

CITY OF NORTH OLMSTED master plan



2005



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CITY OF NORTH OLMSTED master plan



1. Introduction



Prologue & Intent

A master plan is the instrument by which local government establishes long-range policies for guiding development and redevelopment in a coordinated manner. The plan can provide protection and confidence to residents and investors: protection from the many problems associated with unplanned development and confidence for residents that the City will continue to be the special community that it has been for so long.

The North Olmsted Master Plan has been prepared to serve as a guide for City Council, City administration, and boards and commissions as they evaluate the location, character and extent of public and private development proposals within the City. The plan's many recommendations will be implemented over time through decisions by both public and private groups and will impact future public improvements.

The plan reflects over a year-long effort by many committed individuals serving as a steering committee representing all segments of the community. The planning process has afforded substantial opportunities for community discussion related to visioning, assessing existing conditions and trends, and examining development and redevelopment issues facing the City. Public participation was encouraged and made a foundation of the planning process. The steering committee's views were supplemented through personal interviews and focus group sessions geared towards both general and specific community issues.

The resulting plan includes policies and strategies that are to be used in guiding development decisions. Although the document should be viewed as flexible and not rigid in its application, the plan should be applied thoughtfully, with discretion and judgment. Proposals, both public and private, for development and investment should be examined for compatibility with existing and surrounding uses and consistency with the plan's policies. The plan is a living document. It is not meant to infringe upon any elected official's responsibility nor inhibit sound economic development. Rather its aim is to supplement and enrich the outcome of development, encourage collaborative decision-making, and strengthen existing public/private partnerships.

There remains much work to be done. Many of the plan's recommendations will require additional study and the development of more detailed policies by various City officials, boards and commissions. Finally, success will only be realized as day-to-day decisions are made and to the degree these decisions reflect the plan's intent.

Priority Actions

This document identifies many policies and recommendations that are important to the plan's successful implementation. Among the many recommendations, several emerged as most urgent and critical in order to have a significant, positive impact in the City. The following is a summary of the steering committee's three highest priority actions that the City should undertake.

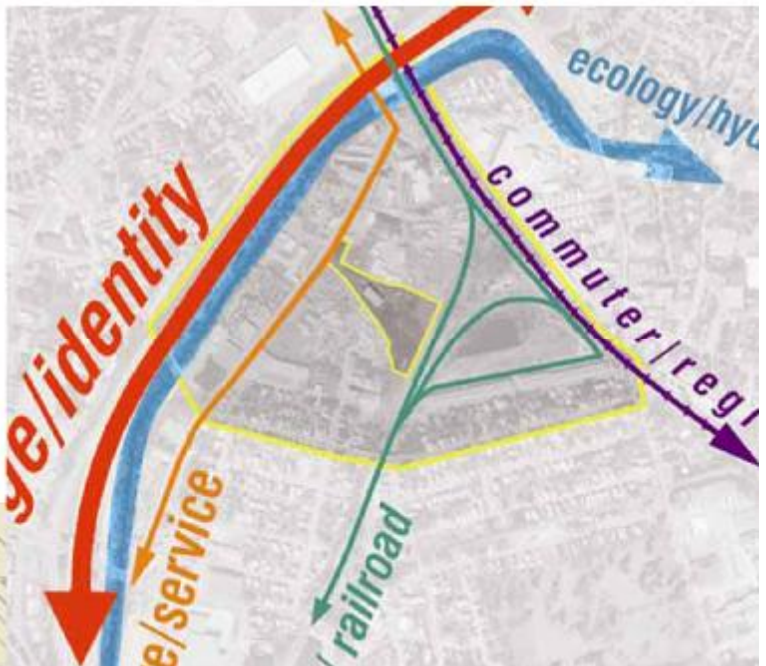
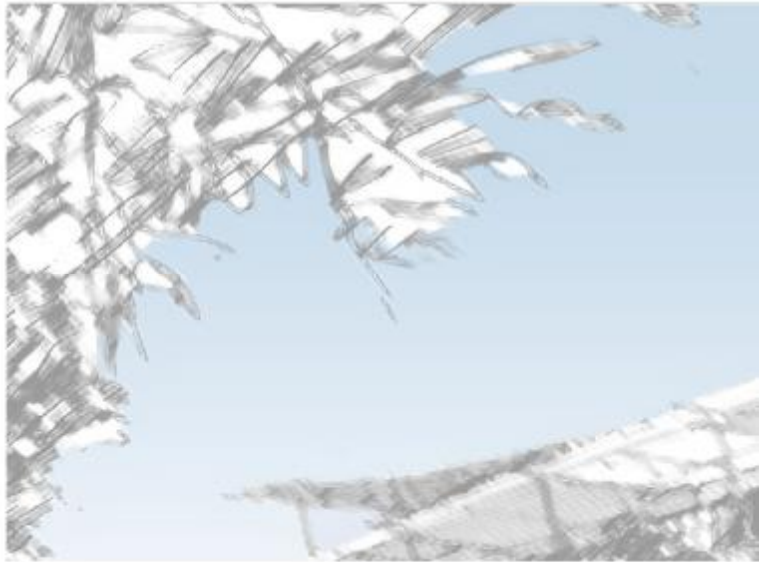
- Many of the plan's recommendations will only be realized with a **comprehensive update of the City's zoning code and subdivision regulations**. Zoning regulations are the most powerful tools available to local governments to control land use and development.

- The construction of the Crocker-Stearns Road extension has the potential to dramatically change land use and traffic patterns on the City's west end. It is critical that the City **actively plan for the Crocker-Stearns extension**. While this master plan offers preliminary recommendations for the development and redevelopment of this corridor, more detailed study and public input processes should be conducted.
- In order to develop a greater sense of place and character for North Olmsted, the City must **create a community focal point**, a community center. This will enhance the image of the City - giving residents a greater sense of pride, businesses a clear understanding of community identity, and visitors a civic-centered landmark to identify North Olmsted as a unique place.

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2. Plan Foundation



Planning Policy Statement

Purpose

The purpose of this planning process is to:

1. Ensure Consistency

Promote the legal requirement of reasonableness by avoiding arbitrary decisions and furthering the uniform application of the various planning procedures.

2. Promote Efficiency

Simplify the preparation of materials for Planning Commission action through the provision of guidelines and criteria. This will promote prompt disposition in the interest of both the public and the petitioner.

3. Establish a Public Record

Provide a clear statement of policies upon which the community may rely.

4. Maintain a Basis of Planning

Assure the judicious use of resources. Planning decisions, such as zoning actions, need to be founded upon adopted principles and objectives. This will assist in accomplishing the intended purpose, and avoid the legal problems of arbitrary and capricious actions.

5. Develop a Planning Method

Promote the rational use of land and the efficient provision of required facilities and services both for the individual and collectively in the public interest through the allocation of land to a variety of uses based upon desired community objectives and development capacity.

6. Ensure Adoption, Amendment and Binding Effect

Establish formal procedures for the adoption and amendment of this Plan recognizing that there is a need for continuity and community support.

Total Community Interest

It is the City's policy that the general welfare of the community in its entirety must be served by all planning measures. Therefore, community interests, as distinguished from individual interests will be furthered. Economic benefit to individuals shall be subordinate to the economic welfare of the community as a whole. Implementation of planning shall not be conducted solely for the purpose of increasing value.

Planning loses its vitality as well as its credibility if it: (1) becomes a mere composite of neighborhood desires; (2) is abused to advance the interest only of certain individuals or special interest groups; (3) is implemented whimsically or arbitrarily; or (4) becomes unreasonable or confiscatory in its application to private properties.

Goals and Objectives

Community goals are global, visionary statements that represent something we are always striving to attain. In addition, community goals are used to provide guidance in the planning process for developing more detailed community planning objectives and policies.

Therefore, the development of goals provides the basic framework for the preparation of the North Olmsted Master Plan. The goals that are presented in this chapter are broad based statements that indicate the general direction in which the City should proceed in responding to more specific development or redevelopment issues.

1. Land Use & Development

Goal: Establish orderly land use patterns which promote redevelopment and ensure proper development of vacant land.

Objectives

- a. Ensure land use decisions by the City's boards and commissions, administration, and Council are in accordance with the Master Plan.
- b. Create specific and clear zoning regulations that promote a desired land use pattern.
- c. Create and maintain lines of communication with developers to ensure an understanding of land use goals and objectives.
- d. Develop an administrative process that achieves a desired development pattern.
- e. Create a development and redevelopment land use plan that will meet the needs of current and future residents.

2. Economic Development

Goal: Promote a diverse economy that provides a strong tax base and a range of quality employment choices for residents.

Objectives

- a. Create an economic development program that actively markets the City and promotes business attraction.
- b. Increase business retention and expansion efforts.
- c. Improve communication and cooperative efforts between the City and Chamber of Commerce.
- d. Identify opportunities for redevelopment and particular community needs or niches that should be pursued.
- e. Consider a variety of strategies to attract tax revenue generating businesses and industries to the City, including economic development agreements with neighboring communities.
- f. Consider appropriate economic development incentives and establish communication with local and state government agencies, lending institutions, schools and other involved parties.
- g. Encourage City, business and resident partnerships that project a business and resident friendly atmosphere.
- h. Ensure adequate access is provided to potential development areas.

3. Housing

Goal: Improve the vitality and increase the value of the City's residential areas and neighborhoods.

Objectives

- a. Increase the variety of high quality housing options available to all residents.
- b. Preserve the quality of existing housing stock through strategies that ensure and enforce residential property maintenance.
- c. Protect residents by creating uniform standards for buffering between residential and non-residential uses.
- d. Evaluate residential redevelopment opportunities.
- e. Create a residential occupancy/density code taking into consideration fair housing laws.
- f. Improve communications between the City and residents regarding available funding opportunities for property maintenance and renovation.
- g. Encourage development of senior housing.

4. Infrastructure & Public Facilities

Goal: Expand and improve infrastructure and public facilities, emphasizing those areas that will enhance quality of life for City residents.

Objectives

- a. Assess infrastructure and public facilities with regard to adequacy and condition and determine needs for expansion or major renovation.
- b. Promote the safe and efficient movement of traffic and the reduction of existing traffic congestion.
- c. Continue to promote alternative transportation options such as public transit, bicycle, walking and multi-use paths.
- d. Expand and improve facilities for meeting, recreation and education.
- e. Ensure pedestrian and public transportation accessibility to commercial and high density residential areas.
- f. Explore creative financing methods for infrastructure improvements.

5. Open Space & Recreation

Goal: Preserve green space and enhance recreational opportunities for current and future residents.

Objectives

- a. Improve the coordination of maintenance for parks and recreation facilities.
- b. Develop recreation programs appropriate for all segments of the community.
- c. Continue public-private partnerships in the provision of recreational opportunities.
- d. Maintain quality open spaces accessible to all residents.
- e. Update zoning regulations to increase green space in new developments and in redevelopment.
- f. Explore joint efforts with community organizations and surrounding cities to expand recreation opportunities.

6. Community Character & Image

Goal: Create a distinct, high quality visual environment in all areas of the community.

Objectives

- a. Create a distinctive image or theme for development in the City through design guidelines and regulations.
- b. Encourage high quality development through improved communication and cooperation with the development community and businesses.
- c. Improve the overall aesthetic appearance of commercial areas and corridors.
- d. Ensure the integrity of existing residential neighborhoods and future residential developments.
- e. Ensure the City leads by example in creating a preferred community image.
- f. Encourage resident input through regular open forum meetings.

Public Input Processes

In order for any planning effort to be successful, the Plan must be representative of the community's vision. Therefore, the public participation element of the plan spanned the entire process and was ongoing throughout the duration of the Master Plan update effort.

1. Steering Committee Meetings

The Master Plan Steering Committee was the chief decision making body throughout the planning process. During monthly meetings, the committee worked to develop the goals and objectives, as well as the substance for all major plan elements. The steering committee reviewed all information and provided comments before ideas were taken to the public at meetings. Committee members also assisted in the other public participation elements including involvement in focus groups. All steering committee meetings were open to the public.

2. Interviews

Interviews were conducted with City officials, including City Council members, Chairpersons of the Planning Commission, Architectural Review Board, Board of Zoning Appeals, and the Landmarks Commission. The following is a summary of the results. *More detailed results are located in the Appendix.*

Interview respondents felt the City has numerous strengths including a strong sense of community and residents concerned with seeing the City succeed. They believed the City's assets include quality schools, good city services, and a strong commercial base with a diverse mix of uses serving the community. The City's location provides convenient access to highways and the airport, and the bus line allows people to get around town or to downtown Cleveland easily. Residents enjoy an affordable standard of living and amenities such as good neighborhoods and a solid housing stock, parks and recreation facilities, a new library, and senior center programs. The population is diverse and represents a mix of cultures not found in surrounding communities.

Respondents felt that the fiscal health of the City is a major issue facing North Olmsted. It is perhaps the most critical issue as the City's financial resources are directly related to its ability

to provide necessary resident services and infrastructure improvements to streets and drainage systems. Respondents were also concerned about general infrastructure and property deterioration within residential neighborhoods and commercial areas and the increasing possibility of blight. Respondents were concerned with providing needed resident services and amenities such as improved senior facilities and programs for youth. The City should also set aside more green space for parks and recreation, update the Recreation Center and City Hall, and construct a new fire station.

Interview respondents used a variety of terms to describe the City's land use pattern including unplanned, haphazard, hodge-podge, reckless, and archaic. They agreed that past development was not handled wisely as it occurred in a piecemeal fashion where proposals were considered individually instead of being planned as part of a whole. The combination of deficient zoning regulations and threats of litigation by developers resulted in poor quality and poorly designed development. For example, zoning created the linear commercial corridor down Lorain Road resulting in many split zoned parcels, frequent curb cuts, and conflicts with adjoining residences.

As little vacant and developable land remains in the City, the development potential in North Olmsted is primarily in redevelopment. Respondents felt that the community was still attractive for reinvestment, but that it would likely occur on a parcel by parcel basis. In redevelopment, particularly on the east end, efforts would need to be made in maintaining the infrastructure and improving the overall streetscape. The City should look into creating incentives for developers to reinvest and in qualifying more areas of the community for grant assistance.

To improve the City's development potential, respondents recommended evaluating the impacts of the City's zoning and making necessary modifications, as well as working toward creating a shared vision by the business community and residents.

Respondents felt that there is no need for additional commercial retail development in the City, but that vacancies should be filled and higher end redevelopment should be encouraged. They agreed that office development should be promoted, particularly those corporations and industries that provide higher paying jobs and significantly add to the City's tax base. Light industry should be encouraged and actively marketed, principally in the City's industrial park.

In the area of housing, respondents felt that future development should be focused on high end housing as well as senior housing. They believed the City already has sufficient amounts of affordable housing and starter homes. Additionally, respondents would like to see more land set aside for recreation and resident amenities such as a community or cultural arts center.

Respondents identified a variety of actions the City should take to improve the community. Some of these suggestions involved improving the development process through tighter zoning and property maintenance regulations and continuing education of board and commission members. Suggestions also included improvements to services and infrastructure including a new fire station, street repair, improving traffic flow and parking, and burying utility lines.

Some respondents felt better marketing for economic development is a priority. Opportunities exist in the City's industrial park, west end, and Crocker-Stearns corridor. Others focused on quality of life improvements such as encouraging more green space, improving senior center and recreation facilities, and aesthetic improvements to commercial and residential areas. Some felt that improving public perception of community image and greater cooperation by City leaders were first steps in achieving these goals.

3. Focus Groups

Eight focus group sessions were conducted in order to involve City residents in the Master Plan update process. Four of the eight focus groups were conducted in topical areas. These focus group topics included economic development, development and development process, open space and recreation, and social and educational services.

The remaining four focus groups were citizen focus groups open for participation to the entire community. Two were open to all residents, a third was dedicated to senior citizens, and the fourth was dedicated to students and youth. These focus groups dealt with quality of life issues and general concerns.

The focus group results, in combination with the other public input methods, were instrumental in defining the six major goal areas of the Master Plan. The following were the most frequent observations by category made by focus group participants.

Land Use & Development

- ▶ Lack of past planning has led to haphazard development patterns
- ▶ Need to manage commercial-residential conflicts
- ▶ Ensure appropriate use of remaining vacant land
- ▶ Focus on redevelopment potential
- ▶ Improve the City's development process and modernize/update the zoning code

Economic Development

- ▶ Expand tax base through industrial, office and other revenue generating development
- ▶ Create or obtain baseline data/inventory
- ▶ Focus efforts on marketing and recruitment
- ▶ Encourage cooperation and communication with the Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Create business friendly development process and regulations

Housing

- ▶ Increase residential property maintenance efforts and enforcement
- ▶ Promote diverse mix of affordable housing
- ▶ Require senior housing options
- ▶ Need for upscale housing and its connection to economic development and business attraction

Infrastructure & Public Facilities

- ▶ Aging infrastructure and increasing maintenance costs
- ▶ Deteriorating road conditions, increasing traffic and poor circulation in areas
- ▶ Stormwater drainage issues
- ▶ New or updated public facilities such as fire station, school facilities and senior center/community center are needed

Open Space & Recreation

- ▶ Preserve open space as development occurs through regulations
- ▶ Continue quality programs and diversity of recreational offerings
- ▶ Better management/maintenance of existing resources
- ▶ Fitness center/wellness center needed
- ▶ More active and passively used parkland

Community Character & Image

- ▶ Consistent development theme or regulations are needed
- ▶ Streetscape improvements to the City's commercial corridors are needed
- ▶ Encourage both commercial and residential property maintenance and sense of investment in the community
- ▶ Improved communication and information resources for all residents
- ▶ Encourage resident interaction through community and neighborhood events

The detailed results of all eight focus groups are located in the Appendix.

4. Public Meetings

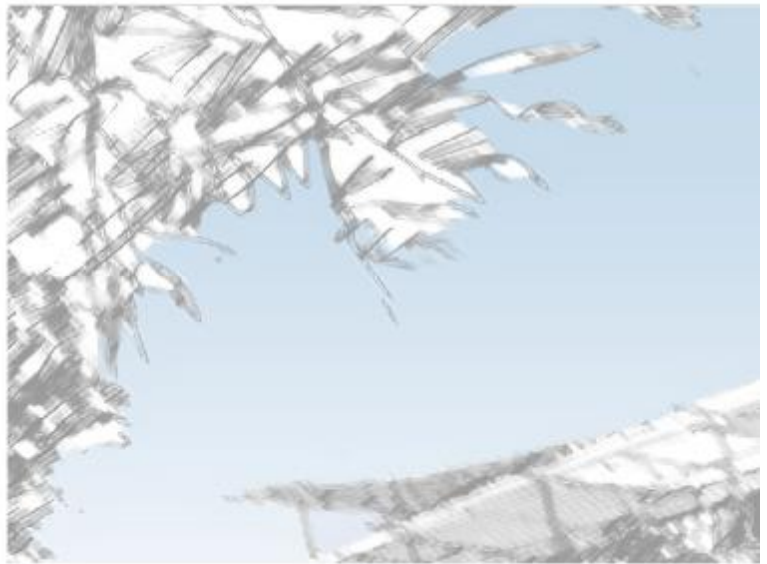
A public meeting was held on September 30, 2004 at the North Olmsted Branch Library, which was attended by nearly 50 community members. The goal of the meeting was to share the progress of the planning process with the community and solicit feedback regarding the Plan's goals, objectives, and proposed recommendations. A presentation was given on the background of the Master Plan development process, which was followed by an open house where attendees were able to look at more detailed displays and talk with Steering Committee members. They were also invited to fill out brief surveys that were aimed at determining residents' top priorities for the Plan's implementation.

A Council Committee-of-the-Whole meeting was held on November 22, 2004 at the North Olmsted Senior Center. All of Council was present at this meeting, as well as an additional twenty individuals representing the Steering Committee, administration, and residents. The purpose of the meeting was to review the most significant preliminary recommendations of the Plan and solicit Council's feedback.

CITY OF NORTH OLMSTED master plan



3. Land Use Plan



Introduction

The land use plan is the foundation of the Master Plan. It provides a strategic approach to achieving the community's vision by creating a plan for the physical development and redevelopment of the City as well as general policy statements of how to get there. It is a guide for developers, landowners, concerned citizens, and elected officials as they make decisions about land and development.

Goal and Objectives

Establish orderly land use patterns which promote redevelopment and ensure proper development of vacant land.

- a. Ensure land use decisions by the City's boards and commissions, administration, and Council are in accordance with the Master Plan.
- b. Create specific and clear zoning regulations that promote a desired land use pattern.
- c. Create and maintain lines of communication with developers to ensure an understanding of land use goals and objectives.
- d. Develop an administrative process that achieves a desired development pattern.
- e. Create a development and redevelopment land use plan that will meet the needs of current and future residents.

Existing Land Use

Land is a limited resource and local governments need to set clear objectives and adopt strategies to assure that this resource is used to support the City's goals.

An inventory of existing land uses provides information about how land is currently being used so that the City can plan for how future remaining vacant land should be utilized to support the City's open space and development goals. The land use inventory was prepared by accessing the Cuyahoga County Auditor's data base on property records, conducting a visual survey of various areas to confirm this data, reviewing aerial photos, and working with the City's staff and Steering Committee to ensure accuracy of the data.

Inventory of Existing Land Use

1. Natural Features Inventory and Development Constraints

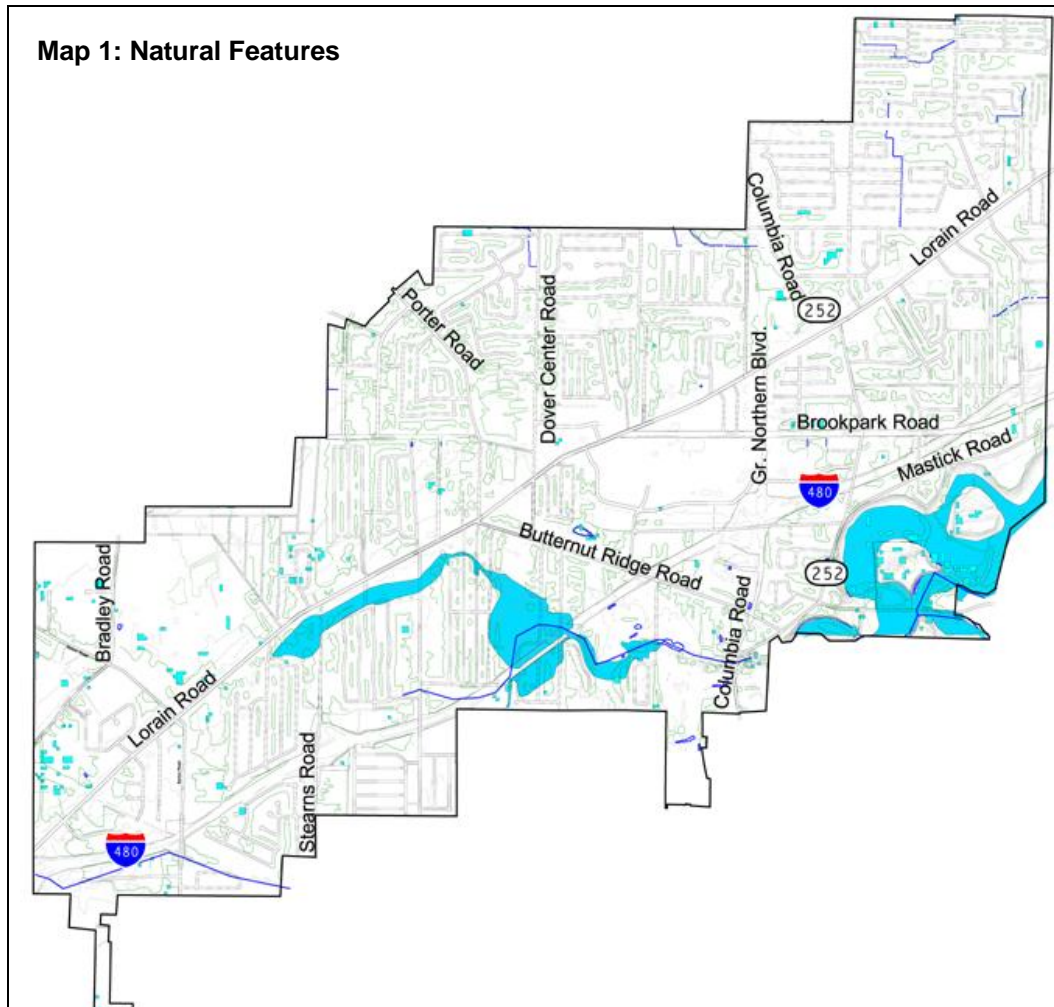
Natural features that can affect development patterns include areas of waterways, floodplains, wetlands, wooded areas and areas characterized by steep slopes. The natural features characterizing North Olmsted are shown in Map 1.

The City has two main watersheds within its boundaries. Generally, a ridge follows the route of Lorain Road, naturally separating these two drainage areas. The area sloping to the northeast drains to the Rocky River while the area sloping to the northwest drains to Lake Erie via several streams.

The City is generally flat, and areas of steep slope are not an issue for the community.

Natural features that affect the City of North Olmsted's development patterns include areas of flood plains and wetlands, also referenced in the Natural Features map:

- **Flood Plains:** The two main areas of flood plains include the Rocky River valley in the Metroparks at the eastern edge of the City (a 100 year floodplain) and an area generally to the south of Lorain Road between Stearns and Porter Roads, then heading to the east through the North Olmsted Golf Course (a 100-500 year floodplain).
- **Wetlands:** Most of the wetlands in the City are concentrated in the Metroparks' Bradley Wood reservation, with smaller areas located around the City.



2. Land Use Trends

The City contains 11.6 square miles of land. The City's current land uses are documented in the Existing Land Use Map. The land use inventory shows that about 94% of the land area in North Olmsted, or 7,155 acres, has been developed. This is an increase from 1992 when 85% percent of the City's land had been developed. This leaves 6% of the City's land as undeveloped or underdeveloped. Vacant land areas are generally located in the western part of the City, but there are vacant or undeveloped areas around the City. There are vacant parcels located in industrial, residential and other zoned areas.

Existing land use patterns in the City are summarized below. Generalized comparisons between 1992, the last time the City completed a land use analysis, and 2004 are provided below where possible. It should be noted that the 1992 and 2004 data are not directly comparable due to different methodologies in collecting the data. However, general trends can be observed and are noted where useful:

- **Residential uses** are the most prevalent in the City as over 50% of the land area (about 4,000 acres) is occupied by residential development. The vast majority of this residential land is single-family residential representing over 3,000 acres of land. The amount of land in residential use increased approximately 10% from 1992 to 2004.
- **Commercial land** uses occupy 8% of the City's land area (about 628 acres), with retail uses serving as the predominant commercial land use, representing 5% of the City's overall land area. The City's land in commercial acreage has increased modestly from the early 1990s when 7% of land area was assessed as being commercial land uses.
- **Parks/open space** accounts for 13% of the City's developed land.¹ The two Metroparks' reservations - Rocky River and Bradley Woods - represent 8% of the City's total land area or 624 acres while local recreational facilities and open space represent the remainder of the City's overall land area. The amount of land in open space/parks has remained the same since 1992.
- **Community facility uses** include 357 acres that are owned by the City or the North Olmsted Board of Education. This acreage in community facilities represents about 5% of the City's total land area. The amount of land in community facilities use has increased since 1992 with the addition of the new library near City Hall.
- **Street rights-of-way** account for about 27% of the City's land area or about 2,000 acres.²

3. 2004 Large Vacant Areas

Vacant and some underdeveloped parcels were identified in the Land Use Map as "vacant" to assist the City in developing policies relating to the preferred land use for these areas. Primary vacant areas that were identified included:

- Large area behind the City's indoor recreation center and shown on the map as "outdoor recreation;" in 1992, this area was suggested as a potential location for senior housing and/or additional recreation facilities.
- Industrial zoned area at the City's western edge on both sides of Lorain Road.
- Undeveloped rear yards of deep, bowling alley lots on major arterial streets such as Stearns and Barton Roads.

4. Assessment of Land Uses

The City is rapidly approaching "build out" and must be especially attentive to how remaining areas of undeveloped land is developed. Should the City desire to preserve any additional open space for active or passive uses, the City must work to secure that land now before it becomes developed for other uses. The City needs to evaluate whether the current zoning for the vacant parcels is the zoning that the City desires for those parcels. Similarly, the City should evaluate

¹ The two reservations of the Cleveland Metroparks, the City's two golf courses, and the City's various neighborhood and citywide parks are classified as "developed" under the category of "Park/Open Space."

² Street ROW acreage was based on the data collected in 1992 assuming that the amount of land in street ROW has not changed significantly in the city since the analysis was completed in 1992.

whether the current zoning supports the City's overall desired land development goals. Some of the key issues to resolve include such items as:

- Does the industrial zoning on the western edge continue to be supportable, or should some of these areas, especially where vacant land exists, be rezoned to other uses?
- Does the current amount of retail zoning along Lorain Road continue to be compatible with the City's development goals?
- Should some of the residential areas around the proposed Crocker-Stearns Road extension be encouraged to redevelop as "buffer" uses or to alternative land uses to support the City's economic development goals?

Redevelopment of existing, non-current or non-productive land uses will become a key focus for the City as large parcels of vacant land are no longer available. The key areas that may be ripe for redevelopment should be identified, and redevelopment approaches could be offered as part of the 2005 Master Plan.

Planning Concepts

Promotion of Infill/Redevelopment

In areas that are limited for future growth or expansion, one way to encourage efficient land use is to direct more development toward existing developed areas where vacant or underused sites can be redeveloped. Declining neighborhoods or commercial/industrial areas may be revitalized through programs that provide financial and other incentives to stimulate new development in those areas. Incentives may include subsidized land costs, tax exemptions or reductions, infrastructure improvements, or assistance from business development groups. The City can also take advantage of federal and state programs aimed at stimulating economic development.

Development Agreements

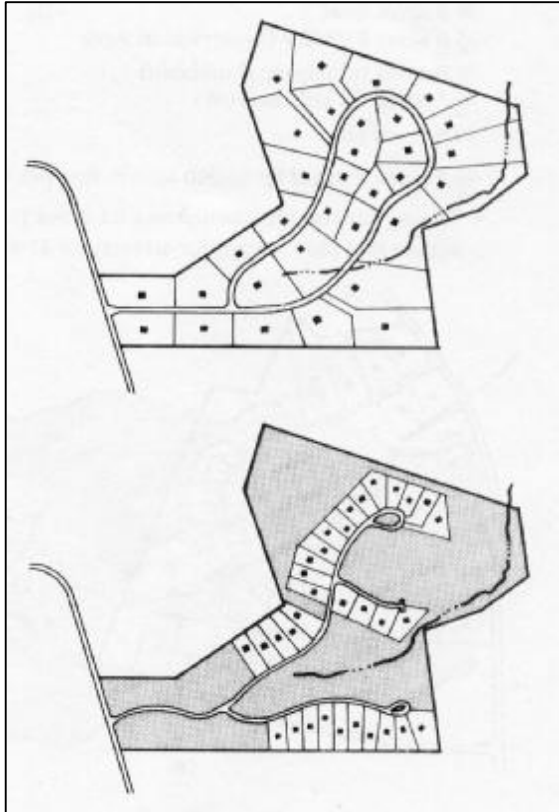
Development agreements are contracts between local governments and developers of a project covering the terms and conditions by which a development will be approved. It may provide that the developer compensate the local government for off-site impacts such as traffic control and stormwater runoff. In exchange, the City agrees that it will approve a specific development with certain uses, intensities, or densities. Language describing the requirements and procedures for development agreements can be included in local zoning ordinances.

