



2017 MASTER PLAN



CITY OF AURORA, OHIO





2017 Master Plan

City of Aurora Master Plan Update

Final Version
Revised February 22, 2018

City of Aurora Master Plan Review Commission recommended adoption with revisions on October 25, 2017

City of Aurora Planning Commission recommended adoption with revisions on December 6, 2017

Adopted by the City of Aurora City Council on February 26, 2018

Prepared with assistance from



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Sponsor: Planning Commission
This is not a Revision to the Codified Ordinances

CITY OF AURORA
OHIO

ORDINANCE 2017-179

INTRODUCED BY:

John Hudley

SECONDED BY:

Kathi Grandillo

AN ORDINANCE APPROVING AND ADOPTING A MASTER PLAN FOR THE CITY OF AURORA

WHEREAS, the Mayor appointed a Master Plan Review Commission pursuant to Article XIV, Section 14.01 of the Charter of the City of Aurora; and

WHEREAS, the Master Plan Review Commission prepared a Master Plan pursuant to Article XIV, Section 14.02 of the Charter of the City of Aurora; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission has reviewed the Master Plan pursuant to Article XIV, Section 14.04 of the Charter of the City of Aurora; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission at its regular meeting of December 6, 2017, recommended approval and adoption of the Master Plan as modified on that date;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the Council for the City of Aurora, County of Portage, State of Ohio, that:

Section 1. The recommendation of the Planning Commission to approve and adopt the Master Plan is hereby accepted.

Section 2. The Mater Plan, as submitted, is hereby approved and adopted with the understanding that any actions or expenditures recommended by the documents are not hereby authorized but must be authorized by separate ordinance.

Section 3. It is hereby found and determined that all formal actions of this Council concerning and relating to the passage of this Ordinance were adopted in an open meeting of this Council, and that all deliberations of this Council and any of its Committees that resulted in such formal action were in meetings open to the public in compliance with the legal requirements, including Section 121.22 of the Ohio Revised Code.

Section 4. This Ordinance shall take effect and be in force after the earliest time provided by law.

Adopted: February 26, 2018 Approved: 2/27/2018

Effective: March 29, 2018 By: Ann W. Benjamin
Ann Womer Benjamin, Mayor

Attest: Donna Hawks
Donna Hawks, Clerk of Council

Approved as to legal form by: Dean DePiero
Dean DePiero, Director of Law

CERTIFICATE OF POSTING

I, Donna Hawks, do hereby certify that I am the duly appointed and acting Clerk of Council of the City of Aurora, Ohio, and that the foregoing Ordinance was published in the City of Aurora as required by law by posting a true and exact copy thereof at the six (6) public posting places as established by Ordinances 1976-10 and 1992-107 and amended by Ordinances 1998-76, 2000-74, and 2014-078.

- 1) City Hall
- 2) Heinen's Grocery Store, Barrington Town Square
- 3) Fire Station No. 2
- 4) Aurora Memorial Library
- 5) U.S. Post Office, Village Commons Shopping Center
- 6) City Website

Such posting was for a period of fifteen (15) days commencing on the 9th Day of March, 2017.

Signed this 1st Day of March, 2017.

Donna Hawks
Clerk of Council
City of Aurora



Acknowledgments

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

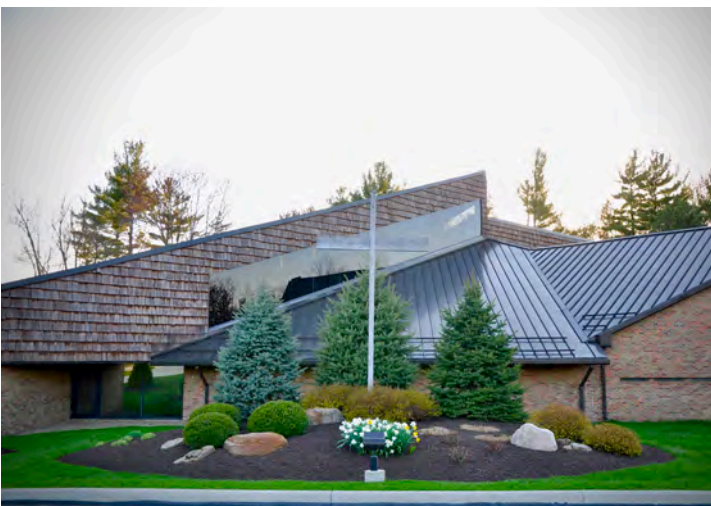
Overview

This Master Plan Update presents a possible roadmap for the City of Aurora’s vision for the future. It serves as a guide for the city, and provides background for the decisions of city officials and administrators, governmental agencies, organizations, and private individuals. The Plan is long-range, in that it examines past trends and makes projections for the next 20 years, and is intended to provide a framework for future land use decisions and ensure that future development/redevelopment are consistent with development goals.

Planning Process

The planning process, which culminated in development of the Plan Update, was commenced in January 2017. Per the City Charter, a 9-member Master Plan Review Commission (MPRC) was appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by City Council to undertake the Plan Update process. The MPRC was comprised of Aurora residents with various backgrounds and interests, each contributing to a well-rounded process and Plan that is representative of diverse values and ideologies, all with the city’s future vitality and stability in mind. Following Plan development at the MPRC level, the Planning Commission will review the Plan and make a recommendation, before the Plan is presented to City Council for review and adoption.

The planning process consisted of three stages which included the following: **1) Assessment** – collecting information on existing conditions and analyzing demographic, land use, environmental and other trends; **2) Recommendations** – soliciting input from residents and local elected officials at public meetings regarding important issues within the city and developing a general consensus on the city’s goals and objectives; and **3) Implementation** – providing tools (e.g. programs, funding, incentives, etc.) to facilitate implementation of established goals and objectives.





2017 Master Plan

Executive Summary

Goals and Objectives

The MPRC, Planning Commission and Administration developed goals that correspond to each of the six key topic areas addressed in the Plan. Goals are defined as broad, general statements that represent the shared vision for the city. These broad statements were used to derive the Plan's objectives and implementation strategies. Following is a summary of the Plan's goals and objectives by key topic area:

Economy

Goal: Create an environment that is conducive to development and growth of businesses and promote Aurora as a community where families and individuals have desirable retail, dining, and entertainment options. Objectives include developing a business attraction and retention strategy; promoting a diverse tax base; promoting a mix of land uses; and promoting the city's environmental features.

Housing

Goal: Promote residential neighborhoods that are safe, attractive, and well connected to community amenities. Objectives include investigation of a specific housing code for residential rental properties and consideration of an exterior maintenance code.

Land Use/Zoning

Goal: Encourage high quality development / redevelopment and innovation in land use planning for all uses including design elements, amenities, and benefits that support current and future residents and businesses. Objectives include but are not limited to developing a cohesive Town Center, preserving neighborhoods while carving out areas for commercial growth, and promoting the city's character and charm.

Community Facilities and Infrastructure

Goal: Maintain and enhance existing community services and facilities and expand and/or adapt community services and facilities to meet future needs. Objectives include but are not limited to continuing to offer reliable public services to residents and business owners; implementing the 2010 Parks and Recreation Master Plan and Hartman Farm Master Plan; maintaining and improving infrastructure including roads, sidewalks, and waterlines; and considering options for a community center and/or recreation facility.

Transportation

Goal: Promote transportation networks that offer a range of safe, efficient, and convenient travel options with aesthetically-pleasing corridors. Objectives include but are not limited to continuing to implement sidewalk and trail connections, applying a complete streets approach to transportation enhancements, and continuing support for increased pedestrian circulation.

Natural Features

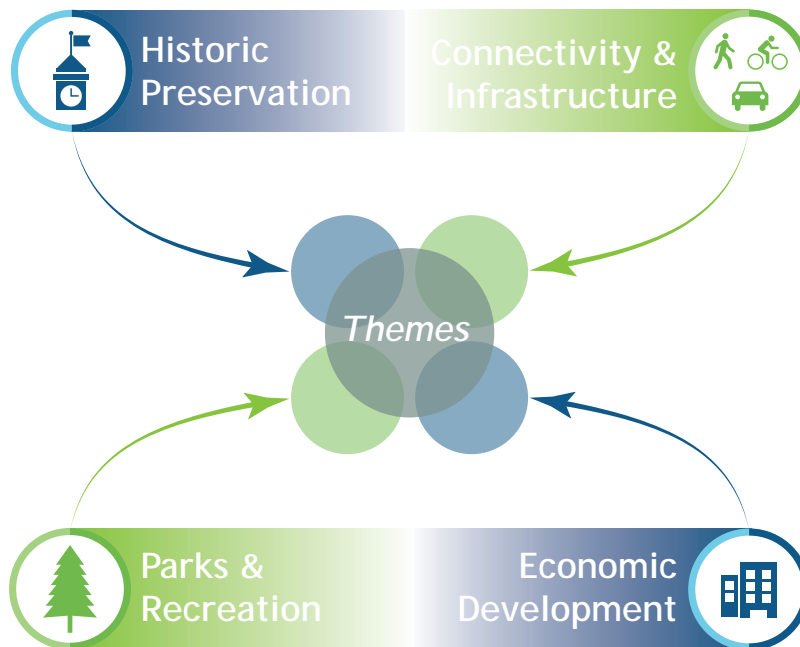
Goal: Preserve and conserve environmental features for present and future residents. Objectives include increasing access to city-owned property where feasible and working to preserve undeveloped land where feasible with the related quality of life benefits.

Future Land Use

The overall vision for the future is portrayed spatially on the Future Land Use map, which displays the preferred land use for all areas of the city, and is intended to prescribe land uses which address the city’s current goals. The Future Land Use Map contains 11 different land use categories.

Themes

As summarized below, four themes emerged as areas of emphasis during the MPRC planning process. The non-prioritized themes are (1) Historic Preservation; (2) Connectivity & Infrastructure; (3) Parks & Recreation; and (4) Economic Development.



Implementation

A more detailed Implementation Toolkit corresponding to each of the four identified plan themes was provided describing relevant programs, funding sources, and incentives that may be utilized to facilitate implementation of plan recommendations.

Addendum

Aurora City Council reviewed the Plan over a two-month period beginning December 18, 2017. The Committee of the Whole (Committee) commended the members of the MPRC for the professional and extensive work that was undertaken on behalf of the City of Aurora. The Committee stressed the importance of infrastructure, economic development, and community facilities as detailed in the Addendum.

Chapter 1



COMMUNITY VISION



2017 Master Plan

Chapter 1: Community Vision

CHAPTER 1: Community Vision

Overview

This Master Plan Update (the Plan) provides the Master Plan Review Commission’s possible roadmap for Aurora’s vision for the future with input from residents, the administration, and City Council. It serves as a guide for the city, and informs the decisions of city officials and administrators, governmental agencies, organizations, and private individuals. The Plan is long-range, in that it examines past trends and makes projections for the next 20 years, and is intended to provide a framework for future land use decisions and ensure that future development/redevelopment are consistent with development goals.

This long-range plan allows the city to plan ahead and anticipate future needs. It should be noted, however, that projections are most accurate in the short term (5 years), and many factors that will shape the future cannot be anticipated. As set forth in the City Charter, a full-scale Plan update will be undertaken at least every five years.

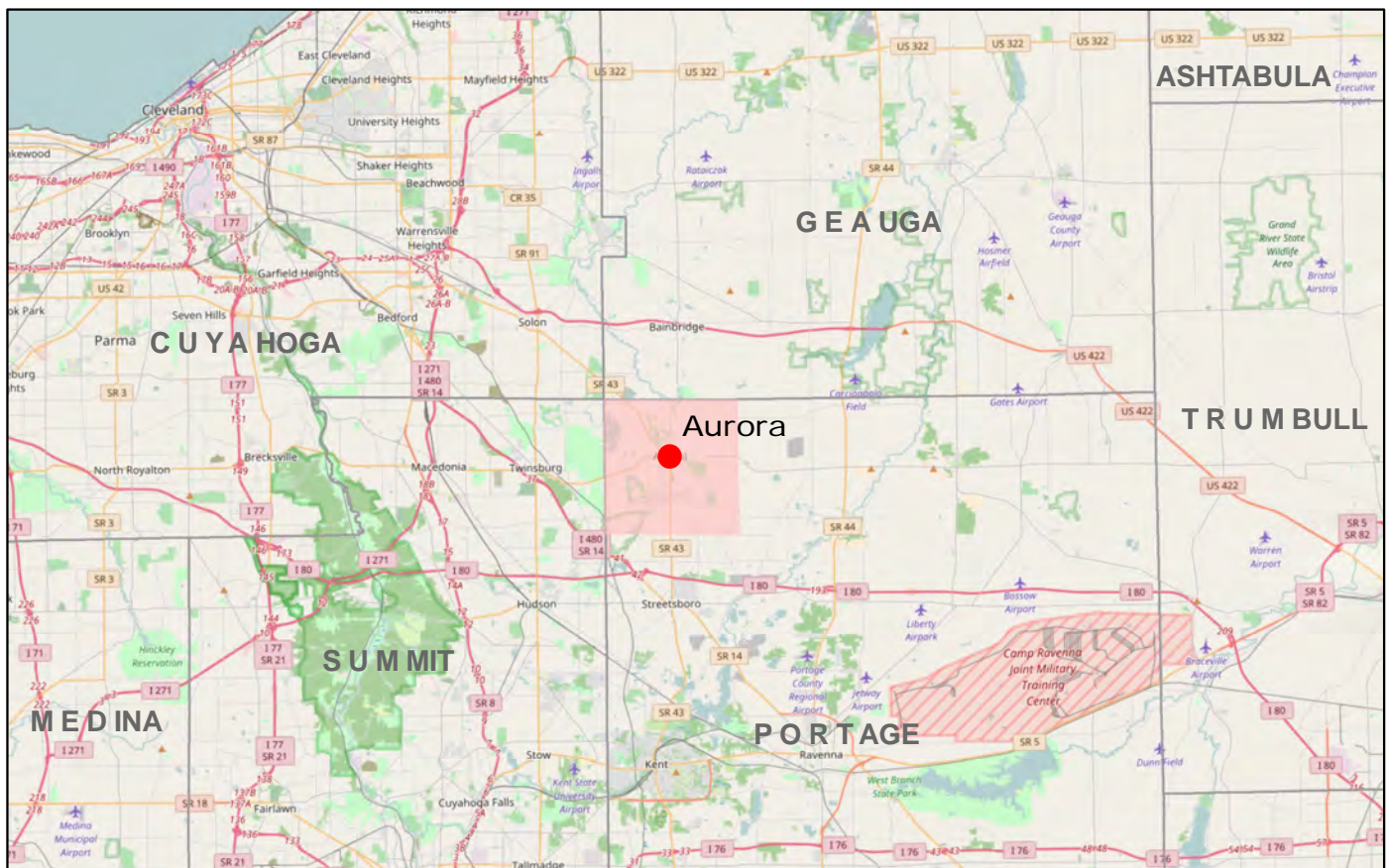
One of the most important functions of the Plan is to provide a solid foundation for future land use decisions made by city leaders. The recommendations presented in this document will provide a legal basis for zoning and other land use controls utilized by the city.



Regional Context

The City of Aurora is located in the northwest corner of Portage County in northeast Ohio. As of the 2010 Census, Aurora is considered part of the Akron Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which encompasses Portage and Summit counties, and the Cleveland-Akron-Elyria Combined Statistical Area (CSA). State Routes 306, 43 and 82 provide easy access to the regional highway network. *Map 1: Regional Context* shows the city's location within the northeast Ohio region.

Map 1: Regional Context





2017 Master Plan

Chapter 1: Community Vision

Need for a Master Plan

The City Charter requires that the Plan be reviewed and updated every five years, with the last Plan Update having been adopted in 2013. As noted in the Charter, this Master Plan Update is intended to provide “a comprehensive guideline upon which land use recommendations and other regulations should be based.” In other words this Plan is intended to be used as a guide for future development and to help ensure that such growth corresponds with the broader goals of the city.

Communities derive a number of benefits from undertaking long range master planning efforts including, but not limited to, development of a balanced and comprehensive land use strategy, identification of opportunities for intergovernmental cooperation, and improvement of quality of life components through provision of public open space and recreational opportunities.

Past Planning Efforts

The City of Aurora has a strong planning history. This update to the Master Plan represents the sixth plan in a process that began in the early 1960s. The first Master Plan was completed in 1997 following adoption of a Charter amendment that set forth the process for completing a Master Plan and requiring Plan updates every five years thereafter. Past long-range planning documents, Master Plans and Updates include the following:

| City’s Past Planning Efforts | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|--|
| <i>Plan</i> | <i>Year</i> | <i>Prepared By</i> |
| Aurora Planning: A Pictorial Summary | 1963 | Tri-County Regional Planning Commission |
| Aurora Land-Use and Thoroughfare Plan | 1991 | Portage County Regional Planning Commission |
| City of Aurora Master Plan | 1997 | Northstar Planning and Design, Inc. |
| City of Aurora Master Plan | 2003 | Northstar Planning and Design, Inc. |
| City of Aurora Master Plan Update | 2008 | C.M. Frederick, Landscape Architect & Chagrin River Watershed Partners, Inc. |
| City of Aurora Master Plan Update | 2013 | McKenna Associates |

When appropriate, goals and themes from past planning efforts have been referenced and/or incorporated in the analysis and recommendations of this Plan.

Planning Process

As required by the City Charter, a Master Plan Review Commission (MPRC) was appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by City Council to undertake the Plan Update process and to work directly with the consultants who assisted in preparing the Plan (Envision). The MPRC was composed of 9 members and was comprised of Aurora residents with various backgrounds and interests and residing in different geographic neighborhoods.

The Plan was completed using a three-phase process approach: (1) Assessment; (2) Recommendations; and (3) Implementation, outlined below:

Phase 1 - Assessment

Envision provided the MPRC with an assessment of existing and future trends in the city with respect to demographics, housing, economic indicators, ecological and cultural resources, transportation, utility infrastructure, and community services and facilities. For perspective, comparisons with surrounding communities and the greater region are provided as appropriate and applicable.

Key findings of the Assessment are included in the Plan as part of Chapter 2 – Inventory and Analysis.

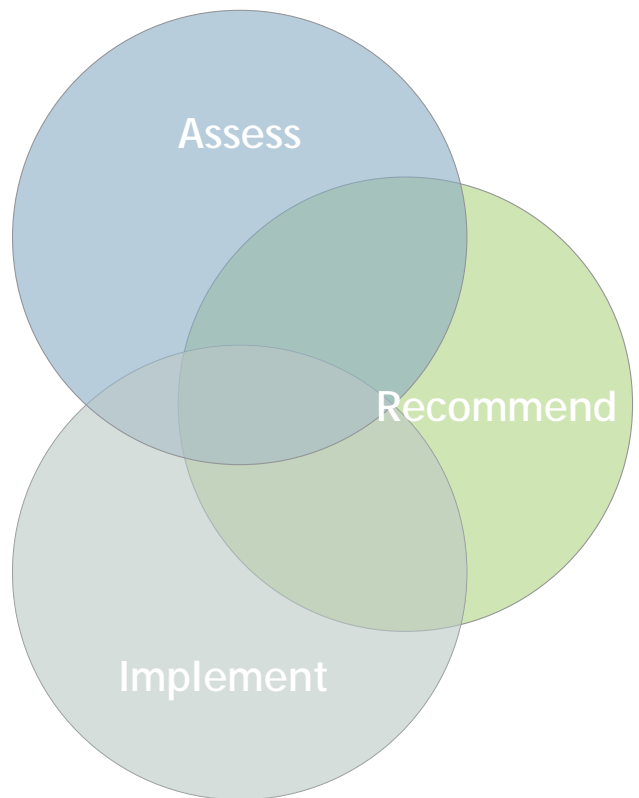
Phase 2 - Recommendations

Envision developed proposed recommendations for the Plan based on the findings of the existing and future trends assessment, input, and community feedback. Recommendations looked both holistically at the city for overarching themes and strategies, as well as at more specific geographic locations including neighborhoods, green spaces, and linkages. An emphasis was placed on developing comprehensive recommendations for the following themes: (1) Historic Preservation; (2) Connectivity & Infrastructure; (3) Parks & Recreation; and (4) Economic Development. Recommendations are included in the Plan within Chapter 3 – Land Use and Themes and Chapter 4 – Recommendations.

Phase 3 – Implementation

Envision formulated an implementation strategy to advance the Plan recommendations through a series of potential programs and projects. Strategies consisted of a combination of regulatory tools, incentive programs, partnerships, funding mechanisms, and grant opportunities.

A detailed implementation guide is included in Chapter 5 – Implementation.





2017 Master Plan

Chapter 1: Community Vision

Public Involvement

Below is the project schedule for the MPRC component of the planning process, which outlines the meeting number, date, and tasks to be addressed at each of the MPRC meetings. In order to encourage public involvement in the planning process, all regular MPRC meetings were open to the public and generally scheduled for the second Tuesday of each month at 4:00 p.m. at City Hall in Council Chambers.

Pursuant to the City Charter, following Plan development and adoption by the MPRC, the Planning Commission had up to 4 months to review and make a recommendation regarding adoption of the Plan to City Council. The Planning Commission reviewed the Plan at three meetings beginning on November 1, 2017, and made a recommendation to City Council to adopt the Plan with revisions on December 6, 2017.

City Council then had up to four months after the Planning Commission recommendation to approve the Plan as submitted with no modifications, or revise and approve the Plan. City Council reviewed and adopted the Plan on February 26, 2018.

The meeting dates and times for all public meetings to discuss adoption of the Plan were determined by Planning Commission’s and City Council’s normal schedules.

| Master Plan Review Commission: Meeting Schedule | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Date | Topic |
| January 10, 2017 | Plan Process Overview |
| February 14, 2017 | Plan Themes |
| March 14, 2017 | Land Use & Zoning |
| April 11, 2017 | Connectivity & Infrastructure |
| May 9, 2017 | Historic Preservation |
| June 13, 2017 | Parks & Recreation |
| July 11, 2017 | Goals & Objectives |
| August 8, 2017 | City Bus Tour |
| October 25, 2017 | Plan Review & Approval |

The development of this Plan included one organized Public Forum where members of the public were formally invited to provide input and insight into present issues and the future direction of the city.

Community Survey

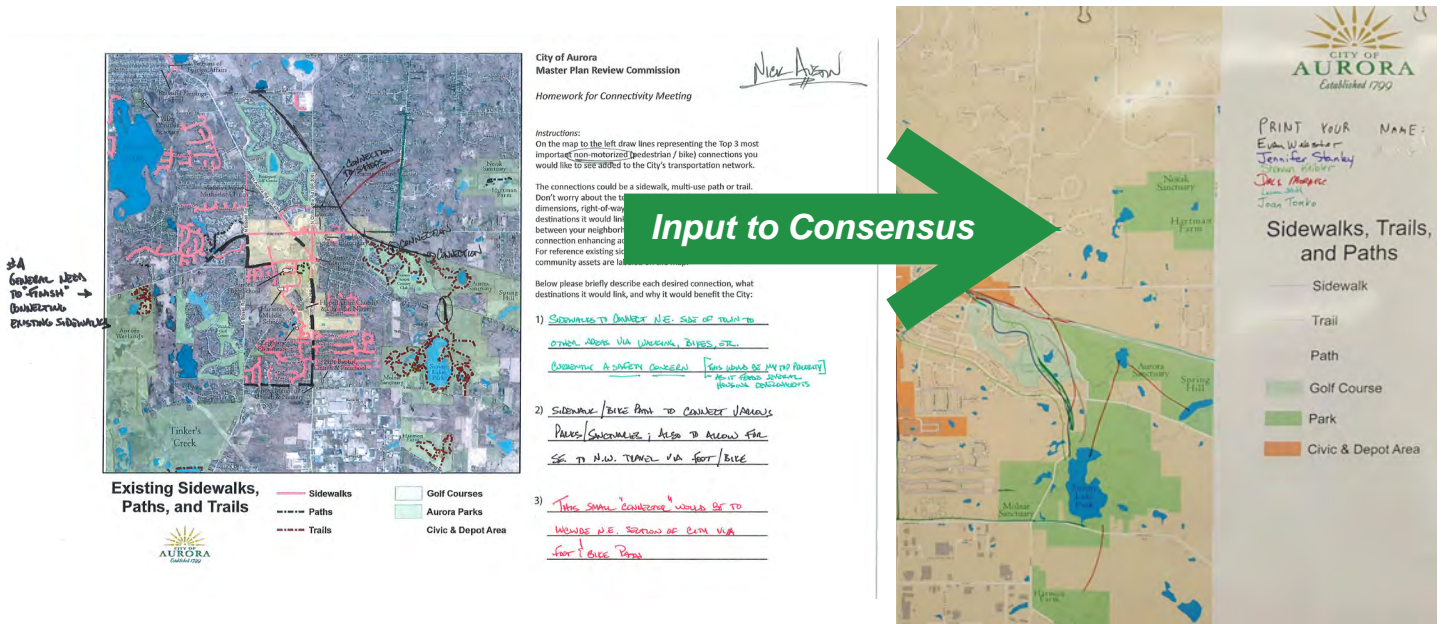
A community survey consisting of 14 questions covering demographics and personal preferences for future community enhancements was made available in print and online on the city’s website with 190 responses received. *Appendix A* includes a summary of responses and the individual responses to the community survey.

The overwhelming majority of respondents (88%) indicated that quality of life in Aurora was either excellent or very good. Top reasons respondents chose to reside in Aurora included “Great Schools” (85%), “Quiet, Small Town Lifestyle” (69%) and Safety (67%). “Bicycle and Pedestrian Connections” was most frequently cited by respondents as the improvement they would most like to see in the city. Most respondents (60%) selected the former Geauga Lake Park as their preferred location for future commercial/retail development in the city, with sit-down restaurants (36%) as the most frequently desired commercial/retail amenity.



Master Plan Review Commission (MPRC)

Members of the MPRC provided input to the Master Plan Update during a series of themed monthly meetings that covered topics such as Land Use, Connectivity, Historic Preservation, and Parks & Recreation. Commission members were given “homework” assignments at each meeting that asked questions about their preferences for the future of the community and what particular assets they would like to see created, enhanced, or preserved within the City of Aurora.



City of Aurora Master Plan Review Commission Homework for Connectivity Meeting

Nick Aron

Instructions:
On the map to the left draw lines representing the Top 3 most important (non-motorized [pedestrian / bike]) connections you would like to see added to the City's transportation network.

The connections could be a sidewalk, multi-use path or trail. Don't worry about the dimensions, right-of-way, destinations it would lead between your neighborhood connection enhancing or For reference existing community assets are labeled.

Below please briefly describe each desired connection, what destinations it would link, and why it would benefit the City:

- 1) Sidewalk to Denver N.E. side of town to other areas via walking, bikes, etc.
(Bicycle & safety concerns) [has much to offer for] [has some safety concerns]
- 2) Sidewalk / bike path to connect various parks / greenways; also to connect SW to NW areas via foot / bike
- 3) This small connection would be to connect the SW side of town via foot / bike path

Existing Sidewalks, Paths, and Trails

- Sidewalks
- Paths
- Trails
- Golf Courses
- Aurora Parks
- Civic & Depot Area

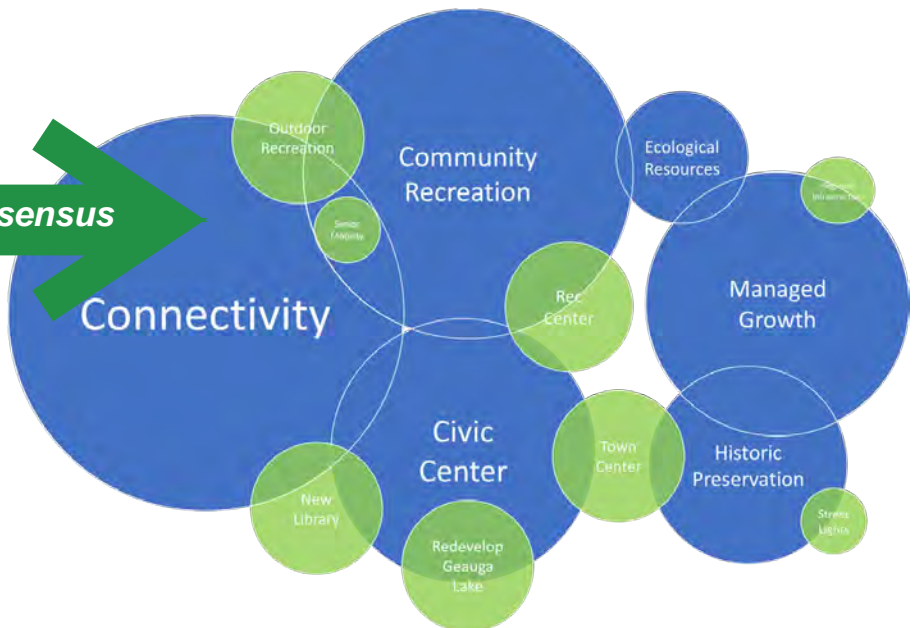
Sidewalks, Trails, and Paths

- Sidewalk
- Trail
- Path
- Golf Course
- Park
- Civic & Depot Area

PRINT YOUR NAME:
Evan Williams
Jennifer Stankov
Alex Mays
John
John Tomko



Input to Consensus

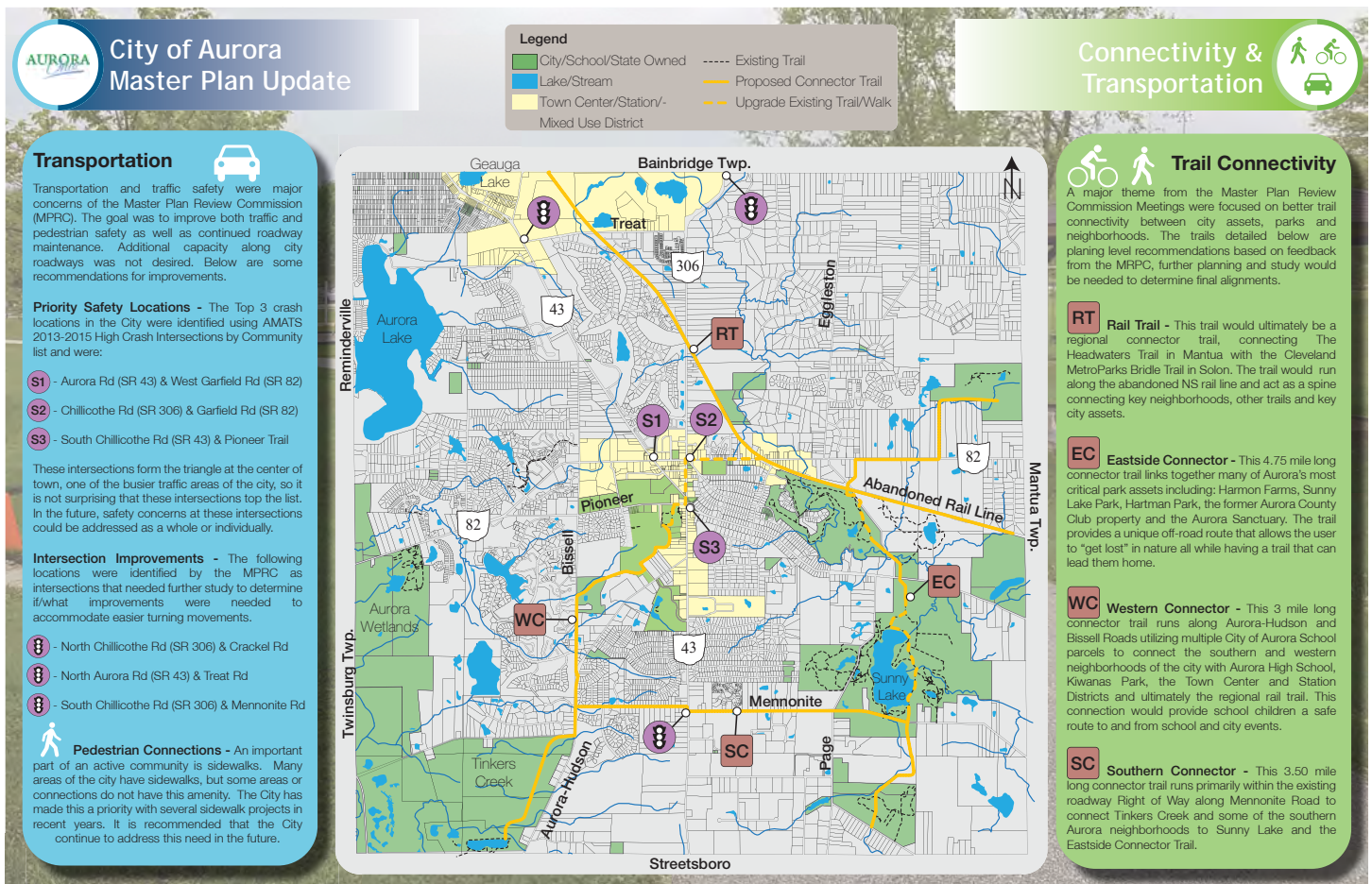


Public Forum

A total of 42 residents, business owners, and other interested citizens and officials, along with members of the MPRC, the Mayor and consultant representatives, participated in the Public Forum held at the Walker Building in the Senior Community Room on Tuesday, July 25, 2017.

The purpose of the forum was to provide local residents, policymakers, and interested individuals the opportunity to view existing conditions and recommendations as well as input received from the MPRC meetings. The meeting enabled attendees to provide feedback on what had been completed to date and fill out a community survey. The workshop offered an opportunity for members of the public to provide personal input into the Plan in large group discussion as well as at themed stations summarizing plan recommendations relative to Historic Preservation, Connectivity & Transportation, and Parks & Recreation. The input received from attendees was used to help shape Plan recommendations.

A number of informal verbal and written comments were received at the forum, most of which focused on wishes for specific land uses in the city. Refer to Appendix A: Public Input Summary, for an overview of input received from the MPRC and the forum attendees.



Plan Organization

Chapter 2 provides an in depth inventory and analysis of current conditions in the city. This chapter examines the following key topic areas including demographics, housing, economy; environmental features; transportation, community facilities and infrastructure; and existing land use. In these sections of the Plan, existing conditions in the city are described and mapped, trends are analyzed, and emerging issues are discussed.

