

ASHLAND COUNTY, OHIO
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Approved by
Ashland County Commissioners

February 2000

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Ashland County Comprehensive Plan

Purpose

The Ashland County Comprehensive Plan represents a new long-term vision for the future development of Ashland County. The reason this plan was developed was because of a growing recognition that physical change is occurring. Change is occurring as new homes are constructed, as new businesses open, and as traffic increases. Many people view recent construction activity and related changes as the positive signs of a healthy and expanding local economy. However, it became clear during the planning process that there are hints of a growing uneasiness about the direction of change in Ashland County. Local leaders and residents do not need to look far outside the limits of Ashland County to see strong evidence of urban sprawl, poorly planned development, and communities that simply do not properly plan for change.

This plan is Ashland County's response to the difficult and challenging task of defining a long-term vision for future development. It is not an effort to stop growth, nor is it an effort to encourage growth. The focus is on managing change and defining what residents and community leaders want Ashland County to look like in the next 20 years. It also represents a definition of policies and initiatives that need to be taken to achieve specific goals.

An interesting point was raised early that captures a fundamental and important thought concerning why this plan is important. As long-term development issues were presented and discussed among members of the Steering Committee, it was recognized that the reason for preparing this comprehensive plan is for a select group of residents—the children of Ashland County. Over the next 20 years, many public and private decisions will be made that will shape physical change in Ashland County. In many ways, the people with the most to gain and lose from these decisions are today's children. A key element of this plan, therefore, is to help guide future public and private decisions so that Ashland County will be a more livable, healthy, and beautiful place for future generations.

Plan Organization

The Ashland County Comprehensive Plan has been organized into two documents. This document describes the actual plan for the physical development of Ashland County for the next 20 years. It contains only a summary of characteristics of Ashland County and is focused on the definition of a long-term vision for the County and the steps needed to achieve community goals.

A separate document was also produced as part of the planning process titled Ashland County Comprehensive Plan—County Profile. This document was produced because the development of a comprehensive plan always requires considerable information gathering in order to identify important characteristics, key social and economic trends, and development patterns. Information in this document is primarily limited to factual data and descriptive information about Ashland County.

Rather than producing one large document, the separation of the actual plan from the more descriptive information about Ashland County was thought to be a more preferred approach toward making this plan more understandable and usable. Descriptive information about Ashland County found in this document is only a summary of information contained in the Ashland County Comprehensive Plan—County Profile.

General County-Level Approach

To be effective at a county level, comprehensive planning efforts need to recognize unique characteristics of county governments. First and foremost, all Ohio counties are made up of separate and somewhat independent townships and municipalities. In Ashland County there are 15 townships, eight incorporated villages, and one incorporated city. For the most part, all of these local jurisdictions have individual control over land use through separate zoning codes. The only direct authority that Ashland County has over the development process is through the Ashland County Subdivision Regulations administered by the Ashland Regional Planning Commission. These regulations apply only in unincorporated areas.

There is an important need for a comprehensive plan to address county-wide issues despite the lack of direct land use control and the multiple units of local government within Ashland County. A key aspect of this plan is an effort to separate county-wide issues from local issues. In other words, Ashland County is viewed as a single entity, and development issues which receive attention are those that are important to the County as a whole. Such concerns typically relate to transportation, environmental assets, economic considerations, and utilities. These are the types of issues that often cross township and municipal boundaries. These issues are legitimately county-wide and, therefore, warrant attention from a county level. Planning issues that only affect a local township or municipality are thought to be best addressed at the local level. Plans developed at a county level should create a framework for local planning based on issues of county-wide importance.

Organization Of Community Leaders

Preparing a county-wide comprehensive plan is an ambitious undertaking. To be meaningful, such a plan should involve a broad cross section of community leaders and should actively engage people in thoughtful discussion about the future. To accomplish this high level of engagement, community leaders were organized into a central Steering Committee and several task forces to provide forums for constructive discussion and consensus-building on key issues. This organizational approach worked well throughout the planning process, particularly because individuals were permitted to serve on both the Steering Committee and a task force. The Ashland County Commissioners felt strongly that the people who participate in planning meetings should feel comfortable knowing that the planning process is well thought-out and will result in meaningful and productive meetings.

Steering Committee

To guide the overall planning effort, the Ashland County Commissioners appointed a Steering Committee to be responsible for the development of this comprehensive plan. The people appointed to this important committee represented a diverse array of interest groups. Special care was taken by the Ashland County Commissioners to make sure that many points of view were represented. This diversity was welcomed to help ensure that as many perspectives as possible were involved as the plan was drafted. The responsibility assigned to the Steering Committee was essentially the role of oversight of the planning process.

As will be described more fully, the Steering Committee met on several occasions early in the planning process to discuss the proposed process and anticipated milestones. The Steering Committee also spent considerable time reviewing descriptive information on Ashland County before meetings of the three task forces were convened. This led to the development of the Ashland County Comprehensive Plan–County Profile.

Task Forces

Three task forces were created as part of this planning process for several reasons. First, by its very nature, a comprehensive plan addresses many broad and interrelated areas. Attempting to address all of these areas at the same time at community meetings can be very difficult. Consequently, by viewing Ashland County in terms of three general subject areas, there could be more focused discussion on key issues. As a result, the following three task forces were created:

- *A Land Use Task Force*
- *A Transportation Task Force*
- *A Quality of Life Task Force*

In many ways, these three subject areas define the essence of the physical environment of Ashland County. Organizing the planning process around these three subject areas represented a logical approach to the development of this plan. Each of the three task forces had between 10 and 20 appointed members, and meetings of the task forces were held concurrently. The primary focus of these task forces was to develop written goals, policies, and initiatives which would form fundamental elements of the Ashland County Comprehensive Plan.

The Land Use Task Force: The Land Use Task Force included representatives from several diverse interest groups. Farmers, real estate professionals, elected officials, and other community leaders all participated in discussions concerning current land use trends and concerns regarding the direction of physical development in Ashland County. Conflicts between urban and rural development and interests in preserving agricultural land and rural atmosphere were important discussion topics.

The Transportation Task Force: The Transportation Task Force included people with a particular interest or background in transportation matters. An important area of discussion among task force members was the issue of access management. At one meeting, representatives from the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) with specific expertise in this subject area provided information on current State policies regarding this issue.

The Quality of Life Task Force: The Quality of Life Task Force included people with disparate interests and backgrounds. This task force had a wide-ranging subject area and discussion included a variety of issues ranging from parks and open space to historic preservation matters.

Planning Process

There are many alternative planning processes that a local unit of government can utilize to complete a comprehensive plan. The planning process used to develop this comprehensive plan was proposed to the Ashland County Commissioners when this planning project was initially discussed. As noted previously, the desire to produce a plan that had considerable public input was identified early.

The planning process followed to complete this plan involved a total of seven phases of work. These were as follows:

- *Phase 1 Initial Meeting*
- *Phase 2 Preliminary Information Gathering*
- *Phase 3 Definition of Goals, Policies, and Initiatives*
- *Phase 4 Draft Plan Development*
- *Phase 5 Public Review--Community Planning Workshop*

- *Phase 6 Final Plan Development*
- *Phase 7 Approval/Adoption*

Phase 1 Initial Meeting

An initial meeting was held with the Steering Committee and was considered to be an important first step in the planning process. It helped set the tone and direction for the project and helped to create a sense of excitement about the work about to begin. At this meeting, introductions were made, and the planning process and time frames were discussed.

Phase 2 Preliminary Information Gathering

Following the initial meeting, a phase of preliminary information gathering was started. This was an effort to assemble basic information about Ashland County so that general development issues and trends could be identified and understood. Some of this information gathering included:

- *Mapping*
- *Natural Resource Information*
- *Social-Economic Information*
- *Development Trends Information*
- *Transportation Information*

At the conclusion of this effort, most of the relevant information necessary to provide a sound basis for identifying issues and areas of public concern had been identified. Several meetings of the Steering Committee were held to review this information, and all of the information was assembled into a document titled Ashland County Comprehensive Plan–County Profile.

Phase 3 Identification of Planning Goals, Policies, and Initiatives

With the benefit of the data gathering efforts and the Ashland County Comprehensive Plan–County Profile, the Steering Committee authorized the activation of the three independent task forces. This was a more lengthy part of the planning process, and it involved concurrent meetings of three task forces on several evenings during the winter and spring of 1998 and 1999. These three task forces spent considerable effort discussing key issues facing Ashland County and developed goals, policies, and initiatives needed to achieve mutually agreeable goals.

Phase 4 Draft Plan Development

A first draft of a plan was compiled from the discussions that occurred in all of the task force meetings. It was then presented to a joint meeting of the three task forces. Even though the three task forces had been meeting separately, the subject matter of each task force was interconnected with the others. A second joint meeting was held to collectively discuss the plan and the related comments. After comments had been incorporated into the draft plan, the Steering Committee was given the draft plan to review and asked to decide whether to proceed toward the next phase of the process.

Phase 5 Public Review–Community Planning Workshop

The next phase was to make a draft plan widely available to Ashland County residents and to hold a public meeting for additional comment. With the approval of the Steering Committee, copies of the draft plan were disseminated and a general community planning workshop was scheduled. Comments from this workshop were recorded for consideration by the Steering Committee.

Phase 6 Final Plan Development

With benefit of public input from Phase 5, the Steering Committee made appropriate changes to the draft and produced a final draft plan for consideration by the Ashland County Commissioners.

Phase 7 Approval / Adoption

The Ashland County Comprehensive Plan was formally presented in final draft form to the Ashland Regional Planning Commission and Ashland County Commissioners for approval.

Prior County Planning Efforts

It is important to recognize that this plan is not the first comprehensive plan for Ashland County. Ashland County prepared the *Optimum Land Use Policy and Plan* in 1973. Like many comprehensive plans of this era, it was prepared with funding through a federal grant, and it provided considerable descriptive information concerning Ashland County's population, economic trends, transportation, and land use. Emphasis was also placed on evaluating existing natural characteristics of land resources and the capacity of these land resources to support future development.

Anticipated population growth was an important element of the *Optimum Land Use Policy and Plan*. Ashland County had a higher increase in population between 1950 and 1970 than in the preceding 50 years. Consequently, it had been projected that between 1970 and 1990, Ashland County would continue growing at a rate of 12 percent each decade (more than one percent per year). This growth rate resulted in a projected 1990 population of 54,668 people. The actual growth, however, was considerably less. Ashland County's 1990 population was 47,507 and actual growth between 1970 and 1990 was less than half of what had been projected.

Despite the overstated population projections, the *Optimum Land Use Policy and Plan* drew attention to several development issues, many of which are still relevant 25 years later. The following excerpts from the 1973 plan reveal the long-standing nature of some development issues:

Scatterization of homes expected—An additional 1,000 or more homes will be added to the rural countryside by 1990 if the present trend continues. This will add to the already present need to establish adequate health and zoning regulations to prevent pollution of surface and underground water supplies in areas where septic tanks do not function properly. More incompatible relationships will arise between farmers and rural residents and more good farm land will give way to homesites unless the present trend is modified to give better consideration to our natural resources. More gravel roads will need to be paved, more fire and police protection provided, more school bus service provided etc. Gradually many areas of the County are becoming more like low density communities and are losing their rural countryside character. (Page 20)

Agriculture—Although agriculture is still a very important job and income producing industry in Ashland County, its role in this area is certainly declining. It has become more difficult to make a living from the average size farm and more and more farmers are turning to other employment or second jobs to support their family income. (Page 21)

Highlight:

As long-term development issues were discussed among members of the Steering Committee, it was recognized that the reason for preparing this comprehensive plan is essentially for a select group of residents—the children of Ashland County.

Chapter 2 - County Profile

Ashland County Comprehensive Plan

An important element of any comprehensive plan is the early effort to gather applicable information. As noted previously, a separate document titled Ashland County Comprehensive Plan–County Profile was prepared for the Steering Committee to provide an accurate description of Ashland County. This is a rather lengthy document, which is summarized in this chapter to draw attention to key facts and conditions in Ashland County.

General Description

Located in a prime agricultural area of north central Ohio, Ashland County is bordered by Medina, Wayne, Knox, Holmes, Richland, Huron, and Lorain counties. Ashland County covers approximately 403 square miles (272,000 acres) and is shaped in a long, narrow configuration.

History

Ashland County has a rich history that can be traced back to thousands of years when indigenous cultures once inhabited the area. Artifacts and remains of ancient mound-building Indians were found in Gamble's Fort in the northern section of the County. As recently as 200 years ago, several American Indian tribes inhabited the area, including those known as the Wyandot, Erie, Mohican, Mingo, and Delaware.

The Ashland County area has also been the home of many well-known people. One of these is John Chapman who is better known as Johnny Appleseed. He was born in 1775 in Springfield, Massachusetts, but traveled the area planting apple orchards along the streams within the borders of present day Ashland County. In addition to planting apple seeds, Chapman was known for helping his neighbors by alerting settlers of the dangers from the Indians.

Political Subdivisions

There are fifteen townships and eight incorporated villages in Ashland County. The townships tend to be a common size of 36 square miles (six miles long and six miles wide), although there is variation because of the shape of the County. Mifflin, Hanover, and Lake townships, for instance, are comparatively smaller in size. Ashland County's eight incorporated villages are listed below.

Village of Bailey Lakes
Village of Hayesville
Village of Jeromesville
Village of Loudonville

Village of Mifflin
Village of Perrysville
Village of Polk
Village of Savannah

The City of Ashland is the County's only city and the county seat. The City of Ashland was founded in 1815 by William Montgomery, who laid out 41 lots and called this new community Uniontown after the Pennsylvania town from which he came. Because of a conflict in 1822 with the post office and another Uniontown located in Stark County, the name was changed to Ashland, in honor of Henry Clay's country place in Kentucky.

Natural Environment

As with other areas in Ohio, Ashland County is experiencing accelerated conversion of open areas and farmland to more urban uses. Because of a growing awareness of the need to preserve rural lands and natural ecosystems, considerable effort was put forth to gather information on Ashland County's rich environmental and agricultural heritage. The analysis was

completed with a review of data from secondary sources describing environmental features and agricultural conditions in Ashland County.

Watersheds

The continental divide passes through Ashland County separating north-flowing rivers in the Great Lakes basin from south-flowing rivers in the Ohio River drainage basin. Almost all of Ashland County is in the Mohican River watershed, part of the giant 8,051 square-mile Muskingum River basin which drains south to the Ohio River and the Gulf of Mexico. The northern tier of Ashland County is in the Lake Erie drainage basin.

Surface Water Quality

Surface water quality in Ashland County varies considerably. Water quality studies conducted by The Ohio State University Extension Office report that the following streams are at least partially impacted by non-point sources of pollution (agriculture, residential, and urban runoff) or by point sources of pollution (municipal and/or industrial wastewater): Jamison Creek, Jerome Fork of the Mohican River, Buck Creek, Clear Creek, Town Run, Vermilion River, and Lang Creek.

Some of the streams have been dredged and channeled over a period of many years to drain adjacent wetlands and to make the rich alluvial soils suitable for farming. Sources of surface water pollution in Ashland County include sediment runoff from residential development, construction sites, and agricultural lands. All of these activities are considered non-point sources of pollution, that is, sources where the definitive origin is not easily identified. Point sources of pollution, on the other hand, are pollution sources with easily identifiable origins.

Sanitary wastes are one of the prime pollution sources of Ohio streams; if not properly controlled, the wastes may threaten groundwater supplies and the "primary contact recreation" designation of streams. The ecological impacts of sanitary treatment using on-site septic systems tend to worsen with an increasing populace and with a greater occurrence of poorly maintained systems. Properly sited and maintained systems can treat water effectively and not significantly threaten water quality. However, septic tank effectiveness strongly depends on site conditions and regular inspection and maintenance.

Floodplains

Floodplains are the areas adjacent to rivers and streams that are subject to frequent or regular flooding. The 100-year flood has one chance in one hundred of occurring in any given year and represents the flood level chosen by FEMA for regulatory purposes. Due to periodic scouring of the areas, floodplains are unstable and potentially dangerous areas for human use. However, floodplains form a unique ecological niche and support biotic communities that are adapted for occasional inundation. Approximately 17,800 acres, or 15 percent of Ashland County, lies within flood zones; the largest is associated with the Jerome Fork watershed. The threat of flooding within Ashland County floodplains is not particularly acute, but all river systems do have floodplains with a corresponding risk for flooding.