Conservation Development

The conservation subdivision is a tool that can be used to balance development pressure with environmental considerations. Conservation subdivisions are developments where a certain percentage of the total land has been set-aside as permanent, protected open space. This is accomplished while maintaining the same overall density that would be allowed under conventional zoning. In a conservation subdivision, lots are creatively arranged on a portion of a site, leaving the balance of the property as open space. The developer can get the same economic return, while developing in a less land-consumptive manner. The open space is protected through a permanent conservation easement, which can be held by local government,

homeowner's association, or land trust. The open space can be used for active or passive parkland or simply left as a natural area.

Conventional subdivision and zoning regulations were designed to provide for the orderly transition of raw land into lots and streets. Generally, these regulations allow all but the "unbuildable" portions of the property, e.g., 100-year floodplains, wetlands, steep slopes, and storm water management areas to be developed. In contrast, conservation design takes into account the unique natural features of a site and call for their permanent preservation. Such "natural features" might include wetlands, floodplains, significant wildlife habitats, woodlands, historic sites, and scenic views.



Conservation subdivision designs offer several advantages over conventional layouts. For example, economically, conservation subdivisions have a smoother review process as the developer has already taken into account many site considerations and limitations. Additional economic advantages include lower costs of infrastructure and design, faster appreciation in value, reduced demand for new open spaces and parks, and environmentally oriented marketing and sales strategies. The environmental and ecological advantages of conservation design include the reduction of stormwater runoff, pollutant filtering, protection of natural buffers along wetlands, and maintenance of wildlife corridors. Conservation subdivisions can also be part of an overall plan to develop a greenway system through a community.

In the figure, the illustration on the top shows traditional residential subdivision development. The bottom illustration shows how the same number of lots can be accommodated on the site while preserving sensitive environmental features and open space.

Several areas in the future land use map are considered for future conservation residential development. These areas are along the borders of the Bradley Woods Reservation. Conservation style development is preferable in these locations to preserve the natural resources of the area and to take into account unique natural and geological features.

Traditional Neighborhood Design

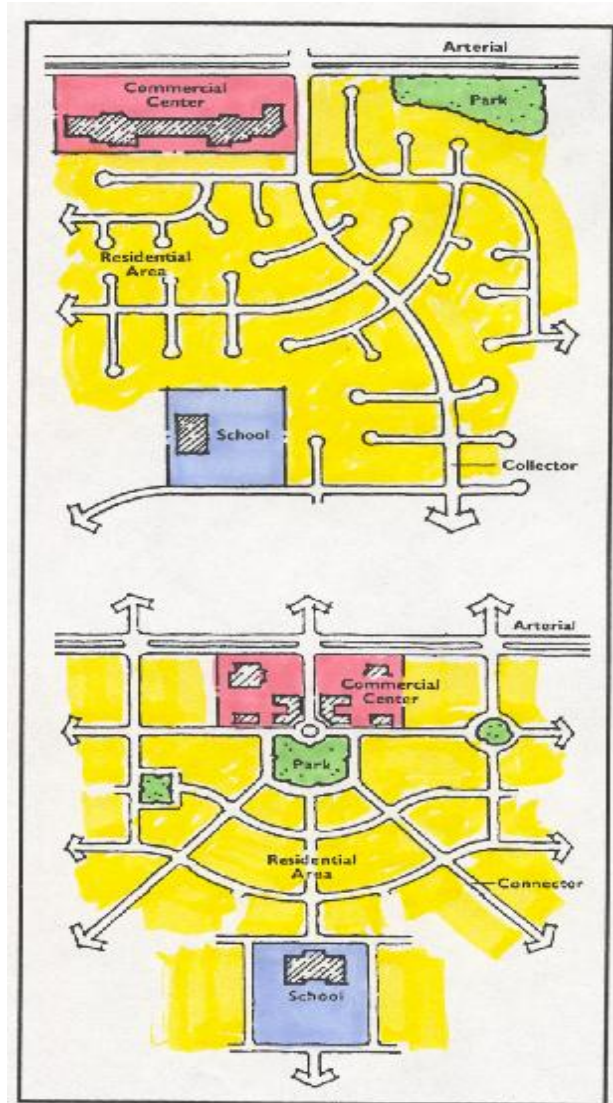
This design concept promotes a return to development patterns where homes are closer together and closer to the street, walking is made easy by pathways connecting homes to shopping and community services, street systems are interconnected to reduce traffic congestion, forms and scales of development are compatible, and open spaces are readily accessible. The illustration shows how traditional neighborhood development (TND) can take different forms, though all promote a mix of uses and walkability.

This design concept is meant to reduce the need for automobile travel. Furthermore, it is intended to increase community interaction through putting people closer together, providing green spaces, and creating a feeling of security, convenience, and comfort in their living environment. To achieve this, the concept is focused on small-scale design elements such as architectural compatibility, relationship of residences to the street, façade treatments, pedestrian walkway networks, and design of open spaces, landscaping and streetscapes.

This design concept would be appropriate in any mixed use district as designated in the Future Land Use Map. The existing development pattern of the east end also lends itself to this style of development.

The following are principles of traditional neighborhood design:

- The neighborhood is defined by an easy walking distance from its edge to its center, ranging from a quarter mile to a half mile. A variety of housing stock serves a range of incomes and age groups and includes backyard apartments, apartments above shops, and residential units adjacent to work places.
- A variety of business types are accommodated, from retail and professional offices to outbuildings for start up businesses. The office stock serves a range from home occupations to conventional office buildings. The retail stock includes a range from corner stores to small supermarkets.
- Special sites are reserved for civic buildings to serve as symbols of the community, thereby enhancing community identity. There is a variety of civic space in the form of parks, greens, squares and plazas.
- Thoroughfares are designed to serve the pedestrian, bicycle, and automobile. Thoroughfares are connected in such a way as to encourage walking and reduce the number and length of automobile trips.
- Building frontages define thoroughfares and civic spaces and mask parking lots.



Future Land Use Plan

The Master Plan provides recommendations for future land use patterns within the City of North Olmsted. The Plan provides a basis for a public policy dialog and the framework for the orderly development and redevelopment of the City. The existing land use pattern occurred over time and the parcel patterns and uses were appropriate for those times and uses. However, as private owners explore redevelopment opportunities and seek zoning or land use changes from the City reflecting those opportunities, it is imperative that land use patterns, configurations, and arrangements reflecting total community interest are considered. This Plan provides a guide for those discussions.

The Future Land Use Map for the community is general in nature. In contrast to zoning maps, which display exact zoning classifications for each parcel, land use maps are based upon broad use categories. As such, the Future Land Use Map does not dictate how specific parcels should be zoned in the future. Rather, the Planning Commission and City officials should consider the map to be one of several tools available to assist them in making land use recommendations and decisions. The information contained on the map should always be supplemented by impact studies and other site specific information.

Land Use Classifications

Single Family Residential. The single family residential classification accommodates both single family and attached residential housing units.

Single Family Residential Options

In addition to the traditional one and two family structures associated with single family residential land use, other types and styles of residential development may be appropriate in various areas of the City. The paragraphs below describe two options for residential development of remaining vacant lands or residential redevelopment projects in the City.

- a. *Cluster Residential.* The cluster option contemplates a planned residential area where dwelling units are designed in groups and clusters as a coordinated architectural and site entity. This option allows for greater flexibility and use of space than in standard single family developments.

Appropriate areas for cluster development: areas of infill or redevelopment, areas of vacant or underutilized backlands of deep properties, areas of transition between single family and other higher intensity land uses.

Examples: Barton/Bradley triangle, undeveloped backlands along major collectors (Clague, Columbia, Barton Roads), lands adjacent to parks and open space areas.

- b. *Conservation Residential.* In conservation residential areas, developments are designed in a way that sets aside a certain percentage of the site as permanent green space. This type of development is intended to preserve the natural character of environmentally sensitive areas.

Appropriate areas for conservation development: areas with physical development constraints due to environmental factors, areas where open space preservation is desired.

Examples: lands around Bradley Woods Metroparks, lands adjacent to Rocky River Reservation, lands adjacent to other parks and open space areas.

Multiple Family Residential. The multiple family residential classification accommodates a variety of dwelling types including attached and detached condominiums, garden apartments, and townhouses. Multiple family residential developments are expected to ensure quality of design including adequate accessibility and parking, provision of open space and other amenities, and screening between adjacent uses.

Multiple Family Residential Options

As there is a variety of single family residential styles, there is also diversity within the City's multiple family residential housing stock. This housing diversity ensures there are sufficient residential options for all current and future residents.

- a. *High Rise.* A number of high rise apartment buildings currently exist in the City. These uses should continue where existing, but not be expanded in the future to other parcels of land.

Appropriate areas for high rise development: areas around major commercial or mixed use nodes, areas in close proximity to highways or transit hubs.

Examples: existing high rise locations.

- b. *Senior Housing.* Senior housing includes apartments and attached and detached cluster units specifically designed for the needs of senior citizens, along with ancillary facilities associated with the living units.

Appropriate areas for senior housing development: areas convenient to retail, medical and personal services and cultural facilities, areas of transition between residential and higher intensity land uses.

Examples: locations along Lorain Road or other major thoroughfares.

Limited Commercial. The limited commercial classification includes retail business, service establishments, and offices that primarily supply or serve residents of the community. This category has smaller-scale, more locally oriented businesses than the standard commercial classification. Examples of limited commercial uses include offices, restaurants, personal services, entertainment, grocery stores, and pharmacies.

Commercial. The commercial classification is a broad category that accommodates larger scale commercial enterprises and serves an area greater than the immediate community. Commercial uses may include service, retail, wholesale, and highway-oriented businesses. These types of land uses may generate more traffic, draw more patrons, and have a greater impact on surrounding properties than the limited commercial classification.

Commercial Mixed Use. The commercial mixed use classification encompasses the major commercial and mixed use hub of the community. This classification includes all types of commercial activities, office uses, and residential uses.

Intent of Commercial Mixed Use

Mixed use development is beneficial to the City in that it creates true neighborhoods of residential, office, retail, and entertainment uses. Mixing uses creates a synergistic effect, which increases the attractiveness and value of these sites and their surrounds. It also improves the City's regional competitiveness by creating unique development opportunities. In order to enhance the revenue potential and appearance of the City's commercial mixed use center, redevelopment should have a higher quality and density than current patterns. Greater intensity and mixing of land uses can be achieved in ways that enhance the character of the City's physical environment and overall quality of life. While it is important to expand the tax base, it is also necessary to address other community needs such as civic gathering places, housing diversity, outstanding community services, and local retail opportunities.

The highest intensity uses should be located in the core of the district, with transitional uses at the edges. New commercial development should not encroach upon single family residential areas at the fringes of this district. Likewise, new residential development should not supplant either existing commercial and office development or sites considered appropriate for such uses.

The commercial mixed use district encompasses an area that currently includes two single family residential streets – Bailey and Fleharty Drives. Should redevelopment occur, it is preferred that the area develop as a planned district. Furthermore, for this specific area to redevelop into commercial mixed use, all properties must be converted together. Piecemeal redevelopment in this area will not be permitted.



Mixed use developments promote active and efficient use of space.

Office Mixed Use. The office mixed use classification primarily includes office and residential uses. Office uses are comprised of administrative, executive, professional, research, or similar organizations and laboratories. Residential uses may include cluster developments or multiple family units.

Intent of Office Mixed Use

While office is to be the main land use for this classification, housing is incorporated as an incentive to attract office development and to serve as a transition to adjacent neighborhoods. Both uses will be integrated into the same structure or adjacent structures to create a mixed-use environment. Live/work units may also be considered in this classification. Additionally, a small proportion of retail should be considered for incorporation into office developments as an ancillary use. If included, retail should serve as a very limited use and should be located on the ground level of these structures. Appropriate retail uses include copy centers, office supplies and services, and coffee shops. The appropriate balance of land uses will be defined in more detailed planning processes for this area.

In order to promote safety and preserve traffic flows, direct access to Stearns Road should be limited to few points of access. Campus style development is preferred.

Office. Office uses may include administrative, executive, professional, financial, research, governmental, public utility, or similar organizations or laboratories.

Limited Industrial. Limited industrial activities may include office buildings; research laboratories; service, sales and storage establishments; and enterprises engaged in the processing, assembly, packaging, or fabrication of products from processed or previously manufactured materials.

Community Facilities & Public Utilities. Community and public uses include government facilities, utilities and services, community centers, churches, hospitals, cemeteries, and educational facilities.

Open Space & Recreation. The open space and recreation classification includes lands primarily used for outdoor recreation or natural area conservation. This may include public or private parks, outdoor sporting clubs, golf courses, and areas for which the primary purpose is preservation and conservation of undeveloped natural areas. Open space is also an appropriate classification for areas of land that pose obstacles to development due to significant physical development constraints (e.g., vacant residentially-zoned parcels adjacent to Bradley Woods Reservation with shallow bedrock).

Land Use Allocation

The following table shows the existing and proposed future land use allocation by classification for comparison purposes. However, it is important to note that the tables are not directly comparable as new classifications (i.e., commercial mixed use, office mixed use) have been added in the future land use scenario.

Table 1: Existing and Future Land Use Allocation

Land Use	2002 Land Use Scenario (Acres)	% of Total	Future Land Use Scenario (Acres)	% of Total
Single Family Residential	3,730	49.7%	3,824	50.9%
Multiple Family Residential	225	3.0%	167	2.2%
Commercial	511	6.8%	341	4.5%
Commercial Mixed Use	n/a	n/a	438	5.8%
Office	74	1.0%	23	0.3%
Office Mixed Use	n/a	n/a	48	0.6%
Industrial	44	0.6%	129	1.7%
Open Space & Recreation	896	11.9%	1,018	13.6%
Community Facilities	372	5.0%	358	4.8%
Roads & Utilities	1,198	16.0%	1,162	15.5%
Vacant/Other	458	6.1%	0	0.0%
Total	7,508		7,508	

Source: D.B. Hartt, Inc.

Policies and Recommendations

Land Use Management & Administration

- 1.1. Have both the Planning Commission and City Council adopt the Master Plan.
- 1.2. Update the City's Zoning Code and Subdivision Regulations in accordance with the recommendations of the Master Plan.

Zoning and subdivision regulations serve as two of the most significant vehicles available for implementing the Master Plan. Zoning divides the City into separate districts with different regulations within the districts for land use, building size, and other elements. Zoning can also be used to regulate aesthetics and density. Additionally, subdivision regulations place requirements and restrictions as to how land can be developed. As with the Plan, these regulatory processes should also be subject to periodic review and revision.
- 1.3. Use the recommendations of the Master Plan when evaluating development proposals.
- 1.4. Continue to improve the efficiency of the development approval process.
- 1.5. Adopt design standards and guidelines.

Design guidelines should be specifically tailored to the City and written to be user-friendly, providing appropriate guidance for property owners, architects and contractors to follow when making development applications. Guidelines may include provisions for building-site relationships such as setbacks, parking, and building orientation, as well as regulations for architectural features, building materials, landscaping, and streetscape elements.
- 1.6. Require future actions regarding capital improvements to be consistent with the Plan.
- 1.7. Actively work with the Board of Education, Cleveland Metroparks, and other public agencies to plan for future facility needs and set aside land as needed.

Zoning

- 1.8. Ensure zoning and development regulations promote efficient, mixed use development.
- 1.9. Create one or more planned districts and encourage their use for larger development or redevelopment proposals.

Under a planned district, a tract of land is developed as a single unit rather than as an aggregate of individual lots, with design flexibility from traditional land use regulations. The

greater flexibility in locating buildings and in combining various land uses makes it possible to achieve economy in construction, as well as the preservation of open space and the inclusion of amenities.

- 1.10. Develop an approach to eliminate split zoning of parcels.
Approaches to consider include rezoning of parcels or establishing an overlay district for those parcels that contain multiple zoning classifications. Any approach should also consider enhancing buffering standards where residential and non-residential districts abut.
- 1.11. Create a new residential zoning district that promotes open space conservation.
A conservation residential zoning district should include requirements that a certain percentage of the site is set aside for permanent open space preservation. This type of district is appropriate where sensitive natural features should be preserved or pose obstacles to development.
- 1.12. Allow for non-single family residential options in commercial areas.
While single family residential uses are not compatible with commercial uses, certain types of residential options can compliment or support commercial areas. These options may include senior housing or various types of multiple family housing.
- 1.13. Ensure regulations promote efficient and desired land usage in the City's major commercial areas such as reduced parking requirements, increased residential buffering, and quality building design.
The commercial corridor should be accessible to both vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Storefronts should be oriented toward the street and pedestrian traffic. Accessibility to businesses must also be provided to trucks for loading and delivery off of Lorain Road. Shared parking areas for businesses should be promoted to reduce curb cuts along Lorain Road.






Redevelopment

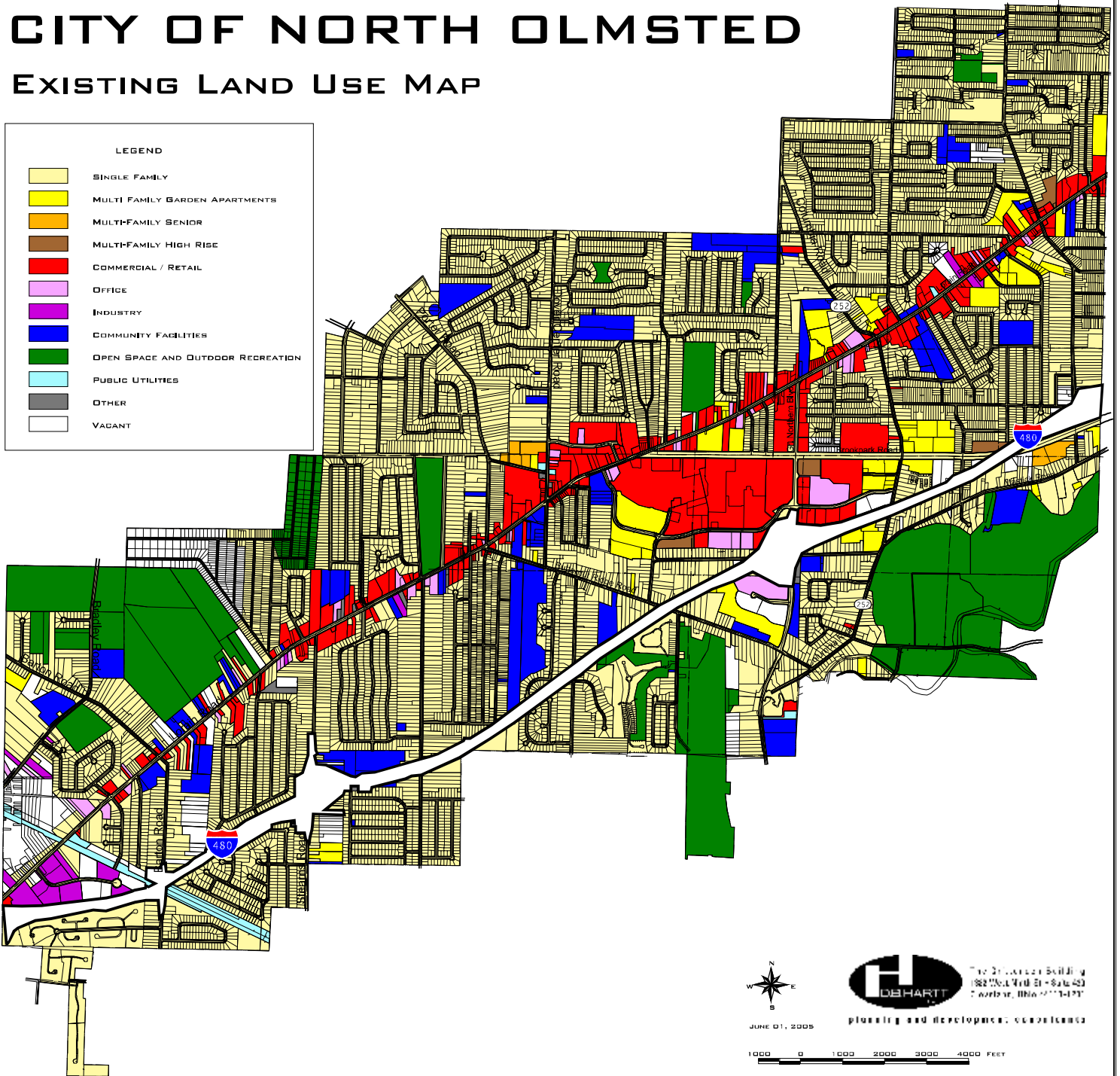
- 1.14. Encourage redevelopment and reinvestment aimed at strengthening the City's tax base.
In order to achieve the type of land use pattern and character desired in the City, extensive redevelopment efforts will be required. Cooperation between public and private interests and the local community will be key to the successful transformation of the existing commercial corridor into a more vibrant destination.
- 1.15. Use redevelopment as an opportunity to enhance community appearance in commercial and residential areas and encourage community gathering.
- 1.16. Improve pedestrian access and connectivity between retail and adjacent neighborhoods.
- 1.17. Consider the needs of an aging population when changes in the physical environment occur including those related to housing and community facilities.
- 1.18. Promote the City's Community Reinvestment Area (CRA) incentives for improvements to residential and commercial properties.
- 1.19. Secure CDBG funds for making physical improvements to qualifying residential and commercial properties in identified Improvement Target Area (ITA) locations.
An ITA is an area designated by Cuyahoga County as having evidence of or potential for deterioration or other blighting influences. These areas are prioritized for grants or other funding sources geared towards infrastructure and real property improvements. The City should continue to work with County representatives to identify these areas in the community and ensure that they are designated as ITAs.
- 1.20. Actively enforce the City's real property maintenance code to eliminate unsightly, decaying or unsafe building fronts, yards and deteriorated sidewalks.

CITY OF NORTH OLMSTED

EXISTING LAND USE MAP

LEGEND

-  SINGLE FAMILY
-  MULTI FAMILY GARDEN APARTMENTS
-  MULTI-FAMILY SENIOR
-  MULTI-FAMILY HIGH RISE
-  COMMERCIAL / RETAIL
-  OFFICE
-  INDUSTRY
-  COMMUNITY FACILITIES
-  OPEN SPACE AND OUTDOOR RECREATION
-  PUBLIC UTILITIES
-  OTHER
-  VACANT



JUNE 01, 2005



The City of North Olmsted
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North Olmsted, OH 44131-1171

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









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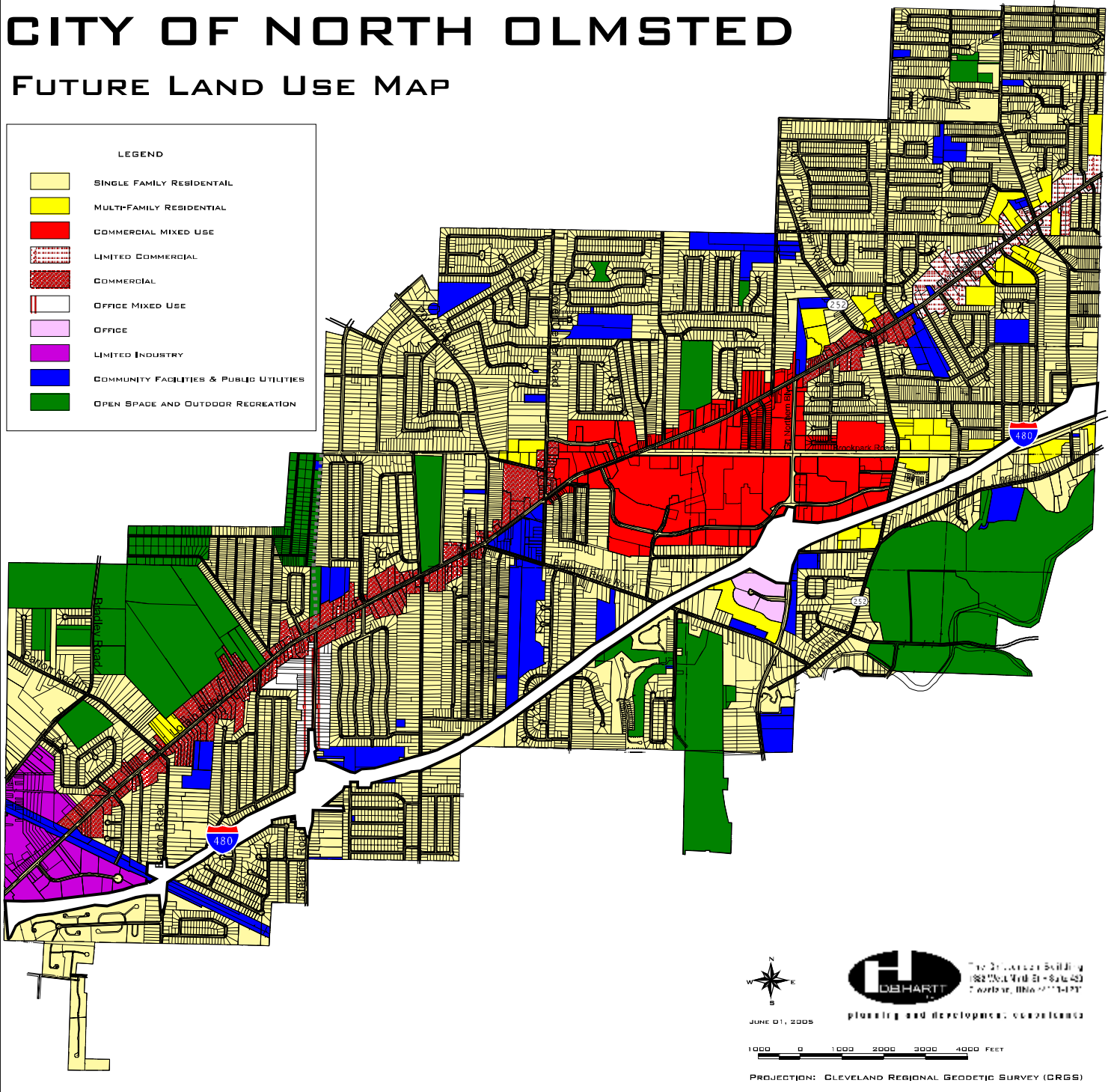
PROJECTION: CLEVELAND REGIONAL GEODETIC SURVEY (CRGS)

CITY OF NORTH OLMSTED

FUTURE LAND USE MAP

LEGEND

-  SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL
-  MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL
-  COMMERCIAL MIXED USE
-  LIMITED COMMERCIAL
-  COMMERCIAL
-  OFFICE MIXED USE
-  OFFICE
-  LIMITED INDUSTRY
-  COMMUNITY FACILITIES & PUBLIC UTILITIES
-  OPEN SPACE AND OUTDOOR RECREATION



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planning and development consultants

JUNE 01, 2005

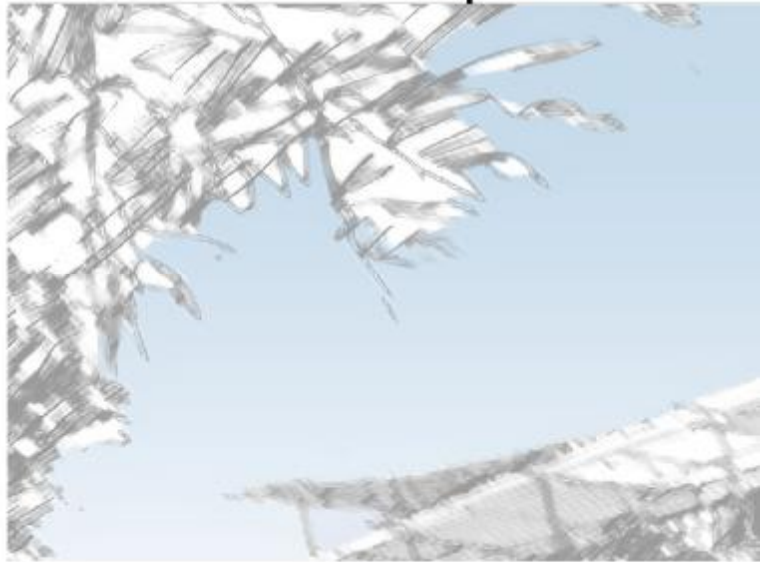


PROJECTION: CLEVELAND REGIONAL GEODETIC SURVEY (CRGS)

CITY OF NORTH OLMSTED master plan



4. Economic Development



Introduction

Economic development is a process by which a community helps to create a sustainable, high standard of living for its residents. The creation of a high standard of living or “quality of life” involves encouraging economic health, increasing community financial resources, retaining and expanding local businesses, recruiting new businesses, developing physical infrastructure, ensuring effective educational systems, and developing an appropriate workforce.

Economic development is an interactive process between members of a community, in this case the City, and those outside entities that influence decisions that impact the community. While the roles of each player, public and private, may be different, they are all important to successful economic development.

Economic development is an integrated process. As the City works to attract new development, it should concentrate on the retention of existing businesses, as well. The City’s role in economic development is critical to the future overall economic health of the business community. There are a number of elements critical to the practice of effective economic development including:

- **Management.** Successful economic development requires creating an organizational structure wherein City decision makers, staff, and board and commission members understand their roles related to economic development including development regulations and process.
- **Public policy.** Implementation of the Master Plan recommendations related to economic development can be achieved by creating an environment for City leadership and the public to “buy in” to general concepts, and then working towards specific implementation strategies and outcomes.
- **Collaboration.** Successful economic development efforts will require communication and collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce and other key business interests. This includes business representation in planning, community development and economic development processes as well as input on legislation impacting businesses.
- **Initiatives.** The City will have many opportunities to cooperate with the business community in a variety of planning, community and economic development initiatives. Some of these will include physical planning for the development of the west end, redevelopment of the Crocker-Stearns corridor, and reinvestment in the City’s east end. Some will involve changing the way the City operates by improving development review through creation of design guidelines, updating the Zoning Code, and creating more business friendly processes in the City. Finally, some initiatives will involve building and maintaining relationships between the City, Chamber of Commerce, and school system to best take advantage of community assets and partnerships.

Goal and Objectives

Promote a diverse economy that provides a strong tax base and a range of quality employment choices for residents.

- a. Create an economic development program that actively markets the City and promotes business attraction.
- b. Increase business retention and expansion efforts.

- c. Improve communication and cooperative efforts between the City and Chamber of Commerce.
- d. Identify opportunities for redevelopment and particular community needs or niches that should be pursued.
- e. Consider a variety of strategies to attract tax revenue generating businesses and industries to the City, including economic development agreements with neighboring communities.
- f. Consider appropriate economic development incentives and establish communication with local and state government agencies, lending institutions, schools and other involved parties.
- g. Encourage City, business and resident partnerships that project a business and resident friendly atmosphere.
- h. Ensure adequate access is provided to potential development areas.

