

ATHENS COUNTY



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

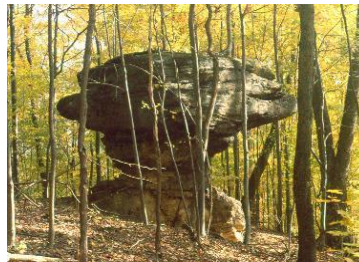


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Executive Summary

The Athens County Comprehensive Land Use Plan is a citizen-driven effort that will help County Commissioners make policy for land use in the county through the year 2030. Formal organization for the Plan began in the summer of 2006 after the County Commissioners and the Athens County Regional Planning Commission agreed that it is time for an update to the existing, outdated County Plan. The Regional Planning Commission provided guidance during various phases of the planning process including:

- Organization and goal setting
- Citizen participation and key person interviews
- Data collection, historical research, and literature review
- Issues analysis
- Policy guidelines
- Mapping
- Plan writing and editing

A Steering Committee comprised of 18 individuals prepared a vision statement and agreed to be the leaders of eight task forces. The vision for the Plan is “Athens County will build upon its unique heritage to practice wise land use that creates a healthy, prosperous and cohesive community for a diverse population. We, the citizens of Athens County, are committed to:

- Meaningful employment
- Entrepreneurial opportunities
- Sustainable agriculture
- Environmental stewardship
- Education achievement & cultural opportunities
- Appropriate transportation and other public services
- Vibrant rural areas and small towns”

The Plan was prepared by eight task forces composed of dedicated citizen volunteers working in the areas of:

- housing
- environment and natural resources
- utilities and infrastructure
- parks and recreation
- economic development
- heritage, arts, and culture
- community facilities
- transportation

Each task force prepared a written report for its topic area. The reports became the Plan chapters and generally covered purpose, process, existing conditions, trends, and goals and policies for each topic area. A Land Use chapter was added to focus on key issues that were woven through the other chapters and to discuss planned future conditions.

The key theme expressed in this document is that land use planning can chart a course for Athens County that will lead to more efficient use of land and tax dollars and in the process help to protect the valuable resources that Athens County citizens appreciate. The County Commissioners have regular opportunity to impact policy concerning how land is used in the County. The Plan will serve as their guide, particularly in the task force's eight topic areas.

Specific issues addressed in each chapter can be summarized as follows:

Housing

Athens County should focus on how to make housing more affordable, efficient, and accessible. Minimum building standards should be promoted and better site planning should lead to improved housing conditions.

Environment and Natural Resources

Resource management is the principal focus for this planning theme. Protection of vital resources, information for citizens, promotion of forestry and farming, and minimizing pollution are all strategies for planned use and safeguarding of the environment.

Utilities and Infrastructure

Making wise use of existing infrastructure and carefully choosing locations for new infrastructure is key to good planning. Zoning is an essential growth management planning tool for areas that have public sewer. Alternative forms of public sewer need to be provided to the small towns and villages that still rely on home sewage treatment systems. Improved broadband service is essential for the county to be economically and academically competitive.

Parks and Recreation

Athens County has a wealth of public open space and a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities. However, good planning is necessary to protect these resources from overuse. The many government owners and administrators of public park and recreation land need to collaborate and communicate on best management practices. A local Park District is proposed, more accessibility to parkland is recommended, and protection and enhancement measures are proposed.

Economic Development

Collaboration, priority setting, brand identity, and site planning for business are the primary goals for economic development in the Plan. Business sector development that relies on strengths and assets that already exist in Athens County is important. Business site planning that better incorporates existing infrastructure, including the railroad, should be initiated.

Heritage, Arts, and Culture

Athens County has a rich cultural history and the presence of Ohio University and Hocking College allow the arts to thrive. Key Plan goals are to preserve the historic and cultural resource by raising citizen awareness and supporting preservation programs, to market Athens County as an arts destination, to provide arts business incubation, and to maintain active inventories of historic resources when possible.

Community Facilities

County Commissioners should help insure that facilities are adequate to meet the needs of county residents. Proper inventorying, maintenance, and preservation will help with this endeavor and facilities will be conveniently located to be accessible by pedestrian and bicycle whenever possible.

Transportation

The Transportation Task Force reviewed all transportation modes in Athens County including automobile, public transit, bicycle, trucking, pedestrian, air, rail, and water. Recommendations are made about improving current operations and preparing local transportation systems for the societal demands through the year 2030.

Land Use

Using land wisely and efficiently are themes of this chapter. Planning tools provided in the Ohio Revised Code can be utilized to improve planning, particularly the use of zoning in places that have public sewer so that property values are better protected. Basic planning concepts promoted include increasing density where infrastructure

is underutilized, protecting natural resource lands, planning to minimize natural hazards such as flooding, and creating opportunities for a variety of transportation options. The chapter mentions that the immediate confines of the Hocking River valley possess almost all of the land use issues mentioned in the Plan and the valley can be viewed as an interesting study for land use planning in Athens County. Leaders are encouraged to think globally and act locally.

A land use plan relies on maps to provide information. The availability of an excellent geographic information system has allowed a number of good land use maps to be created. The data that make these maps is constantly changing and will need to be updated regularly. Elected officials are encouraged to support efforts to keep planning data current in order to help make better policy decisions regarding land use. Plan maps will serve as a good foundation for future plans and can help monitor trends in land use.

Implementation of the Plan

A Plan is only as good as is the will to implement it. Conviction to make this Plan a reality will best be accomplished with the creation of a Plan Implementation Advisory Committee. This Committee can help County Commissioners navigate through projects and also to insure that the Plan is updated every five years. The Plan needs to be a dynamic, living document rather than something that sits on a shelf.

INTRODUCTION

We plan because it is a smart thing to do. You take stock of your assets and figure out how best to save them or use them to your advantage. You think about what the future holds and how to make your home a better place for your children or those yet unborn. You analyze your weaknesses and know how you will reach a goal in spite of them or working with them. You dream about what your future can be and how you will get there.

This Athens County Comprehensive Land Use Plan's intent is to accomplish a number of things. It is a road map for County elected officials and department heads to help with decision-making on projects they will plan and influence¹. It is a way for local government to involve citizens in planning for the future of their communities. It provides business people

¹ This Plan is intended as a policy document and everything contained within it is intended as recommendations to elected officials and other leaders who have to make decisions affecting county land use. Where recommendations are made and the word "should" is used, there is no intent to legally bind elected officials to anything that is stated in the Plan. It is intended to provide guidance only and the Plan writers realize that factors of cost, politics, and other public and private programs will enter into the decision-making process.

Chapter Highlights:

- The Process
- Vision Statement
- Task Forces
- Athens County Overview
- Census 2000 Statistics
- Population Projections

with valuable information about the county in which they may want to locate or expand. It gives ideas on how to protect the valuable aspects of our culture and environment that can be easily lost with decisions that fail to properly consider them.

Planning is important in your personal life and takes on an even bigger role with local government where a lot of resources are at stake. Planning recognizes that rules and recommendations from local government are necessary because individual citizens cannot possibly know everything about resource management but yet own and influence the use of these resources. This has many public implications, some of which can be disastrous without oversight.

Planning can provide government leaders with the information needed to make intelligent choices about how best to use our scarce resources. Some of the professional planning tools available include population projections, citizen participation and surveys, data acquisition, map making, cost/benefit analysis, trends analysis, and statistics. An enormous amount of information is available from private and public sources, particularly are own citizens. This Plan attempts to combine this information with sound scientific planning principles to make the best possible recommendations for future land use in Athens County.

The Comprehensive Land Use Plan begins in Chapter 2 with An Historical Perspective by noted author, historian, and one of Athens County's residents, Marjorie Stone. Each of the next nine chapters covers a key element of the County written by the Task Force charged with that chapter or element. Chapters are designed with a statement of purpose, the process used by that task force, background information for historical perspective, a summary of current conditions and trends, and a listing of goals and recommended policies.

Appendix 1 is a Planning History of Athens County. It provides a context for the present plan. Appendix 2 is an excerpt from the Ohio Revised Code that reviews Regional Planning Commissions and their authority to prepare land use plans in Ohio. Appendix 3 is a list of previous planning documents that have been prepared by or for Athens County. Preparation of this Plan relied on the work of many volunteers, too numerous to mention here (see appendices for a list of task force chairpersons). This Plan is truly homegrown as its vision, goals and much of its writing came from volunteer citizens. Athens County takes its hat off to these volunteers who give many hours of their time to improve conditions where they live. Special thanks to Sue Foster and Karl Runser, Steering Committee Chairpersons, for helping see this project through to completion.

REVIEW OF PROCESS FOR PLAN PREPARATION

Work to update the Athens County Comprehensive Land Use Plan began in the summer of 2006 when invitations to join the planning process were sent to hundreds of Athens County residents. From the start, the aim was to make this

citizen-based, with Athens County residents generating the plan's objectives for future land use and creating practical strategies for how to achieve those objectives. Participants were introduced to a planning process based partly on a model developed by Ohio State University Extension and partly on County planning staff protocols. In the model, "experts" are consulted and their input is considered, but citizen participation and decision-making drive the process.

From this original group of citizen volunteers, a Steering Committee of 22 members was appointed by the County Commissioners to manage the effort. The Steering Committee's first task was to discuss and list the County's assets, challenges and opportunities. From these lists the group would be able to identify specific areas appropriate for inclusion in a comprehensive plan. Committee members also could use this information to draft a vision statement – a statement of residents' hope for Athens County's future and a guide on which to base future decisions and actions.

THE VISION STATEMENT

Every place has unique history, culture, architectural character, and land use patterns. The Steering Committee wanted to recognize the uniqueness of Athens County through its Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The vision statement represents a desired future condition and provides a foundation on which to prepare a Plan and a basis on which to judge the effectiveness of that Plan's implementation. Future monitors will be able to answer the question, "Did outcomes of the Plan help to achieve the vision?"

The Vision Statement for the Athens County Land Use Plan is:

Athens County will build upon its unique heritage to practice wise land use that creates a healthy, prosperous and cohesive community for a diverse population. We, the citizens of Athens County, are committed to:

- Meaningful employment
- Entrepreneurial opportunities
- Sustainable agriculture
- Environmental stewardship
- Education achievement & cultural opportunities
- Appropriate transportation and other public services
- Vibrant rural areas and small towns

The importance of the Vision Statement requires that a brief explanation be provided for each of the seven bulleted items in the vision statement.

MEANINGFUL EMPLOYMENT

It is understood that employment in a vocation that provides both a living wage and satisfaction is important for quality of life. While Athens County enjoys a relatively low unemployment rate due to the presence of Ohio University and other local, state, and federal government entities, the county continues to be one of the poorest in Ohio. One conclusion is that the county has a large population that is working at jobs that have a low pay rate. Creation of more highly skilled jobs in the construction and manufacturing sectors and jobs in sectors that mesh with established local initiatives such as technology and environmental restoration will help to meet this vision.

ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITIES

The creation of meaningful employment means that education, creativity, risk taking, market awareness, and good business practice must be combined to create and promote local products that are the result of using local resources and, when possible, adding value to them

before they leave the county.

Entrepreneurial opportunities means that a spirit of creativity and excitement needs to be infused in the county's youth so that some will desire to start a business in the county.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Sustainable agriculture means an agricultural practice that does not destroy the natural resource base and that helps to strengthen the local economy. Athens County has a viable farmer's market, a number of businesses that prepare and sell food products, a sizable population that prefers and buys locally grown foods, local farmers looking to expand their market, and the land resource for truck and specialty farming. It will be important to promote best land use practices such as erosion control measures, appropriate crop rotations, riparian zone protection, and adequate protection of organic fields from genetically modified seed. It will be crucial to provide adequate measures to protect enough land with agricultural potential that we will continue to reap the many benefits that this resource provides. These benefits include food provision, wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, and beauty.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

The citizens of Athens County are aware of the importance of safeguarding land, water, air, plant, and animal resources that exist in this region. In an area that has suffered environmental degradation from past land use practices, lessons have been learned and efforts are underway to reverse negative trends. Land use planning is recognized as one of the best ways to protect the environment.

EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT & CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES

Athens County is fortunate to have school districts with many dedicated teachers; a

career center for school age children and adults; Hocking College, a two-year institution; and Ohio University, offering bachelor and graduate programs. A significant portion of the local economy is generated by the education sector. Large land areas with low population density and a lack of high paying jobs means that the local school districts struggle to make ends meet. Education quality lags behind the more affluent areas of the state.

Athens County recognizes the importance of education in order to raise the standard of living for area residents. A rich Appalachian heritage, the presence of higher learning institutions, a large population of artists, and ample venues for the display of artistic talent make the county a regional leader for the arts and culture.



Photo of Cutler Hall, Ohio University

Photo from: Ohio University website

APPROPRIATE TRANSPORTATION & OTHER PUBLIC SERVICES

Services provided by the government such as law enforcement, fire, and public sewer, and businesses such as hospitals, clinics, communications and rural water systems are vital to the quality of life in the county. Planning for the appropriate locations and quantities of these services is recognized as crucial to our future well being.

Coordination among the many different service providers is important to maximize

efficiency and minimize waste. It is also recognized that roadway and public sewer and water placement will encourage development where they are placed and that careful attention should be paid to insure that these areas are capable of supporting the development that will follow utility services extended to them.

VIBRANT RURAL AREAS & SMALL TOWNS

In some ways this vision is the centerpiece of what the Plan will attempt to accomplish. Athens County remains very rural and is dotted with small villages and unincorporated towns. In order to be vibrant, these communities will have to realize some of the previously stated goals in the Vision Statement. The strategies of the Plan will attempt to follow good planning principles to extend the goals of the vision statement to small towns and villages within the county. One strategy would be efficiently utilizing the existing infrastructure. Small towns possess many favorable attributes, but cannot support additional residential growth without careful planning. For example, rural areas have suffered from a lack of available public sewage systems and even appropriately constructed home sewage treatment systems. Planning for improved sewage treatment is an important part of the Plan. Better utilization of rural land for agriculture, silviculture, and environmental protection and better transportation and communication services will also help to make rural areas vibrant.

TASK FORCES & THEIR AREAS OF STUDY

With the Vision Statement adopted, the Steering Committee worked from the lists of assets and opportunities to identify eight general topic areas for treatment in

the updated plan. These were assigned to Task Forces, each one chaired by at least two Steering Committee members. The eight are: Economic Development; Environment and Natural Resources; Utilities and Infrastructure; Housing and Housing Support; Community Facilities; Parks and Recreation; Transportation; and Heritage, Arts and Culture. Some individual Task Force members were recruited from among those attending the initial kick-off meeting. Others joined because of interest or expertise in the topic area, or a desire to participate in the planning process. By the time the Task Forces began their work, the total number of participants was over 100. Task Forces were asked to follow these steps:

- Develop a "purpose statement" to help define the group's work.
- Form subcommittees to study specific sub-topics of interest.
- Inventory existing assets and conditions in their topic area.
- Research history and trends in their areas.
- Hear from "experts" - school officials, utility companies, business interests, community groups, arts organizations, etc.
- Use surveys and other information gathering tools.
- Develop objectives for future land use in their topic area.
- Decide on strategies and who might accomplish them.

Steering Committee co-chairs and the planning staff, with help from Task Force chairs, took a number of steps to publicize the Plan update effort. County Commissioners were briefed on progress, and a web site was created for posting of announcements, draft sections of the Plan, and reports on Task Force activities. A general survey was placed in libraries and other public places to gather residents'

opinions on the condition of the County and directions for the future. Citizens were invited to participate in the planning process by attending one of five public meetings held in the County's five school districts. The meetings provided an opportunity for citizen comment and also for Task Force members to learn what was on the minds of the people. Task Forces then began their work hearing from experts, discussing the issues and drafting what would become the "chapters" of the Plan.

Overview of Athens County

Pre-history and History

The prehistoric human record in Athens County primarily consists of Adena Indian mounds from settlements several thousand years ago. Up to several centuries ago, Native American tribes inhabited the woodlands that covered this region but the only evidence we find are from occasional excavations or plowed fields at the sites of their former encampments.

The history of Athens County is rich and varied. A detailed summary of Athens County's history is provided by county historian Marjorie Stone in a separate chapter. Any planning effort relies on an understanding of what has happened before so that we can learn what worked and what did not. Without an awareness of history, the same mistakes are more likely to be made again.

Environment

Athens County is in the unglaciated Allegheny Plateau region of southeastern Ohio. The County contains 325,332 acres or 508 square miles of land that can be roughly categorized as follows.

**Athens County Land Use (2005), from ODNR
Division of REALM**

Land Use	Area (acreage)	% of Total County
Residential	16,493	5.1
Shrub/Brush Rangeland	11,941	3.7
Deciduous Forestland	207,783	63.8
Mixed Forestland	11,786	3.6
Cropland	22,638	7
Pasture	32,424	10
Other (includes industrial, commercial, parking, water, etc.)	22,422	6.8

A more detailed breakdown of land cover by township can be found in the Appendices.

The area has been extensively dissected by drainageways. Most of the soils are underlain by sedimentary rocks: shale, siltstone, sandstone, limestone, and coal. They have a northeast-southwest strike, with an average dip of 30 feet per mile toward the southeast. The landscape is one of hills, narrow ridge tops, and narrow stream valleys that frequently flood. Mount Nebo, near Chauncey, is the highest point, with an elevation of 1,055 feet above sea level. The northern part of the county is rugged, with steep and very steep slopes. The southern part of the

county has more rolling topography, wider ridge tops, and fewer steep hillsides. Many of the soils have high clay content and are prone to high shrink-swell and slippage.

The Hocking River and its tributaries drain most of the county. It enters the Ohio River at Hockingport. The River is 95 miles in length and drains approximately 1,200 square miles. Monday, Sunday, Federal, and Margaret Creek are major tributaries of the Hocking River in Athens County.

The climate is considered temperate with four distinct seasons. Climatic conditions and soils allow for the growth of extensive hardwood forests which are the climax forests of this bioregion. Periodic wet periods in association with strong storm systems bring periodic flooding. Storms with high winds, particularly summer thunderstorms, can be destructive to trees and buildings. Winter storms with high winds and whiteout conditions can also be severe but are not common.

[Population Profile](#)

The 2000 Census showed Athens County population at 62,223 and Ohio's population at 11,353,140. The following chart shows other 2000 census data for Athens County, the state of Ohio, and the United States:

2000 Census Information

<u>Statistic</u>	<u>Athens County</u>	<u>Ohio</u>	<u>U.S.</u>
Persons under 5 years old	4.8%	6.6%	6.8%
Persons under 18 years old	18.3%	25.4%	25.7%
Persons 65 years old and over	9.3%	13.3%	12.4%
Female persons	51.1%	51.4%	50.9%
White persons	93.5%	85.0%	75.1%
Black or African-American persons	2.4%	11.5%	12.3%
American Indian and Alaska Native persons	0.3%	0.2%	0.9%
Asian persons	1.9%	1.2%	3.6%
Persons reporting some other race	0.4%	0.8%	5.5%
Persons reporting two or more races	1.6%	1.4%	2.4%
Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin	1.0%	1.9%	12.5%
Living in same house in 1995 and 2000, age 5+	44.4%	57.5%	54.1%
Language other than English spoken at home, age 5+	5.4%	6.1%	17.9%
High school graduates, age 25+	82.9%	83.0%	28.6%
Bachelor's Degree or higher, age 25+	25.7%	21.1%	15.5%
Persons with a disability	15.7%	16.8%	8.1%
Mean travel time to work (minutes), workers age 16+	21.7	22.9	25.5
Housing units	24,901	4,783,051	115,904,641
Homeownership rate	60.5%	69.1%	66.2%
Median value of owner-occupied housing units	\$84,300	\$103,700	\$119,600
Households	22,501	4,445,773	105,480,101
Persons per household	2.40	2.49	2.59%
Median household money income, 2007	\$27,322	\$40,956	\$50,740
Persons below poverty	29.4%	13.1%	13.1%

Several general conclusions can be drawn from a comparison of the 2000 census data. The large student population at Ohio University gives Athens County a higher percentage of 18-25 year olds but a lower percentage in all other age categories. The racial mix of our population is less than the remainder of the state and county. The county population is more transient than the state and U.S. average shown by the statistic "living in the same house between 1995 and 2000". Our homeownership percentage is lower than the state and U.S. average because there are so many rental units associated with college towns. Median household income

is substantially below the state average and persons below poverty is much higher than the state average. Job opportunities and skilled manufacturing jobs are limited in Appalachia Ohio and this is reflected in these statistics. A large university student population also contributes to high poverty figures. Population density is much lower than the Ohio average reflecting the rural nature of our county.

Population - Historic Trends

Athens County's population has shown a gradual increase since the 1930's. The population declined during the 1920's with the increased closing of

mechanization and the coal mines. While the county's overall population has risen steadily, there has been volatility in populations of the smaller governmental units.

Townships such as Trimble, Dover, and York and incorporated areas such as Glouster, Nelsonville, Jacksonville, and Chauncey, that had coal-based economies, lost population through the 1960s and 70's and only in the last two decades have stabilized. The City of Athens' population is strongly affected by the Ohio University student population. It saw rapid increases after World War II, a decline after the Vietnam War, and has remained fairly steady for the last two decades. The decline of farming and large-farm property holdings and the construction of rural waterlines lead to significantly increased populations in Alexander and Lee Townships.

For various reasons, many people have chosen to settle outside of cities and villages either in the Athens County countryside or in a number of subdivisions that were created between 1970 and 2000. Population increased in all unincorporated township areas between 1970 and 2000. Unincorporated areas in Bern, Rome, and Trimble Townships had slight decreases in population between 1990 and 2000.

Four incorporated areas lost population in the 1990's. Amesville's population dropped from 250 in 1990 to 184 in 2000 largely due to a severe flood in 1998 and a property mitigation buyout program that followed. Coolville's population dropped from 663 to 528 between 1990 and 2000. Former Mayor Ed Rood believed this was due to the aging population and a lack of young people moving in. Buchtel's population dropped from 640 to 574. Mayor John Sullivan did not believe the 2000 census, reflecting a lower population,

to be an accurate count. The Village of Glouster had a slight population decrease from 2,001 to 1,972.

Population Projections

A land use plan relies on population projections to predict future land use, infrastructure, building, transportation, and other facility needs. The United States Census Bureau conducts a detailed 10-year census of various civil divisions such as villages and townships. The Census Bureau also makes population estimates in between the census years. This information is then used for planning and other purposes such as grant allocations that are based on population.

The population level for the 2000 census was 62,223 and the estimated population for year 2007 is 63,275. The US Census Bureau has predicted a 2030 population of 66,337 and this figure will be used for analyzing future land use demands.

AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

by Marjorie Stone

2

**A community without a sense of its past
can have little hope of planning for its future.
The heritage of the past can provide the
identity and the place around which new
commitments can be made.**

South Central Preservation Society (SCOPS)

It has been said that at one time a squirrel could travel from the Ohio River to the Mississippi without touching the ground. After the Revolutionary War and the opening of the Ohio Territory, however, the land started to be used and so began the changing of the landscape and environment. By the beginning of the 20th century both trees and squirrels were scarce.

During the early settling of the Athens County, land had been almost for the taking and the pioneers self-sufficient. Squirrels and other wild life provided a source of food: the forests, wood for buildings and fuel: and the land, once cleared, pastures and agriculture. As more settlers came into Athens County, more land was cleared and small farms dotted the landscape. Pigs, cows, horses, mules, and sheep fed on hillsides, corn and wheat fields thrived; woolen, grist, and saw mills used the abundant power of the clear Hocking River as it ran diagonally through the county.

After the Civil War, however, that which was under the ground came to be more important, monetarily, than that which was above, bringing about a great change in the way the land and its value were viewed. The manufacture of salt, which brought the canal into the county, was petering out, and the coal industry was beginning its seventy-five year run, bringing with it also the mining of limestone, iron and clay.

Farms were sold to large mining companies, agriculture diminished, and self sufficiency was lost. Hillsides were stripped bare of trees and streams became polluted. Railroads crisscrossed the county, mining camps and company towns sprang up to accommodate the rapidly increasing populations, only to be abandoned years later, leftovers scattered across the county like junk-car lots.

By mid-twentieth century, however, the mines had closed. Most of the reservoirs had been drained or filled with trash and cattails, small clusters of houses, deserted, and train rails removed. Villages were dying, but trees were growing on the hillsides again, and squirrels plentiful enough to provide schoolboys successful hunting trips.

Now, in the early 21st century, Athens is no longer a rural county nor is it an industrial or mining one. The changing uses of the land, as well as attitudes and values, are evident. There are few similarities to the early 19th century husbandry - several dairy farms, a few large planted fields, an occasional herd, flock, or gaggle of animals, but for the most part, only vegetable and flower gardens. Recent studies indicate that approximately two-thirds of the county land is forested again, and although serious problems with drainage from closed mines remain, there are ongoing efforts to clean the polluted streams. Much of the strip mined land has been reclaimed and detritus removed, and some gob pile sites have been turned into recreation areas. Also providing recreational opportunities for residents and tourists alike are some of the old railroad grade lines which have been converted into trails. Most of the remaining mining company houses, now privately owned, have been modernized and the "paths out back" are grown over; and although there are some still in use, most remaining outhouses are just objects of interest to artists. Water and sewer lines are being extended throughout the county and regulations are in place to discourage building in the flood plains and on slip-prone land. Even with the influx of chain franchises, many small entrepreneurs are competing, helped by cooperative ventures such as farmers' markets, special festivals, and the Appalachian Center for Economic Networks (ACEnet). Words like environmental protection and greening are being heard more often now.

The population has slowly continued to increase, mostly in the areas of Nelsonville and Athens, and somewhat in The Plains, and Albany, with the opening of the airport and new sewer system there. Many of the other municipalities, such as Glouster, Amesville, Coolville, and Shade, all of which at one time had served so many, are struggling. Boarded up buildings and empty upper stories abound. Statistics show that the housing supply is older than desirable; however, new houses are seen throughout the county, some showing great prosperity.

The changing of the ways the land has been used during these more than two hundred years has also brought changes in the lives and culture of the citizens. Perhaps the most obvious change, except for the fact that one can drive from one end of Athens County to the other in any direction in an hour as opposed to the pioneer's journey just to get to the centrally located courthouse, has been the development of the school systems.

The founding fathers' idea of having public schools, supported by rent from a section set aside in each township, never worked, and during the earlier years all schools, or so nearly all schools, were privately-funded, one room affairs, on donated land. A state law, passed in 1853, however, provided for a workable tax basis, established public school districts, and brought some order to school administration. It also opened the door to consolidation and slowly the county's fourteen townships each established a school district, bringing in many of those small local schools, and eventually, regular attendance by the children was required.

With increased funds and a growing student census, enlarged school systems were able to provide more classes in larger buildings, two or three story brick structures, usually in the heart of the community. High school classes were slowly added and accompanying activities introduced, pulling the citizens together. But, during the last half of the 20th century state-ordered consolidation ruled, forcing many smaller high schools to close and the students to be bussed to new, larger, consolidated ones. Those communities lost their cohesiveness, and their school name, colors, band, athletic teams, and spirit; and a general meeting place. Now there are only five, mostly autonomous, large school districts. Buses travel thousands of miles every day transporting students, some from dawn to dusk, to the sprawling, mostly one-story buildings on

tax-exempt land, most located outside of towns. Many of the still-standing sturdy old buildings in the heart of the communities are trying to survive by serving senior citizens, becoming community centers, or just standing as derelicts on prime real estate land.

The pursuit of higher education has been the driving force behind the growth of Athens and Nelsonville. Ohio University's expansion began after World War II and now has a student body in Athens of approximately 20,000 and has pursued an aggressive building program both on its campus and on other lands it has acquired, over 2,212 tax exempt acres.

Hocking College, in Nelsonville, grew out of the state vocational and community college legislation of the 1960s and now is considered the best in its class. It has an enrollment of over four thousand students and expects that number to increase as the satellite campus in Logan grows. The tax-exempt campus and its outlying areas have grown to about 2,600 acres, including the open lands of Lake Snowden.

The Hocking College administration and Nelsonville citizens have worked together to rejuvenate the town, which had become depressed after the coal industry died. With the Hocking Valley Scenic Railroad, Stuarts Opera House, an upscale restaurant, and a Bed & Breakfast in a renovated 19th century house, along with Council's clever planning for activities for young people, Nelsonville is trying to keep its Victorian flavor. The town is viewed as a growing arts center and tourist destination and many small entrepreneurs are working together to offer special events for the public, hoping to bring in traffic to offset that which will be lost when the new bypass is opened.

Arts and culture have always been alive and well in the county, for a limited number of people anyway. There are accounts of traveling shows and even a circus, performing on the "hitching grounds", or Commons, as early as 1810. By the 1840's literary clubs and debating teams, shape-note choral groups, and fraternal organizations were giving programs. Patriotic organizations were soon popular. As the century progressed into the 20th, the Chautauqua Study Group occupied many ladies, and more and more fraternal offerings were available, as were church societies, bands, and social groups. The Athens County Historical Society and Museum has an extensive collection of booklets of programs given by and to ladies clubs in many county communities. With no movies or television, there was obviously much reading being done, and many programs were on current books and the classics. Shakespeare was a favorite.

Opera houses began to be opened in conjunction with the opening of coal mines, and were supported by both the mine operators and miners' unions. There was one in nearly every town, and local talent and a wide variety of activities (no opera) filled the time between performances of traveling companies. By about the 1930s, however, traveling companies had all but disappeared and shows and plays with local talent were no longer popular. Also, many of the towns lost most of the population when the local mine closed. Some of the opera houses tried to stay in business by showing motion pictures, but nearly all of these once very popular centers of entertainment had to close. The Stuart's Opera House in Nelsonville, was closed, but the building itself remained a viable part of the community. Over sixty years later the second floor auditorium was renovated and in 1990 reopened, and now offers live performances frequently. Efforts are under way by several groups to try to save other opera house buildings in the area before they completely disintegrate.

There are few accounts of early theatrical, or dramatic, activities throughout the county, except for occasional festival in celebration of an historical event, but drama is alive and well in the county now. Theatrical groups in Nelsonville and Athens frequently present plays; a class of Hocking College students often presents historical reenactments and presentations; several teachers in elementary schools have pupils present sketches, and high school students are able to take part in dramatic productions each year. Athens City has underwritten the conversion of a church building to be used as an already-popular arts center. The Ohio University School of Theatre presents plays throughout the year.

Much attention is now being paid to the space arts, both in and on buildings, and with 1% of cost of newly constructed structures being required for art, more and more will be seen. The Dairy Barn Southeastern Cultural Arts Center, Kennedy Art Museum, and Ohio University Multi-cultural Center in Athens are furthering this cultural aspect with programs and exhibits. Some businesses are displaying local paintings. Grants have provided funds for students to work on public murals during summers.

The earliest Ames Township settlers realized the need for reading materials and within ten years had organized the Coonskin Library (Western Library Association) to enable the stockholders to have access to books. A similar need was met by the Wells Library in Albany during the latter part of the 19th century, and was opened by the founder to the residents. It subsequently has been incorporated into and lent its name to the Albany branch of the Athens County Public Libraries.

