



TOGETHER KNOX

Deep Roots, New Growth



Knox County Comprehensive Plan

May 2025
FINAL



Acknowledgements

Knox County Commissioners

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Bill Pursel
Teresa Bemiller, former
Thom Collier, former

Area Development Foundation Inc.

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Special Thanks To

Ariel Arena
The Gathering Place
The Woodward Opera House

Photo Credits

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Knox County Convention and Visitors Bureau
Mount Vernon Nazarene University
Nicole Leone Miller Photography
Owl Creek Conservancy
Philander Chase Conservancy
Planning NEXT
Skyview Technologies

Steering Committee

The following individuals were invited to support the planning process on the Together Knox Steering Committee.

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Bill Seder
Darrell Severns*
Matt Starr***
John Yoder

**Leadership Group members*

***City of Mount Vernon representatives*

**** Both*

Letter to the Community

Dear Knox County Community,

Planning for the future is good stewardship. This is especially true in Knox County. The community needs and deserves economic opportunity. It also must be strategic in conserving assets that make it special. These assets include our cultural, educational, natural, historical, and land treasures. This plan reflects these realities with an approach that finds harmony between these two—sometimes conflicting—needs and reminds us that we have been making things as long as we have been growing things.

The extensive planning process—known as Together Knox—had **two key inputs** that were gathered on a parallel track. The first was conditions and trends analysis on a range of topics, including land use, housing, economic development, and several more. The second—and equally important—was gathering **insight from people who know Knox County best**. Those who live, work, learn and play in the County.

The process affirmed what you likely experience: **Knox County is a special place** known for its quality small towns, attractive landscapes, rural living, and higher education assets. Our community takes immense pride in these attributes. We understand that the ongoing growth and changes in Central Ohio could threaten these cherished assets if not carefully managed. However, **we acknowledge that growth pressure is inevitable**. And some growth is essential to our ability to provide services and facilities. Located just 20 miles from a \$28 billion investment in a region already experiencing growth, Central Ohio anticipates an increase of another one million people in the next 25 years, bringing the total population to three million. Our attractive assets and the overall appeal of our region help drive this growth.

This comprehensive plan is essential to effectively manage our future consistent with your values. It will help us determine what should be conserved along with where and how new development should occur. As mentioned above, this plan is informed by extensive community insight, with over 1,400 residents participating in surveys, town hall meetings, and focus groups. Their input has been invaluable in shaping our vision for the future.

Our commitment to implementation is unwavering. **This plan is not just a document; it is a roadmap for action.** We have engaged with the City, Villages, and Townships, as well as other stakeholders like the Farm Bureau and School Superintendents, to ensure that we can all work together to manage our assets and benefit from the growth we desire.

We still have a great deal of work to do. This plan is the foundation of that work. Together, we will ensure Knox County remains a special place for generations to come.

Thank you for your continued engagement and, mostly, your love for Knox County.

Sincerely,

Together Knox Leadership Group

Jeff Gottke, President
Area Development Foundation, Inc.

Darrel Severns, Planning Director
Knox County Regional Planning Commission

Jason Booth, County Administrator
Knox County

Matt Starr, Mayor
City of Mount Vernon

Amber Keener, Council Member
City of Mount Vernon

Knox County Resolution of Adoption



Knox County Board of Commissioners

Drenda Keesee

Barry Lester

Bill Pursel

Clerk/Executive Assistant
Penny Doyle

County Administrator
Jason Booth

Budget Analyst
Robin Santo

May 1, 2025

RESOLUTION 2025-272—APPROVE THE 2025 KNOX COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN - "TOGETHER KNOX."

Mr. Barry Lester moved the adoption of the following resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Knox County Board of Commissioners approve the 2025 Knox County Comprehensive Plan - "Together Knox."

Mrs. Drenda Keesee seconded the adoption of the foregoing resolution and upon roll call, the vote resulted as follows:

Mrs. Keesee, Aye
Mr. Lester, Aye
Mr. Pursel, Aye

CERTIFICATION

I, Penny R. Doyle, the duly appointed Clerk/Executive Assistant of the Board of Knox County Commissioners of Knox County, Ohio, do hereby certify the above to be a true and correct copy of a resolution adopted by the Knox County Board of County Commissioners on Thursday, May 1, 2025, Journal No. 2025.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Penny R. Doyle".

Penny R. Doyle, Clerk/Executive Assistant
Board of Knox County Commissioners

City of Mount Vernon Resolution of Adoption



City Council
City of Mount Vernon
Mount Vernon, OH 43050

SCHEDULED

RESOLUTION 2025-49

Meeting: 04/14/25 7:30 PM
Dept: Land Use and Development
Keener, Mahan
Category: Planning and Zoning
Prepared By: Rob Broeren
Initiator: Todd Hill
DOC ID: 4221

A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE 2025 KNOX COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AS A GUIDE FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE CITY OF MOUNT VERNON.

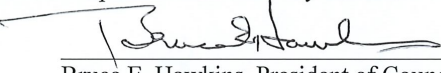
WHEREAS, Together Knox spear-headed a year-long process to create the 2025 Knox County Comprehensive Plan, which is a set of growth, land use, and development policies. It is a foundation for considering various growth, development, and service-related policies, programs, regulations, and capital projects; and

WHEREAS, more than 1,200 people participated in the creation of the 2025 Knox County Comprehensive Plan through small-group discussions, stakeholder interviews, online surveys and Focus on the Future; and

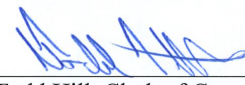
WHEREAS, based on this gathered information, Together Knox produced the 2025 Knox County Comprehensive Plan (attached as Exhibit A).

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MOUNT VERNON, OHIO, THAT:

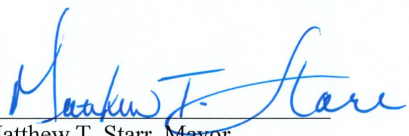
SECTION 1: The Council of the City of Mount Vernon, Ohio adopts the Knox County Comprehensive Plan as a guide for future development within the City of Mount Vernon, Ohio.


Bruce E. Hawkins, President of Council

PASSED: APRIL 28, 2025

ATTEST: 
Todd Hill, Clerk of Council

APPROVED: April 28, 2025


Matthew T. Starr, Mayor

I hereby certify that this is an exact copy of the original on file in office.


TODD HILL
CLERK OF COUNCIL
CITY OF MOUNT VERNON, OHIO

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Executive Summary



Knox County stands at a pivotal moment. As the Central Ohio region continues to expand, the County will confront challenges and opportunities. There has been and will continue to be pressure on the County and its jurisdictions for growth and development. At the same time, agriculture and the rural landscape remain a cornerstone of Knox County, with a substantial portion of land dedicated to farming. The County also boasts exceptional natural and aesthetic assets, including extensive waterways and the scenic beauty of the Kokosing and Mohican Rivers. Decisions regarding growth and development must balance a robust economy with protecting the county's agricultural heritage and natural landscapes. The 2025 Comprehensive Plan focuses on managing these dynamics while preserving the qualities that have made Knox County a cherished place.

Historic development patterns have centered around towns and villages, creating a mix of higher-density residential areas in suburban and urban settings, and low-density residential areas in suburban and rural settings. By focusing growth inward toward already established city and village centers, Knox County aims to enhance its unique town and country characteristics and strengthen the vibrancy and economic vitality of its town centers, as well as fiscal standing.

Economic prosperity in Knox County depends on housing opportunities, workforce availability, training, and a diversified employment base. The connection between housing and workforce availability is crucial, as the variety, price points, and locations of housing attract the necessary workforce to meet local demand. Diverse and abundant housing also influences retail, restaurant, and commercial opportunities, contributing to financial stability for local governments through increased revenue generation.

Some change is inevitable. Preparing for it should not be optional. Knox County is dedicated to creating a resilient community that adapts to and thrives amidst that growth and change. This includes fostering a robust agricultural community that remains a main contributor to the County's economy and culture. The County also seeks to connect its residents with a shared vision for the future, encouraging community engagement and collaboration. This collective effort ensures that the county's growth and development are guided by the values and aspirations of the community.

Legacy of Planning

Together Knox is the latest effort to craft a vision and action agenda to manage the community. This plan builds on our sustained stewardship commitment for Knox County. And represents a vision for the future, shaped by thoughtful consideration of the past and present.

As we look forward, it is important to **acknowledge the tireless efforts of community leaders who laid the foundation through previous planning processes that continue to guide our growth and development today.** Their foresight, dedication, and collaborative spirit have been instrumental in initiating the long-term strategies that continue to shape our community's path.

When we think of this process, there are several versions of plans dating back decades in our history. Commonly known to the long-term residents of Knox County was the time in the early 1990s when leaders got together to develop the *Knox County Focus 2100 Plan*. Similar to today, at that time, community leaders felt it was important to know what was going on in the Region such as the development of New Albany, Delaware, Newark, and Sunbury. Community leaders saw this and decided to act. **They determined not to stop growth, but to manage the growth that was surely coming our way, in part to advance economic opportunity for individuals and expand the fiscal capacity of local governments.**

This document reveals the journey of comprehensive planning in Knox County, highlighting the collaborative efforts of local government officials, residents, and community leaders who, through their early advocacy and involvement, **recognized the importance of strategic planning. And the need for strategic doing.** Their actions helped create a framework that balances development, sustainability, and the preservation of the community's unique character. Special thanks go to those visionaries who set the stage for this ongoing journey, whose work continues to inspire and inform the future of Knox County.

By understanding the origins of comprehensive planning and the key milestones achieved along the way, we can better appreciate the collaborative efforts that have brought us to this point—and, more importantly, how these efforts will continue to shape a vibrant and prosperous future for all who call Knox County home.

What is a comprehensive plan?

The Comprehensive Plan is Knox County's official set of growth, land use, and development policies. It is a foundation for considering various growth, development, and service-related policies, programs, regulations, and capital projects. The plan will act as a policy basis for amendments to the County Subdivision Regulations, updates to local zoning codes, additional joint projects to manage growth, and investments to direct development in suitable locations. While the plan does not replace local zoning, it can serve as a resource for considering code and zoning map amendments to further guide development in each community.

The Comprehensive Plan, funded by the Knox County Commissioners, the Regional Planning Commission, and the City of Mount Vernon, was developed to assist all local jurisdictions in addressing the various pressures and opportunities facing each community. The plan includes a dedicated Mount Vernon Growth Strategy, designed as part of the Comprehensive Plan but also intended to function as an independent document.



Key Themes

Key themes summarize the results of the analysis that is the basis of the Comprehensive Plan and the public input. Themes and findings are detailed within individual chapters.

- **Growth has implications:** Knox County is facing increased growth pressure, particularly on its southwestern area as regional employment growth catalysts such as Intel attract a workforce. This workforce will necessitate the provision of associated services and amenities including housing, transportation network improvements, and secondary goods and service centers.
- **Collaboration remains essential:** Growth management is a collaborative effort involving multiple levels of local government. The County oversees residential subdivision regulations, economic development, water and sewer services, and the transportation network. Townships are responsible for zoning and local services within their jurisdictions, while cities and villages manage nearly all growth aspects within their boundaries. This partnership among various levels of local government is essential to achieving a unified vision for Knox County's future.
- **Rural landscape is changing:** Knox County is largely defined by its rural landscape, which recent development is beginning to reshape. Much of Knox County (35%) is dedicated to prime farmland. The balance in land use between farming, development, and conservation is critical for the county's future character and economic success. Not all growth has to take place in undeveloped, greenfields; redevelopment and infill development can provide alternatives.
- **Broadly defined prosperity is a priority:** Broadening the tax base and drawing in a skilled workforce are essential for a prosperous future. Ensuring robust local services for residents hinges on maintaining a strong tax base, bolstered by non-residential development that generates real estate and income tax revenue. A skilled workforce is necessary to attract businesses, and cultivating that workforce depends on having ample housing options within the county.
- **Agriculture must remain resilient:** Working farms and the County's agricultural sector are important to Knox County's heritage and culture, as well as food production and successful family farms. Concentrating future development near already developed areas—and in some cases at a higher intensity of use—will support conserving prime farmland and natural assets.

Implementation Structure

The Knox County Comprehensive Plan has four major implementation components that will drive results that are deemed important to the community. They are intended to be used in an interrelated manner.

Principles: Ten statements of intent were instilled from the first round of engagement. They were tested and refined with the Steering Committee and the community in the second round of engagement. The principles influenced the development of the plan. They should be used to determine where and how development should take place in the future.

Future Land Use Map: This map aims to balance development and conservation, creating an integrated growth pattern that aligns with Knox County's potential. It geographically represents the principles' sentiments.

Character Types: To effectively convey the vision of the Future Land Use Map, various Character Types are used. These provide detailed explanations and policy directions for different land use categories, including primary and secondary uses, building forms, transportation modes, and open space details.

Goals, Objectives, and Actions: These elements form the policy foundation of the Comprehensive Plan, reflecting the direction set by the principles, Future Land Use Map, and Character Types. The goals are organized into four chapters, all aligned and mutually-reinforcing.

1

Introduction



Situated in one of the nation's most dynamic regions, Knox County boasts an array of economic, natural, and aesthetic assets. Its treasures include fertile agricultural land, the serene Kokosing and Mohican Rivers, vibrant city and village centers, and higher education institutions. The County is also grappling with considerable development pressure, particularly in its southwest areas. In response, Knox County, in collaboration with the City of Mount Vernon, initiated the Together Knox project in early 2024. The initiative produced the new comprehensive plan, providing a strategic long-term vision that will enable the county to thrive amidst regional and national changes. By proactively addressing these challenges, Together Knox positions the County to not only manage growth effectively but also to capitalize on emerging opportunities.

A comprehensive plan is the broadest public policy document a community can create for its future physical development, and it is guided by both technical analysis and the input of community members. The plan is a tool to prepare for change and acts as a guidebook for decision-makers. A comprehensive plan expresses the values, aspirations, needs, and unique conditions of a community. The plan does not replace local zoning or other legal codes but can serve as a resource to consider code and zoning map amendments to further guide development in each community. The plan can also serve as a foundation for land development regulations, budgeting decisions, and more.

Why is Knox County writing a new comprehensive plan?

The County's first comprehensive plan was adopted in 1974, with the first update completed in 1998. Since then, the County has undertaken an update process approximately every 6-8 years, with the most recent update occurring in 2018. Given the expected growth and changes experienced since 2018, a new plan is essential to reflect current trends and priorities while maintaining a forward-looking focus. Regular comprehensive planning demonstrates good stewardship and provides a foundation for well-supported policies, ensuring the best possible future for the County.

What planning has already been done?

In addition to the 2018 Comprehensive Plan update, the following planning efforts have recently been completed:

- **Centerburg Village Strategic Plan** included a steering committee of community members, public meetings, and online engagement opportunities. The plan was developed over eight months and was adopted in 2020. Key recommendations include diversifying housing to support various household types and aging in place, enhancing Downtown and Village gateways with pedestrian-friendly improvements, encouraging regional efforts to expand recreational tourism, and prioritizing capital projects like revitalizing Downtown and promoting the Heart of Ohio Trail.
- **Danville Village Strategic Plan** was adopted in 2020 and envisions the community's growth, development, and quality of life over the next five to ten years. During the eight-month planning process, a steering committee of community members was organized. Participants in the planning process also included residents, business, employees, and local officials. Key recommendations include enhancing Market Street's streetscape, constructing a trail connection to boost tourism and safety, and fostering regional collaboration to expand recreational tourism.
- **Fredericktown Village Strategic Plan** was adopted in 2020 and outlines a vision for the community's growth, development, and quality of life over the next five to ten years. Developed over eight months by a steering committee of community members, the plan combines data, local expertise, and regional trends to create actionable strategies. Key recommendations include leveraging funding for downtown revitalization, improving streetscapes, redeveloping underutilized parcels, enhancing parks and recreation, and diversifying housing to support various household types and aging in place.

Planning in Adjacent Communities

When undergoing a comprehensive planning process, it's crucial to consider the plans of surrounding communities. This awareness ensures regional cohesion, maximizes resource sharing, and addresses potential cross-boundary impacts effectively.

- **Licking County** completed FRAMEWORK, an intensive 14-month planning effort, in September 2023. Fourteen jurisdictions and the County Commissioners collaborated to ensure continuity between townships, municipalities, and county agencies. The resulting report, FRAMEWORK, provides participating jurisdictions with tools to help manage change.
- **Delaware County** completed a comprehensive economic development plan in December 2023. The plan includes significant land use direction, including priority growth areas.
- **Morrow County** worked with economic development firm Montrose Group, LLC. to adopt an Economic Development Strategic Plan in December 2022.

- **Gambier Village Strategic Plan** process took place over eight months and was adopted in 2020. The process included a steering committee made up of members of the community as well as public and online engagement opportunities. Key recommendations include diversifying the economic base, investing in housing to address market inefficiencies, constructing a trail connection to boost tourism and safety, and fostering regional collaboration to expand recreational tourism.
- **Mount Vernon Downtown Plan** aims to guide the area's evolution over the next 10-20 years, enhancing the quality of life for residents, visitors, and employees. Developed through collaboration with local stakeholders, the plan focuses on three key areas: West High Street, the Downtown Square, and the Southern Gateway. It includes urban design analyses, recommended improvements for walkability and comfort, and cost estimates for feasibility. The plan also emphasizes the importance of a robust policy framework, proposing design guidelines to supplement zoning codes and parking strategies to support downtown businesses. Overall, it reflects a vision shaped by technical analysis and community engagement.
- **Mount Vernon Strategic Plan** was developed over a year by a diverse steering committee and focus groups and aims to guide the city's growth and development. It emphasizes collaboration, innovation, inclusivity, equity, stewardship, and maintaining hometown character. The plan outlines key priorities for the next five to seven years, including fostering a supportive business environment, enhancing public safety, improving transportation infrastructure, ensuring access to modern utilities, supporting vibrant community life, promoting quality housing, and maintaining effective governance. The plan was adopted in 2021.
- **Knox County Economic Growth Strategy** was completed in 2022 and sought to provide an overview of the existing economic climate of the county and the impact recent economic activities in the Columbus region may affect Knox County, namely the Intel manufacturing site (Ohio One Campus) in Licking County. It includes an analysis of current economic conditions, identification of key growth sectors, and strategic initiatives to attract and retain businesses. The plan emphasizes the importance of infrastructure improvements, workforce development, and collaboration between public and private sectors. Additionally, it highlights the need for sustainable practices and innovation to ensure long-term economic resilience and prosperity for the community.
- **Knox County Workforce Demand Study** combines quantitative and qualitative data to identify local workforce needs. It includes labor market analysis, stakeholder feedback, and evaluations of existing programs. The report, commissioned by community leaders, is divided into three sections: Labor Market Information Analysis, Stakeholder Engagement Sessions Summary, and Recommendations. Key findings highlight low unemployment but a labor force participation rate below pre-pandemic levels, leading to a tight labor market. Recommendations focus on talent recruitment, sector strategies, and job quality to position Knox County employers as preferred choices and attract sidelined workers back into the labor force.

Who was involved in the process?

Together Knox represents the collective vision of the community. Throughout its development, community members actively engaged and contributed thousands of ideas, which have been instrumental in shaping the plan's recommendations. Below is a summary of the participants involved in this collaborative process.

Steering Committee: The Steering Committee was a diverse group of community members who represented a variety of groups throughout the county including schools, businesses, community groups, and residents of the city, villages, and townships. that met regularly throughout the planning process. These community members provided guidance on the process and substance of the plan, served as community advocates, conducted small group meetings, and will serve as stewards of the completed plan.

Stakeholders: Individuals with specific interests or expertise were engaged to provide insight during the process through interviews and focused conversations. These groups included representatives from higher education, K-12 education, agriculture, local government, conservation, infrastructure, services, non-profits, and business, among others.

Public: Meaningful public involvement from all geographies and perspectives in the County was vital to the success of this planning effort.

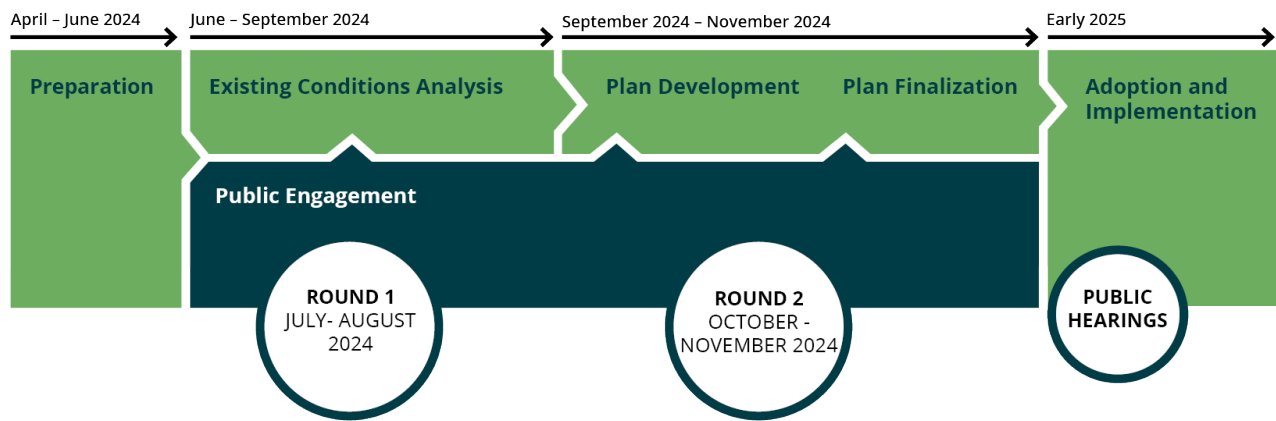
Elected Officials: Comprehensive plans must be formally adopted by the County Commissioners who have a central role in implementation. County officials participated in this process and monitored the progress of the plan.

Staff: Staff at the Area Development Foundation, Knox County, the City of Mount Vernon, and the Knox County Regional Planning Commission supported and helped to coordinate the planning effort, while also contributing local knowledge and expertise.

Consultants: A consultant team worked closely with the Steering Committee and staff to facilitate the process, conduct technical analysis, manage public engagement, and draft the recommendations.

The Planning Process

Together Knox was a year long process to create a new comprehensive plan for Knox County. The planning process included both robust community engagement and technical analysis that helped shape the direction of the plan.



A member of the community participates in the engagement activities for the first round of engagement at the Mount Vernon Farmers Market.



Community members gather for the Focus on the Future event, which featured a panel discussion and activities for the second round of engagement.

Community Engagement

Knox County undertook a comprehensive community engagement initiative encompassing two distinct rounds of outreach. The goal was to ensure that participation was a choice for anyone who lived, worked, or spent time in the county. To achieve this, a multifaceted approach was employed, including email campaigns, distribution of project business cards and promotional materials, as well as coverage in print and radio media, and extensive social media outreach. This concerted effort resulted in over 1,300 participants contributing more than 12,000 unique pieces of feedback throughout the process.

Round 1

In July and August 2024, the first round of engagement for Together Knox was conducted. This phase prioritized meeting people where they were, utilizing small-group discussions facilitated by Steering Committee members, elected officials, and community volunteers. The initiative aimed to introduce Together Knox to the county and gather valuable insights into community values and future aspirations. An online survey was available on the project website. Participants were asked the following questions:

1. What do you treasure about Knox County and its communities, and why?
2. Identify three strong and three weak places in Knox County. As a group, discuss why these places were chosen.
3. When you think about the future of Knox County and its communities, what outcomes would you like to see?

A series of stakeholder interviews were also conducted to supplement insight gathered from the community engagement. Interviews included representatives from various stakeholder groups in the County including K-12 education, agriculture, infrastructure, and services.



1,200+
Participants



4,450
Treasures
Identified



4,109
Outcomes
Identified



2,047
Places
Identified

A strong place is a place that should be protected, conserved, or a location that could serve as inspiration for other places, such as a favorite park or frequently visited business. A weak place is a place that needs to be changed or improved, such as a vacant property or area that is hard to access.

Round 2

The second round of engagement was conducted in October and November 2024. Community members were invited to Focus on the Future, a unique event that brought together Knox County residents, businesses, and community leaders to explore strategies that will shape the County in the years to come.

The event featured a panel discussion focused on economic trends, quality of place, and rural dynamics. Participants were asked to review the draft principles and goals for the Comprehensive Plan and rate them from 1 – do not support to 5 – highly support. They were also asked to review concept maps and provide comments. An online survey was also available on the project website.

Focus on the Future Panelists

- Jamie Greene, Planning NEXT (facilitator)
- Jason Duff, Small Nation
- Kenny McDonald, One Columbus
- Dr. Howard Sacks, Kenyon College



Engagement with the Amish Community

Knox County is home to a significant Amish community, and their input was vital to the comprehensive plan process. The Amish community cherishes their agricultural lifestyle, local businesses, and the trail system that ensures safer travel for horses and buggies. They highly value the small-town atmosphere, friendly community, and peaceful rural living. Looking ahead, they hope to preserve farmland, enhance infrastructure with better roads and buggy lanes, support local businesses, and maintain minimal government intervention to protect their way of life. Additionally, they emphasize the importance of community safety.

Vision

Knox County is a place with a demonstrated commitment to conserving the essential town and country elements that facilitate economic prosperity, reflect genuine community values, and inspire pride. In essence, Knox County is a complete community.

Goals

The following goals were developed based on insights gathered through community engagement. These goals were then tested and refined with input from the Steering Committee and the community. They represent the intended outcomes of the plan, articulated in straightforward terms. The goals are listed in the sequence they appear in this document, not by priority.

- 1. Rural Conservation.** Protected and conserved rural and agricultural land maintains unique character, heritage, and natural landscapes.
- 2. Strengthened Centers.** Resilient city and village centers have a mix of uses and create a strong sense of community.
- 3. Land Use and Development.** Thoughtful and strategic land use and development policies that balance growth with environmental stewardship.
- 4. Economic Prosperity.** A robust local economy with industrial growth and a wide range of employment opportunities.
- 5. Housing.** A diverse range of affordable, high-quality housing options meet the needs of all community members.
- 6. People.** Healthy and proud residents and workers enjoying the benefits of growth and quality of life that drew—and keeps—them in the County.
- 7. Natural and Recreational Amenities.** Enhanced natural and recreational amenities are accessible and offer varied opportunities for outdoor enjoyment.
- 8. Mobility.** Efficient and accessible transportation options connect residents and workers to key destinations, support economic growth, and enhance quality of life.

Plan Framework

The **vision** is the highest —and therefore most general—expression of a community's future. It reflects the community's values and sets the tone for more specific goals and recommendations.

Goals are intended results expressed in non-technical terms. They represent the overarching desired outcomes for the plan.

Objectives are sub-themes within the goals that serve to organize actions.

Actions are projects, policies, or programs that are recommendations to be implemented.

2

Conservation, Character, and Development



Knox County is dedicated to safeguarding its natural resources, conserving its distinctive character, and managing land use to promote responsible growth and development. By prioritizing the protection of scenic landscapes and cultural heritage, the County aims to maintain the unique identity that residents and visitors cherish. Through these efforts, Knox County strives to create a balanced approach to growth that respects both the natural environment and the community's values, fostering a harmonious and vibrant future for all. This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan outlines a comprehensive vision for conservation, community character, and development across the county. The Future Conservation, Character, and Development maps play a crucial role in shaping the plan's various elements, ensuring that all aspects of growth are thoughtfully integrated with the county's vision.

Goals

The content in this chapter is focused on the following goals.

Rural Conservation. *Protected and conserved rural and agricultural land maintains unique character, heritage, and natural landscapes.*

Strengthened centers. *Resilient city and village centers have a mix of uses and create a strong sense of community.*

Land Use and Development. *Thoughtful and strategic land use and development policies balance growth with environmental stewardship.*

Objectives

1. Conserve critical natural assets and prime agricultural land.
2. Enhance rural character.
3. Focus growth and development inward.
4. Optimize and improve infrastructure networks.

Conditions and Trends

To guide conservation, character, and development effectively, it is essential first to understand the current landscape. The conditions and trends section provides context for recent conservation and development trends, including land use, zoning, and subdivision activity.

Existing Land Use

The Existing Land Use map illustrates the location and extent of various land uses, including residential, commercial, parks, and agriculture. This map serves as a valuable tool for inventorying the community, learning from it, and making informed decisions about future land uses. The assessment of existing land use has highlighted several key factors that must be considered in developing the Future Conservation, Character, and Development Map and related policies.

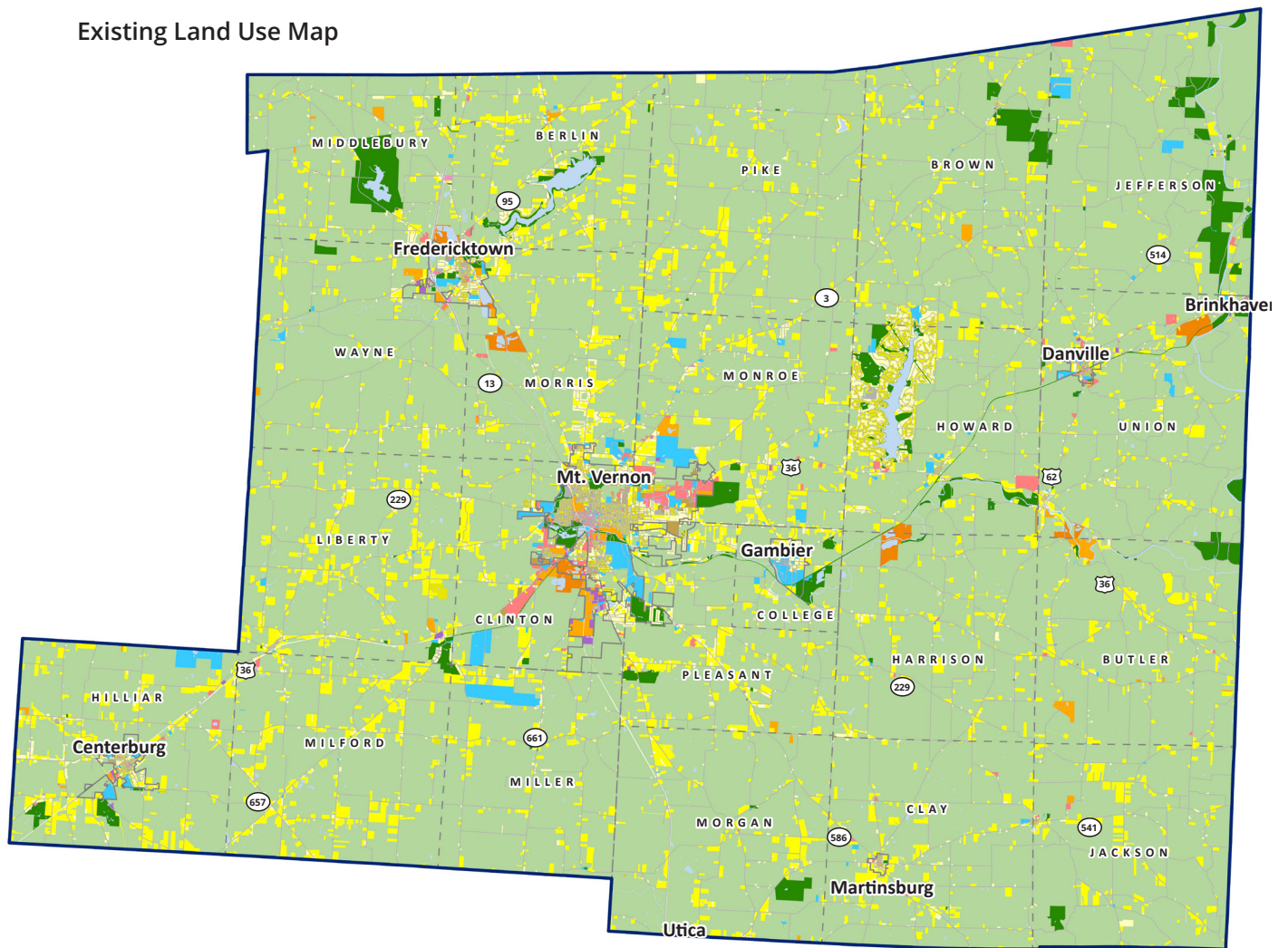
- There is an abundance of agricultural land. Eighty-two percent of total land area in the County is agricultural.
- Historic development patterns are focused around the centers of Mount Vernon, Centerburg, Fredericktown, Danville, and Apple Valley Lake.
- High-density residential is defined by single or multi-family housing found in suburbanized and urbanized areas.
- Low density residential is defined by large lot, single-family homes in suburban and rural areas.

Existing Zoning

The map on page 20 shows simplified zoning within the county. Summarizing zoning districts can be challenging because each jurisdiction uses its own unique zoning classifications and codes to categorize properties.

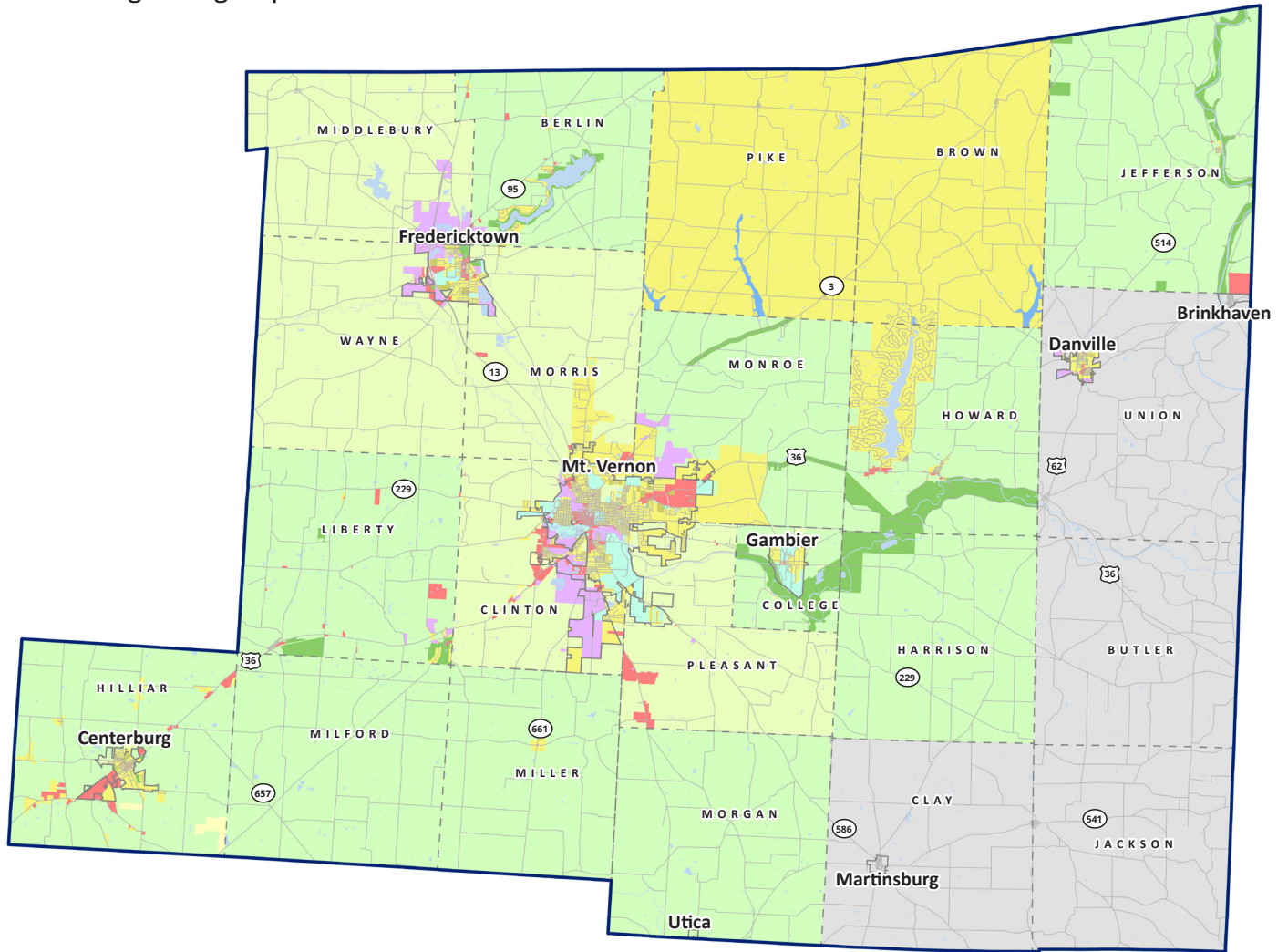
Much of the county is zoned for low-intensity residential or agricultural use, which has helped maintain its treasured rural character. However, recent development trends are altering this landscape. Overall, zoning regulations facilitate single-family residential development, even in areas zoned agricultural. The county does not have an adopted set of building codes, and four townships in the southeast part of the county lack zoning regulations. These regulatory gaps enable rural residential sprawl and untracked development, leading to the proliferation of residential lots across the county that alters the rural landscape and can impact working farms.

Existing Land Use Map



Existing Land Use Categories	Acres	Sq. Mile	Percent
Agriculture	278,738	436	82%
Rural Residential (less than 0.5 units/acre)	29,614	46	9%
Parks & Open Space	9,217	14	3%
Low-Density Suburban Residential (less than 0.5 - 3 units/acre)	7,078	11	2%
Public Services	3,710	6	1%
High-Density Suburban Residential (less than 3 - 8 units/acre)	2,899	5	1%
Right-of-Way	2,041	3	1%
Commercial	1,617	3	0%
Industrial	1,503	2	0%
Quarry	1,278	2	0%
Urban Residential	555	1	0%
Warehouse	266	0	0%
Vacant	224	0	0%
Office	109	0	0%
Total	338,849	529	100%

Existing Zoning Map



Existing Zoning Categories	Acres	Sq. Mile	Percent
Agriculture	147,365	230	44%
Unzoned	65,873	103	19%
Rural Residential	60,219	94	18%
Low-Density Residential	50,248	79	15%
Conservation and Open Space	6,318	10	2%
Industrial and Manufacturing	3,424	5	1%
Business and Commercial	2,386	4	1%
Institutional and Civic	1,773	3	1%
Flood Plain	389	1	0%
Mobile and Manufactured Housing	363	1	0%
Mixed and Multi-Family Residential	242	1	0%
Village Center and Mixed Use	21	1	0%
Total	338,621	530	100%

Lot Splits

Knox County does not issue building permits, making it difficult to track development activity. Lot split data can be used as a proxy to help identify where potential development may occur within the unincorporated portions of the county.

The Knox County Subdivision Regulations guide the lot split process. While the regulations have been periodically updated, including a significant revision in 2006 and changes to lot split regulations in 2019, these updates have not sufficiently provided development controls. For example, in 2019 the regulations were amended to remove limitations on lot splits for parcels over five acres with frontage. Lot splits used to be limited to four for all parcels. Parcels under five acres are still limited to four splits.

From 2019 to 2023, a total of 710 lot splits were completed. Those lots account for 23,419 acres of land in the unincorporated areas of the county with an average split size of 23 acres. The accompanying table summarizes the data for parcels under five acres and those over five acres.

Knox County Unincorporated Area Lot Splits (2019-2023)			
	Under 5 Acres	5.01 acres and larger	Total
Lots	192	518	710
Acres	435	22,984	23,419
Average Lot Size (acres)	2	44	23



Why consider conservation residential development as an alternative to “business as usual” residential rural development?

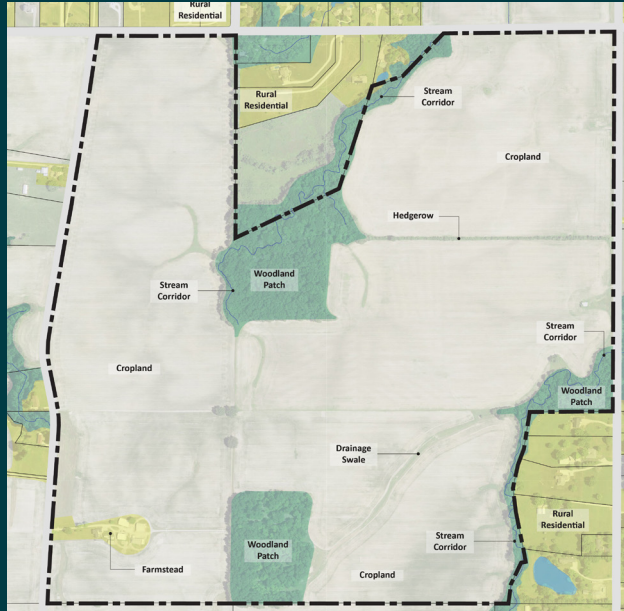
Rural residential development in Knox County has either occurred in the form of small, platted subdivisions, with either on-site septic and wells, or with package treatment plants. In all cases, these new rural neighborhoods are built at a low density, with a minimum lot size of one acre reflecting township zoning requirements. In addition, individual lot splits occur throughout the County, some subject to public review and others (five-acre splits) requiring sufficient road frontage. Whether building permits can be issued is dependent on the ability of soils to accommodate on-site wastewater treatment and disposal. But in the end, productive farmland is permanently lost.

Conservation Residential Development (Subdivision) Defined. As an alternative to “business as usual” rural residential development, the conservation subdivision offers the opportunity to meet housing demand in Knox County, with public utilities, that preserves part of the land. Conservation subdivisions typically set aside 50% or more of a site as permanent open space that can be farmed, used as an orchard, or set aside as a natural area. Placed in platted reserves, these protected areas would fall under the ownership of the related homeowner’s association. The original property owner could also establish a conservation easement on the open space reserve, donating it to a conservation organization (or the HOA) and receiving estate planning benefits.

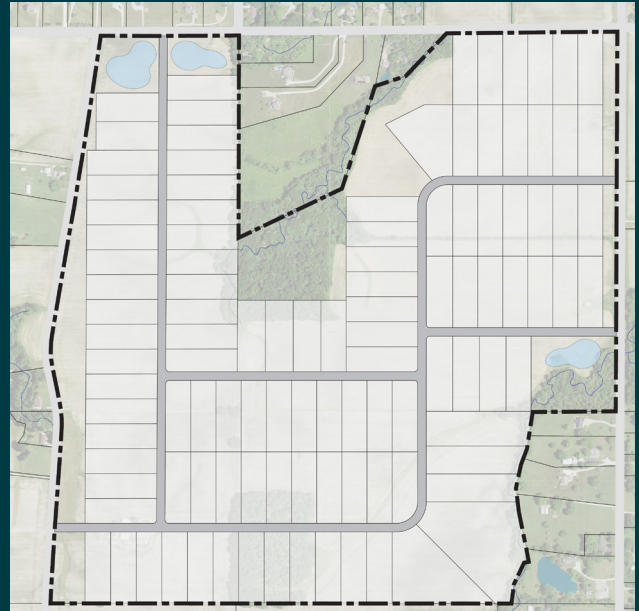
Comparing Alternatives. To demonstrate the benefits of conservation residential development, the following two scenarios are presented based upon a 300-acre site. The first layout is a more typical two-acre rural residential subdivision without public utility access. The second layout applies conservation development principles by clustering the development on quarter-acre lots, with utility services.