Market Analysis

Summary of Observations

- **City is substantially developed and remaining parcels for economic base should be used to further city goals:** With 94% of its land developed at this point, the City must be strategic about how its existing zoned commercial land is used to achieve its goals for economic development.
- **City has a substantial economic base but remains weak in terms of office and industrial uses:** The City's total tax base in 2003 was \$818 million, with 29% represented by commercial valuation. The City increased its number of employees between 1990 and 2000 by 1.3%, higher than the growth rate in employment for Cuyahoga County overall which grew by 0.8% during the same time. The City's commercial tax base and employment is represented largely by retail, commercial and related service industries as these employers represent nearly 50% of the City's total employment.
- **Retail development continues to define the City's economic base:** With 4.6 million square footage of retail development in 1999, North Olmsted's retail base is second only to the city of Parma in terms of overall square footage in Cuyahoga County. The general physical improvements to the Great Northern Mall, the development of the Wal-Mart parcel and the recent approval of the Target mixed use development project continue to enhance the city's position as regional retail center. However, the City will have to continue to monitor development projects in area communities, such as the Crocker Park, to assure that it retains its competitive edge.
- **City's tax structure remains competitive:** The City's commercial property and municipal income tax structure remains comparable to neighboring communities providing the City with a competitive taxation structure.
- **Office and industrial development remains as an unfulfilled goal:** The City's western edge, which is zoned for industrial uses, has had some further development during the 1990s, but remains the City's last large vacant tract available for economic use. Generally, office development provides more local tax revenues to cities than other commercial uses on a per acre basis due to the higher intensity of employment for office uses when compared to industrial and retail uses. Industrial development is second to office development, and retail development provides the lowest local tax revenues on **a per acre** basis to local governments.
- **Market conditions remain weak but are likely to improve:** The office vacancy rate in the Cleveland suburbs was 19.1% in the first quarter of 2004, with a 15.8% vacancy rate in the

southwest suburbs during the first quarter. The industrial vacancy rate in the southwest suburbs was 10.4% in the first quarter of 2004, slightly higher than the 10.3% vacancy rate for the Cleveland suburbs overall. The overall vacancy rate for retail space in the Cleveland region is about 10% currently.

- **The City currently uses economic development tools, but could enhance its strategy to be more competitive.** As part of its economic development strategy, the City has adopted an enterprise zone for about one-half of the community and designated the entire community eligible for tax abatement for projects that are approved by the City. There appears to be no organized economic development program/marketing efforts.

Economic/Commercial Characteristics

1. Number Employed and Businesses

North Olmsted was home to nearly 1,100 businesses and other establishments that employed nearly 18,000 people in 2000. U.S. Census data indicates that the City had 1,097 employers in 2001, down slightly from 1998. As shown in Table 2, the City had a high concentration of retail employers in 2001 (28% of the total) as well as food, hotel and similar service industry employers (21% of the total). Finance/insurance and professional/technical service establishments represented 7% and 8%, respectively, of the total establishments in 2001.

Table 2: Employers by Type of Industry, 1998 and 2001

Industry	1998 Total Estabs	2001 Total Estabs	2001 Proportion	% Change
Total	1141	1097		-4%
Construction	99	87	8%	-12%
Manufacturing	26	18	2%	-31%
Wholesale trade	54	47	4%	-13%
Retail trade	320	305	28%	-5%
Transportation/warehousing	11	8	1%	-27%
Information	18	27	2%	50%
Finance & insurance	80	80	7%	0%
Real estate & rental & leasing	33	30	3%	-9%
Professional, scientific & technical services	84	85	8%	1%
Management of companies & enterprises	2	2	0%	0%
Admin, support, waste mgt services	80	75	7%	-6%
Educational services	2	7	1%	250%
Health care and social assistance	81	77	7%	-5%
Arts, entertainment & recreation	11	8	1%	-27%
Accommodation & food services	117	111	10%	-5%
Other services (except public administration)	120	124	11%	3%
Auxiliaries	1	2	0%	100%
Unclassified establishments	2	4	0%	100%

Source: U.S. Census, Zip Code Business Patterns (NAICS)

As shown in Table 3, employment in the City grew by 1.3% between 1990 and 2000, slightly higher than the growth rate experienced by Cuyahoga County overall.

Table 3: Number Employed, 1990 and 2000

City	Employed 1990	Employed 2000	% Change
North Olmsted	17,697	17,935	1.3%
Cleveland	182,225	180,459	-1.0%
Cuyahoga County	629,512	634,419	0.8%

Source: U.S. Census

2. Tax Base and Tax Rates

The City's overall tax base is nearly \$818 million with 69%, or \$567 million, represented by residential assessed value and 29% represented by commercial assessed value. In the western suburbs, North Olmsted's total tax base is second only to the City of Westlake which had a total assessed valuation of \$1.2 billion in 2003.

Table 4: Assessed Tax Valuation 2003

Cities	Residential Tax Base Per Capita	Commercial Tax Base Per Capita	Total Assessed Valuation 2003	% Res or Agr	% Other R.E.	% Pub. Util. Pers. Prop.
Berea	\$13,169	\$3,629	\$329,839,290	76%	21%	3%
Brook Park	\$13,617	\$6,806	\$446,833,600	65%	32%	3%
Fairview Park	\$17,763	\$3,820	\$385,567,900	81%	17%	2%
North Olmsted	\$16,625	\$6,868	\$817,678,170	69%	29%	2%
Olmsted Falls	\$20,902	\$1,808	\$185,393,080	90%	8%	2%
Olmsted Twp	\$14,770	\$2,333	\$188,235,630	83%	13%	4%
Rocky River	\$25,825	\$4,787	\$644,268,230	83%	15%	1%
Westlake	\$27,494	\$9,763	\$1,204,419,160	72%	26%	2%

Source: Cuyahoga County Auditor's Office

For the City, the residential property tax rate in 2003 was \$68.77 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. This means that the owner of residential property with a market valuation of \$100,000 paid \$2,407 in property taxes in 2003. Residential property tax rates in North Olmsted, summarized in Table 5, are comparable to the neighboring communities of Berea and Olmsted Falls while slightly higher than Westlake and lower than Fairview Park.

Table 5: Local Income Tax Rates

Taxing Jurisdiction	2003 Tax Rate (%)	Tax Credit (%)	Credit Limit (%)
Brook Park	2.00	100	2.00
Fairview Park	1.50	75	1.25
Middleburg Heights	1.75	100	1.75
North Olmsted	2.00	100	2.00
Strongsville	2.00	100	2.00
Westlake	1.50	100	1.50

Source: Regional Income Tax Authority data

The City's current income rate is 2%--higher than adjacent communities of Fairview Park and Westlake--but comparable to area communities of Brook Park, and Middleburg Heights.

The commercial property tax rate in 2003 was \$76.33 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. The owner of commercial property with a market valuation of \$100,000 paid \$2,671 in property taxes in 2003. Commercial property tax rates are comparable to the communities of Berea and Rocky River, lower than Olmsted Township and Fairview Park, and higher than Westlake and Brook Park.

Table 6: Effective Tax Rates 2003

Taxing Jurisdiction	Effective Tax Rate	
	Residential/ Agricultural	Commercial/ Industrial
Berea	65.12	74.58
Brook Park	56.41	65.16
Fairview Park	74.67	83.00
North Olmsted	68.77	76.33
Olmsted Falls	69.92	82.10
Olmsted Township	73.04	86.61
Rocky River	60.49	74.70
Westlake	55.15	60.06

Distribution of Tax Dollars by %--2003

District	Residential	Commercial
School District	54.68%	57.26%
City	19.49%	17.55%
County	21.24%	21.03%
Library/Other	4.59%	4.15%

Source: Cuyahoga County Treasurer

Current Market Conditions

1. Regional Trends

Office Development

CB Richard Ellis, Inc. (CBRE), a commercial brokerage firm, reports that vacancy rates in the region's suburban office market declined to 17.4% at the end of 2003 from 19.5% its peak during the second quarter of 2002.¹ However, the suburban office market vacancy rate bumped up again in the first quarter of 2004 to 19.1%. Net absorption of office space, the change in occupied square footage from one period to another, had increased during 2003 in the suburban office markets, a positive trend, however the first quarter of 2004 saw a decline in this trend as well. CBRE believes that despite the negative trends in the first quarter that the

¹ C.B. Richard Ellis, Inc. Cleveland Suburban Office Market Index Brief, Year End 2003 and MarketView Cleveland Suburban Office, First Quarter 2004.

Cleveland suburban market will stabilize. There is more than 1.4 million square feet of office (20 buildings) currently in the planning stages for the suburban market.

The southwest submarket, which includes the city of North Olmsted, contains 1.7 million square feet of office space, representing 9.6% of the suburban office market. In the first quarter of 2004, the vacancy rate in this submarket increased to 15.8%, lower than the suburban average of 19.1%. The average asking lease rate in the southwest submarket in the first quarter of 2004 was \$14.62 per square foot/year, lower than the suburban area average of \$17.41 per square foot/year.

Industrial Development

The Cleveland industrial market (both city and suburban) continued to experience high vacancy rates, low rents and slow activity in 2003 and into the first quarter of 2004, according to CBRE.² The factors cited for the poor performance of the industrial sector were the large concentration of manufacturing space in the region, global competition, trade agreements, and poor economic conditions. Further, some 2.5 million square feet of industrial space was under construction in the region during 2003, while some 1.0 million square feet of industrial space, primarily “build to suit” warehouse/distribution space, opened for business—adding considerably to the region’s available industrial space.

In the southwest submarket, which includes North Olmsted, the industrial vacancy rate was 10.4% in the first quarter of 2004, just above the regional average of 10.3%. Some 818,000 square footage of industrial space was under construction in this submarket in early 2004. The Average Asking Lease Rate per square foot/per year was \$4.31 in this submarket in early 2004, somewhat higher than the regional average of \$3.91.

Retail Development

According to Colliers International, also a commercial brokerage firm, the retail real estate market has continued to experience increased demand due to strong consumer spending and the continued strength of the housing market (due to low interest rates). The vacancy rate in the Cleveland retail market is a little over 10%. Some key points from the most recent Colliers report on the retail sector include:

- Retailers are targeting the untapped potential of secondary markets possessing supportive demographic characteristics;
- Retailers are finding creative ways to reuse existing space, especially big-box retailers;
- Infill retail development is becoming more common;
- Retail development is shifting away from the development of enclosed malls to a preference for outdoor shopping centers anchored by big-box and specialty stores; and
- Regional malls are competing with “lifestyle centers” by adding outlot developments as well as adding to the retail mix of mall properties.

A recent analysis of the Cleveland region’s retail base, its impacts, and the expectations for future retail, completed by the Cuyahoga County Planning Commission³ (CCPC) in 1999,

² CB Richard Ellis, Inc., Cleveland Industrial Market Index Brief, 4th Quarter, 2003 and MarketView Cleveland Industrial, First Quarter 2004.

³ Cuyahoga County Planning Commission, Northeast Ohio Regional Retail Analysis, 2000, as prepared for the Northeastern Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency.

provides comprehensive research and recommendations for communities such as North Olmsted as they consider planning, zoning and economic development issues related to retail uses. The report documents a trend of continued outward movement of retail investments (following the outward migration of residents) and reports that the Cleveland region is generally *overserved* by retail developments (with the exception of areas in the central city of Cleveland).

The CCPC Northeast Ohio Regional Retail Analysis report characterizes the western suburbs as an area that has more square footage than is needed to serve its local population. The report suggests that these suburbs “capture” retail sales by serving residents of other areas (as an adequate supply of retail exists to serve the household income levels that exist in these communities).

The report states that older communities characterized by outdated strip shopping centers will need to continue to reposition those properties to remain competitive or risk the continued vacancy and loss of tax base, a trend that is already happening in many of the region’s inner-ring suburbs. Among the report’s many recommendations, there is a clear direction to the region’s older communities to consider designating certain out-of-date, retail areas as mixed-use centers where zoning will permit a mix of retail, office and, even residential uses, so as to create economic activity centers in a community where retail may no longer be able to compete.

Table 7: Retail Analysis--Demand and Supply, Cuyahoga County West Shore Suburbs, 1999

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Retail Category	1999 Floor Space	Total Households	Sales/ Household/ Year	Total Sales Potential	National Median Sales per Square Foot	Total Sales	Sales Capture/ (Leakage)	Surplus/ Deficit Square Feet
Convenience	3,699,883	72,806	\$8,883	\$646,735,698	\$213.69	\$790,627,998	\$143,892,300	673,369
Shopping	4,029,421	72,806	\$7,922	\$576,769,132	\$194.17	\$782,392,676	\$205,623,544	1,058,987
Total	7,729,304	72,806	\$16,805	\$1,223,504,830		\$1,573,020,674	\$349,515,844	1,732,357

Cuyahoga County: West Shore Suburban Supply and Demand Ratios (Bay Village, Fairview Park, Lakewood, North Olmsted, Rocky River, Westlake)

Source: Cuyahoga County Planning Commission, Northeast Ohio Regional Retail Analysis. 2000.

2. Local Market Data and Observations

Retail Market Data

The 2004 Land Use inventory indicates that approximately 5.5% of the City’s land is being used for retail purposes. With an estimated 4.6 million square feet of retail square footage, North Olmsted has the second largest concentration of retail activity of all suburban Cuyahoga County communities, ranking it second behind Parma as of 1999. The City functions as a regional retail center for the western suburbs



The mall continues to grow with recent major additions of Dillard's and Dick's Sporting Goods.

largely due to its location on I-480 and the high concentration of retail land uses around the Westfield Shopping Center.

As shown in Table 8, the City's 4.6 million square footage consists of 2.2 million of *shopping goods and services*, representing 49% of the city's total retail square feet. Shopping goods and services consist largely of clothing, equipment and similar retailers. Some one million, or 23%, of the total square footage is represented by convenience *goods and services*—generally stores that cater to the local needs of residents (grocery, restaurants and other convenience services). Some 11% or 500,000 square feet is related to auto goods and services while 6% of the retail square footage is vacant.

Table 8: City of North Olmsted Retail Square Footage, 1999

Type of Retail	Total Square Footage*	% by Type of Retail	
		North Olmsted	Suburban Cuyahoga County
Shopping Goods and Services	2,228,007	49%	36%
Convenience Goods and Services	1,052,170	23%	29%
Automobile Sales, Parts and Services	502,219	11%	11%
Vacant Retail	264,759	6%	8%
Other Retail	382,315	8%	10%
Commercial Amusements	143,168	3%	6%
Total	4,572,638	100%	100%

Source: CCPC; *does not include local office space

Table 9 compares retail square footage in North Olmsted on a per capita basis to area communities. At 135 square feet of retail square footage per capita, North Olmsted has significantly higher square footage than all of its neighboring communities.

Table 9: Retail Square Footage on a Per Capita Basis

Municipality	Total Square Footage of Retail (1999)*	Square Feet of Retail per Capita
Berea	766,201	40
Brook Park	1,175,214	55
Fairview Park	1,490,498	85
North Olmsted	4,572,638	134
Olmsted Falls	257,147	32
Olmsted Township	125,590	12
Rocky River	1,413,823	68
Westlake	2,071,520	65

Source: CCPC; *does not include local office

The evolution of competing regional retail centers in nearby communities, i.e. Westlake's Crocker Park, and the trendiness of the retail sector, requires that the City remain aggressive in positioning its retail assets to achieve the type and quality of retail product desired or consider shifting some of those land assets to other uses.

Office Market Data

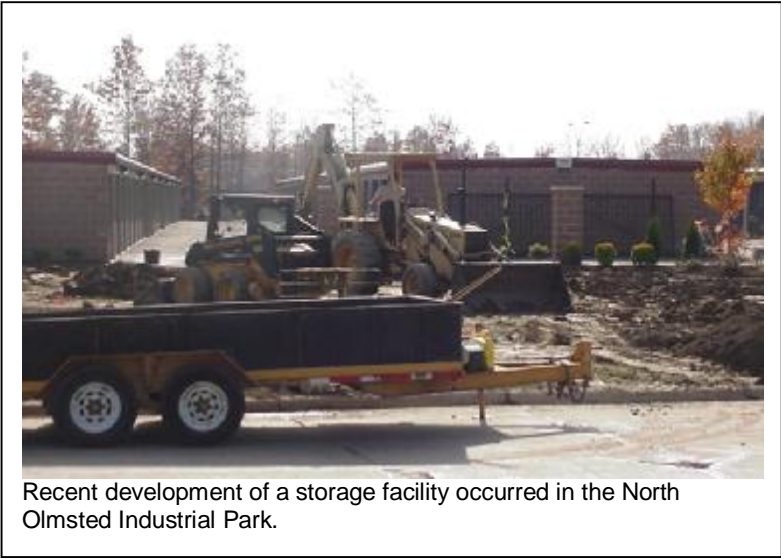
To prepare the City’s Master Plan in 1992, the Cuyahoga County Planning Commission completed a “Floor Area Study” that documented the presence of approximately 840,000 square feet of office space in the community. Of this total, 598,000 square feet of floor area was determined to be “local” office space, providing space for doctors, dentists, lawyers, insurance agents, real estate agents and similar services. Approximately 242,000 square feet of office space was considered “regional” office space.

The current amount of office space in the City is estimated at 882,000 total square feet. The median year of construction for the City’s office buildings is 1968. The data for office buildings was compiled by reviewing the Cuyahoga County Auditor property records for the parcels that were identified as office uses in the land use analysis. Review of the data indicates that the most common office building type in North Olmsted is single-story (with 37 buildings in this category), with 19 two-story buildings, and eight buildings of three stories or more.

Office vacancy rates in Cleveland’s southwestern sub-market have tended to be below the Cleveland region’s vacancy rate averages. North Olmsted will continue to face competition from outlying areas and other nearby locations for the businesses and employers that are currently located in the City. Given the continued development of new office space in outlying areas, and the availability of new office space in the nearby Crocker Park development, the City must continue to work with businesses, landowners and tenants to address issues such as traffic congestion, the desire for amenities, public investments, and similar economic development strategies to preserve its existing economic base.

Industrial Market Data

The 45-acre North Olmsted Industrial Park, located at the western end of Lorain Road near I-480 serves as the City’s primary location of industrial buildings. Easy access to I-480 at Lorain Road and the Ohio Turnpike are important assets to the location of this industrial park. While some of the industrial zoned parcels have been developed, a number of key parcels remain vacant in this area. The City should clarify its position on industrial development land and focus its efforts on attracting and retaining key light industrial users in these western area properties.



Recent development of a storage facility occurred in the North Olmsted Industrial Park.

Discussion of Development Impacts

As the City weighs its economic development options for the future, it must be strategic about choosing how existing land is reused—deciding whether the best use of land is in fact *an economic use, a residential use or a public use*. This section provides a general overview of

the revenue and traffic impacts of various development options. A summary of the development impacts of various land uses is provided in Table 10 as a tool for the City's use in evaluating future development options for the City.

In terms of economic benefits, of all of the non-residential uses, **office development** generates more real estate and municipal income tax revenues *per acre* than retail or industrial development. This is because office uses generally have more floor area per acre than either industrial or retail uses. **Industrial development** typically generates the second highest amount of real estate and municipal income tax revenue per acre while retail development generates lower local income and property taxes on a per acre basis. **Residential development**, on the other hand, generates the lowest real estate and local income tax revenue per acre.

Table 10: Estimated Development Impact of Various Land Uses

	Floor Area per acre (square feet)	Real Estate Value (per acre)	Property Tax Generated (per acre) ¹	Jobs Created (per acre) ²	Average Salary (per job) ³	Income Tax Distributed to City (per acre) ⁴	Property Tax Distributed to City (per acre) ⁵	Total Tax Distributed to City (per acre)	Average Daily Vehicle Trips (per acre)
Hotel ⁶	20,000	\$1,750,000	\$28,714	14	\$11,182	\$3,131	\$5,039	\$8,170	405
General Office	15,000	\$1,500,000	\$24,612	45	\$47,485	\$42,737	\$4,319	\$47,056	165
Professional/Technical Services	15,000	\$1,500,000	\$24,612	45	\$50,573	\$45,516	\$4,319	\$49,835	165
Commercial/Retail	12,000	\$960,000	\$15,752	24	\$19,144	\$9,189	\$2,764	\$11,954	240-720
Personal/Business Services	12,000	\$960,000	\$15,752	24	\$20,578	\$9,877	\$2,764	\$12,642	--
Light Industrial	9,000	\$540,000	\$8,860	18	\$44,923	\$16,172	\$1,555	\$17,727	63
Heavy Industrial	9,000	\$540,000	\$8,860	8	\$44,923	\$7,188	\$1,555	\$8,743	14
Manufacturing	9,000	\$540,000	\$8,860	20	\$44,923	\$17,969	\$1,555	\$19,524	36
Warehouse	9,000	\$540,000	\$8,860	14	\$35,744	\$10,008	\$1,555	\$11,563	45
Planned Residential ⁷	7,200	\$900,000	\$13,183	0	\$0	\$0	\$2,314	\$2,314	23
Single-Family Residential ⁸	5,000	\$750,000	\$10,986	0	\$0	\$0	\$1,928	\$1,928	19

¹ (Real estate value x 0.35)/1,000 x effective tax rate. 2003 effective tax rates for North Olmsted = \$68.77 (Residential) and \$76.33 (Commercial/industrial).

² Source: Development Impact Assessment Handbook (1994), Robert W. Burchell, et al

³ Source: US Economic Census Cuyahoga County Business Profile (2000) www.osuedc.org

⁴ North Olmsted income tax rate = 2%.

⁵ 17.5% of total property tax collected is distributed to the City of North Olmsted.

⁶ Assumes 45 rooms (444 square feet each) per acre.

⁷ Assumes development density of 4 du/acre @ 1,800 square feet per unit (calc using 5.86 trips per dwelling unit)

⁸ Assumes development density of 2 du/acre @ 2,500 square feet per unit (calc using 9.57 trips per dwelling unit)

Source: D.B. Hartt Inc. analysis, compiled from various sources.

In terms of negative community impacts, retail, office and industrial land uses generate more traffic, create more pollution, and have a higher proportion of impervious surface coverage--which contributes to increased storm water run-off--than residential developments. Retail uses generate the highest level of traffic activity on a per acre basis when compared to office and

industrial uses, but spreads this activity over the course of the day (while industrial and office uses have peak periods of traffic activity generally in the morning and late afternoons).

Economic Development Tools

Economic development is the stimulation of economic activity resulting in investments, job creation, and increases in the tax base. A broad range of tools is available to public sector entities wishing to promote economic development in their communities. Economic development tools may fall into one of five categories, yet they are often used in combination. The categories are financial incentives, tax incentives, non-financial incentives, organizational tools, and services.

- **Financial incentives** include grants, financed infrastructure, loans, subsidies, and loan guarantees. Financial incentives, by nature, are capital intensive, and may not be appropriate for all local governments.
- **Tax incentives** may take the form of targeted tax credits, tax abatements, and tax-increment financing.
- **Non-financial incentives** involve actions of public policy requiring approval by a legislative body. They may involve money, yet the funds do not go directly to the private sector. Examples of non-financial incentives include zoning; legal powers such as eminent domain; amenities such as parks, recreation facilities, and plazas; and industrial revenue bonds.
- **Organizational tools** provide legal or functional advantages and opportunities for public/private cooperation. Such organizational tools include non-profit corporations, development corporations, and joint ventures.
- **Services** offer local governments low cost methods of economic development. Services, often provided by public sector employees, may include data and information, one-stop permitting, market analysis, technical assistance, brokering, and loan/grant packaging.

Community Improvement Corporation

A CIC is the agent of a political subdivision dedicated to the industrial, commercial, distribution, and research development in the jurisdiction. A CIC which is designated by the City as its agent can approve or certify projects for industrial development bond (IDB) financing. CICs can use development and economic methods to improve employment opportunities, stabilize employment in existing industries, advance the industrial and commercial life of the community, and stabilize the general economy of the area. The powers of the CIC are broad and include the following:

- To borrow money for any purpose of the corporation by issuing debt. Such debt is secured by a mortgage or other lien on its property. Any debt issued by a CIC solely obligates the CIC, not the City.
- To make loans to persons, partnerships, corporations or other business organizations and to regulate the terms and conditions of such loans.
- To purchase or acquire real and personal property and to dispose of such property.

- To acquire real estate for the purpose of constructing industrial plants or business establishments or to dispose of such property for such purposes. In addition, a CIC may acquire industrial plants and business establishments and may sell, operate, maintain or lease such facilities.

Community Reinvestment Area

The North Olmsted Community Reinvestment Area (CRA) was established by Ordinance No. 91-175 adopted by the City Council in 1992. The CRA consists of all parcels of land within the corporate limits of the City as of adoption of the ordinance. The purpose of the CRA is to promote investment within the City of North Olmsted and encourage the remodeling and construction of certain improvements to real estate. Projects may include residential, commercial, and industrial developments. Qualifying projects are eligible to have the real property taxes abated for specified periods of time, at a maximum between 10 and 12 years. In the City's CRA, tax abatements are not available for the construction of facilities to be used for retail sales. Also, the property tax abatements apply only to the increase in market value of the structure as a result of remodeling or the market value of new construction. Land and existing structures remain subject to real property taxes.

Enterprise Zone

Businesses in specified areas of the City of North Olmsted are eligible for negotiated tax incentives for new investment through Cuyahoga County's Enterprise Zone program. Businesses must apply directly to the City of North Olmsted. The City can grant exemptions of up to seventy five percent (75%) on eligible new investments. The term of these incentives can be for up to ten years. Once an agreement is negotiated between the company and the City, the agreement must be approved by the Board of Cuyahoga County Commissioners.

Special Improvement District

A special improvement district (SID) can be created in municipalities by a petition of the property owners within the proposed district for the purpose of developing and implementing plans for public improvements and public services that benefit the district (see ORC §1710.02). All improvements and services are in addition to those routinely provided by the City. A portion of the funding may also be allocated toward marketing activities which promote the district. Within special improvement districts, property owners agree to payment of an additional property tax to be allocated toward public improvements and services within their district. The special improvement district is administered by a non-profit corporation, which is governed by a board of trustees.

The City and the Chamber of Commerce should cooperate to explore the feasibility of implementing a SID in North Olmsted. They should examine the benefits to local businesses and property owners provided by the creation of a special improvement district and consider other successful local examples. A number of SID's exist in Cuyahoga County including the Playhouse Square District in downtown Cleveland, and Coventry Village in the City of Cleveland Heights. If the SID is determined to be feasible, the City and Chamber of Commerce should determine what steps should be undertaken at the local level in order to establish and administer such a district in North Olmsted.

Tax Increment Financing

Tax increment financing allows a municipality to provide property owners undertaking improvements with a property tax “exemption” on these improvements. The property owner then makes service payments in lieu of the property taxes, which are allocated toward the financing of on-site public infrastructure improvements that are deemed to be of benefit to both the business under development or redevelopment, and the community. Tax increment financing often serves as a powerful incentive tool for commercial development and redevelopment projects.

Economic Development Agreements

The use of economic development agreements through intergovernmental coordination should be considered, as growth is beneficial to the entire region wherever jobs are retained or created. Such agreements may include Joint Economic Development Districts (JEDD) or Cooperative Economic Development Agreements (CEDA), which are tax base sharing mechanisms wherein designated portions of new tax resources resulting from growth would be pooled and distributed among the participating entities.

Joint Economic Development District (JEDD)

One or more municipalities and one or more townships may enter into a contract to create a Joint Economic Development District for the purpose of facilitating economic development within the JEDD. The district cannot exceed two thousand acres in area and cannot include existing residential areas or areas zoned for residential use. The contract grants the JEDD’s board of directors the power to levy an income tax within the JEDD at a rate not exceeding the rate being levied by the municipality. Other powers provided in the contract include the ability to determine the substance and administration of zoning and other land use regulations, building codes, permanent public improvements and other regulatory and proprietary matters; the ability to limit and control annexation of unincorporated land within the JEDD; and the ability to control the granting of property tax abatements and other tax incentives within the JEDD.

Cooperative Economic Development Agreement (CEDA)

One or more municipalities and one or more townships may enter into a Cooperative Economic Development Agreement. The board of county commissioners may also become a party to CEDA upon the written consent of the legislative authority of participating municipalities and the board of township trustees of participating townships. Income taxes are levied only on parcels that have been annexed into a municipality. Typically the municipality remits to the township all real estate and personal property tax revenue it would otherwise receive upon annexation on the unincorporated parcel(s). The agreement may also provide for the provision of joint services and improvements to incorporated or unincorporated areas and the application of tax incentives in the CEDA area. Unlike JEDDs, CEDA districts may include residential land. For both JEDDs and CEDAs:

Services Municipalities Typically Provide

- Water at a rate equal to that charged in-city customers
- Sewage treatment at a rate equal to that charged in-city customers
- Professional services that include engineering review and building inspection
- Income tax collection and administration

Services Townships Typically Provide

- Primary fire and EMS response
- Road maintenance within the agreement area and on roads leading to the area that are developed through JEDD/CEDA revenues
- Commercial, office, or industrial zoning of areas to be included (*JEDD only*)

Policies and Recommendations

Land Use & Zoning

- 2.1. Create a limited retail zoning district for neighborhood scale commercial activities.
Recognizing the diversity in type and intensity of commercial activity in North Olmsted, it is suggested that the City explore the possibility of creating one or more additional commercial zoning classifications. For example, many communities have a hierarchy of commercial zoning classifications that specify that only certain types of businesses may be constructed in certain areas within their municipal boundaries. These hierarchies of commercial zoning classifications are established for a variety of reasons, including preservation of residential properties, traffic control, environmental protection, and controlling the amount and location of desired commercial development.
- 2.2. Require commercial properties to have sidewalks connecting their property to abutting commercial and industrial properties.
- 2.3. Encourage additional mixed use development of undeveloped areas near the mall that will attract the proper mix of both regional offices and ancillary retail services and sales.

Administration

- 2.4. Revitalize the City's Community Improvement Corporation (CIC).
The CIC is the agent of the City dedicated to industrial, commercial, distribution, and research development. A CIC can approve or certify projects for industrial development bond (IDB) financing. CIC's can use development and economic methods to improve employment opportunities, stabilize employment, advance the industrial and commercial life of the community, and stabilize the general economy of the area. In lieu of a true Economic Development Department in the City, a CIC can serve as the planning and advisory group for economic development activities in the community.
- 2.5. Create an inventory of vacant parcels and buildings available for development in cooperation with the Cuyahoga County Department of Development and North Olmsted Chamber of Commerce.
- 2.6. Develop a five-year capital improvement program focused on maintaining and improving the City's infrastructure.
- 2.7. Educate commercial property owners within the City's retail, office and industrial districts about the option of creating "special improvement districts."
In a special improvement district, commercial property owners agree to an assessment of a special property tax which is typically allocated toward physical improvements and services within the district's public areas.
- 2.8. Conduct a survey of businesses as needed to enable businesses to express concerns and recommendations to the City.
- 2.9. Promote workforce development, including state-of-the-art vocational training for adults as well as students.

