

THE LORAIN  
COMPREHENSIVE  
PLAN  
LORAIN, OH





**TABLE OF  
CONTENTS**

**1**

Introduction

**2**

Existing  
Conditions

**3**

Public Input

**4**

Trends & Best  
Practices

**5**

Plan  
Framework

**6**

Implementation



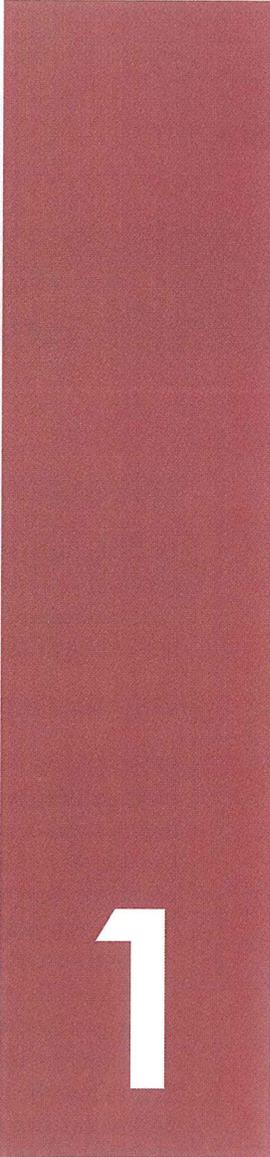
## THE PLAN'S MISSION

*Lorain is a city that is struggling to define itself. The city's reliance on a fading industrial sector has left it scrambling to adapt to the 21st century economy. The loss of middle-class jobs hurt local retailers. Residents moved out, homes have been abandoned.*

*This wasn't always the path forward for Lorain. This was once a city of prosperity and hope, upper-middle class wealth and optimism. And Lorain has much to build on. Leveraging the lakefront, the riverfront, historic neighborhoods, and Broadway Avenue can and should be the building blocks for Lorain moving forward.*

*This Plan, and the process that accompanied its creation, will help guide Lorain as it seeks to redefine itself. It's a comprehensive approach, outlining broad city-wide strategies, and specific site recommendations. It's also just the beginning. As Lorain continues to move forward, this set of strategies will be one piece in the larger set of tools in the reemerging region.*

*While the city relied on heavy industry for much of the last century, the next generations will see a broader mix of uses and opportunities that embrace the natural and historic resources of this once-thriving city in order to succeed again. With efforts underway in the city to reclaim abandoned brownfields and efforts throughout the county to relink people to lakefront, this is truly the time for the rediscovery and reemergence of Lorain.*

A thick, vertical red bar is positioned on the right side of the page. At the bottom of this bar is a large white number '1'.

# 1

# Introduction

*This chapter introduces the purpose, overview, and framework of the Comprehensive Plan.*



# INTRODUCTION

## OVERVIEW

In 2016, the City of Lorain initiated a process to update its Comprehensive Plan. The following is a review of why cities plan.

### Why do cities plan?

Cities plan to better understand their challenges and opportunities, define a vision and goals for the future, and to establish and prioritize steps to achieve them. After a plan has been adopted, city leaders and staff work to implement the recommendations of the plan, while guiding development and making decisions that follow the plan. As codified ordinances and policies are changed and infrastructure and private development is constructed, a community will reap the benefits of a cohesive planning effort.

The planning process can help city leaders make informed decisions by defining and prioritizing community goals and aspirations. This is especially true for complicated decisions such as deciding where development should be encouraged and where infrastructure improvements should be made.

### What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A comprehensive plan is a broad policy document intended to guide decision making related to long

term development and growth. Comprised of a policy framework, land use recommendations, and redevelopment strategies, a plan guides the physical, social, and economic development of the municipality and its environs. A comprehensive plan guides city officials, community organizations, and both private and public development entities. A comprehensive plan is implemented over time through many distinct decisions including annual budgeting, departmental work programs, rezoning, and subdivision of land.

A comprehensive plan is the chief policy instrument for:

- The administration of zoning and subdivision regulations;
- The location and classification of streets and thoroughfares;
- The location and construction of public and semi-public buildings and related community facilities and infrastructure (water, storm and sanitary sewers, gas, etc.);
- Promoting economic development;
- The acquisition and development of public and semi-public properties such as parks and open spaces; and
- The initiation of new programs, such as those in the areas of

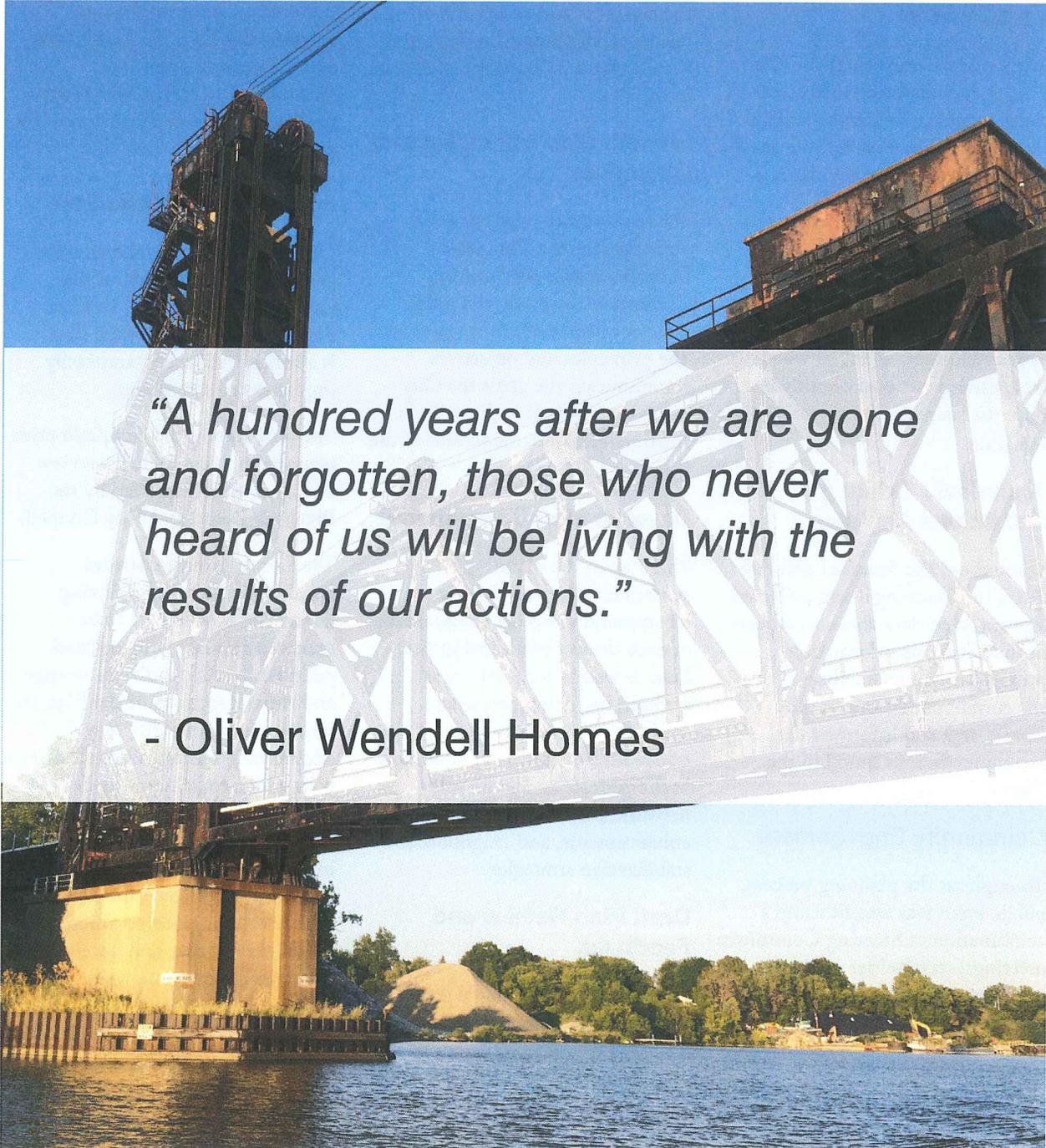
housing rehabilitation and economic development, to address pressing community needs (*Source: Ohio Planning and Zoning Law*).

This document is not a new plan; rather, it is an update to Lorain's past planning efforts. Over the life of this Plan, it should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis to ensure that it meets the changing needs of the City.

### Why produce a Comprehensive Plan?

A comprehensive plan is a blueprint that defines a community vision and provides the framework to guide the coordination of multiple plans and infrastructure systems. The result is a unified approach where the combined changes in policies, city code, and zoning help to achieve common community goals.

In many communities, the traditional approach to planning is to study specific aspects or systems of the city separately, such as the thoroughfare network or water and sewer systems, and develop plans for those systems. Such plans are reactive in nature, building upon assumptions made in previous plans and allow only for incremental improvements to each system. Instead, this Plan is proactive and cohesive approach to the future of Lorain.



*“A hundred years after we are gone and forgotten, those who never heard of us will be living with the results of our actions.”*

**- Oliver Wendell Homes**



# PLANNING PROCESS

## OVERVIEW

The Lorain Comprehensive Plan process included technical research, public engagement, and a review of best practices to develop informed strategies and recommendations.

The planning process (Figures 1.1 and 1.2), was developed at the beginning of the project. Given the breadth and complexity of the Plan, this process helped guide project activities, many of which were carried out concurrently in order to maintain the overall project schedule.

## Technical / Existing Conditions Analysis

Throughout the Summer and Fall of 2016, the Planning Team collected and analyzed data about all aspects of the City. This information provided an understanding of the current conditions in the Lorain area and informed the recommendations found in the Plan.

## Community Engagement

Throughout the planning process, public input was sought using a combination of Steering Committee meetings, stakeholder meetings, public meetings, and online engagement to gain insight into

the concerns and needs of Lorain residents. This helped to form the development of recommendations in the Plan.

## Identify Plan Principles and Objectives

The overarching principles and objectives for the Plan were formulated with the Steering Committee, based on the public input received early in the process. The principles and objectives communicate the goals the City hopes to accomplish through the creation and implementation of the Plan.

## Develop Plan Components

This step in the planning process involved developing recommendations for components of each district identified in the Plan as well as for the City as a whole, including proposed land uses, upgrades to the transportation network, expansion of the pedestrian and bicycle network, park and public space enhancements, and neighborhood stabilization strategies.

## Draft Plan Review and Feedback

Perhaps the most integral part of the planning process, this step

followed an iterative process allowing the Steering Committee and the general public an opportunity to review and provide feedback on the draft version of the Plan.

## Final Plan and Adoption

Once the Plan components were completed, compilation of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan document began. The final Plan is a concise, coherent, and easily implemented document.

The final step in the comprehensive planning process includes review and approval of the Plan by the Planning Board and City Council.

The Lorain Comprehensive Land Use Plan will be a living document. It will need to be reviewed annually and updated periodically. As conditions change and various sections of the Plan are implemented, the City may find additional projects and/or strategies with which to achieve the desired goals and objectives. Therefore, the images and recommendations in this document are meant to be flexible while providing a framework for understanding the needs, perspective, and development priorities of the community.

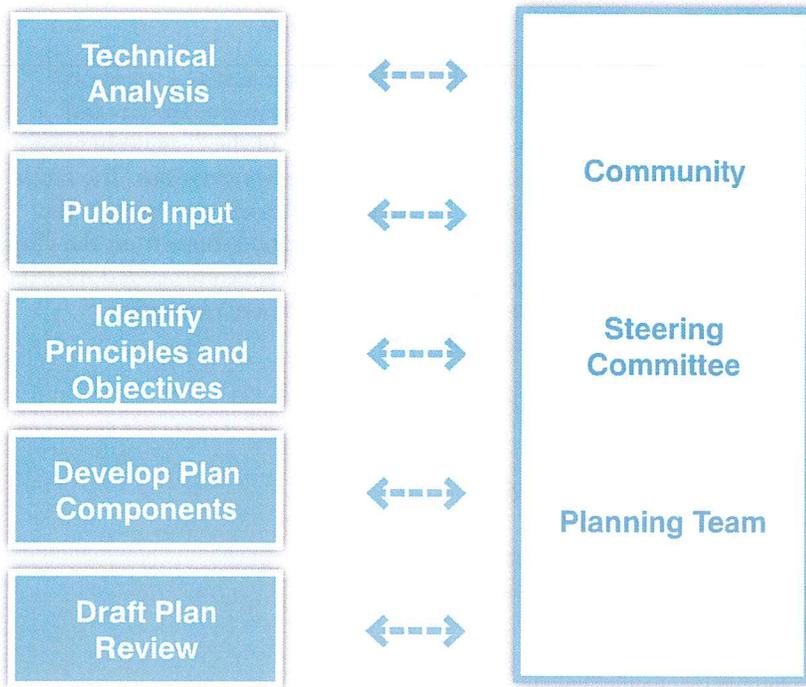


Figure 1.1: Planning Process Overview

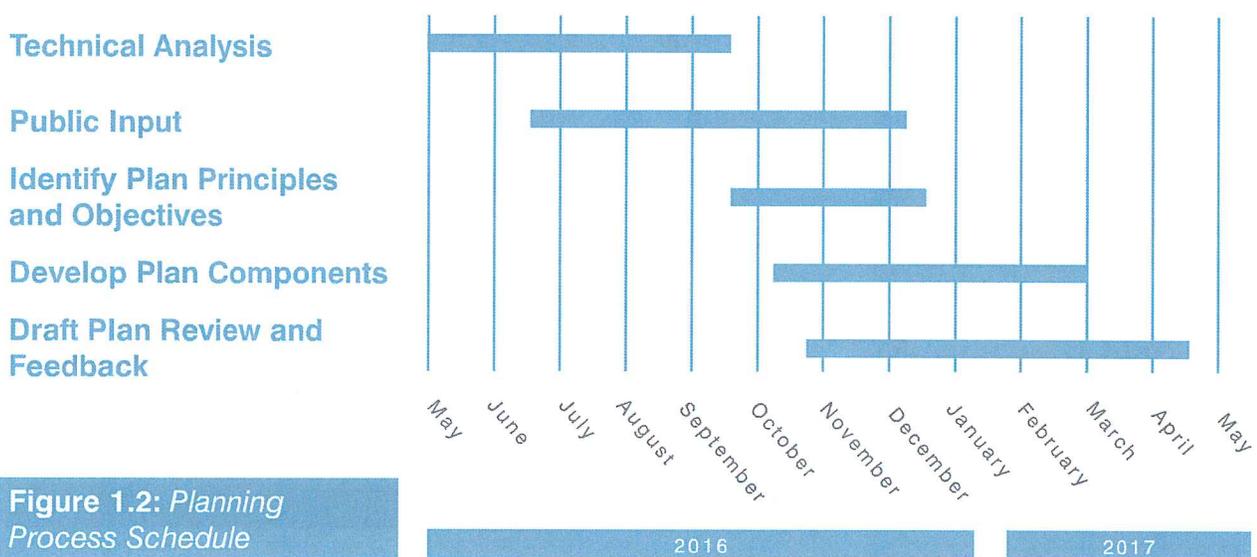


Figure 1.2: Planning Process Schedule



# PLAN OVERVIEW

## PLAN STRUCTURE

The Lorain Comprehensive Plan is composed of six chapters.

Recommendations for preserving Lorain's character while simultaneously spurring new development are found throughout the Plan, each supported by actionable goals in the form of strategies and action steps that are summarized in Chapter 6.

### Chapter 1 - Introduction

This chapters include the introduction of the planning process, the plan framework, existing conditions, and a description of the public input process and results for the Plan.

### Chapter 2 - Existing Conditions

The existing conditions result from technical analysis that was validated and confirmed by both the public and the steering committee.

### Chapter 3 - Public Input

The public input section highlights results gathered throughout the planning process as they relate to differing Plan elements, ensuring that the Plan's final strategies reflect the wants and needs of Lorain residents.

### Chapter 4

This chapter highlights trends and best practices which may be crafted to apply to challenges facing Lorain. This chapter analyzes cases across the nation where localities have implemented planning strategies to address shifting demographics, vacant land, and other factors relevant to the economic, social, and physical needs of Lorain.

### Chapter 5

This section is meant to provide short-term and long-term implementable policies in the context of the larger scale goals for the future of Lorain.

### Chapter 6

This chapter acts as a workbook to aid the implementation and fulfillment of the Comprehensive Plan's recommendations. The tables found in this chapter include the strategies and actions from the Plan, along with a recommended timeline to complete each initiative.

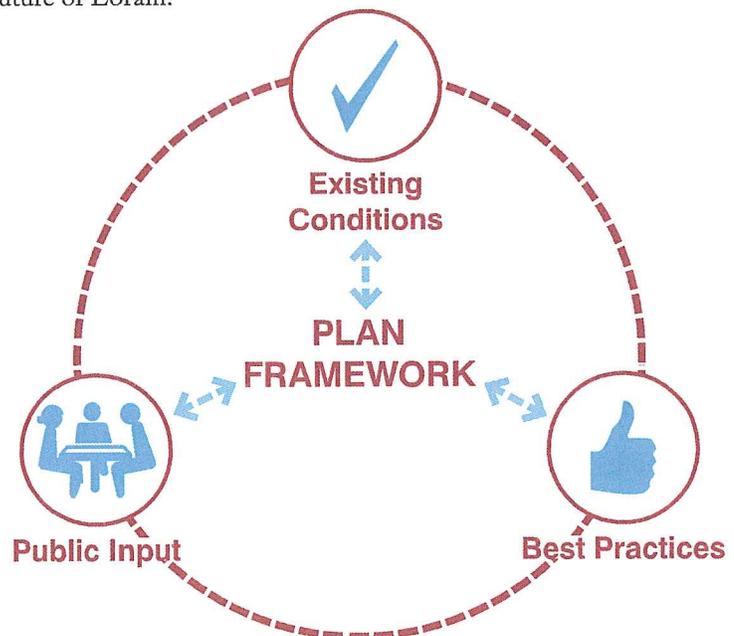


Figure 1.3: Plan Structure and Framework

# 2

## Existing Conditions

*The existing conditions presented in the following chapter were informed by an analysis of data sources and observations of the City made by the project team. The analysis was verified by the project Steering Committee throughout the planning process.*



# RESIDENTS

## OVERVIEW

At just over 63,000 residents, Lorain remains one of the ten largest communities in Ohio. Over the past two decades, Lorain has been hit hard by changes in the local, regional, and global economy. Specifically, the decline of industrial employment and complementary industries has led to a low median household income, compared to both nearby locations and statewide. This decline in employment also helps explain Lorain's low home ownership rates and lower median home values.

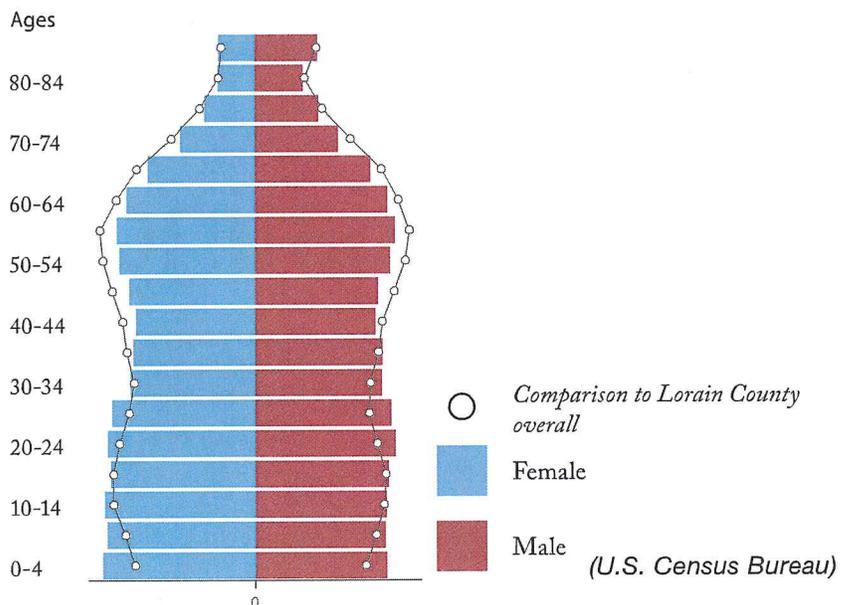
### Population Distribution

Table 2.1 and Figure 2.1 show that Lorain generally has a younger population, compared to selected geographies. A younger population distribution will guide a range of land use decisions for the City, from the demand for schools, social services, and amenities, to specific housing needs.

	Population	Median Age	Median HH Income
Lorain	63,108	37.5	\$34,300
Elyria	54,635	39.4	\$41,315
Lorain County	302,925	41.1	\$52,935
Ohio	11,610,194	39.6	\$49,011

*Lorain's young population and low median household income will guide some of the challenges facing the City, including generating sufficient tax revenue. (U.S. Census Bureau)*

**Table 2.1: Local and Regional Demographics**



**Figure 2.1: Population Distribution**

# EMPLOYEES

## OVERVIEW

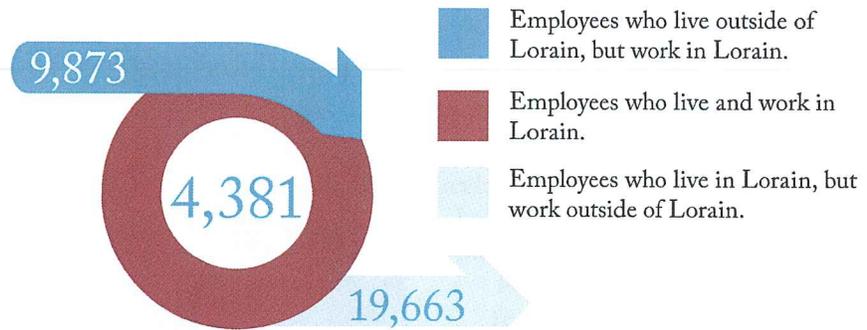
Like almost every city in Ohio, Lorain collects a significant amount of its revenue through income taxes. It is important to understand both the location of employment for Lorain residents, along with trends in the workforce, since both influence and shape city revenues.

