activities. NCA's pose a challenge for future buyers of residential developments, as they add a fee on top of the price and taxes that need to be paid for the house.

Special Improvement Districts (SIDs)

These permit Ohio property owners in a defined area, by majority vote, to create a special assessment to fund public infrastructure improvements and services. A SID is established when owners representing 60 percent of the front footage or 75 percent of the district's land area sign a formal petition to establish it. Services must be for the public good and may include maintenance, physical improvements, cleaning, and additional safety measures, among other activities. The services are selected by

the property owners themselves through a Board of Directors and cannot replace city services.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Program

TIF program funds public infrastructure by capturing future property tax growth within a defined district or site. An Ohio local political jurisdiction may exempt from real property taxes the value of private improvements up to 75 percent for a term of up to 10 years for a General Purpose TIF. Local governmental bodies seeking to provide greater assistance under the TIF must first obtain the concurrence of the affected local board(s) of education. With the concurrence of its school board(s), a local political jurisdiction may exempt the value of improvements up to 100 percent for a term of up to 30 years. Funding for General Purpose TIF can be used for public infrastructure improvements.

Joint Economic Development District (JEDD)

An Ohio JEDD is a contractual partnership between townships and municipalities (cities/villages) designed to foster commercial development and share tax revenue. It enables townships to levy income taxes on businesses and employees within a specific zone—typically to fund infrastructure improvements—without the need for annexation. JEDDs exist to promote economic development, attract businesses, create jobs, and improve infrastructure (e.g., roads, water, sewer) in designated areas, but are not a tool for use with residential development; residents cannot be in the JEDD area. JEDDs allow townships (which cannot normally levy income taxes) to collect income taxes on businesses and employees operating within the district, usually at a rate matching that of the partner municipality, and to provide infrastructure funding for developments in the JEDD. JEDDs are governed by a board of directors representing the participating local governments and operate under an agreement between the impacted local governments that outlines the sharing of revenues, the delivery of local government services, and an infrastructure investment plan to foster economic investment.

- ★ Ross County Residential Incentive Policy
 - Countywide 100 percent, 15 year CRA property tax abatement with a PILOT to the schools
 - 30 year non-school TIF districts
 - NCA for single family residential
 - Construction materials sales tax exemption Recruit residential developers to Ross County
 - Gain control of 500 acres of residential sites
- ★ Ross County Industrial Incentive Policy
 - Countywide 100 percent, 15 year CRA property tax abatement with a PILOT to the schools
 - 30 year non-school TIF districts
 - Construction materials sales tax exemption Formation of a JEDD to foster industrial site development
 - Recruit residential developers to Ross County
 - Support JobsOhio funding from OSIP for industrial site development
 - Gain control of 700 acres for industrial development
- ★ Ross County Mixed-Use Incentive Policy
 - Countywide 100 percent, 15 year CRA property tax abatement
 - 30 year non-school TIF districts
 - NCA for residential development
 - Construction materials sales tax exemption through the Port Authority for site development projects
 - Support state funding for Vibrant Community Program to create a mixed use site development strategy
 - Recruit mixed use developers to Ross County
 - Support state TMUD funding when a developer and
 - Gain control of 50 acres of sites for mixed-use development

Ross County, working with its city, village, and township partners, should create a Public-Private-Partnership incentive model by taking the following action steps:

Site Control	In identified focus areas, negotiate purchase options for 700 acres of potential industrial sites, 500 acres of potential residential sites, and 50 acres of potential mixed use development sites
CRA	In identified focus areas, create CRA areas with property tax abatement for new industrial, residential, or mixed-use investment.
School District Compensation Agreements	Negotiate a model school district compensation agreement with a PILOT payment to the school district they would have received if there was not an abatement.
TIF	Create 30-year, non-school TIF districts at the sites controlled for development to fund public infrastructure at these sites.
JEDD	Create a Green Township and Chillicothe JEDD to fund utility service and public infrastructure development in the township.
Port Authority	Create a bond fund and award construction materials sales tax exemption program with fees over 25 percent of the savings to fund control of land for site development.
Redevelopment	Build "town centers" in Ross County's cities and villages through application of CRA, TIF, construction materials sales tax exemption, DRD, Vibrant Community, TMUD, SID and Historic Tax Credits.
State Funding	Seek development funding from Welcome Home Ohio, Rural Residential Development Revolving Loan Program, TMUD, Vibrant Community and Historic Preservation Tax Credit.
Marketing	Market the use of Ross County economic development incentives to the Central Ohio development community and key industrial sectors.

ACTION PLAN TACTIC #3. PREPARE FUTURE LARGE-SCALE SITES FOR INDUSTRIAL, RESIDENTIAL, AND MIXED-USE INVESTMENTS

Site development is crucial for economic development because it transforms raw land into “shovel-ready” locations, directly enabling faster investment, job creation, and tax base expansion. By building on the research and strategies in the comprehensive plan’s focus areas to further address utilities and permitting, developed sites reduce business risk, lower costs, and shorten construction timelines, making regions more competitive in attracting businesses. Key reasons that site development is critical for economic success include:

- ★ Certified, shovel-ready sites allow communities to respond quickly to corporate inquiries, as companies frequently eliminate locations lacking immediately available, developed land.
- ★ Strategic site development, such as industrial parks or business parks, provides the necessary infrastructure (water, sewer, power) that attracts companies, directly creating jobs and boosting local tax revenues.
- ★ Early-stage development (geotechnical studies, environmental assessments, utility connectivity) minimizes the risks of delays or unexpected expenses for developers, making a site more attractive and eliminating barriers found in the focus areas of the comprehensive plan.
- ★ Proper land-use direction and development create specialized hubs (e.g., tech, manufacturing), promoting knowledge sharing, supply chain efficiency, and innovation.
- ★ Well-planned site development ensures that crucial infrastructure, such as transportation and utilities, is in place, preventing bottlenecks and fostering long-term economic growth.

Site development is a “regional imperative” that shifts economic development from luck-based to preparation-based, ensuring a community is ready to win projects.

When is a site job ready? Sites ready for construction are job-ready when they have defined contiguous acreage under control by a party ready to sell or develop for a competitive price with an industry focus, zoning, infrastructure, and utility service tied

to its highest and best use, and due diligence reports that clarify there are no impediments at the site. Hundreds of criteria can be required before a site is job-ready for construction. However, the list below provides a basic framework for when a site is ready.

Priority Criteria to Create Job Ready Sites

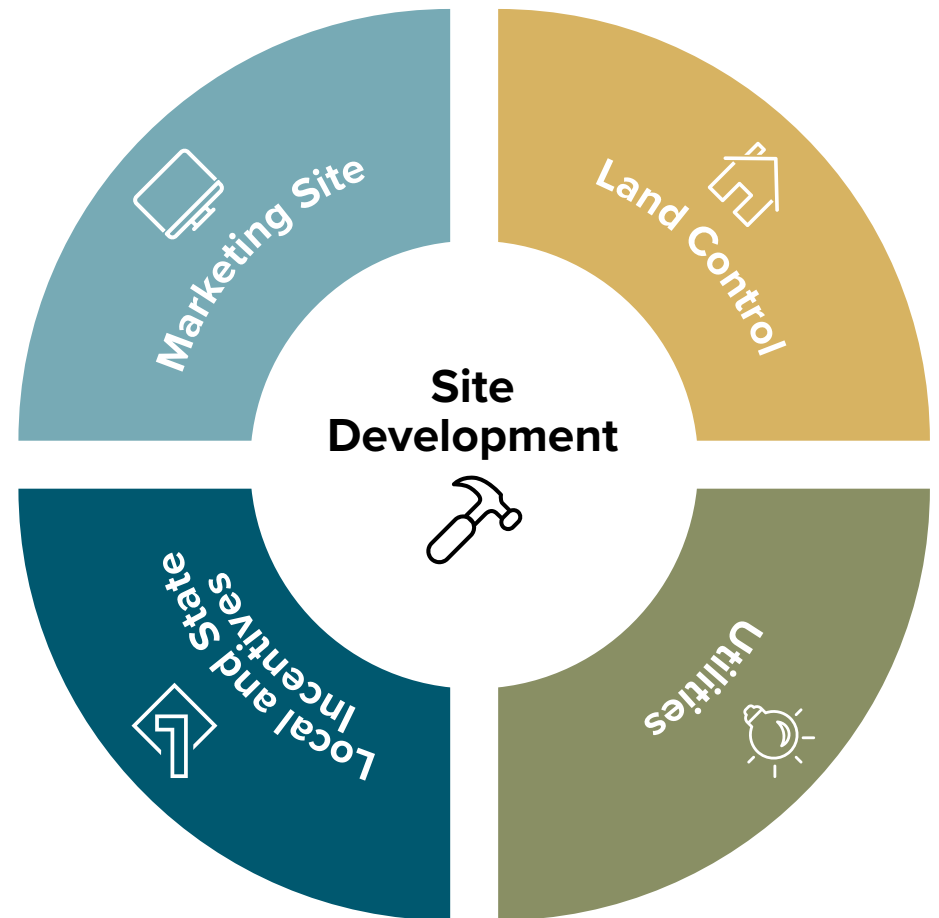
- ★ Targeted industry use (through Covenants) and free from incompatible uses
- ★ Minimum acreage often at least 30+ contiguous developable acres
- ★ Community control through ownership or option agreement and/or letter from willing owner with determined sale price per acre and mineral rights transfer
- ★ All major utilities (Water, Sewer, Electric, Natural Gas, & Fiber) are to the property boundaries and have adequate capacity.
- ★ Due Diligence Studies completed:
 - Phase I Environmental Site Assessment
 - Phase II Environmental Site Assessment– only if required by Phase I
 - Geotechnical Study
 - Wetland Delineation
 - Phase I Cultural Resources Study
 - Archaeology Study and a History Architecture Survey)
 - Endangered Species Study
 - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) – Approved Jurisdictional Determination (AJD)
 - State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) – State Historic Preservation Office Letter
 - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Letter

Site development planning must focus on the availability of a skilled workforce ready to work in the industry targeted for job retention and creation. A site needs to have its workforce pool defined through a review of the total working population within the workforce circle, worker commuting patterns, regional population growth, and a comparison of younger or new workers entering the workforce with older workers preparing to retire. Finally, wage rate comparisons need to be conducted to identify states and regions that offer companies a competitive advantage. Sites need to be reviewed for potential use through benchmark comparisons to assess real estate demand for the use by measuring vacancies, rents, and absorption rates of comparable sites in the region, and how this impacts the real estate costs of potential sites. This real estate review should define the competitive landscape by reviewing the sizes of industrial or other relevant buildings, the sizes of industrial parks or other relevant sites, the locations of industrial parks, buildings, or other relevant sites, and key real estate metrics, including vacancy rates, absorption, and planned construction.

If a site passes the workforce and real estate tests, site control through an option to purchase for a community or developer willing to sell or lease the land at a defined, competitive rate is the next step. Most of these sites will be for the minimum acreage, often at least 30+ contiguous, developable acres without incompatible uses on or around the site. Gaining access to utilities (water, sewer, electric, natural gas, and fiber) at the property boundaries needs to be negotiated. Defining the infrastructure needs of the site and the surrounding area is critical from a transportation standpoint, as this impacts the zoning process and the marketability of the site. Due diligence studies need to be completed that address environmental, geotechnical, wetland, cultural resource, archaeological, endangered species, US Army Corps of Engineers, historic preservation, and fish and wildlife. Zoning approval is required for the site to be developed and marketed to end users.

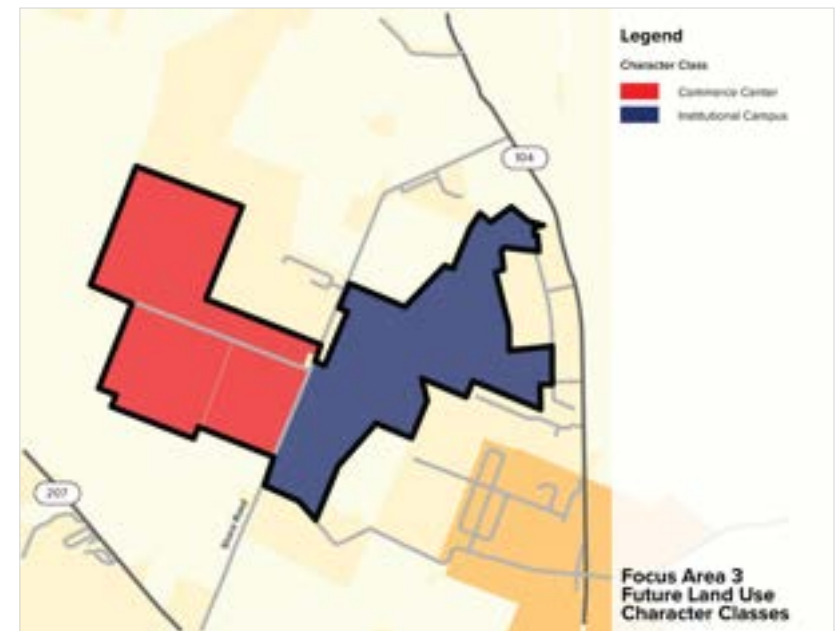
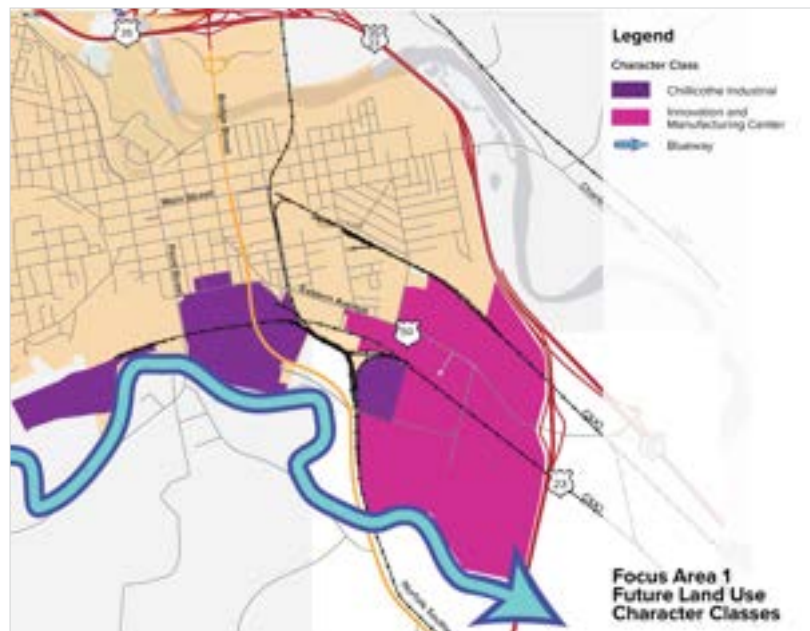
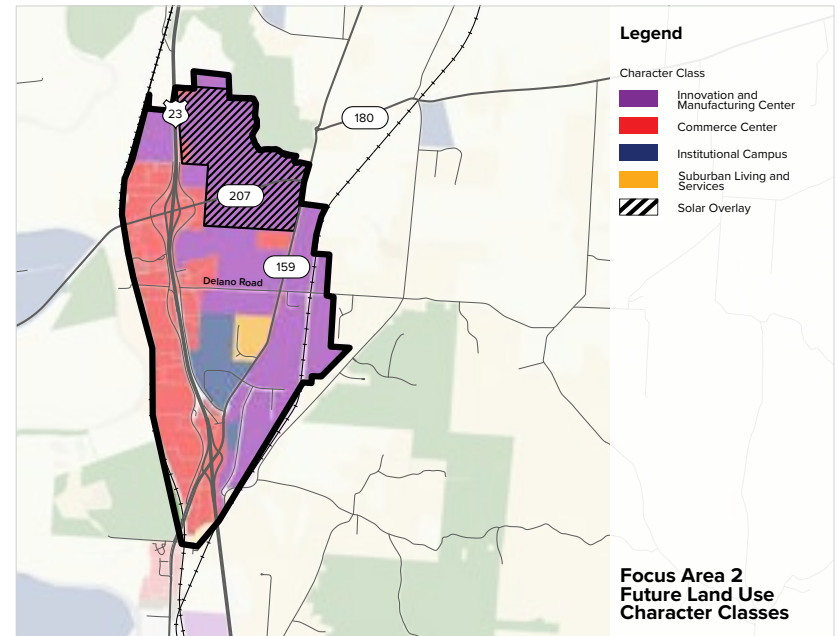
Site development occurs when a developer, CIC, or other organization or individual gains control of land through the option to purchase or the purchase of land, with the intent to develop the land for higher and better use. Preparing the land for the intended use is the next step in the site development process, and identifying the public infrastructure costs and creating a strategy to provide those services, adopting a CRA property tax

abatement, TIF District, Joint Economic Development Districts, and model school compensation agreement to incentivize development at these sites, and marketing the sites for industrial development for companies or developers through targeted briefings. The Pickaway County RBD provides a good industrial reference model for Ross County, with sites within municipalities or JEDDs.



The Ross County Comprehensive plan identifies three prime large focus areas primed for site development, including:

- ★ Focus Area 1 is a 1,230-acre area along US 35/23 at the southeast corner of Chillicothe’s corporate limits featuring large parcels of land adjacent to an existing industrial cluster, offering access to both rail and highway interchange, access to adequate electric, gas, and water utilities primed for industrial, manufacturing, innovation, recreational, and Blueway opportunities.
- ★ Focus Area 2 is 2,508 acres in Green Township just north of Chillicothe, centered on “the Triangle,” defined by US 23 and SRs 159 and 207 with a cluster of institutional uses, including Adena Regional Medical Center, and manufacturing facilities, such as Kenworth Truck Company and is primed for innovation, manufacturing, commerce, institutional campus, suburban living and services, and solar overlay.
- ★ Focus Area 3 comprises 636 acres centered on the Ross County Airport and the new Commerce Center Area between two regional arterials, making it well-suited for Commerce Center development from a logistics perspective, primed for industrial and institutional campus growth.



Ross County will have access to local and state economic development programs to prepare sites for development, including TIFs, as discussed earlier, as well as the JobsOhio OSIP. OSIP is a funding initiative designed to fill gaps in Ohio's commercial real estate inventory by providing grants and low-interest loans for speculative site and building development. Launched in 2020, OSIP aims to make Ohio more competitive for project-ready sites, supporting both greenfield and brownfield development without requiring an immediate end-user for speculative development, meaning projects do not need to have a tenant or buyer identified before construction through \$2,000,000 grants and loans up to \$5,000,000 for industrial and office projects. In addition, an Enterprise Zone (EZ) or CRA property tax abatement, along with a TIF and Construction Material Sales Tax Exemption, will be seen as critical to succeed in the industrial development market. JEDDs can also support industrial development in Ross County.

A JEDD in Ohio is a partnership between municipalities and townships that fosters commercial growth, allowing them to share tax revenue and infrastructure costs without annexation. JEDDs help economic development by enabling townships to collect income tax on new businesses to fund improvements. At the same time, municipalities extend utility services to support business expansion. JEDDs support cities to extend water, sewer, and other services into townships, making previously undeveloped land suitable for commercial or industrial use. JEDDs generate new income tax revenue from businesses in the district, which is shared between the partnering, often cash-strapped, township and the municipality. JEDDs offer a legal, cooperative alternative to annexation, allowing townships to keep their land while still benefiting from development. JEDDs are also often created with specific economic development plans, directing tax revenue toward infrastructure improvements that attract, create, or retain jobs and, in many cases, convert vacant land into productive, high-tax-yield commercial property.

Ross County Industrial Site Development Strategies:

- ★ Land Control by CIC/Port Authority of 700 acres for industrial development in identified focus areas Re-zoning to industrial if needed
- ★ 100 percent, 15-Year CRA
- ★ 30 year Non-School TIF
- ★ Model school compensation agreements
- ★ Construction Materials Sales Tax Exemption
- ★ OSIP
- ★ JEDD

Ross County Residential Site Development Strategies :

- ★ CIC/Port Authority land control of 500 acres for new residential development in identified focus areas
- ★ Residential growth area identified on the future land use map
- ★ 100 percent, 15-Year CRA
- ★ 30 year Non-School TIF
- ★ Model school compensation agreements
- ★ Construction Materials Sales Tax Exemption
- ★ Developer Recruitment

Ross County Mixed-Use Site Development Strategies:

- ★ CIC/Port Authority Land Control of 50 acres in identified focus areas
- ★ Innovation and commercial character classes
- ★ 100 percent, 15-Year CRA
- ★ 30 year Non-School TIF
- ★ Model school compensation agreements
- ★ Construction Materials Sales Tax Exemption
- ★ Developer Recruitment
- ★ TMUD

Future large-scale sites for new residential investment can be accomplished in Ross County through local CIC purchase of land, zoning the land for residential development, identifying and funding the public infrastructure costs, adopting a CRA property tax abatement, TIF District, and model school compensation agreement to incentivize development, and recruiting a residential developer to the sites. The lack of new housing developments in Ross County illustrates the need for Ross County or the local CIC to become engaged in land control, site preparation, and direct marketing to developers at a subsidized rate.

Prepare future large-scale sites for mixed-use development to spur new commercial, retail, and residential development through the creation of a special mixed-use incentive package, identify and fund the public infrastructure costs, and create a strategy to provide those services, adopt a CRA property tax abatement, TIF District, and model school compensation agreement to incentivize development, and recruit mixed-use developers to the sites. Opportunities for large-scale development are enhanced by the use of Ohio's Mega Site Program, which doubles the length of programs such as the CRA tax abatement and the Ohio Job Creation Tax Credit, as well as by millions of dollars in public infrastructure funding from the Ohio Department of Transportation and JobsOhio.

Much like residential development, mixed-use development is unlikely to occur without Ross County or the local CIC engaging in land control, site preparation, and direct marketing to developers at a subsidized rate. Ross County should look to the TMUD program to support its mixed-use development. TMUD is a state of Ohio tax credit that can provide up to 10 percent of a mixed-use development's cost. Projects must integrate at least two uses, such as office, residential, retail, hotel, or recreation. In cities with fewer than 100,000 residents, the project must include at least one new or previously vacant building that is two or more stories in height or has a floor area of at least seventy-five thousand square feet or two or more new buildings that are located on the same parcel or on contiguous parcels and that collectively have a floor area of at least seventy-five thousand square feet. Helping Ross County will mean a lower maximum overall grant award and increased funding for cities with fewer than 100,000 residents.

ACTION PLAN TACTIC #4. CREATE THE ROSS COUNTY WORKS PROGRAM TO BUILD AN EMPLOYER-EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP TO DEVELOP TOMORROW'S WORKFORCE

Employers around the country are facing unprecedented challenges in finding enough workers to fill open positions. As of December 2025, there are over 7.6 million open jobs across the United States. Even with unemployment rising to 4.5 percent, driven by AI-related employment changes, employers are still struggling to find the skilled labor they need. The World Economic Forum found that the scale of workforce upskilling and reskilling is expected to remain significant. If the world's workforce were made up of one hundred people, fifty-nine would need training by 2030. Of these, employers foresee that twenty-nine could be upskilled in their current roles and nineteen could be upskilled and redeployed elsewhere within their organization. However, eleven would be unlikely to receive the reskilling or upskilling needed, leaving their employment prospects increasingly at risk. Skill gaps are categorically considered the biggest barrier to business transformation by Future of Jobs Survey respondents, with 63 percent of employers identifying them as a major barrier over the 2025- 2030 period. Accordingly, 85 percent of employers surveyed plan to prioritize upskilling their workforce, with 70 percent of employers expecting to hire staff with new skills, 40 percent planning to reduce staff as their skills become less relevant, and 50 percent planning to transition staff from declining to growing roles.

Workforce development programs are initiatives aimed at enhancing individuals' skills, knowledge, and employability to meet labor-market needs. These programs are designed to bridge the gap between the skills job seekers possess and those required by employers. In today's economy, workforce development programs are a crucial tool for communities and businesses to retain their workforce. Workforce development programs can take various forms and are often implemented by governments, educational institutions, non-profit organizations, and private companies. Ross County should establish a new workforce development organization to facilitate connections among local schools, businesses, and community organizations. To accomplish this, Ross County should create Ross Works modeled after Pickaway WORKS in Pickaway County, Ohio.

Create a Ross County Workforce Program

Create the Ross Works program to build a Public-Private Partnership that links the existing educational and workforce development assets of Ross County with key employers through the development of a Ross County Works Board that can develop specific workforce development programs tied to the recruitment of workers to the region to serve existing and future companies.

Ross WORKS, which stands for World of Real Knowledge and Skills, should be created as a collaborative effort to align Ross County employers with the local education and workforce training resources available. Ross WORKS should be created as a 501c3 non-profit with formal bylaws in place. Program activities are implemented by the executive director and program advisors at the direction of the director. A five-member Operations Committee, a formal subcommittee of the Ross WORKS Advisory Board, should provide general oversight on budget and personnel matters, make recommendations to the full Advisory Board, and meet quarterly in advance of the Advisory Board meetings. An in-depth review of the program is conducted at the annual strategic planning retreat to review feedback, evaluate program performance, and provide direction for the future. Ross WORKS should promote college and career readiness for Ross County students, with financial support from all the County's school districts.

Ross WORKS can provide ongoing program initiatives and build partnerships among key stakeholders to create relevant career pathways for Ross County students, help meet the workforce demands of our employers, and strengthen the economic stability of our community. That can be achieved through a variety of different programs and initiatives, including:

- ★ Educator Business Tours – Small groups of educators visit businesses to learn about career pathways and local opportunities, and to connect real-world work scenarios to classroom learning.
- ★ Reverse Business Tours – Business and community leaders are invited “back to school” for tours and updates on programming and progress.
- ★ Job Shadows/Internships – On-site and virtual opportunities to help students explore career interests and gain valuable real-world work experience, with various levels of interaction.
- ★ Guest Speaker Events – Career day and other networking and career awareness events for business and community members to share career path stories and connect students, educators, and employers.
- ★ High School Boot Camps – Mock interview sessions and small group workshops on relevant topics to prepare students for success in life after high school.
- ★ Thinking Partnerships – Business and community members partner with a classroom teacher to provide real-world problem scenarios and allow students to solve problems and develop solutions.
- ★ Business Showcase – Students created business spotlight videos to be featured in schools and online, as well as for the benefit of businesses. They can be shared on the youth's preferred social media platforms (e.g., TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram).
- ★ Ross County College & Career Night – An annual County-wide event with over one hundred educational institutions and employers sharing information about education options, future career paths, and local job opportunities.
- ★ ACT Prep Workshops – Spring and fall workshop sessions to help students prepare for college entrance exams.
- ★ FAFSA Day – An annual financial aid workshop with personal assistance from Ohio Christian University professionals in filing the FAFSA, the necessary first step in the financial aid process.

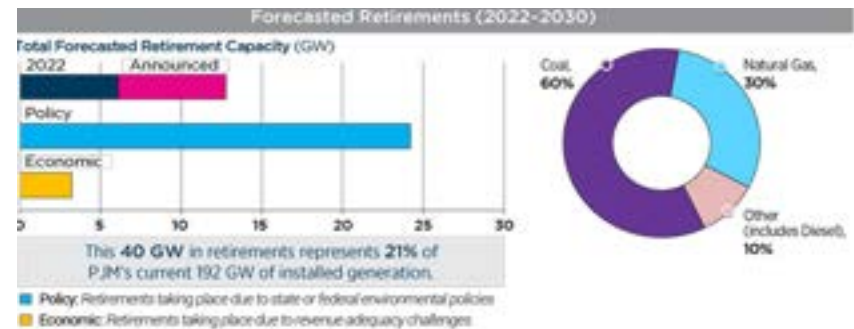
- ★ Kids on Campus – Summer enrichment camp for grades 1-4, focusing on math, science, music, art, and technology, providing hands-on activities in a fun learning environment and early exposure to a college campus.

For Ross WORKS to be successful, the reliance on strong partnerships with local entities is of the utmost importance. Three main councils should be actively involved in managing the organization: a business council, an education council, and a government council. The business advisory council should be comprised of local businesses with active investments in the community. Strong and vibrant communities contribute to the long-term success of businesses. By actively supporting local economic development, businesses can help create a favorable business environment, attract investments, and foster a skilled workforce, which can benefit their own operations. Ross County should partner with local education partners, including local school districts and career centers, the Ohio University Chillicothe campus, organized labor, and other workforce development partners to structure and create the MC workforce development organization. Workforce development programs help schools understand employers’ needs and expectations. By collaborating with local businesses and industries, schools can identify the specific skills and competencies employers seek in potential employees. This information can then be used to shape the school’s educational offerings to better meet those needs. Finally, governments can help to facilitate collaboration and partnerships between educational institutions, businesses, industry associations, and other stakeholders involved in workforce development. By bringing together different sectors, governments can leverage resources, share best practices, and promote a coordinated approach to address workforce challenges effectively. Workforce development can promote social inclusion and equity by providing equal opportunities for all individuals to access education, training, and employment. Governments can implement policies and programs that address systemic barriers, support diversity and inclusion, and ensure that underrepresented groups have access to skill development opportunities. That fosters a more inclusive society and reduces inequality.

ACTION PLAN TACTIC #5. PREPARE ROSS COUNTY BROWNFIELD SITE(S) FOR FUTURE POWER PRODUCTION

The US energy delivery system that powered the Industrial Revolution and made the United States a global economic powerhouse is facing substantial challenges that threaten the nation’s, states’, and regions’ economic futures. Ross County can be part of the energy solution by providing access to power sources essential for energy-intensive industrial uses.

Ross County can position itself for success in attracting industrial companies by developing its electric generation capacity. Sites with access to electricity are high on the list of corporate site location consultants. A variety of tools exist to prepare sites with access to power. However, a critical priority is securing regulatory relief, tax incentives, and funding to spur the development of energy generation facilities.



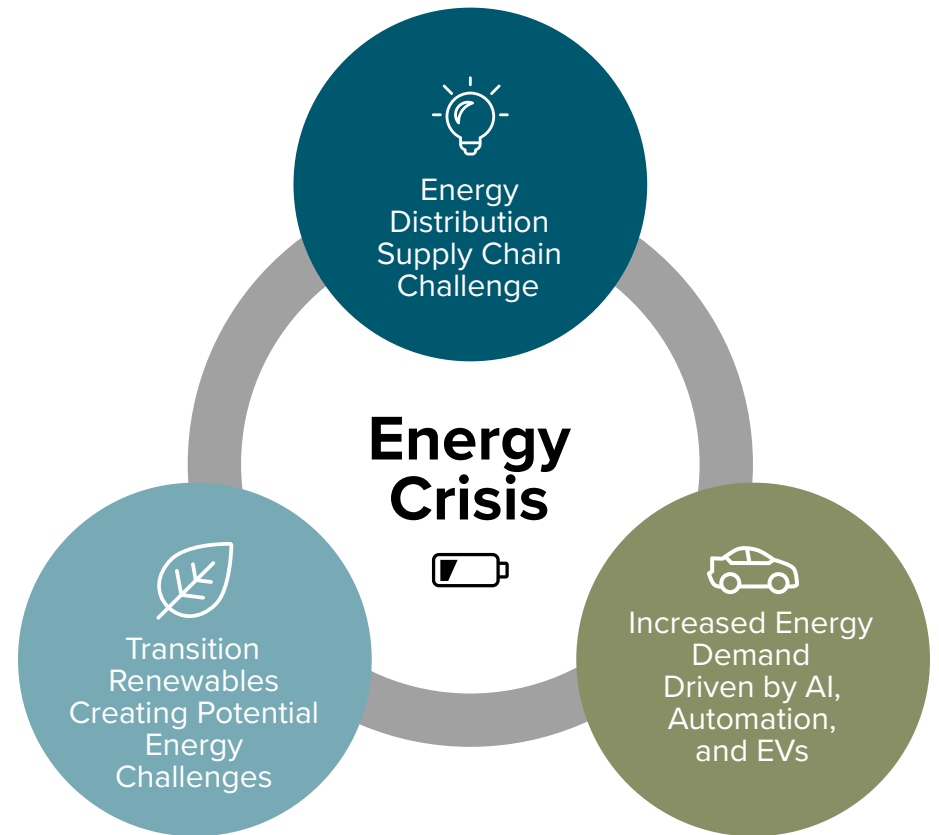
Source: [Energy Transition in PJM: Resource Retirements, Replacements & Risks](#).

Federal and some state policymakers killed traditional carbon-based energy sources that for decades had fostered industrial growth and promoted renewable energy as a substitute. While the US needs energy from a wide range of sources, energy-intensive industries require large volumes of base-load power that operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Across the United States, challenges with energy generation are looming. As the table above illustrates for the PJM territory, energy generation is facing a crisis on the horizon.

For the last several years, utilities throughout the United States have been facing supply chain challenges for the materials needed to distribute electricity to customer sites. Some of the primary areas of concern include distribution transformers, conductors, utility poles, and large transformers. Over the last several years, the distribution of electric power directly to customers has been suffering from substantial delays in service delivery, as outlined in the chart below from Grid Strategies. Lead times for the delivery and installation of transformers needed to take power off electric transmission lines and connect to major industrial customers often exceed 100 weeks and can reach 200 or more for larger transformers, harming economic development projects in need of electric services.

Construction of new high-voltage transmission lines significantly slowed in the US over the last dozen years, according to FERC's monthly Energy Infrastructure Updates. The US dropped from installing an average of 1,700 miles of new high-voltage transmission per year in the first half of the 2010s to an average of only 645 miles per year in the second half of the 2010s. Due to the rise in electrification, Ohio's Regional Transmission Organization that manages its power supply, PJM, is forecasting significant long-term and medium-term load increases – more than 40,000 MW in the next 15 years.

According to Deloitte, a combination of disruptors is driving supply chain gridlock and impacting end-to-end operations in the electric power sector. Data centers could double their energy use by 2026, according to a recent International Energy Agency (IEA) report.



Ross County's Power Generation Strategy:

- ★ Identify Key Sites
- ★ Seek PIA certification for a Brownfield or former coal mine site
- ★ Seek merchant energy generator
- ★ Seek ODOD Brownfield Grant
- ★ Seek TPP tax exemption

The Ohio General Assembly established Ohio's Priority Investment Area (PIA) designation to help drive investment in communities impacted by the decline of the coal industry and Brownfield sites for the purposes of spurring energy production. Ross County should seek PIA certification from the Ohio Department of Development to make its former coal or Brownfield sites eligible for property tax exemptions, brownfield cleanup funding, and expedited regulatory review for energy infrastructure projects. PIA projects also have an accelerated Ohio Power Siting Board (OPSB) review process. Eligible PIA sites include:

- ★ Former coal mine – A location that was, but is no longer, used in connection with the extraction of coal from its natural deposit in the earth.
- ★ Brownfield – An abandoned, idled, or underused industrial, commercial, or institutional property where known or potential releases of hazardous substances or petroleum complicate expansion or redevelopment.

Local governments, developers, and utility companies benefit through tax exemptions, the Ohio Brownfield Remediation Program grants (up to \$10 million) to clean up hazardous substances, hazardous wastes, solid wastes, or petroleum, the demolition and removal of existing structures, grading, or other site work necessary to make a site or certain, and expedited permitting for energy and infrastructure projects in designated redevelopment areas but funds cannot be used for the construction or operation of electric generating infrastructure. PIA projects are eligible for up to \$10 million in grants from the Ohio Brownfield Remediation Program, which provides grants for the cleanup of brownfield sites to assist in the remediation of hazardous substances or petroleum at an industrial, commercial, or institutional property. Remediation includes the acquisition of a brownfield, demolition at a brownfield, and the installation or upgrade of the minimum infrastructure necessary to make a brownfield site operational for economic development. PIA project site energy facilities can also qualify for a five-year property tax exemption on Tangible personal property (TPP) used for electricity or natural gas transmission or transportation that is placed into service within a PIA. The TPP exemption applies to items such as transformers, switchgear, battery systems, and transmission lines, reducing long-term operational costs.

The PIA program is not the only funding source Ross County should consider for the redevelopment of its Brownfield sites. Federal government Brownfield grants and loans can be an important funding source for Brownfield redevelopment programs. Brownfields grants continue to serve as the foundation of the US EPA's Brownfields Program. These grants support revitalization efforts by funding environmental assessments, cleanup, and job training.

- ★ Brownfields Assessment Grants provide funding for Brownfields inventories, planning, environmental assessments, and community outreach.
- ★ Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund Grants provide funding to capitalize loans that are used to clean up Brownfields.
- ★ Brownfields Job Training Grants provide environmental training for residents of Brownfields communities.
- ★ Brownfields Cleanup Grants provide direct funding for cleanup activities at certain properties with planned greenspaces, recreational uses, or other non-profit uses.
- ★ Brownfields Area-Wide Planning Grants provide funding to communities to research, plan, and develop implementation strategies for cleaning up and revitalizing a specific area affected by one or more brownfield sites.

Ross County must look only one county to the south, in Pike County, to see an energy-based economic development strategy being launched in Piketon. Pike County, Ohio, is launching a global energy-led economic development strategy. In March 2026, officials announced a massive redevelopment of the decommissioned Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant, now branded as the PORTS Technology Campus. This project represents the largest single private-sector investment in Ohio's history. Japanese tech giant SoftBank and its affiliate SB Energy are leading the construction of a 10-gigawatt AI data center.

Phase 1 of the project is expected to include 800 megawatts of power and cost between \$30 billion and \$40 billion, with completion targeted for early 2028. To fuel this complex, the site will host up to 10 gigawatts of new power generation. A planned \$33.3 billion natural gas plant, funded by the Japanese government, will have a capacity of 9.2 gigawatts. AEP Ohio and SB Energy are partnering on a \$4.2 billion investment in new 765-kilovolt transmission lines to support the site without raising

local customer rates. Also, Oklo Inc. and Meta Platforms (the parent company of Facebook) are partnering on a 1.2-gigawatt nuclear power campus. The project will utilize Oklo's Aurora fast-fission reactors to provide dedicated clean energy for Meta's regional data centers. Pre-construction began in 2026, with the first phase online by 2030 and full buildout by 2034. The scale of these investments is projected to revitalize the Southern Ohio economy. The PORTS Technology Campus alone is expected to create 35,000 construction jobs and 2,500 permanent positions. Centrus' expansion will add approximately 1,300 local jobs. The project includes \$40 million in direct funding for local schools. It is estimated to funnel \$1.5 trillion into the regional economy over 20 years. By restoring domestic uranium enrichment and adding massive new generation capacity, these projects significantly reduce dependence on foreign energy sources, lower regional electricity costs through improved infrastructure, and provide a model for an energy-led economic development strategy.

Ross County should seek to redevelop existing former coal sites and Brownfield sites to produce energy generation facilities. These programs should also be used to help mitigate the issues identified in Focus Area One discussed in the Comprehensive Plan.

Pike County Energy Led Economic Development Strategy:

- ★ Former Uranium Enrichment Facility Site
- ★ Natural Gas Production Facility
- ★ Electric Transmission Investment
- ★ SMRs

ACTION PLAN TACTIC #6. ROSS COUNTY SHOULD BUILD A GLOBAL TOURISM INITIATIVE TO PROMOTE THE ROSS COUNTY UNESCO SITE THROUGH THE STATE OF OHIO AND JOBSOHIO.

Tourism in Ross County has a massive impact locally and regionally. The industry generated \$155 million in direct sales, with visitor spending increasing 4.9 percent in 2025. There are 2,072 jobs supported by tourism, representing 7.5 percent of local employment. Lodging tax collections increased by 4 percent in 2025, and out-of-state trips rose by 6.1 percent. Visitor spending helps reduce the tax burden on residents by an average of \$608 per household.

Building on a current legacy, further developing travel and tourism in Ross County can be a critical quality-of-place strategy to serve as a population recruitment tool tied to future growth and investment in the community and the state of Ohio.

According to the World Travel & Tourism Council, travel and tourism’s contribution to global GDP totaled \$10.9 trillion in 2024. That includes direct, indirect, and induced impacts of the sector. As a share, Travel & Tourism represented 10 percent of the global economy. Travel and tourism are also important sources of employment. In 2024, the sector supported 357 million jobs globally, approximately 1 in 10 jobs. Also, domestic visitors spent \$5.3 trillion, growing 5.4 percent over the 2023 level. At the same time, spending by international visitors increased 11.6 percent annually to reach US\$ 1.9 trillion. Because rural America is diverse, it has countless ways to explore it. Outdoor recreation is one of the largest components of rural tourism. In 2023, according to the US Bureau of Economic Analysis, it generated \$1.1 trillion in gross output, about 2.2 percent of US GDP, and most of that activity (camping, boating, hiking, hunting, and snow sports) took place in rural counties. National parks remain the main draw, yet some of the fastest growth now happens beyond park boundaries: rails-to-trails bike corridors in Wisconsin log tens of thousands of overnights each summer, a Utah dark-sky sanctuary sells out its astronomy programs a year ahead, and winter Fat-Bike races in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula pull visitors in during months once reserved for locals.



Source: [Slate.com](https://www.slate.com).

The Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks in Ross County, Ohio, were designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site on September 19, 2023. These eight monumental, geometric earthen enclosures were built by Native Americans 1,600 to 2,000 years ago as ceremonial centers, featuring precise, large-scale astronomical alignments. Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks comprises seven monumental earthworks that were constructed by the Ohio Hopewell culture during the Middle Woodland Period (100 B.C. to A.D. 500). These earthworks are located at three sites:

1. Newark Earthworks State Memorial (Licking County, Ohio)
2. Fort Ancient State Memorial (Warren County, Ohio)
3. Hopewell Cultural National Historical Park (Ross County, Ohio)

Major sites in Ross County include the Mound City Group, Hopewell Mound Group, and Seip Earthworks. Ross County is not alone; the State of Ohio is home to several other UNESCO World Heritage sites that can be connected for an overall tourist experience, including Newark and Lebanon, Ohio, as well as other historic sites in the state.

Ross County, as home to a UNESCO World Heritage site, has a substantial opportunity to launch a tourism economic development initiative by first defining “why” people should visit, and coordinating with other UNESCO World Heritage sites in Ohio to a global audience. Next, Ross County needs to undertake a competitive analysis of similar tourism projects and other tourism and experience opportunities in or near Ross County. Next, Ross County needs to define the audience interested in participating in the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks, and the offering for this tourist trip needs to be defined. Finally, the tourist experience needs to be defined, from arriving in Ohio to traveling to various destinations.

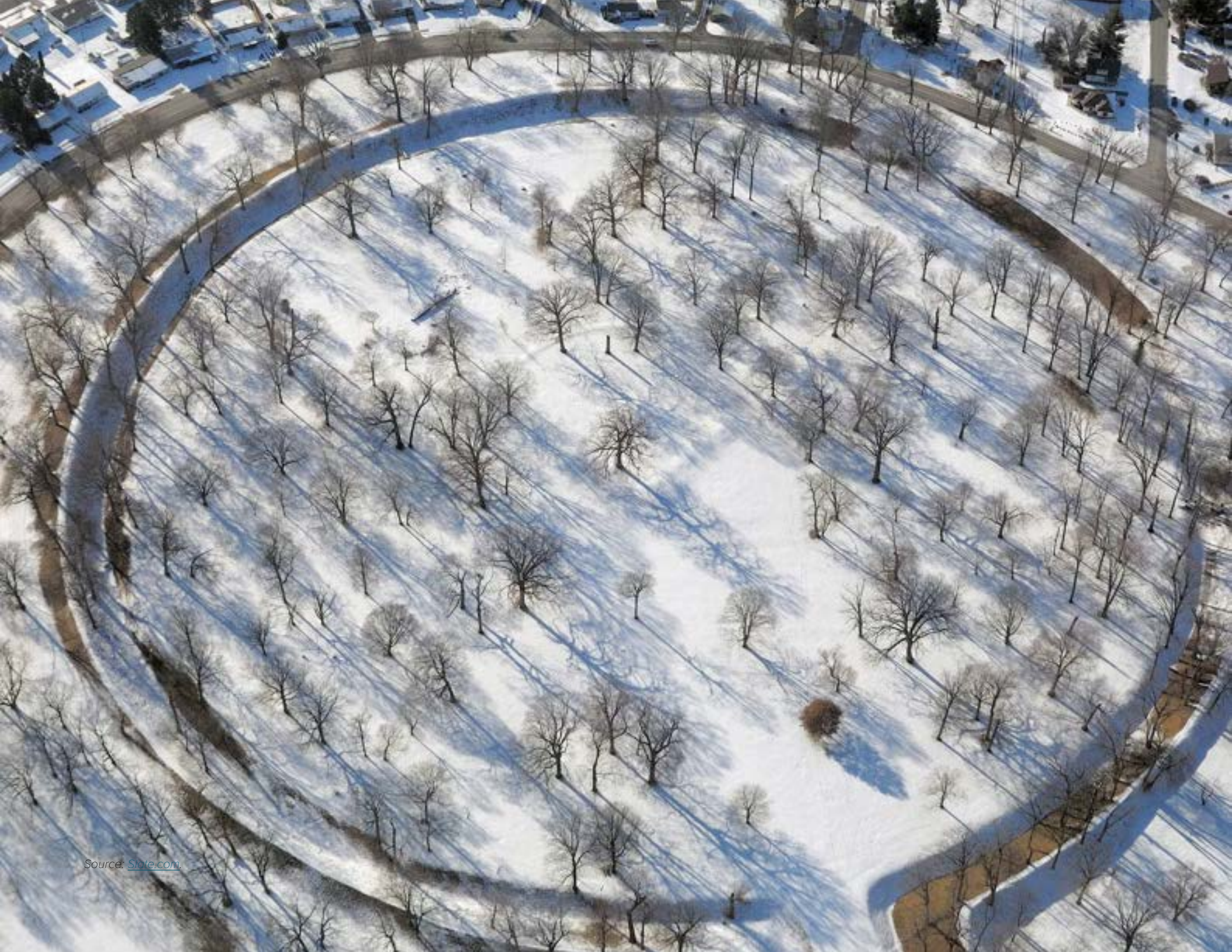
Ross County UNESCO World Heritage Site Marketing

- ★ Coordination statewide
- ★ Tourism competitive analysis
- ★ Define the audience
- ★ Defining the offering
- ★ Defining the tourist experience

Ross County should explore additional tourism-based economic development strategies that create larger regional, statewide, and national initiatives that could include:

- ★ The Ross County Visitors Bureau should lead the formation of a Southern Ohio Tourism Council among Southern Ohio counties to spur the growth and development of regional tourism initiatives across the state, including recreational experiences such as additional mountain biking and hiking trail systems and park lands.
- ★ Approach the state of Ohio about working with many other states to form a US version of the Tour de France bike race that could travel across the United States, could start in Chicago, travel through the Midwest, including a stop in Ross County, and end in Washington DC.
- ★ Take the Downtown Chillicothe Main Street Grant to Villages in Ross County to support retail development in the villages and named places of Ross County that can foster a high-quality tourist event.

Ross County should build a global tourism initiative to promote the Ross County UNESCO site through the state of Ohio and JobsOhio, create a Southern Ohio Tourism Council among other southern Ohio counties to promote regional tourism, create a Tour de US bike race in partnership with the states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland and Washington DC that travels through Chillicothe and Ross County, plan for, prepare a site and recruit a developer for a national golf and convention resort in Ross County, launch a Main Street Retail Grant program to help small businesses in Ross County’s villages and cities start and market their business and improve their facades.



Source: State.com



Transportation / Thoroughfare Plan

TRANSPORTATION PROJECT COORDINATION & PUBLIC AWARENESS

Major roadway improvement projects are essential to maintaining and enhancing the transportation network; however, poorly coordinated construction activities can result in significant congestion, increased travel times, and adverse impacts to businesses, residents, and regional mobility. Ross County aspires to develop a framework to improve coordination, communication, and mitigation strategies across all levels of government and stakeholders.

Ross County will proactively coordinate with local, regional, and state partners to plan and implement major roadway improvement projects in a manner that minimizes disruptions, maintains access, and supports economic vitality. A comprehensive, transparent, and collaborative approach will be used to manage construction impacts and maintain public confidence.

Key Principles

- ★ **Coordination Across Agencies:** Ensure continuous collaboration among local governments, regional agencies, and the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT).
- ★ **Transparency and Public Awareness:** Provide timely, accessible, and accurate information to the public regarding upcoming and ongoing construction projects.
- ★ **Business and Community Protection:** Minimize negative impacts to businesses, institutions, and residents through targeted outreach and mitigation strategies.
- ★ **System-Wide Perspective:** Plan project timing and phasing with consideration of cumulative impacts across the transportation network.



TRANSPORTATION AND THOROUGHFARE PLAN

Ross County's transportation network is one of the most critical systems shaping how and where the community grows. Roadways, corridors, and interchanges are not only responsible for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods, but also directly influence economic development potential, housing patterns, and access to essential services.

In Ross County, transportation plays an especially important role due to the County's position within a broader regional economy. Major routes such as US 23, US 35, and US 50 serve as key connections to surrounding employment centers, industrial growth areas, and regional megaprojects. At the same time, the local roadway network must support residents' daily travel needs, including access to healthcare, schools, and employment, often over long distances.

As development pressure increases, particularly in areas surrounding Chillicothe and along key corridors, transportation infrastructure must evolve to both accommodate growth and guide it to appropriate locations. In several areas of the County, roadway limitations are already constraining development potential, creating congestion, and reducing safety. Without targeted improvements, these constraints will continue to limit the County's ability to capture new housing, support business expansion, and remain competitive within the region.

At the same time, Ross County's transportation system must continue to support its rural and agricultural character. Many roadways serve multiple functions, accommodating commuter traffic, freight movement, and large agricultural equipment. Balancing these needs, while improving safety and efficiency, will be a key challenge moving forward.

For these reasons, transportation planning in Ross County must move beyond isolated roadway improvements toward a coordinated, system-based approach that aligns infrastructure investment with land-use, economic development, and quality-of-life goals.

WHAT WE LEARNED

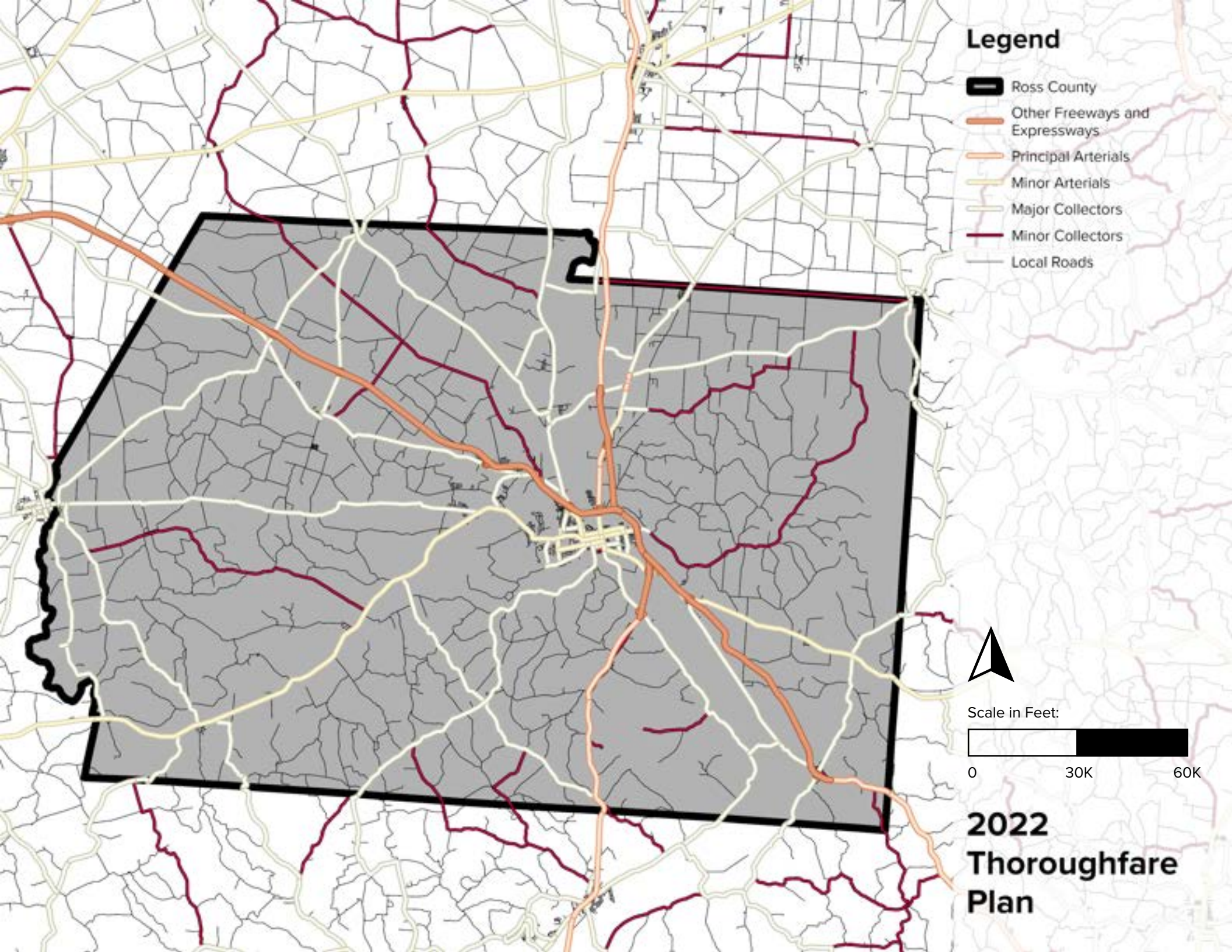
The following came out of the Existing Conditions Report (ECR):

- ★ The 2022 Ross County Thoroughfare Plan update had the following list of proposed projects:
 - Interchange/Intersection Improvements
 - ◆ SR-104/Buckeye Street/Vine Street Intersection
 - ◆ US 23/US 35 Interchange
 - ◆ US 50/Veterans Parkway Roundabout*
 - ◆ US 35/Pleasant Valley Road Full Interchange*
 - Existing Roadway/Corridor Improvements
 - ◆ Bridge Street Improvements – study completed in 2026.
 - ◆ US 50/Western Avenue Corridor
 - ◆ SR-159 Widening
 - ◆ Marietta Road/Rocky Road Improvements
 - Roadway Extension Improvements
 - ◆ Industrial Drive
 - Massieville Road
 - Other Improvements
 - SR104/US 35 Interchange Safety Study*
 - 4th Street and 5th Street Traffic Calming and Two-Way Conversion
 - Study*
 - US 50/East Main Street Corridor Study from Cutright east to US 23*
 - US 23/US 35 Interchange Feasibility Study* - study commenced in 2026.
 - SR-159 Corridor Access Management Study*

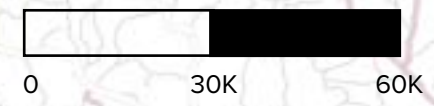
*At the time of the 2022 Thoroughfare Plan, these projects required further study.

Legend

-  Ross County
-  Other Freeways and Expressways
-  Principal Arterials
-  Minor Arterials
-  Major Collectors
-  Minor Collectors
-  Local Roads



Scale in Feet:

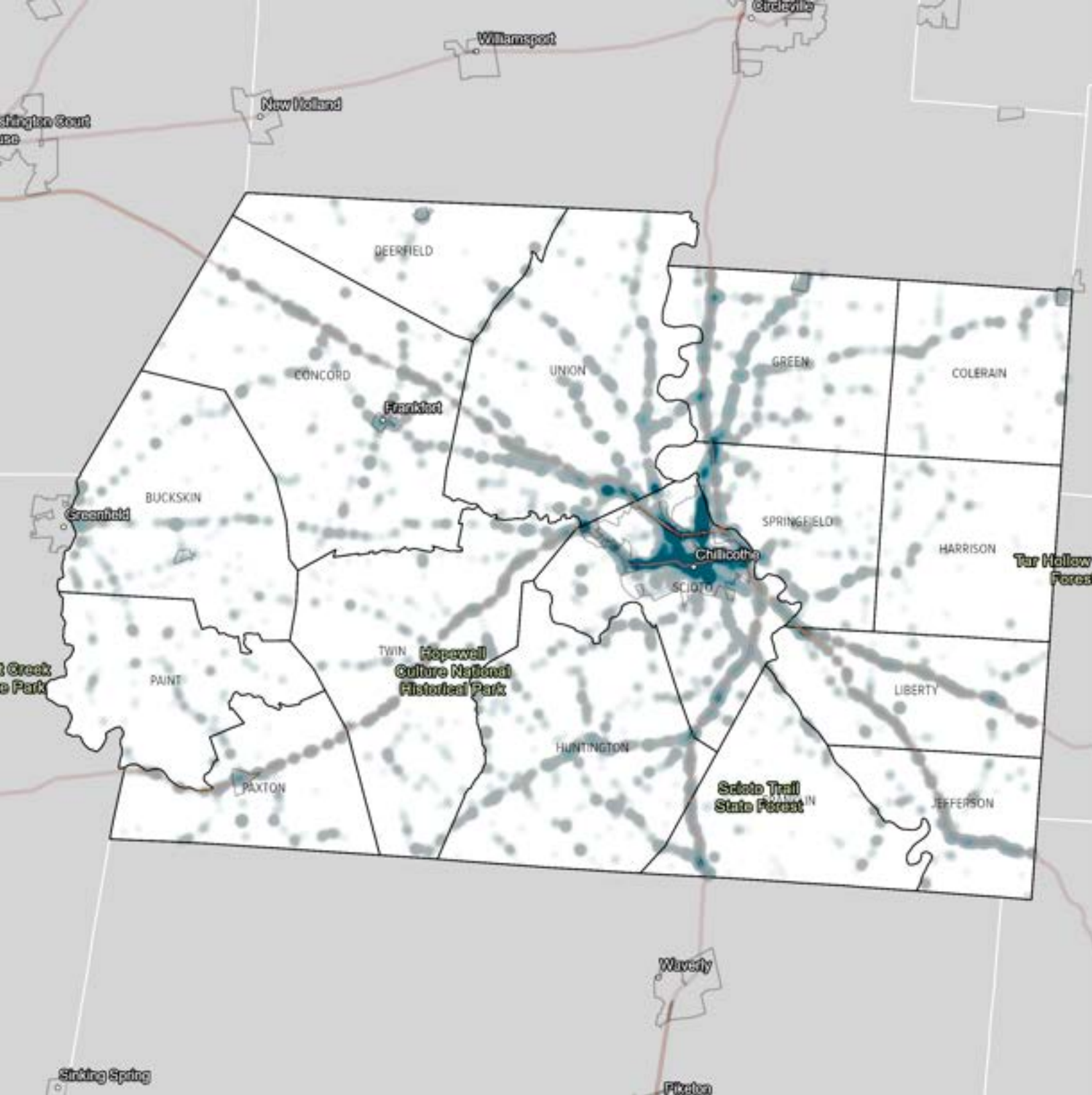


2022 Thoroughfare Plan





Crash hotspots were identified for 2019 to 2024 based on ODOT data. Table 1 and Figure 2 describe these noted hot spots.

Table 1: 2019-2024 Crash Hot Spots

Intersection Name	Traffic Control	Total Crashes 2019-2024	Fatal and All Injury Crashes	Percentage of Injury Crashes (Percent)	Major Crash Type(s)
East Main Street and Bridge Street	Signalized	98	32	32	Angle; Rear End; Sideswipe Passing
North Bridge Street and Plaza Blvd	Signalized	98	20	26	Rear End; Sideswipe-Passing; Angle
North Bridge Street and Marietta Road	Signalized	87	15	20	Rear End; Sideswipe-Passing; Right Turn
North Bridge Street and US 356 Ramp	Signalized	103	27	26	Rear End; Sideswipe-Passing; Angle
North Bridge Street and Pawnee Rd	Signalized	82	16	20	Rear End; Left Turn; Angle
North Bridge Street and Winora Drive	Signalized	57	10	9	Rear End; Angle; Sideswipe- Passing
South Bridge Street and East 8th Street/Eastern Ave	Signalized	58	22	38	Angle; Rear End; Sideswipe Passing
North Bridge Street and East 2nd Street	Signalized	51	10	20	Rear End; Angle; Sideswipe- Passing
North Bridge Street and Seney Road	Signalized	51	12	24	Angle; Rear End; Sideswipe Passing
North Bridge Street and East Water Street	Signalized	43	18	42	Rear End; Angle; Sideswipe- Passing



Legend

-  Townships
-  Incorporated Areas
- Crash Hotspot Locations**
-  Sparse
-  Dense



Scale in Feet:



0 30K 60K

Ross County Crash Hot Spots

WHAT WE HEARD

The following themes were heard during public engagement:

- ★ During public open houses, participants were asked to map their roadway concerns, whether congestion or road conditions. The summary map is shown in Figure 3. The following are roadways of concern:
 - Roadways within villages
 - SR 159/Bridge Street
 - US 23
 - US 50/Western Avenue
 - Veteran’s Parkway
- ★ Some bridges are deteriorating and/or are no longer suitable for the conveyance of farm equipment as farmers move equipment between fields.
- ★ The northern half of the County has historically been perceived as having access management and traffic concerns. However, with new regional development, such as Anduril, new challenges are anticipated in the northern portion of the County, as reflected in Figure 4, Traffic Growth Rate, based on ODOT data.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOAL CONNECTION

★ **Economic Growth**

Promote site readiness for advanced manufacturing, research and development, agribusiness, and employment expansion, and cultivate a strong business community that supports existing businesses while attracting new and emerging industries.

★ **Balanced Growth**

Promote and prioritize development and public improvements in areas best suited for development, while preserving our rural and agricultural core.

★ **Transportation Improvements**

Improve roadway and active transportation infrastructure to better serve residents, the workforce, visitors, and businesses, resulting in greater connectivity and safer, more efficient, and more accessible transportation options.

★ **Utility Expansion and Capacity Building**

Update and expand utilities and infrastructure, including broadband, water, sewer, natural gas, and electricity, to facilitate additional housing and business, manufacturing retention and development, as well as site readiness.

★ **Connect People to Quality-of-Life Assets**

Connect people to parks, trails, and local and regional outdoor recreational amenities to improve the quality of life and health for residents and visitors.

★ **Cross-Jurisdictional Collaboration**

Encourage collaboration between local governments, including school districts, townships, and municipalities, which is vital to implementing key economic and development initiatives.

SYSTEMS CONNECTIONS

The Transportation chapter functions as an interdependent system within Ross County's broader Comprehensive Plan. Each system influences and depends upon the others at multiple scales, from county-wide infrastructure investments to site-specific development decisions.

- ★ **Land Use.** Land use and transportation are tightly interconnected: the way land is developed shapes how people travel, and transportation networks, in turn, influence patterns of development. Dense, mixed-use areas tend to support walking, biking, and transit because destinations are closer together, while low-density, single-use development often leads to greater reliance on cars. At the same time, new roads, transit lines, or stations can attract development, shifting where people live, work, and shop. Because each system reinforces the other, planning them together is essential for creating efficient, sustainable, and accessible communities.
- ★ **Economic Development.** A safe, reliable, and efficient roadway network is needed to support the movement of goods and people and foster an economically thriving Ross County. If achieved, existing businesses, such as Kenworth, will have the confidence to expand their presence in Ross County, knowing the county's infrastructure will support their future operations.
- ★ **Healthy Communities and Quality of Life.** Transportation supports Ross County's quality of life by providing reliable access to jobs, schools, healthcare, and essential services. It enables people to travel farther and more flexibly than they could by walking or transit alone, which is especially important in areas with dispersed development or limited public transportation. Well-designed road networks and vehicle access also help local businesses thrive by facilitating the movement of goods and customers. When managed safely and efficiently, vehicular transportation enhances mobility, economic opportunity, and social connection—key elements of a healthy, vibrant community.
- ★ **Villages and CensUS Designated Places.** Having the right-sized functional classification of roadways impacts the vitality of villages and named places. If a roadway is classified too low and a village's downtown/main street is perceived as congested, it may deter patrons from supporting core, local businesses. If a roadway is built to route heavy truck traffic through Bainbridge, for example, it will discourage pedestrian presence on sidewalks.
- ★ **Agriculture.** Roadways and bridges need to support all appropriate users, including farmers moving farm equipment within the agricultural core of Ross County. That includes roundabouts and supporting roadway accessories, such as overhead utilities and signage within the right-of-way. Unnecessary damage to these features may occur if farm equipment is not accounted for in roadway and bridge design.
- ★ **Housing.** In the past, interest in housing development along the Pleasant Valley Road corridor has not come to fruition due to traffic concerns, underscoring the need for roads to support housing.

The matrix below expresses the relationships between this chapter’s strategies and the rest of the Plan. It shows how interrelated and integral this Plan’s strategies are.

Chapter	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total
Land Use										9
Villages										1
Housing										7
Healthy Communities and Quality of Life										6
Economic Development										9
Agriculture										2
Transportation	This chapter									
Total	5	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	6	



OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

Objective: Maintain a good state of repair for existing infrastructure.

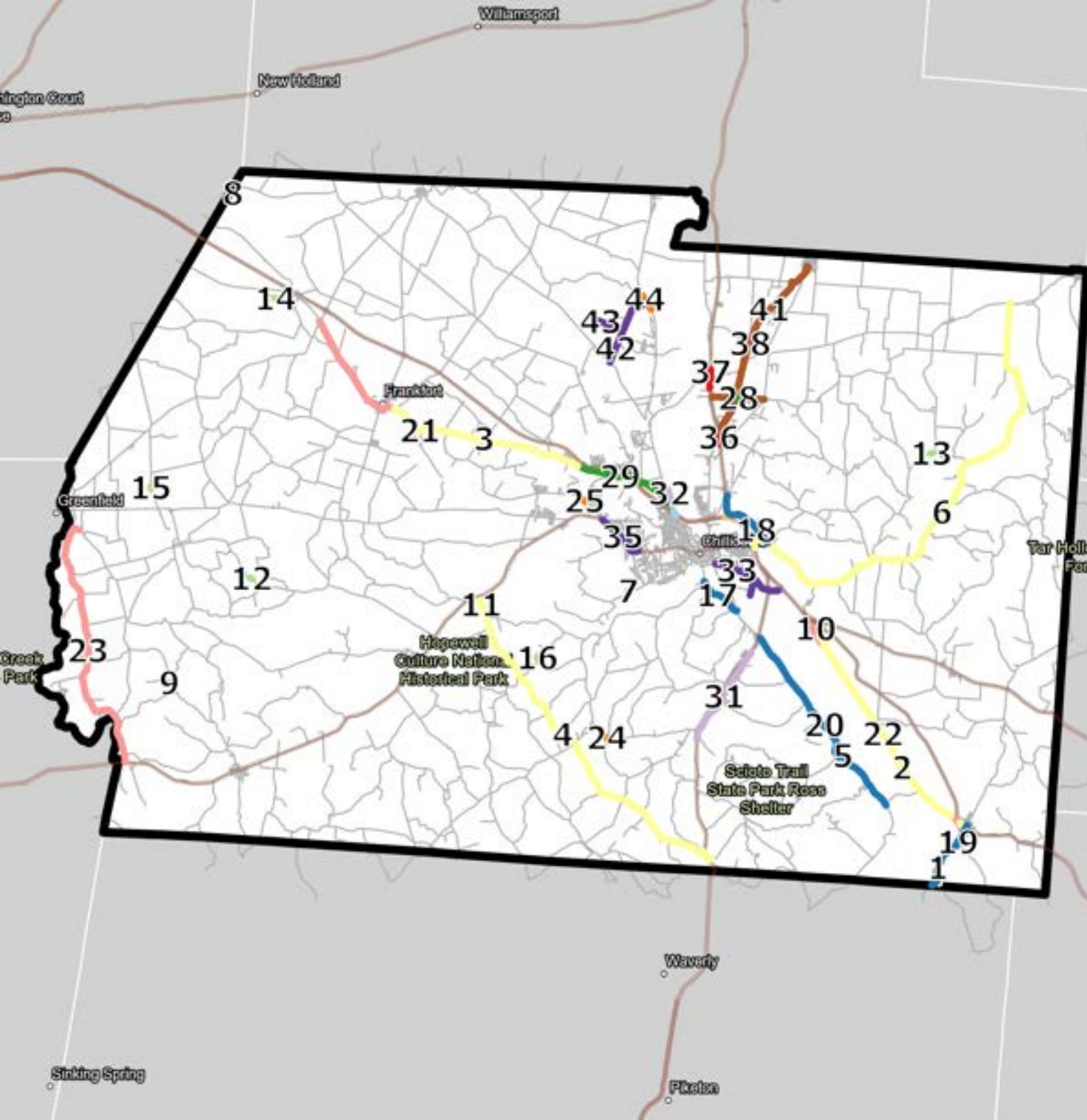
- ★ **Strategy 1:** Develop and Use a County Capital Improvement Plan to Prioritize Transportation and Infrastructure Investments

Maintaining Ross County’s existing roadway and bridge network is foundational to safety, mobility, and long-term fiscal responsibility. Many of the County’s most important transportation needs are not limited to new capacity projects; they also include pavement conditions, bridge rehabilitation or replacement, guardrail upgrades, slip repairs, drainage issues, intersection improvements, and corridor studies that prepare the County for future investment. A Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) should serve as the County’s primary tool for organizing these needs into a clear, prioritized, and financially realistic implementation program. That is especially important in Ross County, where transportation investments must support not only daily travel, but also agricultural mobility, economic development, emergency response, and future housing growth. The County Engineer has identified high-priority projects in Table 2.