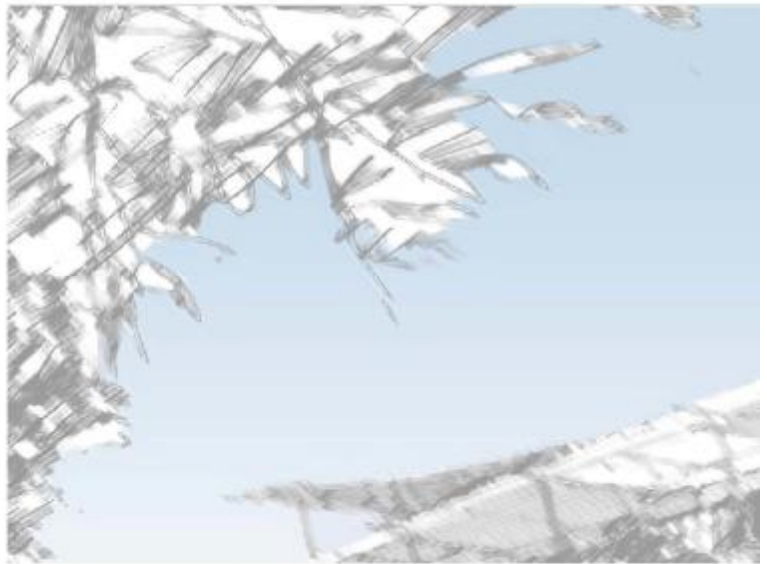
Attraction & Retention

- 2.10. Improve communication with the business and development community by identifying a single liaison from City Hall to local businesses that would address concerns.
- 2.11. Convey to businesses and to the local Chamber of Commerce the many advantages of keeping existing businesses and industries in North Olmsted through discussions and promotional materials.
- 2.12. Encourage the Chamber of Commerce to assist in the development of a marketing program that will emphasize the many assets of the City including the central location of the mall, the surrounding retail establishments and the emerging regional office center.
- 2.13. Make full use of North Olmsted's Community Improvement Corporation (CIC) for packaging loans, developing other programs to lure new industry, and helping promote the City's Enterprise Zone.
- 2.14. Promote the City's Enterprise Zone and Community Reinvestment Area as incentives that exempt tax increases for improvements to commercial and industrial properties.

CITY OF NORTH OLMS TED master plan



5. Housing



Introduction

North Olmsted, like many Ohio cities, evolved over a period of almost two hundred years from a farming community to a developed, suburban environment. This transition is evident in the City's growth pattern and housing stock. The oldest existing structure in the Butternut Ridge Historic District dates back to the 1830's. Since then, housing of a variety of types and styles from every era has marked the City's development pattern as shown in the photos below.

The housing element of the Master Plan builds upon data collected as part of the existing conditions analysis. It is recognized that neighborhood environmental influences, such as conditions of streets and other infrastructure and connection to community facilities like schools and parks have an impact on the attractiveness of a neighborhood, and thus upon its market values.

Therefore, one purpose of this chapter is to determine the need for specific actions or policies to improve the general safety and maintenance of housing stock, to preserve and protect neighborhoods, to create better linkages between established neighborhoods and community amenities, and to promote a more diversified range of housing options that serve the needs of present and future residents. These recommendations are meant to be applicable across the community, to assure a range of housing options, to serve citizens' needs as they change, and to maintain the community fabric and development patterns that create the City's sense of place.



Goal and Objectives

Improve the vitality and increase the value of the City's residential areas and neighborhoods.

- a. Increase the variety of high quality housing options available to all residents.
- b. Preserve the quality of existing housing stock through strategies that ensure and enforce residential property maintenance.
- c. Protect residents by creating uniform standards for buffering between residential and non-residential uses.
- d. Evaluate residential redevelopment opportunities.
- e. Create a residential occupancy/density code taking into consideration fair housing laws.
- f. Improve communications between the City and residents regarding available funding opportunities for property maintenance and renovation.
- g. Encourage development of senior housing.

Existing Conditions

Summary of Housing Observations

- **Moderate growth in housing units reflects changing household formation and limited vacant land available:** While the City's population has declined by 0.3%, the City experienced a moderate increase in the number of housing units—up by 7%-- between 1990 and 2000. Single family building permit activity between 2001 and 2003 has also had a healthy trend, increasing at an annual average of 37 permits per year. While the neighboring communities of North Ridgeville and Westlake have experienced stronger growth rates in housing, North Olmsted's limited amount of vacant land reduces its potential for new housing development.
- **Higher income community and age distribution across various levels:** The City's has higher household income levels that are comparable to most of the west suburban communities. The city's population is distributed across all age levels—the City does not have an above average proportion of senior citizens. However, the City's 65 and older population has been an increasing proportion of the City's total population. Currently, the 65+ population represents about 15% of the City's total population.
- **Housing values are higher, but appreciation was lower than the County:** The median value of a housing unit in 2000 was \$142,300, generally higher than the median value of communities to the east and the median value of housing in North Ridgeville. The median value of housing in North Olmsted increased by 14% between 1990 and 2000, lower than the 21% increase in the median housing value for Cuyahoga County. North Olmsted's housing value increase was lower than all of the neighboring communities, but comparable to the cities of Westlake and Rocky River.
- **The condition of the city's housing stock is generally in adequate condition:** Nearly 85% of the city's housing was considered in average condition in 2001, while 13% was excellent/very good/good and 2% was considered in fair/poor/very poor condition. The City's housing stock is on average 40 years old and will require upkeep and improvements to continue to assure a safe and attractive community. Continued maintenance of the City's apartment housing will also be an important priority.
- **Population levels are expected to remain at current levels:** Population forecasted for 2020 does not indicate any significant new population growth to plan for; the

challenge for the City will be tailoring its housing product to meet the demand of its existing population.

- **City offers a diversity of housing type but could look to expand to serve certain “market niches”:** Some 30% of the city’s housing stock is a type of unit other than single-family housing which provides the city with a diverse mix of housing. The City should work to preserve this diversity of housing so that all market niches can be addressed.

Population and Housing Trends

1. Demographics and Income

- The City’s population declined by 0.3% between 1990 and 2000, from 34,204 persons in 1990 to 34,113 persons in 2002. Neighboring communities to the east experienced similar population declines, while communities to the north, south and west experienced population increases.
- The average number of persons per household declined from 2.96 in 1980 to 2.5 in 2000, mirroring the national trend of a growth in the number of single person households and some reduction in number of children in families.
- The City’s breakdown of population by age category generally mirrors the County’s population with the median age of a North Olmsted resident at 35.9 years, and the median age of a County resident at 37.3 years. A notable trend for North Olmsted is that the percent of its population between the ages of 35 and 74 tended to be higher than the County averages. Also the proportion of the City’s population aged 65 and over, as a percentage of the City’s total population, increased to 15% of the total, comparable to Cuyahoga County.
- The City’s median household income in 1999 was \$52,542, representing 134% of the County average median household income. Median household income in 1999 was comparable to the communities of Rocky River and North Ridgeville.

2. Housing Trends

- Despite the drop in the population, the City’s number of housing units increased by 7% from 13,110 units in 1990 to 14,059 units in 2000, representing 2.3% of Cuyahoga County’s 616,903 units.
- All of the west suburban communities experienced an increase in housing units between 1990 and 2000, with the communities of Olmsted Township, Olmsted Falls, Westlake and North Ridgeville experiencing the strongest growth rates

3. Construction Trends

- Since 2000, the City has issued 111 housing permits, an annual average of 37 permits per year, with the highest number of permits issued in 2003 (69 permits).
- The communities of North Ridgeville, Westlake and Olmsted Falls had greater building activity as they have considerably more vacant land than North Olmsted.
- Of Cuyahoga County’s 1,920 residential building permits issued in 2003, 36 (or 2%) of the permits were issued for construction in North Olmsted.

Housing Characteristics

1. Occupancy Trends

- At the time of the 2000 U.S. Census, North Olmsted had a 3.9 percent vacancy rate.
- Nearly 80% of North Olmsted's housing is owner-occupied, which is slightly higher than the overall average (77%) of the surrounding communities and significantly higher than the County's 63%.
- Between 1990 and 2000, there was a dramatic increase in the number of single person, owner-occupied households in North Olmsted. Similarly, there was an increase in number of households with five or more persons renting in the community.
- The communities of North Ridgeville, Olmsted Falls, Olmsted Township and Westlake experienced an increase in the percentage of housing that was owner occupied. The cities of Brook Park, North Ridgeville, Olmsted Township and Westlake experienced an increase in the percentage of housing that was renter-occupied (18 to 111 percent).
- North Ridgeville and Olmsted Township each added roughly 450 rental units and Westlake added approximately 670 units of rental housing units.

2. Type of Housing

- In 2000, 75.5% of the City's housing was represented by single-family homes, 23% by multi-family buildings with 5 or more units, and 2% by buildings with 2-4 units.
- At 23%, North Olmsted's proportion of buildings with five or more units compares with Fairview Park while the cities of Rocky River and Westlake have a higher proportion of buildings with five or more units.
- At 18%, Olmsted Falls has the highest proportion of single family housing units in attached housing of west suburban communities while North Olmsted has 5%.
- Some 35 percent of the City's housing was built after 1969 (2000 US Census). The median age of the City's housing is 38 years, lower than the median age of the housing built in the communities of Brook Park and Fairview Park, yet higher than the median age of housing built in Olmsted Falls, Westlake, and Olmsted Township.
- In a recent field survey of the exterior of the City's housing stock, more than 98% of the City's single-family, two-family and multi-family housing units have been rated as having "standard" or better exterior conditions. Only a small percentage, 1.9%, of the City's housing units were rated as being substandard.

Table 11: Housing Condition 2001

	Number of Units				Percent		
	Total Units	Excellent/ Good	Average	Fair/ Poor/ Unsound	Excellent/ Good	Average	Fair/ Poor/ Unsound
Berea	5,916	769	4,971	176	13.0%	84.0%	3.0%
Brook Park	7,406	753	6,536	117	10.2%	88.3%	1.6%
Fairview Park	6,304	1,559	4,486	259	24.7%	71.2%	4.1%
North Olmsted	11,811	1,564	10,027	220	13.2%	84.9%	1.9%
Olmsted Falls	3,074	951	2,016	107	30.9%	65.6%	3.5%
Olmsted Township	2,504	436	1,952	116	17.4%	78.0%	4.6%
Rocky River	7,838	4,482	3,253	103	57.2%	41.5%	1.3%
Westlake	10,812	5,916	4,707	189	54.7%	43.5%	1.7%
Cuyahoga County	428,516	94,197	266,460	67,859	22.0%	62.2%	15.8%

Social Indicators 2003-2004 Report, Center for Community Solutions and United Way (based on County Auditor data).

3. Housing Value and Rent

- The median home value in North Olmsted was \$142,300 in 2000, 25% higher than the median value in Cuyahoga County overall. The City's housing value was similar to Olmsted Falls, higher than Fairview Park and North Ridgeville, but lower than Olmsted Township and Westlake.
- When adjusted for constant dollars, the median home value in North Olmsted increased by 14% between 1990 and 2000, slightly below the increase in the median value of housing experienced by Cuyahoga County between 1990 to 2000 (21%). The City's median housing value increase was comparable to the trend experienced by the communities of Fairview Park and Rocky River.
- The median housing value for the selected area varied widely amongst the communities with a range of nearly \$100,000 in difference.

4. Home Sales and Appreciation

- The average sale price for a home in North Olmsted was 13% higher than the average sale price for a home in Cuyahoga County, yet it was about 12% lower than the average sale price for a home in the surrounding communities.
- North Olmsted had the lowest increase in average sale price of all of the neighboring communities.
- In 2001, the highest average home sales prices (for a single family home) were in the cities of Westlake and Rocky River. Of the eight communities compared, North Olmsted ranked 5th in highest average single-family home sale price.

Table 12: Median Housing Value

	1990 (\$)	2000 (\$)	% Change
Berea	74,600	118,600	59.0%
Brook Park	71,500	112,400	57.2%
Fairview Park	90,100	136,000	50.9%
North Olmsted	94,700	142,300	50.3%
North Ridgeville	78,400	129,500	65.2%
Olmsted Falls	92,400	142,200	53.9%
Olmsted Township	89,800	152,600	69.9%
Rocky River	123,700	188,700	52.5%
Westlake	133,400	201,000	50.7%

Housing Analysis

1. Housing Affordability

The Cleveland region provides a relatively affordable housing environment when compared to other major cities. Within the western suburbs, the City of North Olmsted's affordability level is in the middle range. The City's affordability level is generally higher than the communities of Westlake, Olmsted Falls, and Rocky River but lower than the communities Brook Park and Fairview Park. Affordability levels are based on a comparison of median family income to the payment amount needed to afford the median valued house in the community.

2. Housing Market Niche Analysis

When the City's housing is analyzed using a technique that attempts to assess market niches that are 'under' or 'over' supplied, the lower and higher income housing is found to have shortages while the mid-range of housing is somewhat oversupplied. The analysis found that households with incomes below \$30,000 and those households with incomes in excess of \$60,000 annual income were the markets in North Olmsted that could be considered underserved. While those with higher incomes living in smaller or more moderate valued housing could remain in those units, the analysis could be interpreted to demonstrate a need to provide higher end "move up" housing as way of keeping residents in the community.

Housing Initiatives

Fair Housing

In 1996, the City established a Fair Housing Code by ordinance to provide for fair housing throughout the community and to ensure that all persons have full and equal opportunity to consider all available housing options. The Fair Housing Code was revised in 1998 in order to achieve "substantial equivalency" with federal regulations described in the 1968 Civil Rights Act. The Code describes the City's protected classes, so that all residents have access to housing without being discriminated against on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, ancestry, familial status, age, sexual orientation, national origin, or handicap. North Olmsted is one of very few communities in Cuyahoga County that have achieved substantial equivalency. As a result, a variety of services and funding sources are available to the City through HUD for its fair housing efforts.

The Fair Housing Code established a Fair Housing Review Board for the purpose of administering the code and reviewing cases of fair housing non-compliance. Furthermore, the Board has been active in promoting fair housing awareness by organizing workshops and events related to predatory lending and landlord-tenant issues.

Fair housing is linked to community development, particularly the Community Development Block Grant program run by HUD through the Cuyahoga County Department of Development. In addition to offering programs related to fair housing and anti-predatory lending, the County requires municipalities to provide evidence of fair housing ordinances and awareness activities in all grant applications.

Real Property Maintenance

Quality housing standards are becoming increasingly important for aging cities. The movement of populations outward from center cities has resulted in a highly competitive housing market. For older and inner ring suburbs, housing standards must be maintained to retain existing residents and continually attract new ones. These standards must be applied to not only individual housing units, but all residential neighborhoods which together make up the fabric of the community.

With this in mind, the City of North Olmsted recognizes the need to maintain residential as well as commercial properties for the physical and economic well being of the community. The City recognizes that in order to accomplish this goal successfully, it needs to expand enforcement

activities in the Building Department and expand its residential maintenance code. Therefore, the City's property maintenance requirements and related codes are currently being reviewed to ensure they are meeting the City's housing goals. If deficiencies are noted or a change in direction is appropriate, changes will be recommended. Issues regarding staffing needs and administrative costs will also be considered.



The City is taking a more proactive stance with property maintenance and related code enforcement in order to preserve the high quality and attractiveness of the community's neighborhoods.

Exterior Maintenance Grant Program

The average age of the housing stock in North Olmsted is 41 years. Forty percent of North Olmsted homes were built prior to 1960. Homes of this age have growing needs for repair and maintenance. Senior citizens on fixed incomes and young families with entry level incomes occupy many of the aging homes.

Through grant funding from HUD through the Cuyahoga County Department of Development, the City of North Olmsted created an Exterior Maintenance Program in 2004 for homeowners in North Olmsted who have low to moderate income and have code violations or need exterior maintenance to avoid code violations. Residents who live in one of the County designated Improvement Target Areas are given priority, if their projects meet all other program guidelines. In 2005, the City was again successful in receiving grant funding to operate this program.

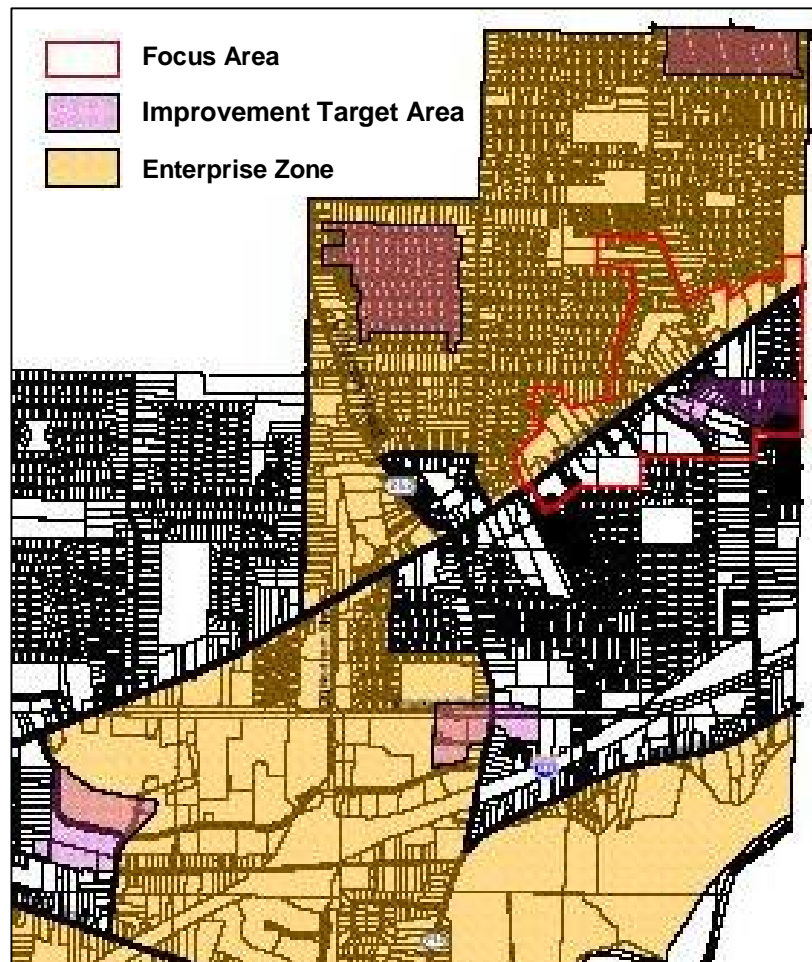
Residential Improvement Target Areas

An Improvement Target Area (ITA) is an area designated by Cuyahoga County as having evidence of or the potential for deterioration or other blighting influences.

In 2004, the County identified five residential ITAs in the City of North Olmsted as shown in the map on the right. All five areas are in the older, eastern half of the community. Three of the ITAs are single family neighborhoods, while the remaining two are multiple family residential areas. ITA designations are reviewed annually by the County.

Improvement Target Areas are prioritized for grants or other funding sources geared towards infrastructure and real property improvements. For example, the City's Exterior Maintenance Program gives preference to qualified projects within ITAs.

Also, the City has been successful in receiving Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for street and drainage improvement projects within residential ITAs in the past.



Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program

The Building Department and the Department of Human Resources continually identify property owners who are in need of this type of assistance and who possibly qualify for this program. The City of North Olmsted responds to the County's request for code citation, inspection, counseling, and other services when needed and available. The City and the County have always prided themselves on the successful and positive partnership formed through the implementation of this program in our community.

Home Improvement Loan Interest Subsidy Program

This program allows qualifying residents to obtain low interest loans for the purpose of rehabilitating, remodeling or otherwise improving single or two-family dwelling units, including residential condominium units within the City of North Olmsted. This program, which was passed by City Council in 1992 (Ordinance No. 92-52), replaced the City's Link Deposit Program, which had restricted homeowners to receiving home improvement loans only from financial institutions which the City had previously been doing its banking.

Community Reinvestment Area Program

This program provides tax exemptions for improvements to residential real property throughout the City. This act, which was passed by City Council in 1992, gives tax exemptions for 10 years for any improvements to dwellings containing not more than two family units provided that the cost of remodeling is at least \$2,500. For residential dwellings containing more than two family units where the cost of remodeling is at least \$5,000, the tax exemptions on the improvements is to last for twelve years.

Group Homes for the Disabled

The City of North Olmsted has always been responsive to the needs of the disabled. For many years, the Westhaven Foundation for the Retarded has operated two group homes for the mentally retarded in our community. This success has been followed by other providers creating group homes in North Olmsted for special needs populations. The City continues to provide assistance upon request – these include Building Department services, social/human services from the Department of Human Resources, and transportation from the North Olmsted Commission On Paratransit, Inc.

Volunteer Home Chore/Fix Up Program

The Department of Human Resources has developed a community service program whereby volunteers, usually through group affiliation, provide donated labor and supplies to accomplish home chores for low and moderate income residents. These efforts have included the painting of the exterior residential structures, landscaping, leaf and snow removal, window repair, installation of A.D.A. compliance devices, and roof repair. The majority of the low and moderate income recipients of this service are identified through the Building Department code enforcement process.

Policies & Recommendations

Maintain Housing Stock

- 3.1. Prioritize funding and capital improvements in residential Improvement Target Areas (ITA) and other neighborhoods that are threatened by physical decline.
- 3.2. Promote City and County programs that offer funding and incentives for home improvements including low interest loans, the Community Reinvestment Area (CRA) program, and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) programs through HUD.
- 3.3. Promote home maintenance workshops for residents through community groups or neighborhood associations.
- 3.4. Create a publication for residents to use as a guide for home improvements and property maintenance regulations.

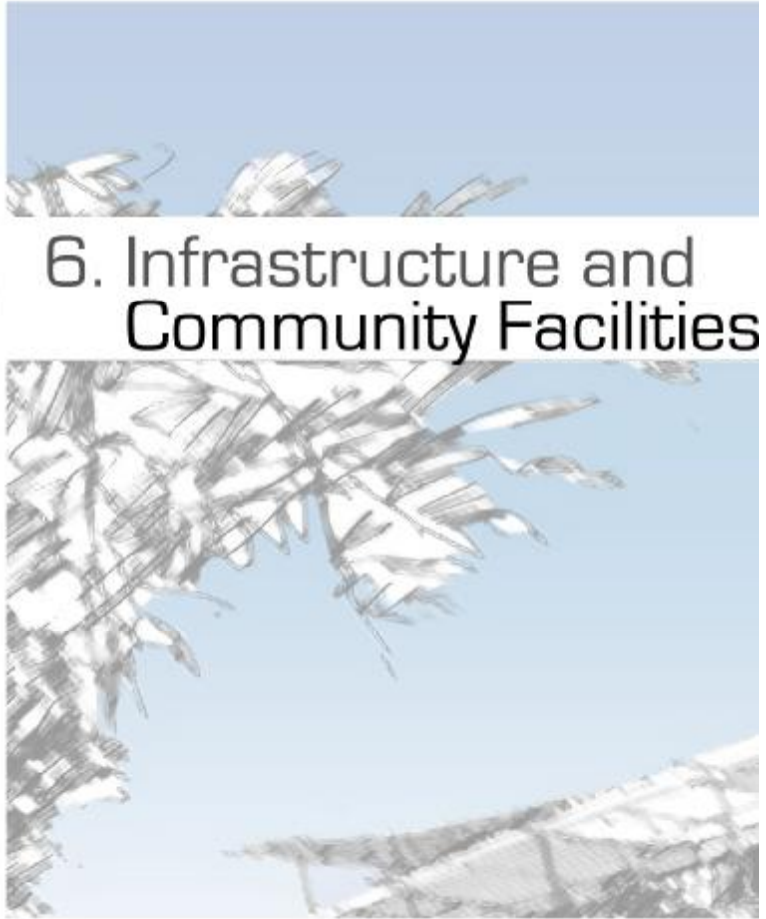
Buffering

- 3.5. Create specific standards governing the height of perimeter screens, fences, walls, landscaped mounds, etc., proposed to be used to screen commercial uses that abut residential zoning districts.
- 3.6. Develop minimum opacity standards for screening materials and a maximum planting distance between trees, shrubs and other natural landscaping materials that serve as screening.
- 3.7. Improve the appearance of sound barriers where Interstate 480 abuts existing residential neighborhoods through the use of landscaping and regular maintenance to remove graffiti.

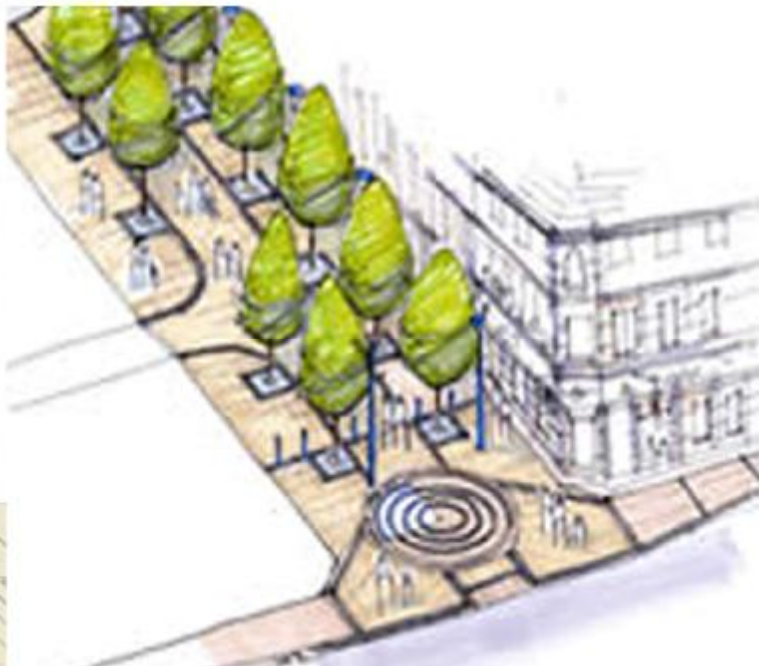
Senior Housing

- 3.8. Identify and promote parcels as possible sites for new construction for senior housing.
- 3.9. Locate senior housing that is convenient to retail, medical, personal services, and educational, cultural and community facilities.
- 3.10. Promote suitable amenities to create a quality living environment in senior housing.

CITY OF NORTH OLMS TED master plan



6. Infrastructure and Community Facilities



Introduction

A city's public facilities, services, and infrastructure (such as municipal buildings, safety services, waste collection, road maintenance, and utilities) exist to support the basic needs of the community – both businesses and residents. The purpose of this chapter is to review North Olmsted's facilities and infrastructure and generally identify the level of improvements/expansion that may be appropriate to meet the current and projected needs of the community. More specifically this chapter will generally identify:

- The type and magnitude of new facilities/services, or improvements to existing facilities/services that may be needed; and
- The possible locations for such improvements, if applicable.

These evaluations are an important component of the Master Plan since the resulting recommendations can influence the City's land use pattern and, otherwise, assist in implementing the Plan's policies and strategies. It is also important that the City maintain a high standard of community facilities and services in order to sustain the "quality of life" that is expected for existing and new residents, businesses, and visitors.

The background information and recommendations in this section have been compiled from previous reports prepared for or by the City, meetings with representatives from the City administration, and discussions with the Master Plan Steering Committee. It is recognized, however, that the suggestions and recommendations in this plan do not, and should not, substitute for more detailed evaluations and feasibility studies that may need to be undertaken by each department before specific recommendations are implemented.

Goal and Objectives

Expand and improve infrastructure and public facilities, emphasizing those areas that will enhance quality of life for City residents.

- a. Assess infrastructure and public facilities with regard to adequacy and condition and determine needs for expansion or major renovation.
- b. Promote the safe and efficient movement of traffic and the reduction of existing traffic congestion.
- c. Continue to promote alternative transportation options such as public transit, bicycle, walking and multi-use paths.
- d. Expand and improve facilities for meeting, recreation and education.
- e. Ensure pedestrian and public transportation accessibility to commercial and high density residential areas.
- f. Explore creative financing methods for infrastructure improvements.

General Comments

As with many of the older suburban communities in northeast Ohio, North Olmsted experienced most of its development at one time – during the 1950's and 1960's. Currently, North Olmsted is a densely-settled community with more than 34,000 people. As a result, the infrastructure and community facilities that were constructed to support this development are reaching their

“life expectancy” at about the same time. Therefore, there is now a heavy demand being placed on North Olmsted’s infrastructure - roads, sewer, and water distribution facilities. The age of water and sewer facilities in the northern half of the City, the widespread proliferation of impervious surfaces and the impact that this has on the volume and rate of flow of storm water entering the City’s collection sewers, and the high levels of traffic on the community’s road system are all issues that the City must monitor and address.

The following sections address the conditions of the City’s infrastructure and community facilities. Specific discussion of the City’s parks and recreational facilities is included in the next chapter, *Open Space & Recreation*.

Community Facilities

Municipal Complex

City Hall is located in the center of the City near the intersections of Lorain and Dover Center Roads. City Hall includes most of the City’s administrative functions - mayor’s office, council offices and chamber, building, commissions/civil service, data processing, engineering, finance, human resources, public services, and planning services.

Since the building was constructed no significant additions or expansions have been undertaken. Because of overcrowding, the City’s Law Department was moved to the Community Building on Lorain Road. While no definitive programming or future needs study has been completed in the past, it is generally believed that significant improvements to City Hall are needed. As a minimum, parking lot improvements are required and the building entrance needs to be modified to comply with ADA requirements. The City is currently underway planning for the City Hall front entrance improvements and the building’s general functional layout. Adjacent to City Hall is the now vacant NOMB bus garage. This space provides the City with new opportunities to examine space usage.

Town Hall, located to the north of City Hall, is the former center of the City’s government and has housed various governmental functions including the City’s food cupboard, offices for the North Olmsted Commission On Paratransit (NOCOP) operations, and the Landmarks Commission. The building is also used for meeting space for various City and community organizations. Old Town Hall is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Currently the City has one **police station** which is located as part of the municipal complex at the intersection of Dover and Lorain Roads. At this time, this one police station is and will be adequate to meet future security needs of North Olmsted.



Town Hall is the City’s former seat of government.

Fire Department

The Fire Department operates out of two stations, one (Station #1) on the east side of the City and the other (Station #2) on the west end. Station #1 was built in 1994. Station #2 is more than 50 years old and is currently being replaced. For this replacement, a bond levy was approved in November 2004. This multi-use building (approximately 12,000 square feet) is planned to include a training center and four bays.



Existing Fire Station #2 on Lorain Road no longer meets the needs of the community.

Senior Center & Community Cabin

The North Olmsted Senior Center is located at North Olmsted Park. This facility is in constant use – close to 600 seniors are served per week. Due to a lack of available space, many senior programs have been expanded into the adjacent Community Cabin. Furthermore, since the senior population is expected to increase in the future (as a percent of the total population) the City is likely to see continued interest and demand for senior services and programs. A new, larger senior center is needed to accommodate growth. It could either be an expansion of the current facility or a new facility on an alternate site.

Library



The new North Olmsted Branch Library opened its doors on April 18, 2004.

North Olmsted is served by the North Olmsted Branch of the Cuyahoga County Library system. The library facility relocated in 2004 from a building on Butternut Ridge Road to a newly constructed library building built to contemporary standards. The new library is located on Lorain Road, contiguous to the municipal complex. The old library building was purchased by the North Olmsted City Schools and will be used by the Board of Education as administrative offices.