### Employment Distribution

According to the most recent data available from the census, a significant majority of working Lorain residents don't actually work in the City of Lorain. Lorain does have an income tax rate of 2.5%, meaning that residents who work outside the City in a jurisdiction that has a rate less than 2.5% pay the difference to the City of Lorain. Even though the City captures revenues from some residents who work outside of the City, it would benefit from increased, high-paying jobs located within the City.

### Employment Trends

The decline of industry is reflected in workforce statistics. The fall of manufacturing employment has been supplemented by an increased share of employment in both the healthcare and social assistance and wholesale and retail sectors. Income tax revenues can vary in the healthcare and social assistance sectors, but are generally lower in both the wholesale and retail sectors.



*Inflow Outflow Analysis, 2014.  
U.S. Census Longitudinal  
Employment Household Dynamics  
Survey.*

**Figure 2.2: Lorain's Employment Distribution**

Employment Trends in Lorain	Percentage of workforce employed in sector (2002)	Percentage of workforce employed in sector (2012)
Manufacturing	33%	20%
Healthcare and Social Assistance	24%	32%
Wholesale and Retail	13%	21%
Food and Accommodation	7%	9%

*(Bureau of Labor Statistics)*

**Table 2.2: Trends in Employment Sectors**

# LAND USE: Residential

## RESIDENTIAL

Lorain’s residential neighborhoods, pictured to the right, are largely made up of older, single-family homes. Largely built in an era when more households had children and access to more stable employment, the makeup of Lorain’s current residential development doesn’t necessarily reflect its current needs.

For example, the population pyramid on the previous page highlights the fact that Lorain has a significant share of the population between the ages of 18 to 30 and between the ages of 50 to 64. Often times, these demographics are less likely to have children, and are increasingly likely to prefer homes with smaller footprints and in walkable neighborhoods. Recommendations in Chapter 5 highlight redevelopment opportunities along the Lakefront that would offer a new housing product that would meet the preferences of these demographics.

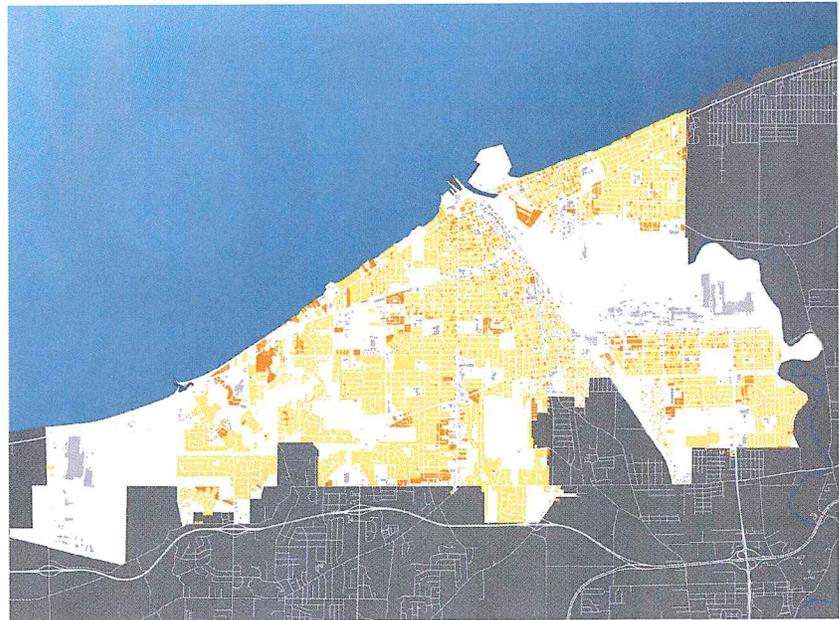


Figure 2.3: Residential Land Use

	Owner Occupied	Renter Occupied	Vacant	Median House Value
<b>Lorain</b>	<b>47.7%</b>	<b>37.5%</b>	<b>13.7%</b>	<b>\$106,982</b>
Elyria	52.1%	36.1%	11.8%	\$129,412
Lorain County	64.4%	26.7%	8.9%	\$168,273
Ohio	58.4%	31.2%	10.4%	\$145,895

Table 2.3: Housing Characteristics, Selected Geographies

## LAND USE: Commercial

### COMMERCIAL

Lorain has a couple of distinct commercial “districts.” Downtown Lorain has the design and structure to redevelop into a successful, vibrant district. Larger, underperforming big box stores and districts scattered throughout the City are highly unlikely to redevelop into the thriving commercial malls they once were.

#### Downtown Lorain

The commercial corridor along Broadway Avenue, while currently underutilized, has the potential to become the identifiable center and gathering place for residents. Recent investments in the Black River Landing draw a steady stream of daily visitors and larger events. Five buildings on the National Register of Historic Places are historic assets that can be leveraged for future development.

#### Big-Box Districts

Lorain has a number of strip malls (such as the one picture to the right) that are either completely vacant or underperforming. As residents express a strong inclination to continue to invest in Downtown (see Public Input chapter) and as changes in the retail marketplace continue to occur (an increase in online sales, a growing preference for “experiences”) Lorain should focus on its Downtown for future commercial redevelopment.

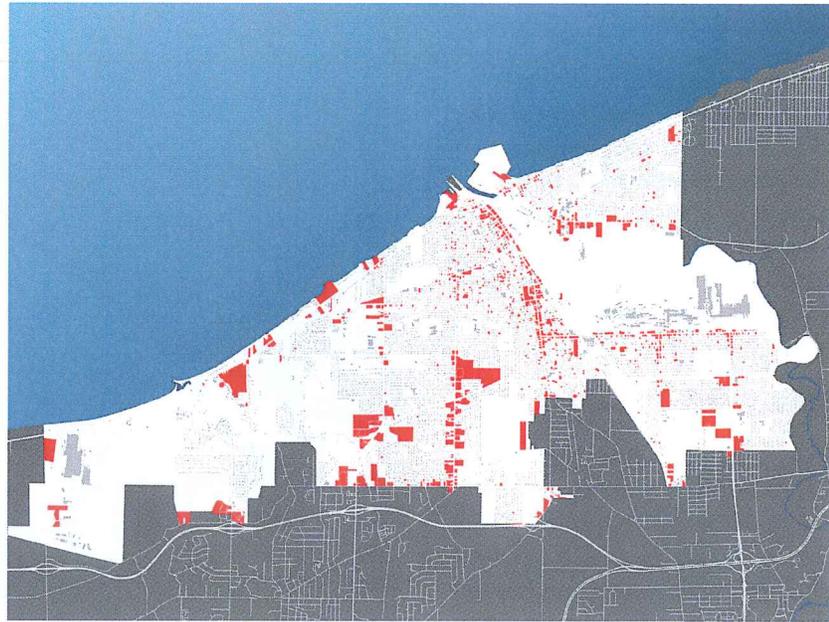
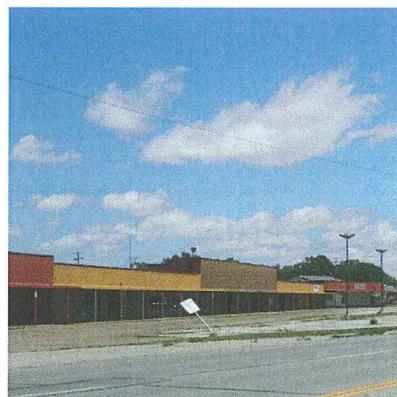
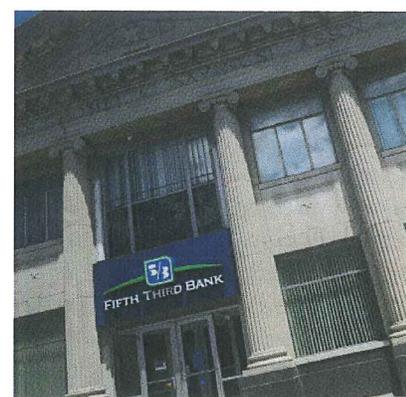


Figure 2.4: Commercial Land Use



*With continuing changes in the retail economy, abandoned strip malls and big-box centers are highly unlikely to redevelop as new, auto-oriented commercial developments.*



*Some historic buildings on Broadway Avenue have already been repurposed for different uses. The continued reuse and preservation of these buildings help leverage future commercial and mixed-use development in the heart of Lorain.*



# LAND USE: Vacant Land

## OVERVIEW

Communities with declining populations and industry across the Rust Belt are grappling with the challenges posed by vacant land; Lorain is no exception. Lorain's vacant land is distributed across both uses (commercial, industrial, residential, and agriculture) and across the City.

### Residential Vacant Land

Vacant land in residential neighborhoods poses significant safety challenges to quality of life for residents; unoccupied properties and poorly maintained landscapes don't promote safe environments to walk in, particularly after dark. Stabilization strategies in Chapter 5 offer potential solutions to address vacant land in residential neighborhoods.

### Other Vacant Land

Commercial and industrial vacant land throughout the City will likely require significant investment in order to be redeveloped. Land listed as agricultural vacant land is largely wooded areas that don't require much attention or investment from the City.

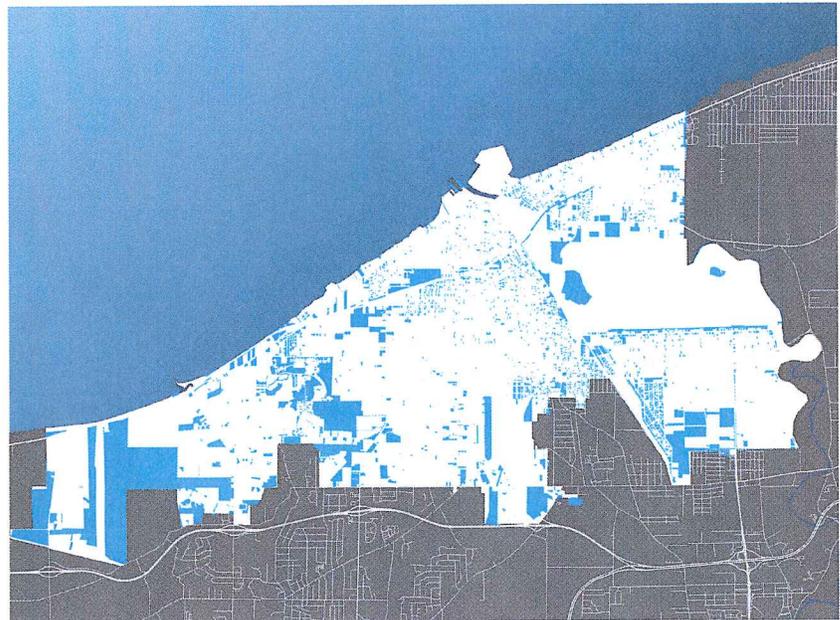


Figure 2.5: Vacant Land

	Total Acres	% of Vacant Land in the City
Commercial	862	~30%
Industrial	403	~14%
Residential	972	~34%
Agricultural	619	~22%

Table 2.4: Vacant Land, by Land Use Category

**~18%**  
of the overall land  
in the City is  
vacant.

## LAND USE: Industrial Land

### INDUSTRIAL LAND

Lorain's economy has long been driven and supported by the industrial sector. Once home to companies that serviced both the steel and automobile sectors, Lorain continues to have a significant amount of industrial land in key locations that can attract employers moving forward.

From a geographic perspective, much of Lorain's industrial land is accessible along the Black River. With access to Lake Erie and even the global marketplace, industrial sites on both sides of the Black River remain viable development opportunities. However, the scale of this industrial ground could be too great to fill without a significant shift in the regional economy. The north side of the Black River has seen significant recent public investment in the hopes of attracting an employer. Future, large-scale industrial development will likely occur around this area.

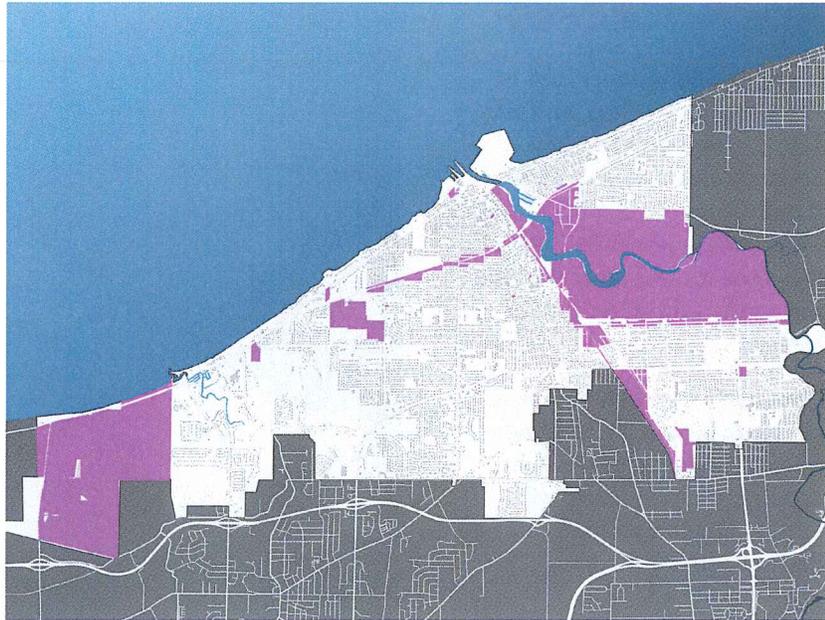
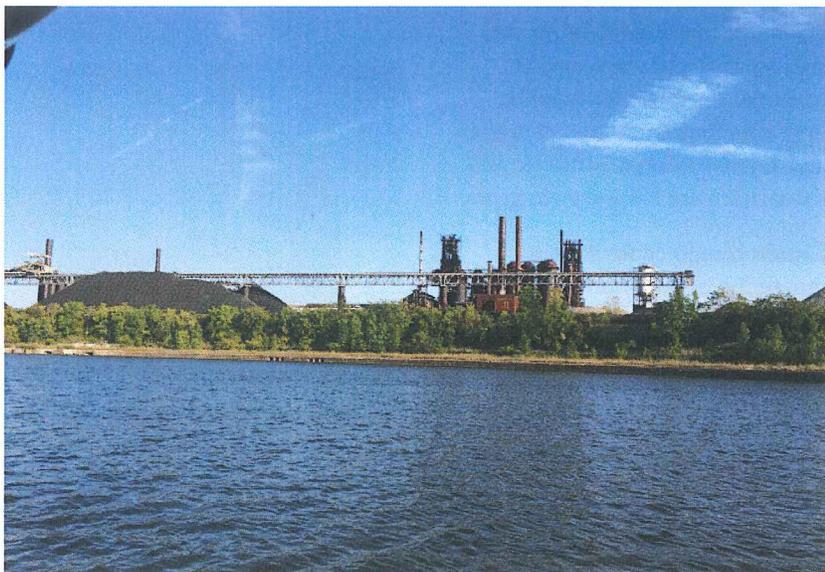


Figure 2.6: Industrial Land



*Current and future industrial activity located along the Black River can take advantage of access to the Port and thus market opportunities across the Great Lakes region.*

# LAND USE: Freeway Access

## FREEWAY ACCESS

Lorain sits 30 minutes west of Downtown Cleveland, on Lake Erie. Lorain's future success depends in part on its ability to thrive within the Greater Cleveland Metropolitan area, with an ability to tap the region's labor markets and markets for other goods and services.

Downtown Lorain sits far from Interstate 80 and 90, and State Route 2. The map to the right highlights Lorain, along with surrounding townships (in various shades of green).

Where this lack of direct access will continue to be a challenge, strengthening connections from the freeway into Downtown can be accomplished. Improved signage and gateways should be initial improvements, while upgrades to the roadway character and transforming downtown as a destination are longer-term goals.

Lorain should capitalize on remaining opportunities for freeway accessible development through coordination with private development partners. Further discussion around annexation is included in Chapter 5.

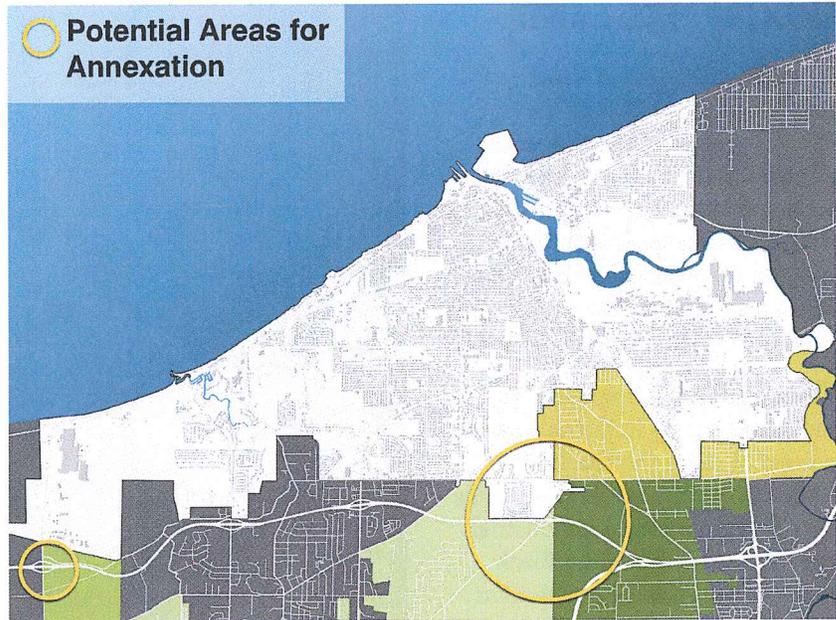


Figure 2.8: Freeway Access and Potential Annexation



*Large-scale office buildings are often built near highways, with the ability to attract workers from across the region. There is an opportunity for Lorain to capture the tax revenue from future office development through annexation.*

# ZONING

## EXISTING ZONING

The City's existing code was last updated in the middle of the twentieth century. Since then, the City has gone through significant changes, from the rise and fall of industry, to the changing retail marketplace, to shifting household structures and housing preferences.

All of these changes necessitate a wholesale re-examination of the City's zoning code, which is happening concurrently to this overall planning process.

### Zoning District

	Business
	Golf
	HMD
	Industrial
	Incomplete Information
	Planned Unit District
	Low-Density Residential
	Med-Density Residential

\* The map below is a simplified version of Lorain's existing zoning.

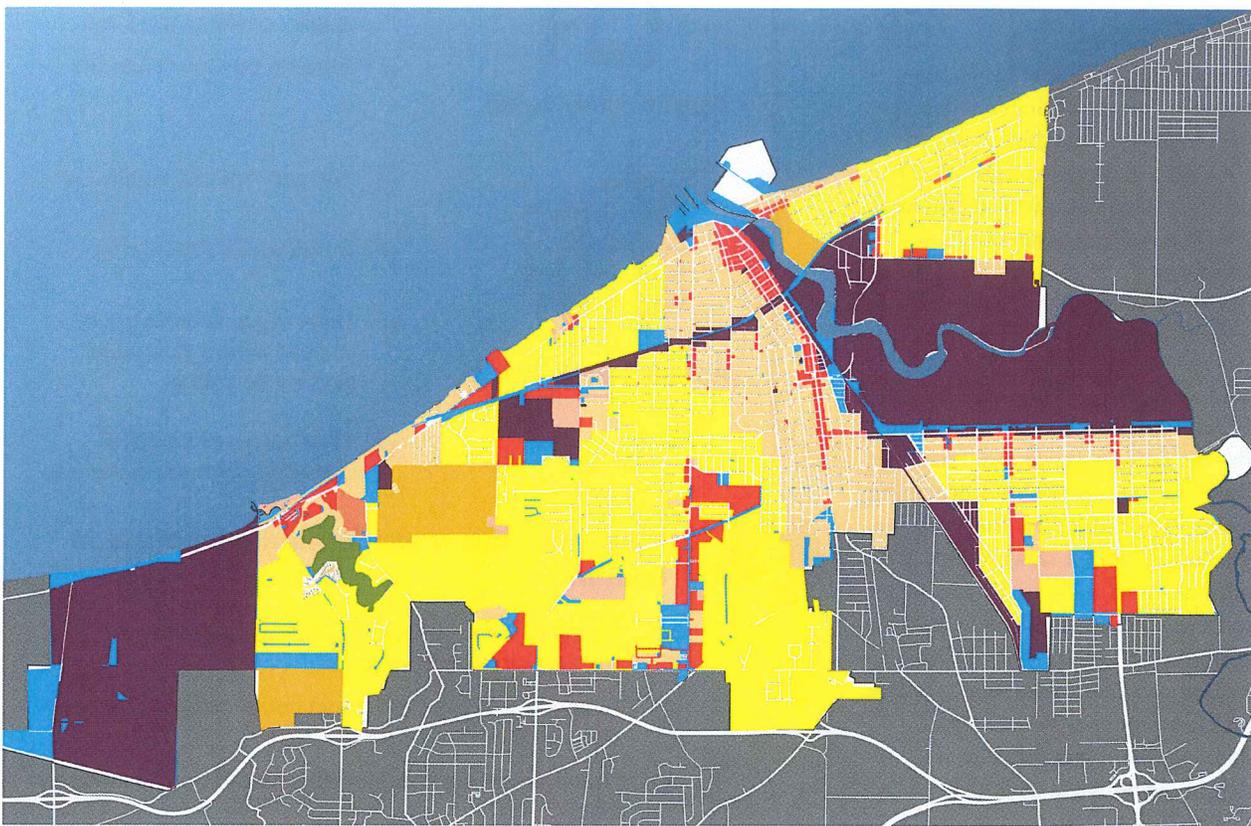


Figure 2.9: Existing Zoning

# LAND USE: City Revenues

## WHERE DO CITY REVENUES COME FROM?

Cities in Ohio receive most of their revenues from municipal income taxes. This guides a number of land use recommendations throughout the Plan. As mentioned previously, large office users — which often generate high income tax revenues for municipal governments — prefer to locate near highways, both for the visibility and the access to a larger potential employment base. Small offices may prefer to locate in a vibrant, walkable Downtown, because that’s a desirable amenity for employees. Establishment of a thriving downtown may attract smaller office users with an interest in access to direct waterfront locations.