Table 2: Ross County Roadway and Bridge Projects

Category	ID	Description	Priority	Map No.
Road Paving	C-207	Watson Rd. / Vigo Rd.		1
Road Paving	C-35	Old Route 35		2
Road Paving	C-550	County Road 550		3
Road Paving	C-167	Blain Highway		4
Road Paving	C-205	Three Locks Rd.		5
Road Paving	C-222	Charleston Pike		6
Bridge Replacement/Major Rehab.	T-144	Plyley's Lane - Truss	High	7
Bridge Replacement/Major Rehab.	C-84	Dogtown Rd. - Truss	High	8
Bridge Replacement/Major Rehab.	T-916	Garman Lane - Truss		9
Bridge Replacement/Major Rehab.	C-35	Old Route 35 over CSX RR - 3-span Steel Girder		10
Bridge Replacement/Major Rehab.	C-167	Blain Highway - 2-span steel beam; single span concrete		11
Bridge Replacement/Major Rehab.	C-54	Lower Twin Rd. - Concrete Arch		12
Bridge Replacement/Major Rehab.	C-233	Walnut Creek Rd. - Steel Beam		13
Bridge Replacement/Major Rehab.	C-29	Austin Rd. - Steel Beam		14
Bridge Replacement/Major Rehab.	C-55	Lyndon Rd. - Steel Beam		15
Bridge Replacement/Major Rehab.	C-159	Bishop Hill Rd. - Steel Beam		16
Slip Repair	C-602	Cooks Hill Rd.	High	17
Slip Repair	C-222	Narrows Rd.	High	18
Slip Repair	C-207	Watson Rd.		19
Slip Repair	C-205	Three Locks Rd.		20
Guardrail Replacement	C-550	County Road 550 / Old US 35		21
Guardrail Replacement	C-35	Old Route 35		22
Guardrail Replacement	C-1	Rapid Forge Rd.		23
Intersection Improvements		Rozelle Creek Rd. at Liberty Hill Rd.		24

Category	ID	Description	Priority	Map No.
Intersection Improvements		Veterans Parkway at Anderson Station Rd.		25
Intersection Improvements		Bishop Hill Rd. at Blain Highway		26
Stormwater Improvements		Delano Ditch at SR 159 and Delano Rd.	High	27
Road Widening	T-236	Delano Road (including Drainage Improvements)		28
Corridor Study		Pleasant Valley Road Corridor	High	29
Traffic Impact Study		Delano Road (west of SR-159) Traffic Impact Study	High	30
Road Extension		Massieville Road Extension		31
Road Extension		Industrial Drive Extension		32
Road Improvements		Eastern Avenue		33
Road Improvements		Stauffer Lane		34
Road Improvements		US 50/Western Avenue		35
Interchange Improvements		US 23/SR 159		36
Interchange Improvements		US 23/SR 207		37
Road Widening		SR 159		38
Safety Study		SR 104/US 35		39
Interchange Study		US 35/US 23		40
Access Management Plan		SR 159		41
Road Improvements		Stone Road		42
Road Improvements		Betts Lane		43
Intersection Improvements		SR 104/Stone Road		44

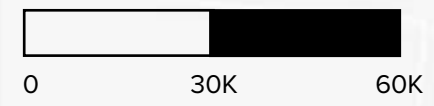


Legend

- Ross County
- Traffic Impact Study
- Access Management Plan
- Bridge Replacement/ Major Rehab.
- Corridor Study
- Guardrail Replacement
- Interchange Improvements
- Interchange Study
- Intersection Improvements
- Road Extension
- Road Improvements
- Road Paving
- Road Widening
- Safety Study
- Slip Repair
- Stormwater Improvements



Scale in Feet:



Ross County Transportation Projects

The CIP should serve as both a short-term capital budget and a long-term capital planning tool, ensuring immediate needs are addressed while preparing for future infrastructure demands.

To establish this program, Ross County should:

- ★ Develop a county-wide Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) with a five- to ten-year planning horizon, incorporating transportation, bridges, drainage, facilities, and related infrastructure needs.
- ★ Structure the CIP in two parts, including:
 - A Capital Budget identifying funded projects for the upcoming year
 - A Capital Plan outlining planned investments over a five- to ten-year period
- ★ Incorporate priority projects identified by County leadership and staff, including roadway resurfacing, bridge rehabilitation and replacement, slip repair, guardrail replacement, stormwater improvements, corridor studies, and key intersection improvements.
- ★ Include core project components for each investment, such as:
 - Project description and justification
 - Cost estimates
 - Funding strategy (local funds, grants, partnerships, bonds, etc.)
 - Implementation timeline
 - Long-term maintenance and operational impacts
- ★ Establish clear prioritization criteria, including safety, asset condition, agricultural access, economic development impact, emergency access, coordination with utilities, and project readiness.
- ★ Align the CIP directly with the County's annual budgeting process, allowing near-term projects to transition from planning into funded capital improvements.
- ★ Coordinate across departments and agencies, including the County Engineer, Planning and Development, utilities, and elected officials, to ensure consistent priorities and implementation.
- ★ Use the CIP to strengthen financial management by phasing major investments over time to avoid sudden budgetary impacts and improve long-term fiscal stability.
- ★ Position projects for external funding, ensuring priority improvements are well-defined, justified, and ready to compete for state and federal grants.
- ★ Maintain the CIP as a living document, regularly updating project status, costs, and priorities as conditions change and work is completed.
- ★ Improve transparency and public understanding by clearly communicating infrastructure priorities, timelines, and investment decisions aligned with the Comprehensive Plan.
- ★ A well-structured CIP will provide Ross County with a clear, actionable roadmap for infrastructure investment, improve coordination, strengthen funding competitiveness, and ensure that limited resources are directed toward the County's highest-priority needs.
- ★ The CIP needs to account for all County capital expenses, not just roads and pipes. That includes any updates to existing buildings and facilities, as well as planned new structures and land purchases. At the time this plan was written, the County was undertaking a comprehensive facilities analysis. Once complete, items identified in that process need to be added to the ongoing CIP program. That should include support facilities, such as updates or modernization of emergency service and police facilities.

Objective: Partner with ODOT District 9 on critical roadway improvements and studies.

★ **Strategy 2:** US 50/Western Avenue Improvements.

The US 50/Western Avenue corridor is one of the most critical transportation corridors in Ross County, serving as a primary east-west connection into Chillicothe and supporting both residential and commercial growth. Recent improvements to Veterans Parkway and surrounding infrastructure have increased the corridor's attractiveness for development; however, the roadway is no longer functioning effectively under current and anticipated conditions.

Increasing traffic volumes, numerous closely spaced and unmanaged access points, and existing roadway geometry are contributing to congestion, reduced capacity, and elevated crash risk. As additional development occurs, these issues are expected to worsen without targeted intervention.

To address these challenges, Ross County should:

- Advance the ROS-50-19.26 corridor improvement project, focusing on mobility, safety, and access management between Veterans Parkway and Limestone Boulevard.
- Implement corridor-wide access management strategies, including consolidating driveways, establishing shared access points, and improving internal circulation between properties.

- Evaluate roadway improvements, including potential widening, intersection upgrades, and geometric enhancements to address existing deficiencies and improve traffic flow.
- Address safety concerns related to high crash rates, incorporating design solutions that reduce conflict points and improve overall corridor operations.
- Coordinate improvements with adjacent land use and development activity, ensuring that new growth aligns with corridor capacity and access management goals.
- Prioritize pedestrian and multimodal improvements where appropriate, particularly in areas transitioning to more urbanized development patterns.
- Phase improvements based on development pressure, safety concerns, and available funding, ensuring early action in the most constrained segments.
- Improving the Western Avenue corridor is essential to maintaining mobility, supporting continued development, and ensuring that this key gateway functions safely and efficiently as the area grows.

★ **Strategy 3:** Advance the Pleasant Valley Road Corridor as a Priority Growth-Supporting Investment

The Pleasant Valley Road (PVR) corridor is one of the most significant constraints to future housing and economic development in Ross County. Severe peak-hour congestion, access conflicts, and limited roadway capacity are already restricting development activity, with multiple projects failing to advance due to transportation limitations. As a critical connector northwest of Chillicothe, PVR also plays an important role in providing access to employment, healthcare, and essential services.

A recent traffic impact study confirmed that both near-term operational improvements and long-term capacity upgrades will be required to address these issues. In response, Ross County has secured funding to initiate a comprehensive corridor analysis focused on improving safety, mobility, and development readiness.

Addressing the PVR corridor is essential not only to resolving existing congestion and safety concerns, but also to unlocking development-ready land, coordinating utility investments, and supporting both workforce and market-rate housing in one of the County's primary growth areas.

To advance this effort, Ross County should:

- Complete a comprehensive corridor study for Pleasant Valley Road, evaluating existing conditions, future traffic demand, and development scenarios.
- Define the study area and key focus segments, including the corridor between SR-104 and SR-207, the associated intersections, and development areas.

- Use existing data and prior studies, including traffic counts, crash data, access points, land use, and utility capacity, to inform analysis. Engage key stakeholders, including the County Engineer, ODOT District 9, MPO, developers, emergency services, and residents, to identify issues and opportunities.
- Identify key constraints and opportunities, including congestion bottlenecks, high-crash locations, access conflicts, and infrastructure limitations.
- Develop and evaluate improvement alternatives, ranging from targeted operational improvements (turn lanes, signal timing) to more comprehensive solutions (widening, intersection redesign, access management, and multimodal enhancements).
- Select a preferred corridor improvement strategy that balances safety, mobility, cost, and development readiness.
- Coordinate transportation improvements with utility planning and land-use strategy, ensuring that infrastructure can support future housing and commercial development.
- Develop a phased implementation plan that includes short-, mid-, and long-term improvements, funding strategies, and project responsibilities.
- Position the corridor for state and federal funding, ensuring that study outcomes support grant applications and capital programming.

Advancing the Pleasant Valley Road corridor will remove a critical barrier to growth, improve safety and mobility, and enable coordinated development in one of Ross County's most important expansion areas.

★ **Strategy 4:** Conduct studies and projects that support Focus Area #2 of this Comprehensive Plan.

The following projects are adjacent to or part of Focus Area #2 of this Comprehensive Plan and support the future land uses and the resultant traffic.

US 23/SR-159 interchange (Triangle Study): Improvements to this interchange will result in improved access for River Road and will unleash the development potential of adjoining properties along River Road and at the property known as “the Point” on the east side of SR-159 (Bridge St).

- US 23/SR-207 interchange (Triangle Study): While this is a newer facility, its design has created significant issues at peak hours with traffic flow at north and south US 23 offramps and at River Rd and Hospital Rd that intersect with SR-207 because it is challenging to cross traffic when making left turn movements at all intersections in the interchange.
- SR-159 Widening and Access Management - Widen to multiple lanes and utilize access roads as the primary means of access along SR-159 from US 23 to the northeast. This area has various development types and is sure to continue developing in the future. Private access to SR-159 should be restricted as much as possible. In the short term, the county is recommended to develop an access management plan for the corridor through a collaborative approach.
- SR-104/US 35 Interchange Safety Study
- US 35/US 23 Full Interchange to Allow for All Turn Movements - This improvement has been under discussion for many years. The US 23/US 35 interchange is important in the area. However, it is not possible to connect directly from US 35 eastbound to US 23 northbound, or from US 23 southbound to US 35 westbound. That adds to the congestion on Bridge Street. During the drafting of this Plan, ODOT examined this connection and found that any impacts on Bridge Street would be negligible and would not significantly improve traffic flow. While this is still a priority project, ODOT’s analysis indicates that these improvements will be self-funded.

★ **Strategy 5:** Advance Supporting Corridor, Access Management, and Connectivity Improvements

In addition to major corridor and interchange investments, Ross County must advance a set of supporting improvements that enhance connectivity, improve safety, and ensure that transportation infrastructure keeps pace with development. These improvements are particularly important within identified growth areas and industrial subareas, where coordinated infrastructure investment is necessary to support site readiness and long-term economic development.

To support these efforts, Ross County should:

- Conduct a traffic impact study for Delano Road (west of SR-159) to evaluate full build-out conditions and determine appropriate roadway improvements to support industrial development.
- Develop and implement an access management plan for the SR-159 corridor that restricts direct access and promotes shared access and internal circulation.
- Evaluate long-term capacity improvements along SR-159, including potential widening if warranted by future traffic volumes.
- Advance roadway improvements within key subareas, including Eastern Avenue and Stauffer Lane, to support economic development.
- Evaluate grade separation and railroad crossing improvements to improve safety and reduce delays.
- Advance the extension of Industrial Drive to improve connectivity within industrial areas.
- Evaluate the extension of Massieville Road, reducing direct access points along US 23 and improving corridor safety.
- Conduct targeted safety studies, including the SR-104/US 35 interchange and major County intersections.
- Coordinate improvements with economic development, utilities, and land-use planning, ensuring that infrastructure supports identified growth areas.
- These improvements will strengthen the overall transportation network, support site readiness, and ensure that development is supported by adequate infrastructure.

★ **Strategy 6:**

Ross County should establish a Transportation Improvement District (TID) to provide a dedicated, flexible mechanism for funding, coordinating, and accelerating priority transportation improvements. A TID is a proven tool in Ohio that allows local governments to partner with townships, municipalities, developers, and state agencies to advance infrastructure projects that support economic development, improve safety, and enhance mobility.

In Ross County, a TID would serve as an implementation tool to move priority projects identified in this Plan from concept to construction, particularly those tied to growth areas, industrial development, and corridor improvements. By establishing a formal structure for collaboration and funding, the County can better align transportation investments with land-use, utility expansion, and economic development initiatives.

A TID can support a wide range of improvements, including roadway expansions, intersection upgrades, access management, bridge improvements, and infrastructure needed to support site readiness in Focus Areas. It also enables leveraging multiple funding sources, including local contributions, state and federal grants, and private-sector participation.

To establish and implement a TID, Ross County should:

- Coordinate with the Ross County Board of Commissioners, municipalities, and townships to establish the TID structure and governance framework.
- Define the geographic scope and priority project areas, with an emphasis on Focus Areas and key corridors, such as Pleasant Valley Road, US 50/Western Avenue, and SR-159.
- Identify initial priority projects that can be advanced through the TID, including corridor improvements, intersection upgrades, and infrastructure supporting economic development sites.
- Develop a funding strategy that leverages multiple sources, including local funding, ODOT programs, JobsOhio, grants, and private-sector contributions tied to development.

- Use the TID to coordinate project delivery, streamline implementation, and reduce barriers associated with multi-jurisdictional projects.
- Align TID investments with the County Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to ensure consistency between long-term planning and project execution.
- Position TID-supported projects to compete for state and federal funding by advancing engineering, environmental review, and cost estimation.

Establishing a Transportation Improvement District will provide Ross County with a powerful tool to implement the transportation strategies outlined in this Plan, accelerate project delivery, and better compete for infrastructure funding in a rapidly evolving regional economy.

Objective: Ensure that transportation improvements in the Focus Areas developed in the Plan receive priority status due to their potential to fulfill multiple plan goals, such as creating new jobs and housing development sites.

- ★ **Strategy 7:** Incorporate transportation improvements into Focus Area #1.

Focus Area #1 includes established and emerging development areas where maintaining reliable access, improving safety, and supporting incremental growth are critical to long-term success. While this area is not expected to experience the same level of large-scale development as other parts of the County, targeted transportation improvements are necessary to maintain functionality, improve connectivity, and support continued investment.

Several priority projects identified through the Thoroughfare Plan and stakeholder input will help address localized constraints, improve circulation, and enhance access to key destinations within this area.

To support Focus Area #1, Ross County should:

- Conduct targeted intersection and safety improvements along key County roadways, addressing known operational issues and improving traffic flow.
- Advance low-cost, high-impact improvements, including turn lanes, signage, striping, and visibility enhancements to improve safety and efficiency.
- Improve connectivity between local roads and major corridors, reducing reliance on a limited number of access points and improving overall network performance.
- Coordinate transportation improvements with maintenance and resurfacing programs, ensuring that upgrades are implemented efficiently as part of ongoing infrastructure investment.
- Support local access and circulation improvements that enhance connectivity to neighborhoods, services, and community destinations.

These improvements will help maintain a safe and reliable transportation network, support incremental development, and enhance quality of life within Focus Area #1.

- ★ **Strategy 8:** Improve roadways to support future land uses of Focus Area #2, developed as part of the ODOT Reviewed Triangle Study, identified in this Plan.
- ★ **Strategy 9:** Incorporate transportation improvements into Focus Area #3.

Focus Area #3 represents a key location for industrial and employment growth in Ross County. Supporting development in this area requires a transportation network that can accommodate increased truck traffic, provide efficient access to major corridors, and ensure safe and reliable movement of goods and employees.

Targeted infrastructure improvements are necessary to enhance site readiness, improve internal circulation, and ensure that transportation constraints do not limit future economic development opportunities.

To support industrial growth in Focus Area #3, Ross County should:

- Advance roadway improvements on Stone and Betts Roads that support employment and aerospace logistics access, including upgrades to key routes serving employment areas and development sites.
- Improve connectivity between industrial sites and major corridors, including SR 207 and SR 104, as well as other regional routes, to support efficient freight movement.
- Evaluate and improve intersections (SR 104 and Stone Road) used by truck traffic, reducing conflicts and improving safety.
 - ◆ Coordinate roadway improvements with utility expansion and site development, ensuring that infrastructure investments support shovel-ready conditions.
 - ◆ Support improvements that enhance internal circulation within industrial areas, reducing congestion and improving operational efficiency.
 - ◆ Position key infrastructure projects for funding, ensuring that improvements align with economic development priorities and grant opportunities.

These improvements will strengthen site readiness, improve access to employment areas, and position Ross County to attract and support industrial investment.



Healthy Communities and Quality of Life

OVERVIEW

Ross County enters this Comprehensive Plan with several strong foundational elements that support healthy communities and quality of life. The County benefits from an impressive network of parks, trails, and natural areas, as well as vibrant cultural, historical, and tourism assets. In addition, residents are served by committed local schools and dependable Fire, EMS, and law enforcement agencies. Throughout the public engagement process, residents consistently identified these assets as important community strengths.

Building on this foundation, this chapter explores community aspirations and the areas residents identified as needing improvement. Public engagement highlighted opportunities to improve overall well-being, increase access to healthy choices, strengthen social connections, and create environments that support longer, safer, and more active lives.

Healthy communities and quality of life in Ross County are shaped by several interconnected factors, including economic conditions, the availability of essential services, and residents' ability to take advantage of the County's food systems, recreational assets, schools, and cultural resources. However, not all residents have equal access to these opportunities. Barriers such as lower household incomes, limited transportation options, and geographic distance from services can make it difficult for some residents to fully benefit from these community assets. As Ross County continues to age and attract new residents, ensuring reliable access to daily needs and community amenities will be critical to supporting residents at every stage of life.

This chapter examines the key factors influencing health and quality of life in Ross County, including access to healthcare, parks and recreation systems, transportation connections, public safety, and the availability of fresh food. It builds on the County's strengths, including its natural beauty, agricultural heritage, and strong sense of community, while identifying policies, partnerships, and investments that can expand access and enhance everyday life for current and future residents.



WHAT WE LEARNED

The following information was documented in the Existing Conditions Report (ECR) and is summarized below to illustrate how existing data informs the recommendations presented in this chapter.

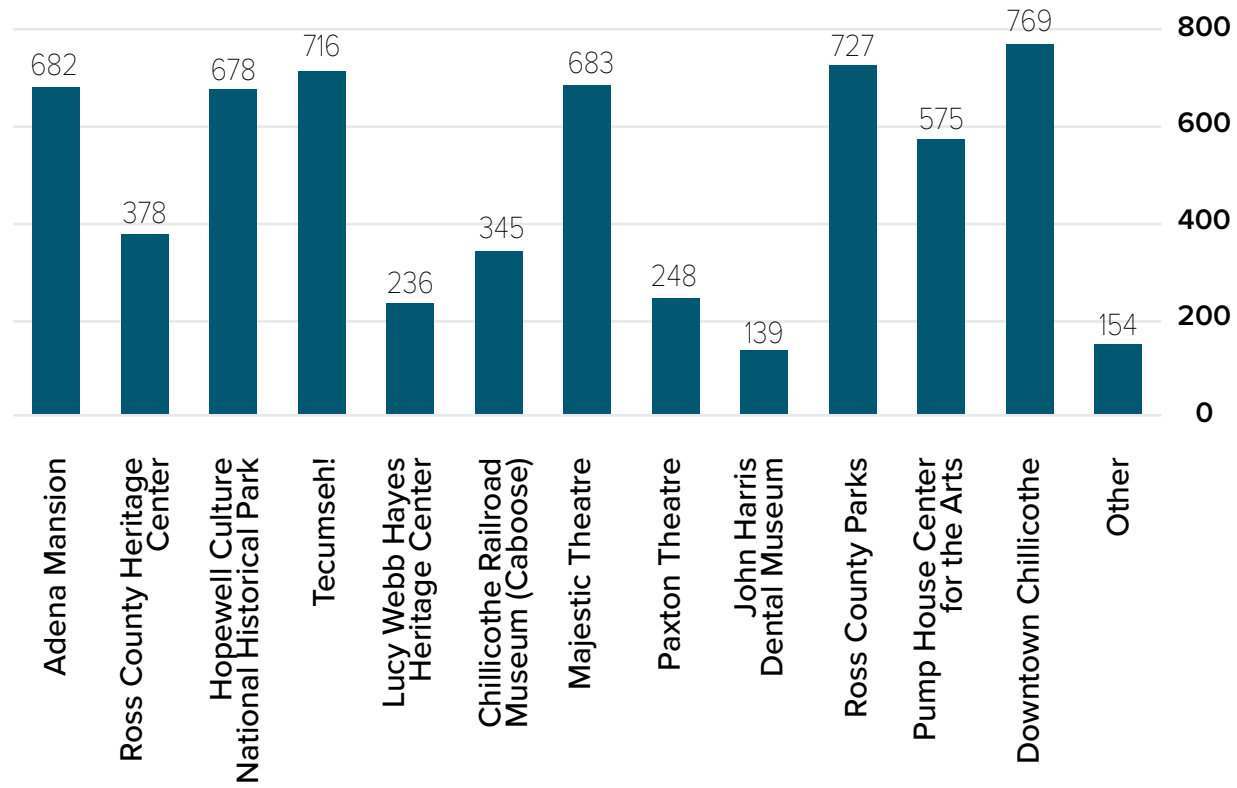
- ★ In 2020, Ross County residents had a median age of 41.2 years, and this figure is expected to continue rising in the coming decades. An aging population will place increasing pressure on transportation systems, healthcare access, and aging-in-place strategies. These strategies include accessible housing design, coordinated transportation services, and programs that help older adults remain safely in their homes and communities as they age. Transportation will be particularly important for residents who can no longer drive to medical appointments or daily services. An on-demand transit service is available to residents throughout rural Ross County; however, its operating hours and service schedule are currently limited.
- ★ In 2023, approximately 16.5 percent of Ross County residents were living in poverty, down from a peak of nearly 20 percent in 2012. The 2024 Community Health Needs Assessment identified lack of physical activity and poor nutrition as the most significant detrimental health behaviors affecting residents. Limited access to fresh food was cited as a contributing factor. Despite the County's strong agricultural foundation, residents in rural areas and smaller villages often face greater challenges in accessing fresh, affordable food.
- ★ Ross County benefits from an extensive park and recreation system that includes parks managed at the national, state, county, and municipal levels. In total, the County provides approximately 138.3 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, significantly higher than the national average of 10.6 acres per 1,000 residents. The County's recreation system also includes approximately 151.45 miles of trails, including the Paint Creek Recreational Trail, which provides an important regional asset for outdoor recreation and active transportation.

WHAT WE HEARD

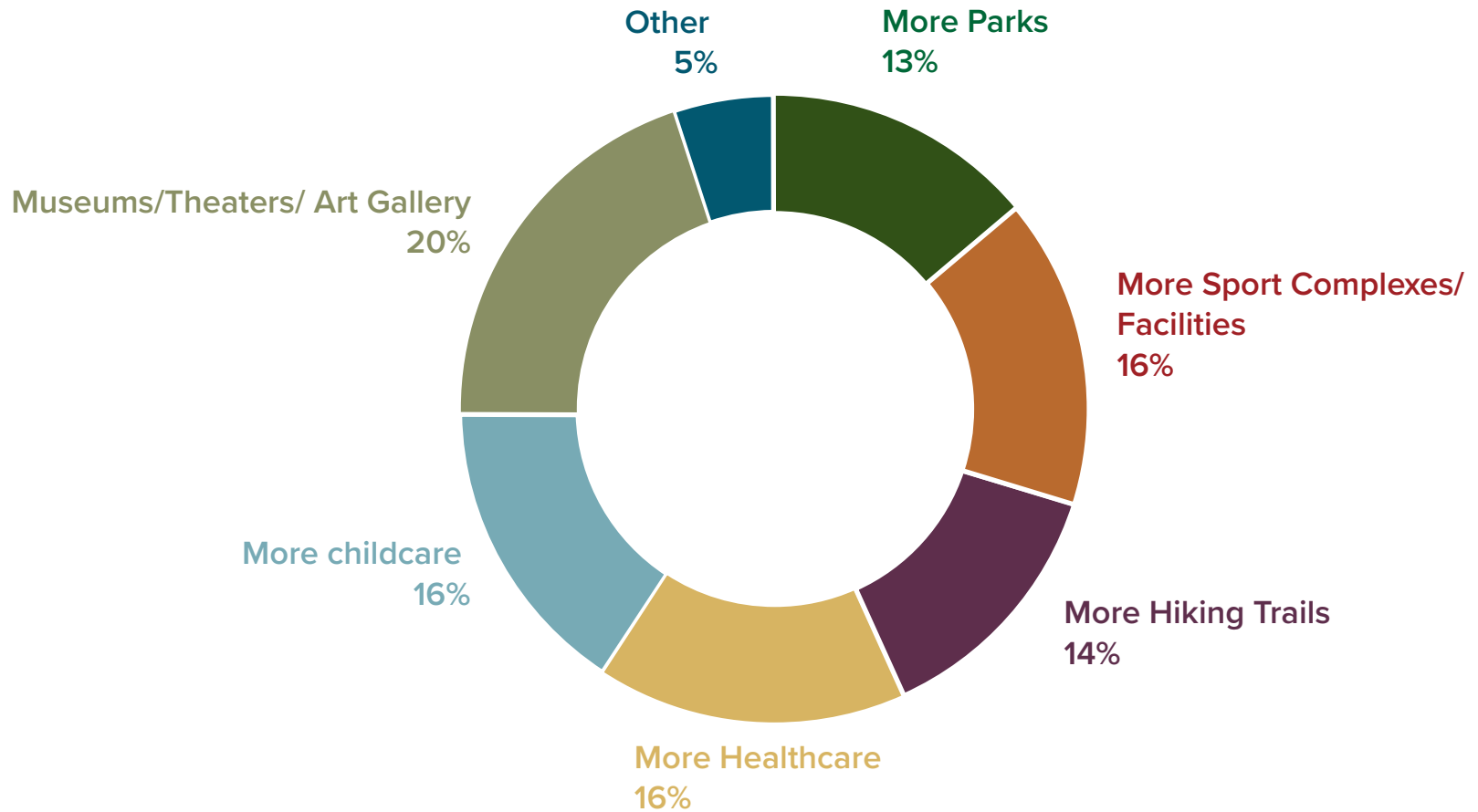
These are the themes that emerged from public engagement:

- ★ Residents consistently identified parks and trails as one of Ross County’s most significant assets. Still, they expressed a desire for improved connectivity both between individual parks and between communities and major recreational destinations.
- ★ Participants emphasized the importance of expanding access to fresh food, particularly in rural areas and villages. They expressed support for farmers’ markets and other opportunities to access locally grown produce.
- ★ Access to transportation was frequently cited as a barrier to reaching healthcare providers, employment opportunities, and other daily needs, particularly for older adults and residents living in rural parts of the County.
- ★ Stakeholders expressed concern about the long-term sustainability of health services and programs that currently rely on federal grant funding, noting that these funding sources are uncertain to continue.
- ★ Libraries, schools, senior centers, village halls, faith-based facilities, and other community gathering places were identified as critical local resources supporting health, education, and social connection.
- ★ Public safety was one of the top priorities noted by open house respondents.
- ★ Participant responses at open houses also indicated that quality-of-life amenities, such as Hopewell Culture National Historical Park and similar attractions, are valued by both residents and visitors. These destinations contribute to community identity and enhance Ross County’s appeal as a place to live and visit. See pages 90 and 91 for responses received during the open house engagement exercises.

Tourism Sites Visited in the Last Three Years



What Amenities Do You Want to See in Ross County?



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOAL CONNECTIONS

Comprehensive Plan goals are interrelated throughout the plan. The following goals are directly relevant to this chapter and demonstrate its integration within the broader Comprehensive Plan.

Transportation Improvements

- ★ Improve roadway and active transportation infrastructure to serve our residents, workforce, visitors, and businesses. That will result in greater connectivity and safer, more efficient, and more accessible transportation options.

Connect People to Quality-of-Life Assets

- ★ Connect people to parks, trails, and local and regional outdoor recreational amenities to improve the quality of life and health for residents and visitors.

Enhance Law Enforcement, Health, and Safety Services

- ★ Enhance community experience and quality of life by prioritizing access to fire and emergency medical services and safety and security.

Cross-Jurisdictional Collaboration

- ★ Encourage collaboration between local governments, including school districts, townships, and municipalities, which is vital to implementing key economic and development initiatives.

SYSTEMS CONNECTIONS

The provision of Healthy Community amenities and Quality-of-Life assets functions as an interdependent system within Ross County's broader Comprehensive Plan. Access to healthcare, recreation, fresh food, transportation, housing, environmental quality, and economic opportunity are not isolated topics. Each system influences and depends on the others to varying degrees and at different scales, from countywide infrastructure investments to site-specific development decisions.

- ★ **Economic Development.** Workforce attraction and retention depend heavily on quality-of-life assets, including parks, schools, healthcare access, and housing options. Investments in trails, fresh food access, and transportation improvements directly support employer recruitment and business expansion by making Ross County a desirable place to live. Healthier populations are also more productive and can reduce long-term public costs.
- ★ **Housing.** The location and condition of housing influence access to schools, parks, employment, healthcare, and transportation. Initiatives such as Safe Routes to Schools, trail connectivity, and aging-in-place strategies can strengthen housing stability and increase the attractiveness of both Suburban Living and Commerce Center character areas. Stable and safe housing improves both physical and mental health. In contrast, overcrowding or substandard housing can increase fire risks and public health concerns.
- ★ **Transportation.** Transportation is a foundational system connecting residents to employment, medical appointments, groceries, education, and recreation. Recognizing healthcare access as a transportation issue helps align mobility investments with health outcomes and the needs of an aging population. Sidewalks, trails, and transit options can promote physical activity, while well-designed and maintained roads, adequate lighting, and proper drainage improve safety and reduce accident rates. Reliable road infrastructure also improves response times for law enforcement, fire, and EMS services.
- ★ **Agriculture and Food Systems.** Strengthening local food networks and exploring options, such as cooperative grocery stores, can support public health while reinforcing Ross County's agricultural economy. Expanding food access in villages can also stimulate local economic activity and improve nutritional outcomes.
- ★ **Villages and Community Hubs.** Village centers function as access points for services, markets, schools, and civic engagement. Supporting walkability, rural transit connections, and small-scale food access can strengthen village vitality while reducing social isolation.
- ★ **Environmental Quality.** Addressing contamination sites, such as the site in Focus Area 1, protects public health while also enhancing economic development potential. Environmental remediation efforts and public health outcomes are closely linked.
- ★ **Recreation.** Parks, trails, and open spaces provide opportunities for physical activity and social interaction while helping reduce chronic disease and stress.
- ★ **Utilities.** Reliable utility infrastructure is essential to maintaining healthy communities. Power outages or water system failures can quickly create emergency conditions and affect the safety and well-being of residents.
- ★ **Public Safety.** Communities that support healthy lifestyles and strong social connections often experience fewer emergency service calls. Investments in quality-of-life infrastructure can therefore complement and support public safety efforts.

The matrix below illustrates the relationship between this chapter's strategies and other elements of the Comprehensive Plan. It demonstrates how these strategies are interconnected and how they contribute to the Plan's broader goals.

		Strategies															
Chapter		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Total
Land Use		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	11
Housing		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	10
Villages		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	11
Healthy Communities and Quality of Life		This Chapter															
Economic Development		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	11
Agriculture		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	4
Transportation		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	7
Total		5	3	4	5	4	5	1	5	5	1	2	3	1	4	6	



OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

The objectives and strategies in this chapter are organized into three focus areas: Active Lifestyle, Healthcare Access, and Public Safety. These categories reflect key topics identified through the planning process and acknowledge the significant work already underway by the Ross County Health District and other partners to promote healthy lifestyles and improve access to trails, recreational assets, fresh food, and healthcare services.

HEALTHCARE ACCESS: EXISTING STUDIES

In Ross County, healthcare access is influenced less by the presence of medical facilities and more by transportation, coordination among service providers, and the ability to deliver services where people live. The strategies presented below focus on strengthening existing systems and aligning healthcare access with broader quality-of-life priorities, including food access, mobility, aging-in-place initiatives, and the vitality of villages and community hubs. These strategies also recognize the importance of coordination with primary healthcare providers, such as Adena Health System, and other local partners.

The summaries below highlight recent healthcare needs assessments and related studies that informed the development of the strategies that follow.

2022 Community Health Needs Assessment

Partners for a Healthier Ross County conducted a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA). That comprehensive, data-driven process identifies the community's most significant health needs and priorities. The assessment informs the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). In addition to analyzing demographic and socio-economic data, the process incorporated input from more than 1,000 community survey responses.

- ★ The leading causes of death in Ross County are cancer (all forms), heart disease, unintentional injury, pulmonary-respiratory disease, and stroke.
- ★ Leading health concerns identified in the assessment include obesity, diabetes, anxiety, and depression.
- ★ Poor nutrition and limited use of primary care services were identified as leading health behaviors contributing to negative health outcomes.
- ★ Economic conditions and poverty, access to basic needs such as housing, food, and transportation, and access to healthcare, particularly preventative services, were identified as key environmental factors affecting community health.
- ★ Outside the east side of Chillicothe, the most vulnerable populations are concentrated in the southwestern portion of the County, particularly in Twin and Paxton Townships.

2024-2026 Community Health Improvement Plan

A Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) is an implementation-focused document that establishes “a long-term, systematic effort to address public health problems based on the results of the community health assessment and the community health improvement process” (Centers for Disease Control, 2015).

The Ross County Community Health Improvement Plan serves as the community’s strategic roadmap for improving health outcomes during the 2024–2026 period. Partners developed the plan for a Healthier Ross County, a consortium of approximately 20 health organizations, including Adena Health System and the Ross County Health District. The plan is based on the findings of the 2022 Community Health Assessment.

The CHIP is intended to guide the work of hospitals, healthcare providers, public health departments, and social service agencies throughout the County. The plan identifies community strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. It establishes a shared vision, priorities, and measurable indicators for improving health outcomes. It also aligns with broader public health initiatives at the state and federal levels.

The primary components of the CHIP include:

- ★ Prioritizing key health focus areas to improve overall community health and address substance use disorders.
 - Mental health.
 - Obesity and diabetes prevention.
 - Care optimization.
 - Child safety and wellness.
- ★ Utilizing evidence-informed strategies to improve health outcomes and services.
- ★ An evaluation plan to track, report, and analyze progress.

Key Health Priorities listed in the CHIP:

- ★ Substance Use Disorder.
- ★ Mental Health.
- ★ Obesity and Diabetes Prevention.
- ★ Care Optimization.
- ★ Child Safety and Wellness.

Shared Outcomes between CHIP and Comprehensive Plan

- ★ Improved nutrition.
- ★ Increased physical activity.
- ★ Better access to care.
- ★ Stronger community conditions.
- ★ Reduced disparities.

The Comprehensive Plan does not replace the Community Health Improvement Plan. Instead, it reinforces the CHIP’s priorities by aligning land use, transportation, parks and recreation, food systems, and housing strategies with the health outcomes identified through the CHIP process.

HEALTHCARE ACCESS STRATEGIES

The most effective way for Ross County to improve the overall health of its residents is to work collaboratively with the region's healthcare organizations to advance shared priorities. The strategies below focus on actions that the County government can influence directly while continuing to coordinate with organizations, such as Adena Health System and other partners, working to advance the priorities identified in the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP).

The following strategies focus specifically on improving healthcare access and addressing related quality-of-life factors that influence community health.

Objective: Improve Access to Fresh Produce

★ **Strategy 1:** Establish Cooperative Grocery Stores in Villages or Census-Designated Places

Villages and rural areas in Ross County have limited access to full-service grocery stores. In many locations, the only nearby options for purchasing food are dollar stores, gas stations, or seasonal farm stands. Establishing consumer cooperative grocery stores (co-ops) in villages or census-designated places, such as Richmond Dale, could improve access to fresh produce and healthy food options for residents with limited transportation or financial means.

Co-ops rely on local membership and community ownership, allowing residents to shape product offerings and services based on local demand. Listening sessions are recommended before establishing a co-op to confirm community interest and identify preferred products. In some communities, a buying club or food purchasing group can serve as an initial step to test the concept before establishing a full retail location. A cooperative grocery model could also support the Food Systems Plan recommended in the Agricultural Chapter of this Plan.

Implementation steps may include:

- Organize a steering committee to oversee the financial and administrative tasks required to establish the co-op.
- Assess community need and market feasibility to confirm that the store can operate sustainably. Successful co-ops typically require a trade area population of roughly 8,000 residents.
- Establish a legal entity for the cooperative organization.
- Build membership and community support.
- Develop a business plan outlining governance, operations, and financial projections.
- Secure financing through programs, such as USDA Rural Development grants or loans.
- Identify a site and develop plans for the facility.
- Hire management and finalize operations.
- Launch the store and promote community participation to sustain it long-term.

CASE STUDY: LOCAL ROOTS IN WOOSTER, OHIO*

Wooster, Ohio, is a smaller city surrounded by rural communities, making Local Roots Market and Café a practical model for other rural or small communities seeking to improve food access while strengthening local economic connections. Local Roots operates as a cooperative grocery market that connects residents with seasonal and sustainably produced foods from more than 300 local growers and producers.

The market functions as a member-owned cooperative, meaning community members collectively own and support the business. Annual membership is \$50. This model demonstrates how a locally rooted community can sustain a grocery outlet that emphasizes regional food systems, community participation, and local economic circulation.

* [Local Roots Wooster Ohio.](#)

ACTIVE LIFESTYLE

Ross County features numerous recreational parks, open spaces, and hiking trails, including Paint Creek State Park, Buzzard's Roost, and Kinnikinnick Fen. The County also benefits from strong local agricultural production that provides access to locally grown food and produce. Elected officials, staff, and volunteers have devoted significant effort to connecting these assets to residents through active lifestyle planning initiatives.

These efforts recognize that Ross County already possesses many of the resources necessary to support healthy living. The challenge moving forward is ensuring that residents are aware of these assets and have convenient access to them so they can be used more regularly. Promoting and connecting these resources can help encourage healthier lifestyles and strengthen overall community well-being.

2020 Ross County Active Transportation Plan

Facilitated by the Ross County Health District, the Ross County Active Transportation Plan (ATP) was developed to address health disparities among Ross County residents, including limited opportunities for physical activity and access to healthy food. Although much of the plan focuses on Chillicothe, several findings and recommendations inform the strategies included in this Comprehensive Plan.

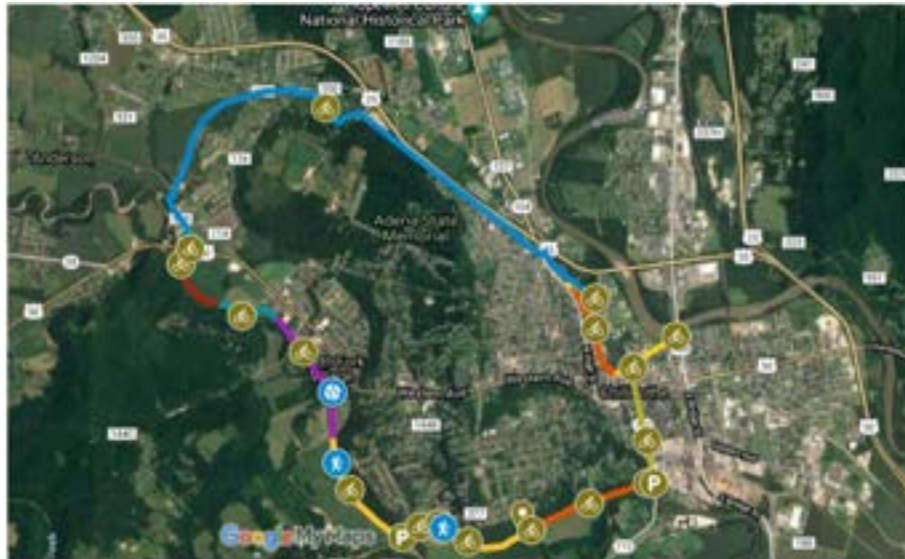
Key takeaways from the Active Transportation Plan include:

- ★ Public survey respondents identified sidewalk repair needs in Bainbridge and expressed a desire for shared-use paths that connect communities throughout the County to the City of Chillicothe.
- ★ Public comments indicated a strong interest in walking and biking opportunities along local trails. At the time the plan was prepared, the Paint Creek Recreational Trail was closed due to flooding-related erosion.
- ★ The campuses of Adena Health System and the VA Medical Center were identified as highly desired destinations for walking and bicycling.
- ★ Key barriers to walking and bicycling included the lack of bike lanes, the absence of sidewalks, and sidewalks in need of repair or widening.
- ★ Priority projects identified in the Active Transportation Plan include the Outer Belt Shared-Use Path. This medium-term project would develop a shared-use path along the former railroad corridor south of Chillicothe from Paint Street to US-50, with an on-street bikeway completing the loop.

The following ATP initiatives align with the CHIP Priorities of care optimization and access to basic needs.

- ★ Infrastructure Improvements
 - Village Walkability Audits (supporting Complete Streets adoption).
 - Trail Connectivity Plan (supports CHIP's three-mile trail expansion goal).
 - Bike Friendly Ross County initiative.
- ★ Transportation Programs
 - Community Bike Library.
 - Rural Transit Coordination.
 - Mobility referral pathways through senior hubs and healthcare providers.

TP Bike Loop Concept



Source: 2022 Ross County Active Transportation Plan

2025-2027 Ross County Park District Strategic Plan

The Ross County Park District Strategic Plan 2025-2027 identifies priorities related to trail development, park infrastructure, community programming, and system visibility. These priorities align closely with this Comprehensive Plan and the Active Transportation Plan (ATP), particularly in areas focused on connectivity, accessibility, and system awareness.

Key areas of alignment include:

- ★ Expansion of a connected trail network supporting shared-use path development and ATP priorities.
- ★ Improvements to park infrastructure and accessibility, including trailheads and facilities.
- ★ Increased community programming to promote park usage and active lifestyles.
- ★ Expanded marketing, signage, and wayfinding to improve awareness and utilization of park assets.

ACTIVE LIFESTYLE STRATEGIES

The following strategies focus on how Ross County can help encourage and promote active lifestyles for residents while supporting lead organizations, such as the Ross County Park District.

Objective: Assist the Park District in enhancing the Ross County Parks System

- ★ **Strategy 2:** Create shared-use paths linking major parks within the County, utilizing ODNR trail funding

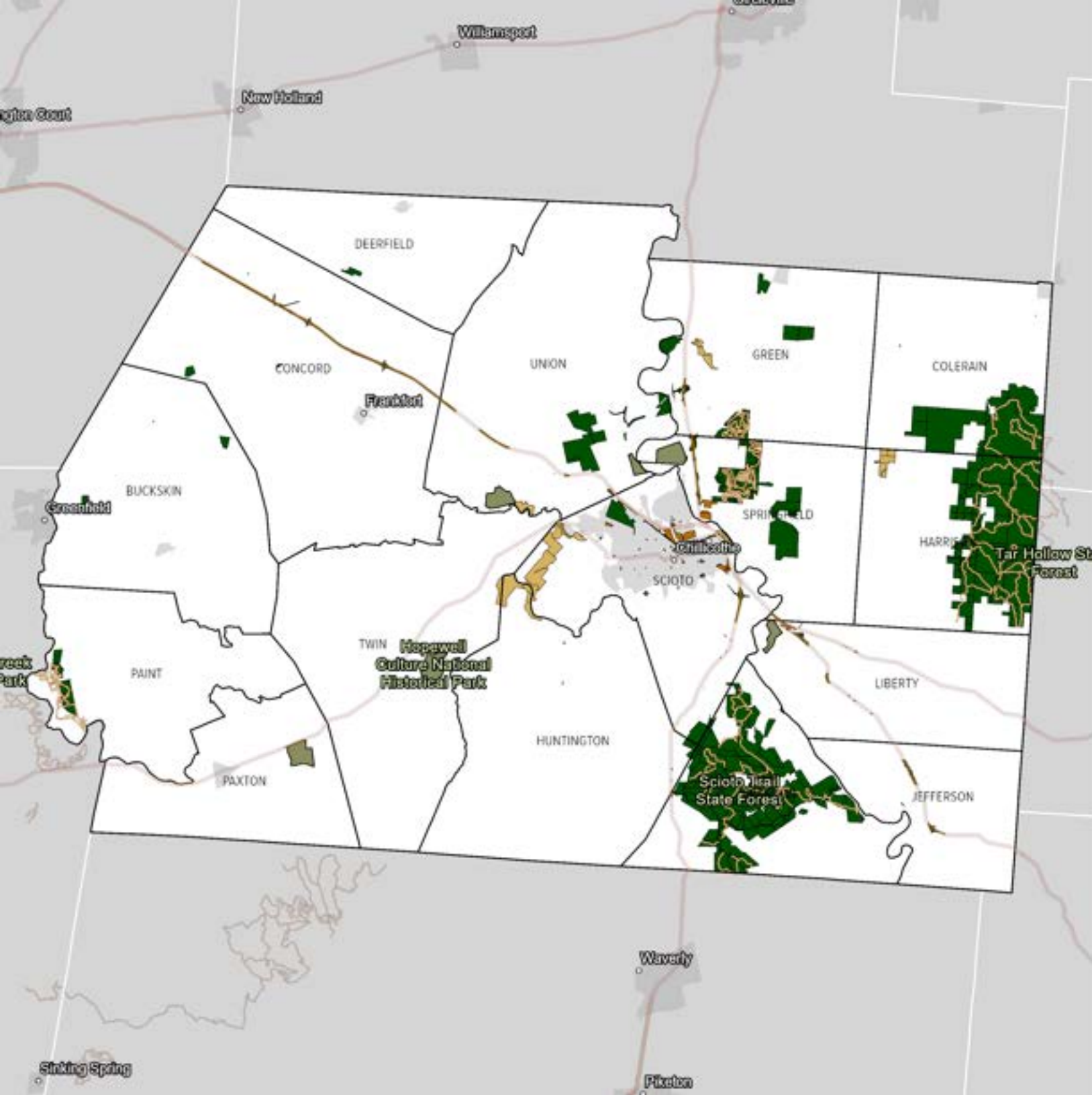
Parks are significant assets for Ross County, serving both residents and visitors. Currently, most trails are located within individual parks and are not connected. Developing shared-use paths between major parks could help create a more integrated recreation network throughout the County.

Expanded trail connectivity can encourage active lifestyles, support non-vehicular travel, increase tourism, and enhance housing demand by making Ross County more attractive to prospective residents. Establishing these connections will require careful study to identify the most feasible routes, particularly given Ross County's topography and the potential need to acquire private property.

A trail connectivity study could be conducted through a partnership between the Ross County Board of Commissioners, the Ross County Park District, the Ross County Engineer, and regional partners such as the Ohio Valley Regional Development Commission (OVRDC). Increasing trail access and overall trail mileage would align directly with **CHIP Objective 1**, which encourages greater opportunities for physical activity.

To advance this effort, the Ross County Park District and its partners should consider the following steps:

- Hire an experienced trail planning consultant.
- Define the purpose and need for expanded trail connectivity.
- Identify stakeholders and analyze property ownership patterns.
- Conduct a preliminary desktop study to identify potential routes.
- Assess environmental and cultural resources along potential corridors.
- Conduct field reconnaissance to verify route feasibility under real-world conditions.
- Perform a technical feasibility analysis.
- Evaluate social and user impacts.
- Analyze and compare alternative trail routes.
- Engage the public and key stakeholders.
- Prepare a final trails study with recommended routes and priorities.
- Obtain necessary regulatory approvals and permitting.
- Develop an implementation plan that includes construction scheduling and funding strategies. A mile of new paved trail can cost between \$500,000 and \$1 million, excluding land acquisition and environmental mitigation.
- Establish a long-term maintenance plan with estimated annual costs.



Legend

-  Townships
-  Incorporated Areas
-  ODNR Trails
-  National Parks
-  State Parks or Forest
-  County Parks
-  City Owned Parks



Scale in Feet:



Ross County Parks and Recreation

BEST PRACTICES: ODNR TRAIL FUNDING

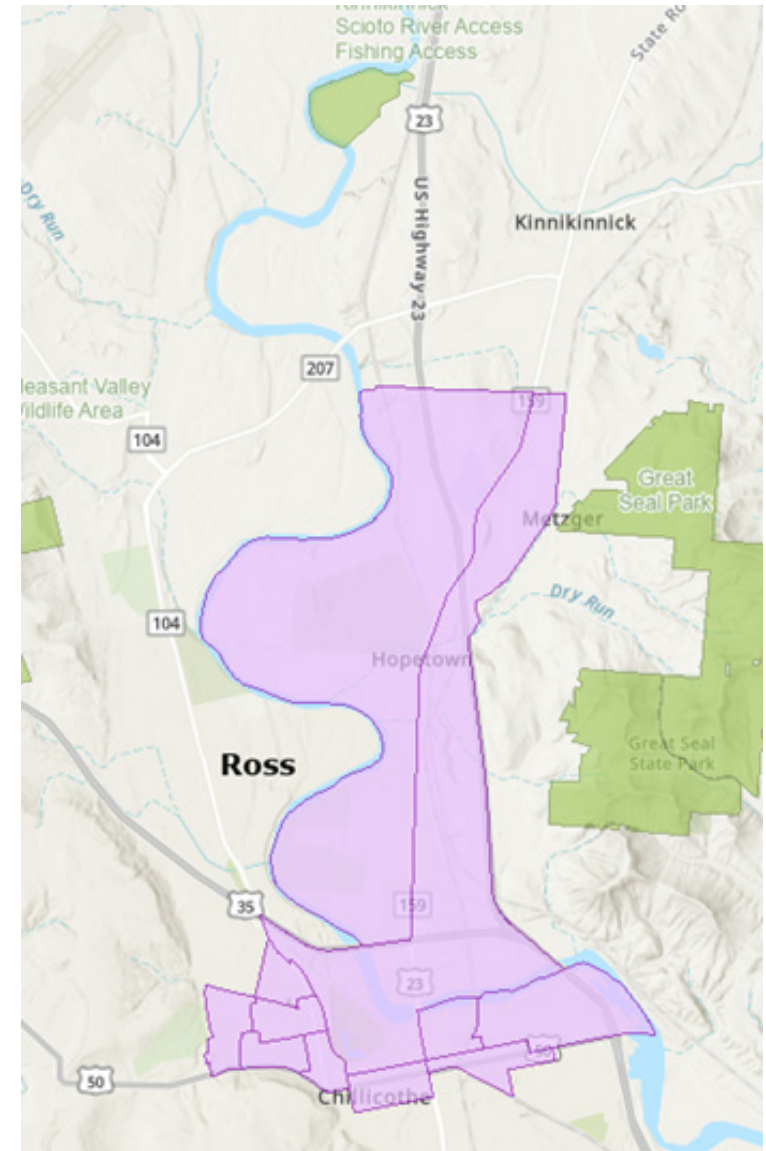
The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) administers two grant programs that support trail development and connectivity.

Recreational Trails Program (RTP): The Recreational Trails Program provides funding to municipalities and other eligible entities to support the development of urban trail connections, trailheads, trailside facilities, and maintenance or restoration of existing trails. Funding may also support ADA accessibility improvements, acquisition of easements or property, development of new trails, and the purchase or lease of trail construction equipment. The program requires applicants to provide matching funds equal to 20 percent of the grant amount, with awards available up to \$150,000.

Clean Ohio Trail Fund (COTF): The Clean Ohio Trail Fund supports land acquisition, construction of new trails or trail connectors, and, in some cases, engineering and design costs. The program reimburses up to 75 percent of eligible project expenses, with a 25 percent local match required. The most competitive applications are typically located within designated High Demand/High Needs Areas, shown in purple in Figure 5. The maximum grant award is \$500,000.

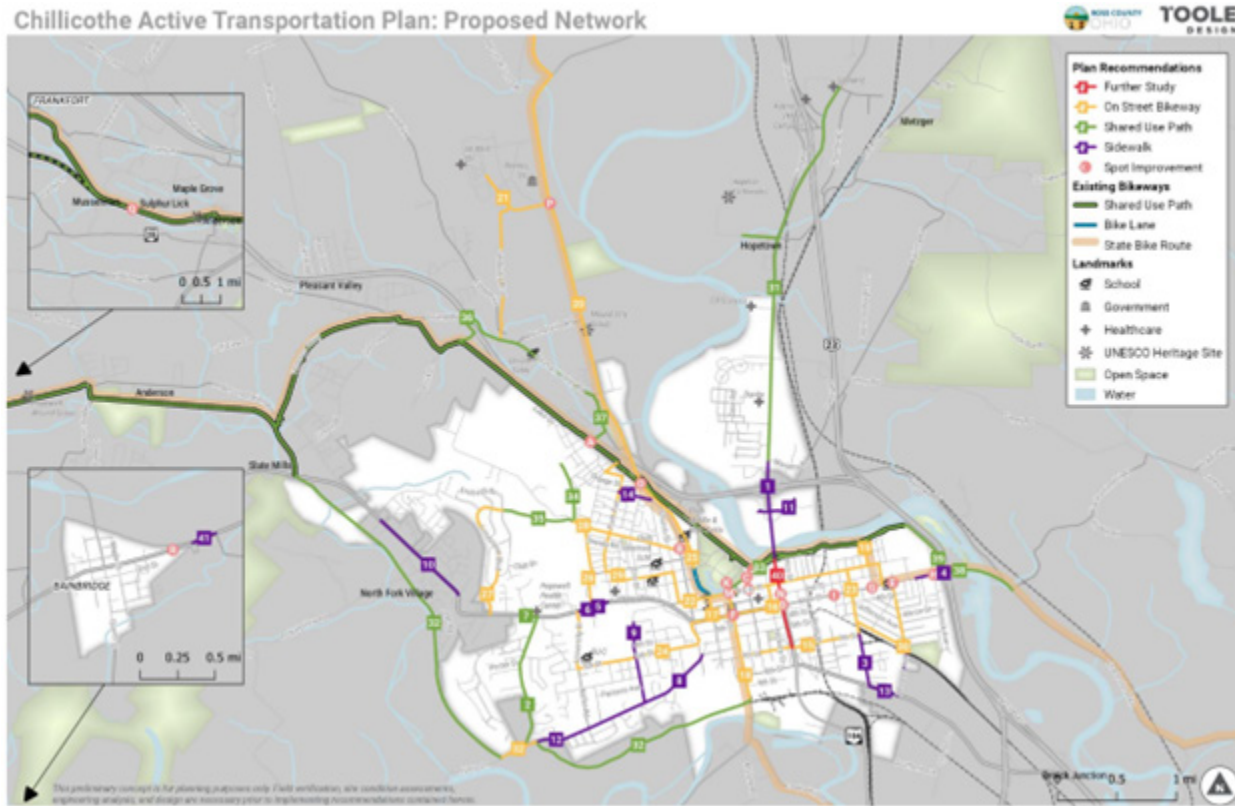
Chillicothe's proposed active trail network provides a logical framework for the Park District to focus its initial trail development efforts. Connecting new paths to an existing network can help encourage greater trail use while also improving access to key destinations, including healthcare facilities and grocery locations.

Clean Ohio Trail Fund High Demand High Needs Areas



Source: [ODNR Clean Ohio Trail Fund – Grant Application](#)

ATP Proposed Network Map



Source: 2022 Ross County Active Transportation Plan

- ★ **Strategy 3:** Create parks and recreation enhancements with long-term ownership, maintenance, and funding plans

High-quality parks and open space systems increase Ross County’s attractiveness to new housing and help position the County as a desirable place for employers and their workforce. A comprehensive parks and recreation master plan can help Ross County inventory its existing parks and recreation assets, identify future needs, and establish long-term maintenance and funding strategies to help attract residents and workers. Preparing a master plan can also improve eligibility for state funding opportunities, particularly when the plan aligns with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources’ **Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)**.

This effort would complement and expand upon the **2025–2027 Ross County Park District Strategic Plan** by providing a longer-term framework for park and recreation planning. The Park District and its partners could consider the following items if they choose to move forward with a new plan:

- Hire an experienced parks and recreation planning consultant.
- Review the purpose and priorities of ODNR’s **Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)** to ensure alignment with state objectives.
- Reevaluate and update the plan approximately every five years to ensure it reflects changing needs and priorities.
- The County may also consider establishing a **fee-in-lieu-of-parkland-dedication** policy to address potential gaps in park access within the Focus Areas identified in this Plan, where future residential growth is anticipated. Under a fee-in-lieu program, developers who choose not to dedicate land to parks within new subdivisions instead contribute funds that the local government can use to acquire new parkland or expand recreational facilities. However, given the County’s desire to encourage housing development, implementation of this program will need to be specific and purposeful.

- ★ **Strategy 4:** Create Scioto River and Paint Creek river trails

The Scioto River and Paint Creek are not used for freight transport, making them well-suited for recreational water trails that can enhance connectivity and expand tourism opportunities throughout Ross County. Establishing designated river trails can create new recreational experiences while strengthening connections between communities, parks, and natural areas.

Water-based recreation can also influence adjacent land uses, support local businesses, and enhance the County’s overall quality of life. Developing river trails would provide an additional amenity that supports healthy living and helps attract new residents and workforce talent seeking outdoor recreation opportunities.

Development of a river trail system may be supported through grant programs such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Boating Infrastructure Grant Program, which can fund docks and transient boating facilities, and the Federal Highway Administration’s Recreational Trails Program.

To establish a river trail system, the County and its partners should consider the following steps:

- Hire an experienced trail planning consultant.
- Define the purpose and need for the river trail system.
- Identify stakeholders and analyze property ownership along the river corridors.
- Conduct a preliminary desktop study to identify potential routes and access points.
- Perform a technical feasibility analysis.
- Evaluate access points and plan supporting infrastructure, such as launches, signage, and parking.
- Define official trail segments, access locations, and mile markers.
- Conduct field reconnaissance to verify conditions and constraints identified during mapping and analysis.
- Engage the public through outreach, education, and promotion.
- Obtain regulatory approvals and permits, including coordination with agencies such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.
- Develop an implementation plan, including construction phasing and funding strategies.
- Establish an ongoing maintenance and monitoring program for the river trail system.

Objective: Expand Active Transportation Opportunities

- ★ **Strategy 5:** Establish and apply for funding for safe routes to school

As identified in the 2020 Ross County Active Transportation Plan, improving safe pedestrian and bicycle access to schools is a key opportunity to address barriers to physical activity and access for younger residents. Access to education is a critical component of community well-being and youth development in Ross County. Removing physical barriers to school access can improve attendance and provide more opportunities for students to safely walk or bike to school, particularly for those who are not served by bus routes.

The Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program, administered by the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), provides funding to help communities improve pedestrian and bicycle access to K–8 schools. Ross County is eligible to apply for this funding in partnership with local school districts; however, high schools alone are not eligible for SRTS funding. Participation in the program requires a 20 percent local match, and the County and its partners would be responsible for design, right-of-way acquisition, construction administration, and long-term maintenance.

Investments in Safe Routes to School infrastructure not only improve access to education but also support broader community goals. Enhancing walkability around schools can promote physical activity, improve safety, and increase neighborhood desirability. Over time, these improvements can increase housing demand and support economic development by making Ross County more attractive to families and the future workforce.

★ **Strategy 6:** Adopt a limited Ross County Complete Streets Policy

Complete Streets policies in rural communities aim to reshape how small villages and countryside areas approach transportation, safety, and access. Rather than focusing solely on vehicles, these policies support people walking, biking, using mobility devices, operating farm equipment, or accessing regional transit.

In rural settings, distances are longer, traffic speeds are higher, and infrastructure is often limited. A Complete Streets framework can improve safety, strengthen local economies, and better connect residents to essential services such as healthcare, schools, and employment. When tailored to Ross County's context, these policies can support a safer, more resilient transportation network aligned with long-term growth and quality-of-life goals.

Complete Streets policies are also an implementation component of an Active Transportation Plan. Adopting a County-level policy aligns with Objective 2 of the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) (see Healthcare Access: Existing Studies) and supports improved access and mobility. Elements appropriate for Ross County villages are shown in the next image.

★ **Strategy 7:** Conduct village walkability audits

Improving walkability is a practical way for Ross County's villages to enhance safety, support local businesses, strengthen community health, and create more vibrant public spaces. Given this Plan's focus on villages, increasing pedestrian activity can help reinvigorate main streets and strengthen community identity.

A walkability audit is a structured assessment that helps local leaders, residents, and planners identify barriers to safe walking, such as missing sidewalks, high-speed traffic, unsafe crossings, or poor lighting, and opportunities for improvement. Conducting regular audits allows villages to make data-driven decisions, prioritize investments, and create environments that support residents of all ages and abilities.

Villages can implement walkability audits using a process such as the following:

- **Assemble a Local Audit Team**
Include village officials, residents (including seniors, parents, and youth), school representatives, local law enforcement, public health staff, and business owners.
- **Select the Audit Area**
Focus on downtown districts, school or park routes, intersections with known safety concerns, and areas experiencing or planned for growth.
- **Conduct the Walkability Audit**
Evaluate sidewalks, crossings, traffic conditions, lighting, and overall comfort. Document conditions through notes and photos.
- **Evaluate and Prioritize Findings**
Organize findings into categories, such as safety hazards, accessibility barriers, and longer-term improvements. Prioritize actions based on need and impact.

Example of Complete Street Elements for a Small Downtown

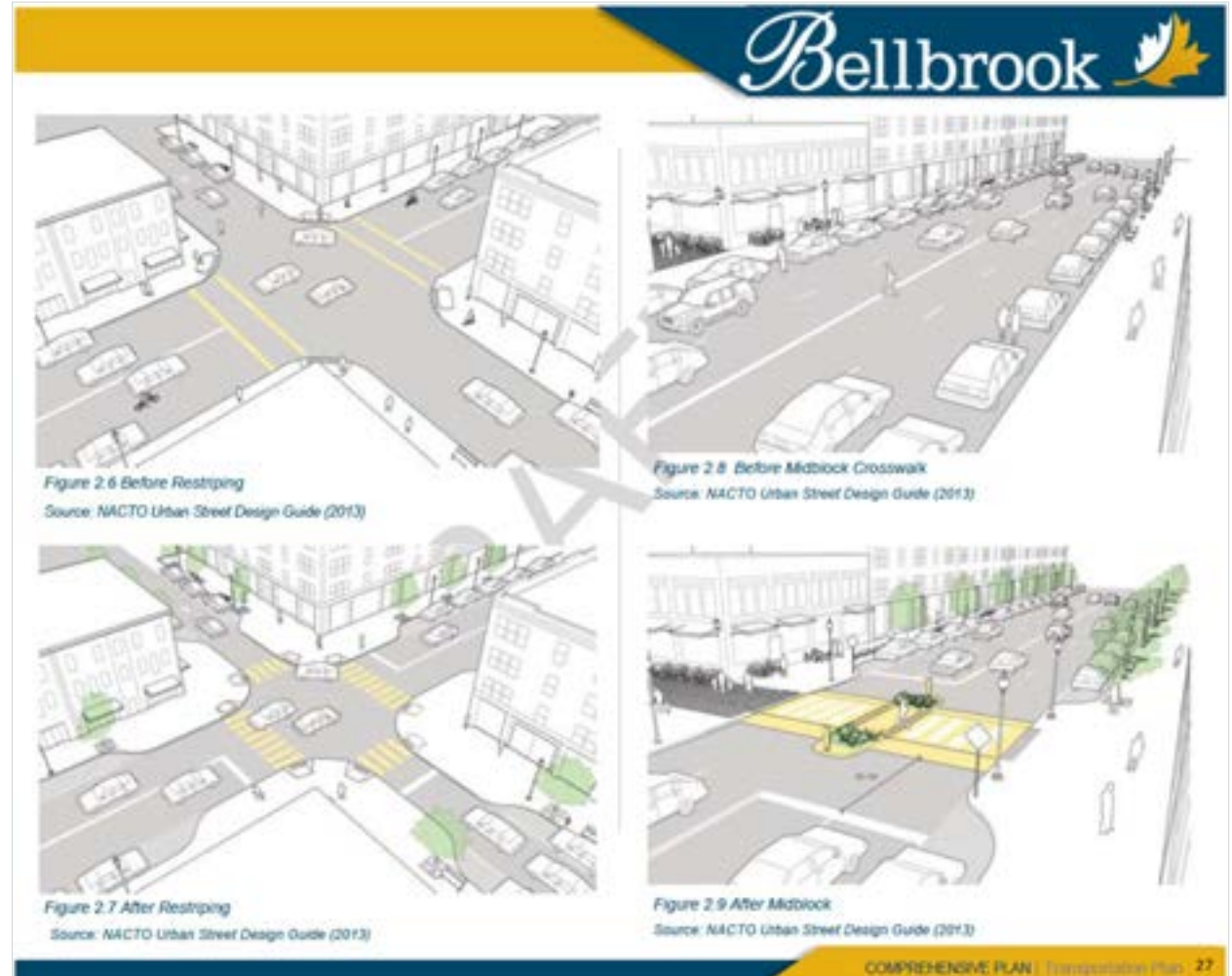
- **Prepare a Summary and Action Plan**

Develop a summary report that includes key findings, recommended improvements, and potential funding sources, such as ODOT or Safe Routes to School programs. Establish short-, medium-, and long-term actions and identify responsible parties.