Riparian Corridors

Riparian corridor is an ecological definition that is applied to the connected waterways of a river system and includes stream banks and floodplains. Riparian corridors, like floodplains, offer important ecological features and should be protected. Left in their natural state, riparian corridors act as stream buffers which, among other things, help to prevent soil erosion, filter water pollutants, and provide habitat for wildlife. Flooding, erosion, sedimentation of surface waters, increased storm water runoff, loss of wetlands, increased pollution, and loss of natural habitats are some of the problems Ashland County could face if riparian corridors are not protected. This

is particularly pertinent to the Jerome Fork of the Mohican River which has a notable riparian system.

Wetlands

The wetlands resources of Ashland County are diverse and cover approximately 9,204 acres, or 3 percent of the County. The northern portion of the County is relatively flat and wetlands occur in depressional areas, swales, and along slow-moving streams. Wetlands here often consist of many small wetlands intermixed with upland forested areas, providing a varied habitat for an array of plant and animal life. Large areas in the northern portion of the County have been drained and cleared for agricultural use, but the remaining woodlots appear to have significant areas of natural hydrology. Many of the forested and scrub/shrub wetlands in these areas are of high quality.

The southern portion of Ashland County is gently rolling to sloping and wetlands here tend to be concentrated along major streams and rivers within wide, flat floodplains. Many of these areas have been drained for agriculture, but some large areas of natural wetlands remain. These wetlands tend to be marshes and scrub/shrub wetlands that cover large, contiguous areas. These large wetlands provide important wildlife habitat, particularly for migratory waterfowl. The Funk Bottoms are a large area of wetlands along the Jerome Fork in Mohican Township and also extend east into Wayne County. Portions of these areas have been tilled and drained for agriculture, while other areas remain in a natural state.

Hydric Soils

Ashland County has about 15,900 acres of hydric soils and almost 90,000 acres of land are covered by non-hydric soils with hydric inclusions. Hydric soils are poorly and very poorly drained soils that formed in low-lying or restricted drainage areas and are formed over long time periods by standing water and/or saturated soils. They tend to be associated with wetlands but are generally more extensive. Many hydric soils are seasonally inundated in the early spring and have saturated soils for only a portion of the growing season. This is sufficient for the soils to develop hydric characteristics and support hydrophytic vegetation.

Soil Suitability for Septic Systems

Because approximately a third of Ashland County is either covered by hydric soils or non-hydric soils with hydric inclusions, much of the County is not suitable for septic systems. Common limitations include a seasonal high water table, restricted permeability, poor natural drainage, the hazard of flooding, excess slope, and a shallow depth to bedrock. Soils with very slow or moderately slow permeability are rated as having severe limitations for septic system use. Restrictive layers such as bedrock are also a severe limitation. The high seasonal water table common within the somewhat poorly drained, poorly drained, and very poorly drained soil types which cover most of the County prevents the proper functioning of septic disposal fields for varying periods of time. Septic systems placed on soils which have a sand or gravel substratum may result in groundwater contamination.

Woodland Resources

Approximately 23 percent (61,900 acres) of Ashland County is wooded and include a variety of forest cover types. Forests are aesthetically pleasing and contribute significantly to the character of Ashland County. In rural settings, the most important role of woodlands is habitat for animal and plant biodiversity. Other trees in rural areas function primarily as "working" or conservation trees, serving as wind breaks, dust and noise barriers, living snow fences, and shade in parklands and on private lands.

Trees in urban settings are habitat for song birds and urban mammals (such as squirrels). In addition, data show that healthy, beautiful urban trees add up to 20 percent to residential property values. Trees within the City of Ashland and the villages of Ashland County comprise the urban and community forests of the County. The City of Ashland and several villages have taken advantage of funding programs for tree planting and urban forestry management through the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Department of Urban Forestry.

Groundwater Resources and Conditions

Drinking water quality and quantity is important in Ashland County. About 83 percent of the residents in Ashland County depend on groundwater for their potable water supply. Approximately 33 percent of all households obtain their water from private wells, and about 50 percent of households use public-water supplies with groundwater as the source.

The majority of Ashland County is located within the glaciated Appalachian Plateau Physiographic Province. Groundwater resources in the county are obtained from the sandstone and shale bedrock formations of the Cuyahoga Group and from unconsolidated sand and gravel deposits that are found throughout the area. The highest producing aquifers are found in the permeable sand and gravel deposits that occur along Jerome Fork and Black Fork. Expected groundwater yields range from less than three gallons per minute in poor groundwater areas to more than 400 gallons per minute in the permeable sand and gravel aquifer areas. Wells offer meager groundwater supplies, and may encounter brackish water or water with high calcium sulfate content.

The quality and composition of groundwater can be affected by both natural processes and by human activity. As water infiltrates the ground and moves through the aquifer systems, it picks up minerals and other natural or man-made substances that may seep from the surface and carries them in solution. Chemical composition, as well as biological, physical and radiological factors, plays a role in the overall quality of a groundwater source.

Glacial Geology

The glacial deposits found in Ohio were deposited during three separate episodes of glaciation that occurred in the Pleistocene Epoch, 2 million to 10,000 years ago. The majority of the glacial materials found in Ohio were deposited by the Wisconsinite glaciers 70,000 to 10,000 years ago, with less extensive Illinoian-age deposits 120,000+ years ago found mostly along the southern boundary of glaciation, and limited pre-Illinoian deposits evident at the surface only in extreme southwest Ohio.

In Ashland County, glacial tills and alluvial deposits of both Wisconsinian and Illinoian age are present. The deposits vary in thickness across the county from less than a foot in some areas to more than 200 feet in others. Depending on composition, glacial deposits can also effect on the quality and quantity of groundwater and serve as a major source of water supply, such as the buried valley sand and gravel aquifers found in Ashland County. Glacial deposits, however, do not cover all of Ashland County. The boundary for past glacial advances into Ohio passes through Hanover Township, located in southernmost Ashland County. Unaffected by glacial erosion and smoothing, this area is typified by steeply sloping valley walls and overall striking topography.

Steep Slopes

Topographic information provides an overview of site characteristics and degree of slope. Construction on or near slopes can cause increased surface runoff and erosion. For these reasons, steep slopes along stream valleys should be maintained with a vegetative cover to prevent soil loss and siltation. Slopes greater than 12 percent usually preclude development except for low density uses. Slopes greater than 6 percent require careful roadway design. Septic

systems placed on slopes of greater than 12 percent may result in erosion and seepage downslope. The majority of Ashland County has slopes of 12 percent or less.

Outdoor Recreation Space

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources publishes the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) as Ohio's official policy document for outdoor recreation. According to SCORP, Ashland County ranks favorably in the amount of outdoor recreation acreage in terms of land and water. Ashland County is reported to have 14,773 acres, or 5.4 percent, of recreation acreage of total land area. This ranks the County 22 out of Ohio's 88 counties in the percent of total acreage for outdoor recreation with 311 acres of outdoor recreation space per 1,000 residents. Although this acreage is significantly above the state average of 131 acres per 1,000 residents, Ohio has less recreational land per 1,000 people than 46 other states. Usage of Ohio's state parks, however, increased 43 percent from 1984 to 1994.

Federal Public Recreation Lands

Federal recreational lands in Ashland County are limited to small areas around dam sites in the Mohican Valley. The dams were built as flood control structures during a period of active dam building on American rivers in the 1930s. The dams are owned and operated by the Huntington District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The sites are Charles Mill Dam on the Black Fork of the Mohican River, the earthen Mohicanville Dam on the Lake Fork of the Mohican River, and the 113-foot earthen Pleasant Hill Dam on the Clear Fork of the Mohican River.

Registered National Natural Landmarks

The National Park Service recognizes two areas in Ashland County as Registered National Natural Landmarks—sites that illustrate outstanding ecological and geological features of national significance. These sites are the Clear Fork Gorge and Crall Woods. The Clear Fork of the Mohican River in southern Ashland County has carved a narrow canyon through sandstone bedrock. Most of the gorge is protected by the State in Mohican State Park and Clear Fork Gorge State Nature Preserve. The second area is Crall Woods which is located in northwestern Ashland County and is a classic example of an old hardwood forest. The site, however, is privately owned and is not accessible to the public.

State Parks

State recreational lands in Ashland County are well known to outdoor lovers throughout Ohio and beyond. Opportunities for canoeing, hiking, nature study, hunting, fishing and other outdoor pursuits are virtually limitless. The attractiveness of the region is based on outstanding scenery, rugged forests, good water quality, and an infrastructure provided by government and private enterprise that supports tourist activities. The following facilities are State-owned and maintained.

Mohican State Park
Mohican-Memorial State Forest
Clear Fork Gorge State Nature Preserve
Funk Bottoms Wildlife Area
Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District

Local Park and Recreation Lands

Local governments in Ashland County also provide active recreation areas, of which the City of Ashland is the largest provider. The City of Ashland park system is comprised of seven parks for a total of 140 acres. Recreational opportunities include lighted ball diamonds, miniature golf, shuffleboard, tennis courts, basketball courts, ice skating, soccer fields, horseshoe courts, an 18-hole golf course and driving range, a toddler's playground, an Olympic-sized swimming pool, shelter houses, and an amphitheater.

Private Sector and Outdoor Recreation

A significant number of firms and small businesses are part of Ashland County's outdoor recreation and ecotourism market. Most of these are in the Mohican Hills in the southern part of the County. For example, there are a dozen canoe liveries in and around Loudonville alone. The southern part of the County also has many youth camps, many of which are privately owned by service organizations and churches.

Private Lakes

Ashland County has several lakes which provide recreational activities. Cinnamon Lake, located in Jackson Township, is 286 acres. Mud Lake and Spring Lake are resources located in Clear Creek. Round Lake and a portion of Long Lake are also located in Lake Township.

Scenic Highways

Scenic roadways contribute to the rural atmosphere and overall attractiveness of Ashland County as a place to live and visit. The Ohio Department of Transportation designated Ohio State Routes 3 and 97, which go through the southern part of the County, as scenic highways. Other scenic drives include US 42 which goes through the City of Ashland, US 224 which is an old federal highway that goes through northern Ashland County, and US 30 which bisects the County from east to west and is part of the old Lincoln Highway.

Population Characteristics

The physical development of an area is directly related to the changing population. Generally, changes in the local population influence the local demand for types of housing, commercial space, and employment opportunities, as well as for recreational and cultural facilities. Changing population in a community also influences the demand for public facilities and infrastructure.

Population Change

Ashland County is primarily a rural county. This is illustrated by the fact that statewide, there are less than 270 people per square mile, while in Ashland County, population density is approximately 115 people per square mile. Despite this rural nature, modest growth has been occurring between 1970 and 1995 in Ashland County and surrounding areas. This growth is contrasted somewhat with the more rapid growth in neighboring Holmes and Wayne counties which grew by 57 percent and 23 percent, respectively, during the same time frame.

From a historical perspective, it is important to examine not only total population growth, but also where growth has occurred. From 1970 through 1990, Ashland County grew by nearly 10 percent. This growth, however, has not occurred evenly. The rural areas of the County have grown at a significantly faster rate than the municipalities. The population of the townships increased by nearly 25 percent, while the population of the municipalities declined by 4.4 percent during this time. The City of Ashland experienced 1 percent increase in population.

Current estimates of population change since the 1990 census indicate that the pace of growth is increasing and the trend of growth in unincorporated areas continues. Between 1990 and 1995, the County is estimated to have grown by more than 3,500 people (7.4 percent) which is more than half of the total growth in the 20 years prior to 1990. The City of Ashland experienced growth of 7 percent, while the villages grew by 3 percent. Once again, the townships experienced the most growth, nearly 9 percent. This evidence suggests that the demand for new housing units in Ashland County has been satisfied by development in more rural unincorporated areas, rather than in more urban municipalities.

Components of Population Change

The population of an area changes as the result of four related factors: births, deaths, in-migration, and out-migration. In Ashland County, in-migration is an important component of recent growth as people from neighboring areas move to Ashland County. Specifically, in-migration to Ashland County has consistently exceeded out-migration in recent years. Additionally, according to the Ohio Department of Development, Ashland County Profile, the total amount of in-migration has been increasing yearly since 1991, suggesting that more people are finding Ashland County an attractive place to live.

Residential Construction

Between 1991 and 1997, 2,070 residential zoning permits were issued in Ashland County and 840 lot splits were approved. The number of annual residential building permits approved since 1991 remained above 300 until 1995, when the number of permits issued declined to 199. Since that time, the number of residential building permits approved has rebounded to nearly the 300 level in 1997. Given the average household size of 2.66, it is reasonable to assume that with the current pace of development, approximately 745 new people will become Ashland County residents each year.

Apart from residential buildings permits, subdivision activity provides an indication of both current and future development. Some occurs shortly before construction activity and other occurs well in advance of construction. In any event, the level of subdivision activity provides an indication of further development in Ashland County, and the number of minor lot splits approved by the Ashland Regional Planning Commission has been on an upward trend. This trend is somewhat disturbing given the fact that more of these lot splits represent the subdivision of rural acreage into home sites built along existing roads.

Age

According to 1990 census data, one-third of the population is in the 0-19 age group while nearly 40 percent are in the 20-45 age group. Approximately 18 percent of the population is within the 45-65 age group, and approximately 14 percent of the population is over 65.

The bulge in the number of people in the 20-44 age range can, in part, be explained by the baby boom which occurred during the 20 years after World War II and into which half of this group fits. Although not all baby boomers have reached middle age, many are choosing to start their families later in life, if at all. This may explain the second bulge in the very young age group (less than 19), which is sometimes called the "echo boom." While the health industry in Ashland County has not experienced great demands on its services, the aging of the baby boomer sector will create a higher demand in this area as well as for other services and housing.

Households and Household Size

The number of households in Ashland County has increased from 15,818 in 1980 to 17,101 in 1990, an increase of 7.5 percent. In comparison, the number of households increased 6.6 percent in Ohio during the same time frame.

While the number of household has increased, the size of those households has decreased. Between 1980 and 1990, the household size for Ashland County decreased from 3.3 persons per household to 2.66. Similarly, household sizes in the State of Ohio decreased from 2.76 to 2.59. This decrease can be attributed to social forces such as more people deferring or eschewing marriage and children, a transition from larger, agrarian families to smaller, urban/suburban families, and increased longevity and a decrease in multigenerational households.

Economic Characteristics

The economic well-being of a community is essential to its desirability as a place to live. Generally, a growing economy results in population growth as people are drawn to new employment opportunities.

Major Local Private Sector Employers

The major employers in Ashland County include the following:

Abbott Laboratories, Inc.	Manufacturing
Ashland University	Service
Garber Company, Inc.	Manufacturing
Hedstrom Corporation	Manufacturing
Landoll Inc.	Manufacturing
Mansfield Plumbing Products	Manufacturing
Pentair (Myers & Hydromatic)	Manufacturing
Samaritan Hospital	Service

Employment

The estimated civilian labor force in 1996 for Ashland County residents was 26,858 with 25,342 people employed. This number includes those people who live in Ashland County but are employed in other counties. Ashland County had 5.6 percent (1,517 people) unemployment rate, compared to a State unemployment rate of 4.9 percent, putting Ashland County 41 out of Ohio's 88 counties. There were 18,776 people employed in all nonagricultural industries in Ashland County in 1995. This number includes people who work in Ashland County but live elsewhere. The three industrial sectors employing the most people were manufacturing with 38 percent, finance, insurance and real estate with 21 percent, and wholesale and retail trade with 19 percent.

Income

From 1980 to 1990, the median household income for Ashland County rose by almost the same rate as the State of Ohio. In 1980, the County's median household income was \$16,678, and Ohio's was \$17,754. In 1990, the median household incomes for Ashland County and the State were \$26,668 and \$28,706, respectively. Ashland County's median household income rose to \$31,479 in 1993.

Housing Characteristics

The characteristics of the existing housing stock within Ashland County affects the demand for new housing development. These characteristics include the age of existing homes, the type (single-family versus multifamily), and location in relation to services and employment centers. The number of housing units in Ashland County increased by 1,060 units (6.2 percent) between 1980 and 1990. In 1990, the Ohio Department of Development counted 18,139 dwelling units in Ashland County; 17,101 (94.3 percent) of which were occupied. Of that, 12,600 units (69.8 percent) were owner-occupied with a median value of \$53,600; and 4,441 units (24.5 percent) were renter-occupied with a median contract rent of \$243.

Recent Housing Construction

Between 1991 and 1997, 2,080 new housing units were built in Ashland County. This corresponds with the increase in population experienced during this same period. Population

pressures fueled the demand for new housing, slowing in 1995, but regaining momentum again in 1996 and 1997.