Infrastructure

Roadway Network

Similar to most communities, the basic road pattern – road locations, the general hierarchy of streets, street widths, traffic controls – was established when the land was initially developed in the City. At the time of construction the roads were designed based on the level of traffic that was anticipated at the time of development. Over time two factors can occur that influence the existing road system by causing an increase in traffic volumes or altering traffic patterns – new highways/roads are developed and development patterns change or intensify. Both have occurred in North Olmsted. For example, I-480 was constructed with three interchanges (Great Northern Boulevard, Stearns Road, and Lorain Road just west of the City limits) influencing traffic volumes and patterns in North Olmsted. Within the next few years the Crocker-Stearns connector will be completed from I-480 north into Westlake. When completed, it is estimated that 30,000 vehicles per day will use this route. In addition, commercial development has increased, perhaps beyond the levels initially anticipated.

Table 13: Daily Traffic Volumes at Selected Locations

Location	1992 Traffic Count	2000 Traffic Count	Average Annual % Change
State Route 10 (Lorain Road) at			
Western corporate line	7,390	7,440	.09
Barton Road	13,200	19,210	3.9
Elmhurst Dr.	16,120		
Mackenzie Rd.	21,230		
Porter Rd.	25,650	18,290	-3.6
Dover Center Rd.	30,050	26,810	-1.4
SR 17 (Brookpark Rd.)	23,960	20,710	-1.7
SR 252 (Great Northern Blvd.)	23,900	22,050	-1.0
Eastern corporate line	18,960	20,840	1.1
State Route 17 (Brookpark Road) at			
SR 10 (Lorain Rd.)	11,510	18,040	4.5
SR 252 (Great Northern Blvd.)	13,190	17,490	3.1
Entrance to Shopping Center	14,610		
Columbia Rd.	15,120		
Clague Rd.	12,100	10,720	-1.4
Eastern corporate line	12,100	10,720	-1.4
State Route 252 (Great Northern Blvd/ Columbia Road) at			
Southern corporate line	16,130	16,920	.6
Butternut Ridge Rd.	16,650		
I-480	36,010	24,440	4
Entrances to Great Northern (mall)	37,380		
SR 17 (Brookpark Rd.)	18,000	17,950	-.04
Lorain Road, entering Columbia Rd.	11,980	11,840	-.2
Northern corporate line	11,980	11,840	-.2

Note: The traffic volumes on I-480 within North Olmsted range from 45,000 to 75,000 trips per day.
Source: Ohio Department Of Transportation: Traffic Survey Report.

The responsibility for road and bridge construction and maintenance is shared. Any structure over twenty feet in clear span parallel to the roadway is maintained by the County or the State. The smaller bridges/culverts are maintained by the City. North Olmsted also has responsibility for maintaining all non-major roads in the City. All major arteries are maintained by the City in cooperation with Cuyahoga County or the State of Ohio. The City's Service Department conducts an annual inventory of the condition of its roads.

Functional Classification

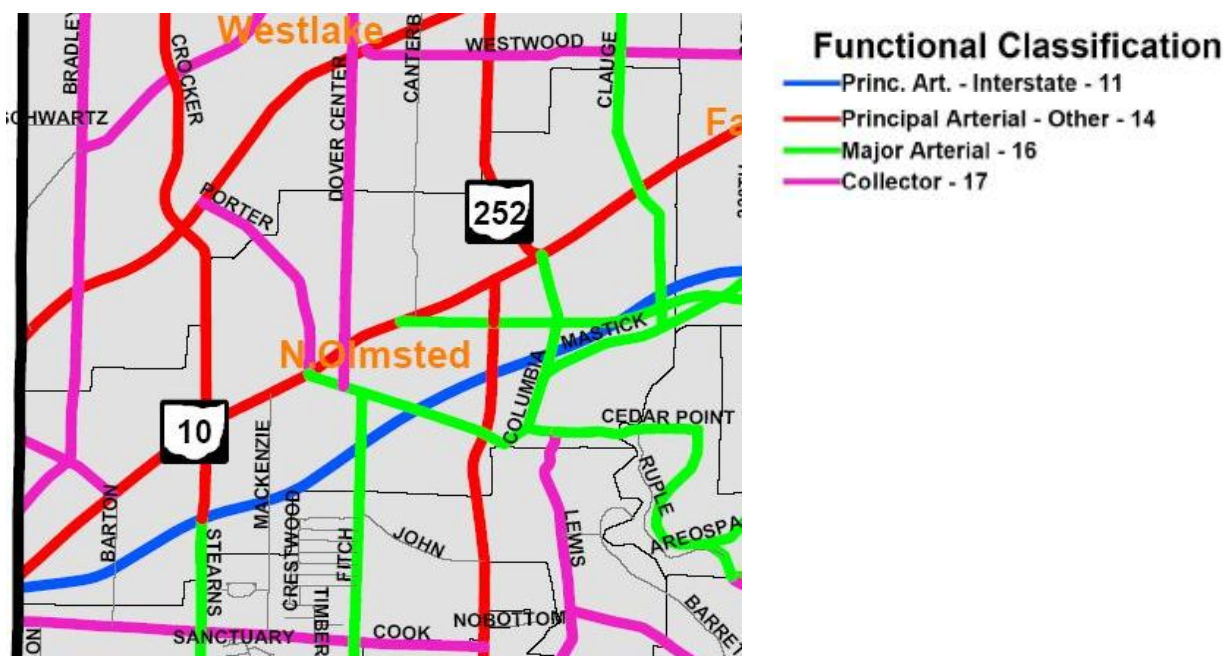
Functional classification is the grouping of roads, streets, and highways in a hierarchy based on the type of highway service they provide. Roads have two main functions: to provide traffic mobility or land access. Functional classification is determined by ranking the proportion of each of these two functions the road serves. Roads that function primarily to move traffic are arterials while roads that provide access to particular land uses are local roads.

Principal arterials (interstate and other) serve statewide or interstate travel as well as major activity centers and high volume corridors. This road classification provides an integrated network of continuous routes serving major population centers.

Major arterials also connect cities and supplement the highway system. Major arterials have fairly high travel speeds and service traffic volume greater than collectors.

Collectors provide service to a more limited area, and they have more moderate travel speeds and volumes than arterials. Collectors are spaced to collect traffic from local roads and bring developed areas within range of access. Collectors serve city and regional destinations not served by arterials.

Local roads provide access to adjacent land uses and serve travel over short distances at relatively slow speeds. Local roads are not carriers of through traffic; instead, they provide access to other local streets and collectors.



The thoroughfare map shows the functional classifications of North Olmsted's roadway system. These classifications should be considered when considering development or prioritizing roadway improvements. Those roads not shown on the map should be considered local roads.

Access Management

Access management is a tool used to balance the competing demands on a transportation system for traffic mobility and land access. In other words, it is the planning and implementation of transportation and land use strategies that control the flow of traffic between roads and the land they serve. Access management strategies include standards for the frequency, location, and design of driveways, intersections, signals, medians, turn lanes, and other features based upon the functional classification of the roadway. As access management involves elements of both land use and transportation, it requires cooperation within and across government agencies responsible for transportation and development decisions.

In order to promote the safety and functionality of state thoroughfares, ODOT developed the *State Highway Access Management Manual*. While the principles in the manual are aimed at managing access to and from state highways, they can and should be adapted to benefit locally maintained roads as well. In order to more effectively manage access, it is recommended that the City consider other ways including zoning and subdivision regulations.

Zoning regulations can be created that support access management in the City. Such regulations can be applied through direct inclusion in the zoning code or by establishing corridor overlay zones, which add special requirements to an existing zoning district while retaining other requirements of the underlying zone.

Minimum setback standards should ensure that future right-of-way requirements of the roadway are met. Other zoning recommendations are the implementation of cluster zoning in high traffic corridors and the implementation of planned districts in commercial areas to promote a mix of uses with shared use driveways.

Subdivision regulations may also be modified to support access management. Subdivision regulations should require congestion prevention and capacity preservation review as part of the site plan review process for major subdivisions. Furthermore, a traffic impact study should be required when a land development or change in use is expected to generate significant traffic, might impact an already congested or high-accident location, and/or has specific site access and safety issues as determined by the City. The study should be conducted by a traffic engineer based on site-specific information. Some components of the study include a description of the proposed land use and impacted study area, an existing conditions analysis, identification of system deficiencies, description of trip generation and distribution, projection of future traffic, and a description of the necessary system improvements.

Public Transportation

The North Olmsted Commission On Paratransit (NOCOP) provides ten (10) community circulator vehicles that offer subsidized transit service to the disabled and elderly in North Olmsted, Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township. This successful service has been the model for other such transportation agencies in the greater Cleveland area. There is a current plan to consolidate the dispatch operations of the various paratransit providers in the region in order to provide more efficient service. This group of providers has formed the FIRST Consortium, and North Olmsted has been selected as the hub for its dispatch activities. The office will be located

at the City's Butternut Ridge property, known as the cottage, near I-480. It is intended that NOCOP's dispatch will also relocate to the cottage.

Historically, the North Olmsted Municipal Bus Line (NOMBL) provided bus transit services in the City under an operating agreement with the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (RTA). In 2005, the operating agreement was not renewed, and NOMBL was acquired by RTA. Presently the bus line continues to provide service to five key bus routes in the southwest suburbs. The five primary bus services are identified in the following map.



There is a 310-car park-n-ride facility at the intersection of I-480 and Great Northern Boulevard providing access to a downtown express route bus. This is one of the most utilized park-n-ride lots in the state. As a result of this success, a significant addition has been considered at this location.

Utilities

The City of North Olmsted has a permanent contract with the City of Cleveland for its **water** supply provided by the Division of Water. All areas of North Olmsted are connected to the main water supply system. To meet the needs of this area, the existing water tower will need to be increased in height or a new water tower needs to be constructed in Olmsted Township.

The City's **wastewater system** consists of a treatment plant, four pumping stations, and nearly 100 miles of sanitary sewer pipe. North Olmsted also provides wastewater treatment services to portions of Fairview Park and Olmsted Township.

Currently, the City is considering extending sewer service to the industrial zoned land in Olmsted Township that is part of a Joint Economic Development District (JEDD) between Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township. In return for this extension, North Olmsted would receive tap-in fees from new development as it occurs.

A critical issue that continues to face the City of North Olmsted is the infiltration and inflow of storm water into the City's wastewater treatment system causing reduced capacity for the system overall. Such storm water infiltration has contributed to basement flooding, surface flooding, and overflows at sewer treatment plant.

Storm water management, which includes addressing street, stream, and basement flooding problems, is also a major concern within North Olmsted. Significant capital improvements will likely be required to assure acceptable storm water management.

Summary of Needs

Specific policies and implementation recommendations related to community facilities are described below in the policy and recommendations section. Based on the above evaluations, several themes have emerged that should influence the City's more detailed community facilities planning:

1. Civic facilities should continue to be concentrated in and around the "triangle" bounded by Lorain Road, Butternut Ridge Road, and Dover Center Road.
2. The City should continue to evaluate facilities, programs and services to meet the needs of the senior population.
3. Since the community is "fully" developed, the City should seize opportunities wherever possible and feasible (i.e. zoning, land acquisition if sites become available, easements, cooperation agreements, etc.) to expand parks and open space and create pedestrian and bicycle connections.
4. Since North Olmsted is substantially developed and therefore no significant increases in tax revenue will result from new development, the City should continuously explore budget alternatives/funding to increase the funding that is devoted for infrastructure improvements and replacement.
5. The City should continue to monitor changing traffic patterns and changing traffic volume and adjust road geometry and traffic control measures accordingly. Furthermore, to maintain the carrying capacity and level of services on existing roads, the City should continue to support:
 - Limited access roads where they currently exist (i.e. Brookpark Road);
 - Consolidation of existing drives along major arteries wherever possible; and
 - Traffic calming measures when appropriate to reduce high volumes and cut-through traffic in residential areas.

Policies and Recommendations

Administration

- 4.1. Develop each year a five-year Capital Improvements Program (CIP) that reflects the latest information from the City's annual assessment and that determines priorities for funding improvements to the City's public facilities and infrastructure. As part of the CIP process, establish a Capital Improvements Budget that establishes what must be improved for the upcoming fiscal year.
- 4.2. Involve the Planning Commission, as well as all City department heads in the development of a capital needs list.
- 4.3. Undertake a community facilities master planning effort examining the City's needs and identifying financing mechanisms. Involve the school system, Chamber of Commerce, and community organizations in future planning efforts.
- 4.4. Assess existing vacant lands or structures within the City for their potential as future community facility sites.
- 4.5. Maintain current high levels of service to the population appropriate with available revenues and other fiscal responsibilities.
- 4.6. Maintain the City's commercial tax base to fund services.
- 4.7. Seek federal and state funding sources to assist in maintaining the infrastructure and community facilities. Examples could include State Issue 2, CDBG, and EPA funding.
- 4.8. When necessary, increase user fees to pay for any increased costs for services and system maintenance.

Transportation

- 4.9. Encourage development patterns that support transit service.
- 4.10. Maintain an appropriate balance between public and private sector responsibilities for roadway improvements.
- 4.11. Ensure that design and capacity standards for roadways are appropriately related to roadway function and classification.
- 4.12. Provide a roadway network with multiple connections between routes and uses.
- 4.13. Encourage connections and internal cross-access easements between retail/commercial developments to minimize traffic on the public street system.
- 4.14. Discourage access to non-residential development on local streets through residential areas.
- 4.15. Discourage primary access to higher intensity development through lower intensity development.
- 4.16. Encourage the construction of bikeways wherever feasible in the City and especially where linkages can be developed between existing bikeways and places of public accommodation, including large shopping centers, public parks and playgrounds, schools and other community facilities.
- 4.17. Improve pedestrian and bikeway safety by installing crosswalks and self-actuated pedestrian walk signals at major traffic intersections such as Great Northern Boulevard, Brookpark Road, Columbia Road and Mastick Road.
- 4.18. Support the continuation of Brookpark Road as a limited access highway that would require City and State approval for the issuance of additional curb cuts.
- 4.19. Cooperate with the Ohio Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration in their efforts to develop an Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) in

order to coordinate the City's traffic control systems with regional systems in an effort to adjust traffic flow during accidents, route closures or other related incidents.

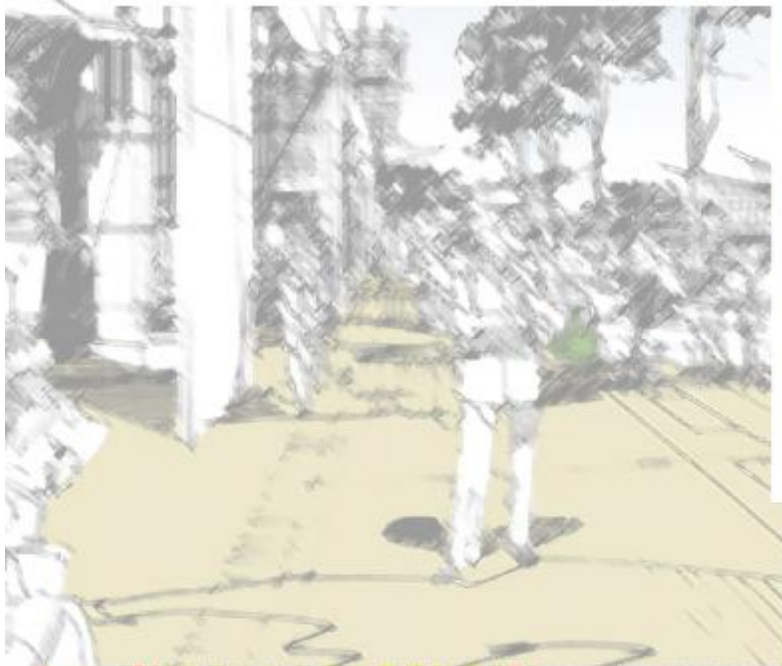
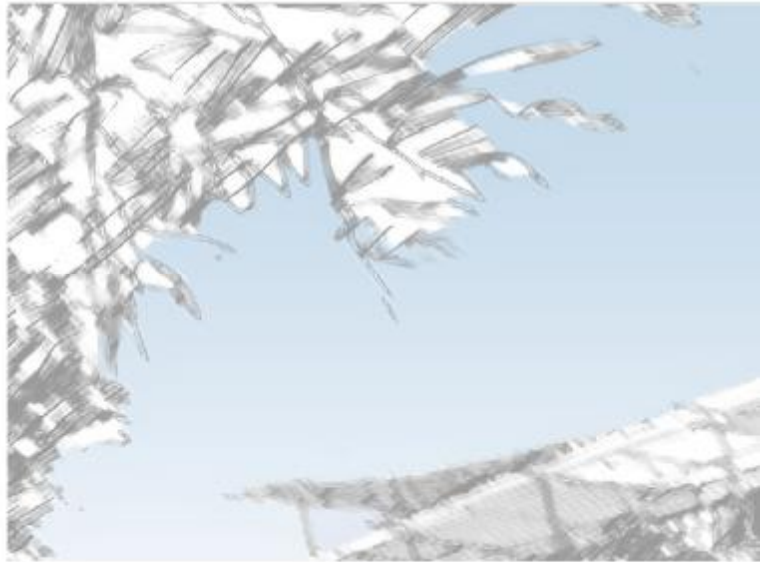
Utilities

- 4.20. Implement sanitary sewer extensions to service areas consistent with the recommendations of the Northeast Ohio Area Coordinating Agency (NOACA) in order to provide adequate sanitary sewer service for the entire service area.
- 4.21. Provide for the safe and efficient collection of stormwater runoff generated by development. Continue to enforce state and federal standards and update City regulations as necessary.
- 4.22. Site future stormwater retention and detention basins to blend with surrounding development and be included as an attractive amenity where possible.

CITY OF NORTH OLMSTED master plan



7. Open Space + Recreation



Introduction

Parks are a valuable community resource. Many of their benefits are straightforward. They provide opportunities for leisure and recreation, add to the aesthetic value of the community, and provide a connection to the natural environment. However, some of their benefits are less obvious, but equally as valuable to the community.

Community Revitalization

Parks that serve as central walking or meeting places can help revive deteriorating or threatened commercial areas. As parks draw community residents, the creative combination of open spaces into business districts can lure shoppers and investment. Parks create a destination, and give businesses the opportunity to capitalize on increased pedestrian activity. Open space can also be used to create linkages between residential areas and business districts.

Parks can have similar positive impacts on distressed residential areas. The cooperation of community officials, organizations, and residents on a park project can help turn around an area through investment and encouraging property owners to make repairs and renovations.

Parks do not automatically guarantee the successful revitalization of an area, but they are one available tool. The following are key elements to consider when using parks and open space as a means of revitalization:

- **Physical:** A park should be a community destination or landmark and an element of an open space route connecting different areas of the community.
- **Political:** A park should create neighborhood interaction and provide the opportunity for community cooperation.
- **Economic:** A park should have a distinctive identity that adds to the character of a commercial or residential area, encouraging both business and homeowner investment.
- **Context:** The physical, political, and economic environment must be ripe in the community in order to take advantage of the opportunity parks provide.



Open space areas can be incorporated into mixed use development or redevelopment to create a more vibrant and attractive destination.

Community Engagement

Parks can create a sense of community and improve the quality of life of its residents. They provide opportunities for residents to interact with each other and frequently provide physical links such as walking or bike paths between neighborhoods. Oftentimes, major transportation routes serve to divide a community and its neighborhoods. Open space can be used to restore these connections. Additionally, developing parks can be a community-wide process. This process should be designed to encourage continued and ongoing public participation.



Parks can promote connectivity within the community.

Economic Development

Parks and open space not only contribute to the aesthetic and environmental qualities of a community, but also to its economic health. Historically, this type of land use has not been seen as an economically viable resource. This idea is beginning to change as communities learn the economic benefits of parks.

A strong relationship exists between property values and open space. When park access is located within close proximity to a residential area, a buyer will spend more for the real estate in this area than in an area that does not have access. This amenity creates higher property values which in turn improves the real estate tax base in the community. The taxes paid contribute to the support of local schools and add to the overall quality of life in a community.

A community's quality of life is an extremely important aspect for many young professionals, families, and retirees when considering locating in an area. These groups identify recreational opportunities and open space as a major factor that defines the quality of life. Additionally, the attraction of professionals to an area can have a direct connection to economic development in a community. Businesses are more willing to locate in an area where they know professionals are willing to move.

Additionally, many of the most popular tourist destinations are attractions that are operated by park and recreation agencies such as parks, historical sites, athletic events, and festivals. Surrounding retail and commercial establishments benefit financially from being located in close proximity to these attractions.

Goal and Objectives

Preserve green space and enhance recreational opportunities for current and future residents.

- a. Improve the coordination of maintenance for parks and recreation facilities.
- b. Develop recreation programs appropriate for all segments of the community.
- c. Continue public-private partnerships in the provision of recreational opportunities.
- d. Maintain quality open spaces accessible to all residents.

- e. Update zoning regulations to increase green space in new developments and in redevelopment.
- f. Explore joint efforts with community organizations and surrounding cities to expand recreation opportunities.

Park and Recreation Opportunities

The future land use plan designates about 1,000 acres of land in the City as open space. This category includes the Metroparks, City parks, recreational areas, and sensitive natural areas that should be preserved. While the open space classification is the only land use solely dedicated to parks and green space preservation, this Plan's policies recommend open space set-asides in other land use classifications. For example, the proposed conservation residential district would require that a certain percent of a residential development site be set aside as permanent open space. This land may be left in its natural state or developed into a park. In addition to conservation areas, other residential areas should also have open space requirements.

Recreation Center

The Recreation Center complex on Lorain Road - an important community asset - is about 30 years old. It includes facilities for swimming, tennis, gymnastics, skating, hockey and more. The current facilities are undersized and inadequate compared to the current demand and the type and level of facilities that are offered in "competing" communities. The schools also use the building for some of its activities, further increasing the demand on the already overly utilized facility. While there is community interest in new and expanded facilities, there has not been adequate support to fund them. These funding limitations have caused the focus of investment to be on repairs and replacements rather than adding new facilities or equipment.



In North Olmsted, residents rely primarily on the Recreation Center since there is no significant level of private sector indoor recreational facilities (such as fitness facilities, racquet clubs, YMCA or similar not-for-profit organizations) providing alternative facilities for residents.

Public Parks

The North Olmsted Recreation Department oversees the City's park and recreational facilities and programs. The Department's staff is located at the City's Recreation Center. The Department is also advised by a Recreation Commission. Residents of North Olmsted have access to a wide range of outdoor recreational facilities within the community.

Table 15 identifies the recreational facilities and parks currently available to North Olmsted residents. Of the total acreage, approximately 93 acres are general purpose City parks. In addition, the City owns the Springvale – an 18 hole golf course and party center (119 acres).

The Cleveland Metro Parks has two parks in North Olmsted – Bradley Woods Reservation (340 acres) and the Rocky River Reservation (352 acres) – that are available to North Olmsted residents. The Metro Parks land represents nine percent of the City's land area.

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) has developed a general standard that a community provide between 6.25 and 10.5 acres of park land per thousand residents.¹ With 93 acres in local recreation space, North Olmsted has approximately three acres of local recreational space per 1,000 residents (excluding any school properties that may be available for recreation). When Cleveland Metro Parks land is added, City residents enjoy 23 acres of parkland per 1,000 population – a considerable amount of open space and recreational facilities for the community's residents.



North Olmsted Park



Springvale Golf Course



Metro Parks - Rocky River Reservation

Table 14: Recreational Lands

North Olmsted:

3 acres per 1,000 population (local recreation)

23 acres per 1,000 population (local + regional recreation)

NPRA Standards:

6.25 – 10.5 acres per 1,000 population

¹ Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines, National Recreation Association; Alexandria, VA: 1983. While the newest approach to recreation planning encourages communities to utilize systems planning that incorporates desired "Levels of Service" for their community and (to not rely on acreage standards), this standard still provides a useful guidepost for communities.

Table 15: Park and Recreation Facility Inventory

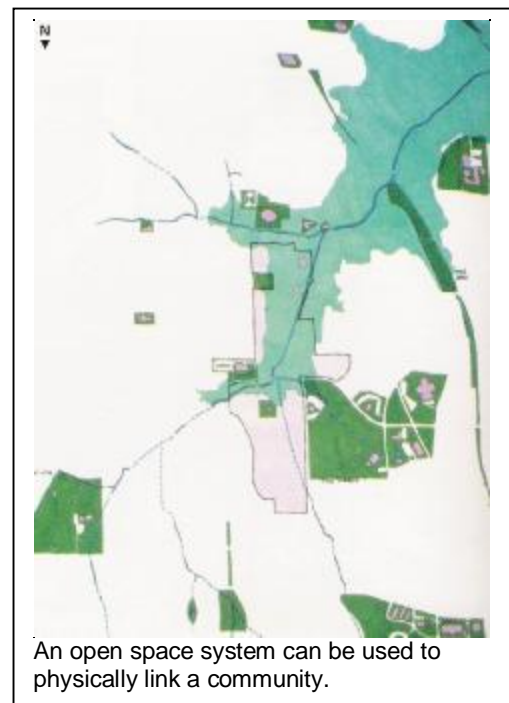
Park	Location	Acreage	Year Improved	Comments
North Olmsted Park	28114 Lorain Road	35	2004 – basketball courts	5 baseball diamonds, 2 sand volleyball courts, basketball courts, horseshoe pits, playgrounds, gazebo and pavilions
North Olmsted Recreation Center	26000 Lorain Road	28	Ongoing maintenance	4 indoor tennis courts, indoor and outdoor pool, ice rink and studio rink, gymnastic facility, multi purpose room; skatepark behind Rec Center for boards and blades
Barton/Bradley Fields	Barton/Bradley Roads	20	2004 – water line and field improvements	Soccer and ball games
Clague Park	Clague Road	10	2005 – walking path installation	2 baseball fields, 2 playgrounds, pavilion
Springvale Golf Course and Ballroom	5871 Canterbury Road	119	2002 – ADA and ballroom improvements, clubhouse, golf course irrigation system, cart path	18-hole, par 70 fairway; 3,000 square foot ballroom available for rent and special events; ballroom dancing lessons and events
Bike Path		N/A		3.98 miles along I-480 and in the Metro Parks
Bradley Woods Reservation	Metro Parks	340		
Rocky River Reservation	Metro Parks	352		

North Olmsted City Schools Land

In addition to the City and regional parks, the North Olmsted City School District also provides the community with public outdoor recreational space. Each elementary school within the City is equipped with playground equipment, although the amount and type of equipment varies by site. When not actively used by students during school hours, these school playground facilities serve as park space for residents of the surrounding neighborhoods.

Community Linkages

Parks and recreation are an important part of creating community linkages. These links may be physical links – connecting neighborhoods, community facilities, business areas, and parkland – or political links – connecting City government, local organizations, school systems, and community residents.



Partnerships

Partnerships can be an extremely valuable resource for park and recreation development in a community. In a partnership, the assets of all parties can be brought to bear on a project, complimenting each other's strengths and offsetting potential liabilities. Public-private partnerships can be used to provide community recreation facilities or create regional trails and greenways systems. Some of the assets of public and private partners are listed below.

Public Assets

- Stable funding
- Organizational infrastructure
- Public legitimacy
- Local users

Private Assets

- Flexible funding
- Organizational flexibility
- Community credibility
- Broad constituency

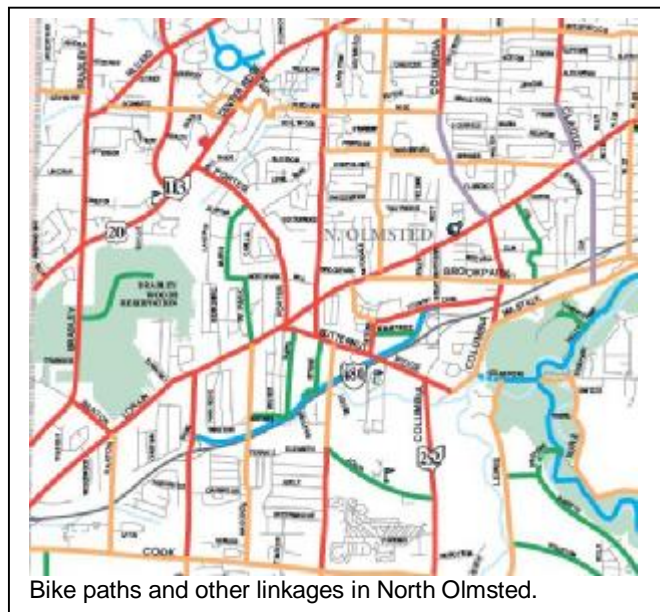
School-Community Cooperation

Parkland owned and operated by local school districts can provide opportunities for all City residents. Schools offer a variety of lands that can be beneficial to all such as playgrounds, park ground, ball fields, and gymnasiums. The increased necessity for these services requires public dollars to be spent to acquire land. Local officials and school board officials can work together to create joint parklands that are accessible to students as well as the general public. By combining resources, schools and the City can reap the benefits of a combined open space area plan and save public dollars.

This type of school and community cooperation can be successful through a variety of methods including the creation of a joint committee that is composed of members from the school board, interested political jurisdictions, and recreation and park authorities or conferences held between political jurisdictions and school officials on policy and administration issues.

Connectivity

Urban development has fragmented open space areas that were once connected. The use of greenways can help to reconnect open spaces in the City and offer benefits to the environment as well as citizens. A number of methods for promoting connectivity exist, including preserving stream corridors, trails, and bike paths. With these linkages, residents are able to hike, walk, or bike along greenways without the threat of automobile traffic. Furthermore, economic development potential is increased by attracting employers and employees to an area with easily accessible natural areas.



Bike paths and other linkages in North Olmsted.

Funding and Acquisition

The location of parklands is essential in determining if the community's resources meet the need of residents. The acquisition of land prior to full build out ensures the City will have sufficient open space and recreational areas. There are two basic processes for land acquisition and financing: the fee simple method and the less than fee simple method. The fee simple process is the actual payment and acquisition of open space and recreation areas. Fee simple financing may include capital improvement programming (CIP), general fund appropriations, bond issues, bank loans, fees and charges, special taxation, and more.

- **General fund appropriations** means the use of money drawn from one general fund, instead of relying on individual government funds to finance parks.
- **Bond issues** enable communities to purchase land now and share the cost equally over a number of subsequent years.
- **Pay-as-you-go** uses previously collected funds to purchase land.
- **Fees and charges** require the gathering of fees by charging for the exclusive use of or construction of facilities or areas and charging fees to recover the administration, operation, and maintenance costs.
- **Special taxation** uses property taxes to finance the acquisition of open space.
- **Concession arrangements** charges for smaller services provided by park and recreational area, such as equipment and facility rental.
- **Gifts and trusts** acquire land through a private gift, endowment, or trust fund.

The less than simple fee process does not involve the direct purchase or acquisition of land but places limits on land use without taking ownership. Several methods of this process include floodplain/wetland regulation, easements, transfer of development rights, and conservation zoning. Any or all of these methods described above could be explored and used in the acquisition of open space and recreation areas.