Chapter 3 discusses where and how new development and redevelopment could occur in the city. A major component of this chapter is Map 13: Future Land Use, which shows the logical land use for all parcels in the city. Also included in Chapter 3 is a discussion of the following four themes that emerged as areas of emphasis during the MPRC: (1) Historic Preservation; (2) Connectivity & Infrastructure; (3) Parks & Recreation; and (4) Economic Development.

Chapter 4 contains the Plan Recommendations which include a list of goals and objectives for six topic areas, which correspond in large part to the inventory and analysis section of the Plan (Chapter 2), as follows: (1) Economy; (2) Housing; (3) Land Use/Zoning; (4) Community Facilities (including Infrastructure); (5) Transportation; and (6) Natural Features.

Chapter 5 outlines potential tools to facilitate implementation. An Implementation Toolkit detailing potential funding programs, regulatory tools, and incentives is provided for each of the four themes identified in Chapter 3.

Appendix A contains a summary chart of input received through the community survey and at the MPRC Meetings and Public Forum.



Chapter 2



INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

CHAPTER 2: Inventory & Analysis

In order to successfully plan for the future, existing conditions such as demographics, housing, economy, environmental features, transportation, community facility and infrastructure, and existing land use should be inventoried and analyzed. These existing conditions can provide insight into potential future city growth patterns and development trends.



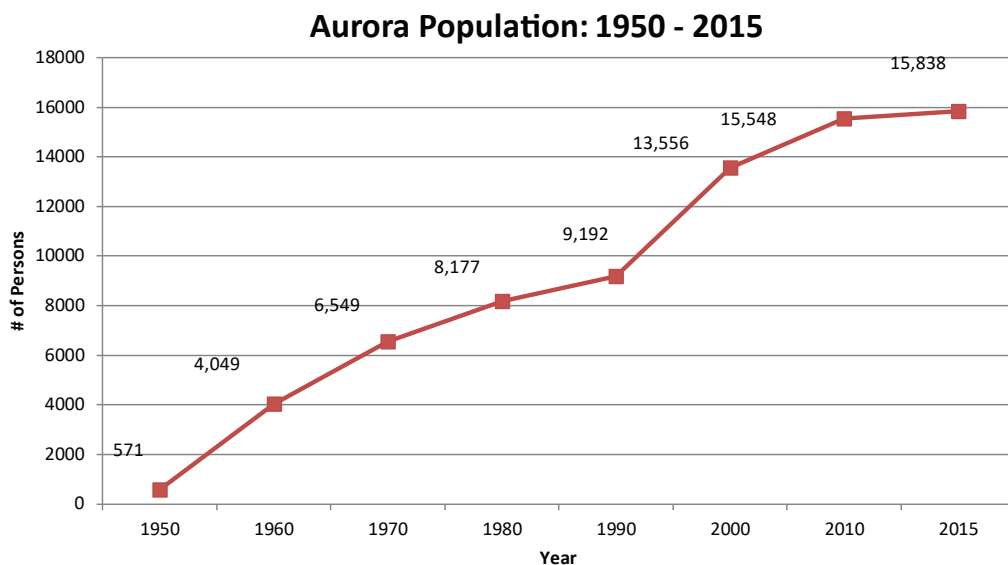
DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographic trends discussed below include the city's total population, age structure, and educational attainment. Analysis of demographic and other trends will allow the city to anticipate future demands for public services, infrastructure, and facilities.

Population Trends

According to the 2015 American Community Survey, and as shown in *Figure 1*, below, the city's population has increased a projected 17% between 2000 and 2015, from 13,556 in 2000 to 15,838 in 2015. The city experienced a 47.48% increase in population from 1990 to 2000 and a nearly 72% increase between 1990 and 2015.

Figure 1 - Total Population: 1950 - 2015



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (pre-2011), 2011-2015 American Community Survey (2015)

As shown in *Table 1*, below, the city’s growth rate has always outpaced the growth rate of Portage County. The county experienced significant growth between 1950 and 1970, but growth has leveled to between 5 and 8% each decade since and is estimated to have increased only 0.53% between 2000 and 2015. The city has experienced steady and pronounced growth every decade since 1950. While the American Community Survey estimates the city population to have only increased by two percent since 2010, housing start data from the city Planning, Zoning and Building Division reflects a greater gain in population than reflected by the ACS.

Table 1: Population Change 1950-2015: Aurora & Portage County

| Year | Aurora | % Change | Portage County | % Change |
|------|--------|----------|----------------|----------|
| 1950 | 571 | 609.10% | 63,954 | 43.50% |
| 1960 | 4,049 | 61.70% | 91,798 | 37.50% |
| 1970 | 6,549 | 24.90% | 125,868 | 7.90% |
| 1980 | 8,177 | 12.40% | 135,856 | 5.00% |
| 1990 | 9,192 | 47.50% | 142,585 | 6.60% |
| 2000 | 13,556 | 14.70% | 152,061 | 6.20% |
| 2010 | 15,548 | 14.69% | 161,419 | 6.15% |
| 2015 | 15,838 | 1.87% | 162,275 | 0.53% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (pre-2011), 2011-2015 American Community Survey (2015)

Two important variables that can impact population change are regional growth patterns and an individual community’s local land use policies and regulations. Regional growth patterns determine if there will be a need for specific land uses and the local policies and regulations determine how much of the demand for different uses will be accommodated in the community.

According to Ohio Department of Development projections, the total population in Portage County will decrease from 161,500 to 151,720 between 2015 and 2040 (a modest 6.0 % decrease over the 25-year period). Based on a linear projection that commenced with 1950 population figures, the total population in the city will increase from 15,193 to 19,737 between 2010 and 2030 (an 8.9% increase over the 20-year period). Population projections in general, and linear projections in particular, are somewhat flawed because they fail to take into account the presence or absence of land available for future development.

Housing starts in Aurora from 2010 through 2016 indicate that this rate of growth may be right on track. *Table 2* (see next page) shows the housing starts by year starting in 2010 through 2016. Using housing starts of 342 units built between 2010 and 2016, and an average household size of 2.5, the estimated population of the city in 2016 is 16,403 (a 5% increase over the 16-year period). Looking forward, an additional six subdivisions or expansions are currently in the planning process, which would result in an additional 312 housing units. Add the potential development of the mixed-use district, an additional 1,400 units, and the projected population of 19,737 by 2030 would be in line with current building trends.

Table 2: Housing Starts 2010-2016

| Year | Single Family | Condo | Total |
|-------|---------------|-------|-------|
| 2010 | 12 | 0 | 12 |
| 2011 | 22 | 2 | 24 |
| 2012 | 38 | 1 | 39 |
| 2013 | 59 | 4 | 63 |
| 2014 | 27 | 24 | 51 |
| 2015 | 16 | 47 | 63 |
| 2016 | 18 | 72 | 90 |
| Total | 192 | 150 | 342 |

Source: City of Aurora Division of Planning, Zoning and Building

Household Trends

As indicated in *Table 3*, below, the growth rate in the number of households in the city from 2000 to 2010 (19.24%) has outpaced that of the county (10.23%) and state (3.55%) over the same period. The opposite trend is displayed for average household size, where the county and state have experienced slightly greater increases in average household size than the city. The fact that the average household size has increased from 2.63 to 2.67 from 2000 to 2010 indicates that the city is continuing to attract families with children.

Table 3: Households & Average Household Size: 2000-2010

| Governmental Unit | Total Number of Households | | | Average Household Size | | |
|-------------------|----------------------------|-----------|--------|------------------------|------|--------|
| | 2000 | 2010 | Change | 2000 | 2010 | Change |
| City of Aurora | 5,047 | 6,018 | 19.24% | 2.63 | 2.67 | 1.52% |
| Portage County | 56,449 | 62,222 | 10.23% | 2.56 | 2.61 | 1.95% |
| State of Ohio | 4,445,773 | 4,603,435 | 3.55% | 2.49 | 2.57 | 3.21% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, 2010 and 2006-2010 American Community Survey

Population Age Trends

Figure 2, right, indicates that the 45 to 54 (20%) and 5 to 14 (15.1%) age groups represent a higher proportion of the overall population than other age groups. Residents over 35 years of age comprise 64.4% of the city's total population.

As shown in Table 4, below, between 2000 and 2015, the 45 to 64 age group increased by the greatest number (478), while the 15 to 24 age group increased by the largest percentage (19.43%) in just 15 years. An overall aging of the population is in-line with national and state demographic trends. However, the increase in 15 to 24 year olds in Aurora may reflect the number of new homes being built that are geared toward families.

The evolving age structure of the city and demographic trends noted above could have impacts on the type of housing needed for residents, public infrastructure, social activities desired, and educational facilities. Generally, seniors tend to show a preference toward the decreased maintenance associated with attached single family dwellings and senior living facilities.

Figure 2: Aurora Population by Age Year

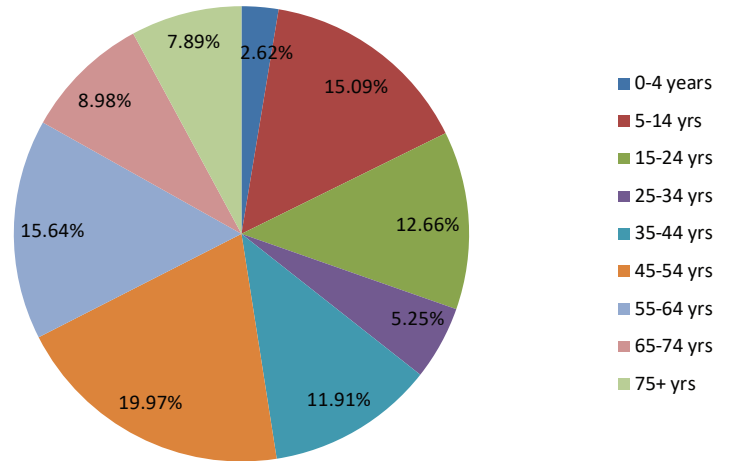


Table 4: Aurora Population by Age Group: 2010-2015

| Age Group | Population | | | | | |
|-------------------|------------|---------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|
| | 2010 | | 2015 | | 2010-2015 | |
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Change | % Change |
| 15 to 24 years | 1,601 | 10.30% | 1,912 | 12.21% | 311 | 19.43% |
| 25 to 44 years | 3,046 | 19.59% | 2,591 | 16.54% | -455 | -14.94% |
| 45-64 years | 4,900 | 31.52% | 5,378 | 34.34% | 478 | 9.76% |
| 65 years and over | 2,969 | 19.10% | 3,108 | 19.84% | 139 | 4.68% |
| TOTAL | 15,548 | 100.00% | 15,663 | 100.00% | 115 | 0.74% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, 2010 and 2011-2015 American Community Survey

Education

Residents of the city generally have a higher level of educational attainment when compared to Portage County and the state. As *Table 5* below shows, the proportion of city population with higher education degrees (Bachelor's, Graduate, and Professional), 48.8%, is nearly twice that of the county (26%) and state (26.1%).

Table 5: Highest Educational Attainment of Population 25 Years & Older: 2015

| Highest Educational Attainment | City of Aurora | Portage County | State of Ohio |
|--|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| Elementary (0-8) | 1.60% | 1.90% | 3.10% |
| Some High School (No Diploma) | 3.30% | 6.80% | 7.80% |
| High School Graduate (and higher) | 95.00% | 91.40% | 89.10% |
| Bachelor's Degree (and higher) | 48.80% | 26.00% | 26.10% |
| High School Graduate (incl. equivalency) | 19.80% | 37.80% | 34.10% |
| Some College (No Degree) | 21.90% | 21.40% | 20.70% |
| Associate Degree | 4.50% | 6.20% | 8.20% |
| Bachelor's Degree | 28.90% | 16.20% | 16.40% |
| Graduate or Professional Degree | 19.90% | 9.90% | 9.70% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2011 – 2015



HOUSING

Housing Composition

As shown in *Table 6*, below, housing in the city is largely composed of owner-occupied units (77.9% of total housing units). The percentage of occupied housing units that are owner-occupied is larger and the percentage of renter-occupied housing units is smaller in Aurora than in Portage County and the state.

Table 6: Housing Units: 2015

| Housing Unit Tenure | | City of Aurora | Portage County | State of Ohio |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| Total Housing Units | Number of Units | 6,577 | 67,897 | 5,135,173 |
| | Occupied Units | 6,189 | 61,055 | 4,570,015 |
| | Occupancy Rate | 94.10% | 89.92% | 88.99% |
| Owner-occupied Units | Number of Units | 6,189 | 41,928 | 3,056,206 |
| | % of all Occupied Units | 77.90% | 68.70% | 66.90% |
| | Homeowner Vacancy Rate* | 0.90% | 1.00% | 2.00% |
| Renter-occupied Units | Number of Units | 1,367 | 19,127 | 1,513,809 |
| | % of all Occupied Units | 22.10% | 31.30% | 33.10% |
| | Rental Vacancy Rate** | 6.00% | 5.30% | 7.20% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2011-2015

*The proportion of the homeowner inventory that is vacant "for sale"

**The proportion of the rental inventory that is vacant "for rent"

The city should consider implementing requirements to ensure minimum health and safety standards for rental housing as they relate to the condition, maintenance and occupancy of rental dwellings. One such potential requirement would be a rental registry requirement that would help to keep the approximate 1,200 rental properties safe and maintained and prevent rental properties from negatively impacting surrounding property values.

Housing Vacancy Rates

Vacancy rates are one indication of the health of a local housing market. The 0.9% vacancy rate among the city's owner-occupied units is indicative of a tight housing market. A healthy vacancy rate for owner-occupied units is considered to be roughly 3%. While too few vacant owner-occupied units may limit housing choices and make it difficult to access housing at a range of price points and styles, it is an indicator of a strong local housing market with stable and rising home values.

Housing Stock Age

As shown in *Table 7*, below, nearly one-fifth of housing units in the city have been constructed since 2000. A boom in city construction occurred in the 90s when 28% of the housing stock was constructed. The age of housing has effects on its condition. In most cases, the need for major repairs or rehabilitation surfaces when housing is over 30 years old. Just over half of the city’s housing stock was constructed more than 30 years ago (approximately 51.3%), indicating that a noticeable portion of the city’s housing stock may require some type of major repair or rehabilitation in the near future. The city has considered in the past and might again consider adopting a property maintenance code to help prevent aging homes from falling into disrepair and negatively impacting property values.

As noted earlier, the city is currently in the midst of another housing boom, with 200 units having been built in just the past three years between 2014 and 2016. Another 312 units, about six subdivisions, are planned and currently working through the development approval process. In addition, the mixed-use district could potentially bring an additional new 1,400 residential units.

Table 7: Age of Housing Stock: 2016

| Year Structure Built | City of Aurora | Portage County | State of Ohio |
|-----------------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| Total Housing Units | 6,934* | 67,897 | 5,140,902 |
| 2010 – 2016* | 5.0% | 0.9% | 1.0% |
| 2000 - 2009 | 15.8% | 13.9% | 10.0% |
| 1990 – 1999 | 27.9% | 15.5% | 11.8% |
| 1980 – 1989 | 11.6% | 9.5% | 9.0% |
| 1970 – 1979 | 16.7% | 17.8% | 14.2% |
| 1960 – 1969 | 8.5% | 12.2% | 12.4% |
| 1950 – 1959 | 7.0% | 12.0% | 14.4% |
| 1940 – 1949 | 1.8% | 4.1% | 6.4% |
| 1939 or Earlier | 5.7% | 14.1% | 20.8% |
| Median Year Structure Built | 1990 | 1974 | 1965 |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (pre 2010), 2006-2010 ACS (2010-2016)



ECONOMY

The health of the local economy is central to the health of any community, and economic considerations play an important role in planning for future land use. The type of development that occurs in the city affects the city's revenue stream, the availability of local jobs, and access to goods and services. This section of the Plan assesses the state of Aurora's local economy, examines the financial position of the city, and discusses various economic development tools available to the city.

Employment

Employment is one fundamental component in understanding the city's economy. *Table 8*, below, identifies the occupational breakdown of the labor force in Aurora, Portage County, and the state. The city is dominated by management, business, science and arts occupations (48%) as well as sales and office occupations (26%). The proportion of the city's labor force that works in management, business, science and arts occupations is much greater than that of the county or state. The county has more than double the proportion of workforce employed in production, transportation and material moving occupations (17%) than the city (8%).

Table 8: Composition of Labor Force of Employed Population 16 Years and Older: 2015

| Governmental Unit | | Occupation | | | | |
|-------------------|---------|---|---------------------|------------------------------|--|---|
| | | Management, business, science, and arts occupations | Service occupations | Sales and office occupations | Natural resources, construction, & maintenance occupations | Production, transportation, and material moving occupations |
| City of Aurora | Number | 3,795 | 1,660 | 2,078 | 203 | 616 |
| | Percent | 48% | 21% | 26% | 3% | 8% |
| Portage County | | 32% | 18% | 25% | 8% | 17% |
| State of Ohio | | 35% | 18% | 24% | 8% | 16% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 ACS

As shown in *Table 9*, below, the top employment sector for residents of the city is educational, health, and social services (21.4%) followed by manufacturing (14.9%). When combined, the top two employment sectors for residents of the city account for over a third of employment in all sectors. The top employment sector in Portage County and the state is educational, health, and social services (22.5% and 24.3%, respectively).

Table 9: Employment by Industrial Sector: 2015

| Industrial Sector | City of Aurora | | Portage County | State of Ohio |
|---|----------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|
| | # Employed | % of Total | % of Total | % of Total |
| Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, & mining | 35 | 0.45% | 0.91% | 1.08% |
| Construction | 156 | 1.99% | 5.28% | 5.13% |
| Manufacturing | 1,310 | 16.68% | 18.37% | 15.49% |
| Wholesale trade | 264 | 3.36% | 2.30% | 2.75% |
| Retail trade | 1,167 | 14.86% | 12.69% | 11.65% |
| Transportation, warehousing, & utilities | 301 | 3.83% | 4.59% | 4.78% |
| Information | 215 | 2.74% | 3.92% | 3.95% |
| Finance, insurance, real estate, & rental leasing | 741 | 9.44% | 4.71% | 6.41% |
| Professional, scientific, management, administrative, & waste management services | 1,055 | 13.44% | 8.28% | 9.32% |
| Educational, health, and social services | 1,678 | 21.37% | 22.54% | 24.23% |
| Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation & food services | 736 | 9.37% | 11.20% | 9.10% |
| Other services (except public administration) | 233 | 2.97% | 4.92% | 4.47% |
| Public administration | 73 | 0.93% | 2.96% | 3.87% |
| TOTAL | 7,852 | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 ACS

Property Values

Property value trends are important indicators of community economic health. Property values are also important because the property taxes generated fund the schools and, to a much lesser extent, city government activities. In 2016, 78% of Aurora property taxes went to the schools and 8% went to the city, with most of the balance going to the county. The assessed property values of taxable property are presented in *Table 10*. Taxable property excludes tax exempt property types. As shown in *Table 10*, Aurora experienced a 2.95% decrease in assessed valuation of property from 2008 to 2011, but an overall 7.49% increase in assessed valuation of property between 2008 and 2016.

Table 10: Total Assessed Value of Taxable Property: 2008 - 2016

| Tax Year | City of Aurora | | | |
|----------|----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| | Value* | % Change 2008 - 2011 | % Change 2011 - 2016 | % Change 2008 - 2016 |
| 2008 | \$609,974,410 | - | - | - |
| 2011 | \$591,952,260 | -2.95% | - | - |
| 2016 | \$655,662,926 | - | 10.76% | 7.49% |

Source: Portage County Auditor

*Assessed taxable valuation per Portage County Auditor

The decrease in valuation between 2008 and 2011 can be attributed to the general downturn in the economy and subsequent nonexistent or slowing new growth and development during this period. The increase in valuation between 2011 and 2016 can be attributed to the ongoing economic recovery and rebound of the housing market. In general, the increase in valuation attributable to new development should be expected to decrease, such that the city will need to identify alternative sources for revenue. One possible source available to the city would be valuation resulting from the renovation of existing structures.

The information in Table 10 represents the value of all real taxable property, based on the Portage County Auditor's assessed values. While some might suggest that such values do not represent "true" property values, they are the values that determine the amount of revenue that comes from property tax and, therefore, are the only values suitable for the purposes of this Plan.

From a tax base perspective, it is also important for communities to find an appropriate balance between residential and nonresidential uses. Several recent studies have shown that on average, individual residential properties require more money in services such as school, fire, and police protection, than they contribute to the tax base. Conversely, nonresidential properties such as commercial and industrial properties, contribute more to the tax base than they use. Therefore, a community with a strong nonresidential tax base can provide quality services at a relatively low cost to residents. Although the city has a large percentage of residential property compared to nonresidential property (see *Table 11*), property taxes make up a small portion of the city's total revenue.

Table 11: Assessed Value by Property Type: 2016

| Property Type | City of Aurora | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| | Value* | % of Total |
| Residential/Agriculture | \$516,541,312 | 78.78% |
| Other** | \$128,258,118 | 19.56% |
| Public Utility | \$10,863,496 | 1.66% |
| Total | \$655,662,926 | 100.00% |

Source: Portage County Auditor

*Assessed taxable valuation per Portage County Auditor

**Consists of Commercial, Industrial and Mineral properties types

Table 12, below, provides information on assessed property values by property type between 2011 and 2016. For the city, property values for other (or nonresidential) property types have increased 22.89% between 2011 and 2016. The assessed value of residential and agricultural real property increased 7.73%, while public utility values increased by nearly 34% from 2011 to 2016.

Table 12: Assessed Property Values, by Property Type: 2011-2016

| Land Use | 2011 | | 2016 | | % Change in Assessed Value (2011-2016) |
|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------------|----------------|--|
| | Assessed Value | % of Total | Assessed Value | % of Total | |
| Residential/Agricultural | \$479,469,390 | 81.00% | \$516,541,312 | 78.78% | 7.73% |
| Other | \$104,368,490 | 17.60% | \$128,258,118 | 19.56% | 22.89% |
| Public Utility | \$8,114,380 | 1.40% | \$10,863,496 | 1.66% | 33.88% |
| Total citywide | \$591,952,260 | 100.00% | \$655,662,926 | 100.00% | 10.76% |

Source: Envision Group LLC, 2017. Assessed value totals as provided by the Portage County Auditor.

Changes in state tax law began phasing out the tangible property taxes in 2008, which was replaced by the Commercial Activity Tax. The Commercial Activity Tax generates revenue for the state by collecting on the gross proceeds generated by sales in Ohio, a portion of which is funneled down to the local level.

Financial Position

This section includes a review of current city finances. Before discussing those areas specifically reviewed, a general discussion of municipal finances is appropriate.

In terms of revenues, the city collects revenues, directly and indirectly, from various sources, including local taxes, intergovernmental revenues, special assessments, service charges, fines/licenses/permits, and other sources.

The city expends money for various purposes, such as public health, public safety, recreation, utilities, transportation, general government, personal services, travel, contractual services, supplies, and materials, as well as for capital improvements and repayment of debts owed.

As a customary way of organizing and managing city finances, various “funds” are created to keep track of money used for like purposes. The most important and indicative fund when looking at Aurora’s future is the General Fund, which is the fund through which most of city government operates.

A review of city finances begins with a summary of city revenues and expenses for all funds between 2012 and 2016. *Table 13*, below, includes this information.

Table 13: City of Aurora Revenues and Expenses (All Funds): 2012 - 2016

| Fund Type | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|---|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Revenues | | | | | |
| General | \$ 14,452,105 | \$ 15,313,206 | \$ 15,976,907 | \$ 16,264,619 | \$ 16,759,218 |
| Bond Retirement | \$ 483,780 | \$ 900,641 | \$ 900,699 | \$ 896,913 | \$ 902,927 |
| Special Revenue | \$ 3,448,936 | \$ 3,127,096 | \$ 3,053,248 | \$ 2,569,297 | \$ 2,629,812 |
| Capital Projects | \$ 2,350,519 | \$ 3,752,390 | \$ 2,287,684 | \$ 2,081,077 | \$ 1,752,063 |
| Enterprise | \$ 7,201,644 | \$ 7,681,716 | \$ 8,137,230 | \$ 8,369,745 | \$ 9,314,274 |
| Trust & Agency | \$ 372,468 | \$ 563,974 | \$ 469,969 | \$ 696,901 | \$ 833,398 |
| Total Revenues | \$ 28,309,452 | \$ 31,339,023 | \$ 30,825,737 | \$ 30,878,552 | \$ 32,191,692 |
| Expenses | | | | | |
| General | \$ 14,476,327 | \$ 14,984,929 | \$ 15,185,729 | \$ 15,490,500 | \$ 16,094,171 |
| Bond Retirement | \$ 432,202 | \$ 904,778 | \$ 904,883 | \$ 899,801 | \$ 905,367 |
| Special Revenue | \$ 2,665,536 | \$ 3,409,406 | \$ 2,750,013 | \$ 3,084,969 | \$ 3,016,625 |
| Capital Projects | \$ 2,559,253 | \$ 2,048,343 | \$ 1,146,799 | \$ 2,400,229 | \$ 1,967,293 |
| Enterprise | \$ 7,012,482 | \$ 6,427,911 | \$ 6,801,107 | \$ 6,688,017 | \$ 8,154,769 |
| Trust & Agency | \$ 244,972 | \$ 356,709 | \$ 606,914 | \$ 390,044 | \$ 579,083 |
| Total Expenses | \$ 27,390,772 | \$ 28,132,076 | \$ 27,395,445 | \$ 28,953,560 | \$ 30,717,308 |
| Total Revenues Over/(Under) Expenses | \$ 918,680 | \$ 3,206,947 | \$ 3,430,292 | \$ 1,924,992 | \$ 1,474,384 |

Source: City of Aurora Finance Department, 2017

Between 2012 and 2016, revenues increased in the General, Enterprise, Trust and Agency, and Bond Retirement funds while decreasing in Special Revenue and Capital Projects funds. On the expenses side of the financial equation, all funds except Capital Projects increased expenditures. Overall, the fiscal health of the City of Aurora seems to be very stable with revenues exceeding expenditures in all five years analyzed. The city should continue five-year financial planning efforts. The review of city finances continues with a summary of city revenues and expenses for the General Fund only in *Table 14*.

Table 14: City of Aurora Revenues and Expenses (General Fund Only): 2012 - 2016

| Category | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Revenues | | | | | |
| Property Taxes | \$ 1,263,566 | \$ 1,219,162 | \$ 1,214,802 | \$ 1,242,435 | \$ 1,278,256 |
| Income Taxes | \$ 10,595,601 | \$ 11,622,750 | \$ 12,530,534 | \$ 13,412,191 | \$ 13,327,559 |
| Other Local Taxes | \$ 1,569,549 | \$ 1,097,773 | \$ 987,591 | \$ 537,387 | \$ 551,543 |
| Intergovernmental Rev. | \$ 448,429 | \$ 351,286 | \$ 369,531 | \$ 367,545 | \$ 384,981 |
| Charges for Services | \$ 223,173 | \$ 466,748 | \$ 404,606 | \$ 263,631 | \$ 270,186 |
| Licenses & Permits | \$ 215,604 | \$ 250,235 | \$ 291,137 | \$ 281,009 | \$ 373,627 |
| Fines & Forfeitures | \$ 17,496 | \$ 17,388 | \$ 20,325 | \$ 22,020 | \$ 30,503 |
| Interest Income | \$ 92,448 | \$ 74,935 | \$ 57,119 | \$ 68,513 | \$ 186,299 |
| Other Financing Sources | \$ 18,120 | \$ 20,277 | \$ 17,923 | \$ 69,863 | \$ 305,984 |
| Transfers & Advances | \$ 8,118 | \$ 78,453 | \$ 83,339 | \$ 24 | \$ 50,280 |
| Total Revenues | \$ 14,452,105 | \$ 15,199,006 | \$ 15,976,907 | \$ 16,264,619 | \$ 16,759,218 |
| Category | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
| Expenses | | | | | |
| Police | \$ 4,134,635 | \$ 4,522,444 | \$ 4,405,320 | \$ 4,439,257 | \$ 4,808,313 |
| Fire | \$ 2,096,326 | \$ 2,291,446 | \$ 2,167,102 | \$ 2,334,773 | \$ 2,540,900 |
| Planning, Zoning & Bldg. | \$ 586,202 | \$ 669,358 | \$ 647,359 | \$ 700,686 | \$ 763,859 |
| Engineering | \$ 202,174 | \$ 208,920 | \$ 209,937 | \$ 205,381 | \$ 228,753 |
| Service | \$ 1,994,991 | \$ 2,156,551 | \$ 2,124,707 | \$ 2,073,144 | \$ 2,271,565 |
| Mayor | \$ 290,366 | \$ 413,334 | \$ 408,338 | \$ 494,851 | \$ 527,218 |
| Finance | \$ 889,068 | \$ 986,718 | \$ 1,001,722 | \$ 965,774 | \$ 982,821 |
| Legal | \$ 303,777 | \$ 353,310 | \$ 383,209 | \$ 372,668 | \$ 348,974 |
| Legislative | \$ 285,473 | \$ 259,926 | \$ 285,802 | \$ 256,247 | \$ 253,440 |
| Civil Service | \$ 16,260 | \$ 11,638 | \$ 19,481 | \$ 12,809 | \$ 16,008 |
| Other / Contingencies | \$ 293,158 | \$ 156,993 | \$ 145,751 | \$ 297,911 | \$ 315,321 |
| Interfund Transfers | \$ 3,383,895 | \$ 2,954,290 | \$ 3,387,000 | \$ 3,337,000 | \$ 3,037,000 |
| Total Expenses | \$ 14,476,327 | \$ 14,984,929 | \$ 15,185,729 | \$ 15,490,500 | \$ 16,094,171 |
| Total Revenues | \$ (24,223) | \$ 214,078 | \$ 791,177 | \$ 774,118 | \$ 665,047 |
| Over/(Under) Expenses | | | | | |



2017 Master Plan

Chapter 2: Inventory & Analysis

The information in *Table 14* illustrates the fluctuation in local taxes and intergovernmental revenues, which generally correlate to changes in the national and regional economies. This data demonstrates changes in expenditures in almost every category, in response to changes in needs and in the level of available revenues.

There are some trends apparent in General Fund revenues that warrant discussion. Predictably, revenues from the “other local taxes” category declined dramatically from 2012 to 2016, as this category includes estate taxes which were eliminated with the passage of House Bill 153 effective January 1, 2013.

Other revenue sources generally increased or remained steady between 2012 and 2016. Annual income tax revenue increased by nearly \$2.7 M between 2012 and 2016 as the local economy recovered and unemployment decreased. The revenues generated by charges for services spiked in 2013 and 2014 correlating with an increase in new housing starts generating engineering and building inspection revenue. Lastly, the rather significant increase in revenue from interest income, which nearly tripled between 2015 and 2016, is the result of a recent sharp increase in interest rates.

In terms of expenditures, the costs associated with general government operations increased particularly Police, Fire and Service.

One method of evaluating a community’s financial condition is to look at its General Fund Cash Balance. This allows a community to determine whether current revenues support current expenses, or whether past cash reserves are being used to subsidize the General Fund in order to keep it in balance.

Table 15, below, demonstrates that the city’s General Fund Cash Balance has steadily increased between 2012 and 2016.

Table 15: City of Aurora General Fund Cash Balance: 2012 - 2016

| Cash Balance | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| As of January 1 | \$ 6,868,215 | \$ 6,843,992 | \$ 7,058,070 | \$ 7,849,247 | \$ 8,623,366 |
| As of December 31 | \$ 6,843,992 | \$ 7,058,070 | \$ 7,849,247 | \$ 8,623,366 | \$ 9,288,413 |
| Net Change | \$ (24,223) | \$ 214,078 | \$ 791,177 | \$ 774,118 | \$ 665,047 |

Source: City of Aurora Finance Department, 2017

Income Tax

Municipalities depend largely upon income tax revenues to pay for many services that they provide. Income tax revenues made up 79.5% of the City of Aurora’s General Fund revenues in 2016. The amount of income tax revenues has increased from \$10 million in 2011 to \$13.3 million in 2016.

Approximately 83% of the city’s 2016 income tax revenue was generated by Aurora businesses through employee income tax withholdings and net profit tax. This warrants the increasing efforts of the city, through the Mayor and Economic Development Director, to attract and retain businesses in the city.

Tax Comparison to Adjacent Communities

Table 16, below, provides the City of Aurora’s property and income tax rates as compared to nearby communities for tax year 2015 (pay/collect 2016).

Table 16: Tax Rate Comparison

| Community | Property Tax (Effective Rate) | | Income Tax Rate |
|---------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| | Residential / Agricultural | Commercial / Industrial | |
| Aurora | 61.1 | 63.5 | 2.00% |
| Chagrin Falls | 85.5 | 95.7 | 1.85% |
| Hudson | 70.8 | 87.3 | 2.00% |
| Solon | 74.0 | 87.6 | 2.00% |
| Streetsboro | 56.0 | 59.3 | 2.00% |
| Tallmadge | 73.7 | 80.9 | 2.00% |
| Twinsburg | 59.1 | 64.8 | 2.00% |

Source: Portage, Summit and Cuyahoga County Auditor; RITA

The City of Aurora has a very low residential and commercial real property tax rate, particularly when compared to other “up-scale” suburban communities such as Hudson, Solon and Chagrin Falls. The city’s income tax rate is in line with most nearby communities.

Future Considerations

The city is in relatively good financial standing at the present time having had “clean” audits from the Auditor of State since at least 1998. As the city grows and the existing infrastructure ages, more demands will be placed on existing revenue streams to fund proper maintenance activities. The city should continue seeking grant funding for programs related to infrastructure improvements, neighborhood revitalization and historic preservation, although it is often deemed ineligible because of its high median income.

In addition, as the population ages and a larger percentage of city residents are living on fixed incomes and, therefore, not contributing payroll taxes, other revenue sources need to be cultivated. The city is fortunate to have a strong commercial and industrial base which it should continue to expand. In addition, the city should continue to invest resources into attracting young professionals and further diversify its tax base.