In Ohio, other uses generally lose money for cities, due to the associated costs of city services and infrastructure maintenance versus the tax revenue produced. However, these uses are essential to providing a strong quality of life for residents. Walkable, vibrant downtowns, with a mix of uses, are important to create a sense of identity in a community. Cities typically lose money providing road, water, police, and fire expenses to residential developments, but residential neighborhoods are obviously essential to a City.

1

### How Do Land Uses Typically Impact City Revenues in Ohio?



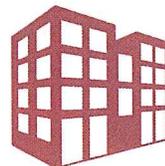
**Residential**

- ✓ Net loss for city revenues
- ✓ Expensive to maintain roads, water, police, and fire
- ✓ Demographic shifts driving lower demand for single-family housing



**Restaurant/Retail**

- ✓ Smaller net loss to city revenues than residential
- ✓ Essential to the identity and quality of life of the City
- ✓ Attracts people to Lorain



**Industry and Office**

- ✓ Net gain for city revenues
- ✓ Employs City residents
- ✓ Diversity in employers is critical to hedge against economic cycles
- ✓ High-wage office jobs generate high tax revenues

2

### What does this mean for future land use in Lorain?

- ✓ Lorain has a sufficient number of single-family residential neighborhoods
- ✓ Investment in the Downtown could create a sense of place to attract a larger tax base
- ✓ There remains a need for diverse office and industry jobs
- ✓ Identify key locations for revenue-producing development, such as freeway frontage

# 3

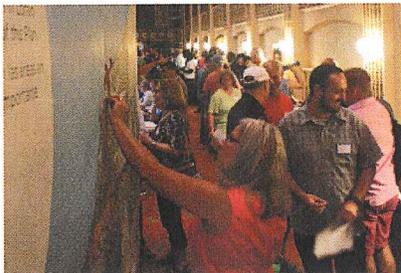
## Public Input

*Public engagement is a critical part of the planning process. Through large public meetings, small focus groups, and online engagement, the goals of the Plan are fully informed and guided by the residents of Lorain.*



# ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

## WHO WAS INVOLVED?



The steering committee consisted of a group of community members, city staff, and other local leaders. The consultant team met with the steering committee on a monthly basis to get and give direction, feedback, and guidance on the plan.



The stakeholders are individuals with a vested interest in the future of Lorain. The planning team met with a diverse group of Lorain residents and business owners to discuss the Plan.



City staff assisted in guiding the Planning Team and the Steering Committee around the development of the Plan.



Two public meetings were held to solicit input on the plan and feedback after initial principles and recommendations were fleshed out. Additionally, a project survey, summarized in this Chapter, provided detailed feedback to the Planning Team.

## Public Engagement Timeline (2016-2017)





P SC

### Mapping Exercise

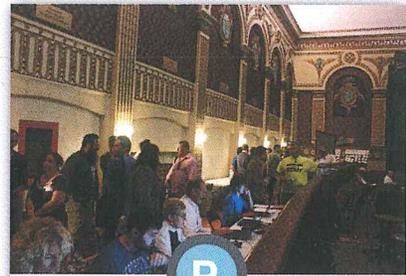
Meeting participants were asked to place two dots on areas of Lorain that should be a focus of the Plan.



S SC P

### Big Ideas

Allowing stakeholders, the steering committee, and public meeting attendees to dream big gave the planning team a range of creative ideas.



P

### Survey

Community members and stakeholders were asked to take a comprehensive survey to help paint a picture of life in Lorain.

SC C

### Existing Conditions Analysis

With the Steering Committee and city staff, the planning team undertook a thorough existing conditions analysis to develop a thorough understanding of Lorain.

S SC

### Issues and Opportunities

The planning team facilitated a discussion with stakeholders and the steering committee around the biggest issues and opportunities facing the City.

P

### Initiative Prioritization

Public meeting attendees were asked to rank initiatives that they thought should be considered a priority, giving the planning team and City staff a direction for which projects to undertake first.

SC

October

SC

November

December

P

January

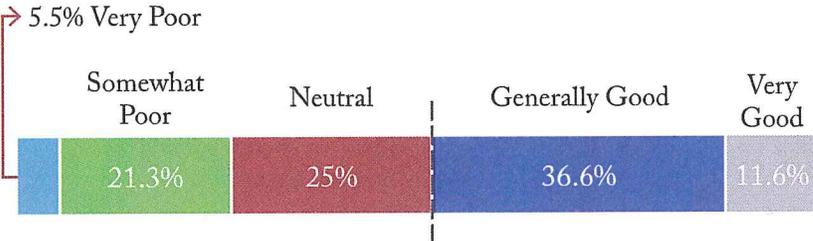


# PUBLIC SURVEY RESULTS: WHAT DID WE LEARN?

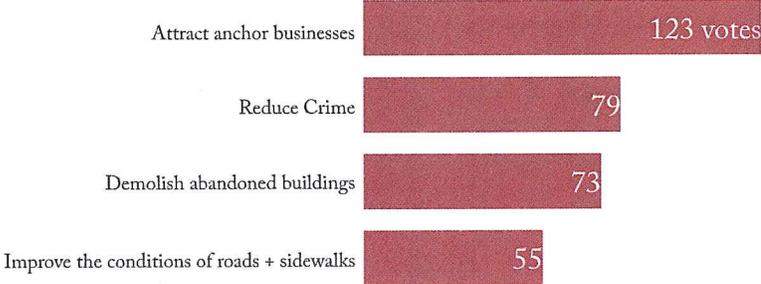
## 1

### NEIGHBORHOODS NEED TO BE STABILIZED.

How do you perceive the quality of life in your neighborhood?



What specific things can the City do to improve the quality of life in Lorain's neighborhoods? Specify three.



**71%** of the 178 surveys were completed.

**61%** of respondents have lived in Lorain for 20+ years.

**84%** of respondents are homeowners.

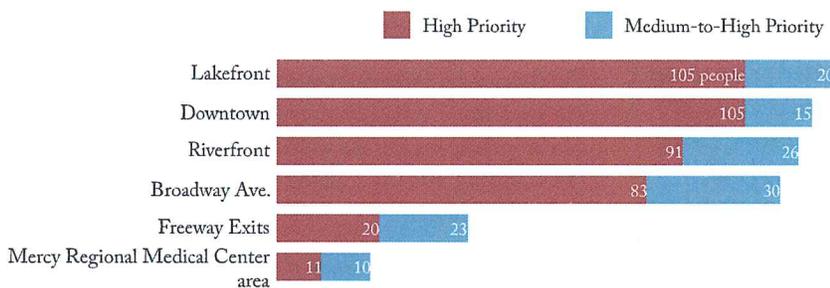


Under 50% of surveyed residents considered their neighborhoods to have a good quality of life. Demolishing abandoned buildings and improving infrastructure conditions can help strengthen Lorain's neighborhoods.

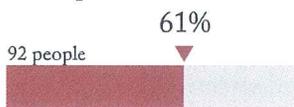
2

**EXISTING ASSETS NEED TARGETED INVESTMENT.**

What areas in Lorain should be a focus for redevelopment?



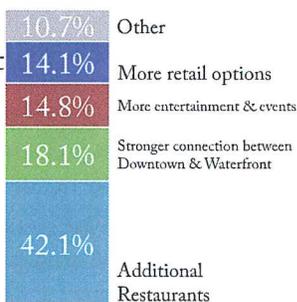
How many people visit Downtown at least a couple of times per month.



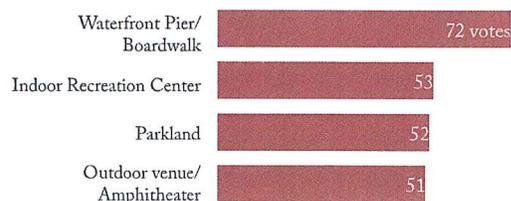
How many people visit the Lakefront at least a couple of times per month.



What would encourage you to visit Downtown more often?



What type of recreation opportunities would you like to see more of Lorain?



Downtown, the lakefront, and riverfront are some of the most popular places for Lorain residents. A historically intact Downtown, in close proximity to a lakefront, is a rare asset to a community. Developing the Downtown and lakefront with a cohesive vision will help establish an identity for the City.



# ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND BIG IDEAS

The issues and opportunities and big ideas exercises are important exercises that help give the Planning Team and City staff a pulse of how the community feels.

## Issues

Two stakeholder meetings of select residents, business owners, and local leaders were conducted prior to the Public Meeting. Stakeholders identified the lack of community pride as the most significant issue facing the City. Other secondary issues were largely of economic concern, including lack of highway access to most of the city and a continued lack of employment in the City.

## Opportunities

Stakeholders identified future development around the lakefront, downtown, and Black River Landing, as the most important opportunity that residents could take advantage of. The development of this area reflects a strong opportunity to solidify the City's identity while elevating the pride residents feel in the City.

## Big Ideas

Residents' big ideas for the City included the following:

- Development of a "Crocker Park-style" walking district on the piers at the mouth of the river, offering resort town amenities available in other regional coastal communities such as lodging, dining, an outdoor music venue, mom-and-pop shops, and indoor/outdoor recreation choices;
- Concentrating clean industry on the river. Incentivizing startup, technology, and renewable energy companies to employ Lorain's skilled workforce;
- Fostering a culture-rich environment that prioritizes the arts and attracts artists, while

capitalizing on Lorain's international identity through youth programming, food access, festivals, and an International District; and,

- Reduction of barriers to entry for potential home and business owners, with an incentivized and streamlined permitting/licensing process.

Furthermore, some members of the public wanted to see specific physical changes to city facilities. A number of the public expressed a desire to relocate City Hall, as the building sits on a prime site for a new waterfront redevelopment.

Many residents expressed a desire for specific changes in their own neighborhoods, including the following:

- Demolition of abandoned properties;
- Preservation of historic structures;
- Rehabilitation of vacant properties; and
- Construction of new, infill residential for both millennials and seniors.

Other, common themes generated by the Big Ideas activity include the following:

- Greater multi-modal connectivity within the City of Lorain and to outlying communities. Bike lanes, lakefront/crosstown trail linkages, improved access to public transportation, water transport, a downtown shuttle, and a regional bus connection were the frequently mentioned specific ideas.
- Increased code enforcement, particularly in relation to commercial and residential property owners on Broadway. Community members want stricter penalties for non-compliance and methods to take neglected, delinquent, and underutilized properties for resale to qualified, present parties committed to the betterment of Lorain.
- A new brand and image for the City of Lorain that reflects the people's friendliness.

# INITIATIVE PRIORITIZATION

## Public Meeting Activity

At the public meeting, participants were asked to prioritize a series of initiatives they would like to see addressed sooner rather than later. Initiatives were broken down into 4 themes, and participants were asked to vote on their top 2 initiatives per theme. The results are below.



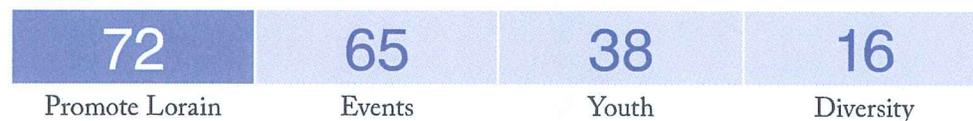
### Grow

Votes



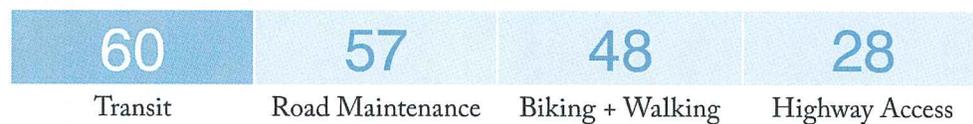
### Community

Votes



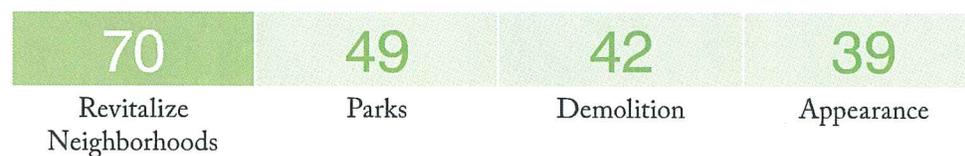
### Mobility

Votes



### Stability

Votes



# MAPPING EXERCISE

## What did we learn?

The mapping exercise allowed meeting participants, and those who visited the project website, to place dots on two key areas that should be focus points for the plan. Two geographic areas stand out on the map above: Downtown Lorain, specifically Broadway from the Lakefront south to West 21st street, and Oakwood Park in the southeast part of Lorain. Other spots on the Lakefront highlighted above include the Pier and Marina just east of the Black River along with the Saint Anthony of Padua school site.



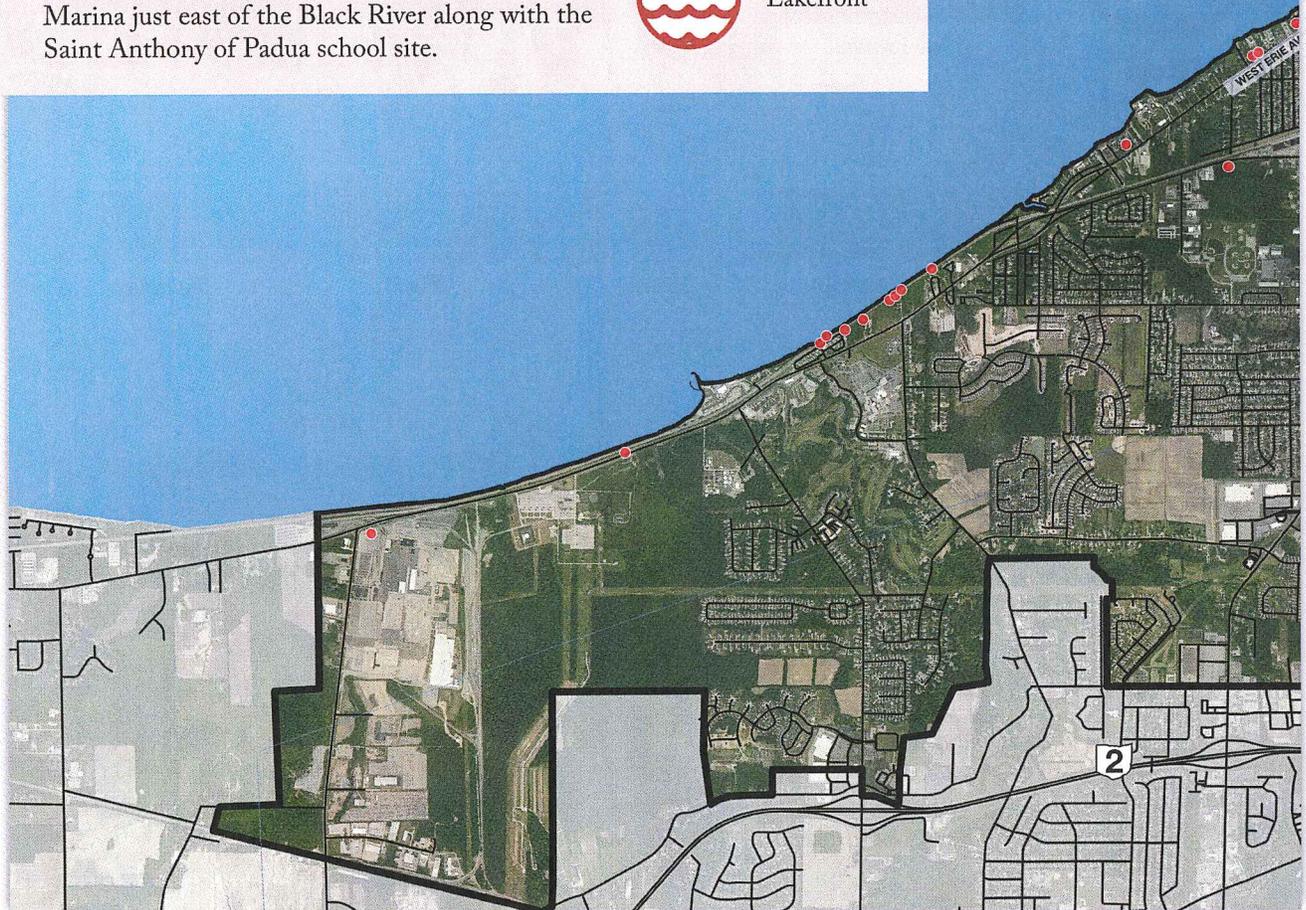
Downtown

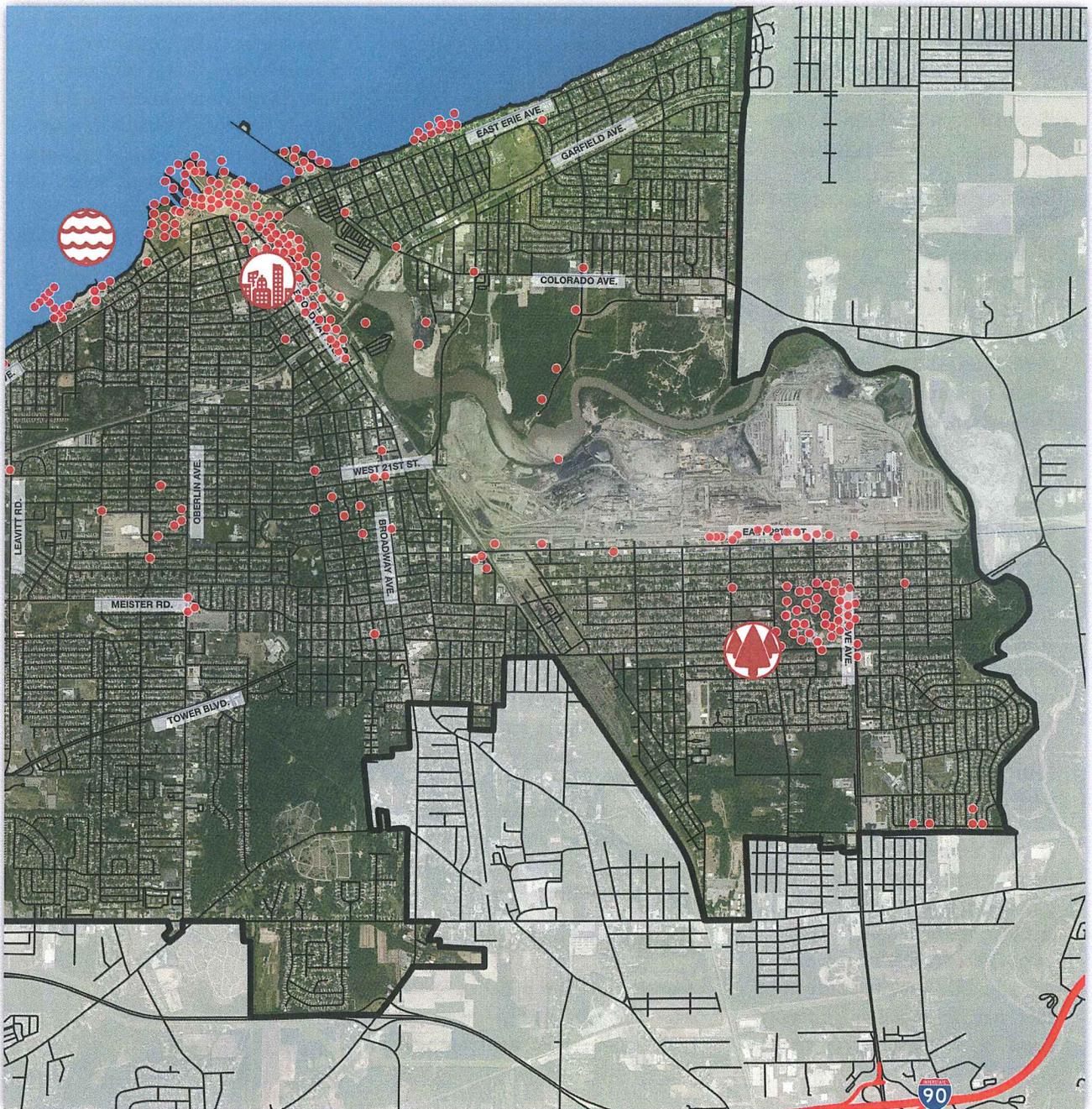


Oakwood  
Park



Lakefront







# PUBLIC INPUT SUMMARY

The public engagement process yielded a number of conclusions that help guide the recommendations of this Plan.