1. **“Business as Usual” Rural Residential Layout: Two-Acre Lots.** The first approach is based on the typical rural residential lot layout style where each lot is at least two acres in size, consistent with typical township zoning. This layout maximizes the number of two-acre lots (minimum 87,120 square feet) that can be placed on the site (108 lots on 261 acres). The result is a layout with less open space, disrupted wildlife corridors, and a loss of working cropland resulting in a wholly changed character for the 300-acre site.
2. **Conservation Development: Quarter-Acre Lots.** The second approach illustrates a layout for a conservation residential development. The standard lot size is one-quarter of an acre (minimum 10,000 square feet). This clustered layout results in a greater number of lots on less space (234 lots on 94 acres), keeping key features of the existing conditions of the site intact (215 acres, noted as open space and cropland). The smaller lot layout also offers greater flexibility in the lot layout design as the layout has room to change without losing lots, depending on the specific goals of any given site. Minimizing the physical space required, developers can lower expenses related to land acquisition, construction materials, and labor. Furthermore, a smaller footprint often leads to more efficient use of resources and streamlined maintenance, further driving down overall costs. This layout preserves some of the rural character endemic to Knox County.

Existing Conditions



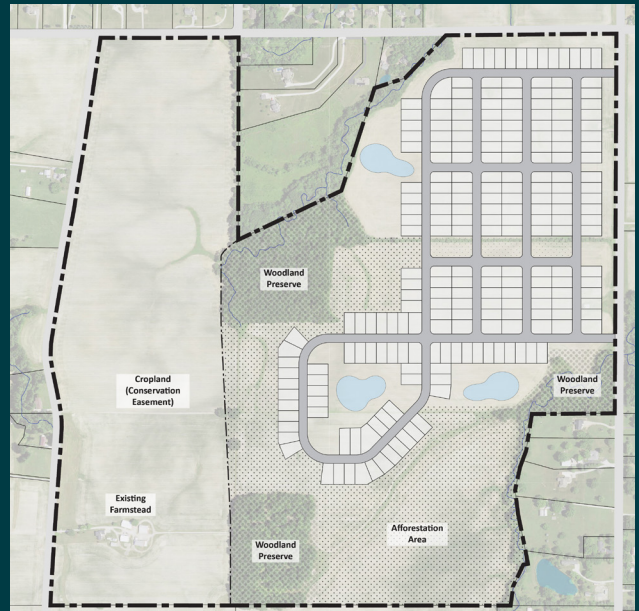
Rural Development



Development Comparison

	Rural Development	Conservation Lots
Lot #	108	230
Lot Size	2 Acres	1/4 Acre
Gross Density	.35 lots/acre	.74 lots/acre
Net Density (excluding cropland)	-	1.12 lots/acre
Open Space	+/- 48 Acres (16%)	+/- 111 Acres
Crop Land	-	+/- 104 Acres

Conservation Lots



Utilities

Utilities play an important role in conservation and development in Knox County. Water and wastewater systems are not widespread in unincorporated areas of the county. Effective utility management and planning will be vital in balancing the needs of current and future residents and businesses while conserving natural resources.

The following water and wastewater systems operate in the county:

Knox County: The county has one water system that serves the Howard and Apple Valley areas. The maximum production is 1.0 million gallons a day (MGD) with an average daily production of 0.5-0.6 MGD. The county has preliminary plans for an upgrade to the well field that is contingent upon funding. The upgrade would increase well production by 0.3-0.5 MGD.

Knox County maintains three separate wastewater treatment facilities.

1. Pleasant View Acres is a small subdivision of around 45 homes located on State Route 3. This is a new facility with approximately 15,000 gallons of capacity with the ability to expand an additional 30,000 gallons.
2. Bladensburg has a small facility that serves around 100 homes with an average daily flow of 0.01 MGD and the ability to treat 0.45 MGD.

3. Little Jelloway Plant is the main treatment plant for the county. It is located in Howard and treats waste from Millwood, Howard and all the properties associated with Apple Valley. Average daily flows is 0.6 MGD with a permit limit of 0.9 MGD. An upgrade was completed on the plant around 10 years ago. Future expansion to this plant could result in major operational changes due to permit requirements.

Mount Vernon: The City of Mount Vernon has one water treatment plant that provides water to the city and to the Village of Gambier. The plant has an average usage of 3 MGD and a capacity of 7 MGD

The wastewater treatment plant treats an average of 2.7 MGD and has a capacity of 7 MGD. The plant has 219 miles of wastewater lines in the city's collection system.

Centerburg: The Village of Centerburg is supplied with water by DelCo Water, a member-owned, non-profit, cooperative water utility.

The Village's wastewater plant has a capacity of 0.3 MGD, with usage during dry periods ranging from 0.14 to 0.15 MGD and increasing to 0.2 MGD during wet periods. The plant does have the capacity to accommodate some new residences.

Danville: The Village of Danville operates a water plant that was built in 2010 and has an average daily usage of 65,000 gallons per day (GPD). The plant has a maximum capacity of 208,000 GPD and currently serves 511 customers. The Village is in the process of upgrading outdated water lines and plans to upgrade more, based on the availability of grant funding.

The Village also operates a wastewater treatment plant that is designed for an average daily flow of .2 MGD with a peak flow of .32 MGD.

Fredericktown: The Village of Fredericktown distributes approximately 180,000 gallons per day (GPD) of water to more than 3,000 consumers. The treatment plant has a total water capacity of approximately 550,000 GPD.

The wastewater treatment plant treats an average of 150,000 GPD and has a capacity of approximately 650,000 GPD.

Gambier: The Village of Gambier purchases water from the City of Mount Vernon but owns and maintains its own distribution system including a 250,000 gallon water tower. The 50-year water purchase agreement is due for renewal within the next five years.

The Village wastewater plant is a Class II facility and has a design flow 450,000 gallons with a peak flow of 1 million gallons a day. The plant serves nearly all of the households in Gambier. Sanitary sewer service will be added to 23 properties on Kokosing Drive in 2025, leaving about 10 homes in the village with private septic systems. The last major improvement was a \$3.4 million project completed in 1997. The Village does not foresee a need to increase capacity in the near future.

Martinsburg: The Village of Martinsburg operates a water treatment plant that serves approximately 110 customers, all located within the village. The plant averages 13,000 gallons per day and fluctuates between 500,000 to 380,000 gallons per month. The system does not have additional capacity but is installing new pipe to establish a loop in the system.

Principles

The following principles were generated using insight gathered in the first round of engagement and tested and refined with the Steering Committee and the community during the second round of engagement. Principles define the intent of development and conservation in Knox County through simple statements. They are forward-looking and focused on future conditions, especially for ‘where’ and ‘how’ growth should occur.

- 1. Strengthen the centers for each community, including villages and the City of Mount Vernon.** The historic population centers of Knox County support economic prosperity, provide for goods and services that support all communities, provide housing opportunities for County residents, and facilitate schools and the efficient delivery of government services and facilities. These communities facilitate social interaction at the neighborhood and community-wide level. And most importantly, they reflect many of the values that make Knox County unique.
- 2. Focus growth inwardly, prioritizing infill and redevelopment over greenfield locations.** Likewise, the rural landscape is a critical component of Knox County cherished by many, while serving an important economic role. As population centers grow, they should prioritize infill development and redevelopment to minimize impacts on adjacent prime farmland. While greenfield development can expand opportunities, it should not be the only priority as communities grow.
- 3. Protect natural assets, including streams, stream corridors, wetlands, ponds, lakes, and steep slopes.** The natural landscape is key to defining Knox County’s special qualities, while supporting wildlife and outdoor recreation. The County has a strong tradition of open space conservation and this should continue moving forward. Land use practices should reinforce the public’s priority to protect the natural landscape and minimize the footprint of future development.
- 4. Conserve agricultural land.** Agriculture will remain an important economic sector for Knox County, but it also represents its collective history and culture. Moving forward, agricultural land should be continually prioritized for conservation and production, while minimizing development’s footprint on the landscape. Working farms should be protected from the impact of haphazard rural development.
- 5. Dedicate places for industrial employment.** The County’s strongest economic sector is light/advanced manufacturing and related uses that provide employment opportunities for residents and tax revenues to support public services. Future economic development should build upon the County’s successes and land set aside with supporting infrastructure and nearby housing to facilitate additional private investment.

6. **Provide housing choices.** Current residents and future workers regarding a full range of housing options, particularly as families and individuals go through various life cycles. Housing choices should reflect the changing demographics of Knox County and ensure residents have the option to remain in their communities as households age and that future generations can call Knox County home.
7. **Stabilize established neighborhoods.** Neighborhoods in Mount Vernon and various villages throughout the County will benefit from public and private investments that stabilize home values and the physical environment. These traditional neighborhoods can offer quality environments to raise families and attract new residents, while housing workers and providing affordable housing options for aging homeowners. Their success also ensures a walkable community within close proximity of downtowns and local businesses, schools, and parks.
8. **Support and maintain unique residential places.** Knox County benefits from unique residential places, especially Apple Valley. This community exists as a quasi-public entity via its homeowner association and provides a number of services to its residents. Its continued success, while maintaining the current scale, reinforces its role as a unique residential area in Knox County.
9. **Leverage the campuses of the higher education institutions.** Knox County is blessed by the higher education institutions that call the County home. While providing services and facilities to support local students and residents, these institutions can play a larger role in the broader community. This can include further investment in downtown Mount Vernon, educational, cultural and athletic events open to the public, and growing the County's image throughout the United States.
10. **Improve major corridors.** Indirectly, Knox County benefits from its location relative to the interstate system through the state routes that crisscross the County. These corridors link the County and its residents to Metropolitan Columbus, facilitating economic development and commuting patterns. Along with safety improvements, access management is critical to ensure efficient and safe traffic movement. This includes ensuring safe movement by the County's Amish community.

Concept Map

The Concept Map serves as a precursor to the Future Conservation, Character, and Development Maps, illustrating where and how the County should guide future physical development and change at a conceptual level. The map is intentionally diagrammatic, featuring shaded and colored areas that indicate desired future conditions. It was created based on input from the initial round of community engagement and a thorough review of existing plans and studies. The map was reviewed by the Steering Committee and the community for input that would inform the final Future Conservation, Character, and Development Maps.

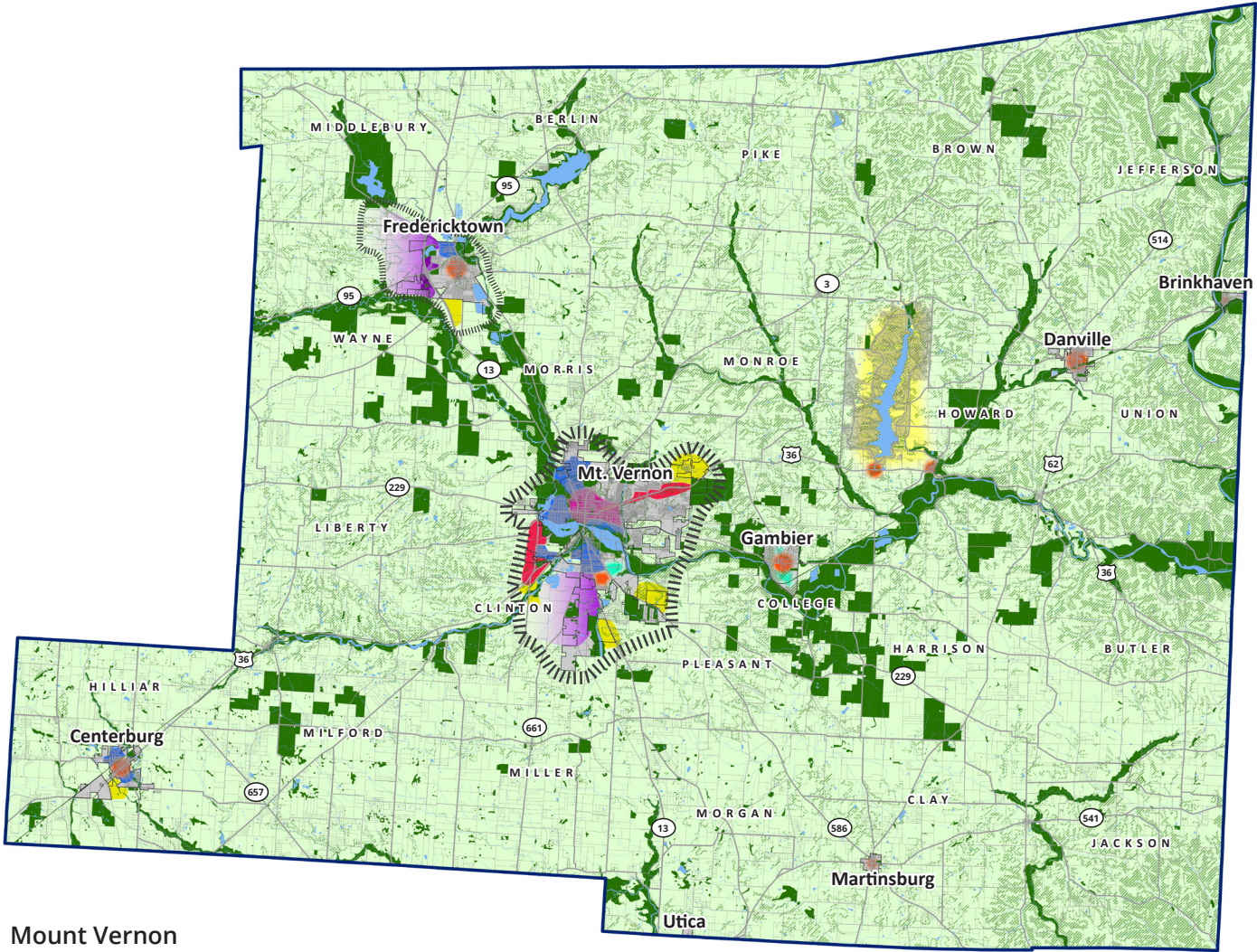
Conservation Concepts

-  **Constrained Land**
Development should be highly limited in these areas. Priority should be given to preservation of natural features. Includes land that is preserved and conserved in trusts, parks, etc. and land in the 100-year floodplain.
-  **Partially Constrained**
Development should be limited in these areas. Priority should be given to preservation of natural features. Includes steep slopes (15% or greater) and the 500-year flood plain.
-  **Rural**
Areas with potential for continued agricultural uses and open space, with some limited conservation oriented residential.
-  **Recreation Focused Residential**
Area with unique residential character where scale of use should be maintained.

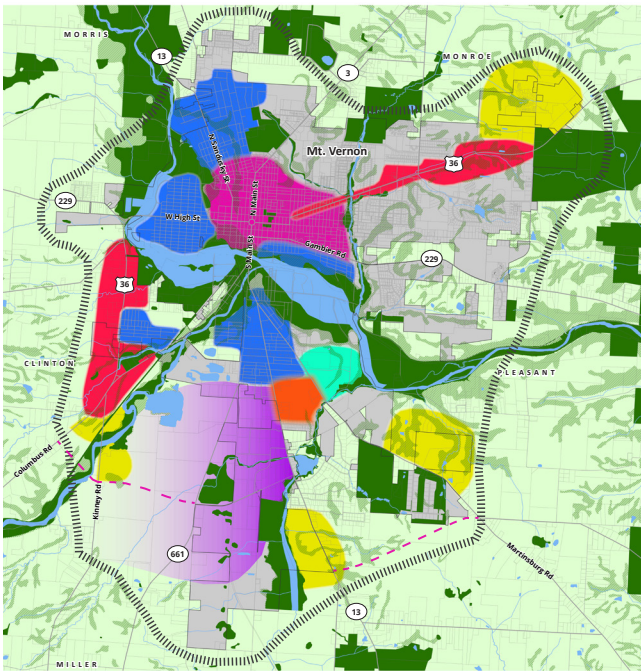
Growth Concepts

-  **Residential**
Areas with potential for home or resident growth based on location, access to services, and surrounding context.
-  **Neighborhood Stabilization**
Areas with potential for reinvestment and revitalization.
-  **Mixed Center, small scale**
Smaller areas with potential for mixed commercial, retail, and limited residential growth.
-  **Mixed Center, large scale**
Larger areas with potential for mixed commercial, retail, and residential growth.
-  **Priority Corridor**
Corridors that may need infrastructure reinvestment or that have potential for employment and commercial growth.
-  **Employment Center**
Areas with potential for job or employment growth.
-  **Higher Education Employment Center**
Areas with potential for higher education focused job or employment growth.
-  **Development Edge**
Conceptual growth boundary for areas with development potential.

Knox County



Mount Vernon



Future Conservation, Character, and Development Map

The Future Conservation, Character, and Development Map expresses the county's intent in more specific terms regarding how land resources should be used in the future. The map identifies preferred future character types. Each type describes attributes of form and function, including the size and type of buildings and their relationship to the street, the surrounding street and block pattern, parking and access, and land uses.

Benefits of a Character-based Approach

This plan takes a character-based approach to shaping the county's future conservation, character, and development. While the Future Conservation, Character, and Development Map includes both primary and secondary land uses in each character type, it also shows the built form that is desired in each area.

There are several advantages to this enhanced approach, including the following:

- It describes an overall intent for each character type, which helps staff, Regional Planning Commission, elected officials, developers/builders, and the public understand whether a particular development or project fits the spirit of the character type;
- It sets clearer expectations about the physical characteristics of development in an easy-to-understand format, which conveys standards for new development that can be used to assess how well a development aligns with community character; and
- It establishes a foundation for zoning code updates and other regulations, especially form-based standards.

The Future Concept, Character, and Development Map was developed based on the input and analysis conducted during this planning process, as reflected in the Concept Map.

Implementing the Future Conservation, Character, and Development Map

The Future Conservation, Character, and Development Map depicts appropriate future conservation and development patterns throughout the county. It reinforces existing patterns in some areas and supports changes in other areas. This element of the comprehensive plan is implemented through county regulations and the zoning codes of the city, villages, and townships.

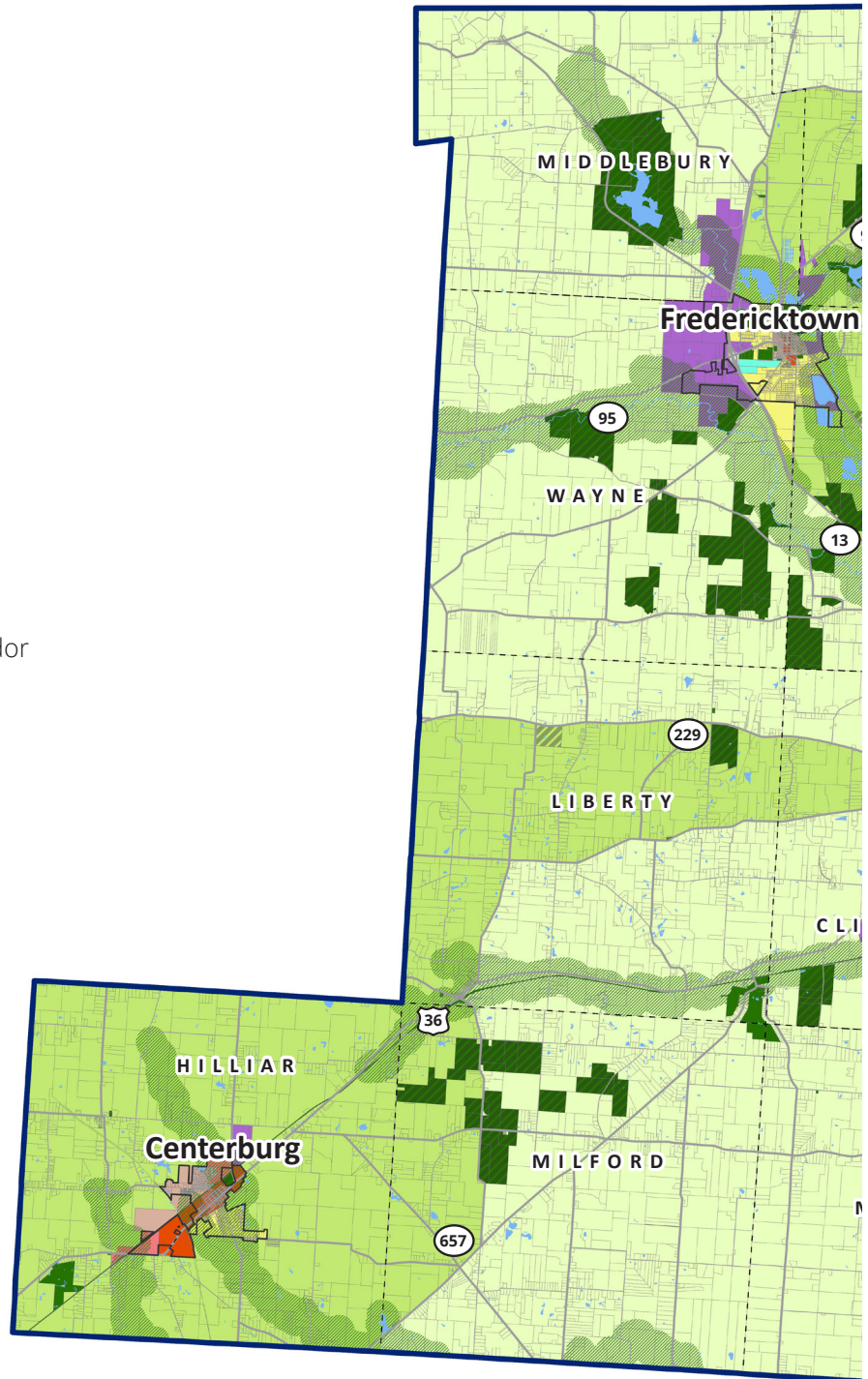
Zoning is a legal tool that regulates land use, including types of structures that may be built, how they are to be built, where they are to be built, and how they may be used. Some townships in the county do not utilize zoning (reference page 21). Each property in a community with adopted zoning is assigned to a zone. There may be more than one appropriate zone for a particular future character type. For example, there is one employment center type, but there may be two or three commercial or industrial zones to account for various intensities, activities, and contexts. The conservation and development map is implemented over time through many distinct public and private development decisions.

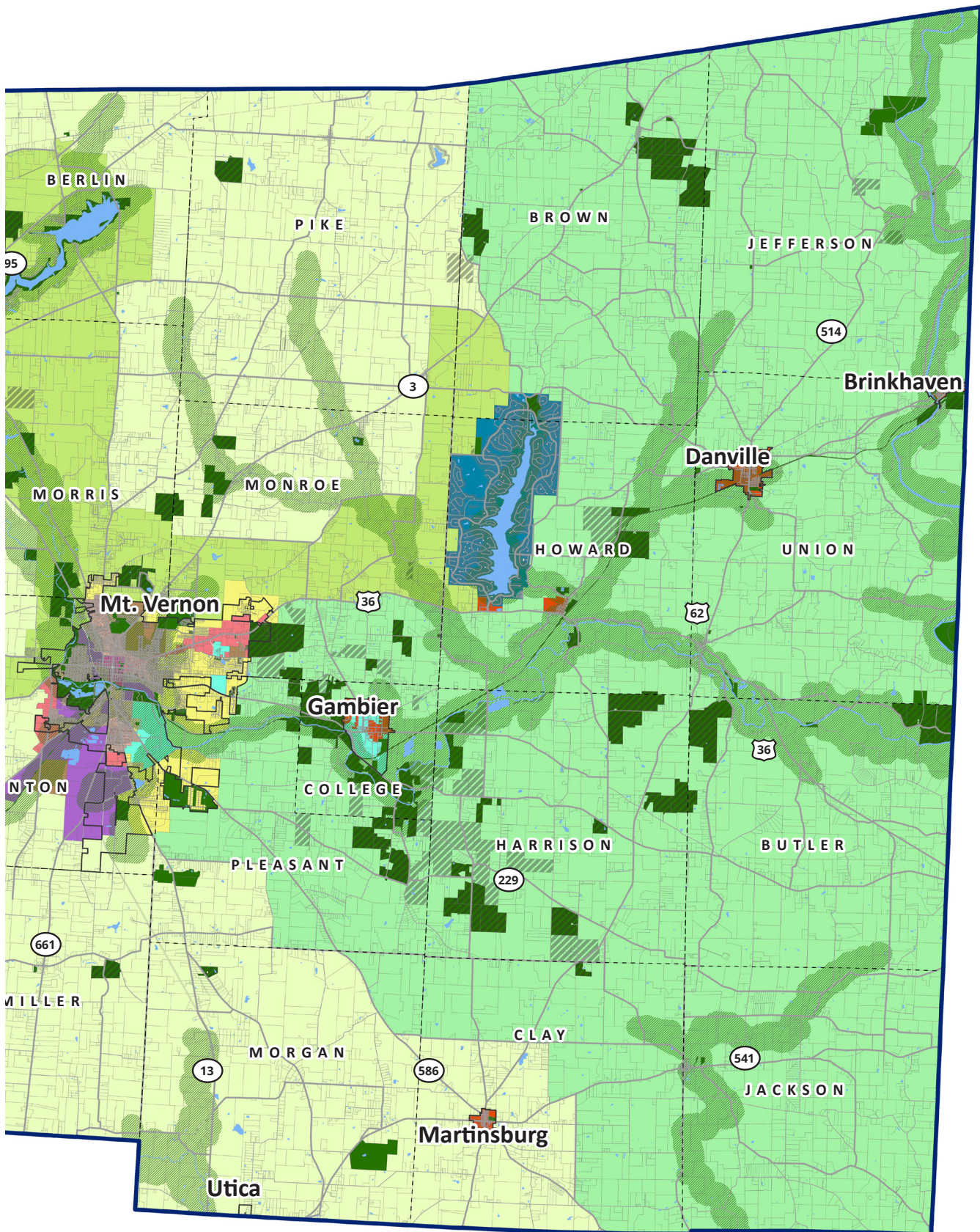


Knox County Future Conservation, Character, and Development Map

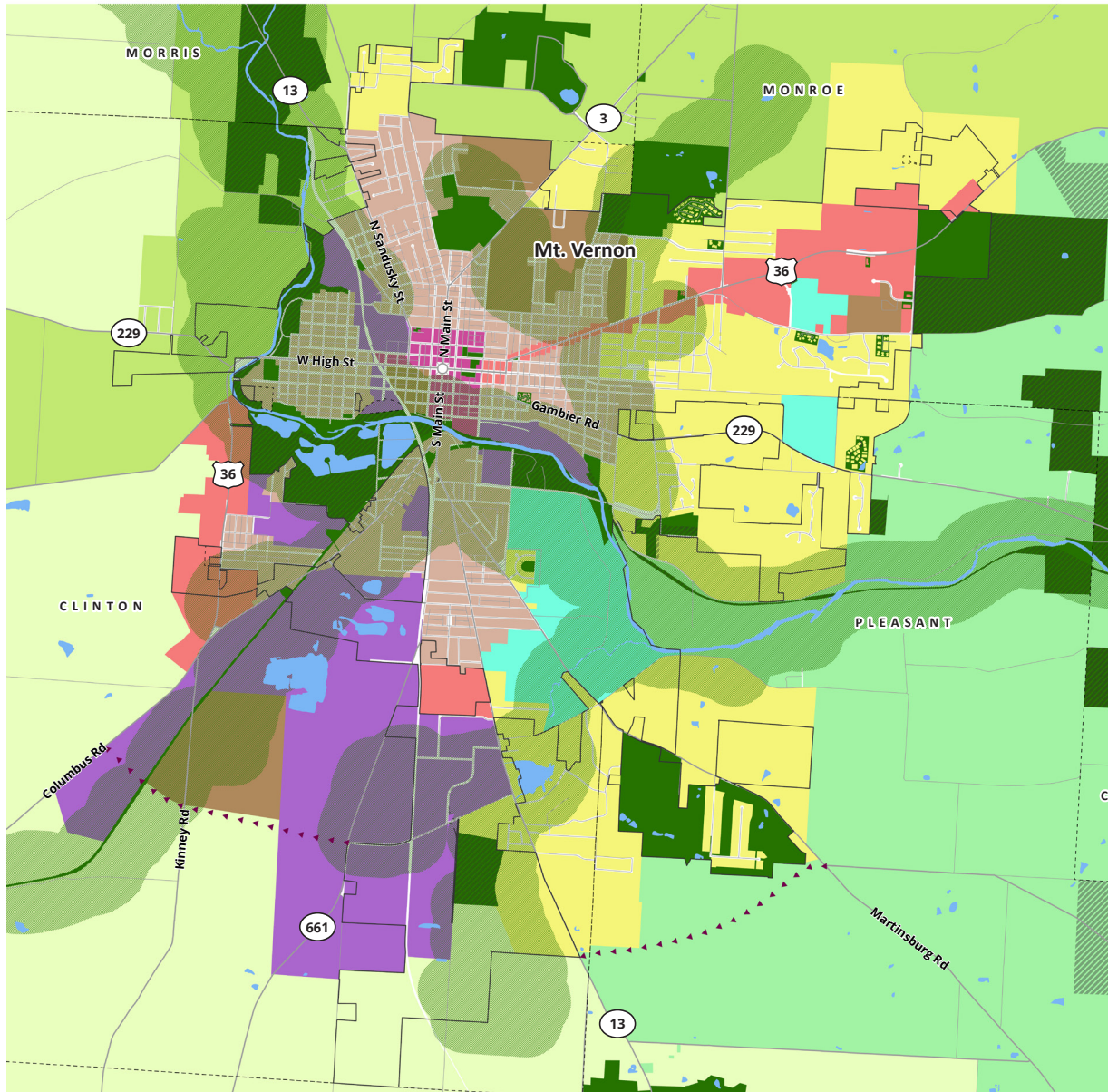
Legend

-  Open Space (*Public & Private*)
-  Low Impact & Conservation
-  Traditional Agriculture
-  Mixed Rural
-  Residential 1
-  Residential 2
-  Residential 3
-  Community / Village Center
-  Town Center
-  Economic Development Corridor
-  Employment Center
-  Lake-Oriented Residential
-  Campus
-  County
-  Municipal Boundaries
-  Township Boundaries
-  Flood Hazard Buffer
-  Conserved Land Parcels
-  Water





Mount Vernon Future Conservation, Character, and Development Map



Legend

Open Space (<i>Public & Private</i>)	Community / Village Center	County
Low Impact & Conservation	Town Center	Municipal Boundaries
Traditional Agriculture	Economic Development Corridor	Township Boundaries
Mixed Rural	Employment Center	Flood Hazard Buffer
Residential 1	Lake-Oriented Residential	Conserved Land Parcels
Residential 2	Campus	Water
Residential 3		

Open Space

Open Space areas are intended for recreation or land that is permanently maintained as an open area. These areas may be improved with amenities and other enhancements based on community desire. These areas feature large open parcels or wooded areas, as well as regional greenways, trails, and bikeways.

INTENT

- » Highlight the natural features of the county.
- » Preserve existing green space and limit development.
- » Protect and enhance natural scenic areas.
- » Provide access to recreational opportunities.

LAND USE MIX

Primary Uses

Parks and open space
Natural and conservation
areas

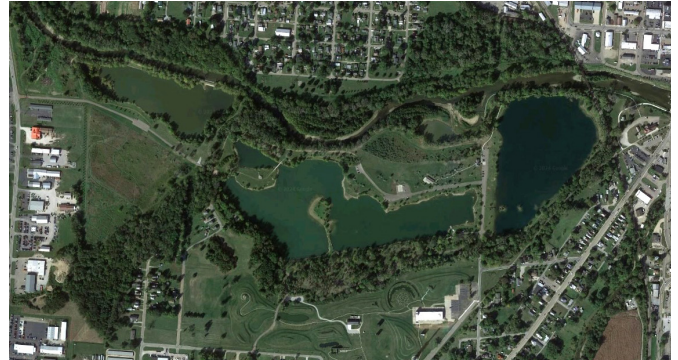
Secondary Uses

Civic and institutional

OPEN SPACE

Could be used for parks and recreation areas, viewshed, historic/geologic attractions, drainage areas, riparian areas, and more.

EXAMPLE PATTERN



EXAMPLE CHARACTER



Low Impact and Conservation

Low Impact and Conservation are areas with unique landscape, heavy woodlands, and natural features. These areas include large lot, single-family homesites. Public parkland and conservation areas are appropriate. Public water and sewer services not intended for these areas outside of existing villages. Significant, new development is not appropriate or anticipated.

INTENT

- » Conserve valuable environmental and aesthetic resources.
- » Protect sensitive natural resources such as waterways, wetlands, and floodplains.
- » Protect and enhance natural scenic areas.

LAND USE MIX

Primary Uses

Parks and open space
Natural and conservation areas
Large lot single-family residential

Secondary Uses

Civic and institutional
Community-based commercial and retail

FORM ATTRIBUTES

BUILDING FORM

Height

1-2 Stories

Setback

Varies

TRANSPORTATION

Primary Mode(s)

Automobile

Secondary Mode(s)

N/A

Parking

Private off-street

Streets

Primarily automobile access
Subdivisions have long blocks and meandering streets
Sidewalks are uncommon.

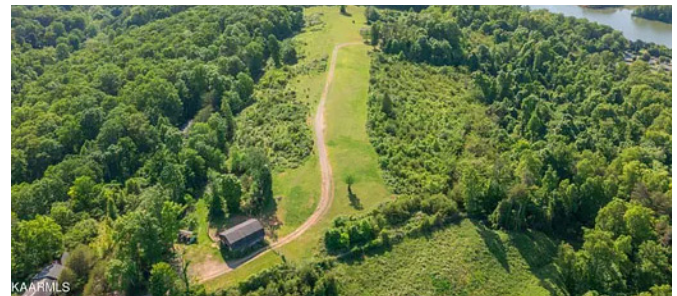
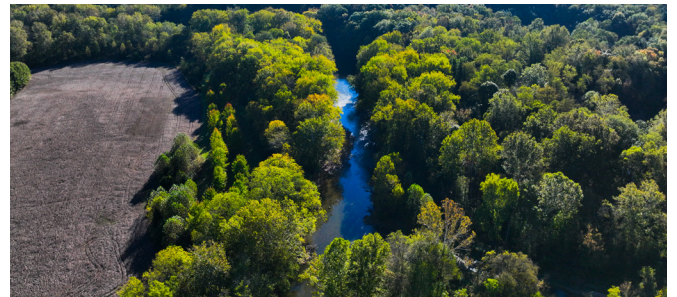
OPEN SPACE

Mostly private. Agriculture and undeveloped private land serves as open space. May have trail access. May include wildlife areas.

EXAMPLE PATTERN



EXAMPLE CHARACTER



Traditional Agriculture

Traditional Agriculture areas are primarily of agricultural use and may also include single-family residential within a rural setting. These areas may include some limited commercial that supports agricultural and civic uses. Buildings are generally set far back from the roadway on large lots.

INTENT

- » Traditional agriculture aesthetic is maintained.
- » Support transition in scale between denser character areas and Traditional Agriculture to preserve the rural character.
- » Conserve farmland and ensure the long-term viability of existing farms.

LAND USE MIX

Primary Uses

Agriculture
Parks and open space

Secondary Uses

Rural single-family residential
Civic and institutional
Agriculture-related and small-scale commercial

FORM ATTRIBUTES

BUILDING FORM

Height

1-2 Stories

Setback

Varies

TRANSPORTATION

Primary Mode(s)

Automobile

Secondary Mode(s)

N/A

Parking

Private surface lots and private off-street; individual drives.

Streets

Primarily automobile access. Subdivisions have long blocks and meandering streets. Sidewalks are uncommon.

OPEN SPACE

Mostly private. Agriculture and undeveloped private land serves as open space. May have trail access.

EXAMPLE PATTERN



EXAMPLE CHARACTER



Mixed Rural

Mixed Rural areas have a blend of agricultural land, residential, and commercial development. These areas are largely agricultural in character but may see more large lot subdivisions, lot splits, and very limited suburban style patterns in a rural setting. Building setbacks and lot size may vary more widely than in other rural and conservation areas.

INTENT

- » Provide residential growth opportunities while maintaining agricultural use.
- » Encourage clustered residential development to preserve agricultural land.
- » Provide areas for agriculture-related commercial activities.
- » Encourage flexible design that maximizes preservation of agricultural land and open space.
- » Maintain rural aesthetic.

LAND USE MIX

Primary Uses

Single-family residential
Agriculture

Secondary Uses

Commercial-retail, small scale
Civic and institutional
Parks and open space

FORM ATTRIBUTES

BUILDING FORM

Height

1-2 Stories

Setback

Varies

TRANSPORTATION

Primary Mode(s)

Automobile

Secondary Mode(s)

Walk/Bike

Parking

Private surface lots and private off-street; individual drives.

Streets

Primarily automobile access, but development should accommodate walking and biking by providing street and path connections between adjacent commercial sites and neighborhoods.

OPEN SPACE

Mostly private. Agriculture and undeveloped private land serves as open space. May have trail access.

EXAMPLE PATTERN



EXAMPLE CHARACTER



Lake-Oriented Residential

Lake Oriented Residential are primarily residential areas that are intended to support low intensity development and access to Apple Valley Lake. These areas are appropriate for single-family housing and limited commercial services. This type has similarities with Suburban Neighborhoods but is distinct due to the unique conditions around Apple Valley Lake. Homes may be situated on large lots or clustered with enhanced protection of open space. Apple Valley is a community that requires property ownership to access the lake and facilities.

INTENT

- » Encourage development and redevelopment that is harmonious with the unique environmental character.
- » Preserve the aesthetic quality of the lakefront.
- » Allow appropriately scaled commercial services.

LAND USE MIX

Primary Uses

Single-family residential

Secondary Uses

Small-scale commercial and services

Parks and open space

FORM ATTRIBUTES

BUILDING FORM

Height

1-2 Stories

Setback

20-30 feet

TRANSPORTATION

Primary Mode(s)

Automobile

Secondary Mode(s)

Walk/Bike

Parking

On-street and private off-street; individual drives from street.

Streets

Culs-de-sac should be limited while dead-end streets are restricted unless for future planned street connections.

OPEN SPACE

Public neighborhood parks should be located in prominent locations. Some residential areas could include shared access to private open space.

EXAMPLE PATTERN



EXAMPLE CHARACTER



Residential 1

Residential 1 areas are primarily single-family residential subdivisions with a range of lot sizes. These areas may have limited small-scale multi-family residential. Housing styles are consistent within subdivisions. Neighborhoods should be well-connected by street, trail, and sidewalk networks, and integrate parks and civic uses.

INTENT

- » Provide single-family housing options that accommodate a range of family size and preferences.
- » Encourage front porches and smaller backyards.
- » Encourage integrated neighborhoods through shared open space amenities and vehicular/pedestrian connectivity.
- » Encourage development adjacent to commercial/mixed-use areas or in areas with access to existing utility infrastructure.
- » Maintain and expand public realm features including street trees, lighting, and sidewalks.

LAND USE MIX

Primary Uses

Single-family residential

Secondary Uses

Multi-family residential
Civic and institutional
Parks and open space

FORM ATTRIBUTES

BUILDING FORM

Height

1-2 Stories

Setback

30 feet

TRANSPORTATION

Primary Mode(s)

Automobile

Secondary Mode(s)

Walk/Bike

Parking

On-street and private off-street; individual drives from street/alley. Limit front-facing garages.

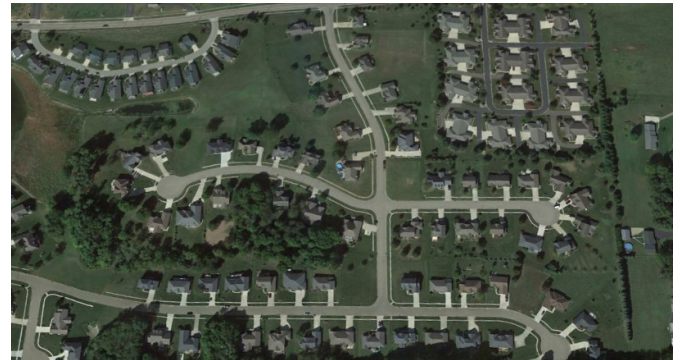
Streets

Culs-de-sac should be limited while dead-end streets are restricted unless for future planned street connections.

OPEN SPACE

Public neighborhood parks should be located in prominent locations. Schools could also supplement public parks. Some residential areas could include shared access to private open space.

EXAMPLE PATTERN



EXAMPLE CHARACTER



Residential 2

Residential 2 areas are primarily single-family residential with a higher percentage of attached homes and some multi-family units, with connectivity between neighborhoods and other non-residential areas. They are characterized by grid-like street networks and shifting architectural styles.

INTENT

- » Allow residential infill that complements the existing character (building scale, placement, design, etc.).
- » Encourage integrated neighborhoods through shared open space amenities and vehicular/pedestrian connectivity.
- » Integrate a housing mix of single-family detached, some single-family attached (duplexes, townhomes, etc.), and some multi-family (apartments).
- » Continue historic preservation efforts in village and city centers to maintain existing neighborhood character.
- » Integrate multi-modal transportation options.

LAND USE MIX

Primary Uses

Single-family residential, detached and attached
Multi-family residential

Secondary Uses

Office
Commercial
Specialty housing (age-targeted, etc.)
Civic/institutional
Parks and open space

FORM ATTRIBUTES

BUILDING FORM

Height

1-3 Stories

Setback

10-20 feet

TRANSPORTATION

Primary Mode(s)

Automobile

Secondary Mode(s)

Walk/Bike, Transit

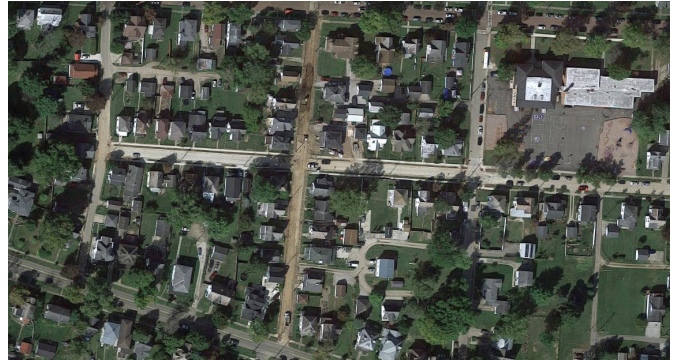
Parking

On-street and private off street; individual drives from street/alley and shared drives for multifamily. No front-facing garages.

Streets

Culs-de-sac should be limited while dead-end streets are restricted unless for future planned street connections.

EXAMPLE PATTERN



EXAMPLE CHARACTER



OPEN SPACE

Compared to residential 1, there is more public open space in the form of neighborhood and community parks, pocket parks, and preserved passive open space. Schools could also supplement public parks. Some residential areas could include shared access to private open space.

Residential 3

Residential 3 areas are primarily multi-family residential with connectivity between neighborhoods and other non-residential areas. They are characterized by grid-like street networks and shifting architectural styles. These areas may include small-scale retail or office.

INTENT

- » Provide housing options that accommodate a range of family sizes and lifestyles.
- » Encourage integrated neighborhoods through shared open space amenities and vehicular/pedestrian connectivity.
- » To support residents, neighborhood-scale commercial uses located in convenient and accessible areas are encouraged.
- » Preserve historic buildings when possible.

LAND USE MIX

Primary Uses

Multi-family residential
Single-family residential, attached

Secondary Uses

Office
Commercial
Specialty housing (age-targeted, etc.)
Civic/Institutional
Parks and open space

FORM ATTRIBUTES

BUILDING FORM

Height

1-3 Stories

Setback

0-20 feet, generally consistent within a block

TRANSPORTATION

Primary Mode(s)

Walk/Bike, Transit

Secondary Mode(s)

Automobile

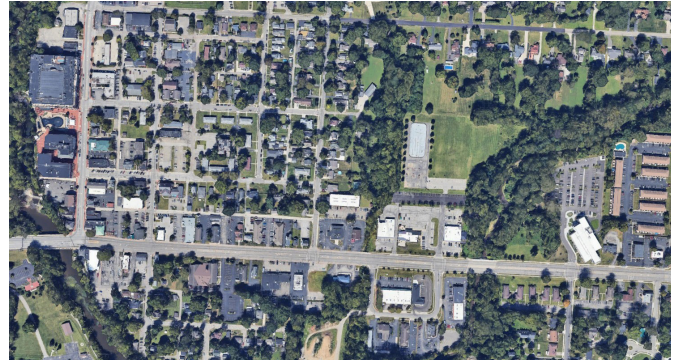
Parking

On-street and private off-street; typically located to the side or rear of buildings and could be shared.