Policies & Recommendations

Natural Resource Preservation

- 5.1. Evaluate existing tree preservation standards for effectiveness in protecting wooded areas and achieving sensitive development practices.
- 5.2. Require the use of native tree species and indigenous plant material where new landscaping is required and develop a list of trees not suitable for residential areas or natural areas.
- 5.3. Encourage the use of conservation development so that sites containing wetlands, floodplains or other environmentally sensitive problems are protected from new development.
- 5.4. Enhance open space requirements in the City's zoning code.

Parks and Recreation

- 5.5. Create a Parks and Recreation Master Plan using the Recreation Commission as an advisory group.
- 5.6. Promote increased recreational opportunities in older neighborhoods through the creation of pocket parks. Identify vacant or underutilized parcels that could be converted to parkland.
A pocket park is the smallest park classification and is used to address limited recreational needs. In residential areas and pedestrian shopping districts, a pocket park typically contains a play area as well as a landscaped sitting and/or picnic area. On average, pocket parks are between 2,500 square feet and one acre.
- 5.7. Identify and pursue funding opportunities for park improvements and development.
- 5.8. Actively participate in park and recreation planning processes with the Cleveland Metroparks, especially related to improvements to the Bradley Woods and Rocky River Reservations.
- 5.9. Include recreational facilities as part of the City's capital improvements programming process.
- 5.10. Explore the possibility of establishing a new City park at the location of the former municipal landfill.
- 5.11. Cooperate with surrounding jurisdictions in considering joint park and recreation options.

Linkages

- 5.12. Require appropriate transportation linkages, especially pedestrian and bike paths for all new community parks and facilities.
Ensure existing and future bike and walking paths are well maintained to promote safety and community appeal.
- 5.13. Create a program for methodically retrofitting non-connected facilities and providing the necessary links where they are missing.
- 5.14. Involve other agencies (e.g., schools) in locating safe and logical connections.
- 5.15. Cooperate with Cleveland Metroparks to provide a North Olmsted access point to the Bradley Woods Reservation.

CITY OF NORTH OLMSTED master plan



8. Community Character + Image



Introduction

A community's character is shaped by both physical and intangible elements. Physical elements may include land characteristics, buildings, and roadways while intangible elements may include quality of life and the interaction amongst a community's residents. These elements together help shape the image of the community. The image of a community is not static – it can and will change as a community matures.

Goal and Objectives

Create a distinct, high quality visual environment in all areas of the community.

- a. Create a distinctive image or theme for development in the City through design guidelines and regulations.
- b. Encourage high quality development through improved communication and cooperation with the development community.
- c. Improve the overall aesthetic appearance of commercial areas and corridors.
- d. Ensure the integrity of existing residential neighborhoods and future residential developments.
- e. Ensure the City leads by example in creating a preferred community image.
- f. Encourage resident input through regular open forum meetings.

Physical Character

Components

When people think of the character or image of the city, they often think of physical elements such as their neighborhood, a shopping plaza, a civic building, or a particular street. In *The Image of the City*, author Kevin Lynch created the language of urban form, which is how we define the physical environment of the City. Since 1960, these commonly understood terms have been used to describe the physical elements of urban places.

- **Paths:** are the familiar routes and channels along which an observer moves including streets, walkways, transit lines, railroads, etc.
Examples in North Olmsted: City streets, sidewalks, bike paths.
- **Districts:** are areas with perceived internal homogeneity in which an observer mentally enters “inside of,” and which are recognizable as having some common identifying character. A city is composed of component neighborhoods or districts.
Examples in North Olmsted: Butternut Ridge Historic District, mall area, residential neighborhoods.
- **Edges:** are dividing lines between districts. They are boundaries between two areas, or linear breaks in continuity such as edges of development or walls. When two districts are joined at one edge they form a seam.
Examples in North Olmsted: Interstate 480, municipal boundaries.
- **Landmarks:** are points of reference. They are usually a rather simply defined and prominent physical object such as a building, sign, store, or natural feature.

Landmarks are an important element of urban form because they help people to orient themselves in the community and help identify an area.

Examples in North Olmsted: The water tower, North Olmsted Branch Library, the Westbury.

- **Nodes:** are centers of activity and the strategic spots in a city into which an observer can enter. They may be primary junctions, places of a break in transportation, a crossing or convergence of paths. Or the nodes may be simply concentrations, as a street-corner hangout or an enclosed square. A node is distinguished from a landmark by virtue of its active function. Where a landmark is a distinct visual object, a node is a distinct hub of activity.

Examples in North Olmsted: Westfield Shoppingtown Great Northern, the “Golden Triangle,” Clague Road-Lorain Road intersection.

Key Issues

Community character and image was a recurring theme in discussions with the Steering Committee and in comments made by interview and focus group participants. Most often, these comments related to the physical environment of the City. The following significant issues were identified:

- **Past Practices:** The progression of development over time can be seen in the character of the community - from the small lots and tighter street pattern in the east end of the City to the less dense environment in the west part of the City. Likewise, the City's development pattern represents design and planning trends at the given time of particular developments. Rather than one consistent image, the growth pattern has resulted in an eclectic and non-uniform appearance.
- **Aging Infrastructure:** North Olmsted's period of rapid growth is long past, and the City must now deal with issues of aging infrastructure and housing stock while other nearby communities are newly developing. Infrastructure and property maintenance has become a focus for both commercial and residential properties in order for the City to continue to attract new residents and investment.
- **Community Center:** The physical environment of the City is also distinguished by features that it lacks. Perhaps the most significant feature in this category would be the lack of a traditional downtown or central activity area – the kind of place that serves as a community's physical and emotional center.
- **Residential-Commercial Borders:** There is general inconsistency and incompatibility between existing residential development and commercial development. Clear standards have been lacking for the transition areas where the two land uses abut. This suggests that development standards and buffering guidelines need to be enhanced for these seams.
- **Urban Forest:** The City has an excellent inventory of trees that enrich the physical environment. Residential areas in particular benefit from a mature, dense and diverse tree cover. However, commercial areas have lacked strong landscaping treatments and associated tree cover.
- **Connections:** Historically, the community has favored separation of land uses. Residents and policy-makers continue to be uncomfortable with changes in land use that

might impact residential neighborhoods. Part of this resistance may be a function of how the City treats the transitional areas between different uses. There are few examples of this being successfully accomplished. This may suggest the City could improve the requirements for visual separations between different uses.

Planning Concepts

Architectural Design Guidelines

Design guidelines are intended to assist citizens, decision-makers, and staff with consistent development review. The guidelines set forth design principles intended to provide a framework for the design of future development initiatives, both new and redevelopment projects. The purpose of these guidelines is to encourage unity in design over time, while also recognizing the varying conditions and constraints inherent to individual sites and settings. The goal is to achieve an integrated community design in which all areas of the City relate to each other. The City is currently underway in a process to create design guidelines for all non single family residential development.

Gateways

A gateway can be defined as any passage or point that serves as a visual entry into a community. Gateways can be large or small, yet they should always be representative of the ideals and character of the people that live within the community. Often, gateway markers incorporate a theme that a community uses as part of its identity.

The locations of gateways are carefully planned to be at key locations. In North Olmsted, several areas exist that are potential sites for gateways. These areas are primarily at the I-480 interchanges with Clague Road, Great Northern Boulevard and Stearns Road, and at the City boundaries on the east and west ends along Lorain Road.

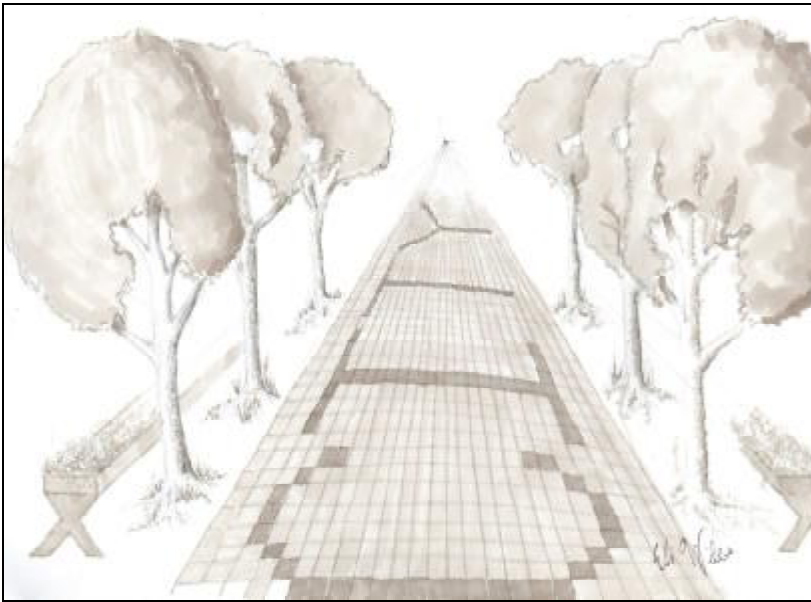
An effort should be made to install attractive features or markers that identify the City's gateways. This type of small improvement can set North Olmsted apart from surrounding communities.



Streetscape Plan

Streetscape plans target important corridors in the community for improvement. Such plans consider the streetscape environment as a whole, and make provisions for attractive, vibrant, pedestrian friendly corridors. The intent of a streetscape plan is to ensure measurable and lasting improvements, cohesive design and a distinct identity for the community.

Streetscape Design Concept



Concept and illustration by Eli Wiles, North Olmsted High School SITES Student

Design Elements & Ideas

- Red brick road inlaid with charcoal or white bricks spelling *City of North Olmsted*
- Dwarf plum trees lining the street
- Black lamp posts served with underground utilities
- Wooden flower baskets complimenting the street trees
- Steam pipes run under the street to prevent ice formation and salt damage to plants

Currently, the City is underway in a streetscape planning process. The output of this process will be a concept plan intended to improve the attractiveness and accessibility of the City's major commercial areas and other significant corridors.



A variety of small elements can make a dramatic difference on the visual impact of the streetscape.

Policies & Recommendations

General Aesthetics

The City should implement standards for site planning, architecture, landscaping, lighting, and signage for all multi-family, commercial, office, industrial and mixed use areas. These standards will create a unique image for the community.

- 6.1. Adopt design guidelines.
- 6.2. Implement the streetscape improvement program.
- 6.3. Actively enforce the City's real property maintenance code for both commercial and residential properties.
- 6.4. Undertake discussions with the utility companies that erect overhead wiring to determine how to reduce the number of above-ground utility poles and wires.

Community Focal Points

Public gathering places and community focal points contribute positively to a City's image, and serve to provide a sense of community. These places include schools, playgrounds, parks, civic buildings and facilities. They are important because they provide visual reference points and places where the community can interact.

- 6.5. Identify focal point locations and implement designs for community gathering places throughout the City.
- 6.6. Create incentives that encourage the inclusion of public spaces and amenities into developments.
- 6.7. Provide for mixed-use development by integrating all types of community facilities where possible.
- 6.8. Encourage the co-location of public facilities, such as parks, libraries and schools to provide community activity centers.
- 6.9. Work with affected landowners and agencies to encourage combined sites.

Gateways

Gateways are points of identification and entry into a community. Often, gateway markers incorporate a theme that a community uses as part of its identity. On a smaller scale, new developments can incorporate gateway elements at the entry points to office, commercial, and residential developments.

- 6.10. Create gateways along the major routes into the City, including features at highway interchanges and attractive new entrance signs along Lorain Road.
- 6.11. Coordinate gateway enhancement with other transportation improvements.
- 6.12. Reserve appropriate land for gateway treatments when acquiring right-of-way.

Partnerships

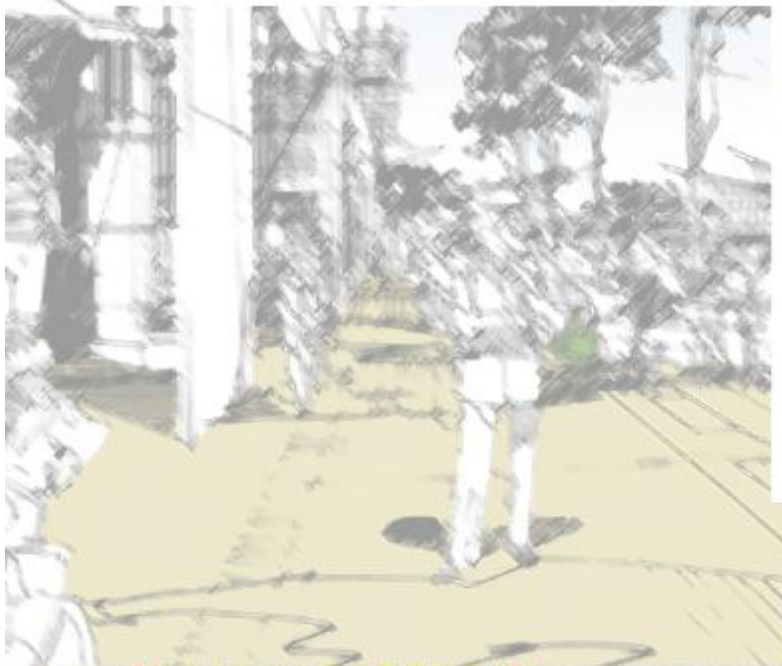
Beyond physical and aesthetic improvements, communication and cooperation are keys to promoting a greater sense of community in North Olmsted.

- 6.13. Improve the availability of information resources in the City.
Coordinating activities in the City may be improved with a community calendar, making better use of the City's TV channel and website, and creating a regular City newsletter.
- 6.14. Continue to work with the school system and community organizations to identify more areas of potential partnerships including facility and service provision.
- 6.15. Tap into the volunteer potential of the community by making volunteer opportunities more widely known.
- 6.16. Encourage organization of and participation in community events.
Community events can promote a greater sense of identity in North Olmsted including the Homecoming festivities, parades, concerts and talent shows, block parties, and other events. Activities should be available for people of all ages. New and creative ideas should be explored to energize the community and appeal to the City's diverse population.

CITY OF NORTH OLMSTED master plan



9. Focus Areas



Introduction

This chapter discusses in greater detail three large geographic areas within the City that have been designated as “Focus Areas.” A focus area is an area within the City of special interest to public officials, business owners and residents demonstrating potential for development or redevelopment. The focus areas were selected based on input from local officials, residents, and the steering committee. They are outlined on the map below. The three areas designated for concentrated analysis are the west end, the Crocker-Stearns corridor, and the east end.

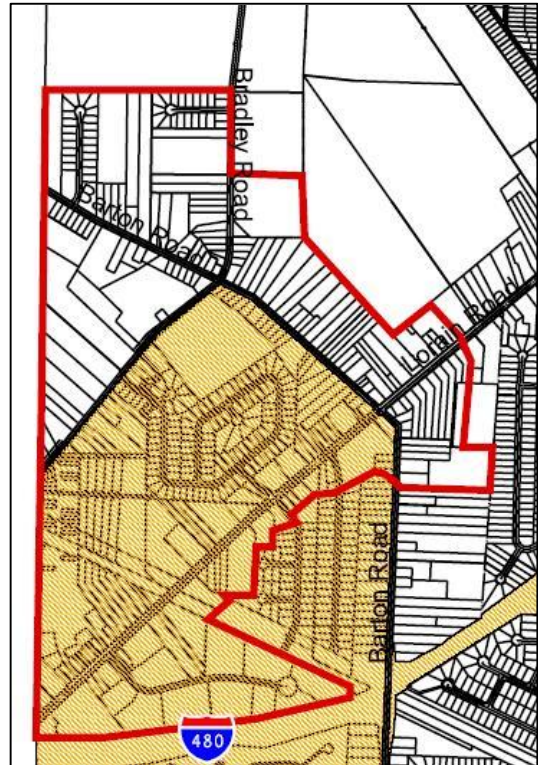
For each of the focus areas, the steering committee defined the focus area boundary, considered critical issues, and identified key recommendations for the development or redevelopment of the area. The following analyses of focus areas are not comprehensive or exhaustive studies, but provide insight and direction to future planning and development efforts. This chapter highlights possible strategies and creates a framework for further discussion by City officials. Changing conditions will require continual evaluation of these focus areas in future years.



Focus Area A – West End

In the 1992 Master Plan, the City's west end was designated as one of four focus areas, specifically from Stearns Road west to the City boundary. This focus area was identified in order to investigate the residential and commercial land use conflicts along Lorain Road and make recommendations for the remaining undeveloped land along the Lorain Road and Barton Road corridors.

Some changes have occurred in this area since 1992 including sporadic residential, commercial, and industrial development. However, many of the issues identified in 1992 remain relevant. This overview of the west end focus area begins with an update of the 1992 plan including a general description of the area, including existing land use, zoning, and constraints to development, as well as a discussion of the existing transportation system. The analysis then looks at issues specific to the focus area such as the conversion of residential properties to commercial properties, recent growth in commercial development, and the development potential of the remaining industrially and commercially zoned land.



Existing Conditions

1. Land Use

The west end focus area and particularly Lorain Road have a wide variety of existing land uses including older single-family homes, undeveloped land, homes that have been converted into businesses and offices, small shopping centers, free-standing retail businesses, light industrial and institutional land. The predominant land uses beyond the Lorain Road corridor are single-family homes and undeveloped land. There is also significant acreage devoted to outdoor recreation, the North Olmsted Industrial Park, and overhead electrical power transmission lines belonging to the Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company.

While North Olmsted is 94 percent developed, the majority of the remaining undeveloped land is located in this focus area.

2. Zoning

The zoning in the West End focus area is as diverse as the land uses. Both sides of Lorain Road from the western corporation line to the CEI easement are zoned for limited industry, with the exception of a smaller portion at the City boundary near the interstate that is zoned for motorist service. The majority of the Lorain Road corridor is zoned for general retail business at a depth varying between 200 and 500 feet. There is also a small area zoned for senior residence, which is currently vacant. The area behind the general retail zoning along Lorain Road is zoned for single-family residences. Furthermore, along Barton and Bradley Roads,

there is a mixture of single family, multiple family, mixed use, and industrial zones. Often, single parcels are split zoned, or have a combination of two or more different zoning classifications.

3. Development Constraints

There are several environmental constraints that may hinder future development of undeveloped areas of the west end focus area. According to National Wetlands Inventory maps for North Olmsted, several major concentrations of wetlands exist in or around the focus area. The largest concentration of identified wetlands is in the Bradley Woods Reservation. Another wetlands site is in the undeveloped area south and west of the Oakwood Circle subdivision off of Bradley Road.

Another development constraint is the overhead electrical power transmission lines that extend through the southwest portion of the focus area. The presence of the electric lines makes the area more difficult to develop and less desirable for residential development than other types of development.

4. Transportation System

Lorain Road (SR 10) is a predominantly four and five lane major arterial street which begins in Cleveland and extends southwesterly through the west side suburbs and into Lorain County. Within North Olmsted, Lorain Road is a little over six total miles in length.

Interstate 480 is a limited access high-speed highway that extends from the Ohio Turnpike east through Cuyahoga County's southern suburbs until it merges with I-271 in Bedford Heights. The Stearns Road/I-480 interchange is a full interchange as it allows vehicles to enter and exit I-480 to and from both the east and the west. To the west, I-480 has a full interchange at Lorain Road (SR 10) at the North Olmsted/North Ridgeville border.

Barton Road (CR 166) is a primarily residential minor arterial street which begins at Center Ridge Road (US 20) in the City of North Ridgeville and extends southeast through North Olmsted to its southern terminus at Cook Road (CR 59) in Olmsted Township. Barton Road is approximately three miles in length. Bradley Road (CR 60) is a minor arterial street which begins at Lake Road (US 6) in Bay Village and extends due south approximately 6.5 miles to its intersection with Barton Road in the City of North Olmsted. From this intersection, Bradley Road continues southwesterly into North Ridgeville for a distance of one mile where it terminates at Lear-Nagle Road.

A ten foot-wide asphalt pedestrian and bicycle path extends from the I-480/Stearns Road interchange to Great Northern Mall along the north side of I-480. Also, a pedestrian/bicycle bridge is located across I-480 to connect the neighborhoods north and south of the highway in the vicinity of the Stearns Road/I-480 interchange. Barton Road north of Lorain Road has sidewalks on only one side of the street, and Bradley Road sidewalks on only a portion of the south/east side of the road. The North Olmsted Industrial Park also lacks sidewalks. All of the other streets in the area have sidewalks on both sides of the street. None of the streets in the focus area are striped with bicycle lanes.

Planning Issues

1. Development Pressure

As the west end is the only area of the community with significant amounts of undeveloped land, development pressure will become a growing issue with the completion of the Crocker-Stearns extension. The west side connection between I-90 and I-480 has the potential to bring increased traffic volume and make the west end more attractive for land speculation and development. The west end may also be impacted by development projects in Olmsted Township and North Ridgeville. Once completed, the joint economic development district (JEDD) in Olmsted Township will also increase traffic and may attract significant industrial, office, and commercial development in close proximity to the City's border.

2. Existing Land Use

Another challenge to creating a logical development pattern on the west end is the diversity of existing land uses. The west end contains a variety of residential, commercial, industrial, utility, and recreational uses. Often, different land uses are intermixed. The Lorain Road corridor is a good example where some residential structures exist next to structures that have been converted to retail uses.

The variety of land uses along with the mix of old and new development and design trends have created a disjointed visual impression of the west end. The electric utility lines are an example where the land use pattern has created both a negative aesthetic appeal and an obstacle to certain types of future development.

3. Current Zoning Regulations

The City's current zoning regulations pose an obstacle to proper development of the west end. Zoning is often in conflict with the existing land use pattern. For example, the industrial zoning along Bradley Road west of Barton Road does not coincide with the residential character of the area. Furthermore, the City's zoning is limited in flexibility by only having one major commercial category. This one-size-fits-all approach does not take into consideration residential conversions along Lorain Road or the need for greater buffering in areas where commercially zoned land abuts residential land.

Additionally, many areas in the West End focus area are split zoned. In some instances, single parcels contain three different zoning classifications. Often these different classifications are inherently incompatible. As the west end faces growing development pressure with the completion of the Crocker-Stearns extension, issues involving development of split zoned parcels are likely to arise.

4. Adequate Access

While vacant parcels are available for development, many of these areas do not have adequate access or in some cases, any access to the local roadway network. Additionally, lot layouts and parcel arrangement are prohibitive to significant economic or large-scale development. A great proportion of vacant parcels are either oddly shaped or too small to accommodate significant development. Other parcels are underdeveloped, in that the frontage is developed, but sizeable back lands remain vacant. In order for industrial or commercially zoned land to be used effectively, considerable land aggregation would need to occur.

Preliminary Recommendations

1. Economic Development

The economic development potential of the west end can be maximized through good planning to ensure quality development and through actively marketing the area as a desirable location in the region.

- Permit those types of industries and businesses that will stabilize and diversify the economic base.
- Increase marketing efforts for the North Olmsted Industrial Park and other commercial or industrially zoned parcels by promoting available development sites and economic incentives.
- Collaborate with the Chamber of Commerce and other key business representatives to promote business retention and expansion.
- Encourage the aggregation of small vacant parcels to allow for larger scale development activities.

2. Zoning

Zoning is one of the most effective tools a municipality has to promote sound planning and good development decisions. Therefore, the City should modify its code provisions and map where appropriate in order to support the recommendations of the Plan.

- Create one or more planned district classifications for commercial, office, and/or industrial uses.
- Enhance buffering and open space requirements in zoning regulations to protect residential land from incompatible uses.
- Allow rezoning in the west end focus area that is compatible with the Future Land Use Plan.

Currently, the land on the northwest side of Bradley Road, south of Barton Road is zoned primarily for limited industry. Because this area is mostly surrounded by residential uses and the Bradley Woods Reservation of the Metroparks, it is suggested that this land be considered for rezoning to residential use. Also, this industrially zoned land is outside of the established Enterprise Zone which borders this area to the south. The City should also consider the possibility of rezoning portions of commercially zoned land along Lorain Road to allow for various types of residential development, such as apartments, condominiums, townhomes, senior housing and cluster housing. This would reduce the amount of possible commercial development in the area, thus reducing traffic and noise.

- Consider establishing an open space zoning classification or overlay zone for park and natural resource lands in the City.

3. Access

The unique combination of commercial, industrial, residential, and recreational land uses in the west end requires that access be provided for truck, auto, and pedestrian traffic. To prevent congestion and other traffic conflicts on residential corridors, adequate access must be provided into and out of commercial and industrial sites.

- Reduce traffic congestion and ensure harmonious relationships of commercial and industrial development with other land uses by locating major development near the I-480 interchange and along Lorain Road.
- Promote shared parking areas for businesses to reduce curb cuts along Lorain Road.
- Consider extensions of bike paths and sidewalks to facilitate access to Barton/Bradley Fields and the Bradley Woods reservation from surrounding residential areas.

4. Open Space & Natural Resources

Open space and natural resource amenities are positively associated with residents' quality of life. The west end focus area has opportunities for open space preservation as development occurs. Any negative impacts associated with development including pollution, stormwater runoff, and vegetation loss will be mitigated.

- Modify existing zoning regulations to require greater open space preservation and buffering.
- Consider creating planned districts designed to permit development flexibility while requiring maximum open space preservation.
- Develop an open space system which protects environmentally critical areas such as floodways and drainage corridors against encroachment, preserves significant vegetation, and provides relief from expanses of development and pavement.
- Preserve important natural features through strict enforcement of flood plain, wetland, and storm water management regulations.

Focus Area B – Crocker-Stearns Corridor

In the 1992 Master Plan, the Crocker-Stearns Corridor was designated as one of four focus areas. This particular focus area was selected primarily to investigate the pending Crocker-Stearns Road extension and widening project, as well as the possible redevelopment of Stearns Road south of Lorain Road. At the time, it was anticipated that the project would begin in 1995. Significant delays have moved the anticipated construction phase of the project to 2006.

There have not been many considerable changes in the focus area since the 1992 discussion; therefore, much of the background information provided in the Plan is still relevant. The focus area analysis in 1992 began with examining the physical characteristics of the area, including existing land use, zoning, and environmental constraints to development. The analysis also included an overview of the existing transportation system and pending and proposed transportation, commercial, and residential development projects. The Crocker-Stearns project was reviewed in detail along with the possible redevelopment of Stearns Road south of Lorain Road. Finally, the Plan provided recommendations on how to improve the overall development of the focus area, including mitigating the impact of the Crocker-Stearns project on adjacent residences and the environment.

The following is a summary of the 1992 discussion of the Crocker-Stearns corridor updated with information and recommendations formulated in the 2004 planning process.

Existing Conditions

1. Land Use

The majority of land north of Lorain Road is devoted to single-family homes and the Bradley Woods Reservation of the Cleveland Metroparks. Several streets north of Lorain Road are “paper streets” that were platted in the 1920’s, but never constructed. The major land use south of Lorain to the I-480 interchange is single-family homes. Lorain Road has a mixture of single-family homes and commercial businesses, including a large strip center on the southeast corner of Lorain and Stearns Roads.

2. Zoning

This area of Lorain Road is zoned for general retail business at a depth varying between 200 and 600 feet. The residential neighborhoods both north and south of Lorain Road are zoned primarily Single Residence B. The portion of the Bradley Woods Reservation of the Metroparks is zoned Single Residence C.

3. Transportation System

The Stearns Road/I-480 interchange is a full interchange, allowing vehicles to enter and exit I-480 to and from both the east and the west. Stearns Road (CR 76) is currently a minor arterial



which begins at Lorain Road and extends south approximately three miles into Olmsted Township, ending at Schady Road (CR 143). Stearns Road is a two lane roadway, except where it widens at the I-480 interchange.

4. Pedestrian and Bicycle Linkages

All of the streets in the focus area have sidewalks on both sides of the street with the exception of the west side of Lansing Drive and the southern end of Stearns Road. A ten foot-wide asphalt pedestrian and bicycle path extend from the I-480/Stearns Road interchange to Westfield Mall along the north side of I-480.

Planning Issues

The steering committee identified key issues regarding the roadway extension and redevelopment opportunities in the Crocker-Stearns corridor. The following paragraphs outline some of the steering committee's major concerns.

1. Impact on Existing Homes

The Crocker-Stearns extension project will widen the road right-of-way from 60 to 80 feet in order to accommodate two additional traffic lanes. Following the widening, a large majority of the over 60 homes fronting on Stearns Road between Lorain Road and I-480 will be situated less than 50 feet from the new right-of-way. A significant proportion will be less than 40 feet from the right-of-way. The widening project will considerably change the character of the Stearns Road area, and likely make the existing homes less desirable for continued residential use.

2. Traffic and Access

The Crocker-Stearns extension will provide a direct connection between two interstates, I-90 and I-480. It is anticipated that the extension and widening will focus traffic in the corridor and ease traffic congestion on many of the nearby collector roads. In the process, traffic levels on Stearns Road will considerably increase. Significant new development such as Crocker Park in Westlake and the JEDD in Olmsted Township will also increase vehicle trips on Crocker-Stearns.



Stearns Road currently ends at Lorain Road. The project will extend the roadway north to connect to Crocker Road in Westlake.

Given the number of homes that have frontage on Stearns Road, access and safety concerns will increase. Each home has a separate access point to the roadway, which is classified by ODOT as an urban arterial. Direct access to arterial roadways is highly discouraged in order to limit disruption to traffic and consider the safety of those entering and exiting the roadway system.

3. Noise

The 1992 Plan described in detail the study that was conducted according to Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) guidelines to determine the effect of the proposed roadway upon the acoustic environment of surrounding homes. At that time, the minimal number of homes impacted by increased noise in conjunction with the level of cost for noise abatement measures did not meet feasibility criteria set forth by the FHWA. However, since 1992, provisions have been made for noise barriers through alternative sources. At this time, engineering plans call for eight foot high concrete sound walls. This type of barrier reflects rather than absorbs sound, lacking the function and aesthetic appeal of more natural types of noise abatement measures such as mounding and landscaping.

4. Remnant parcels

The roadway extension will disrupt current land use patterns as the road right-of-way is secured. Federal funds will be used to compensate the property owners at fair market value for any land that is taken for the road right-of-way. If, after purchase, a parcel is determined to no longer have any economic value, the County will offer to purchase the parcel. However, the owner of these remnant parcels will not be forced to sell.

Preliminary Recommendations

While the Master Plan offers preliminary recommendations as to the future of the Crocker-Stearns corridor, a more extensive effort should be undertaken to create an area plan for the corridor that defines clear policies and action steps related to any future development or redevelopment.

1. Community Involvement

Ensuring a completely open process is the best policy for obtaining maximum “buy in” and community wide understanding of and support for the resulting long term implementation of a plan. Any future planning related to the Crocker-Stearns corridor should involve all segments of the community including developers, property owners, and other affected residents.

- Create a public information campaign to keep residents informed of the progress of the Crocker-Stearns extension and aware of all opportunities to participate in public dialogue.
- Design a series of meetings or workshops to present information to and solicit input from residents and the business community related to potential redevelopment.
- Establish regular communications with the City of Westlake and Olmsted Township to discuss common concerns and opportunities related to the extension.

2. Redevelopment

Redevelopment activities will be supported that are compatible with the Future Land Use Plan. Cooperation between public and private interests will be critical to the successful transformation of the existing corridor.