- **Engage the Community and Monitor Progress**

Share results with village leadership, residents, and partner organizations to build support and track progress over time. Audits should be repeated periodically to measure improvements and maintain momentum.

The image of potential Complete Streets improvements in Bellbrook, Ohio, illustrates how targeted investments, such as improved crossings or streetscape enhancements, can be applied in Ross County villages to enhance walkability and the overall quality of place.



Source: [City of Bellbrook Comprehensive Plan](#)

★ **Strategy 8:** Enhance community-based physical activity

Ross County can expand daily physical activity and reduce chronic disease risk through accessible, community-centered programs that encourage residents of all ages to be active. Potential initiatives include:

- **Village Walking Clubs:** Weekly walking groups that encourage participation through social engagement, mileage challenges, and recognition.
- **Ross County Activity Passport:** A countywide program that encourages residents to explore parks, trails, and village destinations, with incentives for participation or completion.
- **Pop-Up Fitness Events:** Seasonal activities such as yoga in the park, family bike days, chair-based fitness classes, and community 5K events.
- **Youth Recreation Support:** Small grant programs to help villages offer after-school sports, open gym opportunities, and summer activity programming.

★ **Strategy 9:** Connect with small retailers, local convenience stores, and gas stations to provide fresh produce

Gas station convenience stores and small retailers, such as the Old Canal Stop near the Ross County Fairgrounds, already provide locally produced food in some locations. This concept can be expanded to increase access to fresh produce and healthy food options throughout the County, particularly in areas without full-service grocery stores.

Ross County can work with small retailers to improve the availability of fresh produce and healthy staples through strategies, such as signage, refrigeration support, and coordinated promotional efforts. This approach could serve as a component of the Food Systems Plan recommended in the Agriculture Chapter of this Plan and may function similarly to a localized community-supported agriculture (CSA) model.

This strategy could also be expanded to serve seniors by partnering with the Ross County Senior Center to incorporate fresh produce into on-site meal programs and home-delivered meals, improving access for residents with limited mobility.

★ **Strategy 10:** Healthy Food and Living Education Series

Ross County can develop a coordinated series of workshops focused on meal planning, cooking skills, chronic disease prevention, and budget-friendly nutrition. These programs can be offered at accessible community locations such as libraries, senior centers, schools, and village facilities.

The Ross County Health District, with support from OSU Extension and partner agencies, can lead coordination of scheduling, curriculum development, and partnerships. A mix of OSU Extension educators, Health District staff, SNAP-Ed/WIC educators, and other local health professionals should facilitate these workshops. Implementation considerations include:

- Establish a rotating schedule (quarterly or bi-monthly) that brings workshops to libraries, senior centers, schools, and village facilities throughout the County.
- Develop consistent, adaptable curriculum modules that can be delivered across multiple locations and tailored to different age groups.
- Coordinate programming with existing initiatives such as the Mobile Nutrition Outreach Unit and Senior Wellness Hubs.
- Partner with local growers, farmers' markets, and youth agriculture programs to incorporate demonstrations and opportunities for participants to access fresh produce.
- Use a unified, countywide communication strategy, including library calendars, senior newsletters, village social media, and school communications, to promote workshops.
- Track participation and geographic reach, and refine programming based on attendance data, participant feedback, and identified community health needs.

★ **Strategy 11:** Develop Village Farmers Market(s)

Village-scale farmers' markets provide a low-cost, flexible way to expand access to fresh food while supporting local producers and strengthening community activity centers. Ross County's villages—Frankfort, Adelphi, Kingston, Bainbridge, South Salem, Clarksburg, and Richmond Dale—are well-positioned to host smallscale, communitydriven farmers' markets that strengthen local agriculture and improve food access. The following strategies could be employed to launch farmers' markets in villages once a site has been established.

- **PopUp Market Days:** Seasonal or monthly markets are held in central community spaces such as village squares, fire stations, or church parking lots.
- **ProducerOnly Mini Markets:** Lowcost, lowbarrier opportunities for local growers to sell directly to residents.
- **“Market in a Box” Toolkit:** A standardized set of tents, tables, signage, and operating guidelines provided by the County to villages to simplify market startup and ensure consistent branding.
- **Youth Grower Participation:** Collaboration with FFA, 4H, and school garden programs to encourage youth involvement in local food systems.
- **Senior Market Voucher Program:** Vouchers distributed through senior centers and social service agencies to support both older adult consumers and local producers.
- **Mobile Nutrition Outreach:** A County-branded mobile unit will deliver fresh produce, nutrition education, and SNAP/ WIC enrollment assistance to villages and underserved rural areas.

Objective: Address Brownfield Contamination Sites

★ **Strategy 12:** Support a brownfield site mitigation plan

Addressing brownfield sites is critical to improving environmental quality, supporting redevelopment, and enhancing the attractiveness of the Focus Areas identified in this Plan. A coordinated mitigation plan can help ensure that environmental conditions do not limit future investment or negatively impact community health. The County should first define the plan's purpose and whether to position projects for U.S. EPA Brownfields funding, pursue state programs such as the Ohio Brownfield Remediation Program, or guide local redevelopment efforts. The plan should then inventory and prioritize sites, including known areas such as the Howmet groundwater plume.

Following site identification, due diligence activities, such as Environmental Site Assessments, should be conducted to evaluate environmental risks and regulatory requirements. These findings can inform appropriate mitigation and remediation strategies. Priority should be given to sites located within the Focus Areas of this Plan, where redevelopment potential is highest.

Addressing brownfield conditions not only supports land-use and economic development goals but also improves public health outcomes by reducing exposure to environmental hazards.

Objective: Improve healthcare access

- ★ **Strategy 13:** Treat healthcare access as a transportation and aging-in-place issue

Reliable access to healthcare in Ross County is closely tied to transportation options, roadway safety, transit services, and residents' ability to age in place. Recognizing healthcare access as part of broader transportation and aging-in-place planning helps align mobility investments with quality-of-life outcomes across all stages of life.

Transportation improvements that support healthcare access also improve residents' ability to reach grocery stores, community facilities, and other daily needs, particularly for older adults and rural households. As noted in Goal #2 of the 2025 Ross County Coordinated Public Transit–Human Services Transportation Plan, both that plan and the 2021 Rural Transit Feasibility Study identify significant unmet transportation needs across the County, especially outside of Chillicothe.

These studies highlight limited public and accessible transit options in rural areas, a lack of affordable, countywide on-demand service, and insufficient transportation for medical, shopping, employment, and out-of-county trips. Many residents, particularly older adults, individuals with disabilities, and low-income households, live in villages or unincorporated areas without reliable transportation, even though most major destinations are in or near Chillicothe.

A lack of capital funding remains a primary barrier to addressing these gaps. Recommended funding sources include ODOT programs (Sections 5310 and 5307, as well as the Transportation Alternatives Program) and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding. Additional local funding strategies may include partnerships with employers and civic organizations, sponsorships or naming rights (as demonstrated in Columbiana County, Ohio), and the establishment of Special Improvement or Transportation Districts.

Addressing these transportation gaps is essential to improving healthcare access and overall health outcomes for Ross County residents.

PUBLIC SAFETY

A modern, reliable public safety system, including Emergency Medical Services (EMS), Fire Services, Law Enforcement, and Emergency Management, is essential to community well-being, economic competitiveness, and long-term resilience in Ross County. Families, businesses, and visitors expect communities where emergency response is fast, coordinated, and well supported. Ross County's recent EMS Assessment and public engagement feedback confirm that residents value dependable, high-quality public safety services.

Emergency Medical Services and Fire Response

Ross County's **2024 Emergency Medical Services Assessment**, completed with participation from all 16 townships, identifies opportunities to strengthen the current township-based, largely volunteer EMS and fire model. Recommendations focus on increasing paid on-call, part-time, and full-time staffing, while improving coordination across jurisdictions.

Fire departments and EMS agencies often share personnel, facilities, and response responsibilities, making coordinated improvements essential. Currently, 17 percent of EMS responses rely on mutual aid, with dependency on neighboring agencies reaching 72 percent in some areas.

Key recommendations from the assessment include:

- ★ Consolidating dispatch and communication centers into a single agency.
- ★ Establishing consolidated EMS response districts with automatic-aid coverage.
- ★ Setting countywide response time, mutual aid, and clinical standards with public reporting.
- ★ Creating an active Medical Advisory Board (MAB) to standardize treatment protocols.
- ★ Establishing a countywide quality assurance and performance management system.
- ★ Evaluating a unified EMS response model, either district-based or countywide.

As residential growth continues, demand for fire and EMS services will increase. Coordinated planning is needed to ensure that staffing, facilities, and equipment keep pace with development.

Law Enforcement as a Foundation for Safe, Healthy, and Prosperous Communities

Law enforcement plays a central role in maintaining community stability and supporting economic vitality. During public engagement, residents consistently identified safety as a top priority.

Law enforcement agencies:

- ★ Respond to emergencies such as crashes, overdoses, and violent incidents.
- ★ Partner with EMS, fire, and public health to address behavioral health and safety challenges.
- ★ Support prevention through traffic enforcement, school safety programs, and outreach.
- ★ Provide a stable environment for business investment and residential growth.
- ★ Enhance tourism and recreation by ensuring visitors feel safe.

These functions reduce preventable injuries, improve emergency outcomes, and support healthy, thriving communities.

Emergency Management and Community Resilience

Emergency Management coordinates preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery across all hazard types. Its role connects EMS, fire, and law enforcement into a unified system capable of managing large-scale events.

Core responsibilities include:

- ★ Maintaining countywide emergency operations plans.
- ★ Coordinating multi-agency response during disasters and emergencies.
- ★ Supporting training and exercises for partner agencies.
- ★ Managing public communication and resource distribution.
- ★ Advancing hazard mitigation and resilience planning.

As Ross County grows, Emergency Management ensures that systems, infrastructure, and coordination evolve to address emerging risks.

A Unified Public Safety Vision for Ross County

Together, EMS, fire services, law enforcement, dispatch, and emergency management form an integrated public safety system that supports health outcomes, economic development, and community resilience. The EMS Assessment highlights a clear opportunity to modernize and strengthen emergency response across the County.

Through continued coordination across townships, County agencies, and regional partners, Ross County can enhance emergency response, improve public health outcomes, and support safe, resilient communities.

Public Safety Strategies

The following strategies focus on how Ross County can strengthen coordination, improve service reliability, and implement key recommendations from the EMS Assessment.

Objective: Strengthen Public Safety Services Countywide

★ **Strategy 14:** Strengthen and Coordinate EMS and Fire Services

Local officials and staff should continue implementing recommendations from the 2024 EMS Assessment to improve response times, service reliability, and cross-jurisdictional coordination.

- Evaluate consolidation of dispatch and communication systems.
- Establish EMS response districts and expand automatic-aid agreements.
- Implement countywide performance standards and reporting.
- Support staffing models that increase reliability (i.e., paid on-call, part-time, full-time).

★ **Strategy 15:** Enhance Public Safety Coordination and Emergency Preparedness

Ross County should strengthen coordination among public safety agencies to improve emergency response and long-term resilience.

- Support coordination between EMS, fire, law enforcement, and public health agencies.
- Strengthen emergency management planning, training, and interagency coordination.
- Align public safety planning with growth areas identified in this Plan.
- Improve communication systems and public information during emergencies.



Source: [Ross County Emergency Management](#).



OVERVIEW

Ross County's agricultural landscape is a defining feature of its economy, identity, and land use patterns. Nearly 85 percent of the County's land area is devoted to agricultural, open space, or rural living uses, making it the single largest land use category. That includes a range of crops, logging, and livestock operations, with farming practices that vary in scale and production methods. Barns, silos, and grain storage facilities remain prominent features of this environment, underscoring the County's historic and ongoing relationship with agriculture.

Agricultural production in Ross County spans a wide range of operational scales, from small, direct-to-consumer farms to large-scale row-crop and livestock operations that participate in regional and national commodity markets. These larger operations represent a significant share of the County's agricultural output, land use, and economic contribution. Their continued success depends on access to land, capital, infrastructure, and efficient logistics systems that allow them to remain competitive in increasingly global markets.

Public engagement reinforced agriculture's role as a cornerstone of Ross County's identity. Residents consistently identified open space and working farmland among the County's most valued assets. At the same time, farmers emphasized the importance of being recognized as small business operators contributing to the local economy, not solely as land stewards, but also as contributors.

At the same time, the long-term viability of agriculture in Ross County is shaped by economic conditions that extend beyond tradition or community support. While farmland remains abundant, its continued use for agricultural production depends on whether farming operations can remain financially competitive with alternative land uses.

These conditions reflect a fundamental reality: farmland preservation in Ross County is not solely a land use issue, it is an economic outcome. Land will remain in agricultural production only if farming remains viable as a business.

For this reason, this chapter focuses on reducing operational risk, expanding revenue opportunities, and strengthening agriculture as a core economic sector, aligning land-use, infrastructure, and economic development strategies to support long-term agricultural viability.

Several structural factors shape this reality:

- ★ **Land Ownership and Leasing Constraints.** A significant portion of farmland is leased, limiting long-term investment and operational stability.
- ★ **Land Value vs. Farm Income.** In some areas, the financial return from selling land for development exceeds the long-term income potential of farming, creating ongoing pressure to convert land.
- ★ **Limited Access to Value-Added Markets.** Without aggregation, processing, or institutional buyers, many operations are constrained to lower-margin production models.
- ★ **Fragmented Business Support Systems.** Existing support organizations provide valuable services, but there is no coordinated system delivering business planning, financing, and succession support.
- ★ **Aging Workforce and Transition Risk.** Many operations face uncertainty about succession, increasing the likelihood that land will transition out of active production.

“While we look at ways to develop the County into an economic engine for the future, we are competing over the same assets to accomplish our shared goals. The need for more housing requires more land. The need to build more businesses for workers to earn income requires more land. Farmers who need to expand require more land. After all that, the land is the limiting factor across all these areas. The wise use of available land is critical to developing a workable plan. The strategies outlined in this section can be very helpful to achieve the goals of this Plan. The limiting factors in this area are access to capital and the generation of income. The sector that can consistently and easily achieve these two goals will be the winner in securing the land.”

- Steering Committee Member

WHAT WE LEARNED

The following key facts came out of the Existing Conditions Report (ECR):

- ★ Between 2010 and 2023, the agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining industry sector lost 0.4 percent of its workforce. In 2023, 1.0 percent of the Ross County workforce belonged to that sector.
- ★ In 2024, the labor participation rate for 25 to 29-year-olds in Ross County is 65.1 percent, indicating an opportunity for young adults to engage in the Agricultural industrial sector.
- ★ According to the 2025 Community Health Needs Assessment, 16.1 percent of Ross County residents experienced food insecurity in 2022.

WHAT WE HEARD

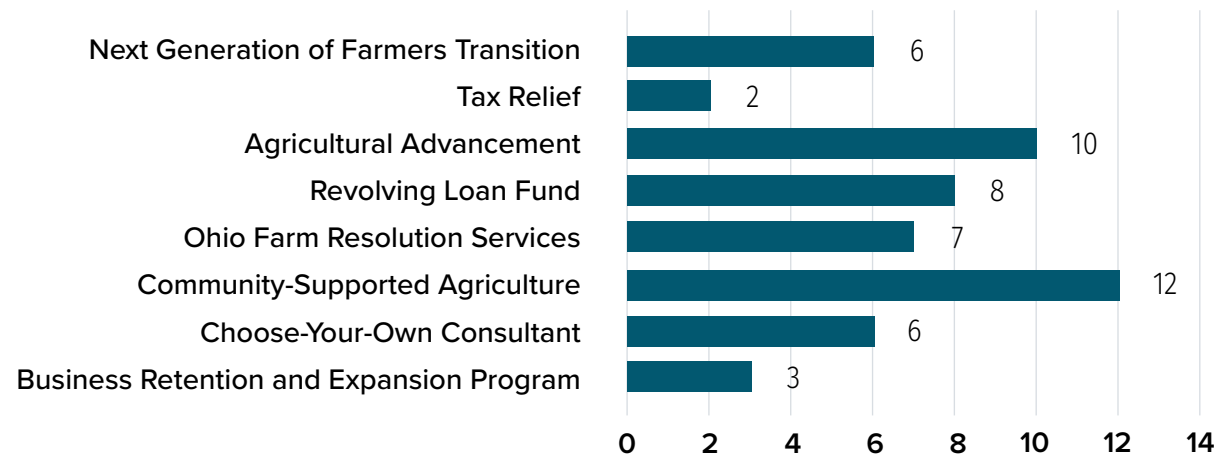
American Structurepoint and Civic Uplift engaged Ross County farmers at Farm Club Dinners, Farm Bureau Meetings, and during the 2025 Ross County Fair. Below is a summary of comments received during public engagement.

- ★ Agriculture was consistently identified as one of Ross County’s most valued assets.
- ★ Residents and farmers called for balancing new development with farmland preservation to maintain scenic landscapes and rural character.
- ★ Farmers highlighted gaps in business assistance, financing tools, and workforce development tailored to agriculture.
- ★ Farmers shared that the County’s public infrastructure and roadways are not conducive to the blend of agricultural and residential traffic. Farmers noted that moving large farm equipment throughout the County is a difficult and dangerous process that often backs up traffic and prompts residents to drive recklessly. Deferred maintenance on bridges often leads to weight limits dropping below what is safe for certain equipment, causing farmers to spend more time on roads with equipment to seek an alternative route to fields.
- ★ Farmers expressed a need for additional markets to supplement their existing methods of generating income.
- ★ The average age of residents employed in agriculture continues to rise, underscoring the need for education and outreach to attract younger people into the sector.
- ★ Larger farming operations, also known as “row farming,” require substantial upfront capital, which is challenging to obtain.

Farmers were presented with eight agribusiness support programs and voted on the programs they considered most beneficial to Ross County Farmers. Figure 1 shows how Ross County Fair participants voted. The programs with the highest interest were:

- ★ Agricultural Advancement. Farmers are introduced to new technologies and practices.
- ★ Community Supported Agriculture. Local farmers collaborate to create produce boxes for purchase by Ross County residents biweekly.
- ★ Ohio Farm Resolution Services. Provides farmers with free mediation and conflict navigation.
- ★ Next Generation of Farmers Transition. Connects and supports current farmers as they transition their farms to new farmers.

What Types of Farm Programs Should Ross County Invest in?



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOAL CONNECTIONS

- ★ Comprehensive Plan goals are interrelated throughout the Plan. The following goals are directly relevant to this chapter and demonstrate its integration within the broader Comprehensive Plan.
 - Economic Growth
 - Promote site readiness for advanced manufacturing, research and development, agribusiness, and employment expansion, and cultivate a strong business community that supports existing businesses while attracting new and emerging industries.
- ★ Balanced Growth
 - Promote and prioritize development and public improvements in areas best suited for development, while preserving our rural and agricultural core.
- ★ Strengthen Agricultural Core
 - Support programs that sustain and grow our agricultural economy and heritage.
- ★ Cross-Jurisdictional Collaboration

Encourage collaboration between local governments, including school districts, townships, and municipalities, which is vital to implementing key economic and development initiatives.

SYSTEMS CONNECTIONS

The Agriculture chapter functions as an interdependent system within Ross County's broader Comprehensive Plan. Each system influences and depends upon the others at multiple scales, from county-wide infrastructure investments to site-specific development decisions. The Ross County Comprehensive Plan envisions a thriving and healthy community where families flourish, businesses grow, and visitors feel welcome. A central part of this vision is that growth will be balanced to honor the County's rural character and agricultural roots. Farmland preservation and agricultural supports directly advance this vision by reinforcing interconnected principles.

- ★ **Land Use.** Promote and prioritize development in areas best suited for growth, while preserving the County's rural and agricultural core. Aligning growth management with farmland protection ensures that Ross County can expand housing and employment opportunities without losing the landscapes and working farms that residents value most.
- ★ **Economic Development.** Support and develop programs that encourage the continuation and growth of Ross County's agricultural economy and heritage. Agribusiness is a major part of the local economy. It should be encouraged and supported as a key industry alongside manufacturing and healthcare. As such, these businesses should receive the same amount of attention through business retention and expansion support. Policies that improve market access, expand financing options, and support farm succession planning will strengthen agriculture as a viable and competitive sector.
- ★ **Healthy Communities and Quality of Life.** Maintain scenic viewsheds, protect the rural character, and safeguard the cultural heritage that defines Ross County. Agricultural supports add to community well-being by strengthening local food systems, promoting agritourism, and expanding and supporting agribusiness ownership in rural areas.
- ★ **Villages and Census-Designated Places.** Villages and census-designated places are primary links for commerce and community to the agricultural production industries.

The matrix below expresses the relationships between this chapter's strategies and the rest of the Plan. It shows how the Plan's strategies are interrelated.

	Strategies							
Chapter	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total
Land Use	[Shaded]							7
Villages			[Shaded]					2
Housing	[Shaded]							0
Healthy Communities and Quality of Life	[Shaded]							7
Economic Development	[Shaded]							7
Agriculture	This chapter							
Transportation		[Shaded]	[Shaded]					1
Total	3	4	4	4	3	3	3	



A lack of tradition or local support does not constrain Ross County's agricultural system. Instead, throughout this process, agriculture was often viewed as an asset to be protected rather than as an industry shaped by economic and operational realities that affect its long-term viability. While the County retains a strong agricultural base, the issues identified through data analysis and stakeholder input point to the need for a more coordinated approach that supports agriculture as an active economic sector, with land functioning as a foundational asset in the supply chain.

The following objectives and strategies address these challenges by reducing risk for farm operators, expanding market opportunities, and aligning infrastructure and land use decisions with long-term agricultural viability. This Plan shifts that perspective by recognizing agriculture as an economic sector that must be actively supported, not solely preserved.

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

Ross County’s approach to agriculture must recognize that farmland preservation is directly tied to economic viability. Supporting agriculture requires a coordinated approach that strengthens farm operations as small businesses while aligning land use, infrastructure, and market opportunities with long-term agricultural success.

For many larger-scale operations, economic viability is driven by factors, such as input costs, commodity pricing, access to acreage, and the ability to operate efficiently across multiple parcels. These operations often require significant capital investment in equipment, technology, and land, and depend on reliable infrastructure, including roadways capable of supporting heavy equipment and truck traffic. Supporting these operations requires a different set of strategies alongside those focused on diversification and local market development.

Objective: Establish Agriculture as a Core Economic Sector

★ **Strategy 1: Formalize and Expand Farm Business Support Services**

Ross County already benefits from active coordination among organizations such as OSU Extension, the Farm Bureau, Soil and Water Conservation District, and local producers. These efforts provide valuable support through meetings, outreach, and education. However, they are not consistently structured as a coordinated business support system comparable to services delivered to other industries. As a result, gaps remain in access to financial planning, succession support, and market development resources.

To strengthen agriculture as an economic sector, these efforts should be formalized into a more structured and accessible system that treats farm operations as small businesses and aligns available services with identified needs.

- Establish a recurring agricultural business roundtable as part of a Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) approach, creating a structured forum to identify operational challenges, infrastructure needs, and growth opportunities.
- Coordinate partners to deliver targeted business assistance, including financial planning, estate and succession planning, and market diversification, through a shared referral or intake system.
- Create a small-scale “choose-your-own consultant” microgrant program to provide flexible funding for specialized services, such as legal, accounting, branding, and agritourism planning.

★ **Strategy 2:** Integrate Agriculture into Economic Development Efforts

Agriculture is a major component of Ross County's economy, but is not consistently treated as a targeted industry in economic development efforts. Farmers identified infrastructure limitations, including roadway conditions, bridge capacity, and broadband access, as barriers to operating efficiently and safely. Without integration into the broader economic development ecosystem, these challenges can remain unaddressed.

Integrating agriculture into economic development efforts ensures that farm operations are included in business outreach, infrastructure planning, and funding strategies alongside other key industries.

- Prioritize and sequence infrastructure improvements that support large-scale agricultural operations, including maintaining bridge weight limits, improving rural haul routes, and ensuring efficient travel between fields, storage facilities, and regional markets.
- Incorporate agricultural operations into business outreach efforts, using a BRE-style approach to identify barriers to expansion, transition, and diversification.
- Coordinate with capital improvement planning to address roadway safety, bridge capacity, and broadband access in areas with significant agricultural activity.
- Position agriculture in grant applications and regional funding strategies, ensuring it is represented in state and federal funding opportunities alongside other targeted sectors.

★ **Strategy 3:** Expand Access to Capital and Support Value-Added Agricultural Investment

Access to capital remains a key barrier to agricultural operations, particularly for investments in equipment, infrastructure, and diversification. While a range of federal, state, and nonprofit financing programs exist, these resources are often difficult to navigate or not structured to align with farm business decision-making. As input costs rise and profit margins tighten, improving access to capital becomes critical to sustaining operations and enabling growth. That includes both value-added investments and the capital needs associated with large-scale production, where equipment, land access, and operating scale are critical to maintaining competitiveness.

This strategy focuses on better organizing and deploying existing financial tools, while prioritizing investments that increase revenue potential and support long-term viability.

- Coordinate and package existing financing tools into a centralized resource that connects farmers to USDA programs, state funding opportunities, and local financing partners, while also assisting with application preparation and financial structuring.
- Establish or expand a local agricultural financing tool, such as a revolving loan fund or gap financing program, through an existing partner entity to support targeted agricultural investments.
- Prioritize value-added and revenue-generating investments, including on-farm processing, agritourism, and specialty production, to increase income potential and long-term sustainability.
- Support access to capital for large-scale operations, including financing for equipment, land acquisition, and operational expansion, recognizing the significant upfront investment required for row crop and livestock production.

CASE STUDY: AGRICULTURAL FINANCING AND VALUE-ADDED INVESTMENT (BERKSHIRE AGRICULTURAL VENTURES, MA)*

Berkshire Agricultural Ventures operates a regional financing and technical assistance program designed to support farm and food businesses through targeted investment.

The organization provides low-interest loans, grants, and business advisory services to help farms expand operations, invest in equipment, and develop value-added products. Rather than functioning as a traditional lender, the program focuses on aligning financing with business planning, allowing farmers to make strategic investments that improve efficiency and increase revenue.

Projects supported through this model include:

- ★ on-farm processing and packaging
- ★ distribution and storage improvements
- ★ diversification into specialty or value-added products

By combining financing with technical assistance, the program helps farms move beyond commodity production and capture greater value within the local economy.



Source: [Tractor House](#)

* [Berkshire Agricultural Ventures](#)

Why this Matters for Ross County:

This model demonstrates how targeted, flexible financing, delivered through a regional partner, can support agricultural investment without requiring the creation of a new County-run program. A similar approach could be implemented locally through an existing entity, such as a port authority, community improvement corporation, or nonprofit partner, scaled to match local demand and capacity.

Objective: Improve access to fresh produce locally to support local market development and entrepreneurship

★ **Strategy 4:** Develop And Implement a Food System Strategy Focused on Market Expansion

While local food systems and direct-to-consumer markets represent an important opportunity, they are only one component of Ross County's agricultural economy. A significant portion of agricultural production is tied to commodity markets, where success depends on scale, efficiency, and access to regional and national distribution systems. Strategies to improve market access should therefore support both local and commodity-based production models.

Ross County has strong agricultural production and existing efforts to improve food access through public health and community initiatives. However, many farm operations remain limited to direct-to-consumer sales or commodity markets. Without coordinated distribution, aggregation, and institutional purchasing, opportunities to scale production and increase profitability remain constrained.

A coordinated food systems approach can align existing food access, public health, and agricultural initiatives to improve how food is produced, distributed, and sold within the region while expanding market opportunities for local producers.

- Align key partners, including Adena Health, local farmers, and community organizations, to coordinate food system initiatives, to guide implementation, and align existing initiatives.
- Use existing data and targeted assessments to identify gaps in production, distribution, and access in production, distribution, and access, using resources such as CHNA, CHIP, and retail analysis.
- Establish institutional purchasing partnerships with healthcare systems, schools, and other major buyers to create consistent demand for locally produced food.
- Support development of aggregation and distribution systems, such as food hubs, cold storage, and logistics networks, to allow producers to meet larger-scale demand.

CASE STUDY: HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS SUPPORTING LOCAL AGRICULTURE (OHIOHEALTH & CLEVELAND CLINIC)*

Healthcare systems across Ohio have implemented local food procurement programs that connect regional farms to institutional buyers. OhioHealth and the Cleveland Clinic have both committed to sourcing a portion of their food from local producers as part of broader community health and sustainability initiatives.

These programs require coordination between farmers, distributors, and institutional kitchens to meet volume, safety, and delivery requirements. In practice, these programs have led to the development of aggregation systems and vendor networks that enable multiple farms to collectively supply large buyers.

By creating consistent demand, these partnerships provide farms with more predictable revenue streams while improving access to fresh food for patients, staff, and the surrounding community.



Source: [Ideastream Public Media](#)

* [Cleveland Clinic](#)

Why this matters for Ross County:

A similar model could be explored with Adena Health, using institutional purchasing to create stable local demand and support expansion of value-added agricultural production.

Objective: Support Long-Term Agricultural Viability and Land Stability

★ **Strategy 5:** Align Farmland Preservation with Growth and Infrastructure Strategy

Farmland preservation efforts are most effective when paired with clear growth patterns and coordinated infrastructure planning. Without alignment, development pressure can fragment farmland and reduce its long-term usability, even in areas where agriculture remains viable.

Aligning preservation efforts with growth strategy ensures that development is directed to appropriate locations while maintaining the long-term viability of agricultural land.

- Coordinate growth planning, infrastructure investment, and development decisions to minimize fragmentation of active farmland and maintain the ability for agricultural operations to expand and remain competitive. That includes recognizing the importance of contiguous farmland, efficient transportation routes, and infrastructure capable of accommodating heavy equipment and commodity transport, while focusing development in the identified focus areas of this Plan.
- Use a mix of easements, incentive-based programs, and partnerships to protect agricultural lands.

★ **Strategy 6:** Align and Strengthen Agricultural Workforce and Career Pathways

Align and strengthen existing education, training, and workforce programs to create a more visible and coordinated pathway into agricultural careers.

Ross County already has a strong foundation in agricultural education and workforce development, including career and technical education through Pickaway-Ross Career and Technology Center, FFA, and satellite programs in local school districts, and youth engagement through OSU Extension and 4-H. However, these efforts are not consistently connected into a clear pathway that leads students from early exposure to long-term careers in agriculture.

This approach prioritizes aligning these existing programs, increasing awareness of modern agricultural careers, and strengthening connections between education and local farm operations.

- Strengthen coordination between K–12 schools, Pickaway-Ross Career and Technology Center, OSU Extension, and local agricultural employers to create a more defined pathway from education to employment.
- Expand awareness of modern agricultural careers, including technology, logistics, agribusiness, and value-added production, not just traditional farming roles.
- Increase opportunities for internships, apprenticeships, and work-based learning with local farm operations and agribusinesses.
- Connect workforce efforts with farm transition and business support strategies, ensuring new entrants have pathways into ownership or long-term employment.

★ **Strategy 7:** Support The Next Generation of Agricultural Leaders While Strengthening Farm Transition

As the agricultural workforce ages, the lack of clear transition planning increases the risk that farmland will be sold or removed from active production. At the same time, new and emerging farmers require support to navigate business ownership, land access, and evolving market conditions.

Supporting leadership development and strengthening transition pathways helps maintain continuity of operations and ensures farmland remains in active agricultural use.

- Expand participation in farm transition and succession planning programs, including those offered by OSU Extension and the Farm Bureau.
- Increase participation in leadership and business development programs that prepare the next generation of farm operators and agricultural entrepreneurs.
- Coordinate with partners such as Soil and Water Conservation District, land trusts, and state programs to align transition efforts with long-term farmland preservation.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) Program*

The Ohio State University provides Ross County businesses and leaders with training, resources, and tools to design a BRE program that helps local businesses stay competitive, increases employment, and stabilizes the economy.

Choose-Your-Own Consultant**

Farmers receive \$1,000 grants for specific, high-quality consultation services in the areas they need, e.g., business & finances, marketing and agritourism, insurance, legal, land protection, etc.

Ohio Farm Resolution Services***

The Ohio State University provides confidential consultation and mediation services to farmers in conflict with business owners, government entities, neighbors, or other parties.

Revolving Loan Fund****

This program provides Ross County farmers with small, low-interest loans to help them invest in their businesses.

* [Community Development: Ohio State University Extension](#)
** [Future Harvest: Chesapeake Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture](#)
*** [Ohio Farm Resolution Services | Farm Office](#)
**** [Berkshire Agricultural Ventures](#)



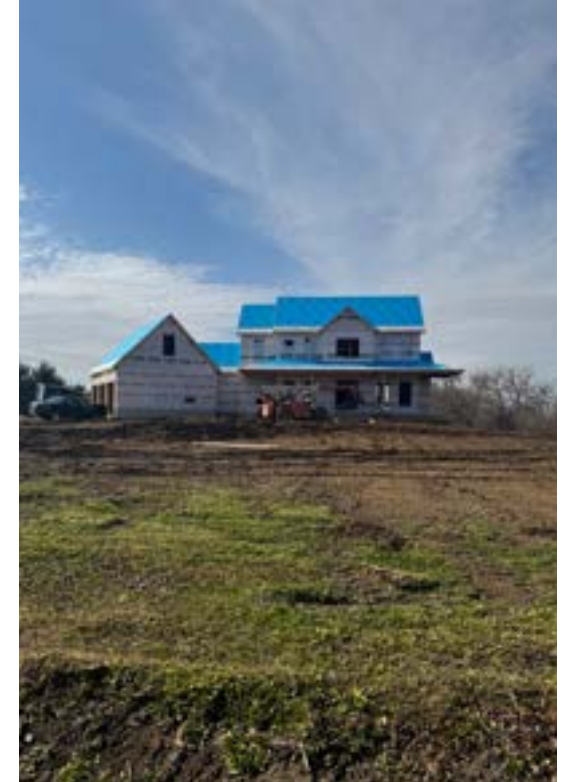


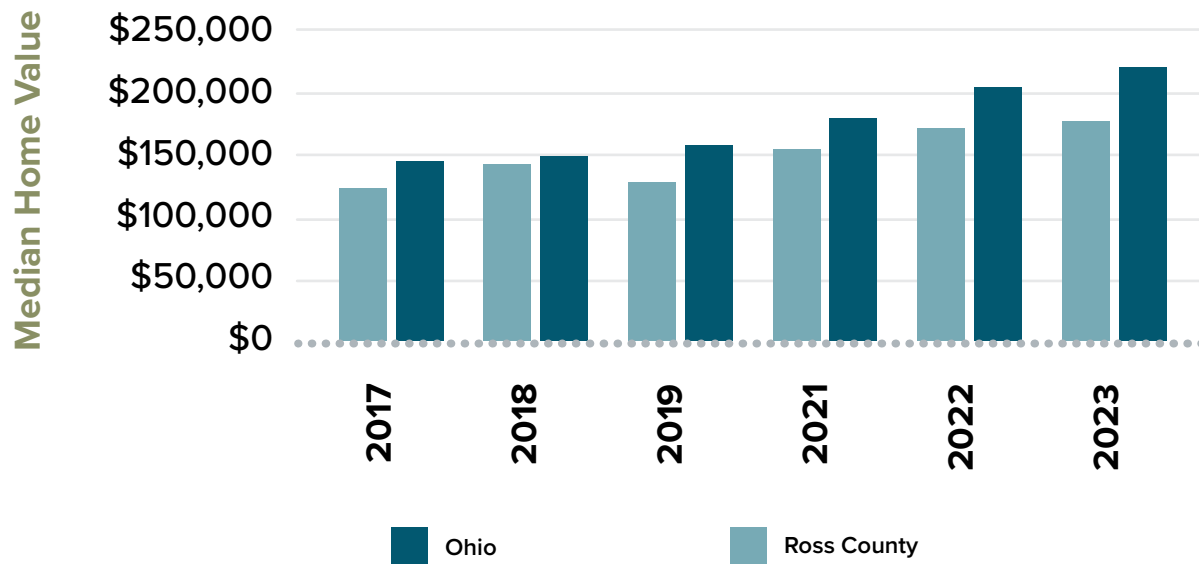
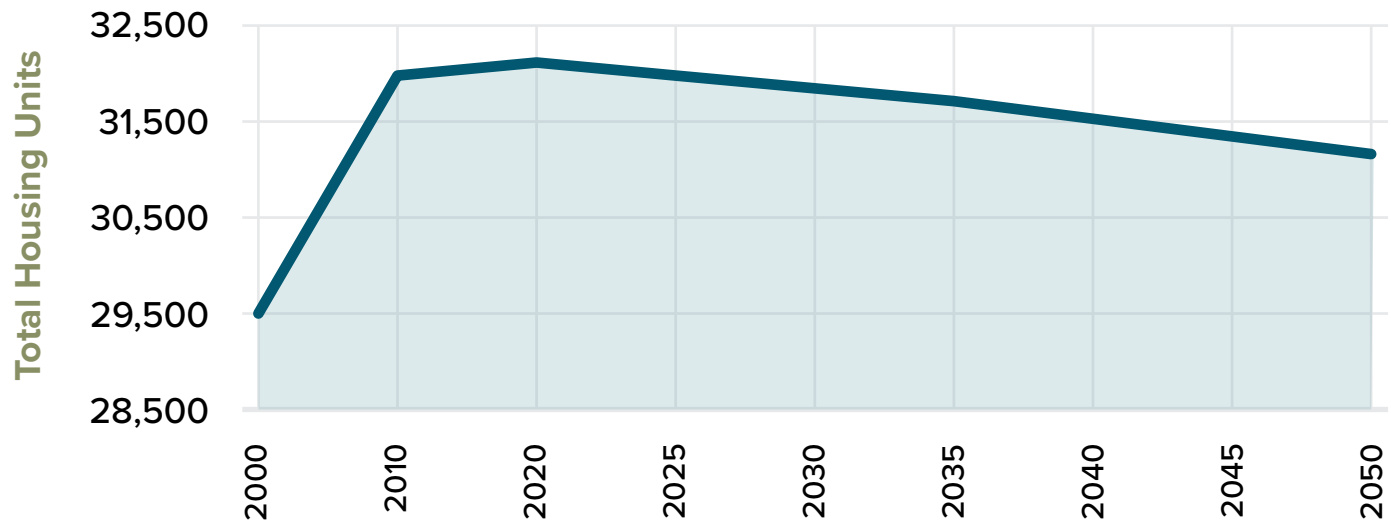
OVERVIEW

Ross County has experienced limited new home construction since the early 2000s, and the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) predicts housing stock will continue to decline until 2050 (see next page). In addition to limited recent construction, developers face structural challenges in delivering new housing in Ross County. Those include difficulty underwriting projects due to a lack of comparable sales, uncertainty in absorption rates for new product types, and infrastructure costs that often exceed what the local market can support. Together, these factors increase financial risk and make it difficult for conventional private development to proceed without coordination or targeted incentives.

This data reflects the broader national slowdown in housing development in less-populated and rural areas but also underscores that housing is fundamentally linked to economic development in Ross County. Conventional market conditions are insufficient to support new housing development. Initiating new housing development will require public-sector involvement to reduce risk and attract private investment, as with sites prepared for industrial or commercial development.

Conversely, housing demand in Ross County remains strong across multiple price points and household types, based on the relationship between current incomes and housing costs. As residents age and downsize, young people seek local housing options, and employers compete for the workforce, housing will remain a central community issue. This disconnect between strong demand and limited production highlights a market gap, where housing is needed but not being delivered at the pace or scale required, reinforcing the need for strategic public-sector involvement.





Recent development interest demonstrates growing market momentum and provides an opportunity to showcase the County's potential. Capturing and building upon that momentum will be essential to attracting additional investment as home sales increase and market confidence grows. However, without deliberate efforts to reduce development risk, improve site readiness, and align infrastructure investment with housing goals, recent activity may not translate into sustained housing production.

Addressing that demand requires a dual approach:

1. Ross County must take an active role in stimulating new housing construction.
2. Officials and staff must prioritize reinvestment in the County's existing housing stock. Repairing and modernizing current homes is just as critical as building new ones.

WHY LIVE IN ROSS COUNTY?

Ross County offers several competitive advantages that position it well for future housing growth, particularly as nearby regional investments increase demand for workforce housing.

Regional Development and Growth: Regional mega developments, such as the battery plant in Fayette County, Anduril in Pickaway, and the expansions in Pike County, are all happening near Ross County, providing plenty of workforce opportunities, but housing in Ross County is more affordable. Ross County offers major employer opportunities, including Kenworth, Ross Correctional Institution, US Medical Glove, and Adena Health. Figure 2 compares median home values in Ross County to those in the State of Ohio. Ross County's median home value has been nearly \$30,000 lower than Ohio's since 2019, as shown in the figure on page 142.

- ★ Quality of Life: Ross County offers many quality-of-life amenities, including unique historic and cultural offerings, such as UNESCO World Heritage-designated Hopewell sites, active lifestyle options like Great Seal National Park, the amazing Downtown Chillicothe, and great schools and higher education options such as Ohio University – Chillicothe.

WHAT WE LEARNED

The following key facts came out of the Existing Conditions Report (ECR):

- ★ In 2023, less than one percent of housing units, including those in the City of Chillicothe, were built after 2020, indicating that little housing construction has occurred in Ross County. Residential permits are not required for buildings with fewer than four dwelling units, and three-quarters of the dwelling units are single-family detached, so permit records cannot further prove this trend.
- ★ The 2022 Ross County Affordable Housing Assessment called for the need for specialized housing. The types of specialized housing required include supportive, transitional, emergency, senior living, housing for individuals with disabilities, employer-assisted, and higher-end housing.
- ★ Woods and Poole are an economics firm that uses factors such as job-driven migration, along with demographic factors like aging and birth rates, to generate annual population projections, which are ideal for housing projections. Woods and Poole project that steady population growth from 2020 to 2060 will result in a net gain of approximately 5,000 people. That will add demand for housing, infrastructure, and amenities.
- ★ While median household income has been increasing, Ross County's median household income remains lower than that of comparable communities. In 2023, the median household income was \$61,651, which is approximately \$20,000 below the annual household income required to purchase a home at the 2024 median listing price in Ross County.
- ★ When compared to Ohio, Ross County has a very low vacancy rate for both rental and owner-occupied housing units.

- ★ Approximately five percent of Ross County’s housing stock was built after 2010, indicating that growth has been minimal over the past 15 years.
- ★ Based on the housing demand and income analysis in the ECR, there is currently a net unit demand of approximately 8,500 owner-occupied units and approximately 500 rental units. There is a noticeable shortage of homes for families with annual incomes between \$75,000 and \$125,000. The distribution of housing by price point suggests many households are likely to spend more of their income on housing than is typical.

WHAT WE HEARD

The following themes came out of public engagement:

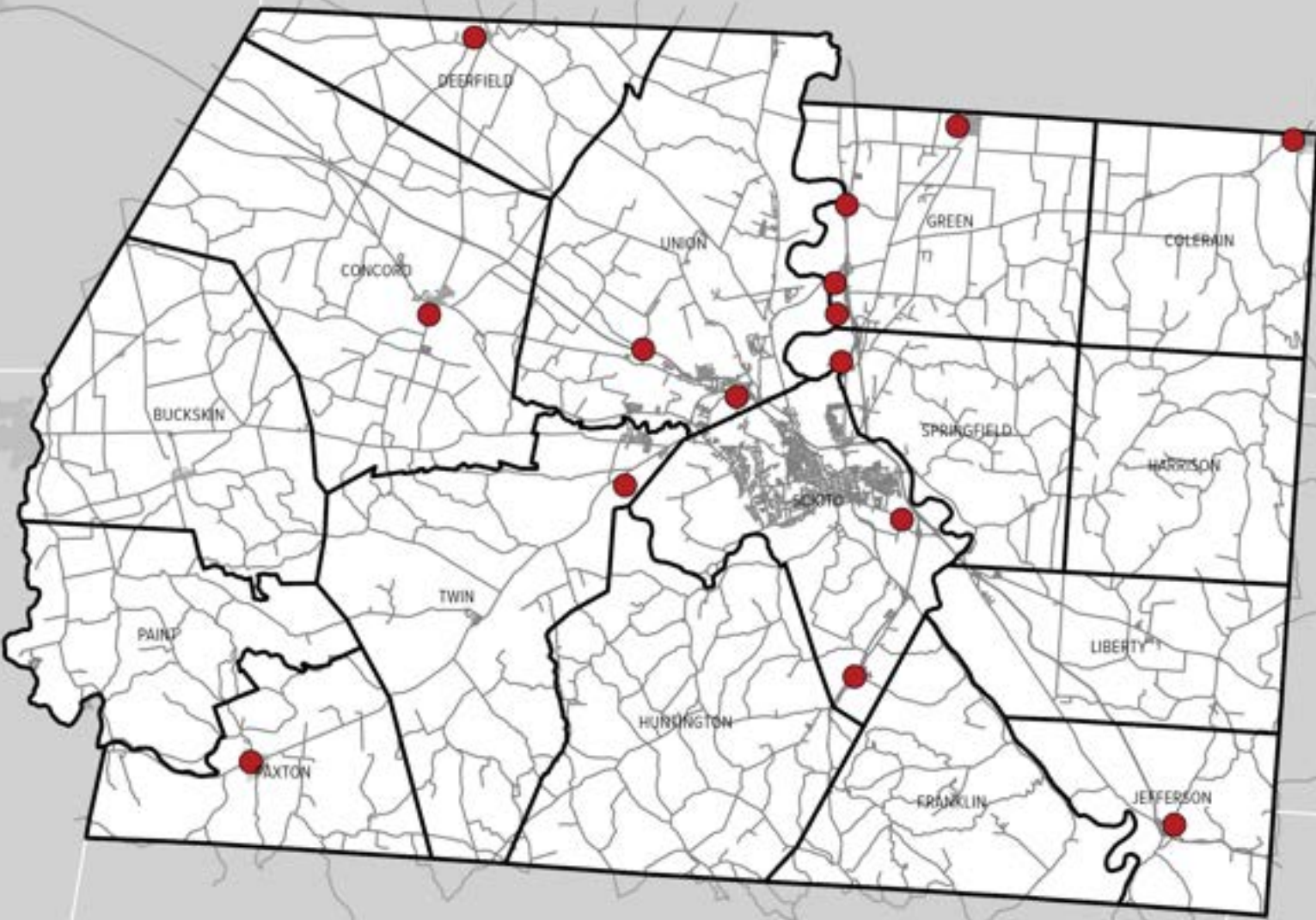
- ★ Housing was the second most mentioned theme. Approximately 70 percent of survey respondents thought Ross County needs more housing. Open house participants mapped ideal locations for future housing within or immediately adjacent to incorporated areas, such as Bainbridge, Chillicothe, Richmond Dale, Kingston, and Adelphi. Their responses are mapped in the next map. While growth in these areas is critical, existing infrastructure and incorporation limits pose challenges to growth.
- ★ According to the online public survey, participants identified affordability and interest rates as the top barriers to development. At the public open houses, participants agreed that affordability is a barrier to development, recognizing that residents cannot afford the prices developers need to make a profit, and support investment in the Ross County market.

Themes that came out of public engagement, continued:

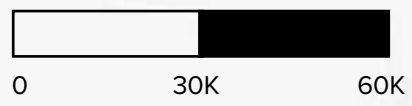
- ★ Many residents associated increased housing with increased density, which raised concerns.
- ★ Residents felt that common housing types intended to serve multiple price points and workforce households have encountered challenges, including modular homes, tiny homes, and multi-unit residential buildings. While modular homes have seen some success in Ross County, it has been a challenge to find lots with adequate utility infrastructure service. Tiny homes struggle due to lender square footage requirements or a lack of comparable sales.
- ★ Stakeholder interviews revealed that multi-unit residential development struggles due to unknown issues with contracting and/or property closings.
- ★ Residents and agency staff are unsure where to find information to assist with housing questions (i.e., repair assistance, down payment assistance, etc.).
- ★ Figure 4 shows the preferences of open-house respondents for the type of housing they desire in Ross County. While many respondents indicated single-unit detached housing and retirement housing, over 40 percent said they would like to see higher-density housing.
- ★ Figure 5 shows how much open house respondents value undeveloped land in Ross County, setting a priority for consolidating development around already developed areas, such as villages, to preserve undeveloped land as a resource.

Legend

-  Townships
-  Incorporated Areas
-  County
-  Responses

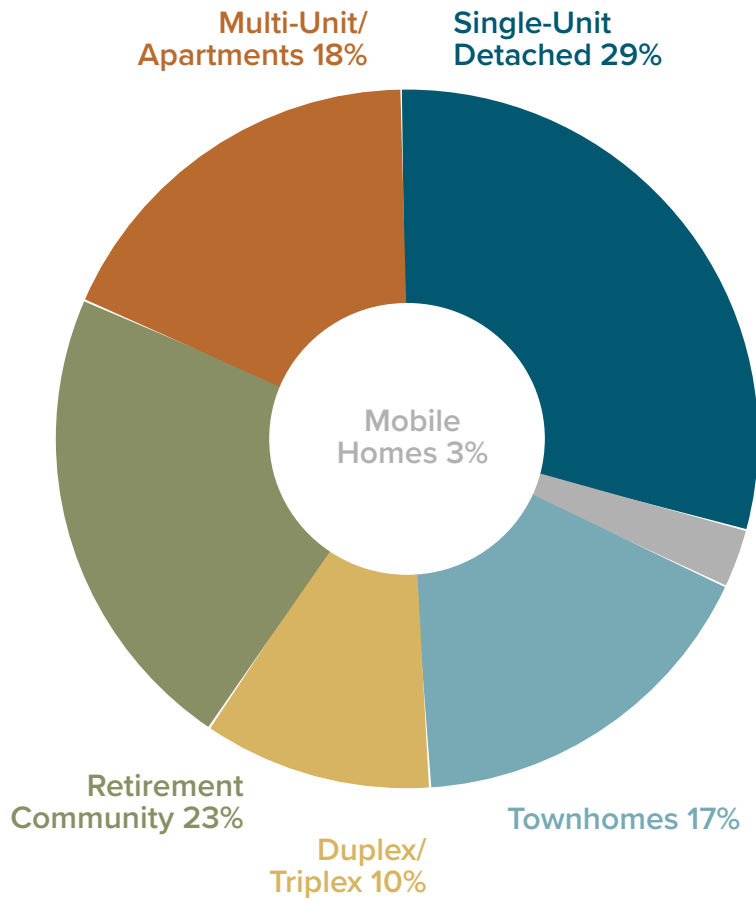


Scale in Feet:

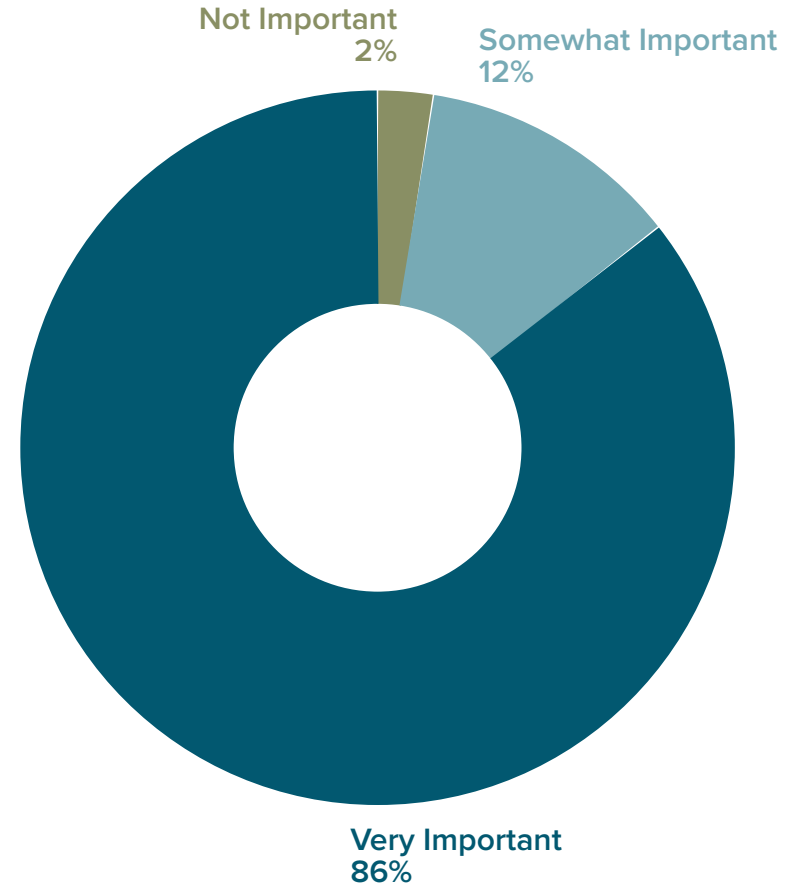


Public Comments: Residential

What Kind of Housing Does Ross County Need?



How Important is Open Space and Farmland in Ross County?



SYSTEMS CONNECTIONS

The Housing chapter functions as an interdependent system within Ross County’s broader Comprehensive Plan. Each system influences and depends upon the others at multiple scales, from county-wide infrastructure investments to site-specific development decisions. In Ross County, housing is not just one component of the Plan. Housing is a foundational system that strongly influences economic development, infrastructure investment, and long-term community viability.

- ★ **Economic Development.** Workforce attraction and retention depend on the availability of housing stock across all price ranges, from regular workers to executives.
- ★ **Transportation.** Transportation is a foundational system connecting residents to where they need to go. Therefore, the transportation system needs to support future housing development.
- ★ **Agriculture and Food Systems.** Housing development needs to be carried out thoughtfully, preserving as much precious agricultural land as possible.
- ★ **Villages and Community Hubs.** Villages have opportunities for infill development, including housing. This infill development, in turn, adds to the vitality of the villages.
- ★ **Land Use.** Other types of development often follow rooftops. Adding housing may directly influence retail and other complementary developments.
- ★ **Healthy Communities and Quality of Life.** Residents are the greatest consumers of community amenities. Without adequate community amenities, residents are likely to move to another community to have their quality-of-life needs met.

The matrix below expresses the relationships between this chapter’s strategies and the rest of the Plan. It shows how the Plan’s strategies are interrelated and integral.

		Strategies								
Chapter		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
Land Use		[Shaded]								8
Housing		This Chapter								
Villages		[Shaded]								3
Healthy Communities and Quality of Life		[Shaded]								5
Economic Development		[Shaded]								7
Agriculture		[Shaded]								2
Transportation		[Shaded]								2
Total		3	2	3	3	3	4	4	5	



ROSS COUNTY AFFORDABLE HOUSING ASSESSMENT*

Ross County's 2022 *Affordable Housing Assessment* identified numerous strategies to address local housing needs. The Plan was developed for Ross County Community Action Committee, Hope Partnership, and Adena Health System. This Comprehensive Plan does not summarize all of them; it summarizes only those with the greatest relevance and carryover. The goals and strategies that follow are intended to advance and implement the most actionable portions of that earlier work, not replace it.

Goal 1: Stabilize the Existing Housing Stock

- ★ Strategy 1: Create a Regional Housing Task Force
- ★ Strategy 2: Develop a Comprehensive Homeowner Support Program
 - Tactic 1: Utilize Homeowner Rehabilitation Incentives and Increase Funding Support
 - Tactic 2: Create a Housing Information Hub
 - Tactic 3: Start a Tool Lending Library
- ★ Strategy 3: Focus on Supporting Both Landlords and Tenants

Goal 2: Develop a Vision for Future Development

- ★ Strategy 1: Utilize Federal and State Funding Sources to Address Infrastructure and Housing Needs
 - Tactic 1: Catalog and Understand Federal and State Funding Opportunities
 - Tactic 2: Build Professional Capacity in Key Housing Organizations
- ★ Strategy 2: Plan to Develop Specialized Housing
- ★ Strategy 3: Embrace Innovative Housing Solutions
 - Tactic 1: Consider a Community Land Trust
 - Tactic 2: Organize a Neighborhood-Based Community Development Corporation

WHAT'S THE HISTORIC HOUSING PROBLEM?

The Ross County Affordable Housing Assessment outlines the county's housing challenges, exacerbated by deferred maintenance of its older housing stock.

"The data provides further contextual information. For example, the data shows that 47 percent of the population can afford rental units priced above \$900 per month. However, only 5 percent of the rental units available in the market are priced at or above that figure. The project team infers that this is creating downward pressure on lower-income individuals and families, and that, due to the limited supply of higher-end rental units, renters with higher incomes are occupying cheaper units, reducing the number of options for individuals whose budgets allow only low-cost units. As residents earning annual wages of \$50,000 or more are forced to rent units they cannot afford, the supply of housing across all price points is reduced. A similar phenomenon occurs with owner-occupied homes. Increasing availability of higher-priced housing units will, in turn, increase affordable and livable homes and more completely meet the community's housing needs."

RELATED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOALS

★ **Balanced Growth**

Promote and prioritize development and public improvements in areas best suited for development, while preserving our rural and agricultural core.

★ **Increase Housing Stock**

A mix of unit types and price points is necessary to address current and future demand.

* *Ross County Affordable Housing Assessment, TPMA*

OBJECTIVES

Objective: Increase housing stock

- ★ **Strategy 1:** Actively seek local control of excess State-owned land in the Pleasant Valley and SR 104 Corridor through Land Bank, Port Authority, CIC, or similar means, for mixed residential housing development (aligns with 2022 Affordable Housing Assessment, Goal 2 – Strategy 2).

Ross County should define a targeted housing focus area centered on State-owned land along the Pleasant Valley Road (PVR) corridor, particularly near SR 104. This area represents one of the County's most viable opportunities to introduce new housing at scale.

To unlock this opportunity, the County should conduct a focused analysis of site-specific conditions within this area, including roadway access, utility capacity, and development readiness. This effort should evaluate existing and planned water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure, identify constraints related to roadway congestion and access management, and assess the feasibility of supporting residential development at a range of densities.

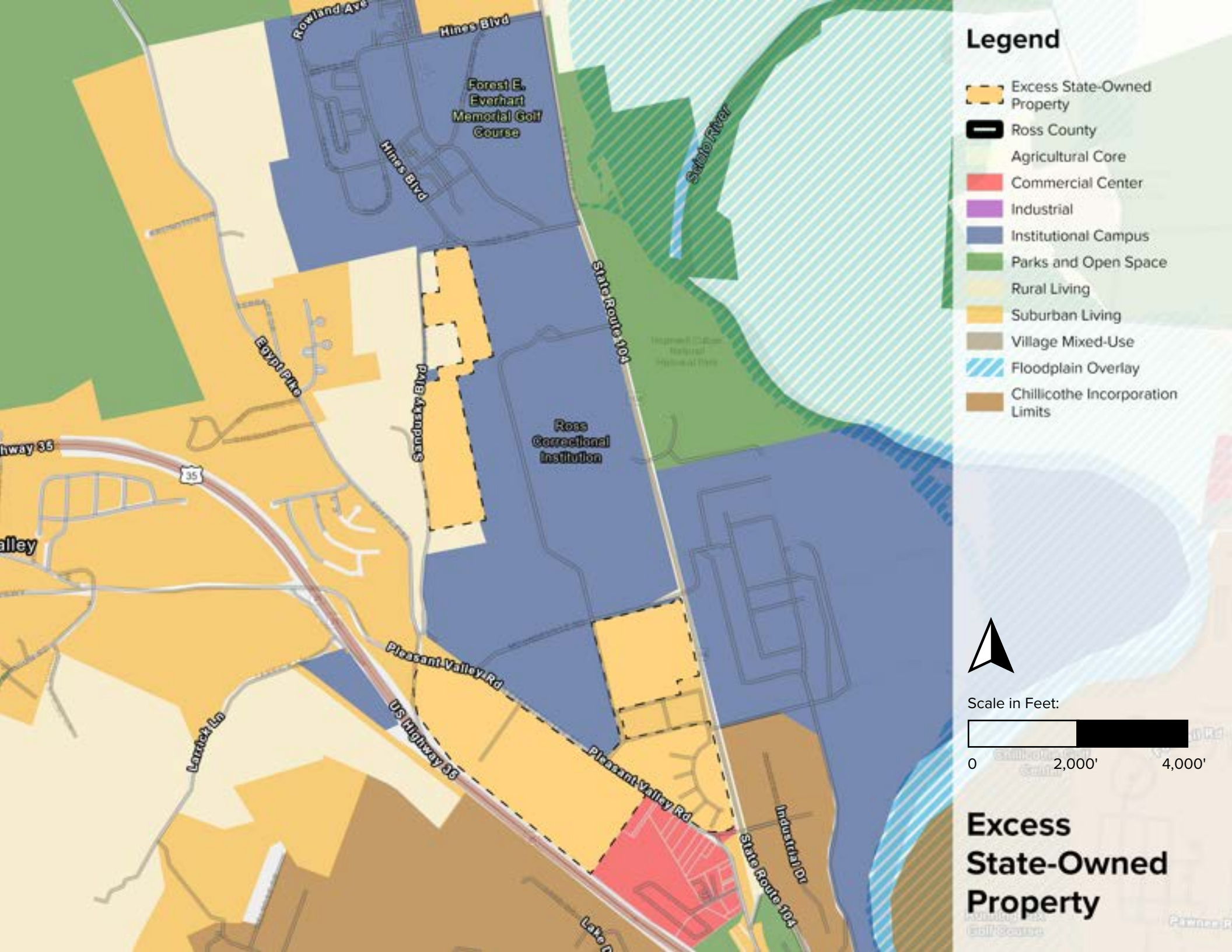
This focused analysis should be coordinated with the broader Pleasant Valley Road corridor study recommended in the Thoroughfare Chapter of this Plan. While the corridor study will address system-wide mobility, safety, and capacity issues, this effort should concentrate on translating those improvements into development-ready sites that can support new housing.

By aligning land availability, infrastructure planning, and transportation investment within a defined focus area, Ross County can reduce development risk, improve site readiness, and position itself to attract private investment for workforce and market-rate housing.

- ★ **Strategy 2:** Work with local industry leaders and businesses to assist private companies in developing and facilitating an employer housing incentive program (Aligns with 2022 Affordable Housing Assessment, Goal 2 – Strategy 2)

Employer Housing Incentive Programs (EHIPs) help businesses attract and retain workers by offering financial assistance (down payment aid, rental help, closing cost support, etc.) so employees can live closer to their jobs. These programs strengthen neighborhoods, reduce commute times, and boost workforce stability.

- Convene an Employer Housing Working Group. Ross County should establish a small, recurring working group of major employers and partners, such as:
 - ◆ Adena Health
 - ◆ Kenworth
 - ◆ VA Medical Center
 - ◆ Corrections institutions
 - ◆ Schools and education partners
 - ◆ Regional employers tied to mega-projects
 - ◆ Local lenders and Realtors
 - ◆ Community Action, Land Bank, and OHFA representatives
- Help Employers Identify the Right Program Structure. Ross County can help companies determine which employer housing model fits their needs:
 - ◆ Down Payment/Closing Cost Assistance - Most common and easiest to administer.
 - ◆ Rental Assistance - One-time or short-term support for new hires.
 - ◆ Matching Funds for Repairs - Helps preserve workforce housing near job sites.
 - ◆ Partnership Programs - Employers contribute funds; Ross County coordinates intake and connects to:
 - OHFA mortgage products
 - USDA loan programs
 - Land Bank infill lots
 - Federal Home Loan Bank grants

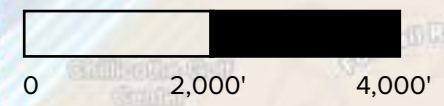


Legend

- Excess State-Owned Property
- Ross County
- Agricultural Core
- Commercial Center
- Industrial
- Institutional Campus
- Parks and Open Space
- Rural Living
- Suburban Living
- Village Mixed-Use
- Floodplain Overlay
- Chillicothe Incorporation Limits



Scale in Feet:



Excess State-Owned Property

CASE STUDY: EMPLOYER-ASSISTED HOUSING PROGRAM

Employer-assisted housing (EAH) programs enable local businesses to support their employees with the costs of owning or renting a home. These programs, typically funded by employers, provide an additional benefit to their workers by offering down payment assistance, rent assistance, and/or closing cost assistance. EAH programs can strengthen local neighborhoods, boost employees' economic stability, and enhance recruitment and retention. Ross County can create an EAH program by partnering with local public or private employers to increase homeownership opportunities. Smaller Ohio communities, such as the City of Heath, have created similar programs when paired with Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC). That type of program aligns with Ross County's goal of helping local workers live in the community of their choice.

Typical benefits include:

- ★ Reduced absenteeism
- ★ Higher employee retention rates
- ★ Fewer resources and funding are devoted to recruitment and training

University of Chicago

A leading example of that model is the University of Chicago's Employer-Assisted Housing Program. "The University of Chicago Employer-Assisted Housing Program (EAH) has long supported affordable home ownership in the University's neighboring communities. The program aims to enable middle-income employees to purchase homes that would otherwise be out of their financial reach, to increase homeownership on the South Side, and to contribute to the vibrancy of these communities while improving work/life balance for employees by reducing commuting times."

The program provides a limited number of grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$20,000 (before taxes) to qualified applicants to support the purchase of a new home in qualifying neighborhoods such as Douglas, Grand Boulevard, Greater Grand Crossing, Hyde Park/South Kenwood, etc. The incentive increases with proximity to the University's campus. Since launching in 2003, the program has helped over 300 employees purchase homes near the University of Chicago's campus.

* Source: [The Employer-Assisted Housing Program | The University of Chicago](#).

** Source: [Greater Circle Living](#)

Greater Circle Living**

An example of an employer-assisted housing program in Ohio is the Greater Circle Living (GCL) program, which is offered in Cleveland. The program is part of the larger Greater University Circle Initiative, launched by the Cleveland Foundation, aimed at increasing the population and enhancing economic opportunities for residents in Greater University Circle. GCL is an innovative partnership that leverages institutional and foundation funds to assist eligible employees with rental and homeownership options or to repair their owner-occupied homes in neighborhoods within the Greater University Circle area.