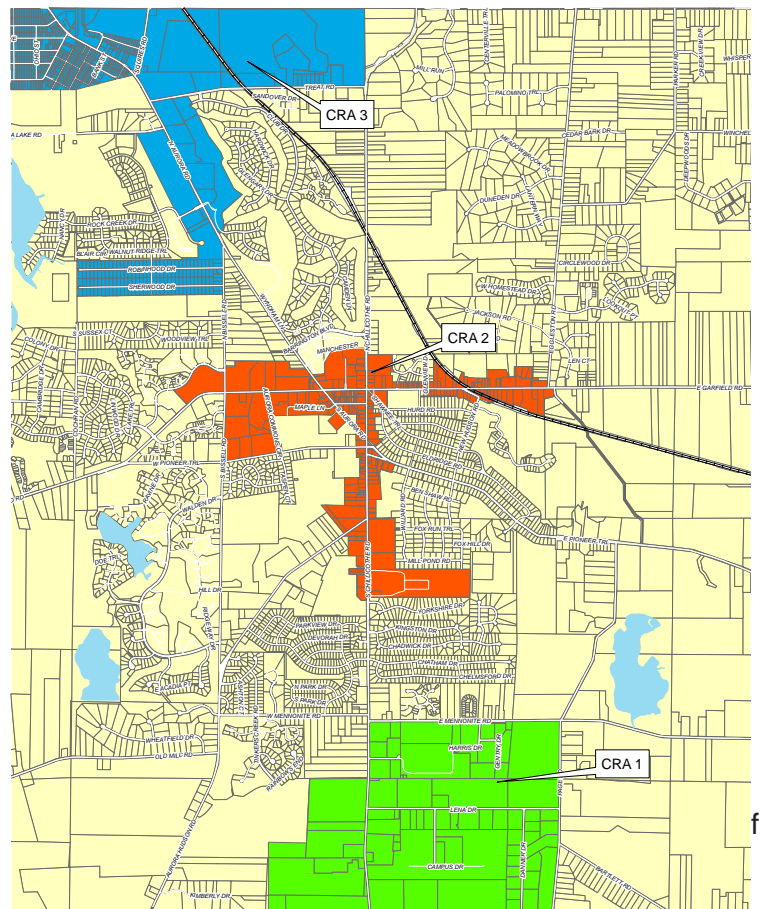
Economic Development Incentives

Currently, new and expanding businesses located in the city’s Community Reinvestment Areas (CRA) are eligible for valuable tax incentives such as abatements. The city has also begun using income tax incentives to attract new businesses. The city has three CRA areas covering the industrial, commercial mixed-use and older residential area of the city. Refer to *Map 2: Community Reinvestment Areas* for the location of the city’s three CRAs.

According to the Finance Department, the Tax Incentive Review Committee (TIRC) annually reviews all the current tax abatements within the city. It tracks the status of the abatement and ensures the resident/business is in compliance with the terms of the agreement. After council approval, this information is reported annually to the Ohio Department of Development.

The Aurora Board of Education (BOE) must be notified of all proposed abatements, but their approval is only required in certain circumstances. BOE approval is not needed for abatements within Community Reinvestment Area (CRA) #1 since it was created before 7/1/1994. Also, the BOE passed a resolution stating that the city does not need BOE approval to grant a tax abatement with an exemption rate up to 75% in CRA #2 and #3. Note, however, that if the proposed project will generate new annual payroll exceeding \$1 million, the payroll income tax revenues must be split 50/50 between the city and the BOE.

**Map 2:
Community Reinvestment Areas (CRA)**





ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

The natural environment plays a large role in planning for future development. Environmental conditions, such as topography and soils, can often pose constraints that limit development. Other environmental features, such as parks and open space, may not pose constraints to development, but should be preserved due to the valuable functions and benefits they provide, such as recreational opportunities and aesthetic beauty. When and where development and redevelopment occur, impacts to the environment should be minimized and mitigated. This section of the Plan provides an overview of Aurora’s natural resources to ensure that environmental considerations are incorporated into future land use planning.

Surface Water

The City of Aurora is located in the Cuyahoga and Chagrin watersheds. The western half of the city is located in the Cuyahoga Watershed, while the eastern half is located in the Chagrin Watershed. The city is comprised of 6 sub-watersheds shown in *Map 3*:

Chagrin Watershed Sub-watersheds:

1. Aurora Branch Above McFarland Creek
2. Aurora Branch at Aurora
3. Aurora Branch at SR 306

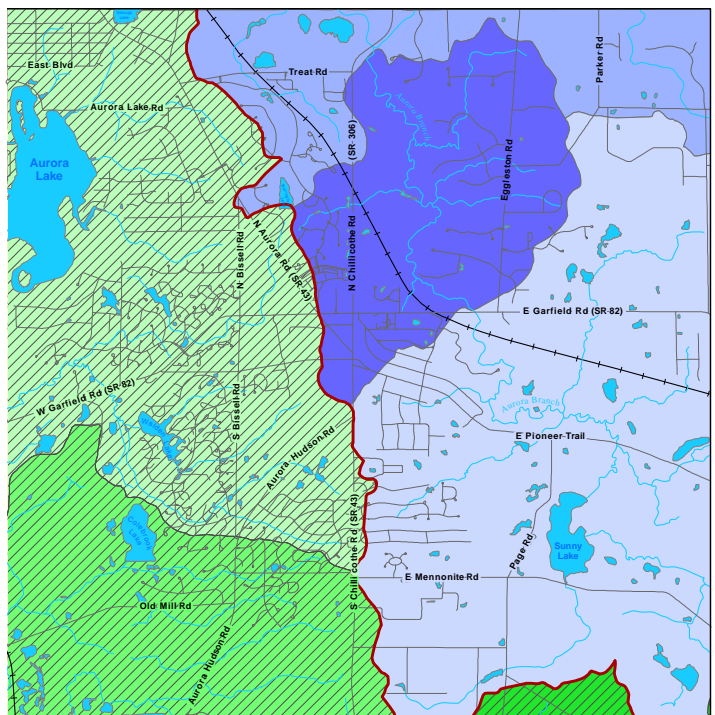
Cuyahoga Watershed Sub-watersheds:

1. Cuyahoga River Below Black Brook
2. Pond Brook
3. Tinker’s Creek Below Pond Brook

The Aurora Branch of the Chagrin River runs north through the eastern portion of the city through Sunny Lake Park and the former Aurora Golf and Country Club property entering Geauga County near SR 306. The city contains Geauga Lake, Colebrook Lake, Walden Lake, Aurora Lake and Sunny Lake. Aurora Lake is a 305 acre private lake located in the northwest portion of the city, adjacent to the Summit County boundary.

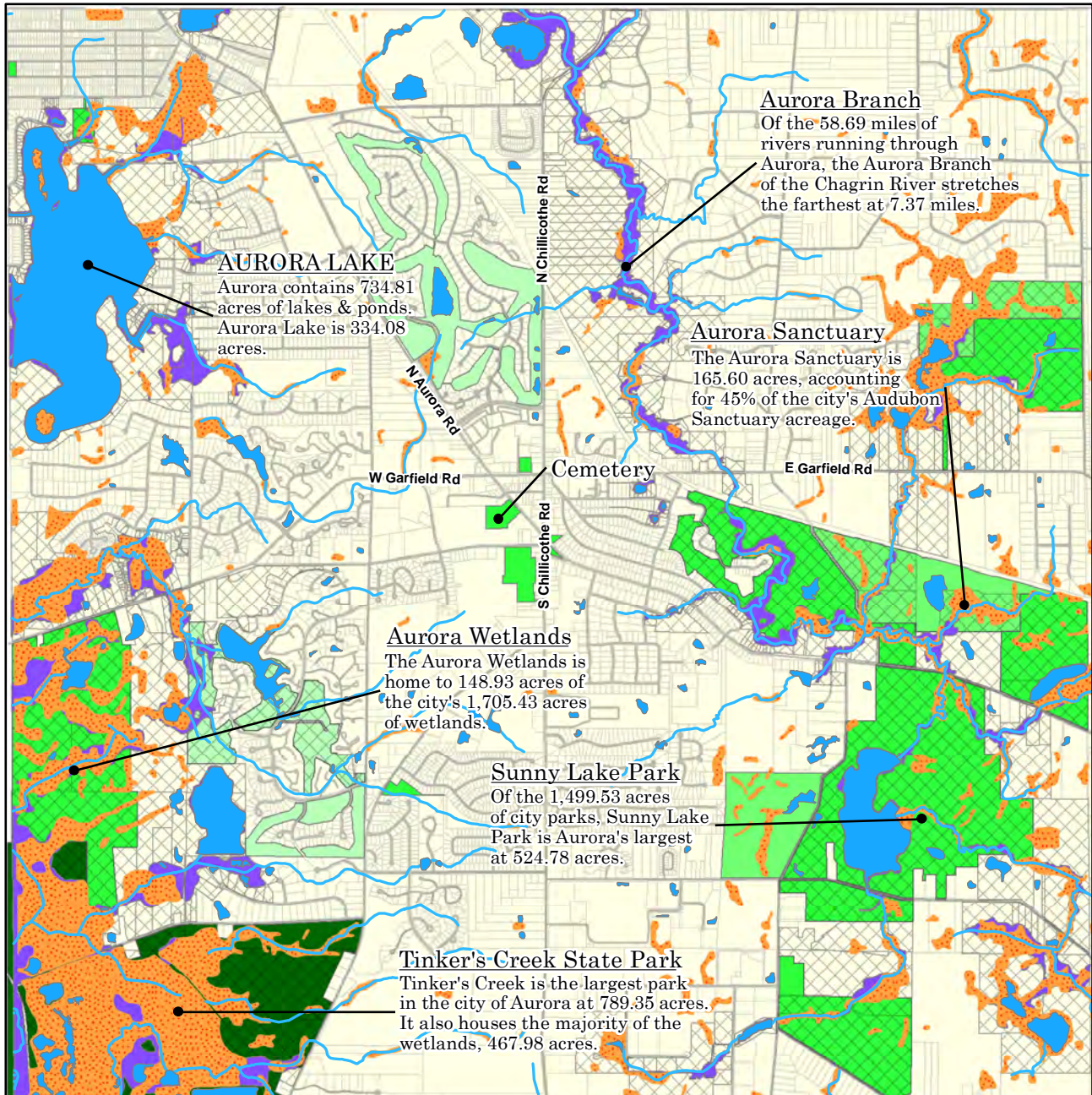
Aurora Lake is flanked by the Aurora Shores subdivision to the north and west, Hawthorn to the east and Aurora Hill Colony (Weston Woods) to the south. Sunny Lake is a 68 acre lake located in the southeast portion of the city, east of Page Road between East Pioneer Trail and East Mennonite Road. Sunny Lake is the primary asset that draws visitors to Sunny Lake Park, which is the largest city-owned park in Aurora (605 acres). The locations of streams and water bodies in Aurora are shown on *Map 4* on the next page.

Map 3: Watersheds

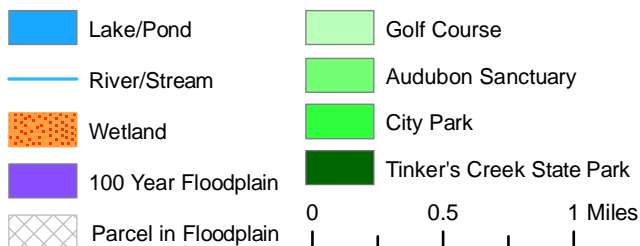


| Cuyahoga Watershed | | Chagrin Watershed | |
|---------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|---|
| Pond Brook |  | Aurora Branch at Aurora |  |
| Tinker's Creek Above Pond Brook |  | Aurora Branch Above McFarland Creek |  |
| Lake Rockwell |  | Aurora Branch at Route 306 |  |

Map 4: Wetlands, Parks, Golf Courses, and Floodplain



Wetlands, Parks, Golf Courses, and Floodplain



Flood Hazard Areas

Floodplains are areas adjacent to streams that experience regular or periodic flooding. *Map 4* displays the location of 100-year floodplains in the city. A storm with the intensity to flood the 100-year floodplain has a one in 100 (or 1%) chance on average of occurring in any given year. Floodplains within the City of Aurora are generally found along the Aurora Branch of the Chagrin River and adjacent to various small streams throughout the city. Flood prone areas are also located within the Tinker's Creek State Park and Aurora Wetlands Preserve. Fortunately, the flood prone areas within the city generally do not contain structures and, therefore, avoid the risk of flooding and associated property damage.

Groundwater

Geologic formations that are capable of yielding enough water to support a spring or well are called aquifers. The ability of an aquifer to transmit and store water is influenced by the materials that make up the formation, such as gravel, sand, or bedrock. The groundwater resources for the City of Aurora are characterized primarily by groundwater developed from sand, sand and gravel, and sandstone formations, which produce yields between 0 to 3 gallons per minute and between 3 to 10 gallons per minute. This yield would sustain private domestic demand and is located generally in the western third of the city. In addition, there are also areas in the central and northeast portions of the city that could sustain yields between 25 and 100 gallons per minute.

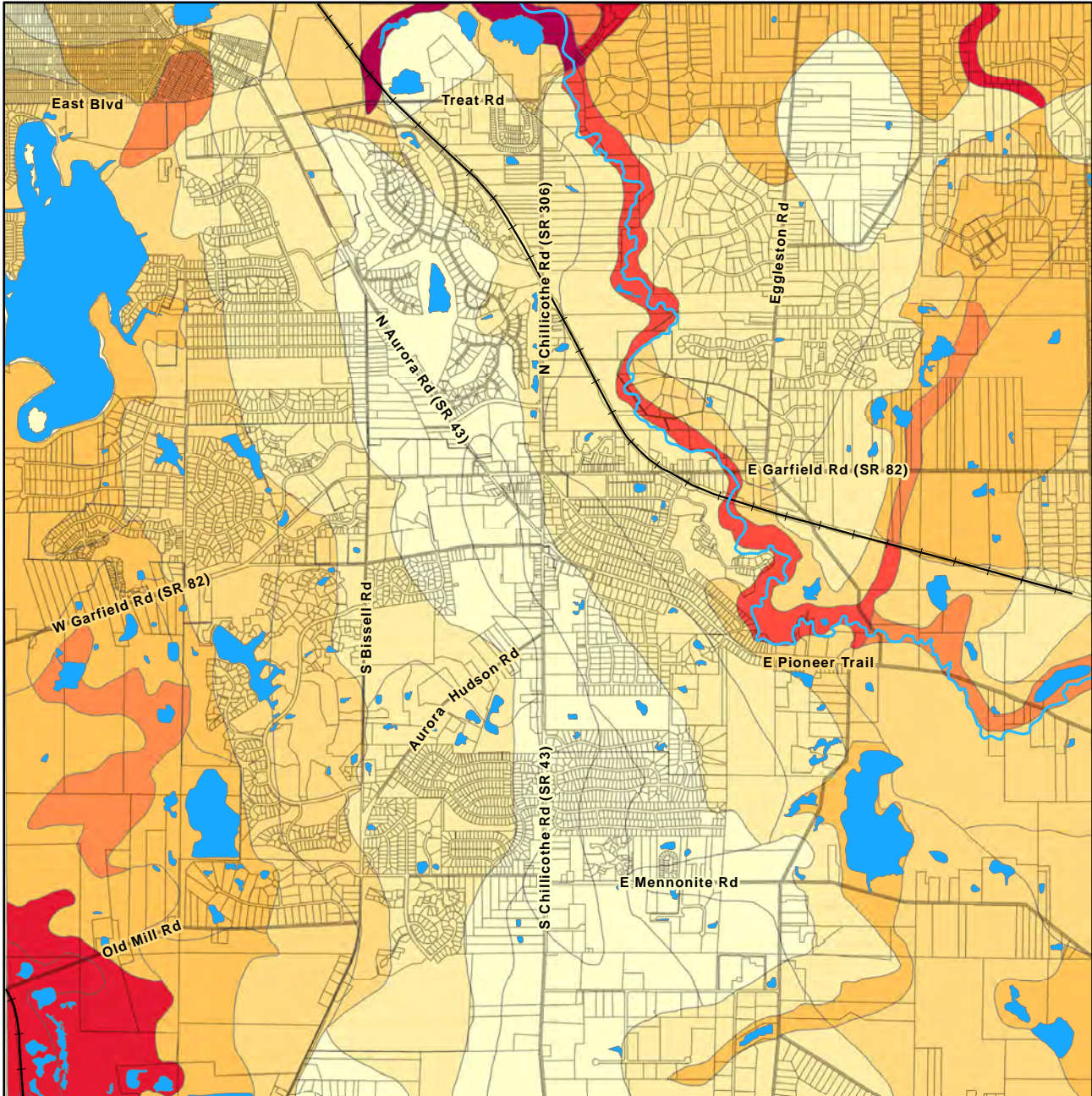
Groundwater Pollution Potential

Although approximately 5,200 parcels (6,593 acres) or 68% of the city is served by a public water system, groundwater should still be considered an important resource to be conserved for future generations. In determining the potential for groundwater pollution in an area, the U.S. EPA considers seven factors: depth to the water table, net recharge, aquifer media, soil media, topography, the impact of the vadose zone media, and the hydraulic conductivity of the aquifer. These factors are combined and weighted to produce a composite index that measures the relative susceptibility of an area to groundwater pollution. Using this system, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) has produced Groundwater Pollution Potential maps that show areas vulnerable to groundwater pollution.

Map 5 (see next page) delineates those areas where aquifers are most vulnerable to pollution. The area of highest groundwater pollution potential is located in the extreme southwest corner of the city, within Tinker's Creek State Park. In general, the city is characterized by low groundwater pollution potential, with the highest index rating being 159- the middle of the scale. Higher intensity land uses, such as industrial uses, should be located in areas with low ground water pollution potential to limit potential ground water contamination. In line with sound planning principles, the groundwater pollution potential of the industrially zoned land along the city's southern boundary is low, with index ratings in the low to middle 80s.

The city, with assistance from the Chagrin River Watershed Partners, has worked consistently to protect, restore, and improve water quality within the Chagrin River Watershed. The city's purchase of various farms and other large properties has helped to ensure that vital groundwater and wetland resources are preserved in perpetuity, showing the city's commitment to preserving vital city natural resources for the enjoyment of future generations.

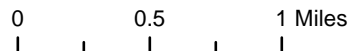
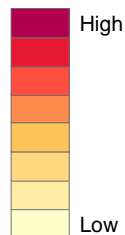
Map 5: Groundwater Pollution Potential



Groundwater Pollution Potential



Created on 03/09/17 City of Aurora; Groundwater data downloaded from geospatial.ohiodnr.gov



Topography & Soils

The City of Aurora is located in the Killbuck-Glaciated Pittsburgh Plateau ecoregion which is characterized by ridges and uplands generally above 1200', covered with thin drift and dissected by steep valleys. Generally, development should be discouraged on slopes greater than 12% grade. Areas within the city that contain slopes greater than 12% grade are located 1) east of SR 306, north of SR 82; and 2) north, south and east of Sunny Lake. Development on steep slopes should be discouraged, but if development occurs, proper restrictions on building placement and design should be employed to ensure the safety of homeowners and surrounding residents.

According to the Portage County Soil Survey, the soils found in the City of Aurora formed mostly in glacial till on uplands. Most of Aurora contains the Mahoning Ellsworth soil association, which is characterized by somewhat poorly drained and moderately well drained soils. The western boundary of the city contains the Sebring-Holly-Caneadea soil association, which displays poorly drained and somewhat poorly drained soils. Although development restrictions associated with most soil associations can be overcome with careful engineering, the soil characteristics of a particular site should be determined and properly analyzed prior to development.

Wetlands

Wetlands are generally defined as areas that are inundated or saturated with water throughout the year, or during a significant part of the year. This presence of water is the defining factor that produces the types of soils, plants, and animal communities typical of wetlands. For the purposes of regulation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACE) identifies wetlands based on 3 things: the presence of water, the presence of soils that form under flooded or saturated conditions (hydric soils), and the presence of plants adapted to hydric soils.

Wetlands provide many important functions that are critical to the health of ecosystems and local communities. Wetlands improve water quality by removing pollutants, sediments, and excess nutrients; they control flooding and recharge aquifers; they provide crucial habitat for many plant and animal species; and they provide recreational opportunities such as bird watching and hunting.

Map 4: Wetlands and Floodplains shows the locations of the most prominent wetland types present in Aurora. A majority of wetlands within the city are located on city-owned property or within the Aurora Wetlands Preserve and Tinker's Creek State Park.

Federal law regulates the discharge of dredged and fill material into navigable waters and adjacent wetlands. If a developer wishes to alter a wetland, he or she must first obtain a Clean Water Act Section 404 permit from the U.S. ACE and a Section 401 water quality certification from the Ohio EPA. When wetlands are destroyed, the loss is mitigated through the creation of new wetlands. The amount of mitigation required varies with the type of wetland being destroyed, but developers in Ohio generally have to provide 1.5 to 3 acres of new wetlands for every acre of wetland lost.

As of 2001, isolated wetlands that are not connected to navigable waters are no longer under the jurisdiction of the Federal government, and alteration or destruction of these wetlands does not require a 404 permit or a 401 certification. To fill this regulatory gap, the State of Ohio created an isolated wetlands permitting process administered by the Ohio EPA.

The City of Aurora has requirements to protect wetlands and ensure that developers obtain the proper permits. Wetland delineation is required on all development sites and the city requires a buffer zone around wetlands. In addition, wetlands are preserved by encouraging open space or conservation subdivisions that channel development away from on-site wetlands and areas with hydric soils.



Additional Considerations

Historically the City of Aurora has taken steps, such as bond issues, to preserve open space and natural features, much of which has been preserved as city-owned parks (see the Community Facilities and Infrastructure section for information related to parks and open space in the city). Open space provides numerous social, economic, and health benefits such as increasing quality of life, attracting economic investment, and providing recreational opportunities.

In response to residents' desires for additional trails, the city should work to implement the goals, objectives and recommendations set forth in the March 2009 Connectivity Study and work closely with private property owners to identify opportunities for additional trails throughout the city. In addition, when considering the acquisition of additional land for trails, priority status should be given to areas that are adjacent to or between existing conservation and recreation areas. The city recently purchased five acres adjacent to the Hartman property and fronting on SR 82, which will provide a future connection from that outdoor recreational area to the south. The acquisition of such ideally located land would provide maximum benefit and enjoyment to the city and its residents.



TRANSPORTATION

Transportation systems are vital for moving people and goods and serving existing businesses. They also play a major role in guiding the location and type of new development that occurs. The following section provides an overview of the transportation network in the City of Aurora and outlines improvements that are planned for the future.

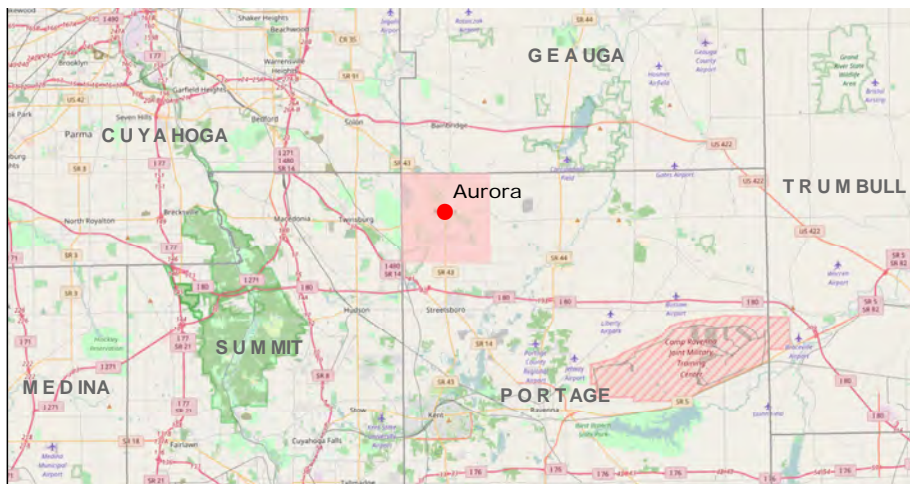
Transportation Network

The basic transportation network in a community consists of the pathways and facilities used to move people and products from one location to another. Usually the network includes the following:

- Facilities for automobile and truck transport
- Railways, rail stations, and intermodal facilities
- Waterways and ports
- Airways and airports
- Bicycle circulation facilities
- Pedestrian ways

Each of these modes of transportation will be considered in the following sections. The locations of the city within the regional transportation network is shown below in *Map 6*.

Map 6: Regional Transportation Network



Regional Transportation Network

County shapefile retrieved from census.gov/Basemap provided by ESRI (Open Street Map)



Functional Classification Of Roads

Functional classification is the process of grouping streets and highways into classes, or systems, according to the character of service they provide. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) promulgates the classification scheme. The designation of federal functional classification is made at least once every 10 years following the decennial census taken by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, or whenever required by federal regulation. The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) Functional Classification Committee works in conjunction with ODOT District Offices and various local government entities to establish the classifications.

The federal functional classification of urban roads (the City of Aurora has been determined to be urban according for Census and FHWA purposes) includes the following:

Arterial Highway System

The arterial highway system provides the highest level of mobility at the highest speed and accounts for the largest proportion of total travel. Roads are designated as arterials when they serve one or more of the following purposes:

- Travel to and through urbanized areas
- Travel to and through small urban areas
- National defense (roads designated by the Federal government as part of the National Strategic Highway Corridor Network (STRAHNET).
- Interstate and regional commerce
- Access to airports, seaports, and major rail terminals or intermodal transfer facilities
- Access to major public facilities
- Access to minor public facilities

Arterials generally have higher design standards than other roads, often with multiple lanes and some degree of access control. An example of an arterial network is the Federal Interstate Highway System. Arterials can be further subdivided into the two categories described below and shown in *Map 7*.

Principal Arterials

The urban principal arterial system includes interstate highways, other freeways and expressways, and other principal arterials. The urban principal arterial system serves the major centers of activity of a metropolitan area, and has the highest traffic volume corridors and the longest trips. It should carry a high portion of the total urban area travel on a minimum of mileage. It carries most trips entering and leaving urban areas, and it provides continuity for all rural arterials that intercept urban boundaries. Principal arterials located in the city include the following:

- State Route 306 (North Chillicothe Road)
- State Route 43 (North/South Aurora Road, South Chillicothe Road)

Minor Arterials

The urban minor arterial system provides service for trips of moderate length and at a lower level of mobility. They connect with urban principal arterial roads and rural collector routes. State Route 82 (West/East Garfield Road) is the only minor arterial located in the city.

Collector Road System

Collectors are typically two-lane roads that link major land uses to each other and to arterials. They are designed for shorter trips at lower speeds and provide a lower degree of mobility than arterials. Roads are designated as collectors when they serve one or more of the following purposes:

- Interconnection of major thoroughfares
- Interconnection of minor thoroughfares
- Access to concentrated land use areas
- Access to diffused land use areas

The urban collector system provides traffic circulation within residential neighborhoods and commercial and industrial areas. Unlike arterials, collector roads may penetrate residential communities, distributing traffic from the arterials to the ultimate destination for many motorists. Urban collectors also channel traffic from local streets onto the arterial system. Collector streets in the city include the following and are identified on Map 4: Transportation:

- Aurora-Hudson Road
- North/South Bissell Road
- West/East Mennonite Road
- Orchard Avenue
- Treat Road

Local Street System

Local streets represent the largest element in the road network in terms of mileage. For rural and urban areas, all public road mileage below the collector system is considered local. Local streets provide basic access between residential and commercial properties, connecting with higher order highways. A route meeting this purpose would connect a home, work, or entertainment trip by connecting the final destination to the roads serving longer trips. Examples of roads meeting the purpose described in this paragraph include those located within a residential subdivision or a cluster of commercial buildings.

Functional Classification & Master Planning

The functional classification of roads according to federal standards serves a variety of purposes, from funding allocations to speed limits and intersection design. For the purpose of the Master Plan, the functional classification of roads has two broad implications.

Arterials are intended to get automobiles from one location to another. However, most roads evolve into an arterial from a lesser classification. Thus many arterials that previously provided access to adjacent properties are now expected to speed cars along to their next destination. This conflict between cars speeding along to their next destination and slower cars entering and exiting can be a major source of traffic accidents.

For the highest levels of arterials – interstate highways and other freeways – access is restricted, and entering and exiting traffic flow is controlled. For all other arterials, access management is an ongoing concern. The city should continue to develop access management plans for arterials.

The second planning concern is to prevent access management problems before they occur. The city has been reviewing and revising its zoning and site plan review requirements and subdivision regulations to assure that measures are in place to limit and manage access points along the arterials in the city. When feasible, the city restricts access on principal and minor arterials.

Roadway Pavement Conditions

According to Pavement Condition Ratings (PCR) in the 2016 PCR Report prepared by GPD Group for the Aurora Service Department, the city contains 131.39 center line miles of local roads with only 2.55 miles of those local roads having pavement rated as Poor or Very Poor, with most of those roads having been repaved in 2016 and 2017 following the report. According to ODOT's Transportation Information Mapping System, there are 13.14 centerline miles of state routes located within the city limits with all of those roadway segments having pavement rated as Very Good, Good or Fair. Key sections of State Route 43 and State Route 82 were repaved in 2016. The city has been aggressive for several years in its annual paving program to address the roads in the poorest condition.

Rail Transportation

Industrial Rail Access

According to rail ownership information provided by AMATS, the City of Aurora does not have any industrial rail access. The city contains one railroad, owned by Norfolk Southern but not currently operational, which runs from the southeast just north of East Pioneer Trail though the former golf course northwest through Barrington just west of State Route 43.

If the right-of-way is abandoned, the city should explore the feasibility of using the old Norfolk Southern tracks as a potential hike and bike trail.

Passenger and Commuter Rail Service

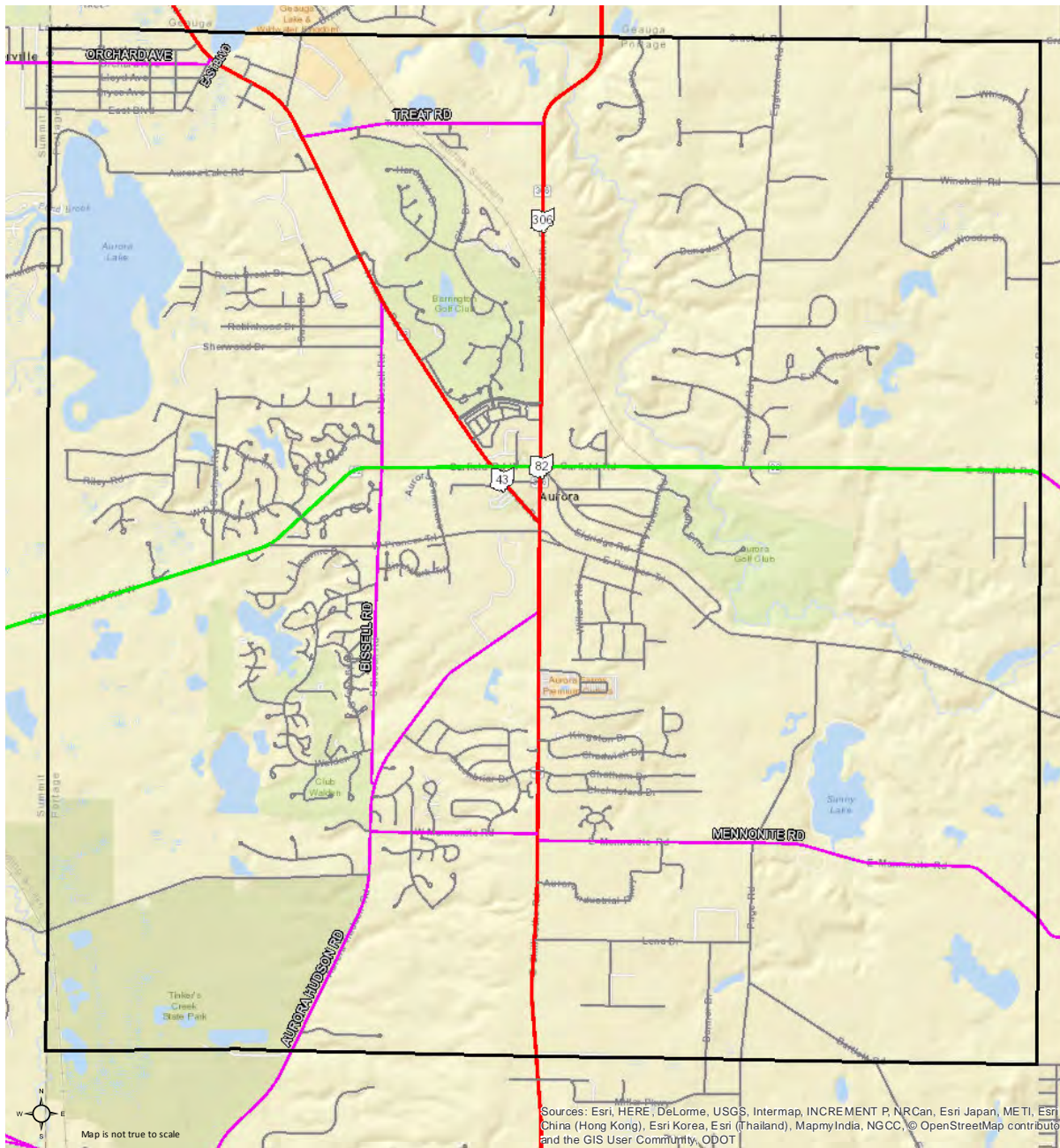
The nearest Amtrak stations are in Cleveland and Alliance, which are 30 and 34 miles away, respectively.

Air Transportation

Commercial passenger and air cargo services are available to Aurora residents and businesses from the Akron-Canton Regional Airport and Cleveland Hopkins International Airport, which are 37 and 33 miles away, respectively.

The Portage County Regional Airport is located in Shalersville Township, southeast of Aurora, and is capable of accommodating light commercial aircraft. Similarly, the Kent State University airport, located in Stow (Summit County), facilitates local general aviation for smaller aircraft.