The countywide Athens County Public Libraries, an outgrowth of the Nelsonville Public Library, which was organized in 1935 and still serves as the headquarters and main office, offers a great service to the citizens of the county. It provides libraries in Athens, Albany, Chauncey, Coolville, Glouster, and The Plains, as well as a much-used bookmobile. Many varied programs and exhibits are also available. The Athens and The Plains branches are in buildings constructed by the organization; the Nelsonville Library, and the ones in Chauncey, Glouster, and Coolville are housed in recycled older buildings. The Wells Library (Albany) had to renovate completely its relatively new building after a recent disastrous fire.

Several of the founding fathers of the county were medical doctors and stories abound about them and of those who came after them, their lives and services. Riding horseback or in a buggy, and carrying the black bag and medicine kit, they served any and all when called. Many times the payment, if at all, might be a chicken or basket of farm produce, a piece of homemade furniture, or so many hours of work. House calls, doctor's mixed medicine, and payment by barter are no more.

As coal mining boomed in Trimble Township, Dr. A. J. Crawford started something unheard of, what today would be called group insurance. He agreed to treat the family of each coal miner who contributed a dollar to the fund. Now health care and government supported universal or group insurance for everyone is a political issue.

The last decades of the 20th century saw a great change in the field of health care in Athens County. As Nelsonville was experiencing the loss of the Tuberculosis Hospital and the Sisters of Charity relinquished operation of Mount St. Mary's Hospital, the small hospital in Athens became the O'Brien Memorial Hospital, moved into a new building, and began a

growth which is ongoing. In recent years the building has been greatly enlarged and a new complex added, enabling the medical offerings to be increased.

The grounds of the closed Tuberculosis Hospital now are used to house a state correctional facility, The Mount St. Mary's Hospital facility, which later was run by the Ohio University College of Osteopathic Medicine, is now affiliated with a hospital consortium in Columbus.

The Ohio University College of Osteopathic Medicine opened in the early 1970s. As it has grown, it has provided clinics throughout the county, and is offering an increasing range of services. Most are housed in already-standing buildings.

Holzer Clinic affiliated with Holzer Hospital of Gallipolis and offering many out-patient surgeries and services, moved into a large new building in Athens late in 2008.

The Athens Mental Health Center, which opened in 1873, was phased out by the state in the latter part of the 20th century as care for mental patients changed. A modern and much smaller building is now used for the care of those in need. Ohio University acquired approximately 600 acres of the grounds of the closed hospital and uses a portion of the building space for offices.

Transportation, the ability to move about, has always been regarded as a necessity for growth and cohesion, as well as convenience. River, rail, and air travel over the years have supplemented man, animal and vehicular land travel. In Athens County traveling has always had problems because of dense forests, rushing streams, and slip-prone hills, as well as a scattered population and lack of adequate funds to maintain roads.

Not so long after forming in the late 18th century, the Ohio Territorial government realized that connecting roads would have to be built if the newly opened land was to be populated, and so it required all males over the age of fourteen to participate in road building and upkeep. Early minutes frequently recorded worked hours and requests for roads to be built from one purchase to another, or to a river or mill site.

Nearly all the earliest settlers to Ohio came at least partway by river, and those coming to the Athens area could continue on water up the Hocking River and Federal and Margaret Creeks. It is hard to believe our slow moving, eroded-soil filled streams of today could ever have supported a boat carrying a family, but for years they did. The Hocking River east of Athens was such that before the 1907 flood a mill owner was able to take his customers on boat cruises, but by the 1930s only small rafts could be used for transporting produce. The new Hocking River channel, built around Athens in the early 1970s, is already partially blocked with soil washing down from the hillsides.

During the 19th century, the Hocking Canal transported both passengers and goods between Athens and Lancaster, to go on to Columbus or join the Ohio-Erie Canal. As trains came to be more in use after the Civil War and the canal beds began to disintegrate, the railroads usurped many of the tow paths: and recently, after the no-longer-in-use rails were removed, those grade lines were turned into bicycle and walking trails. It is interesting to note that one

such route, between Nelsonville, and Athens, is now being used by some commuters on their bicycles.

With water and rail transportation no longer possible, and the only remaining rail line transversing the county non-stop, only roadways serve the county's transportation needs, although there have been several attempts to make air travel available. Maintaining these tax-supported roads has become the responsibility of several separate entities, each having its own budget, office staffing, mechanics and road crews, equipment, buildings and land. The state of Ohio maintains the major highways, Routes #32, #50, and #33; the County Engineer's office is responsible for most of the roads throughout the county except those, mostly unpaved, which fall under the jurisdiction of the township trustees. Most of the municipalities are responsible for the maintenance of the roads within their own boundaries.

With attention now being paid to the environment, it is encouraging to note that Athens County has very little, if any, industrial pollution, and that much of the land is again covered by trees. It might be worrisome, however, to realize how much of the once open green space has been, and is being, lost by the proliferation of areas being built on and paved over. Those lands were covered with plant life, which would slow erosion, remove toxins from the air, purify the ground water, and cool the atmosphere. The large parking lots radiate the heat, and also prevent rainwater from entering the ground.

Athens County is no longer the way it was for our pioneer forefathers, when land was almost for the taking, and if they wanted more space or didn't like their neighbors they could just move a little farther into the open country. There is no more open country! Today we all must live in what could be loosely called the confines of civilization. It is hoped that these confines will not be unreasonably or unjustifiably restricting but will continue to make this old Northwest Territory settlement the way Benjamin Tupper, on his return from the first survey, described it to Rufus Putnam: Beautiful, Fertile, some open, some forested. Perfect for homesteading.

TRANSPORTATION

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of the transportation task force was to outline a transportation plan consistent with year 2030 projected population growth:

- Serving all citizens of the county.
- Improving the quality of life considering safety, environment, cost, efficiency, and flexibility.
- Taking advantage of new technologies and changing conditions.
- Identifying conflicts among transportation modes.
- Meshing with state and federal transportation systems and the work of other Task Forces.

The body of the report is organized into two main sections that each considers in detail the current situation, trends and recommendations. The two sections are:

Athens County Roadways: State and federal highways, county and township roads.

Chapter 6 Highlights:

- Highways
- Emergency Planning
- Bicycle and Pedestrian
- Rail and Water
- Maps
 - Transportation
 - Railroads Abandoned & Active
 - Average Daily Traffic

Transportation Modes: Private automobiles, public transportation; trucking, bicycles, pedestrians, air, water, and rail.

PROCESS

The task force was guided by several experts in the transportation field and related areas.

- County Engineer Archie Stanley and Deputy Engineer for Operations Mike Canterbury
- ODOT District 10 employees Deborah Fought and Stephanie Filson
- Former Troy Township Trustee Steve Jeffers
- Director of the Ohio University Airport Ken Carley
- Athens County Planner Bob Eichenberg
- GIS consultant Rob Wiley

BACKGROUND

Transportation is an extremely important aspect of local planning. It is how we move people, goods, and services. It is how we get to work and school, to the grocery, and to the doctor. It is how building supplies are delivered and how the ambulance and fire department find us when we are most in need.

Athens County has many interesting transportation issues:

- The Nelsonville Bypass will have the first of three phases completed in 2009. Funding is in place and completion of the last two phases is estimated by 2012.
- Bicycle/pedestrian transportation is gaining popularity due to energy, environmental, health, and crowding issues.
- The Ohio University Airport has commuter transportation proposals. Local economic development efforts increasingly point to the airport as an important tool.
- Rail transportation is an untapped resource in Athens County as long as there is a viable rail line. Higher fuel prices help to make rail transportation more competitive.
- The 9-1-1 service has implemented a geographic positioning system to help dispatchers track emergency vehicle locations.

The 2000 Census reported that forty-six percent of Athens County residents drove to work by themselves, five and one-half percent carpooled, one percent used public transportation, and forty-one percent walked, bicycled, or motorcycled to work.

The mean travel time to work for Athens County residents was 21.7 minutes. A total of 43.7 percent of Athens County workers commute to work in less than 15 minutes and 32.4 percent have a commute between 15 and 29 minutes. Only seven percent have a commute of more than one hour (Source Ohio Department of Development).

Transportation Mode	# of people	%
Work out of State	86	1+
Work in State	8,152	98+
Work in County	7,682	93
Drive Alone	3,758	46
Carpool	453	5.5
Public Transportation	82	1
Other (bicycle, walking, or motorcycle)(% is large due to a large student population).	3,345	41
Work out of County	470	5.7

ROADWAYS – PRESENT CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

The dominant transportation mode in Athens County is the automobile. A significant portion of land use, particularly in urban areas, is devoted to the automobile. A large amount of land is used for roads and parking lots. Although road availability within the county is considered adequate, conditions of the roads need to be improved.

ROAD AVAILABILITY

Athens County has an extensive primary road system, consisting of well-paved state roads and highways. Due to its hilly topography, the county also has a complex system of county and township roads whose surfaces range from paved to gravel or dirt. Commuting and commerce to and through the county has improved, but is still considered limited, pending completion of a Nelsonville bypass. There is a trend toward increased road usage as the population grows, especially between main population growth areas and the city of Athens. Currently, the mean travel time to work for county residents is 21.7 minutes.

The following table lists the mileage of state, county and township roads in the county.

State Roads	214 miles total (all blacktop & concrete)
2-Lane Highway	152
4-Lane Highway	50
Roads within Municipalities	12
County Roads	370 miles (165 paved, 155 chip/seal, 50 gravel)
Township Roads	515 miles (conditions vary by township)

The development of the state highway system in and around Athens County has been progressing. The Ohio Department of Transportation has completed a significant number of highway improvement projects along the U.S. 33 Corridor, including the Lancaster Bypass, the Athens to Darwin Connector and the Ravenswood Connector. Another major highway project is the completion of the U.S. 32/50 corridor to I-77 and I-79 and the completion of a new bridge between Belpre and Parkersburg. The first phase of the Nelsonville Bypass is scheduled for completion in 2009. The entire project is funded and scheduled for completion in 2012. With the Nelsonville bypass, the U.S. 33 Corridor from Columbus to the West Virginia state line will be complete. This corridor will provide essential connectivity to I-77 and all points south.

These projects serve to enhance traffic flow, improve safety, access and mobility and support economic development efforts across the region. This greater connectivity promotes population growth by providing reasonable travel times for people employed in Logan, Lancaster, Parkersburg, Columbus and other now accessible areas.

During the last 20 years, many roads on the county system have been widened and resurfaced and many bridges have been replaced or rehabilitated in order to meet modern highway weight loading. Planned county road projects include further road and bridge upgrades, landscaping and improvements at a new county engineer facility, hard-surfacing all county roads by 2015, and improvements to the Athens County Geographic Information System.

ROAD SURFACES & CONDITIONS

The Athens County Engineer's Department has established a goal of hard-surfacing (chip and seal or blacktop) all county roads by 2015. The previous goal of blacktopping all roads by that time has been modified due to prohibitive cost estimates. With only 50 miles of county road still surfaced in gravel, the Athens County Engineer's Department is well on track to complete its hard-surfacing plan on time.

Some township roads are also being hard-surfaced as areas become populated. Some townships are unable to improve road surfaces due to their limited budgets. This is of particular concern since township roads account for the most road miles in the county. The County and many townships have been successful in procuring state funding, that is matched with local funding, to resurface roads that already have a hard surface.

FLOODING

The county has a large number of state, county and township roads that are flooded during periods of heavy rain and snow melt, creating dangerous driving conditions and requiring detours for commuting. Causes of road flooding are often insufficient ditches and culverts, tree debris in ditches and culverts, inadequately crowned roads and having the roads routed through low-lying areas.

FREEZING

The county has a large number of locations on county and township roads that freeze and ice over, creating hazardous driving conditions, especially on the hilly, winding roads. These locations often correspond to road flooding areas and result from the same causes. Other causes of roadway freezing are poorly constructed driveways that drain directly onto the road instead of into the ditch, inadequate snow removal and surface treatment and lack of exposure to sun (as a result of north-facing routes or solar barriers such as evergreen trees and buildings).

SNOW REMOVAL

State highways and city streets are plowed promptly and effectively. Outside of cities and towns, main thoroughfares with higher traffic are cleared well, but some county and many township roads are not plowed until a day or more after snowfall due to manpower and equipment shortages. With snowstorms and blizzards being rare, it is not cost effective to expend more government funding for additional equipment or staffing for snow emergencies.

ROAD DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

For new roads built in County subdivisions, the standards for street access, location and construction requirements are defined by the Subdivision Regulations of Athens County, Ohio. The construction standards reference the Athens County Road specifications established and maintained by the County Engineer. The current specification for double chip and seal may be inadequate for subdivisions with many homes, cars and service vehicles. The County Engineer's Department has standards for developers burying utility lines under county roads. They also have

standards in place for right-of-way clearing, which affects fence and building placement. These latter standards are mainly applied to new fencing and construction.

EMERGENCY PLANNING

Athens County has an active Emergency Management Agency and hazard mitigation plans. It is important to integrate this land use plan with other hazard mitigation plans and for the various governmental departments to communicate. Unique environmental challenges that impact mitigation efforts include steep topography, narrow floodplain valleys, and thickly forested landscapes. The steep topography leads to fast runoff and land slippage, narrow valleys flood frequently and sometimes with little warning, and ice-storms can cause trees to topple into power and communication lines and roadways.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION & FLOOD ROUTES

Emergency routes are primarily designated by federal and state agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Department of the Army in coordination with state, municipal, regional and county authorities. These routes include state and federal highways and rail lines that could be used to move large numbers of people either out of Athens County or through Athens County in the event of emergency conditions.

The county is subject to flooding conditions on various roads during significant rainfall. High Water signs are placed on dangerous roads during such times. Some alternate routes are marked while others are self-determined.

HAZARDOUS WASTE HAULING ROUTES

Hazardous waste hauling routes are designated by the Ohio Department of Transportation and are generally designed to avoid population centers. ODOT also is responsible for signage indicating that such routes are in or near source water sites such as well fields and potable rivers and lakes. However, there is no specific legislation in Ohio regulating the location of such routes away from source water sites.

EMERGENCY AIR TRANSPORTATION

Life flight helicopter service is available at the hospitals in Athens County. Emergency services report that they can land at other sites when necessary.

NATURAL HAZARDS

Athens County has a Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan. The Mitigation Plan attempts to identify hazards and minimize their negative impacts through good planning. Transportation systems are affected by the most commonly natural hazard occurrences that include flooding (both flash flooding and riverine flooding), blizzards, ice storms, snow storms, high winds, and land slippage. Transportation is affected by all of these natural hazards either by a direct blockage of the transportation route making it impassable or because hazardous conditions make travel more perilous.

ROAD AESTHETICS

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

Vegetation management along public right-of-ways constitutes an important component of road safety and upkeep. Steep topography, weather, slip prone soils and erosion, vegetation composition and natural succession combine to make roadway management a challenge in Athens County.



*photo of: flooded Margaret Creek near its mouth
photo from: Athens County Regional Planning
Commission*

Effectively managed roadside vegetation provides many benefits. Improperly managed vegetation can hinder visibility, increase maintenance costs and impact aesthetics. Inventories of culverts, steep slopes, drainage problems and vegetation types would help to streamline management priorities.

Vegetation management on county roads divides into two categories: managing roadside grass and brush, and trimming of trees and limbs. Roadside grass and brush can be beneficial for erosion control and aesthetics but need periodic mowing. Roadside grass and brush can be effectively controlled with side arm mowing, providing it is done frequently. It is also important to trim roadside trees to ensure road safety, visibility and to prevent county liability issues. However, side-arm mowing of trees is considered visually disturbing by some county residents and can shorten the life of trees.

LITTER/DUMPING

Litter and illegal dumping of garbage are two consistent problems on state, county and township roads. Long stretches of remote township and county roads provide ample opportunity for illegal disposal of solid waste. Complicating the matter is the lack of regulation requiring

mandatory solid waste collection in the county. Surveillance is problematic and most dumps are not traceable. Some areas have simply become disposal sites for items such as scrap tires, furniture, and appliances that are not traceable.

Landowners are responsible for the litter and dumpsites on their property. Some organizations pick up litter through Adopt-a-Highway programs and some private individuals collect litter on their roads. Some townships have an annual collection where residents can drop off tires and large items of solid waste at no charge. The litter and dumping problems are growing and a more formal program at the county level is needed to manage it.

SCENIC BYWAYS

There are 23 designated scenic byways in the state of Ohio. A portion of the Ohio River Scenic Byway lies within Athens County along Ohio 124, and several other byways can be found in adjacent counties including the Hocking Hills Scenic Byway and the Morgan County Scenic Byway. Byways play a role in local and regional tourism. Ohio's byways are marked as such, and byway maps are available for the public. There are also local scenic routes in Athens County for viewing barn quilts, murals, solar homes, and covered bridges.

SIGNS

Billboards and some highway signs can be unattractive and distracting. Placement, size and quantity are not adequately regulated.

TRANSPORTATION MODES- PRESENT CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

Transportation planning is increasingly moving towards a multi-modal format. More people are commuting on bike or

foot or by means of public transportation. Recent high gasoline prices indicate that diverse transportation options are important. Since transportation is so market driven, planning for a community's future transportation needs is difficult. As more people are locating homes in proximity to bicycle and pedestrian routes, new residential and commercial developments should be located near existing transportation infrastructure. New development should allow for a variety of transportation options including transit and bicycle routes.

PRIVATE AUTOMOBILES

PRESENT CONDITION

On divided highways in Athens County, traffic generally flows unimpeded without the rush-hour slow-downs and gridlock common to large urban areas. Secondary roads in rural areas in the county also remain relatively free of traffic. Only the urban areas and other transportation destinations in the county are showing signs of traffic stress.

In the city of Athens East State Street was widened to five lanes in the commercial district and Richland Avenue is under study for a major overhaul in the vicinity of the State Route 682 intersection. Finding convenient parking in the city center is often difficult. All this has come to pass because the single-occupant personal automobile is the preferred mode of transportation for most Athens County residents. There is no practical alternative except for those who live within convenient walking or bicycling distance to their place of work or other destination.

From a land use perspective private automobiles are very demanding. Each vehicle requires a large corridor in which to operate and a parking space 10 x 18 feet when it arrives at its destination. In the

retail shopping district along East State Street, for example, parking lots are the dominant feature with attendant problems of appearance, maintenance, and storm-water runoff.

Automobiles are demanding from a fuel resource perspective. A single-occupant automobile today uses less than one percent of the fuel energy consumed by the vehicle to transport its occupant down the road. The rest goes to transporting the vehicle itself and to vehicle inefficiencies.

As the dominant mode of transportation, private automobiles currently enjoy a position of status. Most roadway planning, construction and maintenance are in support of automobile use. Pedestrians and bicyclists often feel unwelcome or even threatened on most streets and roadways.

TRENDS

Automobile traffic continues to increase. Since the 1960's state and federal transportation authorities have built highway bypasses and corridors in Athens County to accommodate growing automobile traffic, culminating in the US 33 bypass of Nelsonville, now underway. These improvements are resulting in more through-traffic competing with local traffic. Vehicle sizes have been steadily increasing, although with relatively higher sticker and fuel prices this is beginning to change. It is becoming increasingly difficult to find available level land for wider roads and more parking lots in urban areas.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

PRESENT CONDITION

The 2000 Census reported that one percent of County residents used public transportation. There are many unemployed persons hampered in obtaining jobs because of transportation

difficulties, and over 5,500 retired persons who need or will need public transportation. Athens County's public transportation system consists of four principal elements: bus services, taxi services, emergency services, and arranged services.

BUS SERVICE

There are three major scheduled bus services:

- Athens Transit System
- Ohio University Campus Area Transportation Services: CATS and CATCAB.
- Lakefront Lines

Athens Transit is the public transportation provider for the City of Athens. Athens has had public transportation since 1984. The Athens Transit system operates four main routes. These include East State Street, Union Street/Plains, Richland Avenue, and the Courtyard Express Shuttle between the Courtyard Apartments and the Ohio University campus. In addition to stopping at posted stops, busses may be flagged down for boarding. By request, those with special needs can be picked up in locations off the regular routes.

Ohio University's Campus Area Transportation System (CATS) operates two routes: from the Ridges to Baker Center and from the Innovation Center to Baker Center. These routes offer service every 30 minutes with stops at various remote parking lots and along streets surrounding the University. They are free to anyone who wishes to ride. University visitors may park at meters in University lots or in the paid facility at Baker Center or may use CATS. CATCAB is available to faculty and students who need special help in getting to and around campus.

Those using it must call CATCAB in advance to use it.

Lakefront Lines, based in Cleveland, operates bus service once a day between Athens and Cleveland with stops in Akron, Columbus, and Nelsonville. On request, the bus will stop at Columbus Airport. There is also the possibility of some stops along the way with a prior request. The bus stops at Athens Community Center and Hocking College bookstore in Nelsonville.

TAXI SERVICES

Several private taxi companies operate within the county. Taxi or “shuttle” service is also available between Athens and the Port Columbus International Airport.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Southeastern Ohio Emergency Medical Service (SEOEMS) operates emergency ambulances. Private vendors operate non-emergency ambulance services.

ARRANGED SERVICES

Arranged services are available for certain groups including veterans, school children, senior citizens, clubs and fraternal organizations, recipients of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funds, and those eligible for Ohio’s PassPort Services. The principle services in the county are:

- The school bus services of the County’s five school districts.
- The University Commons Shuttle Bus.
- Athens County Senior Center/ United Seniors of Athens County.
- Athens County Department of Job and Family Services.
- Tri-County Mental Health.
- Athens County Children Services.
- Non-emergency ambulance service.

These arranged services are particularly important in the rural areas of the County

and in the towns and villages without regularly scheduled transportation services. The result is that most Athens County residents are able to get the transportation they need for work, medical care, shopping, and other needs if they are able to negotiate the systems. These arranged transportation services are less convenient and efficient than most would like.

TRENDS

Athens and Ohio University, with assistance from the Ohio Department of Transportation’s Public Transit Division, prepared an *Athens County Transportation Development Plan*. The Plan locates the geographical areas of the county that should generate the greatest use of public transportation. The plan identifies four population factors that lead to trips on public transportation: the numbers of persons age 65 and older, the number of occupied housing units, the zero vehicle housing units, and persons with one or more disabilities.

On the basis of the *Athens County Transportation Development Plan*, the City and the University prepared a plan for coordination of their regularly scheduled bus services and expansion of those services as needs arise.

TRUCKING

PRESENT CONDITION

The trucking industry has unique issues and concerns including road availability, deregulation and delivery patterns, truck size and weight, and the impact on local roads.

ROAD AVAILABILITY FOR COMMERCE

Recent bypasses and connectors have greatly facilitated truck travel to and through the county. The following results may ensue:

- Some commercial traffic that previously used I-77/I-70 corridors will use the US33 corridor when the Nelsonville bypass is completed.
- Increased truck traffic volume on major highways.
- Periodic congestion at exits around Athens – East State Street, Stimson Avenue., SR 682.
- Increased safety and enforcement concerns.
- Increased number of businesses that rely on trucks for hauling.

IMPACT OF GARBAGE HAULING

Garbage trucks and their associated weight can stress and damage road surfaces. In many areas of the county, multiple garbage hauling companies service the same area at different times in the same week. This creates an excessive and redundant load on the roads and road shoulders.

TRENDS

According to national sources, trucking volumes will double in the next twenty years. In addition, the US 50/32 Corridor to I-77 and I-79 and US 33 improvements will increase traffic through Athens County.

BICYCLE TRANSPORTATION

CURRENT SITUATION

A bicycle can easily cover distances of 10 miles or more in under an hour. This makes bicycling a practical transportation alternative to motor vehicles when commuting to work or traveling to other destinations, weather permitting.

In Athens County there appears to be a need for bike route identification, mapping and signage, resource allocation, and bike lanes.

Athens County offers several options for bike travel, but there are unique issues involved including vehicle traffic, route identification, pavement quality, bicycle storage, pavement marking, and bicycle laws particularly relating to “sharing the road.” Impatient drivers and loose dogs can be problems.

HOCKHOCKING-ADENA BIKEWAY

Athens County is fortunate to have the Hockhocking-Adena bikeway, a bicycle path between Athens and Nelsonville built along the Hocking River on abandoned railroad right-of-way. The Bikeway provides good bicycle access between Athens, The Plains, Chauncey, Hocking College, and Nelsonville. A recently funded transportation enhancement project has improved bikeway access to the center of Nelsonville.



photo of: Hocking-Adena Bikeway
photo from: Athens County Regional Planning Commission

CYCLING ON ROADWAYS

There are about 1,000 miles of roads in the county. Generally these roads do not adequately support bicycle transportation. Road conditions are often poor, there are gaps in routes, signage is inadequate and parking facilities are scarce. The Bicycle Map of Southeastern Ohio shows roadways that are suitable for bicycling. Traffic levels and road surface quality generally determine suitability. Other factors include road design, time of usage (rush-hour versus off-peak traffic) and distance traveled. A mile traveled on busy roads may be acceptable while longer distances may not be. Terrain is also a factor. Hilly routes, besides being difficult, are not time-efficient. Weather is also a significant factor for many people deciding whether to bicycle on any day. Precipitation has a major effect on road surface safety.

TRAFFIC VOLUME

Traffic volume affects suitability of roads for bicyclists. The highest traffic volumes are generally along the main approaches to city centers — especially the city of Athens. Frequent vehicle turn-offs to business parking lots and automobiles parked adjacent to bicycle travel lanes

make bicycling especially dangerous in some areas.

PAVEMENT QUALITY

Generally, asphalt roads and roads surfaced with a fine chip-seal surface are suitable for bicycle travel. Roads that have large stone, chip-seal surfaces are not suitable nor are dirt and gravel roads. Sometimes the chip-seal method leaves patches of loose stone and excess tar, both of which discourage bicycling.

- Federal and State highways generally have suitable surfaces. However, when traffic volume is high, the only safe bicycling alternative is along the shoulder, which is often rough and cluttered with debris
- County road surfaces vary. Some are not suitable for bicycles. Traffic counts on county roads are usually low enough to accommodate bicycle travel.
- Township roads generally have poor surface quality except near larger communities. They are lightly traveled.
- City streets generally have suitable surfaces except for some poorly maintained brick streets in Athens and Nelsonville. Traffic volume varies with time of day and location. The City of Athens is adding bicycle lanes that are helpful to and safer for bicyclists.

BICYCLE TRANSPORTATION GAPS

It is often not possible to cycle from a given starting point to a given destination in the county. New highway projects designed primarily for motor vehicles can remove previously acceptable bicycle routes. Gaps in the bikeway network include:

- Between Albany and Hebbardsville.
- Between The Plains and Columbus Road.

- The eastern and southeastern part of the county. It is generally impossible to travel efficiently in this part of the county without being on US 50. This region in and near the Hocking River Valley is one of the flattest of the county and should be accessible to bicycles.

TRENDS

Bicycle use is growing in Athens County, and government officials at all levels recognize bicycling as a viable means of transportation, as well as recreation. The use of bicycles is likely to grow as more people realize the health benefits and cost savings associated with bicycling. Bicycle use may also increase as a result of rising fuel costs for automobiles and growing environmental awareness.

PEDESTRIAN TRAVEL

PRESENT CONDITION

Pedestrian travel is not practical in the county except for short distances but is very important for many people who live within city limits. Athens, Nelsonville and other urban centers in Athens County have adequate sidewalks in most locations. In the City of Athens, while Ohio University, the downtown area, and close in neighborhoods have a good network of sidewalks, neighborhoods on the south side, in newer subdivisions, and on some portions of commercial roadways have little or no sidewalk facilities. The bikeway helps link Ohio University, the near east side and the East State Street area. Arterial routes and neighborhoods in and around many urban places do not have adequate pedestrian linkages.

Significant gaps for pedestrian travel

Athens City

- Columbus Road.
- Union Street outlying areas.
- E. State Street beyond the malls.
- Columbia Avenue.
- Madison Avenue.

The Plains

There are significant gaps in pedestrian facilities both within The Plains and connecting The Plains to Chauncey and the city of Athens (via Columbus Road).

Nelsonville

Both ends of Canal Street are unsuitable for pedestrian use.

Jacksonville, Trimble and Glouster

These communities are all within walking distance of each other. There are schools and stores in these communities that should be accessible by foot, but the only road between them is a narrow, busy state highway with little sidewalk. The City-County Health Department procured a grant to construct a walking path that links parkland in the three villages.

Albany

There are gaps between the village the Alexander school facilities, and Lake Snowden.

Coolville

Main street in Coolville is the only street with sidewalks. They are in need of repair.

Unsuitable Commercial Development

Commercial development since about 1940 has been less and less pedestrian friendly with the advent of strip malls and other businesses built on the fringes of city limits. In Nelsonville, there is no

pedestrian access to new businesses built along Canal Street (U.S. 33) at either end of town. In Athens, there is only limited pedestrian access to the malls and other businesses along East State Street. The widening of East State Street to five lanes provided little accommodation for pedestrian traffic, resulting in safety concerns for pedestrians crossing the street.

Walking Prevails on College Campuses

On Athens County's two college campuses, Ohio University and Hocking College, walking is arguably the dominant mode of transportation. Student pedestrian traffic reduces vehicle traffic congestion and the need for more parking facilities. Both campuses provide ample walkways for pedestrians; the main problem occurs where pedestrian routes cross streets. The city of Athens has the highest potential for problems with the Ohio University campus located near the city center and the large student population relative to the total city population. Athens provides well-marked and controlled pedestrian crosswalks in most high-traffic areas, but there have been problems along Richland Avenue near the West Green and other areas.

Trends

Development is still automobile-oriented and does not pay adequate attention to pedestrian travel. The city of Athens comprehensive plan promotes pedestrian accessibility.

There is a growing interest in developing multi-use trails in Athens County (excluding motor vehicle use). The Hockhocking Adena Bikeway, the Moonville Rail Trail extension into Athens County and a large number of hiking and mountain bike trails offer safe alternatives for pedestrians. However, these trails,

excluding the Hockhocking Adena Bikeway, are geared toward recreation, not transportation.

Pedestrian transportation is likely to follow the trend of future residential development. If new housing is built in outlying rural areas then pedestrian transportation will not increase much. If development shifts to more housing within cities and villages then pedestrian transportation will increase.

AIR TRANSPORTATION – PRESENT CONDITION AND TRENDS

Airport Location and Access

Ohio University Airport is located adjacent to U.S. Highway 50/32 in Lee Township, in the southwest corner of Athens County. Primary access is from County Road 71 (Columbia Road). The Airport is less than one-half mile from the Meigs County line, approximately twelve miles southwest of the City of Athens, and approximately one mile southwest of the Village of Albany.

The University owns several acres of property in and around the Airport, and has devoted 354 acres of property strictly for airport use. Land uses in the vicinity of the Airport are generally rural in character, but scattered residential development can be found along U.S. Route 50 to the north, as well as along the secondary roadways in the area. Single family residences are also developing south of Albany in line with the runway. There is a buffer of mostly agricultural land between the runway and these homes, which are approximately 6,500 feet east of the Airport.

There is a large gravel quarry to the north of the Airport. There is a commercial logging business east of Columbia Road

and south of the Airport. One church is located immediately northwest of the airport and another is about 7500 feet east and slightly north of the runway's extended centerline. The Alexander school complex is 6,500 feet east and 1000 feet north of the runway's extended centerline. Lake Snowden is 2.5 miles northeast of the airport.