Age of Homes

The distribution of housing units by year the structure was built offers insight into the history of residential development and growth trends in Ashland County. Over 30 percent of housing in Ashland County and the City of Ashland was built prior to 1940, and approximately 13 percent of the homes were built in the 1950s and 1960s. Almost 20 percent of the housing stock was built in the 1970s. The low number of homes constructed in the 1980s (11 percent) may have been the result of high interest rates, economic recession in the early parts of the decade. It is expected that when the residential construction activity of the 1990s is reviewed after the 2000 census, data will show a rebound in the number of housing units constructed.

Agricultural Characteristics

Ashland County is primarily a rural county with over half of its 51,000 residents living outside of city or village boundaries. This, however, does not mean those people are either farmers or live on productive farmland. It does demonstrate the significance of the County's rural traditions and suggests that culture is still very prevalent despite the fact farmland is being turned into residential development.

Statewide Agricultural Trends

Agricultural land is disappearing at an alarming rate throughout Ohio. According to the U.S. Census of Agriculture, Ohio lost 1.4 million acres of farmland between 1974 and 1992. The Ohio Agricultural Statistics Service reports that from 1992 through mid 1996, the number of farms in the state fell by 2,000 with a 100,000-acre decrease in land used for agricultural production. From 1954 and 1992, more than one-fourth of Ohio's farmland, or about 5.7 million acres, was converted to nonagricultural uses such as urban development, recreation, reforestation, and mining.

The U.S. Census Bureau developed a ratio of the rate of growth in urban land area to the rate of growth of population for the period from 1960 to 1990. Ohio's population grew by 13 percent while the urban land area grew by 64 percent. The Ohio Farmland Preservation Task Force reports that agriculture is still the leading industry in Ohio, contributing \$56.2 billion annually to the economy and supporting one in six jobs. However, given farmland conversion trends, they predict that viable farm communities will not exist in over 39 Ohio counties, including Ashland County, within 30 years.

Ashland County

According to the 1996 Ohio Department of Development, Ashland County Profile, approximately 66 percent of Ashland County is currently in agricultural production with an estimated 970 farms containing 176,000 acres of agricultural land. Farms and agricultural land, however, are disappearing throughout Ashland County.

According to the 1998 Ohio State University Extension, Ashland County Summary, the number of farms in Ashland County decreased to 970 in 1996 from 1,280 in 1980. If the trend continues at the present rate, the number of farms in Ashland County will stand at only 257 in just 30 years. Total number of acres of farmland has likewise shown similar declines. Between 1980 and 1995, Ashland County lost approximately 18,000 acres of farmland. As farmland has disappeared, the average size of farms has increased from 153 acres to 181 acres between 1980 to 1996.

It is important to note that price is not a measure of value; it is a measure of availability. The increased demand for rural property throughout Ashland County, in conjunction with the dwindling

supply of farmland and open space, has resulted in the average market value of farmland rising in excess of the average value of farmland and buildings per acre. In 1992, the average value of farmland and buildings per acre was \$1,319; whereas, farmland is now expected to sell for between \$2,500 and \$3,500 per acre (based on conversations with OSU Extension and the County auditor's office).

Cultural Characteristics

Cultural characteristics of an area contribute substantially to both quality of life and sense of place. Ashland County is fortunate to have many facilities and organizations provide interest and a greater sense of place for residents and visitors. Major cultural organizations and attractions include:

*Ashland Community Arts Center
Ashland Symphony Orchestra
Hayesville Opera House
Guy C. Myers Memorial Bandshell*

*Ashland Symphonic Youth Chorus
Ashland University Theatre
Ashland County Historical Museum
Cleo Redd Fisher Museum*

Ashland University

Founded by the Brethren Church in 1878, Ashland College became Ashland University in 1989. Ashland University is a private, comprehensive institution that offers various undergraduate, graduates, and professional degrees authorized by the Ohio Board of Regents. Enrollment is approximately 5,600 students with 1,200 full-time undergraduates living on campus and 500 commuter students. The 98-acre campus has a range of facilities including a nine-story library, an instructional technology center, a performing arts center, and art gallery.

The Ashland Theological Seminary, founded in 1878, is a division of Ashland University. It has approximately 625 students, making it the largest seminary in Ohio and the 17th largest in the country. The Seminary represents 65 denominations and offers courses at Wayne State University, Cleveland State University, and the Ashland University Columbus Program Center. The University and Seminary have noteworthy archeological and art collections that are open to the public.

Existing Land Use

A generalized map of existing land use in Ashland County was prepared and is included in the County Profile. This land use map was prepared using Ohio Capability Analysis Program (OCAP) data from 1982. Because this data is older, some limited field work was conducted to provide some indications of more recent development activity.

Recent Residential Development Activity

Newer residential development is located in two primary areas. First, there have been several newer residential developments constructed toward the south and southeast side of the City of Ashland. These developments have been primarily platted residential subdivisions developed at typical suburban densities (.25 to .5 acre lots). Second, a considerable number of newer residential units have been constructed throughout Ashland County on rural lots divided off from farms and within developments such as Cinnamon Lake. Lower land costs, together with a desire for a rural lot, has resulted in more rural home sites scattered throughout Ashland County over the last 20 years.

Recent Non-Residential Development Activity

Recent commercial development in Ashland County has been focused toward two primary areas. Southwest of the City of Ashland, Claremont Avenue has emerged as a major commercial strip in the area containing both newer, larger retail development and smaller commercial uses such as fast food establishments. The second area that has emerged is the segment of US 250 east of the City of Ashland, toward I-71.

Generally, recent new industrial development in Ashland County has been located toward the northern side of the City of Ashland, along Westlake Drive and nearby areas. There is also a newer industrial park located just east of the Village of Loudonville, located in Holmes County.

Water and Sewer Facilities

A study titled *Preliminary Inventory and Planning Study for Water Supply, Treatment, and Distribution in Ashland County* was completed in early 1998 regarding water supply issues throughout Ashland County. Its purpose was to provide a framework for water supply planning in the County, based on projected population growth areas and associated water supply needs.

Groundwater

The potential development of future public water supplied from groundwater resources for Ashland County may be limited due, in part, to the drainage divide between the Lake Erie and Ohio River basins that runs through the northern part of the County. Potential groundwater sources for public water supplies are limited to narrow bands of sand and gravel deposits which filled pre-glacial valleys in Ashland County. Yields in these areas tend to be variable due to less permeable interbedded silts and clays, so extensive drilling would probably be required to locate wells capable of sustaining higher yields.

Sources of Water For Existing Homes

A public water system is the source of water for nearly two-thirds of the homes located in Ashland County. According to the 1990 Census, 11,567 homes received their water through a public system. The remainder of the homes are serviced by private wells or obtain water from other sources such as spring, creeks, rivers, lakes, and cisterns. The larger number of households that rely on wells for their water source is due to the more rural nature of Ashland County.

Public Sewers

Recent anti-degradation rules adopted by the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA) potentially have a significant impact on the construction of new wastewater treatment plants as well as the expansion of existing wastewater treatment plants. Currently, all streams which receive effluent from wastewater treatment plants in Ashland County are classified as warm water habitats. While this designation is not the highest by OEPA, it is also classified as general high quality water under the anti-degradation rule. In the future, however, full implementation of the anti-degradation regulations may lead to more stringent classifications in which substantially higher standards for wastewater treatment plant effluent will be required.

If stream segments are reclassified as outstanding national resource water, outstanding high quality water, or surface waters that have national ecological or recreational significance, then future wastewater treatment plant expansions or proposed new wastewater treatment plants will have to use non-degradation technology. Future new wastewater treatment plants will be required to study anti-degradation alternatives, minimum degradation alternatives, and mitigative technique alternatives. The study would be obligated to have a socioeconomic justification for the discharge that would include affordability, cost effective alternatives, and be economically justifiable.

Existing Publicly-Operated Wastewater Systems

More than half of the homes in Ashland County dispose of waste by use of a public sewer system. However, approximately 7,600 homes use private septic systems and tile fields while approximately 380 dispose of waste by “other means.” A list of the existing publicly-operated wastewater treatment plants for Ashland County municipalities is found in the [Ashland County Comprehensive Plan–County Profile](#).

Quality of Life Indicators

Although such indicators are subjective, various types of data were examined to characterize the quality of life for residents in Ashland County. These indicators included per capita tax rate, families with income below the poverty level, and level of education and, on the whole, demonstrate the quality of life in Ashland County is above average.

Per Capita Tax Rate

The per capita tax rate in Ashland County is roughly 25 percent less than the rest of the State. In 1990, the per capita tax rate in Ashland County was \$455 compared with \$612 for Ohio residents.

Families with Incomes Below the Poverty Level

The poverty level is an income threshold established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The number of families in Ashland County living below the poverty level was less than the rate statewide. In 1990, 1,050 families, or 8.2 percent, were at this level compared to 9.7 percent for the State. The percentage of female householders with incomes below the poverty level for Ashland County is also lower than at the state level. The rates for Ashland County and the State of Ohio are 30.5 percent and 33.7 percent, respectively.

Level of Education

The comparison of the 1990 levels of education attained for adults 25 years and older for Ashland County and the State of Ohio is mixed. Seventy-six percent of Ashland County residents earned a high school diploma versus 75 percent for the State as a whole. The numbers are reversed, however, when examining rates of higher education attained. Statewide, 11.1 percent of those 25 and over earned bachelor’s degrees, whereas only 8.8 percent of those in the same group earned similar degrees.

Education Facilities

Approximately 484 teachers serve eight school districts in Ashland County, teaching approximately 8,546 students in 23 Ashland public and private schools. There are seven public school districts that serve the overwhelming majority of the County. Four of these districts have the majority of their territory and the district offices in Ashland County:

Ashland City School District
Hillsdale Local School District
Loudonville-Perrysville Exempted Village School District
Mapleton Local School District

Three other districts share territory with neighboring counties:

Black River Local School District (Medina and Lorain counties)
Crestview Local School District (Richland County)
Northwestern Local School District (Wayne County)

Other Educational Facilities

Other education facilities in Ashland County include the Ashland County-West Holmes Career Center, Dale-Roy School and Training Center, Ashland University, and Ashland Theological Seminary.

Law and Fire Protection

The City of Ashland Police Department employs approximately 29 full-time officers. The Village of Loudonville and Perrysville also have their own police departments, while the townships rely on the Ashland County Sheriff's Department. The Ashland County Sheriff's Department protects the County with sixteen full-time officers, seven auxiliary officers, eighteen correction officers, two canine units, three arson investigators, and a five-member bomb squad.

Ashland County is served by eleven fire departments, ten of which are volunteer. The City of Ashland has the only paid employee-based fire department and trained hazardous chemical response unit in the County. The Ashland Fire Department also serves Milton and Montgomery townships. There are also four emergency medical service squads staffed by trained personnel.

Medical Facilities

One indicator of the quality of life in a community is the caliber of its health care system. Ashland County has 39 physicians and one hospital. The Samaritan Hospital, located in the City of Ashland, is a modern, JCAHO-accredited medical care facility offering a 24-hour physician-staffed emergency room and 123 beds. A helipad is located nearby, allowing patients who require further specialized treatment to be quickly transported to a trauma center or other tertiary facility. The Samaritan/Kettering Health Center is a multi-specialty outpatient clinic which provides a laboratory, x-ray and physical therapy services to Loudonville and surrounding areas.

The Rehabilitation Center, Health Reach, and Ashland Industrial Medicine Services provide drug and alcohol screening, rehabilitation, ergonomic evaluation, and back injury prevention. The \$1.7 million Rehabilitation Center offers complete work conditioning and retraining facilities.

Transportation Characteristics

Ashland County is easily accessible from all directions within the State of Ohio and is interconnected by several major highways: US 30 (Lincoln Highway) and 224 cross the County east and west; I-71, US 42 and 250, and SR 58, 60, 89, and 511 run north and south. Mileage for these transportation facilities include 16 miles of interstate highway, 71 miles of U.S. Highways, and 172 miles of state highway.

ODOT Priority Major Programmed New Projects for Ashland County include a 7.8 mile project on I-71 from the west County line to US 250. Work includes rehabilitation and construction of an additional lane.

Interstate Linkages

Ashland County is part of the Columbus-Cleveland corridor along Interstate 71 (I-71), a four-lane, divided highway. According to Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), I-71 is scheduled to be widened through the County. The expansion is divided up into two two-year plans and involves replacing the main lane structures and widening to six lanes. Both plans are scheduled to begin in late spring 2000 and expected to be completed in mid autumn 2002.

Currently, this roadway is classified as level of service F in 2005. Level of service (LOS) represents the amount of traffic occurring on the highways and how that traffic is moving and is

rated from A to F. An LOS A represents uninterrupted free flow on the highway, and an LOS F indicates a breakdown in flow conditions.

Traffic Accidents in Ashland County

The Ohio Department of Highway Safety's Integrated Traffic Records System indicates that motor vehicle traffic accidents in Ashland County were increasing at a slower rate between 1993 and 1997, when compared with nearby counties and Ohio as a whole. Among the traffic accidents during that time, which totaled 9,074, more than two-thirds of the accidents occurred on city streets in the City of Ashland and state routes. Traffic accidents on county roads were 13 percent of the total traffic accidents, while accidents on I-71 were slightly less than 10 percent of the County's total accidents. The remaining accidents which occurred in Ashland County were on township and village roads.

Over the past two years, alcohol-related accidents in Ashland County have increased at a faster rate than compared with the State as a whole. From 1993 to 1997, alcohol-related accidents in Ashland County increased by more than 5 percent from 115 to 121, compared to a 3.9 percent increase for Ohio during the same time.

Ashland County Vehicle Registration

According to the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles, Office of Technology Services, there were 35,768 passenger vehicles registered in Ashland County in 1997. The total increase in passenger cars for this seven-year period is 27 percent. By comparison, the number of vehicle registrations issued in Ohio as a whole increased by 18 percent.

Additionally, given the current ratio of vehicles per Ashland County resident and using population projections mentioned earlier, it is expected that the number of locally-owned passenger vehicles will climb to more than 48,000 by 2020.

Significant Areas of Traffic Generation in Ashland County

Several areas which experienced a significant amount of traffic were identified by the Ashland County Engineer's office and include intersections at the following locations:

TR 1153 (Baney Road) and CR 1356 (Paradise Hill Road/West Main Street): Located on the west side of the City of Ashland in Milton Township.

US 42 and TR 1153 (Baney Road): Located at the southwestern edge of the City of Ashland in Milton Township. (Improvements scheduled for 99/2000.)

US 42 and CR 1302 (Middle Rowsburg Road): On the east side of the City of Ashland in Montgomery Township. (Improvements scheduled for 99/2000.)

US 250 and CR 1575: East of the City of Ashland in Montgomery Township.

Amish Travel

Another factor to consider when evaluating the transportation system in Ashland County is the mode of transportation chosen by the Amish—the horse and buggy. Although this area is not as heavily populated by the Amish as in Fairfield, Knox, Wayne, and Holmes counties, travel by horse and buggy is evident in Ashland County.

From 1990 through 1997, 14 deaths involving horse and buggies occurred statewide. During this same period, there were 1,085 accidents and 809 injuries. Although the Amish have been

required to use slow-moving vehicle signs similar to those installed on farm equipment, accidents will likely continue to occur. The following recommendations are offered:

Erect special signs that alert motorists to buggy traffic such as “Slow Moving Vehicles” and “Do Not Beep Horn.”

Build buggy lanes that accommodate this slower form of transportation. These lanes should occur in areas identified with heavy buggy travel. Providing additional room for buggies would mean less traffic on automobile pavement.

Railroads

Three railroads serve Ashland County:

CSX Transportation crosses Ashland County in an east-west direction across the northern townships.

The CIC Railroad, also known as the Ashland Railroad, crosses the County at a diagonal direction through the City of Ashland and is owned by the Community Improvement Corporation.

Norfolk and Southern owns a rail line that crosses southern Ashland County through Loudonville and Perrysville.

Transit Facilities

The City of Ashland has a transit system called the Service Taxi of Ashland, Inc. A private firm runs the service for the City with assistance from government funding obtained by the City of Ashland. The taxi service provides a vital function for City residents. Many people rely on local public transit networks as their primary means of transportation, enabling riders to arrive to work, job training, medical facilities, shopping, social services, and other destinations.

Other benefits affect the entire community and include reducing traffic congestion on city streets, improving the quality of our air, and reducing energy consumption. Industries considering a location in the County may view the availability of dependable transit as a plus when making location decisions. Many low income people and those without automobiles rely on transit as a means of access to employment opportunities not otherwise available.