Map 7: Functional Classification of Roadways



Legend

Functional Class

- 3 - Principal Arterial
- 4 - Minor Arterial
- 5 - Major Collector
- 7 - Local

This map depicts the Roadway Functional Classifications as of January 1, 2015. Functional Classification is the grouping of roads, streets, and highways in a hierarchy based on the type of highway service they provide. Functional Classifications as defined by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) are as follows:

Source: ODOT Transportation Information Mapping System

Bicycle and Pedestrian Circulation

Following completion of the 2008 Master Plan, the city developed a Connectivity Study. The study analyzed the location of existing paths, sidewalks and trails and made recommendations for the type and location of future bicycle and pedestrian circulation-related improvements throughout the city. Pursuant to a community and AMATS “Bike’n’Brainstorm” discussion last year, a bike route is in the process of being delineated across the southern side of the city.

According to the Connectivity Study, at the time the city had 131.5 miles of roadway, but only 53.3 miles of existing paths, sidewalks and trails, many of which lacked connectivity to one another. Since 2014 the city has installed about 3,000 feet of sidewalks, with several sidewalk projects pending that add 3,000 more feet of sidewalks on South Chillicothe Road in the downtown area and near the south residential areas. Refer to *Map 8: Existing Sidewalks, Trails and Paths* for the location of existing pedestrian circulation infrastructure.

The study determined that the city’s Town Center District should be considered the starting point to accommodate pedestrian connectivity to the city’s service, retail and recreation assets. Work completed or in progress includes the following:

- North side of State Route 82 from Bissell Rd to State Route 306; and
- East Pioneer Trail from State Route 43 to Williard Rd, and State Route 43 from Pioneer Trail to Chatham Dr.

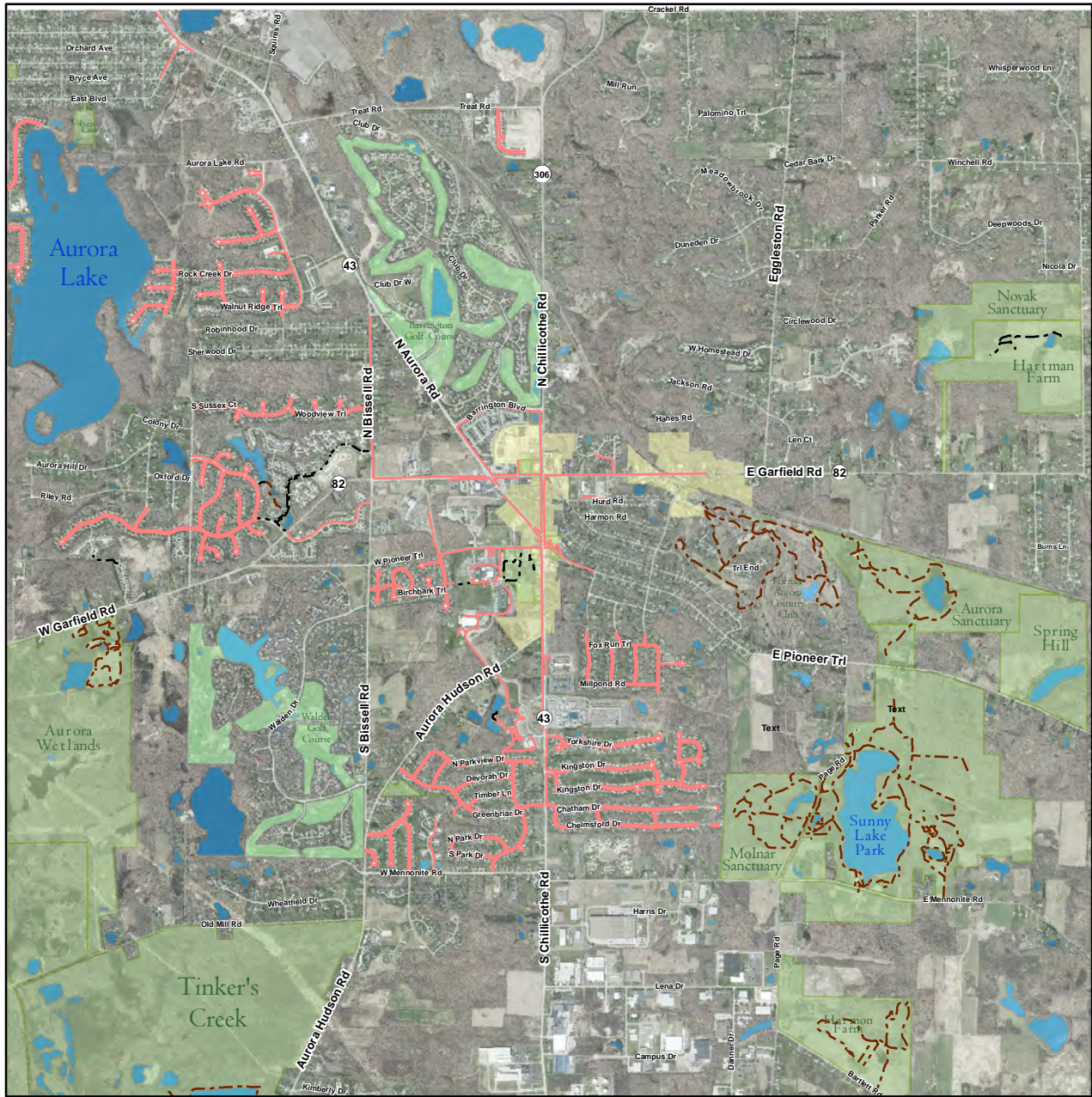
The following are being considered:

- Aurora-Hudson Rd. from State Route 43 to Schools/Greenman Way, and connections to the sidewalks at the intersection of State Route 43 and State Route 82; and
- Both sides of State Route 306 in the Historic District including pedestrian-scaled light poles.

The city should continue to implement the recommendations of the connectivity study, recognizing the safety, financial, economic, and environmental benefits associated with provision of paths, sidewalks and trails.

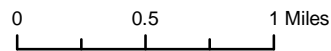
As is often the case with a community’s long-range goals and objectives, implementation takes place incrementally as funding is available, whether that funding comes solely from the city’s general fund or is comprised of a combination of local and grant monies.

Map 8: Existing Sidewalks, Paths, and Trails



Existing Sidewalks, Paths, and Trails

- Sidewalks (48.1 mi)
- - - Paths (2.3 mi)
- - - Trails (21.9 mi)
- Golf Courses
- Aurora Parks
- Civic & Depot Area



Created on 02/16/17; City of Aurora GIS



UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Sanitary Sewer Service

Sanitary sewer service in the City of Aurora is provided by the city. The northeast portion of the city does not have sanitary sewer service and, therefore, utilizes septic systems. As shown on *Map 9: Sewer and Water Service*, approximately 1,209 homes (3,026 acres) are served by septic systems.

There are two Wastewater Treatment Plants (WWTP) in the city, the Westerly and Central WWTP. According to information provided by the Service Department, with few exceptions, all sewers east of SR 43, including most of the city's industrial and commercial areas, convey wastewater to the Central WWTP. Sanitary sewers west of SR 43 convey wastewater to the Westerly WWTP.

Operational issues and regulatory compliance matters required improvements to the Westerly WWTP in 1997 and again in 1999. The Westerly WWTP has an average design capacity daily flow of 1.44 Million Gallons per Day (MGD) and a peak flow capacity of 2.8 MGD. The Westerly WWTP discharges to a tributary of Pond Brook, which flows into Tinker's Creek. Rapid growth in the 90s and an aging plant led to a major reconstruction of the Central WWTP in 1997. The Central WWTP has an average design capacity daily flow of 1.5 MGD and a peak flow capacity of 3.6 MGD. The Central WWTP discharges to the Aurora Branch of the Chagrin River. The city's WWTPs are presently serving approximately 5,200 homes.

Water Service

According to the Aurora Water Department 2016 Consumer Confidence Report, the City of Aurora purchases its water from Portage County Water Resources. The water is provided from Lake Erie and comes from the Post Road tower owned by the City of Cleveland. Ninety-seven percent (97%) of the City of Aurora is served by Cleveland water. Three percent (3%), mainly the industrial area, is still supplied by Portage County and the Coit Road well field. The condition of the city's water and sanitary sewer infrastructure is as shown in *Table 17*:

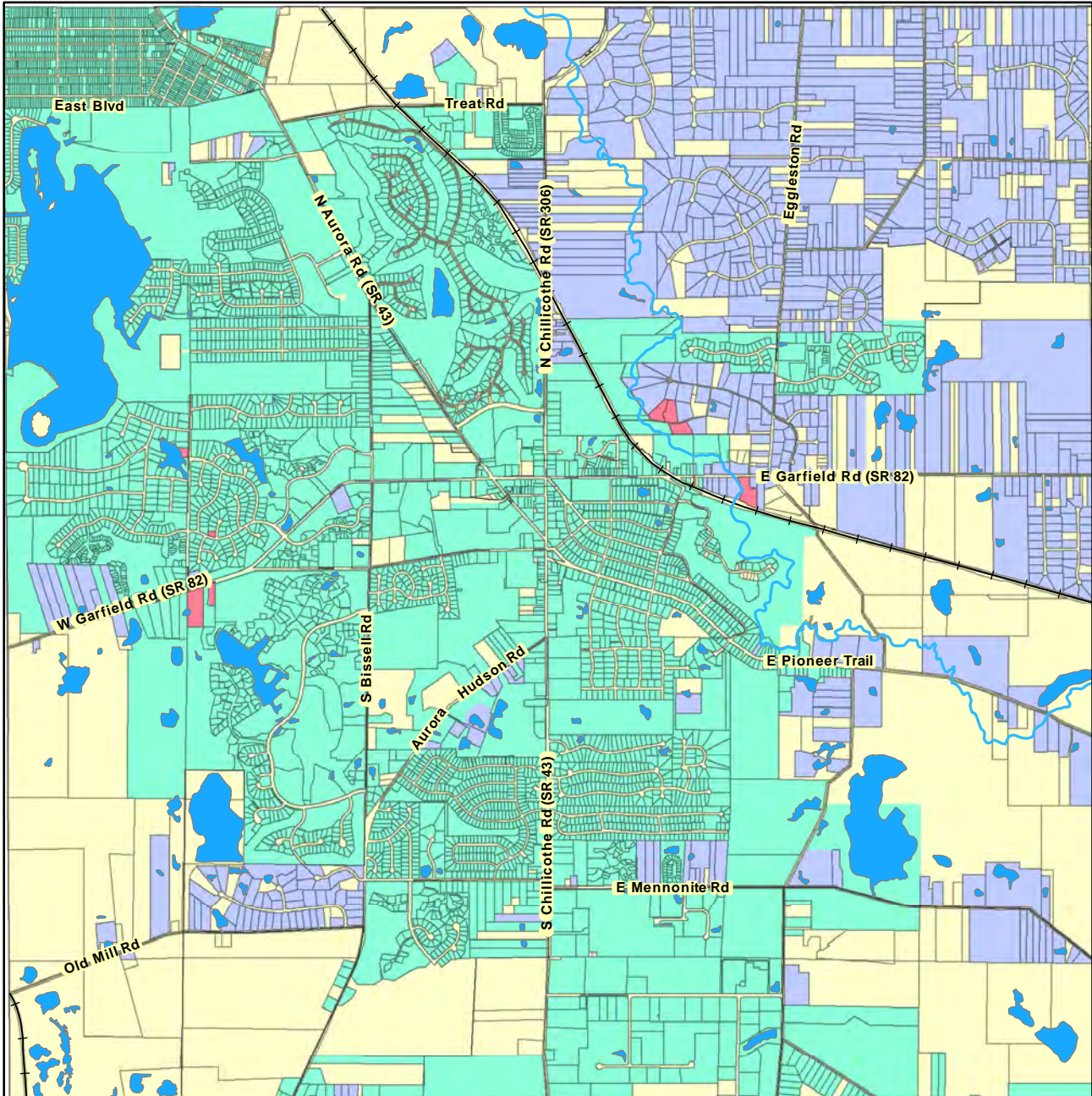
Table 17 - Condition of Water & Sanitary Sewer Infrastructure

| Infrastructure Component | Replacement Cost | Repair Cost | Total Units | Units/Physical Condition | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------|-------------|--------------------|--------------------------|---------|--------|--------|
| | | | | Excellent | Good | Fair | Poor |
| Water Distribution | \$1,800,000 | \$1,360,000 | 281,000 Linear Ft. | 18,000 | 216,400 | 39,000 | 7,600 |
| Wastewater Systems | \$20,000,000 | \$6,000,000 | 2 Facilities | | | 2 | |
| Wastewater Collection | \$44,000,000 | \$1,840,000 | 294,000 Linear Ft. | 11,000 | 157,000 | 97,000 | 29,000 |
| Stormwater Collection | \$8,400,000 | \$3,900,000 | 117,000 Linear Ft. | 15,000 | 51,000 | 37,000 | 14,000 |

Source: 2016 OPWC 5-year Capital Improvements Plan

According to the Director of Public Services, since 2014 the city completed waterline replacements on Shawnee Trail and Harmon Road and is planning to complete a \$1,200,000 water line replacement next year on Hurd Road. The city should continue to develop and maintain a city Service Management Map for current and future water, sewer, and stormwater services. A stable and consistent water supply is one of the most important services a municipality provides.

Map 9: Sewer & Water Service

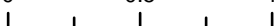


Sewer & Water Service



- City Water & Sewer
- Well & Septic
- Well
- Vacant

0 0.5 1 Miles





COMMUNITY FACILITIES

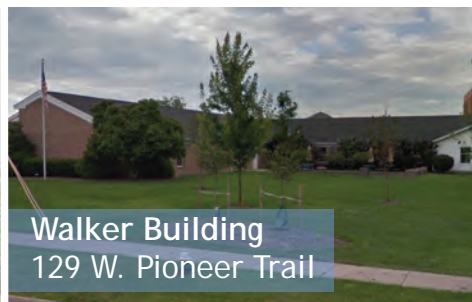
Community facilities exist for the benefit of the residents of the City of Aurora. The city’s fire stations, police station, schools, parks, and various other community facilities provide residents with valuable services and opportunities for recreation. The high quality of Aurora’s local schools and its park system plays a large role in attracting new residents to the community. Services such as water and sewer are key factors that determine where, when, and how the city will continue to develop. Since other important facilities operated by other units of government or organizations also provide important services for Aurora’s residents and businesses, some of these facilities are included in this discussion.

Map 10: Community Facilities (see next page) shows the location of facilities throughout the city and many of them are summarized below:



City Hall
130 S. Chillicothe Rd

Year Built: Unknown (circa 1882)
Function: Mayor’s office; City Council Chambers; and the Finance, Law, and Human Resources Departments



Walker Building
129 W. Pioneer Trail

Year Built: 1988
Function: Planning, Zoning and Building; Parks and Recreation; Senior Center, and Civil Service



Brown Keidel Service Center
158 W. Pioneer Trail

Year Built: 2000
Function: Engineering; Public Service; and Utilities



Fire Station One
65 W. Pioneer Trail

Year Built: 1983
Function: 8 bays, administrative offices, fire prevention, classroom and living quarters



Fire Station Two
1049 N. Aurora Rd

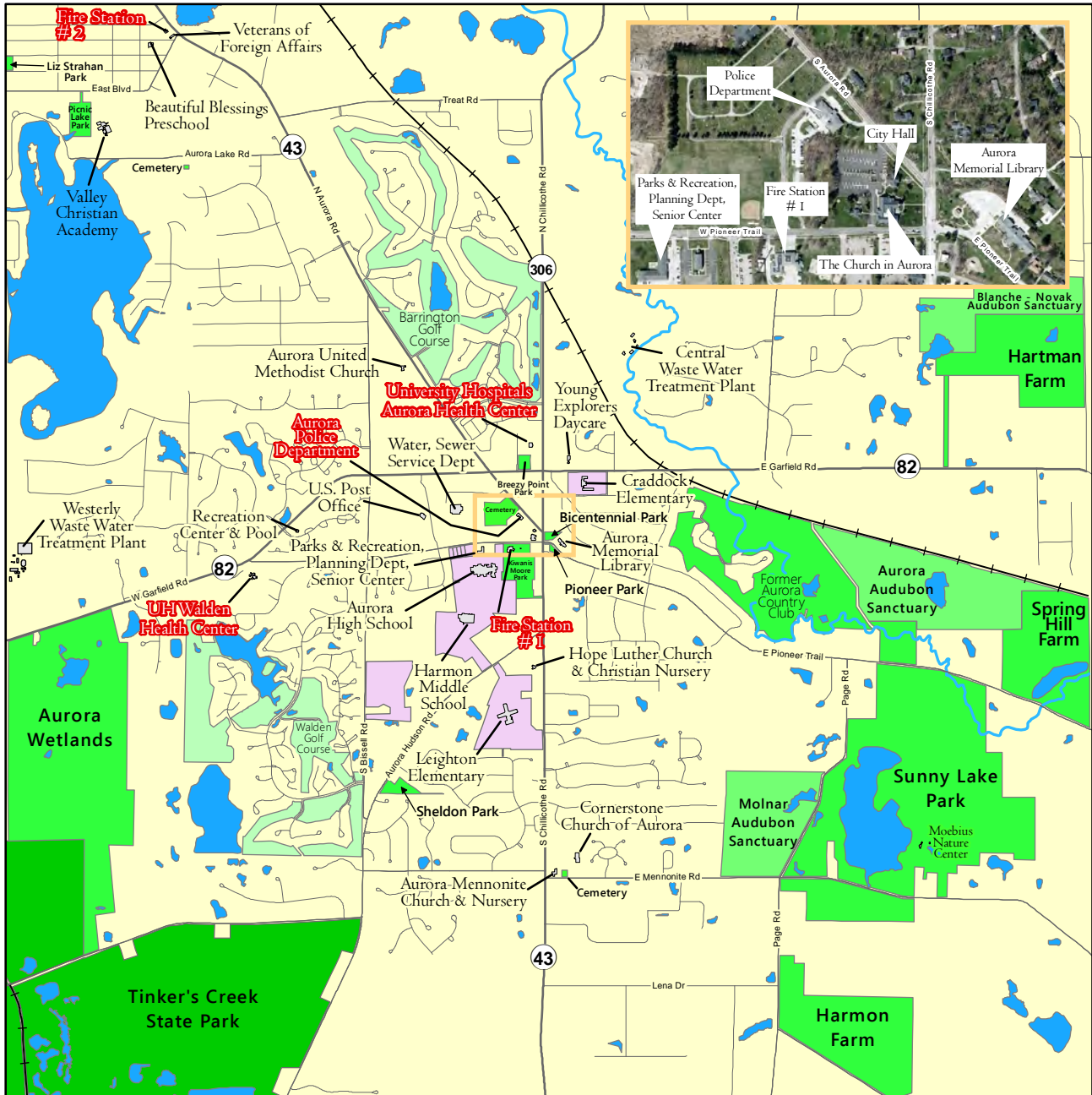
Year Built: 1997
Function: 4 bays and living quarters



Police Station
100 S. Aurora Rd

Year Built: 1982
Function: Police Department headquarters and dispatch center

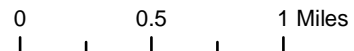
Map 10: Community Facilities



Community Facilities



- Golf Course
- Aurora Audubon Sanctuary
- City Park
- Tinker's Creek State Park
- Lake/Pond
- Aurora Branch
- School Property



Parks & Recreation

The City of Aurora Department of Parks and Recreation currently maintains 10 parks and 1,516 acres spread throughout the community. In 2010 the city prepared the City of Aurora Parks and Recreation Master Plan which provided guidance on how to plan for capital improvements and outlined areas for improved connectivity and collaboration for the parks system. The locations of these parks are shown on *Map 11: city Parks and Tinker's Creek*. The city's parks include the following:

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Aurora Wetlands Location: West city boundary, south side of SR 82 Size: 366 acres Amenities: Grass walking trails, parking lot</p> | <p>Hartman Property Location: Townline Road, adjacent to Blanche-Novak Audubon Sanctuary to the south Size: 126 acres Amenities: Athletic fields and tree arboretum under construction; maple sugar production house; cross-country path planned</p> |
| <p>Bicentennial Park Location: Adjacent to the Aurora Memorial Library Size: 1.9 acres Amenities: Gazebo, benches, paved pedestrian walkways</p> | <p>Kiwanis-Moore Park Location: Adjacent to Fire Station #1 Size: 29.6 acres Amenities: 3 playgrounds, 2 climbing rocks, swing set, 4 ball fields, skate park, 1 picnic pavilion, picnic tables, paved walking path, restrooms</p> |
| <p>Bretschneider Park Location: 881 East Pioneer Trail Size: 23 acres Amenities: Parking lot provides access to Audubon Sanctuary, hiking trail</p> | <p>Liz Strahan Park Location: California Street, Geauga Lake area Size: 1.5 acres Amenities: Playground structures, swing set, 2 picnic pavilions</p> |
| <p>Veterans Memorial Park Location: Barrington Town Square shopping plaza Size: 2.4 acres Amenities: Gazebo, benches, paved pedestrian walkways, retention pond, Veterans, Memorial</p> | <p>Picnic Lake Park Location: East Boulevard, Geauga Lake area, north of Aurora Lake Size: 10 acres Amenities: open grass field, playground, parking lot</p> |
| <p>Former Aurora Country Club Location: 159 Trails End Size: 197 acres Amenities: Walking path, benches, parking lot, sledding hill</p> | <p>Pioneer Park Location: 24 East Pioneer Trail Size: 1 acre Amenities: Deed House operated as museum by the Aurora Historical Society, walking path and patio, benches, lounging swings</p> |

Spring Hill Park

Location: North side of East Pioneer Trail, south of the railroad right-of-way, adjacent to the city's eastern boundary.

Size: 153 acres total (127 acres in Aurora, 26 acres in Mantua Township)

Amenities: Spring Hill Farm contains high quality wetlands habitat that is critical to several threatened/endangered species. Preservation of the wetlands will provide superior filtration for the headlands of the Aurora Branch of the Chagrin River. The property includes an eight acre lake, grass walking paths, and a historic home.

Sunny Lake Park

Location: East Mennonite and Page

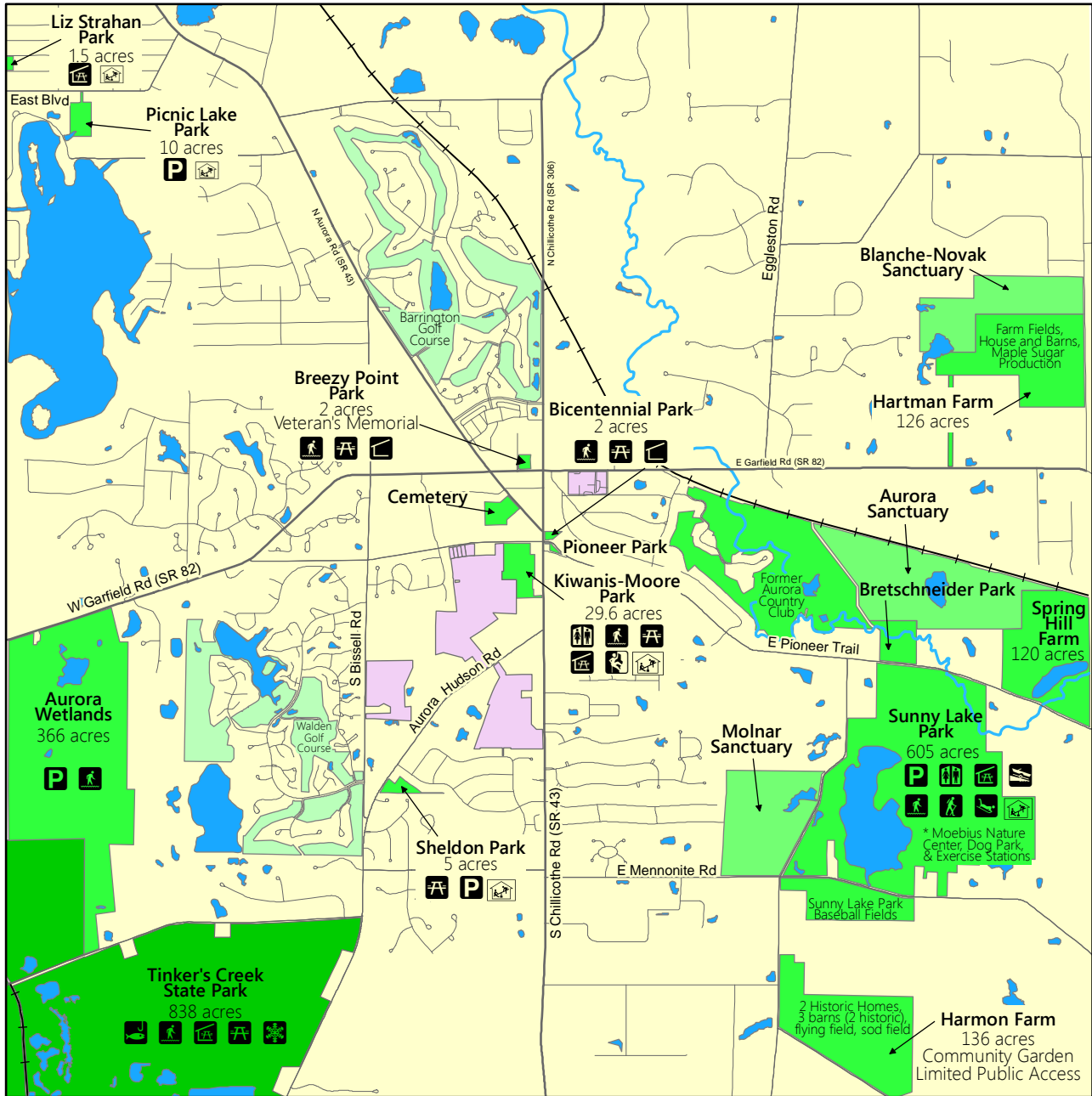
Size: 605 acres

Amenities:

- 68-acre lake
- 1.75 mile paved walking path
- 2 large picnic pavilions
- 6 small picnic pavilions
- Dog park
- 4 parking lots
- 3 lighted ball fields
- Exercise stations
- Swing set
- Sled hill
- 2 playground structures
- Sand volleyball court
- Restrooms
- Boathouse w/rentals
- 2 boat launch areas
- Disc golf course
- Ballfield concession stand with restrooms
- Nature trails
- Aurora Conservation Council's Moebius Nature Center

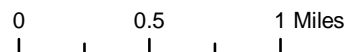
Note: city's largest park

Map 11: City Parks & Tinker's Creek



City Parks & Tinker's Creek

- Golf Course
- Aurora Audubon Sanctuary
- City Park
- Tinker's Creek State Park
- Lake/Pond
- Aurora Branch
- School Property



School Facilities

Aurora City Local School District

The Aurora City School District encompasses the city and a portion of the Village of Reminderville. According to the School District website, 2,961 students are enrolled at the five schools in the district. The locations of these schools are shown on *Map 9: Community Facilities*. The enrollment at each school as of November 2015 is presented below:

| | | |
|--|---|--|
|  <p>Aurora High School 109 W. Pioneer Trail</p> <p><i>Public</i> Grades: 9-12 Enrollment: 995</p> |  <p>Harmon Middle School 130 Aurora Hudson Rd</p> <p><i>Public</i> Grades: 6-8 Enrollment: 683</p> |  <p>Leighton Elementary School 121 Aurora Hudson Rd</p> <p><i>Public</i> Grades: 3-5 Enrollment: 646</p> |
|  <p>Craddock Elementary School 105 Hurd Rd</p> <p><i>Public</i> Grades: 1-2 Enrollment: 409</p> |  <p>Miller Elementary School 646 S. Chillicothe Rd</p> <p><i>Public</i> Grades: Pre-K & K Enrollment: 58 (Pre-K) & 186 (K)</p> |  <p>Valley Christian Academy 1037 East Blvd</p> <p><i>Private</i> Grades: K-8 Enrollment: 306</p> |

The Ohio Department of Education calculates a Performance Index (PI) Score for each school district in the state to measure student performance on the Ohio Achievement Assessments and Ohio Graduate Tests at the 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, and 10th (OGT) grade levels. The Aurora City School District received a PI Score of 103.932 for the 2016-2017 academic year, ranking 23rd out of 608 districts in the State of Ohio.

Other, Quasi-Public, and Private Facilities (not city-owned unless noted)

Aurora Historical Society (city-owned building)

Location: 115 East Pioneer Trail, lower level of the Aurora Memorial Library

Services (outlined on website): The Aurora Historical Society's mission is to preserve Aurora's history through collections and displays of artifacts, as well as provide educational programs for all ages. The Aurora Historical Society was incorporated in the State of Ohio on August 1, 1968, as a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and collecting the artifacts of the past, informing and educating the public in the present to better prepare for the future. The Society sponsors lectures, field trips and special exhibits, publishes the informative newsletter, The Aurora Pioneer, and hosts monthly social meetings featuring informative and historically related speakers. The Society also oversees the management, collections and exhibits of the Aurora Historical Museum, provides volunteer docents for students and visitors, and manages the city's Deed House as a visitor center.

Aurora Memorial Library (city-owned building)

Location: 115 East Pioneer Trail

Services (outlined on website): The genesis of the Aurora Memorial Library goes back to 1947, when a group of parents conceived a memorial to nine boys who died in WW II. Several lots were purchased at a sheriff's sale, and a boulder and cannon were placed there to honor the war dead. In 1964, the idea of a library on the property was proposed and funds were donated by a local family. The original library, dedicated to the memory of George Byron Chapman, opened in 1966. In May 1968, the East Wing was built with money donated by Kitty Riley Wheeler and provided the first home for the Aurora Historical Society Museum.

In 1971, the Chapman family donated a Performing Arts Center. Finally in 1991, public tax money was used for the first time to expand the library. A levy was passed and the building doubled in size. The museum and theatre benefited from the expansion as well. In April 2010, the Library Express delivery service program arrived at the site (located near the branch's book return).

Aurora Post Office

Location: 400 Aurora Commons Circle

University Hospitals Walden Health Center

Location: 700 Walden Place

Services (outlined on website): Constructed in 2003. Services include x-ray and laboratory services, OB/GYN, and Rehab Center and Sport Clinic

University Hospitals Aurora Health Center

Location: 55 N. Chillicothe Rd

Services (outlined on website): An outpatient health center that offers families access to a wide range of primary and specialty care physicians, laboratory services and diagnostic imaging and radiology.

Aurora Community Theatre (city-owned building)

Location: In 1971, ACT was fortunate to find a permanent home in The Performing Arts Center, an addition to the Aurora Memorial Library.

Services (outlined on website): Provides entertainment and encouragement to promote the advancement of theatre art. Provides opportunities for the cultural, technical, and educational growth through experience in legitimate theatre. ACT presents 4 shows per year - fall, winter, spring, and summer. Typically, the summer offering is a more youth-oriented production and offers opportunity for a truly intergenerational show. A Children's Theatre Workshop is also offered during the late summer with a hands-on instructional emphasis.

Moebius Nature Center (city-owned)

Location: 929 E. Mennonite Rd. (just east of Sunny Lake Park)

Services/Mission (outlined on website): The Moebius Nature Center exists to promote the enjoyment, respect, and preservation of nature through education to residents and students of Aurora and neighboring communities.

Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland Education Center at Novak Sanctuary








Location: 382 Townline Road (part of the Blanche and Kathryn Novak Sanctuary)

Information (outlined on website): The Novak Sanctuary lies both to the west of Townline Rd. in Aurora city limits and east of it in Mantua Township. There is a very fine Category 3 wooded wetland on the Aurora side and fields and secondary woods on the Mantua side. This wetland has the highest species diversity of five natural wetlands of Northern Ohio studied by the Ohio EPA. The wetland is approximately 5/8 miles from the parking lot on Townline Rd. and is reached by a dirt road. The sanctuary is a rich habitat for nesting birds with at least 56 species on the wetland side and 41 species on the Mantua side. The area has been part of the spring bird walks of the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland since 1993, and the migratory birds seen are part of that census. An observation blind in the wetlands area was completed in 2002, further enhancing their educational potential. The Novak Sanctuary was dedicated in 1999 as a State Nature Preserve by the Division of Natural Areas and Preserves of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. The Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland restored and renovated a building located in the Audubon Blanche Katherine Novak Sanctuary as a regional Audubon Education Center.