GCL provides up to \$30,000 in down payment assistance, up to \$8,000 in matching funds for exterior repairs, and up to \$1,400 for one-time rental assistance. The program is a partnership involving organizations such as Case Western Reserve University, the Cleveland Clinic Foundation, and other nonprofits.

Objective: Improve the quality of the existing housing stock

- ★ **Strategy 3:** Continue support of programs or create new programs to rehabilitate or repair older housing stock (Aligns with 2022 Affordable Housing Assessment, Goal 2 – Strategy 2)

As noted earlier in this chapter, across Ross County, much of the housing stock was built decades ago and requires ongoing maintenance and modernization to remain safe and livable. As homes age, repairs to roofs, foundations, building systems, and accessibility features can become costly for homeowners, particularly for seniors and low- to moderate-income households.

Continuing to support or create new housing rehabilitation programs can help residents maintain their homes while preserving the County's existing housing supply. These efforts help stabilize neighborhoods, prevent deterioration, and ensure that safe and affordable housing remains available throughout Ross County.

- Inventory existing programs and resources such as HOME and CDBG.
 - Define what the County wants the rehabilitation program to accomplish.
 - Determine how the program will operate, including eligibility requirements, types of assistance, eligible repairs, and the maximum assistance amount.
 - Build partnerships for strong local collaboration with townships, local contractors, financial institutions, and other entities.
 - Promote the program through Planning and Development's website and other means.
 - Track program outcomes to ensure continued effectiveness.
- ★ **Strategy 4:** Investigate State and Federal rehabilitation programs that provide financial assistance for housing repairs (Aligns with 2022 Affordable Housing Assessment, Goal 1 – Strategy 2, Tactic 3)

State and federal housing rehabilitation programs can provide critical financial assistance to help homeowners address these challenges. Programs administered through agencies such as the Ohio Department of Development and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development offer grants, low-interest loans, and other funding opportunities that support housing repair and rehabilitation. Investigating and leveraging these resources can help Ross County expand access to housing repair assistance, preserve existing housing stock, and improve living conditions for residents across the County.

- Research Federal housing rehabilitation programs, like USDA Rural Development Housing Repair Loans and Grants (Section 504).
- Review state-level housing assistance programs, such as the Ohio Department of Development's housing rehabilitation assistance.
- Educate residents and potential residents of the resulting programs.

Best Practice - Ohio Housing Resources*

Ross County can also utilize statewide programs offered through the Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA), including down payment assistance, Mortgage Credit Certificates, and affordable mortgage products for qualifying homebuyers. For rental and senior housing, OHFA's Housing Development Assistance Program and Low-Income Housing Tax Credits can help fill financing gaps and make projects feasible. Lesser-known resources in Ohio include the Ohio Housing Finance Agency's (OHFA) Ohio Heroes program, US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) loans, and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) loans.

- ★ The Ohio Heroes program offers eligible Ohio residents who serve the public, such as veterans, active-duty and reserve military, police, firefighters, EMTs, nurses, doctors, and K-12 educators, a discounted mortgage interest rate on 30-year fixed loans, including those backed by USDA, VA, FHA, or conventional financing, and can be paired with OHFA's down payment assistance and tax credit programs to make homeownership more affordable.

* [Housing Ohio: Tools for Development](#)

- ★ The USDA participates in eligible Ohio home loans through government-backed USDA Rural Development mortgages that offer low-interest, zero-down financing in qualifying rural areas, which can be combined with OHFA's Ohio Heroes benefits when borrowers meet OHFA eligibility criteria.
- ★ The VA home loan program provides federally backed loans with favorable terms, such as no down payment for many veterans. Ohio Heroes can overlay and reduce the mortgage interest rate on VA loans for qualifying public servants. At the same time, OHFA's overall Homebuyer Program delivers additional affordability support across USDA, VA, FHA, and conventional loan types.

These tools provide additional pathways to support attainable housing without requiring the establishment of new local programs.

Objective: Expand housing availability (All Align with 2022 Affordable Housing Assessment, Goal 1 – Strategy 1 and Strategy 2)

- ★ **Strategy 5:** Initiate discussions with partner agencies to explore utilizing residential TIF to provide financing assistance for building public infrastructure and supporting identified residential growth areas before a developer becomes interested (Aligns with 2022 Affordable Housing Assessment, Goal 1 – Strategy 2, Tactic 1)
 - This guide provides a simple process for Ross County communities to begin discussions with partner agencies about using residential Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to finance public infrastructure that supports planned residential growth areas, before a developer formally proposes a project.
 - ◆ Refer to the Focus Areas identified within the Land Use Chapter of this Comprehensive Plan or the state-owned land near the Ross County Correctional Institution.
 - ◆ Understand which improvements for each Focus Area are eligible for TIF, such as roads, water/sewer extensions, sidewalks, and parks.

- ◆ Build a capital stack using the TIF and assess other resources that may be required based on anticipated public improvement costs.
- ◆ Sit down with partners to this proactive TIF, such as utility providers and impacted school districts.
- ◆ Decide if the TIF is County-led, township-led with County support, or a JEDD.

- ★ **Strategy 6:** Partner with potential homeowners to utilize down payment, repair, and home rehabilitation assistance programs available from the USDA and HUD (CDBG/HOME) (Aligns with 2022 Affordable Housing Assessment, Goal 1 – Strategy 2, Tactic 1)

Ross County has a rich stock of older homes that contribute to the character and identity of its communities. Yet many of these homes require repairs, modernization, or financial support to make homeownership attainable for residents. By partnering directly with potential homeowners and connecting them to federal resources, particularly USDA Rural Development programs and HUD-funded CDBG/HOME initiatives, the County can expand access to safe, affordable, and sustainable housing.

These programs offer powerful tools: down payment assistance for first-time buyers, low-interest or forgivable loans for essential repairs, and funding to rehabilitate aging homes. When Ross County actively guides residents through these opportunities, it strengthens neighborhoods, supports long-term affordability, and helps families build generational stability.

- USDA Rural Development
 - ◆ Section 502 Direct Loans: Low-interest loans for low-income buyers.
 - ◆ Section 502 Guaranteed Loans: Mortgage guarantees through local lenders.
 - ◆ Section 504 Home Repair Program: Grants and loans for essential repairs, accessibility improvements, and hazard mitigation.

- HUD CDBG/HOME Programs
 - ◆ Down Payment Assistance: Gap financing to help buyers close on a home.
 - ◆ Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation: Funds to repair, modernize, or bring homes up to code.
 - ◆ Emergency Repair Programs: Targeted fixes for health and safety issues.

★ **Strategy 7:** Incentivize conservation subdivision-designed development to create housing while preserving the community’s rural character (Aligns with 2022 Affordable Housing Assessment, Goal 1 – Strategy 2, Tactic 1)

Preserving Ross County’s rural character while meeting the growing demand for housing requires thoughtful, future-focused planning. Conservation subdivision-designed development offers a powerful way to achieve both goals. By clustering homes on smaller lots and setting aside meaningful portions of land for open space, agriculture, and natural features, these developments create new housing opportunities without sacrificing the landscapes that define the County’s identity and valuable farmland.

Incentivizing this approach encourages developers to build in ways that respect the land, protect sensitive environmental areas, and maintain the scenic qualities valued by residents and tourists. At the same time, conservation subdivisions can reduce infrastructure costs, support wildlife corridors, and provide shared community amenities. By promoting this development model, Ross County can welcome new residents while preserving its rural heritage for generations to come. Given that Ross County does not have county-wide zoning, conservation subdivision design will need to be tied to residential TIF or other incentive conversations to persuade developers to try this approach.

★ **Strategy 8:** Implement a Linked Deposit program in Ross County

The Ross County Linked Deposit Program is a proposed partnership between the County and local banks to offer reduced-interest loans for targeted community needs. The County deposits funds (typically in certificates of deposit) at below-market rates, enabling lenders to pass along interest rate discounts to borrowers while retaining default risk.

The program is designed to support home energy efficiency, housing rehabilitation, small businesses, and agribusiness, with eligibility requiring borrowers to be current on property taxes and use funds for approved purposes. Loan discounts are tied to the spread between CD rates and the federal funds rate, with capped reductions. There are no income limits, but compliance is enforced through documentation requirements, with penalties reverting loans to market rates if violated.

Currently in early development, the program is seeking input from banking partners, with implementation dependent on lender participation and agreements with the Treasurer’s Office.

BEST PRACTICES FOR ACCELERATING HOUSING DELIVERY IN ROSS COUNTY*****

Counties like Ross County successfully increased infill and housing options by actively coordinating funding, land, and administrative support rather than leaving programs to individual residents or builders. In Ross County, a team of USDA, Community Action, Land Bank, mortgage lenders, ORDC, Ross County Planning and Development, realtors, and OHFA could make this possible. Proven practices include:

- ★ **Create a County-wide USDA Housing Navigator.** Develop the resources to screen applicants, assemble documents, and submit Section 502, 504, and 523/524 applications, dramatically increasing utilization among seniors, low-income homeowners, and workforce households. This housing navigator could mean a central location for people seeking a mortgage to start their journey towards home ownership.
- ★ **Pair the Land Bank with Home Construction Financing.** Use the Ross County Land Bank to acquire, clear, and title infill lots, then reserve those lots for projects financed through USDA, OHFA HDAP, Habitat, or Federal Home Loan Bank grants. Prioritize lots in utility-served villages.
- ★ **Develop a Pre-Approved Infill Housing Catalog.** Commission architects to design house plans tailored to Bainbridge, Kingston, Clarksburg, and other villages. Make plans available at no cost and pre-review them with the County Building Department to expedite permitting and minimize soft costs.
- ★ **Bundle Funding to Support Home Repair and Preservation.** Create a single intake form and route eligible properties to USDA 504 grants/loans, CHIP funds, Senior Repair programs, nonprofit rehab partners, and weatherization resources, targeting aging pre-1960 housing stock. This process would involve meeting with various assistance providers and mortgage lenders to establish a coordinated intake and delivery system.
- ★ **Use Public Finance Tools to Unlock Housing Sites.** Deploy TIF or CRA to fund utility extensions, stormwater improvements, sidewalks, and roadway upgrades necessary for workforce housing, especially in Focus Areas and villages with limited capacity.
- ★ **Convene Local Lenders to Expand Rural Mortgage Access.** Host quarterly meetings with banks and credit unions to increase use of USDA Guaranteed Loans, Mortgage Credit Certificates, and other rural-friendly products that serve buyers priced out of conventional mortgages.
- ★ These actions move Ross County from “promoting available programs” to **structuring a housing delivery system**, reducing risk for residents, villages, developers, and lenders while directing growth into existing communities.

* [California Coalition on Family Caregiving](#)
** [Housing Ohio: Tools for Development](#)
*** [National Association of Counties](#)

CASE STUDY: FAYETTE COUNTY, OHIO COORDINATED RURAL HOUSING DELIVERY*

Fayette County, located directly west of Ross County, has successfully expanded rural housing access without adding new government staff or creating new programs. The County partnered with the Fayette County Land Bank, Community Action Commission, local lenders, and USDA Rural Development to proactively assist homeowners and encourage infill construction.

Key elements include:

- ★ **Land Bank–Led Property Acquisition and Clearance**
The Fayette County Land Bank acquires vacant or blighted parcels, clears titles, demolishes unsafe structures when necessary, and prepares sites for reuse, lowering costs for builders and future homeowners.
- ★ **USDA Section 504 Repair Assistance Support**
The Community Action Commission of Fayette County actively assists eligible seniors and low-income homeowners in applying for USDA home repair grants and loans. They assist with documentation, contractor coordination, and inspections, resulting in significantly higher program uptake.
- ★ **Infill Housing Prioritization**
The Land Bank works with small local builders to construct single-family homes on prepared lots within existing neighborhoods in Washington Court House, which strengthens infrastructure efficiency and supports walkability.
- ★ **Low-Cost Partnership Model**
Instead of creating a new office or staff position, Fayette County uses existing entities, including the Land Bank, Community Action, lenders, and Realtors, each of which takes on a portion of the work.

* [Fayette County Land Bank](#)

Why it's Relevant to Ross County:

That model demonstrates how rural counties can grow and preserve housing by coordinating partners, preparing infill lots, and proactively connecting residents to federal programs, without increasing local government overhead.



Farms



Decorative cornice with a repeating geometric pattern.

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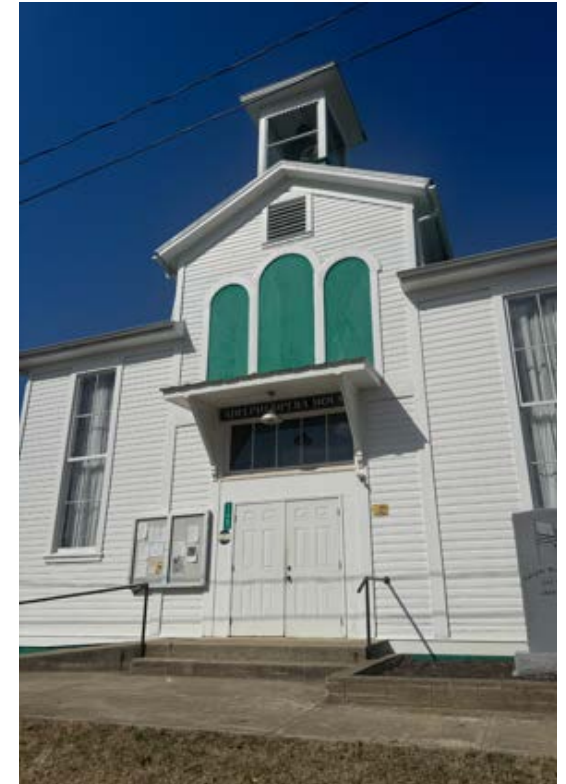
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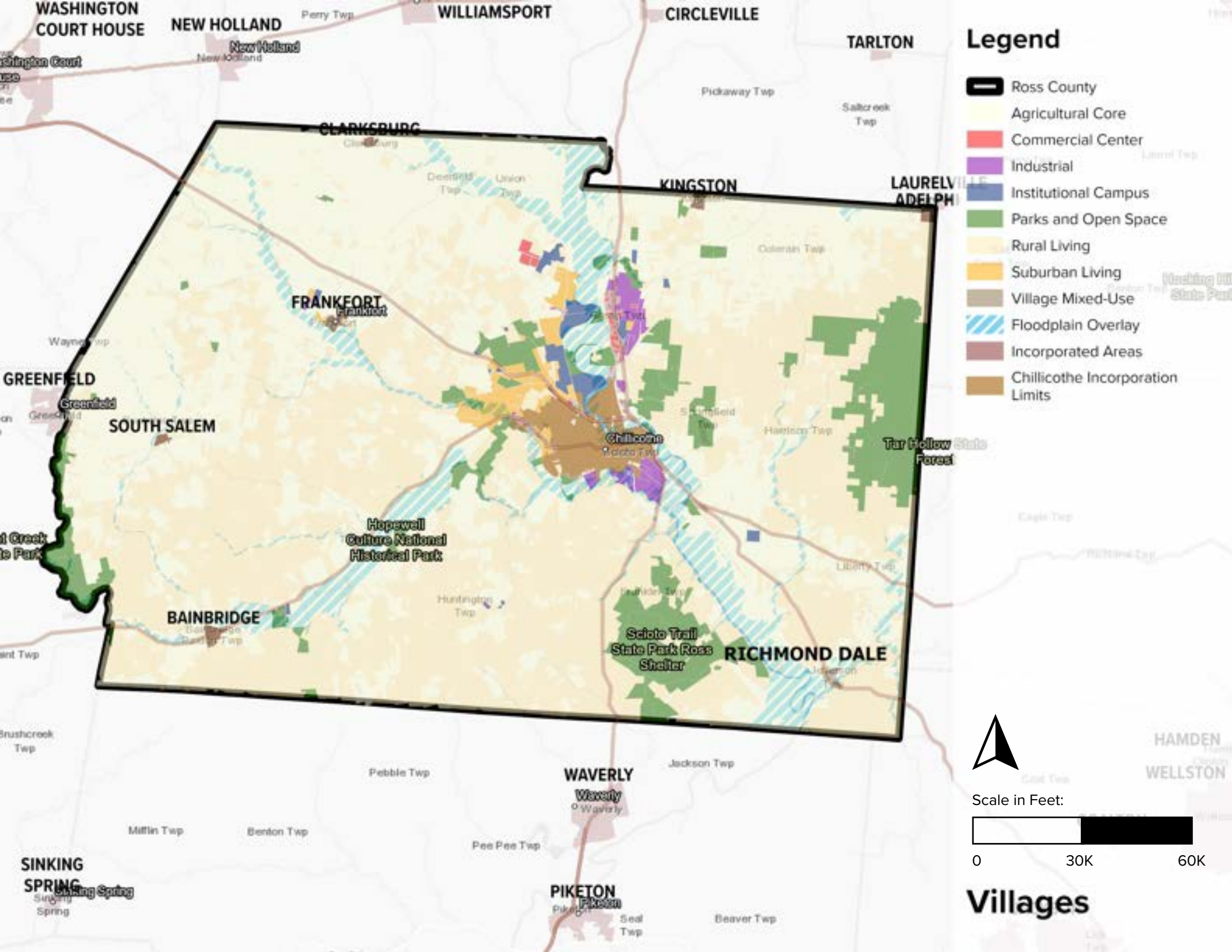
OVERVIEW

In Ross County, nearly 85 percent of the land area is rural, defined by working farms, open spaces, homes on large lots, pasture, and forested land. Across the County are six incorporated villages: Adelphi, Bainbridge, Clarksburg, Frankfort, Kingston, and South Salem, and several unincorporated places, such as Richmond Dale and Massieville, each contributing to its own character and identity. These communities hold unique stories, from the Adelphi Opera House to the Dr. John Harris Dental Museum in Bainbridge. Some are tucked into wooded hillsides, while others emerge from broad agricultural valleys. Together, they form an essential part of Ross County's cultural fabric, connecting its past to its future.

Although residents sometimes feel that attention gravitates toward Chillicothe, Ross County's villages and small communities play equally vital roles. This Plan recognizes their importance and seeks to support their long-term success by honoring their history, leveraging their assets, and strengthening their capacity to thrive in the years ahead. These towns will continue to shape the County's future.

Given the County's infrastructure constraints, development patterns, and the importance of preserving agricultural land, Ross County's villages and existing community hubs represent high-priority locations for future housing growth. Focusing investment in these areas allows the County to leverage existing infrastructure, support local businesses, and accommodate new residents without extending costly services into rural areas.



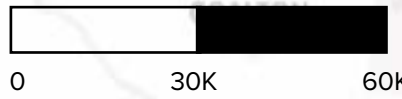


Legend

-  Ross County
-  Agricultural Core
-  Commercial Center
-  Industrial
-  Institutional Campus
-  Parks and Open Space
-  Rural Living
-  Suburban Living
-  Village Mixed-Use
-  Floodplain Overlay
-  Incorporated Areas
-  Chillicothe Incorporation Limits



Scale in Feet:



Villages

VILLAGES SPOTLIGHT

Below are key facts and snapshots about each village in Ross County to provide context for these communities.

	Adelphi	Bainbridge	Clarksburg	Frankfort	Kingston	South Salem
2020 Census Total Population	322	765	409	1,084	1,262	219
2000 Census Total Population	371	1,012	515	1,025	1,038	213
2020 Census Median Age	42.8	42.3	33.9	43.2	46.6	34.6
2023 Median HH Income (ACS 5-Yr)	\$36,563	\$41,250	\$47,727	\$62,583	\$40,609	\$68,750
2023 Median Home Value (ACS 5-Yr)	\$123,800	\$88,100	\$117,500	\$159,100	\$138,700	\$115,600

TIES TO FUTURE LAND USE

The Future Land Use map shows each one of these villages and places them in the Village Mixed-Use character class. That designation was created to represent each town’s current land use and to encourage the continued mix of residential, commercial, and “Main Street” buildings that promote each town’s individual character. Keeping these parts of the community unique will provide variety. That variety can help Ross County achieve important goals, such as offering a mix of housing types, new retail businesses, and great places to live and visit. (For a more detailed description of the character class, reference the Land Use section of this Plan.)

This designation is not only reflective of existing conditions. Still, it is also intentionally positioned to guide future growth into these areas, reinforcing villages as key locations for housing, small-scale commercial development, and reinvestment.

WHAT WE LEARNED

The following came out of the Existing Conditions Report:

- ★ Since 2000, the population of each village has fluctuated and remains unstable.
- ★ No villages in Ross County have a zoning ordinance.
- ★ Some villages, such as Adelphi, have little broadband coverage.
- ★ Many have rich traditions of Main Street-oriented businesses. However, those Main Streets have seen more vacant storefronts in recent years.
- ★ Public transportation for many seniors or residents without cars is limited in these parts of the County.
- ★ Most of these villages and areas have vacant lots or buildings in disrepair, ripe for infill development.
- ★ Many people do not have access to local medical care facilities.
- ★ Several villages rely on aging water and wastewater systems, which limit their development potential until upgrades occur.
- ★ Villages face financial and other challenges associated with low population, such as limited revenue to fund infrastructure improvements.

WHAT WE HEARD

The following themes were heard during public engagement:

- ★ Members from each community stated the need for housing growth and more convenient shopping options. However, they want growth to be primarily limited to within or around existing municipalities.
- ★ There are challenges with village administration providing baseline services, such as sewer service, due to a lack of personnel, funding, and guidance resources.
- ★ Each village and place used to be a bustling town. Unfortunately, stores and family-run businesses have declined.
- ★ There is a desire for more coordination between Chillicothe and the rest of the County. More needs to be done for villages without jurisdictional conflicts or cost burden.
- ★ Villages should double down on what makes them unique. For example, Bainbridge has many historical “upping stones,” or stones that horse riders used to alight themselves.
- ★ Residents in each area desire more housing development to retain young people.



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOALS

★ **Balanced Growth**

Promote and prioritize development and public improvements in areas best suited for development, while preserving our rural and agricultural core.

★ **Cross-Jurisdictional Collaboration**

Encourage collaboration between local governments, including school districts, townships, and municipalities, which is vital to implementing key economic and development initiatives.

SYSTEMS CONNECTIONS

The Villages chapter functions as an interdependent system within Ross County's broader Comprehensive Plan and is not an isolated topic. Each system influences and depends upon the others at multiple scales, from County-wide infrastructure investments to site-specific development decisions.

- ★ **Economic Development.** Since the COVID-19 pandemic and the rise of remote work, the merits of small-town living have become increasingly attractive to many in the workforce. Investing in villages in Ross County is investing in both workforce and employer attraction.
- ★ **Housing.** Many villages in Ross County have dilapidated structures or contain vacant lots ripe for infill development, especially housing to address the current supply shortage.
- ★ **Agriculture and Food Systems.** Focusing investment in Ross County's villages and Census-designated places minimize impacts to arable land by concentrating development.
- ★ **Environmental Quality.** Responsible development patterns should be supported as part of environmental stewardship. Focusing development within a village or a Census-designated place limits the responsible use of land. It preserves the natural vistas that make Ross County beautiful for residents and tourists alike.
- ★ **Land Use.** Many villages have small downtowns or main streets that have developed organically over the years. These traditional development patterns should be preserved and encouraged to sustain each village's unique character.
- ★ **Quality of Life.** Focusing development in villages helps garner rooftops that encourage and attract more amenities to them, such as small medical facilities and retail. The constraints of incorporation limits help maintain the highly desired "small town charm" while doing so.

The matrix below expresses the relationships between this chapter's strategies and the rest of the Plan. It shows how the Plan's strategies are interrelated and integral.



Strategy					
Chapter	1	2	3	4	Total
Land Use					3
Housing					4
Villages	This chapter				
Healthy Communities and Quality of Life					4
Economic Development					4
Agriculture					2
Transportation					0
Total	5	5	3	4	

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

Each of these places deserves an individual small-area or focused Plan, which is recommended below. However, there are additional strategies that apply to each of the village-related strategies in this Plan.

Objective: Preserve the village’s existing character while encouraging infill development

★ **Strategy 1:** Support villages and places in developing focused master plans or neighborhood revitalization plans, including streetscaping

Supporting villages and unincorporated places in developing focused master plans or neighborhood revitalization strategies is a critical step in translating this Comprehensive Plan into on-the-ground investment. These plans provide clear, actionable guidance on where housing, infrastructure, and public improvements should be located, reducing uncertainty and positioning communities to compete for funding and private investment. These plans should specifically identify priority infill sites, infrastructure needs, and redevelopment opportunities, ensuring that each village has a clear path to supporting new housing and reinvestment. At a minimum, these plans should focus on the following:

- Assessing utility availability for each village.
- Learning how each one’s unique charm can or should be utilized as part of the County’s tourism industry.
- Performing a walkability audit as described in the Healthy Communities and Quality of Life Chapter of this Comprehensive Plan.
- Reviewing a SWOT analysis for each village.
- Identifying viable Main Street businesses missing in each community.

- ★ **Strategy 2:** Conduct a vacant lot inventory and building assessment for each town to determine lots that are ripe for infill development

Conducting a comprehensive vacant lot inventory and building assessment allows each town in Ross County to clearly identify where opportunities for new housing already exist. By identifying underutilized parcels, evaluating building conditions, and mapping areas with strong infrastructure access, the County can pinpoint lots ideal for infill development. This proactive approach not only supports smarter land-use and revitalization efforts but also positions communities to strategically guide growth, reduce sprawl, and attract investment where it will have the greatest impact. It is a step in encouraging economic growth and the vitality of villages and census-designated places. This strategy directly supports housing production and workforce attraction by identifying development-ready sites that can be activated with minimal infrastructure investment.

- Define the purpose and scope of the assessment.
 - ◆ Clarify why the inventory is being conducted, e.g., support housing development, reduce blight, and/or guide infrastructure investment.
 - ◆ Decide what information is essential, such as lot size, available utilities, building condition, ownership, etc.
- Gather base data, such as Ross County GIS, and pull property tax delinquency records, code enforcement data, and demolition history, if available.
- Conduct a field survey by Ross County Planning and Development staff or a consultant. Inventory fields, such as lot vacancy status, current land use, adjacent land uses, visible environmental issues (such as flooding), and building conditions (if structures exist).

- ★ **Strategy 3:** Develop pre-approved construction plans for housing or other desired improvements

Developing preapproved construction plans for housing and other priority improvements gives communities a powerful tool to accelerate development, reduce costs, and ensure highquality, consistent design. By creating a set of readytouse building plans that meet local codes, reflect community goals, and streamline the permitting process, Ross County can make it easier for builders, homeowners, and small developers to bring new projects to life. This proactive approach removes common barriers, such as design uncertainty, engineering expenses, and lengthy review timelines. Creating shovel-ready lots will encourage infill development, revitalization, and housing types that match local needs, by local and regional developers. At the same time, the County looks to attract large-scale development entities.

Strategy 4: Double down on Main Street investment and quality of life amenities to continue to attract and retain residents and businesses

A thriving Main Street is the heartbeat of any community. In Ross County, it plays a defining role in attracting new residents, supporting local entrepreneurs, and retaining the talent that fuels long-term growth. By enhancing public spaces, supporting small businesses, and expanding amenities that make daily life vibrant and convenient, Ross County can strengthen its identity as a place where people want to live, work, and build their future.

Investing in Main Street is about more than storefronts in villages and census-designated places. It's about creating walkable, welcoming environments that support arts and culture, improving housing options, and ensuring that residents feel connected to their community. When Ross County prioritizes these amenities, it sends a clear message: *“This is a place where people belong, where businesses can thrive, and where the community’s best days are ahead.”*

- Reinvest in core main street infrastructure such as sidewalks, lighting, and streetscapes for safety and walkability.
- Expand outdoor seating and public gathering places.
- Modernize utilities and broadband to support business growth and upper-story housing (if applicable).
- Offer façade improvement grants, smallbusiness microloans, or matching funds for storefront upgrades.
- Create popup retail opportunities in vacant storefronts to test new business ideas.
- Promote walkable, infill housing that supports local shops and reduces infrastructure costs.
- Support festivals, walking clubs, farmers markets, live music, and seasonal programming that draw people downtown or on main streets.
- Partner with local artists to create murals, public art installations, and creative placemaking projects.
- Strengthen partnerships with local farmers by creating a local food network that connects them with schools, events, restaurants, etc.
- Improve parks, trails, and recreational facilities that connect to Main Street.
- Expand access to childcare, healthcare, and transportation, all key factors in resident retention.
- Promote safe, attractive neighborhoods through code enforcement, beautification, and housing rehabilitation programs as noted in the Housing Chapter in this Comprehensive Plan.
- Attract more investment with place-based branding and advertising success stories, new businesses, and community improvements. Businesses and community partners’ confidence in villages and census-designated places will grow once they witness this success, and it will encourage further investment. Transit and mobility options can expand in response to this activity.

PLANNING STRATEGY ALREADY IN ACTION: MAIN STREET INVESTMENT IN ROSS COUNTY VILLAGES

Examples of Main Street revitalization efforts already exist in Ross County. Through the Appalachia Community Grant Program (ACGP), Bainbridge and Frankfort have set the stage for public enhancements to their main streets. These projects will help demonstrate the charm of both villages and showcase how public improvements can spur private investment.

Bainbridge – Main Street Streetscape (ACGP-Funded) ▶

New sidewalks, crossings, lighting, and streetscape elements are transforming Bainbridge's village core into a safer, more walkable, and more attractive destination, supporting local businesses and heritage tourism tied to assets like the Dr. John Harris Dental Museum.

Frankfort – Main Street Revitalization (ACGP-Funded)

Frankfort is redesigning Main Street to improve pedestrian access, enhance public spaces, and modernize its infrastructure, thereby strengthening the village's identity and appeal to current and future residents. This project also increases access to alternative modes of transportation into and within the Village via a new trailhead on the PCRT and additional shared-use paths.

These projects demonstrate how targeted public investment in downtowns and quality-of-life amenities can reinforce community identity, support small businesses, and help villages remain competitive places to live and work.





IMPLEMENTATION AND CRITICAL PATH STRATEGIES

The previous sections outline the objectives and strategy recommendations for Ross County. This chapter focuses on priority projects or programs to make the Plan's recommendations a reality. These items are known as Critical Path Strategies (CPS).

There are 13 CPS in the Ross County Comprehensive Plan. Each strategy has an entire page outlining the work plan (some strategies were combined because their primary outcomes were closely tied). The work plan identifies related goals, parties involved, action steps, the timeframe for completion, and the estimated project cost to assist with implementation.

CPS PHASING

While each Critical Path Strategy can advance independently, several are foundational and should be prioritized early to reduce risk and enable future investment. Infrastructure, site readiness, and environmental mitigation efforts (CPS 2, CPS 9, and CPS 12) establish the conditions necessary for growth by addressing key constraints and aligning capital investments.

As these efforts advance, housing-focused strategies (CPS 4, CPS 5, and CPS 7) can expand supply and support reinvestment in existing communities. Workforce and employer-driven initiatives (CPS 1, CPS 3, and CPS 11) further align housing, employment, and economic opportunity.

Together, these coordinated efforts position Ross County to support larger-scale economic development initiatives, including site readiness and targeted industry growth (CPS 13 and CPS 10), while reinforcing village vitality and quality of life (CPS 6 and CPS 8).

CRITICAL PATH STRATEGIES

The goal and objective statements guide the community's vision through recommendations; the strategies are straightforward guidelines for implementing those recommendations. All listed strategies are important, but the Critical Path Strategies are the top priorities to complete first. The priorities are a combination of short-term, affordable projects that can create near-term progress for Ross County.

The Critical Path Strategies for this Plan include:

1. Create the Ross County Works program to build an employer-education partnership to develop tomorrow's workforce.
2. Actively seek local control of excess State-owned land in the Pleasant Valley and SR-104 Corridor through Land Bank, Port Authority, CIC, or similar means, for mixed residential housing development.
3. Work with local industry leaders and businesses to assist private companies in developing and facilitating an employer housing incentive program.
4. Continue supporting programs or create new ones to rehabilitate or repair older housing stock.
5. Incentivize conservation subdivision-designed development to create housing while preserving the community's rural character.
6. Support villages and places in developing focused master plans or neighborhood revitalization plans, including streetscaping.
7. Develop pre-approved construction plans for housing or other desired improvements.
8. Adopt a limited Ross County Complete Streets Policy.
9. Create a brownfield site mitigation plan.
10. Integrate Agriculture into Economic Development efforts.
11. Align and strengthen the agricultural workforce and career pathways.
12. Develop and Use a County Capital Improvement Plan to Prioritize Transportation and Infrastructure Investments.
13. Create State of Ohio certified mega sites in Focus Areas 1 and 2 that can accommodate a mix of industrial, residential, and employment uses and investments.

HOW TO USE CRITICAL PATH STRATEGIES

The following pages guide the implementation of the identified Critical Path Strategies in the Ross County Comprehensive Plan. Each strategy's dedicated work plan will include a timeframe of at least five years and an estimated cost.

CPS 1

Strategy

Create the Ross County WORKS program to build an employer-education partnership to develop tomorrow's workforce.

Overview:

Workforce development programs are initiatives that enhance individuals' skills, knowledge, and employability to meet labor-market needs. These programs are designed to bridge the gap between the skills job seekers possess and those employers require. In today's economy, workforce development programs are a crucial tool for communities and businesses to retain their workforce. Workforce development programs can take various forms and are often implemented by governments, educational institutions, non-profit organizations, and private companies. Ross County should establish a new workforce development organization to facilitate connections among local schools, businesses, and community organizations. To accomplish this, Ross County should create Ross WORKS (World of Real Knowledge and Skills), modeled after Pickaway WORKS in Pickaway County, Ohio.

Partners:

- ★ Ross County schools
- ★ Major employers
- ★ Ohio University – Chillicothe
- ★ Greater Chillicothe Ross County Development

Action Steps:

1. Ross WORKS should be created as a 501 (c) (3) non-profit with formal bylaws in place. Program activities are implemented by the executive director and program advisors at the direction of the director. The executive director and program advisors shall form the Ross WORKS Advisory Board.
2. A five-member Operations Committee, a formal subcommittee of the Ross County WORKS Advisory Board, should provide general oversight on budget and personnel matters, make recommendations to the full Advisory Board, and meet quarterly in advance of the Advisory Board meetings.
3. Three main councils should be actively involved in the management of the organization: a business council, an education council, and a governmental council.
4. An in-depth review of the program is conducted at the annual strategic planning retreat to review feedback, evaluate program performance, and provide direction for the future.
5. Ross WORKS should promote college and career readiness for Ross County students (ages 13 and older), financially supported by all the county's school districts.
6. Ross WORKS should provide ongoing program initiatives and build partnerships among key stakeholders to create relevant career pathways for Ross County students, help meet the workforce demands of our employers, and strengthen the economic stability of our community. That can be achieved through a variety of different programs and initiatives, including (continued on next page):

Time Frame:

- ★ Year 1

Estimated Cost:

- ★ Staff time

CPS 1 (CONTINUED)

Action Steps:

- a. Educator Business Tours – small groups of educators visit businesses to learn about career pathways and local opportunities, and to connect real-world work scenarios to classroom learning.
- b. Reverse Business Tours – business and community leaders are invited “back to school” for tours and updates on programming and progress.
- c. Job Shadows/Internships- onsite and virtual opportunities to help students explore career interests and gain valuable real-world work experience, with various levels of interaction.
- d. Guest Speaker Events – career day and other networking and career awareness events for business and community members to share career path stories and connect students, educators, and employers.
- e. High School Boot Camps – mock interview sessions and small group workshops on relevant topics to prepare students for success in life after high school.
- f. Thinking Partnerships – business and community members partner with a classroom teacher to provide real-world problem scenarios and allow students to problem solve and develop solutions.
- g. Business Showcase – students created business spotlight videos to be featured in schools and online, as well as for the benefit of businesses. They can be shared on youth preferred social media platforms (e.g., TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram).
- h. Ross County College & Career Night – annual county-wide event with over 100 educational institutions and employers sharing information about education options, future career paths, and local job opportunities.
- i. ACT Prep Workshops – spring and fall workshop sessions to help students prepare for college entrance exams.
- j. FAFSA Day – an annual financial aid workshop with personal assistance from Ohio Christian University professionals in filing the FAFSA, the necessary first step in the financial aid process.
- k. Kids on Campus – summer enrichment camp for grades 1-4, focusing on math, science, music, art, and technology, providing hands-on activities in a fun learning environment, and promoting early exposure to a college campus.

Systems Approach Tie-Ins

- ★ Aligns workforce development with economic development priorities to ensure training and career pathways match employer demand.
- ★ Reinforces housing, transportation, and quality of life investments needed to attract and retain a skilled workforce.
- ★ Leverages and strengthens existing partnerships across education, employers, and public agencies to create a coordinated workforce system.
- ★ Supports long-term economic competitiveness by connecting talent development with industry growth and site readiness efforts.

CPS 2

Strategy

Advance the Pleasant Valley Road corridor as a priority growth-supporting investment.

Overview:

The Pleasant Valley Road (PVR) corridor is one of the most significant constraints to future housing and economic development in Ross County. Severe peak-hour congestion, access conflicts, and limited roadway capacity are already restricting development, with multiple projects unable to advance due to transportation constraints. As a critical connector northwest of Chillicothe, PVR also plays an important role in providing access to employment, healthcare, and essential services.

A recent traffic impact study confirmed that both near-term operational improvements and long-term capacity upgrades will be required to address these issues. In response, Ross County has secured funding to initiate a comprehensive corridor analysis focused on improving safety, mobility, and development readiness.

Addressing the PVR corridor is essential not only to resolving existing congestion and safety concerns, but also to unlocking development-ready land, coordinating utility investments, and supporting both workforce and market-rate housing in one of the County's primary growth areas.

Action Steps:

1. Actively seek local control of excess State-owned land in the Pleasant Valley and SR-104 Corridor through Land Bank, Port Authority, CIC, or similar means, for mixed residential housing development.
2. Ross County should conduct a focused analysis of site-specific conditions within this area, including roadway access, utility capacity, and development readiness. This effort should evaluate existing and planned water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure, identify constraints related to roadway congestion and access management, and assess the feasibility of supporting residential development at a range of densities.
3. Coordinate this analysis with the broader Pleasant Valley Road corridor study, including:
 - a. Complete a comprehensive corridor study for Pleasant Valley Road, evaluating existing conditions, future traffic demand, and development scenarios.
 - b. Define the study area and key focus segments, including the corridor between SR-104 and SR-207, the associated intersections, and development areas.

(continued on next page):

Partners:

- ★ ODOT District 9
- ★ Ross County Planning & Development
- ★ Utility providers
- ★ State Corrections
- ★ Ross County Engineer

Time Frame:

- ★ Year 1

Estimated Cost:

- ★ \$350,000

CPS 2 (CONTINUED)

Action Steps:

- c. Use existing data and prior studies, including traffic counts, crash data, access points, land use, and utility capacity, to inform analysis.
- d. Engage key stakeholders, including the County Engineer, ODOT District 9, MPO, developers, emergency services, and residents, to identify issues and opportunities.
- e. Identify key constraints and opportunities, including congestion bottlenecks, high-crash locations, access conflicts, and infrastructure limitations.
- f. Develop and evaluate improvement alternatives, ranging from targeted operational improvements (turn lanes, signal timing) to more comprehensive solutions (widening, intersection redesign, access management, and multimodal enhancements).
- g. Select a preferred corridor improvement strategy that balances safety, mobility, cost, and development readiness.
- h. Coordinate transportation improvements with utility planning and land-use strategy, ensuring that infrastructure can support future housing and commercial development.
- i. Develop a phased implementation plan that includes short-, mid-, and long-term improvements, funding strategies, and project responsibilities.
- j. Position the corridor for state and federal funding, ensuring that study outcomes support grant applications and capital programming.

Systems Approach Tie-Ins

- ★ Unlocks development-ready land to support housing and economic growth.
- ★ Aligns transportation investments with land use, utilities, and site readiness.
- ★ Supports workforce access to jobs, healthcare, and services through improved mobility.
- ★ Coordinates infrastructure planning across transportation, utilities, and development.

CPS 3

Strategy

Work with local industry leaders and businesses to assist private companies in developing and facilitating an employer housing incentive program.

Overview:

Employer participation is essential to addressing housing challenges in Ross County. Many of the County's largest employers are directly experiencing workforce constraints tied to housing availability, commute distance, and affordability. Rather than relying solely on public-sector programs, this strategy supports employer-led housing solutions that align with workforce needs.

Ross County's role is to act as a facilitator and connector by helping employers identify the right tools, partners, and funding mechanisms to implement housing programs. These may include down payment assistance, rental support, employer-assisted housing programs, or partnerships to support new housing development.

By enabling employers to take a leading role, Ross County can better align housing production with workforce demand, reduce implementation barriers, and create a more competitive environment for businesses and residents.

Action Steps:

1. Convene an Employer Housing Working Group led by major employers to define program priorities, participation levels, and desired outcomes.
2. Support employers in selecting and structuring housing programs that align with their workforce needs, including down payment assistance, rental assistance, and employer-assisted housing models.
3. Establish a County-supported framework that connects employers to funding tools and partners, including OHFA programs, USDA financing, local lenders, and housing developers.
4. Coordinate with housing partners and developers to align new and existing housing supply with employer demand, including price points, unit types, and locations.
5. Provide administrative support as needed to streamline program implementation, reduce barriers, and ensure consistency across participating employers.

Partners:

- ★ Major employers
- ★ Housing partners
- ★ Ross County Planning and Development

Time Frame:

- ★ Years 2 to 5

Estimated Cost:

Staff time

Systems Approach Tie-Ins:

- ★ Aligns housing production with workforce needs identified through major employers.
- ★ Supports talent attraction and retention by reducing commute distances and improving housing availability.
- ★ Connects employer participation with County-led housing and infrastructure strategies.

CPS 4

Strategy Continue supporting programs or create new ones to rehabilitate or repair older housing stock.

Overview:

County trends indicate a need for additional housing units, as the available supply continues to decline. Preserving and reinvesting in existing housing is therefore critical to maintaining a stable and functional housing supply. Rehabilitation efforts help extend the life of existing homes, improve safety, maintain neighborhood character, and expand access to quality housing for current and future residents.

This strategy focuses on strengthening existing rehabilitation programs while introducing new tools that encourage reinvestment. A key component is the implementation of a Linked Deposit Program, which incentivizes local financial institutions to offer low-interest loans for property repairs and upgrades. By reducing borrowing costs for homeowners and landlords, this program can accelerate reinvestment, address deferred maintenance, and support long-term housing stability across the county. This approach reduces pressure on new housing construction by extending the life and usability of existing units.

Action Steps:

1. Inventory existing programs and funding sources, including HOME, CDBG, and other applicable state and federal resources.
2. Establish clear program objectives, including target outcomes such as structural rehabilitation, property maintenance, and neighborhood stabilization.
3. Develop the program structure, including eligibility criteria, types of assistance, and maximum funding levels, and advance implementation of the Linked Deposit Program through coordination with the Treasurer's Office.
4. Build partnerships with townships, contractors, financial institutions, and housing organizations to support program delivery and expand participation.
5. Promote available programs through County communication channels and partner organizations to increase awareness and utilization.
6. Track performance metrics, such as the number of units improved, funding deployed, and the geographic distribution of investment, to evaluate program effectiveness.

Partners:

- ★ Ross County Planning and Development
- ★ Local lenders
- ★ Ross County Board of Commissioners
- ★ Townships
- ★ Ross County Treasurer

Time Frame:

- ★ Year 3

Estimated Cost:

Staff time

Systems Approach Tie-Ins:

- ★ Expands housing availability by increasing the number of functional units within the existing housing stock.
- ★ Supports reinvestment in villages and named places, helping maintain their vibrancy and long-term viability.
- ★ Reduces pressure on new infrastructure by utilizing existing roads, water, and sewer systems.

CPS 5

Strategy

Incentivize conservation subdivision-designed development to create housing while preserving the community's rural character.

Overview:

Encouraging conservation subdivision-designed development offers a practical way to meet housing needs while protecting the rural character that residents value. By clustering homes and preserving significant open space, this approach supports thoughtful growth that maintains scenic landscapes, protects agricultural land, and reinforces community identity. This strategy ensures that new housing enhances, rather than erodes, the rural qualities that define Ross County, creating a balanced path forward for sustainable and resilient growth.

Action Steps:

1. Define how conservation subdivision design should be applied in Ross County by identifying preferred layouts, development patterns, and example site plans.
2. Develop a voluntary Conservation Development Handbook outlining preferred design approaches, including clustered homes, shared access, and the preservation of active agricultural land. The handbook should include:
 - a. Conservation design principles
 - b. Sample site plans
 - c. Open space preservation guidelines
 - d. Street and utility design recommendations
3. Update subdivision regulations to allow flexible lot sizes and density bonuses, enabling the same or more units on smaller lots in exchange for preserving open space (e.g., 40–70 percent).
4. Establish streamlined review and approval processes for conservation subdivisions, including:
 - a. Coordination with land trusts or conservancies to secure long-term open space protection through conservation easements or development agreements
 - b. Use of service districts or similar tools to support maintenance of preserved open space

Partners:

- ★ Ross County Planning and Development
- ★ Ross County Auditor
- ★ Ross County Health District

Time Frame:

- ★ Year 2

Estimated Cost:

Staff time

CP5 (CONTINUED)

Action Steps:

5. Develop a playbook for townships to establish special improvement districts or similar mechanisms to fund long-term maintenance of open space and shared infrastructure.
6. Conduct landowner education and pre-development outreach, including:
 - a. Workshops with land trusts and development partners
 - b. Sample layouts tailored to typical parcel sizes
 - c. Information on conservation easements and long-term land stewardship
7. Offer financial or tax-related incentives for preserved open space, including:
 - a. Continued eligibility for CAUV, where applicable
 - b. Reduced long-term maintenance obligations through dedication to a township or land trust
 - c. Voluntary agreements between landowners to preserve land in exchange for clustered development

Systems Approach Tie-Ins:

- ★ Preserves productive agricultural land while accommodating housing growth.
- ★ Aligns land use patterns with infrastructure efficiency by reducing the length of roads and utility extensions.
- ★ Expands housing opportunities while maintaining rural character and community identity.
- ★ Supports a broader range of housing products that can attract new residents and the workforce.

CPS 6

Strategy Support villages and places in developing focused master plans or neighborhood revitalization plans, including streetscaping.

Overview:

Supporting villages and named places is a key initiative of this Plan. This effort begins with developing clear, actionable master plans that define a vision for each community and establish a path toward implementation.

These plans will help foster economic vitality, improve quality of life, and reinforce each place's unique identity. County staff will work with township and local officials to create tailored action plans that support redevelopment, improve walkability, and enhance public spaces while building on each community's existing assets.

Action Steps:

1. Conduct a vacant lot inventory and building assessment for each village to identify sites suitable for infill development.
 - a. Compile base data using County GIS, tax delinquency records, code enforcement data, and demolition history where available.
 - b. Conduct field verification to document vacant and underutilized parcels, building conditions, and visible environmental constraints (such as flooding).
2. Assess utility availability and capacity within each village to determine readiness for infill development and reinvestment.
3. Identify opportunities to leverage each community's character and assets as part of the County's tourism and economic development strategy.
4. Conduct walkability audits, as outlined in the Healthy Communities and Quality of Life Chapter, to identify safety and connectivity improvements.
5. Prepare a SWOT analysis for each village to inform redevelopment priorities and strategic direction.
6. Identify gaps in Main Street businesses and opportunities for targeted recruitment and small business development.

Partners:

- ★ Village administrators
- ★ Ross County Planning and Development

Time Frame:

- ★ Years 1 and 2

Estimated Cost:

Varies, but mostly staff time

Systems Approach Tie-Ins:

- ★ Identifies infill opportunities that support additional housing units within existing communities.
- ★ Reinforces Main Street vitality by increasing residential density and supporting local businesses.
- ★ Maximizes use of existing infrastructure by directing growth to areas with available capacity.
- ★ Aligns village-level planning with broader economic development and quality-of-life strategies.

CPS 7

Strategy Develop pre-approved construction plans for housing or other desired improvements.

Overview:

Providing pre-approved, code-compliant construction plans is a practical way to reduce barriers to development, lower design costs, and shorten review timelines. By offering a library of vetted plans, the County can support faster project delivery while maintaining consistent, high-quality development outcomes.

These plans can be tailored to reflect local context, including village character, lot sizes, and market conditions. A range of unit types should be included, such as single-family homes, accessory dwelling units, and small-scale multi-unit structures (e.g., duplexes), to support a broader mix of housing options across the county.

Action Steps:*

1. Identify the program administrator responsible for managing pre-approved plans and coordinating implementation.
2. Analyze typical lot sizes, development patterns, and market conditions, including basic pro forma analysis, to inform plan selection and applicability across different areas, including Focus Areas and village contexts.
3. Develop or acquire a library of pre-approved construction plans in partnership with an Ohio-licensed architect or through existing programs such as Housing Ohio. Plans should reflect a range of housing types and development contexts.
4. Establish clear standards for plan use, including permitting processes, applicable conditions, and any required site-specific modifications.
5. Address architectural licensing, stamping, and liability requirements to ensure compliance and reduce risk for both the County and builders.
6. Establish a schedule and funding plan to maintain and update the plan library over time.

Partners:

- ★ Ross County Health District
- ★ Ross County Building Department for commercial/ multi-unit residential
- ★ Ross County Planning and Development

Time Frame:

- ★ Year 1

Estimated Cost:

\$1,500 to \$6,000 per plan for new designs

Systems Approach Tie-Ins:

- ★ Reduces barriers to housing development by lowering design costs and accelerating approvals.
- ★ Supports reinvestment in villages and existing neighborhoods through predictable and accessible building options.
- ★ Expands the range of housing types available to meet workforce and market demand.
- ★ Aligns housing production with infrastructure capacity and targeted growth areas.

* [Top 10 Tips for Cities Considering Pre-Approved Housing Plans | Planetizen Features](#)

CPS 8

Strategy Adopt a limited Ross County Complete Streets Policy.

Overview:

Ross County's transportation network requires a context-sensitive approach that reflects the needs of both rural and village environments. While traffic volumes and development patterns may not warrant a full-scale policy framework in all areas, targeted strategies can meaningfully improve safety, accessibility, and connectivity for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-motorized users.

Establishing a limited Complete Streets Policy provides a practical foundation for incorporating multimodal considerations into roadway design, maintenance, and capital improvement decisions, particularly within villages and identified activity centers.

Complementing this policy, village-level walkability audits offer a hands-on, data-driven approach to assess existing conditions and identify barriers to safe, comfortable pedestrian movement. These audits engage local stakeholders and help prioritize low-cost, high-impact improvements. Together, these efforts support a more balanced transportation system, improve the quality of life, and strengthen the function of Ross County's communities.

Action Steps:

1. Conduct walkability audits in villages
 - a. Assemble a local audit team, including village officials, residents, school representatives, law enforcement, public health staff, and business owners.
 - b. Select audit areas, focusing on downtown districts, school and park routes, high-crash locations, and areas planned for growth.
 - c. Conduct field audits to evaluate sidewalks, crossings, traffic conditions, lighting, and overall pedestrian comfort. Document findings with notes and photos.
 - d. Evaluate and prioritize findings, organizing issues into safety concerns, accessibility barriers, and longer-term improvements.
 - e. Prepare a summary report and action plan that includes recommended improvements, funding opportunities (such as ODOT or Safe Routes to School), and implementation responsibilities.

(continued on next page):

Partners:

- ★ Villages
- ★ County Engineer
- ★ Ross County Planning and Development

Time Frame:

- ★ Year 1

Estimated Cost:

\$60,000-\$100,000 with a consultant; staff time without a consultant

CPS 8 (CONTINUED)

Action Steps:

2. Develop and adopt a limited Complete Streets Policy
 - a. Define the purpose and scope of the policy, including where it applies and key guiding principles such as safety, accessibility, and multimodal connectivity.
 - b. Build internal alignment by engaging engineering, planning, and public works staff, and secure leadership support.
 - c. Review existing plans, standards, and regulations to ensure alignment and identify gaps.
 - d. Engage stakeholders and the public to identify priority issues and build support.
 - e. Define applicable roadway types and contexts, including distinctions between rural roads, village centers, and higher-intensity corridors.
 - f. Develop clear policy language and supporting design guidance that requires consideration of all users.
 - g. Establish criteria for exceptions and a transparent approval process.
 - h. Integrate the policy into capital planning and project development processes.
 - i. Identify funding sources and implementation tools, including low-cost improvements.
 - j. Adopt the policy through the appropriate governing body.
 - k. Train staff and decision-makers to ensure consistent application.

Systems Approach Tie-Ins

- ★ Improves safety and accessibility across villages and key activity areas.
- ★ Supports health outcomes through increased walkability and physical activity.
- ★ Aligns transportation design with land use and community character.
- ★ Reinforces village revitalization and quality-of-life strategies.

Strategy Support a brownfield site mitigation plan.

Overview:

Addressing legacy environmental conditions is essential to unlocking redevelopment potential, protecting public health, and positioning Ross County for long-term economic resilience. Brownfield sites and contaminated groundwater present both constraints and opportunities. While they can deter investment and limit land use, strategic planning and targeted remediation can transform these areas into productive assets.

For example, a potential issue exists in Focus Area 1 at the former WearEver site. Addressing these environmental challenges and redevelopment barriers is essential to advancing development readiness and supporting future investment.

A coordinated approach with local, state, and private-sector stakeholders to pursue grant funding and other resources that support environmental assessment, remediation, and site-readiness efforts is needed to identify, prioritize, and mitigate environmental risks while aligning cleanup efforts with broader economic development and infrastructure goals. This strategy establishes a comprehensive framework for brownfield assessment and remediation, prepares key sites for industrial reuse and energy production, and advances targeted water quality improvements through intergovernmental coordination.

By proactively addressing known constraints, such as the Howmet plume, and positioning projects for coordinated, multi-source funding, Ross County can remove barriers to development while supporting reinvestment in priority areas.

Action Steps:

1. Define the purpose and funding strategy for the brownfield mitigation plan, including whether the primary objective is to position sites for federal funding, leverage state programs, or guide local redevelopment.
2. Inventory and map known and suspected brownfield sites across the county, including high-priority locations such as the Howmet groundwater plume and sites within or near Focus Areas.
3. Prioritize sites based on redevelopment potential, environmental risk, proximity to Focus Areas, and overall community impact.
4. Conduct environmental due diligence, including Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments as needed, to determine contamination levels, regulatory requirements, and redevelopment constraints.
5. Develop mitigation and remediation strategies that align with regulatory standards, anticipated land uses, and funding program requirements.
6. Coordinate brownfield mitigation efforts with Focus Area redevelopment to ensure cleanup supports targeted growth and maximizes return on investment.

(continued on next page):

Partners:

- ★ OEPA
- ★ City of Chillicothe Utilities
- ★ U.S. EPA Brownfields Program
- ★ Ohio Brownfield Remediation Program
- ★ Ross County EMA
- ★ ODOT

Time Frame:

- ★ Year 4

Estimated Cost:

Funding for brownfield assessment and remediation planning can range from several hundred thousand dollars to over \$1 million when multiple funding sources are coordinated.

CPS 9 (CONTINUED)

Action Steps:

7. Pursue funding and implementation partnerships through federal, state, and local programs, including:
 - a. Ohio Brownfield Remediation Program through ODOD
 - b. U.S. EPA Brownfields Assessment, Cleanup, and Revolving Loan Fund programs
 - c. Coordination with OEPA, including the use of Section 319 funding where applicable for water quality impacts
 - d. Partner with local utilities, developers, and regional organizations to advance remediation and redevelopment. Track remediation progress and redevelopment outcomes to ensure sites are returned to productive use and continue to meet public health and environmental standards.
8. Track remediation progress and redevelopment outcomes to ensure sites are returned to productive use and continue to meet public health and environmental standards.

Systems Approach Tie-Ins

- ★ Removes environmental barriers to redevelopment in Focus Area 1 and other priority areas.
- ★ Aligns environmental remediation with economic development and site readiness strategies.
- ★ Supports infrastructure and land-use planning by repurposing underutilized sites for productive use.
- ★ Positions the County to compete for state and federal funding through coordinated planning and project readiness.

CPS 10

Strategy Integrate Agriculture into Economic Development efforts.

Overview:

Agriculture plays a significant role in Ross County's economy. This Plan recommends treating agricultural land and farm operations as a targeted industry rather than solely as a land preservation priority.

Local farmers have identified key infrastructure constraints, including roadway conditions, bridge capacity, and limited broadband access, that hinder safe and efficient operations. When agriculture is not fully integrated into broader economic development systems, these issues are less likely to be systematically addressed.

By incorporating agriculture into economic development strategies, farm operations can be included in business outreach, infrastructure investment decisions, and funding programs, ensuring they are supported alongside other priority industries.

Action Steps:

1. Prioritize and sequence infrastructure improvements that support agricultural operations, including maintaining bridge weight limits, improving rural haul routes, and ensuring efficient movement between fields, storage facilities, and regional markets.
2. Incorporate agricultural operations into business outreach efforts using a Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) approach to identify barriers to expansion, transition, and diversification.
3. Coordinate with capital improvement planning to address roadway safety, bridge capacity, and broadband access in areas with significant agricultural activity.
4. Position agriculture within grant applications and regional funding strategies, ensuring it is represented alongside other targeted sectors in state and federal funding opportunities.

Partners:

- ★ County Engineer
- ★ Greater Chillicothe Ross County Development
- ★ Ross County Planning and Development
- ★ Farmers' Club

Time Frame:

- ★ Year 1

Estimated Cost:

Staff time and \$100,000 in annual grant funding

Systems Approach Tie-Ins:

- ★ Positions agriculture as a core economic sector within the County's development strategy.
- ★ Aligns infrastructure investment with the operational needs of farm businesses.
- ★ Connects agricultural production with regional supply chains and market access.
- ★ Integrates agriculture into business outreach and funding programs alongside other targeted industries.

Strategy Align and strengthen the agricultural workforce and career pathways

Overview:

A resilient agricultural economy depends not only on land and infrastructure but also on a skilled, sustainable workforce pipeline. As demographic shifts, technological advancements, and evolving market demands reshape the agricultural sector, Ross County must align its workforce development systems with the needs of modern agriculture.

This strategy focuses on strengthening career pathways that connect students, job seekers, and incumbent workers to opportunities across the agricultural value chain, including production, processing, logistics, agribusiness, and emerging ag-tech fields.

By fostering partnerships among local schools, career and technical education programs, higher education institutions, employers, and workforce agencies, the County can better prepare residents for in-demand agricultural careers while supporting business retention and expansion. Emphasis should be placed on increasing awareness of agricultural careers, expanding hands-on training and credentialing opportunities, and reducing barriers to entry for new and future farm operators.

Action Steps:

1. Strengthen coordination between K–12 schools, Pickaway-Ross Career and Technology Center, OSU Extension, and local agricultural employers to create clear pathways from education to employment.
2. Expand awareness of modern agricultural careers, including technology, logistics, agribusiness, and value-added production.
3. Increase opportunities for internships, apprenticeships, and work-based learning with local farm operations and agribusinesses.
4. Align workforce initiatives with farm transition and business support strategies, ensuring pathways into ownership, succession, and long-term employment.

Partners:

- ★ County Engineer
- ★ Greater Chillicothe Ross County Development
- ★ Ross County Planning and Development
- ★ Farmers' Club

Time Frame:

- ★ Year 2

Estimated Cost:

Staff time or potential seed funding up to \$100,000

Systems Approach Tie-Ins:

- ★ Aligns with the Ross County WORKS program to integrate agriculture into broader workforce development efforts.
- ★ Supports long-term viability of farm operations through workforce pipeline and succession planning.
- ★ Connects workforce development with agricultural economic development and business support strategies.
- ★ Reinforces agriculture as a targeted industry within the County's economic development framework.

CPS 12

Strategy

Develop and use a County Capital Improvement Plan to prioritize transportation and infrastructure investments.

Overview:

Maintaining Ross County's roads and bridges is essential for safety, efficient travel, economic development, and responsible long-term budgeting. The County's transportation priorities extend beyond building new capacity and include improving pavement conditions, repairing and replacing bridges, upgrading guardrails, addressing drainage issues, enhancing intersections, and conducting corridor studies to guide future investment.

A Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) should serve as the County's primary tool for organizing these needs into a clear, prioritized, and financially practical program. That is particularly critical in Ross County, where transportation investments must support everyday travel, agriculture, economic development, emergency services, and future housing growth.

Partners:

- ★ ODOT District 9
- ★ MPO
- ★ County Engineer
- ★ Ross County Planning and Development
- ★ Ross County Board of Commissioners

Action Steps:

1. Develop a county-wide Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) with a five- to ten-year planning horizon that includes transportation, bridges, drainage, facilities, and related infrastructure needs, including:
 - a. Transportation improvements within Focus Area 1.
 - b. Roadway improvements supporting future land uses in Focus Area 2, including those identified in the ODOT-reviewed Triangle Study.
 - c. Road and rail investments that support development in Focus Areas.
2. Structure the CIP into two components: a capital budget:
 - a. Identifying funded projects for the upcoming year; and
 - b. Outlining planned investments over a five- to ten-year period.
3. Incorporate priority projects identified by County leadership and staff, including roadway resurfacing, bridge rehabilitation and replacement, slip repair, guardrail replacement, stormwater improvements, corridor studies, and key intersection improvements.
4. Define core project components for each investment, including project description, cost estimates, funding strategy, implementation timeline, and long-term maintenance impacts.
5. Establish clear prioritization criteria, including safety, asset condition, agricultural access, economic development impact, emergency access, coordination with utilities, and project readiness.
6. Align the CIP with the County's annual budgeting process to transition near-term projects into funded capital improvements.

(continued on next page):

Time Frame:

- ★ Year 4

Estimated Cost:

\$100,000 if a consultant is used; staff time if no consultant is used

CPS 12 (CONTINUED)

Action Steps:

7. Coordinate across departments and agencies, including the County Engineer, Planning and Development, utilities, and elected officials, to ensure consistent priorities and implementation.
8. Phase major investments over time to improve financial management and avoid sudden budget impacts.
9. Position projects for external funding by ensuring they are well-defined, justified, and ready to compete for state and federal grants.
10. Maintain the CIP as a living document, regularly updating project status, costs, and priorities as conditions change.
11. Improve transparency and public understanding by clearly communicating infrastructure priorities, timelines, and investment decisions.

Systems Approach Tie-Ins

- ★ Aligns transportation investment with economic development and site readiness strategies.
- ★ Supports housing growth by funding infrastructure in priority development areas.
- ★ Coordinates infrastructure delivery across jurisdictions and agencies.
- ★ Enhances the County's ability to compete for state and federal funding.

CPS 13

Strategy

Establish a Ross County Transportation Improvement District (TID) to fund and implement priority transportation projects.

Overview:

Implementing major transportation improvements in Ross County will require coordination across jurisdictions, alignment with development activity, and access to flexible funding tools. Many of the County's highest-priority projects, particularly those tied to Focus Areas, corridor improvements, and economic development, cross jurisdictional boundaries or require public-private partnerships.

A Transportation Improvement District (TID) provides a formal structure for coordinating these efforts, enabling the County to partner with municipalities, townships, developers, and state agencies to fund and deliver infrastructure projects more efficiently.

By establishing a TID, Ross County can move beyond planning and position itself to implement projects identified in this Plan, including corridor improvements, access management, intersection upgrades, and infrastructure needed to support site readiness and long-term growth.

Partners:

- ★ Ross County Board of Commissioners
- ★ Municipalities and Townships
- ★ ODOT District 9
- ★ Ross County Engineer
- ★ Greater Chillicothe Ross County Development
- ★ Developers and private-sector partners
- ★ JobsOhio

Action Steps:

1. Establish the Transportation Improvement District.
 - a. Initiate coordination with the Ross County Board of Commissioners to serve as the lead entity in forming the TID under Ohio Revised Code Chapter 5540.
 - b. Engage legal counsel to prepare the necessary formation documents, including resolutions, bylaws, and intergovernmental agreements.
 - c. Define the TID's governance structure, including board composition (e.g., County Commissioners, municipal and township representatives, and key stakeholders), voting structure, and administrative responsibilities.
 - d. Identify initial participating jurisdictions (municipalities and townships) and secure formal participation through resolutions or agreements.
 - e. Establish the geographic scope of the TID for the entire county.
 - f. Determine the administrative structure, including whether the TID will operate with County staff support or through a contracted administrator.
 - g. Develop initial operating procedures, including project selection criteria, funding participation requirements, and coordination with partner agencies such as ODOT.

(continued on next page):

Time Frame:

- ★ Year 1

Estimated Cost:

Staff time and \$100,000 in annual grant funding

CPS 14

Strategy

Create State of Ohio certified mega sites in Focus Areas 1 and 2 that can accommodate a mix of industrial, residential, and employment uses and investments.

Overview:

Ross County's ability to compete for large-scale employers depends on having sites that are fully controlled, infrastructure-ready, and supported by completed due diligence. Modern economic development projects, particularly in advanced manufacturing, logistics, and industrial sectors, require sites where risk has been reduced before marketing.

The Priority Focus Areas identified in this Plan present a strong opportunity to position Ross County for this type of investment. However, achieving this requires a coordinated effort to assemble land, extend infrastructure, complete technical studies, and align local policies. This strategy builds on the infrastructure, land use, and transportation recommendations throughout this Plan, including the Thoroughfare Plan and the utility capacity analysis, to create sites that are competitive at the state and national levels.

Partners:

- ★ Ross County Land Bank
- ★ Greater Chillicothe Ross County Development
- ★ ODOD
- ★ Ross County Planning and Development
- ★ Local schools
- ★ Ross County Board of Commissioners
- ★ Ross County utility providers
- ★ JobsOhio

Action Steps:

1. Establish site control in Priority Focus Areas
 - a. Work with property owners to assemble large, contiguous sites through acquisition, options, or development agreements. Sites should be sufficiently large to accommodate major employers and allow for phased development.
 - b. Define the intended use of each site (industrial, logistics, advanced manufacturing, or mixed employment) and ensure site characteristics match the needs of those users, including acreage, configuration, and access.
 - c. Engage JobsOhio and the Ohio Department of Development early in the process to align site preparation with SiteOhio certification requirements and identify gaps that must be addressed.
 - d. Conduct environmental reviews, geotechnical analysis, wetlands delineation, and cultural resource assessments. Identify development constraints and establish preliminary grading and site readiness concepts.