- Require the aggregation of parcels when existing residential uses are redeveloped as more intense uses.

- Encourage redevelopment and/or development on underutilized properties by using incentives or development tools as appropriate.
- Identify funding opportunities to assist in redevelopment efforts.
- Encourage or require utility companies interested in extending lines along the roadway to place the wiring underground.

3. Mixed Use

A mix of uses will be promoted in the focus area. Through the adoption of this plan, zoning changes, and design guidelines, North Olmsted will have clearly defined standards for all types of development in the corridor.

- Promote a variety of land uses for diversity and economic stability.
- Solicit input from the development and business community in order to identify market niches that should be pursued.
- Consider new or modified mixed use zoning classifications that would enhance economic development potential while protecting adjacent residential areas and roadways from negative impacts.
- Actively market the area as an attractive location for redevelopment in the region.
- Promote a balance between structure and open space areas.

4. Access

Mixed use development has the potential to create impacts on the area's roadways. To prevent congestion and other traffic conflicts, adequate access must be provided into and out of these sites.

- Ensure compatible relationships of mixed use development with roads and other land uses by locating major development on improved main thoroughfares and requiring adherence to sound traffic principles.
- Create and implement an access management plan for the Crocker-Stearns corridor.
- Conduct a traffic study once the Crocker-Stearns project is complete and in normal operation to compare actual and projected traffic counts and to determine the effects of the project on City traffic patterns.
- Provide pedestrian and bicycle links between the adjacent neighborhoods and the Bradley Woods Reservation.

5. Compatibility

It is important that development and redevelopment plans are compatible with both the Future Land Use Plan and surrounding neighborhoods. Some of the issues that should be considered include size, intensity, access, and design.

- Assure logical access by encouraging planned, integrated mixed use areas of compatible size with surrounding uses and in proper locations to benefit the community.
- Assure compatibility of style and scale of mixed use development with adjacent development through such means as the establishment of adequate buffer areas, appropriate setbacks, and control of access to sites.

6. Landscaping and Buffering

The proximity of mixed use areas to established residential neighborhoods in the focus area necessitates increased buffering between incompatible uses. Buffering will not only screen these uses, but add to the aesthetic character of the focus area.

- Preserve privacy for abutting and nearby properties by requiring appropriate setbacks from streets and internal property lines.
- In lieu of concrete barriers, consider installing natural landscaped mounding and/or a decorative fence along both sides of the new roadway alongside adjacent neighborhoods.
- Increase buffering requirements between residential and non-residential land uses.

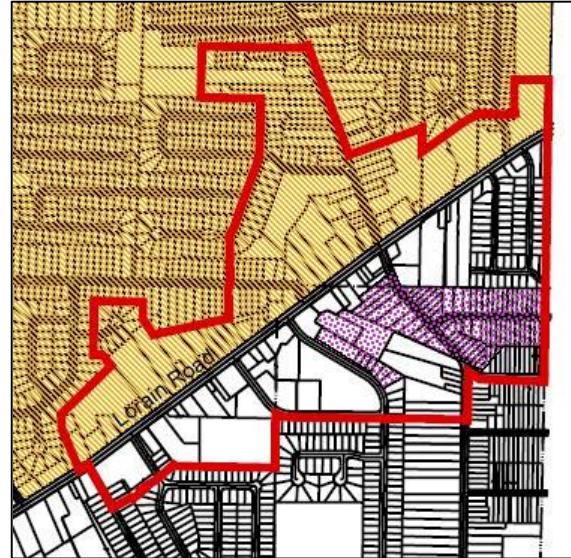
7. Open Space & Natural Resources

Open space and natural resource amenities are valuable community assets. Therefore, development or redevelopment in the focus area will occur in a manner that is sensitive to environmental issues of pollution, stormwater management, and vegetation loss.

- Develop an open space system which protects environmentally critical areas such as floodways and drainage corridors against encroachment, preserves significant vegetation, and provides relief from expanses of development and pavement.
- Preserve important natural features through strict enforcement of floodplain, wetland, and storm water management regulations.
- Work with the County to acquire land remnants of lots split by the location of the new roadway, and transfer ownership of these parcels back to abutting property owners with deed restrictions that would require that these parcels remain in a natural state.

Focus Area C – East End

Unlike focus areas A and B, the east end was not specifically addressed in the 1992 Master Plan. However, in 2004, the steering committee felt that this area of the community merited special attention as both development on the west end and redevelopment of the Crocker-Stearns corridor could have a significant impact on the attractiveness of the east end for reinvestment. The east end has issues unique in the City related to land use, development density and aging infrastructure. This overview of the east end focus area begins with a general overview of existing conditions including current land use, zoning, and a discussion of the existing transportation system. The analysis then looks at issues specific to the focus area followed by preliminary recommendations for addressing those issues.



Existing Conditions

1. Land Use

Land use in the east end focus area is a mix of single family residential, multiple family residential, commercial, and small scale office. This area of the City is almost entirely built out and development density in this area is the highest of any location in North Olmsted. Parcels are generally small in the east end which has resulted in a variety of small, stand alone businesses along Lorain Road, residential conversions, and small strip centers. In some cases, land was aggregated to accommodate somewhat larger commercial centers. Additionally, some residential homes remain along Lorain Road in the east end.

2. Zoning

Zoning in the east end focus area is a mix of single family residential, multiple family residential, multiple family high rise, and general business retail. There is also a small portion of land zoned for mixed use north of Lorain Road adjacent to the Fairview Park border. The most intensive zoning classifications including commercial and multiple family residential are located in an adjacent to the Lorain Road corridor.

3. Transportation System

Lorain Road is the main arterial through the City and particularly the east end. Clague Road is a minor arterial road connecting I-90 in Westlake to the north with I-480 in North Olmsted. Clague Road is a two lane roadway, except where it widens at the Lorain Road intersection and the I-480 interchange. The Clague Road/I-480 interchange is a half interchange, allowing vehicles to enter the highway traveling eastbound and exit the highway traveling westbound.

Planning Issues

1. Aging Infrastructure

As part of the outward growth of Cleveland, the east side of North Olmsted naturally developed earlier than many other parts of the City. This earlier growth led to several trends. Overall, the east side of the City is home to two-thirds of the City's housing units, has older housing stock, lower owner occupancy rates, higher vacancy rates, and lower home values than the City's average. These trends generally relate to issues of aging housing and infrastructure on the east side, and in the east end focus area in particular. Aging infrastructure leads to increased levels of commercial and residential property maintenance issues, numbers of streets and sidewalks needing repairs, and potential drainage problems.

Further, the east end focus area contains one Improvement Target Area (ITA) as defined by the Cuyahoga County Department of Development, which is located on south Clague Road at Summerland/Virginia Avenues. The County defines ITA's as those locations eligible for community development assistance due to evidence of deterioration that may lead to slum and blight conditions.

2. Land Use and Zoning

The east end contains an assortment of land uses including various types of residential and commercial development. The east end also has the highest density of development with smaller single family residential lots, numerous multi-family residential units, free standing businesses, and small strip centers.

Many conversions have occurred along Lorain Road where residential homes transitioned to commercial or office uses. Oftentimes, these conversions occurred on fairly small or narrow lots that had not been planned for accommodating significant parking or deliveries. Still, some residential homes remain along Lorain Road, intermixed with commercial uses.

Current zoning regulations present an obstacle to the effective redevelopment of the east end, the commercial corridor in particular. As previously mentioned, the zoning code is limited in part by having one major commercial zoning classification. Its limitations are most apparent on the east end, in an area with smaller lots and businesses as compared to the major retail areas in and around the mall. The City's zoning regulations treat all commercially zoned areas the same, and fail to take into account the unique issues of buffering, access, and residential conversions that exist in the east end.

3. Aesthetics

The east end developed without much planning and with no design or aesthetic standards. Changes occurring over time including residential conversions, commercial redevelopment, and zoning code modifications have led to inconsistency in the commercial corridor. Therefore, the overall appearance of the east end is eclectic.

For residents and others traveling through the community, the City's character is heavily defined by what can be seen from the roadway. This view from the road, or *viewshed*, is greatly impacted by the type and density of development along the roadside. As with all of Lorain Road, the frequency and height of utility poles dominate the streetscape and create a negative visual impression of the City's main corridor.

Past changes in the City's zoning code including greater setbacks and provisions for ample parking have created situations where redevelopment areas are visually inconsistent with adjacent development. In commercial redevelopment areas along Lorain Road, new structures are set back significantly further from the street than neighboring, original structures. In these areas, large parking areas are the dominant views from the road.

Finally, the east end has several key areas that are entry points into the community. However, these gateways along Lorain Road and Clague Road are not well defined through any type of landscaping or monumental signage. The existing metal signs can be easily overlooked by travelers on the road and offer little sense of the City's character.

4. Access

Nearly every parcel on the east end has an individual access point to Lorain Road. In some cases, single parcels have multiple curb cuts onto the roadway. This proliferation of direct curb cuts creates a large number of potential friction points as vehicles enter and exit the roadway.

Access for deliveries is another issue on the east end. Semi-trucks are prohibited to exit the highway onto Clague Road, so trucks must take other routes to get to businesses on the east end. Additionally, many of the lots are small, and the site does not have sufficient capacity for large commercial vehicles.

Preliminary Recommendations

1. Economic Development

Development and redevelopment activities in the east end should be promoted which support existing businesses and enhance the economic health of the community. Every effort should be made to preserve the economic vitality of the east end as other areas of the City or surrounding communities develop.

- Increase retention and expansion efforts through cooperation with the North Olmsted Chamber of Commerce.
- Publicize information related to City and County economic and redevelopment incentives including existing programs and resources.
- Develop programs and incentives to assist in the creation and support of new businesses.
- Encourage the provision of goods and services in the east end serving the local community.
- Establish a roundtable for discussion on economic development issues specific to the east end with the Chamber of Commerce, Council, administration, and key business representatives.

2. Sense of Place

The east end developed significantly earlier than other areas of the community; therefore, there are distinct issues related to site planning, architecture, landscaping, lighting, and signage in this focus area. The development density and land use pattern of the east end offer unique opportunities to create a community focal point and a greater sense of place.

- Ensure all new commercial development reflects quality design and construction practices.
- Relate the size and scale of commercial development to the needs of residents.
- Create design guidelines and development standards that will be incorporated into the City's zoning code.
- Following the creation of design guidelines, identify commercial and retail areas falling below standards and initiate a program to upgrade these areas through grants or the use of incentives.
- Create gateways into the City at the municipal boundary on Lorain Road and on Clague Road at the I-480 interchange.
- Create a community focal point in the east end at the intersection of Clague and Lorain Roads through distinctive design elements.

3. Zoning

Zoning is one of the most effective tools a city has to promote sound planning and good development decisions. Therefore, the City should modify its code provisions and map where appropriate in order to support the recommendations of the Plan.

- Create a neighborhood commercial zoning classification for the purpose of encouraging smaller-scale businesses and ensuring compatibility with adjacent residential areas.
- Modify zoning regulations to encourage an attractive streetscape through more green space preservation and parking behind structures.
- Incorporate design guidelines into the City's zoning code.



Commercial redevelopment occurring on the northwest corner of Clague Road and Lorain Road was made possible through limited rezoning of adjacent parcels.

4. Accessibility

The east end should be accessible to both vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Storefronts should be oriented toward the street and pedestrian traffic. Accessibility to east end businesses must also be provided to trucks for loading and delivery off of Lorain Road.

- Promote shared parking areas for businesses to reduce curb cuts along Lorain Road.
- Encourage parking areas to be located behind the buildings which front Lorain Road in the east end.
- Encourage planned, integrated commercial areas of compatible size with surrounding uses, and in proper locations to serve the residents.
- Improve connectivity through additional access routes between Clague Park and surrounding residential neighborhoods.

5. Community Development

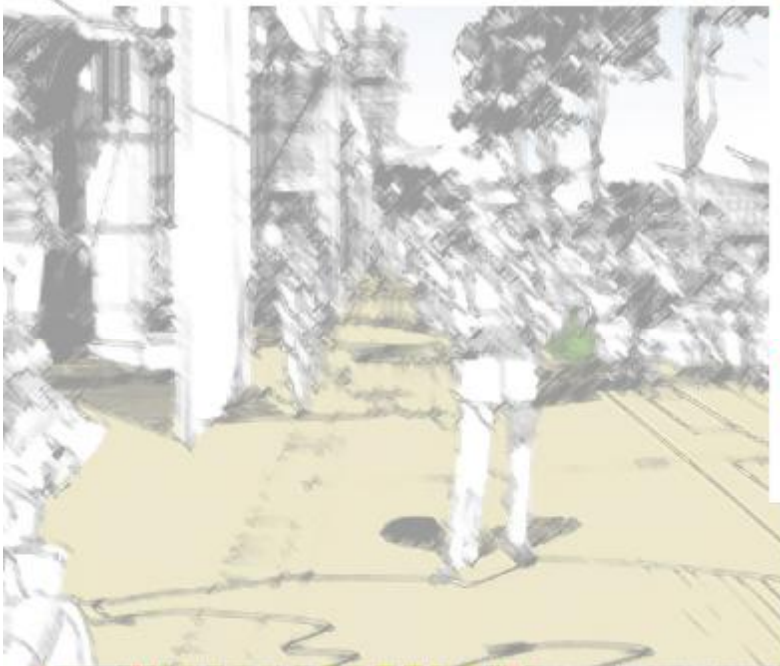
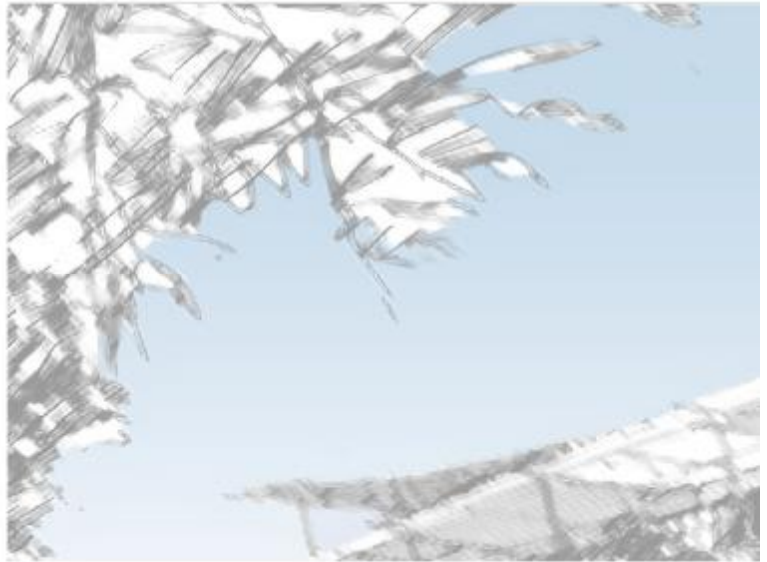
Community development is focused on creating a better overall quality of life for residents. It involves focusing on public-private partnerships as well as providing the basic building blocks of a community such as physical infrastructure.

- Continue to participate in and apply for funding through Cuyahoga County's CDBG Competitive Municipal Grants Program, targeting capital projects such as streets and utilities and other eligible activities.
- Continue to participate in and apply for Exterior Maintenance Grant Program funds through the Cuyahoga County Department of Development, targeting Improvement Target Areas (ITAs) and homeowners with property maintenance code violations.
- Cooperate with the County to identify areas in the east end focus area that would qualify for designation as an ITA.
- Design a program to educate homeowners in frequent building and engineering related issues and code requirements. Publicize available City and County resources and programs aimed at assisting residents with home and property improvements.

CITY OF NORTH OLMSTED master plan



10. Implementation



Introduction

A strong implementation strategy is the key to any successful planning effort. The previous chapters of this plan have described the planning process and the City's vision for the future. The implementation element discusses some of the administrative and other considerations the City may have as they move forward with the plan. This chapter also creates detailed implementation matrix of all the plan's recommendations.

Administration

Once the Master Plan is adopted, City Council, the Planning Commission, and City staff will be primarily responsible for implementing the recommendations. Many of the recommendations will require capital improvements or changes in existing regulations and procedures. All areas of City government will play a role in implementation, so it is imperative that all parties work together to ensure that the plan is implemented consistently.

The plan should be a document that is supported by and accessible to the general community. As the community changes, the plan must also be regularly reviewed and updated to remain a viable and effective guide for the City. As required by the City's Charter, the Planning Commission shall review and update the plan regularly.

The following are suggestions to ensure the plan remains a relevant document as the City changes.

- Planning Commission should prepare an annual report summarizing the status of implementation of the plan's recommendations.
- Planning Commission reports should include a statement declaring their interpretation of whether or not development or zoning proposals are consistent with the plan, as part of their recommendations to Council.
- Future actions regarding capital improvements planning and land use and development should be consistent with the plan.
- When determined that sufficient grounds exist, a formal amendment to the Master Plan should be required prior to deviation from established policies.

As new members are appointed to the City's boards and commissions, a training packet should be provided that contains a copy of the Master Plan. The boards and commissions would also benefit from regular training sessions that review policies, procedures, and other related information.

Fiscal Considerations

Government officials face a variety of fiscal problems such as shrinking budgets and rising costs. Local officials may consider several options in dealing with these issues including improving government output, developing alternative revenue sources, and decreasing the budget. Before such decisions are made, officials should consider all possible consequences through a structured process. Some questions to reflect upon include:

- How much does it cost to provide the service?
- Is the cost of maintaining the equipment more or less than replacement?
- Would it be cheaper for a private contractor to perform the work?

- Is the cost per unit of the service increasing or decreasing?
- How much would be saved by cutting a program?

These questions may be answered in part by conducting a fiscal impact analysis. Impact analyses can be used in projecting the economic impact of development proposals, zoning or subdivision plans, and mixed use developments related to service provision. It is also important to understand how land use decisions can impact a community's economic health.

Cost of Community Services

Every community has a number of land uses including residential, commercial or industrial, and open space. Each land use is subject to tax payments to support the community services demanded by the community. Some changes in land use are predictable and others are not. Decisions about changes in the land use made at the local level need to be made with the best financial information available.

When making development decisions in a community, it is important to look at the fiscal implications of a desired land use pattern. Traditionally, decision makers have believed that any type of development is the best use of vacant land for increasing tax revenues. Often residential developers sell their projects through claims that the development will "pay for itself" and lower each individual's property tax. The preservation of open space has been viewed as a loss of tax base. However, recent cost of community studies and fiscal impact analyses have shown quite the opposite is true.

Public officials may use the information from *cost of community services studies* to help understand what happens when land use changes. For example, when vacant land is converted to residential land use, there are higher tax revenues and there are also higher expenditures for community services, including schools. While these studies do not generally look at the impact of a specific development, they do evaluate the relative differences in expenditures per dollar revenue by land use category. They suggest that communities should be aware of the need to balance both commercial/industrial development and residential development.

Implementation Matrix

This document includes policies and recommendations for each major element in the plan. Policies and recommendations show how specific strategies would be carried out in pursuit of a specific goal. Policies are statements that become the City's way of doing business following plan adoption. Recommendations are focused action items that the City should undertake to support the goals of the plan.

In order to give the City greater direction regarding the plan's recommendations, an implementation matrix was created that describes the time frame, responsible and supporting parties for implementation, and any secondary actions or notes related to the action items.

CITY OF NORTH OLMSTED master plan



11. Appendix



Interview Summary

Eleven individuals representing Council and various Boards and Commissions related to planning were interviewed to gain insight into issues related to the Master Plan process. This is a summary of their responses.

1. How would you describe the quality of life in North Olmsted?

Most interviewees described the quality of life in North Olmsted as good with the potential to be better. They felt that the needs of residents can be met in the community. A smaller proportion felt that quality of life was declining due to the lack of common goals and cooperation, less community activism, and aging infrastructure and facilities.

2. What are the City's greatest assets and strengths?

Interviewees felt the City has numerous strengths including a strong sense of community and residents concerned with seeing the City succeed. They believed the City's assets include quality schools, good city services, and a strong commercial base with a diverse mix of uses serving the community. The City's location provides convenient access to highways and the airport, and the bus line allows people to get around town or to downtown Cleveland easily.

Residents enjoy an affordable cost of living and amenities such as good neighborhoods and a solid housing stock, parks and recreation facilities, a new library, and senior center programs. The population is diverse and represents a mix of cultures not found in surrounding communities.

Interviewees felt that the quality of new development is improving in the City, and that the City is doing a better job of recognizing its flaws and addressing them effectively.

3. What are the most urgent issues facing North Olmsted now and over the next 10 years?

Interviewees felt that the fiscal health of the City is a major issue facing North Olmsted. It is perhaps the most critical issue as the City's financial resources are directly related to its ability to provide necessary resident services and infrastructure improvements to streets and drainage systems. Interviewees were also concerned about general infrastructure and property deterioration within residential neighborhoods and commercial areas and the increasing possibility of blight.

The development of the west end was also cited as a major issue, as the City needs an updated plan in place before the remaining vacant land develops. The City should identify an appropriate business mix and ensure City regulations are not discouraging to redevelopment. Traffic and improvements to internal circulation patterns were also listed as urgent issues.

Interviewees were concerned with providing needed resident services and amenities such as improved senior facilities and programs for youth. The City should also set aside more green space for parks and recreation, update the Recreation Center and City Hall, and construct a new fire station.

4. Are there specific elements of the community that deserve special consideration or preservation during the planning process?

Interviewees felt that the City should consider green space preservation during the planning process. The City should consider improving and expanding its holdings to ensure the park and recreation needs of current and future residents are met. Others felt that the Butternut Ridge historic district should be maintained and improved through streetscaping, landscaping, and curbing.

Some interviewees felt that a sense of community could better be preserved in North Olmsted by creating a more homogenous development and design scheme. This look could be used in the design of City structures and incorporated as part of a community image.

5. How would you describe North Olmsted's development pattern/land use pattern?

Interviewees used a variety of terms to describe the City's land use pattern including unplanned, haphazard, hodge-podge, reckless, and archaic. They agreed that past development was not handled wisely as it occurred in a piecemeal fashion where proposals were considered individually instead of being planned as part of a whole. The combination of deficient zoning regulations and threats of litigation by developers resulted in poor quality and poorly designed development. For example, zoning created the linear commercial corridor down Lorain Road resulting in many split zoned parcels, frequent curb cuts, and conflicts with adjoining residences.

Interviewees felt past land use practices posed a great challenge, but that the City is now moving in the right direction.

6. How would you describe the development potential for North Olmsted?

As little vacant and developable land remains in the City, the development potential in North Olmsted is primarily in redevelopment. Interviewees felt that the community was still attractive for reinvestment, but that it would likely occur on a parcel by parcel basis. In redevelopment, particularly on the east end, efforts would need to be made in maintaining the infrastructure and improving the overall streetscape. The City should look into creating incentives for developers to reinvest and in qualifying more areas of the community for grant assistance.

Interviewees felt that the remaining vacant land on the west end provides the City an opportunity to do something unique and plan appropriately for high quality development. The City should take advantage of the area's proximity to the interstate to promote development. The City should also look at other remaining pockets of undeveloped land including the deep back lands of lots as possible development sites.

To improve the City's development potential, interviewees recommended evaluating the impacts of the City's zoning and making necessary modifications, as well as working toward creating a shared vision by the business community and residents.

7. What types of development are needed in the City?

Interviewees felt that there is no need for additional commercial retail development in the City, but that vacancies should be filled and higher end redevelopment should be

encouraged. They agreed that office development should be promoted, particularly those corporations and industries that provide higher paying jobs and significantly add to the City's tax base. Light industry should be encouraged and actively marketed, principally in the City's industrial park.

In the area of housing, interviewees felt that future development should be focused on high end housing as well as senior housing. They believed the City already has sufficient amounts of affordable housing and starter homes. Additionally, interviewees would like to see more land set aside for recreation and resident amenities such as a community or cultural arts center.

8. If you had to identify “target areas” in the City, where would they be?

Interviewees identified a number of target areas in the City that require special planning and consideration. The Crocker-Stearns corridor project will present challenges to the City of managing increased traffic and development pressure while being sensitive to resident concerns. While the west end was identified as a target area due to its development potential, the east end was also cited as a target area because of growing redevelopment and rehabilitation needs.

Other target areas include major thoroughfares such as the Lorain Road commercial corridor, the Clague Road corridor and Great Northern Boulevard. Interviewees also described the general and citywide need for physical and aesthetic improvements as development and redevelopment occurs.

9. If you were to identify just one action or initiative that the City should undertake to improve the community, what should it be?

Interviewees identified a variety of actions the City should take to improve the community. Some of these suggestions involved improving the development process through tighter zoning and property maintenance regulations and continuing education of board and commission members. Suggestions also included improvements to services and infrastructure including a new fire station, street repair, improving traffic flow and parking, and burying utility lines.

Some interviewees felt better marketing for economic development is a priority. Opportunities exist in the City's industrial park, west end, and Crocker-Stearns corridor. Annexation might also be considered for City expansion. Others focused on quality of life improvements such as encouraging more green space, improving senior center and recreation facilities, and aesthetic improvements to commercial and residential areas. Some felt that improving public perception of community image and greater cooperation by City leaders were first steps in achieving these goals.

10. When citizens contact you, what is the most common concern or request?

Interviewees said that many resident concerns centered on street and infrastructure issues such as road conditions, traffic congestion, stormwater and drainage issues, property maintenance, and other city service issues. Residents also express concern over commercial issues such as retail vacancies, quality of development, residential encroachment, signage, appearance, litter, lights, and noise. Other resident concerns include fences and neighbor issues, as well as speeding on local streets and traffic tickets.

Focus Group Results

Eight focus groups were conducted with North Olmsted residents and interested individuals providing input on a range of City issues. The following is a summary of the meeting results.

Residents

1. What do you like most about living in North Olmsted?

Residents liked living in North Olmsted because of its location and convenience to transportation and retail. The City's location provides access to highways, the airport, downtown, and points west. Residents liked services such as the bus line and park and ride that provide transportation to downtown, though they also stated they do not have to leave the City to find what they need due to the proximity of shopping.

Residents also like the people in the community. Many stated they have good neighbors and that North Olmsted has a small town feel in that everyone knows each other. Residents also felt there is a good mix of people in North Olmsted and that this variety is not found in other neighboring communities.

Residents also felt positively about City services including safety services, the schools, the senior center, the amount of affordable housing, and sports and recreation programs for kids.

2. What do you like least about living in North Olmsted?

Residents most frequently cited the lack of planning and consistency in development and traffic. Residents described how aging infrastructure and changing demographics have contributed to negative perceptions of the community's image. Property maintenance, both residential and commercial, is becoming a growing concern. Residents felt the business community has not positively added to the aesthetics of the City and has created friction points where commercial abuts residential areas. Also, as homes get older, residents stated that homeowners are not all willing to invest in maintenance and may move instead.

Furthermore, the lack of certain amenities such as a fitness or wellness center and other new facilities and programs offered by surrounding communities is contributing to a loss of wage earning adults who help provide tax base while using few services. As the population of the community turns over, there is a decline in the sense of community, fewer neighborhood events, and less interaction among residents.

Residents also felt that communication and coordination between the City and other entities in the community could be improved. Residents wanted to be more informed of what was going on in the community.

3. How would you describe the quality of City services? How could they be improved?

Overall, residents rated City services positively. They felt safety services were an asset to the community, and that the police and fire departments were not recognized for all that they do. Residents felt that a new fire station is needed, and wanted to ensure that the police resources are sufficient to meet the demands due to both residential and business issues.

Some concern was expressed over the ability of the service department to deal with infrastructure issues such as drainage and roadway improvements. It was felt that limited funds posed a challenge to adequately maintaining the aging infrastructure and that certain improvements were slow in coming. Residents felt leaf service is too slow and occurs too late in the season. They also felt that the building department needs to more actively enforce property maintenance on commercial properties.

Finally, while residents do not like the politics and infighting within City government, they were generally satisfied and felt City Council was open to citizens' concerns.

4. How would you rate the City's housing stock? What types of housing does the City need?

Residents described the City's housing stock as affordable yet aging. In some cases, residents felt the housing stock was unfashionable or becoming less attractive for resale. Residents felt this could be abated by dealing with property maintenance issues. While residents were in favor of stricter housing maintenance codes and better enforcement, they did not want to over-regulate residents with codes that are unreasonably tough. They felt providing more information to homeowners on maintenance assistance or reliable service providers would improve housing conditions.

Residents saw a need for housing options for the City's growing senior population. These options should include more single floor layouts as well as assisted living facilities. More housing options will allow seniors to remain in North Olmsted.

Residents felt that redevelopment options for housing should be examined, including the use of incentives or abatements for redevelopment. Higher end developments should also be promoted to attract higher income people.

5. What types of businesses and industries does the City need? Where?

Residents wanted to see more tax revenue generating types of business and industry. They felt that office and light industry should be encouraged. The City should pursue corporate headquarters, health care and bio medical industries, and higher learning institutions. Residents were clear that strip malls should be discouraged.

The City should work with the Chamber of Commerce to improve marketing and business relations. The City should seek businesses that are community partners and create an investment in the community. North Olmsted might consider offering incentives and target those companies looking to move out of the congestion of Cleveland.

6. How would you describe the quality of current parks and recreation facilities? What changes would you suggest?

Residents felt the current parks and recreation facilities could be improved and are not up to the standards set in neighboring communities. More green space is desired in the community. Many residents felt another major park is needed. North Olmsted's parks are often monopolized by one sport or another and are too programmed for general use. At North Olmsted Park, the children's play area could be improved and the northern half of the park seems underused. The park also needs more baseball fields with lighting.

The Rec Center should be upgraded. There is no facility in the community which offers fitness or wellness programs including classes and equipment. The outdoor pool at the Rec Center also needs enhancement. Barton/Bradley fields could be improved by the addition of parking and sidewalks to the area. Residents also questioned how the Springvale site could be better utilized. Some felt that the entryway to Springvale should be improved to better present the facility as an events center.

7. What or where are your top areas of traffic concern?

Residents were concerned with traffic along all of the City's major thoroughfares. In particular, residents named Clague Road, Columbia Road, Butternut Ridge Road, Stearns Road, and Lorain Road. Traffic congestion, deteriorating road conditions, and the number of curb cuts onto arterial roads were commonly cited as issues.

Along Clague Road, residents concerns included basic road conditions and congestion, the need for a turning lane, the lack of curbs, the dirt berms, and the inadequate and dangerous sidewalks. The roadway is a gateway into the community from 480 and should be improved to reflect a community entrance.

Issues along Butternut Ridge Road included traffic during school hours and access to the library and school sites, the lack of curbs and shoulders, the lack of a turning lane, and the need to repave the roadway.

8. Looking into the future, what is your vision for the City of North Olmsted?

North Olmsted will be a leader, a good example of the City, business community, and residents working together. The City will have a strong planning ethic, strong codes, and active enforcement of City regulations. City government will be focused into a civic center with modern facilities within the Golden Triangle.

The City will be thriving, vibrant, active, and attractive. It will have a positive image with community focal points, attention to streetscape elements, and attractive gateways and corridors. North Olmsted will be the city that reinvented itself – an example that other cities use to show how problems could be overcome.