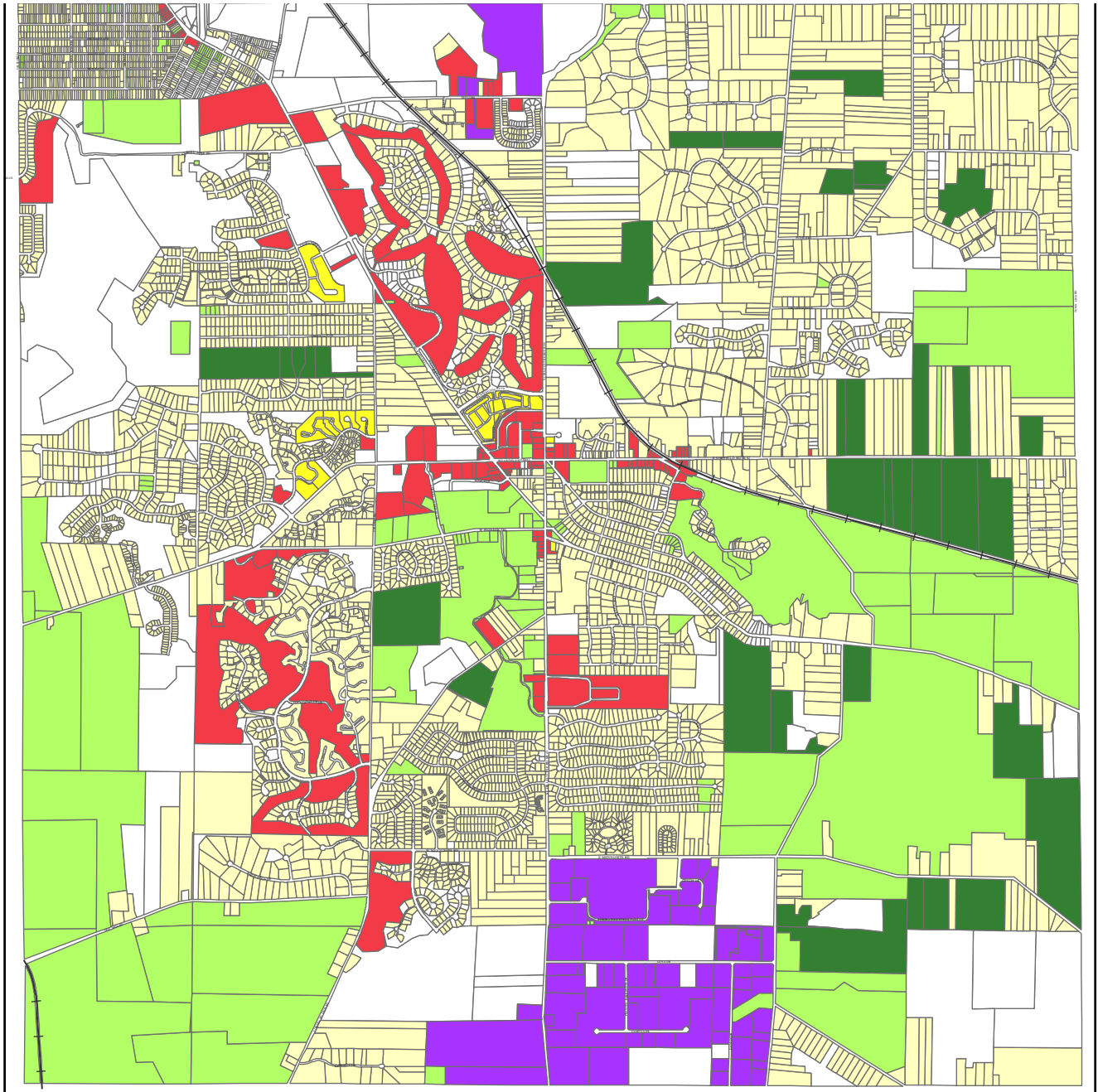


LAND USE








The City of Aurora includes a wide variety of types of development that have been constructed over a long period of time. Commercial and public/institutional uses are located primarily along Principal and Minor Arterials, with residential and park and open space uses spread throughout the city. The city has about 23.5% of all land classified as vacant in 2016. *Map 12* shows existing city land uses, based on the land use classifications used for taxing purposes by the Portage County Auditor. All information represents general conditions and is not intended to reflect parcel-specific features. A brief summary of each of the 7 existing land use categories, including definition, location, and the percentage of land in the city devoted to each land use category is below:

| | LAND USE | DESCRIPTION | % OF CITY / LOCATION |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|---|
|  | SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL | 1 or 2 families per dwelling unit | 40% / Throughout city |
|  | MULTIFAMILY RESIDENTIAL | Buildings with 3 or more dwelling units | 0.5% / Mostly north of 82/ west of 306 |
|  | COMMERCIAL | Commercial & Office Uses including Retail | 7% / Along Principal & Minor Arterials |
|  | INDUSTRIAL | Light Industry, Logistics and Distribution | 5% / South edge of city along 43 |
|  | GOVERNMENT & INSTITUTIONAL | Municipal, school, park & church parcels | 22% / Primarily Town Center |
|  | AGRICULTURAL | Farms (crops & livestock) | 7% / Throughout city |
|  | VACANT | Undeveloped Land | 20% / Throughout city |

Map 12: Existing Land Use



Existing Land Use Map

- | | |
|---|--|
|  Agricultural |  One-Family & Two-Family Residential |
|  Commercial |  Multi-Family & Urban Residential |
|  Industrial |  Vacant |
|  Government, Recreation, Institutional | |

Chapter 3



LAND USE & THEMES

CHAPTER 3: Future Land Use

One of the most important components of the Plan is the Future Land Use Plan. *Map 13: Future Land Use* (see next page) shows a vision of **future land use** in the city based on public input gathered throughout the planning process and input from Planning, Zoning and Building Division staff. The City of Aurora has relatively little residential and commercial land remaining for development. As a result, this Chapter should guide both development and redevelopment within the city. The Future Land Use Map should be used as a tool to guide future land use policies and decisions, and reflects responsible use and reuse of land that is consistent with the community’s visions.

It is important to note the distinction between the Future Land Use Map and the Zoning Map. The Future Land Use Map is a guiding, advisory document that provides a community vision for future growth and development. The Zoning Map is the legally binding statutory authority controlling the use of a property and the density and character of development. The Future Land Use Map has no legal authority and any change to the Zoning Map must be approved through the city’s referendum zoning process by ballot measure at a general election.

Future Land Use

This plan classifies future land use in 11 land categories. *Figure 3* below shows the percentage of land contained in each future land use category.

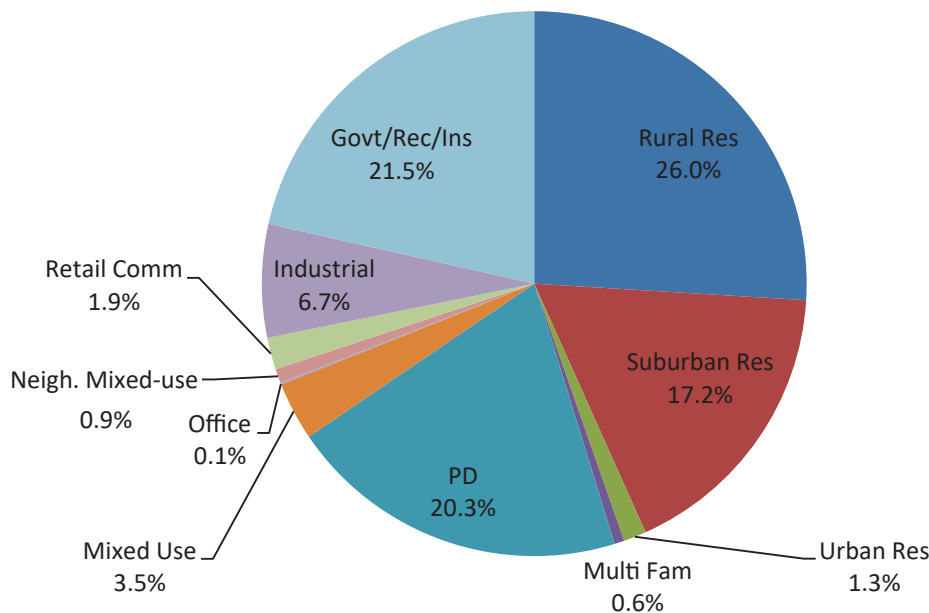
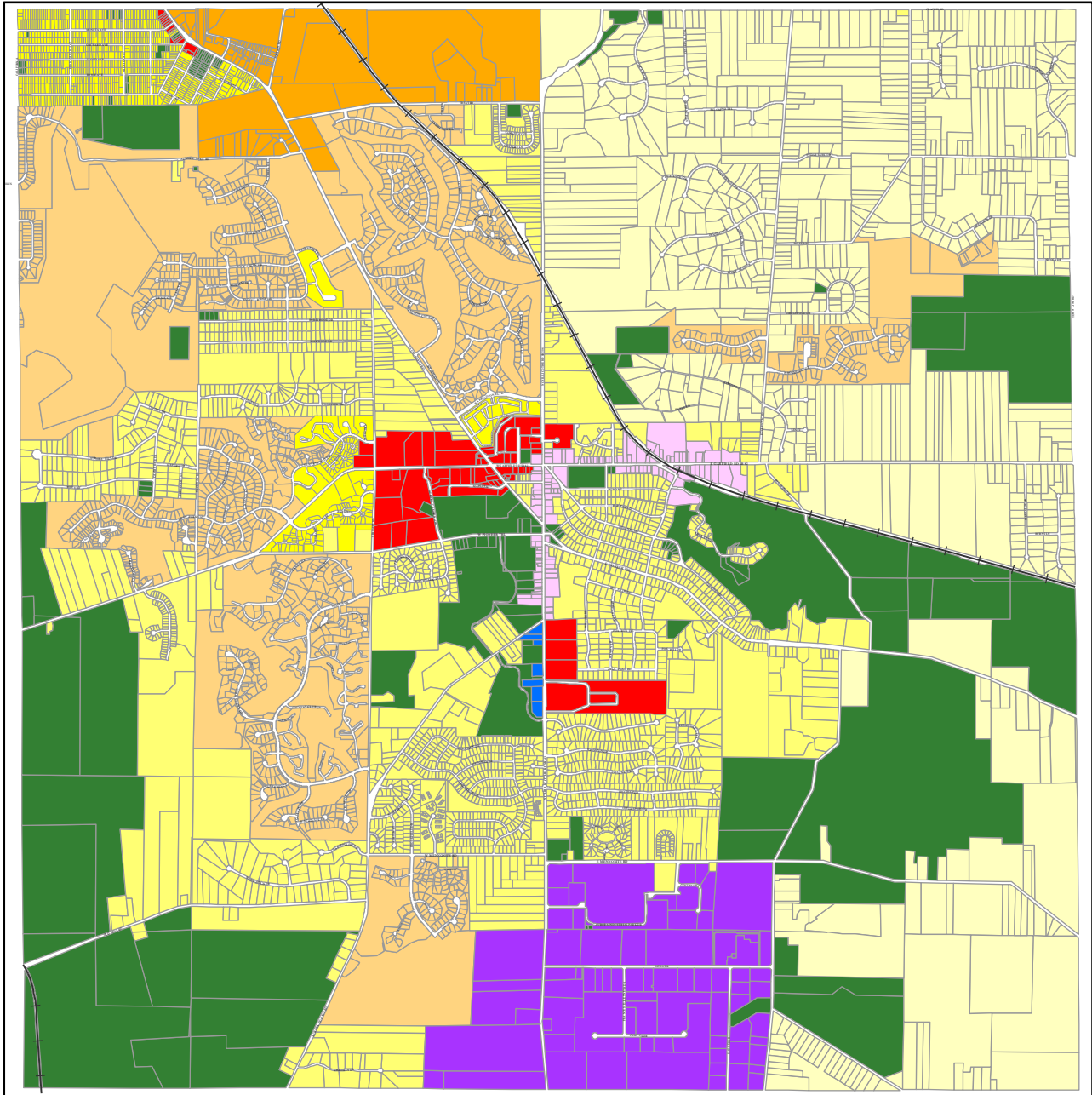












Figure 3 - Composition of Future Land Uses

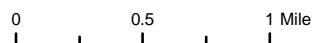
Map 13: Future Land Use schematically depicts the 11 land use categories. Descriptions of these categories follow.

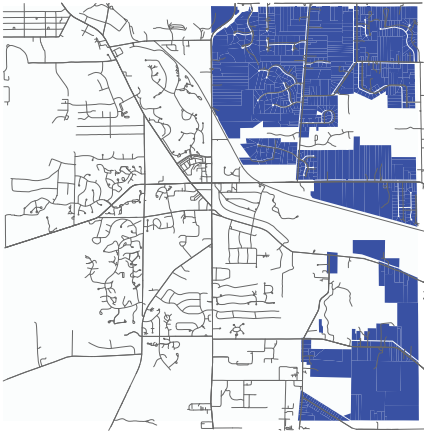
Map 13: Future Land Use



Future Land Use Map

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
|  Rural Residential |  Planned Development |  Industrial |
|  Suburban Residential |  Mixed Use |  Office |
|  Urban Residential |  Government, Recreation, Institutional |  Neighborhood Transitional |
| | |  Retail Commercial |





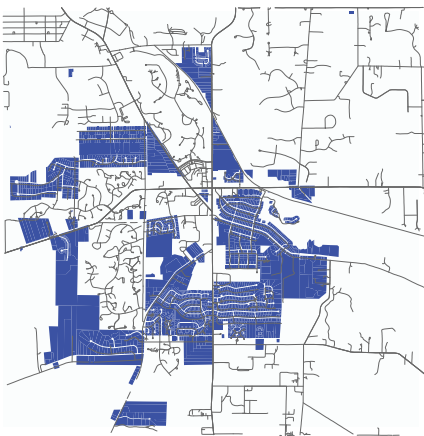
3,793 **26.0%**
acres **of the city**

Rural Residential

The Rural Residential land use classification applies to the areas of the city that are most appropriate for single-family residential uses with an accessory structure. Characteristics include larger homes served by septic systems on lots ranging from 1.5 to 3 acres or greater in size, which is in line with the city's current R-1 and R-2 Zoning Districts.

Rural residential developments are located primarily in the northeast portion of the city, east of SR 306 and north and east of the Norfolk Southern Railroad. Additional areas are located in the southeast portion of the city, south of East Pioneer Trail and east of Page Road. With a maximum density of 0.67 dwelling units per acre (du/acre), the rural residential district is planned for low density residential uses. Because this category contains properties located in two zoning districts, the permitted maximum density for a particular property is dictated by the zoning ordinance.

Potential uses include single-family homes, schools, parks, and trails. This category comprises approximately 3,793 acres or 26.0% of the city.

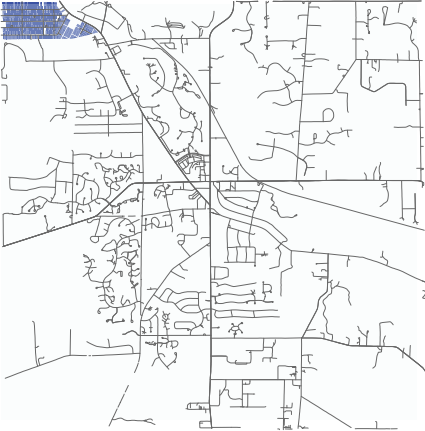


2,531 **17.2%**
acres **of the city**

Suburban Residential

The Suburban Residential land use classification applies to areas of the city that have smaller lot frontages with single and two-family residential uses. Potential uses include single-family homes, attached townhouses, schools, parks, and trails. With a maximum density of 2.5 du/acre (0.39 acre minimum lot size), the suburban residential district is planned for medium density residential uses and contains R-3 and R-4 zoned properties. Because this category contains properties located in two zoning districts, the permitted maximum density for a particular property is dictated by the zoning ordinance.

Attached condos may be appropriate if designed properly and serve as a transitional land use between lower density residential uses and higher density residential uses or nonresidential uses of an appropriate intensity befitting a predominately residential area. This category comprises approximately 2,531 acres or 17.2% of the city.



196
acres

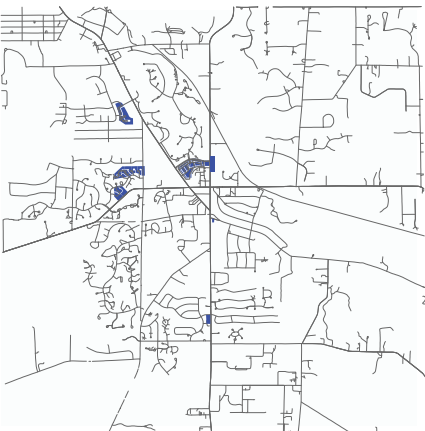
1.3%
of the city

Urban Residential

The Urban Residential land use classification applies to the Geauga Lake area (Gauga Lake Orchard Company and Western Reserve Land Company Subdivisions), in the northwest corner of the city. These are older neighborhoods developed as cottages in the early 40's.

With a maximum density of 3.89 du/acre (0.257 acre minimum lot size), the urban residential district is planned for medium-high density single and two-family residential uses and contains properties in the R-5 zoning district.

Development standards for this area are intended to maintain the character and value of the existing housing while recognizing that redevelopment must permit property owners to maximize development options without adversely affecting neighboring properties. Consolidation of contiguous lots to permit development of larger residential dwellings may be appropriate if such redevelopment is harmonious with the surrounding area. Potential uses include single-family homes, duplexes, schools, parks, and trails. This category comprises approximately 196 acres or 1.3% of the city.

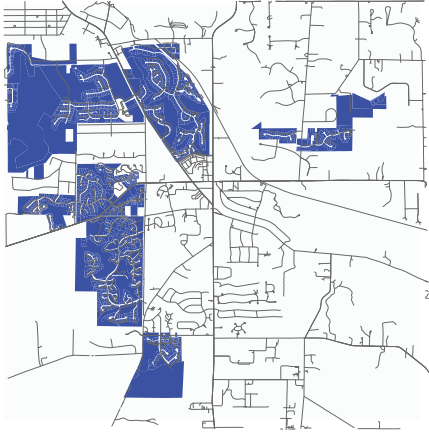


86
acres

0.6%
of the city

Multi-Family Residential

The Multi-Family Residential land use classification applies to the areas of the city that have multiple-family residential uses. These areas often act as a buffer between residential uses and higher intensity uses, and they provide needed alternative housing options in the city. Potential uses include single-family homes, cluster homes, duplexes, townhomes, and apartments. This category comprises approximately 86 acres or 0.6% of the city.

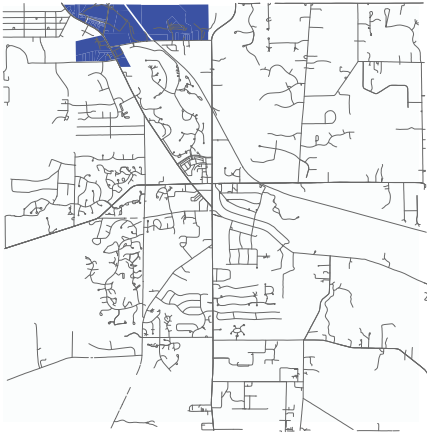


2,960
acres

20.3%
of the city

Planned Development

The Planned Development land use classification applies to areas of the city developed as part of a Planned Development. Planned Development encourages flexibility and innovation in land use planning on large unified sites greater than 300 acres, to offer a variety of dwelling types and commercial uses (as dictated by a property specific development plan). Single and multi-family dwellings are permitted at a maximum density of 2.0 du/acre. This category comprises approximately 2,960 acres or 20.3% of the city.



560
acres

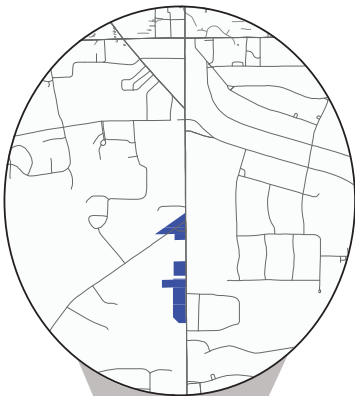
3.5%
of the city

Mixed-use

The Mixed-use land use classification applies to the former Geauga Lake property in the northwest portion of the city adjacent to the city's northern boundary, east of SR 43, west of SR 306. The area also includes the Anna Maria Senior Living Complex as well as existing attached single-family development on the north side of Aurora Lake Road, west of SR 43.

Coordination between the city and Bainbridge Township to the north should continue to ensure that future development of the area is cohesive and creates a uniform character throughout the entire area.

Chapter 1177 of the zoning code establishes a clear design framework plan for public and private redevelopment within the Mixed-use district that is intended to serve as a guide for developers, architects and city officials as they seek to transform the northeast portion of the city in a coherent fashion. These guidelines were developed to improve and build upon the existing charm and character of the city. This category comprises approximately 560 acres or 3.5% of the city.



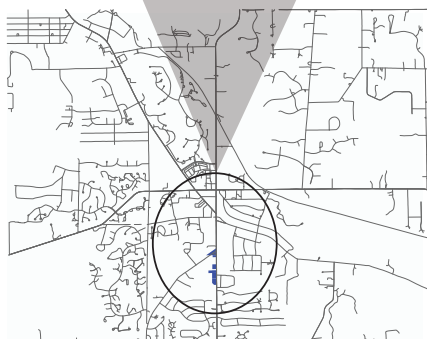
13
acres

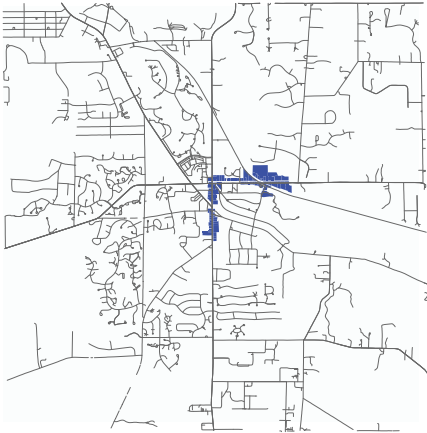
0.1%
of the city

Office

The Office land use classification applies to the west side of SR 43, south of the Aurora-Hudson Road/SR 43 intersection, across the street from Aurora Farms. The Office land use classification supports an environment conducive to well located and designed office building sites to accommodate professional offices, nonprofit organizations and limited business service activities.

Office buildings should be limited to three stories in height, reflect the character of the area and have adequate parking. This category comprises approximately 13 acres or 0.1% of the city.





126
acres

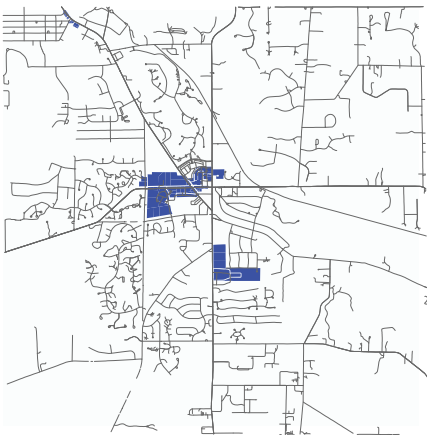
0.9%
of the city

Neighborhood Mixed-use

The Neighborhood Mixed-use land use classification is located along major roadways and encompasses areas that can service both pedestrian and automobile clientele. The Neighborhood Mixed-use classification encompasses the Station District area, the T-1 (Transitional Commercial Service District) zoned area and portions of the Town Center area that front SR 306. Any future development should respect and preserve the historic character present throughout much of the area.

The Neighborhood Mixed-use area may include smaller retail and service land uses that serve a localized area, generally meeting the day-to-day needs of residents, such as groceries, dry cleaning, small restaurants, etc. Smaller office uses may also be appropriate. Neighborhood Mixed-use developments should be limited sites less than five acres in size.

Neighborhood Mixed-use development should be designed to facilitate pedestrian access in addition to accommodating vehicular traffic. The developments should have sidewalks that link to adjacent pathways or sidewalks. The architecture should be on a human scale and reflect the character of the area. This category comprises approximately 126 acres or 0.9% of the city.

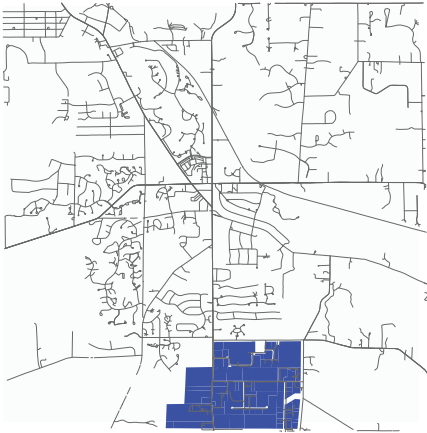


276
acres

1.9%
of the city

Retail Commercial

The Retail Commercial land use classification includes commercial uses that are located on larger lots, with larger building footprints and associated off-street parking. Retail Commercial uses serve the needs of the entire city and include uses such as large grocery stores, hardware stores, and general merchandise. These developments should be on larger parcels, 10 to 50 acres, and developed in a planned manner. The “planned” nature of the land use should ensure that any development or redevelopment that occurs in these areas is well designed with an emphasis on providing easy access to the storefronts while insuring that parking areas are located behind buildings and buffered with landscaping in and around them. The city has limited the size of large commercial stores. This category comprises approximately 276 acres or 1.9% of the city.



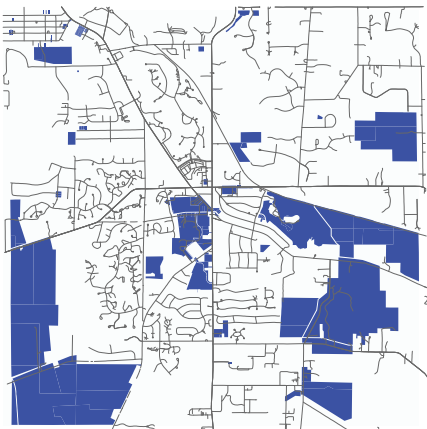
982
acres

6.7%
of the city

Industrial

The Industrial land use classification provides for and accommodates industrial uses in the southern portion of the city, south of Mennonite Road on both sides of SR 306, adjacent to the city's southern boundary. Potential uses include offices, research and development uses, and traditional light industrial uses such as manufacturing (non-heavy), processing, wholesaling and distribution, free from the encroachment of residential, retail and institutional uses. The uses allowed are those which because of their normally unobjectionable characteristics, can be in relatively close proximity to residential districts.

Industrial buildings should be no greater than 3 stories in height and blend with the character of the area. All building facades facing a public street or residential areas should be of a high quality design. This category comprises approximately 982 acres or 6.7% of the city.



3,136
acres

21.5%
of the city

Government/Recreation/Institutional

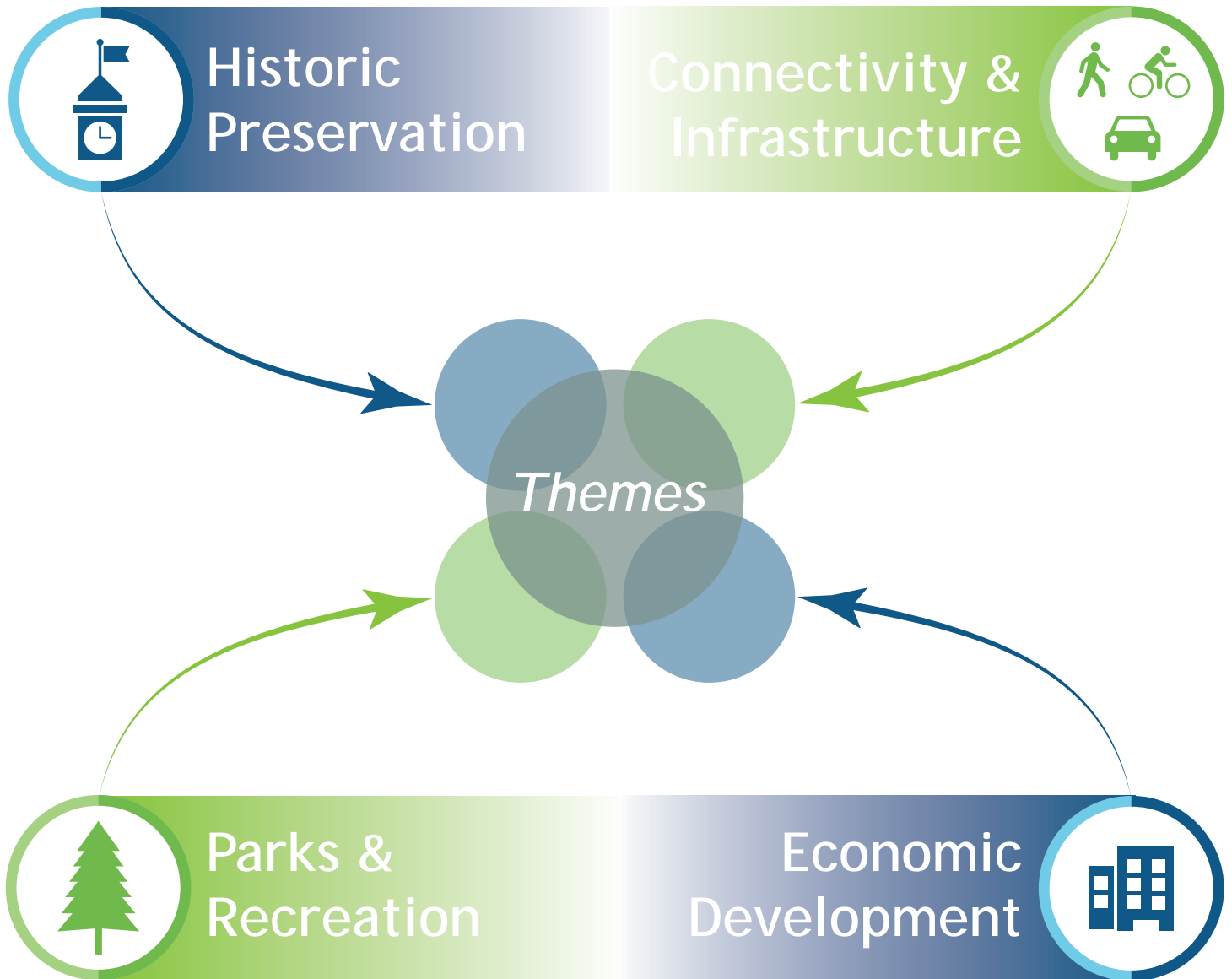
The Government/Recreation/Institutional land use classification recognizes the location of existing public and quasi-public institutions owned by and/or located within the city, including but not limited to the City Hall, Police and Fire Stations, schools, and certain places of public assembly, all developed in a manner consistent with sound planning and design principles. This district is established to accommodate these existing institutions and encourage their future viability and continued location and growth in the city.

In addition, this classification applies to those areas that contain city-owned land, acquired for the general purpose of conserving or preserving important natural resources or areas of natural significance and providing undeveloped open space for active or passive recreation uses. This category comprises approximately 3,136 acres or 21.5% of the city.

Themes

The following pages of Chapter 3 highlight some of the overarching plan themes that were focal points of MPRC discussions. While these themes are in many ways interrelated (e.g. context-sensitive connectivity enhancements can help stimulate economic activity while providing an opportunity for active recreation), each warrants its own discussion relative to the Plan’s goals and objectives.

As summarized below, the following four themes emerged as areas of emphasis during the MPRC planning process: (1) Historic Preservation; (2) Connectivity & Infrastructure; (3) Parks & Recreation; and (4) Economic Development.





Historic Preservation

Town Center

The Town Center focus area (see Map 14) includes properties fronting SR 306 from Barrington Town Square south to Aurora Farms and Miller Elementary School.

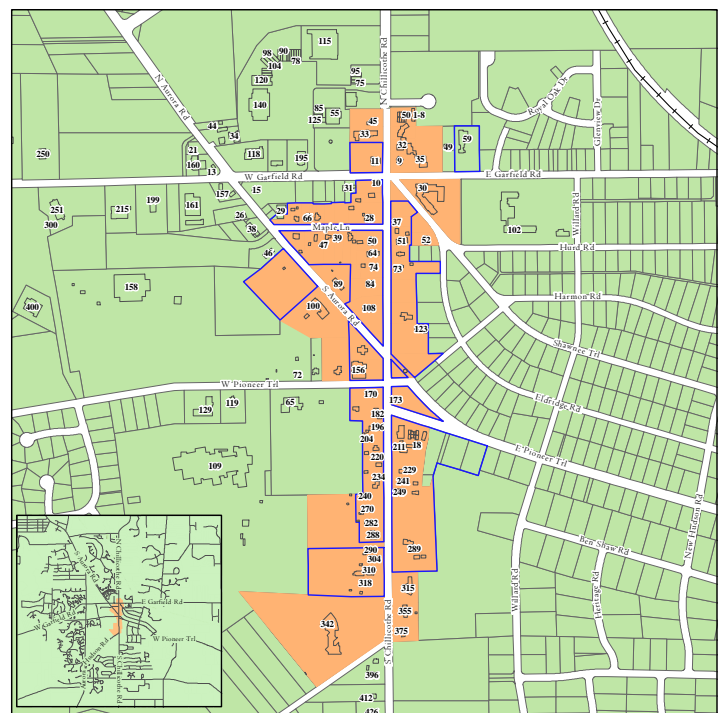
The Town Center focus area contains a mix of institutional facilities (City Hall, Police Station, Craddock and Miller Elementary schools, Library, etc.), historic residential dwellings, restaurants, professional and medical offices, and small and larger scale retail establishments. In some cases, historic dwellings have been converted to accommodate small-scale nonresidential uses noted above.

The Town Center area contains gaps in pedestrian connectivity and seems to be impacted greatly by the presence of highly travelled state routes (SR 43, SR 82, and SR 306) traversing the area. Recent sidewalk construction projects completed (SR 82 and East Pioneer Trail) and under development (SR 306) will help connect Town Center destinations and unify the district. Streetscape enhancements such as decorative lighting, trees/landscaping, historically-appropriate wood fencing, low stone planters, uniform signage, and site furnishings for pedestrian comfort are currently being considered by the city.

Opportunities may exist to promote the adaptive reuse of historic structures within the Town Center area of the historic district as SR 306 between SR 82 and Pioneer Trail is currently vibrant. This could include low intensity uses that promote, preserve and protect the historic characteristics of Aurora’s central downtown area while preserving and enhancing the residential aspects of use and architectural design. At such time as the city and neighborhood might consider such re-use, options could be available.

Historic preservation tools such as financial incentives (e.g. state and federal historic tax credits) and program assistance (e.g. Ohio Main Street Program) are detailed in *Chapter 5 - Implementation*.

Map 14: Town Center



Town Center



Town Center
 Historic Properties

0 750 1,500 Feet

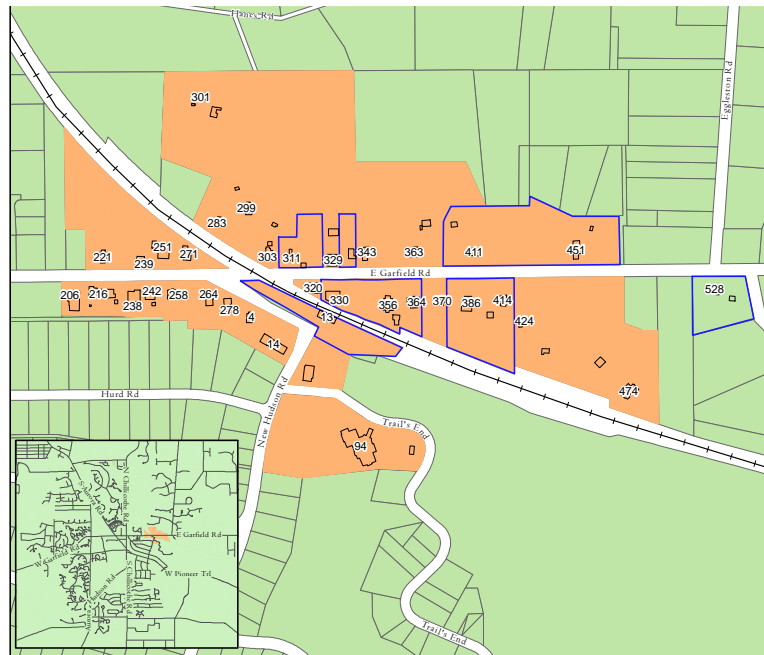
Station District

The Station District (see Map 15) focus area includes properties fronting both sides of SR 82 from just east of Glenview Drive to just west of Eggleston Road. The Station District focus area contains a mix of historic residential dwellings, restaurants, professional offices, small-scale retail establishments, and the old train depot. In some cases, historic dwellings have been converted to professional office and other nonresidential uses noted above.