(continued on next page):

Time Frame:

- ★ Year 1

Estimated Cost:

\$300,000+ for individual utility studies

Action Steps:

- 2. Plan and deliver utility and transportation infrastructure.
 - a. Confirm capacity and extension plans for water, wastewater, electric, natural gas, and broadband. Coordinate with utility providers to ensure service can meet the demands of large users and support long-term growth.
 - ◆ Focus Area 1
 - Heavy new demand may result in a water model or an update to the current model. Plan periodic updates to the City of Chillicothe and Ross County Water models to ensure new development can be served, or additional capacity is needed.
 - A 30-inch raw water main for industrial water supply service will need to be bored beneath railroad tracks.
 - The eight-inch water line on Paint Street and the 12-inch water line at the CSX tracks will need to be extended to provide potable water service to Focus Area 1.
 - The wastewater flow from proposed developments will need to be calculated, using standard wastewater flow rates from the Ohio Greenbook.
 - Coordinate with the developer of the site and the City of Chillicothe for connection into the existing sanitary system.
 - Lift stations will be required to connect new development(s) within the Innovation and Manufacturing Center area, and at least the southern portion of the Chillicothe Industrial area. The new force main(s) will cross existing railroad, requiring permits.
 - Gas line extensions would be required to serve the properties in the southeastern portion of the proposed site.
 - ◆ Focus Area 2
 - Coordinate with Ross County Water and the City of Chillicothe for the connection point to existing water - individual parcels may connect to either Ross County Water or the City of Chillicothe.
 - Update existing water models to include the proposed development and its required fire flows. Depending on location, new water mains may need to be installed or existing mains upsized to provide adequate water service for both new and existing customers.
 - For full buildout of the area, a capacity study of the water treatment plants is recommended
 - A flow monitoring study, survey, and sewer model to evaluate the existing sanitary sewers and Marietta lift station.
 - Determine sanitary wastewater flows from proposed developments using the Ohio Greenbook.

(continued on next page):

Systems Approach Tie-Ins

- ★ Creates shovel-ready sites for economic development, workforce housing, and job creation.
- ★ Identified transportation and infrastructure improvements before capacity concerns limit development.
- ★ Focuses development on specific areas that help preserve agricultural property across the county.

CPS 14 (CONTINUED)

- Coordinate with the City of Chillicothe to determine final connection points and approve proposed flows into their system.
 - Install lift stations and gravity sewer as required. These will be site-specific for each development.
 - Evaluate gas system expansion to maintain pressure for future users.
- a. Align site access with the Thoroughfare Plan, including improvements to Priority Vehicular Routes (PVR). Evaluate truck access, intersection improvements, and potential rail connectivity where applicable.
- ◆ Focus Area 1
 - Upgrade Eastern Avenue to support increased freight traffic, including road widening, signal improvements, and pavement reinforcement.
 - Coordinate with Norfolk Southern and CSX to establish or extend industrial rail spurs into high-priority parcels.
 - Implement grade-separated crossings or active warning systems at key rail crossings to enhance safety and minimize delays.
 - Develop a freight and logistics master plan that incorporates truck staging areas, access management strategies, and designated freight corridors.
 - Promote dual-rail access for the 849-acre Innovation and Manufacturing Center area to increase competitiveness for large-scale industrial users.
 - Incorporate bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvements along arterial corridors in line with the ODOT Multimodal Design Guide (MDG).
 - Ensure future development complies with ODOT Traffic Engineering Manual (TEM) guidelines for signal coordination and access spacing.
 - ◆ Focus Area 2
 - Integrate findings from the Triangle Study into transportation improvements.
- b. Prepare conceptual site plans that include grading strategies, stormwater management, and internal circulation. Identify phased development approaches to allow incremental investment.
3. Establish a coordinated incentive and policy framework.
- a. Align land use, incentives, and economic development tools (such as tax abatements or infrastructure participation) to support targeted site development while preventing incompatible uses.
 - b. Pursue site certification and actively market sites.
 - c. Once due diligence and infrastructure requirements are met, pursue SiteOhio or similar certification and position sites for state, regional, and national marketing efforts.



AMERICAN
STRUCTUREPOINT
INC.

Existing Conditions Report

Ross County Comprehensive Plan





All images are by American Structurepoint unless otherwise noted.

Table of Contents

EXISTING CONDITIONS	231
ECONOMY	255
HOUSING	269
LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT	285
TRANSPORTATION AND MOVEMENT	295
UTILITIES	329
COMMUNITY AMENITIES AND CIVIC SERVICES	333
ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS	341



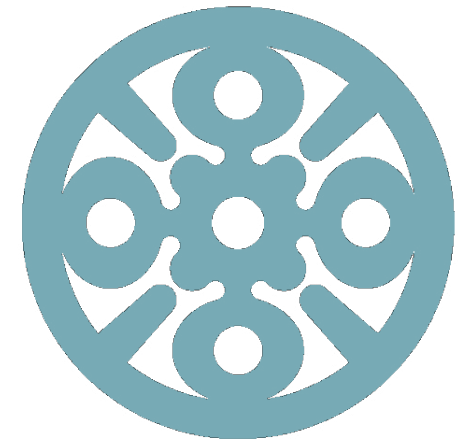
INTRODUCTION

The Existing Conditions Report is an inventory of the physical, economic, and social characteristics in Ross County, Ohio, assembled from relevant data and key topics that will later inform the Comprehensive Plan, including the Future Land Use Map, economic and subarea strategic plans, and a thoroughfare plan. The context provided by this critical first step in the planning process will ensure that the policy recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan have a realistic basis and an informed starting point for action steps, which will decrease barriers to successful Plan implementation.

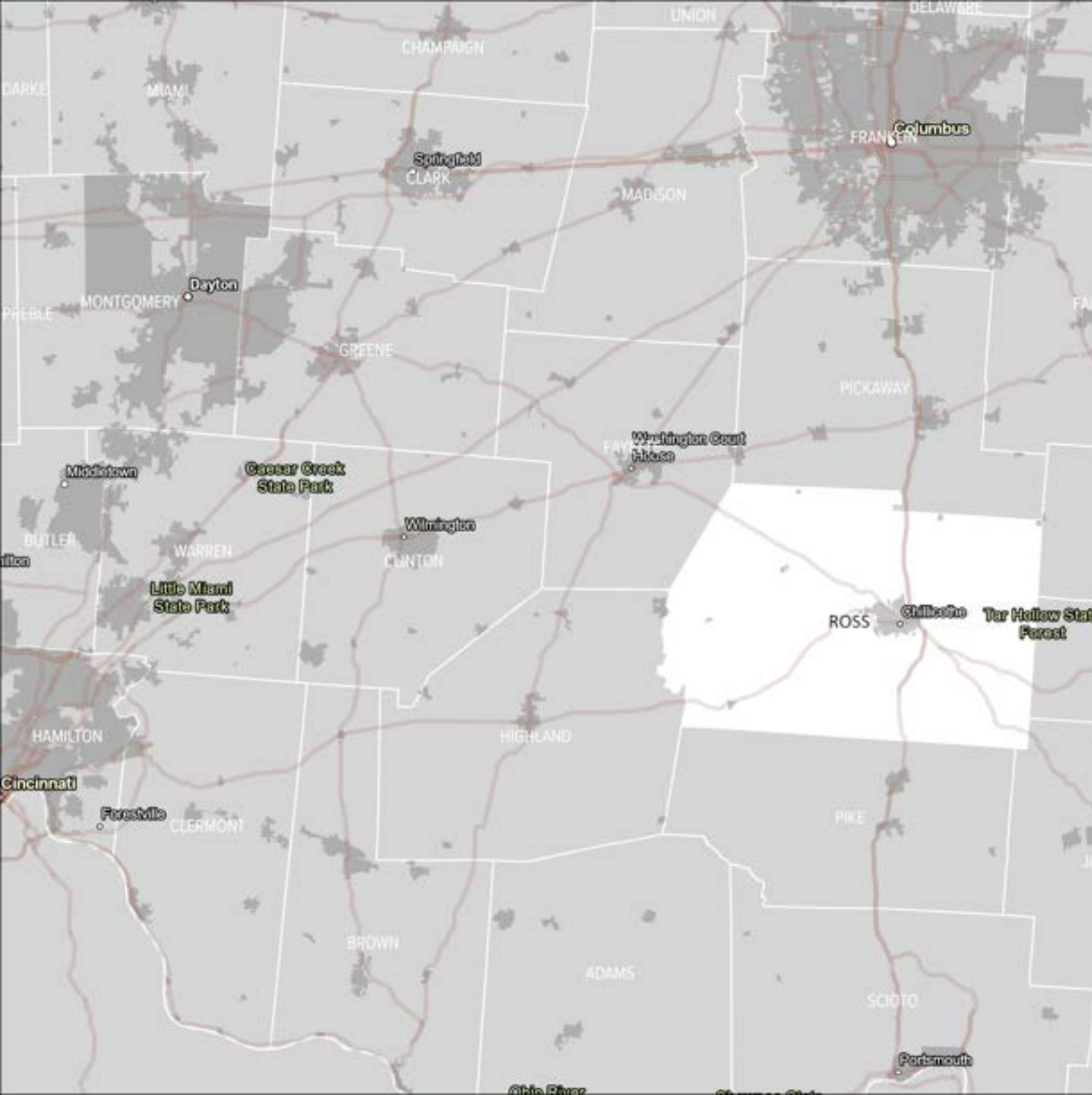
REGIONAL CONTEXT

Ross County, Ohio, steeped in history and natural beauty, is in the Appalachian foothills of south-central Ohio. The county seat, Chillicothe, holds historical significance as Ohio's first capital and a hub for early settlers. Ross County is known for its stunning landscapes, including the scenic Paint Creek Valley, Yoctangee Park, and portions of the Scioto River. Ancient earthworks in Ross County have garnered regional and international attention, most notably the Hopewell Culture National Historical Park, which was recently designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Today, Ross County combines rich cultural heritage with local charm, offering residents, employees, and visitors a blend of wide-open spaces and amenities, all within a one-hour drive of three major Ohio metropolitan areas, Cincinnati, Dayton, and Columbus. While remaining true to its manufacturing roots with major employers like Kenworth Truck Company, Ross County has also diversified into the Education and Healthcare sectors.



The Hopewell copper disc symbol.



Legend

 Incorporated Areas



Scale in Feet:



0 960K 1,920K

Ross County Regional Context

PAST PLANNING EFFORTS

An important part of the planning process is reviewing past planning efforts within the county, region, and state that may directly impact current initiatives.

1978 OPTIMUM LAND USE POLICY AND PLAN: ROSS COUNTY & CHILLICOTHE, OHIO

Adopted in 1978, the “Optimum Land Use Policy and Plan” serves as the County’s comprehensive plan; subsequent plans have been produced but not adopted, so it still serves as the current plan.* It includes an existing conditions analysis, phased land use plans for the County and the City of Chillicothe, and an implementation plan with a recommendation horizon of 1990.

Below is a summary of the key recommendations from that plan:

- ★ Zoning. The City of Chillicothe and Buckskin Township adopted zoning ordinances at the time of the plan; today, these communities continue to have active zoning regulations, as well as Deerfield Township. The plan recommended that zoning continue to be adopted for the rest of the County on a township-by-township basis.
- ★ Subdivision Regulations. The plan noted that regulations in the City of Chillicothe and the County were outdated, and a general update was recommended. At the time of this Report, Chillicothe is currently updating its subdivision regulations. The County’s current subdivision regulations were last amended in 2023.
- ★ Capital Improvement Programming. The plan recommended a capital improvement program, particularly for sewer and water, to accommodate future development. Extensions were recommended only in the urban growth areas identified in the land use plan, predominantly west of Chillicothe’s incorporation limits. The rest of the County, except for villages, was earmarked for conservation or agricultural use, and capital improvement programming was noted as an effective land preservation tool.
- ★ Public Participation. The plan encouraged the community to make the plan widely accessible to garner public support for its goals and recommended policies. As part of the plan, 800 copies of a “Community Attitude Survey” were distributed to raise awareness about and inform the plan, demonstrating the community’s commitment to public engagement.

* In 1999, the County oversaw a Smart Growth Plan planning effort; however, the plan was not adopted.

2023 CHOOSE CHILLICOTHE

The City's current Comprehensive Plan is "Choose Chillicothe," which was adopted in 2023. The following recommendations could impact areas of the county outside of the City:

- ★ Create water and sewer master plans. The proposed master plans will outline future infrastructure availability and provide guidance on maintaining existing infrastructure.
- ★ Define an annexation policy. Defining an annexation policy was a key recommendation in Choose Chillicothe. The policy will determine how, where, and if annexations should be accepted or sought.
- ★ Identify and prepare area plans in locations with significant redevelopment potential. Choose Chillicothe calls for further analysis of sites, such as the Yoctangee Park area, to explore creating area plans. At the time of this report, the master plan for Yoctangee Park was under development as part of the Appalachian Community Grant Program (ACGP).
- ★ Expand the trail network. The Paint Creek Recreational Trail, spanning between Washington Court House in Fayette County and Chillicothe, would provide additional regional recreational opportunities, serve as economic activity centers, and expand alternative transportation.
- ★ Support organizations in creating halfway housing and shelter locations. Temporary housing is a necessity and an opportunity for collaboration between non-profit, public, and private entities across jurisdictional limits. Thoughtful planning is required to ensure that temporary housing needs are met in areas accessible and areas of greatest need.
- ★ Incorporate rental housing in area plans. Meeting the demand for all preferences and price points is critical to attracting residents and investment in Ross County.
- ★ Coordinate signage standards for Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks with regional entities. Regional coordination is required to manage the increased traffic to the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks efficiently. It is an opportunity to direct traffic not only along preferred routes but also to other points of interest in the County.
- ★ Develop a workforce strategy focused on talent development and enhancing quality of place initiatives. Local economies depend on access to a high-quality workforce. "Choose Chillicothe" identified the opportunity for local educational institutions to meet with local human resource officers in order to build connections and address employee skill gaps.
- ★ Draft to explore a joint economic development district (JEDD). Similar to cooperative economic development agreements and Enterprise Zones, JEDDs allow incorporated and unincorporated areas to collaborate in order to grant economic development financial incentives that would otherwise be difficult to obtain.
- ★ Bolster the Ross County Land Bank. "Choose Chillicothe's" recommendations included supporting the County Land Bank in creating important development opportunities through banking surplus holdings.
- ★ Update the city's Thoroughfare and Transportation Plan. "Choose Chillicothe" recommends following the Ross County Thoroughfare Plan to ensure safety, efficiency, and character consistency within the public realm.
- ★ Implement the recommendation of the Ross County Active Transportation Plan within Chillicothe. In 2020, the City and County collaborated on the Active Transportation Plan to outline a funding and implementation plan for trails, paths, sidewalks, and crossings.
- ★ Conduct quarterly conversations with regional parks and trail organizations. "Choose Chillicothe" recommends that Chillicothe, the County, and Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) convene quarterly to discuss bicycle and trail access, facilities maintenance, monitoring, and other topics that would benefit from enhanced collaboration.

2022 ROSS COUNTY THOROUGHFARE PLAN UPDATE

The 2022 update is an update to the 2008 Ross County Thoroughfare Plan, which covers the County and Chillicothe. It was, in part, triggered by the UNESCO World Heritage designation for the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthwork sites in the County and surrounding region, which was anticipated to increase traffic to these sites by up to 100%. Minor amendments were also completed in 2010 and 2012. The 2022 update provided 2019 demographic data, brought refreshed public input, updated mapping, and provided an access management plan based on roadway functional classification.

The following is a list of proposed projects:

- ★ Interchange/Intersection Improvements
 - SR-104/Buckeye Street/Vine Street Intersection
 - US-23/US-35 Interchange
 - US-50/Veterans Parkway Roundabout*
 - US-35/Pleasant Valley Road Full Interchange*
- ★ Existing Roadway/Corridor Improvements
 - Bridge Street Improvements
 - US-50/Western Avenue Corridor
 - SR-159 Widening
 - Marietta Road/Rocky Road Improvements
- ★ Roadway Extension Improvements
 - Industrial Drive
 - Massieville Road

★ Other Improvements

- SR104/US-35 Interchange Safety Study*
- 4th Street and 5th Street Traffic Calming and Two-Way Conversion Study*
- US-50/East Main Street Corridor Study from Cutright east to US-23*
- US-23/US-35 Interchange Feasibility Study*
- SR-159 Corridor Access Management Study*

2021 ROSS COUNTY STRATEGIC WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

Chmura Economics and Analytics, in partnership with Thomas P. Miller and Associates, published a Strategic Workforce Analysis for Ross County. The report notes that, like many communities, it was still experiencing trends, such as higher unemployment, associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Ross County is characterized as a net importer of jobs, as approximately 300 more employees commute into Ross County for employment than out of the County. Chmura made the projections below based on 2019 data.

Key strategy recommendations:

- ★ Finding new workers
- ★ Training for new and incumbent workers
- ★ Addressing barriers
- ★ Utilizing collaborative relationships
- ★ Engagement between workforce development boards/Ohio Means Jobs and employers

* Those requiring further study at the time of the plan.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographics were analyzed not only for Ross County as a whole but also for its 16 townships and comparison communities. Comparison communities help the County understand trends unique to their community and benchmark against communities that are competing for jobs and rooftops or are considered aspirational standards. Typically, these comparison communities should have similar attributes, such as area, population, industrial base, and physical or natural features.



Ross County will experience slower growth than the rest of Ohio in the coming decade.



Ross County is poised for future growth in the industries of general medical and surgical hospitals, wired and wireless telecommunication carriers, vocational rehabilitation services, and skilled nursing facilities.



The number of graduates from postsecondary programs defines future workers and the training capacity to support industry demand. Since 2010, four-year and higher degrees have grown and will continue to do so.

Ross County Townships

- ★ Buckskin Township
- ★ Colerain Township
- ★ Concord Township
- ★ Deerfield Township
- ★ Franklin Township
- ★ Green Township
- ★ Harrison Township
- ★ Huntington Township
- ★ Jefferson Township
- ★ Liberty Township
- ★ Paint Township
- ★ Paxton Township
- ★ Scioto Township
- ★ Springfield Township
- ★ Twin Township
- ★ Union Township

Comparison Communities*

- ★ Fayette County
- ★ Pickaway County
- ★ Hocking County
- ★ Vinton County
- ★ Jackson County
- ★ Pike County
- ★ Highland County
- ★ Greene County
- ★ Fairfield County

**All comparison communities are Ohio counties.*

Data used in this analysis was pulled primarily from the following sources:



DECENNIAL US CENSUS

The decennial Census is a survey completed by the US Census Bureau every ten years. The data collected from this survey is each resident of the country and where they live on April 1 of that survey year. The survey provides detailed information on the number of people in a geographic region.



AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY, US CENSUS BUREAU

In addition to the decennial Census, the US Census Bureau conducts dozens of other censuses and surveys, including the American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS is an ongoing effort that gathers information from a community through a small sample rather than the extensive 10-year survey with which most people are familiar.



ESRI COMMUNITY ANALYST

ESRI Business Analyst is a powerful tool for analyzing data within a specific geographic location. ESRI allows data to be observed at a very local level and compared with surrounding groups. Typically, ESRI uses Census or ACS data as one of its primary information sources, supplemented by proprietary information.



WOODS AND POOLE

Woods and Poole are a national economics firm that provides historical population data as well as proprietary population projections.

Sources: US 2000, 2010, and 2020 Census; Woods and Poole; 2023 American Community Survey

TOTAL POPULATION

Population trends and projections are one way to discern how much development the County can expect over the next 20 or more years. These changes are also useful for projecting future workforce availability.

Since 2000, Ross County has experienced steady growth, and that trendline is projected to continue. The population peaked in 2010. It is important to note that, as of March 2024,

approximately 4,000 people are incarcerated between two correctional institutions in the County. Incarcerated persons are not counted within household numbers but are counted in population. The Ross Correctional Institution is located in Union Township and has 1,845 inmates. Chillicothe Correctional Institution is located between Scioto and Union Townships and has 2,243 inmates.

Ross County, Ohio Township Population				
Township Name	2000 Total Population	2010 Total Population	2020 Total Population	2023 Total Population
Huntington Township, OH	6,018	6,220	6,069	6,127
Buckskin Township, OH	1,040	2,039	2,047	1,806
Colerain Township, OH	1,943	2,148	2,017	1,911
Concord Township, OH	4,107	4,460	4,743	4,675
Deerfield Township, OH	1,096	1,058	1,039	1,565
Franklin Township, OH	1,671	1,705	1,439	1,738
Green Township, OH	4,492	4,918	5,186	5,205
Harrison Township, OH	1,293	1,320	1,189	1,098
Jefferson Township, OH	967	991	1,064	1,435
Liberty Township, OH	2,476	2,619	2,623	2,585
Paint Township, OH	1,169	1,363	1,288	918
Paxton Township, OH	2,165	2,116	1,918	1,482
Scioto Township, OH	27,735	27,721	27,876	27,678
Springfield Township, OH	2,277	2,657	2,573	2,601
Twin Township, OH	3,146	3,384	3,492	3,387
Union Township, OH	11,750	13,345	12,530	12,537
Total	73,345	78,064	77,093	76,748

Source: US Census Bureau

Ross County has 16 townships within its borders that represent a variety of sizes, demographic composition, and economic status. The population estimates for Ross County's townships include the residents of the local incorporated areas that fall within their jurisdiction. Overall, from 2000 to 2022, the fastest-growing townships by population are Deerfield Township at 42.5 percent and Franklin Township at 38.6. The townships with the highest estimated percent

despite being relatively low in population density. Levels of population loss for the same period are Paxton Township at -26.4 percent and Harrison Township at -12.4 percent.

Between 2000 and 2010, Buckskin Township experienced a substantial 96 percent increase in its total population.

Source: US Census Bureau.

Site	Percent of Change (2000-2010)	Percent of Change (2010-2020)	Percent of Change (2020-2022)	2020 Population Density (per square mile)
United States	1.0	0.9	0.9	93.8
Ohio	1.6	2.2	-0.3	288.8
Ross County	0.5	0.7	0.9	111.9
Buckskin Township	96.1	0.4	-7.7	40.7
Colerain Township	11.5	-6.1	-1.4	57.0
Concord Township	10.1	6.3	-1.1	62.7
Deerfield Township	-1.9	-1.8	42.5	33.8
Franklin Township	2.0	-15.6	38.6	41.1
Green Township	10.6	5.4	0.3	120.0
Harrison Township	2.1	-9.9	-12.4	32.8
Huntington Township	3.4	-2.4	1.0	101.9
Jefferson Township	2.5	7.4	-6.2	43.3
Liberty Township	5.8	0.2	-1.0	76.4
Paint Township	16.6	-5.5	-6.6	36.2
Paxton Township	1.1	-9.4	-26.4	60.4
Scioto Township	2.3	0.6	-0.4	700.0
Springfield Township	16.7	-3.2	1.4	84.5
Twin Township	7.6	3.2	-2.5	58.0
Union Township	86.1	-6.1	0.2	188.7

Ross County, Ohio Municipality Population				
Location	2000 Total Population	2010 Total Population	2020 Total Population	2023 Total Population
Adelphi Village, OH	371	380	322	327
Bainbridge Village, OH	1,012	860	765	574
Greenfield Village, OH*	4,925	4,646	4,339	4,047
Chillicothe City, OH	22,113	21,899	22,059	21,958
Clarksburg Village, OH	515	450	409	543
Frankfort Village, OH	1,025	1,069	1,084	1,419
Kingston Village, OH	1,038	1,038	1,262	837
South Salem Village, OH	213	204	219	135
Ross County, OH	73,345	78,064	77,093	76,748

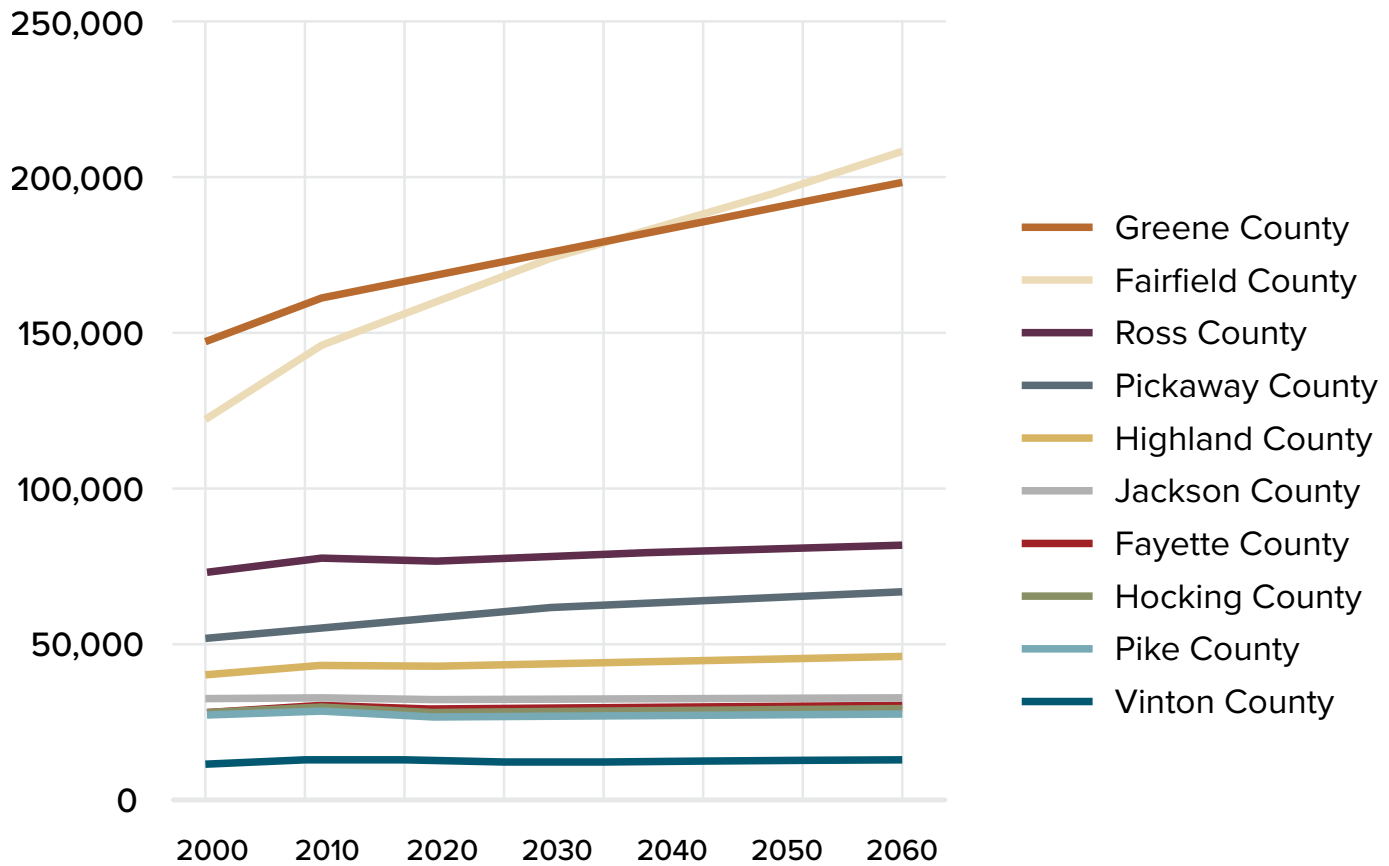
Source: US Census Bureau

*Majority of municipal boundaries are outside Ross County

Total Population of Comparison Communities										
	Ross County	Fayette County	Pickaway County	Hocking County	Vinton County	Jackson County	Pike County	Highland County	Greene County	Fairfield County
2000	73,507	28,495	52,808	28,262	12,825	32,633	27,688	41,019	148,401	123,485
2010	78,093	29,009	55,721	29,444	13,401	33,218	28,600	43,621	161,551	146,396
2020	77,049	28,975	58,656	28,040	12,801	32,662	27,072	43,359	168,131	159,448
2030	78,422	29,019	62,229	27,794	12,626	32,677	27,124	44,170	176,373	174,332
2040	80,100	29,308	63,924	28,156	12,845	32,778	27,300	44,977	184,132	185,505
2050	81,017	29,600	65,697	28,520	13,065	32,879	27,477	45,801	190,764	195,644
2060	82,311	29,894	67,550	28,885	13,286	32,981	27,653	46,641	198,939	207,411

Source: Woods & Poole

Total Population of Comparison Communities



Source: Woods & Poole

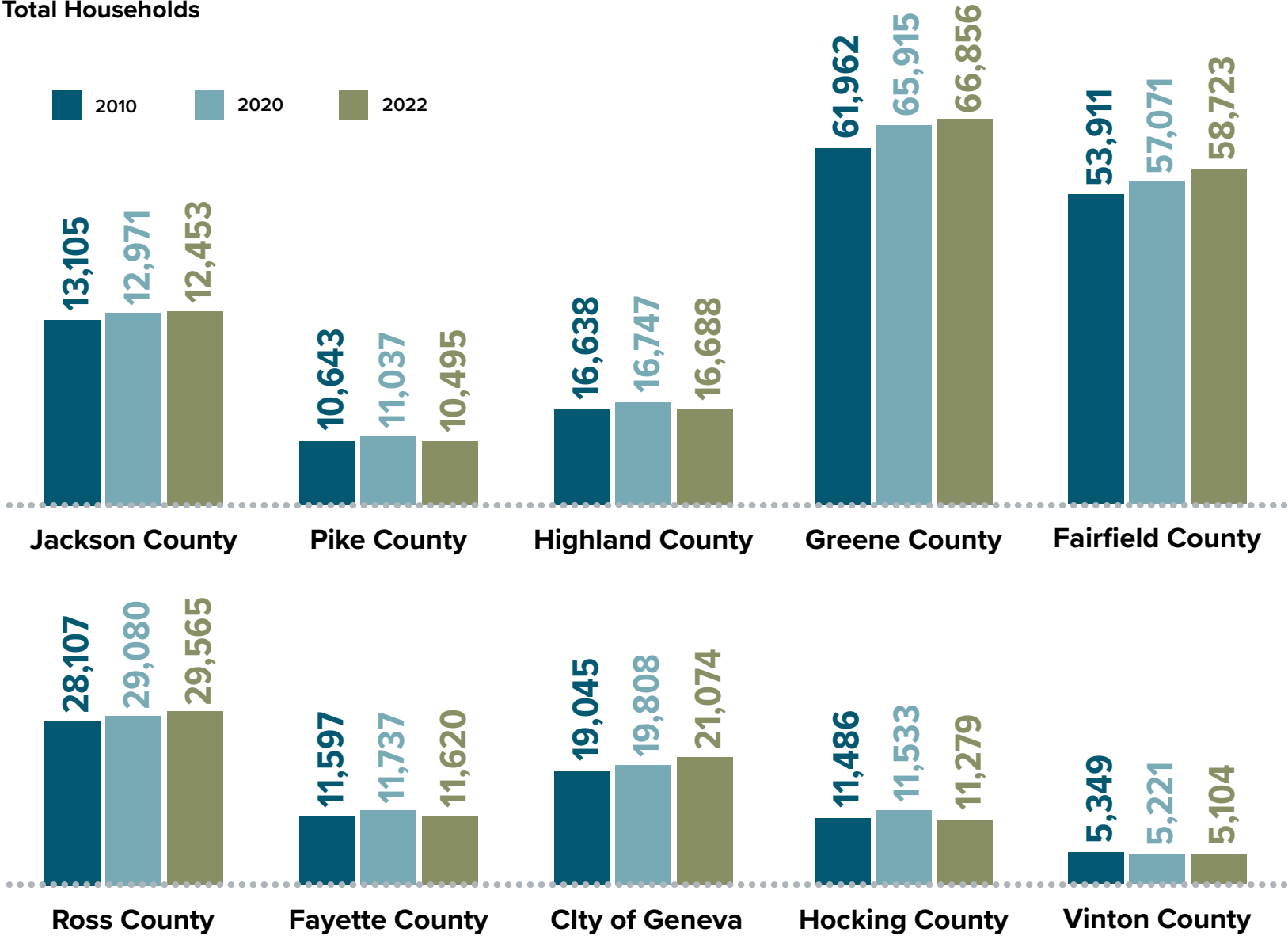
HOUSEHOLDS

Household growth inform how many dwelling units are required to house the population as well as how many “rooftops” may be available to support new or expanding businesses.

Similar to total population, Ross County has enjoyed a steady growth of households since 2010, as seen on the next page. While seven comparison communities, such as Pike County at -5.2 percent and Jackson County at -4.2 percent, lost households between 2020 and 2022, Ross County’s households grew by 1.6 percent.

The 2020 US Census estimated that there were 28,107 households within Ross County, Ohio. According to the most recent ACS five-year estimate, the total number of households in Ross County is 29,565.

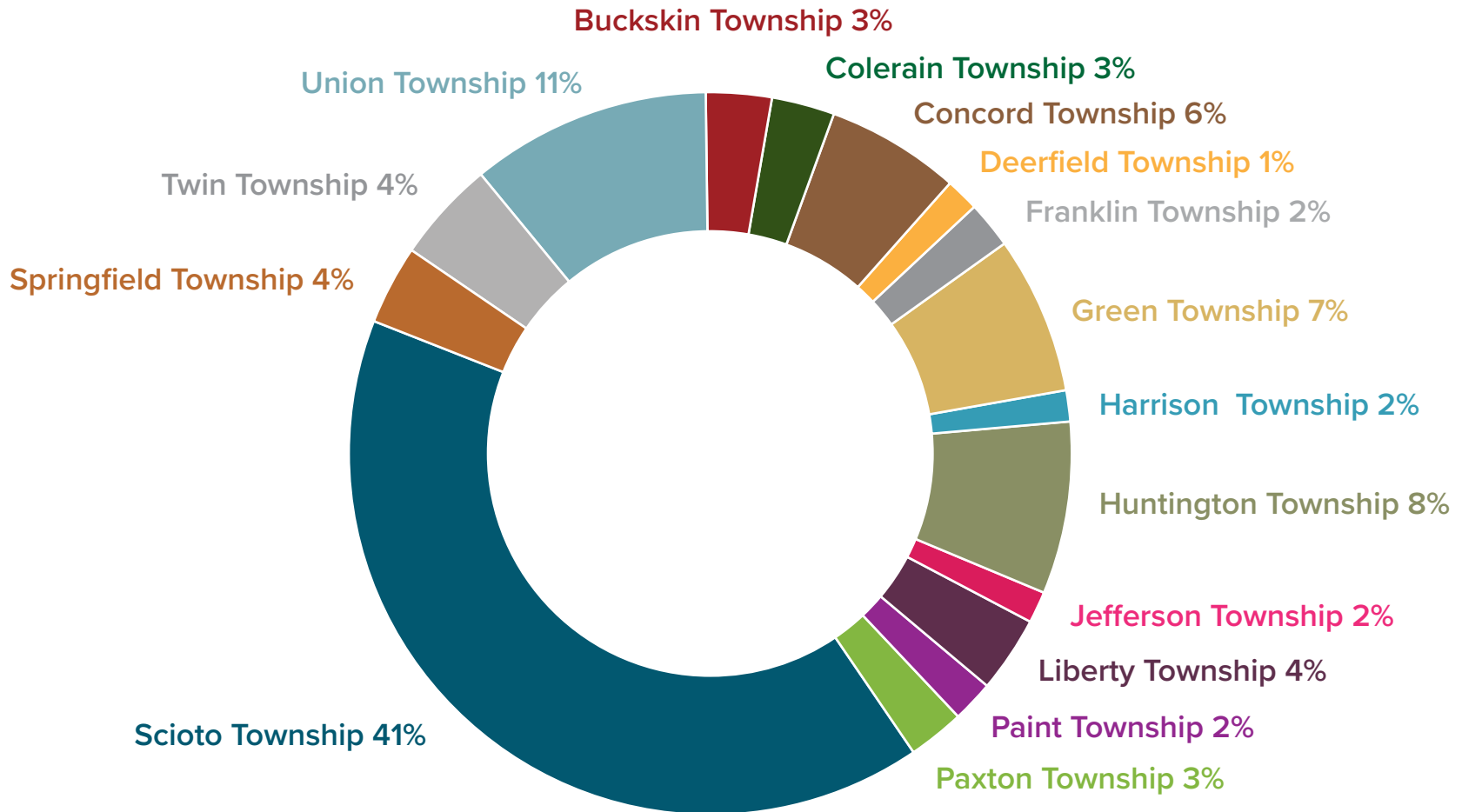
Total Households



Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey (2023)

The 2020 total household pie chart shows the distribution of 2020 total households between townships. Scioto Township, which contains Chillicothe, has the highest number of households, 12,003 or 41 percent. The next highest are Union Township, 3,097 or 11 percent, and Huntington Township, 2,270 or 8 percent, neither of which have incorporated areas.

Total Households by Township in 2020

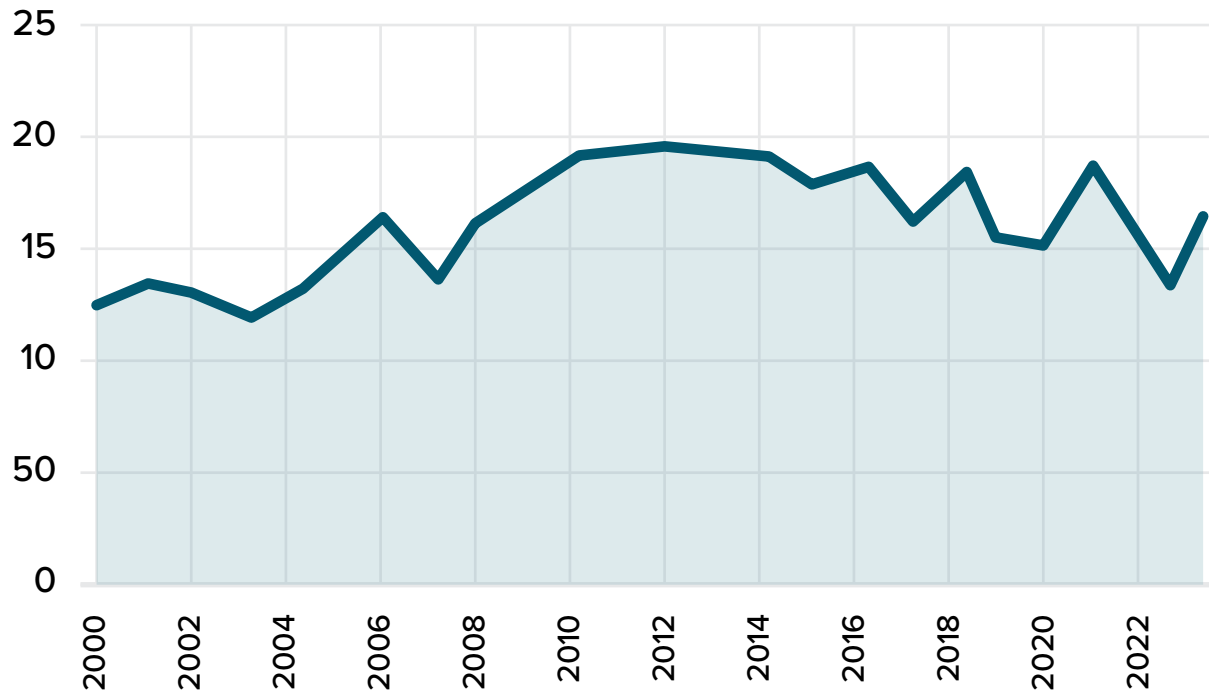


Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey (2023)

HOUSEHOLDS IN POVERTY

The US Census Bureau provides annual estimates of income and poverty statistics for all school districts, counties, and states through the Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates program. Estimates of poverty by age and family are not direct counts from their records. For counties and states, the Census estimates income and poverty by combining survey data with population estimates and administrative records. In Ross County, the poverty rate peaked at 19.6 percent in 2012. Since then, it has fluctuated and is estimated at 16.5 percent in 2023.

Percent of People in Poverty in Ross County



Source: US Census Bureau (2023)

The relationship between educational attainment levels and the poverty levels of an area is connected and dependent on each other. Areas with the highest income levels often have highly educated residents living in or around those areas. Higher levels of education generally lead to better job opportunities and higher incomes as businesses are attracted to these large pools of talent. The adjacent table shows that 40.9 percent of Ross County residents who are in poverty have less than a high school level of education. The percentage of people in poverty declines as the education level increases. Only 4.1 percent of Ross County residents with a bachelor's degree or higher are considered in poverty.

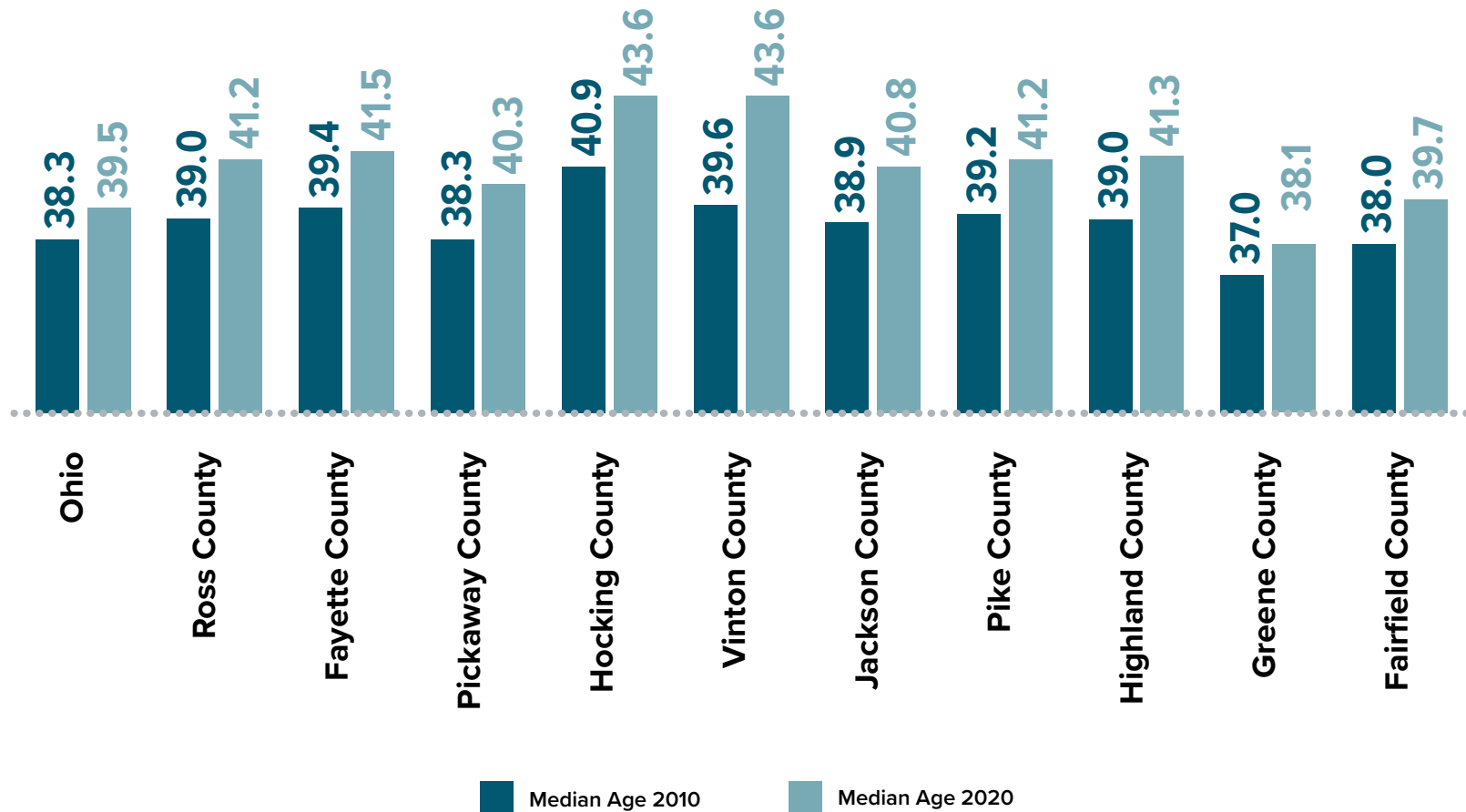
Poverty Rate for Population 25+ by Educational Level	
Education Level	Percent in Poverty
Less than high school graduate	40.9
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	13.4
Some college or associate's degree	12.8
Bachelor's degree or higher	4.1

Source: US Census Bureau

MEDIAN AGE

As shown below, the population of Ross County is aging and, on average, is older than the average for the state by about two years. This trend is consistent with other communities within the southeastern Ohio/Appalachian region. The median age of Ross County residents increased from 39.0 in 2010 to 41.2 in 2020. The current median age estimate of 41.0 is higher than a majority of other central Ohio counties like Pickaway County (39.5), Fairfield County (39.7), and Fayette County (40.8). Vinton County experienced the greatest hike, four years, in median age between 2010 and 2020.

Median Age



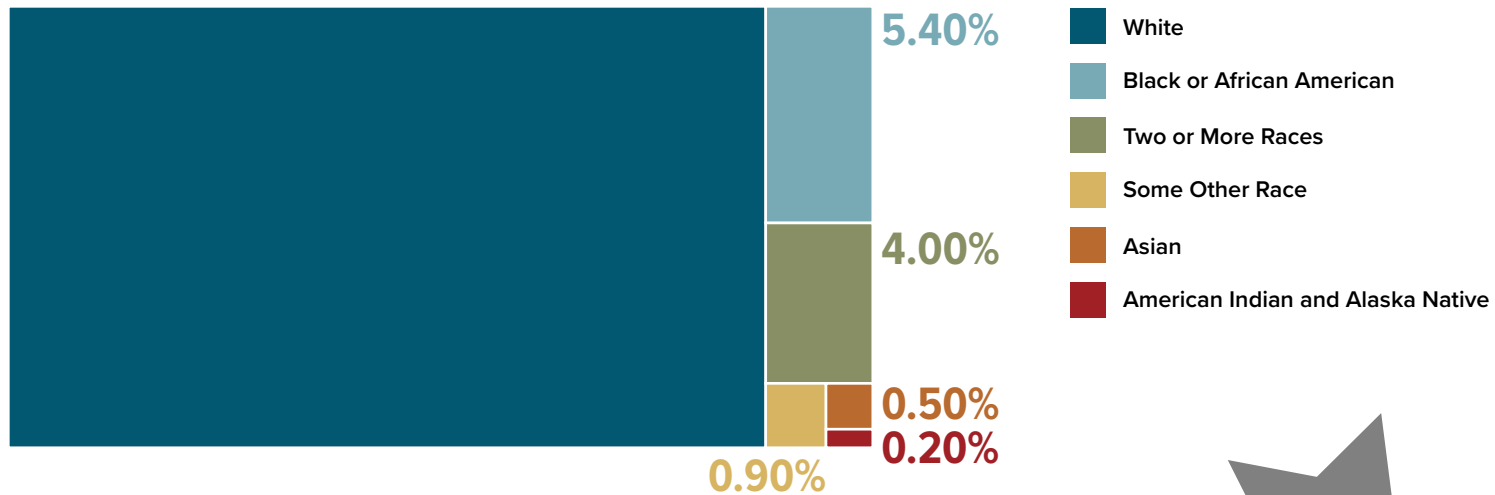
Source: US Census Bureau

RACE AND ETHNICITY

The racial composition of Ross County provides insights into the area's diversity and demographic structure. Ross County has a strong majority of White residents at 89.1 percent. With nearly 90 percent of the population being White, Ross County lacks significant racial diversity. That could mean fewer cultural influences from various backgrounds, potentially limiting exposure to different perspectives and experiences.

Race and Ethnicity

89.1%



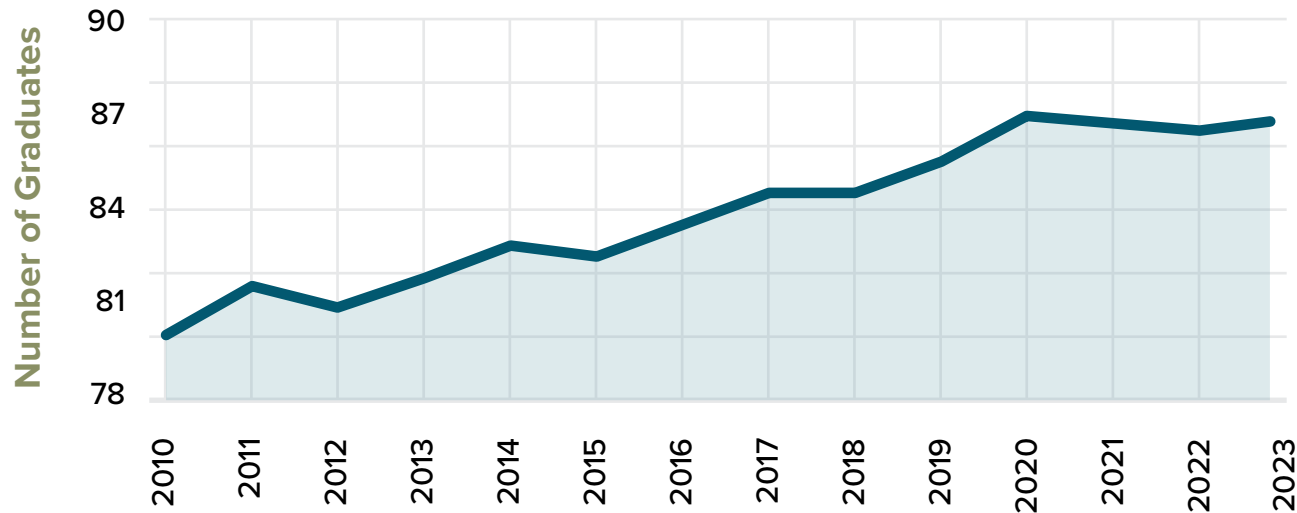
Source: US Census Bureau

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The percentage of the population with a high school diploma or higher includes people whose highest degree was a high school diploma or its equivalent, those who attended college without earning a degree, and those who received an associate's, bachelor's, master's, professional, or doctoral degree. People who reported completing 12th grade but not receiving a diploma are not included.* Overall, the percentage of Ross County residents who are high school graduates or higher has increased significantly since 2010. In 2010, 82.3 percent of Ross County residents were high school graduates or higher. This increased to 88.9 percent by 2023 estimates, which is an increase of 6.6 percent.

The chart below shows the estimated educational attainment for the residents aged 18 years old or older whose highest degree was a bachelor's, master's, or professional or doctorate degree.

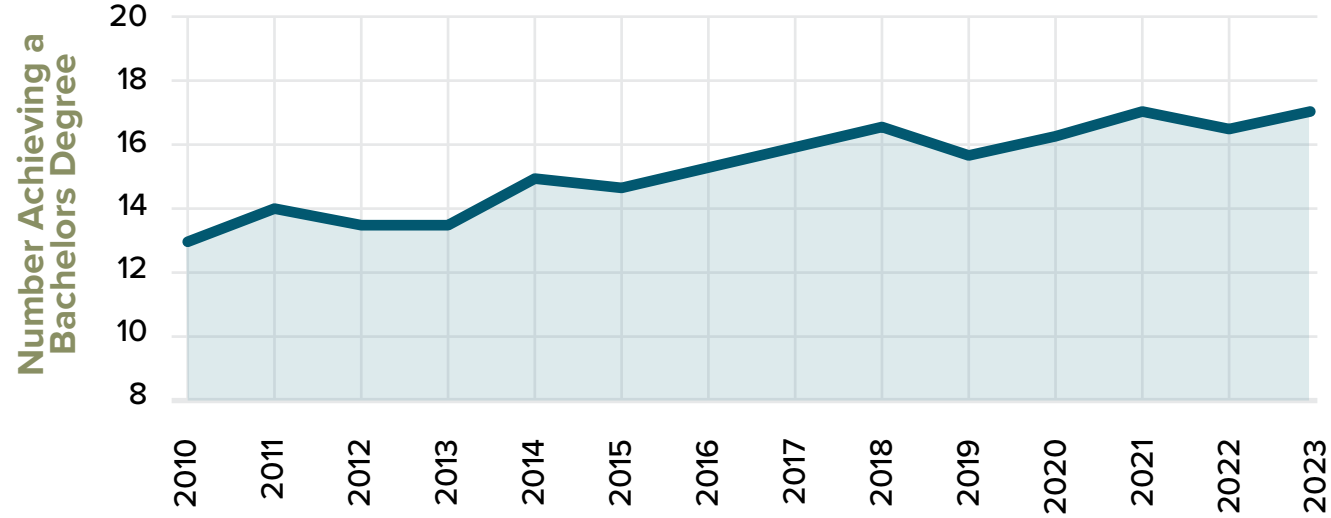
High School Graduate or Higher (Five-Year Estimate)



Source: US Census Bureau

* Source: [High School Graduate or Higher \(5-year estimate\) in Ross County, OH](#)

Similar to the percentage of the population who is a High School Graduate or Higher, the rate of highly educated residents in Ross County increased from 2010 to 2023. In 2010, approximately 13.1 percent of Ross County residents had a bachelor's degree or higher. In 2023, this percentage increased to an all-time high of 17.1 percent.



Bachelor's Degree of Higher (Five-Year Estimate)

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

The income distribution in Ross County provides insight into the county’s economic landscape, standard of living, and financial disparities. The median household income in 2023 for Ross County is \$61,651. Approximately 28.2% of households earn less than \$35,000 annually, with 5.2% earning less than \$10,000. This suggests a significant portion of the population struggles with economic insecurity, potentially facing challenges with being able to afford adequate housing, healthcare, and other necessities.

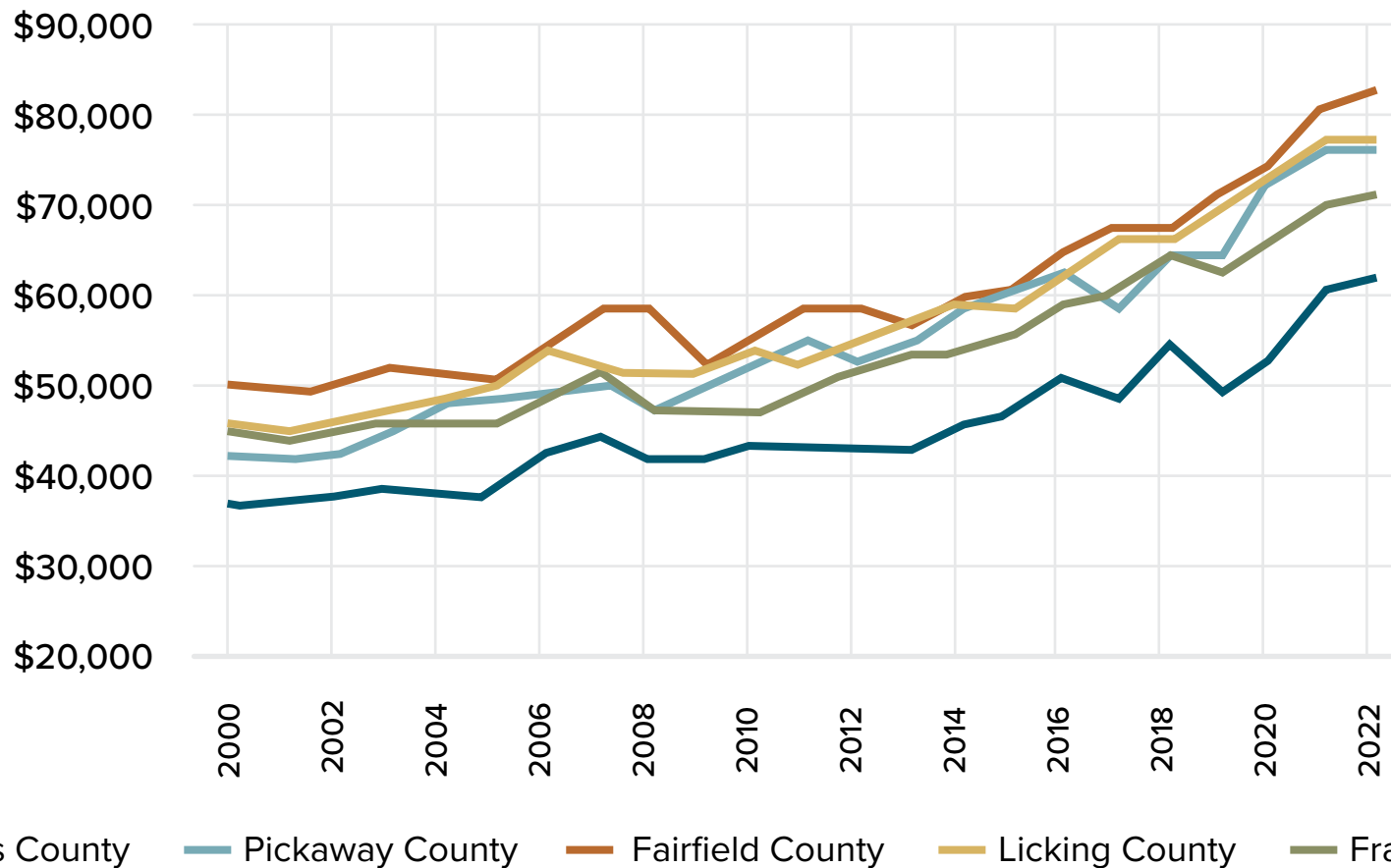
Ross County, Ohio 2023 Median Household Income		
Income Brackets	Households	Percent of Households
Less than \$10,000	1,490	5.2
\$10,000 to \$14,999	1,303	4.5
\$15,000 to \$24,999	2,308	8.0
\$25,000 to \$34,999	3,041	10.5
\$35,000 to \$49,999	3,834	13.3
\$50,000 to \$74,999	5,760	20.0
\$75,000 to \$99,999	3,525	12.2
\$100,000 to \$149,999	4,884	16.9
\$150,000 to \$199,999	1,451	5.0
\$200,000 or more	1,274	4.4
Median household income (dollars)		\$61,651

Source: US Census Bureau

The US Census Bureau provides annual estimates of income and poverty statistics for all school districts, counties, and states through the Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates program. The bureau's main objective with this program is to provide estimates of income and poverty for the administration of federal programs and the allocation of federal funds to

local jurisdictions. In addition to these federal programs, state and local programs use the income and poverty estimates to distribute funds and manage programs.* Overall, median household incomes in Ross County, Ohio, are lower than those in benchmark Central Ohio counties but similar to or higher than those in counties located to the south and east of Ross County.

Median Household Income



Source: US Census Bureau

* Source: [Estimate of Median Household Income for Licking County, OH](#)

The relationship between educational attainment level and median earnings in Ross County reflects the nationwide trend where higher education levels generally lead to increased income. The median earnings in Ross County increase with each level of education that is attained. Residents with less than a high school graduate level of education have median earnings of \$31,670. Ross County residents who have achieved a high school graduate (including equivalency) level of education have median earnings of \$40,538. Ross County residents who have achieved a bachelor's degree as their highest level of education have median earnings of \$52,401.

Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months	
Education Level	Median Earnings
Less than high school graduate	\$31,670
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	\$40,538
Some college or associate's degree	\$43,864
Bachelor's degree	\$52,401
Graduate or professional degree	\$71,472

Source: US Census Bureau



EMPLOYMENT

The Workforce by Industry table represents the workforce shifts in Ross County across various industry sectors between 2010 and 2023 by industry sectors across the county and where residents were employed. However, it does not report what jobs are currently located in Ross County. The sectors that experienced the largest increase in the percentage of county residents were professional, scientific, management, and administrative and waste management services at 2.4 percent; educational services, health care and social assistance at 1.2 percent; manufacturing at 1.0 percent; and construction at 0.8 percent. The industry sectors with the largest decrease in the percentage of residents employed are wholesale trade at -1.6 percent; transportation and warehousing, utilities at -0.9 percent; and information at -0.9 percent.

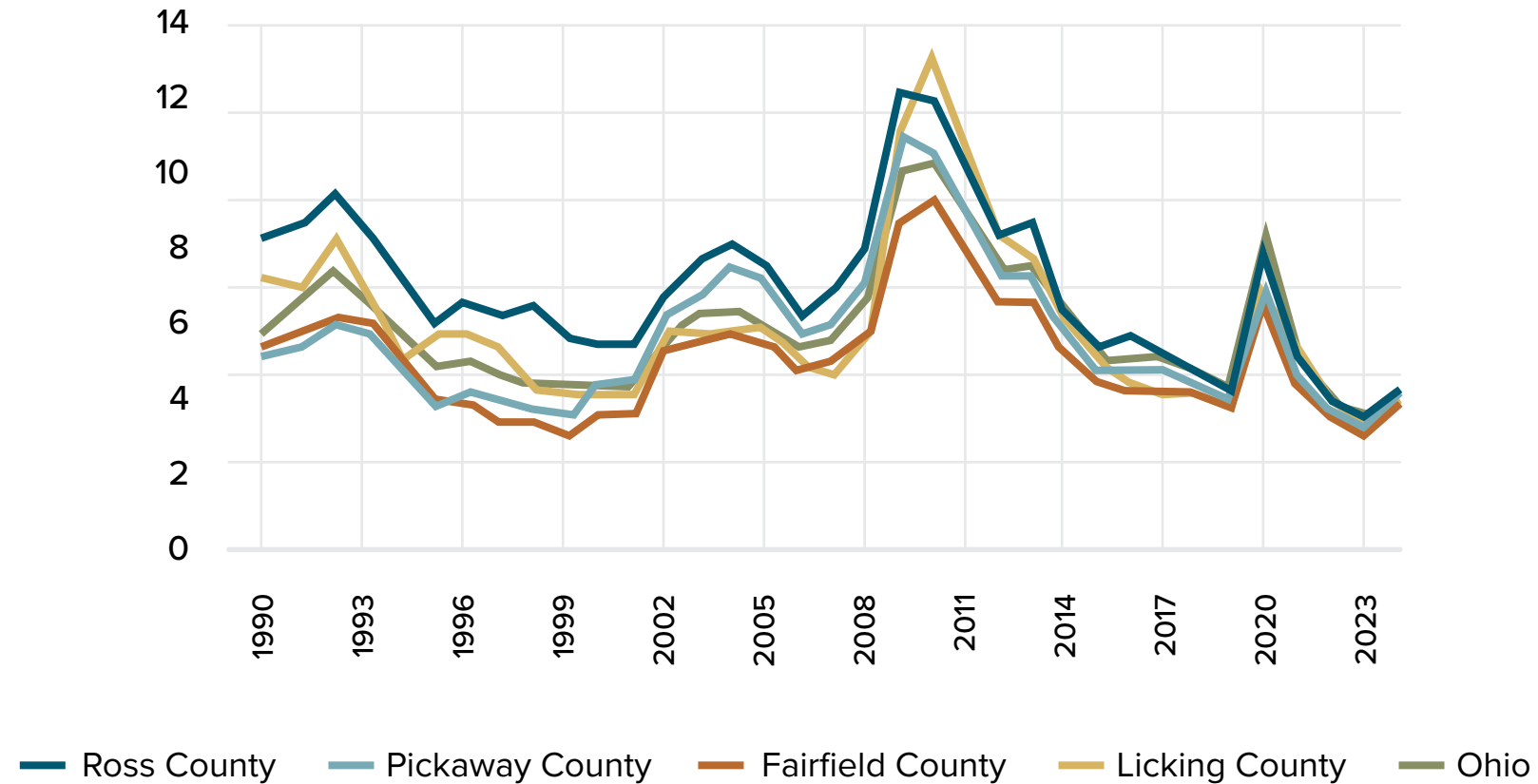
Ross County, Ohio Workforce by Industry		
Industry Sector	2010 Percent	2023 Percent
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	1.4	1.0
Construction	6.0	6.8
Manufacturing	16.5	17.5
Wholesale trade	3.2	1.6
Retail trade	12.3	12.3
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	6.6	5.7
Information	2.1	1.2
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	4.0	3.3
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	4.6	7.0
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	24.2	25.4
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	8.6	8.5
Other services, except public administration	3.6	3.4
Public administration	7.0	6.3

Source: US Census Bureau

UNEMPLOYMENT

The unemployment rate for an area is a key economic indicator that provides insight into the overall health of a region's labor market. The current unemployment rate in Ross County, Ohio, is 4.2 percent, similar to the comparison communities of Pickaway, Fairfield, and Fayette Counties. The unemployment rate in Ross County hit a high of 12.2 percent in 2009 during the Great Recession. Throughout the timeframe measured in the chart above, Ross County has typically had slightly elevated unemployment rates compared to benchmark communities. Although, the rate of unemployment is not elevated enough to indicate concern or a weak labor market.

Ross County Unemployment Rate

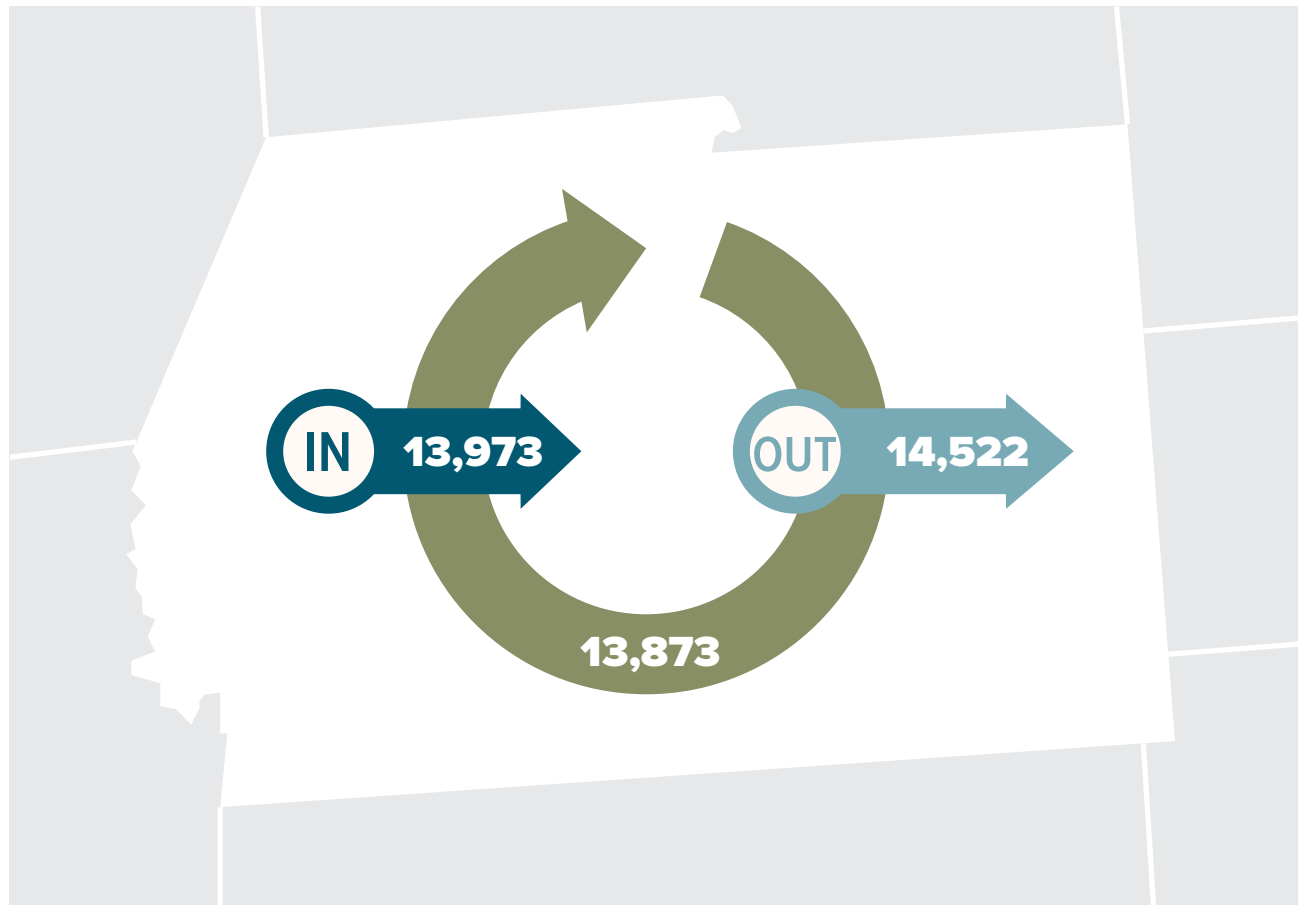


Source: Federal Reserve of Economic Data

COMMUTER BEHAVIOR

The On the Map tool provided by the US Census Bureau is an online tool that allows users to analyze workforce and demographic data based on geographic locations. The map above details the most recent data from 2022 that illustrates the flow of workers in and out of Ross County. There were 27,846 people in total who were employed within Ross County. Of the workforce of 27,486, 13,873 worked in the County, and 14,522 traveled elsewhere for work. Of the 27,846 jobs, 13,973 were filled by non-County residents.