## **Downtown should be a focus of development.**

The mapping exercise, survey, and initiative prioritization exercises all indicated a strong preference for investing in Downtown. 61% of those surveyed said they visit Downtown a couple of times per month. When asked what would encourage them to visit Downtown more frequently, 42% said additional restaurants, while an additional 18% indicated a stronger connection between the Downtown and the lakefront. Chapter 5 will outline why making investments in Downtown and the lakefront is a smart, sustainable economic growth strategy. Results from the public input portion of this plan indicate popular support for this strategy as well.

## **Neighborhoods need to be stabilized.**

Lorain has been hit particularly hard by trends in the regional and global economy, specifically with the loss of manufacturing jobs. Just over 47% of residents surveyed described the quality of life in their neighborhood as “generally good” or “very good,” a percentage

that certainly reflects the most downturn in the local economy, and the subsequent disinvestment in neighborhoods. The survey and the initiative prioritization activity reflected public support for beautifying neighborhoods and demolishing abandoned homes. Although challenging to coordinate, funding is available for these projects, which can have an immediate impact in the short run.

In the survey, 72% of respondents indicated that attracting anchor businesses would be important for improving the quality of life in their neighborhoods. This high percentage may reflect the 74% of residents who said that they regularly travel outside the City of Lorain to obtain the goods and services that they need. Developing neighborhoods that can support a mix of businesses and uses is a longer-term objective for the City, but an objective that is popular amongst surveyed residents. Specific actions to support this idea, such as an update of the zoning code governing residential neighborhoods and a vacant property strategy, are outlined elsewhere in the Plan.

## **Transit should be a priority.**

Transit was the top initiative selected in the prioritization exercise, with 60 votes. Comments

left for the planning team at the public meeting reinforce the importance of having a strong transit system. Those who can't afford a car, or are unable to do so, rely heavily on transit to meet their daily needs. A transit system with increased coverage, hours, and frequency, is a popular action that can help Lorain residents on a daily basis.

## **There needs to be an education effort from the City to residents on why certain initiatives are relevant.**

Two initiatives that received low vote tallies in the initiative prioritization exercise may be long-term objectives the City wants to consider. Specifically, improving highway access into Downtown could make it easy for employers, employees, and visitors to access Downtown Lorain. Increasing housing density and diversity will make long-term living in Lorain more attractive for individuals and families. If these initiatives are undertaken, residents need to be educated on their importance for the future of Lorain.

# 4

## Trends and Best Practices

*This chapter outlines trends and best practices from communities similar to Lorain -- ideas that policymakers may want to pursue moving forward.*



# DEMOGRAPHICS & HOUSING

## OVERVIEW

What are the trends shaping communities like Lorain? How might Lorain learn from the lessons of other communities to help shape its own future? Shifting demographics, a changing retail market, and managing both industrial decline and long-term infrastructure liabilities are important factors that other communities are also struggling with - and Lorain can learn from their example.

## National Trends

Across the country, cities are grappling with a profound shift in demographics. Millennials, born between 1980 to 1999, and Baby Boomers, born between 1945 and 1964, make up over half of the nation's population. These growing segments of the population are shaping housing markets and consumer preferences in their respective communities.

The rising share of millennials and baby boomers is driving major changes in household structure. As boomers age and their children move out, they consistently are looking to downsize their housing needs. Meanwhile, Millennials are delaying both marriage and home ownership, due in large part to the recent economic recession and heavy student loan burdens. In some areas, this has led to a

Household Type	1970	2000	2015	2030
With Children	45%	33%	28%	27%
Without Children	55%	67%	72%	73%

**Table 4.1: Shifts in Household Structure**

*Changing family dynamics over the past 50 years has led to a shift in the housing market and necessitates a different set of housing options for residents.*

surplus of single family homes in the market where the two largest demographics both prefer smaller housing units in walkable, urban neighborhoods.

## What does this mean for Lorain?

By 2030, only 1 in 4 American households will have children, roughly a 20% decrease since 1970. Since a large portion of Lorain's housing stock was built around this time period; the size, function, and price may be obsolete for many families and individuals currently in the community, along with people that may want to be attracted here.

In order to continue to attract new residents - and allow older residents to stay and age in place- Lorain will need to diversify its housing options. Creating walkable neighborhoods with easy access to amenities and allowing an increase in multifamily developments with



*Shifting demographics are part of the reason the demand for single-family homes has fallen while the demand for smaller, mixed-use developments has risen.*

ensure residents of all ages and stages of life will be able to find a home in Lorain.

# RETAIL

## OVERVIEW

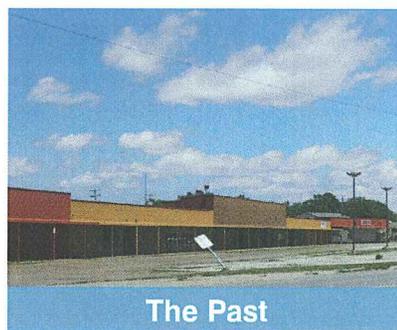
The rise of online shopping has upended portions of the existing retail market. Online marketplaces like Amazon have played a significant role in rendering the traditional shopping mall obsolete. The greater Cleveland metropolitan area is dotted with abandoned malls and strip malls. The decline is expected to continue; market analysts have estimated that 25-30% of shopping malls nationwide will close within the next 5 years.

### Brick and Mortar's role in an online world

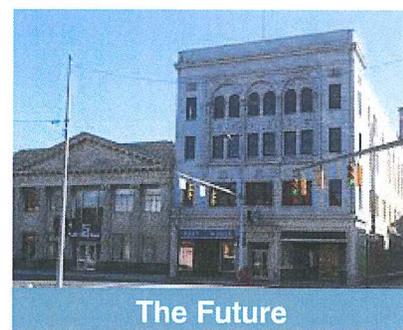
However, the rise of online marketplaces like Amazon doesn't mean the complete decline of brick and mortar retail. Physical stores complement online shopping in important ways. Approximately 80% of purchases start online, with customers engaging in preliminary research, but end in a store. The ability to try-out products, or get a feel for them physically, is a critical advantage that brick and mortar retail stores continue to possess over online shopping.

Furthermore, bars and restaurants continue to play an important role in the resurgence of small Downtowns across the country. In 2016, for the first time, Americans spent more on eating out than they did on groceries. Fast casual is a newly emerged middle market

## THE CHANGING RETAIL LANDSCAPE



The Past



The Future

to fine dining and fast food that supports this trend. This shift in spending is also partly responsible for the increase in service-based jobs.

### What does this mean for Lorain?

While spending patterns and markets continue to change, retail

can still play a viable role in creating a sense of place for a community. Attracting locally-based, unique shops to a downtown allows residents and visitors a chance to linger in a place and support the local economy.



# MANAGING POPULATION DECLINE

## OVERVIEW

Changes in the local, regional, and global economy mean that previous economic success stories in Lorain and elsewhere are unlikely to drive future economic growth. From globalization to automation, Lorain and other rust belt communities are now facing challenges with increasing vacant land and declining tax revenues, among other issues. Here are a few case studies on how communities have handled these issues.

## DATA DRIVEN LAND STRATEGIES IN GARY, INDIANA

Similar to Lorain, Gary, Indiana has struggled with its transition into the new global economy. The decline of industry and population has left Gary with a significant quantity of vacant land. 20% of Gary's buildings are vacant, and 33% of properties in the City are blighted.

With this pressing challenge, Gary, Indiana has created a new, one-stop shop for accumulating different information about existing parcel conditions. Garycounts.org has allowed elected officials, local stakeholders, and concerned residents the ability to make more informed decisions regarding demolition and redevelopment.



## UTILIZING VACANT LAND FOR GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE.

Fresh Coast Capital is a company that seeks to clean up vacant land in communities across the country by planting trees. Some of the trees will be harvested in the short-term (3-5 years) while others are harvested at a later date for use as lumber. The company has done work in Youngstown, OH and Battle Creek and Flint, MI, and takes care of all maintenance on the property. Such a solution may be appropriate for Lorain's future.



# MANAGING INFRASTRUCTURE

## OVERVIEW

One common trend facing growing and shrinking communities alike is a growing inability to manage their long-term municipal infrastructure. In 1950, communities spent approximately 2% of their annual municipal budgets on debt service. Today, that number is approaching 20%, as communities have increased the number of roads that they have constructed, and thus, the amount of money that they have borrowed to pay for this infrastructure. Furthermore, communities

with declining populations, such as Lorain, often have an infrastructure network that is built to accommodate larger populations, an accommodation that is often no longer necessary and a financing model that can no longer be supported.

There are a number of nonprofit organizations that aim to change the conversation for municipalities struggling to make ends meet. One such organization, Strong Towns, has dedicated itself to advocating for community growth in a fiscally sound and responsible manner.

Leaders across the country have developed a series of guidelines and metrics to help elected officials and other community stakeholders evaluate the effectiveness of implementing specific types of infrastructure.

Moving forward, Lorain officials should consult with national examples as well as local case studies for how other communities have changed their infrastructure strategy and financed sustainable growth and development.

## COMBINING INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS FOR ADDED VALUE

When the City of Newark, Ohio realized their outdated sewer service pipes in their historic downtown needed to be replaced, they made a radical decision to change the entire street framework. Required to tear up sidewalks in order to replace the subterranean infrastructure, the City decided to upgrade the surface treatments at the same time. Working with engineers, urban planners, and landscape architects, the new street network features traffic-calming roundabouts, reducing signalized intersections and improving traffic flow in downtown; expanded sidewalks with bump-outs and frequent crosswalks to aid pedestrian travel and safety; and increased landscaping and green infrastructure to help mitigate stormwater runoff and water treatment costs. By working across multiple departments, the City saved in the longterm and created a better end product for all.



# REGIONAL LAKEFRONT PLANNING

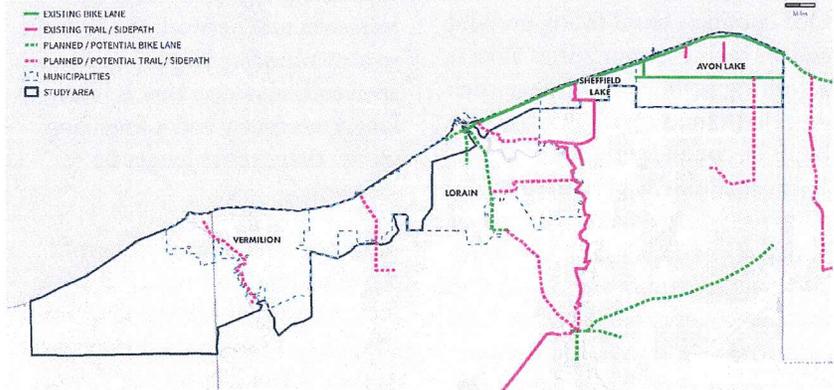
## OVERVIEW

During the creation of this Comprehensive Plan, a regional lakefront planning study was published with a number of relevant recommendations for the City of Lorain. The Lorain County Lakefront Connectivity TLCI Plan comprised of a 67-square mile study area along the shoreline of Lake Erie, including portions of the City of Avon Lake, the City of Sheffield Lake, the City of Lorain, the City of Vermilion, and Vermilion Township.

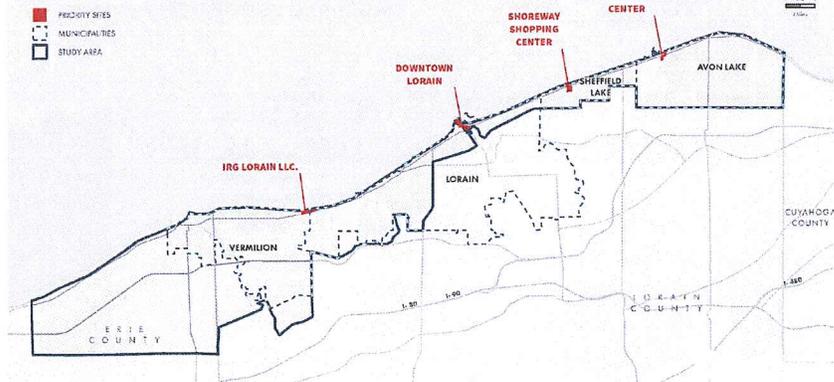
Goals of the project included increasing economic activity, improving health or residents and visitors, reducing air and water pollution, improving environmental impacts of transportation and development, connecting non-lakefront communities to the waterfront, and enhancing the region's quality of life.

The four communities worked together with their residents to select four sites where impactful development should occur, including Downtown Lorain and an underutilized property owned by IRG Lorain LLC which is bisected by the border of Lorain and Vermilion. Environmental Design Group (EDG), the firm hired to complete the regional plan, then created site layouts and programming options for the selected sites.

## BIKE NETWORK



## PRIORITY SITES



The IRG Lorain property was recommended for a new lakefront park and nature center, providing residents a new connection to the waterfront. Options for redevelopment of the site as parkland were limited to the Vermilion side of the parcel, however, a collaboration with Lorain Parks and Recreation is certainly a possibility. Development of this site should be monitored by

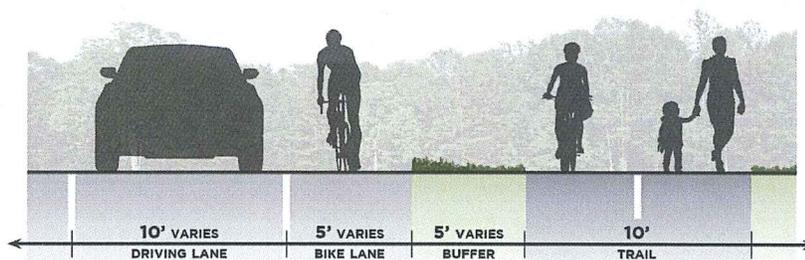
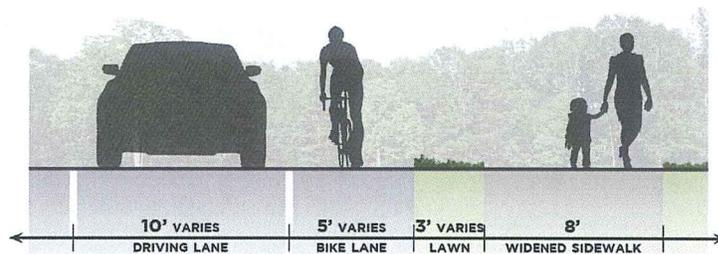
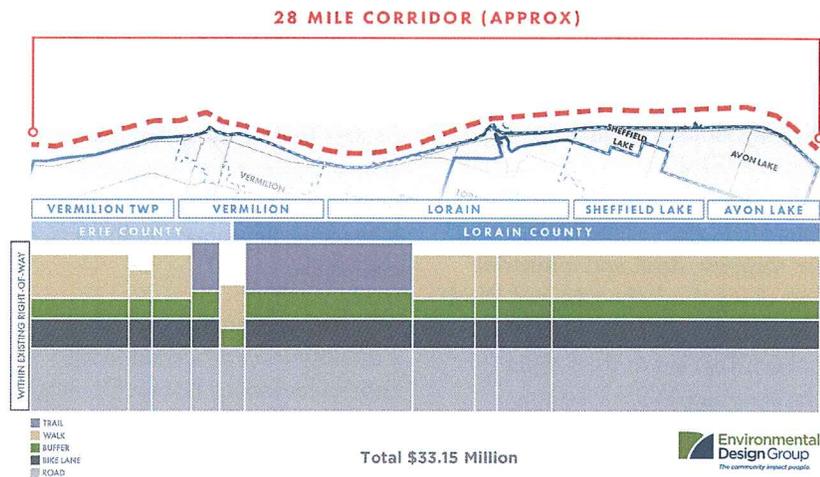
the City of Lorain and potentially utilized as a gateway into the city with proper signage and landscaping as is recommended in Chapter 5: Gateway & Signage.

The Downtown Lorain site is comprised of 31.6 acres of parcels along the Lake Erie shoreline and mouth of the Black River currently home to an underutilized shipping facility and the water treatment plant. This is the same site outlined

in this Comprehensive Plan and outlined for new growth and development in Chapter 5. The EDG plan suggests a mix of uses such as marina, townhouses, retail, and hotel, which aligns for the most part with this plan. Moving forward, the City of Lorain will undoubtedly have many various options for redevelopment of this site to consider.

The TLCI Plan also outlined regional improvements to the multi-modal transportation network of the study area by proposing a corridor that generally follows the Route 6 right-of-way through the various lakefront communities. The route was evaluated for existing non-modal infrastructure, right-of-way pinch points, and constructibility concerns, ultimately resulting in a 28-mile continuous route for pedestrians and bicyclists.

The proposed connection improvements call for wider sidewalks, more frequent crosswalks, and bike lanes or sharrows throughout the route. Some areas of the route, including portions in the southern portion of the Lorain lakefront, recommend travel on a 10' wide trail, which would be a significant improvement to the recreational network in the city.



*Proposed bicycle, pedestrian, and vehicular access along the 28 mile lakefront corridor. Wider sidewalks and crosswalks increase pedestrian safety in the area and dedicated on-street bicycle infrastructure eases transportation and vehicular pollution concerns in the region. Mapping and graphics shown here were created by Environmental Design Group as part of the Lorain County Lakefront Connectivity TLCI Plan.*



# LORAIN HARBOR AREA PLANNING

## OVERVIEW

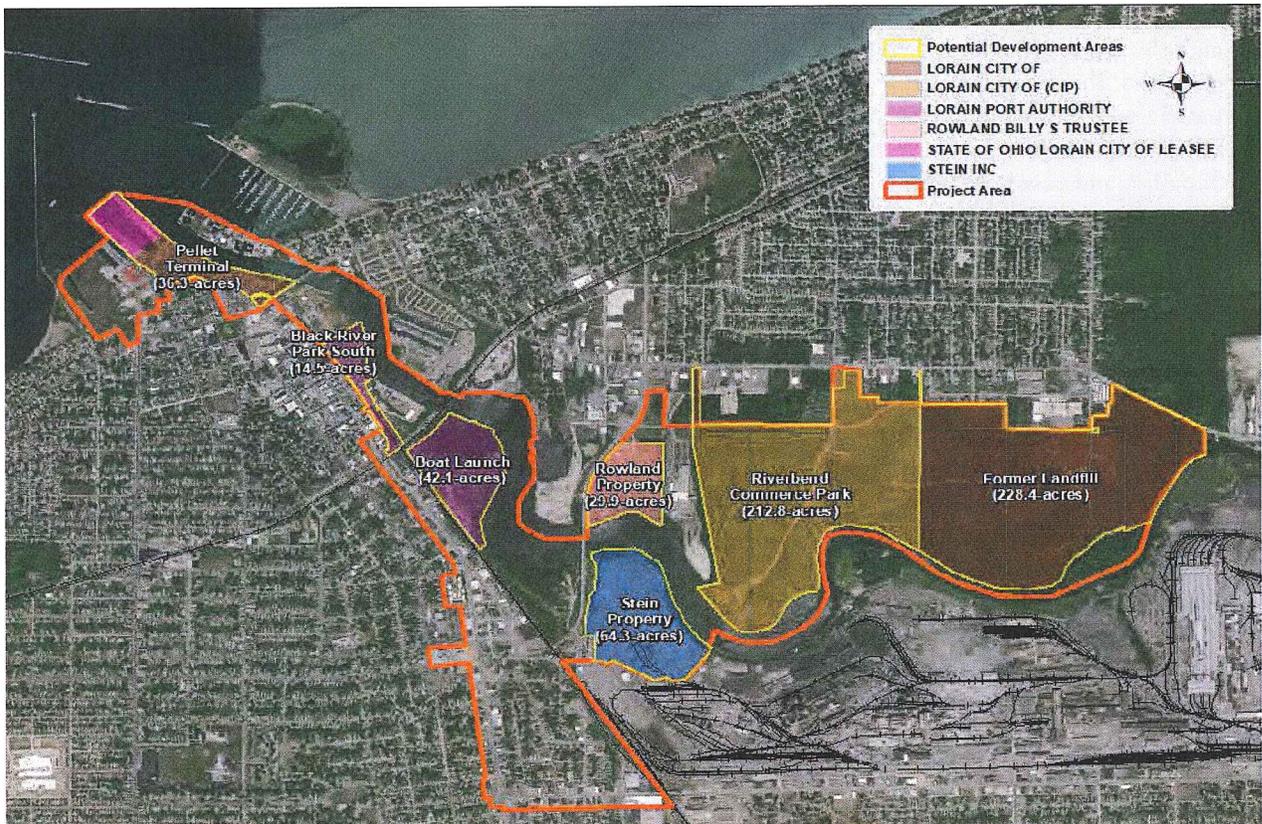
In January of 2017, Lorain County received a \$200,000 grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to fund the cleanup and redevelopment plan for the brownfield sites of the former iron ore shipping dock and industrial sites along the Lake Erie and Black River shoreline in Downtown Lorain. This led to the Lorain Harbor Area-Wide Planning Project which studied five publicly-owned properties located in this valuable waterfront area.

The EPA's Brownfield Program awards funding to communities to prevent, assess, clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields, or sites that are impeded from achieving their redevelopment potential due to the presence of hazardous substances, pollutants, or chemicals.

This harbor planning project is a collaboration of several local entities including Lorain County, the City of Lorain, the Lorain Port Authority, the Lorain Growth Corporation, Charleston Village

Society, and the Black River Area of Concern Advisory Committee with support from the US EPA Land Revitalization Program. The impetus for this project and the rationale for being awarded the EPA grant stems from the systemic disinvestment, poverty, and abandonment experienced in Lorain by the steel production industry over the past several decades.

All told, the study area includes industrial, commercial, and residential uses as well as wildlife



habitats of the Black River and its shoreline. The 36.3 acre Pellet Terminal site has been underutilized for a significant time and represents a key piece of the study area at the juncture of the Black River and Lake Erie. This area has been outlined for redevelopment in this plan in Chapter 5: Make Waterfront Development Ready.