Streets

Blocks are small and walkable with many street connections; alleys are common.

EXAMPLE PATTERN



EXAMPLE CHARACTER



OPEN SPACE

Compared to residential 1, there is more public open space in the form of neighborhood and community parks, pocket parks, and preserved passive open space. Private yards tend to be small and secondary to other open space. Neighborhood schools could serve as open space.

Employment Center

Employment Center areas are characterized by light industrial-style development, high technology, advanced manufacturing, logistics, and office. Large footprint structures offer flexible space to accommodate market demand for various users.

INTENT

- » Encourage industrial and employment uses that provide job opportunities and support the County's tax base.
- » Support industrial and employment activities away from neighborhoods.
- » Utilize natural or man made buffers to separate industry from other uses.

LAND USE MIX

Primary Uses

Light industrial
Advanced manufacturing
Office
Logistics
Flex-office
Data centers

Secondary Uses

Commercial
Civic and institutional
Parks and open space

FORM ATTRIBUTES

BUILDING FORM

Height

1-4 Stories

Setback

Varies

TRANSPORTATION

Primary Mode(s)

Automobile

Secondary Mode(s)

Transit, Walk/Bike

Parking

Surface lots, shared

Streets

Primarily automobile-oriented development, include accommodation for large trucks. Site design and block length should accommodate biking and other transportation alternatives.

EXAMPLE PATTERN



EXAMPLE CHARACTER



OPEN SPACE

Trail connections, passive preserved land, landscaped setback areas, and stormwater detention; generally private.

Economic Development Corridor

Economic Development Corridor areas accommodate an array of uses that include commercial, office, and light industrial. These uses are adjacent to arterial roads that serve the region or multiple neighborhoods. Existing development is characterized by buildings set far back from the street behind large surface parking areas. Over time, new development and redevelopment in these areas is encouraged to raise design quality and improve mobility and accessibility for all users of the corridor.

INTENT

- » Accommodate a wide range of uses to serve a regional market.
- » Provide bicycle and pedestrian connectivity to surrounding neighborhoods and nearby public uses (schools, parks, etc.)
- » Improve/provide public realm features such as signs, sidewalks, lighting, landscaping, and street trees.
- » Locate new buildings near the street and accommodate parking to the side or rear of buildings.

LAND USE MIX

Primary Uses

Office
Vertical mixed-use
Small-scale light industrial

Secondary Uses

Commercial
Multi-family residential
Civic and institutional
Parks and open space

FORM ATTRIBUTES

BUILDING FORM

Height

1-3 Stories

Setback

Varies

TRANSPORTATION

Primary Mode(s)

Automobile

Secondary Mode(s)

Transit, Walk/Bike

Parking

Surface lots

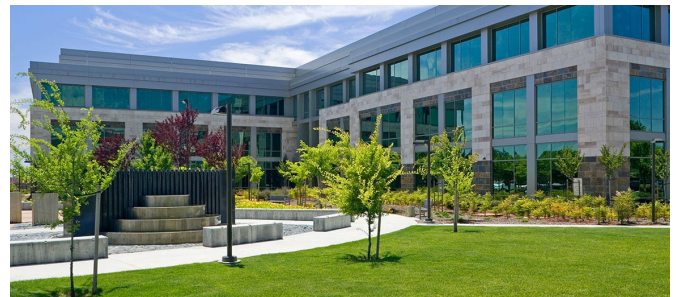
Streets

Primarily automobile-oriented development and may include accommodation for large trucks. Site design and block length should encourage pedestrian and cyclist access.

EXAMPLE PATTERN



EXAMPLE CHARACTER



OPEN SPACE

Trail connections, passive preserved land, and landscaped setback areas; generally private.

Campus

Campus areas include higher education campuses and the mixed-use areas around them. These areas are arranged in a walkable pattern and include a mix of uses either within a single building or connected sites. Housing in these areas generally serves the residential population and includes a mix of housing types.

INTENT

- » Coordinate development with higher education institutions.
- » Create and reinforce walkable activity centers that are connected to surrounding development and include a mix of complementary uses.
- » Improve public realm features such as signs, sidewalks, landscaping, and street trees.
- » Improve pedestrian and vehicular connectivity between civic spaces and adjacent land uses.

LAND USE MIX

Primary Uses

Higher education campus
Student-oriented development
Student housing
Athletic and cultural facilities
Vertical mixed-use
Multi-family residential

Secondary Uses

Small-scale commercial and retail
Single-family residential
Civic and institutional
Parks and open space

FORM ATTRIBUTES

BUILDING FORM

Height

1-5 Stories

Setback

Varies

TRANSPORTATION

Primary Mode(s)

Walk/Bike

Secondary Mode(s)

Transit, Automobile

Parking

Large surface lots that are clustered to serve many buildings/uses; Larger campuses may include structured parking.

Streets

Streets should integrate with the surrounding network and be designed to support walking or biking (both within the campus and between adjacent areas).

EXAMPLE PATTERN



EXAMPLE CHARACTER



OPEN SPACE

Mostly private, may feature neighborhood or pocket parks, and public realm (spaces between buildings and the street). May have trail access.

Community/Village Center

Community/Village Centers are traditional activity centers with a mix of small-scale commercial and residential uses. These areas may be located in incorporated or unincorporated areas. Buildings are set closer to the road on smaller lots but setbacks and lot sizes may vary.

INTENT

- » Provide a vibrant mix of uses that supports a range of activities and amenities.
- » Encourage streetscape continuity with respect to scale and character.
- » Continue historic preservation efforts to maintain the existing neighborhood character within local historic districts.
- » Support adaptive reuse of existing buildings.
- » Improve and provide public realm features such as signs, sidewalks, landscaping, and street trees.

LAND USE MIX

Primary Uses

Vertical mixed-use
Single-family residential
Multi-family residential

Secondary Uses

Commercial
Civic and institutional
Parks and open space

FORM ATTRIBUTES

BUILDING FORM

Height

1-2 Stories

Setback

0-20 feet

TRANSPORTATION

Primary Mode(s)

Walk/Bike

Secondary Mode(s)

Automobile

Parking

On-street, shared structures, or shared surface lots located to the side or rear of buildings.

Streets

Streets should promote a walkable setting with short block lengths, wide sidewalks, and street trees.

OPEN SPACE

Community and neighborhood parks, pocket parks, plazas, trails, green infrastructure, and public realm (spaces between buildings and the street) act as open space.

EXAMPLE PATTERN



EXAMPLE CHARACTER



Town Center

Town Center areas are large and more compact walkable mixed-use areas with employment, commercial, residential, civic, and supporting uses integrated horizontally and vertically with connectivity to surrounding neighborhoods.

INTENT

- » Provide a wide variety of goods and services contributing to vibrant streets and public spaces.
- » Improve connections and transitions to surrounding neighborhoods.
- » Reduce and consolidate surface parking while encouraging shared parking.
- » Provide small-scale public gathering places.
- » Create a comfortable pedestrian experience.

LAND USE MIX

Primary Uses

Vertical mixed-use
Horizontal mixed-use
Multi-family residential

Secondary Uses

Commercial and retail
Civic and institutional
Office
Parks and open space

FORM ATTRIBUTES

BUILDING FORM

Height

1-4 Stories

Setback

0-20 feet

TRANSPORTATION

Primary Mode(s)

Walk/Bike

Secondary Mode(s)

Automobile

Parking

On-street, shared structures, or shared surface lots located to the side or rear of buildings.

Streets

Streets should promote a walkable setting with short block lengths, wide sidewalks, and street trees.

OPEN SPACE

Community and neighborhood parks, pocket parks, plazas, trails, green infrastructure, and public realm (spaces between buildings and the street) act as open space.

EXAMPLE PATTERN



EXAMPLE CHARACTER



Actions

The following projects, policies, and programs support the goals of **Rural Conservation, Strengthened Centers, and Land Use and Development.**

Objective 1. Conserve critical natural assets and prime agricultural land.

Conserving critical natural assets and prime agricultural land is necessary for sustaining Knox County's agricultural productivity and environmental health. These lands offer essential ecosystem services, support biodiversity, and bolster the local economy. Implementing strategies to shield these resources from development pressures and ensure their ongoing use is vital for preserving the County's agricultural heritage and natural beauty.

1.1 Promote opportunities and efforts to protect critical natural resources.

Support both public and private initiatives to ensure the lasting protection of critical natural resources. By promoting tools such as land acquisition, conservation easements, and other protective measures, all local governments will safeguard these valuable resources against inappropriate development.

1.2. Adopt development standards that cluster development and permanently conserve natural assets.

As vacant land is developed, promote clustering development to minimize environmental impact and preserve open spaces. Where appropriate, consider implementing density transfers on development sites to offset the costs of setting aside open spaces. These measures will help balance growth with the preservation of the county's valuable natural resources.

1.3 Explore a full range of measures to protect prime agricultural areas from the intrusion of residential uses that might otherwise create conflicts.

Protective measures could include establishing agricultural stabilization zones to maintain the integrity of farming areas, implementing conservation easements to limit non-agricultural development, and developing policies that prioritize agricultural uses over residential uses.

1.4 Continue to promote agricultural conservation programs and practices, while considering alternative funding sources.

Adopting these strategies can ensure the continued protection of agricultural resources. This could involve looking at successful examples, such as Granville Township in Licking County, Ohio, which has effectively implemented conservation initiatives by generating revenues via voter-approved property levies and grants. Exploring alternative funding sources, such as grants and public-private partnerships, will be essential to support these programs. Other programs provided under local, state, and federal law such as Current Agricultural Use Value (CAUV) and Agricultural Security Areas (ASA) could be explored as complementary actions.



1.5 Establish and continue partnerships to conserve working farms throughout Knox County.

Collaborations with partners like the Farm Bureau, stakeholders, and property owners can support and sustain working farms. This could involve joint initiatives to promote agricultural best practices, securing funding for conservation projects, and creating educational programs to raise awareness about the importance of preserving agricultural land. Continue to support the Knox County Soil and Water Conservation District, the Ohio Department of Agriculture, and more organizations as they continue the long-standing practice of conducting conservation and education efforts with private landowners.

Farming in Knox County

Agriculture in Knox County, Ohio, is a vital part of the local economy, with over 1,300 working farms. While non-farming residents often envision agriculture as picturesque landscapes with rolling hills, peaceful grazing animals, and rural charm, the reality can be quite different. Farms may be large, possibly industrial operations that utilize extensive machinery and large farm vehicles, which can lead to increased noise, traffic, dust, and odors. These farms are essential for producing significant quantities of crops and livestock, contributing to the County's substantial agricultural output. Despite the contrast between perception and reality, agriculture remains a cornerstone of the community, balancing modern farming practices with the idyllic rural image cherished by many residents.

A working farm is defined as a farm whose agricultural land and buildings are in active use for crop production and/or the raising of livestock. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines a farm as any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the year. Historically, family farms were common, with families providing all the labor and owning all the land and capital. However, this is no longer universally true, as many farms now hire nonfamily labor, rent land or other capital, and contract for various farm services. The USDA Economic Research Service categorizes farms into three groups: Residence Farms, which have less than \$350,000 in gross cash farm income and where the principal operator is either retired or has a primary occupation other than farming; Intermediate Farms, which also have less than \$350,000 in gross cash farm income but where the principal operator's primary occupation is farming; and Commercial Farms, which have \$350,000 or more in gross cash farm income and include nonfamily farms. This classification is relevant to understanding the diverse nature of farms in Knox County, which range from small family-run operations to large industrial farms, all contributing to the local agricultural landscape.

1.6 Revise regulations to discourage development in areas that go against the objectives of this Comprehensive Plan.

Updating regulations will ensure that development aligns with the community's long-term vision. This involves refining zoning laws and land-use policies to protect natural resources, maintain open spaces, and safeguard prime agricultural land. By implementing stricter guidelines and enforcement measures, the county can support balanced and environmentally conscious development while preserving its natural assets and agricultural heritage.

Objective 2. Enhance rural character.

Enhancing rural character is essential for preserving the unique identity and charm of Knox County's countryside. This involves maintaining the scenic landscapes, historic sites, and traditional agricultural practices that define the rural areas.

2.1 Update County subdivision regulations to promote conservation development design and work with townships to provide comparable measures in local zoning resolutions.

Incorporate conservation development design guidelines into the Subdivision Regulations, effectively discouraging urban sprawl and protecting farmland. Townships could adopt a residential conservation development zoning district that permits residential clustering and mandates the permanent preservation of at least 50 percent of a site to create a residential transition that protects nearby agricultural areas.

2.2 Increase minimum lot sizes in primarily agricultural areas to reduce residential densities and discourage the development of rural subdivisions.

Update county subdivision standards to increase the minimum lot frontage to 200 feet and the minimum lot size to two acres for lots utilizing on-site water and septic systems. Revise the three feet to one-foot "depth to width" requirement to a minimum rather than a maximum. Require additional setbacks and buffering when a residential subdivision abuts a farm. Townships should explore increasing minimum lot sizes to five acres or more in areas where farming predominates while allowing a limited number of lot splits from existing farms as a conditional use to provide flexibility for current owners.

2.3 Investigate appropriate alternatives to on-lot septic and wells.

Explore viable alternatives to on-lot septic systems and wells to discourage rural sprawl and conserve natural resources and agricultural areas. This investigation should focus on identifying and promoting centralized sewer and water systems for clustered development in appropriate locations. By reducing reliance on private septic and well systems, Knox County can better manage growth, protect water quality, and preserve the integrity of the rural and agricultural landscapes.

2.4 Provide protections for rural view sheds.

The natural landscapes and viewsheds are integral to the cherished rural character of the County. Conduct an analysis of current protections and implement new measures within the development review process to ensure these rural vistas, open spaces, and natural areas are maintained and conserved.

2.5 Incorporate viewshed analysis into subdivision regulations.

This process ensures that new developments do not obstruct or degrade important scenic vistas, maintaining the open, undeveloped feel that defines rural landscapes. Protecting these views can help to retain the unique visual and cultural qualities that make rural areas special. This thoughtful approach to planning balances development needs with the preservation of natural beauty, benefiting both current and future residents.

2.6 Develop a template for township zoning regulations that includes design standards, viewshed analysis, and conservation principles.

This template should provide clear guidelines for new developments, ensuring they adhere to specific design standards that enhance aesthetic appeal and functionality. Incorporating viewshed analysis helps protect scenic vistas and maintain the rural character of the area by preventing visual obstructions. Additionally, integrating conservation principles promotes the preservation of natural resources and biodiversity, encouraging environmentally responsible development. This holistic template aims to balance growth with the conservation of the community's unique visual and ecological assets.

2.7 Mitigate conflicts and educate stakeholders as to the realities of living in an agricultural community.

This action aims to address potential misunderstandings and disputes that may arise between agricultural operations and other community members through proactive communication and engagement strategies. Provide clear information about farming practices, seasonal activities, and the importance of agriculture to the local economy to allow stakeholders to develop a better understanding and appreciation of the agricultural lifestyle. Educational initiatives, such as community meetings, informational brochures, and farm tours, can help bridge the gap between farmers and non-farm residents, fostering a sense of mutual respect and cooperation. This approach not only reduces conflicts but also strengthens the community's support for its agricultural heritage.

Objective 3. Focus growth and development inward.

Directing development towards established communities can reduce urban sprawl, preserve open spaces, and enhance the quality of life for residents. Encouraging inward growth ensures that development is both economically and environmentally responsible. This objective prioritizes the revitalization of existing urban and suburban areas, making the most of current infrastructure and resources.

3.1 Adopt regulations that encourage infill and redevelopment in city and village centers and support higher-density mixed-use projects in downtown areas.

Encouraging infill and redevelopment in city and village centers, along with supporting higher-density mixed-use projects in downtown areas, can create a more walkable community by integrating housing with retail, office, and related services. This approach enhances fiscal resiliency by maximizing the use of existing infrastructure and helps prevent urban sprawl, thereby avoiding the public expense of upgrading utility systems and roads. This can be achieved by adopting regulations that incentivize developers to focus on key vacant sites and underdeveloped corridors, and by providing streamlined approval processes for mixed-use projects in these areas.

3.2 Implement measures that add value to existing infill sites.

This can be achieved through tools such as density bonuses, which incentivize higher-density development in targeted areas. Cities and villages can also use transfer of development rights, which allow for the preservation of open spaces by shifting development potential to more suitable locations. These strategies help maximize the use of existing urban areas, promoting responsible growth and efficient land use.

3.3 Update zoning and subdivision regulations to ensure new growth in the city and villages remains compatible with existing scale, form, and intensity of use.

Ensure that new development and infill align with the community's character in terms of density, height, architectural style, landscaping, and other development elements. Review village zoning codes to identify any standards that may conflict with this objective, particularly regarding building height and setbacks. The City of Mount Vernon's CB District Architectural Standards can serve as a best practice for this action. The County should help villages develop similar standards to ensure new investments reinforce the historic design character of each downtown in Knox County.

3.4 Update subdivision design standards.

Revise the guidelines that dictate the layout, appearance, and functionality of new developments to ensure that the standards reflect the actions in this Comprehensive Plan. Updating these standards can promote more efficient land use, enhance the visual appeal of neighborhoods, and ensure that new developments are in harmony with the existing character of the area.

3.5 Support the Downtown Experience Coordinator position.

Supporting the Downtown Experience Coordinator position, housed within the Area Development Foundation, will enhance the vibrancy and vitality of the villages in Knox County. This role focuses on creating and implementing initiatives that attract visitors, support local businesses, and foster a lively community atmosphere. By backing this position, stakeholders can ensure that efforts to improve downtown areas are well-coordinated and effective, leading to increased economic activity, cultural events, and community engagement. The Downtown Experience Coordinator plays a key role in making Knox County's villages more dynamic and appealing places to live, work, and visit.

Objective 4. Optimize and improve infrastructure networks.

This objective focuses on upgrading and maintaining critical infrastructure such as roads, utilities, and communication systems to meet current and future demands. Investing in modern, resilient infrastructure supports economic growth and improves public safety. Prioritizing these improvements ensures that the County remains well-connected and capable of supporting a thriving community.

4.1 Prepare a Knox County Water Quality Management Plan.

Water Quality Management (208) plans outline and advocate for effective, comprehensive programs aimed at controlling water pollution from both point and nonpoint sources within a specific geographic area. Collaborate with the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA) and other regional partners to conduct the process and prepare a plan. This proactive approach will help the County prepare for future growth and preserve the integrity of the water supply.

4.2 Develop a comprehensive map of Knox County's water and wastewater systems.

Understanding the layout of Knox County's water and wastewater infrastructure is crucial for planning future growth. Mapping the systems will allow the County to identify current capacities, pinpoint areas needing upgrades, and ensure that new developments are seamlessly integrated into the existing network.

4.3 Adopt a water conservation and reuse strategy.

Water reuse (also commonly known as water recycling or water reclamation) reclaims water from various sources and treats and reuses it for beneficial purposes such as agriculture and irrigation, potable water supplies, groundwater replenishment, industrial processes, and environmental restoration. Implementing a water conservation and reuse strategy in Knox County would ensure a resilient water supply, reducing the strain on natural resources as development increases.

4.4 Promote development on vacant and under-utilized parcels with infrastructure services.

The City and villages should identify vacant or under-utilized properties with access to infrastructure like water, sewer, and storm systems that could attract market interest and stimulate private investment in urban areas. Communities should engage with the owners of these parcels to encourage development and facilitate connections with potential investors.

4.5 Prioritize infill and redevelopment in the existing system service areas before considering system expansions.

Before considering annexation proposals, utility capacity studies should be conducted to determine the current limits of utility systems and identify necessary improvements to maximize existing urban areas. If a private entity proposes development outside existing service areas requiring annexation, the City and villages should evaluate the benefits of such development, considering the need to discourage sprawl and protect farmland or critical natural resources. The City of Mount Vernon and villages with utility services should prioritize infill and redevelopment within existing service areas before considering system expansions unless those expansions support economic development and job creation.

4.6 Focus attention on major corridors to minimize sprawl, enhance safety, and reduce congestion..

Support increased development intensity along major corridors adjacent to existing density and development, including on US 36 and SR 13. Prioritize capital investments that reflect the character and history of these areas. Additionally, prioritize safety investments that reduce congestion, ensure public safety, facilitate pedestrian and bike access, manage access, and address the unique needs of the Amish community. These measures will enhance the functionality and appeal of major corridors while minimizing sprawl.



Credit: Knox County Convention and Visitors Bureau

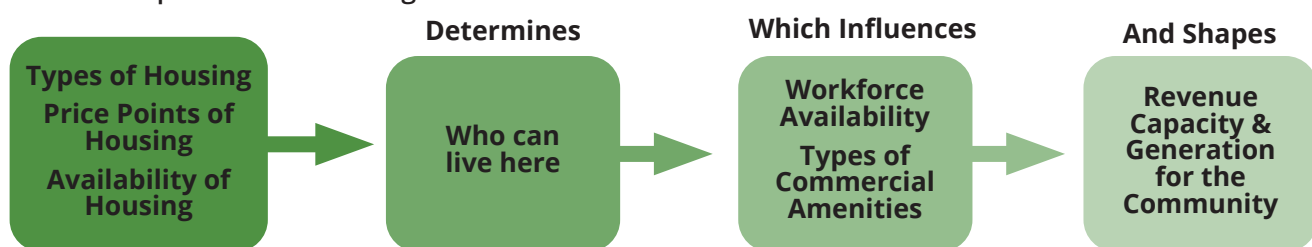
3

Economic, Workforce, and Housing Resilience



Economic prosperity in Knox County is strongly dependent on the opportunity of housing, workforce availability, training opportunities, and a diversified employment base. Specifically, the connection between housing and workforce availability is vital. The amount of available units, types, price points, and location affects workforce availability as it attracts the amount and types of workers needed to meet local workforce demand. Diverse and abundant housing also impacts what retail, restaurant and commercial opportunities are available in the county. These opportunities, coupled with a robust and stable manufacturing sector, not only provide more employment and spending opportunities, but also creates financial stability for local governments, through increased revenue generation. This chapter further demonstrates the connection between housing availability, workforce demand, and economic prosperity and diversity.

Relationship Between Housing and Workforce



Goals

The content in this chapter is focused on the following goals.

Economic Prosperity: A robust local economy with industrial growth and a wide range of employment opportunities.

Housing: A diverse range of affordable, high-quality housing options meet the needs of all community members.

Objectives

1. Support opportunities, among existing companies, and those looking to move to Knox County.
2. Pursue diversification of manufacturing opportunities.
3. Strengthen the talent pipeline.
4. Create neighborhoods with a variety of attainable housing.
5. Strengthen community identity and promote tourism through strategic branding initiatives.

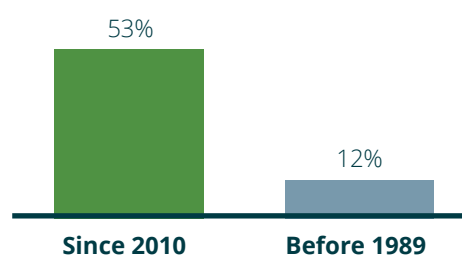
Conditions and Trends

Population, Housing, and Affordability

The housing market in Knox County comprises approximately 26,000 units, with an 11% vacancy rate. Most homes (73%) are owner-occupied, and 39% of these do not have mortgages. The owner-occupied to rental ratio is about 50/50 in Mount Vernon. The rental market makes up 20% of all housing units, with 4% being mobile homes. Notably, 67% of the housing stock was built before 1989. Older housing generally needs more upkeep and without regular maintenance could fall into disrepair, creating a need for a home repair program of some kind. Upkeep on older homes tends to be more expensive than on newer homes as well. Further, rental housing is important to several key demographics in Knox County. Older residents are utilizing rental housing in increasing numbers, due to smaller household size and desire for maintenance-free residences. Currently, 32% of residents over 65 live in an owner occupied single-family home. Younger people, a key workforce demographic, particularly those just starting out on their own, rely on rental housing for residence, while they get financially and professionally established as well. Knox County employers like educational and healthcare institutions utilize short-time (a few months to a year) rentals to house workers, particularly highly-educated professional positions. For example, of those moving to Knox County since 2010, 80% have occupied rental units.

Knox County has shown a modest 3% population growth since 2010, ranking it 18/88 counties in Ohio for population growth. This modest growth is expected to continue over the next several decades. The Mid-Ohio Planning Commission estimates that Knox County's population will increase to about 70,000 by 2050. What does appear to be happening is a robust population transition. Over the next 10 to 15 years, Knox County could see a substantial population change due to a rise in the death rate, a decrease in the birth rate, and the arrival of new residents moving into the county. This can already be observed. For example, more than half (53%) of the county's residents have moved in since 2010. For comparison, only 12% of residents have lived in the county since before 1988. As the population

Moved to Knox County
Owners and Renters



changes, its housing preferences could as well. As work-from-home becomes regularized, and the county population continues to age, the pressure on more diverse housing choices will increase. Those leaving the County had a lower average adjusted gross income (AGI) than those arriving, which could create a demand for more higher-end housing. Entering households are also smaller than the average household with 1.74 persons compared to 2.06 for existing households. The smaller household size could indicate that smaller housing units could be more in demand in the future. Again, older residents often “downsize” to smaller units when they retire and their children move out of the house. Younger residents, just starting out, also look for smaller unit sizes due to smaller household size, and financial constraints. For reference, 93% of housing units in the county are 2+ bedrooms, while only 6% are one bedroom units.

Like many surrounding communities, the housing market, post-COVID, has seen a sharp increase in prices, with the median sales price in Knox County at \$275,750 in 2024. While the increase tracks closely with Licking and Delaware Counties, Knox County had a higher indexed rate. Combine the price increases with affordability of the median household, and a challenging picture emerges. The median household income (\$73,988) can only afford a home priced at \$135,000, highlighting a significant gap in housing affordability for median income households. Rental prices have also surged, with market rents up by 49% since 2015. In 2023, the average countywide rent was \$925. For reference, a household with the median income could responsibly afford \$716 in rent. Housing affordability issues are widespread, with 13% of homeowners and 47% of renters spending at least 30% (the recommended safe limit) of their income on housing. These challenges are most acute for households earning less than \$35,000. Seniors, who comprise 15% of those facing affordability issues, are particularly affected.

2024 Median Home Sale Price

\$275,750

Median Household Income

\$73,988

Home Affordability for Median Income

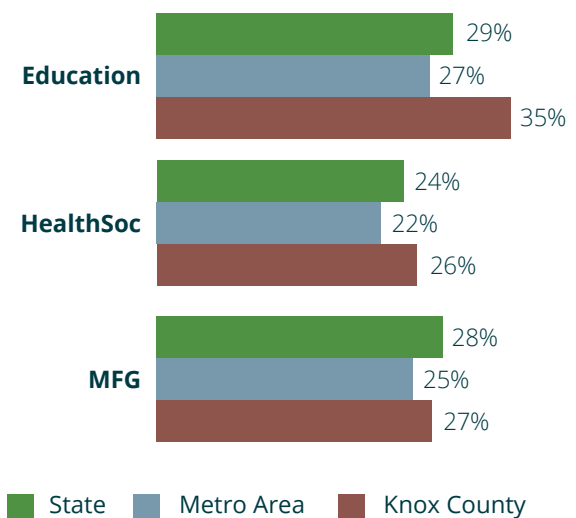
\$135,000

Workforce

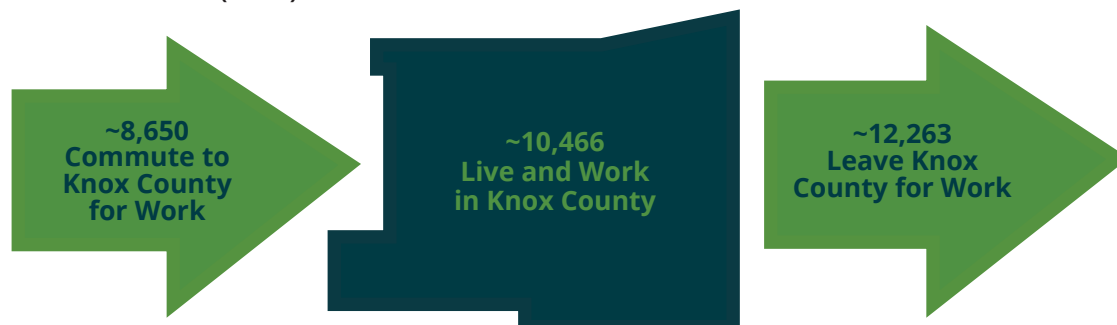
The county's labor force averages 31,572 annually, slightly below its 2019 peak, with a median age of 39.4 years. The unemployment rate was 3.3% in 2023, the lowest since at least 1990, but it rose to 4.9% by June 2024. The workforce participation rate for 20-64 year olds in 2023 was 78.6% was almost identical to Ohio's 78.8%. Educational attainment is rising, with 32% of the population over 25 holding at least an associate degree, mostly employed in educational services. When local colleges are removed, the educational attainment of Knox County residents outside of educational services drops significantly. Most jobs located in Knox County are filled by residents but the majority of residents work outside the County. This marks a significant shift from 2010, when 53% of residents both lived and worked within the County, compared to just 46% in 2022. Key sectors driving this outside commuting, which accounts for 67% of the total, include transportation and warehousing, professional technical jobs, finance and insurance, and hospitality and retail. The average commute time for a Knox County resident to their place of employment is 27.5 minutes, close to the national average of 29 minutes.

The three biggest local employment sectors are manufacturing (22%), healthcare (17%), and educational services (13%). These sectors have above-the-national-average concentrations, and are significant economic drivers to the County. A notable challenge is the high replacement rate needed over the next 10 years, with 55% of the educational service workforce, 25% of healthcare, and 27% of manufacturing workers over age 55. Knox County will need to replace 3,328 manufacturing and 2,612 healthcare jobs by 2032. This will be a significant challenge for the county to meet.

Percent of Workers over 55 in Key Sectors



Inflow Outflow (2022)



Employers struggle to attract and retain non-local workers, who often leave within a few years. Key reasons include lack of local ties, desire for affordable rental housing near entertainment, and finding housing 30-45 minutes away with jobs closer to home. The shortage of affordable, desirable housing hinders the county's ability to retain workers, especially those with advanced degrees or industry credentials.

Manufacturing Diversification

Knox County boasts a robust manufacturing industry and prides itself as “a county that makes things.” Education, agriculture, and manufacturing are the three-legged stool of the County’s economic success. The County should continue to support existing manufacturers and attract new ones. The County’s manufacturing base is concentrated in four main sectors: automotive parts, energy industry machinery, packaging, and construction materials. The Columbus Region also excels in these sectors, plus warehousing/ logistics and biopharmaceuticals. Due to the volatility in some sectors, like automotive and energy, diversification is advised. The 2024 Knox County Workforce Demand Study identified food and beverage manufacturing as a potential growth area, aligning with local skills. Biopharmaceutical manufacturing is another target, but the county lacks “shovel ready” industrial space despite available buildings at Heartland Commerce Park and limited land at Fredericktown Industrial Park.

Knox County Workforce Demand Forecast (2022-2023)

Occupation	2022	2023	Growth	Replacement	Total Need
Total, all occupations	2,523	2,602	79	2,612	2,691
Total analyzed	2,460	2,537	77	2,547	2,624
Home health and personal care aides	251	276	25	409	434
Nursing assistants	263	264	1	380	381
Registered nurses	453	468	15	250	266
Dental assistants	54	56	2	76	79
Licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses	90	90	0	70	70
Maids and housekeeping cleaners	49	50	1	69	70

Occupation	2022	2023	Growth	Replacement	Total Need
Total, all occupations	3,469	3,488	19	3,328	3,347
Total analyzed	3,365	3,382	17	3,228	3,245
Miscellaneous assemblers and fabricators	584	558	-26	594	568
Welders, cutters, solderers, and brazers	194	202	7	189	196
Laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand	113	116	3	150	153
First-line supervisors of production and operating workers	137	141	4	127	131
Machinists	111	115	4	109	113

Knox County Economic Growth Strategy

In December 2021, Intel Corp announced plans to construct a \$20 billion semiconductor manufacturing plant in Licking County. The facility is projected to span 1,000 acres and create 3,000 permanent jobs, along with up to 10,000 additional jobs during the construction phase. This development is expected to significantly impact the local economy, driving job creation and increasing demand for manufacturing, warehousing, residential, and commercial development in adjacent counties.

In anticipation of this growth, Knox County, located just north of Licking County, initiated planning efforts in early 2022. The Knox County Area Development Foundation engaged OHM Advisors, in collaboration with Vista Site Selection and Neighborhood Strategies LLC, to formulate a regional growth strategy.

The Economic Growth Strategy provides an overview of the existing economic climate of the county and the impact recent economic activities in the Columbus region may have on Knox County, including the Intel manufacturing site (Ohio One Campus and other induced economic impacts). Mount Vernon and Fredericktown were identified as the areas most likely to experience land use changes, being 15 to 30 miles from the Intel site. The study highlighted the need for more affordable housing in the county and identified opportunities to provide high-density housing at lower price points. The county's key industries—manufacturing, construction, healthcare/social services, and retail—are well-positioned to enhance the supply chain network for Intel.



Tourism and the Economy

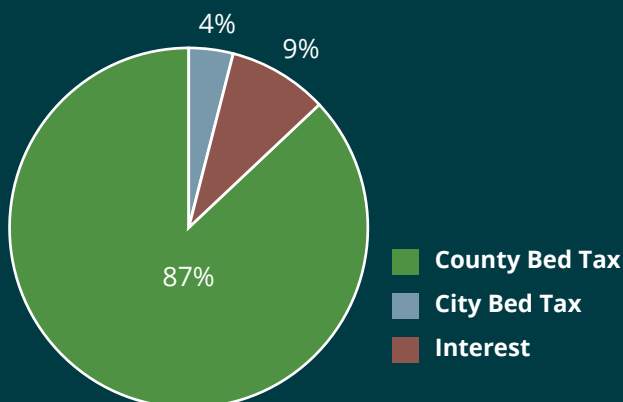
Tourism and visitor spending play a crucial role in the local economy by driving revenue, creating jobs, and stimulating growth across various sectors. Visitors contribute to the economy through spending on accommodations, dining, entertainment, and retail, which supports local businesses and generates tax revenue. Additionally, tourism promotes cultural exchange and enhances the community's profile, attracting further investment and development.

In 2023, the Knox County Convention and Visitors Bureau (KCCVB) recorded increased visitor spending since 2021, with visitors directly spending \$150.6 million at local businesses in Knox County and generating \$19.6 million in local, state, and federal taxes. More than 1,900 jobs in the county are supported by visitor spending, accounting for almost 6% of all jobs in the area. According to their annual report, the KCCVB notes that without visitor spending, each household would need to contribute an additional \$427 annually to match the compensation provided by the tourism industry.

Knox County Convention and Visitors Bureau (KCCVB)

The KCCVB mission is focused on showcasing the County's unique attractions, natural amenities, events and local businesses; making it an appealing place for visitors and residents alike. Through the impact of strategic marketing, enhanced resources, and collaborative partnerships, the KCCVB plays a vital role in boosting the local economic position, enriching community development and providing opportunities for the community and visitors to connect with their passions. The bureau is funded through lodging excise tax revenue from Knox County and the City of Mount Vernon.

2024 Income by Income Stream



Actions

The following projects, policies, and programs support the goals of **Economic Prosperity and Housing**.

Objective 1. Support opportunities among existing companies and those looking to move to Knox County.

Supporting opportunities for existing companies and those looking to move to Knox County is essential for driving economic growth and fostering innovation. These efforts attract community investment, create jobs, and diversify the economy. By providing necessary resources, strong infrastructure, and a supportive regulatory environment, businesses can thrive and significantly contribute to the community's prosperity. Encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation ensures Knox County remains competitive and adaptable in a changing economic landscape.

1.1 Develop future land use patterns that align with economic development goals by providing well-located and serviced sites to attract private investment and generate jobs.

Strategically designating and preparing well-serviced sites can attract private investment and stimulate job creation. Focusing on areas that are appropriately located and equipped with necessary infrastructure allows the County to support diverse economic activities, from small businesses to larger enterprises, thereby boosting local employment opportunities. This approach fosters a favorable environment for businesses to thrive, enhancing the County's overall economic vitality.

1.2 Expand existing employment concentrations to grow the County's tax base and provide job opportunities for residents.

Focusing on the growth of established employment centers will attract new businesses, support the expansion of current enterprises, and foster a robust local economy. Enhance infrastructure, provide incentives for business development, and ensure that these areas are well-connected to transportation networks. This action increases revenue and ensures residents have access to a diverse range of employment opportunities close to home.

1.3 Improve road and rail connectivity to facilitate private investment and utility service investments, as appropriate.

Upgrade existing roads and rail lines and develop new routes where necessary to facilitate the efficient movement of goods and services. This will also ensure that utility services can be extended to new and existing industrial areas to support economic growth.

Objective 2. Pursue diversification of manufacturing opportunities.

Expanding the range of manufacturing opportunities can enhance economic resilience and stimulate growth by attracting a variety of industries. This approach encourages innovation and reduces dependency on a single sector, making the local economy more adaptable to market changes. By supporting diverse manufacturing ventures, the community can create a broader array of job opportunities and foster a more dynamic business environment.

2.1 Promote development of walkable commercial nodes along key corridors.

To support small businesses and foster a thriving local economy, promote the development of walkable commercial hubs along key corridors. These areas should be designed to be pedestrian-friendly, featuring a variety of shops, restaurants, and services that are easily accessible on foot. By focusing on nodal development rather than continuous strip development, the county can create distinct, vibrant commercial nodes that encourage entrepreneurship and provide opportunities for small businesses to flourish.

Nodal Development

Concentrating growth in nodes allows communities to optimize land use, reduce infrastructure costs, and enhance accessibility to services and amenities. This approach promotes mixed-use developments that support vibrant, walkable neighborhoods and reduces reliance on automobiles. Additionally, node-based development can help preserve open spaces and natural resources by limiting urban sprawl. By strategically planning growth in nodes, communities can foster economic vitality, improve quality of life, and ensure conservation of agricultural land and open space.

2.2 Expand industrial areas on the south side of Mount Vernon to take advantage of the U.S. 36 corridor.

The U.S. 36 corridor is a significant route that runs through Knox County and is crucial to the region's connectivity and economic development. U.S. 36 connects Mount Vernon to major highways, facilitating easy transportation of goods and services. The corridor is well-serviced with necessary infrastructure, including roads, utilities, and communication networks, making it easier for businesses to open and operate. By capitalizing on the corridor's accessibility and connectivity, new industrial and economic developments can be attracted to the city's south and west sides.

2.3 Expand industrial areas on the west/northwest side of Fredericktown adjacent to OH 13 and OH 95.

OH 13 is a significant state highway that provides connectivity through several counties, including Knox County. The route's accessibility and connectivity make it an attractive location for industrial and commercial development. The proximity of OH 13 to other major transportation routes enhances its appeal for businesses looking to serve both local and regional markets. Emphasize the expansion of industrial areas adjacent to OH 13 to foster a dynamic economic environment.

2.4 Develop a new commercial and industrial employment center in the Centerburg area.

Developing a new commercial and industrial employment center in the Centerburg area will significantly boost local economic growth and job creation. The strategic location of Centerburg, with its proximity to major transportation routes, makes it an ideal spot for businesses aiming to serve both local and regional markets.

2.5 Develop shovel ready land along major road corridors with appropriate utilities to expand and attract industrial opportunities.

To keep the county attractive for industrial investments, it is essential to have land that is immediately ready for development. This means having parcels of land along major roadways that are already equipped with necessary utilities like water, electricity, and sewage systems. By doing this, the county can quickly accommodate new industrial projects, making it a more appealing location for businesses looking to set up operations.

Objective 3. Strengthen the talent pipeline.

Investing in education, training programs, and partnerships with local businesses can help the County develop a skilled workforce that meets the demands of emerging industries. Enhancing career pathways and providing opportunities for continuous learning will help retain local talent and attract new professionals. This approach not only supports individual career growth but also fosters a resilient and adaptable economy.

3.1 Organize a session to discuss the workforce needs in biomedicine and food manufacturing showcasing successful programs, and evaluate how well Knox County's educational institutions (K-12 and higher education) can meet these needs.

To address the growing demand for skilled professionals in the biotech and biomedical fields, organize a session focused on understanding workforce needs and exploring successful programs in these industries. This session will bring together industry experts, educators, and community leaders to discuss the specific skills and training required for future jobs in biotechnology and biomedicine. The session will also evaluate the capacity of Knox County's educational institutions, from K-12 to higher education, to meet these workforce demands. By assessing current programs and identifying gaps, the county can develop strategies to enhance its educational offerings, ensuring that students are well-prepared for careers in these high-growth sectors.

3.2 Create and implement a strategy to recruit and retain young workers in the County.

This should include efforts to attract young professionals through career development programs, networking opportunities, and partnerships with local businesses and educational institutions. Enhance quality of life to make the County more appealing to young workers. Address housing affordability and availability to ensure that young professionals can find suitable and affordable living arrangements. By integrating these elements, the County can create a vibrant and supportive environment that attracts and retains young talent.

3.3 Continue coordination between Knox County's schools and in-demand employers through the Business Advisory Council.

Continue to foster strong partnerships that align educational programs with workforce needs. This involves regular communication and collaboration to ensure that curricula and training opportunities are tailored to the skills and qualifications sought by local employers. Facilitate internships, apprenticeships, and job shadowing programs to provide students with hands-on experience and direct pathways to employment. This coordination helps employers identify and nurture future talent, ensuring a steady pipeline of skilled workers to support the county's economic growth.



Credit: Area Development Foundation



Objective 4. Create neighborhoods with a variety of attainable housing.

Creating neighborhoods with a variety of attainable housing will foster inclusive and vibrant communities in Knox County. By offering diverse housing options that cater to different income levels and family sizes, the county can ensure that all residents have access to safe and affordable homes. This approach supports reduced housing insecurity and promotes economic stability. Developing mixed-income neighborhoods also enhances community cohesion and provides opportunities for residents to live near their workplaces, schools, and essential services.

4.1 Revitalize neighborhoods and smaller community areas that have experienced disinvestment.

Encourage new residential investment on vacant parcels in existing neighborhoods to maximize the use of existing utility systems. Invest capital dollars in neighborhood infrastructure to enhance the physical environment. Prioritize sidewalk, crosswalk, and bike connection maintenance to ensure safe access and connectivity within established neighborhoods.

4.2 Create an infill housing strategy for the city and villages.

Identify vacant, zoned parcels with existing utilities to maximize development potential. Partner with the Knox County Land Bank where possible. Consider implementing an incremental development model in codes and processes to strengthen neighborhoods through small-scale projects. Incremental development involves making small, gradual changes to existing neighborhoods and commercial areas, rather than large-scale projects. Expand the capacity of groups such as the Knox County Land Bank to develop and rehab missing middle housing.

4.3 Prioritize nearby residential development in places within close proximity to employment to provide for future workers and reduce commuting.

Create housing options near employment centers to create convenient living options for employees, making it easier for them to get to work. This approach will reduce travel time and transportation costs and decrease traffic congestion.

4.4 Create standards that require a mix of housing types in appropriate locations.

Regulations should mandate that residential development projects in designated areas, which exceed a specified acreage or number of units, must incorporate a variety of housing types. This approach ensures diverse housing options, such as single-family homes, townhouses, and multi-family units, are available within the community. Encourage the City and villages to adopt similar standards.