Airport Role

The Airport provides general aviation access to Athens County and the surrounding counties. The National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS), which identifies airports that are significant to the national air transportation system, designates the role of Ohio University Airport as a general aviation airport. This indicates the facility is considered to be of national interest.

The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) Aviation Division Office classifies (based on runway length) Ohio University Airport as an Advanced Service Airport, the second highest classification. There are 35 airports in Ohio in this classification.

Economic Impact

A 2006 ODOT study estimated the total economic output of Ohio University Airport at \$15.1 million, with \$7.4 million in direct impacts and \$7.7 million in secondary impacts. The study also determined that the Airport created 160 jobs in the community with a total payroll of \$5.8 million. This ranks the Airport in the top ten among Ohio's general aviation airports in terms of economic impact.

Airport Activity and Demand

There are forty-five aircraft based at Ohio University airport. The airport conducts an estimated 51,600 operations (takeoff or landing) annually made up of 41,200 local and 10,400 itinerant operations.

A 2006 study of travel agent booking data determined the demand for air service in the market area of the Ohio University Airport. The area's demand is estimated at 33,405 total passengers annually, a level likely too low to warrant new scheduled air service. However, demand is at a level that, combined with the Airport location, may attract enhanced on-demand air taxi service.

Activity over the next 20 years, excluding air-taxi or other commercial service expansion, is projected to increase the number of based aircraft to sixty-six and the number of annual operations to 63,600.

Airspace Issues

Unencumbered navigable airspace around the Airport is crucial to operational safety and future development, and is a prime consideration in the Airport's planning efforts. Some degree of airspace height control does exist. The State of Ohio Tall Towers Act requires all proponents of construction in the vicinity of a public airport to obtain ODOT approval.

The Airport is a non-towered general aviation facility using standard oval shaped traffic patterns. Noise complaints from the Village of Albany have caused the Airport to adjust the traffic pattern for aircraft departing to the east. The airport also has implemented a formal process for receiving and tracking noise complaints.

Runway Issues

While the existing runway length is sufficient to meet projected operations, changes in the type of aircraft using the airport could potentially require construction of additional Runway Safety Area to the west. Additional Runway Safety Area improvements are currently being designed for airport property

immediately north and south of the runway. The University does not currently own all the property in the Runway Protection Zones. Property purchases and navigation easements are considered in the Airport's 20-year Master Plan.

RAIL TRANSPORTATION – PRESENT CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

The only active commercial rail line is a single north-south track (approximately 40 miles,) with 3-4 trains daily. It primarily supports the coal and chemical industries in West Virginia. There is additional commercial capacity in the rail line, but limited capability for delivery of goods in the area (railroad sidings) and no passenger service. Much track has been removed and some rights-of-way have been converted to bikeways or to private use.

Rail service continues to be a substantial part of the Ohio transportation network. Freight shipment in Ohio is expected to increase by 46% and truck traffic by 64% by 2020. Given the impact of increased vehicular traffic on roads, environmental issues, and rising fuel costs, rail transportation will become more competitive.

Passenger Service

There are groups advocating for re-establishment of both passenger and freight service between Athens and Columbus, which would then connect to existing freight services and proposed high speed passenger service between Cleveland and Cincinnati.

The goal is to have rail service for commuters between Athens and Columbus and to open the area to greater tourist trade. It would facilitate people commuting to Lancaster and Columbus

while reducing automobile traffic and costs. Significant development might be expected along the railroad, especially for businesses requiring freight shipping and for tourist attractions.

Considerable development will be required for such rail service as some rail beds, track and support services have been removed or converted. Land for right-of-way will need to be purchased; and tracks, stations and transport connections (busses, taxis, and light rail) at terminals will be needed. The medians of existing highways may be viewed as right-of-ways, particularly for elevated monorail-type systems.

Freight Service

Expansion of freight rail service to and in Athens County may be more feasible than passenger service since one freight line is already in operation through the county. There is additional capacity on the lines, and Norfolk-Southern is interested in more originating business from Athens County. Addition of rail freight terminals would allow delivery and receipt of value-added goods, reducing wear and tear on the highway system, especially in light of the projected increase in truck traffic. It could also increase area employment through new businesses and industries and direct employment in the freight business itself. Shipping of quality local hardwood products to lucrative east and west coast markets is one such opportunity. Addition of rail service to Columbus or other locations would further increase rail freight opportunities.



*photo of: train on Norfolk-Southern line near The Plains
photo from: Athens County Regional Planning
Commission*

Safety Concerns

Not all rail crossings in Athens County are controlled by gates. ODOT reports that if some crossings can be eliminated to improve safety then programs are available to provide lights at other crossings in compensation.

Some rail shipments include hazardous products, primarily chemicals. Such shipments pose problems as some tracks run through populated areas and/or source water areas. Norfolk Southern Railroad has provided to the City of Athens and the Athens County Emergency Management Agency a list of the most voluminous 25 hazardous materials that travel through Athens County by rail.

WATER TRANSPORTATION- PRESENT CONDITION

Water (barge) transportation is the most economical way to move large amounts of

raw materials. The proximity of the Ohio River allows Athens County to benefit indirectly from this method of shipping. Gravel, coal, and other materials can be delivered to terminals in nearby counties. However, there are few places in Athens County that can support such a facility. River bank areas in the Hockingport area (the only river access in the county) are steep and may be ecologically fragile.

PLAN CONCEPT

The planning concept for the transportation chapter is based on the desire to promote transportation systems that work with existing and future land uses while making it a friendlier place for pedestrians and bicyclists. It is a fundamentally simple concept, but it has important ramifications for the transportation system's design and management.

Those who walk or ride purely for recreation place different demands on the transportation systems than those who routinely walk or ride to work, to shop, or to get to school. The transportation system must adapt to these different demands, providing both recreational trails for those interested in fun and a functional integration of these travel modes into the street system for those with other needs.

A goal in Athens County is to make the county more accessible for pedestrians and non-motorized transportation. This requires creating an environment where residents can accomplish their daily routines without getting in their cars. Those who walk or ride recreationally find ways to do it, but those who must walk or ride as a matter of daily need often have trouble. Goals and policies addressing these desires are included in this Plan. This transportation chapter suggests ways

that the transportation system can enhance the pedestrian and bicycling environment, making a functional integration that is key to true walkability.

The planning concept also includes maintaining the transportation system's diversity and complexity, calling for the continuation of regional transportation flows through Athens County and the permanence of the county airport. While much of the focus is on pedestrian scale, the importance of other aspects of the transportation system should not be minimized. Regional connections are vital to the community's economic success, and the airport provides an important opportunity for new types of economic growth

GOALS & POLICIES

GOAL 1: Road Improvements and maintenance

Policies for Consideration:

- A. Hard-surface all county roads by 2015.
- B. Adopt an access management program as provided by Ohio Revised Code section 5552.
- C. Adopt asphalt, instead of chip and seal, as the minimum standard for subdivision road surfaces.
- D. The responsible entities should develop a mechanism to collect and dispose of litter and roadside dumps.
- E. Reduce the interactions between automobiles, bicyclists and pedestrians by developing parallel transportation routes or properly engineering intersections.

GOAL 2: Education and Information

The county may provide education and information to help make the transportation network more usable, accessible, and safe.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. More information should be provided to contractors and homeowners about proper driveway construction.
- B. Road Managers should maintain a database of freeze-prone roads to facilitate targeted snow removal and surface treatment in those areas.
- C. Road Managers should maintain a database of flood-prone roads to facilitate targeted clearing of ditches and culverts in those areas.
- D. County and Township road crews should receive training regarding proper roadside vegetation management.
- E. Emergency routes and flood detour routes should be better signed.
- F. Designated bicycle routes on county highways may receive “Share the Road” signs.
- G. The County should provide public service announcements to motorists and bicyclists about bicycle laws, safety, and sharing the roadways.

- H. The County Engineer is encouraged to create a comprehensive website that provides minimum road standards, current and upcoming construction projects, flood detour routes and other emergency information, mapping, and driveway and culvert permitting.
- I. The Athens County Convention and Visitor's Bureau should develop maps and promotional materials for area scenic byways.
- J. Athens County should include improved Airport signage in any comprehensive plan to improve signage throughout the County road system.

GOAL 3: Advocacy

Promote legislation that will improve local transportation

Policies for Consideration:

- A. Athens County Commissioners should support the enactment of state legislation regulating the siting of hazardous waste hauling routes away from source water locations.
- B. Solid waste hauling routes should be franchised to eliminate multiple trips from multiple haulers on the same roads.
- C. Athens County and Lee Township should consider implementing airport zoning in accordance with the Airport Master Plan in order to provide for compatible land uses in the vicinity of the airport. Noise issues should be considered in the airport zoning plan.
- D. Responsible entities should consider adopting mandatory county-wide household trash collection in order to alleviate the illegal dumping problem as well as the problems from trash burning.
- E. Athens County encourages a statewide bottle and can return program in order to reduce roadside litter.

GOAL 4: Emergency Planning

Prepare plans that will provide for the effective mitigation of hazardous situations.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. Villages and other settled areas should identify and map helicopter landing locations. This effort can be coordinated with the Emergency Management Agency.

GOAL 5: Acquisition

Seek ownership of key properties to further promote other transportation goals.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. Ohio University, as the Airport Sponsor, should acquire the parcels of land in the Runway Protection Zones or consider purchasing navigation easements in these areas, or a combination thereof.

GOAL 6: Public Transportation

Public transportation should be accessible, convenient, and cost effective.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. Development of residential and commercial areas should be coordinated with public transportation.
- B. Research expanded public transportation services, including rail service, and access between urban areas.
- C. Responsible entities should coordinate efforts in the public transportation sector.

GOAL 7: Diversify transportation modes

Alternatives to automobile and truck transportation should be researched and implemented.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. Efforts should be made to locate businesses adjacent to the existing commercial rail line that traverses north-south and passes through existing communities.
- B. Designate preferred bicycle routes on Athens County roadways with uniform paving standards through cooperation with state, county, township and city authorities.
- C. The County Commissioners should request that the County Bikeway Advisory Committee prepare a countywide bicycle plan. The county should produce a map that shows bicycle and pedestrian network gaps, locations where bicycle and pedestrian bridges are needed, and locations for bicycle parking facilities.

- D. Consider bike lanes or, at-least, paved shoulders along congested approaches to municipalities.
- E. Sidewalks providing pedestrian access should be part of all new residential and commercial developments. Sidewalks should also be installed in towns and cities where there is significant pedestrian or motor vehicle traffic, in particular in commercial areas or denser residential areas.

Chapter 4 Highlights:

4

- Land
- Water and Watersheds
- Agriculture
- Forests
- Air Quality
- Viewsheds
- Maps:
 - Soils Slip Potential
 - Watersheds

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of the environment/natural resources task force is:

“To evaluate existing conditions and to develop strategies for the protection, utilization and enhancement of the environment and natural resources of Athens County”.

PROCESS

Task force members recognize the daunting task of forecasting environmental trends and defining, evaluating and outlining recommendations to best steward the use of environmental and natural resources. The use and misuse of the environment and natural resources in the county must be understood within the context of our global environment and natural resources. The use, development and protection of the environment and natural resources of the county are intertwined with and overlap topics or focus areas of other land use task forces within the county. In order to accomplish its purpose, and to utilize the various levels of expertise and interest in particular areas, members of the task force chose to work on one of four subject matter teams or committees. The four teams were:

- Land
- Water
- Agriculture and Woodland
- Air/Sky/Viewshed

After the development of a purpose statement, the task force convened several meetings to allow teams to examine maps of the county and begin defining the extent of resources within their topic area. The co-chairs made an outline of topics and speakers that would present necessary background information at task force meetings. The purpose of these informational meetings to help all members of the task force have a basic understanding of topic areas the environment/natural resources task force had been asked to address.

Several two-hour meetings allowed speakers to present the current situation, trends/projections and possible land use plan recommendations or land use implications on pertinent environment and natural resource topics. Topics and speakers who addressed those topics included: use of county Geographic Information System (GIS) (Darren Cohen), recycling and landfill issues (Tom O’Grady), new state septic regulations (Crabtree), public woodlands (Cheryl Coon), private woodlands (Pete Woyar), county soils/suitability for various uses (Kevin Lewis), night lighting/light pollution (Joe Shields), use of genetically modified organisms (GMO’s); (Cindy Riviere), watershed and water quality issues (Mike Steinmaus), climate change (Carol Kuhre) and air quality factors and trends (Gary Conley). In a separate countywide forum

some task force members received information regarding county wildlife issues (Dave Swanson, Ohio Department of Natural Resources – Wildlife Division) and options/strategies for farmland preservation (Jill Clark, Center for Farmland Policy Innovation).

Although each environment/natural resource team within the task force developed lists of issues that directly impact their focus area, there are broad issues that cut across all aspects of the environment and natural resources in Athens County. These priority issues that need to be addressed in a comprehensive land use plan include:

DEVELOPMENT PRESSURE

According to the Ohio State University Exurban project website (<http://exurban.osu.edu>), Athens County ranked 47 out of 88 Ohio Counties in terms of land converted to urban use from 1992 to 1997 and 44th in terms of population increase from 1990 to 2000. With the U.S. 33 by-pass projects, development pressures in Athens County are increasing and are projected to continue to increase.

The environmental beauty of Athens County is a valuable asset and defined by woodlands, scenic viewsheds (including the agrarian fields and pasture settings), and air and water quality. How will development pressure affect this asset? Land suitable for housing and other development projects is likely to compete for the limited land suitable for production agriculture in the county.

GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE

There is consensus among international panels of scientists that global warming is indeed occurring (<http://www.ipcc.ch/>). Those same panels say that human activity is likely a contributing factor to global warming. Some of the likely effects of

global warming are increased temperatures leading to increased moisture stress, an increase in extreme weather events, and shifting weather patterns. It is difficult to quantify the effects of global warming upon the environment and natural resources in Athens County, yet this issue must be acknowledged. From the standpoint of a land-use plan, how do activities in Athens County contribute to global warming? Can development be planned in such a way as to limit energy use and preserve the woodlands and grasslands that act as carbon sinks?

WASTE STREAM

Typically, increased development and population pressure result in an increased waste volume. Not all of the material that enters the waste stream belongs in a landfill. Planning must take into account methods to reduce consumption, re-use products and recycle waste to protect environmental resources. Illegal garbage dumping and roadside littering damage viewsheds and water resources and must be controlled. Future landfill areas must be planned with care to protect water, agricultural land, and forested areas.

MINING CONSEQUENCES

Acid mine drainage is a consequence of coal mining and it affects water quality and stream life. How will the current and future energy needs of the region impact upon additional extraction of Athens County coal resources? Gravel pits involve a trade-off with agricultural land. Their development along major highways challenges the scenic viewscape that Athens County promotes.

NON-NATIVE INVASIVE SPECIES

Non-native invasive species (NNIS) evolved in different ecosystems and when introduced into Athens County can outcompete native flora and fauna and cause significant damage with the environment. NNIS include insects (gypsy

moth, emerald ash borer), plants (multiflora rose, tree of heaven, garlic mustard, autumn olive), viruses, and bacteria. These species can affect soil chemistry, biological diversity, erosion issues, fire regimes and overall ecosystem function. They also can impact the aesthetics of local areas, restrict recreational opportunities and thus impact local economies.

The following sections of this chapter will deal with the current situation, trends, planning issues and recommendations of this task force as it relates to the environmental and natural resource uses of Athens County.

BACKGROUND

Athens County has a range of natural resources that provide the foundation for a land use plan. Basic natural resource components that determine land uses and are affected by land uses include soils, water, air, and the flora and fauna. Athens County is home to some rare natural resources that include two federally-listed species (the Bald Eagle and the American Burying Beetle) and 34 state-listed species that include various lichens, plants, birds, reptiles, fish and mammals. The information and recommendations provided by this task force will include guidance for future land use decisions that are wise and cognizant of the richness of the environment and natural resources of Athens County.

PRESENT CONDITIONS & TRENDS

LAND-PRESENT CONDITION

Athens County is in the unglaciated Allegheny Plateau Region. The area has been extensively dissected by drainageways. Most of the soils are underlain by sedimentary rocks. The rocks are shale, siltstone, sandstone, limestone, and coal.

They have an average dip of 30 feet per mile



toward the southeast.

*Photo of: acid mine drainage from mine shaft
Photo from: ODNr, Division of Mineral
Resource Management*

The landscape is one of hills, narrow ridge tops, and stream valleys. Mount Nebo, near Chauncey, is the highest point, with an elevation of 1,055 feet above sea level. The northern part of the county is rugged, with steep and very steep slopes. The southern part of the county has more rolling topography, wider ridge tops, and fewer steep hillsides.

Near Albany and Coolville, there are extensive preglacial terraces, which are remnants of the preglacial Teays River drainage system. The Teays River had a complex drainage system that originated in the Carolinas and flowed generally northwest and terminated near Wisconsin. With the advance of glacial ice, the Teays River was dammed, forming an extensive lake system. Eventually, the Hocking River and its drainage system were formed and these lakes were drained to the south. The former Teays River valleys are at elevations of 700 to 820 feet and are characteristically gently sloping.

Illinoian age, glacial outwash terraces are at The Plains and near Stewart. Wisconsin age glacial lake terraces are scattered

throughout the county, with the largest in Athens and Buchtel. These terraces range from 640 to 700 feet in elevation.

The Hocking River and its tributaries drain most of the county. This river enters the Ohio River at Hockingport. Monday, Sunday, Federal, and Margaret Creeks are major tributaries of the Hocking River in Athens County. Monday, Sunday, and Federal Creeks drain the northern part of the county, and Margaret Creek drains the southwestern part. The Shade River drains the south-central part of the county and flows into Meigs County. Tributaries of Raccoon Creek and Leading Creek drain the west-central part of the county.

There is countywide production of oil and gas from several rock layers. The Middle Kittanning number 6 coal has been surface or shaft mined in the past, especially in the northwestern part of the county. Pittsburgh number 8 coal has been surface mined near Amesville. Limestone has been quarried near Albany. Sand and gravel are excavated along the Hocking River northwest of Athens and near Stewart. Clay has been mined for production of brick and other masonry and ceramic products.

The climate of Athens County can be summarized with the following statistics:

- Winter avg. temp.: 32°F
- Winter avg. daily min temp.: 21°F
- Lowest temp. on record: minus 27°F on Jan 28, 1963
- Summer avg. temp.: 71°F
- Summer avg. daily max temp.: 85°F
- Highest temp. on record: 104°F July 14, 1954
- Total annual precipitation: 38.6" and 55% falls from April through September
- Avg. seasonal snowfall: 14"

LAND - TRENDS

Agricultural and forest land is continuing to be surveyed into small tracts and converted to commercial and residential development. Floodplains are developed for commercial uses and forestlands and other open spaces are often developed into housing.

The Hocking River floodplain is being reconfigured for commercial development and the extraction of commercial minerals (sand and gravel) north and south of Athens. This land was predominantly agricultural land due to annual flooding. Recent development of larger highways, commercial minerals, commercial buildings, new water well fields, and fill areas to raise development above the 100 year flood level have permanently converted some of the best agricultural land in the county. If these trends continue there will be even less farming on the Hocking River floodplain. In addition, there will be modification of the hydrologic and ecologic functioning of the floodplain as well as a permanent alteration of the natural beauty of the river valley.

Coal and limestone are not a major industry in the County. If imported coal for power plants and imported limestone for construction purposes becomes more costly, there could be renewed activity in the county for extraction of these resources.

A lot of Athens County land has mineral rights severed from the surface ownership, granting the mineral owner priority to remove the minerals even if environmental degradation results. Commercial mining requires a permit from the state of Ohio to insure that minimal environmental standards are met. Large-scale landscape changes could occur if coal and limestone production becomes economically feasible in the future.

The soils and topography of Athens County will determine types and locations of future development. Many areas of the county are comprised of heavy-clay soils that are susceptible to hillside creep and slippage. Areas that have been identified with potential slippage should be planned carefully for future development. The Soils Slip Potential map in the appendices shows the extent of slip prone soils in the County.

The soils and topography in the Athens to Albany corridor and Troy Township are relatively favorable for larger residential and commercial developments. These areas also possess good agricultural land and are at risk for farmland conversion to urban land use.

The Hocking River Valley contains some of the flattest land in the county but it is subject to periodic flooding. Earth fills are constructed to make elevated building pads in order to minimize flood damage. Because this type of development follows the River, a linear feature, it tends to promote auto-dependent travel, sprawl rather than compactness, long extensions of utilities, loss of farmland and open space, and loss of aesthetic Valley features.

The location of surface mines will affect the environment of Athens County. Sand and gravel will be used for home construction and renovations, roadway construction, and masonry product manufacture. Existing sand and gravel quarries will become less economically viable due to the increasing depth of the quarrying operation. Existing sand and gravel pits are also confined by property lines, infrastructure, and physical boundaries. New quarries will open as demand for the sand and gravel products continues.

There are no active limestone quarries in the county, but limestone is hauled in from counties to the west. There will be a

continued need for limestone due to construction projects. Athens County has the potential for additional limestone quarries, however development will be dependent on transportation costs. As long as transportation costs remain at acceptable levels, limestone will be imported from surrounding counties with large surface mining operations.

Previous environmental damage from surface mining for coal continues to plague the county, especially with water quality and drainage issues. Acid mine drainage and poorly reclaimed landscapes contribute to reduced water quality and soil erosion. Disturbed landscapes also provide havens for non-native invasive species. These situations also affect the aesthetics of the landscape. Active watershed organizations in Athens and surrounding counties and local, state, and federal agencies continue work to address these land issues that affect water quality.

WATER-PRESENT CONDITION

The climate of Athens County is fairly mild with significant precipitation year-round. Precipitation in Athens County ranges from 30-41 inches per year (Harstine, 1991) and has averaged 40 inches per year in the City of Athens from 1961 – 1990. The geology of Athens County is mostly unglaciated sedimentary rock of the Pennsylvanian and Permian Age (ODNR Geological Survey, 2006). The exception is the Hocking River valley, which is a sand and gravel glacial outwash up to 150 feet deep. Relief of the county is approximately 400 feet and typically consists of steep ridges, rolling hills, and flat stream valleys. In total, the county contains approximately 611 miles of major streams and rivers (OSU Extension – AEX-480.05-97).

Athens County is located in the Ohio River drainage basin, which means that all the surface water eventually drains to the Ohio

River. The Ohio River borders southeastern Athens County. The Hocking River watershed, Athens County's largest, drains most of the north, central, and east portions of the county. The Watershed Map in the appendices shows the watershed boundaries in Athens County.

Manmade lakes are also present with most in public ownership, including Burr Oak Lake (664 acres), Dow Lake (161 acres), Lake Snowden (131 acres), and Fox Lake (48 acres). Burr Oak Lake, with a portion in Perry County, is the only large lake not located entirely within the county. Smaller private lakes and numerous private ponds also exist within the county. The land use table in the appendices contains data about water coverage in Athens County.

The Hocking River watershed is primarily warm water habitat comprised of 122 named streams in Fairfield, Perry, Morgan, Hocking, Washington, and Athens Counties. Recent population estimates for the watershed exceed 150,000 with a density of approximately 1,128 people per square mile.

Water quality in the Hocking River has improved in the past 30 years due to the Clean Water Act, the Conservation Reserve Program, modern agricultural practices and watershed restoration efforts.

Improvements to municipal wastewater treatment have aided cleanup. The Hocking River meets Clean Water Act goals on 160 miles (56.1%) and partially meets the criteria on 49 miles (17.2%) of the drainage. The Hocking River watershed holds 97 fish species with 3 of these on the state endangered list. This drainage is also home to 27 mussel species and 266 macro invertebrate taxa.

Surface water composition, flow, and quality are influenced by soil type, bedrock geology, topography, and land use. The majority of negative impacts to the streams

and rivers in the county are from past and current land uses including agriculture, urban development, mineral resource extraction, and industrial waste.

Abandoned coal mines throughout the county have impacted many miles of stream with acid, metals, and sediment. Mine drainage impairs aquatic life by degrading water chemistry and increasing sedimentation. Poor agricultural practices have also had an impact on the health of the county's streams. The largest impact has been on the reduction of riparian areas. Over the past 30 years, this situation has seen some improvement with implementation of the Conservation Reserve Program.

Increased urban and residential development in the county has led to construction of more impervious surfaces, such as rooftops and parking lots. These prevent rainwater from percolating into the soil to be released slowly into the area's natural drainages and instead creates a rapid influx of water into a stream during rainfall events. Impervious surfaces increase intensity of runoff events leading to channel instability and increased bank erosion. Also, pollutants that may be present are not filtered by any natural vegetation or soil and are readily washed into the streams.

Healthy streams are intended to transport gravel and support native riparian hardwoods along their banks to prevent bank erosion, provide shade which maintains cooler water temperatures and provide terrestrial and aquatic wildlife habitat. Dredging and riparian tree removal increase sedimentation, destroy aquatic habitats, and increase downstream flooding potential. Removal of logjams at or near bridges and culverts is the only in-stream, vegetation maintenance strategy recommended.

There are government agencies and non-profit organizations whose goals are to mitigate some of the problems that prevent the surface waters from attaining warm water habitat status. Watershed organizations operating in the county are the Hocking River Commission, The Friends of the Hocking River, Monday Creek Restoration Partnership, Sunday Creek Watershed Group, Federal Creek Watershed group, Leading Creek Watershed Group, and the Raccoon Creek Partnership. Several of these watershed organizations have watershed management plans or acid mine drainage abatement and treatment (AMDAT) plans that identify restoration needs in their respective watersheds.

Groundwater resources in Athens County are a key resource for most development. Groundwater is the source of drinking water from all public water systems that service Athens County and portions of neighboring counties, except for several that utilize water from the Burr Oak water treatment facility. This facility plans to change to a ground water system in the next several years.

The predominant source of groundwater in Athens County comes from the Hocking River buried valley aquifer (the Aquifer) which commonly produces 500 gallons per minute throughout its range in the county. This yield far exceeds the typical yield of less than 2 gallons per minute commonly found in the consolidated sandstone and shale bedrock formations that have some potential to provide groundwater to homeowners in the areas of the county not served by a public water system. No other source of water in Athens County holds the potential to meet the needs of homeowners,

farmers, manufactures, schools, villages or cities as does the Aquifer. The protection of this precious resource is very important.

Currently there are four groundwater public water systems serving Athens County with well fields located in the Aquifer (City of Athens, Le-Ax, Nelsonville, and Chauncey), two public water systems partially serving Athens County with well fields located in the Ohio River aquifer (Tuppers Plains and Little Hocking), and one public water system serving Athens County residents with a well field located in the Federal Creek aquifer (Amesville). Burr Oak Water District partially serves Athens County residents but is currently drawing water from Burr Oak Lake as a surface water public system. Of the eight public water systems that serve Athens County, two of the systems, Burr Oak and Le-Ax, are currently upgrading and expanding their capacities. Burr Oak is changing from a surface water system to a ground water system and has installed five new groundwater wells in the Aquifer on property near the former Athens County Home on State Route 13 and Le-Ax has constructed a new well near its existing well in the proximity of the mouth of Hamley Run.

The Plains Water and Sewer District, Sunday Creek Water District and the Glouster Water Department purchase water from one of the eight previously mentioned public water systems. The water usage and population served by these systems is included in the water usage for the eight public water system listed in Table 1.

Table 1.**Water Usage From The Hocking River Buried Valley Aquifer, Athens County, Ohio**

Public Water System	Population Served	Primary Water Source	Water Usage (MGPD)*	Treatment Capacity (MGPD)
City of Athens	25,740***	Ground Water	2005 – 3.2 2007 – 3.7	7.0
Le-Ax Water Co.	17,700***	Ground Water	2005 – 1.4 2007 – 1.6	2.88
City of Nelsonville	10,000***	Ground Water	2005 – 0.75 2007 – 0.7	2.3
Tuppers Plains/Chester	14,133 4,000 Athens Co.	Ground Water	2005 – 1.1 2007 – 1.3	2.4
Chauncey	1,428	Ground Water	2007 – 0.117	0.32
L. Hocking Water Assoc	11,570	Ground Water	2005 – 0.9 2007 – 0.85	2.0
Amesville	255	Ground Water	2007 – 0.025	0.043
Burr Oak Water	22,285	**Surface Water	2005 – 1.3 2007 – 1.3	4.0

*Million Gallons per Day

**Projected change over to ground water production is scheduled for 2010.

***Combined population served for water from the Hocking River buried Valley Aquifer by respective system.

Information from Ohio EPA Division of Drinking and Ground water files

WATER - TRENDS

Increased development, especially in floodplain areas, is causing short and long-term impacts to riparian and stream habitats. These impacts include sedimentation, increased runoff from hardened surfaces causing increases in flash flooding and water quality impairments.

Untreated or poorly treated wastewater is a common problem in Athens County where enforcement of regulations in rural areas is a challenge. The public sewage systems in some communities are also at capacity as the population increases and systems age. A common problem with which older systems deal is infiltration from stormwater systems.

Recreation access to streams in Athens County needs improvement. Enhanced access will benefit tourism and provide opportunities for local residents to appreciate nature and realize the importance of watershed management concepts.

The demand for safe and dependable drinking water will continue to place more pressure on available aquifers. As can be seen in Table 1, of the eight public water systems that serve Athens County, all except one (Nelsonville) experienced either a consistent water demand or an increased water demand during the three year period between 2005 and 2007. Future water demands on the Aquifer will most likely increase due to expansion plans already underway by Le-Ax Water Company and Burr Oak Water District.

Drinking water quality and future availability are concerns that need to be addressed as demand for groundwater resources increases and development expands.

AGRICULTURE AND WOODLAND

AGRICULTURE – PRESENT CONDITION

Athens County is in the heart of Ohio's hill country, the most heavily forested part of the state. While many Americans viewed this region of the Allegheny Plateau as part of a vast wilderness just 200 years ago, the subsequent impacts of industry and settlement have left their marks on the landscape. Nearly all of the forests that covered Athens County when settlement began were cut for timber, charcoal, mining, firewood or to make way for farms and settlements.

Open land used for agricultural purposes is principally divided between cropland with approximately 22,638 acres, or 6.96% of the total county acreage, and pasture/grassland with approximately 32,424 acres, or 9.96% of the total county acreage. There are also approximately 2000 acres of farmsteads, 517 acres in nursery and ornamental horticultural use and slightly over 10 acres in orchards.

The hilly topography of Athens County is more conducive to pasture and forage-based livestock production than large-scale row crop agriculture. Row crop production within Athens County is, with a few exceptions, generally less than 100 acres in size. Row crop production, although scattered in small patches throughout the county, can be found in the bottomland soils along the Hocking River, following the highway 33 corridor north of

Athens to Nelsonville and the highway 50 corridor towards Guysville and Coolville. There are also pockets of level cropland along the highway 13 corridor from Athens to Glouster and in Stewart area along the bottomlands of Highways 329 and 144. However, the predominant row cropland is located in the bottom tier of townships and especially in the Alexander and Lee township areas. There are also a number of small acreages, generally under 5 acres in size, being utilized for the row crop production of market vegetables and small fruits within the county.



*photo of: an Athens County farm
photo from; Athens Soil and Water
Conservation District website*

Photographs of the Athens County countryside from the early 1900's show a very different vegetative cover than today. During this period, small family farms dominated the landscape and many of the wooded slopes had been cleared for timber and crop production. As the farm economy changed, and the thin soils on hillsides eroded or became exhausted, row crop production became less prominent. Brush, woods and pasture began to replace the hillside field.