The goal of the Lorain Harbor Area-Wide Planning Project is to transform the project area into a revitalized mixed-use, and

sustainable community featuring trails and recreational connections between Lake Erie and the Black River. It will be the role of the City and County to ensure the final result is a product that capitalizes on the great natural amenities available in Lorain, as well as reflects the varied needs and desires of Lorain's diverse population.

Next steps in the process of transforming this area are attracting developers and end users interested in the future ownership and redevelopment of the area.

Assets of this area are plentiful and provide unique combinations of opportunities to potential developers. This includes proximity to major transportation and freight travel routes on I-90, Lake Erie, and the significant access to CSX, Norfolk, and Southern rail lines. The Port of Lorain is a functional deep water port and each site of the study area has direct river access.



Photos courtesy of [lorainharborawp.com](http://lorainharborawp.com)



## PLAN PRIORITIES OVERVIEW

*This plan can neither complete all the assets of the city nor cure all the ills of economic change and mistakes in previous planning. What this plan establishes are eight clear strategies for change. All have near-term action steps needed to start the shift in opportunity, attitude and fortunes that is so clearly needed.*

*A transformation will not take place with one, or three or even all eight of these ideas. Instead, by working toward all of these concepts - some small and quickly achievable and others much more complex - these efforts will set the stage for the next iteration of Lorain. This new emerging version of the city might resemble the exciting concepts generated by the Lorain County Lakefront Connectivity Plan or as part of future planning studies. One that will incorporate the ideas and interest generated by the EPA study initiated in January, 2017, including concepts and realities that will transform the city from the struggles of today to the transformation of tomorrow.*

*While the concepts of this plan are specific and targeted, this is also the more general roadmap to reach beyond the stagnation present today. By taking initial steps, we're setting up the exciting future for Lorain that is possible.*

# 5

## Plan Priorities

*This chapter highlights eight comprehensive strategies that will help address a number of the issues brought up throughout the planning process.*



# 1

## MAKE WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT READY

*Lorain's waterfront is an asset that truly sets the city apart. A fully developed lakefront will serve as a catalyst and connector to the existing historic downtown, while providing waterfront recreation opportunities.*

### OVERVIEW

Lorain's waterfront is an asset that truly sets the city apart. A fully developed lakefront will serve as a catalyst and connector to the existing historic downtown, while providing waterfront recreation opportunities.

Long gone are the days of widespread and dangerous pollution in Lake Erie. During development boons of the industrial era, many waterfront zones were committed to manufacturing needs due to the direct access to water. This led to a systemic issue of toxic dumping in the lake and communities viewing the natural resource as more of an eyesore and health hazard than an asset.

Over the past 50 years, the Environmental Protection Agency has been more proactive and restrictive in regulating industrial waste, and Lake Erie has rebounded as the regional gem it once was. However, large swaths of lakefront land have continued to be owned and/or operated by manufacturing companies. The private ownership of lakefront land restricts public use

### CURRENT CONDITIONS

- Limited access to the lakefront, specifically from Broadway Ave.
- Limited activities and no amenities on the Downtown lakefront
- The City Hall site is a barrier between Downtown and the lakefront

### DESIRED OUTCOMES

- A vibrant lakefront connected to the Downtown
- A range of amenities attractive to all Lorain residents and visitors
- Development that builds off the best assets of Lorain

### ACTION PLAN

- Identify redevelopment opportunities
- Modify City Hall site
- Identify different lands for public acquisition

and limits the overall community value of the lake. Lorain has worked hard to reverse this in the center of downtown, reclaiming once-industrial land and transforming it into Black River Landing and accessible lakefront to east of the river. Additional opportunities are now available to extend this practice.

The recommendations of this section illustrate a phased approach

to redeveloping Lorain's lakefront, transforming large industrial sites into shared greenspace, high quality office space, and mixed residential development.

The changes to Lorain's waterfront area proposed in this section would be drastic and far reaching, elevating the waterfront, adjacent downtown, and the city as a whole by utilizing its lakefront location as a truly advantageous redevelopment tool.

### GROWTH

### STABILITY

### COMMUNITY

### MOBILITY

## WATERFRONT STRATEGIES

Currently, a large portion of Lorain's waterfront is occupied by only three users: the City of Lorain government offices (City Hall and the Police Department), a water treatment facility, and waterfront piers. The first step in repositioning this area in order to attract developers is relocating current users to sites across Lorain better aligned with the needs of the community and businesses.

The phased diagram below illustrates the recommended process of redevelopment, based on ease of moving current users and remediation where appropriate.

### CITY HALL

- Relocate Police Department to 21st Street location
- Redesign City of Lorain offices to be more user friendly
- Improve physical connection between Downtown and the lakefront

### WATER TREATMENT SITE

- Ideal recreation opportunity to extend waterfront parkland
- Creates an amenity for adjacent development
- Complements tourism activities

### VACANT PIERS

- Package large adjacent sites for development
- Consider long-term collaboration on water facilities, allowing relocation
- Determine extents of developable ground and preservation areas

## STAGED WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

### SHORT TERM

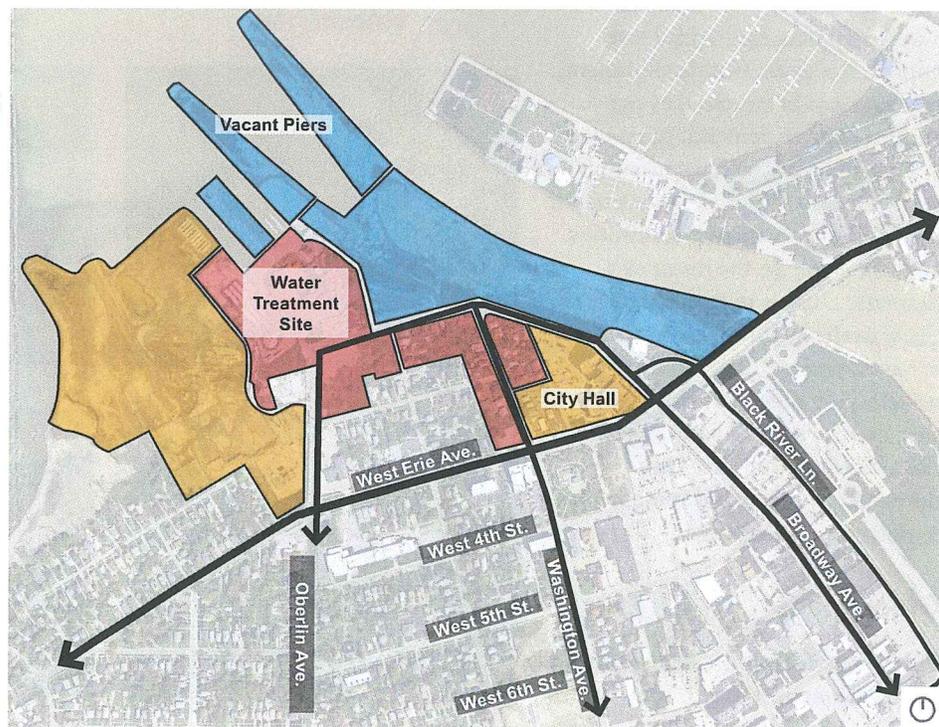
- Large tract of undeveloped land owned by the City; easier to jumpstart development
- Area will catalyze future development

### MEDIUM TERM

- Portion of the site dependent on action plan for City Hall
- Some areas will require remediation

### LONG TERM

- Longer time-frame for development
- Properties need to be acquired



# 1

## MAKE WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT READY

### LAND USES

This designated Land Use strategy is to serve as a guide to visible redevelopment opportunities, and can be adapted to market realities as development occurs. The exact uses and the locations will be determined on a project-by-project basis, within the general framework established here. The two vital aspects of any redevelopment are that:

- Public access is maintained to the lakefront/river
- Connectivity is strengthened to the Broadway Corridor

It is important to note that these recommendations are based on a potential balanced mixed-use approach to lakefront development, but have not been tested as per current market demand, or involved a detailed brownfield reclamation study. In case of the market, some of this will rely on current conditions and some will be the result of a dramatic change in the character of the waterfront through continued catalytic projects. The County is undertaking a Brownfield Study that more specifically identifies the ability to align uses with developer interests and remediation opportunities/challenges.

### Greenspace

Publicly accessible greenspace along the lakefront and river is vital to

### PROPOSED CHARACTER

*These images are examples of what potential development could look like along the waterfront in Lorain.*



**Commercial**



**Greenspace**



**Office**



**Single-family homes**



**Multi-family**



**Townhomes**



**Mixed-Use**

the long-term success of downtown redevelopment. There are several components of this greenspace:

**Piers:** These piers are ideal for recreational lakefront access. Too narrow to support effective site development, the piers are very suitable for recreational activities that bring people not just to the edge of the lake, but out into it. The northern tips of this “Piers Park” afford the best view of the sunset anywhere in the Great Lakes region. In addition to simply sitting and

experiencing the lake, other passive recreation opportunities include walkways, seating, bench swings, picnic areas, and open lawns. Active recreation uses can include bike/running trails, sand volleyball courts. Related recreational development opportunities include a marina and visitor docking.

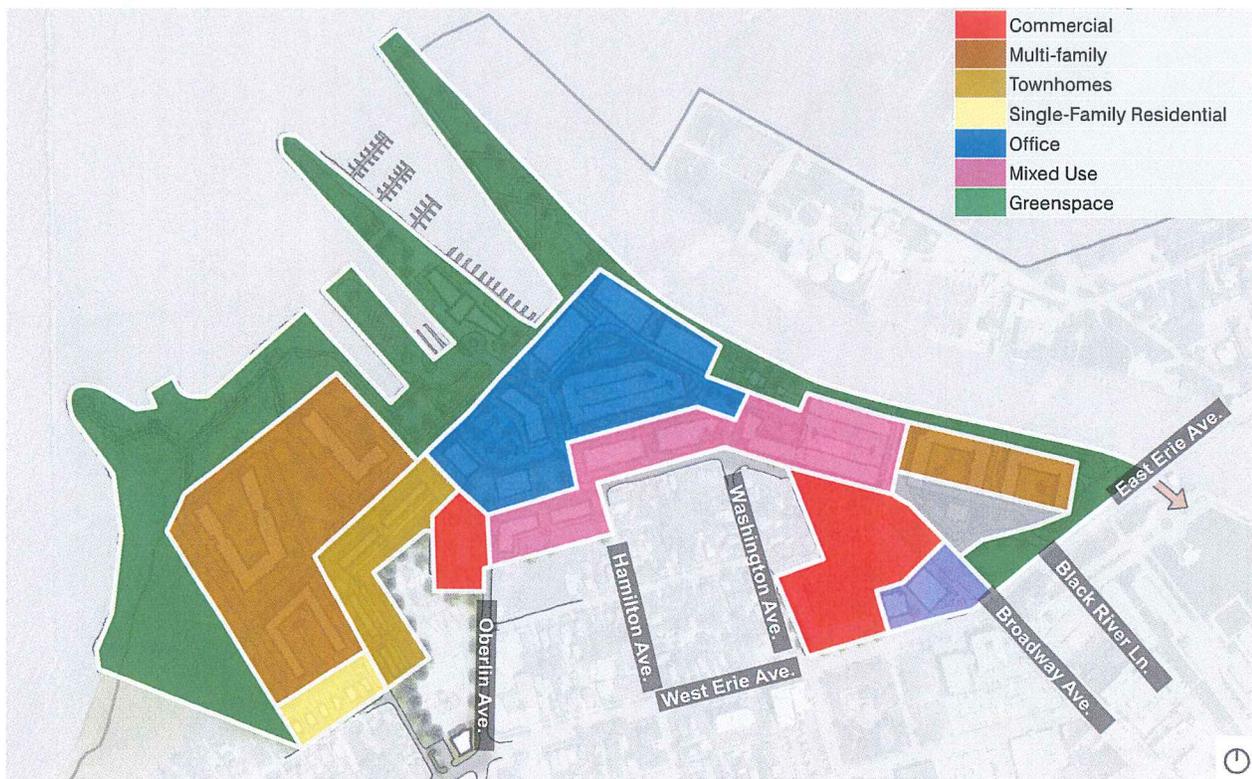
**Riverwalk:** Along the river’s edge, a public greenspace corridor must be maintained as part of any development project. This corridor will extend under the bridge from

the Black River Landing and continue toward the new Piers Park. Elements will include a walking path, bike/running trail extension, bench and clustered seating, respite areas, small plazas, and plaza fountains.

### Commercial

Commercial uses in the site area should extend along the Broadway corridor north toward the lakefront. This could include restaurants, entertainment, or retail users. A

## LAND USES



# 1

## MAKE WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT READY

combination of different users in multi-story buildings is the ideal approach. This could involve redevelopment of portions of the existing City Hall site and a next generation of neighborhood commercial use for the Oberlin Avenue site.

### Office

Premium office space along the lake will bring more daytime and evening workers to the lakefront end of the corridor and help activate

the space. Additionally, parking for office uses is compatible with nearby entertainment and restaurant uses due to the complementary hours of peak use. This lakefront destination can include medical or corporate office, and will take advantage of the adjacent and newly developed park and commercial amenities to create a valued attraction for employees.

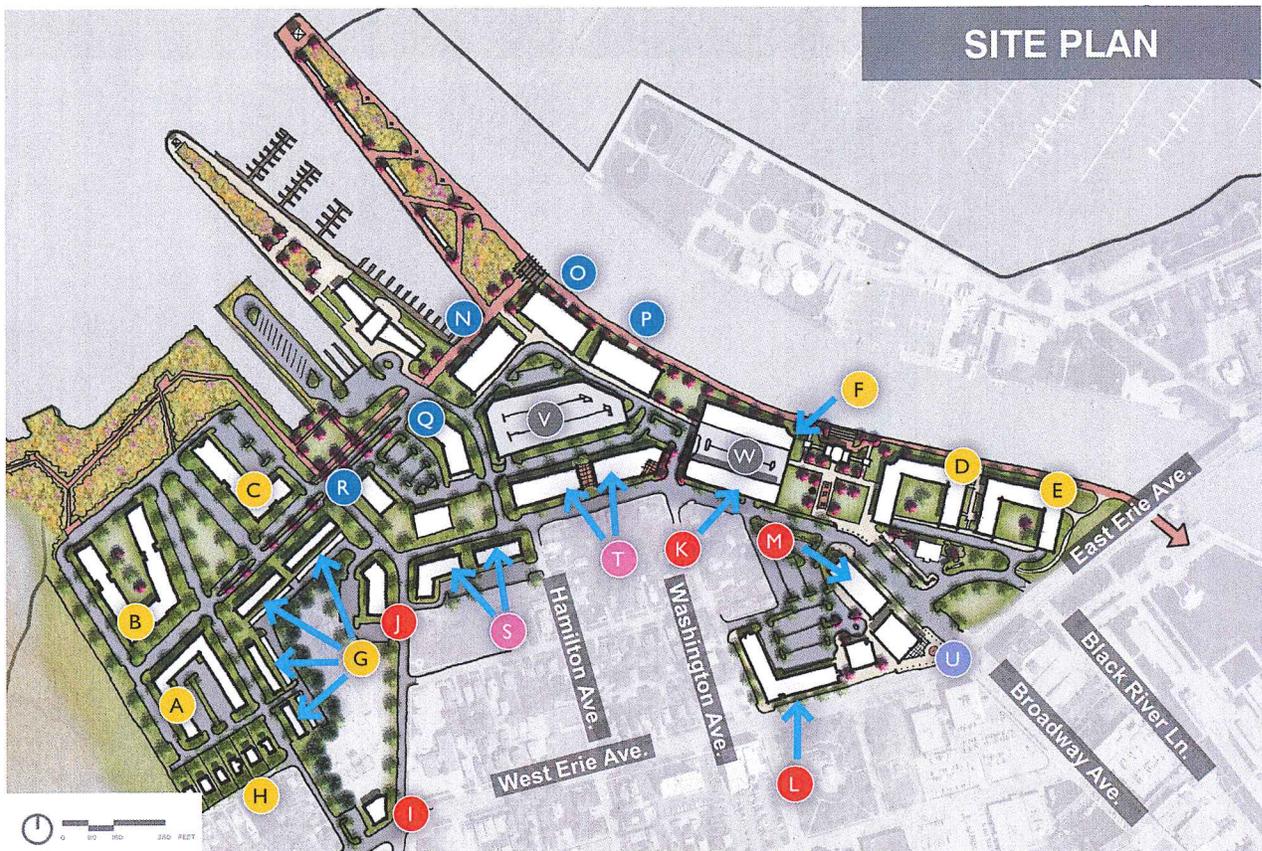
### Mixed Use

A mixed-use corridor is shown here, extending the Broadway

Corridor north towards the lake and connecting the proposed residential uses to Downtown. This walkable street frontage will curl through the site, and is an ideal location for mixed-use multi-story buildings. First floor uses can include restaurants, entertainment and retail, as well as small service-oriented offices. Upper floors can include residential and office uses.

### Multi-family

Larger, multi-family residential





**DEVELOPMENT DATA**

Residential	A	85 units
	B	165 units
	C	90 units
	D	117 units
	E	105 units
	F	64 units
	G	33 townhomes
	H	6 S.F. homes
<b>Total</b>	<b>601 units</b>	
Commercial	I	5,000 s.f.
	J	10,920
	K	33,000 s.f.
	L	22,200 s.f.
	M	12,000 s.f.
<b>Total</b>	<b>83,100 s.f.</b>	
Office	N	65,700 s.f.
	O	65,700 s.f.
	P	65,700 s.f.
	Q	31,000 s.f.
	R	16,600 s.f.
	<b>Total</b>	<b>244,700 s.f.</b>
Mixed Use	S	38,700 s.f.
	T	64,700 s.f.
<b>Total</b>	<b>103,400 s.f.</b>	
Civic	U	65,000 s.f.
Parking	V	800 spots
	W	400 spots
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,200 spots</b>

buildings should be located in close proximity to shared recreational assets, such as the lake and proposed parkland. This allows residents the necessary areas in which to relax, make neighborhood connections, and form community bonds. The sites shown here leverage the premium views along the lakefront and Black River, while also providing the increased mass of residents needed to support a thriving Downtown.

**Townhomes**

Townhome development creates the ideal transition from new, multi-family development to established, single-family neighborhoods. As a medium density housing solution, townhomes can add value to a neighborhood, provide a buffer to historical neighborhoods, and introduce the transition to the more urban streetscape of Downtown.

**Single-Family**

At the edge of the development scenario is a small area of proposed single family houses. This replaces any houses lost in the redevelopment of the neighborhood and builds back into the historical framework of the area.



# 2

## MAKE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT READY

*Vibrant communities have vibrant downtowns. Several buildings on the National Historic Register are strong assets for Broadway Ave., while natural development opportunities should be taken advantage of to strengthen the Broadway corridor.*

### OVERVIEW

Historic downtowns throughout Ohio and beyond are seeing a resurgence in popularity and revitalization in recent years. After decades of auto-oriented development and shopping malls located along highways, residents are looking for authentic experiences with a mix of downtown uses, including retail shopping, dining options, urban living, gathering places, entertainment, and more. With a significant amount of historic building stock downtown, Lorain is well positioned to capitalize on this trend and reinvigorate what was once a bustling downtown core.

### Historic Buildings

There are currently five buildings along Broadway Ave in downtown Lorain that can act as catalysts and focal points for development along the corridor. These buildings include the Palace Theatre, a well-loved local landmark that was restored through heavy support by community volunteers. Plans have emerged for a public/private partnership for a mixed-use

### CURRENT CONDITIONS

- Limited connection between assets
- Existing connectivity is primarily focused on vehicular traffic
- Limited visibility to the riverfront and lakefront

### DESIRED OUTCOMES

- Increased connectivity to and from the Downtown
- Pedestrian connection linking riverfront and lakefront
- Bicycle connection linking the Metro Parks trails to Downtown

### ACTION PLAN

- Design alleys and paths connecting Broadway Ave. to river
- Create a pedestrian pathway from the lake to the river
- Prioritize bicycle trail planning along east side of the river

development adjacent to the bascule bridge. The new development will anchor the connection to the park from Broadway and highlighting the potential for change along the corridor.

### Urban Framework

An intact, walkable streetscape is a critical element for a vibrant downtown. A dense urban fabric, where buildings front the street

and have large display windows create an inviting and attractive environment for pedestrians. This pattern of development is crucial for a downtown and exists throughout much of Broadway Ave. today.

### River Proximity

Access to a riverfront park of such size and popularity as the Black River Landing is a unique opportunity for Downtown

GROWTH

STABILITY

COMMUNITY

MOBILITY

Lorain. Currently there is a lack of movement between the commercial core and riverfront park. Bolstering these connections will aid both entities in achieving success.

the corridor continues to improve, these sites can then become key initial sites for infill redevelopment opportunities. The existing surface lots are in prime locations to enable

development linkages between Broadway and emerging downtown redevelopment.

### Surface Parking Lots

Approximately three acres of surface parking lots currently exists in the vicinity of Broadway and West Fourth Ave. This presents a near and mid-term opportunity for revitalization in the corridor.