4.5 Explore options and opportunities to provide quality housing for workforce families and seniors.

Assess community needs and identify market gaps to ensure suitable housing solutions for workforce families and seniors. Encourage partnerships with non-profits, leverage housing programs, and promote the inclusion of affordable units in new developments. Engage stakeholders to ensure these initiatives are community-driven and inclusive.

4.6 Develop programs that assist with the rehabilitation of older homes to maintain the housing stock.

Support both homeowners and rental property owners in rehabilitation efforts by providing a range of services, from educational resources to financial assistance. Offer guidance on best practices for home repairs and renovations, as well as financial support for necessary improvements through grants or low-interest loans, to help preserve the quality and safety of housing and ensure that older homes remain viable and attractive living options.

In the initial draft of the plan, there was a proposal to investigate and report on the potential implementation of building codes "within the County". While the recommendation was about studying building codes - versus implementing - the Regional Planning Commission raised sufficient concerns to lead to the removal of the recommendation. However, the topic of building codes may continue to be a point of discussion in the County moving forward.

Objective 5: Strengthen community identity and promote tourism through strategic branding initiatives.

The County should tailor its branding efforts to reflect the true essence of the community. This approach ensures that the brand is not just a superficial image but a genuine representation of the residents' experiences and values. Highlighting the County's unique cultural, historical, and natural assets through a well-crafted brand can foster a deep emotional connection among residents, enhancing their sense of pride and belonging. Moreover, effective branding initiatives, such as engaging marketing campaigns and vibrant community events, can attract visitors and support local businesses, boosting tourism and driving economic growth. This holistic strategy not only generates revenue and creates job opportunities but also strengthens the community's overall well-being and social cohesion, making the County a more attractive and thriving place to live, work, and visit.

5.1 Pursue a countywide branding effort.

The communities of Knox County possess a unique story that appeals to prospective residents and businesses alike. By undertaking a comprehensive branding campaign, the County can identify and showcase the distinct qualities that set it apart from other regions. This initiative will establish a cohesive identity to guide economic development and highlight community characteristics. It should also be used to reassess and enhance wayfinding for parks, attractions and local businesses. The campaign will also instill a sense of community pride and emotional attachment, fostering a stronger connection among residents and celebrating the County's heritage and future potential. The Knox County Convention and Visitors Bureau (KCCVB) has developed a marketing brand and extensive strategy to market the County to visitors. The organization can act as a valuable asset and partner in developing a brand for the County.

5.2 Foster stronger partnerships with the Knox County Convention and Visitors Bureau and other tourism-related organizations to improve the visitor experience in the County.

Building stronger partnerships with the KCCVB and other tourism-related organizations will create a more cohesive and attractive destination for tourists. This collaboration will involve joint marketing efforts, shared resources, and coordinated events that highlight the unique attractions and cultural offerings of Knox County. These strengthened partnerships will ensure that visitors receive a seamless and enriching experience, encouraging longer stays and repeat visits.

4

Quality of Life



Knox County is characterized by its vibrant communities, cultures, and longstanding traditions. The people of Knox County are its greatest asset, fostering a strong sense of community and connection. The natural beauty, highlighted by the Kokosing and Mohican Rivers and extensive park systems, offers residents and visitors numerous recreational opportunities. This chapter of the comprehensive plan focuses on enhancing the quality of life in Knox County by addressing the needs of its people and conserving and promoting its natural and recreational resources.

Goals

The content in this chapter is focused on the following goals.

People: Healthy and proud residents and workers enjoying the benefits of growth and quality of life that drew—and keeps—them in the County.

Natural and Recreational Amenities: Enhanced natural and recreational amenities are accessible and offer varied opportunities for outdoor enjoyment.

Objectives

1. Expand and enhance local services and amenities.
2. Strengthen access to and conservation of natural spaces, parks, and greenways.

Conditions and Trends

Population

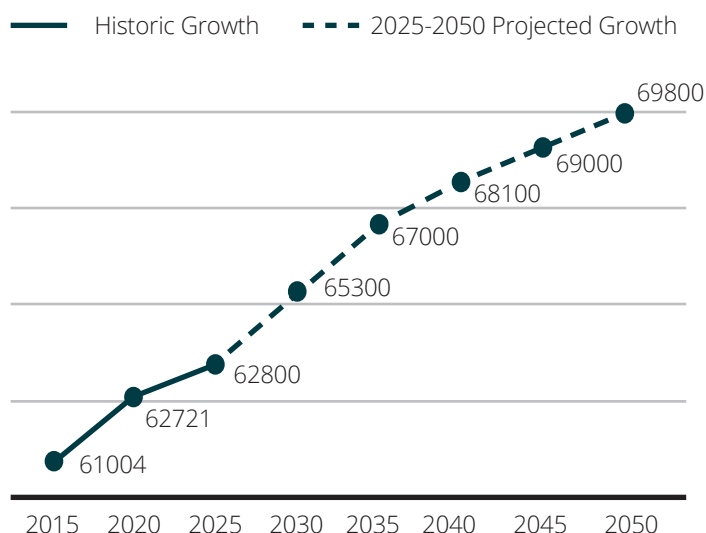
Knox County has experienced stable population growth, averaging 0.4% per year, which aligns with projections from the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC). This trend is expected to continue, with the county projected to grow by 11% through 2050. Mount Vernon, the largest city in Knox County, comprises 26.6% of the county's population. However, recent stagnation in Mount Vernon's population suggests that future growth may occur outside the city.

The county is witnessing significant growth in its over-60 age cohort while experiencing a reduction in birth rates. This demographic shift could pose challenges to the local economy. The trend of an aging population is consistent with broader patterns observed across Ohio and the nation.

Services

Law Enforcement: In Knox County, Ohio, several law enforcement agencies operate to ensure the safety and security of the community.

- 1. The Knox County Sheriff's Office** provides a range of law enforcement services, including patrol, criminal investigations, and maintaining the county jail. Additionally, the Knox County Sheriff's Office has contractual agreements to provide law enforcement services to the villages of Centerburg and Gambier.



Knox County Age Cohorts (2015 and 2022 Comparison)

Age	2015	2022	Percent Change
Under 5 years	3,778	3,738	-1.1%
5 to 9 years	4,198	3,639	-13.3%
10 to 14 years	3,788	4,423	+16.8%
15 to 19 years	4,939	4,950	+0.2%
20 to 24 years	4,828	4,735	-1.9%
25 to 34 years	6,585	6,885	+4.6%
35 to 44 years	6,875	7,007	+1.9%
45 to 54 years	8,130	7,156	-12.0%
55 to 59 years	4,293	3,500	-18.5%
60 to 64 years	3,944	5,009	+27.0%
65 to 74 years	5,419	6,867	+27.0%
75 to 84 years	3,108	3,305	+6.3%
85+ years	1,119	1,443	+29.0%

2. The Mount Vernon Police Department serves the City of Mount Vernon and handles local law enforcement within the city limits.

3. The Fredericktown Police Department serves the Village of Fredericktown, focusing on local law enforcement and community safety.

4. The Danville Police Department serves the Village of Danville, providing law enforcement services and community policing.

Fire and EMS: Knox County is currently served by eight fire districts.

1. The Bladensburg Fire District provides fire and emergency medical services (EMS) to Clay and Jackson Townships, in the southeast portion of the County. The district covers 48.8 square miles with two stations, 10 in-service apparatuses, and over 30 trained members.

2. The Central Ohio Joint Fire District was established in 2000 and serves the Village of Centerburg, Hilliar Township, and Milford Township. The fire district also serves South Bloomfield Township and the Village of Sparta in Morrow County. The district serves nearly 75 square miles from one station.

3. The Eastern Knox Joint Fire District provides fire and EMS services to 186 square miles in the eastern portion of the County. The district was formed in 2001 and serves Brown, Jefferson, Union, Howard, Harrison, and Butler Townships as well as the Villages of Danville and Brinkhaven. The district operates out of two stations and has a fleet of 16 vehicles.

4. The Fredericktown Community Fire District provides fire and rescue services to 9,000 residents in 118 square miles of northwest Knox County. The district serves Berlin, Middlebury, Wayne, and Pike Townships and the Village of Fredericktown as well as a portion of Morris Township from two stations. EMS services are provided by the Fredericktown Community Joint Emergency Ambulance District.

5. The Homer Fire Department provides fire and EMS services to Miller Township in Knox County as well as Burlington and Bennington Townships in Licking County. The volunteer fire department operates from one station.

6. The Monroe Township Fire Department provides fire and EMS services to Monroe Township, located in central Knox County, from one station.

7. The Mount Vernon Fire Department provides fire and EMS services to the City of Mount Vernon and the Village of Gambier as well as Liberty, Clinton, Pleasant, and College Townships and part of Morris Township. The department also contracts with the Mount Vernon Developmental Center and the Knox County Airport to provide emergency services. The department serves 82 square miles from two stations.

8. The County Line Joint Fire District provides fire and EMS services to Morgan Township in Knox County and the Village of Utica and Washington Township in Licking County. 29 trained members provide services to 4,200 residents from one station.

Health and Social Services: Knox County has one main hospital system, Knox Community Hospital. The system operates a hospital in Mount Vernon as well as primary and specialty care offices across the county.

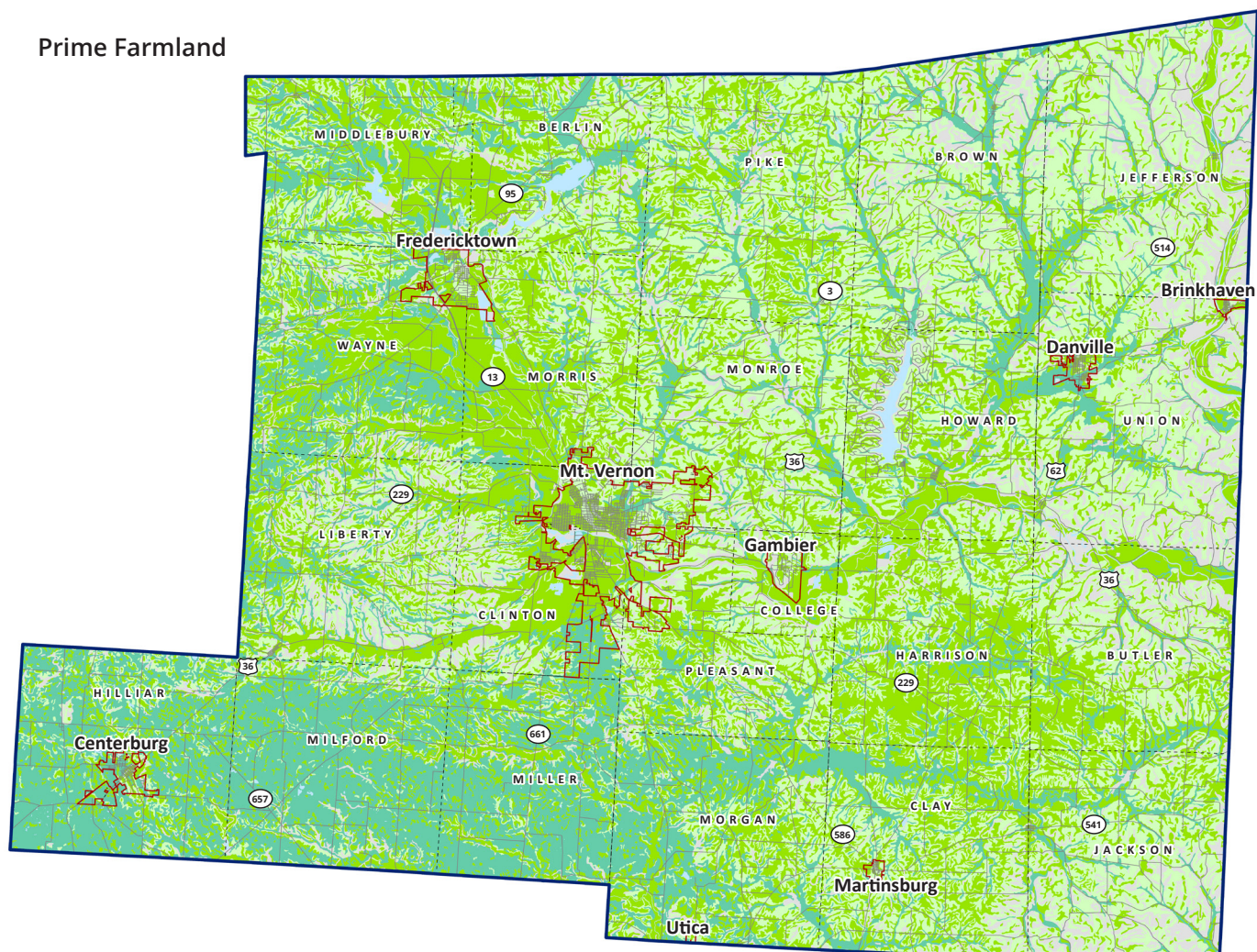
In addition to Knox Community Hospital, Knox Public Health provides a variety of public health services, including immunizations and health education. Knox Public Health also operates the Knox County Community Health Center, with locations in Mount Vernon and Danville. The Community Health Center offers comprehensive medical, dental, and counseling services. It serves as a patient-centered medical home, providing preventive and primary care to residents of all ages.

The County also provides a range of social services, including:

1. Knox County Job & Family Services provides a range of services, including child and adult protective services, public assistance programs (such as food stamps and Medicaid), and employment services.
 - a. Children and Family Services: This division of Knox County Job & Family Services focuses on protecting children and the elderly from abuse and neglect. They offer a range of services, including foster care, adoption, and protective services for both children and adults.
 - b. Public Assistance Programs: Knox County provides various public assistance programs through Job & Family Services. These include Ohio Works First, Medicaid, food assistance, and disability assistance. These programs aim to support low-income families, children, pregnant women, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities.



Prime Farmland



Natural Resources

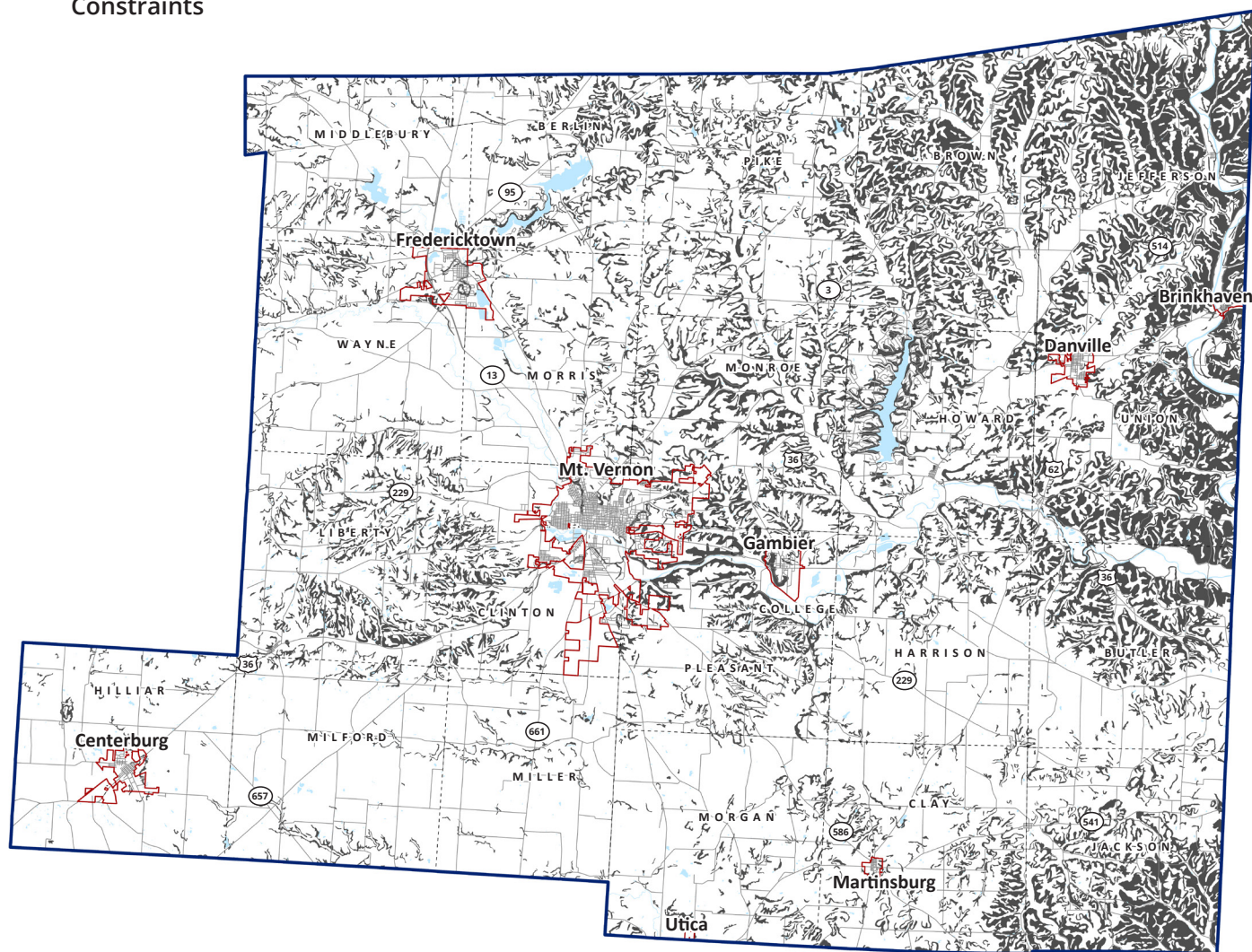
Knox County is rich in natural resources that significantly contribute to its character. The county's abundant agricultural lands, scenic rivers, and lush forests not only support local farming and recreational activities but also play a vital role in preserving the area's rural heritage.

Approximately 35% of the county has been identified as prime farmland, defined as land with the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops. Much of the prime farmland is found in the flatter portions of the county. An additional 31% of the County is farmland of local importance, defined as currently producing crops, has the capability of production, or is used to produce confined livestock.

Legend

- Water
- Prime Farmland
- Prime Farmland if Drained
- Farmland of Local Importance
- Not Prime Farmland

Constraints



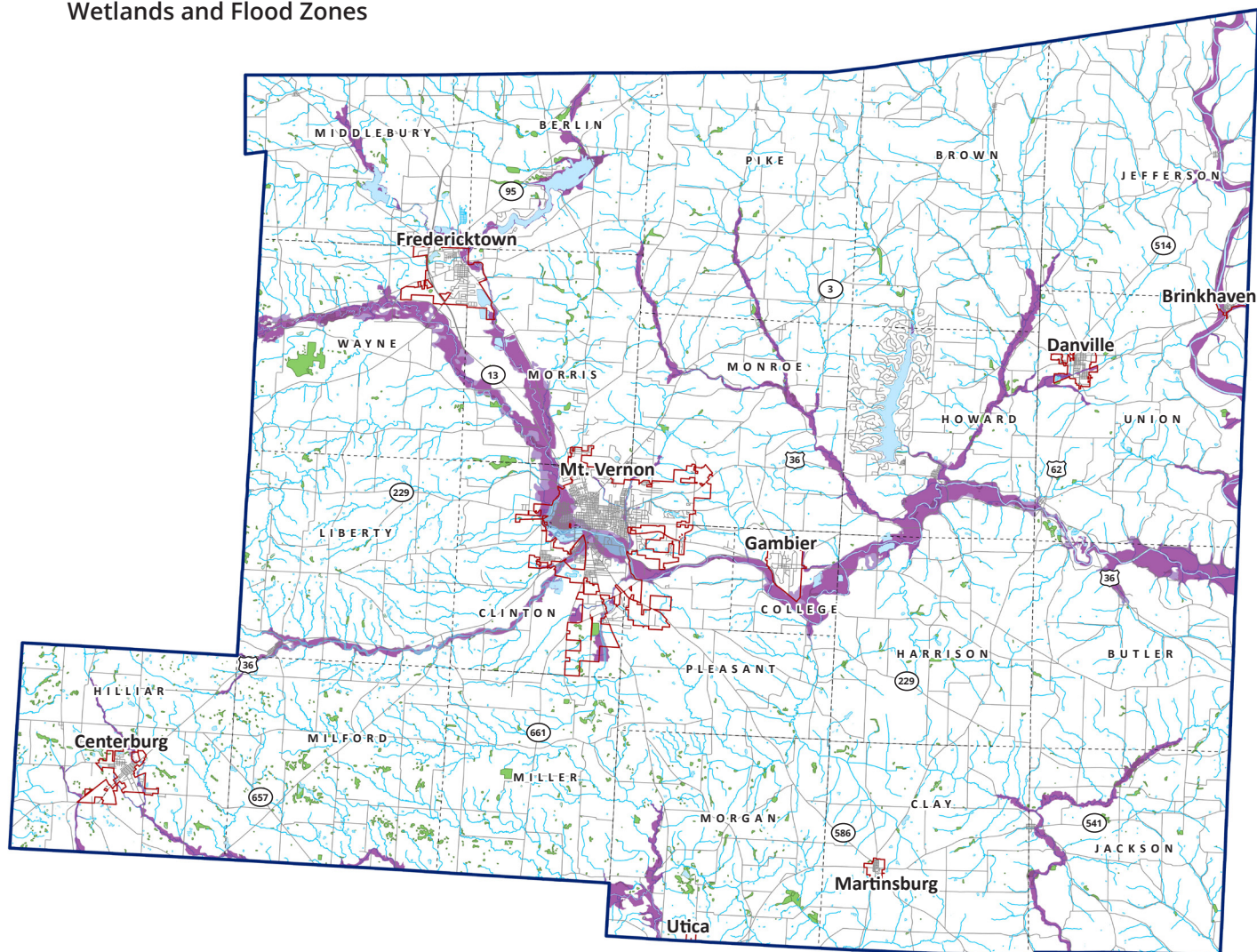
Approximately 19% of the county, or about 63,800 acres, is constrained by steep slopes. Steep slopes are defined as hillsides with a 15% slope or greater. The steepest slopes in the county are concentrated in the northeastern section near the Mohican River. Due to the difficulty of developing areas with steep slopes, woodlands are most heavily preserved in those areas.

Based on visual analysis of satellite imagery, 21% of the total land area in the county is covered by heavy woodlands. These areas are found primarily near waterways and are riparian in nature, largely located in the eastern portion of the county.

Legend

 Steep Slopes (15% or Greater)

Wetlands and Flood Zones

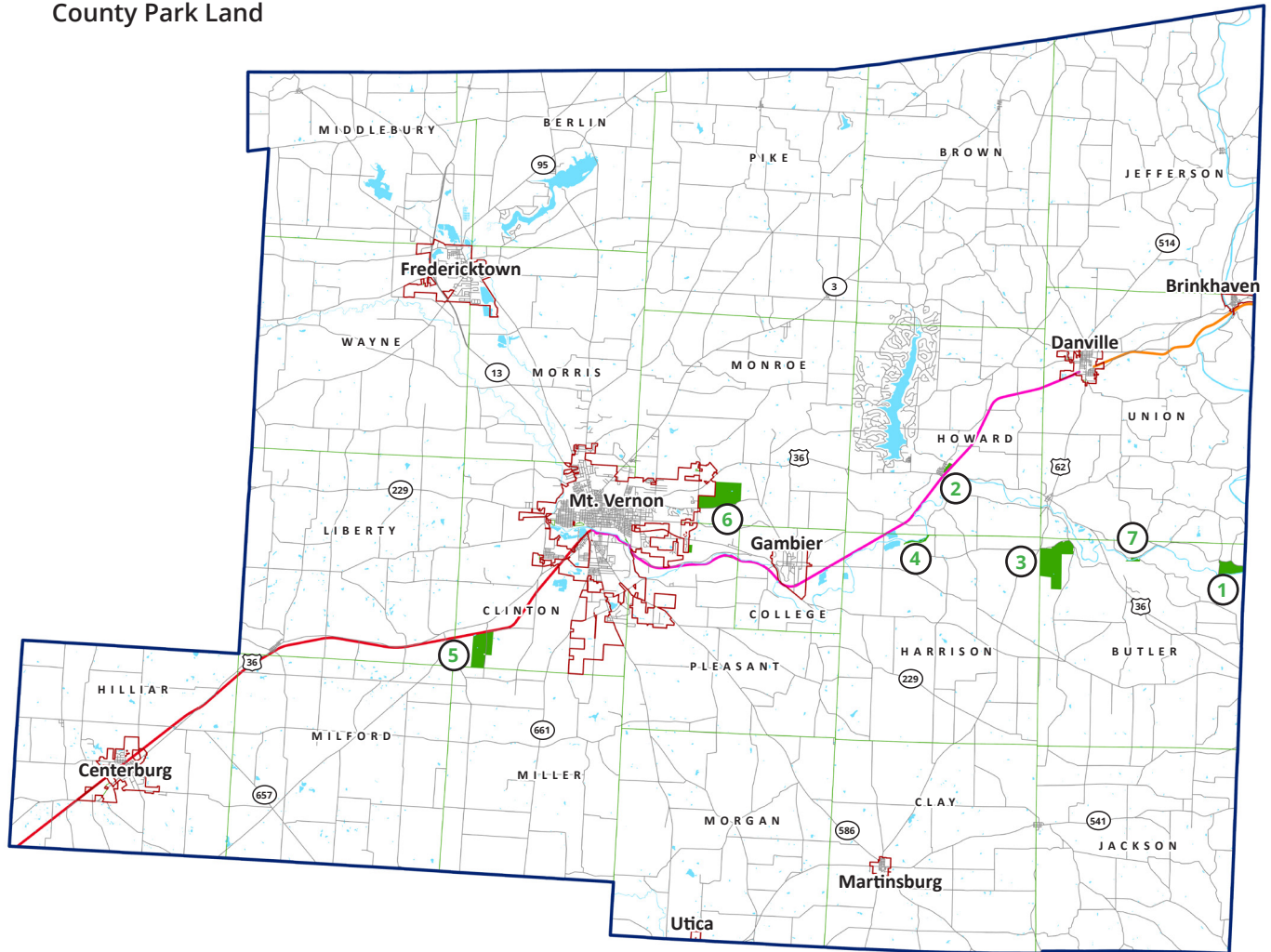


Knox County also has approximately 18,900 acres of land located in flood zones. Flood zones are areas of land susceptible to flooding and are found near bodies of water. To prevent personal and property damage, construction is often restricted in flood zones. Given the potentially devastating impact of floods, FEMA has designated 500-year floodplains (0.2% annual chance) and 100-year floodplains (1% annual chance) to indicate the probability of damaging flooding. Additionally, 3,500 acres of the county are wetlands, located mainly in the flat portion of southwest Knox County.

Legend

- 500 Year Flood Zone
- 100 Year Flood Zone
- Regulatory Floodway
- Lakes, Ponds, & Riverine Areas
- Wetlands

County Park Land



Parks and Open Space

Parks and open spaces are abundant in Knox County, with the Knox County Parks District managing over 1,000 acres of land. The county boasts 16.1 acres of parkland per 1,000 people, surpassing the national standard of 10 acres per 1,000 people set by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). These parks are complemented by a regional trail network that connects the county from east to west.

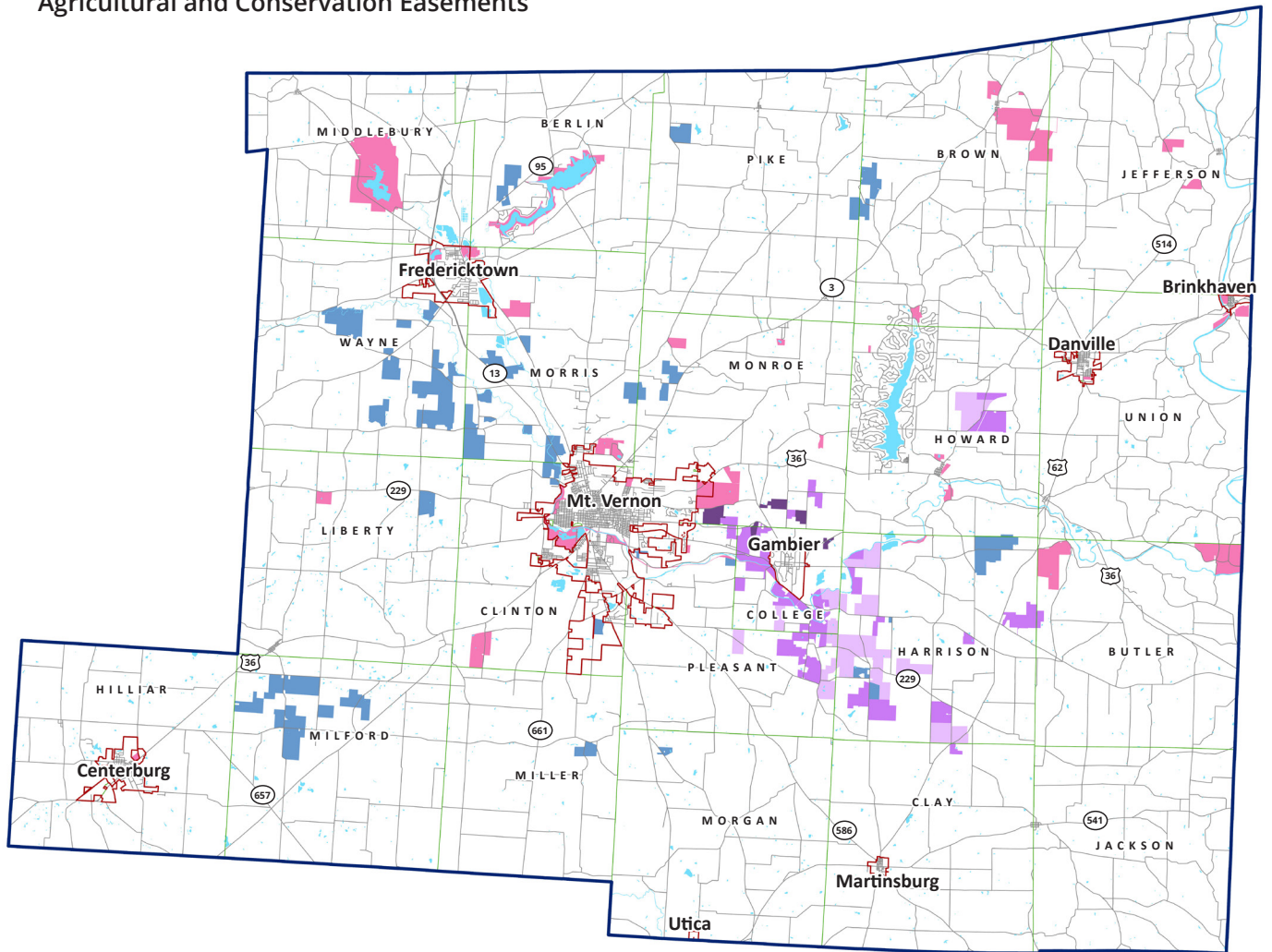
Legend

- Heart of Ohio Trail
- Kokosing Gap Trail
- Mohican Valley Trail
- Water
- Park Land

Parks

1. Bat Nest Park
2. Hellbender Preserve
3. Honey Run Highlands Park & Waterfall
4. Indianfield Bluffs Park
5. Thayer Ridge
6. Wolf Run Regional Park
7. Zuck Riparian Preserve

Agricultural and Conservation Easements



Easements also contribute significantly to the county's open spaces, conserving its agricultural and natural heritage. Agricultural easements protect cropland and grassland by limiting non-agricultural uses, while conservation easements preserve land in its natural, scenic, open, or wooded condition. The Owl Creek Conservancy and Philander Chase Conservancy are the primary conservancies operating in Knox County, with more than 10,000 acres of land currently under easement.

Legend

- Owl Creek Conservancy Land
- Philander Chase Conservancy - Agricultural Easements
- Philander Chase Conservancy - Conservation Easements
- Philander Chase Conservancy Land
- Other Open Space

Higher Education

Higher education institutions are invaluable assets to the County, offering numerous benefits that enhance both quality of life and economic opportunities. These institutions attract a diverse population of students, faculty, and staff, fostering a vibrant and dynamic community. They provide access to cultural events, educational resources, and recreational activities, enriching the lives of residents. Additionally, colleges and universities often serve as major employers, contributing significantly to the local economy through job creation and the attraction of businesses and industries that seek to capitalize on the educated workforce.

Higher education institutions can drive innovation and economic development through research initiatives and partnerships with local businesses. An additional benefit is the availability of town-gown grant opportunities, which are funding sources provided by universities or colleges to support projects that directly benefit the surrounding community. These grants can fund a wide range of initiatives, from infrastructure improvements to social programs, thereby strengthening the bond between the institution and the community. This collaborative approach not only addresses local needs but also fosters a sense of shared purpose and mutual growth.

- **Kenyon College**, located in Gambier, Ohio, is a prestigious private liberal arts institution founded in 1824. As Ohio's oldest private college, Kenyon enrolls around 1,800 students in over 50 majors, minors, and concentrations. Known for its rigorous academics and vibrant campus life, Kenyon offers a unique blend of historic charm and modern facilities, fostering a close-knit community.
- **Mount Vernon Nazarene University (MVNU)**, in Mount Vernon, Ohio, is a private Christian university founded in 1968. MVNU offers a wide range of undergraduate and graduate programs, emphasizing academic excellence, spiritual growth, and service. The university is known for its supportive environment, vibrant campus life, and commitment to integrating faith and learning, preparing students for meaningful service and leadership.



Credit: Kenyon College



Credit: Mount Vernon Nazarene University

Land Conservancies

Land conservancies play a crucial role in preserving natural landscapes and enhancing the quality of life in Knox County. By protecting open spaces, forests, wetlands, and other natural areas, land conservancies help maintain biodiversity, safeguard water quality, and provide habitats for wildlife. These preserved areas also offer recreational opportunities such as hiking, bird-watching, and fishing, promoting physical health and well-being among the community. Conserved lands can serve as natural buffers against flooding and erosion, contributing to the County's resilience against environmental challenges.

Land conservancies can have significant economic benefits. Conserved lands can attract tourism, bringing in revenue and supporting local businesses. Land conservancies can leverage grants and funding opportunities to support conservation projects, fostering community engagement and education about the importance of environmental stewardship.

- **Owl Creek Conservancy** is a private nonprofit organization dedicated to conserving natural and agricultural lands. The conservancy holds 40 conservation easements and 8 agricultural easements, covering a total of 5,610 acres across Knox and surrounding counties. By working with landowners, Owl Creek Conservancy aims to protect farmlands, stream corridors, wildlife habitats, and other ecologically sensitive areas. Their efforts help maintain the region's natural beauty, promote sustainable land management practices, and provide lasting benefits for both present and future generations.
- **Philander Chase Conservancy** is a dedicated land trust established by Kenyon College in 2000. Named after the college's founder, the conservancy aims to protect the natural beauty of the surrounding farms, woodlands, waters, and open spaces. Over the past two decades, the conservancy has successfully preserved 5,500 acres across 62 farms and properties. By working with local farmers, landowners, and environmental groups, Philander Chase Conservancy ensures that the rural character of the region is maintained, supporting biodiversity and providing recreational opportunities for the community.



Credit: Owl Creek Conservancy



Credit: Philander Chase Conservancy

Actions

The following projects, policies, and programs support the goals of **People and Natural and Recreational Amenities**.

Objective 1. Expand and enhance local services and amenities.

This objective aims to improve the quality of life for residents by investing in and upgrading community resources. By expanding services and amenities, the County can better meet the needs of the population, support responsible growth, and ensure that all residents have access to essential facilities and amenities.

1.1 Develop and sustain partnerships with the university community to enhance the built environment to benefit students and residents.

Facilitate the creation of collaborative academic, residential, and cultural spaces in Mount Vernon and Gambier, supported by local universities. Continue to support university investments to enhance the physical environment and foster additional office, retail, cultural, and residential development and redevelopment.

1.2. Maintain an open dialogue with Knox County school districts.

This dialogue should focus on ensuring that both Knox County and the school districts are well-informed about growth and development. By sharing information about local options for housing, transportation, and other critical factors, public, private, and non-profit organizations can proactively address these issues. This approach helps make informed decisions that support the community's educational needs and ensures officials are prepared for future developments.

1.3 Enhance access to existing health services and resources.

To improve community well-being, increase awareness and education about available health services through outreach programs and various media channels. Enhancing transportation options, such as providing affordable rides to medical appointments, can make healthcare more accessible. Increased funding and partnerships can bolster resources. Addressing language and cultural barriers, improving facility accessibility, and engaging community health workers are also crucial steps. These efforts collectively ensure that all residents can access the health services they need, leading to better health outcomes.

1.4 Anticipate additional police, fire, and safety service demands concurrent with development activities.

Align infrastructure investments and major development decisions with public safety services, including police, fire, and EMS. Relevant departments should collaborate to assess fire and EMS coverage as development progresses and plan for future facilities. This coordination may include reviewing major development or redevelopment proposals that meet specific criteria and conducting annual assessments of ongoing development in relation to public safety calls and response times. To support these efforts, use five-year capital improvement planning for facilities, equipment, and personnel.

1.5 Incorporate connectivity in future development and infrastructure upgrades to ensure appropriate response times, thereby enhancing public safety.

A more connected street network can provide greater route options and reduce peak traffic on major arterials. Update development standards and subdivision regulations to include street extensions from new developments to adjacent undeveloped land and cross-access requirements between neighboring mixed-use developments. Encourage the City and villages to implement standards that require developers to create additional connections between existing streets, where appropriate.

Objective 2. Strengthen access to and conservation of natural spaces, parks, and greenways.

This objective focuses on preserving the County's natural beauty while ensuring that these areas are accessible to all residents. Improving access to parks and greenways provides recreational opportunities, promotes physical and mental well-being, and fosters a deeper connection with nature.

2.1 Conserve stream corridors, woodlands, and wetlands.

These natural areas constitute a significant portion of the County's rural landscape and offer essential air and water benefits, such as stormwater buffering and wildlife habitat. Encourage landowners to adopt practices that protect riparian and in-stream habitats through incentives and educational programs. Implement restoration projects to improve water quality and habitat integrity. This can include reforestation of riparian corridors and wetland restoration. Focus on preserving areas with high biodiversity, rare species, and good sport fishing through conservation easements, acquisitions, and landowner programs.

2.2 Prepare a Parks, Open Space, and Natural Resources Plan.

A Parks, Open Space, and Natural Resources Plan will provide a framework for planning, developing, rehabilitating, and maintaining Knox County's parks, open spaces, recreation facilities and programs, and natural resources. The plan can serve as an inventory of existing open spaces and recreational amenities while identifying new opportunities. County organizations and partners can use this plan to define priorities for conservation and investments in trail development, park amenities, and other improvements.

2.3 Strengthen and connect Knox County parks while being open to new acquisitions.

Community engagement has consistently highlighted the value residents place on parks and greenspaces, as well as their desire for more of these amenities. The County should focus on strengthening and better connecting the existing park system while remaining open to acquiring new areas if the opportunity arises. Utilizing existing natural areas earmarked for conservation can help expand the park and trail system. Ensuring the distribution of parks in areas currently lacking such amenities will further enhance community access and enjoyment.

2.4 Expand sources of funding for parks and greenways.

Knox County residents highly value the parks, trails, and green spaces available to them. To maintain and enhance these amenities, it is essential to secure additional funding sources. Granville Township in Licking County, Ohio, can serve as a model, generating revenue through voter-approved property levies and grants. Additional grant opportunities may be available through the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), the Ohio Parks and Recreation Association, and the Ohio Grants Partnership.

2.5 Seek joint-use easements for trail systems within existing and proposed drainage, utility, and right-of-way corridors.

Easements set aside land where future greenways may be built and provide an opportunity for creating a better-connected system. The county should consider the easement width needed to provide a greenway trail as well as unique buffer, maintenance, and access needs of each opportunity.

2.6 Set aside rights-of-way or easements for future greenways as development is planned.

Require private development to build connections or provide easement/rights-of-way to connect existing and proposed trail corridors. Consider requirements to provide incentives for developer-built greenway trails. County and local subdivision regulations should be amended to support this action.



Credit: Knox County Convention and Visitors Bureau



Credit: Knox County Convention and Visitors Bureau

5

Mobility



Efficient and accessible transportation is essential for a thriving community, connecting people to jobs, schools, and services while supporting economic growth and improving quality of life. The Knox County transportation system consists of 400 miles of roadway (including 20 miles of gravel roads), 326 bridges, and over 32 miles of trails. Thoughtful transportation planning ensures that these systems meet current needs and adapt to future demands. This chapter outlines a vision of efficient and accessible mobility for Knox County. The recommendations build on past planning efforts and target critical areas for improvement. By focusing on these priorities, the county aims to create a transportation system that is safe, connected, and adaptable to the needs of all residents and visitors, fostering economic vitality and an improved quality of life.

Goal

The content in this chapter is focused on the following goal.

Mobility. Efficient and accessible transportation options connect residents and workers to key destinations, support economic growth, and enhance quality of life.

Objectives

1. Bridge gaps in the multimodal network.
2. Enhance the pedestrian and bicyclist experience.
3. Relieve congestion and improve roadway safety along regional corridors.

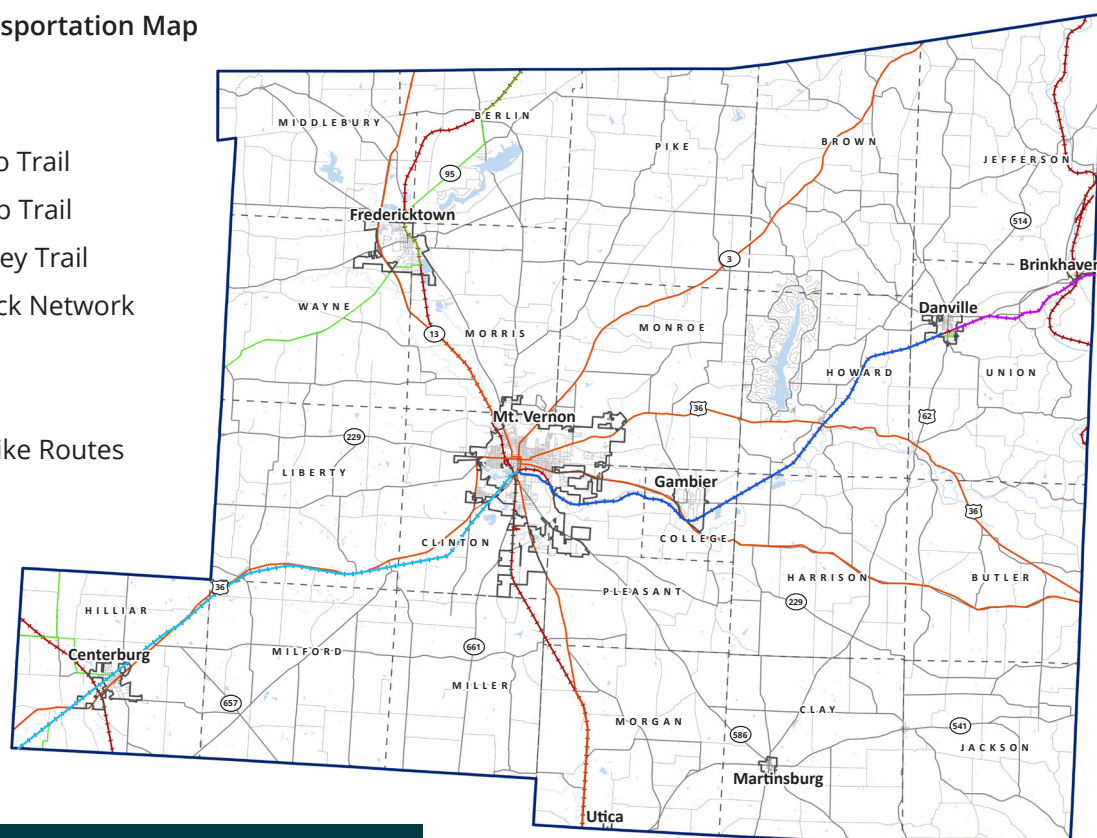
Conditions and Trends

Knox County is primarily rural, with land use generally consisting of agriculture and low-density rural residential outside of Mount Vernon and a few other population centers. This land use pattern has resulted in a generally vehicle-dependent population; nearly 75% of residents travel alone in a personal vehicle as their primary mode of transportation. At the same time, there are people throughout the county who do not have access to a vehicle, choose not to drive, or simply desire to have additional travel options for improved health and quality of life. This includes transit riders, recreational and commuting cyclists, and members of the growing Amish community in Knox County who primarily travel by horse-drawn vehicle or on foot.