*photo of: an Athens County goat herd
photo from: Athens Soil and Water
Conservation District website*

The following table, using numbers from the National Agriculture Statistics Service (<http://www.nass.usda.gov/>) illustrates farm numbers and acres in farmland from 1987 through 2006 (the most current year for which statistics are available). The pasture/grassland division of vegetative cover can be broken down into land used exclusively for pasture grazing by livestock, land used exclusively for the production of hay/forage crops and land managed for both livestock grazing and forage crop production.

Within Athens County there are significant acres of formerly managed pasture/grasslands that are no longer managed and are reverting to shrub and brush land. What fraction of the 11,940 acres classified as shrub and brush land within the county fits this description is not clear, but, if left unattended, the natural succession will be towards some type of woodland (see Appendices).

Year	Number of Farms	Ave. Farm Size (acres)	Land in Farms (acres)
1987	600	157	94,000
1988	600	155	93,000
1989	600	150	90,000
1990	590	151	89,000
1991	570	154	88,000
1992	560	154	86,000
1993	580	150	87,000
1994	570	153	87,000
1995	560	154	86,000
1996	550	156	86,000
1997	560	154	86,000
1998	570	156	89,000
1999	590	154	91,000
2000	610	156	95,000
2001	630	156	98,000
2002	660	141	93,000
2003	660	147	97,000
2004	660	147	97,000
2005	660	147	97,000
2006	660	148	98,000

AGRICULTURE - TRENDS

The mid 1990's saw a continuation of decreasing farm numbers and acres in farmland that began in the early 90's. In 1996 farm number and acres of farmland reached modern lows; 550 farms on 86,000 acres of farmland. Since that time, farm numbers and acres have risen. Since 2002, farm numbers and acres of farmland have been steady at 660 and 97,000 respectively.

The trend in Athens County over the past 20 to 30 years has been the decline of the family farm. Very few farms in Athens County are full-time farms or farms that provide 100% of the owner's income. While farm numbers and acreage in farmland has increased from the low point of 1996, the vast majority of these farms are part-time farms, small farm production supplemented with off-farm employment and income. Row crop production

remains a part of the agricultural landscape, but many of the small, part-time farms demonstrate a trend towards diverse land use and incorporation of several agricultural/horticultural enterprises. Examples include ruminant livestock, market gardens, woodland crops, and aquaculture. It is possible that total land in farms could increase even though cropland is being lost because these small farms are using more marginal pasture and woodland acres for agricultural enterprises.

As new housing and development occurs in Athens County it is likely more acreage will be used for the nursery and ornamental horticulture enterprises. Population increases may also provide incentive for the startup of small-scale, farm- market orchards.

Land best suited to the production of row crops (agronomic or horticultural) as determined by percent of slope (under 4%) is being converted into houses and non-agricultural businesses. In particular the Athens/Albany corridor is being developed. This is Teays Stage river valley land, which is considered to be prime agricultural land. Farmland in this area will be developed for light commercial and residential uses if no action is taken to preserve farmland. Larger farms of over 100 acres are being subdivided into smaller tracts for residential development. Land currently in row crops or hay is most desirable for this development due to slope and the ease of construction.

In other areas of the county, as farms downsize and/or sell off portions of their more developable land, there will be a trend for the remaining land to be used for livestock production, non-traditional agricultural/horticultural enterprises or farm market/value added production.

Some of the bottomland currently used for agricultural production along the highway 33 corridor from Athens to Nelsonville is expected to be lost to agricultural production due to the development of gravel pits and increased development pressure as a result of the highway 33 bypass projects around Lancaster and the planned 33-bypass project around Nelsonville. This will result in fewer acres available for agronomic production crops such as corn, soybeans and wheat. The primary land use issue for agriculture is how to protect some of the best cropland and pasture land areas from development.

The use of genetically modified organisms (GMO's) will increase as more varieties of produce are genetically modified. The debate over genetic contamination is also expected to increase as organic growers and consumers become more concerned with the quality of their food and potential environmental harm.

As the biotechnology industry grows, protection of the organic production sector in Athens County becomes an issue. By the Ohio Ecological Food and Farming Association (OEFFA) and USDA definitions, organic producers cannot use GMO's. Organic producers are concerned that their crops will get cross-pollinated with the GMO strains, causing contamination of organically grown crops. This could mean a significant loss of sales for the organic producer. A secondary concern is maintaining the identity of non-GMO seeds in the market. Currently if a farmer or gardener were to plant seeds that had been crossed with a GMO, the company of the GMO can sue them for stealing their genetic material, resulting in high litigation costs and loss of seed stock. At the same time it is recognized that there can be economic incentives/benefits for production agriculture to use current GMO technology. It is possible that future

GMO technology may incorporate more ecological and nutritional benefits. For these reasons a plan must be developed that allows both GMO users and non-users to exist within Athens County.

Another issue increasing in importance is wildlife influence upon agriculture. Currently, deer, coyotes and Canada geese rate as the top 3 wildlife problems. It is important to provide strategies and resources to prevent loss of livestock, crops, and high-value horticultural plants.



photo of: Whitetail Deer
photo from: ODNR website

WOODLAND COVER — PRESENT CONDITION

The deciduous forests of southeast Ohio are considered part of the mixed mesophytic forest region. Mesophytes are terrestrial plants that thrive in soil conditions that are not too wet or too dry. The species mix includes a variety from more northern and more southern locations. Most forestlands of Athens are not pre-settlement in origin; they were harvested and then cultivated or grazed one or more times since settlement by

immigrants in the late 1700's. Many stands are second-growth that established after heavy cutting approximately 80 to 140 years ago. While some evergreens are native to the area, many of the evergreen forests in Athens County are planted stands used to reclaim historically impacted areas (e.g. surface mines and grazed lands) that needed quick growing species to prevent soil erosion. Industrial use of the forests for coal, clay and gravel production left long-lasting scars, but these areas are slowly returning to forestland.

Private and public forestlands compose over 222,000 acres (68%) of Athens County. Deciduous forestlands are the dominant forest type, about 64% (207,783 acres), followed by mixed (3.6%), evergreen (0.7%), and clear-cut (0.5%) forestlands. Approximately 182,000 acres of forestlands (82% of the total forestlands) are in private ownership. Of this total, 17,475 acres are tax-reduced through participation in CAUV or Forest Stewardship programs.

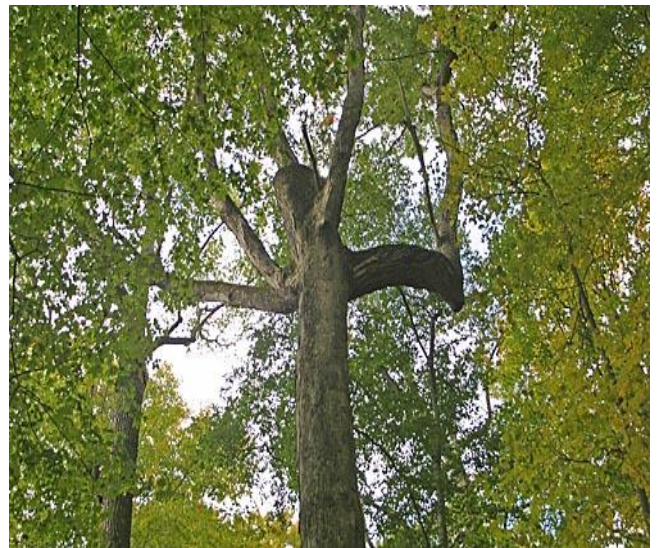


photo of: Ohio hardwood forest
photo from: ODNR website

Private forestlands in Athens County are a great resource. It is estimated that there

are approximately 546 million board feet of standing timber and 13.65 million tons of fiber worth about \$191 million and \$41 million respectively, or about \$1,000 per acre. Non-timber commodities that private forests provide include maple syrup, medicinal herbs, mushrooms, fruits and nuts, hunting leases, recreational fees and tourism. It is difficult to assign a value to these non-timber products. Forestlands also provide wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, viewsheds and soil and water conservation. Forested riparian areas provide erosion control and temperature control (shading) for streams and rivers.

Public forestlands (36,130 acres) are managed by a variety of agencies including: U.S. Forest Service, Ohio Division of Natural Resources (ODNR), Athens County, Ohio University and Hocking College. These forests provide habitat for two federally-listed species: bald eagle and American burying beetle, as well as rare state-listed wildlife and plant species including: Black Bear, Bobcat, Cerulean Warbler, Plain Gentian, Green Adder's-mouth Orchid and Ontario Blazing Star.

WOODLAND COVER - TRENDS

Division of land into smaller parcels (parcelization) causes fragmentation of forests leading to a decrease in the connectivity of wildlife habitat and an increase in wildlife-human confrontations. Scattered subdivision development in wooded areas also allows the spread of non-native invasive species that decrease forestland quality.

As parcelization occurs there are also implications for commercial forest production. As the tract size of forestland is reduced there are higher production costs. Reduced tract size means reduced

access to the raw timber product. This results in higher costs for the mill and affects the ability of the mill to supply wood at a competitive price.

Logging in smaller tracts, within increasingly developed areas, can lead to complaints of property devaluation due to the actions of a neighbor who is selling timber. This can make it difficult for forest landowners to manage for commercial timber production. A long-term reduction in woodland acres that can be managed for timber results in a reduction of forest industry production and infrastructure. The net effect can be loss of jobs and the economic benefits from managed logging.

Of the 182,000 acres of private forestland in Athens County, only about 4% (7,651 acres) have written forest stewardship plans filed with the Forestry Division of ODNR. Most private forests are not under active management and over 60% of forest owners are not interested in commodity production (ODNR Division of Forestry).

The current tax system makes long-term stewardship difficult because estate taxes may force the sale of timber and/or the forestland. The result is the disruption of a resource base as well as the viewshed. Current tax laws may actually create a disincentive to invest in a forest and its management. For example, the current tax law recognizes commercial timber production and the harvest of timber as a qualifying management practice, but provides no tax abatement for other types of woodland management that maintains healthy forests. Thus, the tax law may actually drive forestland owners to do a high-grade (selecting the best marketable trees) harvest to get the forest tax law provision. High grading is not good, long-term forest management. We should encourage the state to develop economic

incentives to insure that forests within Athens County can be managed to sustain a commercial forest products industry

Formerly cleared land reverting to forest cover is prime habitat for some wildlife populations such as whitetail deer. Increased populations of some species will increase human-wildlife interactions resulting in more automobile accidents caused by wildlife; wildlife browsing that affects grazing and agricultural production and landscapes of private homes; and increased potential for disease transmission between wildlife and humans, farm animals, and pets.

The number of non-native invasive species (NNIS) and the number of infected acres continue to increase in Athens County. NNIS can:

- Out-compete native species and produce monocultures that decrease forest ecosystem quality.
- Reduce understory biodiversity of the forestlands.
- Reduce quality habitat and food sources for native wildlife and plant species
- Alter soil structure and chemistry.
- Change native fire regimes.
- Degrade genetic integrity of native species through hybridization.

Control of NNIS in the U.S. costs billions of dollars and will continue to impact the nation's landscape and economics. Insect NNIS that can have a significant impact on our trees include the Emerald Ash Borer² and Gypsy Moth. Disease NNIS that can impact our forests include the Chestnut Blight, Dutch Elm Disease, Dogwood Anthracnose and Butternut Canker. Plant NNIS that have the potential to out-

compete native plants and significantly reduce tree regeneration include Garlic Mustard, Japanese Stilt Grass and Tree-of-Heaven.

AIR & SKY

Climate is a key environmental variable and greatly impacts human activity. Average rainfall in the Athens County is sufficient to sustain large-scale forests and a variety of agriculture. Intensive rainfall episodes regularly occur and cause erosion and flooding. Some flooding within the City of Athens has been mitigated since 1970 through the rerouting of the Hocking River by the Corps of Engineers. This required a significant modification of the viewshed. Proper stormwater management requires that attention be paid to water storage, riparian zones, wetlands, and land use in relation to topography and soil conditions.

Too little rainfall can lead to drought conditions that impact private water supplies for residential and agricultural use and create wildfire hazards. Temperature extremes can adversely affect agriculture and vulnerable human and animal populations and introduce stress on energy supply systems.

Carbon dioxide plays a major role in global warming. Within the county, major sources of CO₂ are coal consumption at Ohio University, distributed consumption of natural gas in homes and businesses, and fuel consumption by vehicles operating in and passing through the county. Housing and commercial locations reinforce the necessity of using cars for transportation. Currently, there are no major smokestack industries or power plants within the county, although such facilities are located nearby.

² The Emerald Ash Borer has not been detected in Athens County at the time of this writing in May 2009.

Outdoor lighting is used for a variety of purposes to enable nighttime activity and promote safety. Well-designed outdoor fixtures direct light so as to illuminate the intended target, and also use appropriate levels of light intensity. Poorly designed fixtures emit light in directions that do not contribute to the desired illumination; in so doing they waste energy and money, constitute nuisances through illumination of neighboring property, contribute to sky glow that obscures the beauty of the night sky, and can actually decrease safety by introducing glare. The nighttime sky in Athens County is still relatively dark in comparison with major urban centers, but problems associated with poorly designed outdoor lighting have increased.

Fuel and environmental costs indicate the need for improved energy efficiencies. However, much development and present land use patterns reinforce dependence on automobiles. Increasing demand for electricity and access to local coal reserves has prompted proposals in recent years for new large-scale power plants in the region including Athens County. Recent efforts to expand high-speed, high-capacity highway access to southeast Ohio encourage growth of vehicular traffic in and through the county. The pressures that drive these trends are expected to remain in place for the foreseeable future.

Future development in the county will likely contribute to nighttime light pollution and diminish the asset of a dark nighttime sky. County Commissioners should be cognizant of these issues and the value of a dark night-time sky as a tourist and quality-of-life attraction and should include standards for outdoor light fixtures in public/commercial development that minimize light pollution while performing the intended purpose.

VIEWSHED - PRESENT CONDITION

A viewshed is what you can see from a given point. The scenic viewsheds in Athens County are the natural and man-made features that give our area its unique beauty: the hills covered by hardwood forests; the rock outcroppings below the ridges; the Hocking River valley with its historic buildings; the pastoral landscape that includes working farms. Athens County's viewsheds are one of its greatest assets

Viewsheds are scenic resources that, as with any other resource, should be carefully maintained in order to sustain their economic, social, cultural, and environmental value. Scenic resources produce community benefits. They define the character of the community in a geographic area, thus creating a "sense of place." The scenic resources of Athens act to distinguish it from neighboring communities and other regions of Ohio.

Scenic resources also have important economic value, because they support the tourism and recreational industries in Athens County. They also increase the value of properties that either provide or that look out on these resources. Development in Athens County that is carefully planned, sensitive to its surroundings and that complements its natural setting does not detract from the county's scenic resources. However, some development in the county has been careless of its scenic impact. The picturesque qualities that are characteristic of Athens County are eroded by highway excavations that are intrusive on the landscape, buildings that are out of scale with their environment or architecturally discordant, hilltop construction or soil mining that modifies

the natural topography, and outdoor advertising.

Increasingly, topography no longer limits where commercial and residential development can take place. Hillsides can be removed and floodplains filled. This trend is expected to continue or accelerate in Athens County in the future. It is crucial when planning future development to recognize the inherent value in the county's scenic resources and take measures to preserve them.

PLAN CONCEPT

Athens County is fortunate to have an environment and natural resource base that will support a variety of industries, lifestyle choices, and diverse agricultural and horticultural enterprises. The hilly topography and the fact that the county is 65% woodland cover provide for striking vistas and offer appeal as a tourist attraction. Thoughtful planning will be needed to maintain the current environmental quality and to conserve the natural resources of the area.

This chapter has focused on five aspects of the environment and natural resources of Athens County that can be greatly impacted by future development and growth. It is important to realize that there is a fundamental and vital connection between maintaining healthy woodland and agricultural land cover and the impact on surface and groundwater recharge and quality. In turn, this impacts the environmental quality of our sky and air and the scenic beauty of this area.

Within this chapter the environment/natural resources task force has set a number of specific land use goals with some suggested policies for achieving these goals. However, a priority area that should be addressed by comprehensive planning and management is the Hocking

River Valley. The Valley is a microcosm of the environmental issues discussed in this chapter and it contains the best aquifers for present and future water consumption. Within this corridor some of the strategies for land use, management and protection of natural resources should be implemented. The groundwater aquifer within this corridor must be protected and managed. Best management practices for mineral extraction, woodland management, agriculture and commercial/residential development must be put into place and followed. The environment and natural resource base determine the quality of life available to residents of the county. Short-term economic gain should not be the factor that determines how, when, and where growth and development take place within the county. Land use objectives and strategies outlined in this chapter can provide a guideline to growth and development that will sustain the environment and natural resources of Athens County.

GOALS & POLICIES

GOAL 1: Strengthen land use policies for natural resource protection.

Land use rules and education programs to improve natural resource protection should be recommended.

Policies for Consideration:

The county should:

- A. Recommend a protected riparian zone that measures a minimum of three stream widths.
- B. Prepare a Plan to protect additional riparian areas to improve water quality and wildlife habitat.
- C. Strengthen floodplain rules to include riparian zone protection features, to prevent pollution, and to encourage appropriate floodplain land uses.
- D. Recommend better site development planning near streams and wetlands.
- E. Promote development standards that comply with the Rain Water and Land Development manual of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Soil and water.
- F. Continue to cooperate with watershed groups to implement Acid Mine Drainage and Treatment Plans.
- G. Plan carefully for future development of areas that have been identified with landslip potential.

GOAL 2: Education and Information

The County should provide education and information to land developers regarding best management practices.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. Cooperate with the Athens Soil and Water Conservation District to update and reissue the Guide to Homebuyers/Home Builders.
- B. Promote ways to reduce wasteful uses of water.
- C. Educate agricultural and horticultural producers about the issues regarding use of genetically modified organisms (GMO's).
- D. Educate county residents about the potential economic, environmental, social and cultural value of land preservation.

GOAL 3: Aquifer Protection

The buried river aquifers are so important that the county should have policies to preserve and protect them. Athens County must balance the demand for mineral extraction, farming, and farmland development for domestic and industrial needs with the need to protect the Hocking River buried aquifer as an irreplaceable source of drinking water for the county.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. Designate future drinking water protection areas.
- B. Hold an annual workshop that covers utility issues and that will have aquifer protection as a major agenda issue.

GOAL 4: Farmland protection

Protect land best suited for agricultural/horticultural production from commercial and housing development. Currently about 17% of the total land acreage in Athens County is used for this purpose. Develop strategies to project land acreage for agricultural/horticultural production.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. The Commissioners should appoint a Farmland Preservation Advisory Committee that would partner with the Center for Farmland Policy Innovation at Ohio State University that will produce specific strategies for farmland preservation. The committee's tasks may include:
 - Identification of priority land preservation areas in the county.
 - Identification of "corner-stone" farms.
 - Exploration of agricultural districts and other land use tools to help preserve farmland.
- B. The County may create a plan to address issues related to Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) that could include:
 - A study of other states' programs.
 - Development of an education program.
 - Creation of a producer map showing GMO and non-GMO growers.

GOAL 5: Wildlife Management

Work with the responsible entities to develop wildlife management strategies that improve wildlife habitat and minimize detrimental human/wildlife interactions.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. Explore the possibility of establishing a “Hunters for the Hungry” program.
- B. Coordinate with federal and state wildlife managers to map corridors that need to be protected and created.
- C. Consider critical wildlife habitats with all development proposals.

GOAL 6: Forestland Management

Work with the responsible entities to improve management of private and public forest lands.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. Increase the number of forestland management plans for private property. This can be achieved by:
 - Hold an annual seminar with local agencies and organizations to inform private landowners of available tax incentives and other programs associated with forestland management, sustainable cutting of timber, master tree farms, carbon credits, non-timber forest products.
 - Establish a program to inform new forestland owners of the available forestland programs.
 - Create a Forestland Preservation Advisory Committee that may create plans/ideas to preserve identified priority forest areas.
- B. Identify large contiguous tracts of quality forestland that are a priority to protect:
 - Travel corridors between tracts.
 - Commercial and timber production.
 - Biodiversity

GOAL 7: Non-native invasive species

Reduce the impacts of non-native invasive species.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. Begin a countywide survey/mapping project to help with future prioritization of areas to treat for non-native invasive species.
- B. Develop a database that identifies non-native invasive species in the county.
- C. Reduce the amount of non-native invasive species (NNIS) in Athens County by:
 - Educating landowners about NNIS, the negative impacts they can have to agricultural and forestry production and wildlife habitat.
 - Developing a non-native invasive species management plan that determines what species to target (priority list) and best management practices for control efforts.
 - Incorporate an annual training for County and Township road crews to identify, inventory, treat and prevent spread of non-native invasive species.
 - Work with local interest groups to identify local sources of non-native invasive species (e.g. gravel yards, pits, nurseries, etc.) that could be included in regional cooperative efforts.

GOAL 8: Air and Sky Issues

Reduce pollution of our air and sky.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. Future development within Athens County should make use of outdoor light fixtures that minimize light pollution, and are appropriate and well designed, for their intended purpose.
 - The International Dark Sky Association can be used as a resource for information.

GOAL 9: Scenic Resource Maintenance and Preservation

The County may adopt plans and policies that maintain and preserve scenic resources.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. Collaborate with cities, villages, and townships to identify, map, and prioritize significant viewsheds and scenic resources such as scenic corridors and Scenic Byways.- identify and collaborate with all viewshed stakeholders, including city and county elected leaders, residents, land owners, farmers, developers, and open space advocates, to develop a shared vision and plan for maintaining and preserving significant scenic resources .
- B. Develop a county economic impact analysis of preservation versus development of scenic resources. The analysis will be a clear and comprehensive explanation of the relative impacts on county revenues and expenses.
 - Based on the economic analysis, determine both the amount of preserve acreage that will be most economically and environmentally beneficial to the county, and the cost of preserving this land.
 - identify funding sources for maintenance and preservation of scenic resources.
- C. Determine what can be done in order to prevent irreparable damage to county scenic resources such as: hilltop and hillside removal, floodplain filling, industrial pollution of surface and ground water, and destruction of riparian areas.
- D . Create a Scenic Resource Preservation Advisory Committee that would:
 - assist in coordinating the identification, mapping and prioritizing of significant lands
 - research similar activities in other communities in the US.
 - assist in identifying funding for preservation
 - act as a liaison between the county and local land trusts, local advocacy groups and other County Plan advisory committees such as the Forestland Preservation and Farmland Preservations Committees.
- E. Produce a policy guidebook for developers that provides design guidelines for growth proposals. This guidebook will promote architecture and designs compatible with hillside terrain and views.
- F. Maintain the original topography and vista along the Hocking River corridor.
 - Pursue designation of the Hocking River corridor as a state and federal scenic byway

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

To identify innovative land use and policy strategies for planned, measurable, and sustainable economic development.

PROCESS

The Economic Development task force held three group meetings and hosted a forum for economic development professionals. The task force meetings were held on September 28, 2006 in Shade at the Community Center; October 10, 2006 in Athens at the Athens County Extension office; and October 25, 2006 in Nelsonville at Rocky Brands Retail Center conference room. A forum to allow organizations, institutions and agencies to share their initiatives and programs for economic development in Athens County was held on January 26, 2007 at the Athens County Extension Office.

By the October 10, 2006 meeting, the task force had identified five pressing questions to frame the discussion and ensuing focus for this chapter. The topic areas were:

Chapter 5 Highlights:

- Demographics
- Employment Data
- Business Possibilities
- Household Income
- Maps
 - Median Household Income
 - Per Capita Household Income
 - Developable Land for Commercial and Industrial Purposes

1. *How do we promote economic development from the waste stream? How do we incorporate peak oil issues?*
2. *How can policy issues reframe economic development challenges or competition such as revenue sharing between townships within the county?*
3. *How do we brand or aggressively promote the county to strengthen specific sector development? For example some of our economic development strengths and focus areas include sustainable energy; utilizing high technology associated with Hocking College, Ohio University; technology businesses such as Sun Power, Global Cooling, and Diagnostic Hybrid; and tourism)*
4. *How do we encourage more diversification of business types and sectors? We need to identify expansion businesses, encourage more density in desired sectors and ensure better quality jobs and continued job growth.*

5. *How do we build consensus within communities as to where new or expanding economic development should occur?*

Various questions allowed task force participants to provide input in two rounds of small group discussion. The feedback collected from this meeting framed discussion in the third task force meeting in Nelsonville.

BACKGROUND

The economy of Athens County is oriented to the government and services sectors. The Ohio Department of Development places Athens County in the Southeast region. Compared to the other eleven regions in Ohio, the Southeast Region has the lowest population as well as the fewest number of people in the labor force. The five dominant industries in the eight counties that comprise the Southeast Region are government, retail, service, manufacturing and construction.

The economy in Athens County has not always been government and service sector-oriented. The economy in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was based on a combination of subsistence farming, salt production, iron production, clay products manufacturing, and coal production. Ohio University, located in the City of Athens, is an institution with approximately 20,000 students and it spawns a lot of retail and service activity. The University did not become the dominant economic force in the county until the latter half of the twentieth century.

Athens County and the region have faced economic challenges over the past two decades. The closing of a large coal mining operation in Meigs County in the 1990's led to hundreds of layoffs for Athens County residents who worked in the Meigs mines. More recently TS Trim (315 jobs), Athens

Plastics, Rocky Boots (67 jobs), and McBee Industries (361 jobs) closed their doors or reduced the manufacturing component of their business in the county.

Organizations whose primary focus is on economic development issues include:

- The Athens Area Chamber of Commerce
- Athens County Economic Development Council
- The Athens County Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Nelsonville Chamber of Commerce
- Athens County Port Authority
- Athens County Community Improvement Corporation
- Enterprise Development Corporation
- Ohio University – Innovation Center
- Appalachian Center for Economic Networks

Organizations that actively engage in economic development work include:

- Rural Action
- Athens County Extension
- Hocking College
- Ohio University – Voinovich Center
- Hocking/Athens/Perry Community Action Agency

In 2009, the Athens County Economic Development Council was created to be the principal organization for coordinating economic development activities. The Council maintains a list of properties available for business activity. This information and other county economic statistics are available on the Council's website at www.businessremixed.com.

CONDITIONS & TRENDS

Ohio County Profiles alphabetically lists the major employers of Athens County as follows:

Alexander Local Board of Education

Athens City Board of Education
 Athens County Government
 Diagnostic Hybrids, Inc.
 ED MAP, Inc.
 Federal Hocking Local Board of Education
 Hocking College
 Nelsonville-York Board of Education
 O'Bleness Memorial Hospital
 Ohio University
 Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.

Holzer, Inc. opened a medical clinic in the City of Athens in 2009 and it is also a major employer in the service sector. Of the major employers, only Diagnostic Hybrids, Inc. is listed as a manufacturer. The majority are government institutions with a concentration in education.

According to the Athens County Convention and Visitors Bureau, Athens County brings in 1,591,176 visitors each year who spend a combined \$170,800,000. Tourism is a significant component of local and regional business activity. The history, culture, and public recreation lands of Athens County will provide opportunities to expand this economic sector.

Residents of Athens County have a relatively short commute time of 21.7 minutes and 76.1% of them spend less than 30 minutes commuting to work. Approximately 43.7% of its residents spend 15 minutes or less commuting to work.



Photo of: Innovation Center at Ohio University
 Photo from: Athens County Regional Planning Commission

The following table shows employment by sector for the year 2006:

Ohio County Profiles³ lists the following employment figures by sector for Athens County:

SECTOR	AVERAGE EMPLOYMENT
Private Sector	12,771
Goods-Producing	1,160
Natural Resources and Mining	150
Construction	452
Manufacturing	558
Service-Providing	11,611
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	3,587
Information	350
Financial Services	739
Professional and Business Services	753
Education and Health Services	3,176
Leisure and Hospitality	2,516
Other Services	481
Unclassified	9
Federal Government	277
State Government	3,575
Local Government	3,489

According to the Ohio Department of Development, the county residents have the following educational attainment:

Educational Attainment	Number	Percent
Persons 25 years and over	31,563	100.0%
No high school diploma	5,384	17.1%
High school graduate	10,790	34.2%
Some college, no degree	5,212	16.5%
Associate degree	2,064	6.5%
Bachelor's degree	3,970	12.6%
Master's degree or higher	4,143	13.1%

According to the 2000 census, the median household income for Athens County residents was \$27,322. The median household income for Ohio was \$40,956.

³ Ohio Department of Development, Office of Policy, Research and Strategic Planning.

This is a significant gap.

Athens County is considered the poorest county in the state with an individual poverty rate of 27.4%.⁴

The out-migration of higher paying mining and manufacturing jobs has had a significant impact in transforming the Athens County economy to one that is more service-based. Although the individual poverty rate is high, the unemployment rate is relatively low in comparison to the surrounding Appalachia counties. This is because many of the service-oriented jobs pay a low wage and because Ohio University requires a large labor pool. In 2007, Athens County's unemployment rate was 5.9%, only slightly higher than the state's rate of 5.6%. The U.S. rate for 2007 was 4.6%⁵

Athens County has attributes that help with business opportunity:

- US Highway 33 by pass around Lancaster and the by pass around Nelsonville (under construction) provide a faster transport time to major highways to the north and south.
- Ohio University and Hocking College provide technology and skilled labor while adding economic stability and a unique culture.
- Athens County has or is close to several outdoor recreation opportunities including Wayne

⁴ US Census Bureau, Athens County, Ohio Economic Characteristics, Individuals Below Poverty Level. (The presence of a large student population skews the statistic to a certain degree because students do not have as high an income level as non-students.)

⁵ Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services, Office of Workforce Development, Bureau of Labor Market Information, 2007.

National Forest; Burr Oak, Strouds Run, and Hocking Hills State Parks; state forests; nature preserves; and unique city parks. These beautiful surroundings also play a large part in making Athens County a desirable place to live and work.

- The unique Athens culture, including an active arts community, makes the County a desirable place to have a business.



Photo of: Athens Farmers Market

Photo from: Project for Public Spaces website

Following are examples of businesses that are a good match for the amenities that Athens County offers:

- Professional service businesses – Athens County's high quality of life and the presence of Ohio University and Hocking College. These businesses may include corporate headquarters, software design, science and engineering research, and call centers.
- Small and medium-scale manufacturing firms (20 to 150 employees) will find attractive the county's access to transportation and comparatively low labor costs. Businesses of this type include food processors, recreational equipment manufacturers, furniture manufacturing, specialty

apparel, and other specialty manufacturing.

- Retirement facilities – Such providers may find Athens County’s health care services, access to recreational opportunities, and rural setting appealing. Businesses of this type include active retirement communities, assisted living facilities, and traditional nursing homes.
- Tourist and recreational services - Firms provide lodging, restaurants, guiding and liveries, specialty retail, and arts and crafts.
- Specialty food and agriculture – An active farmer’s market, a kitchen incubator at the Appalachian Center for Economic Networks (ACEnet), a growing awareness of the value of locally grown food, and land suitable for truck farming provides an environment for small-scale farming.
- Alternative energy and green service industries - These industries focus on wind, solar, biomass, and other alternative energy production. Also included are recycling and reuse industries that attempt to minimize the waste stream and find productive reuses for products. This may also include manufacturing and/or providing green building materials and services.