While high vacancy downtown has eliminated most evening parking demand, providing clean, safe, landscaped, and well-maintained public parking areas can be a useful initial step in supporting growth. As

### INVEST IN INFRASTRUCTURE

- Implement the completed Broadway streetscape plans
- Create missing connections; both pedestrian and vehicular

### ENERGIZE THE CIC

- Target properties that will be catalytic for development
- Create an easy path to reuse for historic buildings; both for individuals and small businesses
- Be the link between Lorain and the market

### IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES

- Identify key business types needed to kickstart corridor
- Reduce the regulatory barriers for top priority uses
- Take advantage of existing riverfront successes

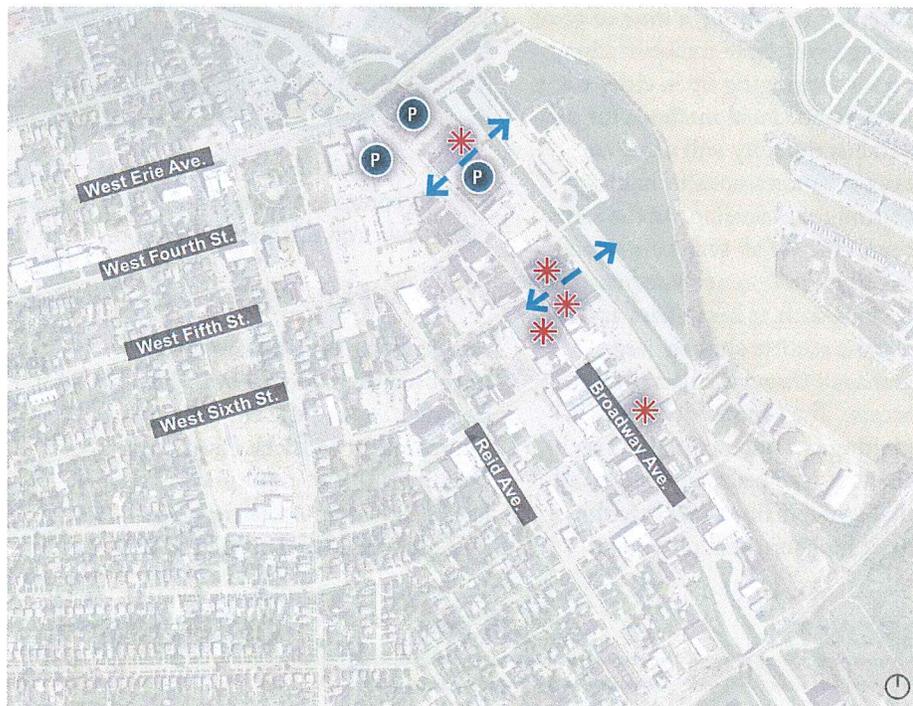
## BUILDING BLOCKS FOR A STRONGER BROADWAY AVE.

#### ASSETS

- \* **Buildings on the National Historic Register**  
5 buildings along Broadway Ave. including the Palace Theater, can be catalysts and focal points for development along the corridor.

#### OPPORTUNITIES

- P **Surface Parking Lots**  
2.78 acres of surface parking lots currently exists in the vicinity of Broadway and West Fourth Ave, a prime redevelopment opportunity for the corridor.
- ↔ **Proximity to the Black River Landing** Access to the riverfront is a unique opportunity for a historic Downtown. Lorain must facilitate movement between its commercial core and riverfront park.





# 3

## STRENGTHEN CONNECTIONS

*Improving connections in and around the Downtown, riverfront, and lakefront areas will allow more people to experience these great assets of Lorain.*

### OVERVIEW

Connectivity throughout the downtown area and between key city assets is poor. While in close proximity, the downtown corridor, riverfront and lakefront feel disconnected and this is a significant inhibitor to success.

As a catalyst to renewed downtown vitality and as a part of the revitalization process, direct, safe and attractive connections will be the tissue that binds the key projects into a collective whole. Mobility is entering a time of great change, with new transportation options springing up in cities every week. Traditional methods for car and bus mobility will continue even as autonomous technology continues to develop. At the same time, cities of all scales are seeing the introduction of shared mobility options such as bike-share and electric scooter sharing, largely managed through smart phone access. The future of mobility is exciting but uncertain. As these changes take place, the one thing that will remain constant is the need for connected places and

### CURRENT CONDITIONS

- Limited connection between assets
- Existing connectivity is primarily focused on vehicular traffic
- Limited visibility to the riverfront and lakefront

### DESIRED OUTCOMES

- Increased connectivity to and from the Downtown
- Pedestrian connection linking riverfront and lakefront
- Bicycle connection linking the Metro Parks trails to Downtown

### ACTION PLAN

- Design alleys and paths connecting Broadway Ave. to river
- Create a pedestrian pathway from the lake to the river
- Prioritize bicycle trail planning along east side of the river

spaces. This will be the key aspect of create a cohesive whole throughout downtown and the greater city.

### Waterfront Access

Access along the waterfront has improved dramatically over the past decade with the continuing improvement to Black River Landing and the removal of legacy industrial waste from the lakefront. In addition, Metro Parks

improvements to Lakeview Park have re-energized it as a destination on the near west side of downtown. However, it is now time to take the next step and make the waterfront improvements more accessible between each of them, and directly to the Broadway corridor. This should be accomplished in three ways: integration of access into new development, direct pedestrian and vehicular linkages between

GROWTH

STABILITY

COMMUNITY

MOBILITY

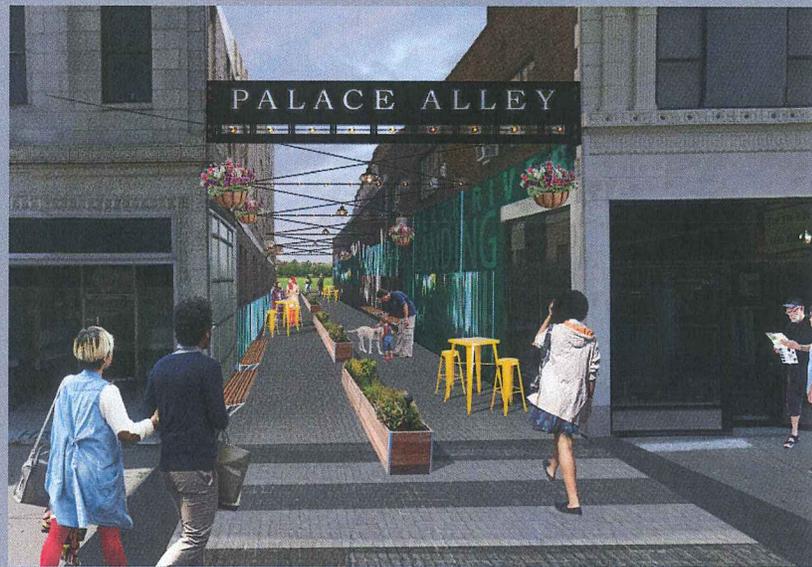
## Alleyways

Alleys present a crucial connection to bring activity from the riverfront to Downtown Lorain. Events and concerts held at Black River Landing should draw visitors to local shops and restaurants. There are several existing alleys in Downtown that present great opportunities for stronger pedestrian connections. The alley along the north side of the Palace Theater, pictured here, showcases a natural opportunity for a new connection and gathering place.

Alleys can be designed to accommodate vehicle traffic, or not, and often feature landscaping, lighting, public art, and outdoor dining. These cosmetic enhancements to existing infrastructure is often all that's needed to encourage pedestrian activity.

*Existing Lorain alleyway (pictured right) located adjacent to the Palace Theatre and connecting Downtown to the Riverfront Landing.*

*The same alley pictured below with new amenities such as lighting, art, seating and greenery provides a more welcoming atmosphere to pedestrians.*



Broadway and the riverfront, and links to the overall regional pedestrian and bike trail system.

## New Development

Over time, new development along the lakefront must integrate connectivity within each site, to the waterfront resources and to the Broadway corridor. In particular, internal public roadway grids should be created in the larger lakefront development parcels. Broadway should be physically and visually connected to the north to create a strong bond between this new

development and the historic city corridor. In addition, public land must be maintained for trail and park access along all waterfront edges in new development. This will begin the larger reconnection of lakefront and riverfront assets that will truly set Lorain apart from any other community in the region. Further details of these development principles are described in Section 1 of this chapter.

## Links between Broadway and the riverfront

There are immediate opportunities to create improved access to and from the riverfront from Broadway. While the park has continued to improve, little of this vibrancy has translated up the short hill to the Broadway corridor. This is in part due to the physical and perceptual separation between the two areas. With the Broadway streetscape set to begin and the announced restoration and reuse of the Broadway building, this is the ideal time to remedy this issue.



# 3

## STRENGTHEN CONNECTIONS

There is the potential for an additional/improved roadway connection between Broadway and the riverfront. This will help to remedy the current vehicular pattern which forces all access to the very ends of the corridor which are also the ends of the park. At the southern end this can feel

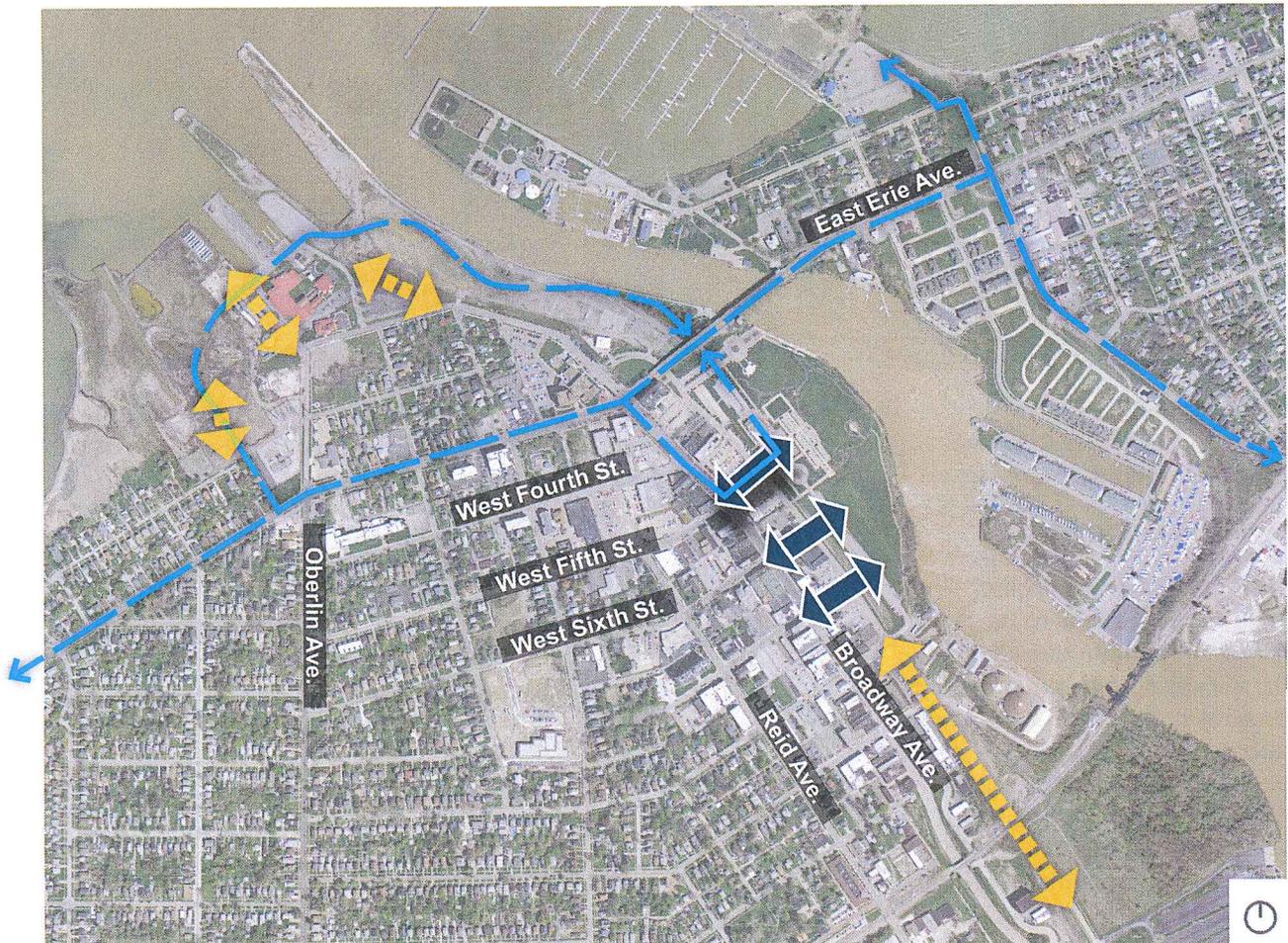
particularly remote as that is the less active end of the park on a daily basis and no new improvements or redevelopment has yet occurred on the larger adjacent sites.

A more exciting set of connection can be made in the existing alleys that already link Broadway to the

riverfront. With some investment, these can be transformed into active, vibrant downtown spaces, and likely locations for restaurants, shops, and other uses while drawing people in both directions.

Made attractive with new surfaces, furnishings and artwork and made

### REGIONAL CONNECTIONS WITHIN THE DOWNTOWN



safe with added lighting and visibility, these alleys would be ideal complements to the Broadway corridor streetscape improvements. These would also allow opportunities for additional seating and access for emerging downtown uses. An additional advantage is the creation of easy, appealing walkways

from Black River Landing parking to the potential restaurants and shops along Broadway. It's a well-established factor in downtown redevelopment that visitors will walk added distance from parking when the route is visually appealing, safe, and direct.

In particular, a connected lakefront trail system will link Lorain's waterfront to those of neighboring communities and become a vital piece of the overall waterfront trail system.

2) Trails within the downtown area will link the lakefront to the river corridor and other uses throughout the downtown area. This will encourage redevelopment by opening access and encouraging close interaction between key assets.

3) Connections to the larger Lorain County trail system are needed to link the larger community and to promote health. These connections will better tie downtown to the city. Health initiatives spearheaded by the County Health Department will tie in to this effort to increase active recreational opportunities for residents, workers and visitors.

### Connections from Broadway Ave to the Black River

Pedestrian and roadway connections will unite Downtown and the Black River Landing.

### Bicycle Trail Extension

Prioritizing funding and collaboration with the Lorain County Metro Parks will draw cyclists into Lorain.

### Connecting Downtown to Developable Land

The waterfront development concepts in section 1 of this chapter offer strategies for connecting Downtown with the lakefront.

## Pedestrian and Bicycle Trails

Mixed-use recreational trails will play a key role in both connectivity and the overall health of the community. These trails must be created in three specific ways.

1) A dedicated lakefront trail is needed. The Lakefront Redevelopment Plan undertaken by the Lorain County Metro Parks (see Chapter 4), indicates some vital element of this connectivity.



*Adding programming, lighting, and other elements to existing physical connections between the River and Downtown will strengthen the safety of existing spaces, in addition to connecting Broadway Ave. with the riverfront.*



# 4

## PARKS

*Providing space for gathering, recreational opportunities, and environmental benefits, city parks are an integral part of a community. Capitalizing on these assets and safeguarding them for future generations are key issues.*

### OVERVIEW

Lorain has a parks of a variety of sizes. Since the number of parks strains the city’s current ability to maintain them, it may seem that there is excess parkland in the city. This is not the case, however. The amount of parkland is in line with needed acres per person in order to provide quality recreation and natural environments for residents. In addition, Lorain has a few large parks that serve large portions of the city.

### Prioritization by size and character

While there is a temptation for cities to walk away from smaller neighborhood parks when budgets are tight, it is almost always better to hold onto the land since parks are true centerpieces to neighborhood quality of life and often the catalyst for neighborhood redevelopment. The city should prioritize maintenance abilities by the size and service the park provides. For smaller parks that are currently underutilized, there is an option to naturalize those in safe

### CURRENT CONDITIONS

- Park space per capita is comparable to national average
- Parks vary in size, scale, and function across Lorain
- Costly to maintain current parks

### DESIRED OUTCOMES

- Large parks maintained and celebrated in Lorain
- Neighborhood parks used as catalyst for area stabilization
- Strengthened collaborations with Metro Parks and Port Authority

### ACTION PLAN

- MAINTAIN parks with prime locations, most visitors, and largest areas; through collaboration with Metro Parks when possible
- HOLD parks with low visitation but future potential through naturalization or leasing the land (see right)
- SELL/DONATE key small parks to new champions of greenspace (ie. nonprofits, neighborhood groups, community agriculture, etc.)

locations, lowering maintenance costs while maintaining long-term control. Other compatible uses could also be considered such as temporary tree farming or local

food production. Only in parks with very limited sizes and locations should they be sold/donated, and those should be targeted to remain in an open-space oriented use.

GROWTH

STABILITY

COMMUNITY

MOBILITY

## HOLDING PUBLIC LAND

When maintenance of publicly owned land is cost prohibitive but future value of the land is high, as is the case with many parks in Lorain, two options are to naturalize the park or temporarily lease the land to an external company. Both options:

- Retain City ownership
- Eliminate or reduce City maintenance
- Raise property values bordering park

**NATURALIZATION** - Utilizes natural, low maintenance plantings to convert parks to meadowland which can still be accessed and enjoyed by the public.

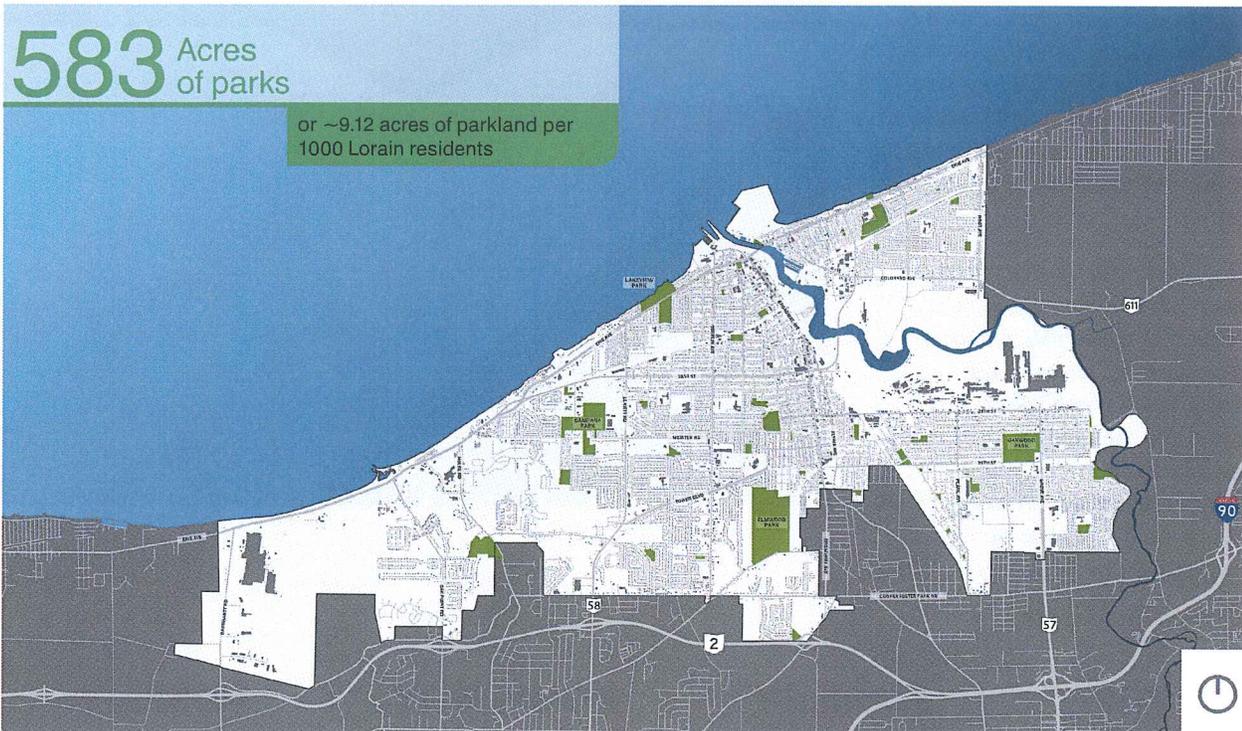
**LEASING** - Often to tree farming or other agriculture companies, retains park-like space but eliminates City maintenance and liability.

### Metro Parks

The involvement of the Metro Parks in maintaining and operating Lakeview Park has been a boon to the city. As a large and highly utilized park with direct beach access, it is an expensive place to keep at the highest standard. Further opportunities for Metro Parks to maintain and operate other large city parks should be pursued.

#### EXAMPLE OF LAND LEASE: Fresh Coast Capital

- Transforms leased land into tree farms and urban agriculture
- Assumes maintenance of land for 10-15 years
- Cleans contaminated brownfield sites
- Mitigates stormwater
- Provides local jobs
- Increases tax base with new operating business





# 5

## STABILIZE VACANT PROPERTIES

*Vacant properties should be addressed through a land bank strategy, where the most at-risk areas are targeted for stabilization.*

### OVERVIEW

Vacant and derelict properties are a serious blight on the city. From the perspectives of maintenance, safety, the perception of safety, appearance, land values and community investment, vacant properties are a significant detriment to the near-term livability of neighborhoods and long-term economic success.

One key strategy for vacant properties begins with acquiring control of the properties through tax delinquency foreclosures. The presence of a City/County land Bank facilitates this approach and can be the catalyst for changing the impacts of these properties on the city.

Properties with vacant structures much be evaluated against the a rubric of conservation versus dilapidation. One one end, properties deemed historically significant are likely to have special consideration in this process. These historic properties will likely require public/private/non-profit partnerships to achieve preservation.