Knox County Transportation Map

Legend

- Heart of Ohio Trail
- Kokosing Gap Trail
- Mohican Valley Trail
- National Truck Network
- Roads
- Railroad
- State & US Bike Routes



The Heart of Ohio Trail serves as the central portion of the Ohio to Erie Trail, which spans 362 miles across the state, connecting the Ohio River to Lake Erie.

Streets and Roadways

Several US and State Routes cross the County. Most of these routes radiate from the City of Mount Vernon and the Village of Fredericktown and are two-lane roads with narrow shoulders and turning lanes at some key intersections and in urban areas. Key corridors include US Route 36 (US 36), US Route 62 (US 62), State Route 3 (SR 3), State Route 13 (SR 13), State Route 229 (SR 229), State Route 586 (SR 586) and State Route 661 (SR 661).

US 36 transverses the county, extending from the southwestern corner of the county through the City of Mount Vernon and across the eastern county boundary. US 62 travels from the City of Columbus through Utica and into eastern Knox County, connecting Martinsburg, Millwood, Danville, and Brinkhaven. SR 13 extends through Knox County connecting Utica, Mount Vernon, and Fredericktown, and continues north crossing Interstate 71 toward Mansfield. SR 3 originates in Mount Vernon in central Knox County and travels northeast through Amity and Jelloway, continuing northeast to connect the County with major regional routes and Greater Cleveland. Access to Knox County from the south is provided by US 62, SR 3, SR 661, and SR 13, with limited connections between them. Notably, truck traffic regularly travels through the downtown center of the City of Mount Vernon due to a lack of alternative routes.

Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan, 2021-2026

The Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan for Knox County, Ohio, initially developed in 2017 and updated yearly, aims to enhance mobility for all community members, including seniors and individuals with disabilities. The plan, last updated in January 2024, emphasizes the importance of transportation in providing access to jobs, education, healthcare, and human services, enabling community members, including older adults and people with disabilities, to live independently and engage in community life. Local stakeholders collaborated to identify and prioritize community transportation needs, minimize service duplication, and develop strategies to increase transportation options.

A key component of the plan is the creation of a Mobility Manager position to coordinate services and share information. The Mobility Manager works with various transportation resources to develop a knowledge base of services and eligibilities, refer users to appropriate services, and educate the community. Active engagement was fundamental, with participation from seniors, individuals with disabilities, low-income individuals, transportation providers, and other community organizations to ensure comprehensive planning and implementation.

Traffic and Congestion

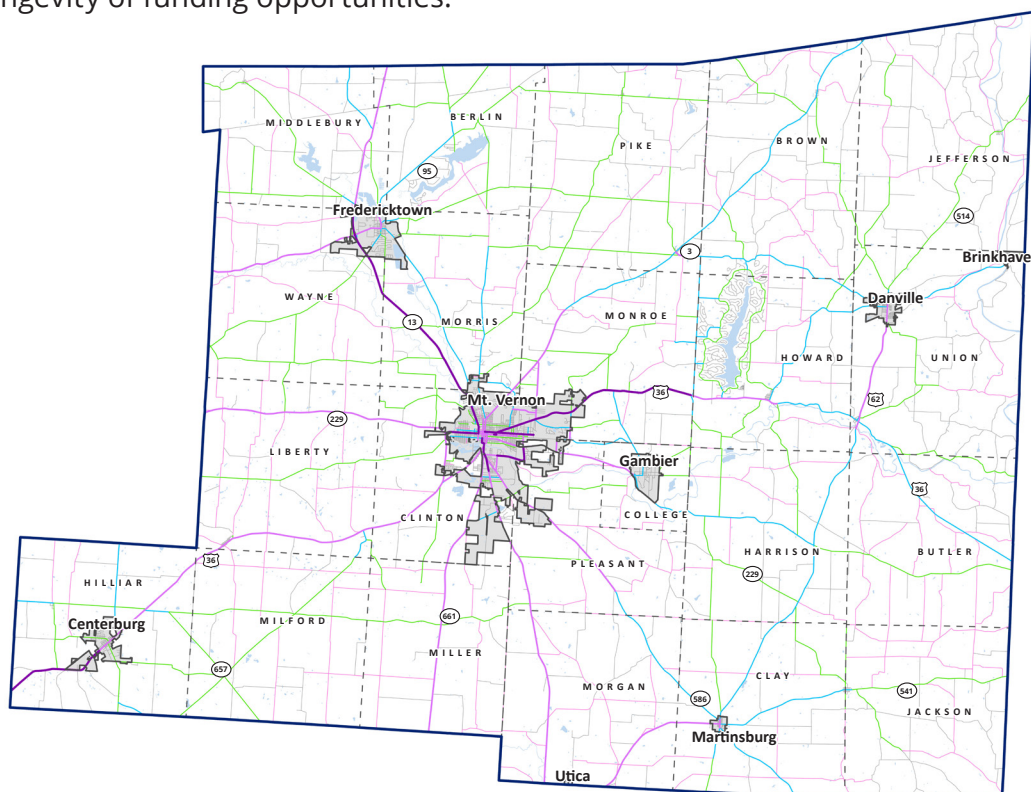
The highest average daily traffic (ADT) volumes occur on the US and state routes, particularly within the City of Mount Vernon. Portions of US 36, US 62, and SR 13 observe over 8,000 vehicles per day on average, representing the highest traffic volumes in Knox County. Traffic volumes above 3,000 are observed on multiple City of Mount Vernon roadways including Martinsburg Rd, High St, Chestnut St, and the segments of State Routes and U.S. Routes that intersect within the city limit. SR 661 and SR 586 also experience ADT in excess of 8,000 vehicles. According to public input provided during this planning process and analysis presented in the Central Ohio Rural Planning Organization (CORPO) 2018 - 2040 Transportation Plan, network congestion has been observed most frequently in the City of Mount Vernon, along US 36, and along SR 13.

Per the 2023 Knox County Economic Growth Strategy, future potential roadway improvements include the improvement of Sycamore Road to provide increased east-west connectivity in the southern portion of the county, various roadway extensions in the vicinity of Mount Vernon to provide better circulation and connectivity between major routes and to enable trucks to bypass the downtown area, and capacity improvements for major thoroughfares including US 36, SR 3, and SR 229. Roadway improvement projects in Knox County are constrained by a lack of funding, staff resources and capacity, and variation in availability and longevity of funding opportunities.

Daily Traffic Volume

Legend

- Under 300
- 300 - 1199
- 1200 - 2999
- 3000 - 7999
- 8000 or more



Active Transportation

Major bikeways and trails travel parallel to rail corridors throughout the County. The active transportation system includes approximately 32 miles of trails (primarily consisting of the Heart Ohio Trail, Kokosing Gap Trail, and Mohican Valley Trail) as well as some on street bicycle infrastructure in Mount Vernon and sidewalks, particularly in downtown areas of Mount Vernon, Gambier, Fredericktown, and Danville. The 2019 Knox County Active Transportation Plan (ATP) highlights the need to expand the bicycle and pedestrian networks to better connect non-motorists with their destinations. Residents have expressed concern with lack of trail crossings along major roadways and incomplete sidewalk systems serving local schools, making active transportation both a challenge and a safety risk.

Public input gathered as part of recent planning processes including the Knox County Coordinated Public Transit Plan, the Knox County Active Transportation Plan, and the CORPO Transportation Plan reveal resident concerns about pedestrian and bicycle safety due to gaps in the multimodal network (e.g., lack of completed sidewalks, lack of bicycle lanes, lack of trail crossings, nonfunctional push buttons at active crosswalks). Pedestrians and bicyclists encounter challenges safely and efficiently traveling and cite the need for greater connectivity and safety infrastructure to comfortably do so.

Current transportation network improvement priorities include addressing gaps in the multimodal network, including improving multimodal network maintenance, expanding the trail system to connect with Fredericktown and other locations with latent demand for non-motorized travel, increasing bicyclist safety and awareness on roadways, and correcting the lack of network-wide bicycle and pedestrian crossings to increase comfort and convenience for non-motorists. The network is also addressed and is part of the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC)'s Central Ohio Greenways master plan.

The 2019 Knox County Active Transportation Improvements includes recommendations for over 20 miles of additional trails, over 10 miles of on street bikeways, close to 9 miles of sidewalks to fill critical gaps, and safe crossing improvements in several locations around the county.

Transit

Knox County Transit is the primary transit service provider and offers free scheduled and on-demand shuttles within the City of Mount Vernon services to other areas of the county for a fare. Gobus operates a low-cost, accessible bus service connecting Knox County cities and towns. The Knox County Coordinated Public Transit Plan reports that residents desire a greater variety of reliable, consistent transit options, including alternatives to Knox County Transit, longer transit service hours, and regular busing to and from the City of Columbus. Residents report challenges with transit access including struggles finding consistent transportation services at the beginning of the school year, lack of options for workers with unconventional working hours, and issues with transit vehicles being late.

Horse-Drawn Vehicle Travel

The ODOT 2019 Ohio Statewide Amish Transportation Study notes that five clusters of Amish settlements are located within Knox County: one in the northwestern corner extending northwest from Fredericktown and into Morrow and Richland Counties, one along SR 3 in northeastern Knox County near Jelloway, one near Danville along US 62, and two in the southeastern corner of the county along SR 229 extending south toward State Route 586 (SR 586). Since 2019, there has been growth in the Amish population in Knox County, including in Liberty and Wayne Townships.

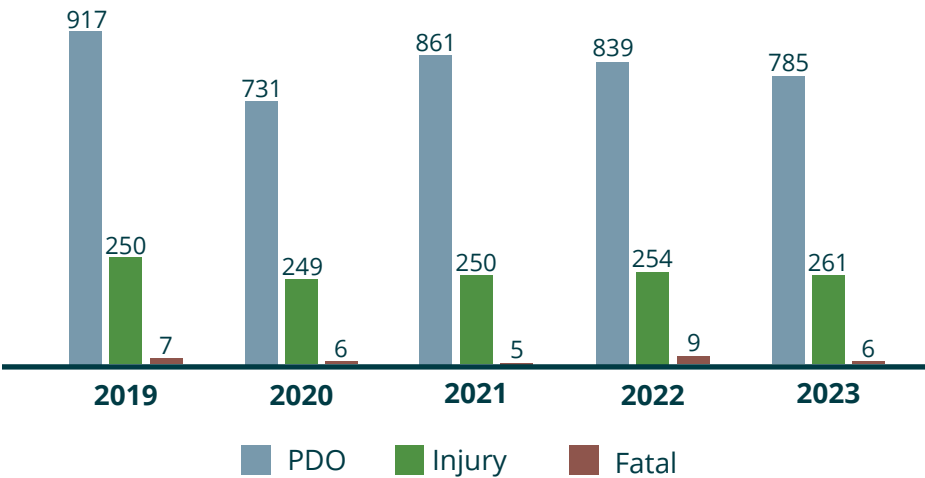
Knox County has observed growth in the Amish population in recent years and is expected to see continued expansion of this community in the northeastern corner of the county between US 62 and SR 3. The county has also observed an influx of Amish population movement from the east side of the county to the west side. Existing settlement locations as of 2019 are shown on page 92. Nearly 100% of Amish residents ride a horse-drawn vehicle as their primary means of transportation and walk to destinations if a horse-drawn vehicle is not available; this includes horse-drawn vehicle and pedestrian travel along state routes when necessary.

Safety issues for the Amish population of Knox County include horse-drawn vehicle safety along state routes, specifically related to nighttime visibility, lack of sight distance, limited shoulder width, and disparate speeds between horse-drawn vehicles and motor vehicles. Public input from the 2019 Ohio Statewide Amish Transportation Study is primarily focused on improving horse-drawn vehicle safety through installation of LED lights and reflective tape on horse-drawn vehicles traveling along state routes.

Safety

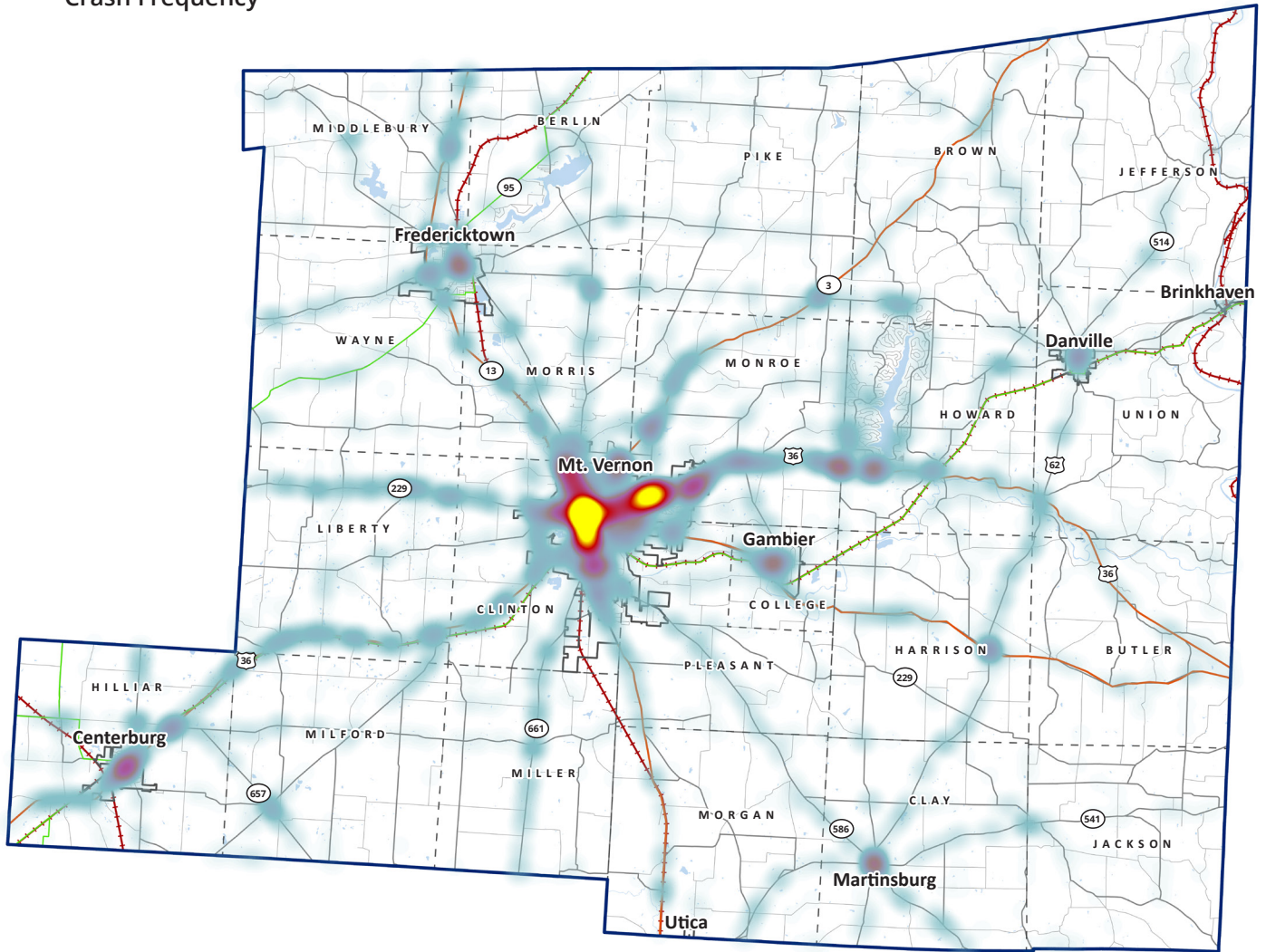
This analysis considers crashes from 2019-2023 for the full Knox County area, inclusive of freeways. During the crash data period, there were 5,996 crashes including 35 fatalities and 163 serious injuries. Compared to the statewide average, Knox County has slightly higher rates of fatal crashes and crashes only resulting in property damage, and slightly lower rates of crashes causing injury.

Crash Frequency by Year by Severity



Crashes by Severity, 2019-2023			
Knox County		State of Ohio	
Property Damage Only	4,520 (75.4%)	Property Damage Only	988,055 (74.2%)
Injury Crashes	1,441 (24.0%)	Injury Crashes	338,612 (25.4%)
Fatal Crashes	35 (0.6%)	Fatal Crashes	5,834 (0.4%)
Total	5,996	Total	1,332,501

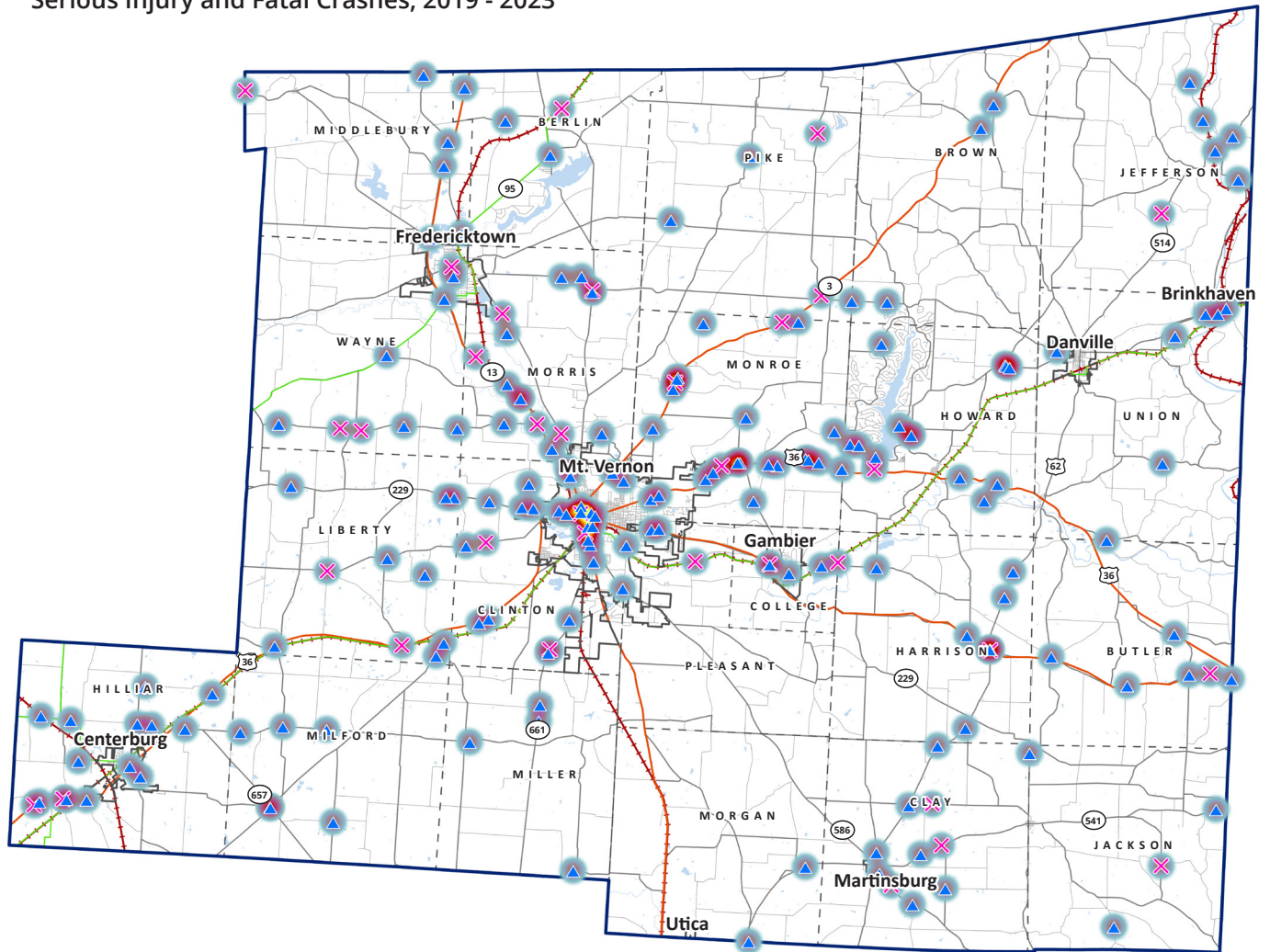
Crash Frequency



This map displays hotspots for all crashes, revealing areas of heightened frequency along the state and US routes within Knox County and within the City of Mount Vernon along SR 3 and US 36. Other hotspots include US 36 through Centerburg, US 36/ Coshocton Rd east of Mount Vernon, US 62 in Danville, SR 13/ Sandusky St in Mount Vernon, and downtown Mount Vernon south of US 36.



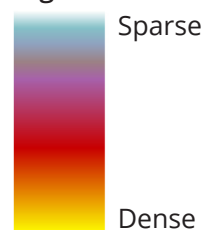
Serious Injury and Fatal Crashes, 2019 - 2023



The map above shows the locations of crashes resulting in serious injury or fatality, including two fatal crashes within the City of Mount Vernon, five fatal crashes along US 36, three fatal crashes along SR 13, and three fatal crashes along SR 3. Other severe crashes are scattered throughout the county but are mainly at intersections or rail crossings.

Pedestrian and bicycle-involved crashes often result in higher rates of injury and fatality due to a lack of vehicular protection. In the timeframe studied, there were 27 pedestrian and 13 bicycle crashes in Knox County. Among these incidents, eight resulted in serious injury and one was fatal. The largest concentrations of bicycle and pedestrian crashes are observed in central Mount Vernon along SR 13 and US 36. Another crash hotspot is observed east of Mount Vernon along the Kokosing Gap Trail.

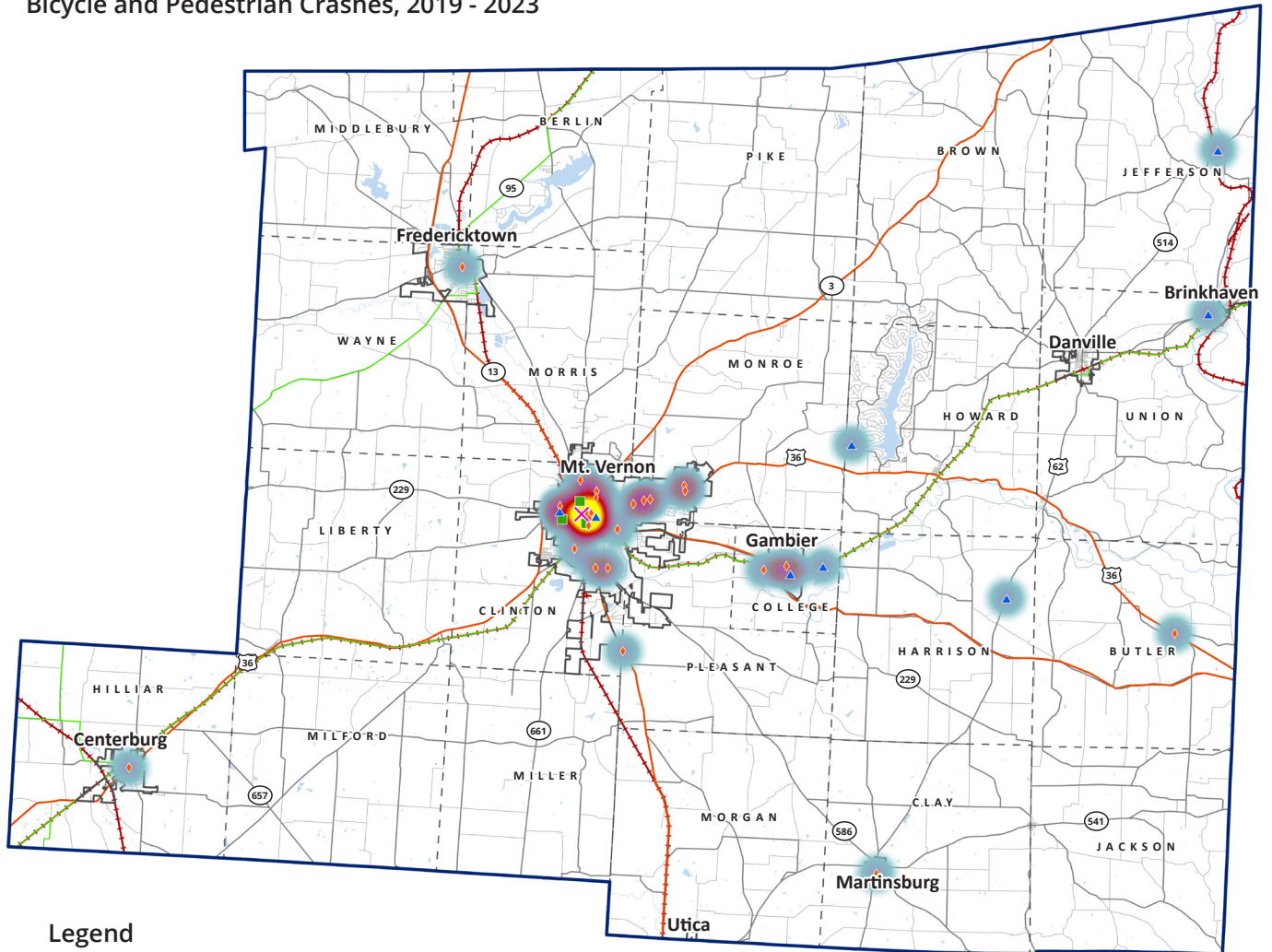
Legend



✕ Fatal

▲ Serious Injury

Bicycle and Pedestrian Crashes, 2019 - 2023



Legend



Sparse

Dense



Fatal



Serious Injury

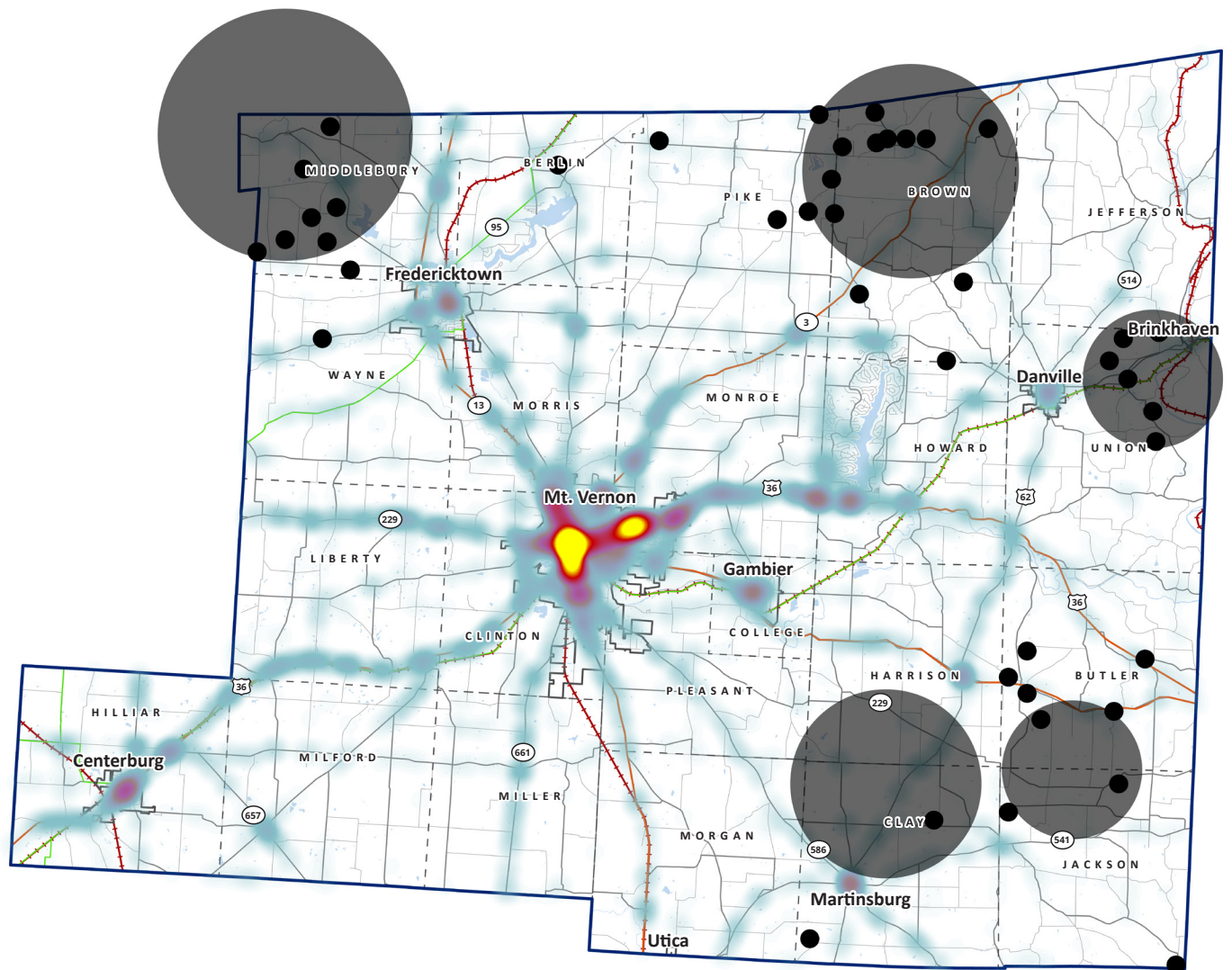


Minor or Possible Injury



Property Damage Only

Amish Settlements, Buggy Volumes, and Crash Frequency



The 2019 Ohio Statewide Amish Transportation Study includes information about the volume of horse-drawn buggy travel in Knox County. This information is shown in the map above alongside Amish settlement locations overall crash frequency. Since 2019, there has been growth in the Amish population in Knox County, including in Liberty and Wayne Townships. Crash frequencies, as well as incidence of pedestrian- or buggy-related serious injuries or fatal crashes, are not observed as crash hotspots for the given period of crash data.

Legend



Amish Settlement

Amish Bishop Present

Actions

The following projects, policies, and programs support the goal of **Mobility**.

Objective 1. Bridge gaps in the multimodal network.

Knox County is home to the Heart of Ohio Trail, Kokosing Gap Trail, and Mohican Valley Trail—key regional assets that provide recreation opportunities for residents and visitors alike. However, some trail crossings present safety concerns, and opportunities exist to expand connections to these trails.

Beyond trails, gaps in the sidewalk network and safe crossings persist in downtown areas of Mount Vernon, Gambier, Fredericktown, and Danville. The Knox County Active Transportation Plan and other previous efforts have identified strategies to address these challenges.

Building on these efforts, the following recommendations aim to bridge gaps in the multimodal network and create safer, more connected transportation options for all.

1.1 Complete sidewalks and bicycle routes between community destinations where gaps are present.

The 2019 Knox County Active Transportation Plan details prioritized project recommendations that include over 20 miles of additional trails, over 10 miles of on street bikeways, and close to 9 miles of sidewalks to fill critical bicycle and pedestrian facility gaps in the county.

1.2. Determine feasibility of expanding the County trail system to connect Fredericktown with the Heart of Ohio Trail and/or Kokosing Gap Trail.

The Owl Creek Trail is a multi-use trail, developed from a railroad corridor, that runs north and south through Fredericktown. Expanding this trail to Mt. Vernon would greatly expand the regional trail network. The County could conduct a feasibility study to assess the potential routes, costs, environmental impacts, and benefits of the proposed connections. This study should include public input and stakeholder engagement to ensure community support.

1.3 Conduct periodic “walking audits” to monitor changes to and evolving needs of the pedestrian and bicycle network.

Walk audits involve a multidisciplinary team walking in a key area of focus to identify needs and concerns of the active transportation network. These walk audits can help decision-makers determine priorities and experience the built environment from a different perspective.

1.4 Improve accessibility by bringing substandard sidewalks into compliance with ADA requirements.

Equitable access to the transportation system is essential in order to provide all people the ability to reach their destinations. A key component of equitable access is ensuring that sidewalks and crossings meet ADA standards. Grants from programs like the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) can be instrumental. Additionally, consider local funding options such as bonds or special assessments.

1.5 Update zoning code, subdivision regulations, and/or design guidelines to require new developments to have a well-connected street, sidewalk, and bike path network.

A key component to building the active transportation network that the community desires is developing guidelines, policies, and regulations that specify requirements for what type of facilities must be included in new developments and roadway projects. This could include adopting a complete streets policy, developing zoning code changes that require sidewalks on both sides of all streets and specify minimum widths (e.g., 5 feet for residential and 8 feet for commercial areas), or requiring developments to include sidewalks, paths, or specific active transportation friendly street configurations.

Objective 2. Enhance the pedestrian and bicyclist experience.

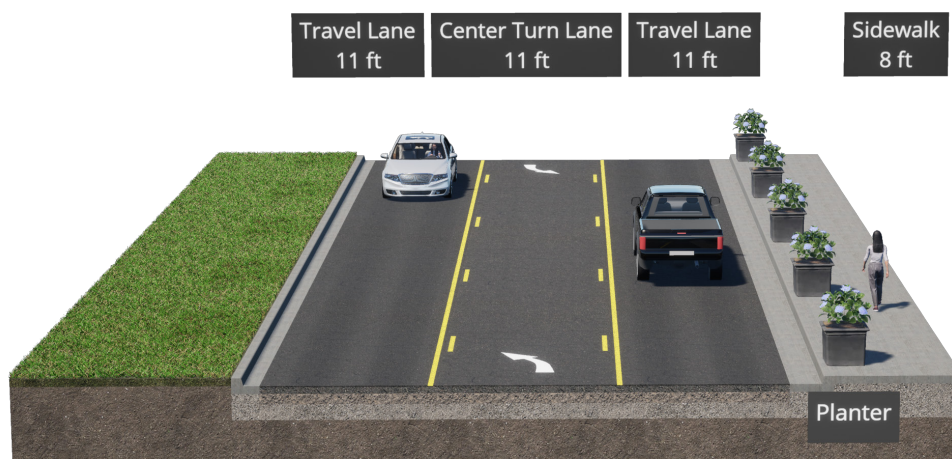
Many people walk and bike for their commute or for recreation purposes. The environment that they walk or bike in should be comfortable, convenient, and most importantly safe.

2.1 Incorporate amenities such as lighting, seating, and landscaping at transit stops to encourage use.

Transit stops should include lighting and seating to enhance safety, visibility, and comfort for riders. Seating along can provide needed breaks for those with mobility challenges and create a welcoming environment for people utilizing the stop. Landscaping can be helpful to enhance the look and feel of the stop and also create a separation from vehicular traffic. These amenities not only provide benefits for current transit users but may also attract new riders.

2.2 Implement streetscape improvements such as increased sidewalk widths, street trees, raised medians, and decorative bollards/railings.

Wider sidewalks can help increase the comfortability of a pedestrian along a busy road, accommodate higher volumes of pedestrian traffic, and allow space for bicyclists, particularly around schools where children could be using the sidewalk to bike. Street trees both enhance the look of the environment around a path and provide shade in the warmer months. Raised medians can help pedestrians and bicyclists cross the street by providing a place of refuge between the two directions of traffic flow. They can also help with managing vehicle traffic and reducing speeds. Decorative bollards or other road separation types protect pedestrians and bicyclists from vehicle traffic with a physical barrier, helping these users to feel more comfortable particularly on busier, higher speed roads. They can also improve the look and feel of a street.



*Decorative planters separating the sidewalk from the road.
Source: Burgess & Niple*

2.3 Enhance existing crosswalks with high-visibility elements to improve safety.

Safe crossings are a key component of ensuring pedestrian and bicyclist safety. High-visibility elements can include increased lighting, added signage, and high-visibility crosswalk markings (ladder crosswalk).

2.4 Increase bicycle awareness and safety through ongoing planning and coordination with implementation partners.

Continue to update and reference the Knox County Active Transportation Plan to identify gaps and prioritize areas for improvement. Establish partnerships with local advocacy groups to guide safety initiatives. Provide trail crossings recommended in the Knox County Active Transportation where the Heart of Ohio and Kokosing Gap Trails cross State and County roads.



High-visibility crosswalk enhancements
Source: FHWA



Credit: Nicole Leone Miller Photography



Credit: Area Development Foundation, Inc.

Objective 3. Relieve congestion and improve roadway safety along regional corridors.

A key principle of this plan is to improve corridors, encompassing increased intensity, accommodating a mix of uses, enhancing the public realm, and improving traffic flow and safety. Knox County roads provide transportation for a diverse range of users including horse and buggy travel, transit, vehicles, and active transportation modes. It is important to continue to improve upon the transportation system with all of these users in mind and with increasing safety at the forefront of decision-making.

3.1 Conduct studies to identify potential capacity and/or operational improvements along high-volume roadways including SR 229 between I-71 in Morrow County and Mount Vernon, US 36, and SR 661 between Granville in Licking County and Mount Vernon.

SR 229, US 36, and SR 661 are key regional routes, primarily two-lane roadways, that serve as vital connections for residents, businesses, and visitors. With growing traffic demands, studies should be conducted to explore potential improvements to address congestion and enhance safety. If daily traffic volumes continue to rise and backups become frequent, these studies will help identify effective solutions to ensure these corridors remain reliable and efficient.

3.2 Improve east-west roadway mobility across Knox County. Study the following potential improvements: Improve Sycamore Rd to provide enhanced east-west connectivity in the southern portion of the County; Major upgrades to SR 229 west of Mount Vernon and on US 36 east of Mount Vernon.

Past planning efforts have identified a need to improve east-west mobility in the county. The County should collaborate with regional partners to further evaluate proposed alternatives to improve access and connectivity.

3.3 Extend and connect roadways at the periphery of Mount Vernon to provide better circulation and connectivity between major routes and to enable trucks to bypass the downtown area.

Mount Vernon is a main hub for transportation in the county, but heavy truck traffic must pass through the downtown area. This can lead to congestion, safety concerns, and wear on local streets not designed for these heavy vehicles. Extending and connecting roadways at the city's periphery would improve traffic circulation by providing alternate routes for trucks traveling between major highways and destinations.

3.4 Update the Knox County and City of Mount Vernon Thoroughfare Plans and Access Management Guidelines.

Thoroughfare Plans provide a long-term vision for the transportation network, identifying key roads and corridors that will need improvements or expansions to accommodate changes in the region. Access Management Guidelines focus on how driveways, intersections, and other access points are designed to improve traffic flow, reduce congestion, and enhance safety. These updated guidelines will help control where and how new accesses to roadways are created, making the transportation system safer and more efficient.

3.5 Improve access to the Knox County Regional Airport.

As more air traffic comes to Knox County, improving access to the Knox County Regional Airport is crucial. The access roads, Kinney and Airport Roads, should be upgraded to handle increased traffic efficiently. The airport serves as a significant economic driver for the county, and enhancing its accessibility can further boost economic benefits. This improvement should be included in the MORPC Regional Transportation Master Plan to ensure coordinated regional development with state and federal community project requests and the MORPC capital improvement list.

3.6 Implement visibility improvements for horse-drawn vehicle travel including installation of LED lights or reflective tape to prevent collisions with motor vehicles.

In the areas of the county where there are Amish settlements, particularly the roads that have higher horse-drawn vehicle counts, installing visibility enhancements on the road can help reduce the potential for conflicts with motor vehicles and increase the visibility of the road for those traveling by horse-drawn vehicle.

3.7 Increase the number and/or frequency of transit routes to high-demand areas.

Past planning efforts have identified a demand for more frequent transit routes and an expanded transit system. The county should

6

Mount Vernon Growth Strategy



The City of Mount Vernon is a vibrant community that blends historical charm with modern amenities. Nestled along the picturesque Kokosing River, Mount Vernon is celebrated for its rich heritage, welcoming neighborhoods, and thriving local economy. As a cultural and economic hub, the city offers a diverse array of recreational, educational, and business opportunities. However, the City is not without challenge, including housing affordability, suburban development patterns, and fiscal stress. The following chapter outlines a comprehensive growth strategy for Mount Vernon. This strategy provides measurable objectives and actions to guide decisions and foster responsible development. While aligned with the larger Knox County Comprehensive Plan, the Mount Vernon Growth Strategy is designed to function independently if needed.

What is a growth strategy?

A growth strategy is an approach that outlines measurable goals and objectives to guide a community towards responsible growth and development. It provides clear direction, enhances decision-making by aligning actions with the vision, and improves resource allocation. It fosters adaptability, allowing the community to respond to environmental and situational changes, and aligns stakeholders. Ultimately, a well-crafted growth strategy supports long-term success by proactively addressing challenges and opportunities.

Why does Mount Vernon need a growth strategy?

Mount Vernon is a significant contributor to Knox County, accounting for twenty-seven percent of the county's population and sixty-three percent of its consumer spending. It also serves as the major job center for the county. With much of the county's anticipated growth expected to occur in and around the City, Mount Vernon is poised to experience significant development pressure. A well-defined growth strategy is essential to manage this pressure effectively. Such a strategy will ensure that the city can accommodate new residents and businesses while maintaining its unique character and high quality of life. By proactively planning for growth, Mount Vernon can optimize infrastructure, enhance public services, and preserve green spaces. Additionally, a growth strategy will help align community goals, attract investment, and foster economic resilience.

Vision

Mount Vernon aspires to be a premier city, with historic hometown values, for a diverse group of citizens, visitors, and businesses ensuring safety and opportunity for all through innovative and fiscally responsible services.

Goals

The following goals were developed based on insights gathered through community engagement. These goals were then tested and refined with input from the Steering Committee and the community. They represent the intended outcomes of the strategy, articulated in straightforward terms.

- 1. Rural Conservation.** Protected and conserved rural and agricultural land maintains unique character, heritage, and natural landscapes.
- 2. Strengthened Centers.** Resilient city and village centers have a mix of uses and create a strong sense of community.
- 3. Land Use and Development.** Thoughtful and strategic land use and development policies that balance growth with environmental stewardship.
- 4. People.** Healthy and proud residents and workers enjoying the benefits of growth and quality of life that drew—and keeps—them in the County.
- 5. Natural and Recreational Amenities.** Enhanced natural and recreational amenities are accessible and offer varied opportunities for outdoor enjoyment.
- 6. Economic Prosperity.** A robust local economy with industrial growth and a wide range of employment opportunities.
- 7. Housing.** A diverse range of affordable, high-quality housing options meet the needs of all community members.
- 8. Mobility.** Efficient and accessible transportation options connect residents and workers to key destinations, support economic growth, and enhance quality of life.

Plan Framework

The **vision** is the highest —and therefore most general—expression of a community's future. It reflects the community's values and sets the tone for more specific goals and recommendations.

Goals are intended results expressed in non-technical terms. They represent the overarching desired outcomes for the plan.

Objectives are sub-themes within the goals that serve to organize actions.

Actions are projects, policies, or programs that are recommendations to be implemented.

Conditions and Trends

Existing Land Use

The Existing Land Use map illustrates the location and extent of various land uses, including residential, commercial, parks, and agriculture. This map serves as a valuable tool for inventorying the community, learning from it, and making informed decisions about future land uses. The assessment of existing land use has highlighted several key factors that must be considered in developing the Future Conservation, Character, and Development Map and related policies.