Specialty wood products – Athens County’s landscape is mostly wooded. There are opportunities for utilizing wood as a natural resource to create value-added products. There are also

opportunities for woodland owners to engage in active cooperative ventures in order to reduce individual costs of timber production and harvest.

PLAN CONCEPT

The strength of Athens County’s economy is essential to the community’s vitality.

Proximity to outdoor recreational opportunities combined with the community’s character makes it a great place to live, visit, and do business. The Comprehensive Plan promotes economic activities that focus on green and sustainable energy, tourism and the arts, specialty food and agriculture, bio-technology, healthcare provision, recycling and reuse from the waste stream, and internet technology.

This Comprehensive Plan supports retention and expansion of businesses that employ large numbers of Athens residents such Diagnostic Hybrids Inc., Rocky Shoes & Boots, EdMap, and Stewart MacDonald. Attracting additional business like these is important to expanding the county’s economy. Government employment is also a large portion of the economy in Athens County. The Comprehensive Plan encourages the continued support of existing government agencies that headquarter in Athens County. This plan identifies emerging opportunities by strengthening and attracting specific businesses, leveraging resources and creating a multi-layer brand identity.

GOALS & POLICIES

GOAL 1: Collaboration

Economic development practitioners, non-profit agencies and local governments collaborate more explicitly on projects.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. Expand entrepreneurship support networks such as business incubators, business planning and mentoring programs, and cooperatives.
- B. Secure additional local, state, regional and federal funding to support retention and expansion in a variety of sectors. Strengthen partnerships with regional, state and federal resource providers to bring more capital and development services to the county.
- C. Promote leadership development and recruit an on-going pool of economic development professional and local entrepreneurs to participate more fully in long-term business planning.
- D. Partner more effectively with educational institutions to develop curriculum focused on entrepreneurship and technology.
- E. Reexamine and identify models of revenue sharing between townships and the cities to create a less competitive environment and promote sustainable development for all county townships and residents.

GOAL 2: Prioritized Sector Development

The county should identify and prioritize specific economic sectors that would be most likely to thrive in Athens County.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. Build consensus among partners on specific sector development for the county to be included in regional and state plans and applications including specialty food, environmental technology, interactive digital technology, reuse and recycling from the waste stream, and life sciences.
- B. Develop new mechanisms for accessing capital.

GOAL 3: Brand Identity

Work with responsible entities that serve many sectors to support existing firms and organizations as well as attract new businesses, entrepreneurs, residents and visitors to Athens County

Policies for Consideration:

- A. Work with various partners such as the Chambers, ACCVB, Economic Development Council, educational institutions, merchant associations, arts districts, and heritage tourism organizations to share and align the regional branding, marketing campaigns, tourism programs and business attraction efforts.
- B. Market that message to specific audiences.
- C. Share and link resources to centralize information such as web portals, print materials, and national advertising campaigns.
- D. Leverage state and regional funding to utilize new media and technology tools to reach wider target audiences

GOAL 4: Site Planning for Economic Development

During the site development process, the county should apply appropriate planning techniques.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. Use appropriate planning techniques for commercial and industrial siting. These include:
 - Whenever possible use existing and underutilized infrastructure including buildings and rail transportation.
 - Avoid sensitive and hazardous locations.
 - Apply access management principles to maintain the viability of access from existing public highways.

UTILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

6

Chapter 6 Highlights:

- Water/Waste Water Treatment
- Communications
- Maps:
 - Critical facilities p.
 - Utilities, Water & Sewer
 - Major Utility Corridors

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

This chapter gives an overview of available utilities and infrastructure in Athens County. The purpose is to recommend utilities and infrastructure that emphasize:

- the health of our citizens
- planned growth and development
- the conservation of our natural resources
- the availability of efficient and environmentally responsible utility options

PROCESS

The Utilities and Infrastructure Task Force held a series of meetings to review details of the following key infrastructure types: Water treatment and distribution, wastewater collection and treatment, electric generation and distribution, natural gas distribution, communications, and solid waste and recycling. Roadways were not considered, as they are the focus of the Transportation Task Force, which can be found in Chapter 3. Each task force member was assigned the responsibility of researching the historic and current conditions of each of these utilities, as well as future trends. Members then reported their findings back to the group.

BACKGROUND

The major build out of rural utilities (i.e. water, electricity, and natural gas), which began in the 1940's, is considered largely completed by the major utility companies. Originally, these utility companies developed service in advance of consumer purchase, driving development along certain road arteries.

In the survey conducted by the planning office (see appendix) the two utilities about which participants expressed the greatest concern were sewer and telecommunications. In the case of sewer there are areas of significant population with no access to public sewer and small rural communities with inadequate sewage facilities. The complaints regarding telecommunications generally related to the lack of availability of broadband Internet service, as well as unreliable wireless phone service. Because sewer issues pose a significant health issue, several policies will focus on improvement and development of public sewer facilities.

As telecommunications services become more critical to education, economic opportunity and general communication, this Plan recommends focusing attention on

developing robust telecommunications availability throughout the county.

CONDITIONS & TRENDS

Unlike the utility companies of the mid 20th century, utility companies today develop new service on a demand basis as individual customers request it. The cost of new utility development generally falls to the customer requesting the service. Therefore, development trends today are not being driven so much by the decisions of utility companies as they are by decisions of citizens and private developers. Where public water/sewer, electricity and gas services are available, they are regulated and therefore are generally adequate and safe.

In some areas of the county, basic services such as public water, sewer, electricity and natural gas are not available and there is no anticipation that they will be available by the major utility companies. In these cases, either development does not occur, or individual homeowners seek “off the grid” solutions. These solutions include water wells; water cisterns; on-lot sewage systems; gas wells, propane or wood for home heating; and other alternative sources of energy such as solar and wind power. The Health Department regulates private sewage systems and private water systems. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources permits gas well drilling. The other energy sources are not regulated.

PUBLIC WATER

While Athens County enjoys widespread public water provided from several rural water districts, there are areas in the county that do not have access to public water (see appendix). In addition, there are instances when private water supply systems are

developed to supplement public water supplies.

In order to provide the needed built environment for safe private water supplies and to protect undeveloped water supplies (aquifers), most of which are shallow, any private water supply development must be made in compliance with applicable state and local rules. The Health Department administers these rules.

Seven major water systems serving populations of 2,000 or more operate in Athens County (for a total of 53,225 customers in a multi-county setting). The County also has 10 smaller community systems serving 250 to 1,000 people each (for a total of around 7,000 customers also in a multi-county setting). Numerous private water supplies on private land throughout the County are subject to little control or monitoring. Because of limited available groundwater in the County, wells may not be effective water supplies for rural homeowners unless they are near an available aquifer. Ohio EPA estimates indicate that less than 5 percent of the population gets water from private wells, cisterns, springs, ponds or hauled water.

The largest system, for the City of Athens, draws from wells along the Hocking River aquifer. The system’s most recent new well was added in 2001. Treatment facilities and equipment were recently updated, and a Wellhead Protection Program is in effect in Athens. The Plains Water and Sewer District receives its water from the Athens City system and serves approximately 3,000 households.

Le-Ax Water District serves western Athens County including Albany and parts of Meigs and Vinton Counties. The Le-Ax system is installing parallel water lines to augment its original undersized lines.

Nelsonville's water system serves Nelsonville and the Village of Buchtel and relies on three wells, one recently completed, along with new water pumps.

Tuppers Plains-Chester Water District serves northeastern Meigs County and southeastern Athens County. It proposes to add capacity to provide additional service to Canaan, Bern, Rome, Lodi, Carthage and Troy Townships in Athens County. The Tuppers Plains-Chester Water District recently upgraded 35 miles of lines in Carthage and Lodi Townships, replaced an existing water tank with a new 100,000 gallon tank on Ackley Road in Carthage Township, and installed two fire hydrants and a pump station. Line replacements in Stewart will allow for more fire flow in that community.

Burr Oak Regional Water District pumps four million gallons a day and provides service to an extensive region of Athens County, including Bishopville, Glouster, Trimble, Jacksonville, and Hollister. In 2008 Burr Oak's satellite service, Sunday Creek Valley Water District, finished replacing its three tanks and pumps. It provides water to Trimble Township and its extended rural service reaches to the Strouds Run and Scatter Ridge areas east of Athens. Because all of the satellite systems utilize Burr Oak Lake and have experienced water quality problems, the Burr Oak Water District has constructed a new wellfield on State Route 13 adjacent to the Hocking River. A new water treatment facility will be built in Millfield.

The Little Hocking Water District services a small portion of Athens County, primarily in northern Troy Township.

Other smaller and self-maintained systems in the County include the Villages of Chauncey and Amesville.

FIRE FLOW

Fireflow is often inadequate on the smaller waterlines utilized by rural water systems. The County Subdivision Regulations require that the developer of new subdivisions provide the necessary flow with larger lines or provide a safer environment with the use of dry hydrants or by increasing distances between homes. Where flow is inadequate for fire fighting it is important that housing density and spacing not exceed that provided in the County's Subdivision Regulations.

Water system components are mapped as Critical Facilities (Pages 172, 173 and 174) and Utilities-Water and Sewer (Page 162).

WASTE-WATER TREATMENT

The county has made progress over the last 10 years in accomplishing public sewer extensions or establishing new systems in some areas of the county, particularly in Albany, Buchtel, parts of The Plains and Amesville. The Amesville example is particularly encouraging as it incorporates a unique "decentralized" public sewage system that is more economical and easier to maintain than traditional public sewage projects. The system relies on multiple collection points that allow for solids settlement and three separate treatment areas that rely on organic filters and ultraviolet radiation. This system is appropriate for smaller communities with an urban housing density.

Most of Athens County is rural and un-sewered. In the 1960's and 1970's a number of subdivisions were approved in an area southwest of the City of Athens. This concentrated residential development served by Home Sewage Treatment Systems (HSTS's) has sewage-related problems. Inability of the clay soil to adequately leach and treat effluent and systems that are not

properly maintained have lead to a situation that is targeted to eventually receive public sewer.



Photo of: Trimble Township Sewer District Treatment Facility
Photo from: Athens County Regional Planning Commission

Besides the obvious and significant public health and environmental problems associated with improper sewage disposal, poor wastewater treatment causes reduced property values; engenders stigmas that negatively affect the potential for residential, commercial, and tourism development; and degrades neighborhood relations.

New residential lots in un-sewered areas are not approved unless the lot is capable of treating effluent with a leaching system. System designs on new lots must accommodate a four bedroom home. Each lot must also have a replacement leach area set aside in the event that the primary leach area fails. Off-lot discharge systems can only be approved in rare circumstances with a variance from the Board of Health. Off-lot discharge systems must also meet stringent National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) standards.

Priority should be given to providing public sewer to the Village of Coolville and to unincorporated communities. These existing neighborhoods are densely populated and have a great deal of existing

infrastructure to support successful business and residential use including: Existing division of property (individual lots); public roads and rights-of-way; utility infrastructure including gas and water lines; electrical and phone lines; schools; community buildings; parks; post offices; libraries; playgrounds; and historically significant and reusable buildings. Many of these areas have some limited retail presence to serve the established population density. Unfortunately, the sanitary infrastructure is inadequate at best. Due to problems associated with population density and inadequate conditions for effluent leaching, it is recommended that additional planning be performed to construct public sewer in the Athens to Albany corridor, in the Village of Coolville, and in towns such as New Marshfield, Guysville, Imperial/Doanville, Hollister, Oakdale, McLieish, Redtown, Truetown, Millfield/East Millfield, Broadwell, Kilvert,, Stewart, Lottridge, Torch, Hockingport, Caananville, Sugar Creek, Shade, Hebbardsville, Mineral, and Carbondale.

SOLID WASTE

Landfills are licensed by the Health Department and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency. The OEPA permits any new construction. Water samples are collected by the landfill quarterly and analyzed by the OEPA. The total volume of solid waste coming to the Athens-Hocking Reclamation facility for 2005 was 184,000 tons. This total is added from: in-district 61,400 tons, out-of-district 35,400 tons, and out-of-state 87,400 tons. This represented an increase of 2,500 tons from 2004 and 89,000 tons from 2003. If one assumes that the landfill is open 300 days per year then the facility averaged 613 tons of solid waste per day in 2005.

The only limit on the quantity of out-of-state solid waste that can be brought to the landfill is that the daily limit cannot be

exceeded. The maximum amount of solid waste that can be handled on a given day is 2,500 tons. At that rate there would be 15 years of life left. A rate of 800 to 1000 tons per day will provide about a 45 year life expectancy. There is room for a little over 11,000,000 tons. The projected landfill capacity is considered adequate over the life of this Plan but should be reviewed with a Plan update every five years.

The Athens City-County Health Department licenses companies that haul solid waste in the County. There are a total of 16 haulers that operate in Athens County. Solid waste is hauled to the Athens-Hocking Reclamation facility adjacent to US Rt. 33 on the Athens and Hocking County lines. Several haulers that responded to an informal survey indicate varying but generally slowly increasing numbers of customers. Customer numbers appear to average about 250 for the smaller operators. None have areas they are unwilling to serve but most prefer to stay in close-by areas.



Photo of: Baled cardboard and Athens-Hocking Solid Waste District's packer trucks.

Photo from: Athens County Regional Planning Commission

According to the Ohio EPA, Ohio Solid Waste Management Districts were established in 1988 to create a planning process for local and state governments "to ensure that there is adequate and environmentally sound management capacity for Ohio's solid waste and to

increase the efforts of Ohio's communities, businesses, and industries to reduce and recycle solid wastes." There are 52 SWMDs in Ohio, 15 of which are multi-county. Each district must create and implement a solid waste plan that assures that residents have adequate solid waste disposal capacity. Athens-Hocking JSWMD Management Plan was updated in September, 2005. This was the required 3-year update.

The Athens-Hocking Joint Solid Waste District operates a solid waste collection service for the City of Athens, The Plains, and Ohio University. The District also runs a recycling operation at the former County Home site on State Route 13 and Sand Ridge Rd. The District recently began one day per month recycling collection at key locations in the County. These material quantities were reported to have been recycled: 2006 (Jan-Sept) - 2,590 tons, 2005 - 3,580 tons, 2001 - 4,880 tons. It appears that the amount of material being recycled has steadily declined. The current and projected recycling percentage is about 11.5% for all of Athens County. Athens City recycles about 25% of its total amount of material discarded.

There are private non-profit recycle/reuse organizations: ReUse Industries (accepting general household, business, and personal goods and building materials) and New-to-You thrift store (accepting general household, business, and personal goods). There are also several scrap metal dealers.

Litter and illegal disposal is solid waste that has been improperly discarded, often from a vehicle, but also from improper storage of that waste at the home or business location. The wind, flowing water, or animals further disperse the solid waste and it becomes an aesthetic problem that has negative impacts on property value, tourism, business development, and the environment. It can clog culverts and bridges and can harm

wildlife and domestic animals. An effective program to deal with this problem may involve education, enforcement, clean up, and a means of requiring that all residences and businesses have solid waste collection from a licensed hauler.

The Athens City Wellhead Protection Committee is investigating a hazardous waste program. Athens City held a hazardous waste collection day for City residents.

ELECTRICITY

American Electric Power (AEP) is the major electric provider for Athens County. According to AEP Ohio, the number of customers in Athens County (2005-2006) was 23,539 residential, 3,369 commercial and 195 industrial. Although no Athens County figures were available, there was significant growth statewide from 1988 to 2006 on the order of 34%, 51%, and 13% respectively for the above customer groups. AEP did not provide any projected customer numbers but suggested that local economic development data could be utilized to approximate future figures.

Regarding electrical usage (kilowatt-hours per month (kwh)), AEP reports that Athens county averages 1,011 for residential customers, 7,139 for commercial users and 8,690 for industrial consumers. Data for Athens County was unavailable, but AEP throughout Ohio has seen average growth in consumption from 1988 to 2006 on the order of 20%, 22%, and 20% respectively for the three user groups.

American Electric Power recently issued two requests for proposals seeking long-term wind energy purchase agreements, the first steps toward a goal of adding 1,000 megawatts of new wind energy by 2011 as part of a strategy to address greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, the utility is soon expected to offer customers (for a cost

premium) the option of buying electricity from "green" (i.e., renewable) sources.

As research continues with wind and solar energy, the county is likely to see more alternative energy installations at the residential level. Ohio University is researching wind intensity at higher elevations. The WOUB tower is being used for this research. If the data for wind intensity is supportive, then commercial applications may become a reality. Low altitude windmills have not proved economically feasible based on current prices of alternatives to wind.

Solar energy applications will increase with rising costs of traditional energy and incentive programs provided by government. Athens County has several firms that specialize in solar and wind applications.

NATURAL GAS

Columbia Gas of Ohio stated that there are no supply issues of concern at this time. There are no plans for expansion at this time. They review proposed projects on an individual basis. Historically natural gas has been more economical than electricity. No one can realistically predict the future cost beyond several months. They perform forecasting but said the information is not made public. Approximately 99% of the natural gas supply utilized in Athens County is transported from out of state.

COMMUNICATIONS

The State of Ohio is stressing the importance of providing broadband services, especially to rural areas. A committee has organized in Athens County to address the issue of how to provide better broadband service to these rural areas. Some of the issues the committee is addressing include:

- Inadequate facilities
- Lack of funding
- Public awareness about advancing technologies

CELLULAR



Photo of: Cellular Tower

Photo from: Athens County Regional Planning Commission

Cellular - Telecommunication towers in Athens County house five different types of antennas: AM, FM, cellular, paging, and microwave. This chapter focuses on cellular technology. In structural terms, any telecommunication tower is capable of being used as a cellular tower, sometimes housing multiple antennas for a number of providers, and often for more than one of the above technological uses.

The ASR Program is the processes by which antenna structures that require Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) notification must register with the FCC, which generally refers to structures more than 60.96 meters (approximately 200 feet) in height or located near airports.⁶ Aside from the points consistent with the ASR data, the additional points appearing in the AM, FM, cellular, paging, and microwave data are believed to

either be telecommunication structures in existence but either not yet in operation or currently not in use. Therefore, these structures are still capable of serving as cellular towers and are included on this map.

In addition to the telecommunication towers appearing on this map (Figure , it is known that antennas exist on other structures throughout Athens County (such as buildings, bridges, and water towers) that do not appear in this data. The reason for this is any antenna structure shielded by existing structures (such as buildings in a city) or natural terrain (such as hills) of equal or greater height to the antenna is exempted from the FAA notification and FCC ASR requirements because the telecommunication structure will not affect air navigation.⁷ As a result, this data is not available, and these points do not appear on this map.

The data attributed to these telecommunication tower files reveal the major owners of the structures within Athens County. Based on this data, service providers Alltel, Cingular, and Nextel appear to own a significant number of towers and antennas, tower-leasing company SBA Communications Corporation plays a major role in leasing towers throughout the county, and the State of Ohio owns many telecommunication structures as well.

With an emphasis on cellular technology, it is important to note that there are still dead zones due to the hilly topography. Most of the county has been covered with the recent construction of more towers. The Federal Communications Commission regulates the location of towers. Local control of tower

⁷ FCC ULS: Getting Started: PREFILE. Available: <http://wireless.fcc.gov/antenna/about/gettingstarted1.htm>.

location could only come through zoning at the county or township level. The major positioning of towers follows U.S. Highways 33 and 50 through Athens County.

CABLE

Time Warner Cable is currently the dominant service provider to a majority of Athens County residents. Nelsonville TV Cable, independently owned and operated since 1952, currently provides service to the following locations: Nelsonville, Buchtel, Chauncey, Glouster, Jacksonville, Millfield, The Plains, and Trimble. As a result, portions of areas in and around The Plains that are served by both Time Warner and Nelsonville TV Cable represent the only part of Athens County where competition currently exists in the cable television market. Riley Video Services, independently owned and operated since 1972, currently provides limited service to the Amesville area.

The service areas change frequently enough that mapping these areas is not relevant.

Warren Communications News "Television and Cable Factbook: Online," provides maps that are constantly updated and are more reliable than the annual print edition.⁸ The web-address is footnoted below.

TELEPHONE

Several phone companies serve Athens County. A map showing service areas can be found at the web-address provided in the footnote below. This map is primarily based on publicly available GIS data from the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO).⁹ This map displays Central Offices

(C.O.'s) located within Athens County as well as those located within five miles of county boundaries.

DSL

DSL is the generic name for "digital service line" provided by local telephone companies in order to offer subscribers a means of connecting to the Internet.¹⁰ The same map utilized to show telephone central office locations is also used to show DSL availability and the web-address is noted below. Based on public discussions, DSL service is known to currently be available in Nelsonville, Athens, Albany, New Marshfield, and The Plains, with limited service to the Amesville area as well. The standard distance for DSL to reach subscribers from a CO is generally 18,000 feet in rural areas. In urban areas, it is possible for DSL to reach distances up to 24,000 feet from CO's. Therefore, the DSL buffers on this map represent areas within 18,000 feet of CO's where DSL service is known to currently be offered.

PLAN CONCEPT

When considering land use planning as it relates to utilities and infrastructure in Athens County, it is important to distinguish between the facilities located within our two largest cities, Athens and Nelsonville as a separate issue from the rural utilities issues. Utilities and infrastructure within the city limits are generally adequate and well established. Land use patterns within the city limits will not likely be altered significantly by a specific infrastructure initiative. An exception to this statement might be the development of broadband internet service as it emerges in different forms. The

⁸ Warren Communications News, "Television and Cable Factbook: Online." Available: <http://www.factbookonline.com>

⁹ PUCO Statewide Digital Data. Available: <http://www.puc.state.oh.us/gis/pucodata.htm>

¹⁰ Newton, H. (2004). *Newton's Telecom Dictionary (20th Updated and Expanded Edition)*. San Francisco, CA: CMP Books.

development of high capacity points of presence and wireless zones could be used to drive commercial and even industrial development as well as affecting certain student housing initiatives.

Where development of new utility services is most likely to have a specific land impact on a county-wide basis is in the undeveloped, rural areas which may be subject to further development as population trends cause people to seek more housing options. Recent and impending highway improvements linking Athens County to the rest of the region may cause people from nearby urban cities to choose to build homes in the scenic beauty of Athens County and therefore increase the demands on existing utilities and infrastructure.

As Athens County's population grows, the utilities and infrastructure serving the

county will also need to grow. The concept of this comprehensive plan centers on providing appropriate levels of services for reasonable levels of population growth in order to keep pace and to increase efficiency of existing utilities and infrastructure.

Providing high levels of service doesn't always mean simply increasing capacity of existing services or adding new services. Arrangement of land uses, utilization of alternative sources of power and transportation, public education, and alternative and efficient use of existing services are some of the ways this Plan and its goals and policies address population growth and the increased need for public services. Innovation and planning are essential to keep Athens County on top of public service demand.

GOALS & POLICIES

GOAL 1: Site planning

The County should follow planning best practices for locating utilities and infrastructure.

Policies for Consideration

- A. Utilize existing utility infrastructure where and when possible. Co-location on existing communication towers is encouraged.
- B. Utilities and infrastructure should be sited away from sensitive areas that include identified viewsheds, wetlands, riparian zones, flood zones, critical habitats for threatened and endangered species, prime agricultural lands, and parklands and their recommended buffer areas. A rigorous planning approach should be utilized to examine alternative locations for any proposed utility.
- C. Underground installation of utilities is preferred to overhead installations.
- D. Any regions likely to see population growth should have utilities analyzed for issues of maintenance, need, and cost.
- E. Reviews of property subdivisions will assure that adequate on-site resources (soil and site conditions) are available to support non-discharging HSTS that contain all wastewater on the individual lot using the most reliable and technologically simple means. While compact lots are encouraged, a higher priority should be given to assurance that multiple design options are available for development of individual single family homes on approved lots, and that these options are sustainable and flexible over the life of the parcel as a support structure for a residence remote from public sewer service.
- F. Reviews of property subdivision will insure that fire protection is adequate for the subdivision proposed.
- G. Due to the population densities that will form, adequate land use controls should be in place whenever public sewer is provided. These controls can take the form of subdivision regulations, and any other planning measures to help guide development.

GOAL 2: Improve services and programming

Utilities and infrastructure should be built to be efficient, cost effective, long-lasting, and minimally intrusive.

Policies for Consideration

- A. Franchise solid waste collectors to minimize impacts to roads and rural living.

- B. Work toward a 25% solid waste reduction/recycling rate in Athens County, by offering incentives to residents for recycling, hosting a hazardous waste collection day for county residents, and encourage county offices to participate in an organized recycling effort.
- C. Prioritize improvement of broadband service to business and government, particularly if additional funding is made available.
- D. Use Amesville as an example to promote decentralized public sewage systems where appropriate such as in Coolville, New Marshfield, Guysville, and Stewart.
- E. Support efforts at the state and local level to encourage that sewage systems serving our communities and individual homes are safe, effective, long lasting and available at reasonable cost of installation and maintenance.

GOAL 3: Alternative Energy

Explore alternative energy technologies and use alternative energy where applicable.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. Encourage the development of a long-range plan for clean, localized energy production that is based on proven resource availability.

GOAL 4: Education and outreach

Policies for Consideration:

- A. The Athens City-County Health Department should promote private water supply standards through education and information efforts focused on the general public and community leaders.
- B. Athens County should encourage the distribution of appropriate information regarding alternative energy costs and viability.
- C. General information about broadband availability, including DSL, should be disseminated by an appropriate agency.
- D. The County and Chamber of Commerce should co-host an annual meeting with utility companies to discuss any planning related utility and infrastructure issues.
- E. The impact on the community of a functional HSTS should be reiterated and the notion of community obligation to individuals to properly site, install, operate and maintain their systems is essential. The Board of Athens County Commissioners supports progressive programs related to HSTS.

- F. Encourage responsible entities to provide additional information about alternative home sewage treatment, particularly the approval process involved and the attainment levels required for treated effluent.
- G. The County will provide continued support for wellhead protection programs in water source aquifers.

HOUSING

Chapter 3 Highlights:

- Housing Data
- Housing Value
- Green Building
- Maps
 - Population by Census Tract
 - Population per sq. mi.
 - Residential developable Land

Statement of Purpose

To promote durable, safe, and healthy housing that is affordable, resource efficient and accessible for all citizens.

With at least one third of energy consumption and greenhouse gasses attributed to homes and buildings, Athens County has an opportunity to demonstrate environmental stewardship, improve the quality of life, and create economic opportunities by improving housing.

By promoting safe and healthy, energy efficient, resource conserving, low maintenance and long lasting housing for all residents of our community, the housing sector can be a local and regional engine of job creation, increased tax revenue, and local pride.

Process

The Task Force developed a purpose statement, gathered data on the existing housing conditions in Athens County, identifiable trends, and issues for decision making and policy formulation. Housing data was supplemented with input from experts and citizens via surveys and/or public meetings.

Background

Athens County is made up of many housing types including single-family dwellings, mobile homes, and apartments. The large student population associated with Ohio University and Hocking College leads to an increased demand for rental properties. There is a demand for starter home and mid-price range housing. Rehabilitation of existing dwellings is essential in order to meet the needs of low- and middle-income residents. Outside the City of Athens, quality of housing has steadily improved but still lags behind the non-Appalachian counties of Ohio.

Conditions & Trends

The overall number of housing units in Athens County is increasing. The median value of homes is also increasing. As more new homes are constructed throughout the County, the average age of the housing stock has steadily decreased. Still, the number of homes built prior to 1939 continues to be a large proportion of homes. An older housing stock does not necessarily imply the existence of a poor or deteriorated housing stock. Older homes were often built with superior quality materials. However, maintenance is a necessity on

older homes and older housing stock in Athens County has often been neglected.

The tables contain Census 2000 statistics about housing in the County. Comparisons can be made between incorporated places, the County as a whole, the state of Ohio and the United States.

HOUSING UNITS

Athens County has had a steady increase in the number of housing units since 1960, with an overall increase of 83% during the 40-year period ending in 2000. The smallest increase in number of housing units occurred from 1980 to 1990, when a 10 % increase took place. The largest increase, 21%, occurred from 1960 to 1970. Overall, the number of housing units appears to be increasing.

HOUSING VALUE

Data for median value is for specified owner-occupied, year-round housing. The median value of homes in Athens County, Athens City, Nelsonville and Glouster has increased considerably since 1960. In all cases, the greatest rise in values took place in the decade from 1970 to 1980 – an increase of over 100%. In contrast, the most modest increase in median value occurred during the decade from 1980 to 1990. During this period the median value of homes in Athens County, Athens City, Nelsonville City, and Glouster Village increased by less than 50%. The median home value in Nelsonville increased by less than 50% during the decade from 1960 to 1970 as well. According to the 2000 census, approximately 54.6 % of owner-occupied housing units are valued at less than \$100,000.

Census data shows the number of homes constructed from 1940 to 1949 was lower than any other decade. The 2000 census reports that only six percent of Athens County homes were constructed from 1940 to 1949.



COAD website

The age of homes is decreasing as newer homes are constructed and replace older homes.

HOUSING TRENDS

The Housing Task Force reviewed the list of approximately 30 trends submitted by committee members. Of these, five are considered most pertinent to the Task Force: a growing emphasis on housing accessibility, green building, rising housing costs, changing rural demographics, and rising land and infrastructure costs. These are listed below with discussion and definition.

HOUSING ACCESSIBILITY

Accessible design refers to houses or other dwellings that meet specific requirements for accessibility. These requirements are found in state, local and model building codes, and regulations such as the Fair Housing Amendments of 1988. An accessible home is one which enables an individual to live as independently as possible. Access may be as simple as adding grab bars and a tub seat in the bathroom. For wheelchair users, access may require ramping entrances, widening doorways, lowering counters, adding lever or loop-

HOUSING AGE

style hardware to doors and drawers, and modifying storage areas.

Universal design addresses the need for access by creating designs usable by all people, whether or not they are disabled. This is accomplished by designing wider halls and doors, barrier-free entrances, elevated electrical outlets, lowered switches, adjustable closet rods and shelves, adjustable counters, touch switches, and other features as inherent elements in the building. This type of design makes the home usable by all family members and recognizes that human abilities change over the life span.

While achieving accessibility may mean finding a new apartment or designing and building a single-family home to the specifications that meet the needs of a person with a specific disability, it is often possible to adapt or modify current and existing housing using various assistive technologies.

GREEN BUILDING

In an effort to reduce the amount of energy needed to build and operate our homes and to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere, the principles of “green building” are implemented. Green building is constructing energy and resource efficient houses. These houses are healthier for their occupants and the environment.



*Green Home
Green Energy Ohio Website*

The benchmark used to rate structures for energy efficiency is the EPA’s Home Energy Rating System (HERS). The benchmark for the design, construction, and operation of high performance green, sustainable buildings is the U.S. Green Building Council’s (USGBC) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification. Other enhanced building strategies and technologies such as Passive House and Net Zero Energy design will reduce home energy use. Green building has increased in popularity as supported by the following statistics:

- *The National Home Builders Association reported that 1,463,700 new single-family homes were started in 2006. The Energy Star program reports that 174,000 Energy Star-rated homes were built the same year. This means that nearly 12% of all permitted homes built in the United States in 2006 were Energy Star rated, using 30% to 40% less energy than Model Energy Code homes.*
- *USGBC began a LEED Certification for homes pilot project in August 2005. To date 5,900 residences are enrolled in the program and 200 have been LEED certified as green homes.*
- *Statistics from the federal Energy Information Agency show that total residential energy consumption has increased from 24,427 trillion BTU in 1978 to 28,897 trillion BTU in 2005. Even though energy consumption per household has been decreasing, the total number of households has been increasing for a net gain in total energy consumption. NHBA statistics show an average of 1.5 million single- and multi-family housing units added each year since 1978.*



Photo of: Affordable Single Family Housing
Photo from: Corporation for Ohio Appalachian Development (COAD) website.