*(Continued on page 58).*

### CURRENT CONDITIONS

- Considerable amount of vacant properties
- An overall strategy needed to deal with vacant properties is needed
- Vacant properties are lowering property values

### DESIRED OUTCOMES

- Non-salvageable structures are demolished and land is held or sold
- Vacant land is assembled to larger, developable tracts and sold
- Improved land values

### ACTION PLAN

- Partner with the County land bank to address vacant residential properties and to stabilize property values within targeted areas
- Target Residential Areas (A) are "at risk" areas where the "Prepare" Land Bank strategy could primarily be employed
- Target Residential Areas (B) are the districts in the City with the lowest property value, where the "Hold" strategy could primarily be employed
- Partner with the County land bank to address vacant commercial properties throughout the City
- Large industrial areas should be preserved through a combination of the "Prepare", "Naturalize", and "sell" strategies

GROWTH

STABILITY

COMMUNITY

MOBILITY

## WHAT IS A LAND BANK?

A land bank is a non-profit entity that addresses flaws in the private land and development market. Areas of low value, where the property value is not high enough to incentivize maintenance are a typical focus of land bank revitalization efforts. Tax-foreclosed properties are targeted for acquisition, and the land bank will use an “expedited foreclosure” process to clear the title, and deal with the properties in one of the four ways outlined below:

### Hold

- Lots are held by the Land Bank as a way to help stabilize property values in under-valued areas
- Structures, if non-salvageable are demolished
- Properties assembled into larger, more developable tracts

### Prepare

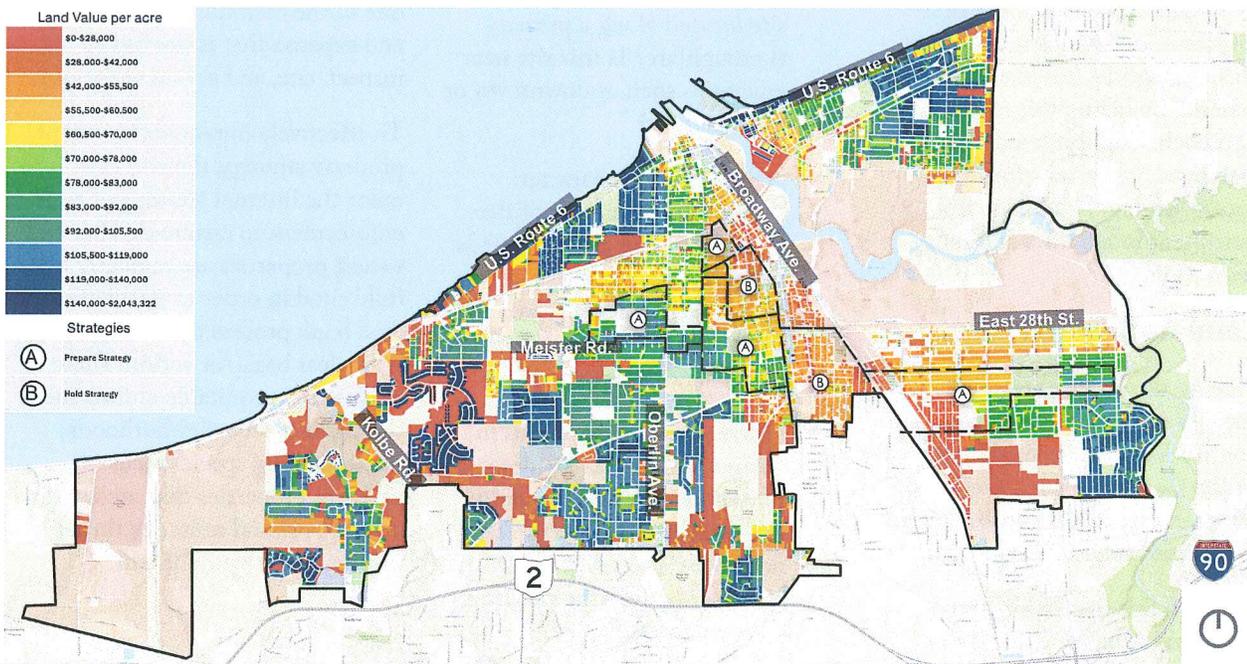
- Structures in salvageable condition are stabilized (window boards, new roof, etc.) and offered for renovation
- Commercial properties are remediated
- Redevelopment plans must be submitted by purchaser

### Naturalize

- Large areas of vacant land with a long timeframe for redevelopment can be cultivated as a naturalized area
- Less maintenance costs, less impact on adjacent property values, easy to turn over for redevelopment

### Sell

- Mow-to-own
- Establish clearinghouse of land bank properties for sale
- Residential vacant land can be sold to adjacent property owners





# 5

## STABILIZE VACANT PROPERTIES

For most of the current vacant structures, they are non-contributing and impose a significant negative impact on the neighborhoods they are in. The criteria for these properties will be different and favor an approach to mitigate the near-term problems they pose.

For these nuisance properties, a demolition strategy is necessary and must be aggressively funded to remove blighted properties that are dragging down city fortunes. The result will be a significant amount of vacant land, whether created through demolition or already existing.

This sets up a four-tier strategy. The Hold/Prepare/Naturalize/Sell approach breaks down the best opportunity for vacant land into those categories based on prevalent criteria. By taking this multi-tiered approach, neighborhoods can be stabilized, while transforming vacant land and buildings from a detriment into a local and long-term asset.

### Land Acquisition

Having the assets of land enables the city to have much greater control. Whether owned by the City or the County, this is a preferred alternative to private ownership of abandoned blighted properties.

Through this ownership and basic maintenance (whether of

the structure or of the vacant lot resulting from demolition), the values of surrounding properties will be improved and the overall values of each neighborhood will be stabilized.

### Developing Criteria

In order to determine how to proceed on Land Bank properties, a set of criteria for action must be established. The first step is to acquire the properties and establish basic maintenance, but then the Land Bank can position the sites based on their potential reuse versus potential timeframe.

To categorize these properties, several factors may be considered.

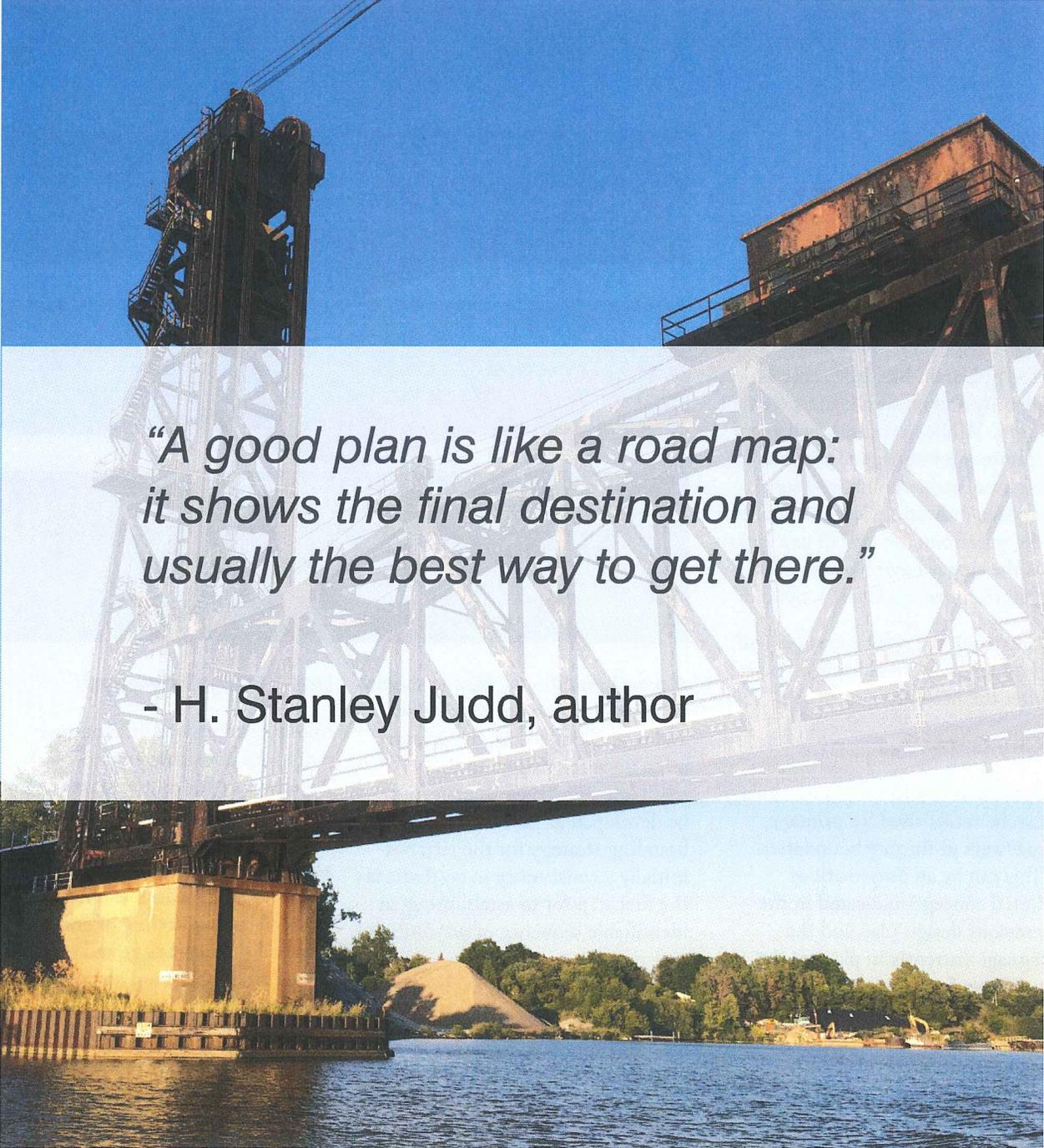
- **Location:** is this a highly visible site located along a primary thoroughfare? Is this site near amenities such as downtown or the lakefront?
- **Neighborhood character:** What is the character of the surrounding neighborhood? Is this a rare scattered vacant site in an otherwise well-cared for neighborhood or one of many in a struggling area?
- **Market conditions:** Is this in an area where sites are desired for purchase? Are sites selling at a market rate? Are adjacent neighbors interested in buying and maintaining the sites at a discounted rate?

By considering a combination of these factors, the acquired vacant parcels can be placed in the HOLD, PREPARE, NATURALIZE, or SELL categories described in this section.

### Code Enforcement Strategy

A frequently mentioned concern throughout the public process for this plan was a need for increased code enforcement of property violations in the neighborhoods. While this plan can't directly address solutions to that issue, part of any neighborhood improvement strategy that involves reclaiming vacant and derelict properties must involve code enforcement. It is a difficult task to find the appropriate balance of enforcement and results, due to the continual time, effort, and expense that is needed to inspect, cite, and act on violations.

To effectively implement a vacant property strategy, the city can tailor the internal strategy of code enforcement to ensure derelict and vacant properties are regularly and fully cited in order to enable the land bank process to move forward with clear basis for action. There must still be equitable enforcement throughout the neighborhoods, while keeping special focus on problem properties that are creating a neighborhood nuisance through vacancy and abandonment.



*“A good plan is like a road map:  
it shows the final destination and  
usually the best way to get there.”*

- H. Stanley Judd, author



# 6

## GATEWAY AND SIGNAGE

*Gateways into Lorain provide an opportunity to project an image of civic pride and make a first impression for visitors. Signage throughout Lorain should clearly guide residents and visitors to their final destination.*

### OVERVIEW

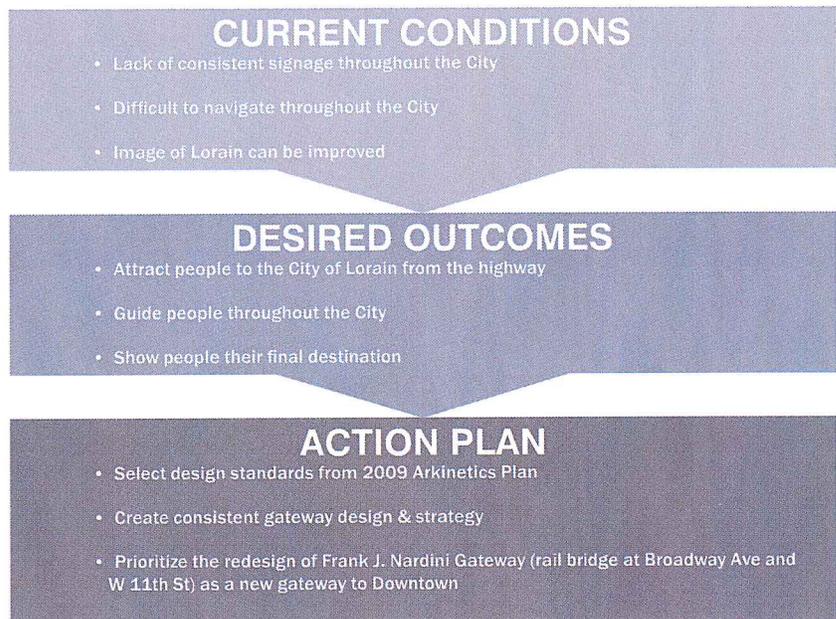
Telling someone where they are seems like a simplistic way to create identity. However, a cohesive city approach to naming and place-making is a vital part of establishing civic character.

Today, Lorain has little sense of identity and no significant points of entry. While there are small entry features and signage near some highway access points and some signage indicating downtown and the riverfront, the overall perception of the city as having prime waterfront access is not conveyed.

Entry points at city entrances and the Downtown can begin to help alter the perception of Lorain.

### City Gateways

A consistent and simple vocabulary can be established for primary gateways at the city boundaries. This can be an outgrowth of initial concepts indicated in the previous design plan and the signage currently in place at the southern freeway entrance on Broadway Avenue as part of this



approach, additional signage should indicate directions to downtown and waterfront access, the primary attractions for visitors to the city. New signage concepts could be developed as part of a large branding strategy for the city, but initially a consistency in aesthetic is the first step for to establishing an identifiable sequence of wayfinding.

### Downtown Gateways

Specific gateways that announce entry into downtown and the Broadway corridor would create an excellent complement to emerging changes downtown. Taking advantage of natural breakpoints in the street approach can help in establishing the feeling of entering a special district. Suggested entry points are highlighted on the map to the right.

GROWTH

STABILITY

COMMUNITY

MOBILITY

PROPOSED CHARACTER

1

Attract to Lorain



2

Guide within Lorain



3

Show the Final Destination



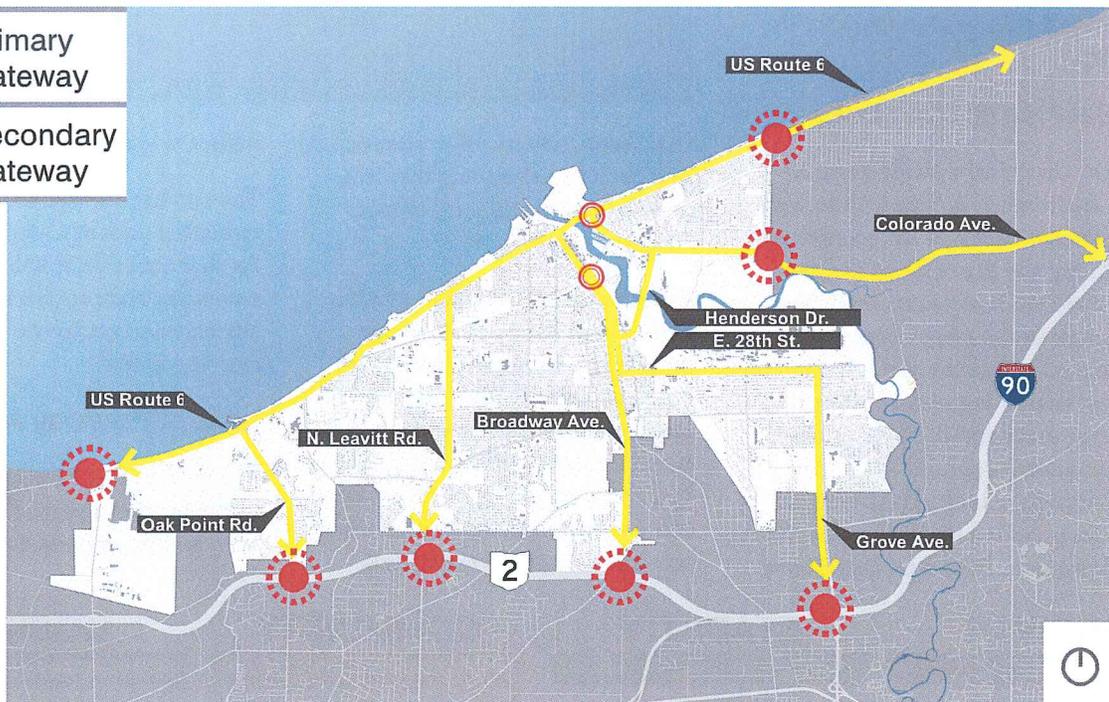
GATEWAY LOCATIONS



Primary Gateway



Secondary Gateway





# 7

## ANNEXATION STRATEGY

*Future development along the freeway exits should trigger annexation of these sites into Lorain.*

### OVERVIEW

Lorain has several challenges with regard to city-wide economic development. Annexation opportunities should be explored as one method in a toolkit of approaches to inspire development investment in the city. Lorain is not a typical “greenfield” development area, but has some opportunities to grow. While important efforts are made to improve the downtown core, the annexation of limited areas near freeway access could provide a complement and help with the overall economic strategy for the city.

### Balance of Land Uses

The historical development of Lorain relied on heavy industrial uses as a driver of the economy. Along the Black River and the lakefront, heavy manufacturing plants in the form of steel mills, related industries and other intense manufacturing uses consumed large areas and the bulk of the commercial ground in the city. During the industrial heyday, these uses provided the jobs to sustain the downtown Broadway corridor of

**CURRENT CONDITIONS**

- Unincorporated land near freeway exits can support high-return development
- Freeway interchanges are ideal for office development
- Lorain is unable to control branding from heavily traveled roads

**DESIRED OUTCOMES**

- Generate positive tax revenues for the City
- Control the City’s messaging and branding from the highway
- Attract new businesses and visitors to Lorain

**ACTION PLAN**

- Determine parcels to annex for ideal highway access
- Coordinate with owners and developers
- Coordinate with City service departments

businesses, several other commercial corridors and shopping districts, and the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

With the loss of this industry, the city did not have a sustainable and diverse economic base or job creators. The city does not have a large amount of the corporate office uses that pay significant income tax. There are medical and medical office uses in specific locations and few other employers providing

higher-wage opportunities.

The city has invested in a newer industrial park at Colorado Avenue. As that area fills, it will still rely on secondary state routes to provide any truck access to the major freeway system.

### Lack of Freeway Access

The lack of direct freeway access to the northern part of the city has been an impediment to economic

GROWTH

STABILITY

COMMUNITY

MOBILITY

development. While this plan outlines strategies to improve the perception of distance to downtown and adds reasons to redevelop there, certain types of commercial users will prefer a freeway accessible location. In particular, this could be an opportunity to attract more high-wage office users, and potential expansion of emerging medical office in the area.

Collaborative efforts with private developers could result in this limited but strategic expansion of the city's boundaries, while establishing new "front doors" to the city. In addition to the important revenue generates, signs of investment for the city in these

## WHY

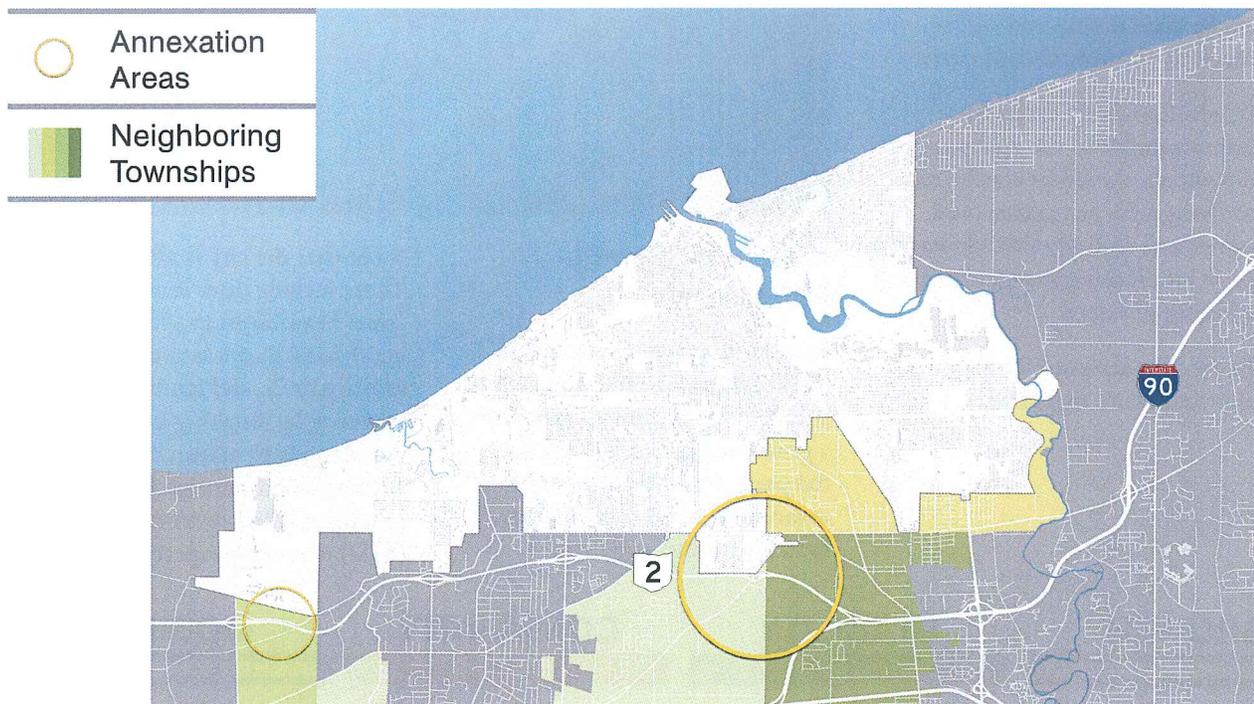
- Prime location with high visibility for office and commercial development
- Increased tax base results from new development
- Improves gateways into the city

## HOW

- Can be accomplished in several ways; typically a plan is "owner-initiated"
- Township land is currently unincorporated, allowing annexation to occur
- In return, Lorain agrees to provide city services (water, sewer, etc.)

highly visible locations could signal ongoing development efforts along the Broadway corridor and provide a greater awareness of opportunities for those visiting this portion of the city.