North Olmsted will be a family friendly community. It will have well maintained properties, both commercial and residential. North Olmsted will be pedestrian friendly with curbs and sidewalks along all streets.

North Olmsted will have a healthy economy. The City will market itself in the region and bring in industry to increase tax revenues while discouraging increases in residents' taxes. The City will cooperate with the Chamber of Commerce, which will respond to resident concerns of commercial property maintenance and encourage involvement in the schools and community programs.

Economic Development

1. How would you describe economic development efforts in North Olmsted?

Simply stated, focus group participants felt there are no significant economic development efforts in North Olmsted. Participants compared economic development efforts to past

planning efforts in the community where plans had been developed but, ultimately, never adhered to by the City when pressured by developers.

2. What are obstacles to economic development in North Olmsted?

Participants felt there are several obstacles to economic development in the City. The lack of high quality and enforceable development standards has been one challenge. Historically, the City's zoning regulations and process allowed developers to build whatever they wanted, resulting in no one coherent look to the City in contrast to surrounding communities. Public buildings in North Olmsted have not added to a positive image, though the new library was cited as a good example of higher quality development the City should encourage.

The City's housing stock was identified as another potential obstacle to economic development. Employers often look at community amenities when choosing to locate in an area, particularly housing for their employees. With fewer opportunities for new development and aging infrastructure, the housing stock would not attract higher salaried residents. Instead, it is likely that families moving in to the community would be of a lesser income which translates into less money to support schools, churches, and community organizations.

Finally, participants described how the City is lacking good information about the businesses and industries in the community. There is no inventory of vacant or available sites or current database of existing commercial, office, and industrial uses. Therefore, it is difficult to plan for economic development without an understanding of existing City assets.

3. What are economic development opportunities in the City? How can economic development be fostered?

Focus group participants felt that an important first step in fostering economic development is to have accurate, baseline market data. The City needs an inventory of existing businesses and industries, vacant lands, and housing stock to have a clear understanding of the City's assets. Once baseline data is established, options can be considered with the goal of generating more tax revenue while protecting residents from tax increases. These options may include rezoning of land or offering incentives to businesses to locate in the community.

Economic development can be encouraged through improved marketing efforts. Participants felt North Olmsted has much to offer employers and employees. The City's location provides convenient access to interstates, the airport, and downtown, and its diverse commercial base allows residents to meet all of their day-to-day needs. There are also less tangible selling points such as being a family friendly City with a core of long time residents and caring neighbors with strong community values.

When locating in an area, businesses look not just at the economic climate of a community, but also amenities for its employees. Therefore, North Olmsted could benefit from the addition of certain facilities such as a cultural arts center, fitness center, improved senior facilities, and higher end housing. While there is not a lot of vacant land remaining for residential development, there are unused backlands that could be opened up for housing. Creating small pockets of high value homes could attract higher paid employees and help raise the value of surrounding areas.

4. What type of new industries or businesses do you feel should be pursued in planning for economic development? Are there existing niches that should be built upon?

Focus group participants felt that office development, light industry, and high tech businesses should be pursued while additional commercial growth should be limited. Large employers, whether corporate headquarters or branch offices, would provide more jobs, and higher end businesses would serve as amenities to existing residents and attract new residents.

North Olmsted should build upon its location in the region and convenience to major transportation routes. In particular, the west end has great potential for economic development. The City should consider strategies such as cooperative efforts with North Ridgeville by the I-480 interchange. Also, the City should inventory its vacant lands and ensure through zoning that economic development goals will be met with future development.

The City should also support existing businesses in the community. Redevelopment and rehabilitation efforts could be encouraged through low interest loans and subsidies.

5. What role should the Chamber of Commerce play in economic development?

Focus group participants felt that the Chamber of Commerce's role in economic development is primarily to support existing businesses so that they can succeed and grow in the community. It was not felt that the Chamber should be involved in business recruitment, nor does the Chamber have the necessary financial resources to undertake such an effort. However, the Chamber can assist with marketing by positively promoting the community amongst businesses and promoting those businesses that would provide services to local retailers. The Chamber should also reach out to more franchise businesses that are oftentimes reluctant to become involved or see the benefit of local Chamber membership.

The Chamber should work to improve its relationship with the City in order to create a better partnership. In the past, the perception has been that the City is more focused on resident concerns than business welfare, and that the business community has not been included in creating legislation that significantly impacts businesses. The Chamber can work more closely with the City to input on business issues that arise at an earlier point in the process.

Within the community, the Chamber should foster better relationships with community organizations and continue positive relationships with the schools. The Chamber can increase its visibility within the community by expanding its role through communications and sponsorship of more community events.

6. What role should the City play in economic development?

Focus group participants felt that the City should take a lead role in economic development, particularly in business recruitment, marketing, and outreach. The City should be looking at financial resources to help business growth and attract new development to the community. Participants felt that a full time economic development staff person was needed in the City to coordinate these activities.

The City should also improve its development process and work more closely with development applicants. It was felt that currently the process takes too long and that applicants need more guidance as to what to expect. The City needs to take a more business friendly approach and use the business friendly designation process to improve its practices.

Finally, the City should be more open to constructive communication with the Chamber of Commerce and business community. City staff and Council members should attend Chamber meetings as a forum to discuss economic development issues.

7. How would you describe successful economic development in the City?

Successful economic development would be characterized by a good balance between commercial, office, and light industry with a variety of businesses complimenting the community. Likewise, the community should include a good balance of residents of all ages and backgrounds to support the economy.

Successful economic development would occur as a result of an adopted Master Plan that sets forth not just long term goals, but also short term actions so that those goals can be met. The Plan should include provisions for better marketing and communication, funding, and logical zoning and development process. The Plan should be adhered to and able to weather the changes in the City Council and administration.

Development & Development Process

1. What are North Olmsted's strengths and assets?

Focus group participants felt a major strength of North Olmsted is its location, as it is close to the airport and highways in addition to the amenities of Lake Erie. North Olmsted is a moderate income community with a diversity of housing stock and excellent schools. The City has quality services including police, fire, and service departments, as well as access to a good parks system. The City has a strong commercial base with a regional mall that is growing and has been updated through the years.

2. What are North Olmsted's weaknesses and liabilities?

Participants felt a growing concern over residential property maintenance. As the housing stock grows older, poorly maintained homes devalue property values elsewhere in the community. The City has become more reactive than proactive to housing issues.

Other weaknesses included past development practices that reflect a lack of planning and the high level of commercial compared to other types of office and industrial development. Participants also had concern over commercial vacancies generated when tenants move to new sites instead of redeveloping existing sites.

3. How would you describe the development pattern in North Olmsted?

Some participants felt that the current land use pattern in the City developed in an unplanned, haphazard way. However, the City has more recently been taking stronger looks at proposals to encourage quality developments.

Others described the City's development pattern as rational or natural. Commercial development follows major thoroughfares while there are bigger nodes of development at intersections. This type of development has occurred undirected over time.

4. How would you describe the development potential for North Olmsted? Is such potential dependent upon particular factors?

Participants described the City's development potential as similar to that in other inner ring suburbs. While there is limited land on the west end for development, redevelopment will continue to be a priority. On the east end, participants felt that redevelopment efforts within Fairview Park may breed more redevelopment activity within North Olmsted.

There is potential for industrial development in the industrial park and areas on the west end. However, the demand for industrial space is impacted by the economy and North Olmsted's tax rate may be discouraging to industrial development. More activity on the west end may be spurred by the construction of the Crocker-Stearns extension. Development potential on the west end could be enhanced through acquisition and lot assembly of smaller parcels to create larger tracts of land for development.

5. What are the greatest challenges to development in North Olmsted? Are they physical, economic, procedural, etc.?

The greatest physical barrier to development in North Olmsted is the lack of large undeveloped tracts of land under single ownership. Where smaller vacant parcels are adjacent, they should be aggregated and proper access should be ensured so that they can be developed.

Participants cited zoning as another challenge to development in the City. The zoning map should be evaluated as to the needs and proportions of various types of land uses and adjusted as needed. Furthermore, the zoning code and City's development process could be modified to be more user friendly.

A final challenge to development identified by participants was the need for green space preservation. While development is important in providing for the tax base of the community, open space preservation is also an important goal. The City should examine its open space resources to determine what lands should be preserved as development occurs.

6. How helpful are the City's processes and policies in responding to development proposals? How could the City's development process be improved?

Focus group participants felt that the City's process has recently improved in responding to development proposals with the addition of a planner to liaise between the City, applicant, and concerned residents. Participants felt it is critical to have a person in place who can guide the applicant through the process, clarify any questions, give input as to the expectations of the various boards and commissions, and provide other constructive feedback. Participants also felt the Building and Engineering Departments were helpful, and they liked the development packets that are given to applicants with necessary forms and a flowchart of the process. However, they did recommend providing more information in digital form and putting the contents of the development packet on the City website for easier access.

Participants also recommended creating standard design guidelines through legislation that would allow Planning Commission more precise standards for evaluating architecture and design. Participants felt that clear guidelines are preferable when creating a development plan as design elements are closely related to the economics of feasibility for projects. While guidelines may create more paperwork, they give applicants a set of expectations and reduce surprises in the process. Design guidelines would also greatly contribute to enhancing the aesthetics in the community and also help provide consistency when dealing with issues of the commercial to residential transition.

Participants had lengthy discussion as to the roles and timing of the Architectural Review Board (ARB) and Planning Commission. In the current process, applicants appear before the ARB first, which has sometimes created the situation where the ARB is put in the position of dealing with planning issues for which it is not prepared. In other cases, the recommendations of ARB and the Planning Commission may slightly differ. The consensus amongst participants was that combining the functions of the two boards into one may help streamline the development process. In this case, the skills found on the ARB would need to be represented on Planning Commission. This merger would help to reduce the number of appearances before the City's boards and commissions and provide for greater consistency.

Participants felt other changes should be made in the City's development process to make it more user-friendly. They described the multi-layered approval process and the overlapping jurisdictions between the Planning Commission and the Building, Zoning and Development (BZD) Committee of Council, as the Planning Commission is a board of recommendation while final plan approval rests with the BZD. Applicants are frustrated by the ability of the BZD to significantly modify or disapprove projects that have already been through a lengthy and detailed planning process with the Planning Commission and other boards. They feel that the BZD is more likely to react to specific resident concerns and individual needs when making changes to plans rather than looking at the project's overall impact on the general welfare. Rather than having Council input at this late stage, it was recommended to include a Council representative on the Planning Commission and reduce the BZD review step.

Participants made a variety of other recommendations related to the City's development process. For example, they saw a great benefit to having informal meetings between the City, developers, and affected residents to discuss proposals early in the process. They also believed the City should have tax incentive information available on the City website. Finally, participants were concerned over the number of variances that are granted in North Olmsted. They felt applicants must be required to show actual hardships, rather than allowing variances to become a routine part of the development process.

7. What should the City be doing to promote economic development?

Participants felt that the City should focus its economic development efforts on marketing and outreach. The City may consider using print and electronic media such as email and the City website to market available sites and provide all necessary zoning codes, regulations, and applications related to development. A streamlined development process would also improve economic development efforts. The City's Community Improvement Corporation should be more fully utilized and funding options should be considered for economic development.

The City needs to have an inventory of all available developable lands in the community and existing conditions data about the community. The City should promote economic development in accordance with recommendations set for in the Master Plan or ensuing plans aimed at economic development. These plans should be continually evaluated in terms of progress and activities should be measured against plan goals. Furthermore, these plans should have the buy-in of community residents, who understand that economic development serves their interests by lowering tax rates.

Finally, participants indicated that improving the aesthetic character of the City could also assist with economic development efforts. Streetscaping and design guidelines were two recommendations for creating an identifiable character in the community, starting with City owned buildings and properties.

8. How would you describe the housing market in North Olmsted? Are there areas of need?

Participants described how the housing stock in North Olmsted reflects the City's middle income image. There is a lack of upscale housing in the community, and more frequently, new families moving into the City's subdivisions consider them to be starter homes.

Participants felt that the City should look at providing more housing options including upscale housing, senior housing, and mixed housing developments with different types of housing located together. The City should consider creating basic housing maintenance standards to ensure homes remain in sound repair.

Social & Educational Services

1. What are North Olmsted's greatest strengths and assets?

Focus group participants felt the City has much to offer its residents including high quality schools, the new library, senior center, and bus line. The City's location provides easy access to the airport, downtown, and outlying areas, as well as convenience for all of residents' day to day needs. There are also less tangible strengths such as diversity of population, strong community organizations, and citizens who are involved in the community.

2. What are North Olmsted's greatest weaknesses and liabilities?

Focus group participants believed that many of the City's weaknesses stem from past development practices. They felt the City has a very eclectic, non-uniform look which can be unattractive, and it lacks a town center or focal point of community activity. North Olmsted's period of rapid growth is long past, and the City must now deal with issues of aging infrastructure and housing stock while other nearby communities are newly developing.

Participants described how the change in the City's demographics have resulted in issues related to accommodating a growing diversity of cultures and providing services, facilities, and housing for seniors. Also, certain public facilities have become inadequate over time such as the post office, which is neither business nor resident friendly.

3. Can you describe the needs for social services that exist in the community? What types of social services and programs are available to residents?

Participants felt that the need for social services is growing in the community. Demographics of the community have shifted, so that currently thirty percent of the school aged population is at or near the poverty level and the proportion is rising. There is a clear need for more services aimed at youth, special needs children, and seniors.

North Olmsted has a variety of programs already in place. In addition to extra curricular activities provided through schools, the youth diversion programs provide activity for school aged kids. Special Children First has uncovered a tremendous need for special needs programming and is a facility unique to the west side. The City's senior center reaches over 450 seniors in the community every week.

While there are excellent programs available in the community, service providers echo common concerns of operating without the needed financial resources, facilities, or staff. This can have the impact of reducing services and programs that are not geared towards meeting emergency needs.

Participants described the need for more programs aimed at youth. Affordable traditional day care programs are needed to adequately prepare children to enter the school system, as well as programs for special needs. As more parents are working, quality after school and summer programs including activities and tutoring are required.

4. Are there gaps in the services and/or facilities? Are there populations who you feel are not being sufficiently served?

Participants described the growing facility needs of the City's school system. A new middle school is needed, yet the financing of such a project is a significant barrier with declining state funding and the difficulty of asking the public for more money. The schools have a long term interest in a new auditorium and athletic complex; however, they must first consider more fundamental operating issues before facilities. Participants felt it is difficult to gain public support for such efforts.

As demographics in the community change, participants felt that service provision needs to be reevaluated. With an aging population, the City will struggle to encourage a healthy mix of residents of all ages. The City must maintain a good balance and attract new families in order to continually invigorate the community. One positive sign is that a high percentage of parents of children now entering the school system are first time parents.

5. How would you describe the educational resources of the community?

Participants felt that North Olmsted offers quality academic programs as well as extra curricular activities and athletics to students. Additionally, Polaris offers a comprehensive vocational school program beyond traditional education, which provides guidance to students for establishing career goals. It was felt the general public does not fully understand the value of this type of education which provides vocational skills to students without detracting from their ability to go to college. Adult education opportunities can be pursued through Polaris as well as local community colleges, libraries, churches, and other providers.

6. How could the partnerships between the city, schools, social service agencies, faith community, and residents be improved?

Participants felt strongly that greater coordination of services amongst all the various service providers is needed. They described how the lack of staff and resources makes it difficult to take time coordinate efforts, even though this coordination would be a benefit for all. Participants believed they need an inventory of resources to tap in the community as the service providers are the first layer of communication with the City's residents. There needs to be one source or clearinghouse for obtaining information in the City.

Additionally, participants felt that there is a tremendous volunteer potential in the community. They stated that people wanted to be involved in community efforts, but that they often do not know how to beyond making financial contributions.

City Council must become more engaged in making effective partnerships within the community. A more proactive Council could improve relationships and initiate action with social and educational service providers. The City leadership should also look into the possibility of creating a non-profit group such as a community development corporation to look at various issues including senior housing, transportation, and other services.

7. Looking into the future, what types of programs, activities or events are needed to promote a greater sense of community in North Olmsted?

Focus group participants felt that communication is one key to promoting a greater sense of community in North Olmsted. They recommended coordinating activities in the City with a community calendar, making better use of the City's tv channel and website, and creating a regular City newsletter.

Community events can promote a greater sense of identity in North Olmsted including the Homecoming festivities, parades, concerts and talent shows, block parties, and other events. Activities should be available for people of all ages who want to be involved. New and creative ideas should be explored to energize the community and appeal to the City's diverse population.

Parks and recreation can also provide residents opportunities to interact. Athletic programs as well as bike paths linking neighborhoods are a few ways to connect residents in the community. The performing arts can also promote connectivity. A community theater facility would provide space for residents to gather and provide an important artistic outlet. Many of these activities cut across age and cultural divisions and would serve to promote diversity in the community.

Open Space & Recreation

1. What are the City's greatest strengths and assets?

Focus group participants felt that people are one of North Olmsted's greatest strengths. The diversity of residents adds to the fabric of the community, and there is a sense of volunteerism in the community. Participants felt that the degree of volunteer efforts in community organizations and athletics was unmatched compared to other communities.

Participants also felt the City's location is an asset, with access to highways, the airport, and a bus line which provides transportation downtown. The City also provides convenient access to a variety of shopping and restaurants.

Other strengths named include a quality educational system; good City services including police, fire, service department, and human resources department; and recreational facilities such as the Rec Center, Springvale Golf Course, and Barton/Bradley soccer fields.

2. What are the City's greatest weaknesses and liabilities?

Focus group participants described how the community has changed due to lack of planning and aging infrastructure and facilities. Development has occurred at a high density, particularly in the commercial corridor, with little green space preservation. Road conditions have also deteriorated over time. Other facilities need to be updated or renovated, such as the Rec Center, in order to be competitive with other communities in the region.

Participants felt frustration at watching the successes of other communities that more actively engaged in planning and community development. However, they felt that creating a municipal planning department was the first step in turning things around.

Finally, participants felt that there is a lack of common goals and objectives amongst the City's leadership. They believed that political infighting was preventing positive actions and outcomes in the community. The situation could be improved by taking a more proactive approach with residents and having constructive conversations generating solutions rather than dwelling in negativity.

3. What types of open space and recreational amenities does the City offer?

Focus group participants felt the City had numerous recreational assets including the Recreation Center, Barton/Bradley soccer fields, Springvale Golf Course, North Olmsted Park, Clague Park, and bike paths. North Olmsted Park is kept clean and attractive is heavily used. Recent improvements to Springvale's facility have made it a more valuable community asset. Notable improvements to the Rec Center have also been made in the past year. Bike paths are also a great amenity in the community; however, they are not maintained or publicized as they should be.

4. What are deficiencies with current open space and recreation offerings?

Participants felt that before the City considered acquiring more parklands and recreation facilities, management of existing resources should be improved. The City staff is already stretched thin in maintaining its parks. They also felt that the City depends too heavily on the assistance of volunteers and community organizations to maintain and operate its open space and recreation programs.

Participants also recommended improving the signage to the City's parks and facilities. Signs would help with way-finding, especially for people who come into the community from out of town.

5. Where are more open space and park areas needed? What types of recreational programs or facilities are needed?

Participants felt that the City's parks and recreation facilities could be improved and expanded. However, first an inventory of the City's lands and programs should be conducted so that the City understands its available resources.

Participants indicated current parks and facilities could be expanded. Barton/Bradley could be expanded using adjacent City property. Additionally, Rec Center offerings should be expanded as there is insufficient room for classes and meetings. Participants agreed that more facilities and programs should be available for people of all ages. This may require future additions of fitness equipment, walking tracks, and other facilities aimed at seniors.

Participants saw the need for both passive and active open space areas. While the Metroparks provides many acres of parkland for resident enjoyment, participants felt that more passive parks in or adjacent to neighborhoods should be encouraged which are less programmed and provide space for unplanned activity. Participants also wanted more outdoor areas for organized activities such as baseball, basketball, and tennis. They supported developing a field complex with all lighted fields for softball and baseball including a central concession stand.

6. What should be the major short term goals for parks and recreation in the City?

Participants had many ideas for the future improvements of the City's parks and recreation facilities. However, they saw the need to prioritize and divide such improvements between short term efforts and long term efforts. Short term goals were focused on dealing with immediate problems or deficiencies. For example, the outdoor pool at the Rec Center needs immediate attention, as well as the compressors at the ice rink. Other short term goals are improving the Barton/Bradley fields with irrigation, providing for outdoor tennis courts, and completing the unfinished projects and improving the parking and facilities at North Olmsted Park. Participants felt another park should be a priority, but only after improvements are made in maintaining the parks. They recommended that all park and recreation maintenance be the responsibility of one City department for a more efficient process.

Participants felt that these short term goals need to be achieved quickly and show results so that residents can see positive outcomes. They believed the momentum from these improvements would carry over into longer term goals.

7. What should be the major long term goals for parks and recreation in the City?

Participants' major long term goal to improve the City's parks and recreation offerings is the construction of a new facility that would accommodate a fitness center, senior center, and community center. Such a facility would include space for indoor group exercise, a walking track, basketball courts, tennis courts, weights, classrooms, kitchen facilities, and an auditorium. The City should begin its planning and gather resident input to get the process moving.

In addition to considering more lands neighborhood parks, the City should look into expansions to activities at existing sites. The land behind the Rec Center could be used for

a variety of recreational activities as well as area by Springvale Golf Course. In general, the City should have a greater focus on parks and recreation.

Students

1. What are some positive things that North Olmsted Schools offer its students? What do you like about the schools?

Overall, students had a positive image of North Olmsted Schools. A wide variety of courses and programs are offered to students, including AP classes and post-secondary options and other classes geared towards college. They felt the school system has teachers and staff that are high quality and accessible to students.

The school facilities are spread throughout the community and located within easy access to residents. The schools encourage community interaction, actively seeking student input and using its student resources to promote volunteerism. The SITES program is one example of a model program for the region that the school system offers.

North Olmsted Schools offer a variety of extra curricular activities. Students feel that the sports programs are improving, in part due to a dedicated coaching staff.

2. What are some things North Olmsted Schools could do better?

Students offered suggestions for improving the school's curriculum. Students felt that honors courses needed to be more challenging, there need to be a more diverse offering of AP courses, and that more college prep courses structured as independent studies should be offered. They felt that the foreign language program could be improved by encouraging more students to take courses beyond the minimum requirements and offering classes at a younger age. Students were also concerned that certain departments such as the arts and music are less of a priority and are in danger of cutbacks without more dedicated funding.

Students felt that school facilities, particularly the Middle School, need to be renovated and improved. Students also believed that school events should be promoted community-wide to encourage greater community involvement.

3. What do you think the City of North Olmsted has to offer its younger residents?

Students felt there are a lot of places to go for younger residents in North Olmsted, such as restaurants and shopping areas. Many of these places also provide employment opportunities. Additionally, North Olmsted Park, Barton/Bradley soccer fields, and the Rec Center offer young people recreational activities.

Students liked the sense of community in North Olmsted. They believed residential developments create close knit and safe neighborhoods. Students also felt positively about the City's safety services, which provide friendly law enforcement and school involvement.

4. What do you think North Olmsted is lacking?

While North Olmsted has plenty of shopping and dining opportunities, students felt that there are few things to do in the community that are active and low or no cost for younger residents. Their ideas included providing a place for young people to work out by including

fitness equipment at the Rec Center, attracting a movie theater to the City, and providing other types of activities for all ages.

5. What types of programs or activities do you think are needed for younger residents?

Students were looking for more active types of recreation including a fitness or wellness center, walking and biking trails, and community based sports open to people of all ages and abilities. They felt the skate park is a good example of the type of unique opportunities they would like to have more of in the community. Students also believed that more green space should be preserved for passive uses and that spectator areas should be reserved or constructed in the more active areas.

Students were also looking for more opportunities for creative activities such as craft or other types of classes. Classes may be organized through local craft or home stores, the Community Cabin, or the new library. They were also looking for more places to gather and hang out with other young people such as a game room, lounge, or club.

Students also said the City could do a better job of getting the word out of what there is to do in the community. They believed that given the opportunity, there would be willing volunteers in the community to help organize and publicize events.

6. What kinds of businesses and industries do you feel are needed in the community?

Students described how the location of the City and the mall has attracted a lot of commercial development to the area. However, they felt that North Olmsted needs industries that bring in more tax dollars and more office buildings that create better jobs. Some students wanted more upscale businesses such as restaurants and art stores and fewer strip mall developments and car dealerships. Other students wanted a Target and more thrift shops.

7. Do you plan on living in North Olmsted after high school or college graduation? Why or why not? What are the factors you considered?

Half of the student participants indicated they did not plan on living in North Olmsted following graduation, while the other half said they may or may not consider living in the City. Those that said they would not live in North Olmsted most frequently cited the lack of career opportunities in the City. They felt there are mostly minimum wage jobs, few opportunities for young professionals, and a long commute to locations where jobs are available. Others were looking for warmer weather or places with more to offer people outside of the family demographic.

Others indicated that they might consider living in North Olmsted because of the sense of community, and comfortable, safe atmosphere of the City. They said North Olmsted is a good place to raise a family with good schools, family related activities, neighborliness, convenience to retail, and community diversity.

8. Looking into the future, what is your vision for the City of North Olmsted?

The schools will remain a priority in the City in the future, offering top quality academic and athletic programs and attracting new families to the community. The schools will continue to cooperate with the community, sharing facilities for joint use.

The community will have a facelift including improvements to streets, improvements to commercial storefronts, renovations to apartments, and overall property maintenance. The perception of the City will change from that of an aging community to that of an up and coming community offering new opportunities.

The City will provide a balance between residential areas and businesses. More opportunities will be created for young professionals. More people will be drawn to North Olmsted, attracted by the mall, entertainment, and community events geared towards families and people of all ages.

Senior Citizens

1. What types of programs or facilities are available for senior residents?

Focus group participants said a variety of activities are offered to senior residents through the North Olmsted Senior Center. They include activities such as arts, music, and quilting, as well as exercise programs. The senior center also offers a hot lunch program twice a week, tax assistance, and computer classes.

North Olmsted's paratransit system (NOCOP) was cited as a wonderful program which provides seniors with transportation to the senior center and appointments for a minimal fee. Without this service, many seniors would not otherwise have the ability to participate in senior center programs.

Seniors also value the City's Are You Ok program run through the Police Department. With this free program, the police call seniors every day at a certain time, and they will visit their homes to check on them if the call is unanswered.

2. What types of senior programs or facilities are needed?

Participants felt a new or expanded senior center facility is needed to accommodate the City's senior citizens, and that the City needs to plan for the seniors of the future. Participants felt that the next generation of seniors will want new and different types of programs. They believed that funding sources for new facilities could potentially come from grants or other government programs. They felt that new programs and facilities did not have to result in increasing residents' tax burden, and cited the hot lunch program as an example.

Participants did suggest that more programs in the future should be oriented towards men, and that the health program could be expanded to include a better inventory of available resources. They felt a survey should be conducted within the community to gauge interests in various types of senior center programs, and in order to see what future seniors will want.

Finally, participants felt that communication should be improved in order to better inform residents of senior center programs and activities. As all seniors do not use or have access to the internet, they would prefer receiving information via newsletter. While there is a senior center newsletter, participants felt that the rest of the community is more likely to get involved with activities if there was a quarterly citywide newsletter. Such a newsletter should include information about all City events and programs, and could be funded through selling advertising space.

3. What types of housing does the City need?

Focus group participants indicated that seniors are interested in ranch style homes with one floor designs including downstairs baths. This would allow seniors to remain in their own homes for as long as possible. Participants felt that seniors would rather adapt their existing homes or move into an addition of their families' homes than experience the trauma of moving to a separate facility.

Participants did feel there was a need for a senior facility with affordable independent and assisted living options. While these facilities provide excellent services to seniors, participants were concerned about the cost of living.

4. What types of businesses or industries does the City need? Where?

Participants described how there is very limited land left for development in the City. They felt that landowners needed to be encouraged to redevelop and reinvest in their properties.

Participants would like to see the industrial park fully developed in order to enhance the tax base. More corporate office and professional employment opportunities are also needed to provide jobs and keep young people in the community. As with the greater region, there are few opportunities for college graduates in North Olmsted.

Participants also felt that more medical facilities could be provided in North Olmsted to serve the entire west side. Such facilities could provide convenient, specialized health care for seniors and save seniors from long commutes to receive services.

5. How would you rate the City's parks and recreation facilities? What facilities or programs should be added or modified?

Participants said they like the senior center setting in North Olmsted Park. They felt the park could be improved with outdoor areas for activities such as bocce ball or shuffleboard. They also felt the parking areas could be improved as they can be inaccessible when activities are going on at the cabin or senior center. They said that the walking path at the park is not frequently used, but that seniors often walk indoors at the mall when the weather is poor. Seniors also enjoy swimming at the Recreation Center.

Participants were interested in more intergenerational activities that would appeal to a variety of age groups. Such classes or programs could bring in youth as well as those adults that might be interested in future senior center programs. Once again, participants recommended creating a survey to determine what types of parks and recreation facilities the community wants.

Master Plan Public Meeting – September 30, 2004

Resident Survey & Comment Form

What do you think should be the City’s main priorities related to the Plan? (8 total responses)

	High Priority	Moderate Priority	Low Priority	Not A Priority
A. Guiding the quality of development	7			
B. Street and infrastructure maintenance	6	1		
C. Encouraging economic development	2	4	1	1
D. Property maintenance enforcement	2	6		
E. Improving/expanding recreation facilities	1	5	1	
F. Improving the appearance of the City	7	1		
G. Green space preservation	8			
H. Encouraging transit/transportation options	1	2	3	1
I. Other: • Protect existing housing areas				

What one action or activity do you think should be the City’s highest priority that would improve the community? Other comments:

- What is to be done about empty stores in the strip malls? Do we need all the strip malls we have on Lorain Road?
- We need trees. Clean up Lorain Road. There are too many strip malls. We need to keep the trees we have and add more where there are none. We need trees and coverage at Lorain Road where the police parking lot is.
- Our spending on frivolous lawsuits is an embarrassment for me and the rest of the taxpayers. We have such a poor image to the rest of the communities. With such high taxes and high water rates, I would expect more from this city. Too much congestion at 5:00 p.m. on Great Northern Blvd and on Saturdays. Property maintenance is another huge issue to me. City revision of zoning maps is another hot item, mainly flood zoning.
- It is important to have our city an attractive place to enter (ex. Lorain Road with trees, etc as Fairview Park has done; Brookpark Road needs attended to). Then businesses will be attracted to our community. Somehow it is important to have our beautiful tree lined streets with pretty homes highlighted, as opposed to making Great Northern Mall the only feature of our city. Encouraging retail to maintain their properties, perhaps awards or contests or newspaper features is extremely important. Seeing the check list above makes me know that each of the above has a high priority. Having more community involvement with planting, beautifying, etc. would be wonderful.
- Protecting community’s housing areas from further encroachment by commercial/retail development. We’ve had enough! No recreation development near residential neighborhoods unless nearby neighbors and other residents agree. Do like idea of park-like areas for extra land use as per previous Master Plan. Do like idea of improving appearance of the city.
- Link the Metroparks with the city – east, west and south. New senior center. Move after school to park.