- The City is 22% agricultural despite having higher density residential uses.
- Most development that has occurred in the past four to five decades has a distinctly different pattern than the core.
- Much of the retail and residential growth in the last 10 years is focused in the northeast (and to a lesser extent) the south side. This is especially true for multifamily residential.
- There is considerable potential to accommodate future growth through redevelopment.

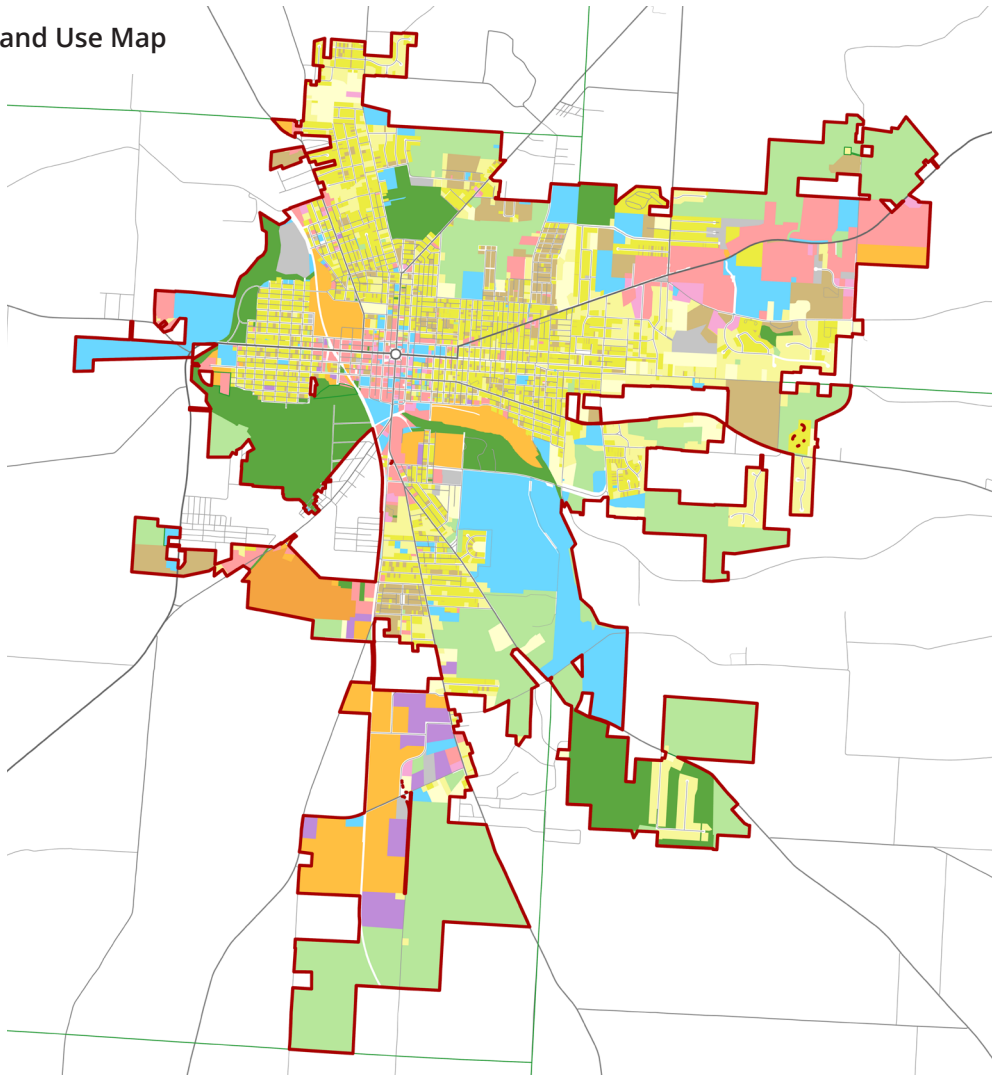
Existing Zoning

The map on page 101 shows simplified zoning within the city. Horizontal residential growth is anchored by a historic urban core, which is zoned for a mixture of uses and residential densities, creating a dynamic center. Low-density residential zoning radiates outward, promoting horizontal sprawl. Industrial land is primarily concentrated on the south side of the city.

Development Activity

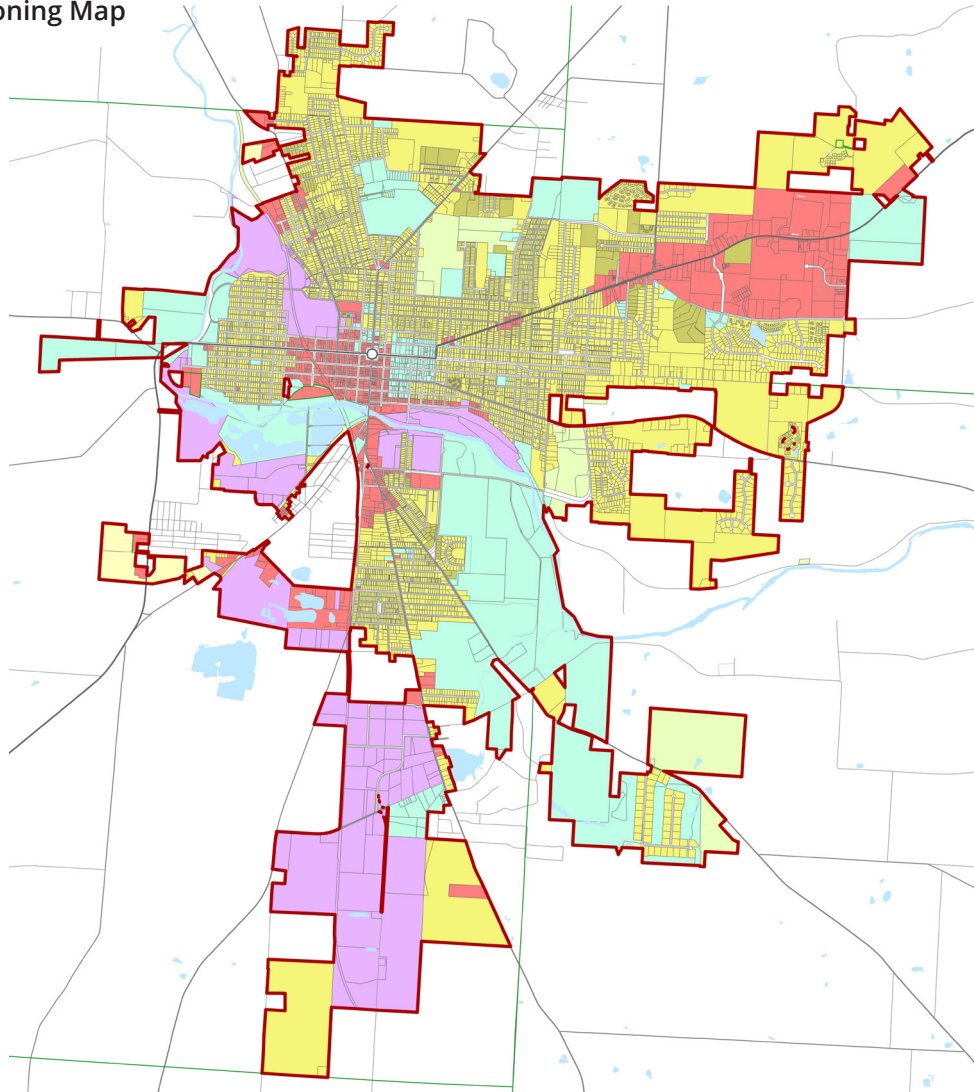
Residential development (map on page 106) is occurring in the southern and northeast sections of Mount Vernon. Between 2019 and 2023 a total of 64 parcels, totaling 547 acres, received new construction permits. Seventy-five percent of these permits were issued for housing. New housing development is taking place in the northeast and south-side of Mount Vernon with 475 residential units on the south-side and approximately 700 residential units in the northeast. This trend of new housing can be expected to continue as housing demands will continue from the projected increase of population.

Existing Land Use Map



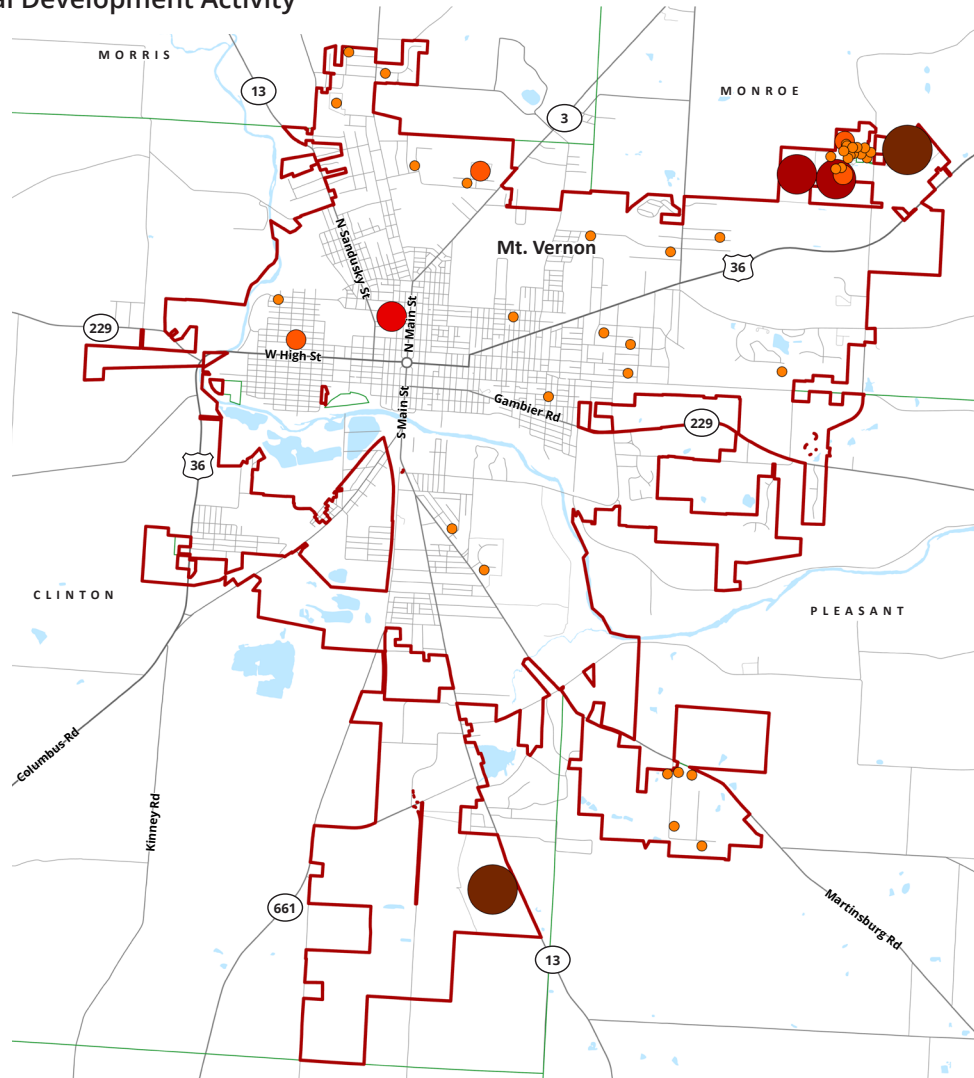
Existing Land Use Categories		Acres	Sq. Mile	Percent
	Agriculture	1,412	2	22%
	High-Density Suburban Residential	826	1.3	13%
	Public Services	675	1.1	10%
	Parks & Open Space	628	1	10%
	Right-of-Way	611	1	9%
	Low-Density Suburban Residential (less than 0.5 - 3 units/acre)	511	.8	8%
	Commercial	422	.7	7%
	Industrial	397	.6	6%
	Urban Residential	394	.6	6%
	Rural Residential (less than 0.5 units/acre)	212	.3	3%
	Warehouse	111	.2	2%
	Quarry	100	.2	2%
	Vacant	86	.1	1%
	Office	53	.1	1%
Total		6,438	10	100%

Existing Zoning Map



Existing Zoning Categories	Acres	Sq. Mile	Percent
Low-Density Residential	2,648	4	43%
Institutional and Civic	1,372	2	22%
Industrial and Manufacturing	1,005	1.6	16%
Business and Commercial	655	1	11%
Rural Residential	293	.5	5%
Mixed and Multi-Family Residential	120	.2	2%
Manufactured Homes	59	.1	1%
Total	6,152	10	100%

Residential Development Activity



Legend

- 1 Unit
- 2 - 9 Units
- 10 - 99 Units
- 100 - 199 Units
- 200 + Units

Permit Type	Permits	Units
Single-family dwelling	39	120
Multi-family dwelling	9	496
Planned neighborhood	1	475
Commercial	10	N/A
Industrial	4	N/A
Warehousing/storage	2	N/A
Total	65	

Population

Mount Vernon is currently experiencing population stagnation, in contrast to the growth observed in the County. This difference in growth patterns, coupled with the associated age cohorts, suggests an aging population that is becoming less urban. Such a trend is likely to have significant implications for housing, transportation patterns, and service distribution within the city.

Additionally, Mount Vernon exhibits significant variability across different age groups. The City has seen a reduction in births, which could impact the school system as fewer future students enroll. However, there have been notable increases in the population aged 10 to 19, although this school-aged group tends to leave the City as indicated by the 20-24 age cohort. Encouragingly, the population either returns or is replaced in the 25-60 year old cohorts, suggesting a strong workforce age population. Addressing the needs of these age groups will be crucial to maintaining a robust workforce within Mount Vernon.

Mount Vernon Age Cohorts (2015 and 2022 Comparison)

Age	2015	2022	Percent Change
Under 5 years	1,181	691	-41.5%
5 to 9 years	1,164	701	-39.5%
10 to 14 years	641	999	+55.9%
15 to 19 years	1,181	1,617	+36.9%
20 to 24 years	1,806	1,362	-24.6%
25 to 34 years	1,080	1,795	+66.2%
35 to 44 years	2,278	2,391	+5.0%
45 to 54 years	1,873	1,846	-1.44%
55 to 59 years	1,029	1,051	+2.1%
60 to 64 years	1,012	868	-14.2%
65 to 74 years	1,535	1,078	-29.7%
75 to 84 years	922	830	-10.0%
85+ years	523	585	+11.9%

Services

The following agencies operate to ensure the safety and security of the community:

- **The Mount Vernon Police Department** serves the City of Mount Vernon and handles local law enforcement within the city limits.
- **The Mount Vernon Fire Department** provides fire and EMS services to the City of Mount Vernon and the Village of Gambier as well as Liberty, Clinton, Pleasant, and College Townships and part of Morris Township. The department also contracts with the Mount Vernon Developmental Center and the Knox County Airport to provide emergency services. The department serves 82 square miles from two stations.

Social Development

Investing in people is at the heart of social development. The City of Mount Vernon strives to remove barriers to allow individuals to pursue their dreams with dignity and confidence. The aim is to ensure that poverty is not a permanent condition and to advocate for self-sufficiency as a fundamental right. Mount Vernon fosters a healthier, more educated, and economically stable population by providing opportunities for citizens to grow, develop skills, and contribute meaningfully to their families and communities.

Early education and affordable, high-quality child care are critical components of social development in Mount Vernon. Investing in early learning initiatives helps children achieve greater success later in life, while accessible child care enables parents to be more productive at work, benefiting local businesses and the broader economy. Providing affordable and safe housing is crucial for promoting self-sufficiency and nurturing strong family relationships.

Economic development is also a key aspect of social development in the City. Programs and services for youth, post-secondary education opportunities, job creation, and the promotion of healthy, active living all contribute to the city's economic growth. Encouraging community engagement through faith-based organizations and other initiatives further strengthens the social fabric. This collaborative effort requires the involvement of community organizations, businesses, universities, and local governments to ensure a brighter future for all residents.



Credit: Knox County Convention and Visitors Bureau

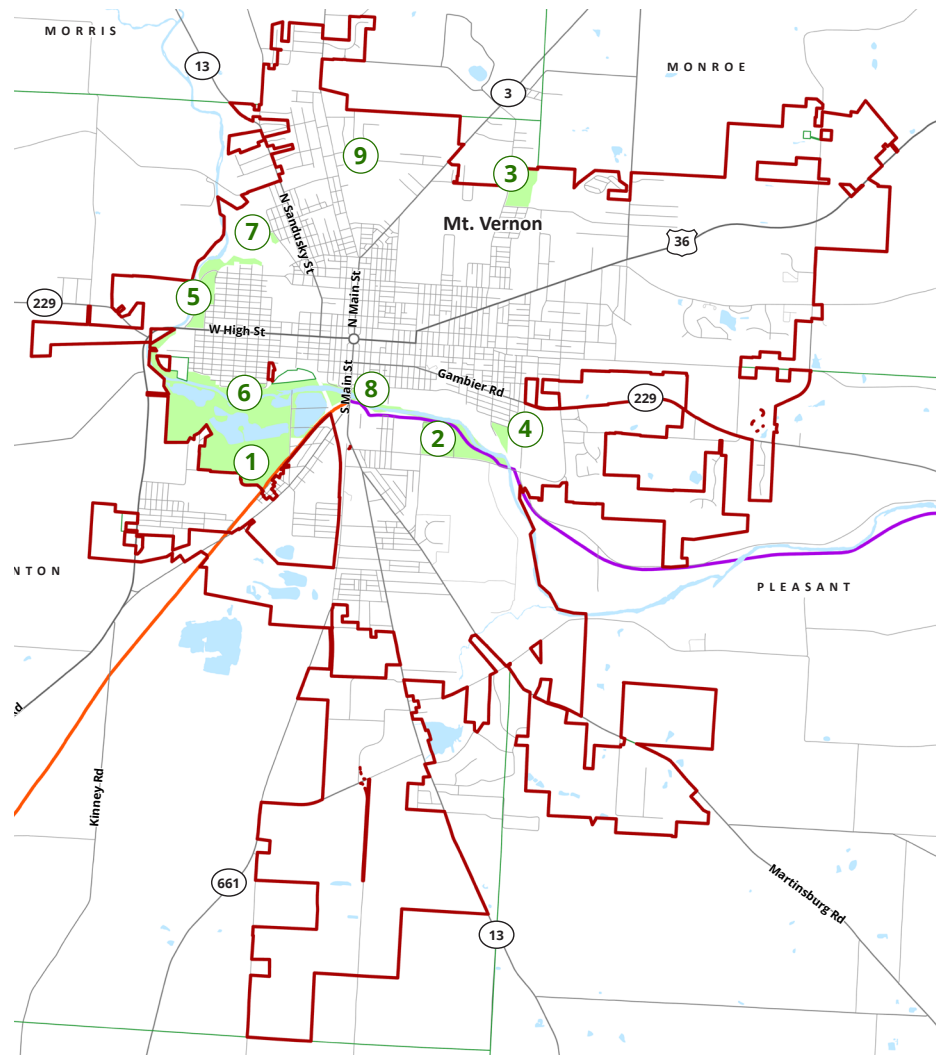
City Parks

Legend

- Heart of Ohio Trail
- Kokosing Gap Trail
- Water
- Park Land

Parks

1. Ariel-Foundation Park
2. Memorial Park
3. Hiawatha Park
4. Phillips Park
5. Riverside Park
6. Arch Park
7. Shellmar Park
8. Riverview Park
9. Dan Emmett Park



Parks and Open Space

Mount Vernon boasts an impressive array of parkland, with 19.8 acres of parks per 1,000 residents, significantly exceeding the National Recreation and Park Association's standard of 10 acres per 1,000 people. This abundance includes a diverse range of park types and amenities, from the 215-acre Ariel-Foundation Park, a regional attraction on a former glass-making factory site, to smaller neighborhood parks. Downtown Mount Vernon, located just north of the Kokosing River, is enriched by Heritage Park, which serves as a junction between the Kokosing Gap Trail and the Heart of Ohio Trail. In addition to the parks mapped above, the City has a number of smaller pocket parks distributed throughout the neighborhoods. This intersection of parkland, trails, and downtown amenities creates a vibrant and engaging experience for residents and visitors alike,

Cultural Opportunities

Mount Vernon offers a rich array of cultural, entertainment, and gathering opportunities that significantly enhance the quality of life for its residents. The Mount Vernon Arts Consortium, for example, brings big-name events, musicians, and performers to the city, utilizing venues like the historic Woodward Opera House, Knox Memorial, and Ariel-Foundation Park. These events not only provide entertainment but also foster a sense of community and cultural enrichment. Downtown Mount Vernon hosts various events throughout the year, including festivals, holiday celebrations, and community gatherings, which create vibrant social spaces for residents to connect and engage with one another.

Organizations like Experience Mount Vernon play a crucial role in organizing community events that bring people together. The Mount Vernon Music and Arts Festival is a highlight, featuring live music, art displays, and various activities that celebrate local talent and creativity. Additionally, numerous downtown events, such as farmers' markets, parades, and seasonal festivities, offer residents and visitors a chance to enjoy the city's unique charm and hospitality.

These cultural and entertainment opportunities benefit the city by boosting the local economy, attracting visitors, and supporting local businesses. They also contribute to the city's identity and pride, making Mount Vernon a desirable place to live and visit. The integration of cultural and recreational activities into the fabric of Mount Vernon helps build a strong, connected, and thriving community.



Credit: Nicole Leone Miller Photography



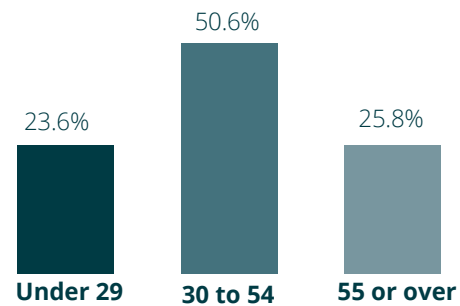
Credit: Knox County Convention and Visitors Bureau

Workforce

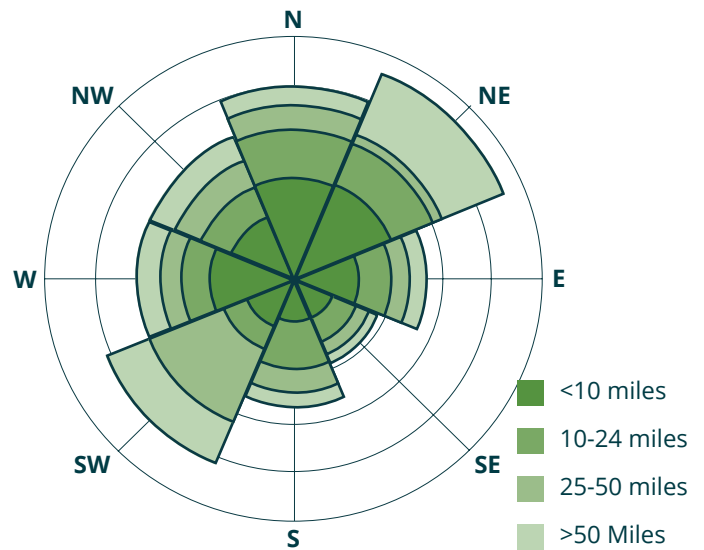
The workforce in Mount Vernon included 8,231 workers in 2022. After experiencing a decline in the early 2010s, the number of people in the workforce has remained generally steady since 2020. Approximately 50% of workers are between the ages of 30 and 54, while around one quarter of the workforce is over the age of 55 and will soon be reaching retirement age. The unemployment rate was 3.3% in 2023 but rose to 4.9% by May 2024. Most of the workforce is employed in the educational services and healthcare sectors, reflecting the city's strong emphasis on these industries.

A significant portion of Mount Vernon's residents commute to work outside the city. In 2010, 40.2% of residents lived and worked in the city, but this number decreased to 34.3% by 2022. The average commute time for a Mount Vernon resident is 19.9 minutes. This commuting trend highlights the need for continued investment in local job opportunities to reduce commute times and retain more workers within the city.

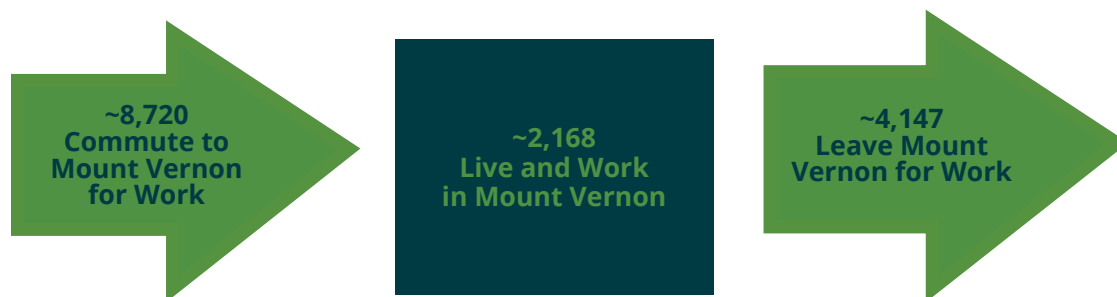
Percent of Workers by Age



Mount Vernon Labor Shed



Inflow Outflow (2022)



Housing

Mount Vernon has approximately 7,900 housing units, with a 9% vacancy rate. Of these units, 52% are owner-occupied, and 42% of homeowners do not have mortgages. Single-family homes make up 68% of the housing stock, while 42% of the units are rentals and 3% are mobile homes. Notably, 82% of the housing units were built before 1989, making them over 35 years old. This aging housing stock may require significant maintenance and updates to meet modern living standards. Mount Vernon accounts for 37% of the countywide total housing units, and 29% of its residents spend at least 30% of their income on housing costs. Additionally, Mount Vernon represents 43% of the housing affordability issue in Knox County while accounting for only 31% of occupied housing units.

Further highlighting the housing affordability challenge, 14% of homeowners in Mount Vernon pay at least 30% of their income on housing costs, while 51% of renters face the same burden. This indicates a significant portion of the population is struggling to meet their housing expenses, which can lead to financial stress and instability. A significant 84% of the housing affordability issue is concentrated in households with incomes less than \$35,000, emphasizing the need for targeted support for low-income families. Seniors, those over 65, represent 24% of the affordability issue, underscoring the importance of providing affordable housing options for this vulnerable population.



Traffic and Congestion

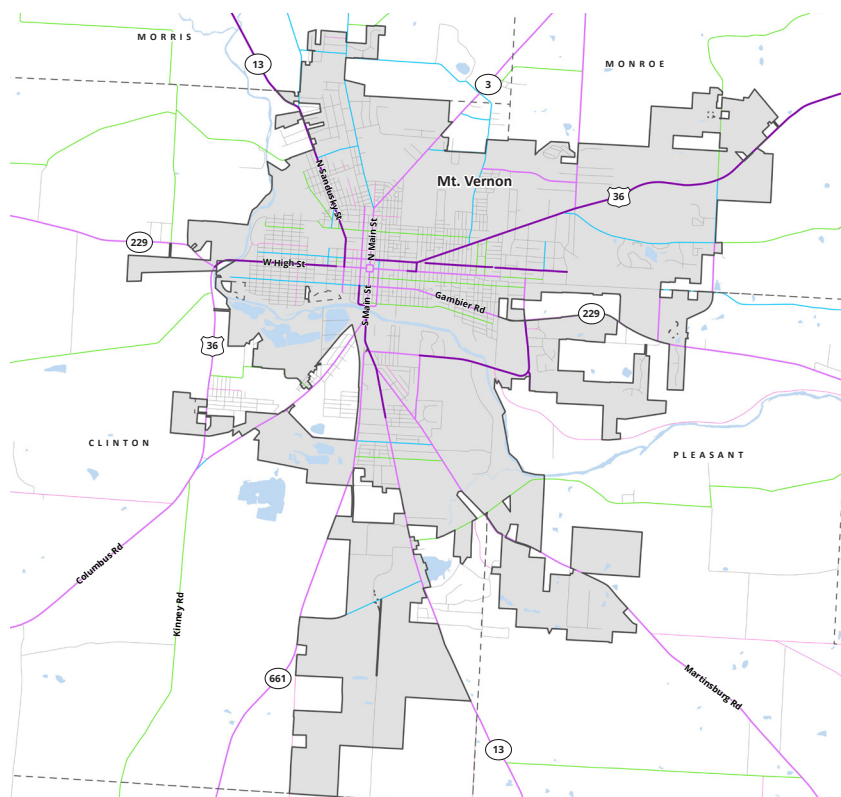
The highest average daily traffic (ADT) volumes occur on the US and state routes. Portions of US 36 and SR 13 observe over 8,000 vehicles per day on average, representing the highest traffic volumes in the City and some of the highest in the County. Traffic volumes above 3,000 are observed on multiple City of Mount Vernon roadways including Martinsburg Rd, High St, Chestnut St, and the segments of State Routes and U.S. Routes that intersect within the city limit. According to public input provided during this planning process and analysis presented in the Central Ohio Rural Planning Organization (CORPO) 2018 - 2040 Transportation Plan, network congestion has been observed most frequently in the City of Mount Vernon, along US 36, and along SR 13.

Per the 2023 Knox County Economic Growth Strategy, future planned roadway improvements include the extension of Sycamore Road to provide increased east-west connectivity in the southern portion of the county, various roadway extensions in the vicinity of Mount Vernon to provide better circulation and connectivity between major routes and to enable trucks to bypass the downtown area, and capacity improvements for major thoroughfares including US 36 and SR 229. Roadway improvement projects in Knox County and Mount Vernon are constrained by a lack of funding, staff resources and capacity, and variation in availability and longevity of funding opportunities.

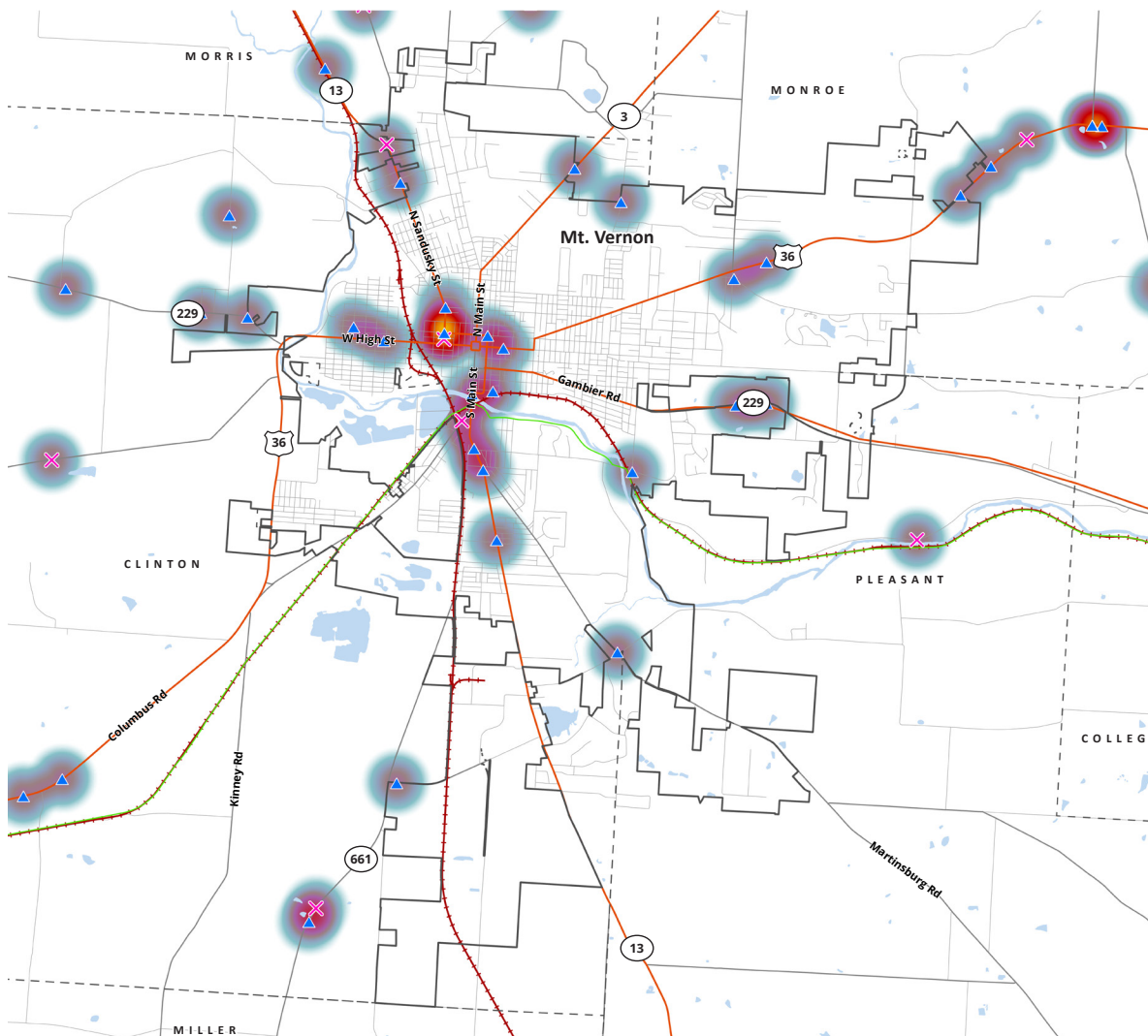
Daily Traffic Volume

Legend

- Under 300
- 300 - 1199
- 1200 - 2999
- 3000 - 7999
- 8000 or more



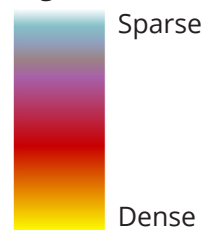
Serious Injury and Fatal Crashes, 2019 - 2023



The map above shows the locations of crashes resulting in serious injury or fatality, including two fatal crashes within the City of Mount Vernon. Three additional fatal crashes occurred within close proximity to the City.

Pedestrian and bicycle-involved crashes often result in higher rates of injury and fatality due to a lack of vehicular protection. The largest concentrations of bicycle and pedestrian crashes within the County are observed in central Mount Vernon along SR 13 and US 36. Another crash hotspot is observed east of Mount Vernon along the Kokosing Gap Trail.

Legend



✕ Fatal

▲ Serious Injury

Principles

The following principles were generated using insight gathered in the first round of engagement and tested and refined with the Steering Committee and the community during the second round of engagement. Principles define the intent of development and conservation in Knox County and Mount Vernon through simple statements. They are forward-looking and focused on future conditions, especially for ‘where’ and ‘how’ growth should occur.

- 1. Strengthen the center of the City of Mount Vernon.** The historic population centers of Knox County support economic prosperity, provide for goods and services that support all communities, provide housing opportunities for County residents, and facilitate schools and the efficient delivery of government services and facilities. These communities facilitate social interaction at the neighborhood and community-wide level. And most importantly, they reflect many of the values that make Knox County unique.
- 2. Focus growth inwardly, prioritizing infill and redevelopment over greenfield locations.** Likewise, the rural landscape is a critical component of Knox County cherished by many, while serving an important economic role. As population centers grow, they should prioritize infill development and redevelopment to minimize impacts on adjacent prime farmland. While greenfield development can expand opportunities, it should not be the only priority as communities grow.
- 3. Protect natural assets, including streams, stream corridors, wetlands, ponds, lakes, and steep slopes.** The natural landscape is key to defining Knox County’s special qualities, while supporting wildlife, outdoor recreation, and minimizing climate impacts. The County has a strong tradition of open space conservation and this should continue moving forward. Land use practices should reinforce the public’s priority to protect the natural landscape and minimize the footprint of future development.
- 4. Conserve agricultural land.** Agriculture will remain an important economic sector for Knox County, but it also represents its collective history and culture. Moving forward, agricultural land outside of the city limits should be continually prioritized for conservation and production, while minimizing development’s footprint on the landscape. Working farms should be protected from the impact of haphazard rural development.

5. **Dedicate places for industrial employment.** The County's strongest economic sector is light/advanced manufacturing and related uses that provide employment opportunities for residents and tax revenues to support public services. Future economic development should build upon the County's successes and land set aside with supporting infrastructure and nearby housing to facilitate additional private investment.
6. **Provide housing choices.** Current residents and future workers regarding a full range of housing options, particularly as families and individuals go through various life cycles. Housing choices should reflect the changing demographics of Knox County and ensure residents have the option to remain in their communities as households age and that future generations can call Knox County home.
7. **Stabilize established neighborhoods.** Neighborhoods in Mount Vernon and various villages throughout the County will benefit from public and private investments that stabilize home values and the physical environment. These traditional neighborhoods can offer quality environments to raise families and attract new residents, while housing workers and providing affordable housing options for aging homeowners. Their success also ensures a walkable community within close proximity of downtowns and local businesses, schools, and parks.
8. **Support and maintain unique residential places.** Knox County benefits from unique residential places, especially Apple Valley. This community exists as a quasi-public entity via its homeowner association and provides a number of services to its residents. Its continued success, while maintaining the current scale, reinforces its role as a unique residential area in Knox County.
9. **Leverage the campuses of the higher education institutions.** Knox County is blessed by the higher education institutions that call the County home. While providing services and facilities to support local students and residents, these institutions can play a larger role in the broader community. This can include further investment in downtown Mount Vernon, educational, cultural and athletic events open to the public, and growing the County's image throughout the United States.
10. **Improve major corridors.** Indirectly, Knox County benefits from its location relative to the interstate system through the state routes that crisscross the County. These corridors link the County and its residents to Metropolitan Columbus, facilitating economic development and commuting patterns. Along with safety improvements, access management is critical to ensure efficient and safe traffic movement. This includes ensuring safe movement by the County's Amish community.

Concept Map

The Concept Map serves as a precursor to the Future Conservation, Character, and Development Map, illustrating where and how the City should guide future physical development and change at a conceptual level. The map is intentionally diagrammatic, featuring shaded and colored areas that indicate desired future conditions. It was created based on input from the initial round of community engagement and a thorough review of existing plans and studies. The map was reviewed by the Steering Committee and the community for input that would inform the final

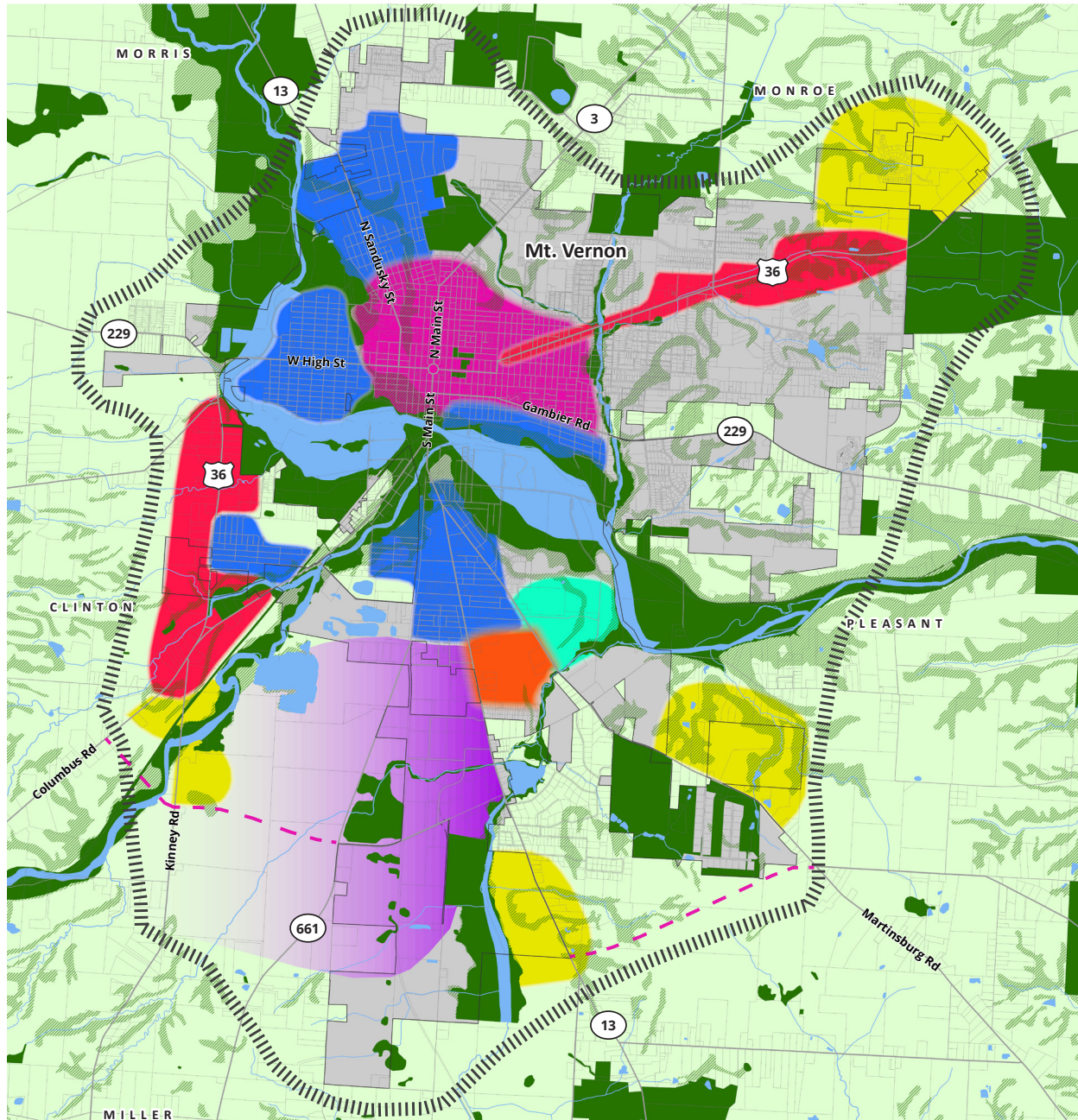
Conservation Concepts

-  **Constrained Land**
Development should be highly limited in these areas. Priority should be given to preservation of natural features. Includes land that is preserved and conserved in trusts, parks, etc. and land in the 100-year floodplain.
-  **Partially Constrained**
Development should be limited in these areas. Priority should be given to preservation of natural features. Includes steep slopes (15% or greater) and the 500-year flood plain.
-  **Rural**
Areas with potential for continued agricultural uses and open space, with some limited conservation oriented residential.
-  **Recreation Focused Residential**
Area with unique residential character where scale of use should be maintained.

Growth Concepts

-  **Residential**
Areas with potential for home or resident growth based on location, access to services, and surrounding context.
-  **Neighborhood Stabilization**
Areas with potential for reinvestment and revitalization.
-  **Mixed Center, small scale**
Smaller areas with potential for mixed commercial, retail, and limited residential growth.
-  **Mixed Center, large scale**
Larger areas with potential for mixed commercial, retail, and residential growth.
-  **Priority Corridor**
Corridors that may need infrastructure reinvestment or that have potential for employment and commercial growth.
-  **Employment Center**
Areas with potential for job or employment growth.
-  **Higher Education Employment Center**
Areas with potential for higher education focused job or employment growth.
-  **Development Edge**
Conceptual growth boundary for areas with development potential.

Mount Vernon Concept Map



Future Conservation, Character, and Development Map

The Future Conservation, Character, and Development Map expresses the city's intent in more specific terms regarding how land resources should be used in the future. The map identifies preferred future character types. Each type describes attributes of form and function, including the size and type of buildings and their relationship to the street, the surrounding street and block pattern, parking and access, and land uses.

Benefits of a Character-based Approach

This plan takes a character-based approach to shaping the city's future conservation, character, and development. While the Future Conservation, Character, and Development Map includes both primary and secondary land uses in each character type, it also shows the built form that is desired in each area.

There are several advantages to this enhanced approach, including the following:

- It describes an overall intent for each character type, which helps staff, elected officials, developers/builders, and the public understand whether a particular development or project fits the spirit of the character type;
- It sets clearer expectations about the physical characteristics of development in an easy-to-understand format, which conveys standards for new development that can be used to assess how well a development aligns with community character; and
- It establishes a foundation for zoning code updates and other regulations, especially form-based standards.