Airports

Built in the early 1960s, Ashland County Airport is an uncontrolled field with a fixed-base operator and a 3,500 x 50 foot asphalt runway that accommodates primarily private personal and small corporate aircraft. Currently, the airport is managed by Johnston Aviation and reports to the Ashland County Airport Authority which owns the facility. Approximately 30 private aircraft are housed at the airport with most in hangars; 23 aircraft are individually owned, and seven aircraft are owned by Johnston Aviation and used as rentals. Johnston Aviation also owns and operates a flight school at the airport. There is no landing or overnight parking fee, but fuel and minor repair services are available. The Ashland County Airport provides pilot-activated runway lighting, rotating beam, lighted wind tee, NDB approach, runway end identifier strobes, and visual approach slope indicator. The nearest major airport providing commercial airline service is the Cleveland Hopkins International Airport.

Bike Transportation

There are currently no existing rail-trails, bicycle lanes, or paths in Ashland County with the exception of the Cardinal Trail which is a signed cross-state bike route.

Transportation Improvement Projects Proposed

The following transportation improvement projects are relevant to the Ashland County transportation network:

Access Ohio Phase II

Four projects listed on the ACCESS Ohio Phase II Highway Component, which identified system needs include the following projects, ranked 39-43 for Region 2, District 3:

US 30 was identified as a regional priority for upgrading.

US 250: regional improvements were recommended on this route through Ashland, Huron and Wayne counties.

US 224/SR 60: terminus for a proposed improvement on US 224 in Ashland County from the intersection of US 224/SR 60 west to the intersection of US 250.

Highway Corridor Improvements

Interstate 71 will require 88.6 miles of land widening and 160 bridges widened or replaced. The current cost is \$342.8 million. The segments are those adjacent to the Cincinnati and Columbus metropolitan areas and most of the route between Columbus and Cleveland. Much of the highway between Cincinnati and Columbus is adequate if traffic increases at the same rate it has in past years. However, a major new generator of traffic in the southwestern Ohio could trigger new growth and may require additional improvements in the decades ahead.

Roadway Classification System

The Ohio Department of Transportation provided rural and urban classification maps for Ashland County, which delineate the road system into the following functional classifications as shown below:

Rural

Interstate Highways
Principal Arterial
Minor Arterial
Major Collector
Minor Collector

Urban

Interstate Highways
Other Freeways and Expressways
Other Principal Arterials
Minor Arterials
Collectors

Chapter 3 - Challenges

Ashland County Comprehensive Plan

One benefit this comprehensive plan offers is to define the major challenges that await Ashland County in the next millennium. As stated previously, change is occurring in Ashland County. The overriding challenge for community leaders is to take hold of the future and direct physical change and development so that Ashland County becomes a more livable place. During the planning process, meetings of Steering Committee and task force members included much discussion that helped to identify these challenges in a more specific way. These will be described in subsequent chapters. However, to help frame an overall context of this comprehensive plan, the following general challenges have been identified and are described below in no particular order of importance.

Control Sprawl

Early signs of urban sprawl are appearing in Ashland County. Urban sprawl is generally defined as random low-density residential development, commercial strip development along major highways, and an overall lack of community planning. In Ashland County, most new residential building sites are being created on large rural lots with septic systems and wells. The creation of these types of subdivisions (approved Type 1 subdivisions according to the Ashland County Subdivision Regulations) has been increasing and the apparent development trend is toward more of this type of rural low-density development. Similarly, small strips of commercial development are emerging along state routes.

Neighboring counties, Medina and Wayne counties in particular, have experienced sprawling land use patterns to a much higher degree than Ashland County and are now reacting to associated problems. To confront this issue, **Ashland County is challenged to be more proactive to avoid being the next example of sprawl and to find smarter and more cost-efficient ways to grow.** It is important to note that the costs of sprawl are most likely to be borne by future generations who would likely pay higher taxes and user fees for providing new or extended public services to a growing low-density population. Land use studies have also blamed sprawl for a loss of a sense of community (as homes are built far from each other on very large lots), increased air pollution from longer automobile commutes, and degradation of the natural rural environment.

Preserve Rural Character

Related to the issue of controlling sprawl is the issue of preserving rural character. The overall demand for new residential home sites is not anticipated to decline in Ashland County in the next 20 years. In fact, current projections indicate that by 2020, Ashland County will add nearly 5,000 new residents and 2,000 new housing units. This is especially true if the current popularity of rural home sites and a willingness to commute long distances to work continue. Policies presented later in this plan address the issue of discouraging sprawl and striving to achieve a more efficient land use pattern. However, it must also be recognized that **the development of rural Ashland County will continue to some degree, and the challenge before local leaders is to raise the standards for this type of development to help preserve rural character.** Current standards for minor rural subdivision activity (Type 1) address only minimum lot sizes and the need for a well and septic system to function on a proposed lot. **What is needed is a new approach to the development of rural property.** The creation of individual lot subdivisions (Type 1) should be discouraged in favor of a more creative development approach that seeks to preserve the natural characteristics of a site and preserve natural attributes contributing to the rural character of the area.

Examples of this more creative approach to rural development are found in the work of Randall G. Arendt who has popularized the concept of conservation design for subdivisions in *Dealing with Change in the Connecticut River Valley: A Design Manual for Conservation and Development* (1988) and *Conservation Design For Subdivisions—A Practical Guide to Creating Open Space Networks* (1996). In Ohio, The Countryside Program, a project of the Western Reserve Resource Conservation and Development Council in Lyndhurst, was created to promote conservation development practices in the state.

Samples of creative conservation development approaches that maintain site characteristics, which contribute to rural character while allowing conventional densities of development, are shown below.

In addition to establishing a higher standard for rural development, efforts to preserve rural character also involve the need to maintain and enhance the quality of existing urban areas. It should be recognized that the issue of farmland and rural character preservation and the need to revitalize existing urban areas are very related issues. **A challenge before local leaders is to help direct private investment toward existing downtowns, neighborhoods, and commercial areas to provide an alternative to greenfield development of rural areas.** Providing appropriate incentives for redevelopment and reuse of brownfield sites and infill of underdeveloped neighborhoods is a logical approach to help attract private investment to existing urban areas and stop a trend toward disinvestment. It is a challenge that most communities today must face especially if preservation of the rural environment and/or farmland is considered important.

Preserve Natural Amenities

Ashland County is strongly associated with a beautiful and largely unspoiled natural environment. Almost one-fourth of Ashland County, primarily the southern half, is covered by a variety of forest types. These forested areas, along with meadows, abandoned agricultural lands, pastures, and cultivated lands add diversity of the natural rural landscape. Additionally, many higher-quality streams and waterways flow through parts of Ashland County and provide a diverse array of natural habitat. Because of these natural amenities, Ashland County (particularly southern Ashland County) is a well-known destination for outdoor recreation activities such as camping, canoeing and many other passive recreational activities.

The natural beauty of Ashland County is significant in many ways; however, the danger of deterioration of the natural environment increases as development activity continues and more people are drawn to the area. Poorly planned construction activity can result in excessive loss of tree canopy, erosion on steep slopes, water pollution from failed septic systems, and downstream flooding. **The challenge before Ashland County leaders is to institute appropriate measures to protect the natural landscape and maintain the ecological health of the area.**

Economic Development

County-wide land use planning should include the identification of general areas that will serve as the future locations for new industry in Ashland County. In fact, a growing county should set aside sites for new industry to locate and existing industry to expand to help ensure that job creation and population growth occur at a similar pace. Ashland County has several areas well suited for future industrial development by virtue of existing land use and proximity to major roads and utilities. Setting these areas aside means ideally that incompatible residential development would not be located in and near such areas, necessary plans for adequate water and sewer services would be made, site control and zoning issues would be addressed, and appropriate tax incentives would be put in place.

The area on the northwest side of the City of Ashland has been identified as a primary location for future industrial sites. Similarly, land outside Loudonville (and actually in Holmes County) offers attractive industrial sites in an existing industrial park. These two areas are expected to represent future site of new local employment, **but the challenge before local leaders is to identify additional areas that can serve as locations for future industrial development, particularly in and near the villages.**

Access Management

A major challenge facing Ashland County is the ability to maintain the capacity of roadways as the population and demands on the roadway system grow. Building new roads is expensive, and the costs will continue grow. At the same time, availability of public dollars to fund new road construction could very well decline. It is important, therefore, to preserve existing roadway capacity. Several major corridors in the County already experience a decrease in capacity to move motor vehicles quickly and safely. A growing population means more vehicles on all roads. In Ashland County, the number of locally-owned passenger vehicles is expected to climb from 35,768 in 1997 to more than 48,000 by 2020.

A lack of access control has led to a major reduction in the capacity of traffic flow in many areas of Ohio. Residential and commercial strip development along existing roadways has sacrificed mobility for access, causing congestion. Without good site planning, each new driveway represents a serious point of conflict which reduces highway safety and mobility, and creates delays. These delays further contribute to excess air pollution as vehicle efficiency declines.

The State of Ohio recently began an aggressive approach to control access along state routes. A State Highway Access Management Manual was developed and adopted in 1997. This manual provides uniform permit procedures which establish when, how, and where access to state highways would be permitted.

With this statewide initiative, Ashland County is challenged to take complementary actions to maintain capacity and mobility. **This effort will require cooperation among several agencies including the County Engineer's Office, ODOT, townships, and municipalities. A coordinated effort and review/permit processing procedures will help to maintain communication among these agencies.**

Proposed Connector

Another challenge facing Ashland County is the ability to provide improved circulation to the west side of the County and the City of Ashland. A connector road would link the north side of the City to the southwest quadrant. This route is important to the public health and safety of the residents living on the west side of the County and would allow quicker response time for emergency vehicles. This roadway would also allow easier and quicker access for residents to reach the interstate or other destinations within the County.

Provide Alternative Forms of Transportation

While automobile travel is expected to remain the dominant mode of transportation for Ashland County into the next century, some shift in thinking toward alternative forms of transportation is warranted, especially in terms of the way new developments are designed. There is a growing national trend toward designing new urban developments that are more mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented, and linked to a community-wide open space network. This trend is part of an effort to build more livable and environmentally sustainable communities. New subdivisions, especially

conservation developments, should include open space networks that allow residents to walk within common open spaces and enjoy the natural amenities. Additionally, pedestrian walkways and trails should be linked, where possible, to a county-wide open space network. **Ashland County developers and officials who approve of developments are challenged to be innovative in the design of new subdivisions to provide ways to achieve more creative development and offer alternatives to dependence on automobiles.**

High-speed rail, another alternative form of transportation, may be available to Ashland County residents in the future. A high-speed rail system is under consideration to connect Cleveland and Cincinnati. Although this project is in the planning stages, it would provide County and regional residents with another choice in transportation.

Provide Housing Variety

A challenge facing all communities today, including Ashland County, is the ability to provide a variety of housing choices for residents. As lifestyles and households change, greater housing choices are needed to meet the changing demand. An aging population, for example, means that more senior citizens housing is likely to be needed. Similarly, people deferring or eschewing marriage and declines in extended family households may mean alternatives--condominiums, town houses, multifamily dwellings--to larger, detached houses.

Housing choices, therefore, should include a variety of house types, prices, and ownership options. This requires innovative planning and the ability to embrace concepts such as mixed-use development (where multiple housing types are provided in a single development) and adaptive reuse of older buildings. The City of Ashland already contains a good example of an adaptive reuse project that helps meet the emerging demand for elderly housing. The Home Company building, a large vacant commercial structure in downtown Ashland, was recently converted into approximately forty apartments for the elderly. This project not only helped to provide needed units for a growing elderly housing market, but also served to add life to the City's downtown. Since its conversion, the Home Company building enjoys a very high occupancy rate and is considered to be a success.

One obstacle to encouraging innovative housing opportunities and living environments is the existing, and sometimes outdated, zoning and subdivision regulations. These codes often require segregation of land uses and offer little opportunity for developers to propose innovative developments without considerable red tape and delays. This is particularly problematic in smaller municipalities and townships that often lack the local expertise to update these ordinances and resolutions. What is needed are flexible local zoning regulations that encourage innovations and creativity while still protecting legitimate public interests.

One last challenge in the housing arena is the continuation and strengthening of existing housing assistance programs provided at the city and county levels. Current Community Housing Improvement Programs (CHIP's) are providing much-needed assistance to residents of the County while continuation and expansion of these programs are paramount in providing opportunities to residents in the low and middle income groups. Habitat for Humanity in Ashland County uses volunteer labor to build homes for people with low incomes.

Support Schools

Problems within Ashland County school districts are reflective of problems elsewhere. A major challenge for almost every school district in Ohio is funding education. This includes paying for educational programs and maintaining physical infrastructure. Not only are schools a challenge to the elected school boards, they require the attention from residents and government officials. Recent court cases in Ohio have illustrated the need for more creative and dynamic funding

support. Although no new funding mechanism has been approved, it is in the best interests of the community to provide as much support as possible to the school district to insure that the children are receiving the best education possible.

Related to the overall school funding issue is the matter of tax abatement. To remain competitive, municipalities, townships, and counties find themselves in a position where they must provide tax incentives to companies locating or expanding in their communities. These incentives are generally in the form of property tax abatement, and the bulk of the taxes being abated are earmarked for the schools. Thus, coordination and communication between the school districts and economic development officials are paramount in creating a climate that recognizes the need for both economic development and quality schools. The subject of tax abatement is brought up later in the context of providing industrial sites for local growth and incentives for development to occur in designated areas.

Another major challenge across Ohio and in most of the Midwest involves work force development. Several common issues arise that include the lack of qualified workers, fewer young people pursuing technical careers, training programs that do not provide adequate training for today's technology, and older, unemployed workers who require retraining in order to be marketable. A major focus toward work force development issues had been underway throughout the Voinovich administration and continued efforts are required to assure companies that adequate workers are available.

Enhance Arts and Parks

Quality of life considerations are often reasons people choose to live in one community over another, and parks and recreation facilities, along with arts and cultural programs, often become deciding factors. To complicate matters, different types of opportunities appeal to different age groups, making a local government's choice of what to offer even more challenging. If Ashland County is going to retain young people and families and fulfill the past-time needs of its older residents, greater attention to develop recreational and cultural opportunities will be required.

Adequate programs and facilities should be provided to meet the needs of today's residents and those of new residents projected to reside within the County. **A major challenge facing Ashland County is to dedicate sufficient attention and energy toward the development of additional programs and facilities for the arts and recreation.** As will be discussed later, there are considerable opportunities in Ashland County to establish an excellent recreational trail system and defined natural corridors for recreational purposes. There is also the potential to build upon planned cultural attractions, such as the proposed Johnny Appleseed Heritage Center & Outdoor Historical Drama. Improvements like these will contribute greatly to future quality of life but will require dedication and considerable local effort to implement. Often the development of such programs are set aside in favor of other services considered to be more essential. Aggressive project planning will, therefore, be necessary to carry out the critical steps required to take full advantage of many opportunities defined more fully later in this plan.

Preserve Historic Resources

Ashland County has a very rich history. There are numerous sites throughout the County that have historic significance and are in various stages of preservation. Several historical societies in the County are trying to preserve and enhance these resources, and all often depend upon the same limited funds to do so. **A major challenge to Ashland County is to more fully identify historic resources and properly plan for their preservation, enhancement, and promotion utilizing the energies of existing historical societies and other interested parties.**

Incorporating tourism efforts throughout the County and the State of Ohio with promotion of historic sites in Ashland County is also a challenge. Much effort and cooperation will be necessary to determine the level of tourism promotion while simultaneously acknowledging the desires of County residents and preserving the area's rural ambiance.

Chapter 4 - Vision

Ashland County Comprehensive Plan

Long-Term Vision

By 2020, Ashland County will be a very different place. According to county-wide projections published by Woods & Poole Economics, 20 years from now there will be approximately 5,000 more Ashland County residents and nearly 2,000 more housing units. Increased demand for local goods and services from this growing population will result in the construction of at least 50,000 square feet of new commercial space. New residents will be driving 3,600 more cars on Ashland County roads. As a result of an expanding local economy, 4,500 new jobs are expected to be created. Job growth is actually expected to increase faster than population growth during the next 20 years with most new jobs expected in the service sector. These numbers are, of course, rough estimates based on data available now and will vary from place to place.