Commuter Flow



Source: OnTheMap

The outflow columns within the Commuter Behavior table to the right show where the Ross County workforce commutes to for their employment. 13,873, or 48.9 percent of Ross County residents, were employed somewhere within Ross County. The county with the second highest share of employment is Franklin County, 3,501 or 12.3 percent of Ross County residents commute to Franklin County for employment. The third highest share is Pickaway County, with 1,527 or 5.4 percent of Ross County residents commuting there for employment.

The inflow columns of the Commuter Locations table to the right represent where employees at Ross County businesses commute from. The largest share of Ross County workers come from neighboring Pike County to the south. Approximately 1,778, or 6.4 percent of all people employed within Ross County come from Pike County. Franklin County represents the second highest share of residents that are employed within Ross County, with 1,201 or 4.3 percent of the total. The third highest share comes from Pickaway County, which has 1,173 or 4.2 percent of the total. Other counties that are in the top ten but not featured in the table for inflow workers that commute into Ross County for employment are Lawrence at 2.4 percent, Highland at 2.4 percent, and Vinton County at 2.4 percent.

The following tables provide data and insight into the specific age, wages, and industry sectors surrounding the employment patterns in Ross County. The inflow and outflow commuters are evenly spread across the three different age groups, with no age group representing a significant proportion of inflow or outflow of employment. Over 50 percent of workers in both the inflow and outflow categories earn more than \$3,333 per month, suggesting that a significant portion of the employees has access to well-paying jobs.

Ross County, Ohio Commuter Behavior

Area of Focus	Count	Share
Employed in the Selection Area	27,846	100.0%
Living and Employed in the Selection Area	13,873	48.9%
Living in the Selection Area but Employed Outside	14,522	51.1%
Employed and Living in the Selection Area	13,873	49.8%
Employed in the Selection Area but Living Outside	13,973	50.2%

Source: US Census OnTheMap Report

Ross County Commuter Locations

Area of Focus	Outflow Count	Outflow Share (Percent)	Inflow Count	Inflow Share (Percent)
Ross County, OH	13,873	48.9	13,873	49.8
Franklin County, OH	3,501	12.3	1,201	4.3
Pickaway County, OH	1,527	5.4	1,173	4.2
Pike County, OH	987	3.5	1,778	6.4
Hamilton County, OH	694	2.4	N/A	N/A
Fayette County, OH	684	2.4	522	1.9
Highland County, OH	653	2.3	667	2.4
Fairfield County, OH	451	1.6	536	1.9
Montgomery County, OH	417	1.5	N/A	N/A
Scioto County, OH	384	1.4	958	3.4
All Other Locations	5,224	18.4	5,796	20.8

Source: US Census OnTheMap Report

Outflow Job Characteristics (All Jobs)		
Area of Focus	Count	Share (Percent)
External Jobs Filled by Residents	14,522	100.0
Workers Aged 29 or younger	3,661	25.2
Workers Aged 30 to 54	7,660	52.7
Workers Aged 55 or older	3,201	22.0
Workers Earning \$1,250 per month or less	2,736	18.8
Workers Earning \$1,251 to \$3,333 per month	4,456	30.7
Workers Earning More than \$3,333 per month	7,330	50.5
Workers in the “Goods Producing” Industry Class	2,952	20.3
Workers in the “Trade, Transportation, and Utilities” Industry Class	4,028	27.7
Workers in the “All Other Services” Industry Class	7,542	51.9

Inflow Job Characteristics (All Jobs)		
Area of Focus	Count	Share (Percent)
Internal Jobs Filled by Outside Workers	13,973	100.0
Workers Aged 29 or younger	3,536	25.3
Workers Aged 30 to 54	7,557	54.1
Workers Aged 55 or older	2,880	20.6
Workers Earning \$1,250 per month or less	2,835	20.3
Workers Earning \$1,251 to \$3,333 per month	3,975	28.4
Workers Earning More than \$3,333 per month	7,163	51.3
Workers in the “Goods Producing” Industry Class	2,537	18.2
Workers in the “Trade, Transportation, and Utilities” Industry Class	3,570	25.5
Workers in the “All Other Services” Industry Class	7,866	56.3

Source: US Census OnTheMap Report

LABOR PARTICIPATION RATE

In 2024, Ross County's labor participation rate for employees aged 25 to 74 was over ten percent lower than Ohio's. That difference was nearly 20 percent for those 25 to 34 years old.

Labor Participation Rate by Cohort

Age Cohort	Ross County (Percent)	Ohio (Percent)	Difference (Percent)
Ages 16 to 19	40.6	45.8	-5.2
Ages 20 to 24	75.9	79.1	-3.2
Ages 25 to 29	65.1	85.0	-19.9
Ages 30 to 34	66.9	84.9	-18.0
Ages 35 to 44	72.2	84.6	-12.4
Ages 45 to 54	70.3	83.2	-12.9
Ages 55 to 59	62.8	75.2	-12.4
Ages 60 to 64	49.5	60.1	-10.6
Ages 65 to 74	16.8	26.9	-10.1
Ages Greater than 75	4.1	7.0	-2.9

Source: US Census OnTheMap Report

LOCATION QUOTIENT

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) uses data called a location quotient in order to analyze the concentration of employment throughout the United States. A location quotient is a method of using federal industry cluster data to identify the economic concentration of a certain industry in a state, region, county, or metropolitan statistical area compared to a base economy, such as a state or nation.

These competitive advantages are often due to factors such as natural resources, an existing skilled labor force, or supportive infrastructure. Understanding these advantages within an area can help in making decisions about transportation investments, workforce development, and economic development efforts.



LOCATION QUOTIENT = 1

Indicates that the County has the same proportion of employment in the industry or occupation as the reference area.



LOCATION QUOTIENT > 1

Indicates that the County has a higher concentration of employment in the industry sector or occupation compared to the reference area. It suggests a specialization in that industry or occupation.



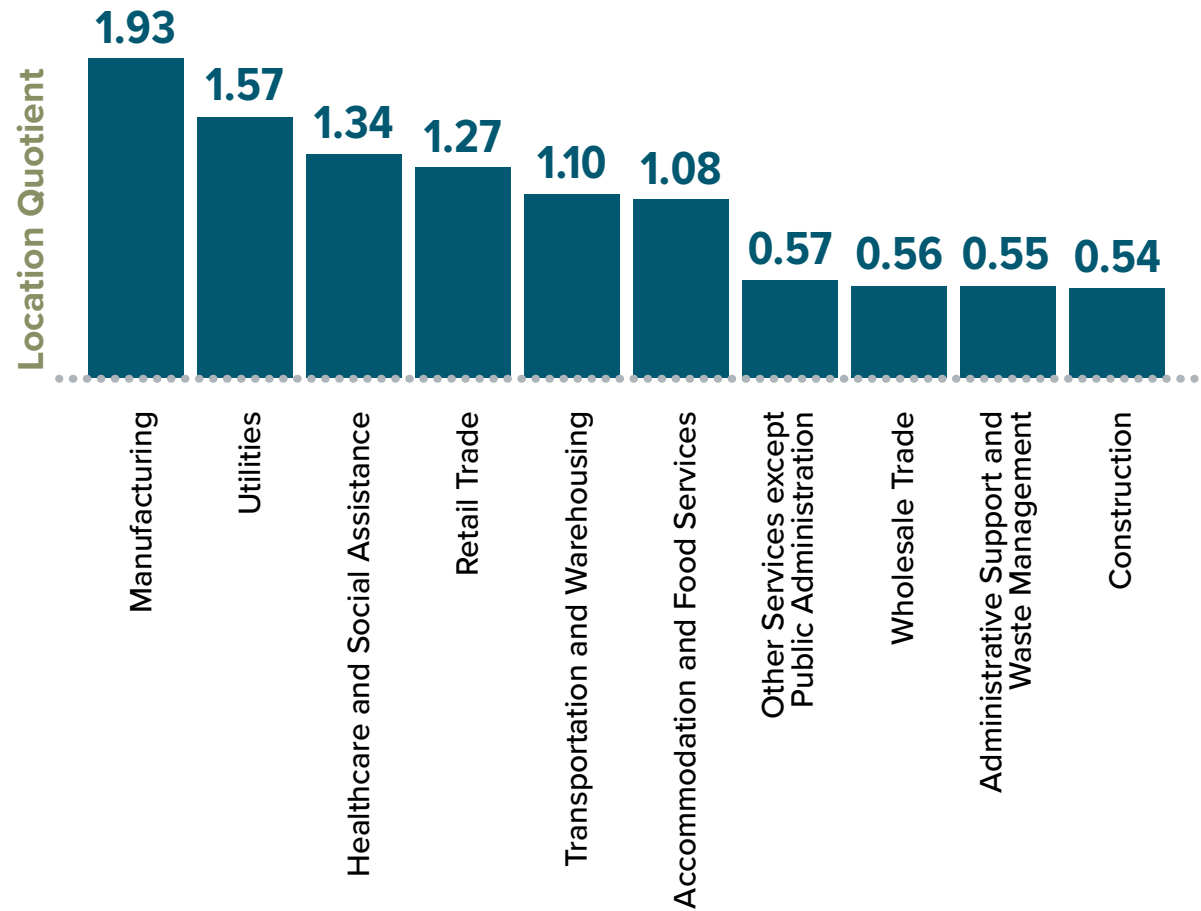
LOCATION QUOTIENT < 1

Indicates that the County has a lower concentration of employment in the industry or occupation compared to the reference area.

The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) is a system used to classify business establishments into specific industries based on their primary economic activity. Each industry is assigned a unique code, typically with a hierarchical structure that allows for a more detailed breakdown of economic sectors. The codes are numerical and range from 2 to 6 digits, with the first two digits representing the sector, the first three digits representing the subsector, and so on. The data for this analysis represents the annual averages of private businesses in the year 2023.

Ross County, Ohio, has significant industry concentrations in six sectors, with NAICS 31-33 (manufacturing) scoring the highest location quotient (1.93), suggesting that it is a significant economic driver in Ross County. Another key sector is NAICS 22 (utilities), with a location quotient of 1.57, indicating a strong presence in services like electric power (generation, transmission, distribution), natural gas (distribution), steam supply, water treatment, and sewage management. The County should consider policy decisions and economic development strategies related to these industries.

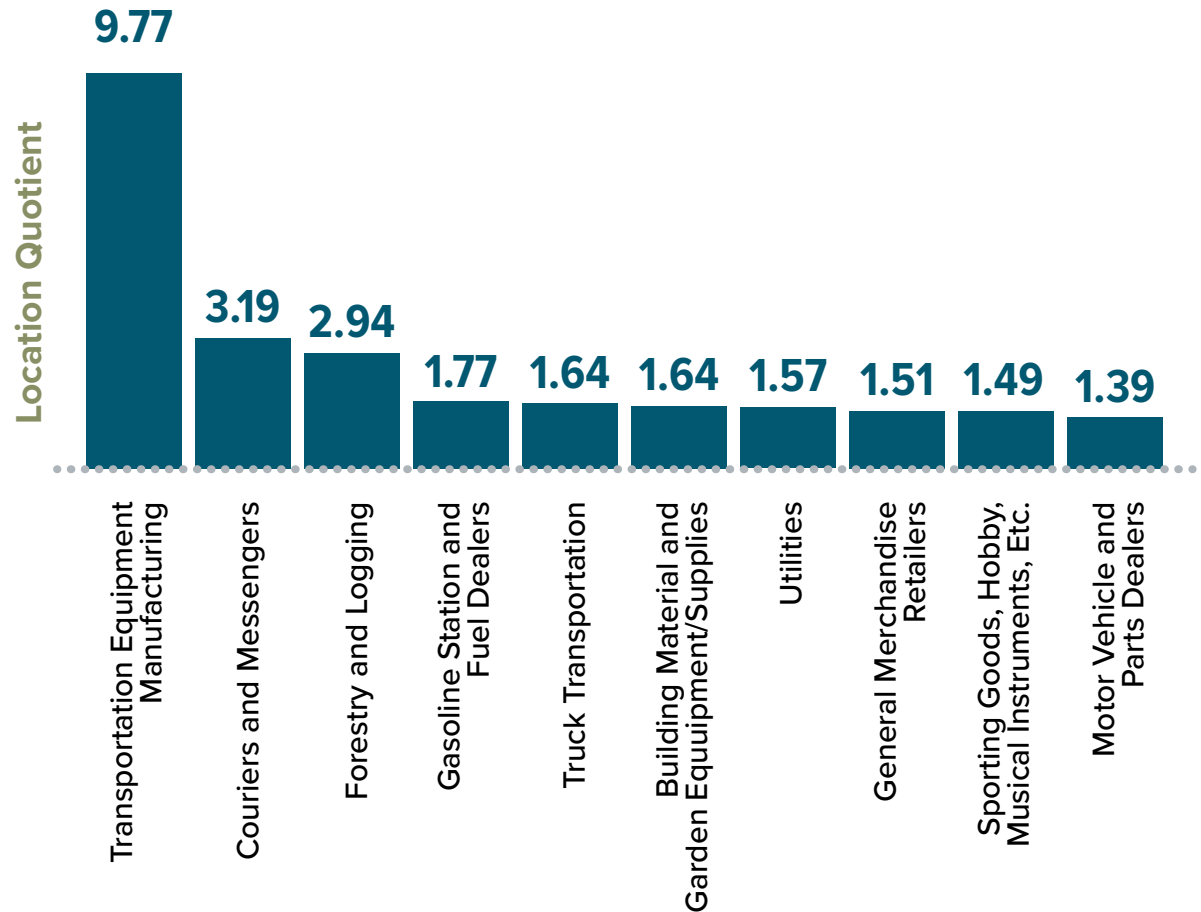
NAICS 2-Digit Location Quotient in Ross County



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

NAICS 3-Digit Location Quotient in Ross County

The three-digit NAICS codes provide a more specific breakdown of industries within the broader two-digit sectors. They divide the broad two-digit industry sectors into subsectors, offering more details about the types of employment in Ross County. They allow for more precise industry classification and are useful for more targeted economic analyses. The NAICS 336 (transportation equipment manufacturing 1.08 turing industry sector) has a location quotient score of 9.77, which suggests a significant concentration of this industry sector within Ross County. This industry sector had an annual average employment of 3,373 in Ross County in 2023. The remaining industry sectors represent a variety of different trades, suggesting that the Ross County economy is fairly balanced.



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

RETAIL GAP ANALYSIS

A retail gap analysis was conducted for the County. The Retail Gap Trade Areas map illustrates the three trade areas calculated via drive times from the center of the County. A retail gap analysis demonstrates current sales and revenue generated locally and how much money “should” be spent based on the local population’s disposable income.

A retail gap analysis helps to:

- ★ Uncover unmet demand and possible opportunities.
- ★ Understand the strengths and weaknesses of the local market area; and,
- ★ Measure the difference between actual and potential retail sales.

“Leakage” and “surplus” are the two categories used in a retail gap analysis.

- ★ Leakage in a local market means that people living in a trade area are spending money outside of that trade area. That indicates that additional disposable income could be captured in the trade area but is being lost or “leaking” to competing shopping districts.
- ★ A surplus in a local market means more money is being invested in developing local businesses and specialty niches than the trade area’s population “should be” spending. A surplus can have multiple meanings:
 - A saturation of the number of businesses that exist in the trade area without enough disposable income to support them all;
 - The trade area is increasing in various retail businesses and services from additional shoppers beyond the residents’ spending power.

TRADE AREAS

The 20-, 30-, and 45-minute drive times from Bridge Street and Seney Road intersection, the County's most central location, were chosen for this retail gap analysis.

Primary Trade Area: This trade area represents residents who shop at local stores twice to four times a week and make up most regular customers. For this analysis, a 20-minute drive was used to consider the area's central location and to determine whether this area represents the primary shopping destination in the county.

Secondary Trade Area: This trade area represents residents who shop at local stores three to four times a month. For this analysis, a 30-minute drive was used to consider the area's central location and determine whether it represents a secondary shopping destination in the county.

Extended Trade Area: The extended trade area is for customers who make less frequent trips, usually to a favorite restaurant or specialty store, once or twice a month. Given the number of regional visits coming to Ross County, a 45-minute drive time was used as the extended trade area.

PRIMARY 20-MINUTE DRIVE TIME TRADE AREA

The majority of retail categories within the 20-minute primary trade showed high surpluses, indicating that many shoppers were coming from outside the immediate trade area. Three categories showed leakages:

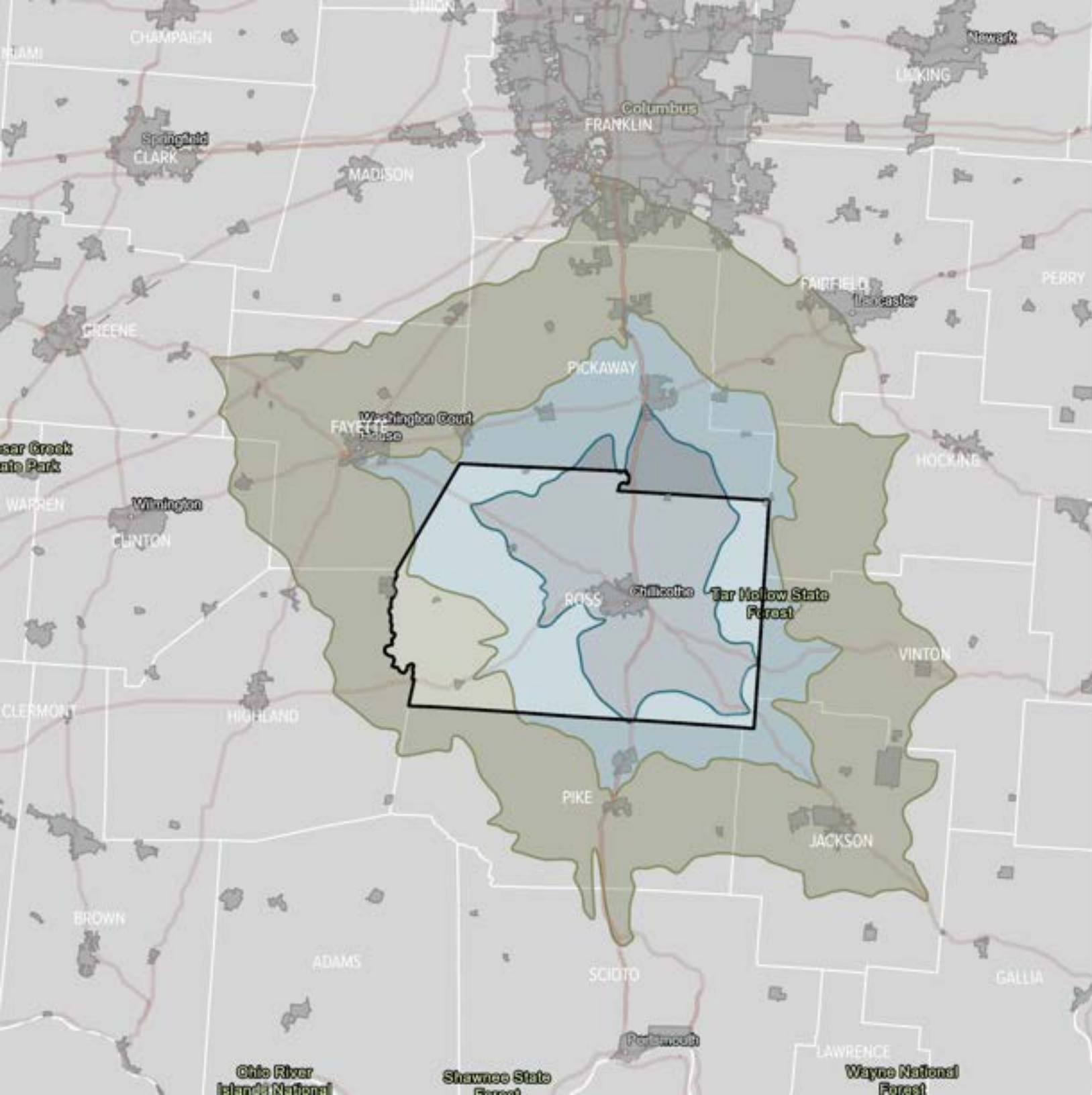
- ★ Electronic shopping and mail-order houses
- ★ Special food services
- ★ Drinking places

The overall surplus was -\$738,880,888. This information signals that the primary retail trade area has more shoppers visiting local stores than residents would spend on these goods and services. This trend indicates that the region is an importer of shoppers beyond area residents. A substantial portion of this surplus is likely generated from the number of employees working in Ross County but did not live there. Also, this would account for the number of visitors to attractions, such as the parks and World Heritage Sites.

30-MINUTE DRIVE TIME TRADE AREA

The 30-minute drive-time trade revealed similar surpluses when compared to the primary trade area. However, the overall surplus was lower at -\$252,138,889, with an increased number of retail categories showing leakages:

- ★ Furniture and home furnishings stores
- ★ Electronic shopping and mail-order houses
- ★ Health and personal care stores
- ★ Clothing and clothing accessories stores
- ★ Special food services
- ★ Drinking places
- ★ Full-service restaurants
- ★ Snack and non-alcoholic beverage bars

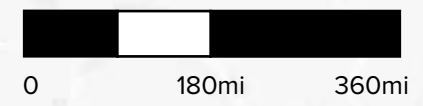


Legend

- Incorporated Areas
- 20 Minutes
- 30 Minutes
- 45 Minutes



Scale in Feet:



Ross County Retail Gap Trade Areas

45-MINUTE DRIVE TIME TRADE AREA

Given the area's central location in the region for residents, visitors, and employees, the extended trade area was examined as a 45-minute drive. This extended trade area showed that the overall surpluses in the smaller trade areas flipped to a leakage of \$36,113,811. As detailed in the Retail Gap Analysis Table, all but five categories showed leakage. The increasing proximity to the Columbus, Ohio, shopping areas drove this change to a leakage.

Given the expected increases in tourism and potential job growth, this gap analysis shows that demand for more retail will need to appeal to many customers. To ensure long-term success, new shopping and dining options should cater to both the local and regional markets.

Retail Gap Analysis Table

Retail Category	20-Minute Drive Trade Area	30-Minute Drive Trade Area	45-Minute Drive Trade Area
Total retail trade, including food and drink	-738,880,888	-252,138,889	36,113,811
Motor vehicle and parts dealers	-179,231,468	-53,939,642	85,219,643
Furniture and home furnishings stores	-10,599,183	1,241,541	26,223,625
Electronics and appliance stores	6,235,945	14,287,183	35,389,378
Building materials and garden equipment and supplies dealers	-104,334,385	-52,485,935	-69,339,432
Food and beverage stores	-78,902,783	-62,231,773	-123,555,565
Health and personal care stores	-31,555,812	8,991,461	2,140,036
Gasoline stations	-178,020,330	-124,623,712	-496,501,195
Clothing and clothing accessories stores	-210,599	22,899,829	44,593,113
Sporting goods, hobby, musical instruments, and bookstores	-9,012,229	-2,802,331	19,303,357
General merchandise stores	-222,782,943	-213,233,804	-264,786,936
Miscellaneous store retailers	-25,844,960	-13,564,173	4,430,385
Food services and drinking places (alcoholic beverages)	-58,146,500	-20,872,085	137,043,146
Special food services	5,850,757	8,837,947	29,217,330
Drinking places (alcoholic beverages)	4,430,137	4,360,125	10,310,013
Restaurants and other eating places	-68,427,394	-34,070,157	97,515,803
Full-service restaurants	-15,389,248	7,689,361	123,733,873
Limited-service restaurants	-49,482,070	-43,348,344	-48,305,305
Cafeterias, grill buffets, and buffets	-2,313,981	-1,294,235	758,628
Snack and non-alcoholic beverage bars	-1,242,095	2,883,060	21,328,607



Welcome to
Frankfort



THE
SUNFLOWER
IS THE
HOME OF
THE FUTURE!



Honoring
all
who served

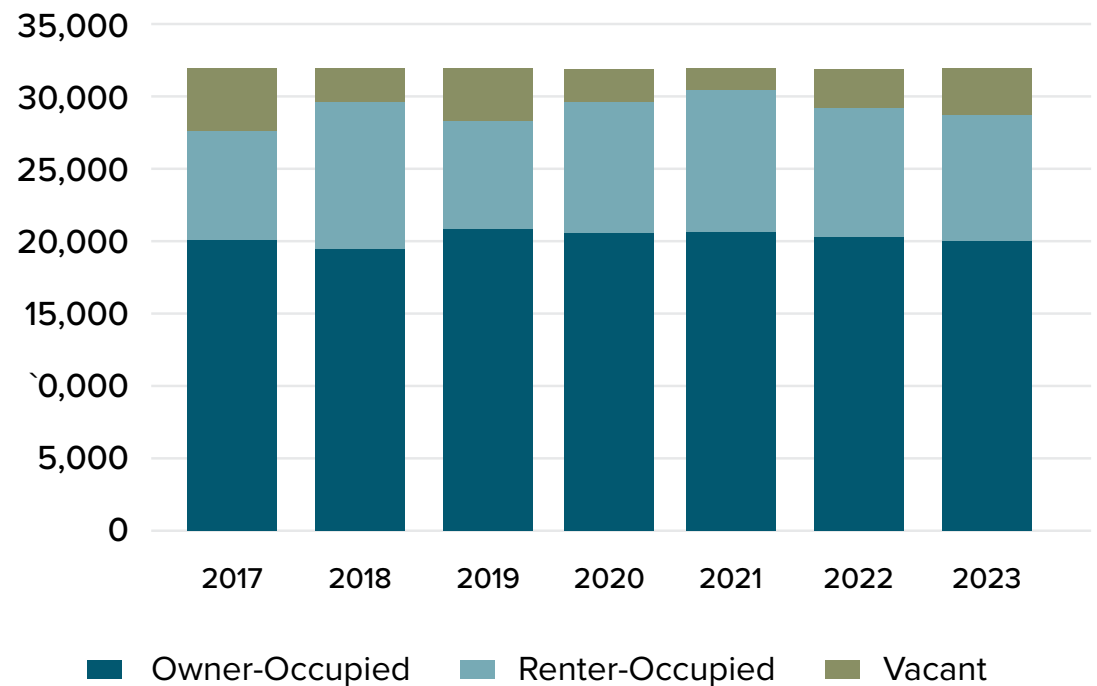
Home of the
Sunflower



INTRODUCTION

Housing is a paramount topic in Ross County. To ensure community success, homes must be available that are attainable and affordable for current and future residents at all income levels and life stages. Like other communities nationwide, addressing this need has proven challenging. This chapter provides a detailed look into current housing available to better understand the unique underlying circumstances for Ross County.

Total Housing Units



Source: US Census

TOTAL HOUSING UNITS

In 2023, Ross County had 32,077 total housing units. Between 2017 and 2023, Ross County saw a net increase of eight new housing units. Another interesting trend observed is that as low vacancy rates have come down in the Vacancy Rate Comparison below, occupancy appears to have shifted away from owner-occupied and renter-occupied units for the same single-unit detached housing units. Ross County's trendline for vacant rental units was moving in the opposite direction from the State of Ohio, which further demonstrates the tightening of available units.

Vacancy Rate Comparison

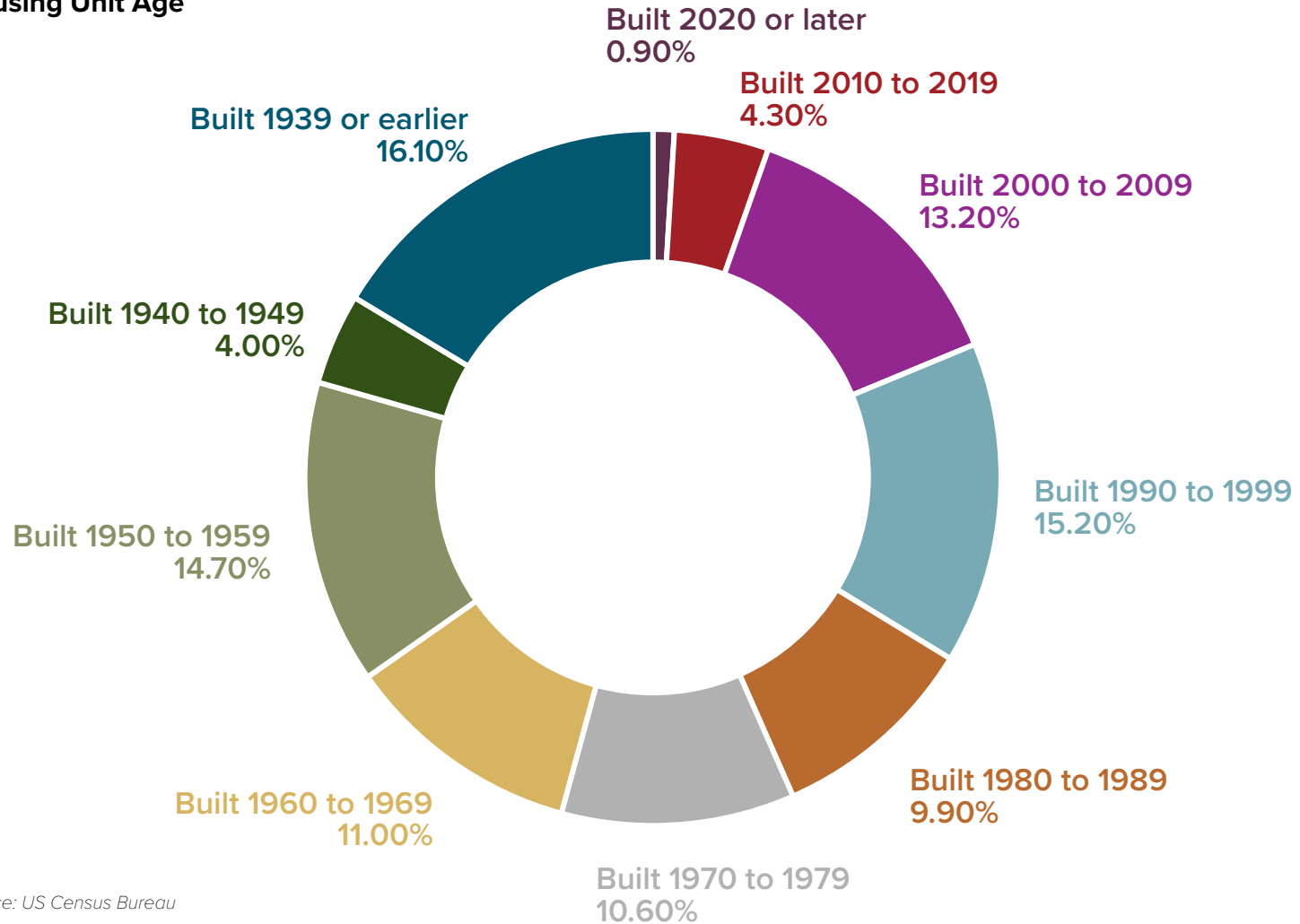
	Ohio						
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Homeowner Vacancy Rate (Percent)	1.4	1.2	1.2	1.3	0.8	0.7	0.7
Rental Vacancy Rate (Percent)	5.6	5.5	4.7	5.1	4.0	3.8	4.7
	Ross County						
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Homeowner Vacancy Rate (Percent)	0.1	1.1	0.0	0.7	1.2	0.1	0.2
Rental Vacancy Rate (Percent)	7.7	1.4	2.5	2.4	0.0	3.3	0.0

Source: US Census

HOUSING STOCK AGE AND VALUE

The Housing Unit Age chart illustrates Ross County's housing stock age as of 2023. After the 1940s, most housing was built in the 1990s, indicating an aging housing stock. Of the 32,066 housing units in Ross County, approximately two-thirds (21,559) housing units were outside of the City of Chillicothe.

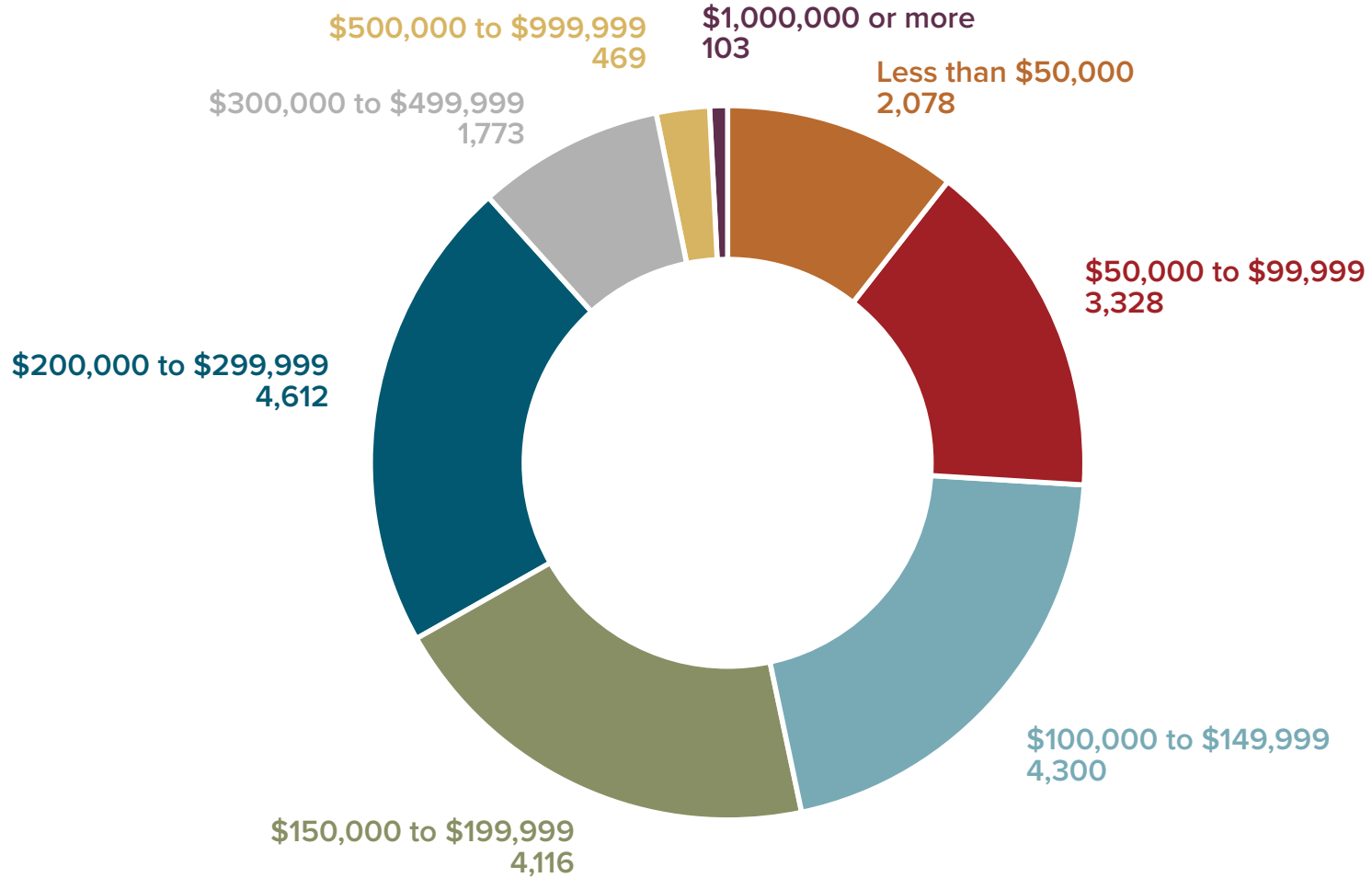
Housing Unit Age



Source: US Census Bureau

The Owner-Occupied Housing Unit by Value chart provides information about the value of owner-occupied housing units in Ross County. The majority of owner-occupied units fall within the \$200,000 to \$299,999 range, with 4,612 or 22.2 percent of the total housing stock. The \$100,000 to \$149,999 range represents the second largest share of owner-occupied housing units, with 4,300 or 20.7 percent of the total housing stock. The median value of owner-occupied housing units in Ross County is \$158,500.

Owner-Occupied Housing Unit by Value



Source: US Census Bureau

Looking at the Owner-Occupied Unit Demand table, there is a net unit demand of 8,490 dwelling units. Over half of this demand comes from individuals earning at or below the median annual household income.

Owner-Occupied Unit Demand Based on Resident Income (2022)

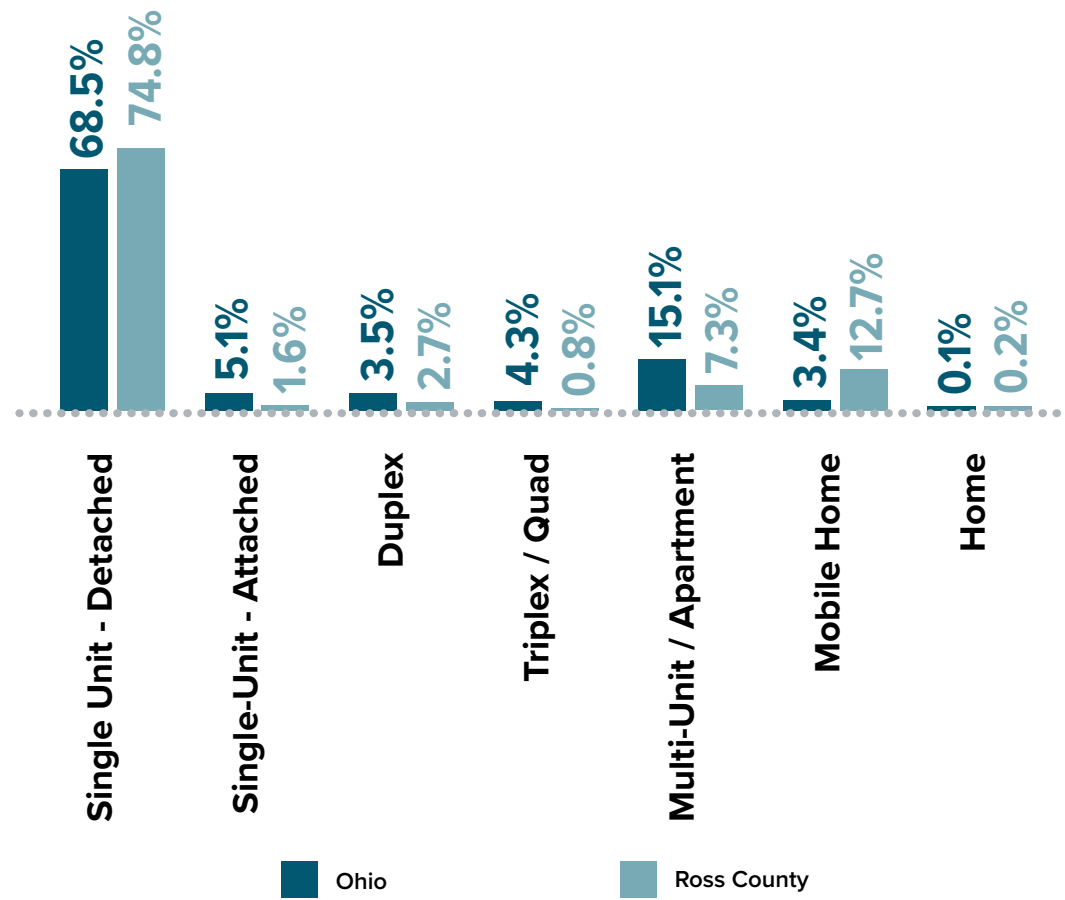
Income Cohort	Max Affordable Monthly Mortgage	Homes Valued in this Range	Households that Could Purchase in this Range	Attainable Home Price Based on DTI of 36 Percent	Net Unit Demand	Down Payment
Less than \$60,000	\$1,800	15,472	15,319	\$222,246	-153	\$7,778.61
\$60,000-\$74,999	\$2,250	2,951	2,461	\$279,987	-490	\$9,799.54
\$75,000-\$99,999	\$3,000	1,245	4,009	\$376,229	2,764	\$13,168.01
\$100,000-\$124,999	\$3,750	692	3,447	\$472,470	2,755	\$16,536.45
\$125,000-\$149,999	\$4,500	257	1,859	\$568,712	1,602	\$19,904.92
\$150,000-\$199,999	\$6,000	204	1,294	\$761,195	1,091	\$26,641.82
\$200,000 or Greater	\$6,000+	256	1,176	\$761,195+	921	\$26,641.82+
Total Net Unit Demand Based on Existing Household Income		21,077	29,565		8,490	

Source: US Census and American Structurepoint

HOUSING TYPE

In 2023, Ross County’s housing stock was approximately two-thirds single-unit detached housing units, about seven percent more than Ohio for the same year. Notably, Ross County has fewer attached housing unit types, such as townhomes (i.e., single-unit, attached) and conventional apartment communities, but nearly ten percent more mobile homes than Ohio. While the number of renter-occupied units has increased in Ross County, the share of multifamily units is still underrepresented in the region.

Housing Type



Ross County, Ohio Housing Unit by Type	
Area of Focus	Number of Units
Total housing units	32,042
1-unit, detached	23,004
1-unit, attached	561
2 units	1,024
3 or 4 units	774
5 to 9 units	873
10 to 19 units	451
20 or more units	907
Mobile home	4,365
Boat, RV, van, etc.	83

Source: US Census Bureau

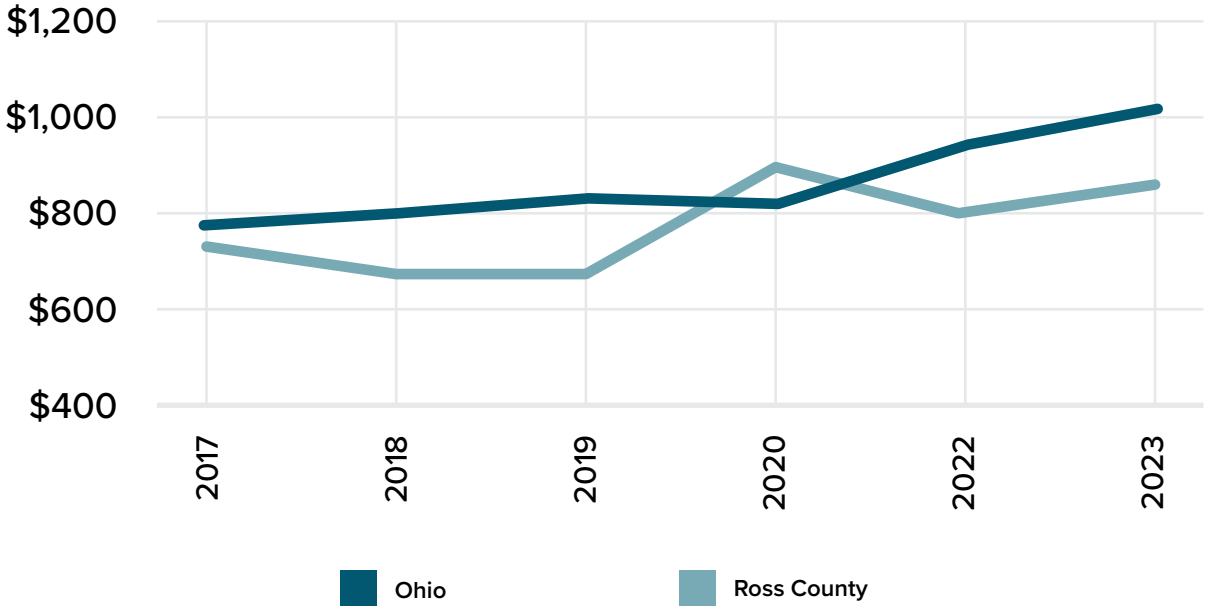
Source: US Census

OCCUPANCY

As noted earlier, most Ross County residents own their housing units. For those residents who rented, approximately 30 percent spent 35 percent or more of their income on rent, despite the 2023 median rent being 15 percent lower than Ohio's.

Percent of Renters Spending 35 Percent or More of Income on Rent							
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Ohio	36.2	36.2	34.8	36.1	36.2	38.3	38.6
Ross County	38.9	43.4	36.0	43.0	62.7	30.5	29.7

Median Rent



Source: US Census

The Rental Unit Demand Based on Resident Income table shows the maximum affordable rent, assuming that renters use 36 percent of their income towards rent. There is a net unit demand for 518 units.

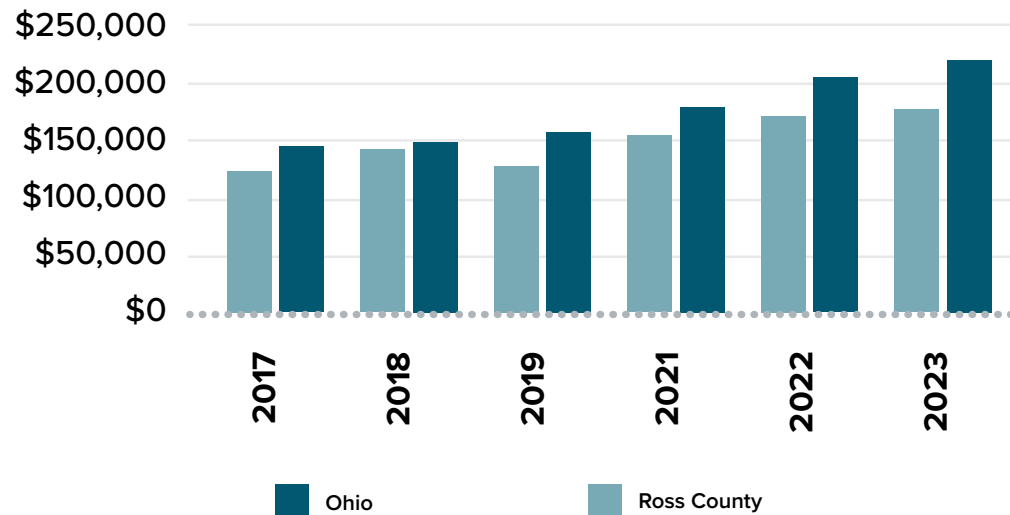
Rental Unit Demand Based on Resident Income (2022)				
Income Cohort	Max Affordable Rent	Available Rental Units in this Range	Renter Households Earning this Income	Net Unit Demand
less than \$60,000	\$1,500	7,644	6,944	-700
\$60,000-\$74,999	\$1,875	192	531	339
\$75,000-\$99,999	\$2,500	56	609	553
>\$100,000	\$3,125	0	326	326
Total Net Unit Demand Based on Existing Household Income				518

Source: US Census and American Structurepoint

VALUE

Ohio median home values have steadily risen since 2017, while Ross County median home values have fluctuated. Ross County median home values have remained lower than those of the state. As of 2023, Ohio median home values were 21.6 percent higher than Ross County's. With new regional employment centers coming to the region in Fayette and Pickaway Counties, an opportunity exists to provide attainable housing in Ross County.

Median Home Value

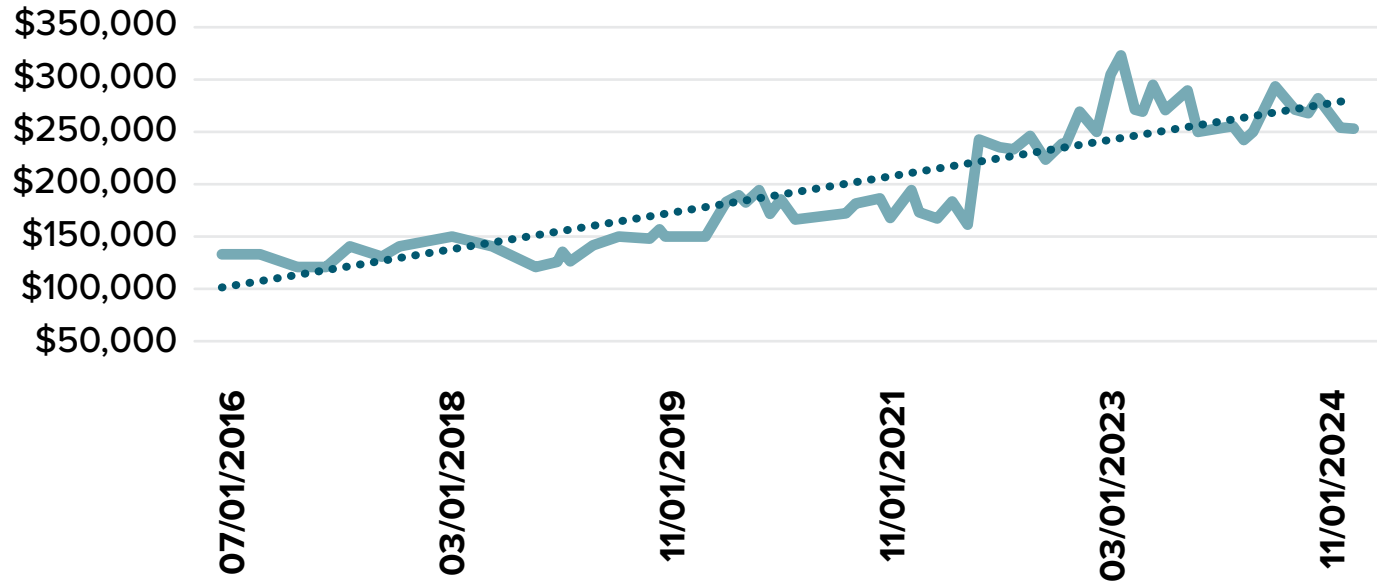


Source: US Census

SALES TRANSACTIONS AND VOLUME

The data in the Realtor.com library is based on the industry's most comprehensive and accurate database of MLS-listed for-sale homes. Realtor.com aggregates and analyzes data from hundreds of sources, produces hundreds of metrics for multiple markets, and curates figures and trends where possible for reliability and comparability.* That database was used to generate sales transactions and volume information in this report.

Median Listing Price in Ross County

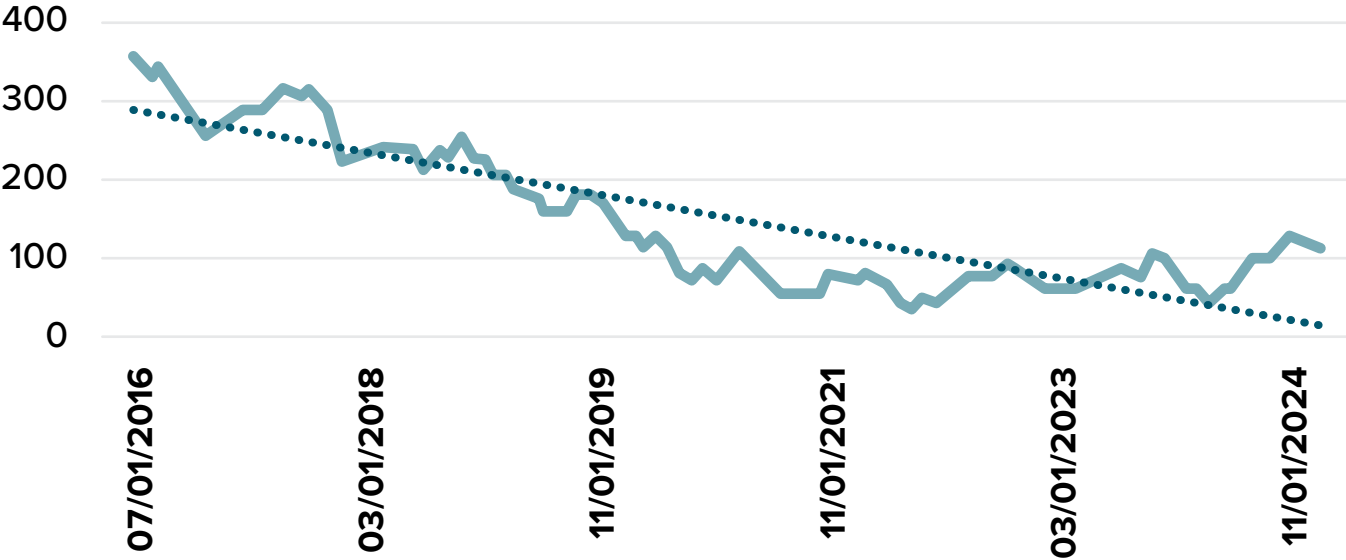


Source: Realtor.com

* [Realtor.com Data Library | Residential Data](#)

The number of active listings is a key indicator of Ross County’s housing market’s current state. The housing market is closely tied to the basic economic principles of supply and demand and how their inverse relationship changes one another. As indicated by the graph Active Listing Count, the active supply of homes available for purchase in Ross County has decreased significantly from the levels experienced in 2016 and 2017. The number of active listings in Ross County remained above 250 until December 2017, when it reached 241. After this moment, the number of active listings in Ross County would continue to decrease to a low of 34 in February 2022. The number of active listings did steadily increase during the year 2024 where it increased from April through November. The current active listing count in January 2025 was 118.

Active Listing Count in Ross County



Source: Realtor.com

AFFORDABILITY

As of January 2025, the median listing price in Ross County, Ohio, was \$249,900. This is down from the peak median listing price of \$319,000 in April of 2023. The median listing price for the year 2024 was \$264,906, which is down from the median listing price of \$276,338 in 2023.

Ross County, Ohio Affordability Index			
Year	Median Listing Price	Median Household Income	Price to Income Ratio
2024	\$264,906	\$63,620*	4.16
2023	\$276,338	\$61,651	4.48
2022	\$227,377	\$60,352	3.77
2021	\$176,015	\$53,068	3.32
2020	\$172,435	\$49,543	3.48
2019	\$143,415	\$54,728	2.62
2018	\$138,223	\$49,385	2.80
2017	\$130,869	\$50,387	2.60

Source: Federal Reserve of Economic Data

* Estimate of 2024 MHI

Housing affordability is a critical issue that affects individuals, families, communities, and entire economies. The median listing price of homes in Ross County, Ohio, and the United States of America experienced sharp increases in most areas during 2021 and 2022. Many high-cost living areas and regions, like central Ohio, are experiencing growth. Many high-growth regions are also experiencing an increase in median listing prices across their housing stock. From 2021 to 2022, the median listing price for a home in Ross County increased by \$51,362, and from 2022 to 2023, it increased by another \$48,961. There has been a sharp increase in median listing prices for Americans over this time frame. From 2021 to 2024, the median listing price of a home in Ross County increased by 50.5 percent, compared to only a 19.9 percent increase in the median household income. The column on the far right represents the price-to-income ratio for Ross County. The price-to-income ratio helps explain the affordability or unaffordability of homes in a simplified metric. The price-to-income ratio represents how much more a home costs than the median household income in an area. For example, in 2017, the median listing price for a home in Ross County was 2.60 times higher than the median household income. Now, in 2024, the median listing price for a home is 4.16 times higher than the median household income in Ross County. This is a 60.3 percent increase in the unaffordability of a home in Ross County, Ohio.

Income Scenario						
Total Home Price	Mortgage Cost	Principal and Interest (Monthly)	Property Taxes (Monthly)	Homeowners Insurance (Monthly)	Total Monthly Cost	Annual Household Income Required
\$264,906	\$211,925	\$1,382	\$252	\$61	\$1,695	\$81,360

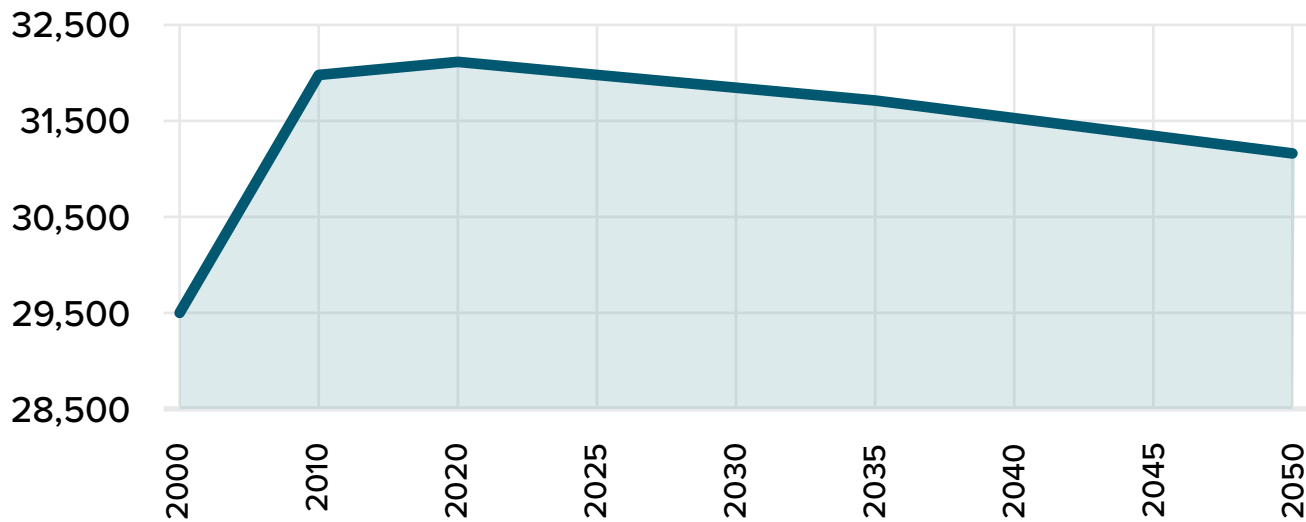
Source: Realtor.com

Using the 2024 median listing price for a home in Ross County, Ohio, of \$264,906, we can estimate how much a household would need to earn in order to buy a home under the current housing conditions. With a 20% down payment the total mortgage cost on a home would be \$211,925. Current estimates indicate that a home loan with a repayment term of 30 years and an interest rate of 6.804% that remains the same throughout the life of the loan would cost a homeowner \$1,382 in principal and interest monthly. Using an estimate on property taxes and homeowners' insurance, the total monthly cost of a home at the median listing price is \$1,695. The 30-percent rule states that a household should spend no more than 30% of its income on housing costs. This figure has long been used in academic circles and by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. For this scenario, a rate of 25% of the annual household income is spent on housing costs metric. This leads to an annual household income required of \$81,360 to afford a home in Ross County, Ohio, at the 2024 median listing price. This is important because 61.5% of all Ross County households earned under \$74,999 in 2024. This metric further highlights the housing affordability challenges that many Americans are facing.

HOUSING DEMAND ANALYSIS

Calculating the housing demand in Ross County is essential for understanding how many homes are needed to meet the demands of the population. The most common way to determine housing demand is related to population growth. An increase in the number of residents in an area will typically lead to an increase in the demand for housing. For Ross County, the population decreased by an estimated 971 from 2010 to 2020. According to housing unit projections provided by the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, the number of housing units in Ross County is not projected to increase in the following decades. While these figures are based on current population projections and historical Census data from 2000 to 2020, they are subject to change following shifts in demographic measures.

Housing Unit Projection



Source: US Census Bureau, Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission





Land Use and Development

CHARACTER CLASS DISTRIBUTION

The Character Class Distribution table below shows each classification with associated acreage. The top existing land uses are Agricultural/Rural Living, Single-Unit Residential Detached, and Park/Open Space. This trend is reflected in the character class distribution for most individual townships, with a few exceptions. Jefferson Township had Industrial and Liberty Township had Institutional among its top three land uses.

INTRODUCTION

Permitting records and land use regulations were used to understand existing land use, development activity, and historical development patterns that a community may want to encourage or determine if new land use types are needed to support their long-term vision.

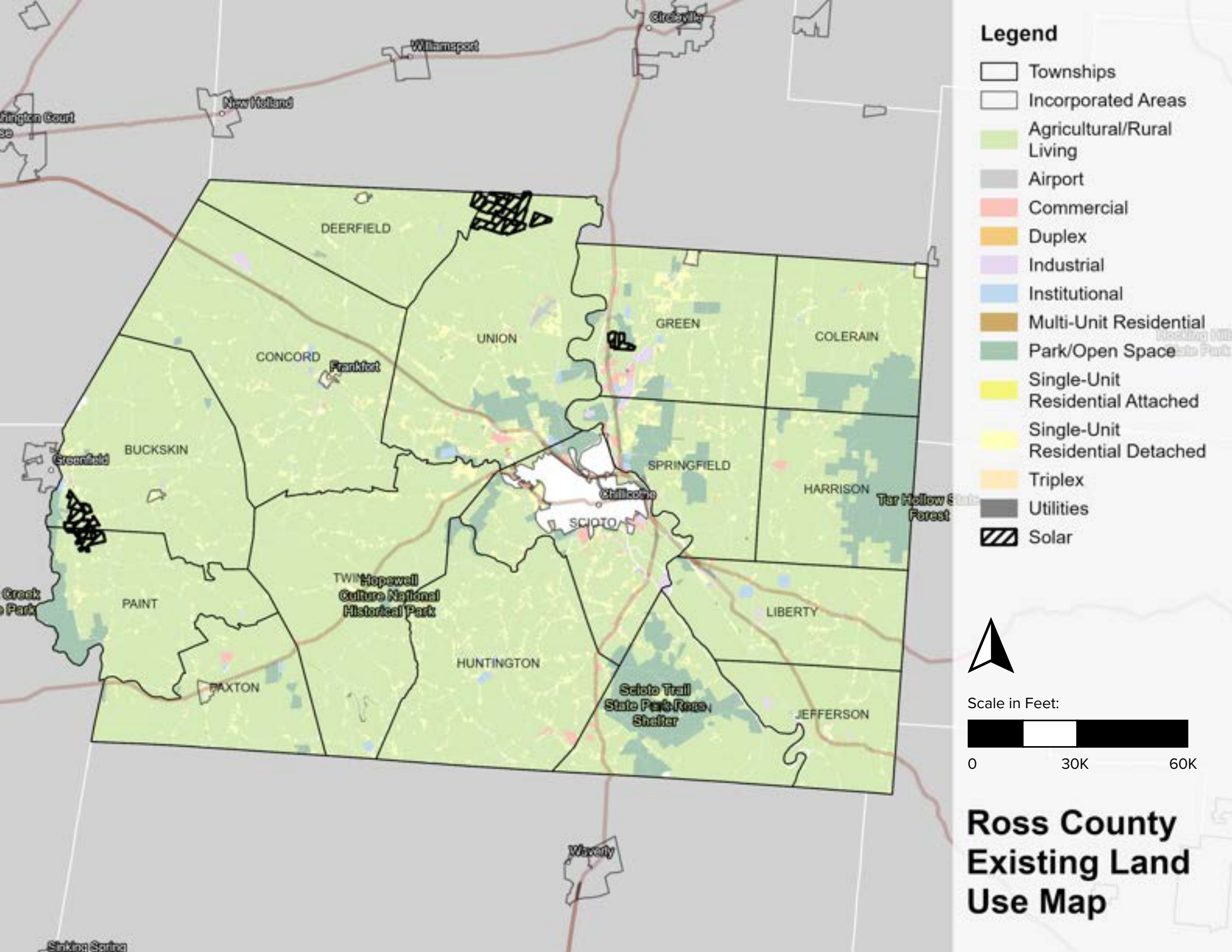
EXISTING LAND USE

Contrary to zoning, existing land use describes an area as it is currently being used. Land use analysis can provide insight into an area's character and how people relate to that portion of the County. Based on Ross County Auditor data and onsite observations, there are 12 character classes within the county.

Existing Land Use Category	Ross County	
	Acres	Percent of Total
Agricultural/Rural Living	363,552.23	84.56
Solar Overlay	3,546.54	0.01
Airport	206.05	0.05
Commercial	2,906.95	0.68
Duplex	71.77	0.02
Industrial	1,530.46	0.36
Institutional	2,258.77	0.53
Multi-Unit Residential	137.52	0.03
Park/Open Space	39,340.44	9.15
Single-Unit Residential Attached	0.15	0.01
Single-Unit Residential Detached	19,746.97	4.59
Triplex	25.03	0.01
Utilities	150.44	0.03
Total *	429,926.78	100.0%

Source: Ross County Auditor

* Total acreage excludes the land area of the City of Chillicothe.



Legend

-  Townships
-  Incorporated Areas
-  Agricultural/Rural Living
-  Airport
-  Commercial
-  Duplex
-  Industrial
-  Institutional
-  Multi-Unit Residential
-  Park/Open Space
-  Single-Unit Residential Attached
-  Single-Unit Residential Detached
-  Triplex
-  Utilities
-  Solar



Scale in Feet:



**Ross County
Existing Land
Use Map**

TOP THREE LAND USES BY TOWNSHIP

Township	Top Land Uses
Buckskin	Agricultural/Rural Living, Single-Unit Residential Detached, Park/Open Space
Colerain	Agricultural/Rural Living, Park/Open Space, Single-Unit Residential Detached
Concord	Agricultural/Rural Living, Single-Unit Residential Detached, Park/Open Space
Deerfield	Agricultural/Rural Living, Single-Unit Residential Detached, Park/Open Space
Franklin	Agricultural/Rural Living, Park/Open Space, Single-Unit Residential Detached
Green	Agricultural/Rural Living, Single-Unit Residential Detached, Park/Open Space
Harrison	Agricultural/Rural Living, Park/Open Space, Single-Unit Residential Detached
Huntington	Agricultural/Rural Living, Single-Unit Residential Detached, Park/Open Space
Jefferson	Agricultural/Rural Living, Single-Unit Residential Detached, Industrial
Liberty	Agricultural/Rural Living, Single-Unit Residential Detached, Institutional
Paint	Agricultural/Rural Living, Park/Open Space, Single-Unit Residential Detached
Paxton	Agricultural/Rural Living, Park/Open Space, Single-Unit Residential Detached
Scioto	Agricultural/Rural Living, Park/Open Space, Single-Unit Residential Detached
Springfield	Agricultural/Rural Living, Park/Open Space, Single-Unit Residential Detached
Twin	Agricultural/Rural Living, Single-Unit Residential Detached, Park/Open Space
Union	Agricultural/Rural Living, Park/Open Space, Single-Unit Residential Detached

Source: Ross County Auditor

CHARACTER CLASSES

The following describes the 12 primary character classes observed within Ross County.

AGRICULTURAL/RURAL LIVING



Agricultural land makes up over 80 percent of Ross County's land area. In Ross County, Agricultural land was defined as cultivated land and large-lot residential development two acres and over. Single-unit residential development is typically limited in agricultural areas due to the availability of sewer and water infrastructure; wells and septic systems are common. Another common constraint is floodplains; floodplains are flat with rich soil and ready water availability, which is ideal for farming but limiting for development due to associated development regulations.

SOLAR

Portions of northern and western Ross County are formerly Agricultural/Rural Living land currently occupied by large-scale solar farms. These lands will likely be returned to active farmland upon decommissioning.