The Future Concept, Character, and Development Map was developed based on the input and analysis conducted during this planning process, as reflected in the Concept Map.

Implementing the Future Conservation, Character, and Development Map

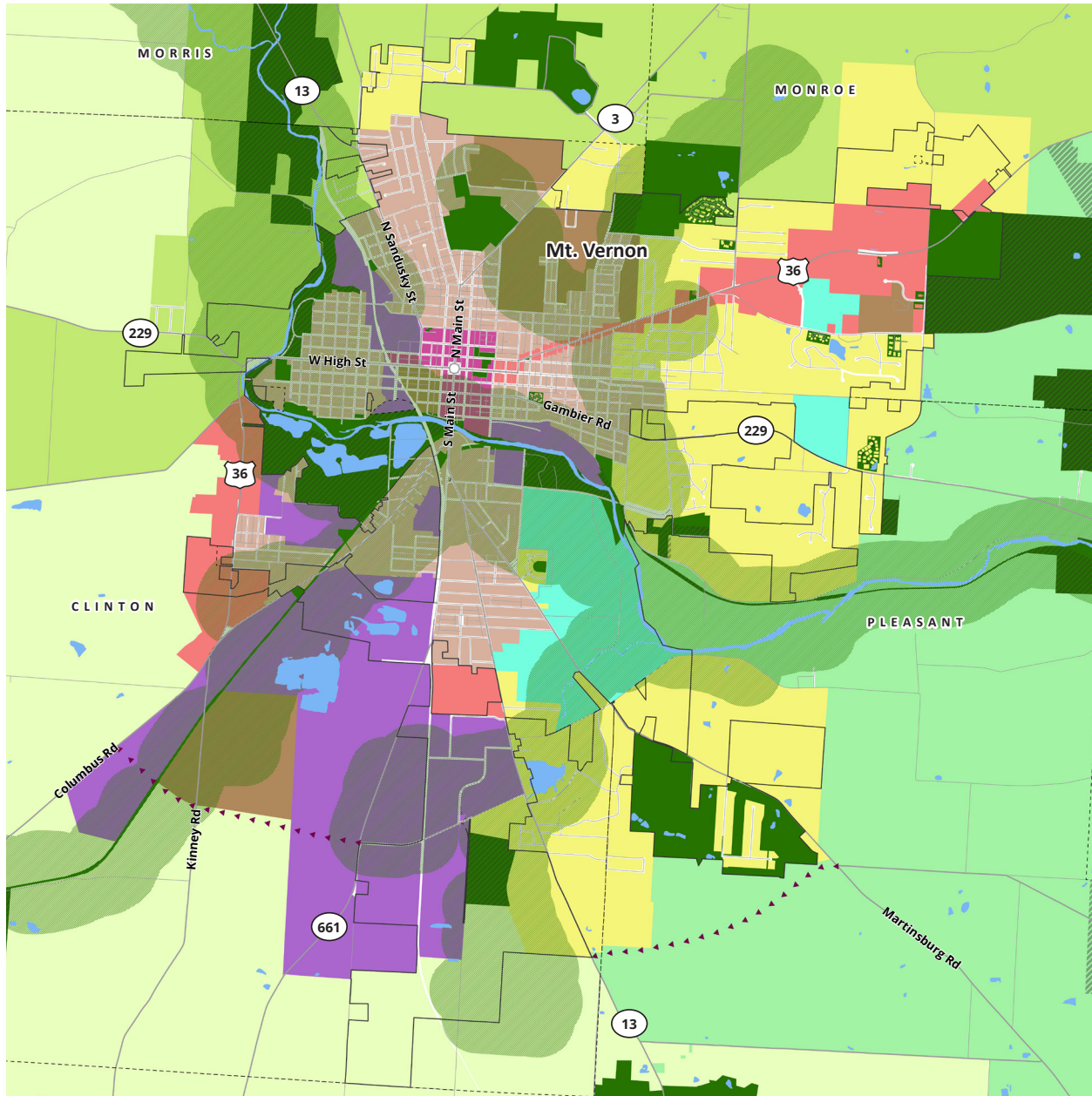
The Future Conservation, Character, and Development Map depicts appropriate future conservation and development patterns throughout the city. It reinforces existing patterns in some areas and supports changes in other areas. This element of the growth strategy is implemented through city zoning codes and other regulations.

Zoning is a legal tool that regulates land use, including types of structures that may be built, how they are to be built, where they are to be built, and how they may be used. Each property in a community with adopted zoning is assigned to a zone. There may be more than one appropriate zone for a particular future character type. For example, there is one employment center type, but there may be two or three commercial or industrial zones to account for various intensities, activities, and contexts. The conservation and development map is implemented over time through many distinct public and private development decisions.



Credit: Area Development Foundation, Inc.

Mount Vernon



Legend

- | | | |
|--|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Open Space (<i>Public & Private</i>) | Residential 3 | Potential Future Connectors |
| Low Impact & Conservation | Town Center | Municipal Boundaries |
| Traditional Agriculture | Economic Development Corridor | Township Boundaries |
| Mixed Rural | Employment Center | Flood Hazard Buffer |
| Residential 1 | Campus | Conserved Land Parcels |
| Residential 2 | | Water |

Open Space

Open Space areas are intended for recreation or land that is permanently maintained as an open area. These areas may be improved with amenities and other enhancements based on community desire. These areas feature large open parcels or wooded areas, as well as regional greenways, trails, and bikeways.

INTENT

- » Highlight the natural features of the county.
- » Preserve existing green space and limit development.
- » Protect and enhance natural scenic areas.
- » Provide access to recreational opportunities.

LAND USE MIX

Primary Uses

Parks and open space
Natural and conservation
areas

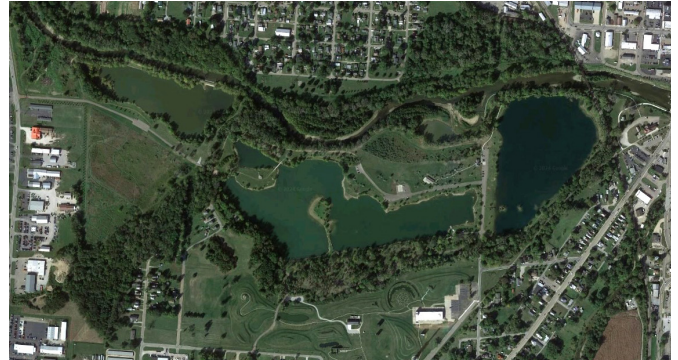
Secondary Uses

Civic and institutional

OPEN SPACE

Could be used for parks and recreation areas, viewshed, historic/geologic attractions, drainage areas, riparian areas, and more.

EXAMPLE PATTERN



EXAMPLE CHARACTER



Low Impact and Conservation

Low Impact and Conservation are areas with unique landscape, heavy woodlands, and natural features. These areas include large lot, single-family homesites. Public parkland and conservation areas are appropriate. Public water and sewer services not intended for these areas outside of the city limits. Significant, new development is not appropriate or anticipated.

INTENT

- » Conserve valuable environmental and aesthetic resources.
- » Protect sensitive natural resources such as waterways, wetlands, and floodplains.
- » Protect and enhance natural scenic areas.

LAND USE MIX

Primary Uses

Parks and open space
Natural and conservation areas
Large lot single-family residential

Secondary Uses

Civic and institutional
Community-based commercial and retail

FORM ATTRIBUTES

BUILDING FORM

Height

1-2 Stories

Setback

Varies

TRANSPORTATION

Primary Mode(s)

Automobile

Secondary Mode(s)

N/A

Parking

Private off-street

Streets

Primarily automobile access
Subdivisions have long blocks and meandering streets
Sidewalks are uncommon.

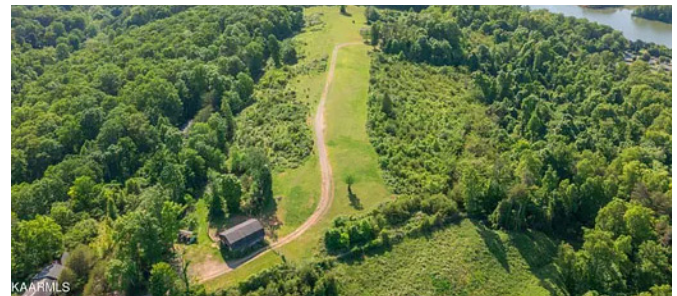
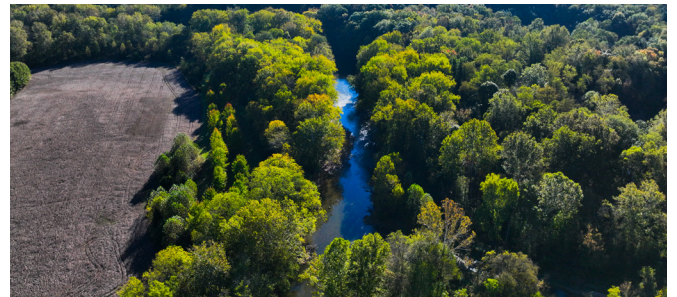
OPEN SPACE

Mostly private. Agriculture and undeveloped private land serves as open space. May have trail access. May include wildlife areas.

EXAMPLE PATTERN



EXAMPLE CHARACTER



Traditional Agriculture

Traditional Agriculture areas are primarily of agricultural use and may also include single-family residential within a rural setting. These areas may include some limited commercial that supports agricultural and civic uses. Buildings are generally set far back from the roadway on large lots. Traditional Agriculture areas are located predominantly outside of the city limits, though areas contiguous to the city limits could be considered for development.

INTENT

- » Traditional agriculture aesthetic is maintained.
- » Support transition in scale between denser character areas and Traditional Agriculture to preserve the rural character.
- » Conserve farmland and ensure the long-term viability of existing farms.

LAND USE MIX

Primary Uses

Agriculture
Parks and open space

Secondary Uses

Rural single-family residential
Civic and institutional
Agriculture-related and small-scale commercial

FORM ATTRIBUTES

BUILDING FORM

Height

1-2 Stories

Setback

Varies

TRANSPORTATION

Primary Mode(s)

Automobile

Secondary Mode(s)

N/A

Parking

Private surface lots and private off-street; individual drives.

Streets

Primarily automobile access. Subdivisions have long blocks and meandering streets. Sidewalks are uncommon.

OPEN SPACE

Mostly private. Agriculture and undeveloped private land serves as open space. May have trail access.

EXAMPLE PATTERN



EXAMPLE CHARACTER



Mixed Rural

Mixed Rural areas have a blend of agricultural land, residential, and commercial development. These areas are largely agricultural in character but may see more large lot subdivisions, lot splits, and very limited suburban style patterns in a rural setting. Building setbacks and lot size may vary more widely than in other rural and conservation areas.

INTENT

- » Provide residential growth opportunities while maintaining agricultural use.
- » Encourage clustered residential development to preserve agricultural land.
- » Provide areas for agriculture-related commercial activities.
- » Encourage flexible design that maximizes preservation of agricultural land and open space.
- » Maintain rural aesthetic.

LAND USE MIX

Primary Uses

Single-family residential
Agriculture

Secondary Uses

Commercial-retail, small scale
Civic and institutional
Parks and open space

FORM ATTRIBUTES

BUILDING FORM

Height

1-2 Stories

Setback

Varies

TRANSPORTATION

Primary Mode(s)

Automobile

Secondary Mode(s)

Walk/Bike

Parking

Private surface lots and private off-street; individual drives.

Streets

Primarily automobile access, but development should accommodate walking and biking by providing street and path connections between adjacent commercial sites and neighborhoods.

OPEN SPACE

Mostly private. Agriculture and undeveloped private land serves as open space. May have trail access.

EXAMPLE PATTERN



EXAMPLE CHARACTER



Residential 1

Residential 1 areas are primarily single-family residential subdivisions with a range of lot sizes. These areas may have limited small-scale multi-family residential. Housing styles are consistent within subdivisions. Neighborhoods should be well-connected by street, trail, and sidewalk networks, and integrate parks and civic uses.

INTENT

- » Provide single-family housing options that accommodate a range of family size and preferences.
- » Encourage front porches and smaller backyards.
- » Encourage integrated neighborhoods through shared open space amenities and vehicular/pedestrian connectivity.
- » Encourage development adjacent to commercial/mixed-use areas or in areas with access to existing utility infrastructure.
- » Maintain and expand public realm features including street trees, lighting, and sidewalks.

LAND USE MIX

Primary Uses

Single-family residential

Secondary Uses

Multi-family residential

Civic and institutional

Parks and open space

FORM ATTRIBUTES

BUILDING FORM

Height

1-2 Stories

Setback

30 feet

TRANSPORTATION

Primary Mode(s)

Automobile

Secondary Mode(s)

Walk/Bike

Parking

On-street and private off-street; individual drives from street/alley. Limit front-facing garages.

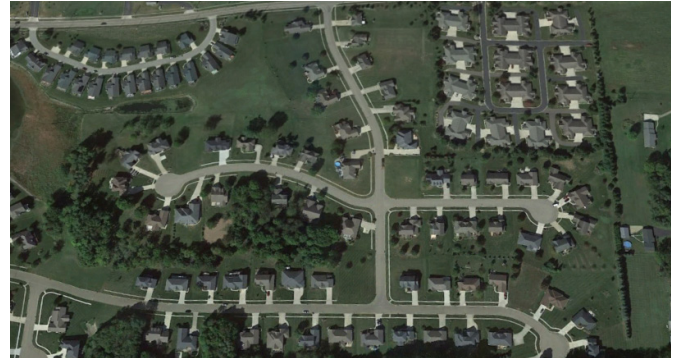
Streets

Culs-de-sac should be limited while dead-end streets are restricted unless for future planned street connections.

OPEN SPACE

Public neighborhood parks should be located in prominent locations. Schools could also supplement public parks. Some residential areas could include shared access to private open space.

EXAMPLE PATTERN



EXAMPLE CHARACTER



Residential 2

Residential 2 areas are primarily single-family residential with a higher percentage of attached homes and some multi-family units, with connectivity between neighborhoods and other non-residential areas. They are characterized by grid-like street networks and shifting architectural styles.

INTENT

- » Allow residential infill that complements the existing character (building scale, placement, design, etc.).
- » Encourage integrated neighborhoods through shared open space amenities and vehicular/pedestrian connectivity.
- » Integrate a housing mix of single-family detached, some single-family attached (duplexes, townhomes, etc.), and some multi-family.
- » Continue historic preservation efforts in village and city centers to maintain existing neighborhood character.
- » Integrate multi-modal transportation options.

LAND USE MIX

Primary Uses

Single-family residential, detached and attached
Multi-family residential

Secondary Uses

Office
Commercial
Specialty housing (age-targeted, etc.)
Civic/institutional
Parks and open space

FORM ATTRIBUTES

BUILDING FORM

Height

1-3 Stories

Setback

10-20 feet

TRANSPORTATION

Primary Mode(s)

Automobile

Secondary Mode(s)

Walk/Bike, Transit

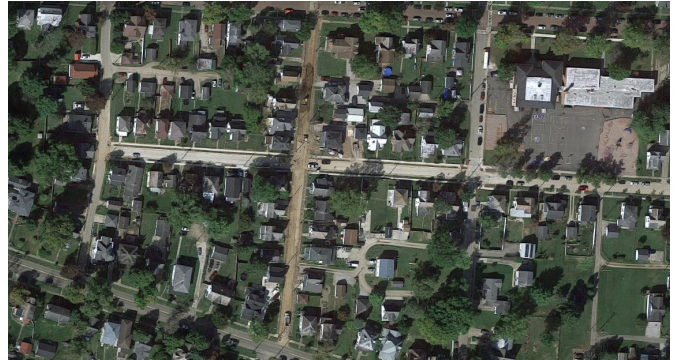
Parking

On-street and private off street; individual drives from street/alley and shared drives for multifamily. No front-facing garages.

Streets

Culs-de-sac should be limited while dead-end streets are restricted unless for future planned street connections.

EXAMPLE PATTERN



EXAMPLE CHARACTER



OPEN SPACE

Compared to residential 1, there is more public open space in the form of neighborhood and community parks, pocket parks, and preserved passive open space. Schools could also supplement public parks. Some residential areas could include shared access to private open space.

Residential 3

Residential 3 areas are primarily multi-family residential with connectivity between neighborhoods and other non-residential areas. They are characterized by grid-like street networks and shifting architectural styles. These areas may include small-scale retail or office.

INTENT

- » Provide housing options that accommodate a range of family sizes and lifestyles.
- » Encourage integrated neighborhoods through shared open space amenities and vehicular/pedestrian connectivity.
- » To support residents, neighborhood-scale commercial uses located in convenient and accessible areas are encouraged.
- » Preserve historic buildings when possible.

LAND USE MIX

Primary Uses

Multi-family residential
Single-family residential, attached

Secondary Uses

Office
Commercial
Specialty housing (age-targeted, etc.)
Civic/Institutional
Parks and open space

FORM ATTRIBUTES

BUILDING FORM

Height

1-3 Stories

Setback

0-20 feet, generally consistent within a block

TRANSPORTATION

Primary Mode(s)

Walk/Bike

Secondary Mode(s)

Automobile

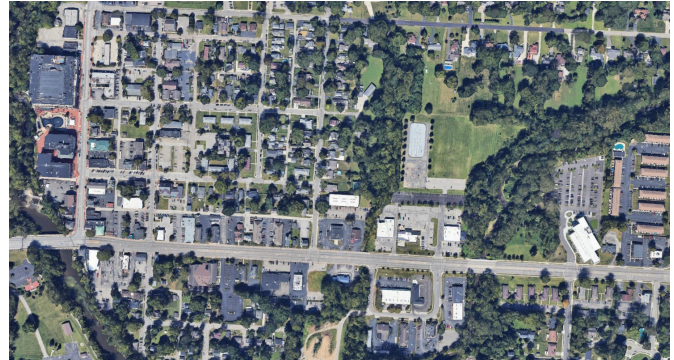
Parking

On-street and private off-street; typically located to the side or rear of buildings and could be shared.

Streets

Blocks are small and walkable with many street connections; alleys are common.

EXAMPLE PATTERN



EXAMPLE CHARACTER



OPEN SPACE

Compared to residential 1, there is more public open space in the form of neighborhood and community parks, pocket parks, and preserved passive open space. Private yards tend to be small and secondary to other open space. Neighborhood schools could serve as open space.

Employment Center

Employment Center areas are characterized by light industrial-style development, high technology, advanced manufacturing, logistics, and office. Large footprint structures offer flexible space to accommodate market demand for various users.

INTENT

- » Encourage industrial and employment uses that provide job opportunities and support the county and city's tax bases.
- » Support industrial and employment activities away from neighborhoods.
- » Utilize natural or man made buffers to separate industry from other uses.

LAND USE MIX

Primary Uses

Light industrial
Advanced manufacturing
Office
Logistics
Flex-office
Data centers

Secondary Uses

Commercial
Civic and institutional
Parks and open space

FORM ATTRIBUTES

BUILDING FORM

Height

1-4 Stories

Setback

Varies

TRANSPORTATION

Primary Mode(s)

Automobile

Secondary Mode(s)

Transit, Walk/Bike

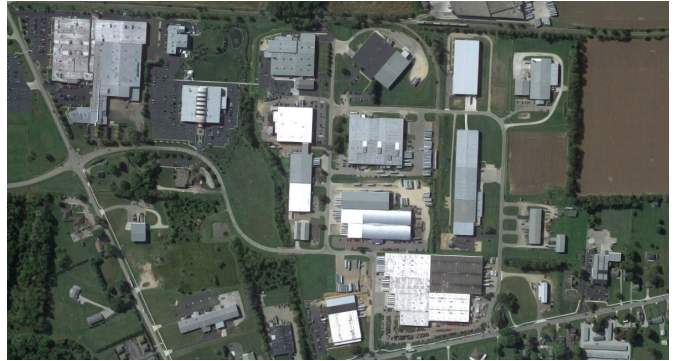
Parking

Surface lots, shared

Streets

Primarily automobile-oriented development, include accommodation for large trucks. Site design and block length should accommodate biking and other transportation alternatives.

EXAMPLE PATTERN



EXAMPLE CHARACTER



OPEN SPACE

Trail connections, passive preserved land, and landscaped setback areas; generally private.

Economic Development Corridor

Economic Development Corridor areas accommodate an array of uses that include commercial, office, and light industrial. These uses are adjacent to arterial roads that serve the region or multiple neighborhoods. Existing development is characterized by buildings set far back from the street behind large surface parking areas. Over time, new development and redevelopment in these areas is encouraged to raise design quality and improve mobility and accessibility for all users of the corridor.

INTENT

- » Accommodate a wide range of uses to serve a regional market.
- » Provide bicycle and pedestrian connectivity to surrounding neighborhoods and nearby public uses (schools, parks, etc.)
- » Improve/provide public realm features such as signs, sidewalks, lighting, landscaping, and street trees.
- » Locate new buildings near the street and accommodate parking to the side or rear of buildings.

LAND USE MIX

Primary Uses

Office
Vertical mixed-use
Small-scale light industrial

Secondary Uses

Commercial
Multi-family residential
Civic and institutional
Parks and open space

FORM ATTRIBUTES

BUILDING FORM

Height

1-3 Stories

Setback

Varies

TRANSPORTATION

Primary Mode(s)

Automobile

Secondary Mode(s)

Transit, Walk/Bike

Parking

Surface lots

Streets

Primarily automobile-oriented development and may include accommodation for large trucks. Site design and block length should encourage pedestrian and cyclist access.

EXAMPLE PATTERN



EXAMPLE CHARACTER



OPEN SPACE

Trail connections, passive preserved land, and landscaped setback areas; generally private.

Campus

Campus areas include higher education campuses and the mixed-use areas around them. These areas are arranged in a walkable pattern and include a mix of uses either within a single building or connected sites. Housing in these areas generally serves the residential population and includes a mix of housing types.

INTENT

- » Coordinate development with higher education institutions.
- » Create and reinforce walkable activity centers that are connected to surrounding development and include a mix of complementary uses.
- » Improve public realm features such as signs, sidewalks, landscaping, and street trees.
- » Improve pedestrian and vehicular connectivity between civic spaces and adjacent land uses.

LAND USE MIX

Primary Uses

Higher education campus
Student-oriented development
Student housing
Athletic and cultural facilities
Vertical mixed-use
Multi-family residential

Secondary Uses

Small-scale commercial and retail
Single-family residential
Civic and institutional
Parks and open space

FORM ATTRIBUTES

BUILDING FORM

Height

1-5 Stories

Setback

Varies

TRANSPORTATION

Primary Mode(s)

Walk/Bike

Secondary Mode(s)

Transit, Automobile

Parking

Large surface lots that are clustered to serve many buildings/uses; Larger campuses may include structured parking.

Streets

Streets should integrate with the surrounding network and be designed to support walking or biking (both within the campus and between adjacent areas).

EXAMPLE PATTERN



EXAMPLE CHARACTER



OPEN SPACE

Mostly private, may feature neighborhood or pocket parks, and public realm (spaces between buildings and the street). May have trail access.

Town Center

Town Center areas are large and more compact walkable mixed-use areas with employment, commercial, residential, civic, and supporting uses integrated horizontally and vertically with connectivity to surrounding neighborhoods.

INTENT

- » Provide a wide variety of goods and services contributing to vibrant streets and public spaces.
- » Improve connections and transitions to surrounding neighborhoods.
- » Reduce and consolidate surface parking while encouraging shared parking.
- » Provide small-scale public gathering places.

LAND USE MIX

Primary Uses

Vertical mixed-use

Horizontal mixed-use

Multi-family residential

Secondary Uses

Commercial and retail

Civic and institutional

Office

Parks and open space

FORM ATTRIBUTES

BUILDING FORM

Height

1-4 Stories

Setback

0-20 feet

TRANSPORTATION

Primary Mode(s)

Walk/Bike

Secondary Mode(s)

Automobile

Parking

On-street, shared structures, or shared surface lots located to the side or rear of buildings.

Streets

Streets should promote a walkable setting with short block lengths, wide sidewalks, and street trees.

OPEN SPACE

Community and neighborhood parks, pocket parks, plazas, trails, green infrastructure, and public realm (spaces between buildings and the street) act as open space.

EXAMPLE PATTERN



EXAMPLE CHARACTER



Actions

The following projects, policies, and programs support the following goals:

Strengthened Centers. Resilient city and village centers have a mix of uses and create a strong sense of community.

Land Use and Development. Thoughtful and strategic land use and development policies that balance growth with environmental stewardship.

Objective 1. Conserve critical natural assets.

Conserving critical natural resources is crucial for sustaining Mount Vernon's environmental health. These lands offer essential ecosystem services, support biodiversity, and bolster the local economy. Implementing strategies to shield these resources from development pressures and ensure their ongoing use is vital for preserving the City's natural beauty.

1.1 Promote opportunities and efforts to permanently protect critical natural resources.

Support both public and private initiatives to ensure the lasting protection of critical natural resources. By promoting tools such as land acquisition, conservation easements, and other protective measures, all local governments will safeguard these valuable resources against inappropriate development.

1.2 Revise regulations to discourage development in areas that go against the objectives of this Growth Strategy.

Updating regulations will ensure that development aligns with the community's long-term vision. This involves refining zoning laws and land-use policies to protect natural resources, maintain open spaces, and safeguard prime agricultural land. By implementing stricter guidelines and enforcement measures, the county can support balanced and environmentally conscious development while preserving its natural assets and agricultural heritage.

Objective 2. Focus growth and development inward.

Directing development towards established communities can reduce urban sprawl, preserve open spaces, and enhance the quality of life for residents. Encouraging inward growth ensures that development is both economically and environmentally responsible. This objective prioritizes the revitalization of existing urban and suburban areas, making the most of current infrastructure and resources.

2.1 Adopt regulations that encourage infill and redevelopment in the city center and support higher-density mixed-use projects.

Encouraging infill and redevelopment in city and village centers, along with supporting higher-density mixed-use projects in downtown areas, can create a more walkable community by integrating housing with retail, office, and related services. This approach enhances fiscal resiliency by maximizing the use of existing infrastructure and helps prevent urban sprawl, thereby avoiding the public expense of upgrading utility systems and roads. This can be achieved by adopting regulations that incentivize developers to focus on key vacant sites and underdeveloped corridors, and by providing streamlined approval processes for mixed-use projects in these areas.

2.2 Implement measures that add value to existing infill sites.

This can be achieved through tools such as density bonuses, which incentivize higher-density development in targeted areas. Cities and villages can also use transfer of development rights, which allow for the preservation of open spaces by shifting development potential to more suitable locations. These strategies help maximize the use of existing urban areas, promoting responsible growth and efficient land use.

2.3 Update regulations to require sufficient setbacks, screening/landscaping, and reduced lighting to minimize impacts by industrial users.

These strategies create a buffer zone that reduces noise, visual disturbances, and light pollution. By incorporating setbacks, industrial activities are kept at a distance from residential and commercial areas, minimizing their impact. Effective screening and landscaping provide a visual barrier, enhancing the aesthetic appeal and further reducing the intrusion of industrial sights and sounds. Reduced lighting helps to prevent light pollution, ensuring that the night sky remains clear and the surrounding environment is not overly illuminated.

Objective 3. Enhance the vibrancy of downtown Mount Vernon to establish it as a lively, desirable destination where people want to live, work, and visit.

Integrating housing, offices, shops, restaurants, and entertainment venues can offer a dynamic and convenient lifestyle in downtown Mount Vernon. This variety of uses fosters a sense of community and ensures that the area remains active and engaging throughout the day and evening, making it a desirable destination for everyone.

3.1 Mix residential, office, and academic spaces to create a vibrant, walking destination.

Integrating residential, office, and academic spaces will transform an area into a dynamic, pedestrian-friendly destination. This blend encourages a constant flow of people throughout the day, fostering a lively atmosphere. Residents benefit from convenient access to work and educational opportunities, while businesses and institutions thrive in a bustling environment. This synergy creates a vibrant community where living, working, and learning seamlessly coexist.

3.2 Update codes to allow horizontal and vertical mixed use in new buildings.

Encouraging both horizontal and vertical mixed use in new buildings promotes a diverse and efficient use of space. This approach allows for a combination of residential, commercial, and recreational areas within the same structure or complex, enhancing convenience and accessibility. It fosters vibrant, multi-functional communities where people can live, work, and play in close proximity, reducing the need for long commutes.

3.3 Provide for sufficient retail uses to meet local needs.

Offering a diverse range of retail options can effectively meet the community's needs. This includes the addition of a new grocery store, which provides convenient access to fresh food and essential goods. By offering a range of shopping choices, the area can support local businesses and enhance the quality of life for residents, making it a more self-sufficient and attractive place to live.

3.4 Create pedestrian and bike connections with Mount Vernon Nazarene University and downtown Mount Vernon.

Establishing pedestrian and bike connections between Mount Vernon Nazarene University and downtown Mount Vernon can significantly enhance accessibility and mobility. These connections provide safe and convenient routes for students, faculty, and residents, encouraging walking and biking as preferred modes of transportation. This initiative not only promotes a healthier lifestyle but also strengthens the bond between the university and the local community, fostering a more integrated and vibrant area.

Objective 4. Revitalize the Coshocton Avenue Corridor.

Increasing the density along the Coshocton Avenue Corridor can transform it into a vibrant and dynamic area. Enhancements will focus on creating a mix of residential, commercial, and other uses, making the corridor more appealing and walkable. Improved pedestrian pathways and bike lanes will encourage active transportation. These improvements will create a lively, accessible corridor.

4.1 Develop codes to allow appropriate higher density uses on vacant sites and underdeveloped sites.

Encouraging higher density development on vacant and underdeveloped sites can maximize land use efficiency and address housing needs. This approach prioritizes residential projects, offering both rental and owner-occupied options to cater to diverse housing preferences. By transforming these sites into vibrant, densely populated areas, the community can benefit from increased housing availability, economic growth, and a more dynamic urban environment.

4.2 Adopt an overlay zoning district west of Adams Run that supports a walkable built environment.

Position buildings closer to the right-of-way to enhance pedestrian access and visibility. Relocate parking to the rear of buildings to reduce street clutter and prioritize foot traffic. Require architectural character and materials to align with the aesthetic of nearby neighborhoods, ensuring a cohesive and appealing streetscape. Refer to the City of Columbus' urban commercial overlay for guidance.

4.3 Adopt an overlay zoning district east of Adams Run that supports a larger scale, walkable built environment.

Establish a 20-foot building setback to allow for attractive landscaping along the frontage, creating a welcoming and visually appealing environment. Position parking areas behind buildings to minimize street clutter and enhance pedestrian access. Construct multi-story mixed-use buildings to efficiently utilize space and provide a range of amenities. Refer to the City of Columbus' community commercial overlay for guidance.

Objective 5. Optimize and improve infrastructure networks.

This objective focuses on upgrading and maintaining critical infrastructure such as roads, utilities, and communication systems to meet current and future demands. Investing in modern, resilient infrastructure supports economic growth and improves public safety. Prioritizing these improvements ensures that the City, County, and region remains well-connected and capable of supporting a thriving community.

5.1 Adopt a water conservation and reuse strategy.

Water reuse (also commonly known as water recycling or water reclamation) reclaims water from various sources and treats and reuses it for beneficial purposes such as agriculture and irrigation, potable water supplies, groundwater replenishment, industrial processes, and environmental restoration. Implementing a water conservation and reuse strategy in Mount Vernon would ensure a resilient water supply, reducing the strain on natural resources as development increases.

5.2 Promote development on vacant and under-utilized parcels with infrastructure services.

The City should identify vacant or under-utilized properties, either within or adjacent to city limits, with access to infrastructure like water, sewer, and storm systems that could attract market interest and stimulate private investment in urban areas. Engage with the owners of these parcels to encourage development and facilitate connections with potential investors.

5.3 Prioritize infill and redevelopment in the existing system service areas before considering system expansions.

Before considering annexation proposals, utility capacity studies should be conducted to determine the current limits of utility systems and identify necessary improvements to maximize existing urban areas. If a private entity proposes development outside existing service areas requiring annexation, the City should evaluate the benefits of such development, considering the need to discourage sprawl and protect farmland or critical natural resources. The City of Mount Vernon should prioritize infill and redevelopment within existing service areas before considering system expansions unless those expansions support economic development and job creation.

5.4 Focus attention on major corridors to minimize sprawl, enhance safety, and reduce congestion.

Support increased development intensity along major corridors adjacent to existing density and development. Prioritize capital investments that reflect the character and history of these areas. Additionally, prioritize safety investments that reduce congestion, ensure public safety, facilitate pedestrian and bike access, manage access, and address the unique needs of the Amish community. These measures will enhance the functionality and appeal of major corridors while minimizing sprawl.



The following projects, policies, and programs support the following goals:

Economic Prosperity. A robust local economy with industrial growth and a wide range of employment opportunities.

Housing. A diverse range of affordable, high-quality housing options meet the needs of all community members.

Objective 6. Support opportunities among existing companies and those looking to move to Mount Vernon.

Supporting opportunities for existing companies and those looking to move to Mount Vernon is essential for driving economic growth and fostering innovation. These efforts attract community investment, create jobs, and diversify the economy. By providing necessary resources, strong infrastructure, and a supportive regulatory environment, businesses can thrive and significantly contribute to the community's prosperity. Encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation ensures that the City remains competitive and adaptable in a rapidly changing economic landscape.

6.1 Develop future land use patterns that support economic development goals to provide appropriately located and serviced sites to attract additional private investment and generate jobs.

Develop future land use patterns that align with economic development objectives by designating and preparing sites that are strategically located and well-serviced. This approach aims to attract private investment, stimulate job creation, and ensure sustainable growth. By providing appropriately located and serviced sites, the City can create a favorable environment for businesses to thrive, thereby enhancing the overall economic vitality of the region.

6.2 Expand existing employment concentrations to expand the City's tax base and provide job opportunities for residents.

Focusing on the growth of established employment areas will attract new businesses, support the expansion of current enterprises, and foster a robust local economy. Enhance infrastructure, provide incentives for business development, and ensure that these areas are well-connected to transportation networks. This action increases revenue and ensures residents have access to a diverse range of employment opportunities close to home.

6.3 Improve road and rail connectivity to facilitate private investment and utility service investments, as appropriate.

Upgrade existing roads and rail lines and develop new routes where necessary to facilitate the efficient movement of goods and services. This will also ensure that utility services can be extended to new and existing industrial areas to support economic growth.

Objective 7. Pursue diversification of manufacturing opportunities.

Expanding the range of manufacturing opportunities can enhance economic resilience and stimulate growth by attracting a variety of industries. This approach encourages innovation and reduces dependency on a single sector, making the local economy more adaptable to market changes. By supporting diverse manufacturing ventures, the community can create a broader array of job opportunities and foster a more dynamic business environment.

7.1 Promote development of walkable commercial nodes along key corridors.

To support small businesses and foster a thriving local economy, it is crucial to promote the development of walkable commercial hubs along key corridors. These areas should be designed to be pedestrian-friendly, featuring a variety of shops, restaurants, and services that are easily accessible on foot. By focusing on nodal development rather than continuous strip development, the City can create distinct, vibrant commercial nodes that encourage entrepreneurship and provide opportunities for small businesses to flourish.

7.2 Expand industrial areas on the south side of Mount Vernon to take advantage of the U.S. 36 corridor.

The U.S. 36 corridor is a significant route that runs through Mount Vernon, Ohio, and is crucial to the region's connectivity and economic development. U.S. 36 connects Mount Vernon to major highways, facilitating easy transportation of goods and services. The corridor is well-serviced with necessary infrastructure, including roads, utilities, and communication networks, making it easier for businesses to open and operate. By capitalizing on the corridor's accessibility and connectivity, new industrial and economic developments can be attracted to the city's south and west sides.

7.3 Develop shovel ready land along major road corridors with appropriate utilities in the City to remain competitive for industrial opportunities.

To keep the county attractive for industrial investments, it's essential to have land that is immediately ready for development. This means having parcels of land along major roadways that are already equipped with necessary utilities like water, electricity, and sewage systems. By doing this, the county can quickly accommodate new industrial projects, making it a more appealing location for businesses looking to set up operations.

Objective 8. Create neighborhoods with a variety of attainable housing.

Offering diverse housing options that cater to different income levels and family sizes, can ensure that all residents have access to safe and affordable homes. This approach supports reduced housing insecurity and promotes economic stability. Developing mixed-income neighborhoods also enhances community cohesion and provides opportunities for residents to live near their workplaces, schools, and essential services.

8.1 Revitalize neighborhoods and smaller community areas that have experienced disinvestment.

Encourage new residential investment on vacant parcels in existing neighborhoods to maximize the use of existing utility systems. Invest capital dollars in neighborhood infrastructure to enhance the physical environment. Prioritize sidewalk, crosswalk, and bike connection maintenance to ensure safe access and connectivity within established neighborhoods.

8.2 Create an infill housing strategy.

Identify vacant, zoned parcels with existing utilities to maximize development potential. Partner with the Knox County Land Bank where possible. Consider implementing an incremental development model in codes and processes to strengthen neighborhoods through small-scale projects.

8.3 Prioritize nearby residential development in places within close proximity to employment to provide for future workers and reduce commuting.

Create housing options near employment centers to create convenient living options for employees, making it easier for them to get to work. This approach will reduce travel time and transportation costs and decrease traffic congestion.

8.4 Interconnect residential and employment areas via sidewalks and bike trails to facilitate commuting options.

Developing a network of sidewalks and bike trails that connect residential areas with employment centers can greatly improve commuting options and make the City a more attractive place to work and conduct business.

8.5 Create standards that require a mix of housing types in appropriate locations.

Regulations should mandate that residential development projects in designated areas, which exceed a specified acreage or number of units, must incorporate a variety of housing types. This approach ensures diverse housing options, such as single-family homes, townhouses, and multi-family units, are available within the community.

8.6 Develop higher density multi-family to attract workers to Mount Vernon and Knox County.

Higher-density multi-family housing, which can be available for rent or purchase, offer flexible living options that cater to various needs and preferences. The additional housing choices can make the City a more appealing destination for workers in all industries.

8.7 Explore options and opportunities to provide quality housing for workforce families and seniors.

Assess community needs and identify market gaps to ensure suitable housing solutions for workforce families and seniors. Establish partnerships with non-profits, leverage housing programs, and promote the inclusion of affordable units in new developments. Engage stakeholders to ensure these initiatives are community-driven and inclusive.

8.8 Develop programs that assist with the rehabilitation of older homes to maintain the housing stock.

Support both homeowners and rental property owners in rehabilitation efforts by providing a range of services, from educational resources to financial assistance. Offering guidance on best practices for home repairs and renovations, as well as financial support for necessary improvements through grants or low-interest loans, to help preserve the quality and safety of housing and ensure that older homes remain viable and attractive living options.

8.9 Study and report on the possible implementation of building codes.

Pursue the creation of a professionally prepared, publicly informed report, examining the financial and logistical pros and cons, to the city and tax payer, of building codes and how such codes could be implemented. The report should include a financial and statistical analysis on the benefits and drawbacks of implementing building codes. It should also provide opinions from industry experts, such as those from the building, trades, safety, and insurance industry, on the need and feasibility for building codes. It should also include an overview of best practice models of how other similar communities adopt, fund, and enforce such codes, and a recommended implementation strategy.

The following projects, policies, and programs support the following goals:

People. Healthy and proud residents and workers enjoying the benefits of growth and quality of life that drew—and keeps—they in the County.

Natural and Recreational Amenities. Enhanced natural and recreational amenities are accessible and offer varied opportunities for outdoor enjoyment.

Objective 9. Expand and enhance local services and amenities.

This objective aims to improve the quality of life for residents by investing in and upgrading community resources. By expanding services and amenities, the City can better meet the needs of the population, support responsible growth, and ensure that all residents have access to essential facilities and amenities.

9.1 Develop and sustain partnerships with the university community to enhance the built environment, provide additional physical resources that benefit students and residents, and improve overall quality of life.

Facilitate the creation of collaborative academic, residential, and cultural spaces in Mount Vernon, supported by local universities. Continue to support university investments to enhance the physical environment and foster additional office, retail, cultural, and residential development and redevelopment. Facilitate the creation of collaborative academic, residential, and cultural spaces in supported by local universities.

9.2. Maintain an open dialogue with Mount Vernon City Schools.

This dialogue should focus on ensuring that both Mount Vernon and the school districts are well-informed about growth and development. By sharing information about local options for housing, transportation, and other critical factors, public, private, and non-profit organizations can proactively address these issues. This approach helps make informed decisions that support the community's educational needs and ensures officials are prepared for future developments.

9.3 Enhance access to existing health services and resources.

The physical and mental health needs of the community significantly impact the quality of life. Local organizations such as Knox Public Health, Knox Community Hospital, and the Knox County Community Health Center are dedicated to supporting the community through various health initiatives and programs. Strengthening existing partnerships, developing new local collaborations, and aligning funding with these programs can ensure that residents, particularly the most vulnerable, have access to essential health services.

9.4 Anticipate additional police, fire, and safety service demands concurrent with development proposals.

Align infrastructure investments and major development decisions with public safety services, including police, fire, and EMS. Relevant departments should collaborate to assess fire and EMS coverage as development progresses and plan for future facilities. This coordination may include reviewing major development or redevelopment proposals that meet specific criteria and conducting annual assessments of ongoing development in relation to public safety calls and response times. To support these efforts, use five-year capital improvement planning for facilities, equipment, and personnel.

9.5 Incorporate connectivity in future development and infrastructure upgrades to ensure appropriate response times , thereby enhancing public safety.

A more connected street network can provide greater route options and reduce peak traffic on major arterials. Update development standards and subdivision regulations to include street extensions from new developments to adjacent undeveloped land and cross-access requirements between neighboring mixed-use developments. Require developers to create additional connections between existing streets, where appropriate.

The following projects, policies, and programs support the following goal:

Mobility. Efficient and accessible transportation options connect residents and workers to key destinations, support economic growth, and enhance quality of life.

Objective 10. Bridge gaps in the multimodal network.

Gaps in the sidewalk network and safe crossings persist in the downtown area of Mount Vernon. Building on these efforts, the following recommendations aim to bridge gaps in the multimodal network and create safer, more connected transportation options for all.

10.1 Complete sidewalks and bicycle routes between community destinations where gaps are present.

The 2019 Knox County Active Transportation Plan details prioritized project recommendations that include additional trails, on street bikeways, sidewalks to fill critical bicycle and pedestrian facility gaps in the City.

10.2 Improve accessibility by bringing substandard sidewalks into compliance with ADA requirements.

Equitable access to the transportation system is essential in order to provide all people the ability to reach their destinations. A key component of equitable access is ensuring that sidewalks and crossings meet ADA standards. Grants from programs like the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) can be instrumental. Additionally, consider local funding options such as bonds or special assessments.

10.3 Update zoning code, subdivision regulations, and/or design guidelines to require new developments to have a well-connected street, sidewalk, and bike path network.

A key component to building the active transportation network that the community desires is developing guidelines, policies, and regulations that specify requirements for what type of facilities must be included in new developments and roadway projects. This could include adopting a complete streets policy, developing zoning code changes that require sidewalks on both sides of all streets and specify minimum widths (e.g., 5 feet for residential and 8 feet for commercial areas), or requiring developments to include sidewalks, paths, or specific active transportation friendly street configurations.