While it is useful to make projections, it should be understood that most projections simply represent a statement of what is expected to happen if present trends continue. However, it is more likely that current trends will not continue, and the future may be significantly different from what is currently projected. Given this, three important points become apparent as local leaders try to create a vision of the future:

- *This plan should be updated periodically to reflect changing conditions over time. Reasonably accurate projections of population and land use can be made, but in the years to come, periodic and fresh looks at development trends can help ensure that local leaders have an accurate picture of how Ashland County is changing.*

- *As important as it is for local leaders to identify the direction of change, it is more important for local leaders to have clear community goals and a shared vision of a desirable future. Current trends will influence the future, but should not be the only determinant of the future.*

- *With the combined knowledge of the current directions of change, clear community goals, and a shared vision of a desirable future, local leaders can be empowered to take deliberate steps toward major accomplishments.*

A Future Perspective

The following chapters provide a list of goals for Ashland County along with an identification of the policies and initiatives required to achieve these goals. In all cases, these goals are relatively specific and address the subjects of land use, transportation, and quality of life. With these goals and with general comments expressed during the planning process, the following vision statement was developed. It was thought that this vision statement would help to effectively capture what Ashland County can be in the future in a more non-technical way. It is written from the perspective of a person living in 2020 who is looking back at the previous 20 years.

As a new generation of residents reaches adulthood, Ashland County has become an exceptionally livable and healthy environment in which to live, work and raise a family. Growing up in the early parts of the new millennium, most young adults are proud of where they were raised. Thanks to initiatives taken nearly 20 years ago, the early trend toward urban sprawl was halted in Ashland County, and much of the countryside remains rural with viable agricultural operations. Where development in rural areas did occur, it was accomplished in the form of conservation developments. Natural features and open spaces were preserved and rural character was maintained. Rural character, open space, and natural corridors were also maintained through a variety of local initiatives including creation of a local private community land trust. This group worked hard and, with private funding, was able to secure conservation easements to help acquire key rural properties. Regulatory incentives used to encourage development in and near incorporated villages have been successful. These communities have become viable rural communities that offer a more complete array of public services.

In 2020, Ashland County is not known as a bedroom community but as a thriving area with ample employment opportunities. The job market has expanded to meet the needs of a growing population. Through the efforts of a unified, strong, and effective economic development campaign, new companies from a variety of sectors have chosen to locate in Ashland County. These companies have brought new jobs, community support for schools and the arts, and helped to create a solid tax base.

Different types of housing choices are available to serve every age range and economic status. Most existing homes have been rehabilitated, while condominiums and assisted living facilities are now available.

The student population has also grown. The school districts and County government continue to work together to provide quality school facilities and programs. Schools offer foreign language classes, mentoring programs, and advanced courses for honor students.

The health and safety of the public continues to be a major priority in Ashland County. An effective disaster response plan, developed by the numerous fire, police, medical, and emergency response organizations, has been maintained. The County is capable of responding to any type of natural or hazardous material disaster, providing a greater level of protection to residents. The medical community has made great strides in improving the quality of care for mental health issues, substance abuse, and teenage pregnancy programs. The high quality of housing, services, and schools that Ashland County offers has enticed several physicians to live and work here.

Ashland County continues its commitment to providing residents and visitors with a variety of cultural opportunities. A grass roots effort to support the Ashland County Arts Center has resulted in the creation of numerous arts and cultural opportunities for the County and region. Many corporate and private sponsorships and fund-raising campaigns have made it possible to build a new Community Arts Center and provide educational programs for students.

Outdoor recreational opportunities abound in Ashland County. The County Park District was formed early in the century and continues to work toward the purchase and development of new parks for the county-wide park system. The Park District offers quality recreational and educational opportunities to residents

of all ages. Students can learn about the area's endangered species or about biking/skating safety. An extensive and integrated multipurpose system of pedestrian linkages provides access to municipal and County parks in addition to widely available cultural, historical, and recreational opportunities. These trails also provide connections between tourist attractions in southern Ashland County and the Villages of Loudonville and Perrysville, allowing people to take leisurely walks or bike trips to these communities for shopping and dining. As new subdivisions were constructed, developers dedicated open space for parks and trail systems that connect to the county-wide trail system. This system also connects with neighboring county and regional trail systems. Residents or tourists can now trek to a connected park to enjoy camping, boating and picnicking.

Tourism is a growing business for Ashland County. The southern part of Ashland County has become a prominent attraction for passive recreational opportunities. Mohican State Park and new attractions such as the Johnny Appleseed Heritage Center east of Charles Mill Dam draw tourists from great distances to learn about the history of the area.

Because of the vision of County leaders 20 years ago, it is now easy for residents to travel on all Ashland County roadways. The County maintains a continuous review of proposed safety and traffic improvements, working diligently to see road improvements are made as funding allows. With a partnership of various local, County, and State agencies, access management standards were developed to preserve quick and easy vehicular access to all destinations. These standards have allowed the County to be proactive rather than reactive in maintaining access, capacity, and mobility for all residents and visitors. The County has also made great strides toward the development of a connector road to complete the outer roadway belt on the west side of the City of Ashland. This route is important to the public health and safety of the residents living on the west side of the County and will allow quicker response for emergency vehicles.

Ashland County will continue to adapt with the ever-changing environment of the future. Residents care about their community, they have a vision, and they are able to come to a consensus on major issues because each person ultimately places the benefit of the whole County as their first priority.

Chapter 5 - Goals

Ashland County Comprehensive Plan

Goals are defined to help provide more specific and clear direction for Ashland County. While the preceding chapter articulated an overall general vision for Ashland County in 2020, considerably more detail is necessary to provide community leaders with a more meaningful road map to the future.

Members of each of the three task forces were asked to develop goals that Ashland County should strive to achieve in the next 20 years. In most cases, there was considerable discussion on each goal as each group tried to articulate a meaningful statement that provided some clear direction for Ashland County. After all three task forces met together, goals were refined and slightly reorganized to provide continuity and to avoid overlapping subject matter.

Land Use Goals

A total of six land use goals were defined for Ashland County. These goals included the following:

1. To Conserve Agricultural Land And Rural Atmosphere For Future Generations Through The Management of Growth And Development.

Considerable discussion took place regarding this particular goal. Specifically, it was thought that this goal should not reflect a pro- or anti-growth message but rather should be neutral on the issue of growth. Among all goals brought up by the Land Use Task Force, this first goal received the most attention as people discussed the need to control urban sprawl and preserve the agriculture and rural character, while respecting basic property rights. The concept of implementing incentives so that development can occur in a more desirable manner was a major issue.

2. To Support And Enhance Tourism Activities In Southern Ashland County By Maintaining Rural Character And Scenery.

The southern part of Ashland County is an especially beautiful place, attracting tourists and vacationers from great distances. From both an economic and aesthetic perspective, it is in Ashland County's best interest to pay close attention to how development occurs in this area. Strip commercial and residential development along roadways and hillsides, if properly planned, would not detract from a desirable, tourism environment.

3. To Maintain Viable Locations For Industrial Development To Help Ensure A Full Range Of Economic Opportunities For Current And Future Residents.

Several areas in Ashland County represent logical places for expanded industrial activity. These areas are a result of existing land use, access to major thoroughfares, and other related considerations. One particular site is on the north side of the City of Ashland, and another is located in the Village of Loudonville's industrial park. Other industrial areas could also be identified with additional effort in and around the villages. This becomes essential if the number of jobs increases with population growth over the next 20 years. These identified sites will need to be protected from incompatible land uses, such as residential development.

4. To Develop In-House Capabilities To Manage Land Resource Information In A Geographic Information System (GIS).

A great deal of land resource data was gathered as a result of preparing this plan. Much of this data is computerized and can form the basis for a local geographic information system (GIS) in Ashland County. Many Ohio counties are moving toward the development of in-house capabilities

to store, manage, and manipulate data on the natural environment, property ownership, current agricultural use values, and other similar variables. This is clearly a national trend among local governments as the costs of computer technology drops and the need for up-to-date information increases. The development of a local GIS system can pay big dividends in cost savings to a local government from the efficiency of having geographic data computerized and accessible.

5. To Protect The Environmental Health Of The Ashland County Landscape And Preserve Natural Corridors.

There is a growing recognition of the interrelationships between the way that land is developed and the environmental health of an area. Communities that have ignored important environmental considerations as development occurs have experienced many problems. For example, groundwater has become polluted in some areas as a result of discharges from inappropriate land uses located above groundwater supplies. In other areas surface water quality has declined. This decline was a result of development encroaching into riparian corridors causing the transformation of natural waterways into sterile drainage ditches. These ditches flood more frequently due to increasing volumes of runoff and the speed of water moving across hard surfaces.

Ashland County has several corridors, such as the Mohican River and the Black Fork River, that traverse the area and provide scenic watercourses and natural habitats. It is the goal of the County to protect as many of these corridors as possible and to provide public access to them for passive recreational use if and when feasible. Besides providing space for recreational activities such as walking or bicycling, cross country skiing, and boating, corridors can provide environmental benefits. Habitats for wildlife often flourish, and natural areas along the corridors can prevent erosion and reduce the amount of runoff from farming or development that enters the streams, thus protecting our surface water quality.

6. To Achieve Orderly Commercial Land Use Expansion And Redevelopment Of Existing Commercial Areas.

A growing local population requires additional goods and services which creates a demand for additional commercial space. It is highly desirable that there be some restraint in the outward expansion of commercial areas, especially in the vicinity of the City of Ashland. Extensive creation of new commercial property through rezoning may lead toward an oversupply of commercial land. This oversupply may result in diminished value of existing commercial land, particularly land that is somewhat deteriorated. An oversupply of commercial property may also affect the viability of downtown Ashland if commercial entities choose to relocate in lieu of remodeling existing space.

Transportation Goals

The Transportation Task Force was comprised of people interested in improving transportation in Ashland County. Members included ODOT retirees, the Assistant County Engineer, and representatives from the County's private sector. After identifying and evaluating the major challenges facing Ashland County, the Transportation Task Force identified four major goals. These goals will require open communication and cooperation among various local and State agencies as well as the general public.

1. To Maximize The Capacity And Function Of Existing Roadways And Provide For The Safe And Efficient Movement Of Traffic Between Local And Regional Destinations.

Ashland County residents are fortunate to have a quality transportation system. As funding allowed, local officials have endeavored to see that the needs of various safety and traffic improvements have been accomplished. For example, most bridges within Ashland County have

been maintained to standards by the County Engineer's Office. However, several major concerns were also addressed by the task force. Various locations within the County were identified as needing one or more of the following improvements: signalization, widening, intersection improvements, center or left turn lanes, and a proposed connector road. Planning and implementing these improvements will help to increase the capacity of the current road system, improve site distances at intersections, reduce the number of accidents at key locations, and provide increased mobility and better access to various areas throughout the County and the region.

Another way to increase the capacity and function of existing roads is to develop access management standards for County-maintained roads, similar to ODOT's standards. ODOT recently published *State Highway Access Management Manual* which regulates the level of access allowed on a state-maintained roadway based on the function of the road. Access management standards are set for each road classification. These standards manage the frequency, location, and design of driveways, intersections, signals, medians, and turn lanes.

Access management standards are adjusted based on the classification level of the roadway. For example, the higher the class of roadway, the more restrictive the access. When access management standards are utilized, motorists experience fewer accidents, less congestion, and improved travel time. Over time, studies have shown that access management can reduce the overall number of accidents by as much as 50 percent, while safely increasing travel speeds by as much as 40 percent. Less congestion results in the reduction of transportation costs to businesses while remaining accessible and attractive to customers.

2. To Effectively Plan For New Road Connections.

In addition to maintaining the capacity of existing roadways, the need for limited new road construction is recognized in order to aid overall traffic circulation. As funding for new road construction is scarce and actual construction takes many years, effective planning is thought to be critical so that potential road alignments are not lost due to development activity.

3. To Enhance And Protect The Positive Experience Of Traveling Within Ashland County.

For the most part, people experience the largest parts of Ashland County by driving along major and minor roadways. To a tourist or other visitor, impressions are formed by viewing the natural landscape and physical character of the area. Today, there are few formal efforts to define a sense of arrival into Ashland County or into the Mohican Country in southern Ashland County. With a new governmental emphasis on the enhancement of transportation facilities and the growing recognition that roadways do more than allow people to move from place to place, certain actions seem appropriate. For example, the development of signed and landscaped entrances at certain locations and measures to take control of the placement of billboards along scenic routes are some approaches toward enhancing the traveling experience in Ashland County.

4. To Develop Alternative Forms Of Transportation.

Progressive communities are looking for ways to develop alternative forms of transportation. While additional discussion on the subject of developing trails for recreation purposes will be discussed under the subject of quality of life, the Transportation Task Force recognized the benefits of creating pedestrian linkages between residential areas and community facilities, parks, shopping areas and similar destinations for purely transportation purposes. Sidewalks, walking trails and similar connections can provide an alternative to automobile trips, although they would be limited in terms of usage. The task force also recognized an opportunity with the potential development of the proposed high speed rail. This would provide Ashland County residents with another alternative form of transportation that could ultimately provide connections to other transportation modes, such as airports and buses.

Quality of Life Goals

Quality of life goals established for Ashland County are defined to help point the direction toward a more livable County in the future. A total of seven such goals were established:

1. To Significantly Increase Outdoor Recreation And Open Space And Achieve Better Distribution Of Opportunities And Spaces Throughout Ashland County.

Ashland County is fortunate to have significantly more outdoor recreation space per capita than the state average. This is because of large holdings of State forest land, other large outdoor recreation areas, and the fact that Ashland County serves as a major statewide destination for outdoor recreation activities. Despite this abundance of existing outdoor recreation space, a goal to aggressively pursue additional acquisition and development of open space and parkland is established. Additional outdoor recreation space is needed to continue to maintain a high standard as population growth occurs and to build upon Ashland County's position as a tourist destination. The task force also thinks an effort should be made to assure that the parkland is distributed evenly throughout the County, and that each township has a least one park facility.

2. To Increase Cultural Opportunities And Opportunities In The Arts.

There is a belief that Ashland County residents are forced to rely heavily on neighboring cities and counties for most of the cultural activities and art programs. Some positive steps have been taken recently by certain entities and individuals to increase the opportunities for the arts and other cultural activities. The most notable accomplishment is the establishment of the Ashland Community Arts Center. This volunteer organization is striving to make the arts and cultural activities as available to residents of Ashland County as football and baseball.

3. To Provide A High Level Of Support For The School Districts.

Most people feel that the quality of education received by the children of Ashland County will determine the future success and accomplishments of the County. Education is a key factor in all areas of the country, especially in the State of Ohio, as we compare ourselves to the successes of school systems in other countries. Employers are taking a much stronger position regarding the quality of education because today's students are tomorrow's employees. New attention is being placed on training programs as well as on cooperative efforts between schools and industries to help ensure recent graduates are not ill-equipped for life in the workplace.

Because of these considerations, Ashland County has set a goal to work with its school districts to enhance the quality of education being provided. Maintaining closer working relationships among education providers within the County, addressing growth issues, and sharing facilities to reduce operational costs are some ideas being suggested to achieve this goal. Capitalizing upon the resources available at Ashland University through a variety of partnerships is encouraged. Involving school districts in economic development activities (especially as they relate to tax abatement), supporting opportunities for children through programs developed at the State level, and meeting the needs of the companies of the future are considered to be important elements of this goal.

4. To Provide Adequate Police, Fire, And Emergency Medical Services To All County Residents.

There are numerous service providers at present, but as the County continues to grow, additional services will be required to meet the new demands. This can be challenging when many of the services within many townships are provided by volunteer departments. The Quality of Life Task Force agreed that all residents of the County should be assured of proper services to meet their needs, regardless of where within the County they might live. Continually assessing and addressing these services is a goal established by the task force.

5. To Provide Adequate Medical Services To All County Residents.

Ashland County has taken some positive steps in the past decade to better address the medical needs of its residents. Additional educational and awareness programs, recruitment of physicians, and improvements at the hospital and clinics have all enhanced the available medical services. Ashland County's goal for the planning period is to continue to support medical programs and efforts county-wide, especially those programs that provide mental health and children's health services.

6. To Identify, Protect, And Enhance Historic Resources.

Ashland County is rich with historic assets, from battle sites to cemeteries and opera houses. Some of these resources are protected at this time and others are not. Proper identification of these historic resources is paramount as a first step in any serious efforts to accomplish meaningful preservation. There are several historical societies within the County, all of which are performing some level of historic preservation. Coordinating efforts among these historic preservation groups, especially since funds for these types of activities are limited, is a goal set by the Quality of Life Task Force. Working with State and federal preservation agencies is also important to the success of preservation efforts within Ashland County.

Combining these historic preservation activities with existing and proposed tourism efforts in a manner which is sensitive to the environment and the rural character of the County is an important aspect of this goal.