PARK/OPEN SPACE



Parks and open spaces in Ross County are characterized by large, forested, and often hilly land with natural and cultural features. These natural characteristics lend themselves to beautiful viewsheds enjoyed by visitors and residents alike. Many of these areas are designated as state forests. Certain areas within the County were also used for raising cattle, as the hilly terrain is still favorable for this type of agricultural activity.



SINGLE-UNIT RESIDENTIAL DETACHED

Single-unit residential detached structures are concentrated in the City of Chillicothe and dispersed throughout the County with lot sizes less than two acres. They are characterized by one dwelling unit per lot. Dwelling units within older neighborhoods and incorporated areas tend to have smaller lots compared to dwelling units adjacent to agricultural activities. Off-street parking, whether on a driveway or in a garage, is typically located in front or to the side of the primary structure.

SINGLE-UNIT RESIDENTIAL ATTACHED

Single-unit residential attached is found predominantly in the City of Chillicothe or in other incorporated areas. They are often referred to as “townhomes,” and each unit is under individual ownership. Lot sizes are typically smaller. Dwelling units often have alley access or off-street parking underneath the living area.



DUPLEX

Duplexes look similar to single-unit detached homes, except they contain two dwelling units within one shared residential structure on a single lot. Under casual observation, duplexes are typically not unlike single-unit residential-detached structures. Duplexes typically have smaller lots, multiple driveways, garages, and front doors, and a higher density than single-unit residential-detached dwelling units. Although concentrated in incorporated areas, such as Chillicothe and Frankfort, a few can be found throughout the County.

TRIPLEX

Triplexes are not very common in Ross County. Typically, triplexes contain three dwelling units with shared walls and common ownership, similar to multi-unit residential and duplexes. All units often have ground entry. Similar to duplexes, they might blend into single-unit neighborhoods but are generally larger when compared to single-unit detached structures and duplexes.

MULTI-UNIT RESIDENTIAL

Multi-unit residential units, apartments and condominiums, are four or more dwelling units within a structure under common ownership. Shared amenities, such as parking, open space, and community buildings, often characterize them. These high-density developments often have minimal side yards between apartment blocks or accessory structures.



INSTITUTIONAL

Institutional uses include schools, prisons, libraries, government buildings, and other public service uses. They have larger lots as uses are often clustered for efficiency of service delivery and can be found throughout Ross County.



INDUSTRIAL

Industrial uses tend to be large-lot developments along major thoroughfares. In Ross County, industrial uses are clustered along OH-159 north of Chillicothe incorporation limits and along US-35, due to rail access. This character class typically includes large buildings dedicated to the production or assembly of manufactured goods.



COMMERCIAL

Commercial uses are often concentrated in or around incorporated areas and along thoroughfares. Lot size often varies by context, with larger lot sizes outside of incorporated areas. The character of these areas in the County was typical commercial buildings surrounded by off-street parking lots. The businesses located in these areas ranged from local retail and restaurants to large general merchandise stores, medical uses, and gas stations.



UTILITIES

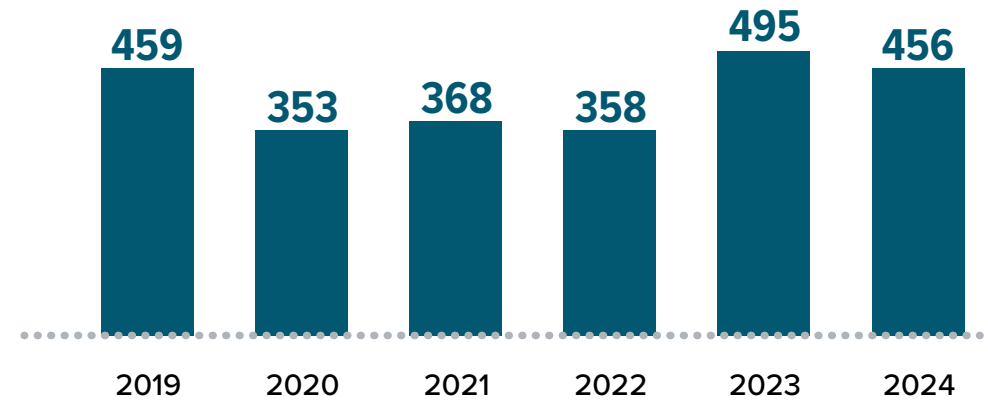
Utility land uses vary in character, whether for public or private providers. They include structures and easements for electric substations, sewer lift stations, water towers, and other accessory infrastructure uses.

DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

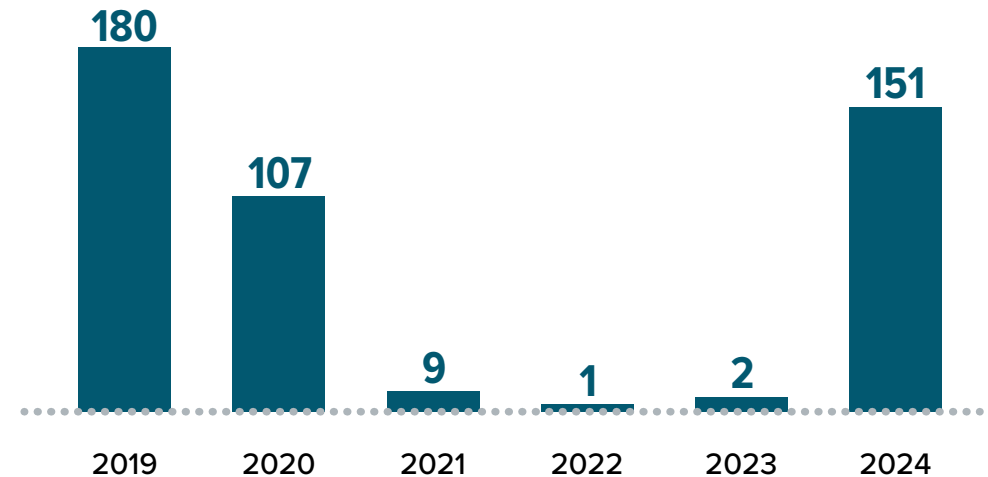
Permitting can act as a bellwether for development activity. To the right are two charts showing the number of building permit applications for the last five years. The unincorporated areas in Ross County do not require a building permit for residential improvements under four dwelling units, and incorporated areas that do require a residential building permit, such as the City of Chillicothe, review them within their jurisdiction. The Total Building Permits – Including City of Chillicothe chart includes the commercial building permits for the entire county. From this chart, we see a relatively steady amount of development activity. However, the Total Building Permits – Excluding City of Chillicothe chart shows that the rest of the County did not have the same sustained development activity from 2021 to 2023.

Permit scope varied greatly and included trade permits, new wireless communications towers, a paint shop addition to Kenworth, apartment renovations, etc. As shown on the Average Permit Project Cost chart, in 2019 and 2024, when permit volumes were highest in the last five years, declared project cost averages were also highest.

Total County Building Permits – Including City of Chillicothe

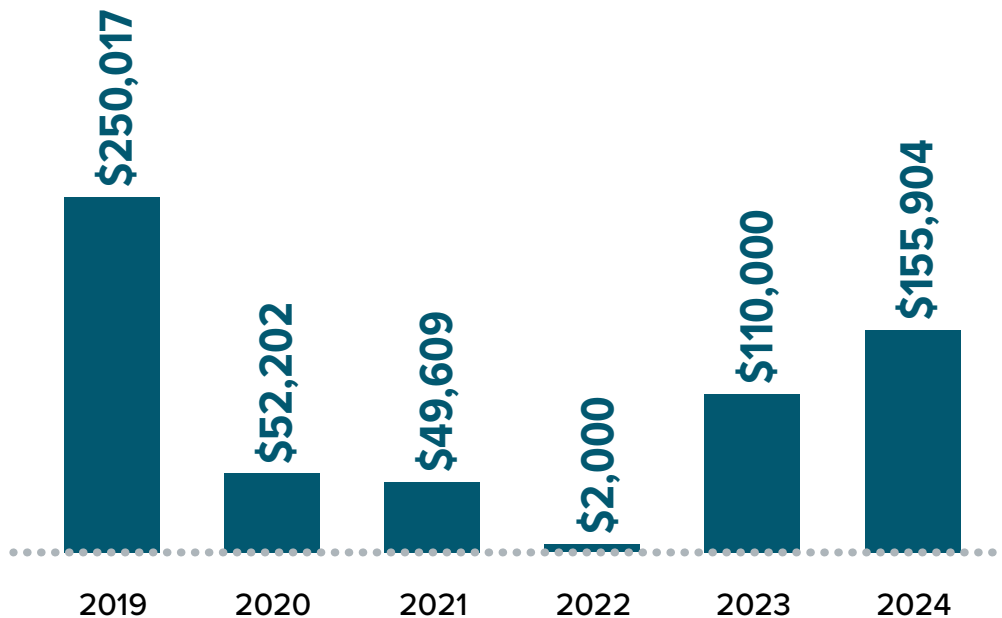


Total County Building Permits – Excluding City of Chillicothe



Source: Ross County Auditor

Average Permit Project Cost – Excluding City of Chillicothe



Source: Ross County Building Department

NOTABLE RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

UNESCO World Heritage Designation: Ross County, Ohio, is home to the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks, which were officially inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site on September 19, 2023. This designation recognizes the outstanding universal value of these ancient Native American earthworks, which were constructed around 2,000 years ago. Five of the eight sites lie in Ross County. This designation not only honors the historical and cultural significance of the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks but also boosts tourism and community pride in Ross County.

Sherman Heights: This expansion of a single-detached dwelling subdivision includes 48 new lots. Like many communities, Ross County needs new housing. This project is significant as it is one of the few recently constructed new housing projects. At the time of this report, Sherman Heights was under construction.

ACGP Yoctangee Park Project: The Yoctangee Park project, funded by the Appalachian Community Grant Program (ACGP), is a significant development aimed at transforming Yoctangee Park in Chillicothe. With the County as a project partner, the project received \$35 million from the ACGP, which is part of a larger \$500 million program aimed at supporting communities in Ohio's Appalachian region. The project has many elements, including an amphitheater, restoration of the Armory, and a new visitor center that will be built to honor Ross County's designation as a UNESCO World Heritage site and to welcome tourists.

ZONING

Most unincorporated areas of Ross County are not zoned, except for Buckskin and Deerfield Townships.



Source: [John Hancock via opewellearthworks.org](https://www.opewellearthworks.org)



Transportation and Movement

INTRODUCTION

The movement of people, goods, and services is crucial for the effective operation of any county. Ensuring safe and accessible transportation options allows a community to preserve its unique identity while directing growth through strategic infrastructure investments.

A well-planned transportation network enhances mobility, supports economic activity, and improves overall quality of life. By prioritizing safety, convenience, and efficiency, cities can reduce congestion, promote sustainable development, and create a more connected environment for residents and businesses alike.

ROADS

As part of this existing assessment, a thorough review of the existing roadway infrastructure within the county limits was conducted. This segment of the Existing Conditions Report examines current conditions in Ross County, identifying roadways with deteriorated pavement, high-crash locations, severity levels, projected traffic growth, and existing traffic volumes.

The analysis was based on data from ODOT's Transportation Information Mapping System (TIMS) and the GIS Crash Analysis Tool (GCAT). These findings will play a key role in shaping the Thoroughfare Plan component of the Comprehensive Plan. According to TIMS, the functional classification of major roadways within Ross County is outlined in the subsequent sections.

Per TIMS, the roadway functional class for the major roadways within Ross County is provided in the Major County Roadways table.

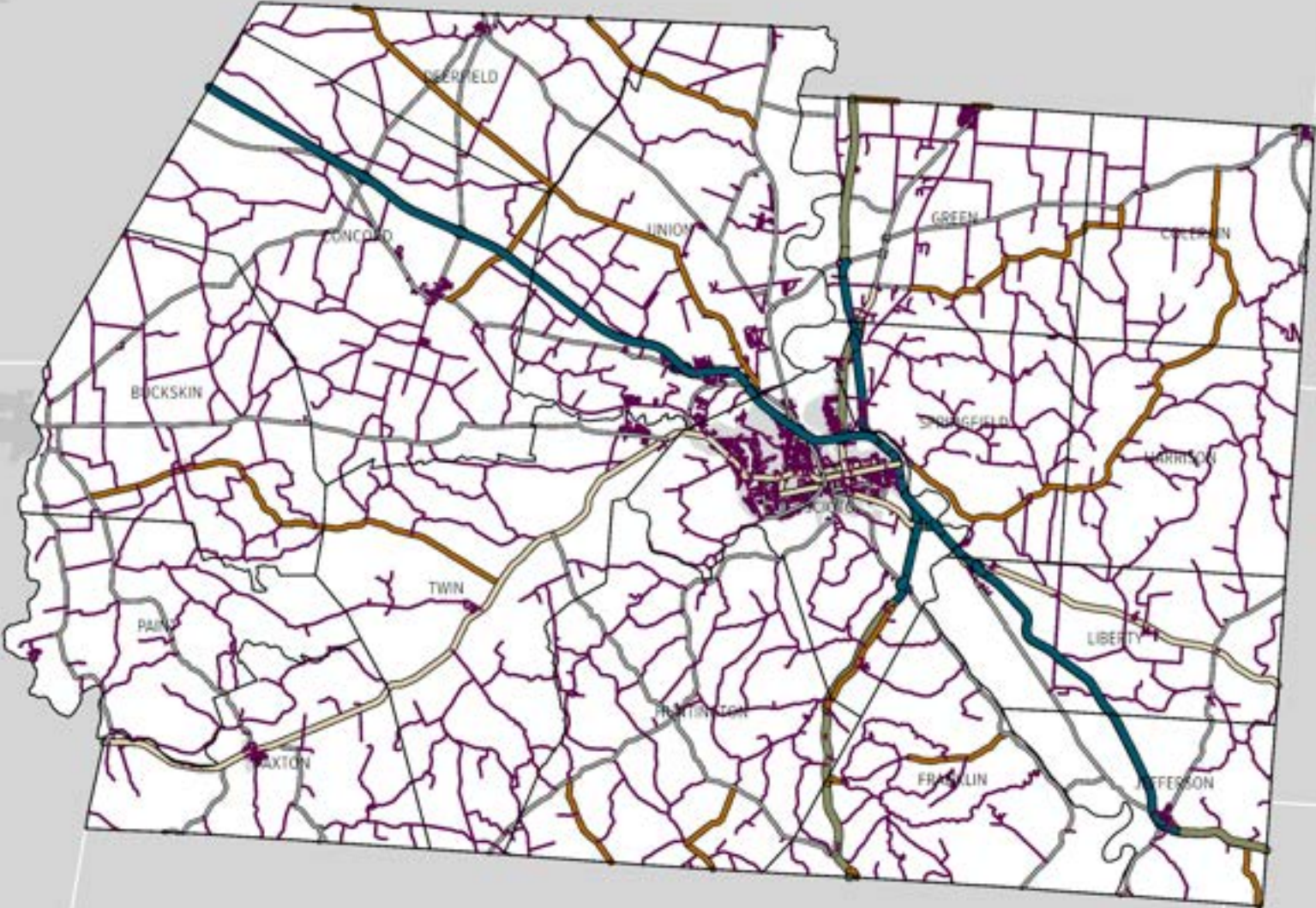
Major County Roadways

Roadway	Functional Classification (ODOT)
State Route 28	Major Collector
Egypt Pike	Minor Collector
US Highway 50	Minor Arterial
Lower Twin Road	Minor Collector
US Highway 35	Principal Arterial
County Road 550	Major Collector
Three Locks Road	Major Collector
US Highway 23	Principal Arterial
Charleston Pike	Minor Collector
Western Avenue	Minor Arterial
Pleasant Valley Road	Major Collector
Old Route 35	Major Collector

Source: ODOT TIMS

Legend

-  Townships
-  Incorporated Areas
-  Principal Arterial
Freeway
-  Principal Arterial
Other
-  Minor Arterial
-  Major Collector
-  Minor Collector
-  Local



Scale in Feet:



0 30K 60K

**Ross County
Roadway
Functional
Classification**

PAVEMENT CONDITIONS

The condition of each road segment is reflected in the Pavement Condition Rating (PCR). PCR is based on a numeric score between 100 and 25:

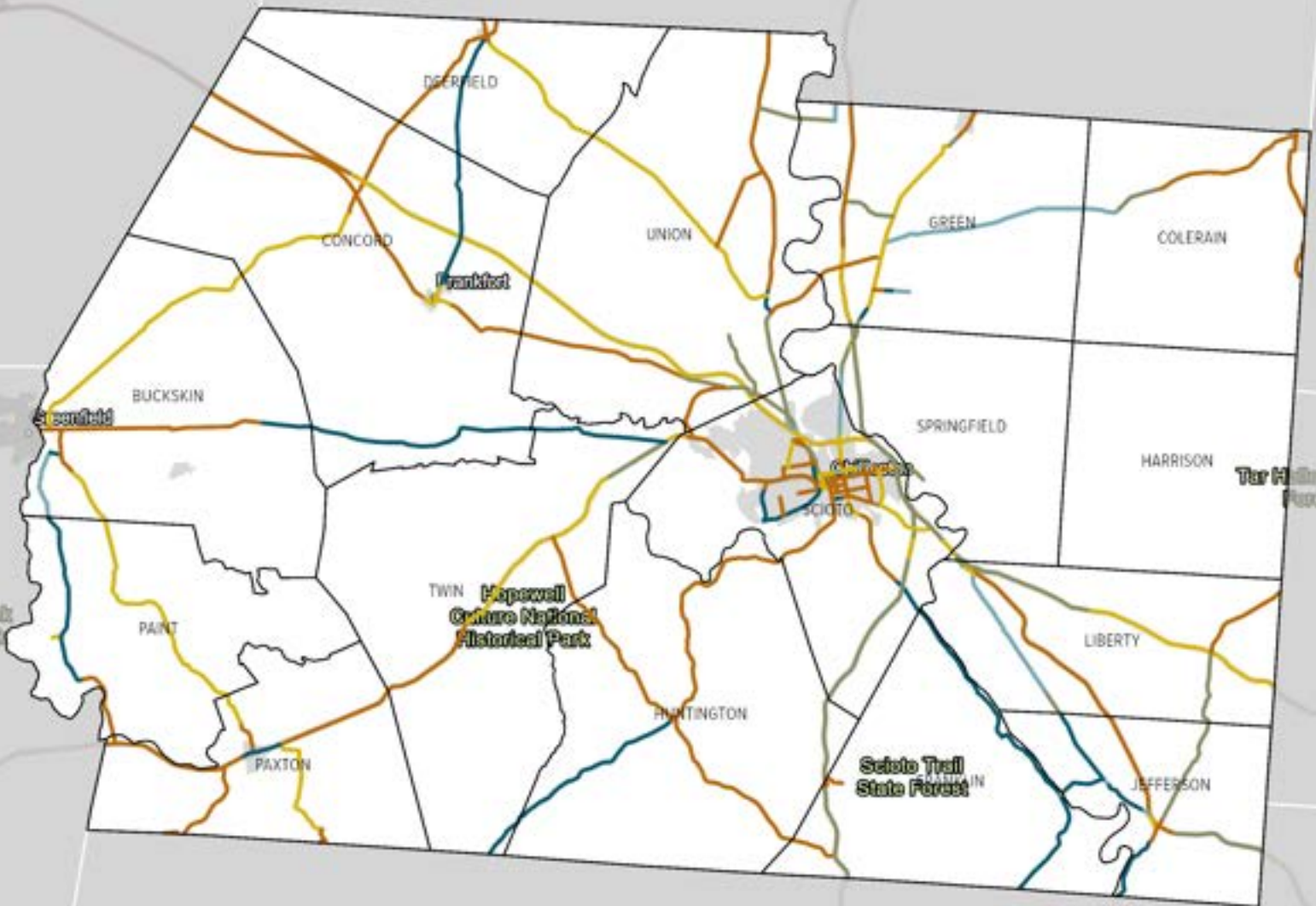
- ★ 100 to 90 – Excellent Condition
- ★ 89 to 80 – Very Good Condition
- ★ 79 to 70 – Good Condition
- ★ 69 to 66 – Fair Condition
- ★ 65 to 25 – Fair to Poor Condition

A pavement condition rating between 25 and 65 signifies substantial distress and structural failures, warranting repair or full replacement. Several roadways in Ross County have been classified as poor, indicating the need for immediate attention. Additionally, certain corridors, while not yet in critical condition, exhibit signs of deterioration and should be routinely monitored.

Among the roadways requiring close observation are Frankfort Clarksburg Pike between Adena Road and State Route 138, Rapid Forge Road from Reservoir Road to Lower Twin Road, SR 28 from Harper Station Road to US Highway 50, and SR 772 from the Blain Highway to the County limits have been rated as poor. These segments, though currently operational, show progressive wear that could impact traffic flow and safety if left unaddressed. Continued assessment and maintenance planning are recommended to prevent further degradation and ensure long-term roadway functionality.

Legend

-  Townships
-  Incorporated Areas
-  23 - 65
-  66 - 69
-  70 - 79
-  80 - 89
-  90 - 100



Scale in Feet:



0 30K 60K

Ross County Pavement Condition Rating

CRASH DATA ANALYSIS

Crash data from GCAT was collected within Ross County to identify high-crash locations and potential safety concerns at intersections and along key roadway corridors. Between 2019 and 2024, 4,162 crashes were recorded within the County, for an annual average of 832. The crash data includes detailed records such as the date, time, location, severity, contributing factors, manner of collision, and roadway surface conditions at the time of the incident.

Crash patterns in Ross County indicate that rear-end and sideswipe-passing crashes were among the most common, accounting for a significant percentage of total crashes. These crash types often suggest that traffic congestion, driver distractions, and improper following distances contribute to roadway incidents. Additionally, angle crashes frequently occur at intersections, potentially indicating visibility issues, signal timing concerns, or failure to yield.

The heat map to the right was developed to highlight high-crash density areas within Ross County. The most crash-prone intersections include:

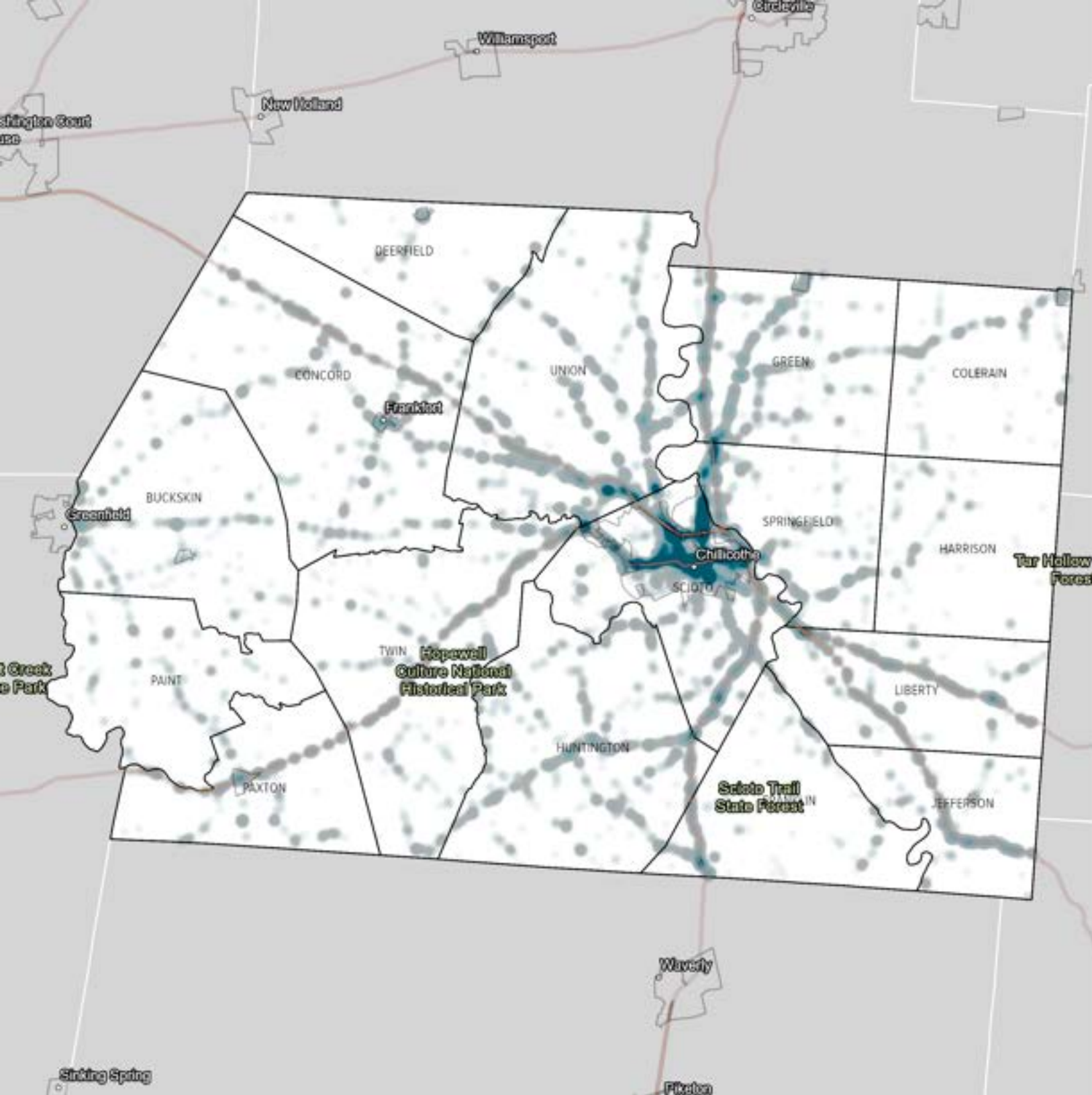
- ★ E Main Street & Bridge Street
- ★ N Bridge Street & Plaza Blvd
- ★ N Bridge Street & Marietta Road
- ★ N Bridge Street & US 356 Ramp
- ★ N Bridge Street & Pawnee Road

These locations exhibit a higher frequency of crashes, particularly those involving rear-end and angle collisions, suggesting a need for potential safety improvements such as signal timing adjustments, geometric enhancements, or access management strategies.





2019-2024 Higher Crash Frequency Intersections

Intersection Name	Traffic Control	Total Crashes - 2019-2024	Fatal and All Injury Crashes	Percentage of Injury Crashes (%)	Major Crash Type(s)
E Main Street & Bridge Street	Signalized	98	32	32	Angle; Rear End; Sideswipe Passing
N Bridge Street & Plaza Blvd	Signalized	98	20	26	RearEnd; Sideswipe-Passing; Angle
N Bridge Street & Marietta Road	Signalized	87	15	20	RearEnd; Sideswipe-Passing; Right Turn
N Bridge Street & US 356 Ramp	Signalized	103	27	26	RearEnd; Sideswipe-Passing; Angle
N Bridge Street & Pawnee Rd	Signalized	82	16	20	Rear End; Left Turn; Angle
N Bridge Street & Winora Drive	Signalized	57	10	9	Rear End; Angle; Sideswipe- Passing
S Bridge Street & E 8th Street/Eastern Ave	Signalized	58	22	38	Angle; Rear End; Sideswipe Passing
N Bridge Street & E 2nd Street	Signalized	51	10	20	Rear End; Angle; Sideswipe- Passing
N Bridge Street & Seney Road	Signalized	51	12	24	Angle; Rear End; Sideswipe Passing
N Bridge Street & E Water Street	Signalized	43	18	42	Rear End; Angle; Sideswipe- Passing

Source: ODOT TIMS



Legend

-  Townships
-  Incorporated Areas
- Crash Hotspot Locations**
 -  Sparse
 -  Dense



Scale in Feet:



0 30K 60K

Ross County Crash Hot Spots

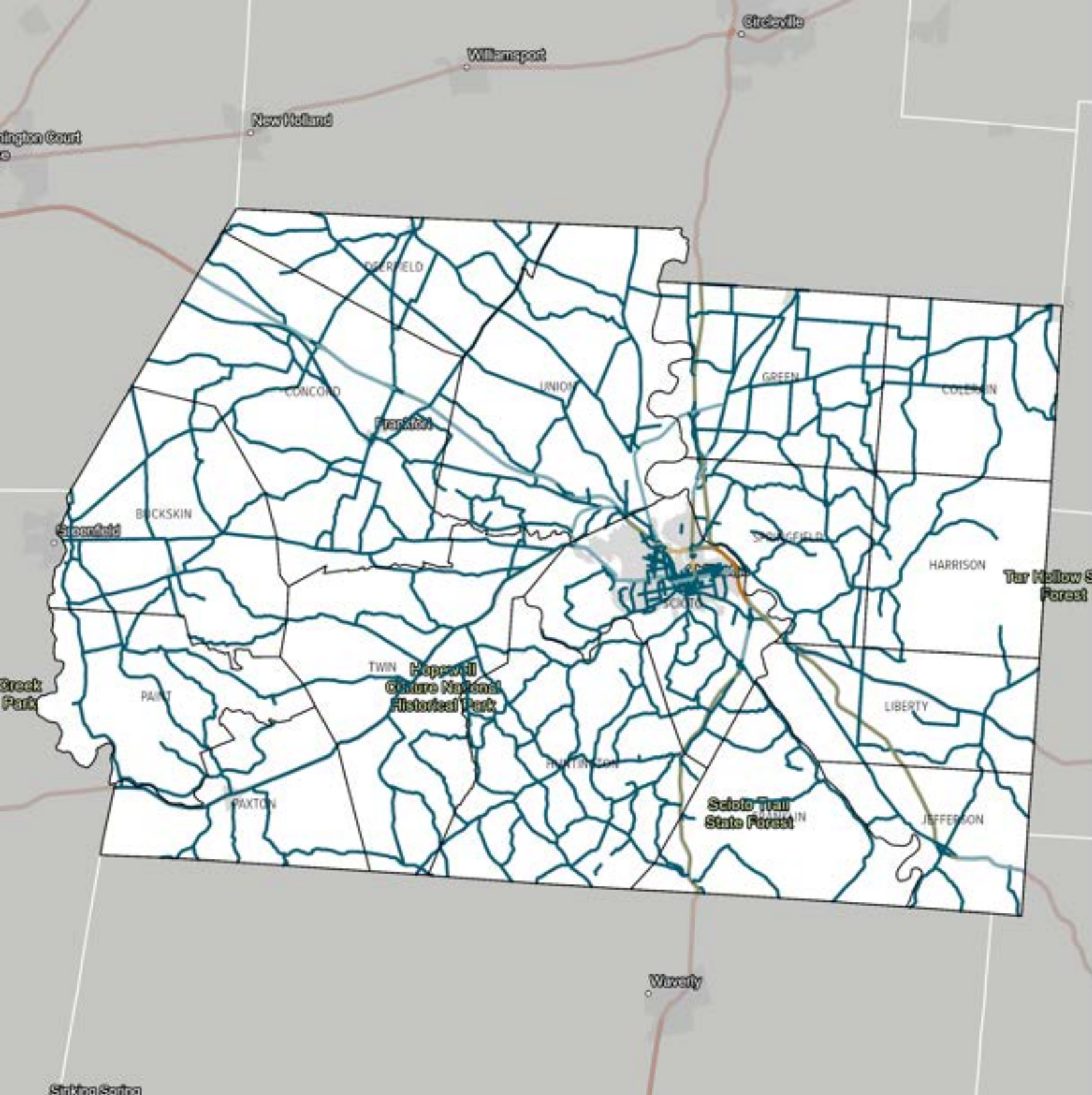
EXISTING AND PROJECTED TRAFFIC DATA

AVERAGE ANNUAL DAILY TRAFFIC (AADT)

The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) provides AADT data and projected growth rates for major roadways in Ross County. The AADT values are derived from field-collected traffic volumes and adjusted using historical data and anticipated development trends. These projections help assess current roadway capacity and plan for future transportation needs. Ross County's most heavily traveled roadways are primarily concentrated in Chillicothe and surrounding urbanized areas. Based on AADT data, traffic volumes in the County range from 10,000 to 50,000 vehicles per day, with the highest volumes observed along key state and US routes. These corridors serve as critical connections for both regional and local travel, supporting commuters, freight movement, and general roadway users.

VOLUME-TO-CAPACITY

Based on the provided map, Ross County's Road network primarily exhibits volume-to-capacity (V/C) ratios within the 0 - 0.7 range, signifying that most routes experience low congestion and operate efficiently with available capacity. Some segments show a V/C range of 0.701 - 1, indicating moderate utilization, but no apparent segments exceeding a ratio of 1.0, which would signal potential congestion. The main corridors within Ross County predominantly operate under capacity (green), ensuring consistent and efficient traffic flow.



Legend

- Townships
- Incorporated Areas
- AADT**
- 0 - 10000
- 10000 - 20000
- 20000 - 30000
- 30000 - 40000
- 40000 - 50000



Scale in Feet:

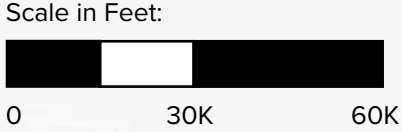
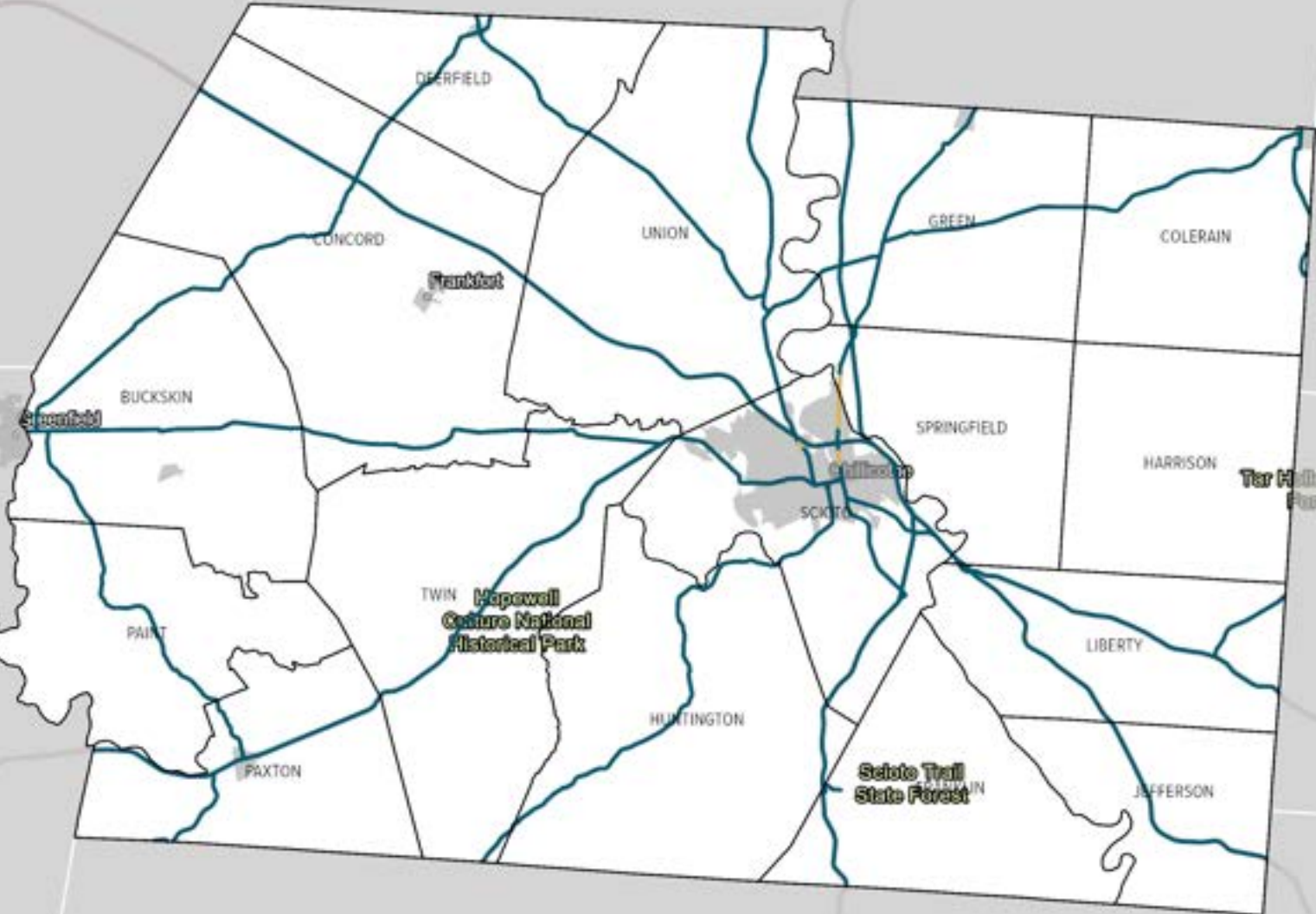


0 30K 60K

Ross County Annual Average Daily Trips

Legend

-  Townships
-  Incorporated Areas
- V/C Ratio**
-  0- 0.7
-  0.701 - 1



Ross County Traffic Volume to Capacity Ratio

PROJECTED TRAFFIC GROWTH RATES

According to data from ODOT's Transportation Information Mapping System (TIMS), projected growth rates for major roadways in Ross County are generally stable, with most corridors expected to see gradual, steady increases in traffic volumes over time. These projections are based on a combination of historical traffic trends, anticipated land use and economic development, and the capacity of existing transportation infrastructure. However, certain corridors are anticipated to experience more pronounced growth. Specifically, roadways such as SR 28 and US 35 are projected to see significantly higher traffic increases. This elevated growth is likely driven by planned developments, regional connectivity improvements, and increased commuter and freight demands along these routes. These corridors may warrant closer analysis to ensure future infrastructure investments align with anticipated traffic conditions.

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

The Active Transportation Demand Score map highlights regions where pedestrian and bicyclist activity are expected to be substantial. This score was developed by ODOT to assess and prioritize areas for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvements. This score is derived from various factors that generate bicycle and pedestrian movements, such as population density, land use, and proximity to key destinations like schools and parks. Areas classified under higher demand scores (3 and 4) align with urban cores and key corridors where non-motorized users interact with vehicular traffic. Kingston and portions of Bainbridge also have a demand score of 3. Enhancing pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, including shared-use paths, improved crosswalks, and signalized pedestrian phases, in these areas would foster increased connectivity and promote safety and multimodal accessibility.



Legend

-  Townships
-  Incorporated Areas
- Growth Rate (%)
 -  0 - 1
 -  1.01 - 2
 -  2.01 - 3.5

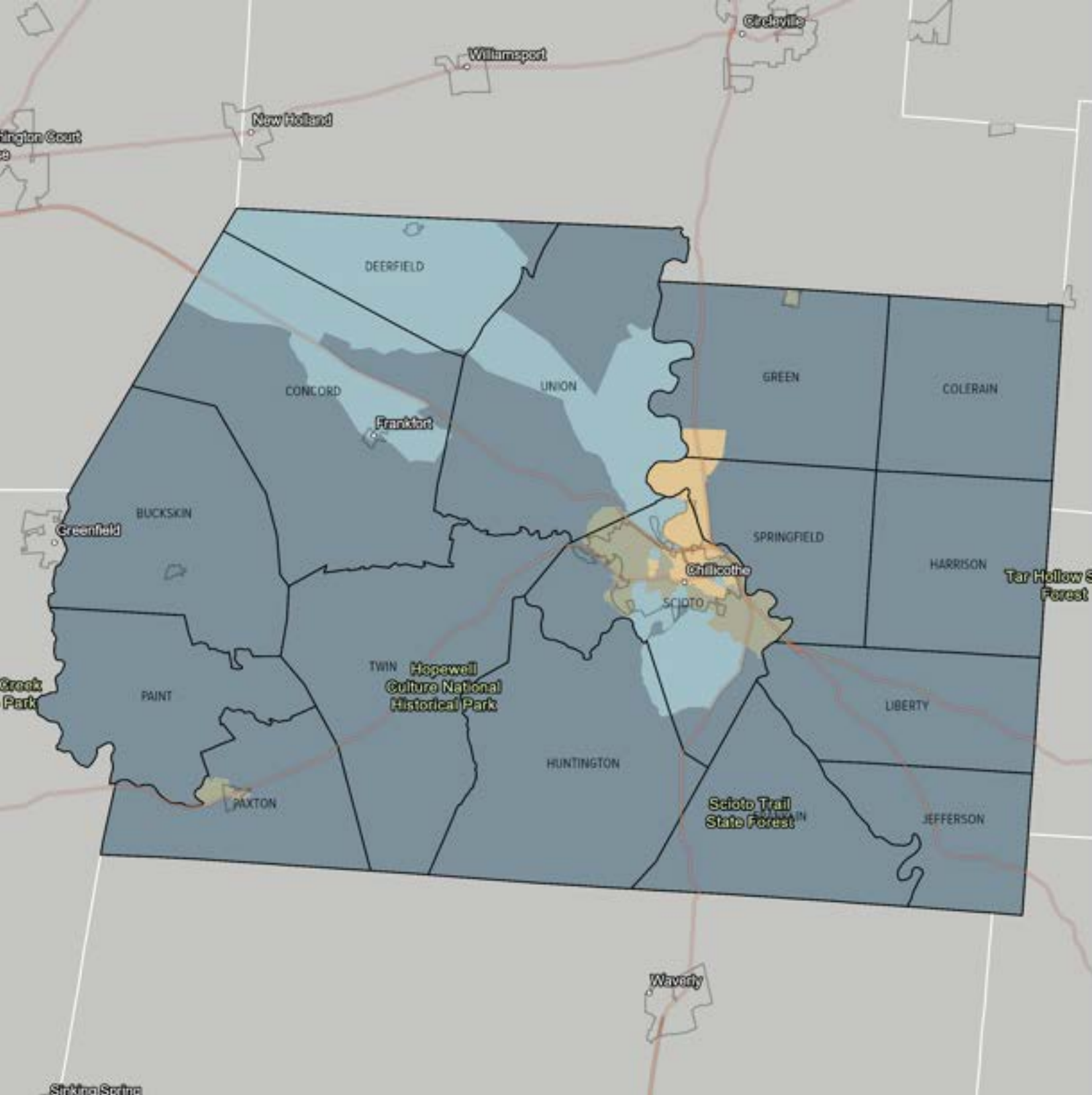


Scale in Feet:



0 30K 60K

Ross County Traffic Growth Rate



Legend

-  Townships
-  Incorporated Areas
- Active Transportation Demand Score
-  1
-  2
-  3
-  4



Scale in Feet:



0 30K 60K

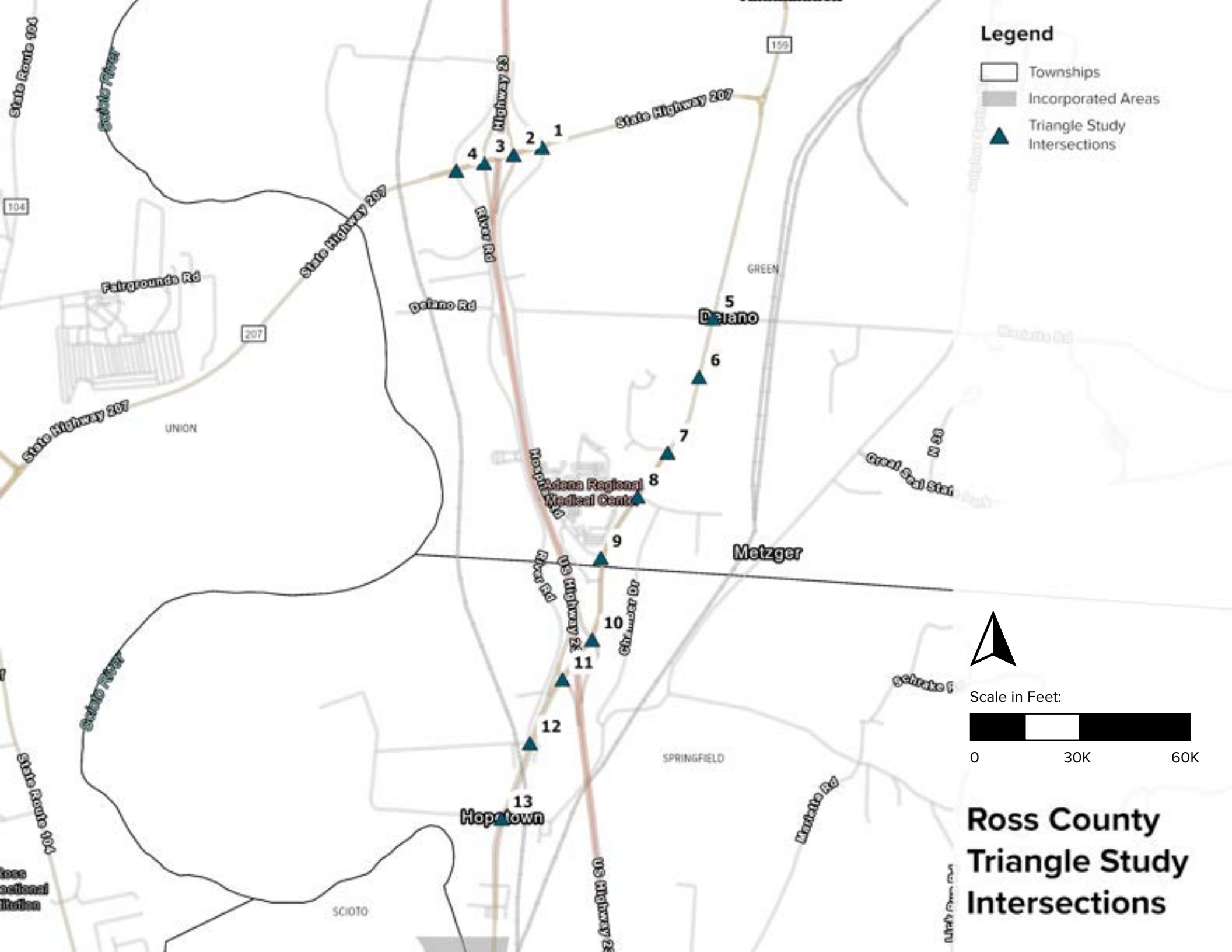
**Ross County
Active
Transportation
Demand**

TRIANGLE STUDY

TRAFFIC COUNTS

As part of this Existing Conditions Report and ODOT Triangle Study, turning movement counts (light and heavy vehicles) were collected at thirteen study intersections on November 20, 2024. Traffic counts were collected for 14 hours (6 AM-8 PM) at each intersection.

Triangle Study Intersections	
Map Number	Location
1	Hospital Road and SR 207
2	SR 207 and US 23 Northbound Ramp
3	SR 207 and US 23 Southbound Ramp
4	River Road and SR 207
5	Delano Road and SR 159
6	SR 159 and Northern Kenworth Private Drive
7	SR 159 and Clayburne Boulevard
8	Kenworth Drive and SR 159
9	Hospital Road and SR 159
10	SR 159 and US 23 Westbound Ramp
11	SR 159 and US 23 Eastbound Ramp
12	River Road and SR 159
13	Hopetown Road and SR 159



Legend

- Townships
- Incorporated Areas
- Triangle Study Intersections



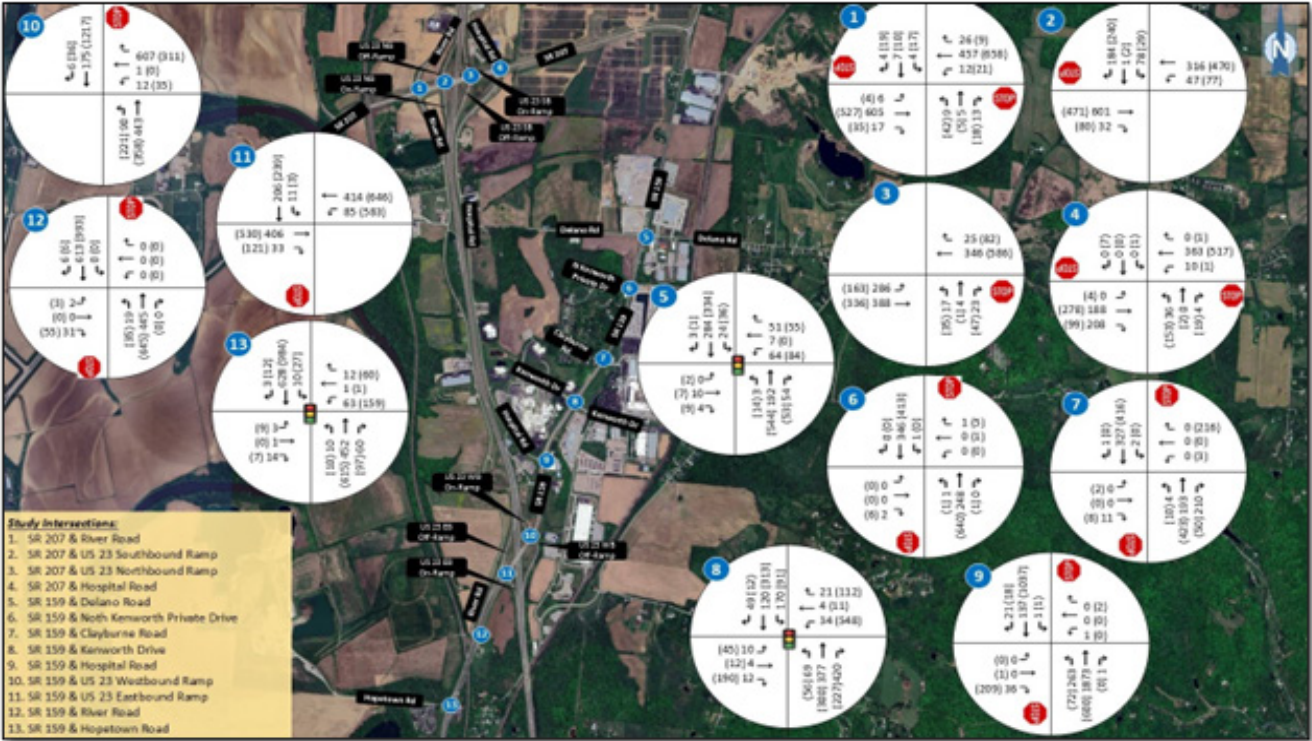
Scale in Feet:

0 30K 60K

Ross County Triangle Study Intersections

The figure below illustrates the counted 2024 AM and PM peak hour turning movement counts at the study intersections.

2024 Peak Hour Turning Movement Counts



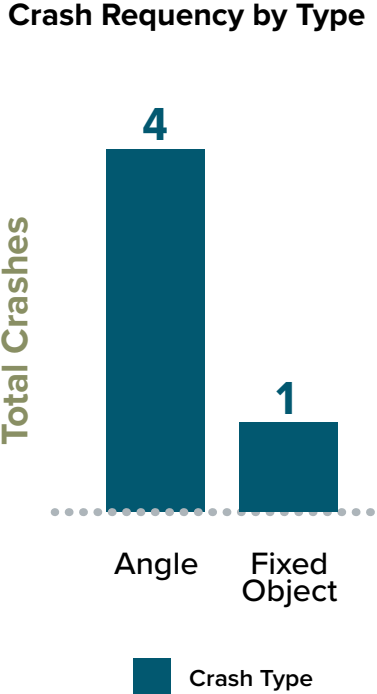
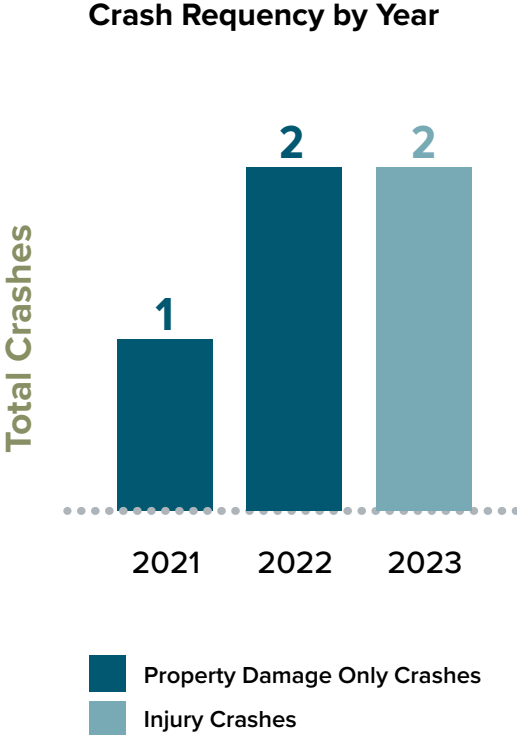
CRASH ANALYSIS

Crash data was collected for a three-year calendar period (2021-2023) period using ODOT’s GIS Crash Analysis Tool (GCAT). High-level crash trends at the study intersection based on analysis using ODOT’s Crash Analysis Module (CAM) are summarized below. The source for the following charts is ODOT GACT.

SR 207 and Hospital Road

Crash Trends:

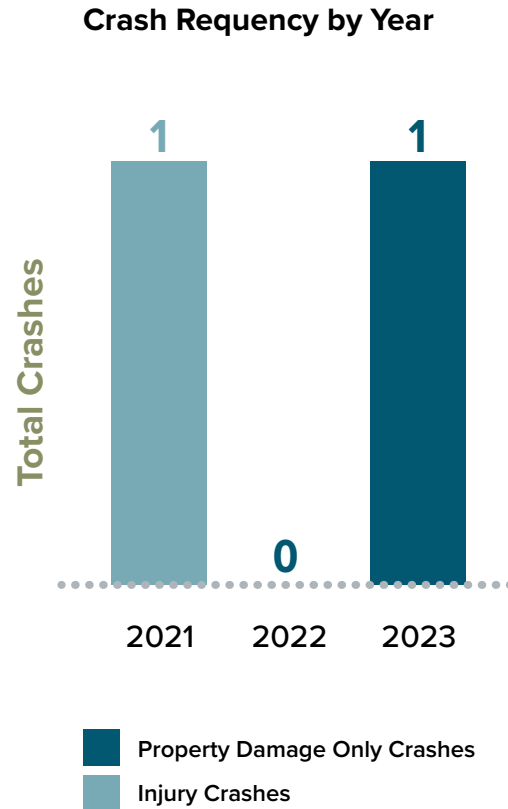
- ★ A total of 5 crashes were reported, including two injury crashes.
- ★ Major crash types: Angle (4) and Fixed object (1).



SR 207 and US 23 Northbound Ramp

Crash Trends:

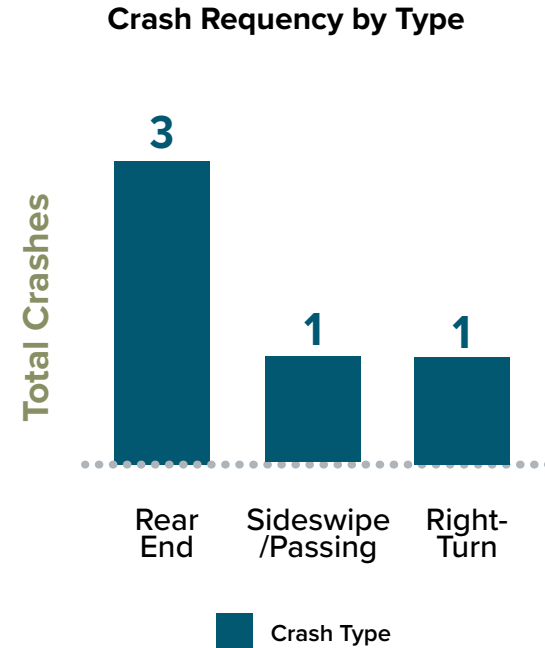
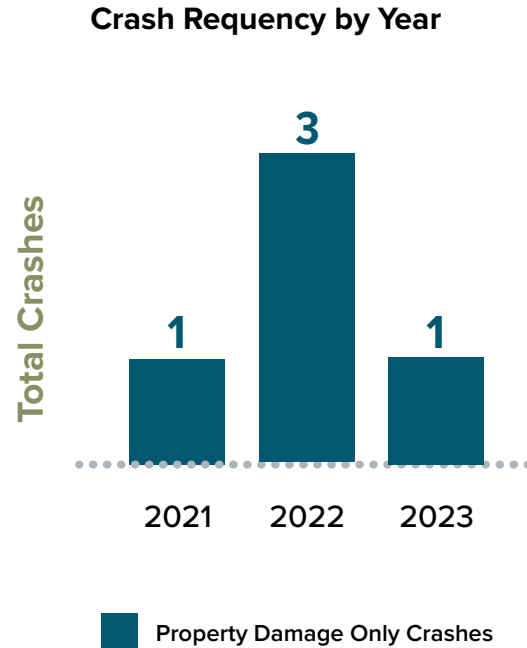
- ★ A total of 2 crashes were reported, including one injury crash.
- ★ Major crash types: Angle (1) and Sideswipe -Passing (1).



SR 207 and US 23 Southbound Ramp

Crash Trends:

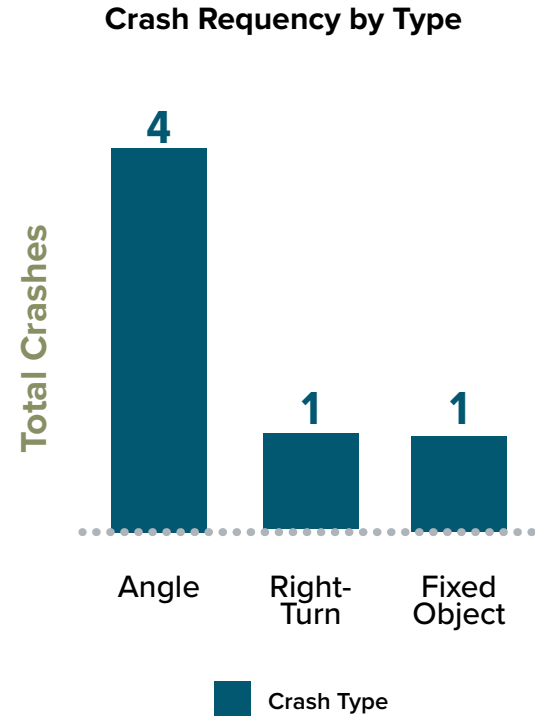
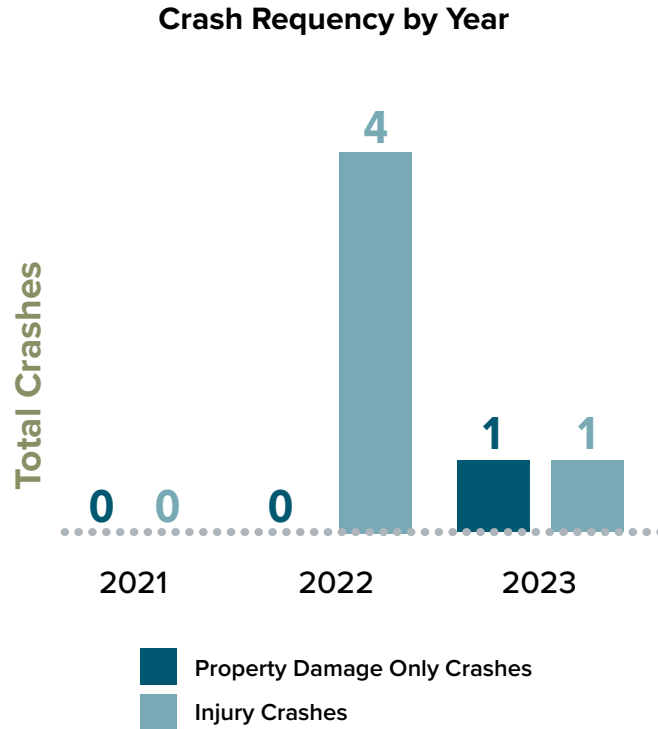
- ★ A total of 5 crashes were reported, including zero injury crashes.
- ★ Major crash types: Rear End (3), Sideswipe-Passing (1), and Right Turn (1).



SR 207 and River Road

Crash Trends:

- ★ A total of 6 crashes were reported, including five injury crashes.
- ★ Major crash types: Angle (4), Right Turn (1), and Fixed object (1).

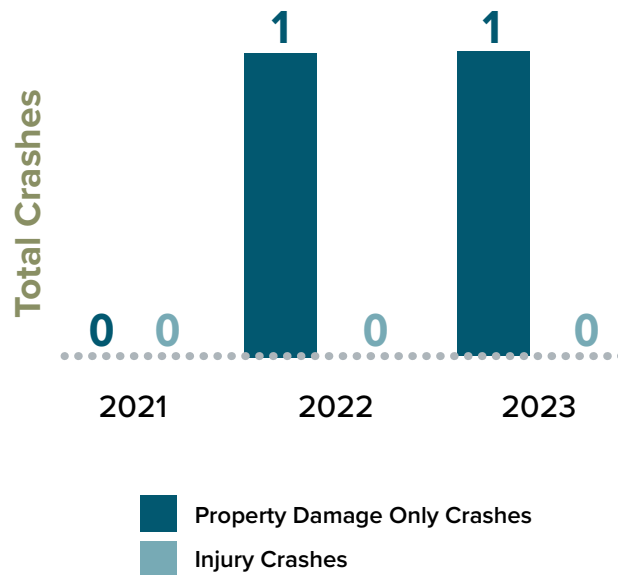


SR 159 and Delano Road

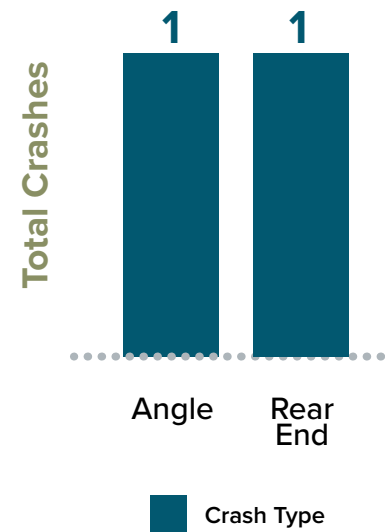
Crash Trends:

- ★ A total of 2 crashes were reported, including zero injury crashes.
- ★ Major crash types: Angle (1) and Rear End (1).

Crash Requency by Year



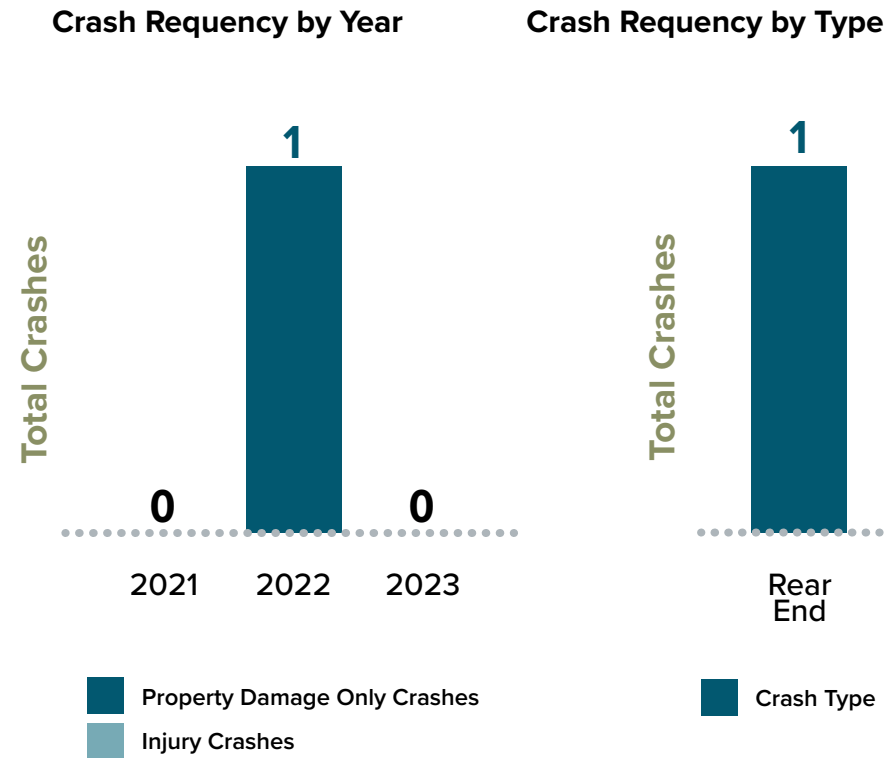
Crash Requency by Type



SR 159 and North Kenworth Private Drive

Crash Trends:

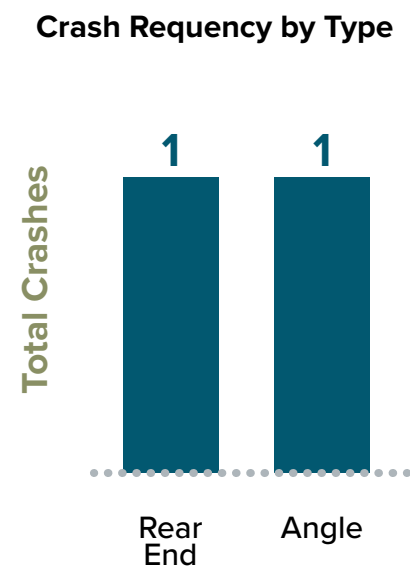
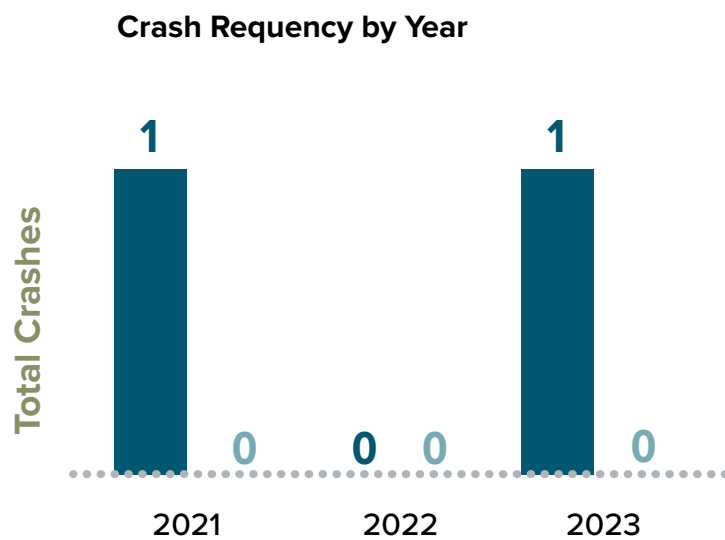
- ★ A total of 1 crash was reported, including zero injury crashes.
- ★ Major crash types: Rear End (1).



SR 159 and Clayburne Boulevard

Crash Trends:

- ★ A total of two crashes were reported, including zero injury crashes.
- ★ Major crash types: Rear End (1) and Angle (1).