The historic character, development patterns, and mix of uses present in the Station District focus area are similar to the Town Center focus area. As a result, the recommendations, concepts and additional considerations noted above for the Town Center focus area should also be applied in the Station District, as may be applicable. Since the Station District is a distinct district or area, the city should consider developing Station District-specific design guidelines to further differentiate and define the historic character of the Station District from that of the Town Center area.

In addition, the city should continue exploring opportunities to convert the Norfolk Southern Railroad line into a regional multiuse trail connection potentially linking the Cleveland Metroparks Emerald Necklace with the Portage Park District Bike & Hike Trail, with a trailhead as the centerpiece of a revitalized historic Station District. Development of a regional trailhead along SR 82 (East Aurora Road) would serve as a focal point for redevelopment in the Station District with the potential to generate recreation related commercial activity geared towards walkers, runners and cyclists.

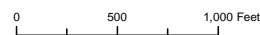
Map 15: Station District



Station District



- Station District
- Historic Properties





Connectivity & Infrastructure

Traffic & Circulation

As noted in the road inventory in Chapter 2, the City of Aurora has two Principal Arterials (SR 43 and SR 306) and one Minor Arterial (SR 82). SR 43 north of SR 82 was widened in the last 10 years, and it along with SR 82 west of SR 306 were resurfaced in 2016 with the aid of state funding. Based on current conditions and level of development within the City of Aurora, the transportation needs of the city are more limited compared to some of its neighboring communities. Currently, the city has no projects on the Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS) Long-Term Highway Recommendation List and no projects on the AMATS 2018-2021 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) list. Maintenance and reconstruction of roadways will always be necessary but the need for new roadways and capacity additions is not widespread. As recommended in the 2013 Master Plan, the city should continue to consider the widening of SR 43 in the southern portion of town, as a joint project with the city of Streetsboro.

The city should continue to do as it has in the past addressing specific locations as issues arise. These locations may include safety concerns and capacity/operational concerns. The top three crash locations in the city (see *Map 16 on Page 67*) were identified using AMATS 2013-2015 High Crash Intersections by Community list:

1. Aurora Road (SR 43) & West Garfield Road (SR 82) - *S1 on Map 16*
2. Chillicothe Road (SR 306) & Garfield Road (SR 82) - *S2 on Map 16*
3. South Chillicothe Road (SR 43) & Pioneer Trail - *S3 on Map 16*

These three intersections form the triangle at the center of town, one of the busier traffic areas of the city. In the future, safety concerns at these intersections could be addressed as a whole or individually. There is a funding source, which the city has used in the past, through ODOT called the Highway Safety Program (HSP) that could potentially fund a majority of the cost of improvements at these intersections if it were determined to be needed. The city is currently completing engineering work to improve the intersection of East Pioneer Trail and South Chillicothe Road next year. The city recently improved the traffic signals along SR 43 northbound from Pioneer to SR 306.

A cursory review of traffic crashes in the area revealed that there were approximately 114 crashes from 2014-2016 on the roadways bounded by these three intersections summarized by crash type in *Table 18*.

Table 18: Traffic Crashes, 2014 – 2016

| Type of Crash | Number of Crashes |
|---------------|-------------------|
| Rear End | 65 |
| Angle | 19 |
| Sideswipe | 10 |
| Left Turn | 7 |
| Fixed Object | 3 |
| Other | 10 |
| Total | 114 |

Source: ODOT GIS Crash Analysis Tool

Rear end crashes are the predominant type of crash which typically is the result of stop-and-go traffic. As noted previously, the city also addresses transportation issues as they develop. The following improvements are currently being investigated:

1. *South Chillicothe Road (SR 43) & Pioneer Trail* – The city is investigating improvements to the east leg of this intersection to improve traffic flow for East Pioneer Trail. The lengthening of the westbound right turn lane is proposed to allow traffic to bypass vehicles waiting to turn left onto SR 43 southbound.
2. *West Garfield Road (SR 82) & Aurora Commons Drive* – The city is looking to add pedestrian crossings to this intersection to cross both SR 82 and the driveway now that there are sidewalks on the north side of the road along that stretch of roadway.
3. *Citywide Traffic Signal System* – The project would update the city’s traffic signal system which will be over 20 years old by the time this project could be implemented. This project would warrant pursuing federal funding due to the cost associated with such an improvement. The city is currently pursuing funding through an application to AMATS that could supply up to 80% of the construction costs for the project. The results of the application will be known by the end of 2017. A new signal system would improve traffic flow through the city, while making it easier for the city to monitor traffic and adjust traffic signal timings as well as reduce maintenance costs.
4. *Pedestrian Connections* – An important part of an active community is sidewalks. Many areas of the city have sidewalks, but some areas or connections do not have this amenity. The city has made this a priority, having installed 3,000 feet of sidewalks since 2014, with several sidewalk projects pending that add 3,000 more feet of sidewalks on South Chillicothe Road in the downtown area and near the south residential areas. It is recommended that the city continue to pursue its connectivity plan.

At the April 11, 2017 Master Plan Review Commission meeting, Roadway and Transportation was indicated to be a priority. Through discussion with the commission members, maintenance and upkeep of the existing roadways appeared to be the main concern as members advised that the city must continue to dedicate resources on an annual basis to maintain its roadway system.

In addition, the following intersections were identified as potential issues and are denoted with a traffic signal symbol on *Map 16* (see *Page 67*):

1. *North Chillicothe Road (SR 306) & Crackel Road* – A traffic signal or other improvement project is desired to allow for easier turns from Crackel Road onto SR 306. An intersection study is recommended.
2. *North Aurora Road (SR 43) & Treat Road* – A traffic signal or other improvement is desired at this intersection to allow for easier turns from Treat Road and the Kensington Care Center across the intersection. A recent traffic study showed that a traffic signal at this intersection is warranted, and the city is evaluating the funding and scheduling of such a project.
3. *South Chillicothe Road (SR 43) & Mennonite Road* - The Mennonite Road approaches to this unsignalized intersection are not aligned making turning and through movements from the stop control approaches difficult. In addition, this intersection is a difficult location for cyclists and pedestrians to cross SR 43. An intersection study is recommended.

Bicycle & Pedestrian Connectivity

The city undertook a Connectivity Study in 2009 which found that the city had 131.5 miles of roadway, but only 53.3 miles of existing paths, sidewalks and trails, many of which were located intermittently and lack connectivity to one another.

The study determined that the city's Town Center and Station District areas should be considered the starting point to accommodate pedestrian connectivity to the city's service, retail and recreation assets. The study included a 20-year phasing program separated into 4 phases and most of Phase 1 has been completed. Below is a summary of the phases and the sections that have been completed.

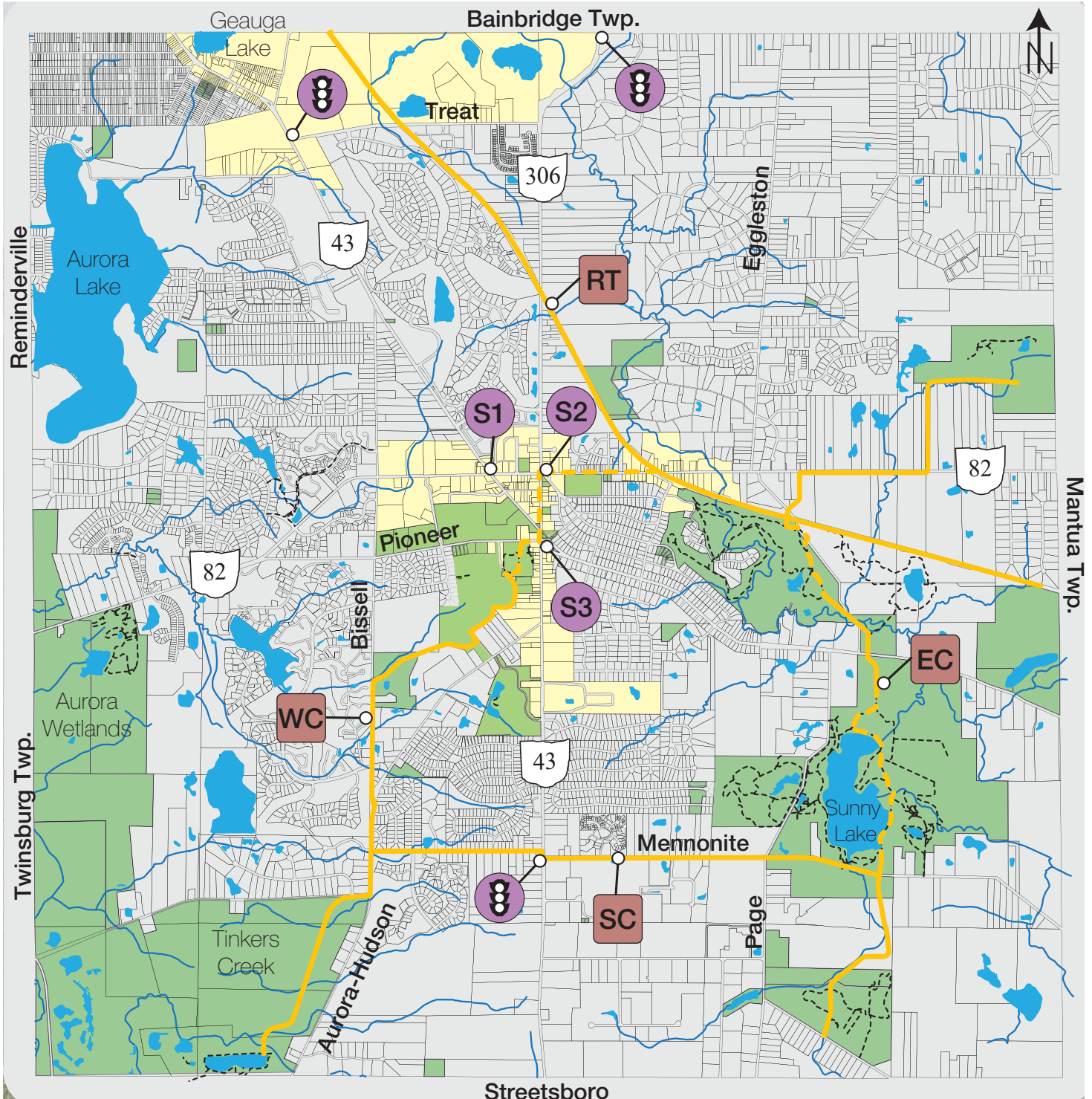
Along with the improvements noted above, the city has made further sidewalk, path and trail additions. The total current pedestrian networks inventoried indicate the city has 48.1 miles of sidewalks, 2.3 miles of paths, and 21.9 miles of trails (see *Map 8: Existing Sidewalks, Paths, and Trails*). The city currently has a total of 70.9 miles of sidewalks, paths, and trails which is an increase of 35% since 2009.

At the April 11, 2017 Master Plan Review Commission meeting, pedestrian and bicycle facilities were viewed as an important amenity to promote a healthy community, provide safe pedestrian access, and assist with economic development. Through discussion with the commission members and additional analysis the following areas were identified as priority connections focused mostly on trails:

- *Eastside Connector (EC)* – This trail alignment would be a multiuse north and south connection on the east side of Aurora which is an opportunity to connect various public open spaces and existing trails including Harmon Farm, Sunny Lake, the former Aurora Golf Course, Aurora Sanctuary, future Hike and Bike Trail, and Hartman Farm. The city is currently in the process of a study for the Shagbark Trail in this area which will connect E. Pioneer Trail to the former Aurora County Club. In addition, the city recently purchased five acres adjacent to the Hartman Farm and fronting on SR 82 and is planning for another connection.
- *Railroad Trail (RT)*– This alignment follows the existing railroad right-of-way from the northwest to southeast through the city. Extending this alignment past Aurora would provide connections to neighboring Solon and Mantua as a regional multiuse trail. Also this alignment would provide an opportunity for a potential connection to the Portage Park District's Chagrin Headwater Preserve and Headwaters Trail further to the east. Development of this alignment would require coordination with the railroad. The Railroad Trail was identified as Phase 4 of the 2009 Connectivity Study.
- *Southside Connector (SC)* – This trail alignment would be an east and west connection on the south side of Aurora which would connect Sunny Lake and Tinkers Creek State Park along the right-of-way on Mennonite Road. This alignment is an opportunity to connect public spaces and provide residents in the neighborhood with access to the public spaces.
- *Westside Connector (WC)* – This trail alignment would be a north and south connection on the west side of Aurora which would connect the public spaces in the Town Center to the schools, and Tinkers Creek State Park. The trail alignment could utilize the public-owned property and the right-of-way on Aurora-Hudson Road.

Map 16 (see next page) summarizes the recommended enhancements to the city's transportation system.

Map 16 - Recommended Transportation Enhancements





Parks & Recreation

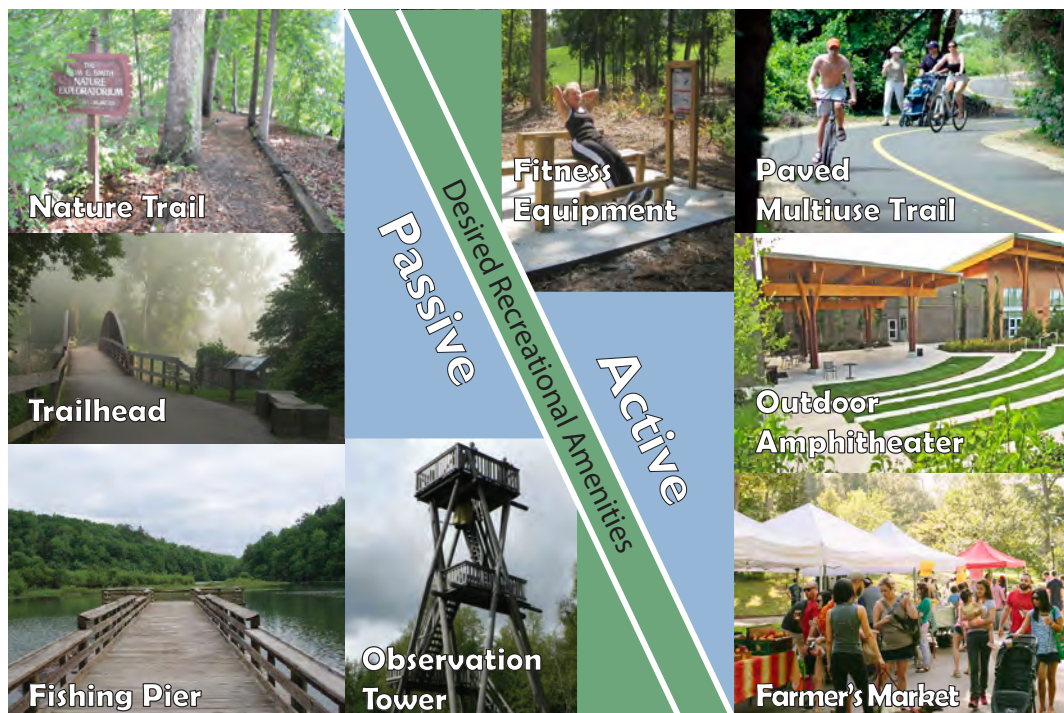
The City of Aurora has many assets concerning Parks and Recreation. The main strength and distinguishing factor for the City of Aurora and the Division of Parks and Recreation is the amount of property, over 1,500 acres, that has been acquired for conservation, preservation, education and recreational needs. When combined with Tinkers Creek Area and State Nature Preserve, there are over 2,100 acres of parkspace within the city limits. This equates to approximately 130 acres of park space per 1,000 residents.

While the city boasts a large amount of parks and greenspace, the MPRC cited several recommendations to enhance Aurora's parks system:

- increasing connections between parks
- adding more active recreation amenities
- building a shared civic-recreation complex
- expanding access to open spaces and parks

Desired Park Amenities

MPRC members were asked to provide input on which recreational amenities they would like to see added to the city's park system, for both passive and active uses. A summary of their preferences is depicted below:



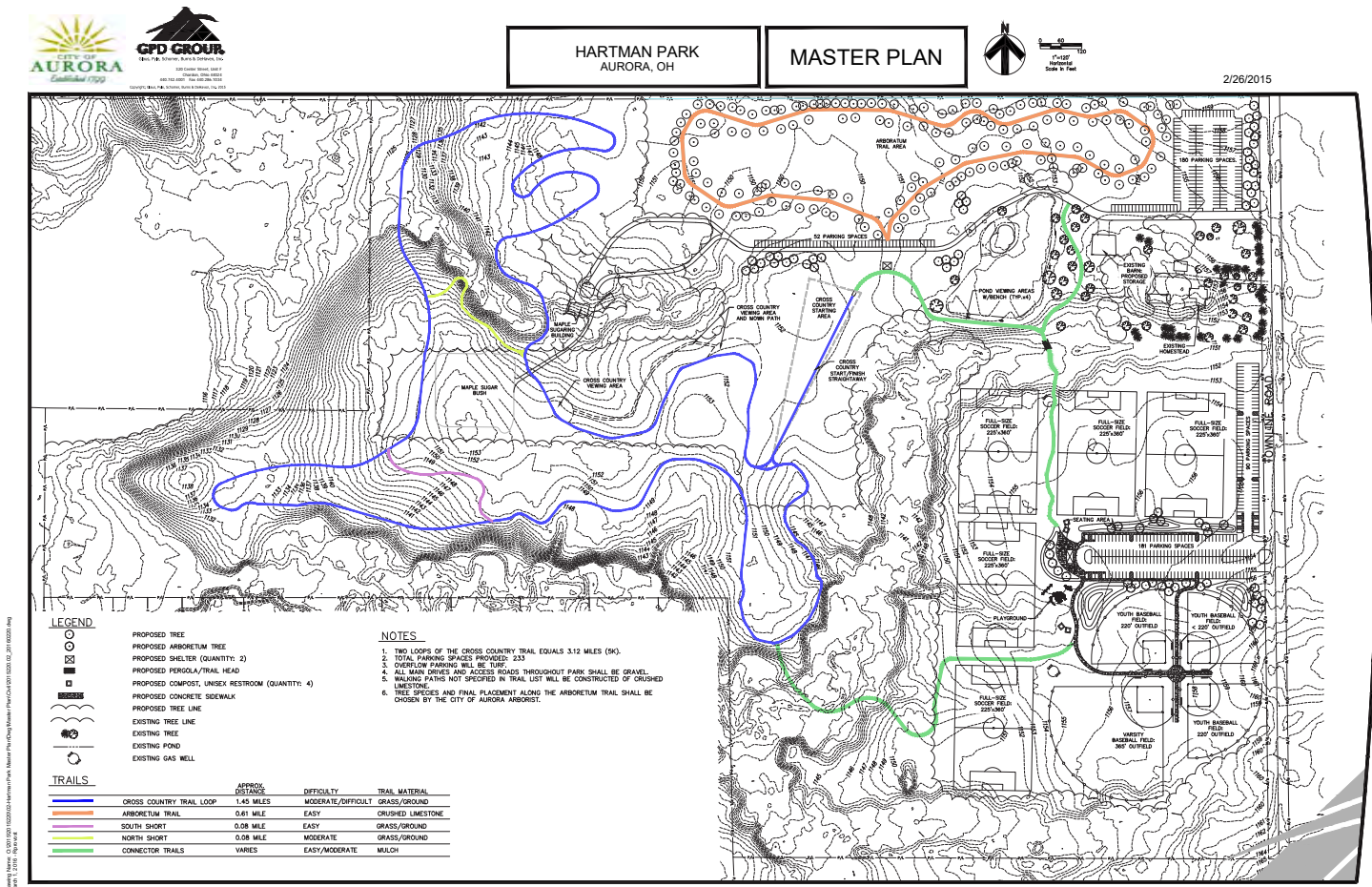
Priority Park Investments

The MPRC was asked to provide input on where they would like to see the city focus future park investments by park type and location:

Neighborhood Parks - Neighborhood Parks include Sheldon Park, Veterans Memorial Park, Bicentennial Park, and Liz Strahan Park. MPRC members requested improvements across all these smaller scale parks. Desired improvements included Outdoor Playground, Amphitheater, and Landscaping/Flowers.

Spring Hill Farm (Passive Recreation) - For Passive Recreation parks, the majority favored additional investments at Spring Hill Farm. Desired improvements included Paths, Bridle Trails, Observation Towers, Lake Access, Piers, and Benches/Picnic Tables.

Hartman Farm (Active Recreation) - For Active Recreation parks, the majority favored implementation of the Hartman Farm Master Plan shown below. This plan is currently under construction and will provide new soccer and baseball fields as well as a tree arboratum, a cross-country trail, additional walking paths, and a maple syrup facility.





Economic Development

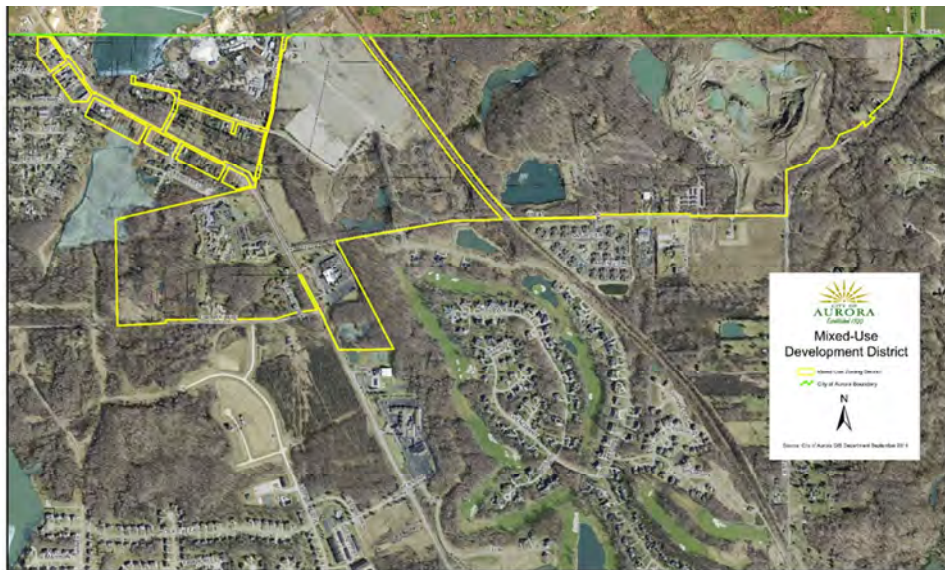
The city’s previous Master Plan recommended that the former Geauga Lake property be studied in more detail for the 2017 Master Plan update. This area is important to the city due to its location as the city’s northwest gateway as well as its potential for catalytic redevelopment with excellent roadway access and utilities in place.

Former Geauga Lake Property

The former Geauga Lake property consists of approximately 748 acres of contiguous property that straddles the City of Aurora/Bainbridge Township line. Approximately 560 acres are located in the city, with the balance located in the township. As previously noted, the Geauga Lake property is located in the northwest portion of the city-adjacent to the city’s northern boundary, east of SR 43, west of SR 306.

The property’s owner, Cedar Fair, is seeking to sell the property. Since the city is not in a position to purchase the property, and given the large size of the site and the associated redevelopment potential, the city has established a Mixed-Use Development District (see *Map 17*) to guide the type and character of future development at this location.

Map 17 - Mixed-Use Development District



Mixed-Use District

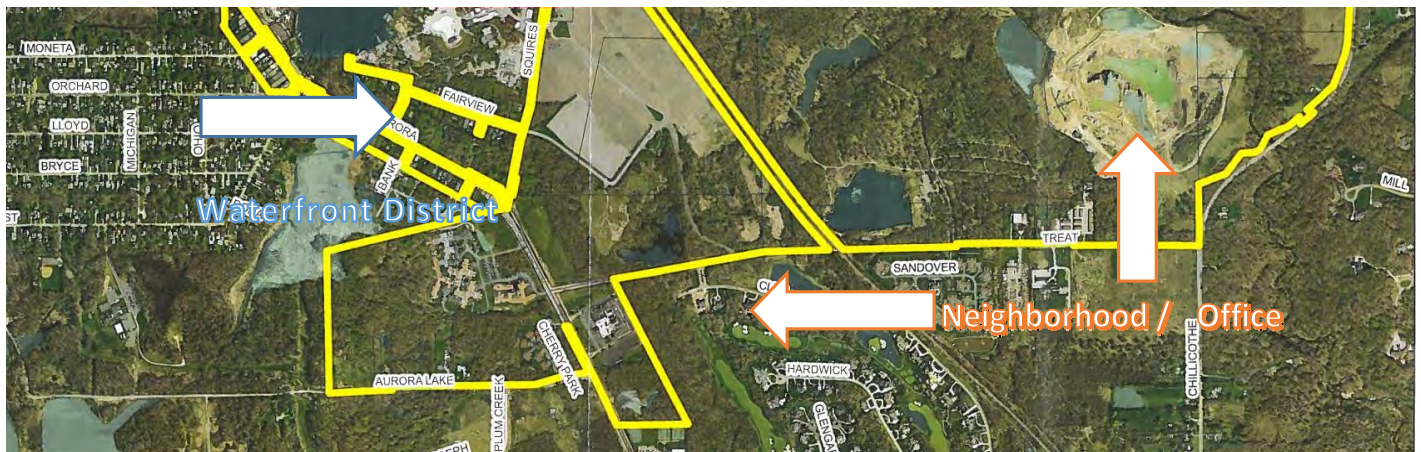
In 2014, Aurora residents voted to rezone about 560 acres including the former Geauga Lake property as a Mixed-Use District. The city established design guidelines for the area that are intended to serve as a guide for developers, architects and city officials as they seek to transform the site in a coherent and appealing manner.

These guidelines were developed to improve and build upon the existing charm and character of the city. To that end, the City of Aurora seeks to do the following:

- Preserve the integrity and value of adjacent single family dwellings.
- Create vehicular connections within the overall network.
- Recognize and be sensitive to the unique environmental features of the lake and topographical variations east of the railroad right-of-way.
- Incorporate Aurora’s historic features – with specific emphasis on Western Reserve-style architecture.
- Integrate mixed-use into a development plan to create greater efficiency, economic value and potential to create a sense of place.
- Create a pedestrian-friendly environment with walkable neighborhoods.
- Encourage Smart Growth concepts.
- Limit residential growth to 2.5 units per acre for a maximum of 1,400 total units.

The city’s intention is to provide workable guidelines that allow flexibility in new development while preserving the historic character of the city and natural geographic assets. Further, these recommendations provide options to create walkable communities, develop a variety of open space and streetscape options while creating jobs and increasing the city’s tax base.

The vision for the district includes a vibrant entertainment district near the lake (referred to as the Waterfront District) with a mix of unique and attractive office, retail and residential uses, and additional office and residential uses in the areas located off SR 43 and Treat and Chillicothe Roads (referred to as Neighborhood / Office areas). Of course, actual development of the district depends on the developers and builders Cedar Fair is able to attract.



NOTE: The Committee of the Whole emphasized the importance of the city’s commercial corridors and industrial area for economic development as detailed in the Addendum (see Page 106).

Chapter 4



RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 4: Recommendations

Overview

This Chapter contains the goals and objectives for the Plan, as identified by the Master Plan Review Commission (MPRC), with input from Planning Commission, the Mayor and administration, City Council and the citizens of Aurora. Public input into the goals and action items took place at various points throughout the planning process including public meetings of the MPRC and the Public Forum.

Community improvement requires a compelling vision, persistence, an ability to achieve consensus, and the flexibility to respond to changing needs, opportunities, and circumstances. Successful implementation of plan recommendations requires strong city leadership, general community consensus, and funding opportunities.

Goals and Objectives

Goals are broad, general statements reflecting community values and objectives. The goal for each topic area is shown in large bold text next to the underlined title of the topic area to which the goal relates.

The goals/objectives have been grouped into six topic areas, corresponding to the inventory and analysis sections of the Plan (Chapter 2), as follows: (1) Economy; (2) Housing; (3) Land Use/Zoning; (4) Community Facilities and Infrastructure; (5) Transportation; and (6) Natural Features. The Plan contains a total of six goals (one for each topic area) and a series of more detailed objectives.

Objectives are listed below each goal. While the goals are broad and present a vision, objectives are more defined and usually more easily measured. The objectives, and bullet points beneath each objective, consist of concrete courses of action and tasks associated with that particular objective. Where applicable, organizations that can play a key role in helping the city to realize the goals and objectives identified in the Plan have been noted.

Goals and objectives for the Plan begin on the next page.



ECONOMY

E-1 Create an environment that is conducive to development/business growth and promote Aurora as a community where people can raise a family, run a business, and enjoy excellent services and amenities.

Objectives:

E-1A Support existing and prospective local businesses by developing a comprehensive business attraction and retention strategy.

- Continue to work with the Aurora Chamber of Commerce to promote and market the unique attributes of the city as a means of attracting new and retaining existing small businesses, recognizing that nonresidential (commercial and industrial) growth will increase city revenues.
- Continue to work with retailers and the Aurora Chamber of Commerce to develop a strategy that fully capitalizes on the nearly 3 million annual visitors to Aurora Farms Premium Outlets.
- Work with county, state, and federal agencies to identify programs, and offer incentives to businesses looking to establish themselves within the city.
- Consider development of a Business Improvement District. Business Improvement Districts are an economic development tool that allows property owners or merchants in a defined area to use the city's assessment powers to assess themselves. If there is a willingness on the part of the business community to pay an additional tax assessment, BIDs can be a useful tool to accomplish improvements such as security, maintenance, marketing, streetscape improvements and community policing initiatives.
- Continue to work with property owners on CRA requirements and benefits.

E-1B Promote a diverse tax base.

- Continue to permit mixed-use development where residential and nonresidential uses are permitted in the same building or within close proximity to one another. Mixed-use development is one tool for creating the critical mass of residents necessary to sustain successful nonresidential uses, while at the same time allowing neighborhood amenities to be operated in close proximity to their users.
- Promote green, low impact, innovative industries. Market the city as an ideal place to initiate and/or expand high tech, low impact "green" businesses.
- Promote development of the Station District for retail (boutiques), bed & breakfasts, sit-down restaurants, medical facilities, and professional office uses.

E-1C Promote a mix of land uses.

- Continue to analyze the Zoning Code to ensure that it permits a wide variety of commercial activities, namely neighborhood-scale shopping and dining establishments. Parking regulations should ensure that adequate and properly located parking is accessible in commercial districts.
- Encourage small-scale retail establishments.



HOUSING

H-1 Promote residential neighborhoods that are safe, attractive, and well connected to community amenities.

Objectives:

H-1A Develop a specific housing code for residential rental properties.

- Identify requirements intended to ensure minimum health and safety standards for rental housing as they relate to the condition, maintenance and occupancy of rental dwellings. As with all dwellings in the city, a rental housing code would be intended to ensure that rental housing in the city be maintained in a safe and sanitary manner. A residential rental registry would be a key requirement of the code. Monitor violations and complaints to aid determining the need for a rental housing code.
- With the increasing number of rental properties in the community the Committee recommends that the administration pursue the implementation of a “housing code for residential rental properties” as recommended in the Master Plan Update as well as a Rental Property Registry.

H-1B Develop an Exterior Maintenance Code.

- As the city’s housing stock continues to age it will be increasingly important to ensure that residential buildings and properties are properly maintained to ensure stable property values and health and safety. An Exterior Maintenance Code would give the city the authority to prevent and remedy blighted properties.
- Continue to monitor violations and complaints to aid in determining the need for an Exterior Maintenance Code.
- The administration should consider the implementation of a maintenance code taking into account concerns regarding the extent of regulation within the code, the protection of private property rights, enforcement and resources available.



LAND USE & ZONING

LU/Z-1 Encourage high quality development/redevelopment and innovation in land use planning for all uses including design elements, amenities, and benefits that support current and future residents and businesses.

Objectives:

LU/Z-1A *Develop a cohesive Town Center and Station District.*

- Take steps to make these areas less auto-centric and more pedestrian-friendly.
- Incorporate paths and way-finding signage.
- Rails to Trails. Explore the feasibility of utilizing the railroad right-of-way to accommodate development of a path system. Coordinate with the Norfolk Southern Railroad.
- Undertake streetscaping improvements within the Town Center and Station Districts to begin the process of creating a cohesive district that residents and visitors recognize as distinct districts. Identify streetscaping grants to leverage city investment.
- Enhance the SR 82/SR 306 intersection streetscape.

LU/Z-1B *Lead redevelopment efforts for the former Geauga Lake property with Bainbridge Township.*

- Continue efforts to establish a Joint Economic Development District (JEDD) or Cooperative Economic Development Agreement (CEDA) as an incentive to collaboration between the city and township for redevelopment of the former Geauga Lake Property.

LU/Z-1C *Develop a comprehensive redevelopment strategy to address vacant commercial properties.*

- Develop an inventory of all vacant properties and evaluate and prioritize redevelopment depending upon location, size, future use, and potential revenue generation.
- Develop and incorporate into the zoning ordinance the following incentives to promote redevelopment:
 - An accelerated plan review process for projects seeking to redevelop;
 - Provide targeted assistance to businesses and potential new development projects on process and timelines for approval to ensure developments are processed smoothly;
 - Continue to recognize the true cost of development by considering infrastructure costs, social benefits and other impacts on the community as a whole; and
 - Encourage predictability and consistency in the city's land use regulations, while also allowing for flexibility and creativity in the site development process.