10.4 Conduct periodic “walking audits” to monitor changes to and evolving needs of the pedestrian and bicycle network.

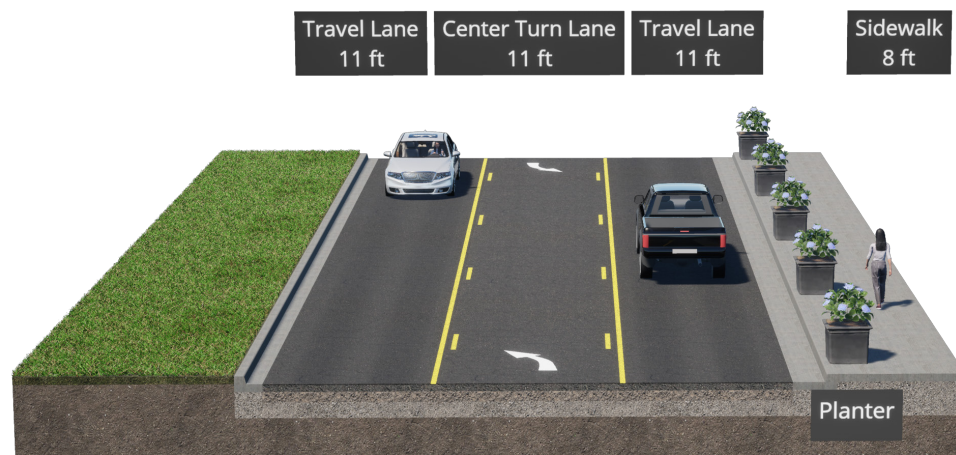
Walk audits involve a multidisciplinary team walking in a key area of focus to identify needs and concerns of the active transportation network. These walk audits can help decision-makers determine priorities and experience the built environment from a different perspective.

Objective 11. Enhance the pedestrian and bicyclist experience.

Many people walk and bike for their commute or for recreation purposes. The environment that they walk or bike in should be comfortable, convenient, and most importantly safe.

11.1 Evaluate streetscape improvements such as increased sidewalk widths, street trees, raised medians, and decorative bollards/railings.

Wider sidewalks can help increase the comfortability of a pedestrian along a busy road, accommodate higher volumes of pedestrian traffic, and allow space for bicyclists, particularly around schools where children could be using the sidewalk to bike. Street trees both enhance the look of the environment around a path and provide shade in the warmer months. Raised medians can help pedestrians and bicyclists cross the street by providing a place of refuge between the two directions of traffic flow. They can also help with managing vehicle traffic and reducing speeds. Decorative bollards or other road separation types protect pedestrians and bicyclists from vehicle traffic with a physical barrier, helping these users to feel more comfortable particularly on busier, higher speed roads. They can also improve the look and feel of a street.



*Decorative planters separating the sidewalk from the road.
Source: Burgess & Niple*

11.2 Incorporate amenities such as lighting, seating, and landscaping at transit stops to encourage use.

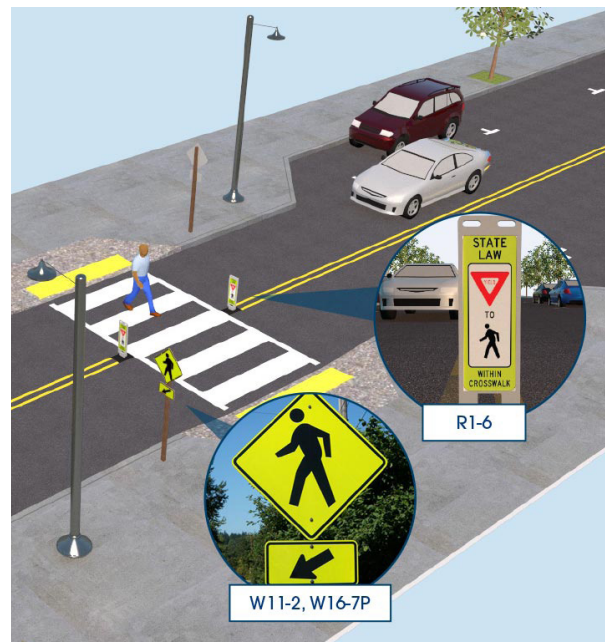
Transit stops should include lighting and seating to enhance safety, visibility, and comfort for riders. Seating along can provide needed breaks for those with mobility challenges and create a welcoming environment for people utilizing the stop. Landscaping can be helpful to enhance the look and feel of the stop and also create a separation from vehicular traffic. These amenities not only provide benefits for current transit users but may also attract new riders.

11.3 Enhance existing crosswalks with high-visibility elements to improve safety.

Safe crossings are a key component of ensuring pedestrian and bicyclist safety. High-visibility elements can include increased lighting, added signage, and high-visibility crosswalk markings (ladder crosswalk).

11.4 Increase bicycle awareness and safety through ongoing planning and coordination with implementation partners.

Continue to update and reference the Knox County Active Transportation Plan to identify gaps and prioritize areas for improvement. Establish partnerships with local advocacy groups to guide safety initiatives. Provide trail crossings recommended in the Knox County Active Transportation where the Heart of Ohio and Kokosing Gap Trails cross State and County roads.



*High-visibility crosswalk enhancements
Source: FHWA*

Objective 12. Relieve congestion and improve roadway safety along regional corridors.

A key principle of this plan is to improve corridors, encompassing increased intensity, accommodating a mix of uses, enhancing the public realm, and improving traffic flow and safety. Mount Vernon roads provide transportation for a diverse range of users including horse and buggy travel, transit, vehicles, and active transportation modes. It is important to continue to improve upon the transportation system with all of these users in mind and with increasing safety at the forefront of decision-making.

12.1 Extend and connect roadways at the periphery of Mount Vernon to provide better circulation and connectivity between major routes and to enable trucks to bypass the downtown area.

Mount Vernon is a main hub for transportation in the county, but heavy truck traffic must pass through the downtown area. This can lead to congestion, safety concerns, and wear on local streets not designed for these heavy vehicles. Extending and connecting roadways at the city's periphery would improve traffic circulation by providing alternate routes for trucks traveling between major highways and destinations.

12.2 Partner with the County to develop an updated City of Mount Vernon Thoroughfare Plan and Access Management Guidelines.

Thoroughfare Plans provide a long-term vision for the transportation network, identifying key roads and corridors that will need improvements or expansions to accommodate changes in the region. Access Management Guidelines focus on how driveways, intersections, and other access points are designed to improve traffic flow, reduce congestion, and enhance safety. These updated guidelines will help control where and how new accesses to roadways are created, making the transportation system safer and more efficient.

11.3 Increase the number and/or frequency of transit routes to high-demand areas.

Past planning efforts have identified a demand for more frequent transit routes and an expanded transit system. The county should work with the transit authority to determine potential ways to improve transit for residents in the region.

7

Implementation



The Knox County Comprehensive Plan serves as a long-term policy guide for the community, detailing a wide range of actions. Implementing this plan will require collaboration among county, city, village, and township governments, non-profit organizations, local businesses, and residents. This chapter offers guidance on managing and utilizing the plan, including a summary of all identified actions. While much care has been given to the plan's actions, the County should be opportunistic in pursuing other actions that would support its vision and goals.

Promoting Collaboration

The Together Knox Comprehensive Plan will necessitate collaboration among individuals and organizations from diverse geographies, backgrounds, industries, and communities within Knox County. Active community involvement is crucial to ensure that actions are aligned with the community's interests. This comprehensive plan is a dynamic document, serving as a foundation for Knox County to realize its unified vision for the future.

How to Use the Plan

Together Knox is intended to be used on a daily basis for both public and private decisions. It should be considered regarding development proposals, capital improvements, economic incentives, and other matters pertaining to the future of Knox County and its communities. The following is a summary of how decisions and processes should align with the vision and goals of this plan.

- **Capital Improvements.** Capital Improvement Programs (CIPs) for the county, city, and villages should be consistent with the plan's goals and actions. This includes decisions about the provision of utilities, as this plan encourages development where utilities already exist or are easily accessible.
- **Economic Incentives.** Economic incentives should be considered and prioritized relative to their consistency with the plan's actions and areas of growth or investment identified.
- **Private Development Decisions.** Property owners and developers should align their plans with the vision and goals of the plan. Public decision makers can use it to assess if private development meets the County's needs and aspirations.
- **Development Approvals.** Administrative and legislative approvals for development proposals should be used as a means of implementing the plan. Decisions made by the county should reference relevant comprehensive plan actions as well as future conservation, character and development and character type recommendations.
- **Annual Work Programs.** Individual departments, administrators, boards, and commissions should be aware of the goals and actions of the plan when preparing annual work programs and budgets. It is recommended that progress on implementation of the plan be shared with the community, see implementation actions for more information.

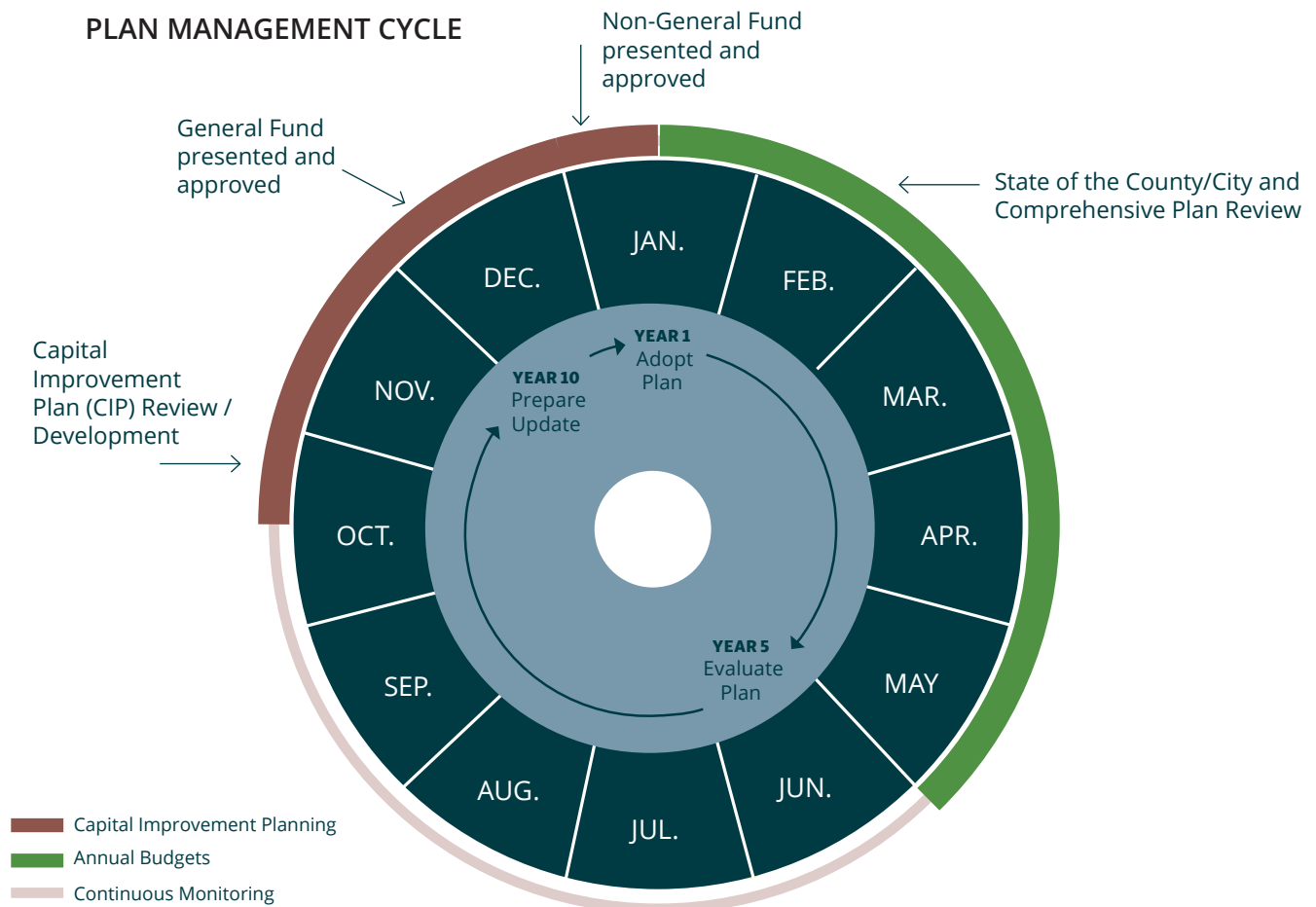
Roles of Local Government

Under Ohio law, units of local government have various functions and authorities in managing growth and development, which are summarized below. In addition to such legal authorities, units of local government can enter into collaborative Inter-governmental Agreements (IGA) to jointly undertake a variety of services, such as joint provision of services (water, fire protection, etc.), policy coordination and information sharing, joint review of development, and Joint Economic Development Districts (JEDD).

- **County.** Authority to adopt and implement subdivision regulations for the creation of parcels to support development; health regulations for managing on-site water and wastewater facilities; thoroughfare plan and access management standards to manage the public road network; engineering standards for the review and approval of public improvements relative to development; building codes to regulate residential and commercial development; stormwater regulations to manage on- and offsite drainage related to development; provide water and sanitary sewer services; incentives to support economic development; and adoption of sales taxes and fees to raise revenues for public services and facilities.
- **Townships.** Authority to regulate the use and intensity of development through zoning resolutions; design guidelines for informing public and private development decisions; code enforcement; incentives to support economic development; and adoption of property taxes and fees to raise revenues for public services and facilities. Under the Ohio Revised Code, townships have the ability to enact limited home rule.
- **Cities and Villages.** Authority to adopt and implement subdivision regulations for the creation of parcels to support development; code enforcement; thoroughfare plans and access management standards to manage the public road network; engineering standards for the review and approval of public improvements relative to development; capital improvement planning; building codes to regulate residential and commercial development; stormwater regulations to manage on- and off-site drainage related to development; provide water, sanitary sewer, and stormwater services; incentives to support economic development; and adoption of property and income taxes and fees to raise revenues for public services and facilities.

Updating and Tracking

The diagram below illustrates the timeline that will be used for implementation and maintenance of the Comprehensive Plan. It also shows how major milestones are connected to annual county processes. The plan should be assessed for progress and effectiveness according to this timeline. If changes or opportunities arise, those should be integrated into the management cycle.



Monitoring

The plan should be monitored on a regular basis for implementation, effectiveness, and relevancy. It should be referenced annually in the development of departmental work programs, budgets, and capital improvements planning. A formal review of the plan's accomplishments and relevancy should occur within five-year intervals.

Updating

In general, an update of the plan should be considered at least every ten years. In Central Ohio, with the anticipated growth, a five-year update may be more prudent. In the interim, key milestones may be reached which necessitate an update sooner than a ten-year cycle. Such milestones should be considered on a case-by-case basis. There may be circumstances that warrant formal amendment of the plan. Amendments to the plan should be made only with careful consideration and compelling justification.

Actions

The following projects, policies, and programs support the implementation of the Knox County Comprehensive Plan.

Objective 1. Implement the Knox County Comprehensive Plan.

The following actions will help ensure ongoing success with implementing the Comprehensive Plan and ensuring long-lasting success in Knox County,

1.1 Create a Plan Implementation Task Force.

The task force should comprise of the most relevant stakeholders in the County and should meet quarterly or biannually to prioritize and execute the recommendations in the plan document.

1.2. Report progress at commissioners meetings.

Create a dedicated "Planning" section in the quarterly meeting agendas for the Knox County Commissioners. This section will enable the County and local jurisdictions to provide updates on the progress of plan implementation.

1.3 Integrate plan priorities into County and City annual budget discussions.

Consider requiring departmental work programs and capital requests to identify support of such proposals and requests relative to the Knox County Comprehensive Plan's vision, goals, objectives, and actions. Consider implementing similar requirements in City departments relative to the Mount Vernon Growth Strategy's vision, goals, objectives, and actions.

1.4 Create a grant finder or coordinator position to identify and secure grants for plan related activities.

The grant finder or coordinator should be focused on all components of the plan. The position should be within an organization with a county-wide scope.

Matrix

The following table provides more information on each action including timeframes and identification of lead and supporting entities.

Timeframe Key

Short

(0 - 2 Years)

Mid

(2 - 5 Years)

Long

(6 - 10 Years)

Ongoing

(Continuous)

Entities Key

ADF = Area Development Foundation

Cnty Com = Knox County Commissioners Office

Council = Mount Vernon City Council

Engineer = Knox County Engineer

Fire = All Knox County Fire Departments and Districts

Health = Knox Public Health

KCCP TF = Knox County Comprehensive Plan Implementation Task Force

KCCVB = Knox County Convention & Visitors Bureau

KMHA = Knox Metropolitan Housing Authority

KNLB = Knox County Land Bank

MORPC = Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission

MPC = Mount Vernon Municipal Planning Commission

Municips = All Villages/Cities in Knox County

MV Engineer = Mount Vernon Engineering Department

MV Parks and Rec = Mount Vernon Parks and Recreation Department

MV WW = Mount Vernon Water and Wastewater Department

ODA = Ohio Department of Agriculture

ODOT = Ohio Department of Transportation

OEPA = Ohio Environmental Protection Agency

OSU Extn = Ohio State University Extension

Park = Knox County Park District

Post-sec = All Knox County Post-Secondary Schools

Police = All Knox County Police Departments

RPC = Knox County Regional Planning Commission

Schools = All Knox County School Districts

SWCD = Knox County Soil and Water Conservation District

Townships = All Townships in Knox County

Transit = Knox County Transit

Utilities = All Knox County Utility Providers

Funding Key:

Admin = Local Administrative Budget

CDBG = Community Development Block Grants

COH-GC = Clean Ohio Greenspace Conservation Fund

CIP = Capital Improvement Program

CRA = Community Reinvestment Area

JOBSON = Jobs Ohio Revitalization Fund

LFG = Local Area Foundation Grants

ODH = Ohio Department of Health Grants

ODNR = Ohio Department of Natural Resources Grants

ODNR-NW = ODNR Nature Works Grants

ODOT = Ohio Department of Transportation Grant Programs

ODOT-TA = Ohio Department of Transportation Transportation Alternatives Program

OEPA = Ohio Environmental Protection Agency Funds

USDA = United States Department of Agriculture Grant Programs

USDOT = US Department of Transportation Grant Programs

Conservation, Character, and Development

The following projects, policies, and programs support the goals of **Rural Conservation, Strengthened Centers, and Land Use and Development**.

Objective 1: Conserve critical natural assets and prime agricultural land.				
ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT	FUNDING
1.1 Promote opportunities and efforts to protect critical natural resources.	Ongoing	Cnty Com, RPC	SWCD, OSU Extn, Municipis, Township	Admin, ODNR, COH-GC, USDA
1.2 Adopt development standards that cluster development and permanently conserve natural assets.	Short	Cnty Com, RPC	Engineer, Townships, Municipis	Admin
1.3 Explore a full range of measures to protect prime agricultural areas from the intrusion of residential uses that might otherwise create conflicts.	Long	RPC	Cnty Com, Townships, ODA	USDA,
1.4 Continue to promote agricultural conservation programs and practices, while considering alternative funding sources.	Mid	RPC	OSU Extn, Cnty Com, Townships, ODA	USDA, ODNR
1.5 Establish and continue partnerships to conserve working farms throughout Knox County.	Ongoing	Cnty Com	RPC, SWCD, OSU Extn, ODA	USDA, OFB-GTG,
1.6 Revise regulations to discourage development in areas that go against the objectives of this Comprehensive Plan.	Mid	RPC, Cnty Com	Townships, Municipis	Admin

Objective 2: Enhance rural character.

ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT	FUNDING
2.1 Update County subdivision regulations to promote conservation development design and work with townships to provide comparable measures in local zoning resolutions.	Short	RPC	Cnty Com, Townships	Admin
2.2 Increase minimum lot sizes in primarily agricultural areas to reduce residential densities and discourage the development of rural subdivisions.	Mid	RPC	Cnty Com, Townships	Admin
2.3 Investigate appropriate alternatives to on-lot septic and wells.	Mid	RPC	Engineer	Admin
2.4 Provide protections for rural view sheds.	Long	Cnty Com, RPC	Municips, Townships	Admin, ODNR
2.5 Incorporate viewshed analysis into subdivision regulations.	Long	RPC	Cnty Com, Engineer	Admin
2.6 Develop a template for township zoning regulations that includes design standards, viewshed analysis, and conservation principles.	Mid	RPC	Townships	Admin
2.7 Mitigate conflicts and educate stakeholders as to the realities of living in an agricultural community.	Ongoing	Cnty Com	Municips, Townships	Admin

Objective 3: Focus growth and development inward.

ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT	FUNDING
3.1 Adopt regulations that encourage infill and redevelopment in city and village centers and support higher-density mixed-use projects in downtown areas.	Mid	Cnty Com, Municips, Townships	RPC, MORPC	Admin
3.2 Implement measures that add value to existing infill sites.	Short	Municips, Townships	RPC, MORPC	Admin

Objective 3: Focus growth and development inward.

ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT	FUNDING
3.3 Update zoning and subdivision regulations to ensure new growth in the city and villages remains compatible with existing scale, form, and intensity of use.	Mid	Municips, Townships	RPC, MORPC	Admin
3.4 Update subdivision design standards.	Mid	RPC	Engineer	Admin
3.5 Support the Downtown Experience Coordinator position.	Ongoing	Cnty Com	Municips	Admin

Objective 4: Optimize and improve infrastructure networks.

ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT	FUNDING
4.1 Prepare a Knox County Water Quality Management Plan.	Mid	OEPA, Cnty Com	Utilities	OEPA
4.2 Develop a comprehensive map of Knox County's water and wastewater systems.	Short	Engineer	Utilities, Municips	Admin
4.3 Adopt a water conservation and reuse strategy.	Long	Cnty Com, Engineer	OEPA, Utilities	Admin
4.4 Promote development on vacant and under-utilized parcels with infrastructure services.	Mid	Municips, RPC	Cnty Com	Admin
4.5 Prioritize infill and redevelopment in the existing system service areas before considering system expansions.	Short	Municips, RPC	Cnty Com	Admin
4.6 Focus attention on major corridors to minimize sprawl, enhance safety, and reduce congestion.	Mid	Engineer	Municips, Townships	Admin

Economic, Workforce, and Housing Resilience

The following projects, policies, and programs support the goals of **Economic Prosperity and Housing**.

Objective 1: Support opportunities among existing companies and those looking to move to Knox County.

ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT	FUNDING
1.1 Develop future land use patterns that support economic development goals to provide appropriately located and serviced sites to attract additional private investment and generate jobs.	Long	RPC, Municipals, Townships	ADF, Cnty Com	Admin
1.2 Expand existing employment concentrations to grow the County's tax base and provide job opportunities for residents.	Long	ADF	Cnty Com, Municipals, Townships	Admin
1.3 Improve road and rail connectivity to facilitate private investment and utility service investments, as appropriate.	Short	Engineer, Municipals, Townships	ADF, Cnty Com, RPC	CIP, ODOT, USDOT

Objective 2: Pursue diversification of manufacturing opportunities.

ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT	FUNDING
2.1 Promote development of walkable commercial nodes along key corridors.	Mid	RDF, Municipals	Cnty Com	CIP, ODOT-TA, CDBG
2.2 Expand industrial areas on the south side of Mount Vernon to take advantage of the U.S. 36 corridor.	Mid	Municipals	ADF	Admin, CDBG, CRA
2.3 Expand industrial areas on the west/northwest side of Fredericktown adjacent to OH 13 and OH 95.	Mid	Municipals	ADF	CDBG, CRA, JOBSOH
2.4 Develop a new commercial and industrial center in the Centerburg area.	Long	Municipals	ADF	CDBG, CRA, JOBSOH
2.5 Develop shovel ready land along major road corridors with appropriate utilities to remain competitive for industrial opportunities.	Mid	Municipals, Townships	ADF, Cnty Com, RPC	CDBG, JOBSOH

Objective 3: Strengthen the talent pipeline.

ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT	FUNDING
3.1 Organize a session to discuss the workforce needs in biomedicine and food manufacturing showcasing successful programs, and evaluate how well Knox County's educational institutions (K-12 and higher education) can meet these needs.	Short	ADF	Post-sec, Schools	Admin, LFG
3.2 Create and implement a strategy to recruit and retain young workers in the County.	Mid	Cnty Com	ADF	Admin
3.3 Continue coordination between Knox County's schools and in-demand employers through the Business Advisory Council.	Ongoing	Cnty Com, ADF	Schools	Admin

Objective 4: Create neighborhoods with a variety of attainable housing.

ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT	FUNDING
4.1 Revitalize neighborhoods and smaller community areas that have experienced disinvestment.	Long	Municips	RPC	Admin, CDBG
4.2 Create an infill housing strategy for the County's city and villages.	Mid	RPC	KNLB, Municips	Admin
4.3 Prioritize nearby residential development in places within close proximity to employment to provide for future workers and reduce commuting.	Short	Municips, Townships	RPC, Cnty Com	Admin, CDBG
4.4 Create standards that require a mix of housing types in appropriate locations.	Mid	Municips	RPC	Admin
4.5 Explore options and opportunities to provide quality housing for workforce families and seniors.	Ongoing	Municips	Cnty Com, KMHA	Admin, CDBG

Objective 4: Create neighborhoods with a variety of attainable housing.

ACTION		TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT	FUNDING
4.6	Develop programs that assist with the rehabilitation of older homes to maintain the housing stock.	Long	Municips	Cnty Com, KMHA	Admin, CDBG

Objective 5: Strengthen community identity and promote tourism through strategic branding initiatives.

ACTION		TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT	FUNDING
4.1	Pursue a countywide branding effort.	Mid	Cnty Com	ADF, KCCVB	Admin
4.2	Foster stronger partnerships with the Knox County Convention and Visitors Bureau and other tourism-related organizations to improve the visitor experience in the County.	Ongoing	Cnty Com	KCCVB	Admin

Quality of Life

The following projects, policies, and programs support the goals of **People and Natural and Recreational Amenities**.

Objective 1. Expand and enhance local services and amenities.				
ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT	FUNDING
1.1 Develop and sustain partnerships with the university community to enhance the built environment to benefit students and residents.	Mid	Cnty Com, Municipis	Post-sec	Admin
1.2 Maintain an open dialogue with Knox County school districts.	Ongoing	Cnty Com, Municipis	Schools	Admin
1.3 Enhance access to existing health services and resources.	Mid	Health	Cnty Com	ODH
1.4 Anticipate additional police, fire, and safety service demands concurrent with development proposals.	Ongoing	RPC	Police, Fire	Admin
1.5 Incorporate connectivity in future development and infrastructure upgrades to ensure appropriate response times, thereby enhancing public safety.	Long	RPC, Engineer	Police, Fire	Admin
Objective 2: Strengthen access to and conservation of natural spaces, parks, and greenways.				
ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT	FUNDING
2.1 Conserve stream corridors, woodlands, and wetlands.	Long	RPC	Cnty Com, SWCD	COH-GC, ODNR
2.2 Prepare a Parks and Open Space Plan.	Mid	Park	Cnty Com, Municipis	Admin
2.3 Strengthen and connect Knox County parks while being open to new acquisitions.	Long	Park	RPC, Cnty Com, Municipis, Townships	ODNR, LFG

Objective 2: Strengthen access to and conservation of natural spaces, parks, and greenways.

ACTION		TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT	FUNDING
2.4	Expand sources of funding for parks and greenways.	Mid	Park	Cnty Com	ODNR, LFG
2.5	Seek joint-use easements for trail systems within existing and proposed drainage, utility, and right-of-way corridors.	Ongoing	RPC	Park, Engineer	Admin, ODNR, ODOT-TA
2.6	Set aside rights-of-way or easements for future greenways as development is planned.	Ongoing	RPC	Park, Engineer	Admin, ODNR

Mobility

The following projects, policies, and programs support the goal of **Mobility**.

Objective 1. Bridge gaps in the multimodal network.				
ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT	FUNDING
1.1 Complete sidewalks and bicycle routes between community destinations where gaps are present.	Mid	Municips	Engineer, RPC	ODOT-TA, CDBG
1.2 Determine feasibility of expanding the County trail system to connect Fredericktown with the Heart of Ohio Trail and/or Kokosing Gap Trail.	Long	Park	Engineer	Admin, ODNR, ODOT-TA
1.3 Conduct periodic “walking audits” to monitor changes to and evolving needs of the pedestrian and bicycle network.	Short	Municips, Park	Engineer	Admin
1.4 Improve accessibility by bringing substandard sidewalks into compliance with ADA requirements.	Long	Municips	Engineer	Admin, ODOT-TA
1.5 Update zoning code, subdivision regulations, and/or design guidelines to require new developments to have a well-connected street, sidewalk, and bike path network.	Mid	Municips	RPC	Admin
Objective 2: Enhance the pedestrian and bicyclist experience.				
ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT	FUNDING
2.1 Incorporate amenities such as lighting, seating, and landscaping at transit stops to encourage use.	Mid	Municips	Engineer	Admin
2.2 Implement streetscape improvements such as increased sidewalk widths, street trees, raised medians, and decorative bollards/ railings.	Short	Municips	Engineer	Admin

Objective 2: Enhance the pedestrian and bicyclist experience.				
ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT	FUNDING
2.3 Enhance existing crosswalks with high-visibility elements to improve safety.	Mid	Municips	Engineer	Admin
2.4 Increase bicycle awareness and safety through ongoing planning and coordination with implementation partners.	Ongoing	Cnty Com	Municips, Townships	Admin, ODH
Objective 3. Relieve congestion and improve roadway safety along regional corridors.				
ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT	FUNDING
3.1 Conduct studies to identify potential capacity and/or operational improvements along high-volume roadways including SR 229 between I-71 in Morrow County and Mount Vernon, US 36, and SR 661 between Granville in Licking County and Mount Vernon.	Mid	Engineer, Municips, Townships	ODOT	Admin, ODOT, USDOT
3.2 Improve east-west roadway mobility across Knox County. Study the following potential improvements: Extend Sycamore Rd to provide improved east-west connectivity in the southern portion of the County; Major upgrades to SR 229 west of Mount Vernon and on US 36 east of Mount Vernon.	Mid	Engineer, Municips, Townships	ODOT	Admin, ODOT, USDOT
3.3 Extend and connect roadways at the periphery of Mount Vernon to provide better circulation and connectivity between major routes and to enable trucks to bypass the downtown area.	Long	Engineer, Municips, Townships	ODOT	Admin, ODOT, USDOT
3.4 Update the Knox County and City of Mount Vernon Thoroughfare Plans and Access Management Guidelines.	Mid	Municips, Engineer	ODOT	Admin, ODOT
3.5 Implement visibility improvements for horse and buggy travel including installation of LED lights or reflective tape to prevent collisions with motor vehicles.	Short	Engineer, Municips, Townships	Cnty Com	Admin, ODOT
3.6 Increase the number and/or frequency of transit routes to high-demand areas.	Long	Transit, Cnty Com	Municips,	Admin

Mount Vernon Growth Strategy

The following projects, programs, and policies support the goals of the Mount Vernon Growth Strategy.

Objective 1: Conserve critical natural assets.				
ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT	FUNDING
1.1 Promote opportunities and efforts to permanently protect critical natural resources.	Ongoing	Council	SWCD, MPC	Admin, ODNR, COH-GC,
1.2 Revise regulations to discourage development in areas that go against the objectives of this Growth Strategy.	Mid	MPC	Council	Admin
Objective 2: Focus growth and development inward.				
ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT	FUNDING
2.1 Adopt regulations that encourage infill and redevelopment in the city center and support higher-density mixed-use projects.	Mid	MPC	Council, MORPC	Admin
2.2 Implement measures that add value to existing infill sites.	Short	Council	MORPC	Admin
2.3 Update regulations to require sufficient setbacks, screening/landscaping, and reduced lighting to minimize impacts by industrial users.	Mid	MPC	Council, MV Engineer	Admin
Objective 3: Enhance the vibrancy of downtown Mount Vernon to establish it as a lively, desirable destination where people want to live, work, and visit.				
ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT	FUNDING
3.1 Mix residential, office, and academic spaces to create a vibrant, walking destination.	Mid	MPC	Council	Admin, CDBG
3.2 Update codes to allow horizontal and vertical mixed use in new buildings.	Mid	MPC	Council, MV Engineer	Admin

Objective 3: Enhance the vibrancy of downtown Mount Vernon to establish it as a lively, desirable destination where people want to live, work, and visit.

ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT	FUNDING
3.3 Provide for sufficient retail uses to meet local needs.	Long	Council	MV Engineer	Admin, CDBG
3.4 Create pedestrian and bike connections with Mount Vernon Nazarene University and downtown Mount Vernon.	Long	Council	MV Engineer, MV Parks and Rec	ODOT-TA, CDBG

Objective 4: Revitalize the Coshocton Avenue Corridor.

ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT	FUNDING
4.1 Develop codes to allow appropriate higher density uses on vacant sites and underdeveloped sites.	Short	MPC	Council, MV Engineer	Admin
4.2 Adopt an overlay zoning district west of Adams Run that supports a walkable built environment.	Mid	MPC	Council, MV Engineer	Admin
4.3 Adopt an overlay zoning district east of Adams Run that supports a larger scale, walkable built environment.	Mid	MPC	Council, MV Engineer	Admin

Objective 5: Optimize and improve infrastructure networks.

ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT	FUNDING
5.1 Adopt a water conservation and reuse strategy.	Long	MV WW	OEPA, MV Engineer, Council	Admin
5.2 Promote development on vacant and under-utilized parcels with infrastructure services.	Mid	MV Engineer	Council, MPC	Admin

Objective 5: Optimize and improve infrastructure networks.

ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT	FUNDING
5.3 Prioritize infill and redevelopment in the existing system service areas before considering system expansions.	Short	Council	MV Engineer, MPC	Admin
5.4 Focus attention on major corridors to minimize sprawl, enhance safety, and reduce congestion.	Ongoing	Council, MPC	MV Engineer	Admin

Objective 6. Support opportunities among existing companies and those looking to move to Mount Vernon.

ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT	FUNDING
6.1 Develop future land use patterns that support economic development goals to provide appropriately located and serviced sites to attract additional private investment and generate jobs.	Long	MPC	Council	Admin
6.2 Expand existing employment concentrations to expand the City's tax base and provide job opportunities for residents.	Long-	ADF	Council	Admin
6.3 Improve road and rail connectivity to facilitate private investment and utility service investments, as appropriate.	Short	MV Engineer	Council, ADF	CIP, ODOT, USDOT

Objective 7. Pursue diversification of manufacturing opportunities.

ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT	FUNDING
7.1 Promote development of walkable commercial nodes along key corridors.	Mid	MPC	Council	CIP, ODOT-TA, CDBG
7.2 Expand industrial areas on the south side of Mount Vernon to take advantage of the U.S. 36 corridor.	Mid	Council	ADF	Admin, CDBG, CRA
7.3 Develop shovel ready land along major road corridors with appropriate utilities in the City to remain competitive for industrial opportunities.	Mid	Council	ADF, MPC	CDBG, JOBSOH

Objective 8: Create neighborhoods with a variety of attainable housing.

ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT	FUNDING
8.1 Revitalize neighborhoods and smaller community areas that have experienced disinvestment.	Long-	Council	MPC	Admin, CDBG
8.2 Create an infill housing strategy.	Mid	Council	MPC	Admin
8.3 Prioritize nearby residential development in places within close proximity to employment to provide for future workers and reduce commuting.	Short	Council	MPC	Admin, CDBG
8.4 Interconnect residential and employment areas via sidewalks and bike trails to facilitate commuting options.	Long	MPC	MV Engineer	Admin, ODOT-TA
8.5 Create standards that require a mix of housing types in appropriate locations.	Mid	MPC	Council	Admin
8.6 Develop higher density multi-family to attract workers to Mount Vernon and Knox County.	Mid	Council	MPC	Admin, CDBG
8.7 Explore options and opportunities to provide quality housing for workforce families and seniors.	Long	Council	KMHA	Admin, CDBG
8.8 Develop programs that assist with the rehabilitation of older homes to maintain the housing stock.	Mid	Council	KMHA	Admin, CDBG
8.9 Study and report on the possible implementation of building codes.	Mid	Council	MV Engineer, MPC	Admin

Objective 9: Expand and enhance local services and amenities..

ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT	FUNDING
9.1 Develop and sustain partnerships with the university community to enhance the built environment, provide additional physical resources that benefit students and residents, and improve overall quality of life.	Mid-Term	Council	Post-sec	Admin

Objective 9: Expand and enhance local services and amenities..

ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT	FUNDING
9.2 Maintain an open dialogue with Mount Vernon City Schools.	Ongoing	Council	Schools	Admin
9.3 Enhance access to existing health services and resources.	Mid	Council	Health	Admin, ODH
9.4 Anticipate additional police, fire, and safety service demands concurrent with development proposals.	Ongoing	Council	Police, Fire	Admin

Objective 10. Bridge gaps in the multimodal network.

ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT	FUNDING
10.1 Complete sidewalks and bicycle routes between community destinations where gaps are present.	Mid	MV Engineer	Council	ODOT-TA, CDBG
10.2 Improve accessibility by bringing substandard sidewalks into compliance with ADA requirements.	Long	MV Engineer	Council	Admin
10.3 Update zoning code, subdivision regulations, and/or design guidelines to require new developments to have a well-connected street, sidewalk, and bike path network.	Mid	MPC	Council, MV Engineer	Admin, ODOT-TA
10.4 Conduct periodic “walking audits” to monitor changes to and evolving needs of the pedestrian and bicycle network.	Short	MV Engineer	Council	Admin

Objective 11: Enhance the pedestrian and bicyclist experience.

ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT	FUNDING
11.1 Evaluate streetscape improvements such as increased sidewalk widths, street trees, raised medians, and decorative bollards/ railings.	Short	MV Engineer	Council	Admin
11.2 Incorporate amenities such as lighting, seating, and landscaping at transit stops to encourage use.	Mid	MV Engineer	Council	Admin
11.3 Enhance existing crosswalks with high-visibility elements to improve safety.	Mid-Term	MV Engineer	Council	Admin
11.4 Increase bicycle awareness and safety through ongoing planning and coordination with implementation partners.	Ongoing	Council	MV Parks and Rec	Admin, ODH

Objective 12: Relieve congestion and improve roadway safety along regional corridors.

ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT	FUNDING
12.1 Extend and connect roadways at the periphery of Mount Vernon to provide better circulation and connectivity between major routes and to enable trucks to bypass the downtown area.	Long	MV Engineer	Council, Cnty Com	Admin, ODOT, USDOT
12.2 Partner with the County to develop an updated Knox County and City of Mount Vernon Thoroughfare Plan and Access Management Guidelines.	Mid	Council	MV Engineer, ODOT	Admin, ODOT
12.3 Increase the number and/or frequency of transit routes to high-demand areas.	Long	Transit, Council	Cnty Com	Admin, ODOT
12.4 Increase bicycle awareness and safety through ongoing planning and coordination with implementation partners.	Ongoing	Council	MV Parks and Rec	Admin

Implementation

The following projects, programs, and policies support the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.

Objective 1: Implement the Knox County Comprehensive Plan.				
ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT	FUNDING
1.1 Create a Plan Implementation Task Force.	Short	Cnty Com	ADF, RPC	Admin
1.2 Report progress at commissioners meetings.	Short	RPC	Task Force	Admin
1.3 Integrate plan priorities into County and City annual budget discussions.	Short	Cnty Com	RPC	Admin
1.4 Create a grant finder or coordinator position to identify and secure grants for plan related activities.	Short	Cnty Com	ADF	Admin

8

Glossary



Agriculture.

The science or practice of farming, including cultivation of the soil for growing crops and the rearing of animals to provide food and other products.

Industrial Agriculture.

The large-scale, intensive production of crops and animals and animal products.

Buffer.

A strip of land created to separate and protect one type of land use from another; for example, as a screen of planting or fencing to insulate the surroundings from the noise, smoke, or visual aspects of an industrial zone or junkyard.

Conservation Development (Conservation Subdivision).

A residential development that prioritizes preserving some of the land, these subdivisions typically set aside 50% or more of a development site as permanent open space that can be farmed, used as recreational space, or set aside as a natural area.

Conservation Easement.

A voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or government entity that permanently limits uses of land to protect its conservation values. Landowners continue to own and manage their land and retain the right to sell the land or pass it on to future generations.

Density.

The average number of people, families, or housing units on one unit of land. Density is also expressed as dwelling units per acre.

Density Bonus.

Allows developers to build in specified areas densities that are higher than normally allowed.

Development Rights.

Development rights give property owners the right to develop land in ways that comply with local land use regulation.

Environmentally Sensitive Area.

Environmentally sensitive areas have special environmental attributes worthy of retention or special care in order to maintain habitat and open space, provide stormwater management, control flood and erosion effects, and protect surface and groundwater quality.

Farm.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines a farm as any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the year.

Family Farm.

Historically, it was common for a family to provide all the labor for a farm and to own all the farm's land and capital. That is no longer true today, although the extent to which individual farms hire nonfamily labor, rent-in land or other capital, or contract for various farm services varies across farms.

Working Farm.

A farm whose agricultural land and buildings are in active use for crop production and/or the raising of livestock.

Farm Typology:

The USDA Economic Research Service groups farms into three similar groups:

Residence Farms. Farms with less than \$350,000 in gross cash farm income and where the principal operator is either retired from farming or has a primary occupation other than farming.

Intermediate Farms. Farms with less than \$350,000 in gross cash farm income and a principal operator whose primary occupation is farming.

Commercial Farms. Farms with \$350,000 or more gross cash farm income and nonfamily farms.

Frontage.

The continuous linear distance along any approved way, measured on the street line, between the side lot lines.

Infill Development.

Development of vacant land (usually individual lots or leftover properties) within areas that are already largely developed.

Infrastructure.

Water and sewer lines, roads, urban transit lines, schools and other public facilities needed to support developed areas.

Land Trust.

A community-based, nonprofit organization that actively works to conserve land permanently. Often, they protect open space via conservation or agriculture easements – a tool that allows private landowners to conserve their land while maintaining ownership. Land trusts can also protect land by purchasing it outright.

Land Use.

The manner in which a parcel of land is used or occupied.

Mixed-Use Development (Horizontal).

A project which integrates a variety of land uses such as residential, office, commercial, service and employment across a development site and can result in measurable reductions in traffic impacts.

Mixed-Use Development (Vertical).

A proposed development that includes non-residential and residential uses within the same building.

Node.

A place where people and transportation routes converge or congregate, a centralized space that could be the focal point of an area.

Open Space.

Refers to land that is left undeveloped, often used for recreation, conservation, or agricultural purposes, including parks, natural areas like forests and grasslands, farms, wetlands, and stream corridors, whether publicly or privately owned; essentially, land set aside for uses other than heavy urban development.

Overlay Districts.

Zoning districts in which additional regulatory standards are superimposed on existing zoning. Overlay districts provide a method of placing special restrictions in addition to those required by basic zoning ordinances.

Primary Uses.

The main use to which the premises is devoted and the primary purpose for which the premises exists.

Redevelopment.

Demolition and reconstruction or substantial renovation of existing buildings or infrastructure.

Secondary Uses.

Uses that support primary uses. By example, a garage is a secondary use on a site that permits single-family homes (in that case, it can also be classified as an accessory use for zoning purposes). Retail uses can serve as a secondary use to employment uses in that it provides services and goods that support the primary use.

Stream Corridor.

Intricate ecosystems that include stream channels, their banks, riparian zones, and the flora and fauna within them.

Subdivision.

A subdivision occurs as the result of dividing land into lots for sale or development.

Wetland.

Land area that is saturated or covered by water for a significant portion of the year, either continuously or periodically. Home to a wide variety of plants and wildlife.

Woodland.

Area of land on which many trees grow, function as important wildlife habitat and improve water quality.

Zoning Ordinance.

A zoning ordinance contains regulations designed to implement the master plan, while regulating the use of property, buildings and structures to promote the health, safety and general welfare of the community.