## POTENTIAL AREAS FOR ANNEXATION





# 8

## PROMOTE LORAIN

*Lorain must have a collaborative, comprehensive “front door” to the region, promoting tourism, business opportunities, and a positive image.*

### OVERVIEW

Lorain has many assets that are not at all visible to those outside the city, and often overlooked by its own residents. While waterfront events are common and well-attended, those outside the area are often unaware of them. The access to the lake and river continues to expand in Lorain, surpassing that of neighboring communities. With coming streetscape improvements and new business in the downtown, and hoped-for brownfield reinvestment as part of the County study, there is now, and will be, much to promote about Lorain.

In addition, some systemic improvements to the operation of downtown should be considered to change the perception (and sometimes reality) of the downtown as an area lacking maintenance and a feeling of safety.

In order to accomplish this, two approaches are suggested:

### CURRENT CONDITIONS

- Difficult to find information about Lorain
- Information doesn't highlight the strengths of Lorain
- Lorain is not controlling its message

### DESIRED OUTCOMES

- Updated website for visitor and resident information
- A recognizable and comprehensive brand for Lorain
- Increased tourism and development interest in Lorain

### ACTION PLAN

- Create new and up-to-date web interface for City info
- Consolidate tourism info across City offices and nonprofits
- Incorporate Lorain brand into signage and gateway features

### Downtown District Management

In order to promote a sense of safety and order, management of a downtown district will require a proactive approach. Now is the perfect time to form an organization that can provide functions above and beyond

those that the city is able to do. These include litter removal, street beautification (flowers, etc..), local business promotion, safety patrols, and controlling vagrancy by directing under-served populations to resources. This can be accomplished through the creating of a Special Improvement District (SID) whereby property owners

GROWTH

STABILITY

COMMUNITY

MOBILITY

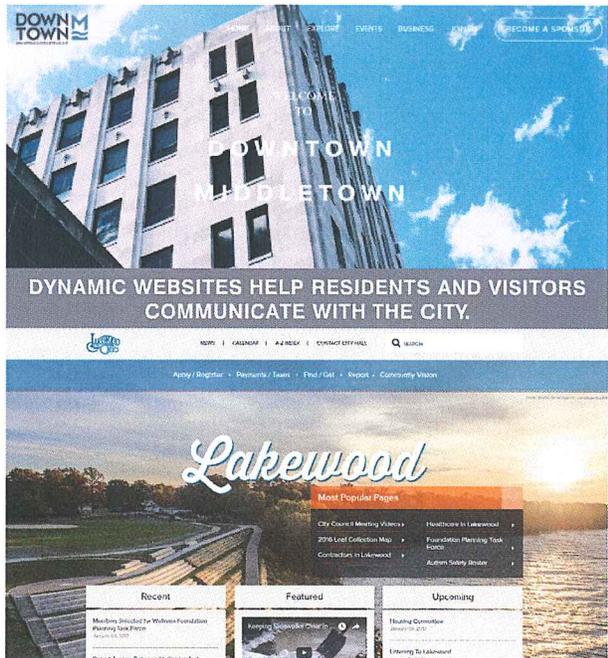
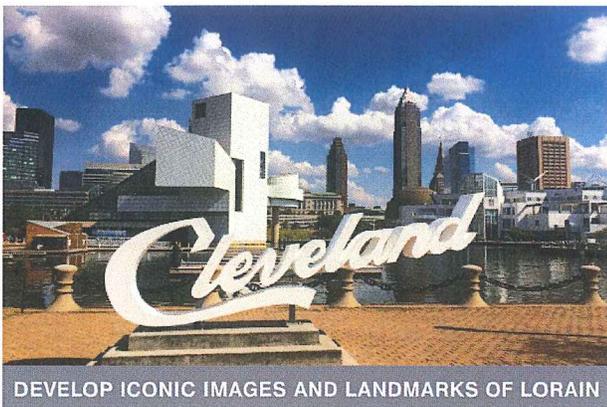
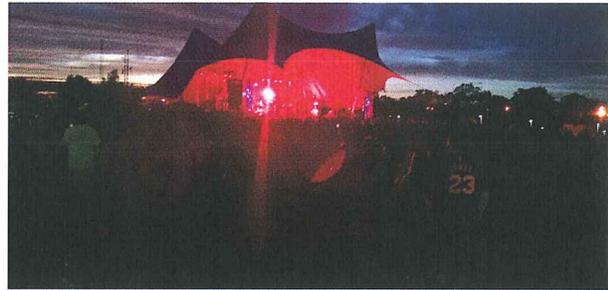
EXAMPLE PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

share financial responsibility and in conjunction with existing organizations such as the Port Authority.

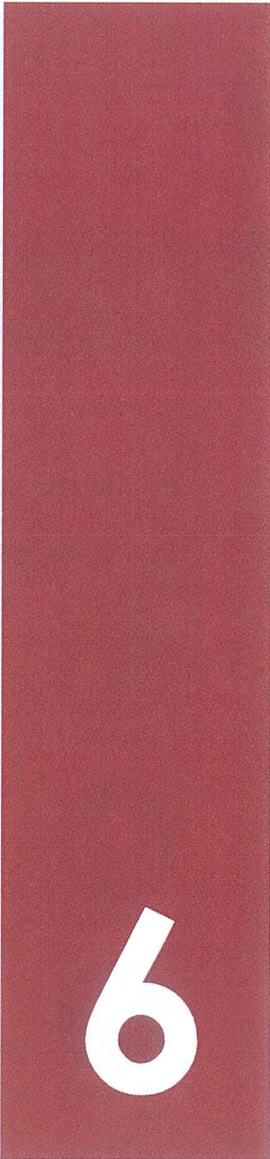
**Consolidated Online Site and Branding**

There are a variety of organizations currently promoting programs and opportunities in Lorain. The Lorain Port Authority has begun a consolidated effort to link these resources together and to provide direct links to events and opportunities. Expansion of this could link overall promotion of the emerging changes in downtown and the Broadway corridor to the activity on the waterfront.

An overall branding campaign and strategy for the city, linking the efforts of the Port Authority and the assets of the city could be the next step in solidifying the new identity of Lorain as changes occur and redevelopment begins.





A vertical red bar on the right side of the page, containing a white number 6.

# 6

# Implementation

*This chapter summarizes all of the strategies and actions necessary to implement the vision of the Comprehensive Plan.*



# IMPLEMENTATION OVERVIEW

## PLAN PRINCIPLES

The following plan principles, introduced in the public engagement chapter, frame the implementation framework below.



**Growth**

*Lorain will leverage its existing assets to attract a diverse range of employers and ensure sustained economic growth well into the future.*



**Stability**

*Recognizing that Lorain's homes and neighborhoods are important spaces for residents, Lorain will work to stabilize and improve the quality of life in these neighborhoods.*



**Mobility**

*Improving access to and within Lorain, while strengthening the safety and quality of all modes of transportation, the City of Lorain will better connect its people and its places.*



**Community**

*Lorain will broaden its programming and events for residents, while establishing itself as a regional destination.*

## GOALS

	Growth	Stability	Mobility	Community	Downtown	Lakefront	Commercial Corridors	Brownfields	Freeway Exits	Neighborhoods
Corridor redevelopment	■	■		■	○		○			○
Connections to river			■		○					
Connections to lake	■		■		○	○				
Historic preservation		■			○		○			○
Adaptive building reuse	■	■			○		○			
Site redevelopment strategy	■			■	○	○		○	○	○
Community Investment Corporation	■	■		■	○	○	○	○	○	
Economic incentives		■		■	○	○	○	○		○

**STRATEGIES**  
(FROM CHAPTER 5)

Plan Initiatives	Growth	Stability	Community	Mobility	Downtown	Lakefront	Commercial Corridors	Brownfields	Freeway Exits	Neighborhoods
<b>1. Make Waterfront Development Ready</b>					○	○		○		
<i>Identify redevelopment strategies</i>					○	○		○		
<i>Develop City Hall modification/relocation strategy</i>					○	○				
<i>Identify land for public acquisition</i>					○	○		○		
<b>2. Make Downtown Development Ready</b>					○					
<i>Control key redevelopment sites</i>					○					
<i>Infrastructure investment in streetscape and connections</i>					○		○			
<b>3. Strengthen Connections</b>					○	○	○			
<i>Create pedestrian linkages to the riverfront</i>					○	○	○			
<i>Integrate connections into future redevelopment</i>						○	○	○		
<i>Link to trail and recreation planning for greater area</i>					○	○	○	○		○
<b>4. Parks</b>					○	○	○			○
<i>Establish "Maintain, Hold, Sell/Donate" strategy</i>					○	○				○
<b>5. Stabilize Vacant Properties</b>					○			○		○
<i>Collaborate with County Land Bank</i>					○					○
<i>Establish "Hold, Prepare, Naturalize, Sell" criteria</i>					○		○			○



# IMPLEMENTATION OVERVIEW

STRATEGIES	Growth	Stability	Community	Mobility	Downtown	Lakefront	Commercial Corridors	Brownfields	Freeway Exits	Neighborhoods
<b>Plan Initiatives</b>										
<b>6. Gateways and signage</b>					○		○		○	○
<i>Focus on key gateways for improvement</i>					○		○		○	
<i>Create consistent wayfinding signage strategy</i>					○	○	○		○	
<b>7. Annexation</b>									○	
<i>Coordinate public/private investment</i>									○	
<i>Coordinate city services</i>									○	
<b>8. Promote Lorain</b>					○	○	○		○	
<i>Collaboration with Port Authority</i>					○	○	○	○		
<i>Website - events promotional</i>					○	○	○			
<i>Website - sites and development promotional</i>					○	○	○	○	○	
<i>Incorporate brand of gateways and signage</i>					○	○	○		○	
<b>Other: Codes &amp; Regulations</b>										
<i>Zoning Code</i>					○	○	○	○	○	○
<i>Code enforcement</i>					○		○			○
<b>Other: Transportation Collaboration</b>										
<i>Expanding public transit</i>					○		○			○
<i>Non-motorized transportation</i>					○	○	○			○

# PLAN INITIATIVES

STRATEGIES	Growth	Stability	Community	Mobility	ACTION STEPS	TIMELINE
<b>Plan Initiatives</b>						
<b>1. Make waterfront development ready</b>						
<i>Identify redevelopment strategies</i>					Work with Lorain County on collaborative outcome to brownfield redevelopment study	2018-2019
<i>Develop City Hall modification/relocation strategy</i>					Consider options to reposition City Hall site to complement redevelopment opportunities along the lakefront. Other locations downtown should be considered for administrative functions while safety services could locate in a variety of areas.	2019-2020
<i>Identify land for public acquisition</i>					Seek opportunities to consolidate additional waterfront and near-waterfront land into public ownership	Ongoing
<b>2. Make Downtown Development Ready</b>						
<i>Control key redevelopment sites</i>					Seek opportunities to consolidate downtown development sites and key buildings for reuse into public ownership	Ongoing
<i>Infrastructure investment in streetscape and connections</i>					Implement the Broadway corridor streetscape project and continue increased access to the riverfront	2019-2020
<b>3. Strengthen Connections</b>						
<i>Create pedestrian linkages to the riverfront</i>					Construct pedestrian alleys from Broadway corridor to the riverfront	2019-2020
<i>Integrate connections into future redevelopment</i>					Extend the Broadway corridor to the north and establish better connectivity to the waterfront with any new development	Ongoing
<i>Link to trail and recreation planning for greater area</i>					Seek connections between key downtown assets and the trail network. Implement trail connectivity recommendations of the Lakefront Connectivity Plan	2019-2022
<b>4. Parks</b>						
<i>Establish "Maintain, Hold, Sell/Donate" strategy</i>					Evaluate opportunities for each park for near term use and as catalysts for neighborhood improvement. Extend relationship with Metro Park for management of key parks as possible.	2019 - Ongoing



# PLAN INITIATIVES

STRATEGIES	Growth	Stability	Community	Mobility	ACTION STEPS	TIMELINE
<b>Plan Initiatives</b>						
<b>5. Stabilize Vacant Properties</b>		■	■			
<i>Collaborate with County Land Bank</i>		■	■		Refine strategy and process for public acquisition of vacant and abandoned properties	2019 - ongoing
<i>Establish "Hold, Prepare, Naturalize, Sell" criteria</i>		■	■		Establish criteria and priority ranking system for land banked and city acquired parcels	2019-2020
<b>6. Gateways and signage</b>		■	■	■		
<i>Focus on key gateways for improvement</i>		■	■	■	Design and implement gateway improvements as part of a larger city promotion and branding strategy	Initial 2020, future through 2022
<i>Create consistent wayfinding signage strategy</i>		■	■	■	Design and implement wayfinding as part of a larger city promotion and branding strategy	2020
<b>7. Annexation</b>	■	■				
<i>Coordinate public/private investment</i>	■	■			Pursue public/private partnerships for development in designated annexation areas adjacent to the freeway	Ongoing
<i>Coordinate city services</i>	■	■			Create a city services plan indicating the density and development size needed for adequate return on investment of providing city services	2019

# PROMOTE LORAIN

STRATEGIES	Growth	Stability	Mobility	Community	ACTION STEPS	TIMELINE
<b>Plan Initiatives</b>						
<b>8. Promote Lorain</b>						
<i>Website - events promotional</i>					Heavily promote the Port Authority website for coordination of local activities, or create another dedicated web portal. Link clearly to the city webpage	2018-2023
<i>Website - sites and development promotional</i>					Create a web-based searchable database of available redevelopment sites and adaptive reuse buildings, along with the list of associated city incentives	2019
<i>Incorporate brand of gateways and signage</i>					Coordinate larger branding approach between web-based proportional materials and gateway/wayfinding approach	Ongoing



# TRANSPORTATION COLLABORATION

STRATEGIES	Growth	Stability	Community	Mobility	ACTION STEPS	TIMELINE
<b>Other: Transportation Collaboration</b>						
<b>Expanding Public transit</b>					<p>Mobility options will continue to evolve in the very near future. Current hopes expressed are for expanded public transit in the form of buses and County shuttles. The city could also look to partner with quasi-public and private mobility partners to expand options as shared-use and autonomous vehicles become commonplace.</p>	Ongoing
<b>Non-motorized transportation</b>					<p>Consider on-street facilities for active transportation in the design of rebuilt or resurfaced streets. These might include bike lanes or bike sharrows among other possible improvements. Linkages to the overall trail network should be created as part of redevelopment or re-purposing of existing corridors.</p>	Ongoing

# CODES & REGULATIONS

STRATEGIES	Growth	Stability	Community	Mobility	ACTION STEPS	TIMELINE
Other: Codes & Regulations						
Zoning Code	■	■			Finalize and approve zoning code updates	2019
Code Enforcement		■	■		Prioritize vacant and blighted properties Coordinate with Land Bank approach for coordinated enforcement	Ongoing



# THE LORAIN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PRIORITIES

The Lorain Comprehensive Plan is the result of a community process, resulting in a set of targeted strategies. The key findings are summarized below.

## 1 MAKE WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT READY

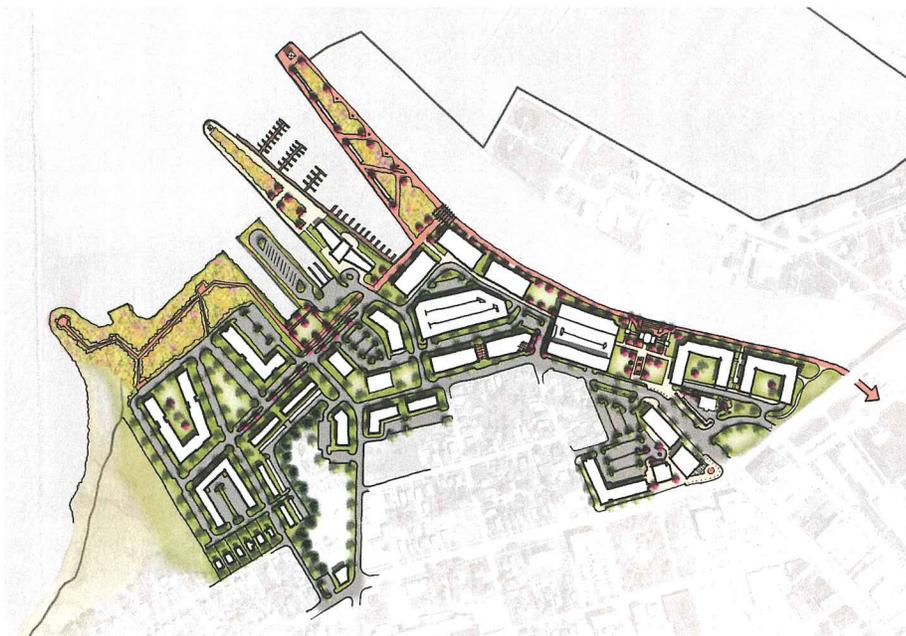


*Lorain's waterfront is an asset that truly sets the city apart. A fully developed lakefront will serve as a catalyst and connector to the existing historic downtown, while providing waterfront recreation opportunities.*

### ACTION PLAN

- Identify redevelopment opportunities
- Modify City Hall site
- Identify different lands for public acquisition

## 2 MAKE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT READY



*Vibrant communities have vibrant downtowns. Several buildings on the National Historic Register are strong assets for Broadway Ave., while natural development opportunities should be taken advantage of to strengthen the Broadway corridor.*

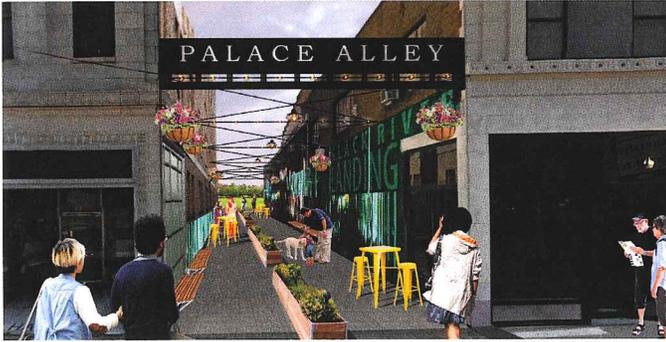
### ACTION PLAN

- Identify redevelopment opportunities
- Modify City Hall site
- Identify different lands for public acquisition



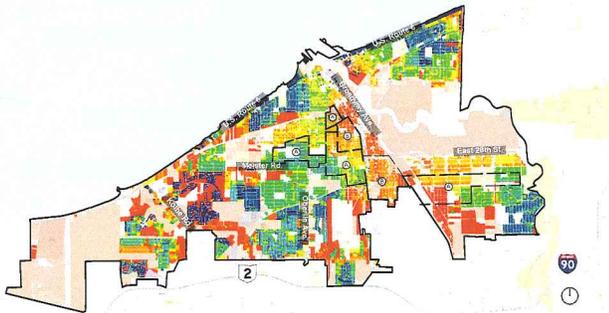
# THE LORAIN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PRIORITIES

## 3. STRENGTHEN CONNECTIONS



Improving connections in and around the Downtown, riverfront, and lakefront areas will allow more people to experience these great assets of Lorain.

## 5. STABILIZE VACANT PROPERTIES



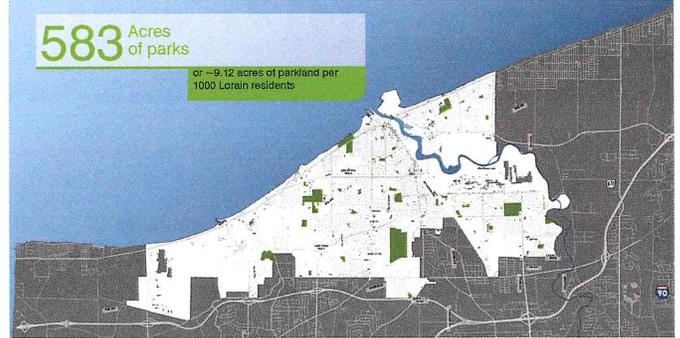
Vacant properties should be addressed through a land bank strategy, where the most at-risk areas are targeted for stabilization.

## 7. ANNEXATION STRATEGY



Future development along the freeway exits should trigger annexation of these sites into Lorain.

## 4. PARKS



Providing space for gathering, recreational opportunities, and environmental benefits, city parks are an integral part of a community. Capitalizing on these assets and safeguarding them for future generations are key issues.

## 6. GATEWAY AND SIGNAGE



Gateways into Lorain provide an opportunity to project an image of civic pride and make a first impression for visitors. Signage throughout Lorain should clearly guide residents and visitors to their final destination.

## 8. PROMOTE LORAIN



Gateways into Lorain provide an opportunity to project an image of civic pride and make a first impression for visitors. Signage throughout Lorain should clearly guide residents and visitors to their final destination.