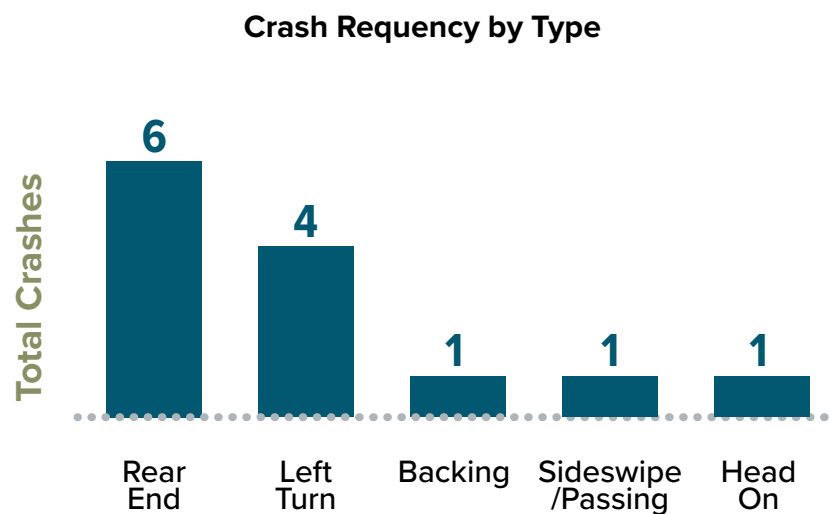
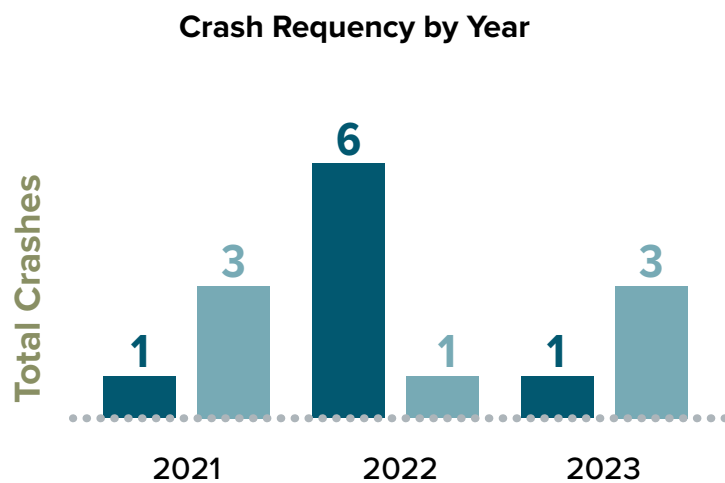
■ Property Damage Only Crashes
■ Injury Crashes

■ Crash Type

SR 159 and Kenworth Drive

Crash Trends:

- ★ A total of 13 crashes were reported, including four injury crashes.
- ★ Major crash types: Rear End (6) and Left Turn (4).



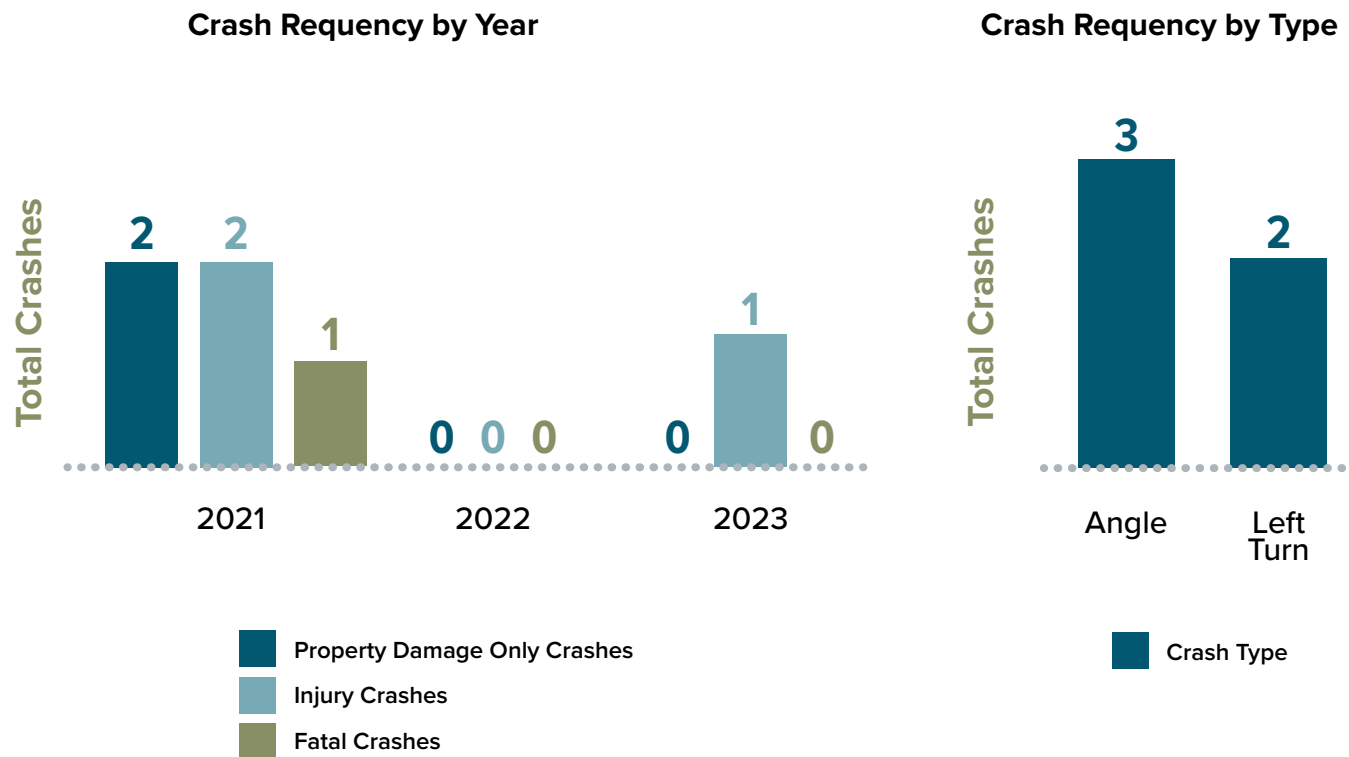
Property Damage Only Crashes
 Injury Crashes

Crash Type

SR 159 and Hospital Road

Crash Trends:

- ★ A total of 6 crashes were reported, including three injury crashes.
- ★ Major crash types: Angle (3) and Left Turn (2).

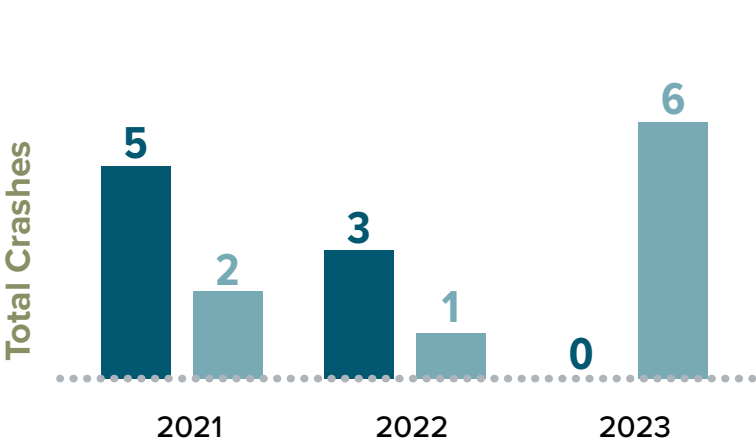


SR 159 and US 23 Westbound Ramp

Crash Trends:

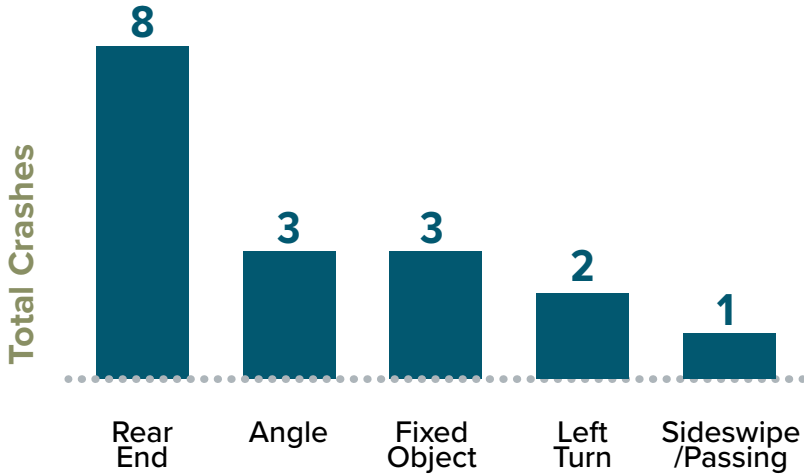
- ★ A total of 17 crashes were reported, including nine injury crashes.
- ★ Major crash types: Rear End (8), Angle (3) and Fixed object (3).

Crash Requency by Year



Property Damage Only Crashes
Injury Crashes

Crash Requency by Type

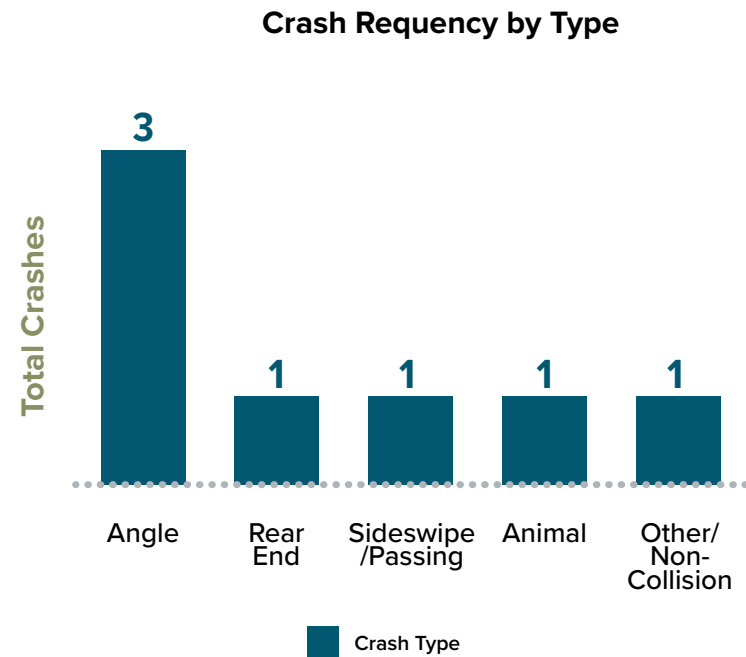
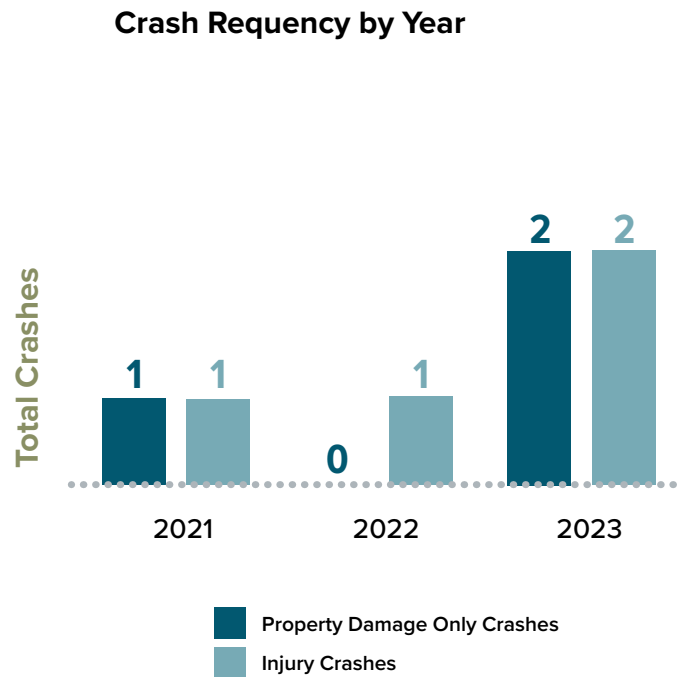


Crash Type

SR 159 and US 23 Eastbound Ramp

Crash Trends:

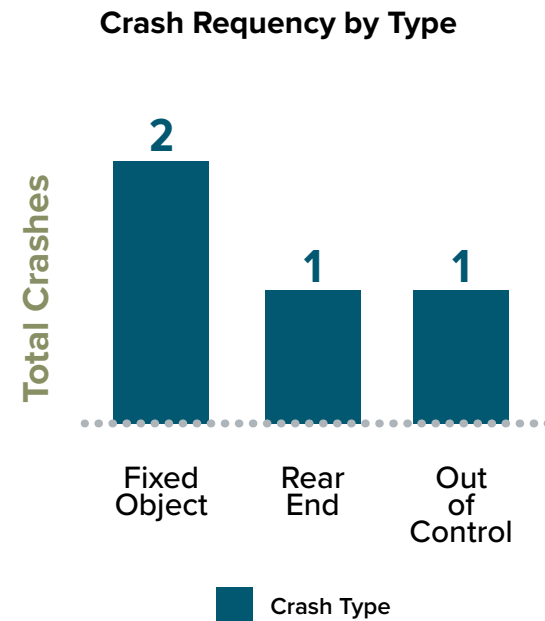
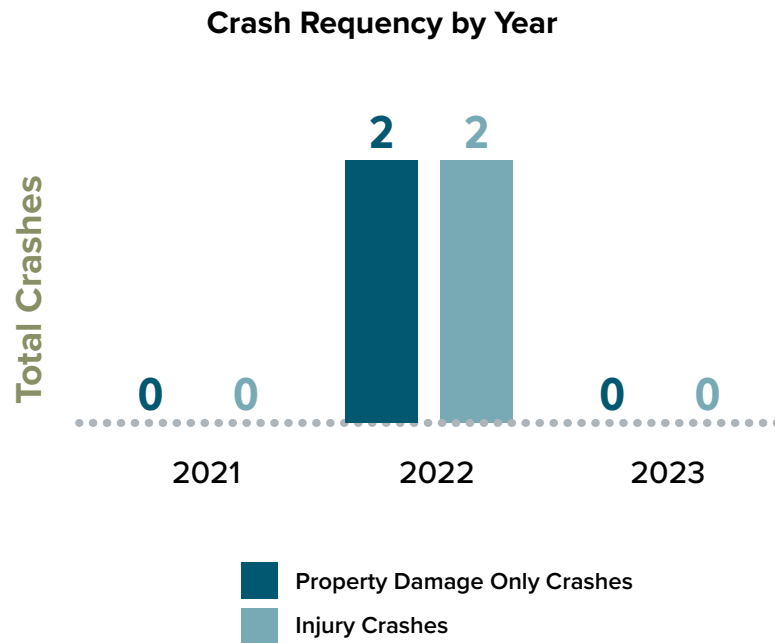
- ★ A total of 7 crashes were reported, including four injury crashes.
- ★ Major crash types: Angle (3), Rear End (1), and Animal (1).



SR 159 and River Road

Crash Trends:

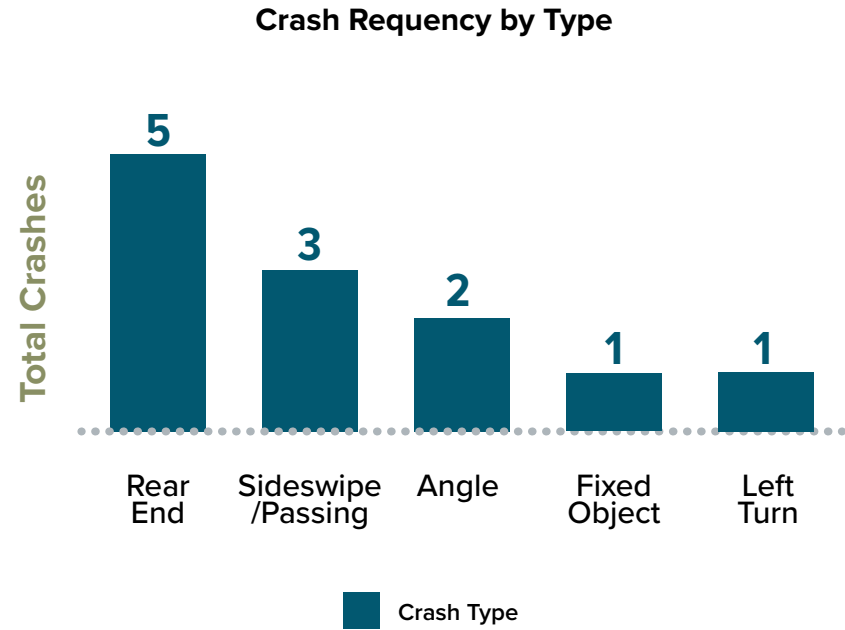
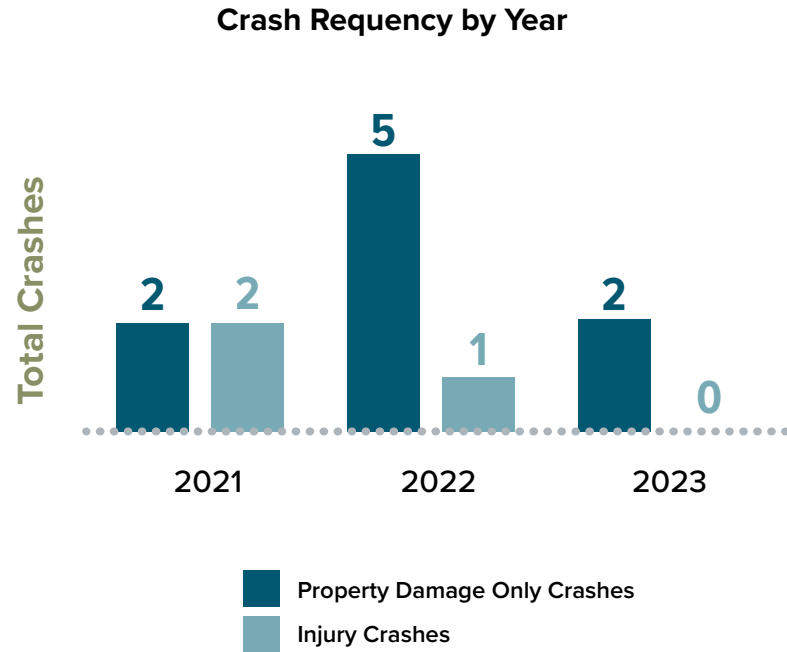
- ★ A total of 4 crashes were reported, including two injury crashes.
- ★ Major crash types: Fixed Object (2) and Rear End (1).



SR 159 and Hopetown Road

Crash Trends:

- ★ A total of 12 crashes were reported, including three injury crashes.
- ★ Major crash types: Rear end (5), Sideswipe-Passing (3), and Angle (2).

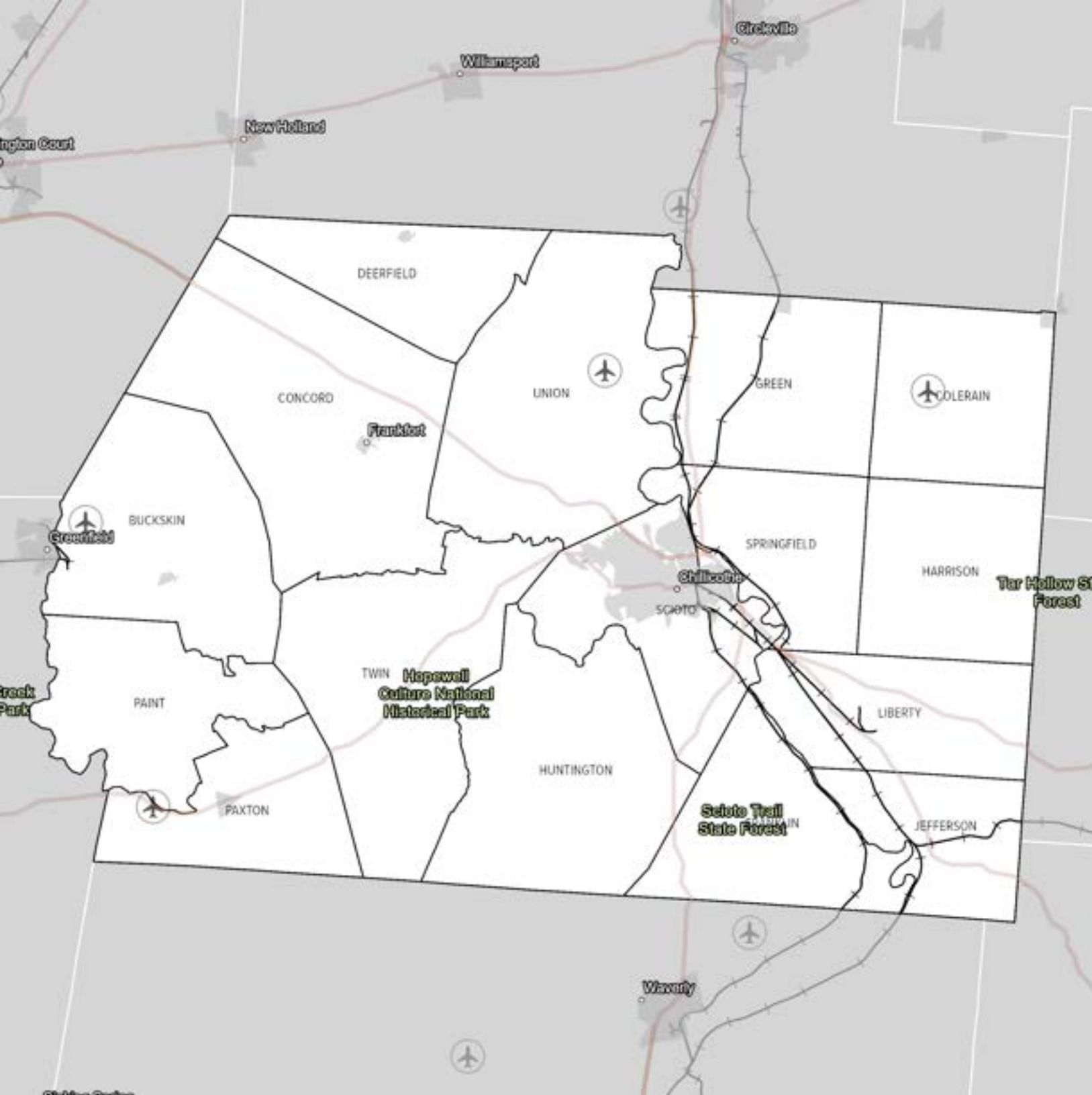


AIRPORTS AND RAIL

Airports and rail can be important for passengers as well as industry.

For rail, Norfolk Southern and CSX, both Class 1 carriers, have rail lines in the eastern portion of the County. Indiana & Ohio Rail connects to Greenfield on the western edge of the County. These rail lines run north to south, connecting most of the county's industrial land uses; this established land development and goods movement patterns will have economic development implications as industries tend to cluster. An average of 25 to 35 freight trains move through Ross County per day.

Ross County Airport (Union Township) is a public, single-runway airport for primarily small passenger aircraft. In 2021, Ross County Airport averaged 147 aircraft operations. Other smaller airports shown include Haas Airport (Paxton Township), Ross Field (Buckskin Township), and Mission Field (Colerain Township).



Legend

-  Townships
-  Incorporated Areas
-  Railroad
-  Airport



Scale in Feet:



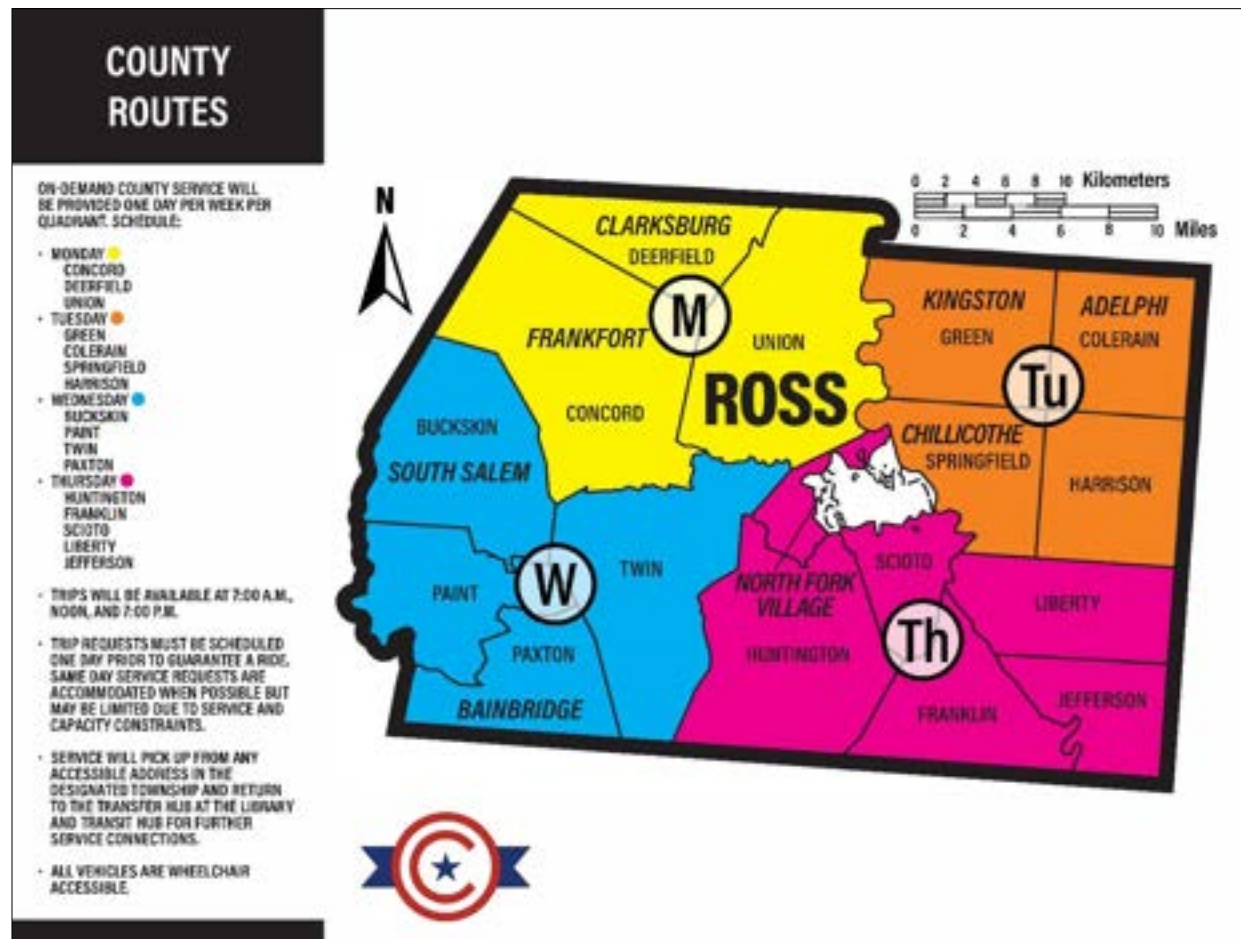
0 30K 60K

Ross County Rail and Airports

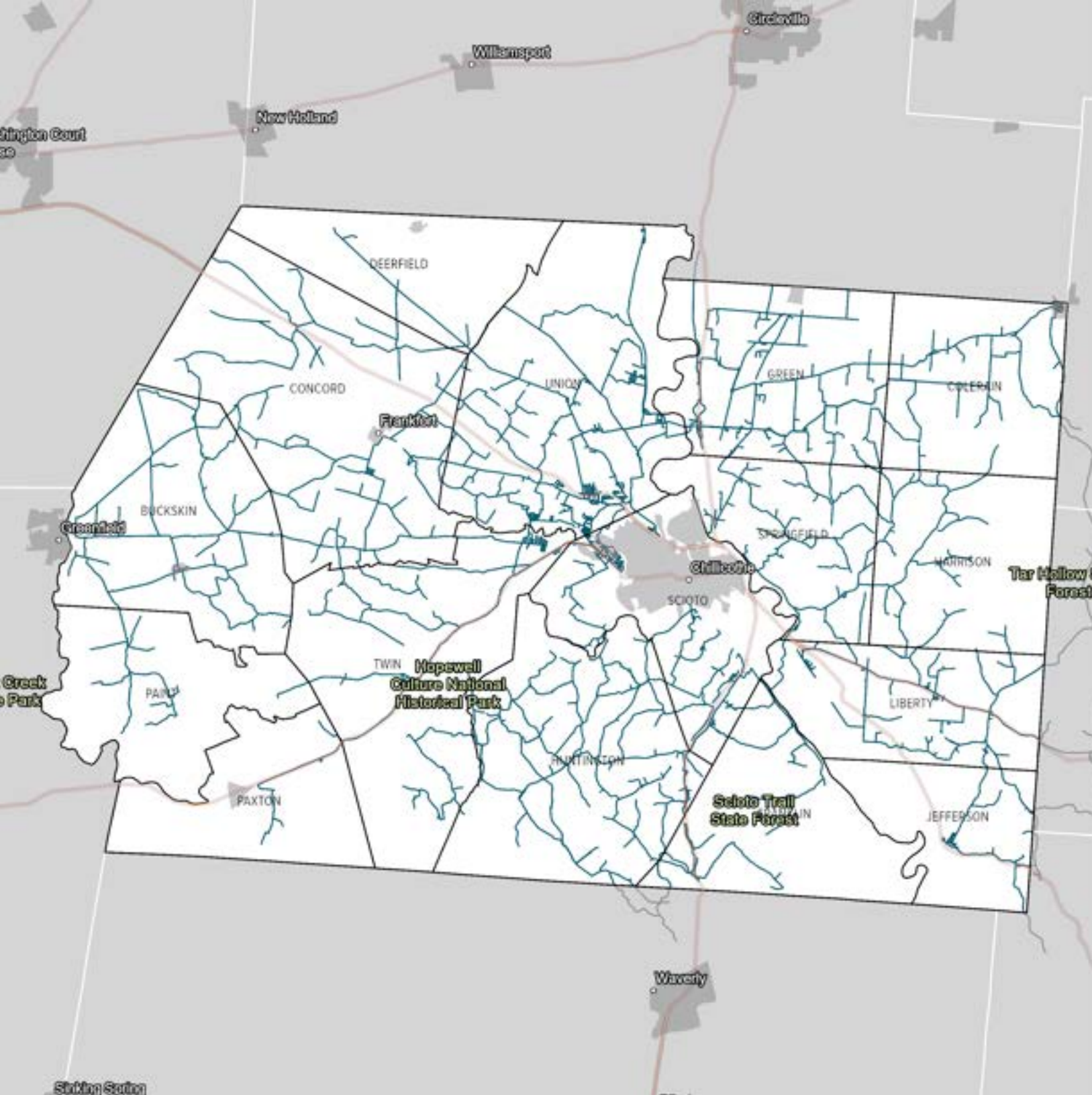
PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Public transportation outside of Chillicothe is provided on an on-demand basis one day a week by on-demand County service, depending on where you are located within the County. The service schedule is based on four zones, displayed on the Ross County On-Demand Transit Service Map, and trips need to be scheduled one day prior.

Ross County On-Demand Transit Service Map



Source: [Transit Department | County Service](#)



Legend

-  Townships
-  Incorporated Areas
-  Ross County Water Mains



Scale in Feet:



0 30K 60K

Ross County Water

WATER

The public water facilities in Ross County treat primarily groundwater from wells. The Villages of Frankfort, Bainbridge, Kingston, and Clarksburg, as well as the City of Chillicothe, all have drinking water treatment and water distribution systems in place within their corporation limits. The Ross County Water Company serves all unincorporated portions of the County and has two water treatment plants. Emergency connections between Ross County Water and the municipalities were created to provide emergency water access as needed. The Ross County Water Company has approximately 1,120 miles of water main to serve Ross County and other nearby counties. See the Water map for Ross County Water Company coverage across the county.

The City of Chillicothe and Ross County Water Company would be more likely to be able to support future developments with water service.

SEWER

The Villages of Frankfort, Clarksburg, and Kingston have wastewater treatment plants that serve the municipality. The City of Chillicothe also has a sanitary system serving the city. Pleasant Valley Regional Sewer District provides sanitary and storm sewer to some unincorporated areas. Richmond Dale also has a sanitary treatment plant to serve their community. The City of Chillicothe and Pleasant Valley Regional Sewer District would be able to support the growth of the sanitary systems more easily. Coordination of proposed growth areas in the county will help highlight the necessary future wastewater treatment plant or sanitary collection systems needs and allow time for communities to plan and request available funding for projects.

ELECTRIC

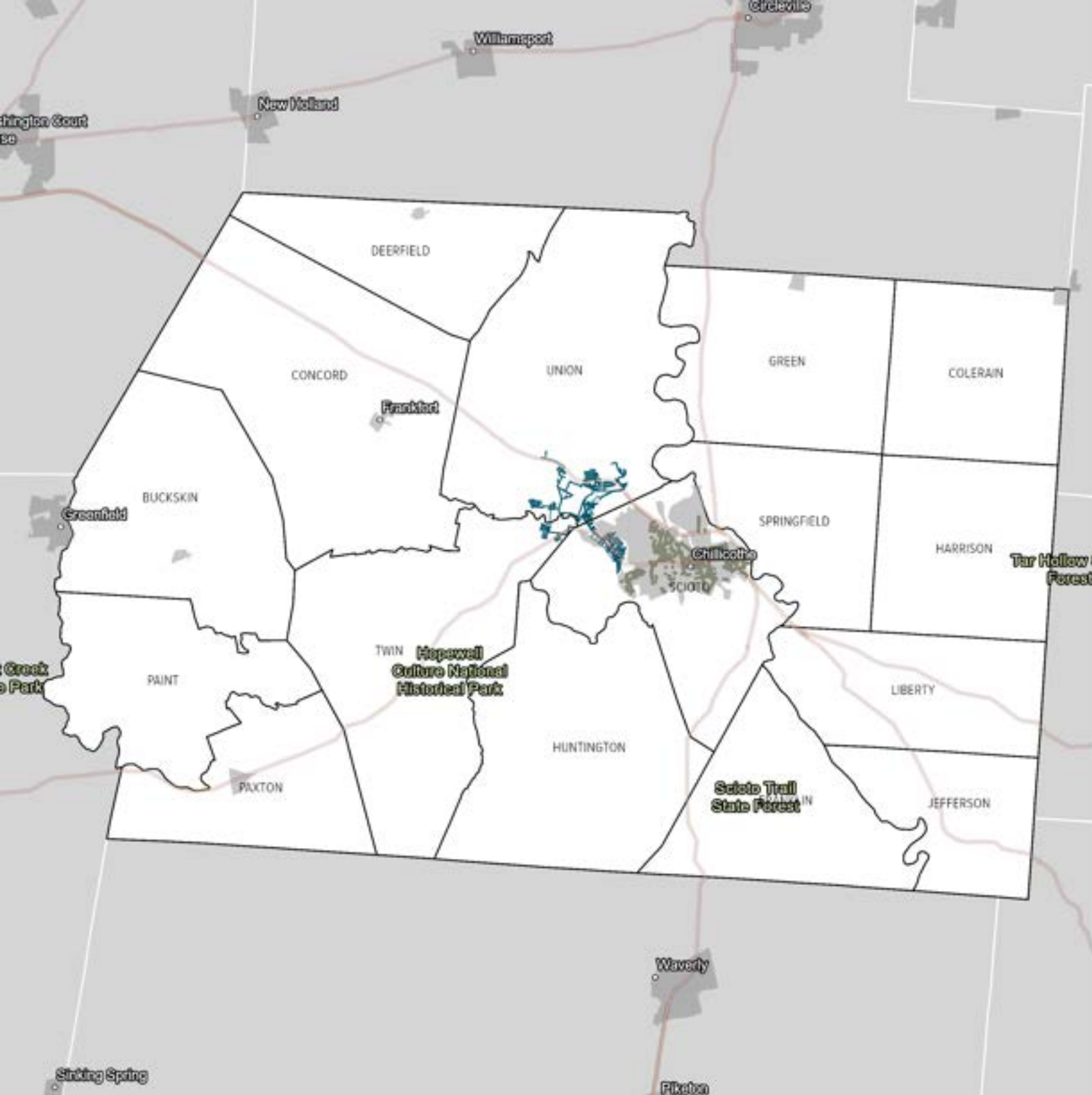
South Central Power provides electricity to the western half of Ross County, while AEP serves the eastern portion. AES Ohio serves the northwestern corner, and Buckeye Rural Electric serves the southeastern corner of the County.

GAS

Gas service is provided by Columbia Gas of Ohio and Pike Natural Gas Company. The northern portion of the County notably lacks gas service.

INTERNET/BROADBAND

AT&T, CHT, and GTE – Frontier North provide telecommunications service to Ross County. Below is a map of broadband availability. 5G is up to 100 times faster download and upload than 4G. Areas shown with 5G availability also have 4G availability. A significant portion of the County has no or only 4G broadband access. Notable low 5G broadband availability can be seen in parts of Colerain, Harrison, Franklin, Union, Paxton, Paint, Twin, and Buckskin townships.



Legend

-  Townships
-  Incorporated Areas
-  Sanitary Gravity Main
-  Sanitary Pressurized Main
-  Storm Lines

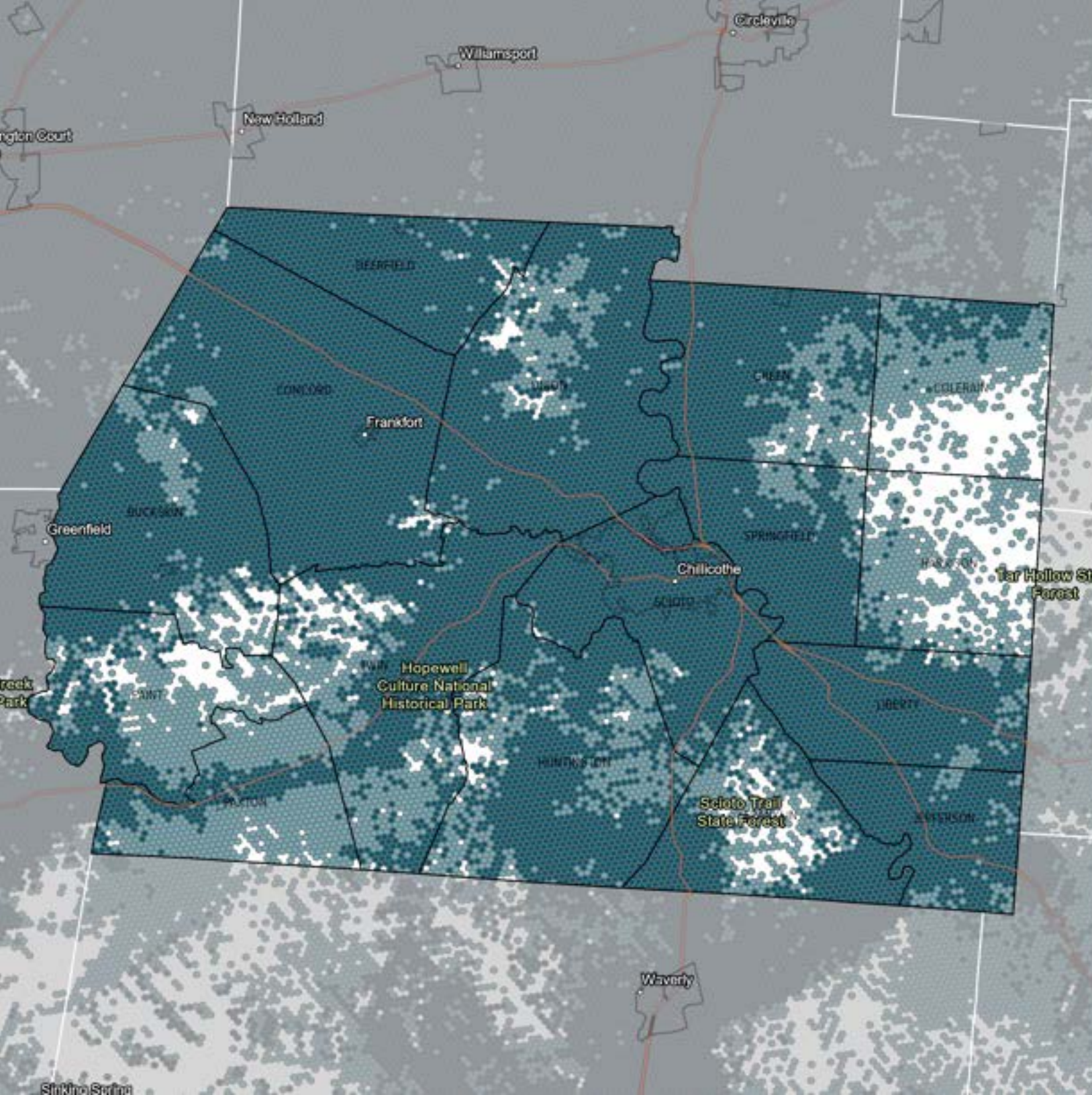


Scale in Feet:



0 30K 60K

Ross County Sewer



Legend

-  Townships
-  Incorporated Areas
-  5G NR
-  4G LTE



Scale in Feet:



0 30K 60K

**Ross County
Broadband
Coverage**



GREEN TWP. FIRE DEPT.
TRAINING CENTER
1987 Douglas, Adams Pt. Pa.

Community Amenities and Civic Services

OVERVIEW

Community amenities and civic services are assets that contribute to the quality of life for residents and those employed within the County. They are also factors evaluated by future residents and employers that attract them to locate in Ross County.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

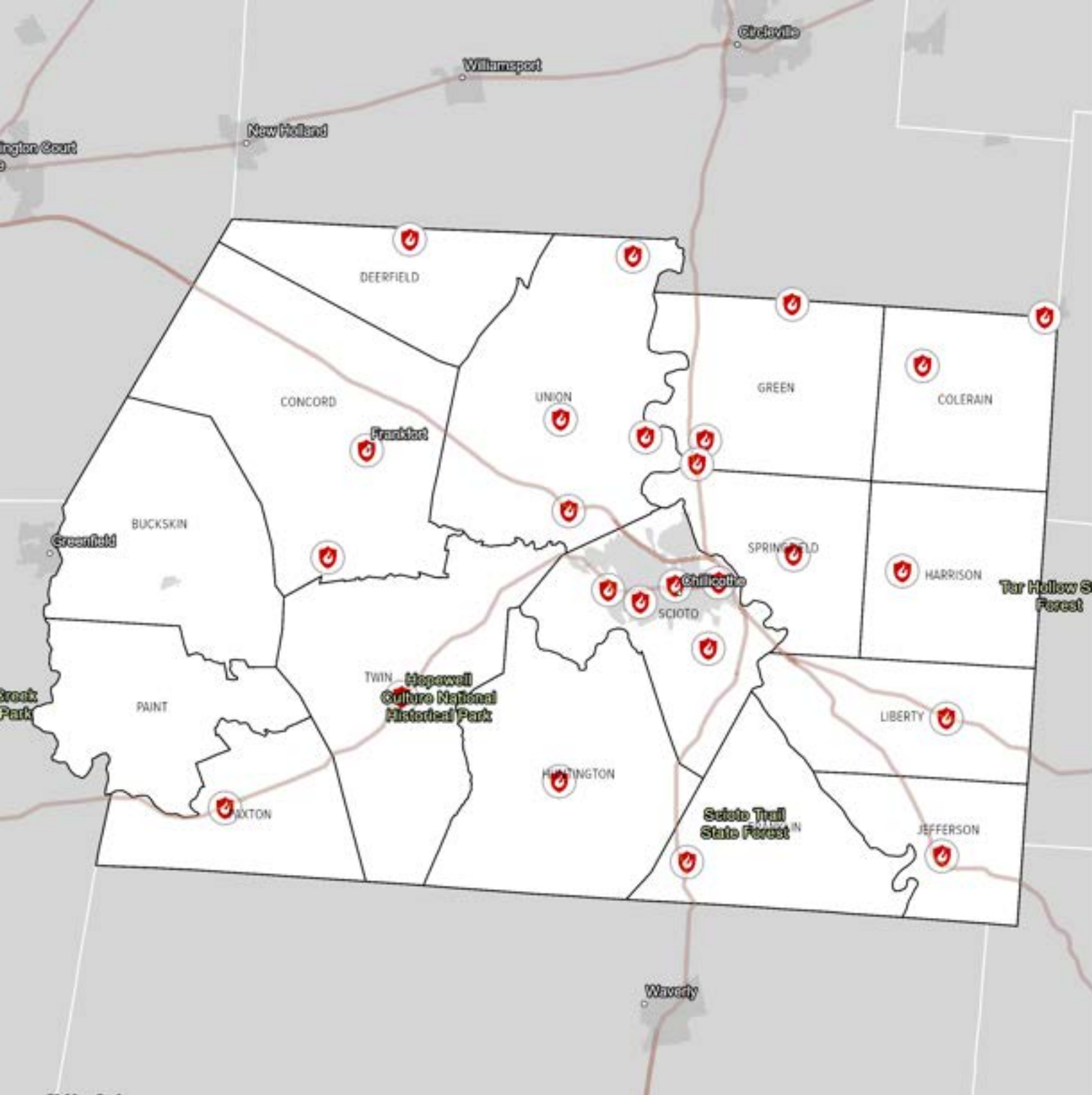
LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Ross County Sheriff's Office is headquartered at 28 N. Paint Street in Chillicothe. It serves the County through the four divisions of Administration, Law, Corrections, and Civil.

FIRE AND EMS

Most townships provide fire and rescue services for the unincorporated areas and villages of the County. Chillicothe is the only incorporated area with a fire department. Buckskin and Paint Townships do not have township fire and emergency medical services (EMS). Deerfield Township has EMS-only services.

Ross County Fire and EMS	
Department	Station(s)
Chillicothe Fire Department	3
Colerain Township Volunteer Fire Department	2
Concord Township Volunteer Fire Department	2
Deerfield Township EMS	1
Green Township Fire Department	2
Harrison Township Fire Department	1
Huntington Township Fire Department	1
Jefferson Township Fire and Rescue	1
Paxton Township Fire Department	1
Ross County Fire and Rescue	2
Scioto Township Fire Department	2
Springfield Township Volunteer Fire and Rescue	1
Twin Township Volunteer Fire and Life Squad	1
Union Township Fire Department	3



Legend

-  Townships
-  Incorporated Areas
-  Fire and EMS



Scale in Feet:



0 30K 60K

Ross County Fire and EMS

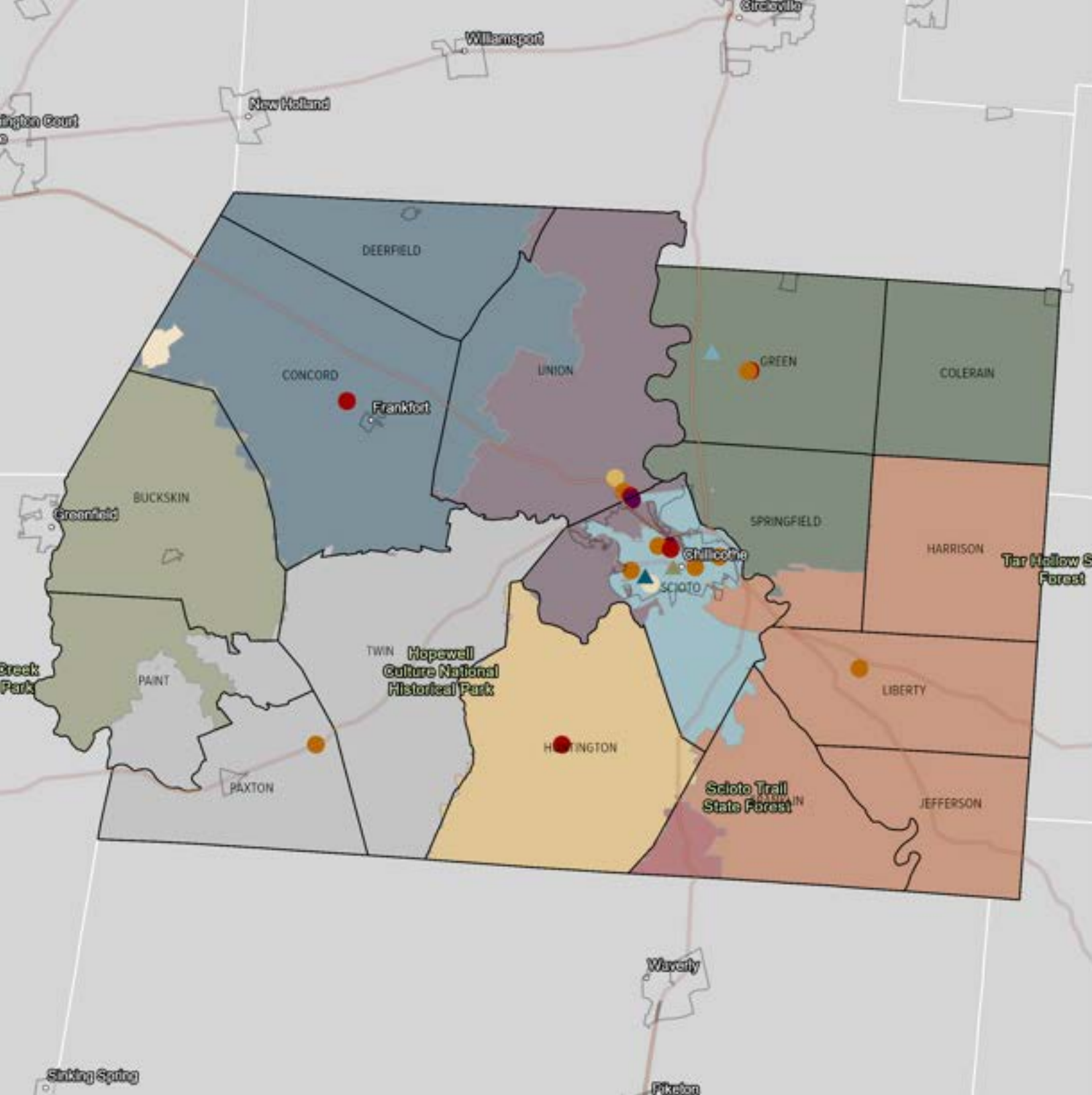
EDUCATION

The Schools map shows the locations of the ten public school districts that service Ross County, many of which also service areas outside of the County. Cumulatively, Ross County has ten public elementary schools, seven public middle schools, and seven public high schools. The public schools are listed below:

- ★ Adena Local School District
 - Adena Elementary School
 - Adena Middle School
 - Adena High School
- ★ Chillicothe City School District
 - Allen Elementary School
 - Tiffin Elementary School
 - Mt. Logan Elementary School
 - Worthington Elementary School
 - Chillicothe Middle School
 - Chillicothe High School
- ★ Huntington Local School District
 - Huntington Elementary School
 - Huntington Middle School
 - Huntington High School
- ★ Paint Valley Local School District
 - Paint Valley Elementary School
 - Paint Valley Middle School
 - Paint Valley High School
- ★ Southeastern Local School District
 - Southeastern Elementary School
 - Southeastern Middle School
 - Southeastern High School
- ★ Union-Scioto (Unioto) School District
 - Unioto Elementary School
 - Unioto Middle School
 - Unioto High School
- ★ Zane Trace Local School District
 - Zane Trace Elementary
 - Zane Trace Middle School
 - Zane Trace High School

The County has two parochial schools: Bishop Flaget and Ross County Christian Academy. Bishop Flaget is a Catholic school, enrolls approximately 200 students, and offers Kindergarten to eighth grade instruction. Ross County Christian Academy has three schools, together offering Kindergarten to High School instruction.

Ross County is fortunate to enjoy vocational and continuing education services in County for all abilities. Ohio University – Chillicothe offers associate degrees, bachelor's degrees, and certificate programs, including nursing, law enforcement technology, and equine studies. Pickaway Ross Career and Technology Center, a vocational school, offers both high school and adult practical learning opportunities in trades, medical, firefighting, and similar fields. Pioneer Center, operated by the Ross County Board of Developmental Disabilities, offers preschool to young adult education and support services.



Legend

- Townships
- Incorporated Areas
- Ohio University - Chillicothe
- Pickaway Ross Vocational Center
- Pioneer Center
- Private Elementary School
- Private K-8 School
- Public Elementary School
- Public High School
- Public Middle School
- Adena Local School District
- Chillicothe City School District
- Greenfield Exempted Village School District
- Huntington Local School District
- Miami Trace Local School District
- Paint Valley Local School District
- Southeastern Local School District
- Union-Scioto Local School District
- Waverly City School District
- Zane Trace Local School District

Scale in Feet:



0 30K 60K

Ross County Schools

PARKS AND RECREATION

Local, state, and national parks are cherished assets and represent a substantial tourism opportunity.

NATIONAL PARKS

Ross County is home to one national park, Hopewell Cultural National Historical Park, which consists of six separate ancient mound sites spread throughout the County. All six sites comprise 1,828 acres, and one site, Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

STATE PARKS AND FOREST

Ross County has five State Parks.

- ★ Great Seal State Park – 1,862 acres and 50 miles of trails
- ★ Paint Creek State Park – 5,652 acres and 33 miles of trails
- ★ Pike Lake State Park – 587 acres and four miles of trails
- ★ Scioto Trail State Park – 218 acres and 6.8 miles of trails
- ★ Tar Hollow State Park – 604 acres and 27 miles of trails

COUNTY PARKS

- ★ Ross County Park District has five county parks that serve as nature preserves.
- ★ Buzzard’s Roost – 1,200 acres and five miles of trails
- ★ Herron-Downs Fen Nature Preserve – 174 acres*
- ★ Kinnikinnick Fen – 154 acres and two miles of trails
- ★ Maple Grove Prairie – 99 acres
- ★ Metahqua Park and Disc Golf Course – 234 acres and 2.4 miles of trail

**Coming Soon*

In addition to the five parks, Ross County Park District also had two trails, a soccer complex, and a baseball park.

The Paint Creek Recreational Trail connects bicyclists and pedestrians from Chillicothe to Washington Court House on a 32-mile abandoned B&O Railroad corridor.

Coppel Athletic Complex primarily has soccer fields; however, it also has a playground, frisbee golf putting green, a one-mile hiking trail, and a shelter house.

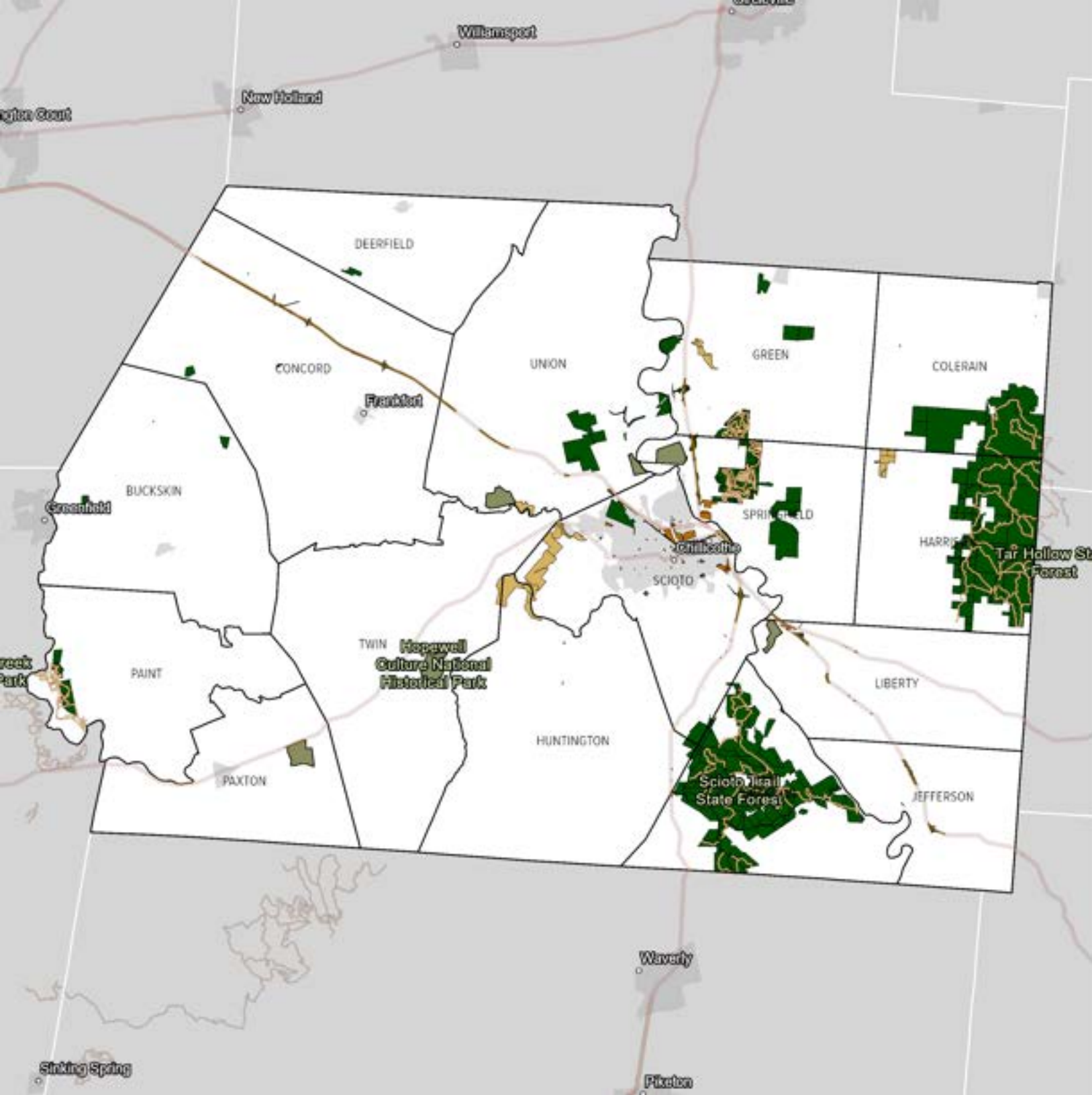
The North Fork Water Trail follows the North Fork Creek to the northwest of Chillicothe for 4.25 miles between Maple Grove Prairie and Coppel Athletic Complex.

Ross County Baseball Park has two diamonds located to the north of Chillicothe.

NATIONAL RECREATION AND PARK ASSOCIATION (NRPA) COMPARISON

The NRPA provides performance benchmarks to allow communities to understand how they compare to other communities of similar size. The following metrics compared Ross County's parks to NRPA's 2024 Agency Performance Review for places with populations between 50,000 and 99,999 residents. Not including parks within the City of Chillicothe, Ross County has 13 parks, most of which are over 100 acres. While the number of residents per park is nearly three times the national median, taking a deeper look, we see that Ross County exceeds the national median for acres per 1,000 residents by nearly 14 times. Ross County is also home to a substantial number of trails, nearly ten times the national median, and it provides a solid bedrock for marketing the quality of life present in the County.

	Jurisdiction Population			
	Ross County (77,049)	All Agencies (Median)	Jurisdiction with 50,000 to 99,999 Residents (Median)	
Total Parks	13	-	-	Parks
Resident per Park	5,926.8	2,386	2,346	Residents
Acres per 1,000 Residents	138.3	10.6	10.2	Acres
Miles of Trails	151.45	16.0	18.1	Miles



Legend

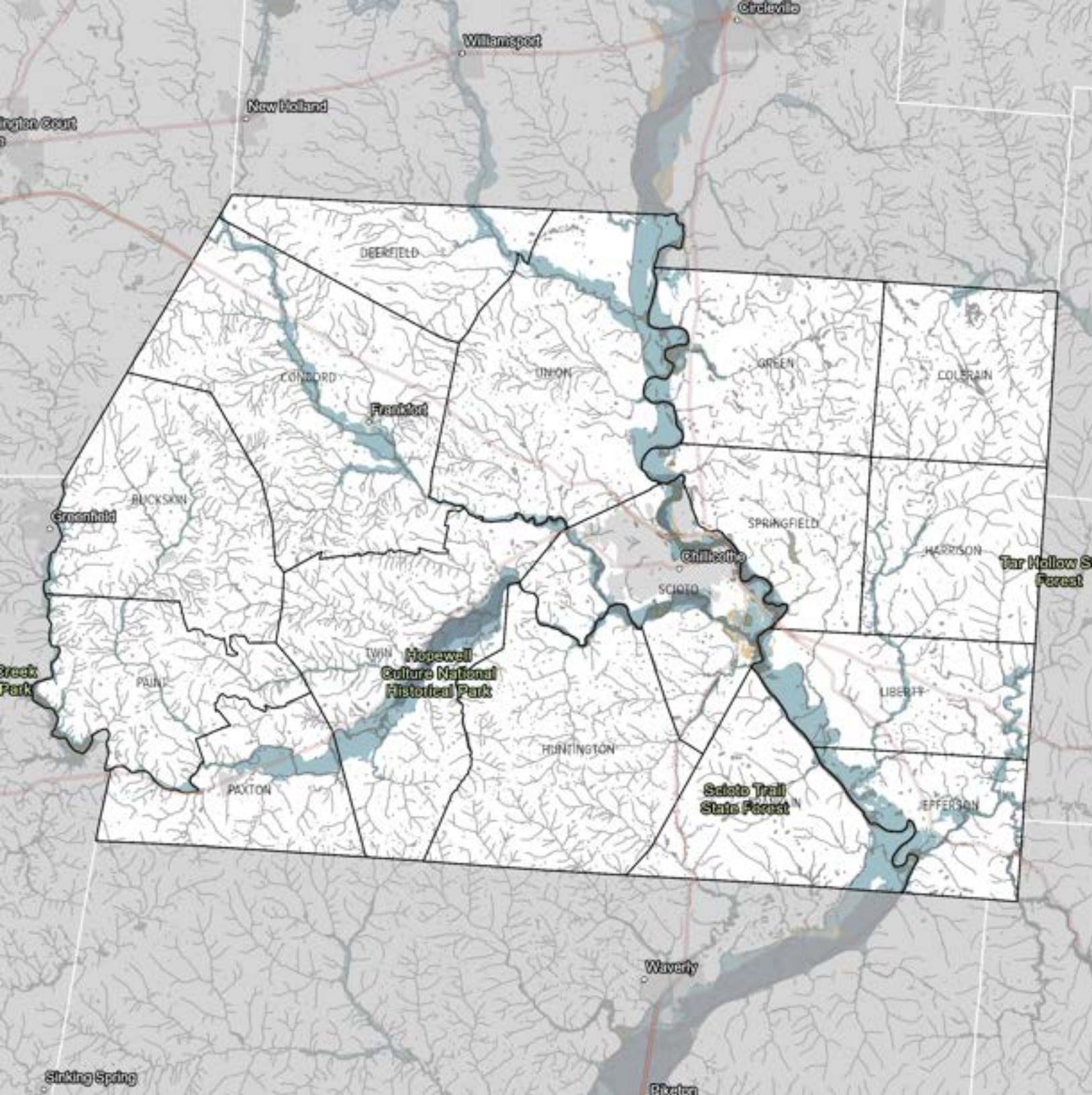
-  Townships
-  Incorporated Areas
-  ODNR Trails
-  National Parks
-  State Parks or Forest
-  County Parks
-  City Owned Parks



Scale in Feet:



Ross County Parks and Recreation



Legend

-  Townships
-  Incorporated Areas
-  Wetlands
-  1% Annual Chance Flood Hazard
-  Regulatory Floodway
-  0.2% Annual Chance Flood Hazard



Scale in Feet:



0 30K 60K

Ross County Hydrology

INTRODUCTION

Immutable environmental conditions, such as floodplains and topography, provide considerable constraints to future development patterns.

HYDROLOGY

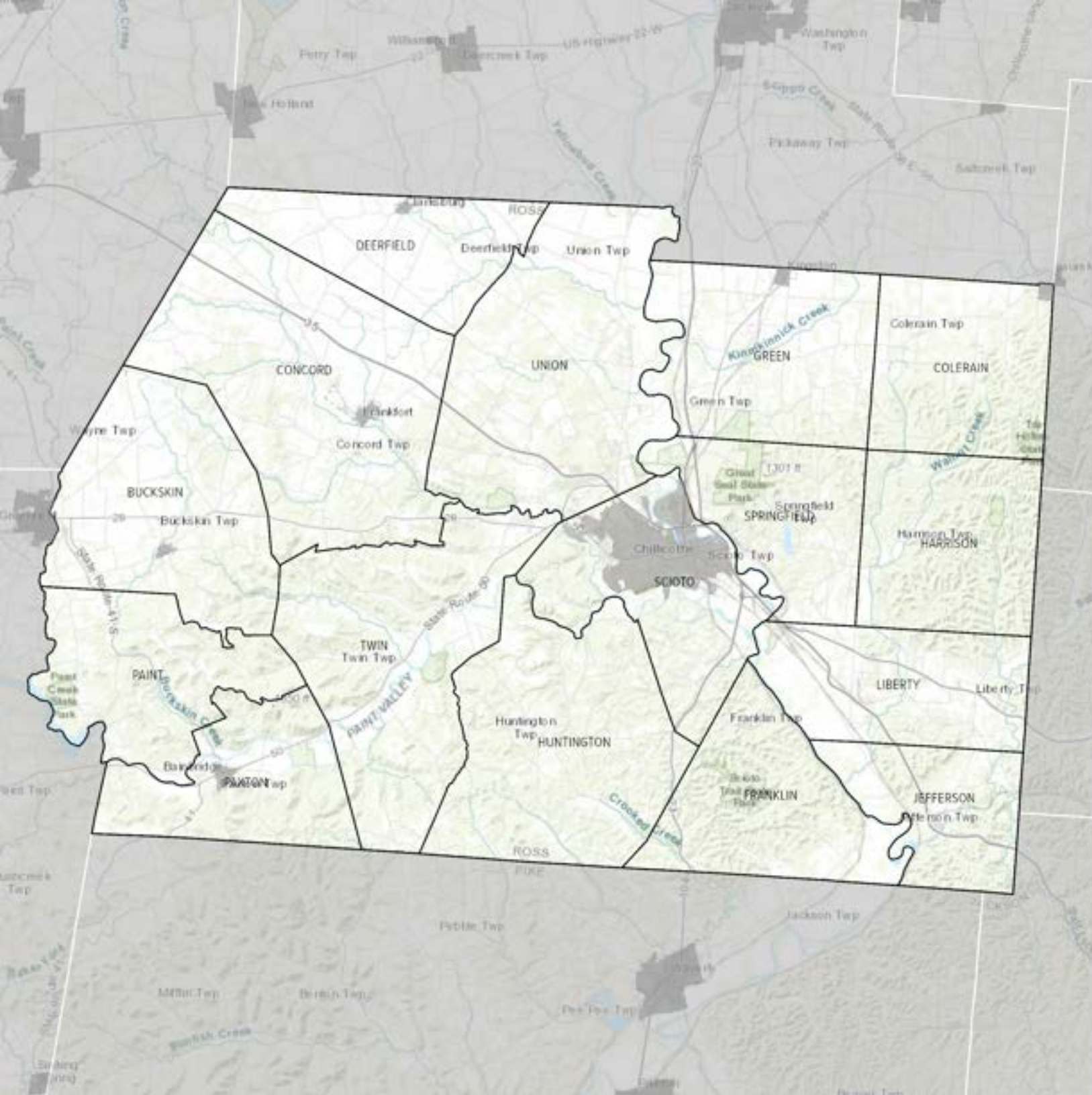
The Hydrology map highlights the county's environmentally sensitive areas. While floodplains are a hazard for development, they are typically flat land ideal for agriculture and a sign of available freshwater for agricultural activities.

TOPOGRAPHY



Topography is one of the County's defining characteristics. The southeastern portion is hilly and forested, while the northwestern portion is relatively flatter and covered with farms.

CONTAMINATION

Outside of the incorporated boundaries of Chillicothe, there are no Superfund or Brownfield sites within Ross County.



Legend

-  Townships
-  Incorporated Areas



Scale in Feet:



0 30K 60K

Ross County Topography





AMERICAN
STRUCTUREPOINT
INC.