In Athens County, there are several indications that the Green Building trend is gaining momentum. Businesses such as Dovetail Solar, Third Sun, Stirling Technology and Sunpower are growing. Attendance at the annual Solar Home Tour and Sustainability Festival is increasing. Ohio University has appointed a resource conservation coordinator.

The upfront cost of green building is estimated to be between two percent and ten percent more than standard construction. Most supporters of green building believe the long term benefits of lower energy consumption, less environmental impact and better health will offset the up-front costs.

HOUSING COSTS

The costs of buying, owning and operating a house continue to climb. National Realtors Association reports the average sale price of an existing home in the Midwest in 2006 was \$167,800 and of a new home was \$240,000. The following information relates to housing costs:

- *Size: The National Association of Home Builders reports that average house size increased from 983 sq. ft. in 1950 to 2,349 sq. ft. in 2006.*
- *Construction Costs: The NAHB reports that the average cost per square foot for sale of a*

new home is now \$88.01 in the Midwest and \$92.51 for the U.S.

- *Energy Use: Total consumption of energy per household has declined over the past two decades. Average household consumption was 138 million BTU in 1978 and 92 million BTU in 2001, according to the Department of Energy.*
- *Sanitary Systems: The Athens City-County Health Department now requires a soils analysis and system design before a home sewage treatment system is installed. Systems are designed for ground-based treatment. Discharging systems can only be approved in very unique situations. New residential lots are designed to be large enough for a primary leaching area and a replacement leaching area in the event of a failure of the primary area. Most new systems have slightly larger leaching areas than do those approved several decades ago. In rare circumstances new systems can be significantly more expensive if a site has severe soil and/or space limitations. New residential lots are only approved if the lot can contain a standard leaching type system, not a high end and expensive system.*

RURAL DEMOGRAPHICS

Americans continue to live longer. Census data show that there has been a steady increase in both male and female life expectancy of about 0.3 years per decade since 1950. Average life expectancy is now 77.6 years. There is no reason to expect this trend to change. We also expect to see these older Americans enjoying better health than their predecessors, according to the National Health Institute.

The Carsey Institute's 2006 Demographic Trends in Rural and Small Town America gives a broad overview of rural population changes for the past 30 years.

- *Since 1970, migration into rural areas has been complex with 17% of our population now*

occupying 75% of non-metropolitan land. Many Americans prefer to live in smaller communities that are near urban areas. Population growth rates for the 1990s and after 2000 have been higher in counties immediately adjacent to metropolitan areas.

Racial diversity has increased in rural areas and will likely continue. Immigrants now account for 31% of overall growth in non-metropolitan areas. Only 6.5% of the rural work force is involved with farming.

- *Areas with significant natural amenities, recreational opportunities or quality of life advantages have new prospects for growth and development. Counties that offer recreation or retirement opportunities have consistently been the fastest growing counties in non-metropolitan America.*

LAND AND INFRASTRUCTURE COSTS

The significant increase in land prices over the past decade makes it more difficult for first time home buyers to purchase large tracts of land. It also tends to encourage the segmentation of available land into smaller and smaller building sites, either for sale by owners or to accommodate the housing needs of the present owner's descendants.

As Athens County continues to be developed, land prices will make it difficult to buy large tracts for single family housing. Construction of more expensive homes leads to increased property values in rural neighborhoods and this can result in higher taxes for residents on a fixed income.

Retrofitting and remodeling need to be a priority in political and outreach efforts to achieve the ambitious goals of this housing plan. Retrofitting and remodeling existing homes is an important aspect of this plan and the following considerations should be made:

- *Owners of existing homes tend to be demographically older and on fixed incomes. Attention must be given to assist these owners to "age in place," by making their homes ADA compliant and increasing in-home service providers.*
- *As real estate taxes increase, provisions must also be made for homestead tax roll backs or other tax relief.*
- *The needs of manufactured and mobile homes, as well as site-built homes, should be considered in this plan.*

AFFORDABLE HOUSING



*Photo of: mobile home park in Athens County
Photo from: Athens County Regional Planning Commission*

The need for affordable housing for very-low to moderate income persons and families is an important issue for the County. "Extremely low" income is at or below 30 percent of the average median income (AMI), "very low" income is at or below 50% of the AMI, and "low" income is 80% of the AMI. Many Athens County households experience financial difficulties and require assistance. Assistance is often not available immediately if at all. Special populations, including the homeless, very-low income, elderly and disabled are in need of accessible and affordable housing options. This Plan addresses these issues in an effort to improve the overall affordability and condition of housing in Athens County.

Many issues affect very-low income families including lack of public transportation for most of the county and lack of affordable rentals within the City of Athens where public transportation is available. Due to current market conditions, most rentals in the City of Athens and in Nelsonville are focused on student housing. Other challenges for developing affordable housing in the county include lack of infrastructure on available land, land cost where land is available, and land being unsuitable for building because of flooding, poor soils, and steep/rugged topography. Even with ongoing assistance and subsidy such as HUD vouchers, the rent received for affordable development in Athens County is frequently not enough to cover the cost of mortgage, taxes and insurance on new construction or rehabilitation of existing homes.



Photo of: Affordable housing
Photo From: Athens County Regional Planning Commission

EXISTING HOUSING PROGRAMS

Athens County and the City of Athens have each adopted an affordable housing plan called a Community Housing Improvement Strategy (CHIS). The CHIS provides an analysis of existing housing needs, market conditions, available resources and strategies for addressing those needs over a five-year period. Each local CHIS was completed as part of a process to allow the county and city to apply for funding

through the Community Housing Improvement Program (CHIP), a state-administered grant program. The current CHIS is valid from 2004-2008 and is to be updated every five years. Implementation of CHIS goals should continue in an effort to enhance affordable housing opportunities.

Funding provided by CHIP has allowed the County and City to provide home rehabilitation, home repair, home ownership assistance and new housing construction.



Photo of: Habitat for Humanity Office
Photo from: Athens County Regional Planning Commission

Local investors should be encouraged to purchase credits through the Housing Tax Credit Program administered by the Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA). Housing credits provide additional development capital for the construction of low- to moderate-income multi-family and lease-to-purchase single family dwellings.

Non-profit housing development organizations should be encouraged to work with OHFA to obtain low-interest loans and grants for the development of affordable rental and home ownership initiatives.

Low- to moderate-income individuals should be encouraged to access low interest loans available through OHFA and USDA Rural Development.

PLAN CONCEPT

This comprehensive plan calls for a degree of change in the provision of housing in Athens County. The Plan proposes housing that is safe, durable, and efficient yet affordable for county residents. With the cost of housing climbing due to increased home size and higher construction and energy costs, the need for affordable housing is greater than ever.

An aspect of affordable housing is to decrease infrastructure costs associated with new development. Encouraging housing development centered around existing infrastructure will reduce the need for new infrastructure and its associated costs. This is particularly true for sanitary sewage systems.

The development of multi-family housing will encourage an efficient use of available lands. In-fill development will help control transportation and infrastructure costs. Multi-family housing also reduces the costs per-unit of heating and building maintenance.

Education (including guidelines and permitting processes), stakeholder involvement and economic incentives are critical elements in achieving a vibrant, distinctive and environmentally friendly housing sector and will help to reduce the energy and resources used in building, maintaining homes.

GOALS & POLICIES

GOAL 1: Affordable Housing

To provide durable, safe, healthy and affordable housing for all individuals living in Athens County.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. The County Commissioners could adopt building standards (general construction, plumbing, electrical, and HVAC) for residential construction and include a permitting and inspection program.
- B. Consider requiring registration, certification and/or licensing of contractors and trades people.
- C. Investigate incentives for developers to construct affordable housing for low and moderate income residents.
- D. Facilitate an annual coordination meeting among all local jurisdictions to review housing needs and CHIS implementation.
- E. The County and other public entities should approach the development community, perhaps through the Home Builders Association of Athens County, to establish a working group and investigate opportunities for affordable new housing.
- F. A number of entities are active in the housing field in Athens County, providing services to a host of clients. These various efforts should be coordinated under the County's CHIS and this Housing Plan to ensure prioritized needs are successfully addressed.

GOAL 2: Site Planning

Conduct site planning that minimizes environmental degradation and reduces infrastructure, material and energy costs.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. Direct concentrated development infrastructure where it can and could occur with the least environmental impact. This infrastructure could include construction of a public sewer in the Athens to Albany corridor.
- B. Subdivision regulation could provide incentives for conservation design.
- C. In-fill sites within the county could be located and identified on a map that is made available to the real estate and building industry.

GOAL 3: Education and Development

Provide education on energy efficiency, accessibility, environmental responsibility and resource conservation in housing for residents.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. Working with an existing housing agency, provide an education program for builders and developers. The program may cover the following topics:
 - energy efficient design and construction;
 - supply and waste stream management;
 - site management;
 - use of locally produced materials, fuels, and services;
 - accessible design; and
 - resource conservation.
- B. County Commissioners could promote an incentives program for the State of Ohio to adopt.

HERITAGE, ARTS AND CULTURE

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Athens County's heritage, arts and culture are strong assets for the county's future. Athens County will work collaboratively to identify, celebrate, promote and preserve the county's cultural resources.

Previous land use plans provided little attention to the role and the importance of heritage, arts and culture. These are powerful builders of community and greatly contribute to the quality of life for all county residents. Heritage, arts and culture will have a place in local land use planning.

PROCESS

A task force that had wide representation in the arts and history of the county was picked. They were the experts and we called on that expertise, wisdom, and vision. The Task Force was divided into smaller groups to do research at the township level. Historic properties in each township were identified. We also looked at other county land use plans, both in and out of Ohio. We tried to focus, not on the historical building or property that had been lost, but on the present and future situation and how we might preserve what remains and use it to enrich our communities.

Chapter 8 Highlights:

- Historic Preservation
- Viewsheds
- Arts
- Historic Farms
- Maps
 - Historic Register Sites
 - Indian Mounds
 - Cemeteries
 - Churches

8



Photo of: Performer at Stuart's Opera House
Photo by: Dave Hooker

BACKGROUND

There is a renewed appreciation for the county's history and culture. As we lose cultural and historic resources to time or neglect, what remains is rarer and perhaps cherished more. Townships and towns that had thrived during the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries lost people, farms, school buildings and businesses as historic sites and structures fell into disrepair. This boom and bust pattern occurred in regions that experienced large-scale extraction and exportation of natural resources.

Athens County has an interesting history as it developed from the hard work of settlers who came from both New England and points further south into Virginia. These different groups brought distinct architectural styles, art, and

culture. Ohio and Athens County became a mixing pot for these cultures and this is reflected in historic artifacts of the County.

Many historic sites and structures are endangered. Some have been lost to decay or changes in land use. In addition, minimal value has been placed on the importance of a long-term preservation plan for prehistoric sites such as the Native American mounds in the vicinity of The Plains.

During the 1970's, Ohio University's student and faculty population increased significantly and many of these individuals chose to purchase rural land and relocate to Athens County in a "back to the land" movement. It was during this time that an appreciation for the arts got a rebirth since some of the land purchasers were artists.

CONDITIONS & TRENDS

Organized efforts to preserve and promote heritage, arts and culture have recently gained momentum. More people are beginning to value the regional history and there has been success in preserving structures and sites. The Little Cities of Black Diamonds is a regional history organization that provides information about the old coal mining towns.



*A company store in Nelsonville
From Little Cities of Black Diamonds website*

Another organization, the Ohio Hill Country Heritage Area, takes a multi-

county approach to promote education about and preservation of the Appalachian Ohio region. The Athens County Convention and Visitor's Bureau has undertaken an active campaign to promote heritage tourism. The Athens County Historical Society regularly promotes the county's history through its museum displays and by providing information. Final Fridays is an organized effort in Nelsonville to promote the many arts businesses that have opened on the square. Shops stay open late and outdoor festivities are provided on the last Friday evening of the month. Other renovation projects include the Dairy Barn, Stuart's Opera House, Eclipse Company Town and The Ridges.

HISTORIC PLACES

Throughout the planning process, it was evident that preservation of historical sites and areas is important to the residents of Athens County and as a result, this plan contains policies to help highlight, maintain and revitalize the county's historical sites and areas. Additional sites of historic and cultural interest can be found on the maps in the Appendices.



*Kidwell Covered Bridge near Millfield
From the Athens County Chamber of Commerce website*

ARTS

The arts community has evolved into an important aspect of Athens County. Various avenues to express art in the community include Art of Ohio, Dairy Barn Arts Center, Nelsonville's Historic Square Arts District and Final Fridays, Ohio Valley Summer Theatre, Passion Works Studio, Stuart's Opera House, Kennedy Museum of Art, and numerous individual studios throughout the county.

Creation of the Dairy Barn Arts Center and the popularity of events such as Final Fridays in Nelsonville prove the desire of local residents to encourage artistic endeavors. This Plan contains goals and policies that will enhance and encourage the flourishing arts community.

VIEWSHEDS

A viewshed is the natural environment that is visible from one or several viewpoints. The residents of Athens County find importance in preserving views of the surrounding foothills, rivers and lakes. Frequently identified were ridgetop and major stream valley views, particularly at entryways into villages and cities. Preserving and enhancing quality viewsheds should be considered during future planning efforts.

FARMS

Citizens expressed interest in identifying and preserving farms as part of the Plan. Agriculture continues to play an important role in the lives of Athens Countians and recognition of some of the key county farms is important. This plan contains goals and policies that will help to preserve the local historical farms. A few historical farms in Athens County include:

- Miller Farm, Dover Twp.
- Lackey Farm, Rome Twp.
- Cline Farm, Lee Twp.

- Hartman's Dairy Farm, Dover Twp.
- Brooks Farm, Waterloo Twp.
- Lucas Farm, Ames Twp.
- Battrell Farm, Lee Twp.
- Cotterill Farm, Lee Twp.
- Haning Farm, Lee Twp.
- Bean Farm, Lee Twp.
- West Farm, Lee Twp.



Photo of: Athens Area Glass Art
Photo from: Sunflower Glass Studio Website

PLAN CONCEPT

Athens County contains many special features – historic sites, beautiful scenery and a vibrant arts community. These places help to attract visitors and strengthen the local economy. The goals and policies of this Comprehensive Plan support development that encourages historic preservation and adaptive reuse. Athens County's arts and history is something the residents are proud of and wish to protect and enhance. The goals and policies of this Plan highlight and protect the natural environment of Athens County, preserve its heritage, and encourage artistic endeavors.

GOALS & POLICIES



Photo from: Starbrick Clay

GOAL 1: Preservation

Athens County should strive to preserve archaeological sites, historical architecture, communities, farms, and viewsheds.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. Encourage designation of historically significant structures and districts. Assist residents who will promote and assist the revitalization and preservation of quality viewsheds and historic architecture and farms.
- B. Review the inventory of buildings maintained by the Ohio Historic Preservation Office.
- C. Support residents to make nominations to the National Register of Historic Places.

- D. Establish an awards program to promote good practices in historic preservation.
- E. Nominate key routes in the County for status as Ohio Scenic Byways and work with the Ohio Department of Transportation to have them officially designated.

GOAL 2: Awareness

Athens County should increase awareness and preservation of Athens County's rich natural and cultural heritage.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. Increase public awareness with a formal education program that includes media events.
- B. Continue to map historic, artistic, natural, and cultural resources by utilizing the County's GIS.
- C. Promote Athens County internally, regionally and nationally as an arts destination.

- D. Update the inventory of historic, cultural, and archeological sites, viewsheds, and historic farms that are mapped as part of the County's geographic information system.

GOAL 3: Conservancy

Athens County should work to protect land and structures from demolition and unplanned development.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. Identify local farms, viewsheds, roads, and rivers for preservation using the research and other volunteer work of community groups.
- B. Seek grants from community groups to provide education.
- C. Support local land trusts by cooperating with them to secure funding for land and easement purchases.

GOAL 4: Development

Athens County should develop policies that reinforce the protection and development of art and culture.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. Establish the Athens County Heritage, Arts and Culture Advisory Commission (ACHACC) to coordinate and advise countywide heritage and arts planning.
- B. Promote redevelopment of arts districts' buildings into art studios.
- C. Provide mentoring, business planning, and financial assistance to new and existing arts businesses and organizations
- D. Collaborate with Ohio University and Hocking College to protect and promote art and culture. This can include providing arts business incubation and support.

GOAL 5: Registry

Encourage National and State registry placement of archeological and historical landmarks. These landmarks can include Native American mounds, earthworks, burial sites, and historic buildings and farms.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. Athens County may identify sites not on the registry and assist owners to get them registered and better protected.
- B. Locate funding for interpretive signage for historic buildings and sites identified on the National Historic Registry.

- C. Encourage owners of historic structures to go through the process to be listed on the National Historic Register.

GOAL 6: National Heritage Area

The county should pursue National Heritage Area status.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. Identify and work with regional and local groups pursuing National Heritage Area status to promote appropriate tourism and heritage preservation, by assisting in the steps required for the feasibility study outlined by the National Park Service.
- B. Provide assistance which can include creating a presentation about Heritage areas and/or evaluating public support, capacity, and commitments through a written report.

GOAL 7: Artistic Epicenters

Athens County should encourage open, friendly, and accessible epicenters of art and culture that will encourage diverse regional and county audiences.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. Cooperate with responsible entities to develop a county-wide inventory of art and cultural organizations, venues, businesses, events, and individual artists. This could include creating a county-wide driving tour of studios and designing and promoting walking art tours in the various towns in Athens County.
- B. Promote Athens County as a community where artists are welcomed and supported.

Chapter 9 Highlights:

9

- Trails
- Waterways
- Accessibility
- Maps:
 - State and Community Parks
 - Natural Resource

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Athens County should promote accessible, affordable, public recreational opportunities that enhance the quality of life of the residents and attract tourists and future residents.

PROCESS

The Task Force members included many participants who had knowledge of Athens County and its public lands and recreational facilities. The Task Force saw its charge as enhancing the quality of life of citizens in an environmentally sound way. This Task Force focused on outdoor recreation, but there are many other forms of recreation available in Athens County which were appropriately addressed by other task forces. For example, the Heritage, Arts and Culture Task Force addressed such recreational activities as theater, artist's activities, and historical sites. The Economic Development Task Force discussed a number of county activities, which also attract tourists to the County.

Research on demographics, trends and patterns helped the Parks and Recreation Task Force put its plans into the context of the needs of the County and in line with national interests.

Representatives of the Task Force attended all of the community meetings scheduled by the Steering Committee. Direct feedback about recreational interests and ideas for improving recreational opportunities came from 24 citizens in the form of completed surveys. The results supported the Task Force objectives which were consistent with this citizen input:

- 87.5% of the respondents indicated an interest in hiking and walking and the suggestions related to improving opportunities emphasized the expansion and networking of trails.
- 86% of the respondents indicated that they considered parks and recreation as very important or somewhat important.
- 75% indicated that they were in favor of Athens County playing a role in the management of recreational activities.

At the community meetings, citizens living near Lake Snowden and Burr Oak Lake requested that those areas be included as resources in the planning for recreational land use and they provided suggestions about how to address them. The citizens from Lake Snowden also requested the Task Force's assistance in their effort to insure the facility remain a public recreation area rather than a proposed private resort.

BACKGROUND

Athens County offers a combination of scenic natural beauty and cultural resources. Tourism is an important source of revenue for the county, but more can be done to develop its recreational potential. The completion of the Nelsonville Bypass will increase the county's accessibility for the Franklin County metropolitan area. Rising gas prices and other cost factors will compel Ohio residents to vacation within the state.

While recreational resources bring tourism revenues, their greatest value is in enhancing the quality of life of residents. The existence of parks, trails, nature preserves, and other recreational opportunities make Athens County a desirable place to live, and further development of these resources will help attract future residents.

CONDITIONS & TRENDS

NATIONAL RECREATION

- By 2030, 20 percent of the U.S. population will be over the age of 65.

- Between 1982 and 2002, almost 35 million acres of rural land were converted through development, reducing the rural recreation resource causing many to move closer to public lands.
- Increasingly visitors to public lands are ex-urban and non-traditional rural.
- Visitors' stays are short with more day-use activities.

Accommodating future growth in recreation demands will likely fall heavily on public properties and providers. Private landowners are continuing to close more land. For federal properties, restoration and management of ecosystems and recreation are high priorities, but funding is often not available. Infrastructure on State lands is reaching maturity.

According to the 2000 National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (NSRE), the top five recreation activities for visitor participation are nature viewing/sightseeing, hiking, picnicking, swimming/beach use, and visiting historical sites. (See the following table.)

On the same NSRE survey, the top five recreation activities showing the greatest percentage of increase in participation rates are backpacking, hiking, Off Highway Vehicles (OHV) riding, viewing/sightseeing, and swimming/beach use, respectively.

Recreation Activities	Area Recreation Users (2002)	Regional Midwest NSRE (1994/95)	National NSRE (2000)	NSRE National (1995)	National NSRE (1983)	Percent of National Change 1983-2000
Sightseeing/ Nature Viewing	79	N/A	38.2/108.6	54.1/113.4	21.2/81.3	+80.2%/ +33.6%
Hiking	70	68.2	69.8	47.8	24.7	+182.6%
Picnicking	64	52.2	118.3	98.3	84.8	+39.5%
Swim/Beach	59	53.4	94.8	78.1	56.5	+67.8%
Visit Historical Site	53	43.9	46.3	44.1	N/A	N/A
Jogging	42	23.9	N/A	26.2	N/A	N/A
Lodge	36	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Boating	35	31.8	76.7	58.1	49.5	+54.9%
Fishing	33	31.5	67.9	57.8	60.1	+12.9%
Tent Camping	27	21.7	25.8	28.0	17.7	+45.8%
Tour Bike	24	31.4	39.7	3.2	N/A	N/A
Off Road Vehicle	18	12.6	35.0	27.9	19.4	+80.4%
Recreational Vehicle	14	N/A	N/A	8.6	N/A	N/A
Mountain Bike	13	N/A	21.5	28.6	N/A	N/A
Hunt/Trap	12	11.3	20.9	18.6	21.2	-1.4%
Shooting	12	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Horseback Riding	10	6.8	23.1	14.3	15.9	+45.3%
Backpacking	9	5.4	27.9	15.2	8.8	+217.1%
Rock Climbing	5	3.3	N/A	3.7	N/A	N/A

Attitudes Toward Future Investment in Trails in Ohio, 2003, Presented in Percentages with Mean

	Investment Option	Greatly Reduced Investment	Reduce Investment	Invest About The Same	Invest More	Invest Much More	Mean
1	Statewide/regional trails system	4.2	37.4	37.5	18.5	2.7	1
2	Community trail system	1.4	4.1	32.3	39.1	23.1	2.8
3	Day hiking	1.8	2.9	56.8	27.1	12.3	2.4
4	Backpack trails	2.7	6.3	61.3	21.9	7.8	2.2
5	Walking Trails	0.6	2.2	34.9	38.5	23.7	2.8
6	Hard surface bicycle trails	3.5	4.5	39.0	34.5	18.5	2.6
7	Natural surface bicycle trails	5.2	10.2	52.9	21.8	9.8	2.2
8	In-line skating trails	10.9	10.9	53.4	17.8	6.9	2.1
9	Jogging/exercise trails	2.7	4.6	52.4	29.5	10.8	2.5

10	Horseback riding trails	7.5	16.6	54.4	12.4	9.1	2.0
11	Canoeing/kayaking trails	5.7	9.7	58.3	18.6	7.7	2.1
12	Cross-country skiing trails	8.9	11.5	63.8	12.3	3.4	1.9
13	Nature/Interpretive trails	3.3	3.7	42.6	34.9	15.4	2.6
14	Snowmobile trails	28.5	18.4	42.7	7.9	2.5	1.4
15	ATV trails	33.6	19.4	35.5	7.3	4.1	1.3
16	Off-road motorcycle trails	36.0	18.2	36.0	5.3	4.5	1.2
17	Off-highway vehicle trails	36.3	17.6	35.1	6.5	4.5	1.3

Source: 2003 Ohio Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)

According to the 2003 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) the top six trail facilities in which Ohioans want more investment are:

1. Community trail systems
2. Walking trails
3. Hard surface bicycle trails
4. Nature/interpretive trails
5. Jogging/exercise trails
6. Day hiking trails

While Americans (and Ohioans) continue to enjoy hunting and fishing, the number of people choosing to fish and hunt has dropped significantly. Enthusiasm for

hunting and fishing among young people has particularly declined since the early 1990's. Angler participation rates among those ages 18 to 24 dropped to 13 percent in 2001, from 20 percent in 1991, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Fewer hunters' means state wildlife officials will have to find creative ways to maintain deer herd populations within acceptable levels. Larger herd sizes will lead to increased damage to vegetation and more vehicle collisions. In contrast, other wildlife activities, such as observing wildlife and photographing wildlife, are very popular in Ohio and nationwide (2003 SCORP).

Wayne National Forest Activity Participation and Primary Activity

Activity	% Participating	% as Primary Activity
Viewing Wildlife	68.2	<.1
Viewing Natural Features	6.8	0.4
Relaxing	62.3	.5
OHV Use	54.9	50.9
Fishing	21.7	18.5
Hiking/Walking	20.4	5.1
Picnicking	14.4	.6
Driving for Pleasure	14.4	3.8
Nature Study	6.5	0
Primitive Camping	5.7	0.3
Hunting	5.2	4.7
Developed Camping	4.8	1.2
Visiting Historic Sites	3.8	0
Backpacking	3.7	2.9
Nature Center Activities	3.3	0.1
Gathering Forest Products	2.9	0
Other Non-motorized	1.9	0.7
Horseback Riding	1.2	1
Bicycling	1.2	0.8
Non-motorized Water	0.4	0
Resort Use	0.2	0
Other Motorized Activity	0.2	0
Motorized Water Activities	0.1	0.1

According to the Wayne NF 2003 National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) report, participation rates for three of the top seven outdoor recreation activities on WNF support the regional and national trends as shown in the above table. Those include viewing nature and wildlife, OHV use, and hiking.

The other top visitor activities were relaxing, picnicking, driving for pleasure, and fishing. Forest visitors participating in many of these popular recreation activities favor doing them in the more natural and remote settings.

According to the 2000 U.S Census, Athens County population is recorded at 62,223 and a recent 2005 estimate is recorded at 62,062.

Athens County ranks 41 out of 88 counties in the state of Ohio.¹¹

Some theories for the current trends in recreation are that people are using leisure time as a means of seeking self-identity or self-fulfillment; individuals no longer measure personal success by work alone; and Americans are focusing on new ways to divert themselves from daily stresses.

Nature provides a soothing alternative and outdoor recreation gives people an outlet for relieving stress.

¹¹ US Census Bureau, Population Finder, 2005 Population Estimate



photo of: park picnic area

photo from: Athens County Regional Planning Commission

Trends point to continued growth in outdoor recreation across all segments of the population. Many studies have shown that this upward trend can be attributed to several factors, such as:

- growth in the national, regional, and local population and a shift in the population's age (i.e., Baby Boomers getting older with more free time to recreate),
- the greater need to spend quality time with family and/or get away from job-related demands and stress and;
- more people achieving higher levels of education which translates to jobs with higher income and more disposable income to spend on recreation activities.

Source:

<http://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/trends/2006UtahSSC.pdf>

AGE EFFECTS

Census statistics indicate that Ohioans are aging. Throughout the last decade, while Ohioans have increased their income and education levels, the size of their families have decreased. "Empty nesters" are occupying an increasing percentage of Ohio's graying population. An older population is more likely to pursue less vigorous activities such as gardening, walking, or golf, and may include more spectator-oriented forms of recreation.

WORKPLACE CHANGES

The changing structure of the workplace has had an impact on recreation and the availability of leisure time. Many jobs offer employees flextime and the option to work from home. Because of improvements in technology, work can now be done from a park or while on vacation rather than from an office cubicle. Individuals can be accessible to the workplace while simultaneously participating in recreational pursuits.

HOME OWNERSHIP

Another trend affecting recreation is an increase in the homeowner population. This has had a primary impact on recreational activities such as gardening and horticulture. According to a recent study, gardening has become the second most popular leisure activity in the country behind walking. An increase in the number of people owning second homes could also create a potential challenge for providers of recreation. Research suggests second-home owners may want to spend leisure time on activities they enjoy such as boating, golfing, and other recreational pursuits they may not have time to explore from their primary residence. As new properties develop, the need for trails, golf courses and other forms of recreation will follow.

Another homeowner trend that has potential to catch on in Ohio is the resort-style subdivision. This type of development offers features such as indoor/outdoor pools, fitness centers, spa and salon, a golf course, recreation center, gym, equestrian center, restaurant, and lake. It will also feature medical professionals on site. The concept is to link empty-nester homes to recreation facilities and medical professionals and help keep retirees home for the winter.

HEALTH ISSUES

Many Americans are overweight and out-of-shape. Ohioans are no exception. The Columbus Dispatch, October 9, 2002, revealed that 31 percent of American adults are obese while another source reported the surgeon general's finding that more than 61 percent of adults are overweight. Unfortunately, America's children appear to be adopting this trend. Our nation's youngsters are the heaviest on record with 14 percent of children obese or overweight. Although the current trend shows children not exercising frequently enough, there is an increase in the number of children turning to sports media (TV sports and video games) on a daily basis.

COMPUTER ACCESS

The computer serves as a primary technological tool to transform the recreation environment, most notably, the increasing use of the Internet. Rather than directly contacting agencies for information pertaining to recreation, people can surf the net.

PREFERENCE CHANGES

While team-oriented sports used to be the most popular form of recreation, there is a shift toward more individualized forms of sport and recreation. Extreme sports such as skateboarding, snowboarding and BMX (bicycle motor cross) are becoming increasingly popular as they reflect individualism. Results of the 1994 National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (NSRE) show that 94.5 percent of Americans 16 years of age or older participated in at least one or more forms of outdoor recreation. That is almost 19 out of 20 people or approximately 189 million participants nationwide.

Many recreation opportunities offered on a majority of private industry and organization lands are dispersed forms of

recreation such as hunting, nature-viewing, hiking, and other non-motorized trail use.

Federal and State governments are increasingly relying upon private-public partnerships to provide recreation opportunities, due to a general cut in their recreation budgets over the past decade. The trend of the federal government will continue to be facilitation of local and private efforts to provide recreation opportunities for the public.

These agencies are also relying more heavily on volunteers to help operate and maintain their recreation facilities due to reduced budgets.