LAND USE & ZONING

Objectives:

LU/Z-1D *Expand areas where high technology, sustainable uses are permitted.*

- Promote high technology, sustainable, and low-impact “green” uses in industrial and commercial zoning districts.
- Revise the zoning ordinance to permit such uses by right or conditionally in targeted areas.

LU/Z-1E *Ensure that development and redevelopment foster continuation of a quaint community that preserves the semi-rural character of Aurora.*

- Promote private open space and preservation of natural landscapes, agricultural lands, and other features of the natural environment to encourage development that is sensitive to the geological conditions and natural character of the area.
- Develop design guidelines that promote harmonious development and aesthetic quality of the city.
- Continue to promote and encourage the utilization of Western Reserve architectural design elements throughout the city.

LU/Z-1F *Work with the Aurora Historical Society and Landmark Commission to support and promote historic preservation.*

- Update the Landmark Commission’s inventory of historic structures and require preservation of such structures in all new developments.
- Work with the Aurora Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Bureau and Aurora Historical Society to promote tourism and marketing of historic sites throughout the city.
- Research possibilities for an economic development program that would include incentives for historic preservation. Identify and include tax incentives for historic preservation and adaptive reuse of properties.

LU/Z-1G *Promote green building practices.*

- Develop zoning regulations to incentivize use and construction of pervious pavement, rain gardens, swales, solar panels and other best management practices.
- Work with the city Planning, Zoning and Building Division to identify practical building practices that can be incorporated into new and existing developments.



COMMUNITY FACILITIES

CF-1 Maintain and enhance existing community services and facilities and expand and/or adapt community services and facilities to meet future needs.

Objectives:

CF-1A *Continue to support, foster, and build upon the cooperative relationship with the Aurora City School District.*

- Continue collaboration on efforts such as the Safe Routes to Schools grant program.
- Understanding that the Aurora Schools are a community asset that draws prospective residents to the city, continue supporting the school district whenever possible. This support has historically included collaborative bidding, in-kind labor contributions like ballfield maintenance and a shared school resource officer.

CF-1B *Continue utilizing a tax abatement policy that takes into account proposed investment, job creation, and revenue foregone by the school district.*

CF-1C *Conduct feasibility study for development of Community Recreation Center.*

- A community/recreation center would enable the city to compete with adjacent communities that have existing centers, and therefore serve to attract families to Aurora. As noted in the 2010 Parks and Recreation Master Plan, a center would provide a central meeting place for residents (something that was expressed as lacking in the city) and provide for year-round recreation opportunities.
- Public-private partnerships could be explored again as a means of leveraging public dollars and maximizing return on investment for the physical maintenance of a community/recreation center.
- Explore conducting a Community Recreation Center feasibility study that includes a detailed financial assessment of potential capital, operations, and maintenance costs.

CF-1D *Work to implement the recommendations set forth in the 2010 Parks and Recreation Master Plan.*

- Update the Parks and Recreation Master Plan to reflect changes since the last Plan was completed such as acquisition by the city of new properties and programming for such properties.
- Address accessibility of facilities to the general public and handicapped individuals in the Plan update to provide equal opportunity for enjoyment of facilities for all.
- The city owns and operates its own parks and recreational facilities and should continue to collaborate with Portage Parks District as appropriate.



COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Objectives:

CF-1E *Continue to offer exemplary, reliable public services to residents and business owners.*

- Road safety should remain a top priority. Timely and continual clearing of roadways is recognized by residents and visitors and can have a positive impact on economic activity during periods of inclement weather.
- Retain and expand, when feasible, full-time fire and police personnel. The size and staffing levels for safety services play a large role in attracting and retaining families in Aurora.
- Continue to develop and maintain a city Service Management Map for current and future water, sewer, and stormwater services.

CF-1F *Continue cooperative service agreements with adjacent communities to reduce the cost of providing services such as maintenance of city roads and safety services.*

- City should continue to evaluate opportunities for cooperation and develop an achievable list of projects.

CF-1G *Manage completion of engineering plan review services.*

- Continue contracting with an engineering consulting firm, as may be necessary, to supplement plan review services provided by the city engineer.
- The city recently hired two part-time engineers and should evaluate engineering needs as development continues to increase.





TRANSPORTATION

T-1 Promote transportation networks that offer a range of safe, efficient, and convenient travel options with aesthetically pleasing corridors.

Objectives:

T-1A *Continue to implement connectivity enhancements for pedestrians and cyclists, and encourage safe routes for non-motorized transportation throughout the city.*

- Continue incremental progress toward implementation of Plan recommendations as funding allows.
- Continue to advance non-motorized connectivity between existing and future developments and activity centers such as the Town Center District, Station District, and Aurora Farms Premium Outlets.

T-1B *Continue to support increased pedestrian circulation opportunities.*

- Promote linkages between existing and proposed paths.
- Coordinate with AMATS and ODOT to promote development of bike paths adjacent to state rights-of-way.
- Continue to enforce subdivision regulations that require sidewalks to be incorporated within and around all new developments.

T-1C *Continue to support current public transportation service for senior citizens.*

- Continue the Aurora Transportation Program which is available for Aurora seniors who are at least 65 years of age and adults with disabilities. Transportation is available for medical appointments (except following a surgical procedure), routine errands, and senior events held at the Senior Center.

T-1D *Continue coordination with Streetsboro to facilitate improvement of SR 43 to widen the right-of-way from Mennonite Road south to the city's southern border.*

- Widening of SR 43 through the city's southern industrially zoned area could have economic development benefits through increased job creation and new industrial uses. The project is another example of collaboration with adjacent communities. Such collaboration could lead to future cost sharing opportunities.

T-1E *Enhance roadway appearance.*

- Develop streetscape standards which incorporate traffic calming techniques, such as on-street parking, bike lanes and other pedestrian amenities including but not limited to street trees, benches and crosswalks.
- Coordinate with AMATS and ODOT to incorporate streetscape improvements where necessary to facilitate safe vehicular and pedestrian travel on local and state roads.



TRANSPORTATION

Objectives:

T-1G Continue to promote safe pedestrian travel for school-aged children.

- As noted in the Connectivity Study, work with School District officials to develop a plan that addresses the transportation impacts of school facilities within the city.
- Evaluate current and future pedestrian traffic levels generated by schools to facilitate safe pedestrian access to and from school facilities.
- Coordinate with ODOT to assess the need for roadway improvements, including but not limited to walk and bike lanes, adjacent to school facilities.
- Promote improvements which facilitate travel at all times of the day to accommodate student participation in after-school activities.
- Identify grant funding opportunities to help offset the cost of identified improvements.

T-1H Continue to integrate multiple travel modes, where appropriate and feasible, into transportation improvements.

- Create a comprehensive, integrated, connected multi-modal transportation network within the community.
- Recognize the need for flexibility in that all streets are different; user needs must be balanced and fit into the context of the community.

T-1I Maintain and improve roadway safety.

- Prioritize road improvements based on existing condition, safety, and present and future use.
- Monitor traffic data on an annual basis to determine dangerous intersections.
- Identify and address congested and dangerous roadways.
- Work to ensure that future road improvements are compatible with city goals and objectives as identified in this Plan.
- Continue to enforce zoning regulations that require traffic impact studies to be completed for all new developments and construction.
- Continue to develop and maintain a GIS City Street Management Map for current and future projects.



NATURAL FEATURES

NF-1 Preserve and conserve environmental features for present and future residents.

Objectives:

NF-1A *Increase access to city-owned property, where feasible, based upon existing development restrictions.*

- Some city-owned properties are not accessible for public use. Continue to work to provide access to city-owned parks through active and passive amenities so as not to disturb protected land.

NF-1B *Work to preserve undeveloped land where feasible, understanding that such amenities contribute to the quality of life in Aurora.*

- Much of the existing undeveloped land is protected from future development through covenants and restrictions. Where privately-owned land is not preserved in perpetuity, consider creating flexible development regulations, such as planned development regulations, that require a certain percentage of usable, accessible open space to be set aside as undeveloped in perpetuity.

GENERAL

Objectives:

G1-A *Implement the Master Plan Update and revise as necessary.*

- Work to implement the recommendations set forth in the 2017 Master Plan Update. Incremental progress toward implementation of Plan recommendations is understandable given budgetary constraints.

Chapter 5



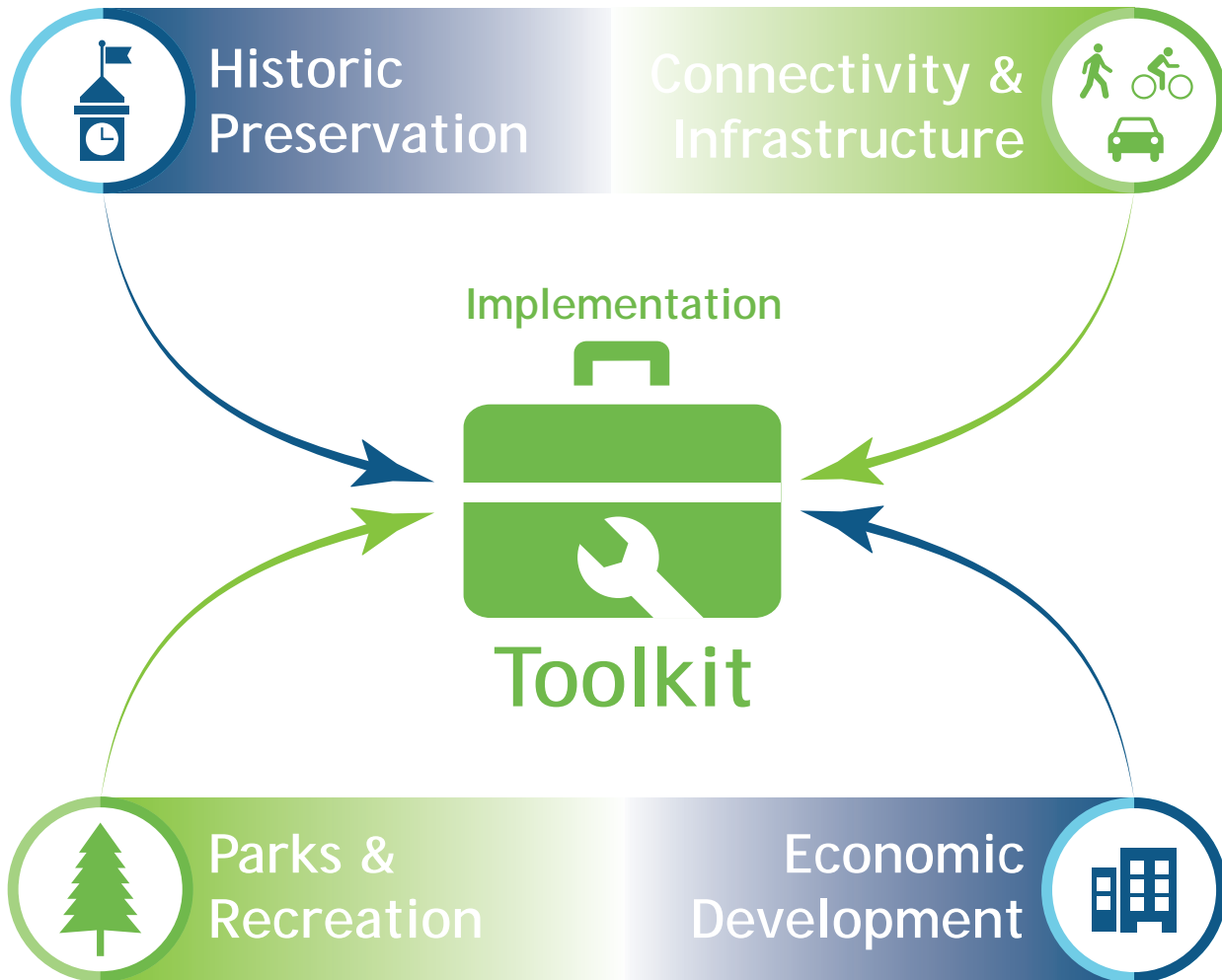
IMPLEMENTATION

CHAPTER 5: Implementation

Implementation Toolkits

The following pages highlight some of the potential funding programs, financial incentives, and regulatory tools that can potentially be utilized by the city to implement the Plan’s recommendations. These “toolkits” are intended to serve as a reference for administration and council as they determine how to fiscally budget and legislatively authorize expenditures and initiatives to support implementation of the Plan. Ultimately, the administration and council will be responsible for selecting which Plan recommendations to implement, when that action takes place, and at what level to fund a given investment.

As summarized below, the implementation toolkits are organized in four categories: (1) Historic Preservation; (2) Connectivity & Infrastructure; (3) Parks & Recreation; and (4) Economic Development:





Historic Preservation



Historic Preservation Tools

Historic preservation related themes relative to the City of Aurora include the following:

- National Register District Expansion & Local Landmarks
- Rehabilitation, Repair & Maintenance of Historic Resources
- Historic Design Review
- Creating a Historic Town Center identity and sense of place
- Creating a Station District identity and sense of place
- Heritage Tourism – promoting historic character and attracting visitors to Aurora as a destination
- Implementation and Funding¹

The following Historic Preservation Tools were identified to address these themes offering recommendations and implementation strategies.

I. National Register of Historic Places – Benefits and Incentives

Listing on the National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of properties recognized by the federal government as worthy of historic preservation for their local, state, or national significance in American history. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archeological resources. Listing accords a certain prestige, raises awareness and at the same time creates community identity and sense of place through the recognition of historic buildings.

What Listing Does:

- Provides a basis as a destination for historic tourism, a \$38 million growing industry in Ohio.

¹ Review included 1989 Preservation Plan & 2001 update; 2005 Aurora Streetscape Historic Scenic Enhancement Program & Preliminary Alternative Development Document; 2013 Master Plan; Local Historic Districts & Landmarks; City of Aurora Codified Ordinances; ABR Commercial and Residential Design Guidelines; City of Aurora National Register Nominations and HABS; Proposed Overlay District; site visit Aurora Town Center Historic District and Aurora Train Station Depot area; 4/25/17 meeting with planning staff; 5/9/17 meeting with Master Plan Review Commission.

- Income producing properties listed on the National Register are eligible for 25% state and 20% federal historic tax credit.
- National Register listing is often a prerequisite for funding applications for façade grants, low interest rate loans, design assistance, preservation easements or restoration work through various private, governmental and non-profit organizations.
- National Register listing is the basis for formation of a Downtown Redevelopment District (DRD).
- A National Register Historic District, or historic district boundary increase, substantially reduces the overall cost of achieving historic status for individual buildings.
- Listing leads to rehabilitation of buildings, which can be a catalyst for the immediate district and the surrounding neighborhood, both commercial and residential.

What Listing *Does Not* Do:

- It does not prevent the owner from remodeling, repairing, altering or demolishing the property, unless federal funds are used which prompts a Section 106 Review by the federal agency.
- It does not obligate the owner to make repairs or improvements to the property.
- It does not place any additional state or federal review requirements on a property owner; local reviews remain in place with or without National Register listing.

AURORA

The Aurora Town Center Historic District (NR #74001601) is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The District is significant under Industry, Commerce, Architecture, Religion and Social History encompassing the predominately residential town center including 20 houses, two general stores, a church and fire station. Aurora was established in 1799 as part of the Connecticut Western Reserve, named for the Goddess of Dawn from Roman mythology. The development of Aurora's first three main roads occurred between 1802-1806. Aurora Center became the juncture and pass through of the major transportation routes of Chillicothe Road (SR 306), Garfield Road (SR 82), Aurora Road (SR 43) and Pioneer Trail. It was along these routes that the majority of Aurora's settlers constructed their homes and established businesses and industry. The Aurora Town Center Historic District demonstrates early 19th century commerce, religious and civic institutions and representative homes of industry leaders. The District is visually centered at the major intersection of Routes 306, 43 and Pioneer Trail marked by the location of the community church and town hall. The period of significance spans from 1825-1899 with architecture including Greek Revival, Federal, Gothic Revival, Italianate and Queen Anne styles.

Aurora Township was an important mercantile and trade center in the 19th century, especially in the manufacture and export of cheese, with mills and factories located along the Chagrin River. The industrial center was situated one-half mile to the east of the Aurora Town Center near the **1904 Aurora Train Station Depot (NR# 86001131)** at 13 New Hudson Road, which is individually listed on the National Register. In addition, the **1853 C.R. Howard House (NR# 74001602)** at 411 E. Garfield Road is listed on the National Register. Buildings

in the area are scattered with some lost to demolition. Compiling a cohesive historic district seems unlikely, although individual buildings may be eligible for listing on the National Register.

Strategy

The Aurora Town Center Historic District provides the basis for historic identity and branding of the City of Aurora as a historic destination. Expansion of the boundaries of the 1974 Aurora Town Center National Register Historic District will allow additional properties to take advantage of the benefits of National Register designation including state and federal historic tax credits.

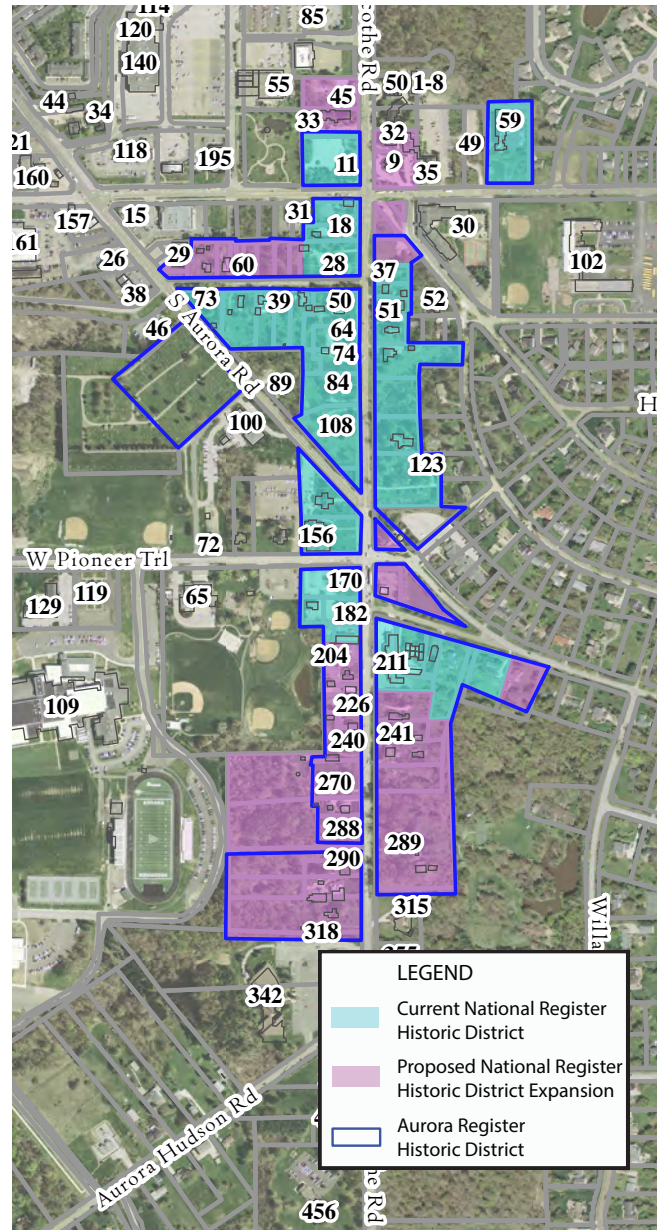
Implementation

Funding options for Expansion of National Register Aurora Town Center Historic District:

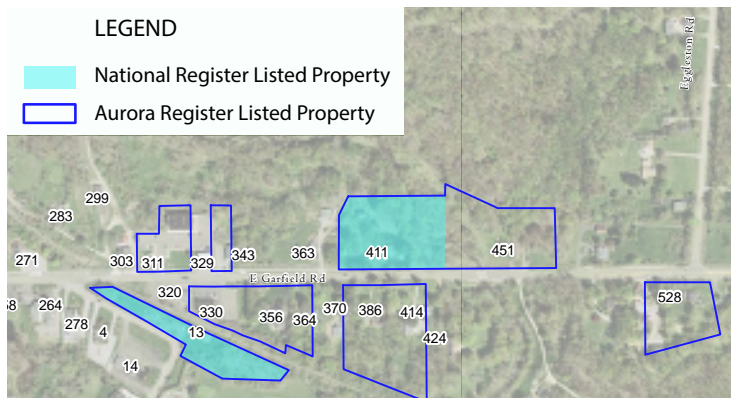
- Certified Local Government (CLG) Grant – State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
- Pipeline Initiative Grant – Ohio Development Services Agency (ODSA)

Map 18 (to the right) shows the Aurora Town Center National Register Historic District (properties in blue) and proposed boundary expansion (in pink). Map 19 (see below) shows the historic properties listed on the National Register and Aurora Register in the Station District.

Map 18 - National Register & Aurora Register Historic District



Map 19 - Station District Historic Properties



II. Rehabilitation of Income Producing Buildings Listed on National Register

Historic Tax Credits

Federal and state tax credits are available for the rehabilitation of a historic property. A tax credit is a dollar-for-dollar reduction in the amount of taxes owed and includes the following:

- 10% federal tax credit for the rehabilitation of *non-historic, non-residential* buildings constructed before 1936.
- 20% federal tax credit for the rehabilitation of income producing buildings listed on the National Register.
- Up to 25% state tax credit for the rehabilitation of CLG landmarked buildings.

Tax Credit Eligibility Requirements:

- Property must be a historic building.
- The rehabilitation must be substantial and exceed the greater of \$5,000 or the adjusted basis of the building.
- The property end use must be income producing: commercial, industrial, agricultural, rental residential.

Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation

- All ten standards must be met to receive certification.
- Applies to all properties regardless of type, size, use or materials.
- Applies to both exterior and interior features.
- Applies to environment, attached and adjacent construction within the property.

Case Study by the Numbers (see Table 19 to right)

Example: A \$500,000 historic rehabilitation using federal and state historic tax credits, calculated in the amount of \$171,000. Historic tax credit project awards in Ohio since 2015 have ranged in amount from \$37,000 to \$5 million.

Strategy

Expansion of the Aurora Town Center National Register Historic District and individual listing of commercial properties located in the Aurora Train Station Depot area will allow additional properties undertaking rehabilitation to take advantage of state and federal historic tax credits.

Implementation

Funding options for expansion of National Register Aurora Town Center Historic District:

- Certified Local Government Grant – State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
- Pipeline Initiative Grant – Ohio Development Services Agency (ODSA)

Table 19 - Tax Credit Case Study

| | Total Project Costs | Qualified Rehabilitation Expenditures (QRE's) |
|---|---------------------|---|
| Building Purchase | \$100,000 | \$0 |
| Rehabilitation Expenditures | | |
| Masonry | \$25,000 | \$25,000 |
| Windows | \$30,000 | \$30,000 |
| Plumbing | \$25,000 | \$25,000 |
| Electrical | \$30,000 | \$30,000 |
| HVAC | \$40,000 | \$40,000 |
| Carpentry | \$45,000 | \$45,000 |
| Lumber | \$90,000 | \$90,000 |
| Roof | \$25,000 | \$25,000 |
| Landscaping | \$10,000 | \$0 |
| Asphalt Paving | \$10,000 | \$0 |
| Developer Fee | \$40,000 | \$40,000 |
| Soft Costs | | |
| Architect | \$25,000 | \$25,000 |
| Accountant | \$5,000 | \$5,000 |
| Total | \$500,000 | \$380,000 |
| Fed Historic Tax Credit (20% of QREs) | | \$76,000 |
| State Historic Tax Credit (up to 25%) of QREs) | | \$95,000 |
| Total Historic Tax Credits | | \$171,000 |

III. Rehabilitation of Historic Homes

Heritage Home Loan Program – Cleveland Restoration Society (CRS)

- The Heritage Home Loan Program provides below market interest rate financing for interior and exterior house rehabilitation, repair and maintenance projects including for example insulation, energy efficient upgrades, window repair, roof work, painting with color scheme consult, kitchen and bath remodeling, and more. Historic preservation technical assistance is included.
- Technical assistance is available to participating municipalities without a loan.
- Qualifying homes must be 50 years or older and located in a participating Heritage Home Loan Program community.

Strategy

Implement CRS Heritage Home Loan Program to benefit all owners of homes 50 years or older within the city with rehabilitation, repair and maintenance. The program will provide overall technical support for buildings located in participating communities.

Implementation

- Prepare and submit an Advocacy Letter to CRS from Mayor or City Council expressing community support and interest in the program. CRS will provide template letter.
- Contact CRS for information and support:
<http://www.clevelandrestoration.org/homeowner/index.php>
- Work with CRS to find a Portage County bank to set up low interest rate Heritage Home Loan Program. CRS acts as escrow agent for the loan and disburses funds to rehabilitation project contractors while overseeing technical components of project.

IV. Preservation of Historic Buildings

Historic Design Guidelines for Local Landmark Buildings

Alterations, additions and new construction in historic districts have an impact on the distinctive character of adjacent structures, streetscapes and the larger setting, therefore making the creation of local historic design guidelines a wise administrative choice. Historic design guidelines apply to designated local landmarks and historic districts.

Historic Design Guidelines

- Stabilize and protect the value of public and private investment.
- Help reinforce the character of the historic area, protect its visual aspects and encourage compatible additions and new construction.
- Create constancy in design review and help interpret general design criteria in the local historic preservation ordinance.
- Serve as a tool for designers and their clients to use in making preliminary design decisions.
- Increase public awareness of design issues and options.
- A demolition ordinance, supported by historic design guidelines, allows time to consider alternatives.

Strategy

Creation of historic design guidelines specific to historic properties in the City of Aurora should include examples of historic architectural styles and character defining features to aid in design review. In addition, the city should consider a historic inventory (OHI) survey update or expansion of Aurora Town Center National Register District to aid in design review by providing detailed architectural and physical description of buildings identifying character defining features. Target areas include Chillicothe Road, Pioneer Trail, Aurora Road, Maple Lane and Garfield Road at the local Aurora Station Historic District.

Implementation

- CLG grants are available for historic design guidelines, historic inventory surveys and National Register nominations.

V. Historic Identity & Sense of Place, Heritage Tourism

Main Street Program – Heritage Ohio

The Main Street Program was initiated by the National Trust for Historic Preservation to save historic downtowns and developed into a powerful economic development tool. Improving economic management, recruiting new business and encouraging adaptive use of historic buildings, strengthening public participation and making the business district a fun place are all central to the program. The program is locally driven, addressing local issues and concerns. The program employs a four-point methodology focused on the following:

1. Organization is the building of consensus and cooperation among groups that play a role in the business district. Many individuals and organizations in the community have a stake in the economic viability of the business community.
2. Design involves improving the business district's image by improving physical appearance, including not just buildings but also streetlights, window displays, parking areas, signage and sidewalks, streetscapes, landscaping, promotional materials and all other elements that convey a visual message about what the business district is and what it has to offer.
3. Promotions involve marketing the business district's unique characteristics to shoppers, investors, new businesses, tourists and others. Effective promotions create a positive image of the business district through retail promotional activities and specific events utilizing the business district as a staging area of community activities.
4. Economic development involves strengthening the existing economic base of the business district while diversifying it. Business enhancement activities could include helping existing businesses, recruiting new businesses, providing a balanced mix, converting unused space into productive property and improving competitiveness of merchants.

AURORA

The City of Aurora Zoning Map indicates three commercial nodes which encompass historic buildings located at the intersection of Chillicothe Road (SR 306) and Garfield Road (SR 82); the intersection of Chillicothe Road and Pioneer Trail; and East Garfield Road and New Hudson Road. The area between the two commercial districts along Chillicothe Road is separated by a residential district which includes the church and town hall buildings at Aurora Road (SR. 43). Overhead signage directs traffic to Aurora Farms, Geauga Lake, Mentor, Solon and the various State Routes yet lacks immediate wayfinding. Historic district signage is posted at all entries to the Town Center and Station Historic Districts, but is overshadowed by ODOT signage. Wayfinding would be improved to complement Aurora amenities. The message to visitors is confusing and the commercial business district(s) undefined.

Historic identity is rooted in the built environment. Historically, Aurora developed a residential section along Chillicothe Road (SR 306) and industrial section along the Chagrin River and Garfield Road (SR 82). A District Overlay has been considered for zoning along Chillicothe Road in the Town Center Historic District to allow for increased commercial use while protecting the residential investments, but that may not be appropriate at this time since the area is experiencing a residential resurgence. The city seeks to save historic buildings and encourage adaptive use of existing residential and commercial properties.

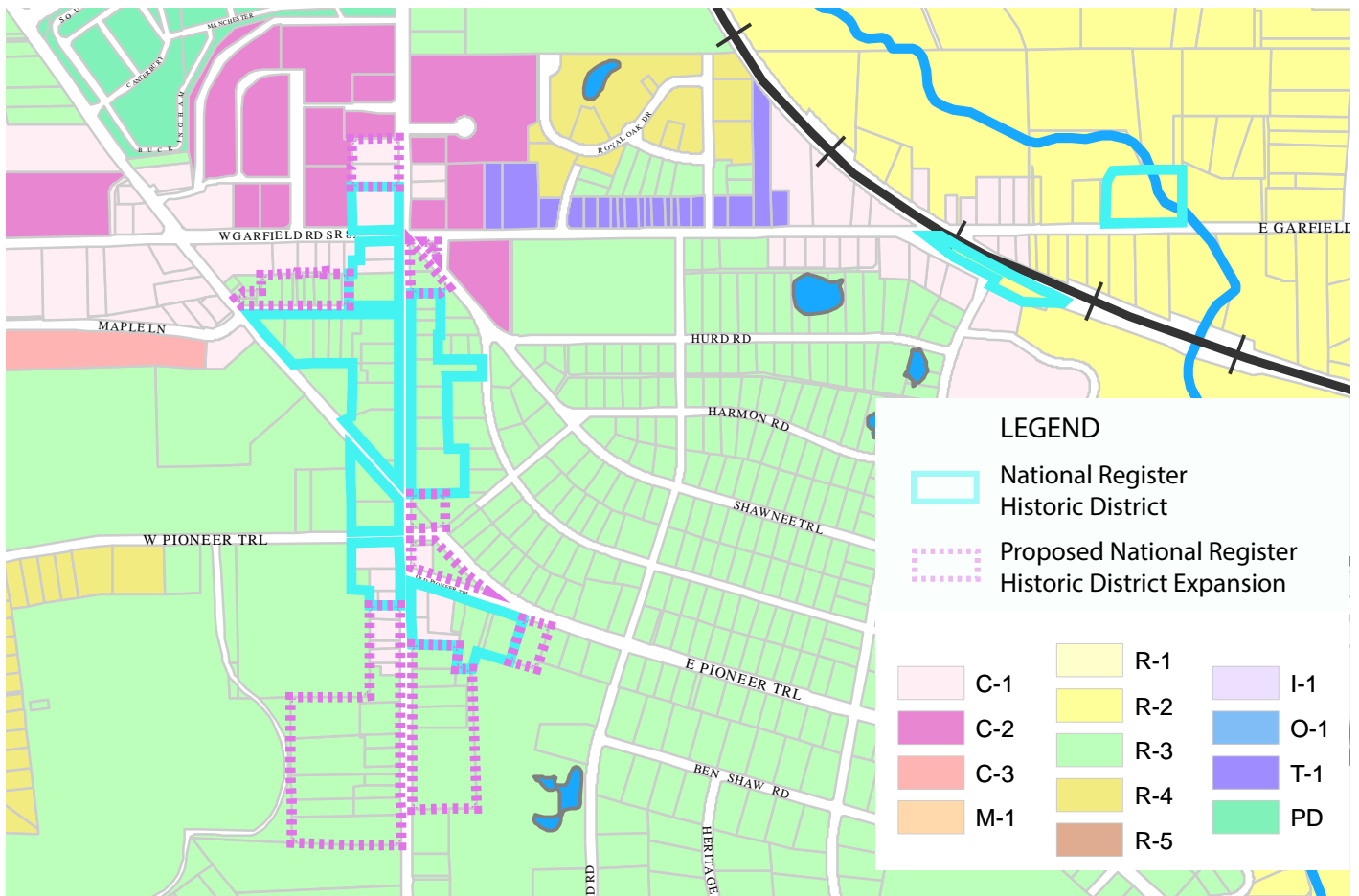
Strategy

It is recommended that the city clearly define historic business district(s) to allow for a targeted historic resource based economic development program. City support and adoption of an Aurora Main Street program will guide implementation of desired goals and provide a defined historic identity. In addition, the Ohio Development Services Agency (ODSA) offers programs to link local heritage sites to the larger Ohio brand. See *Map 20 below* for current zoning classifications within the city's two historic districts.

Implementation:

- Contact Heritage Ohio about becoming a Main Street community. For more information see <http://www.heritageohio.org/programs/ohio-main-street-program/>

Map 20 - Zoning Classifications: Town Center & Station District





Connectivity & Infrastructure

Implementation



Infrastructure Funding

Funding programs from various public agencies are available and competitively awarded to assist with the funding of transportation and utility infrastructure projects at the municipal level. The City of Aurora has successfully leveraged state and federal funds to offset the cost of capital improvement projects in the past and should continue proactively seeking those opportunities based on financial feasibility, infrastructure needs, and community priorities.

A summary of some of the applicable infrastructure funding programs and their eligible projects and required local match contributions is provided below:

| Infrastructure Funding Sources | | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|---|---------------------|
| Program | Funding Agency | Eligible Projects | Minimum Local Match |
| SCIP/LTIP (Issue 1) | OPWC | Road, Bridge, Culverts, Water, Sewer | 10% / 0% |
| Water Pollution Control Fund | OEPA | Wastewater | Loan - n/a |
| Drinking Water Assistance Fund | OEPA | Water | Loan - n/a |
| Resurfacing Program | AMATS | Roadway Resurfacing (fed-aid, but non-SR) | 20% |
| Surface Transportation Block Grant | AMATS | Transportation (federal-aid system) | 20% |
| Transportation Alternatives Program | AMATS | Bicycle & Pedestrian | 20% |
| Safe Routes to Schools | ODOT | Infrastructure within 2-miles of schools | 0% |
| Highway Safety Program | ODOT | Roadway (safety-related) | 10% |
| Urban Paving | ODOT | Roadway Resurfacing (state routes) | 20% |
| Roadwork Development (629 Account) | ODSA | Roadway (related to job creation) | 50% |
| Recreational Trails Program | ODNR | Trails (generally local trails) | 20% |
| Clean Ohio Trails | ODNR | Trails (emphasis on regional connections) | 25% |

Priority Trail Connections

Priority trail connections identified through the MPRC process are detailed on *Pages 94-97* with conceptual alignments and accompanying text describing the challenges associated with implementing these potential connections. The summaries provided for each of the connections is intended to provide a starting point for more detailed planning and preliminary engineering, while also providing a reference for proposed improvements that can be cited in funding/grant applications and discussions with potential project partners.