7. To Provide A Variety Of Housing Types For Residents And To Maintain The Quality Of Existing Residential Areas.

Ashland County's population is continuing to change. According to projections, the area will see an increase in older households, which are considered to be "empty-nesters." As empty-nesters' lives change, so too may be their specific needs in housing, especially for smaller, lower maintenance units. This becomes an area that Ashland County will have to address. Despite a shifting demand for new housing types, however, there is sometimes resistance to developments that include multifamily housing units due to concern for neighborhood property values. It is a goal of Ashland County to encourage a variety of housing types to be constructed to provide all family types with a range of housing options.

Chapter 6 - Initiatives

Ashland County Comprehensive Plan

There are two basic ways for Ashland County to achieve its goals. One way is through adoption and implementation of policies. The adoption of policies represents a position on issues and defines a general course of future action. Policies should primarily guide future decision making. For example, decisions regarding specific development proposals should be made by comparing the proposed development against adapted land use policies.

A second way Ashland County will achieve its goals is through initiatives. Initiatives are specific actions that need to be taken by specific people or organizations to achieve specific outcomes. Unlike policies, initiatives should be very focused and with clear outcomes. Initiatives require action from the designated entities.

This chapter defines specific initiatives that are thought to be necessary for Ashland County to achieve some of the established goals. Most of these initiatives are relatively short-term, considered feasible in the next one to five years. The subsequent chapter defines companion policies focused toward these same goals and long-term vision.

Land Use Initiatives

Land Use Goal: To Conserve Agricultural Land And Rural Atmosphere For Future Generations Through The Management Of Growth And Development.

Model Zoning Initiative: Produce model zoning regulations to help townships update land use regulations. These model regulations will include provisions to allow open space developments in a manner consistent with Ashland County Subdivision Regulations and this comprehensive plan. Particular focus will be directed toward defining clear requirements for open space subdivisions and some incentives for developers to opt for this development approach. Provisions will also address general updates to zoning procedures along with new land uses.

Responsible Entity: Ashland Regional Planning Commission.

Time Frame: By January 2002

Initiative to Promote Cooperative Zoning Practices: All townships should be zoned, and all zoning codes should be administered in a professional manner. Two townships currently lack zoning, and it is thought that additional work is required to develop codes that would be approved by the voters. A part from reaching the point where all Ashland County townships have are zoned, effective administration and enforcement of these codes is important. Many townships rely on part-time zoning inspectors who have varying levels of commitment and availability. Townships could share zoning inspectors and thereby increase the volume of work and the ability to find a full-time professional inspector.

Responsible Entity: Ashland Regional Planning Commission.

Time Frame: Ongoing.

County-Wide Initiative to Encourage Open Space Subdivisions: The Ashland County Subdivision Regulations will be updated to reflect a number of key provisions. The Ashland County Subdivision Regulations currently provide for (and actually encourage) planned unit development (PUD) as a method of development. PUD's would be the logical mechanism for an individual to create an open space subdivision, given that normal subdivision requirements prohibit innovative site design and clustering. However, despite the fact that PUD's are encouraged, existing procedures and a lack of specific requirements may actually discourage

someone from opting to undertake a more creative development. Article VII of the Ashland County Subdivision Regulations should be updated to provide specific required development standards, such as required amounts of open space and maximum density clustering. In addition, procedural changes to streamline the review process are also needed.

Responsible Entity: Ashland County Commissioners and Ashland Regional Planning Commission.

Time Frame: Ongoing.

Initiative to Control Lot Splits: Action will be taken to develop a more strict position on the number of minor subdivisions (Type 1) that can be split from a larger tract. Currently, up to five lots that are less than five acres in size can be split from an original parcel. The definition of this original parcel is not now clearly defined. The intent of this initiative is to slow the process of converting a farm into a subdivision using the rules of minor subdivision approval (Type 1). Individuals who intend to develop a large parcel with more than five lots should follow the rules associated with major subdivisions (Type II). Options to accomplish this include amendment of existing provisions of the subdivision regulations or formally reinterpreting existing provisions that an original parcel is "a piece of property that existed as a separate parcel as of 14, May, 1964."

Responsible Entity: Ashland County Commissioners and Ashland Regional Planning Commission.

Time Frame: Ongoing.

Initiative to Address Farmland Preservation on an Ongoing Basis: A Farmland Preservation Task Force will be created to monitor local trends in farmland loss and to recommend actions to the Ashland County Commissioners. This task force will support the establishment of land trusts. Private land trusts are considered to be a consequential force in the area of land preservation and, as private organizations, citizens have leeway to take a leading role. A Farmland Preservation Task Force will also investigate the practicality of a local Purchase of Development Rights Program (PDR).

Responsible Entity: Ashland County Commissioners.

Time Frame: By July 2000.

Initiative to Encourage More Innovative Development: Meetings will be held at least annually with local developers to help identify regulatory and other types of impediments to desirable forms of development. The purpose of these meetings is to identify actions required to raise the standard for local development. These meetings should seek to develop a public-private partnership to improve local development practices. Participants should be encouraged to think creatively and aim toward a cooperative effort to more innovatively develop land.

Responsible Entity: Ashland County Commissioners.

Time Frame: Ongoing.

Initiative to Create Incentives for Development to Occur in Urban Development Areas: An investigation will be conducted into the creation of a series of incentives to guide and encourage development toward urban development areas as shown on the land use concept map. Incentives could include regulatory, service, and tax incentives aimed toward making identified growth areas more attractive for future urban development.

Regulatory Incentives worthy of consideration include:

a) **Different lot size and/or frontage requirements in urban development areas** under both the Ashland County Subdivision Regulations and township zoning. For example, the Ashland County Subdivision Regulations currently require lots served by central water and sewer systems to have 80 feet of frontage and 10,000 square feet of lot area. These requirements could be reduced by 10 to 15 percent in urban development areas without a substantial impact on the quality of the development.

b) **Relaxed development standards for major subdivisions in urban development areas** should be investigated. Relaxed development standards contained in the subdivision

regulations could include reduced requirements for items such as right-of-way width. Currently, the Ashland County Subdivision Regulations require a minimum right-of-way width of 60 feet in all subdivisions. It is possible that unless curbs, gutters and sidewalks are installed (and they would not typically be installed in the more rural areas), a 50 foot right-of-way width would be acceptable for local residential streets.

Water and Sewer Service Incentives worthy of consideration include:

- a) **Pursuit of grants and other funds to replace and upgrade water and sewer lines for urban development areas.**
- b) **Pursuit of subsidies for lower service rates for urban development areas.**

Tax Incentives worthy of consideration include:

- a) **The development of Community Reinvestment Areas (CRA's) in urban development areas.** CRA's can provide a real estate tax break for residential, commercial, and industrial development. Tax exemptions can be for up to 15 years depending on type of development. The establishment of CRA's in urban development areas could provide a significant financial incentive for development.

Responsible Entity: Ashland County Commissioners and Ashland Regional Planning Commission.

Time Frame: Ongoing.

Land Use Goal: To Support And Enhance Tourism Activities By Maintaining Rural Character and Scenery.

Initiative to Develop Special Land Use Standards: Along with effort to develop a model zoning code (as discussed previously), special attention should be directed toward updating local land use standards in townships that depend on tourism. Townships should have land use standards that address issues such as general hillside development, tree canopy removal, and requirements to limit erosion. In conjunction with townships, work will begin on the development of draft zoning requirements that address these issues.

Responsible Entity: Ashland Regional Planning Commission.

Time Frame: By January 2002.

Land Use Goal: To Develop In-House Capabilities To Store And Create Land Resource Information In A Geographic Information System (GIS).

GIS Initiative: Development of a Geographic Information System (GIS) for Ashland County will be accomplished as a project spearheaded by the Ashland Regional Planning Commission. Limited grant funding is available for local governments through the Environmental Systems Research Institute Inc. (ESRI), but local funds will also be needed to fully implement a complete system. Coordination with the Ashland County Auditor, Ashland County Engineer, other County departments, and potentially organizations outside County government should be included in the discussions of building and funding a usable system.

Responsible Entity: Ashland County Elected Officials

Time Frame: By July 2003.

Land Use Goal: To Protect The Environmental Health Of The Ashland County Landscape And Preserve Natural Corridors.

Initiative to Identify Corridors for Preservation: Natural corridors will be further identified throughout the County. Material in this comprehensive plan provides some general indications of the boundaries of these natural corridors (see Ashland County Future Land Use and Transportation Map in Chapter 7). These corridors will be identified as natural and habitat areas, potential locations for hiking and biking trails, and for scenic highways. These corridors will also be considered as potential connections between parks, lakes, and other designated public spaces throughout the County and would help protect rivers, streams, and creeks from degradation as a result of urban development.

Responsible Entity: Ashland Regional Planning Commission

Time Frame: By December 2003.

Initiative to Pursue Funding for Corridor Development: Once potential corridors in Ashland County are identified, goals will be prioritized for the acquisition and development of land in specific corridors. It is also anticipated the activities of a future private land trust (addressed under Land Use Policies) could complement acquisition activities. This initiative includes pursuing funding from all potential sources for the acquisition of property along with development and maintenance in these corridors.

Responsible Entity: Ashland Regional Planning Commission.

Time Frame: By December 2004.

Transportation Initiatives

Transportation Goal: To Maximize The Capacity And Function Of Existing Roadways And Provide For The Safe And Efficient Movement Of Traffic Between Local And Regional Destinations.

Initiative to Begin Serious Progress Toward a Local Access Management Program: An Access Management Committee to be comprised of representatives from the Ashland County Engineer, Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), and from townships and interested municipalities will be appointed. A "partnering" relationship should be developed with an emphasis on communication and cooperation. This type of environment is essential if the committee is to complete its tasks.

Responsible Entity: Ashland County Commissioners and Access Management Committee

Time Frame: By January 2001.

Initiative to Develop Specific Access Management Standards for Ashland County: An Access Management Plan will be developed that includes a road classification according to road function. The road classification illustrated on the Ashland County Future Land Use and Transportation Map in Chapter 7 represents a good starting point for this work. This system will be similar to ODOT's road classification system for State-maintained roads but will classify all remaining roads. When classifying roads, the Committee will review the length and purpose of trips, access to properties, and the amount of traffic on each road. Most non-state and federal roadways are expected to be classified as collectors and local roadways. A map depicting a combination of the State and County road classification system should be developed for easy reference. The Access Management Plan should provide standards for each road according to function. This process may take several months of review and discussion before a consensus is reached. The main goals in this process will be to:

- *Provide a logical basis and rationale for managing access.*

- *Consider the roadway's function within the system and set consistent policies and standards accordingly.*
- *Define when, where, and how access is to be approved, denied, or restricted in order to separate and limit the traffic conflict points that drivers face.*
- *Establish consistent, uniform procedures including how to provide variances for access that do not meet specific standards.*

The final Access Management Plan should be easily comprehensible with clear standards that allow flexibility in selecting a design to achieve the desired level of access. The relationships between local zoning, county subdivision regulations, and other laws should also be clear.

Responsible Entities: Access Management Committee, Ashland Regional Planning Commission, and the Ashland County Commissioners with the involvement of townships and municipalities.

Time Frame: By January 2002.

Initiative to Correct Specific Traffic Safety and Flow Problems: Several proposed roadway improvements are shown on the Ashland County Future Land Use and Transportation Map in Chapter 7. The need for improvements is based on the beliefs that there are an unusual number of accidents and delays in these areas and that geometric and site distance problems need to be corrected. Several specific intersections/sections of roadway were identified by the Transportation Task Force, and although these projects are not now under consideration by the State, the task force recognized that these improvements are needed to enhance safety. A majority of these improvements are located on State-maintained roads and would, therefore, require State approval and assistance to complete.

Responsible Entities: After review and approval by the County Commissioners, the County Engineer would pursue studying the identified sites for improvement, prioritizing the projects, and forwarding a list of proposed projects to the ODOT District 3 requesting that they be added to the Transportation Improvement Program. Improvements on local roads can be accomplished with local funding and/or grant funding from programs such as Issue 2.

Time Frame: By January 2002.

Transportation Goal: To Effectively Plan For New Road Connections.

Initiatives Toward Construction of a Connector Road: Ashland County will proceed with an alignment study and preliminary design for the development of a connector road on the west side of the City of Ashland. Construction of a connector road would link the US 250 bypass (Faultless Drive/TR 1186) on the north side of the City with US 42 on the southwest side of Ashland. This road would complete a loop around the City, eliminate the need to either drive through the City or take the east bypass, and provide safer and more convenient access to the southern portion of the County. The new road would be located primarily in Milton Township. The major benefit of a preliminary study of the proposed road would be to identify potential alignments so that development could be planned in such a way to accommodate a future roadway alignment. Close cooperation with township officials is an obvious requirement for a successful project. If/when the proposed connector route is considered, the possibility of making the US 250 loop a limited access highway in lieu of the connector route should be considered.

Responsible Entities: Ashland County Commissioners, Ashland County Engineer, and township officials.

Time Frame: By July 2003.

Transportation Goal: To Enhance And Protect The Positive Experience Of Traveling Within Ashland County.

Initiative to Enhance Travel Through Ashland County: A Transportation Enhancement Committee will be appointed and members would include representatives from the County Engineer, ODNR, township officials, and other interested individuals. This committee would be responsible for identifying key gateways into the County, developing standardized signage and placement, outdoor advertising, and other issues such as highway beautification, tree planting, and scenic byways.

Responsible Entities: Ashland County Engineer and Transportation Enhancement Committee.

Time Frame: By December 2003.

Initiative to Specifically Identify Key Gateways and Corridors: A first assignment to the Transportation Enhancement Committee will be to identify and develop key corridors and gateway locations that welcome visitors to Ashland County. Additional development standards for these areas should also be produced. Transportation Task Force members noted that when traveling along a major corridor, it is difficult to discern when one enters or exits Ashland County. The Transportation Enhancement Committee would identify key gateway sites, and distinct, standardized signage and landscaped entrances should be developed to create a sense of place and arrival to Ashland County. This is especially important in southern Ashland County where tourist traffic is greatest. Signage should not only be visually appealing but must also be easy to read from a traveling vehicle. Design standards may include designating the size, setbacks, and color of the signs. Depending on the road designation, permission from the approving agency would then be required (ODOT, County Engineer, municipality). Municipalities may also want to consider developing unique entranceways at their borders.

To solicit participation and ownership among residents in this project, a county-wide contest could be held to develop a special logo or slogan. The contest could target a specific age group, and the runner-up logos could be displayed on billboards located throughout the County. The County may also want to consider “adopt an area” programs. Groups or businesses could adopt entranceways and would be required to maintain the area on a regular basis. This would entail trash collection and possible participation in landscape maintenance.

Responsible Entities: Transportation Enhancement Committee and the Ashland County Engineer.

Time Frame: By December 2003.

Initiative to Control Outdoor Advertisement: A second task of the Transportation Enhancement Committee will be to establish special requirements for outdoor advertising along scenic routes to not distract from the scenic surroundings or ruin the attractiveness of the area. These standards would include height, setback, and sign area requirements for County and township roads. Particular attention should be given to the Mohican recreation area because of its exceptional landscape.

Responsible Entities: Transportation Enhancement Committee, Townships, and Villages.

Time Frame: By December 2003.

Highway Beautification Initiative: Ashland County will develop an Adopt-a-Highway and Highway Beautification campaigns that may include planting wildflowers and trees, initiating adopt-a-highway programs, and designating scenic roadways. The Transportation Enhancement Committee would spearhead this endeavor in partnership with the County Engineer and ODOT to develop a campaign that encourages residents to take ownership in their community.

Responsible Entities: Transportation Enhancement Committee, Ashland County Engineer, and ODOT.

Time Frame: Ongoing.

Transportation Goal: To Develop Alternative Forms Of Transportation.

Initiative to Create an Entity Responsible for Creating a System of Recreational Trails: A local recreational trail board (RTB) will be created as needed and will consist of representatives from municipalities, townships, ODNR, and ODOT. Such a board should become part of any park district that comes into existence.

Responsible Entity: Ashland County Commissioners.

Time Frame: By December 2001.

Initiative to Develop Specific Plans for Recreational Trails: A prime responsibility of the RTB is to identify potential sites/locations for trails. This would include developing a county-wide trail system that would connect major parks and lakes, northern and southern portions of the County and major attractions such as the proposed Johnny Appleseed Heritage Center and Outdoor Historical Drama. One potential trail site is the old Interurban line. Plans should also include identifying parking area locations for trail users. Parking areas provide residents and visitors with easy access to the trail system, allowing users to bring along bicycles, picnic supplies, and other equipment. Other needed facilities ADA-standard restrooms with pay phones, trailheads, and benches. Locations for these facilities should be identified in conjunction with the design of the trail system.

Responsible Entity: Recreational Trail Board.

Time Frame: By December 2002.