For Wayne National Forest, developed recreation is expected to receive a 16% increase in visitors by the next decade. Visitor growth for dispersed forms of recreation is estimated to increase by 10% by the next decade in the Wayne National Forest. The following can be expected with this growth:

- The anticipated growth in visitations may cause some weekend visitors to be displaced or unable to find their desired recreation setting or experience. Some of these visitors may be displaced to less developed or undeveloped areas where increasing concentrations of human use would likely cause unacceptable resource impacts.
- Trails for both motorized and non-motorized use will experience greater use. As demand exceeds supply, conflicts among user groups will become greater, the visitor's recreation experience will be devalued, illegal trail use will escalate, and impacts to natural and visual resources will rise.
- Increasing demands for rock climbing, off-road vehicle use,

hiking, horseback riding, paddling, camping, driving for pleasure, and wildlife viewing are likely to create more competition and conflicts for public and private properties.

- There is a tendency for one group (typically traditional and non-mechanized) to perceive much more conflict than others (non-traditional and mechanized).

Source: <http://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/trends/2006UtahSSC.pdf>

ATHENS COUNTY RECREATION

Athens County Outdoor Recreation (Land and Water)

Athens County offers opportunities for a variety of recreational activities. Its public lands allow for hiking, biking, hunting, and nature viewing to all residents and visitors at a low cost. The presence of the Wayne National Forest places us relatively high in the state for public recreation lands per capita.

- Total county acres: 325,487
- Land size ranking in Ohio: 23rd
- Total Recreation Acres: 29,004
- Recreation Acres ranking in Ohio: 14
- % of Total Acres for Outdoor Recreation: 2.1%
- % of Total Acres State Ranking: 14
- 2006 Ohio Population Estimate: 61,860
- 2006 Population Ranking in Ohio: 41
- Total Recreation acres per 1,000
- Residents: 469
- Acres per 1000 Residents State Ranking: 17

Source 2008 Ohio Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)

Access to a large amount of public open space is Athens County's most important recreational tourism asset. Much of Ohio has very little open space per capita. As Ohio's population continues to grow, public

natural areas are likely to become a scarce and sought-after commodity.

Athens County is an easily accessible destination for people seeking recreational opportunities. Providing public open space is not necessarily an expensive proposition beyond the initial purchase price of land. In forested areas, the maintenance cost of open space is low, and the benefits are high.

The following is a list of recreational activities, consisting of federal, state, and county/city units, located in Athens County. A chart containing all activities can be found in the appendices.

Federal:

Wayne National Forest land in Southeastern Ohio includes 18,721 acres of land in northwestern Athens County. The forest provides opportunities for hiking, backpacking, biking, horseback riding and camping. The US Army Corps of Engineers also maintains a paved boat launch and parking facility on the Hocking River about six miles from its mouth at the Ohio River.

State:

Burr Oak and Strouds Run State Parks consist of 2606 acres and 2593 acres, respectively. These parks provide fishing, swimming, hiking trails, boating under 10 hp, boat rental, picnic areas, bridle trails, camping, hunting, volleyball, playgrounds, and basketball courts. Burr Oak State Park also has lodging available. There are several state forests and nature preserves in the county including Desonier Nature Preserve, Fox Lake Wildlife Area, and Zaleski and Waterloo State Forests. These areas allow for hiking, hunting, fishing, biking, and other outdoor pursuits.

County:

The county has New Marshfield, Sugar Creek and Ferndale Parks that have areas for sports and picnicking. The County also

operates 12.5 miles of the Hockhocking Adena Bikeway between Athens and Nelsonville. There are also several private campgrounds and additional private recreation opportunities including Sunday Creek Raceway, Carthage Gap Campground, and The Elm Golf Course.

City/Village/Town:

The cities of Athens and Nelsonville have several parks, dog parks and other facilities that provide for a variety of activities. These include the Athens Community Center, Hockhocking Adena Bikeway, West State St. and Southside Parks in Athens and Canal Street Park and Brick Kiln Park in Nelsonville. The villages also have neighborhood parks with playground equipment. Some have ball fields and ball courts.

HIKING/MOUNTAIN BIKING TRAILS

Most of the public land in Athens County has hiking trails. There are relatively few mountain biking trails, by comparison, but more have been developed, particularly in Strouds Run State Park. The Zaleski Backpack Trail travels through western Athens County and provides a more primitive camping experience over a multi-day period.

The Strouds Run area trail system is extensive and continues to improve. There will soon be an estimated 30 miles of trails in the Park and adjacent preserve land. Another popular area for hiking, jogging, and nature study is The Ridges on property owned by Ohio University. Ohio University should retain the portion of The Ridges south and west of the buildings and north and west of Dairy Lane (including the 170-acre land lab but also land to the south of the land lab) as an undeveloped natural area for educational, research, and low-impact recreational use.



*Bridge on hiking trail
photo from ODNR website*

The Athens Trail has been proposed as a hiking/biking trail that would completely encircle the city of Athens. Parts of it are already open but the rest remains to be developed. Its completion will require the cooperation of several private landowners, but most of the planned route is on public land. This trail will offer hiking and mountain biking opportunities within two miles of the homes of every Athens City resident.

BICYCLING

Athens County is an excellent place to cycle. For mountain bikers, there is the still-developing trail system in Strouds Run State Park and adjacent city-owned preserve lands, as well as in the Wayne National Forest. For road cyclists, there is the Hockhocking-Adena Bikeway and an extensive network of scenic rural roads. The county should build on these existing resources to develop a truly exceptional network of trails, paved paths and rural roads, which would attract cyclists. The proposed construction of a new bike path from Albany to Lake Snowden is consistent with this vision and is particularly desirable because it would serve a part of the county that has a growing population and has no bike paths. It would benefit even more people if it were extended 3/4 mile farther

northeast to the junction of Enlow Rd. and US-50, thereby providing safer access to Lake Snowden and more paved county roadways.

The Hockhocking-Adena Bikeway should be extended beyond Nelsonville into Hocking County as far as Haydenville (there is currently no easy way for cyclists to avoid the 5-mile stretch of busy US-33 between Nelsonville and Haydenville) and southeastward at least as far as Guysville. It would also be desirable to develop spur paths to other communities. A desired goal is a network of paved roads and paths connecting every village and town in the county.

HUNTING & FISHING

Hunting and fishing are popular activities in the county and besides recreation they help control animal populations and provide food. Locations for fishing include streams and rivers, farm ponds, and public water bodies. A lot of hunting takes place on private lands but most public areas are also open to hunting in season.

WILDERNESS-LIKE EXPERIENCE

Strouds Run State Park and the contiguous preserve land owned by the City of Athens and the Athens Conservancy should be maintained as mostly uninterrupted forest. In addition to providing habitat for species that require a deep forest environment, it offers a haven for people who seek a wilderness-like experience. Being able to hike all day in the forest, and see and hear minimal evidence of human activity is an experience that many people treasure. When opportunities arise, additional property contiguous to Strouds Run could be acquired. Zaleski State Forest and Wayne National Forest (WNF) may also have sections that could be dedicated to providing a wilderness-like experience.

ATV TRAILS

WNF has selected all-terrain vehicle (ATV) trails as one of its primary recreational niches and will continue to provide this resource in and near Athens County. ATV use is extremely popular and numbers of users continue to increase.

ATV trails are expensive to build and maintain, and their noise is incompatible with many other forms of outdoor recreation (e.g., hiking, horseback riding, nature study). ATV trails should therefore be restricted to the areas where they are most appropriate. To minimize damage to the environment, all sites designated for ATV use should be those already degraded (e.g., former strip mines, abandoned pastureland, brushy second growth forest with invasive plants already abundant). ATV trails should not be developed in high quality forest.

AQUATIC RECREATION

Athens County is fortunate to have two state park lakes and the Hocking River available for recreation. Troy Township has about 3 miles of frontage on the Ohio River. In Athens County the Hocking River is little used because there is only one developed public access point (near Coolville) in Athens County. The provision of several more public access points would make the Hocking usable as a "water trail" for fishing, canoeing, and kayaking, and providing direct boat access to the Ohio River. The Hocking River Commission is currently developing a water trail map and purchasing riverfront land in order to provide more public access. Dow Lake and



Lake Snowden are among the most important recreational resources in the county and are used extensively for fishing, boating, and swimming. Lake Snowden is also well known to local birdwatchers as an excellent place to see migratory waterfowl. It is critical that there be no reduction in public access to these two lakes and the surrounding parkland. Protection of the water quality of Dow Lake and Lake Snowden is a high priority.



Tents at campground
Photo from: ODNr website

PLAN CONCEPT

Parks are a cherished resource for Athens County residents and outdoor recreation plays an important role in residents' lives. The goals and policies in this Plan seek to maintain access to those existing parks whenever feasible, provide for more parkland adjacent to existing parks and in locations where there is a need for more, and create viable, walkable connections between residents and parks. Because this is a comprehensive plan and not a recreation plan, parks and recreation is treated as one component of the whole. While this chapter's plan concept establishes goals and policies to improve recreation opportunities, a future recreation plan can provide more step-by-step details about how to reach the goals stated in this Comprehensive Plan.

In order that recreational development be sustainable, it must be provided in an environmentally responsible way. Recreational opportunities must be affordable. Many forms of outdoor

recreation are, and should continue to be, available without a user fee.

There should be recreational resources available to accommodate a wide range of ages and physical abilities, including wheelchair accessible trails and play areas for young children as well as physically challenging forms of recreation for those who enjoy such activities. The county should work toward providing a network of trails linking communities and recreation areas such as Strouds Run State Park and the Athens Community Center.

Establishing a county park district could be considered as a method of ensuring the appropriate development and funding of the county's recreational resources.

GOALS & POLICIES

GOAL 1: Park District and Recreation Plan

Policies for Consideration:

- A. Consider creating a park district to administer and expand county recreation lands.
- B. The County may prepare a detailed recreation plan that:
 - i. Seeks funding
 - ii. Coordinates human resources
 - iii. Identifies properties for purchase, including conservation easements
 - iv. Provides standards for facilities including: fixtures, landscaping, and energy use
 - v. Provides for maintenance of lands and facilities
- C. Involve the community in development and maintenance of recreational opportunities, particularly with established community organizations.
- D. Collaborate with other branches of government to implement the plan (e.g., Township Trustees, Engineers).

GOAL 2: Accessibility

Increase accessibility to diverse recreation opportunities for all residents.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. Develop mini-parks in communities across the county.
- B. Connect recreation areas with community trails using existing public lands, scenic roadways, new and expanded horse and bike trails, and new acquisitions.
- C. Encourage open space dedication and access with new development proposals.
- D. Provide access opportunities to all citizens including the physically challenged.
- E. Develop access to the Hocking River to meet the water activity needs of residents and tourists.

GOAL 3: Provide, Protect, and Enhance Recreation Opportunities

Provide diverse recreation options, protect them and improve them.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. Strive to preserve public natural areas and explore ways to expand this resource.
- B. Expand on the existing bike path by developing a system of trails throughout the county.
- C. Encourage the development of camping facilities to attract tourists to Athens County and explore the need for modern facilities with RV hookups.
- D. Strive to improve the range of recreation options to satisfy interests of all ages.
- E. Use a framework of ecologically sound guidelines for a broad range of recreation activities.
- F. Efforts should be made to inform recreation facility users about non-native invasive species.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Chapter 10 Highlights:

- Libraries
- Fire Stations
- Schools
- Hospitals
- Maps
 - Critical Facilities
 - Schools
 - Red Cross Shelters

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Community Facilities Task Force's main purpose was to assess the adequacy, distribution and utilization of community facilities and to determine future needs.

PROCESS

Assessing adequacy, distribution and utilization involved several steps. Task Force members brought a lot of expertise and addressed facility issues for their respective entities that included Ohio University, public libraries, Children Services, schools, construction trades, villages, emergency services and health care. Surveys of county departments were conducted to gather information about what department heads feel are the short- and long-term facility needs for the county.

BACKGROUND

Athens County provides many services to its citizens and therefore needs many facilities to perform its tasks. For purposes of this community facilities chapter, "facilities" are defined as buildings that are used for a public or non-profit purpose that is more than just recreation. Community facilities also do not include water and sewer infrastructure. While a facility can be more than just a building, such as recreational fields or utility installations,

other task forces such as Parks and Recreation or Utilities and Infrastructure covered these other recreation and utility facilities.

CONDITIONS & TRENDS

LAW ENFORCEMENT AND JAILS/DETENTION FACILITIES

Six major law enforcement offices are based in Athens County: the Athens County Sheriff's Office, Athens Police Department and Ohio University Police Department, all located in the City of Athens; the Nelsonville Police Department; the Hocking College Police Department; and the Ohio Highway Patrol post located on Della Drive just east of the City of Athens. The Athens Police Department has 29 fulltime officers as well as a number of special program staff for communications, domestic violence, investigation, patrol and meter enforcement. The Athens County Sheriff's office maintains three work spaces, the Sheriff's Office, the Jail Building and the Jail Building Annex, all located in the City of Athens. The Southeast Ohio Regional Jail and the Hocking Correctional Facility, both located in Nelsonville, provide additional detention space that Athens County shares with other counties.

FIRE STATIONS

There are ten fire departments in Athens County, two staffed by paid firefighters and eight by volunteers. The Athens City Fire Department is the only one completely staffed by full-time firefighters. The Nelsonville Fire Department is mostly volunteer-based with 26 firefighters paid by the calls served. Nelsonville has four full-time firefighters. Volunteer departments include Albany area, Ames-Bern-Amesville, Chauncey-Dover, Coolville, Glouster, Jacksonville, Richland Area, Rome Township, Waterloo Township, and York Township.

HOSPITALS AND CLINICS

Athens County has three hospitals: O'Bleness Memorial Hospital, Doctor's Hospital of Nelsonville and Appalachian Behavioral Healthcare (a State of Ohio facility). O'Bleness and Appalachian



Photo of: O'Bleness Hospital

Photo from: Athens County Regional Planning Commission

Behavioral Healthcare are located on Hospital Drive in Athens and are a part of the Health Care Corridor along the Hocking River. The Corridor includes O'Bleness Hospital and the adjacent Cornwell Center and Castrop Center, Appalachian Behavioral Healthcare, Echoing Meadows, and Tri-County Mental Health and Counseling. The Castrop Center provides a

variety of physician's offices and support services. The Cornwell Center contains the Endocrinology and Diabetes Center and the Vascular Center. The hospital system has added clinic services at medical clinics in Albany and in Pomeroy in Meigs County. Doctor's Hospital in Nelsonville is certified as a Critical Access Hospital with 25 beds. In addition to the hospital system, two clinics provide services in Athens County: Express Care at Parks Hall operated by the Ohio University College of Medicine and Holzer Clinic on East State Street in Athens.

Ohio University established its College of Medicine (OUCOM) in 1977. OUCOM provided medical services to the community first at the former Athens Mental Health Center, a state psychiatric hospital, and later in its own clinics, where the medical faculty also serve as practicing physicians. The clinics and O'Bleness Health System have served as training sites for OUCOM students. In 2002 the OUCOM clinical faculty became a private corporation which maintains services in Athens, Coolville and Nelsonville. In 2003 a federal grant led to creation of a diabetes research center in a combined effort with O'Bleness Health System.

All of the facilities have parking available and those in Athens have bus service. The Health Care Corridor is within walking distance of many living in Athens City.

MENTAL HEALTH



*Photo of: Appalachian Behavioral Health Care Center
Photo from: Athens County Regional Planning Commission*

Athens County has a psychiatric hospital, four major mental health programs and a number of private and volunteer programs. Appalachian Behavioral Healthcare, part of the Health Care Corridor mentioned above, is a fully accredited, state-operated facility with 52 beds. A recent state-level reorganization added over 30 beds when the other regional state facility at Cambridge was closed. The four programs are Tri-County Mental Health and Counseling Services (which serves Hocking and Vinton Counties as well), Rural Women's Recovery Program, Health Recovery Services and The Gathering Place. Tri-County Mental Health, also located on Hospital Drive in the Health Care Corridor, is a non-profit comprehensive community mental health center and a member of the 317 Board network of mental health services. The Board funds community mental health services to provide a network of care for patients. Health Recovery Services is located in a multiple use building on Columbus Road. The Gathering Place, a drop-in center for those recovering from mental health problems, is located on North Congress Street in Athens.

CHILDREN SERVICES

Athens County Children Services (ACCS) offices are located on 13 acres off of East

State Street. Four two-story buildings are located on the premises along with the agency's offices and visitation center. The Nelsonville Family Center located on Canal Street provides a number of parent, child and family services and evening programs. Social workers maintain offices in two of the area's school systems. The Regional Training Center (RTC) located in Athens serves 13 counties under the auspices of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, but is more readily available to ACCS because of its location.

The agency maintains custody of approximately 125 children and teens, most located in foster care or other facilities. Transportation services required to maintain the Agency's many connections, as well as continuous communication with state and local agencies, are constantly changing and are vitally important to the agency. For families who meet the guidelines for Child and Family Services funding, child care is available.

EDUCATION

Ohio University (OU) has extensive land holdings including, the main campus in Athens (1,100+ acres) in Athens Township, the OU Airport (492.6 acres) in Lee Township, the Hebbardsville Farm (426 acres) in Alexander Township and The Ridges (600+ acres) in Athens Township. The latter two were transferred to OU when the Athens Mental Health Center moved to its new building on Hospital Drive. For a further discussion of the OU airport see the Transportation Task Force Report. Hocking College, located near Nelsonville, has 1,388 acres of land on its main campus in York Township. It also holds 634 acres in Lee Township and about 20 acres in Alexander Township where Lake Snowden is under Hocking College ownership. Besides these higher education facilities, Athens County has Tri-County Joint Vocational School located in York Township adjacent to Hocking College with 118 acres of land.

There are 294.65 acres of land owned by the county school systems.

Athens County has five school systems: Athens and Nelsonville-York City School Districts, and Alexander, Federal Hocking and Trimble Local School Districts. A few Athens County children in the northeast corner of the county attend a Washington County school. The Athens City School District is the most extensive and includes the Middle School, East Elementary, Morrison Elementary and West Elementary located in Athens City, Athens High School and The Plains Elementary in The Plains, and Chauncey Elementary in Chauncey. The Alexander District recently moved into a new campus which is divided into pre-kindergarten through second grade, third through fifth grade, middle school and high school. The campus is located just east of Albany. Alexander's consolidation vacated former school buildings which are now being renovated and used for other community functions. Federal Hocking District serves the communities of Amesville, Coolville, Guysville and Stewart, and maintains a high school and middle school just outside of Stewart, and elementary schools in Amesville and Coolville. Nelsonville-York has a combined campus with the elementary, junior high school and high school all on Buckeye Drive on the far eastern edge of Nelsonville. Trimble Local has a high school in Glouster and an elementary and middle school in Jacksonville. In addition to these systems, Beacon School in Athens serves students with developmental disabilities who cannot be served in the special programs and classrooms of the five school systems.

In the dispersed rural population of Athens County most children and school employees travel by bus and car to arrive at school. It is not uncommon for schools to close due to weather-related travel conditions. Emergency planning and emergency

services must all be able to serve the many school systems rapidly when needed.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Athens County's Emergency Management Agency is located on West Washington Street in Athens. That office is responsible for developing a disaster response plan for the county and for helping maintain emergency operations during a disaster. Southeast Ohio Emergency Medical Services (SEOMS) serves Athens and parts of four other counties, providing emergency medical services, 911 response and transport to the hospitals. The Athens County stations are in Athens, Glouster, Nelsonville, Coolville and Albany.

The Athens County Chapter of the American Red Cross, located on May Avenue in Athens, provides disaster relief, disaster education, armed forces emergency communications, and health and safety education to Athens, Meigs and Vinton Counties.

ELDERLY CARE

The Athens County Senior Center (ACSC) occupies a wing of the Athens Community Center on East State Street in Athens. Its membership is open to all county seniors. The Center provides space for meetings and classes, equipment and programs for exercise, a nutrition program, and space for casual socialization. ACSC offers transportation, adult day services, socialization, information and referral, health assessment, and outreach.

There are four nursing homes in Athens County (Hickory Creek Nursing Center in The Plains, Arcadia Nursing Home in Coolville, Kimes Nursing and Rehab Center in Athens, and Russell Nursing Home in Albany) and one assisted living facility (Lindley Inn) for older and/or disabled citizens, along with special senior services from a number of agencies and businesses.

One senior housing project in The Plains and one under construction on Columbus Road in Athens (an expansion of Hickory Creek) provide independent and assisted living. A new senior housing project was recently built on East State St. at the eastern edge of the City and another assisted living facility is planned on State Route 56 just west of the City.

Many senior services are provided in the home by the Appalachian Community Visiting Nurse Association, Hospice and Health Services (ACVNAHHS). The organization is affiliated with the O'Bleness Healthcare System and operates throughout Athens County as well as Meigs, Hocking and parts of Vinton, Perry and Morgan counties. Opened in 1982 as a visiting nurse program it later added services including Hospice. ACVNAHHS provides in-home nursing and healthcare, housekeeping services, personal care services and delivery of supplies to senior and disabled Athens County residents. This enables seniors who no longer drive to remain in their homes much longer and still receive necessary care up to the time when they require full-time nursing service. ACVNAHHS employees travel most of the roads in Athens County to reach in-home clients and transportation becomes a major part of the agency's expenditures.

LIBRARIES



Photo of: The Plains Library

Photo from: Athens County Regional Planning Commission

The Athens County Public Library System, based in Nelsonville, offers countywide service with six branch libraries in Athens, The Plains, Glouster, Chauncey, Coolville and Albany (the Wells Library). From its founding in 1935 in Nelsonville, the library system has grown to include approximately 300,000 volumes and an addition of approximately 25,000 new items each year as well as subscriptions to approximately 130 magazines and newspapers. Voter registration, tax forms, and Golden Buckeye Card applications are available. In the year 2010 the library system will celebrate 75 years of service to Athens County and the surrounding areas. Due to the decline in state funding, the library system, for the first time, may put a levy on the voter's ballot. Part of its basic services includes classroom and public meeting space.

COMMUNITY CENTERS

Athens Community Center provides a fitness center, gymnasium, exercise studio, indoor track, arts and crafts room, licensed childcare facility, and meeting room space for groups and organizations throughout Southeast Ohio. The Center provides flexible meeting space with appropriate sound and visual aid equipment and a catering kitchen. Membership can be purchased by anyone throughout the county. The building was constructed with tax levy money on approximately 11 acres of land which also includes a pool, a skate park, tennis courts and a community garden. Athens County has five smaller community centers in Albany, Shade, Stewart, New Marshfield and Lottridge. Most centers are in older buildings remodeled after schools or other public facilities were no longer being used for their original purpose.

DOG SHELTER



Photo of: The Athens County Dog Shelter
Photo From: Athens County Regional Planning Commission

The Athens County Dog Shelter is adjacent to the former County Home near Chauncey. It has indoor and outdoor pens and space for visitation and adoption programs, an indoor shelter area for lost and confiscated dogs, a system for adoption of homeless dogs, and a variety of volunteer activities which aid the staff in permanent and foster placement of dogs in custody.

COURTHOUSE



Photo of: Athens County Courthouse
Photo from: Athens County Regional Planning Commission

The Athens County Courthouse at Court and Washington Streets in Athens houses the Court of Appeals and Common Pleas, Juvenile and Probate Courts, and offices of the Prosecutor, Domestic Relations and Clerk of Courts. Many county offices, including the Auditor, Recorder, Board of Elections, Treasurer and County Commissioners are located in the Courthouse Annex. The Courthouse, a brick two-story building, was built in 1880, remodeled in 1935 when the clock from the old City Hall building was moved to the Courthouse cupola, and remodeled again in 2004. The building replaces the county's original seat of government, a log house built in 1808, and a second structure built in 1817.

JOB AND FAMILY SERVICES



Photo of: The Athens County Job and Family Services
Photo From: Athens County Regional Planning Commission

Job and Family Services has four locations: The former County Home on Route 13 near Chauncey provides child support and family services; the Denver White Building on Lancaster Street in Athens provides health services and services to the aged, blind, and disabled; the Work Station at The Plains provides employment and educational services; and the office on Connett Road in The Plains provides program administration. This department serves the entire county and provides transportation to and from the services for those who have no transportation.

MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS

There are two incorporated cities in Athens County, Athens and Nelsonville, and each has a City Hall or city building for the basic functions of city government. In Nelsonville the building located on Lake Hope Drive, houses the City Manager, Auditor, Tax and Water departments. Athens City Building houses the Mayor, city council, and safety/service, utility billing, and municipal court space. Athens has several additional locations for city services including the Law Building in downtown Athens, which houses the police functions, but also the auditor, income tax, and prosecutor's offices. City of Athens Code Enforcement and County planning are located in a facility on Curran Drive which also houses the water distribution and sewerline maintenance functions. The water treatment facility and the street maintenance garage are on West State Street and the sewage treatment facility is on East State Street. Combined with the sewage treatment operation is 75 acres of land in Canaanville, owned by the City that is used to spread sewage sludge for incorporation into the soil. The City of Athens also owns and operates a downtown parking garage on Washington Street in downtown Athens.

There are eight villages in Athens County, each with some office space: Albany, Amesville, Buchtel, Chauncey, Coolville, Glouster, Jacksonville, and Trimble. In addition, there is one "census designated place" The Plains, and many unincorporated communities in Athens County. Each village has office space frequently shared with other governmental functions. There are fourteen townships in Athens County and each has township building space for its three trustees and clerk. This is frequently in the same building as the township's maintenance equipment and supplies. The amount of land owned by the individual townships varies greatly, ranging from Troy

Township with .2 acres listed to York Township with 82.2 acres.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT

The Athens City-County Health Department is located on West Union Street in Athens. The Department's services are divided into six divisions: Environmental Health, Nursing, Health Education, Public Health, Preparedness, and Vital Statistics. Many of the Department's services are provided in the field, especially those related to food, water, sewer, and environmental concerns. The Department, in coordination with the County's Emergency Management Agency office, is responsible for the development of the disaster plan for medical service to Athens County residents.

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENTS

The Athens County Engineer's Office is responsible for the maintenance of county roadways and is located at the intersection of U.S. highway 50 East and State Route 690. The site offers adequate open space for maintaining county vehicles and equipment and storing road materials. Additional information is available in the Transportation Task Force report. Each of fourteen sets of township also maintains roadways and culverts within their jurisdictions.

The Athens County Fairgrounds comprises 32.9 acres of land within the City of Athens. Its buildings are used for the county fair each year and to maintain program space at other times. The Athens County Fair Board governs the property.

FAIRGROUNDS



Photo of: Athens County Fairgrounds

Photo from: Athens County Regional Planning Commission

MAINTENANCE & IMPROVEMENTS

Building infrastructure is primarily the responsibility of the agency director or department head, in some cases an elected official or board, and indirectly the responsibility of the County Commissioners. It is usually the responsibility of individual agencies to report needs to the County Commissioners who will assist, usually financially, with the construction or maintenance needs.

The Athens County Commissioners employ a staff of six to maintain buildings and grounds that are their direct responsibility. These buildings essentially include: Courthouse, Courthouse Annex, Sheriff's offices, Health Department and OSU Extension offices, The Athens County Water and Sewer offices, and the Dog Shelter. In addition, limited maintenance is provided for Jobs and Family Services, the County Engineer, and the 911 communication towers.

STRUCTURAL IMPROVEMENTS

Maintaining existing facilities will take priority over new construction. It is important to address certain considerations when maintaining existing facilities

including, but not limited to, energy efficiency, universal design, climate change, and transportation costs.

Energy efficiency will continue to play an ever larger role in facility maintenance. As fuel costs rise, the County leaders will face decisions about when to upgrade to greater efficiency systems.

Our aging population will also affect future needs with increased accessibility issues, including handicapped parking and architectural design features. It is important to keep buildings safe and to minimize insurance claims and lawsuits by reducing hazardous situations.

A changing climate may bring more intense storms and severe weather. New building design and retrofits may have to reflect this changing weather pattern. There may be a need for more shelters.

Locating facilities near public transportation routes may become a more important consideration. By using in-fill development principles and locating facilities within existing urban settings reduces sprawl and the need for additional road networks. Placing similar facilities near each other allows members of the public and staff to visit various departments within walking distance thus decreasing the need for additional roads and parking spaces.

With rising energy costs, more building materials may need to be produced at the local level. By producing wood and masonry products locally, building designers and retrofitters will have local purchase options and the transport costs associated with distant markets would decrease dramatically. Environmental considerations may also make the renovation and reuse of existing older buildings more desirable than new construction.

As budget limitations allow, new technology will drive facility improvements. Changes in communication will have an impact as more wireless-type communication becomes available. Wireless communication simplifies demands on buildings because fewer cables may be necessary. Future budgets should consider communication antennae in new construction and renovation costs.

In order to comply with floodplain regulations and to set a good example for citizens, the County Commissioners need to be cognizant of their buildings that are located in flood hazards areas and how to perform appropriate maintenance and rehabilitation of these structures. The goal needs to be a continual reduction of risk over time within budgetary constraints.

TRENDS

Characteristics of our population will help to drive facility needs. Athens County is expecting the addition of approximately 4,000 citizens by the year 2030; however, this will be an uneven population distribution throughout the county. Unincorporated areas closer to the City of Athens, The Plains, and Albany village expect to see the majority of the population growth. With travel times to Columbus reduced by the Lancaster bypass and the Nelsonville bypass, settlement by people who want to be close to Columbus may occur in the northwestern section of the county also. If Coolville village installs a public sewer system then that area will see some settlement by people who work in the Belpre and Parkersburg areas to the east. These settlement patterns have an effect on all facilities, especially an increased need placed on emergency service providers.

The impact of the trends above will be shared by all the agencies and offices under county jurisdiction, and coordinated

planning for the provision of county services will be essential to the efficient use of county funds. Athens County services have a history of working together to solve problems which a single agency cannot afford to solve on its own.

Complete reviews of transportation, environment and recreational issues are located in other sections of this Plan.

PLAN CONCEPT

As population growth occurs in Athens County, the community facilities that serve the county will need to adapt. The concept of this comprehensive plan centers on providing appropriate levels of facilities and services that keep pace with reasonable levels of population growth. In order to accommodate this growth or to provide better services, the addition of new facilities may not necessarily be the best solution. Using existing facilities more efficiently and rehabilitating existing structures may be the best approach. When new facilities are needed, it is important to arrange them to work with the land and make use of existing infrastructure.

This Plan suggests that the existing community facilities are adequate for the existing needs of its residents to the year 2030. This Plan recognizes the need for continued evaluation of emergency service provision, particularly fire departments, as population increases. The recent addition of a station in Shade, as part of the Richland Area Fire Station, has filled a large gap that existed in the south central portion of Athens County.

Any increased need for community services may require expansion of the existing facilities. Energy efficiency, multiple transportation options, hazard and safety planning, and adaptive reuses are important goals of county residents and should be

considered with all facility plans. This Plan contains goals and policies that address population growth and continued updates to the existing facilities to increase their usefulness.

GOALS & POLICIES

GOAL 1: Adequacy, Distribution, and Utilization

Community facilities will be well-planned to meet the needs of county residents.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. The County Commissioners should hold an annual meeting with department heads to conduct facility planning.
- B. County Commissioners should insure that citizens have input in the planning process for new community facilities and changes to existing facilities.
- C. The technical review committee of the Regional Planning commission may assist with site planning for new county-owned facilities.