Regional Rail Trail

This trail would run along the Norfolk Southern (NS) rail line stretching from the city border with Mantua and Bainbridge Townships. The hope is that this would be a small section of a larger, regional trail that follows the NS rail corridor from Mantua to Solon, connecting the Cleveland MetroParks with the Headwaters Trail in Mantua. The trail would act as the “spine” of the Aurora trail network, linking together the other proposed connector trails, large neighborhoods, like Barrington, the Station District and the former Geauga Lake site.

Implementation Challenges

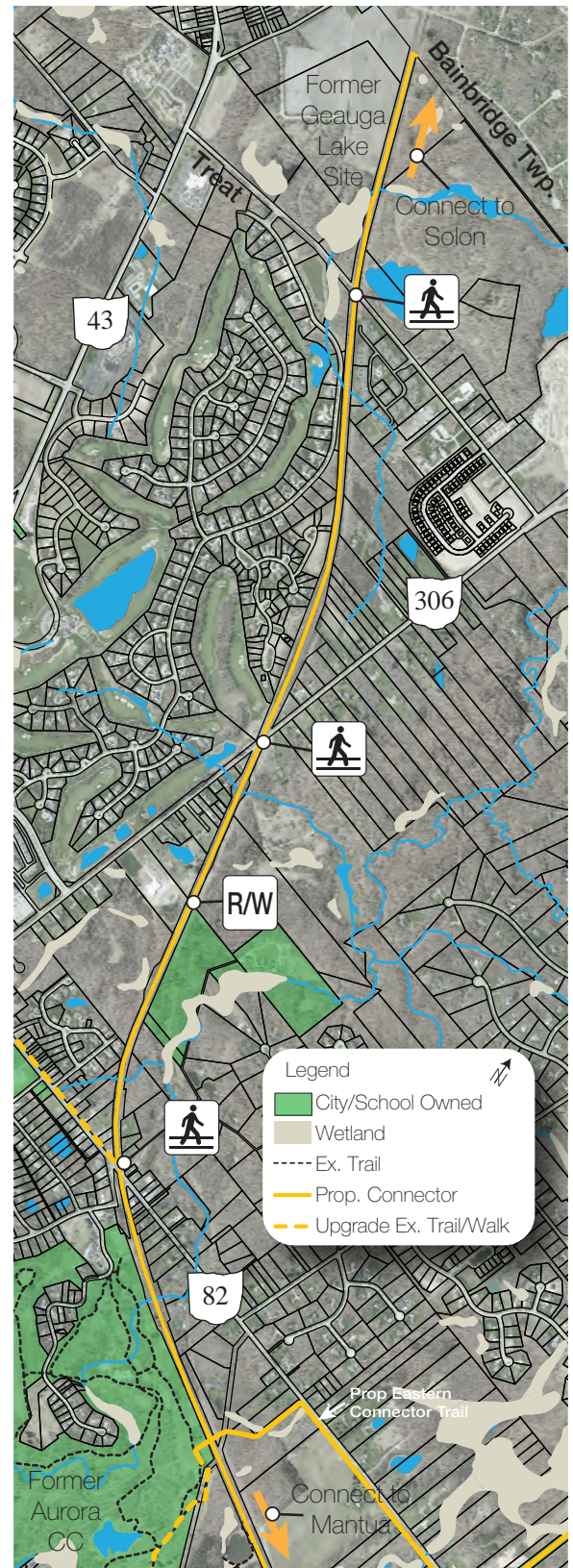
Below are brief descriptions of the major challenges to installing this trail that would need to be addressed with further planning and engineering studies.



Roadway Crossings: There are three major roadway crossings within the city at SR 82, SR 306 and Treat Road. SR 82 and SR 306 have a fairly significant amount of daily traffic and with the hopes of future development at the former Geauga Lake site, Treat Road will have an increase in traffic volume as well. With the trail being regional and relatively flat, bike riders will travel at faster speeds making roadway crossing safety critical. Further study should investigate how each major road crossing is designed, either with a HAWK signal, Rapid Flashing Beacon or tunnel.



Right-of-Way Needs: Acquiring the existing right-of-way or an easement is the biggest challenge to implementing this trail. The entire length of the rail line within Aurora is owned by NS. While in some ways it is easier to only deal with one private property owner, railroad negotiations can be challenging.





Eastside Connector Trail


This 4.75 mile long connector trail would link together many of Aurora’s most critical park assets including Harmon Farms, Sunny Lake Park, Hartman Farm, the former Aurora Country Club property and the Aurora Sanctuary. The trail would connect with both the Southern Connector Trail along Mennonite Road and the proposed rail trail along the NS line. As much of the trail is located within existing city-owned property and away from more densely populated subdivisions, the trail has few roadway crossings and provides a unique off-road route that allows the user to “get lost” in nature all while having a trail that can lead them home. The majority of the trail can be constructed within existing public right-of-way and some of the trail could even reuse existing walking paths to reduce construction costs. Due to the assets it would connect, the minimal right-of-way needs and high interest from the public and the Master Plan Review Commission, this trail should be a top priority to implement.

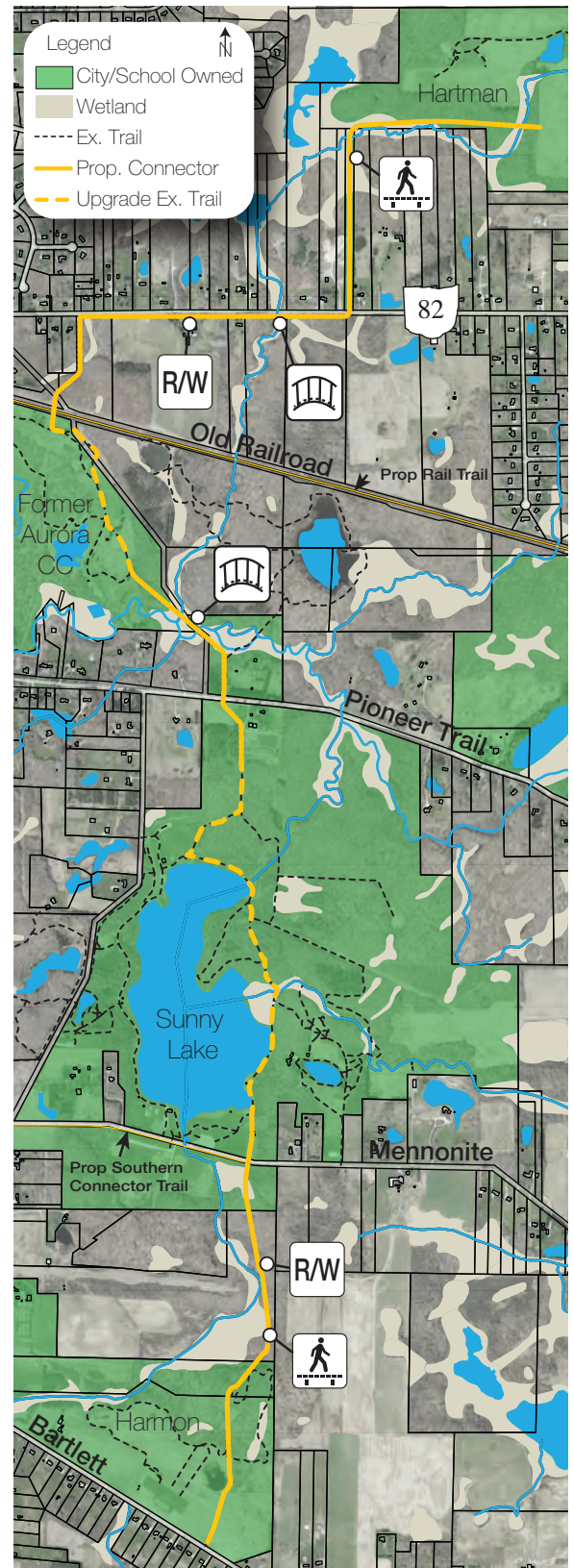
Implementation Challenges

Below are brief descriptions of the major challenges to implementing this trail that would need to be addressed with further planning and engineering studies.

 **Bridge/Large Culvert:** There are multiple locations where a bridge or large culvert is needed to span an existing waterway. If possible, the alignment of the trail should be altered to avoid these locations. Engineering analysis will be required.

 **Boardwalk to avoid wetlands:** Though traversing through a wetland can be an interesting experience for the trail user, it does increase costs and can impact a project schedule. In some locations, as shown on the map, a boardwalk or wetland mitigation may not be able to be avoided.

 **Right-of-Way Needs:** Some areas along SR 82 and south of Mennonite Road will need easements. Different bike facilities (bike lanes, trail locations, etc.) should be investigated with further study, particularly along SR 82, to minimize the need for easements.



Southern Connector Trail

This 3.50 mile long connector trail would run primarily within the existing roadway right-of-way along Mennonite Road to connect Tinkers Creek and some of the southern Aurora neighborhoods to Sunny Lake and the Eastside Connector Trail.

Implementation Challenges

Below are brief descriptions of the major challenges to implementing this trail that would need to be addressed with further planning and engineering studies.



Intersection Crossing Upgrades: Further study is needed to determine the safest route to cross some of the high speed rural corridors along the trail route. The intersection of SR 43 and Mennonite Road should be studied to determine a feasible alternative to realign Mennonite Road to allow for a safer crossing for both vehicles and, with increased pedestrian traffic from this connector trail, pedestrians as well. Rapid Flashing Beacons or HAWK Signals, as shown below, are effective tools for increasing pedestrian awareness and limiting accidents and should be investigated to aid in pedestrian safety at this intersection.



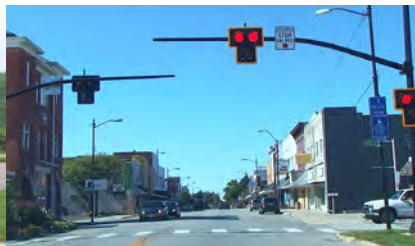
Bridges and Culvert Extensions: As most of the trail is along Mennonite Road, existing culverts may have to be extended or new structures added for a trail.



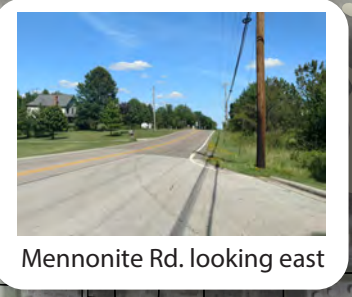
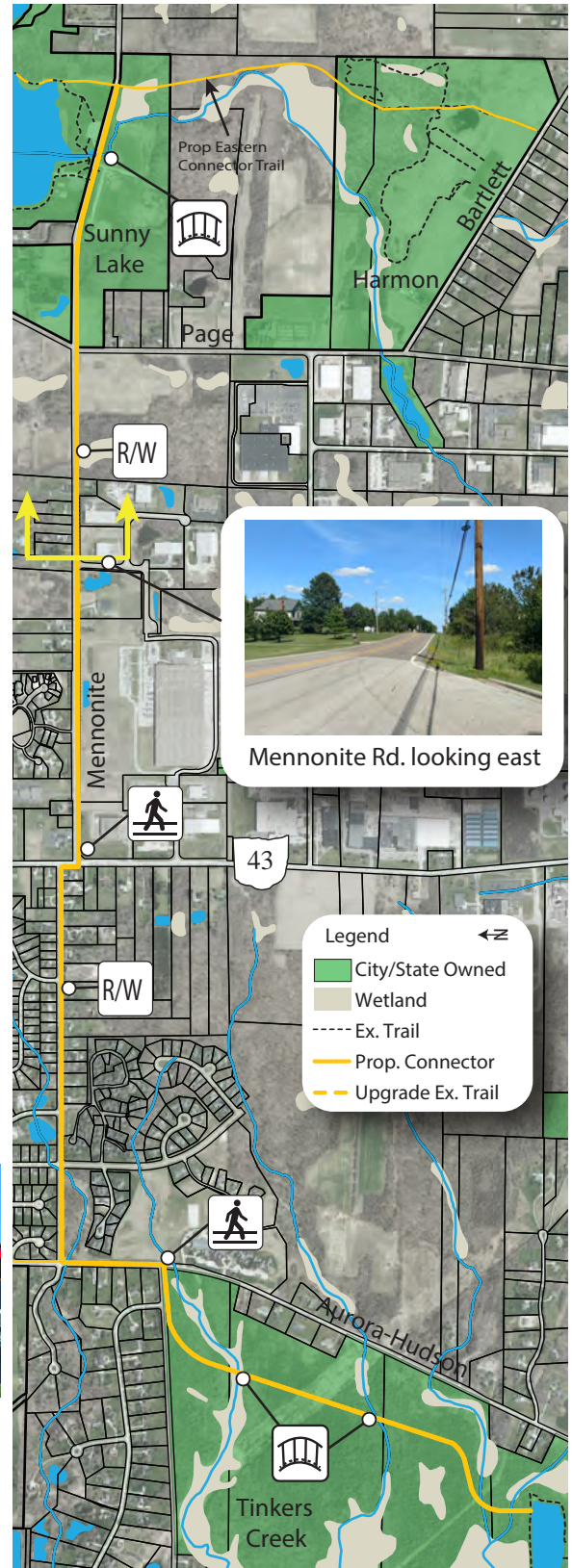
Right-of-Way Needs: As shown in the picture of Mennonite Road to the right, utilities and ditch lines run fairly close to Mennonite Road. To lessen impacts, further study is needed to determine the best location of the trail facilities. In some locations easements will be needed from multiple owners making the implementation of this trail difficult.



Rapid Flashing Beacon



HAWK Signal

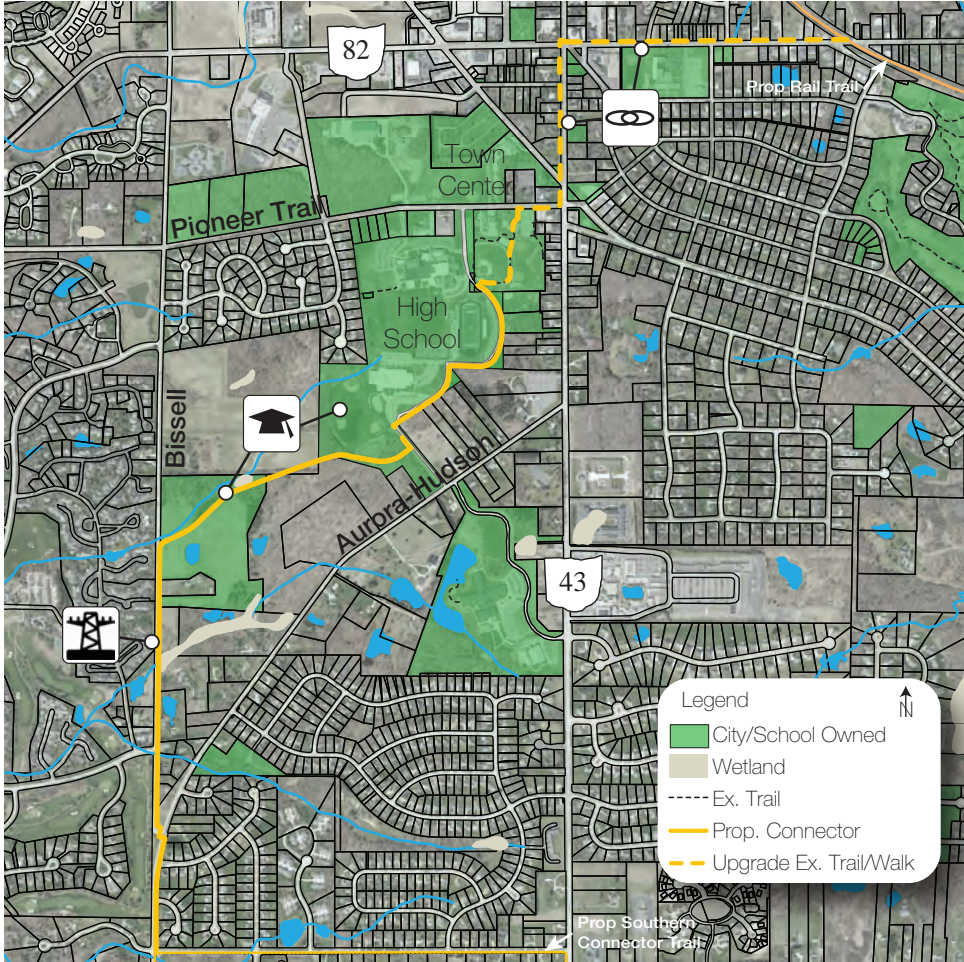





Western Connector Trail

This 3 mile long connector trail runs along Aurora-Hudson and Bissell Roads utilizing multiple Aurora School District parcels to connect the southern and western neighborhoods of the city with Aurora High School, Kiwanis-Moore Park, the Town Center and Station Districts and ultimately the regional rail trail. This connection would provide school children with a safe route to and from school and city events.

Implementation Challenges

Below are brief descriptions of the major challenges to implementing this trail that would need to be addressed with further planning and engineering studies.

- 
- The map shows the proposed Western Connector Trail route in Aurora, Colorado. The route is highlighted in yellow and orange, starting from the south near Bissell Road and heading north through the Town Center and Station Districts towards Aurora High School. Key landmarks include Aurora-Hudson Road, Pioneer Trail, and the High School. The map also shows existing trails (dashed lines) and proposed connector trails (solid lines). A legend in the bottom right corner identifies symbols for City/School Owned land (green), Wetland (light green), Existing Trail (dashed line), Proposed Connector (solid yellow line), and Upgrade Existing Trail/Walk (dashed orange line). Icons for a critical linkage, school, and utility are placed along the route to indicate specific challenges.
-  **Critical Linkage:** For the trail network to truly “connect the community” the Town Center and Station District need to be included. This connection could help liven empty storefronts and create activity in the center of town. The safest way to connect these areas would be to widen existing sidewalks to accommodate a 10’ wide multi-use path. Some right-of-way may be needed.
 -  **School Coordination:** The Aurora City Schools must be a major stakeholder in future citywide trail discussions if an off-road trail network is to be successful in Aurora. Many of the properties along this trail route are on school property (including the two parcels highlighted above). Alternate routes could be considered along Aurora-Hudson Road but right-of-way would be needed from the majority of the owners, making implementation more difficult and a trail that is ultimately less scenic than the one proposed above.
 -  **Utility Considerations:** Though Bissell Road has a wide enough right-of-way to accommodate a trail, utilities along the eastern side of the road may restrict the feasibility of installing a separate trail within the right-of-way. Bike lanes may be a viable option to provide access to the neighborhoods along Bissell Road.



Parks & Recreation



Parks & Recreation Funding

Funding programs from various public agencies are available and competitively awarded to assist with the funding of greenspace, parks and recreation, and trail-related projects at the municipal level. The City of Aurora has successfully leveraged state and federal funds to offset the cost of park-related capital improvement projects and land acquisition frequently in the past and should continue seeking those opportunities based on community priorities and financial feasibility.

A summary of some of the applicable parks and recreation funding programs and their eligible projects and required local match contributions is provided below:

| Parks & Recreation Funding Sources | | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|---|---------------------|
| Program | Funding Agency | Eligible Projects | Minimum Local Match |
| NatureWorks | ODNR | Parks & Recreation Facilities | 25% |
| OPWC Green Space Conservation Program | OPWC | Land Conservation, Passive Recreation | Loan - n/a |
| Land & Water Conservation Fund | ODNR | Land Conservation, Passive Recreation | Loan - n/a |
| Recreational Trails Program | ODNR | Trails, Trail-related facilities | 20% |
| Clean Ohio Trails | ODNR | Trails (emphasis on regional connections) | 25% |

Innovative Partnerships

Two state programs offer opportunities for project sponsors to leverage the market value of a donated piece of land from a private third party as a local match contribution towards the project development cost of providing passive recreation access to the property that must be conserved in perpetuity:

- *OPWC Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation Fund* - This program is dedicated to environmental conservation including acquisition of green space and the protection and enhancement of river and stream corridors. Grant recipients agree to maintain the properties in perpetuity so that they can be enjoyed and cherished for generations to come. The City of Aurora was awarded Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation funds for the purchase of Spring Hill Park.
- *ODNR Land and Water Conservation Fund* - This program provides funding for acquisition, development, and rehabilitation of recreational areas.



Economic Development



Economic & Entrepreneurial Development

The Economic and Entrepreneurial Development (EED) initiative in Aurora is intended to be a resource for existing businesses as well as those businesses and industries interested in locating in Aurora. The department's goal is to pursue all types of economic development opportunities combined with a responsive approach when addressing the needs of all types of businesses and manufacturing facilities.

The EED maximizes the departmental capabilities of the City of Aurora and leverages the needed assets to ensure that the commercial and industrial growth of the city satisfies all strategic and financial priorities.

The EED is led by the Economic Development Director and supported by the Mayor. Additionally, the Economic Development Board acts as a strategic and operational resource to provide insight and direction. The Board consists of five outside members, the Mayor, EED Director, and President of City Council. The Board meets several times annually and assembles as needed.

The EED works with county, regional and state partners to develop partnerships and utilizes several incentive programs which include the following:

Community Reinvestment Area (CRA)

A Community Reinvestment Area (CRA) is an economic development tool administered by municipal and county government that provides real property tax exemptions for property owners who renovate existing or construct new buildings. Property owners in CRAs can receive tax incentives for investing in real property improvements. This program permits municipalities or counties to designate areas where investment has been discouraged as a CRA to encourage revitalization of the existing housing stock and the development of new structures. Local municipalities can determine the type of development to be supported by the CRA Program by specifying the eligibility of residential, commercial and/or industrial projects.

Aurora has three active CRAs in the northwest, central, and southern areas of the city.

Case Study:

The City of Aurora utilized a 15-year, 100% property tax abatement through an existing CRA to encourage Piping Rock Health Products LLC to invest \$11.9 million at an existing building at 777 Lena Drive which could result in 346 new jobs in the next five years.

Enterprise Zone

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 in which businesses can receive tax incentives in the form of tax exemptions on eligible new investment. The Enterprise Zone Program can provide tax exemptions for a portion of the value of new real investment when the investment is made in conjunction with a project that includes job creation. Existing land values and existing building values are not eligible (except as noted within rare circumstances).

Local communities may offer tax incentives for non-retail projects that are establishing or expanding operations in the State of Ohio. Real property investments are eligible for tax incentives.

Municipal Income Tax Rebate

A municipal income tax rebate provides an incentive, allowable under Ohio Revised Code 718.15, to new or existing businesses within city limits which are creating new, full-time jobs. Qualified companies may be eligible for a non-refundable income tax credit against their for-profit or individual income tax. The rate and term of the credit is negotiated by the city administration and ultimately approved by city council (or its designated municipal income tax credit advisory council) on an individual basis.

Case Study:

The City of Aurora utilized a 7-year, 33% income tax abatement to encourage Piping Rock Health Products LLC to locate within the city.

Economic Development Agreements

Economic development agreements present an opportunity for Aurora and an adjacent unincorporated area to share the benefits and responsibilities of commercial and industrial development. Two such examples are the following:

Joint Economic Development District (JEDD)

A Joint Economic Development District (JEDD) is an economic development tool that enables municipalities and townships to cooperatively provide financial support for infrastructure improvements and public services, among other activities. Through a JEDD, land can remain in a township, thereby allowing the township to continue to collect property taxes, but a separate taxing district, or JEDD, is created to levy an income tax on JEDD area businesses. Both municipalities and townships can benefit from this increased tax base.

Cooperative Economic Development Agreement (CEDA)

A Cooperative Economic Development Agreement (CEDA) is another economic development tool that enables municipalities and townships to cooperatively provide support for infrastructure improvements and public services within a defined area. Through a CEDA, land can be annexed to a municipality, thereby allowing the municipality to collect its income tax, while a township can continue to collect some or all of the property taxes it collected prior to annexation. In addition to municipalities and townships, CEDAs can also be entered into by counties and private entities.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is an economic development tool that enables local governments, including municipalities, townships and counties, to finance public infrastructure improvements and, in select circumstances, privately owned economic development projects and residential projects. The two most common types of TIFs are parcel TIFs and incentive district TIFs. An Incentive District may span multiple parcels and comprise an area no larger than 300 contiguous acres.

O.R.C. 5709.40(A)(5) requires that Incentive District TIFs demonstrate one or more of the following seven characteristics of economic distress:

1. More than half of the residents' incomes in the district fall below 80% of the median income of the residents in the political subdivision where the TIF district is located;
2. The average unemployment rate over the last year for the district is equal to 150% of the average rate of unemployment for Ohio over the same year;
3. More than a quarter of the population living in the district has an income below the federal poverty line;
4. The district is blighted;
5. The district is located in a substantially distressed area;
6. A certified engineer certifies that the public infrastructure in the district is inadequate to meet the potential development needs of the district; or
7. The district consists of entirely unimproved land.



How it Works

TIF captures the increase in property value of real property. As shown above, an existing assessed value is established prior to the TIF's enactment. This sets the taxable value of the property for the life of the TIF. In addition, extensive economic analysis is completed to establish projected future property values based on proposed public improvements within the district. These projections are the basis for the economic development plan that must be completed to justify a TIF. As improvements are made to the public infrastructure in the district and/or development occurs, property values should increase. That projected increase in property value is used to fund the aforementioned public improvements throughout the district.

TIF is not a tax increase. The additional assessed value of the properties within the TIF district are paid by the property owner as Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTs).

School Board Approvals

Local legislative authorities may exempt up to 75% of the value of improvements to real property from taxation for up to ten years without local school board approval. In general, any government desiring to exempt more than 75% of the value of the improvements from real property taxation or seeking a TIF term greater than 10 years must receive prior approval from the local board of education and statutorily required additional government entities. With those approvals a political jurisdiction may exempt up to 100% of the improvements for up to 30 years. The jurisdiction that authorizes the tax incentive must specify the rate (100% maximum) and the length (30-year maximum term) of the property tax exemption.

Potential Application:

A TIF Incentive District could be utilized to construct new public streets and utilities to facilitate a mixed-use development at the former Geauga Lake Park site or new business park within the city's industrial area.

Downtown Redevelopment District (DRD)

The Ohio General Assembly recently enacted H.B. 233 which enables municipalities to create Downtown Redevelopment Districts (DRD). A DRD functions similar to a TIF Incentive District, but offers municipalities additional options in funding projects and programs with funds generated by the DRD.

How it Works

Property owners within the DRD make service payments in lieu of taxes on a tax exemption up to 70% of the increased value of real property over the course of the 10-year DRD period. A DRD may have a 30-year term with approval by the local school board.

Eligible Uses of DRD Proceeds

An Economic Development Plan must specify the proposed uses of DRD service payments which may include the following:

- i. loans *or* grants to owners of buildings within the DRD for the purpose of rehabilitating *historic* buildings;
- ii. loans to owners of buildings within the DRD for the purpose of making repairs or improvements to buildings that are *not* historic buildings;
- iii. contributions to a Special Improvement District (SID), Community Improvement Corporation (CIC) or nonprofit corporation for use to rehabilitate a historic building or promote or enhance the DRD; or
- iv. financing public infrastructure improvements (similar to TIF districts) within the DRD.

The name *Downtown* Redevelopment District is in itself misleading. A DRD does *not* have to be located in a Central Business District or densely populated area. The only requirements in delineating a DRD is that it must

- i. be located within a municipality;
- ii. be no more than 10 acres of contiguous area; and
- iii. include one historic building (as defined by O.R.C. 149.311) that is being rehabilitated or will be rehabilitated.

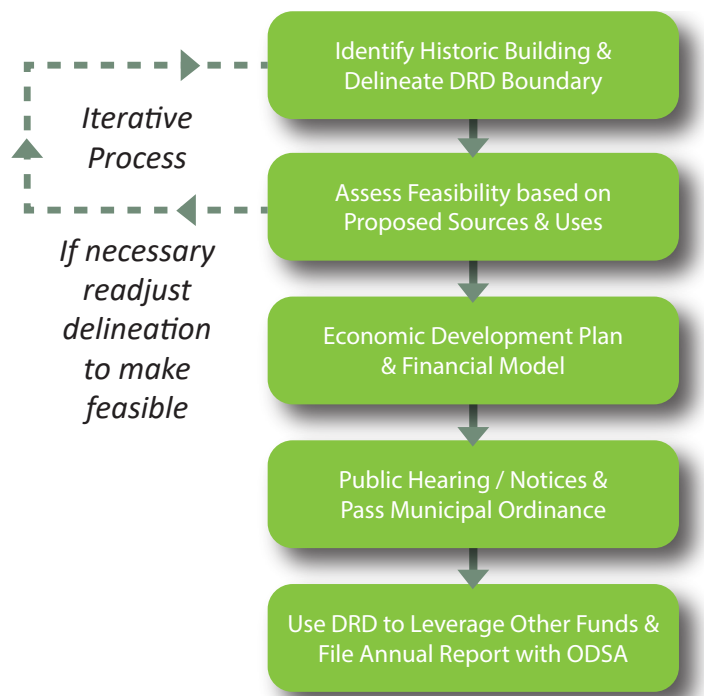
A DRD must *not* be comprised exclusively of residential uses. In addition, a DRD may *not* be comprised of any parcels that are part of an active or former TIF District.

Redevelopment Charges

In addition to service payments, property owners within a DRD may enter into agreements with the municipality to impose a redevelopment charge on the property. The redevelopment charge may be a fixed dollar amount or an amount determined on the basis of the assessed valuation of the property or all or part of the profits, gross receipts, or other revenues of a business operating on the property, including rentals received from leases of the property.

Potential Application:

A DRD could be utilized to help fund the rehabilitation of one or more historic buildings in the Station District as the centerpiece of a future trailhead-oriented development in conjunction with a Rails-to-Trails conversion of the Norfolk Southern railroad.



Summary

The City of Aurora is a wonderful community that offers many opportunities. The city strives to be a city of distinction, with great schools, sound local government, open spaces, and many other amenities and services. Aurora is a great place to raise a family, operate a business, or both.



Aurora is a growing community with a strong commercial/industrial tax base that supports the superior services and facilities provided by the city. Through sound planning and strong leadership, the city has been able to maintain an excellent quality of life for residents by preserving historic structures, conserving greenspace and ecological resources and maintaining accessible parks and recreational facilities.



The city has demonstrated a successful track record of leveraging beneficial public-private partnerships and encouraging investment that strengthens the city tax base and, in turn, supports the continued provision of superior services and amenities that residents have come to enjoy. The City of Aurora can look forward to a bright future by continuing to honor its historic charm, expansive greenspaces and vibrant neighborhoods through context-sensitive planning that balances desired development with aesthetic and environmental considerations to manage growth to best meet community needs.

ADDENDUM



ADDENDUM

Overview

Aurora City Council reviewed the Plan over a two-month period beginning December 18, 2017. The Committee of the Whole (Committee) commended the members of the MPRC for the professional and extensive work that was undertaken on behalf of the City of Aurora. It is important to note that the MPRC began its “Executive Summary” by emphasizing that the “Master Plan Update presents a possible roadmap for the City of Aurora’s vision for the future. It serves as a guide for the city, and provides background for the decisions of city officials and administrators, governmental agencies, organizations, and private individuals.” In addition, the Committee of the Whole stresses that implementation of the recommendations outlined in the plan is dependent upon the collaboration of city officials as well as their ability to provide the necessary financial resources.

As a result of the review conducted by the Committee of the Whole the following addenda related to infrastructure, economic development, and community facilities are included within this Amendment.

Infrastructure

The committee believes that while “infrastructure” is considered as one of the “themes” partnered with connectivity, the importance of infrastructure is a significant omission. The continued replacement and maintenance of the city’s aging water lines is crucial. In addition, with continued growth and development maintenance and expansion of the city’s water treatment facilities is vital to the community’s health and welfare. Storm water control should continue to be a priority in the engineering of future residential, commercial and industrial developments.

The city is currently working to advance a number of priority infrastructure projects including upgrades to the city’s wastewater treatment plants, replacement of old water lines, ongoing storm water management measures, and roadway improvements.



Economic Development

While the Master Plan Update emphasizes mixed-use development in the Geauga Lake area, other areas of the city have significant economic development potential.

Emphasis should also be given to the economic development along SR 43 from Bissell Road to Treat Road (see right).

In addition, the area on the north side of SR 82 between SR 43 and Bissell Road (see bottom left) is an area of prime economic development potential.

The industrial area along SR 43 between Mennonite Road and the southern city limits (see bottom right) continues to be a prime location for economic development with vacant land available. The city continues to offer new and expanding tax incentives to help defray the costs of capital expansions that support job creation and expansion of the city's tax base.



Community Facilities

The Committee recommends that the Master Plan Update be amended to include the following omissions:

- *Cemeteries:* Preservation and maintenance of the Aurora Cemetery, the Mennonite Cemetery (city-owned portion) and the Seward-Giles Cemetery (located on Aurora Lake Road).
- *Additional Recreational Amenities:* While the Master Plan Update recommends the completion of a feasibility study for a community recreation center, additional amenities such as tennis courts and basketball courts should be included in the study.

Other Considerations

The review of the Master Plan Update by the Committee of the Whole included the discussion of other items that should be considered as the 2017 Master Plan is implemented. Those considerations are the potential installation of the following:

- *Traffic Signals:* Placement and relocation at various locations;
- *Sidewalks:* Along SR 43 to enhance connectivity between the Geauga Lake area and the Town Center; and
- *Street Lighting:* Sherwood Drive, Robinhood Drive, and Sussex Drive, and SR 306 along the “S-curve” north of Treat Road (planned for 2018).

In addition, consideration should be given to conducting a Traffic Study along East Blvd.