Initiative to Education Children About Bike Safety: An initiative directly related to the implementation of the trail system would be to educate children about bike/skating safety through the development of special programs. Safety programs are important, and this effort would include encouraging the use of helmets and other protective gear. The program should be addressed on an annual or semiannual basis, particularly during the summer.

Responsible Entities: Recreational Trail Board, and School Districts.

Time Frame: Upon completion of the first trail segment.

Initiative to Extend the Airport Runway: Short-term efforts will be made to extend the Ashland County Airport runway an additional 1,500 feet, enlarge the ramp area, and widen the taxiway. The Ashland County Airport is another alternative form of transportation that is used primarily by private and corporate aircraft. For instance, customers of local businesses and industries fly into the airport to visit local facilities. In order to better accommodate the anticipated increase in corporate aircraft, the airport will need to expand the facilities to accommodate air traffic.

Responsible Entities: Ashland County Commissioners and the Ashland County Airport Board.

Time Frame: Preliminary plans for expansion by December 2001 (subject to federal funding).

Quality of Life Initiatives

Quality of Life Goal: To Increase Outdoor Recreation And Open Space In Proportion To Population Growth To Achieve Better Distribution Of Opportunities And Spaces Throughout Ashland County.

Initiative to Amend Land Use Regulations to Recommend Parkland Dedication: Ashland County will amend existing subdivision regulations to include the dedication of parkland to the community by residential subdivision developers. Fees in-lieu of land dedication should also be an option in cases where subdivisions are small or when other considerations make establishing parkland impractical. Full implementation of these requirements should take place after plans for the establishment of natural corridors, recreation trails and other major elements of a county-wide recreation and open space plan are in place.

Responsible Entity: Ashland Regional Planning Commission and Park District.

Time Frame: By December 2002.

Initiative to Consider Creation of a County-Wide Park District: The feasibility of creating an Ashland County Park District will be investigated to lead the way toward increased outdoor recreation and open space. The Ashland County Commissioners will appoint a committee to investigate options for the creation of a new park district (geographic coverage) along with the related issues of funding and staffing. The committee will be asked to deliver a recommendation to the Commissioners after careful study and investigation.

Responsible Entity: Park District Study Committee

Time Frame: Recommendation by December 2002.

Initiative to Develop an Overall Outdoor Recreation Plan: In conjunction with the newly created Ashland County Park District and the initiative to set aside parkland, a plan will be considered that will address the need for county-wide outdoor recreation. This plan would inventory potential park sites, and set priorities for future land acquisitions and recreation needs.

Responsible Entity: Ashland County Planning Commission and Park District.

Time Frame: December 2003.

Initiative to Pursue Funding for Park Development. Ashland County and the new Park District will actively pursue grant programs, private foundations, and private donations to finance the acquisition and development of parklands throughout the County.

Responsible Entity: Park District.

Time Frame: By July 2004.

Quality Of Life Goal: To Increase Cultural Opportunities And Opportunities In The Arts.

Initiative to Study the Feasibility of a New Community Arts Building: A feasibility study will be conducted to determine the need for construction of a new community arts building which would include facilities for youth music and theater, communications, arts instruction, community theater, photography, community chorus, dance performances, and an art gallery. Such a study will be critical in attracting funding sources or pursuing a tax levy for a project of this nature.

Responsible Entity: Community Arts Center.

Time Frame: Feasibility Study by December 2004.

Quality Of Life Goal: To Provide A High Level of Support For The School Districts.

Initiative to Determine Growth Trends of School Districts: Growth projections developed as part of the genesis of this plan will be shared with local school districts. A meeting between Ashland County representatives and school districts to discuss overall projected growth trends and the impacts such trends may have on the school districts will be convened. Land use planning and implementation efforts will be coordinated with school districts so that appropriate school enrollment projections can be made.

Responsible Entity: School Districts.

Time Frame: After 2000 census data is available.

Initiative to Provide Funding to Schools through Economic Development Efforts: Economic development activities will continue to consider the impact on schools of commercial, industrial, and residential development and incentives offered to companies locating or expanding in the County. Payments to the schools in lieu of taxes will continue to be requested from companies receiving tax incentives. Other services and/or contributions by the companies to the schools will be encouraged as well, with the intent to foster and/or enhance better relationships, including partnering, between private sector companies and the schools.

Involved Entities: Local Governments.

Time Frame: Ongoing.

Quality of Life Goal: To Provide Adequate Police, Fire, And Emergency Medical Services To All County Residents.

Initiative to Anticipate Demand for Expansion of Services: The land use and population projections resulting from this comprehensive plan will be discussed with service providers so that services to growth areas can be planned. A meeting will be convened between Ashland County representatives and service providers to discuss overall projected growth trends and the impacts such trends may have on service demands.

Responsible Entity: Ashland County Sheriff.

Time Frame: By June 2001.

Quality of Life Goal: To Identify, Protect And Enhance The Historic Resources Of Ashland County.

Initiative to Nominate Historic Sites to the National Register of Historic Places: The necessary steps will be taken to have identified historic sites nominated to and included on the National Register of Historic Places. To accomplish this, local historical societies will work with the County, the Ohio Historic Preservation Office, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the Department of the Interior.

Responsible Entities: Local Historical Societies.

Time Frame: By Ongoing.

Initiative to Market Historic Sites within Ashland County: Local historical societies will advertise historic tourist sites in appropriate sources such as *Ohio Magazine* and will also utilize the Internet as an advertising medium.

Responsible Entity: Local Historical Societies.

Time Frame: Ongoing.

Quality of Life Goal: To Provide A Variety Of Housing Types For Residents And To Maintain The Quality Of Existing Residential Areas.

Initiative to Provide Various Types of Housing for All Ages and Incomes: As part of their overall responsibilities to address housing issues, the Ashland City and County Housing Advisory Committees will take a broader look at the types of housing available and needed in various locations throughout the County, while considering all price ranges and ownership alternatives. Housing opportunities will especially be considered for persons at or below the poverty level, as well as those individuals seeking affordable housing. Upscale housing will also be examined, especially in the Villages of Loudonville and Perrysville, communities which have attracted several new industries to the area and have upper management personnel who desire larger and more upscale housing.

Responsible Entity: Ashland City and County Housing Advisory Committees.

Time Frame: Ongoing.

Initiative to Revise Zoning Codes to Allow Greater Flexibility in the Development of Housing Types: As either part of the previously described initiative to develop a model township zoning code or as a separate effort, municipal and township zoning codes will be reviewed and updated to encourage a greater variety of housing opportunities. Appropriate provisions to allow zero-lot line housing, condominiums, town houses, and other housing types should be included in

local zoning to provide developers with greater opportunities for more diversified and state-of-the-art housing developments. As indicated previously, it is expected that the local housing market may be shifting toward an increasing demand for housing for smaller households, and consequently, there is a need to make sure local zoning can accommodate this shift.

Responsible Entity: Ashland Regional Planning Commission and Local Governments.

Time Frame: By January 2002.

Initiative to Develop a Quality Relationship Between Ashland University and the Community Regarding Housing:

A committee will be established to develop a relationship between Ashland University and the City of Ashland to review and improve existing rules and policies regarding off-campus housing for students. History has shown that housing provided to college students living off-campus tends to have a detrimental effect on the surrounding neighborhoods if the housing is not properly maintained and if adequate regulations are not enforced. The committee or group engaged to address this problem will develop new policies as needed to create a positive living environment and protect private investments in neighborhoods adjacent to the University.

Responsible Entity: An Appointed Committee

Time Frame: By December 2001.

Chapter 7 - Policies

Ashland County Comprehensive Plan

In concert with defined initiatives, a number of policies have been defined to help provide an overall direction for future actions and to help guide decision-making in the years to come. Typically, policies are statements that reflect a general course of action and/or a position on given issues. Clear policies aid in decision-making as local leaders are confronted with matters that require action and/or approval. In addition to specific statements, some policies are reflected and illustrated on the map titled Ashland County Future Land Use and Transportation. It is intended that written policies below supplement and amplify elements shown on this map.

Land Use Policies

Land Use Goal: To Conserve Agricultural Land And Rural Atmosphere For Future Generations Through The Management Of Growth And Development.

Policy on Water and Sewer Districts: Ashland County will discourage the creation of new water/sewer districts in areas not identified as urban development areas on the land use plan. It is thought that the creation of new water and sewer districts in rural areas will encourage sprawl and premature development. New water/sewer districts in designated urban development areas would not be considered to be contrary to this policy and would actually support the goal of directing new development to designated urban growth areas.

Involved Entities: Ashland County Commissioners and Township Trustees.

Policy on Public Support For Development in Certain Areas: Ashland County will provide public support for development in designated urban development areas. Support may include zoning changes, utility extensions, establishment of Joint Economic Development Districts (JEDD), and road improvements.

Involved Entities: Ashland County Commissioners, Ashland Regional Planning Commission, township trustees and elected municipal officials.

Policy on Private Land Trusts: Ashland County will encourage the establishment of private land trusts created to acquire agricultural easements and/or fee simple ownership of agricultural or environmentally sensitive lands. Private land trusts are considered to be a rapidly growing force in the area of land preservation. In the preceding ten years, the number of land trust organizations has increased 63 percent and land trusts now protect 4.7 million acres of land nationwide. In Ohio, 27 land trust organizations protect nearly 11,000 acres of land. Because land trusts are private organizations, public policy can simply encourage private citizens to step forward and create a trust. Once created, trust organizers and government agencies, such as the Ashland Regional Planning Commission and County Park District, can collaborate on mutually-held projects.

Involved Entities: Ashland County Commissioners, Ashland Regional Planning Commission, Farmland Preservation Task Force.

Policy on Purchase of Development Rights: Ashland County is neutral on the concept of a publicly-funded purchase of development rights (PDR) program. A PDR program allows a local government to levy a tax to raise revenue for the purchase of the development rights from owners of existing farms. Purchasing the development rights means that the land could only be used for farming or other limited purposes. Although local PDR programs were recently authorized by state law in Ohio, it would require considerable study to fully implement in Ashland County. Further, assuming that all technical matters can be addressed, it is not known how receptive

residents might be to a PDR program. A major obstacle is thought to be the issue of funding and the expected need for a new local tax. Future grant funding could lessen the need for local tax revenue but would not likely eliminate it all together. Although PDR programs have been used effectively in other states such as Pennsylvania, little experience with PDR programs exists in Ohio.

Involved Entities: Ashland County Commissioners and Ashland Regional Planning Commission.

Policy on Helping Local Villages with Development Regulations: Because a central focus of the future land use concept is to direct development toward existing incorporated villages and designated urban development areas and these villages have limited full-time professional capabilities, Ashland Regional Planning Commission will extend assistance to these areas as much as possible. Planning assistance might include helping villages update and improve zoning regulations complementary to County policies.

Involved Entities: Ashland Regional Planning Commission.

Policy on Potential Federal Funding Opportunities: It is expected that there will be greater federal attention on helping local governments deal with growth and development issues. The focus of this attention appears to be toward providing additional voluntary programs and funding opportunities for local governments that are interested in finding smarter ways to grow. Because these proposed federal initiatives are not yet finalized, it is prudent for Ashland County to monitor the progress of current actions, especially as they may relate to farmland preservation and the control of sprawl. Specific initiatives such as the proposed Lands Legacy Initiative and Better America Bonds could provide a means for Ashland County to accomplish major projects that support the goal of preserving rural character.

Involved Entities: Ashland County Commissioners, Ashland Regional Planning Commission and all local units of government.

Land Use Goal: To Support And Enhance Tourism Activities By Maintaining Rural Character and Scenery.

Policy on Hillside Development Standards: Encourage townships and municipalities to adopt development standards that address the issue of hillside development. Specified standards are to be developed as a separate initiative discussed previously. Standards should address concerns related to preservation of scenic views, erosion, and tree canopy removal.

Involved Entities: Ashland Regional Planning Commission and involved townships and villages.

Policy on Ecotourism: Ashland County will support local efforts to develop ecotourism activities in Ashland County.

Involved Entities: Ashland County Commissioners and other public/private organizations.

Land Use Goal: To Maintain Viable Locations For Industrial Development To Help Ensure A Full Range Of Economic Opportunities For Current And Future Residents.

Policy on Tax Incentives: Ashland County will establish appropriate tax incentive programs to apply to selected areas where industrial development is sought in accordance with the Ashland County Future Land Use and Transportation Map in this chapter. As will be described, it is also the policy of Ashland County to effectively address issues of school funding in light of abated taxes in a manner consistent with State law.

Involved Entities: Ashland County Commissioners and involved local governments.

Policy on Water/Sewer Services: Ashland County will maintain efforts to make sure that potential sites for industrial development have adequate water and sewer services. Ashland County will also develop plans as necessary to provide such services so that economic development projects can occur more quickly.

Involved Entities: Ashland County Commissioners and involved local governments.

Policy on Economic Development Partnerships: Ashland County leaders will continue to develop and maintain partnerships between local governments, private development organizations, and Ashland County to bring about continued economic development.

Involved Entities: Ashland County Commissioners and involved local governments.

Land Use Goal: To Achieve Orderly Commercial Land Use Expansion and Redevelopment of Existing Commercial Areas.

Policy on Commercial Rezoning: Ashland County will discourage commercial rezoning of property beyond designated urban development areas in order to limit commercial strip development. It is thought that the designated urban development areas represent more than enough space for expansion of commercial areas well into the next century.

Involved Entities: Ashland Regional Planning Commission and involved local governments.

Policy on Commercial Revitalization: Along with the policy of controlled expansion of commercial areas, Ashland County will support efforts to revitalize existing commercial areas to help meet a growing demand for commercial space. This includes downtown areas of municipalities.

Involved Entities: Ashland County Commissioners, Ashland Regional Planning Commission and involved local governments.

Transportation Policies

Transportation Goal: To Maximize The Capacity And Function Of Existing Roadways And Provide For The Safe And Efficient Movement Of Traffic Between Local And Regional Destinations.

Access Management Policy: Access management standards developed will be included in the County Subdivision Regulations and townships will be encouraged to implement these standards in township zoning codes. These regulations will require tighter development standards, greater setbacks, and review by the various local agencies. Access management standards should be utilized when reviewing/approving requests for driveways/curb cut, ingress/egress for minor lot splits, residential subdivisions, planned unit developments, and proposed industrial parks. Utilizing a unified permit system will ensure these standards are maintained, road capacity is preserved, and access is maintained.

Involved Entities: Ashland Regional Planning Commission and the Ashland County Commissioners, townships and municipalities.

Road Improvement Policies: Funding to upgrade existing roadways that experience an unusual number of accidents and to correct geometric and site distance problems will be pursued. The designated improvements include the following:

Install turn lanes near all schools located within Ashland County. The Transportation Task Force discussed the traffic problem which occurs at each school. All the schools experience congestion because school buses and private

vehicles are loading/unloading students, while other drivers are trying to make it through the area. A left turn lane at school entrances would provide smoother flow of traffic, increasing mobility for non-turning vehicles.

Realign the intersections of SR 511 with SR 302. The task force noted that these are dangerous intersections primarily because of the proximity. Realigning these intersections would help to reduce accidents, improve site distance, and allow for easier flow of traffic.

Widen and reconstruct the intersection of US 250 with SR 89. Task force members felt this intersection was particularly dangerous.

Construct interchanges on US 30 at SR 511 and SR 89. Task force members felt providing additional access at SR 511 or SR 89 would allow for easier access to the southern portion of the County. Currently, only one at-grade intersection exists along US 30 in Ashland County, and that intersection is located at SR 60. This intersection should also be upgrade to improve site distance.

Construct an additional interchange on I-71 at SR 60 on the southeast side of the City of Ashland. Although this is more of a long-term goal, the task force would like ODOT to be aware of the County's desire for an additional interchange on I-71. This would alleviate the congestion that occurs at the I-71 interchange with US 250, providing another access to the City.

Involved Entities: Ashland County Commissioners and the Ashland County Engineer.

Transportation Goal: To Effectively Plan For New Road Connections.

Connector Road Construction Policy: Pursue funding for the construction of a connector road on the west side of the City of Ashland. The construction of a new road can take from five to more than 15 years from the preliminary phase to completion, and, therefore, it is important to maintain a consistent long-term policy on such an improvement. The Ashland County Commissioners recognize the importance of this project to the public health and safety of the residents living on the west side of the County. A new connector road will allow quicker response for emergency vehicles and will improve traffic circulation. If/when the proposed connector route is considered, the possibility of making the US 250 loop a limited access highway in lieu of the connector route should be considered.

Involved Entities: Ashland County Commissioners and the Ashland County Engineer.

Transportation Goal: To Enhance And Protect The Positive Experience Of Traveling Within Ashland County.

Funding Policy: Involved entities will pursue grant funding for the development of key gateways. Funding for signage and landscaping of gateways is available through local, state, and federal grants. Potential sources also include private and corporate sponsorship of a key gateway. Previously defined initiatives addressed the need to establish a Transportation Enhancement Committee to address projects of this nature.

Involved Entities: Transportation Enhancement Committee and the Ashland County Commissioners.

Regulatory Policy: Ashland County will encourage revisions to local land use controls to address the placement of outdoor advertising along scenic routes. The regulation of the placement and size/height of outdoor advertising will help to create a more positive environment for Ashland County travelers.

Involved Entities: Ashland County Commissioners and the Ashland Regional Planning Commission.

Scenic Byway Policy: Ashland County will encourage the development of formally identified scenic byways and help define a scenic byway connecting the Johnny Appleseed Heritage Corridor/Scenic Byway and the Underground Railroad. Connecting the Ashland County Trail system with regional trails will provide the residents with more recreational possibilities. Once a road or section of a road in Ashland County has been designated to be a scenic byway, proper signage should be installed to mark the area.

Involved Entities: Trail Board and Transportation Enhancement Committee.

Policy on Roadway Beautification: Ashland County will encourage the development and support of Adopt-a-Highway and highway beautification campaigns. The Adopt-a-Highway program continues to be popular and successful programs across the country. Many County and State agencies throughout the nation promote this program because it reduces the need for government personnel to perform the same functions that volunteers accomplish through litter pick-up and landscaping. The benefits of a highway beautification campaign are twofold: physical beautification of the roadside through wildflower seeding or tree planting will in turn become an additional attraction for tourists to the area.

Involved Entities: Ashland County Commissioners, Transportation Enhancement Committee, and the Ashland County Engineer.

Transportation Goal: To Develop Alternative Forms Of Transportation.

Policy Toward Requirements Regarding Pedestrian Linkages: Along with other initiatives to encourage or require pedestrian linkages, Ashland County will seek to encourage municipalities to develop and maintain pedestrian linkages, especially when new residential development occurs near existing or proposed trails, schools, parks, playgrounds, commercial areas, or community facilities.

Involved Entities: Ashland County Commissioners and the Ashland Regional Planning Commission.

Policy on Funding: It will be necessary to obtain funding from local, state, and national sources to facilitate the development of the pedestrian linkage of all types. Because budget constraints limit the ability of the County and communities to proceed with this project, it is important to identify major sources of grant funding. There are many sources for trail funding available including NatureWorks Grants (recreational trail development), National Recreational Trail Fund (trail development), Ohio Department of Transportation (Transportation Enhancement Funds for bicycle/pedestrian facilities and rails-to-trails projects), Community Oriented Policing grants (enforcement), and Mutual of Omaha grants (educational programs). It may be necessary to apply for funding over several years in order to construct the trail and provide necessary facilities.

Involved Entities: Depending on the location of the trail, applications for funding would be submitted by a municipality, the proposed County Park District/Trail Board, or a special community or school group to ensure timely and correct application procedures were followed.

High Speed Rail Policy: Ashland County will monitor progress toward the development of the proposed high speed rail line in Ohio. Participating in the development of the rail line is also essential should the County decide to lobby for a rail stop in the County. A rail stop will allow residents to park and ride to various destinations in Cleveland and Cincinnati. Additionally, transit opportunities in both cities will allow riders to connect to their jobs, cultural opportunities or other transit facilities, such as the Amtrak rail line or an international airport.

Involved Entity: Ashland County Commissioners.

Airport Expansion Policy: Ashland County will pursue funding for the improvements to the Ashland County Airport which include runway extension, widening the taxiway, and enlarging the ramp area. These improvements will enable the airport to accommodate corporate aircraft, providing growth opportunities to the airport and the County.

Involved Entity: Ashland County Commissioners and the Ashland County Airport Board.

Quality Of Life Policies

Quality of Life Goal: To Increase Outdoor Recreation And Open Space In Proportion To Population To Achieve Better Distribution Of Opportunities And Spaces Throughout Ashland County.

Policy on Distribution of Park and Open Space Development. Ashland County will identify areas for further development of parks and open spaces. Consideration will be given to identifying and providing at least one parcel within each township. Other potential areas to consider will include the 225 acres at the old landfill, and the potential for a path around the reservoir. A natural area around the City of Ashland is also a possibility that will be considered.

Involved Entities Proposed Park District

Policy to Encourage Parkland Dedication in Municipal Subdivision Regulations. The City of Ashland and the various villages and townships within the County will consider amending their existing zoning and subdivision regulations to include the dedication of parkland to the community by residential subdivision developers. In addition, monetary contributions for park and recreation activities will be included as an alternative to the actual dedication of land. Other innovative concepts that will result in the acquisition or development of additional parkland within the County will also be considered.

Involved Entity Ashland Regional Planning Commission.

Quality of Life Goal: To Increase Cultural Opportunities And Opportunities In The Arts.

Policy to Balance Cultural Arts Programs with Athletic Programs. Through the efforts of the Community Arts Center, the County will strive to balance cultural arts programs with athletic programs, especially when it comes to planning and programming for funding and facilities.

Involved Entity: County Commissioners.

Policy to Develop a Joint Sponsorship of Programs and Facilities. In an effort to minimize duplication of programs and to garner significant public support for the arts, joint sponsorship of programs and facilities will be pursued whenever possible. This should include increasing arts and cultural programs at all community parks.

Involved Entity: Community Arts Center.

Quality of Life Goal: To Provide A High Level Of Support For The School Districts.

Policy to Cooperate with Schools in their Programming: Local schools depend upon their communities to support school activities. Such support might include media coverage of school activities including academics and art, community input on school curricula and policies, and volunteering in school activities.

Involved Entity: School Districts.

Policy on Partnerships with Ashland University: School districts are encouraged to seek partnerships with Ashland University. Both parties can benefit from working together.

Involved Entities: School Districts and Ashland University

Policy on School Curricula: Ashland County should be vitally concerned about its schools. Residents should seek involvement with school activities, school curricula development and policies, and media coverage of positive educational climate. Schools should emphasize the development of students as human beings, citizens, and future workers. Residents should also seek the most effective ways to support curricula that develop these areas.

Involved Entity: School Districts.

Policy on Child School to Work: New opportunities to expand child care, including preschool and day care services especially in the southern part of Ashland County, will be pursued.

Involved Entity: School Districts.

Policies to Share Facilities Among all Sectors: Sharing facilities among local governments, Ashland University, the schools, and the private sector will be a priority in the future as new funding is harder and harder to acquire.

Involved Entities: Local Governments.

Quality of Life Goal: To Provide Adequate Police, Fire, and Emergency Medical Services to All Residents of the County.

Policy on Coordination of Service Providers: Activities of all service providers within the County will be coordinated to assure that all sections of the County are adequately covered with protective services.

Involved Entities: Ashland County Commissioners and Service Providers.

Quality of Life Goal: To Support Programs Which Address the Medical Needs of the Community.

Policy on Marketing Medical- and Health-Related Programs to County Residents: The necessary steps will be taken to increase awareness of medical- and health-related programs available through all providers in the County, especially for existing mental health, substance abuse, and teenage pregnancy programs, which need to do a better job of reaching their targeted audiences.

Involved Entity: Mental Health Board.

Quality of Life Goal: To Identify, Protect And Enhance The Historic Resources Of Ashland County.

General Policy on Preservation of Historic Resources in Ashland County: Ashland County will aggressively support preservation of historic resources in the County, including old cemeteries, old township schoolhouses and academies, the Hayesville Opera House and the Ohio Theater in Loudonville, and historic and battle sites.

Involved Entity: Local Historical Societies

General Policy of Support for the Development of the Johnny Appleseed Heritage Center and Outdoor Historical Drama: The development of the outdoor drama theater, Johnny Appleseed Heritage Center near Mifflin Lake, will be supported by residents and officials of the

County, emphasizing that development should occur in an environmentally-sensitive manner. Efforts to make this new facility an integral part of regional tourist attractions will be made.

Involved Entities: Ashland County Commissioners, Local Historical Societies, and the Steering Committee.

Policy to Pursue Funding to Preserve Historic Properties: Funding will be aggressively pursued whenever possible to preserve and enhance historic properties throughout the County, especially those identified in the Land Use Plan, or as a result of future planning processes recommended in this comprehensive plan.

Involved Entities: Ashland County Commissioners, Local Historical Societies, and the Steering Committee.

General Policy on Working with Local Tourism Groups: In order to promote existing historic sites within the County, local historical societies will work with existing tourism groups within the County, the area, and the State of Ohio to promote desired tourist activities at identified County sites.

Involved Entities: Ashland County Commissioners, Local Historical Societies, and the Steering Committee.

Policy to Promote Recreational Opportunities within Ashland County: Efforts will be made to incorporate corridors and open spaces with desirable tourism activities and promotional efforts.

Involved Entities: Recreational Trails Board and Local Historical Societies.

Quality of Life Goal: To Provide A Variety Of Housing Types For Residents And To Maintain The Quality Of Existing Residential Areas.

Policy to Discourage Demolition of Solid Housing Stock. The County and municipalities will discourage the demolition of sound housing stock in existing neighborhoods, unless such units represent health hazards. Such demolition results in a net housing loss, as new housing in a similar price range is generally not replicated. Directing public resources such as Community Development Block Grant Funds (CDBG) and Community Housing Improvement Program (CHIP) funds toward neighborhoods and specific housing units requiring attention are steps that can be taken to implement this policy.

Involved Entities: Ashland County and Municipalities.

Policy to Continue to Pursue And Effectively Administer Housing Grants. Ashland County is currently administering Comprehensive Housing Improvement Programs (CHIP's), and it is hoped that the City of Ashland will be able implement such programs. These Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and/or HOME-funded programs, which are administered by the Ohio Department of Development (ODOD), Office of Housing and Community Partnerships (OHCP), provide opportunities to be ongoing programs. If administered properly and expeditiously, additional funds can be sought every other year. With the additional housing studies being proposed within this Land Use Plan, the need for additional funds for housing projects should continue to be apparent, and should be sought at every opportunity. Programs other than CDBG and HOME programs should also be aggressively sought.

In order to reach the people who most need housing programs, additional marketing and promotion of these existing programs will be undertaken. Education and awareness programs will be developed to reach a wider range of potential participants. Seminars, brochures, workshops, newspaper articles, and public service announcements will be utilized to their fullest extent. The State of Ohio will be contacted regarding successful efforts undertaken by other communities that could be duplicated in the City of Ashland as well as the County. Visits to communities with successful housing and promotion programs will be made to acquire a greater range of successful advertising and awareness activities.

Involved Entities: Local Governments, Ashland University, and School Districts.

ASHLAND COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

DISCUSSION ISSUES

- 1) *Pertaining to the Goal of “Conserving Agricultural Land and Rural Atmosphere for Future Generations Through the Management of Growth and Development” we should add the policy that Ashland County will encourage all townships and municipalities to have zoning codes. A new policy could be added on Page 7-2 - or the policy on Helping Local Villages with Development Regulations could be expanded.*
- 2) *Under the subject of who is responsible for the initiative to create incentives for development in Urban Development Areas (Page 6-3), consider adding the Commissioners and involved local governments with respect to tax incentives. The Regional Planning Commission would likely have an indirect role in creating tax incentives.*
- 3) *Under the initiative of developing special land use standards in Southern Ashland County (Page 6-3), we should explain more fully the fact that Ashland County Subdivision Regulations already contain some requirements, but that they should be complemented by local zoning requirements.*
- 4) *Under the initiative to begin serious progress toward a local access management plan (Page 6-4); we should consider adding the County Engineer as a responsible entity.*
- 5) *Under the initiative to develop specific access management standards (Page 6-4), we should describe more fully the fact that some of the authority for access management requirements should come from local zoning and be based on the protection of public health and safety.*
- 6) *Since the year 2000 census is approaching, we should consider changing the time frame under the initiative to determine growth trends in school districts. The time frame could be changed to sometime after the new census data is released (Page 6-4). The new census will provide more current data on age distributions and therefore, we can generate more accurate projections.*
- 7) *Under the goal of significantly increasing outdoor recreation space and the initiative of amending the subdivision regulations to require parkland dedication (Page 6-7), we should consider adding the need for developing an overall outdoor recreation plan for Ashland County. This can help add clarity to priorities for future land acquisitions.*

- 8) *There are frequent references to “southern” Ashland County, especially when referring to tourism activities. It was suggested that possibly the word “southern” should be removed and that the references should be for all of Ashland County. References were made to pgs. 4-4, 5-1, 6-3, and 7-2. This would also include the policies on hillside development standards and*

eco-tourism.

- 9) Quality of Life policies on **Page 7-9** identify the Steering Committee as the involved entities on policies on school district partnerships and school to work. Is this correct?
- 10) Is it enough to just encourage the development of Private Land Trusts as we do on **Page 7-1 and 7-2**? Should we explain this further and turn this into a more action-oriented initiative that has Ashland County playing a more active role in this?
- 11) There have been a few remarks that illustrating the southern parts of Ashland County the way it is shown (green shade) may convey the idea that agriculture is unimportant in this area. This was not the intent. The intent is simply to convey the idea that the southern part of Ashland County is both an important agricultural area and an area where the rolling hills and scenery complement the nearby tourist areas. Perhaps another graphical technique can be used to illustrate both aspects of this area.
- 12) It was suggested that an initiative and policy be added under the QOL issues dealing with education, as follows:

“Policy to Cooperate with Schools in their Programming. Local schools depend on their communities to support their activities. Such support might include media coverage of school activities, including academics and arts, community input on school curricula and policies; and volunteering time to serve in school activities.” (Pg. 7-9)

“Policy on Partnerships with Ashland University. School districts are encouraged to seek partnerships with Ashland University. Both parties can benefit from working together.” (Pg. 7-9)

- 13) It was also suggested that we change the “Policy on School to Work” to “Policy on School Curricula.” The paragraph should be changed to: “Ashland County should be vitally concerned with its schools. Residents should seek involvement in school activities, determination of school curricula and development and policies, and media coverage of positive educational climate. Schools should emphasize development of students as humans, as future citizens, and as future workers. Residents should also seek the most effective and meaningful ways to teach curricula which develop these areas.”

INFORMATIONAL / CLARIFICATION ISSUES

Page

2-1 5th Paragraph *It may be said that many townships are not a common size of 36 square miles. This is because of the long and irregular shape of the County. Need to add language to note this.*

2-9 1st Paragraph *Need to address prime farmland issue. Note that drainage is a key element of prime farmland.*

2-13 3rd Paragraph *Need to note that I-71 will be widened with additional lanes throughout Ashland County. Construction work is expected to begin next year.*

3-5 3rd Paragraph *Note that the fact that people are having fewer children is another reason for smaller household sizes.*

3-6 1st Paragraph *Need to reword paragraph. The main point is that codes should be made more flexible to allow for more innovation and creativity.*

3-6 2nd Paragraph *Should note that Habitat for Humanity is active in the area. Only County has CHIP program - see also 7-11.*

4-3 4th Paragraph *Need to note that a disaster response plan already exists. Also, we need to refocus this discussion toward the maintenance of an effective plan.*

7-7 3rd Paragraph *Need to clarify the fact that we are focused toward township and village zoning codes.*

7-11 3rd Paragraph *Need to clarify the fact that the City of Ashland does not now have a CHIP grant.*

2-12 2nd Paragraph *Information concerning the number of school districts should be clarified. There are four school districts that have a majority of their territory in Ashland County and a number of others with territory partly in and partly out of Ashland County. There are actually seven public school systems.*

2-14 1st Paragraph *We should provide names of roads - not just numbers.*

2-14 6th Paragraph *Ownership of railroads should be updated.*

2-15 2nd Paragraph We should clarify the fact that the nearest airport that provides commercial airline service is the Akron-Canton Airport. The nearest MAJOR Airport is Cleveland-Hopkins.

4-1 1st Paragraph Questions were raised about the projection of future commercial space. This projection is based on the simple formula that generally commercial space increases at a rate of 10 square feet per each new person added to a local population. This is simply a general “rule of thumb” and this number can be expected to vary widely from place to place. The intent here is to provide a general perspective on future nonresidential growth.

4-1 1st Paragraph Questions were raised about the projection of future jobs. These projections were obtained from Woods & Poole Economics (Washington, D.C.). Woods & Poole develops economic and population projections for counties across the U.S.

Other Points Early in June 1999, the OSU extension office offered a number of technical comments on the natural resource components of the County Profile that was distributed in October 1998. Davey Resource Group is in the process of responding to these technical issues.