GOAL 2: Sustainability and Preservation

New and rehabilitated community facilities should be constructed utilizing sustainable practices.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. Whenever feasible, rehabilitate existing buildings rather than build new facilities.
- B. The following may be considered and encouraged during construction or rehabilitation of community facilities:
 - Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) principles.
 - Historic preservation.
 - Natural resource preservation that includes soils, sensitive areas, water, and vegetation.
 - Universal design for aging and disabled populations.
 - An architectural style that fits in with surroundings.
 - Use of local and regional building materials and design professionals.
- C. Community facilities should be accessible by foot, bicycle and public transit whenever possible.
- D. Facilities should receive routine and adequate maintenance to insure their longevity and efficiency.
- E. The County Commissioners should maintain a priority list for upgrades to community facilities.

LAND USE

Chapter 11 Highlights:

- Land Cover
- Land Suitability
- Flood Hazard Mitigation
- Growth
- The Hocking River Valley
- Site Planning
- Planning Tools

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

To promote land uses in Athens County that help to realize the goals established in the Vision Statement for this Plan.

PROCESS

This Land Use Chapter was drafted apart from the formal task force structure used to write most of the chapters in this Plan. Some ideas generated by the task forces require a planning context whether that is analysis of existing or needed legislation, land use trends, or the cultural context of planning and land use. An attempt is made here to connect key points from other chapters with existing and future land use.

BACKGROUND

Land use is simply how humans use the earth. In planning there are a variety of categories of land use such as residential, commercial, or agricultural that are used as general descriptions. The general descriptions can then be further refined into more specific land use types within each general category such as single family housing, multifamily housing, or group homes for the general residential category.

In 2005 the Athens County Auditor listed the county land use in the following

categories with accompanying percentage of the total county land (Athens County contains 325,332 acres or 508 square miles):

- Agriculture, 68.71%
- Residential, 15.00%
- Exempt (public, non-taxed), 13.91%
- Commercial, 1.81%
- Industrial, 0.57%

Athens County's land use history is typical of many places in Appalachia. The County is rural and was a resource extraction area for salt brine, oil, gas, timber, coal, clay, sand, and gravel. Agricultural practices on steep and erosion prone soils were often extractive and unsustainable as well, leading to degradation of soil and other resources. This also led to difficult times for small, marginally productive, family-run farm operations. Farm practices shifted to larger holdings and larger equipment to remain profitable. Stricter food standards were required. As a direct result many small-scale farm operations went out of business.

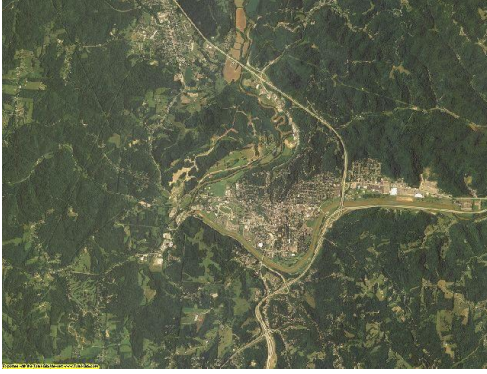


Photo of: land cover in and adjacent to the City of Athens

Photo from: www.landsat.com

The largest change in Athens County land cover over the last half century is the succession of fields to forest. In 1970 there were 120,097 acres listed as woodland and in 2000 this figure had increased to 235,012 acres. This is a natural succession driven by agricultural economics. Re-established forestland creates new challenges and opportunities for different land management techniques and new partnerships.

Periodic, catastrophic flooding impacted cities and towns, although rural areas were not spared negative consequences. Local, state, and federal governments have more recently established hazard mitigation systems to help inform citizens about and predict flood situations and to reduce the impacts of flooding when it does occur.

Flooding is a natural phenomenon that provides benefits, particularly nutrient enrichment of floodplain bottomlands for wildlife and agriculture. It is more cost effective to regulate development of hazard areas rather than to try to keep floodwaters away from traditional floodplains.

The Hocking River travels 95 miles through parts of seven counties on its way to the Ohio River at Hockingport in

Athens County. Its watershed encompasses 1200 square miles and includes important tributaries such as Rush, Monday, Sunday, Margaret, and Federal Creeks. It has provided water, transportation (boat, including canals; rail; and highway), soil, food, beauty, economy, and recreation. Its importance to the county is recognized in the Plan. The Hocking River, its floodplain, and its valley walls cover only a small percentage of overall land, yet are a focus of most of the planning topics addressed in the County Land Use Plan.

Appalachian people have a strong sense of place and culture even while living in an economy that lags behind the remainder of the country. There is a strong sense of self-determination and property rights and an aversion to government influence. Consequently, zoning is not a popular land use tool in southeastern Ohio. Unincorporated Athens County and the villages of Buchtel, Jacksonville, Trimble, Glouster, Chauncey, Coolville, and Amesville are not zoned. The Village of Albany and the cities of Athens and Nelsonville have zoning.

All regions with mapped floodplains have regulations regarding location and type of development activity that is allowed. Subdivision regulations have been adopted in unincorporated Athens County and Athens City. The City of Nelsonville plans to adopt subdivision regulations soon.

The growth of Ohio University fueled residential developments in areas surrounding the City of Athens. The City has physical constraints imposed by the previously mentioned floodplain and steep slopes. When additional housing locations, particularly single family, were needed developers purchased land within several miles from City boundaries and

built subdivisions remote from the public sewage system utilities.

The county is affected by the presence of Ohio University which sets it apart from surrounding counties. The downtown areas of Athens and Nelsonville support restaurants and civic/cultural amenities such as theaters and art galleries. Much of the housing in the county is concentrated in these cities although the number of rental properties to ownership is quite high.

CONDITIONS & TRENDS

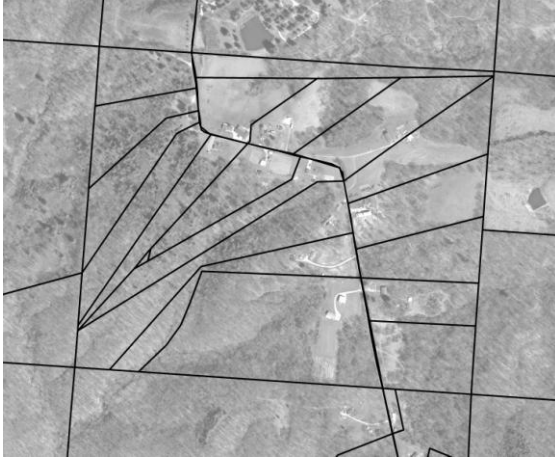
The following points are not meant to be an exhaustive list or detailed information but instead highlight what Athens County sees as important issues with which planning will play a key role. The issues have been discussed throughout the Plan but an attempt is here made to list them together because of their importance to local planning:

- Reversion to a forest land cover provides a myriad of new land management challenges and economic opportunities.
- The Hocking River valley will continue to be a key focal point for planning initiatives.
- Where and how to grow our towns using good planning principles is increasingly important.
- The use of zoning may be considered for any area with public sewer or high housing density.
- Positive trends in agriculture continue. These include grassland farming, rotational grazing, non-timber forest products, and locally produced foods.



*photo of: greenhouse
photo from: greenedgegardens.com*

- Producing bicycle and pedestrian-friendly communities and non-motorized transportation corridors that link population centers is a higher priority.
- The concept of viewsheds is gaining importance for Athens County where tourism is promoted as an economic development tool.
- Watershed groups continue to perform important environmental restoration and are poised to receive additional funding.
- Revitalization of historic towns through a process of infrastructure improvements and business and community development.



*photo of: example of parcelization
photo from: Athens County Regional Planning
Commission*

- The Village of Amesville can serve as an example for alternative approaches in public wastewater management. Public sewer in smaller towns will open housing and business development opportunities, eliminate chronic nuisance situations, improve aesthetics, and offer affordability and small town amenities.
- A Park District may be discussed as recreation and tourism gain in popularity for the County.
- There is an ongoing effort to consider global implications of local land use planning and activity.
- There is a growing interest in treating our dark night skies as a resource. Efforts to reduce light pollution may continue.

The lack of zoning in Athens County poses challenges for effective planning. Zoning assures landowners of the type of development that will occur on adjoining properties and is an effective means to guide and plan growth. Zoning can also work if applied to specific geographic areas, not always the entire county. This can include natural hazard areas, such as

floodplains, or developing areas that may need additional regulation, such as communities with public sewer systems.

Without zoning, planners, leaders, and citizens can use other methods to guide development in the direction that is most appropriate for the community. Athens County has subdivision regulations for land divisions that are less than five acres in size or require new easements for access regardless of lot size. Subdivisions must meet certain design criteria including public road frontage, depth to width ratios, and health department approval. A minimum lot size requirement is 20,000 square feet, but health department regulations for on-lot wastewater management require additional documented resources. With public sewer and water availability, the minimum lot size is 9,450 square feet or 0.217 acres.

Health standards, more frequently than lot dimension requirements, govern land use in order to protect the health and safety of the public. These standards are important for the welfare of the community and the requirements are a crucial consideration in planning regulation. A planning technique that is permitted in Ohio Revised Code is large lot rules. Large lot rules allow local governments to regulate lot splits from four to 20 acres for minimum health, dimension, and access requirements.

Comprehensive plans act as a guide for the direction of a community. They provide a plan for the future development of land in the county. The purpose of the land use plan is to examine all land and natural resource assets in the community and determine what types of land uses would best fit on the land to help achieve the kind of future community that resident's desire. This is accomplished through the goals and policies laid out in each chapter of the

document. Another component of a comprehensive plan that many communities adopt is a Future Land Use Map. A land use map designates areas that are most appropriate for specific uses. These designations are based on features that are particular to the land in a specific area. For example, an industrial designation would be on land that has good access and public services and does not contain sensitive or hazards areas such as steep slopes, wetlands or floodplains.

LAND COVER

Land cover defines what is on the surface of the earth. In Athens County the land cover is mostly vegetation, typical of a rural area. Changing economic conditions, technology, farming techniques and cultural attitudes means that lands that were used for row crop agriculture and grazing in previous decades are reverting to a forest cover.

A detailed list of all the land cover in Athens County is shown in appendix 6. Land cover is scientific and measureable by photographic imagery taken from the air. Mapping specialists use techniques to predict what the cover on the planet's surface is.

LAND USES AND LAND SUITABILITY

The main land uses in the county are summarized below.

FORESTRY AND AGRICULTURE

Forestry is the predominant land use in Athens County. Tree farms provide both traditional timber products as well as

Athens County Land Use (2005)

LAND USE	AREA (ACREAGE)	% OF TOTAL COUNTY
RESIDENTIAL	16,493	5.1
SHRUB/BRUSH RANGELAND	11,941	3.7
DECIDUOUS FORESTLAND	207,783	63.8
MIXED FORESTLAND	11,786	3.6
CROPLAND	22,638	7.0
PASTURE	32,424	10.0
OTHER (INCLUDES INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL, PARKING, WATER, ETC.)	22,422	6.8

edible and nonedible, non-timber forest products. Forestry also provides tourism and recreation opportunities. Most working farms in the county include a woodland component with the forests occupying terrain characterized by steepness, wetness, or poor soils. The mix of forest land and row crop or pasture land is dynamic as forests reclaim former crop fields.

The climax vegetation of Athens County is hardwood forest. Left alone, vacant land will revert in a process succession, to a permanent hardwood forest canopy. The least amount of human-added energy inputs will be used in maintaining a land

cover of trees. Any other land uses require energy input to keep the successional changes from progressing to forest.

New land owners, often owning smaller, rural properties, may benefit from an ongoing educational effort about forest management, wildlife and wildfire management.

Steep slopes, erosion or slip-prone soils, and improper agricultural practices led to problems when row cropping and grazing were poorly done in unsuitable locations. Areas in the county that are best suited for crops and grazing are the more level lands and should include the majority of the floodplains. Soils considered to be prime agricultural soils, though a small percentage overall, should be preserved for agriculture.

RESIDENTIAL

Residential land use makes up 5% of the total land use in the county. Most residents live in incorporated areas. The total estimated population in year 2007 for the county was 63,275. Of this total, 33,667 or 53% lived in incorporated villages or cities.



*Photo of: residential land use
Photo from: Athens County Regional
Planning Commission*

The County population in year 2000 was 62,223 with 32,715 people living in incorporated areas. This means that over 90% of the estimated population increase from 2000-2007 occurred in incorporated areas which are mostly residential land uses. This is considered a positive trend due to the presence of public sewer systems for the expanding population.

To protect groundwater, surface water, aesthetics, and public health, practical wastewater management is essential. In areas not served by a public sewage utility this is accomplished by utilizing soil resources to treat sewage effluent. The effluent must be leached and this requires that adequate ground be available for this purpose.

COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL

Commercial and industrial areas within the county make up only a small percentage of land use. General commercial and industrial land use includes specific land covers of commercial and services, industrial, mixed urban or built-up, utilities, junk yards, educational, religious, health care, race tracks, fairgrounds, transportation, and quarries.



*Photo of: industrial land use
Photo from: Athens County Regional
Planning Commission*

Larger commercial and industrial uses generally require a public sewer utility. Proximity to a transportation artery is also a requisite for many. In Athens County there are few sites that meet the requirements for large scale commercial and industrial land use. New commercial areas can be created along major highways with little regard for access except by motorized vehicles.

MINERAL EXPLORATION/ EXTRACTION

Sand and gravel deposits resulted from glacial outwash after the last glacial period over 10,000 years ago. These materials are used in the construction business and are concentrated in the Hocking River valley. The topsoil is removed before the sand and gravel, leaving the land no longer available to agriculture. After excavation, a large body of water remains. Competition between quarrying and agriculture in the floodplains will likely continue for a long time.



Photo of: Quarries adjacent to the Hocking River

Photo from: Athens County Regional Planning Commission

Coal mining has greatly diminished in Southeastern Ohio because the coal easiest to extract has already been mined, new

regulations make mining more expensive, and the price of energy is still not high enough to justify mining coal in Athens County. While these economic realities and other factors may dampen the drive to mine coal it will be counteracted by higher energy prices.

RECREATION

Hilly, forested terrain, abundant wildlife, a diverse native flora, and a multitude of public lands makes Athens County an ideal location for a variety of outdoor recreation pursuits and help to fuel the tourism industry. The Hock Hocking Adena Bikeway and a growing network of bicycle routes on rural highways and mountain bike trails in the woods provide new opportunities. Hiking trails and horseback riding trails provide other forms of popular recreation. Off road vehicle use on the Wayne National Forest is gaining popularity. Private lands are also available for recreation with owner permission.

SITE PLANNING

When developing a site for residential, commercial, industrial or other purposes, the main concern should be whether the land can support the proposed development. Site planning should respect the existing natural setting and work with these features, attempting to cause little impact to the natural environment while still achieving the desired use.

Some lands are more suitable for development than others. An industrial use, such as a landfill, will have significantly different issues than a single-family residence. A landfill would require considerably more land area than a single-family residence and a landfill will have additional health, safety and environmental issues to consider.

When planning a site for development, the characteristics of the land are important factors. These include vegetation, topography, soils, streams and wetlands, floodplains, and underground mines. Steep slopes are a potential hazard due to erosion and slippage concerns. Development on steep slopes should be avoided or performed only after thorough planning and engineering because of potential environmental damage, safety, and cost concerns. Development should also take into account the soils found at the site. Certain soils are prone to slippage, others are best suited for farmland, and others are associated with wetlands. Farmland soils are limited in Athens County, and should be preserved. Some of the characteristics of good farmland soil include adequate drainage, high fertility, and relatively flat grade. Lands with prime farmland soils not currently used for farming are best preserved as open space so that the land could be used for farming in the future.

Wetlands are sensitive areas and should not be developed. Floodplains are natural hazard areas and any development in these areas is required to comply with FEMA standards. Generally, any development within the floodplain requires a local permit. Construction specifications may include elevation and venting of any structure below flood elevation. There are also standards for the placement of fill. When siting a structure, it is usually easier and more cost effective to avoid areas located within a floodplain.

One of the most important aspects in site plan development is the proximity of utilities and infrastructure. Locating development near existing sewer and water lines, roads, and other utilities and infrastructure reduces the cost of development and concentrates

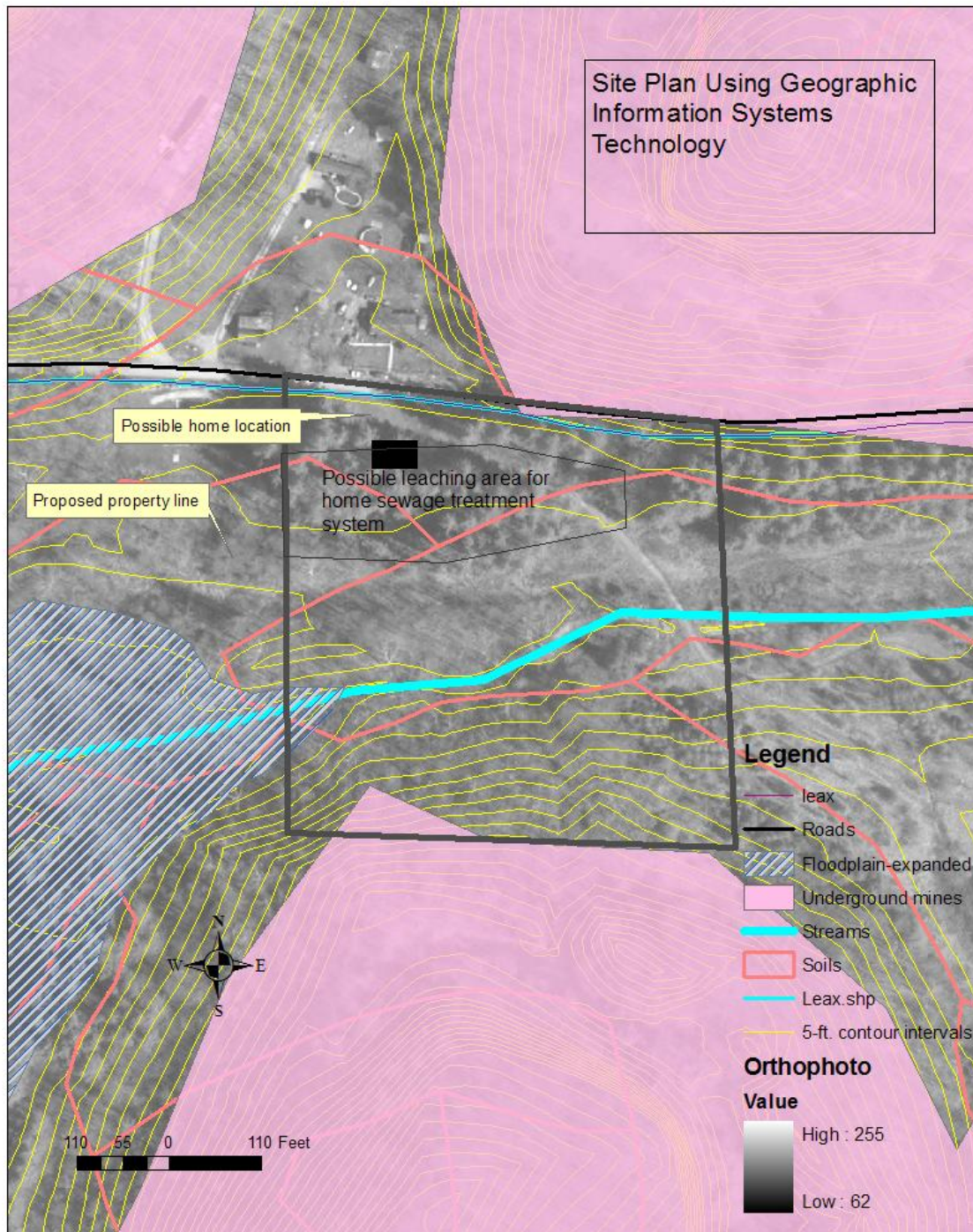
development. This allows for preservation of open space and sensitive areas.

Exhibit 1 is a typical site planning map utilizing geographic information systems technology that is available to planners in Athens County. The map is not intended to show every issue encountered when planning a site but will show many of the land features to be analyzed and some of the considerations.

An aerial photograph is used as the base map or background and different layers of information can be added to help a planner analyze the site. The layers added to this map are soils, roads, floodplain, streams, underground mines, waterlines, and topography. A good site should have:

- Adequate soils for wastewater management and soils that are not prone to slippage.
- Topography that is not too steep for a home site and driveway but allows for good drainage away from the home.
- A home site that is far enough from the roadway to keep noise and dust to a minimum.
- No old mines beneath the surface (or at least a determination from a qualified professional that mine subsidence will not be a problem).
- Freedom from flooding or be properly elevated to minimize flood damage and a driveway that is useable during flooding periods.
- Adequate potable water for domestic use (in Exhibit 1, Le-Ax Water District has an existing 3-inch diameter waterline in the road right-of-way).
- Adequate protection (vegetative buffers, adequate distance of structures and other land uses, proper

Exhibit 1 -- Site Plan



erosion control) of sensitive features such as streams and wetlands.

- Road frontage on a public road or proper platting of an easement for access to the site.

Proper site planning utilizing the geographic information system not only prevents problems but can help locate sites that have the features that are desired, whether they be proximity to water, soils for farming, great views, or good wildlife areas. Site planning is encouraged by Athens County to help protect the many resources described in this Plan.

PLANNING TOOLS

Planning works to improve the welfare of people and their communities by creating more convenient, equitable, healthy, efficient and attractive places for present and future generations. Through the planning process, government leaders, businesses, and residents all play a role in creating vibrant communities.

The planning process helps community members envision the direction their community will grow and helps find the right balance of new development and essential services and protection of the environment. Good planning helps create communities that offer better choices for where and how people live. Although the goal of planning remains constant, planning tools and methods are consistently adapting to changes in the environment, economy, and lifestyle.

State law provides local government with various tools to allow the implementation of planning. The following is a list of laws and programs that relate to planning in Ohio. Items in quotes are taken from

Meck and Pearlman, Ohio Planning and Zoning Law, 2006:

- **Subdivision Regulations** (ORC 711) manage the splitting of property that involves lots of less than five acres or lots requiring a new easement for access. These regulations set minimum standards for lot size and shape, building setback, health standards, safety issues, and specifications for any improvements (water, sewer, roads, etc.) that will be built with the subdivision. Athens County has basic subdivision rules in place. Ohio has given County Commissioners the authority to regulate lot splits for lots up to 20 acres in size if the Commissioners so choose. These rules prevent the creation of flag lots (long and skinny-shaped lots that are created to avoid the construction of new roads and utilities).
- **Zoning** (ORC 303, Counties and ORC 519, Townships) regulates the uses that can occur on a parcel of land. These include the types of use (residential, commercial, industrial), percentage of land that can be covered with buildings, height of buildings, architectural style, signs, lights, setbacks, and density of development. A five-person zoning commission is responsible for drafting the zoning resolution. In unincorporated areas, a zoning resolution is initiated by either the Board of County Commissioners or the Board of Township Trustees. A resolution must be adopted by either Board when they are presented with a petition signed by at least 8% of the total vote cast in the last preceding general election at which a governor was elected in those precincts that will

be affected by the zoning. The resolution must go through a public hearing and is then voted on by the citizenry that will be affected. There is no zoning in effect in unincorporated Athens County.

- **Floodplain Regulations** (ORC 1521) are a type of zoning that pertains to those areas mapped on the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Flood Insurance Rate Maps. Development activity is regulated and is primarily directed at insuring that buildings are elevated in order to minimize property damage. An area known as the floodway (areas closer to the waterway) is off limits to construction unless it can be shown that the development will not cause any rise in flood heights. Some counties have adopted higher than minimum standards requiring buildings to be higher than the base flood level by a specified amount (known as "freeboard" - Athens County uses 6 inches) or requiring that fill proposals demonstrate what will be done so that there is no increase in flood levels when fill is placed (compensatory storage). Athens County does not have a compensatory storage rule.
- **Billboards** (ORC 5516) are regulated by zoning ordinances and by ODOT in cases where there is no zoning. ODOT's process allows billboards that are visible from the interstate highway system, in unzoned areas, by permit, where there is existing commercial land use.
- **Building Codes** (ORC 3781 and 3791) The state of Ohio regulates the construction of residential buildings with more than three dwelling units and the construction of commercial

buildings and places of public assembly. The regulations do not apply to land use, only to the specific architectural plans and specifications. Local governments can enforce building standards provided they have certified building inspectors on staff. Athens County does not have building codes except for the requirements placed on new or substantially improved buildings in floodplains.

- **Mobile Home Park/Recreation Vehicle Park** (ORC 3733) are regulated in situations where "three or more manufactured homes used for habitation are parked either free of charge or for revenue purposes." The state also regulates situations where five or more self-contained recreation vehicles are parked. Minimum lot sizes, lighting, access drives, and public health issues are addressed.
- **Solid Waste Planning** (ORC 3734) House Bill 592 passed the state legislature in 1988. It mandated a 25% per capita reduction in materials going to landfills. The state had several mandates including "reduce reliance on landfills for solid waste management; establish objectives for solid waste reduction, recycling, reuse, and minimization, and a schedule for implementing those objectives; establish restrictions on the types of solid wastes disposed of by landfilling for which alternative management methods are available, such as yard wastes, and a schedule for implementing those restrictions; establish a strategy for legislation and administrative action to promote markets for recycled materials and state use of such materials; establish a program for separation and disposal of household hazardous waste."

Detailed solid waste planning is handled at the local level by single or multi-county solid waste districts. Athens and Hocking Counties make up the local solid waste district. A district solid waste plan is prepared every 10 years and must include an inventory of solid waste and solid waste facilities; a 10-year projection of population changes; a 10-year projection of solid waste amounts and composition; a strategy for the identification of additional solid waste facilities needed; “an implementation schedule covering financing, expansion, and closure of existing facilities, establishment of new facilities, and implementation of recycling, reuse, and waste reduction programs.”

The Ohio EPA licenses all solid waste, infectious waste, and hazardous waste facilities. The provisions governing hazardous waste facilities contain a state preemption of local regulations.

- **Agricultural Districts** (ORC 929.01 to 929.05) rules allow owners of agricultural land to apply to the County Auditor to place land in an agricultural district for five years provided that for the previous three years the land was used exclusively for agriculture. The land area must total at least 10 acres or must have produced an annual gross income of at least \$2,500 or the owner must have evidence of an anticipated gross income equal to that amount. Once in an agricultural district, land is taxed at an agricultural use rate rather than its true market value rate. Land in an agricultural district is also exempt from special assessments for sewer,

water, or electrical service without permission of the owner. If the owner withdraws the land from an agricultural use, they must pay a penalty to the Auditor.

An owner of agricultural land can receive tax relief without having to be in an agricultural district. Application can be made to the County Auditor for participation in the Current Agricultural Use Valuation (CAUV) program. Land is taxed at the current agricultural use but does not have the other protections of land in an agricultural district. Owners of CAUV land that is converted to a non-agricultural use will be charged an amount equal to the savings during the preceding three tax years.

- **Agricultural Easements** (ORC 5301.691) Authority is given to the state Department of Agriculture and to counties, townships, and municipalities to purchase agricultural easements. An agricultural easement is defined in part in ORC 5301.67(C) as “an incorporeal right in interest in land that is held for the public purpose of retaining the use of land predominantly in agriculture and that imposes any limitations on the use or development of the land that are appropriate at the time of creation of the easement to achieve that purpose.” Limited state funds are available for the purchase of agricultural easements. Preference will be given to “areas identified for agricultural protection in local comprehensive land use plans.”
- **Economic Development**
Ohio law gives local governments and non-profit organizations

many useful economic development tools. They include:

- (1) setting aside or clearing and assembling adequate land for business (zoning and urban renewal);
- (2) underwriting risk (industrial development bonds and tax abatement);
- (3) providing amenities and infrastructure (tax increment financing and urban renewal); and
- (4) creating an ongoing economic development financing and promotion capacity (community improvement corporations, other non-profit organizations).

In addition, the Ohio Department of Development offers technical assistance and development incentives beyond those available locally."

- **Community Reinvestment Areas** (ORC 3735.65 to 3735.70)
Municipalities and counties may create community reinvestment areas that allow for 100% abatement of real estate taxes (on property improvements) for up to 10 years. This is an incentive for property owners to invest in their property in geographic areas that local government wants to see rehabilitated.
- **Tax Increment Financing** (ORC 5709.40 to 5709.43, 5709.73 to 5709.75, and 5709.77 to 5709.81) "is a method for funding public improvements in an area slated for redevelopment by recapturing, for a time, all or a portion of the increased property tax revenue that may result if the redevelopment stimulates private reinvestment....The increased

assessed value of these added improvements-the tax increment-is exempt from taxation for the period beginning with the ordinance's effective date and continuing until the termination date specified in the ordinance or until the costs of any public improvements connected with the project are paid in full." In lieu of taxes, payments are made to a tax increment fund.

- **Enterprise Zones** (ORC 5709) can be designated by petitioning and obtaining the approval of the Ohio Department of Development. A zone must meet certain economic criteria that show it is distressed. Tax incentives in the zone are granted to businesses that have established, expanded, renovated, or occupied a facility. The business "must also show it has hired at least 25% of its nonretail employees from at least one of the following categories: the unemployed within the county; those receiving aid to dependent children, welfare, or unemployment compensation or participants in several related state programs; the handicapped; those who are eligible for federal job training funds; or those who live within the enterprise zone."
- **Community Improvement Corporations (CIC)** (ORC 1724) may be established to advance, encourage, and promote the industrial, economic, commercial, and civic development of a community or area. To achieve these purposes, a CIC has a wide range of state-authorized powers. It may borrow money, make loans to persons refused conventional

- bank financing, acquire, sell, and lease real estate, and acquire personal property, stock, and other securities.” Athens County has an active CIC.
- **Cooperative Economic Development Agreements** (ORC 701.07) can be entered into for resolving conflicts over municipal annexation. The agreement may cover issues such as provision of services and permanent improvements, the payment of service fees to a municipality by a township or county, and identification of time periods when annexation will not occur.
 - **Infrastructure** (ORC 164)
The Ohio Public Works Commission was created to administer state bond money for repairs and construction in these areas: roads and bridges; wastewater treatment systems; water supply systems; solid waste disposal facilities; flood control systems; stormwater and sanitary collection storage and treatment facilities. The funds available to Athens County are passed through a 10-county district committee in southeast Ohio. Funds are available by application to a competitive grant/loan program. **Conservation** (ORC 164) – The same district committee for the previously discussed infrastructure program appoints an 11-member natural resources assistance council that is responsible for awarding grants to local political subdivisions or nonprofit organizations from the Clean Ohio Conservation Fund. These funds may be used for open space acquisition.
 - **Park Acquisition and Trail Construction**
The Ohio Department of Natural Resources operates several programs that provide limited funds for park acquisition and maintenance and trail maintenance and construction. Grants are generally on an 80/20 match basis. These programs are titled Nature Works, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and the Recreational Trails Program.
 - **Access Management** (ORC 5552) allows townships and counties to establish rules for management of access onto township or county roadways in order to maintain safety and not diminish the traffic handling capacity of the roadway.

FUTURE LAND USE AND PLAN CONCEPT

The concept for the Land Use chapter is to set the framework for how land is used at present, what are the changes or trends that are occurring, and how planning tools can be used or managed to insure that the land use goals of the Plan can be met with a reasonable timeframe and budget. Some content in other chapters dealt with policy issues or ideas that were not directly land use related. This chapter attempts to deal directly with those land use issues most critical for land planning in the County.

Future land use is discussed in only a general fashion. There are no future land use maps as part of this Plan, although creation of a future land use map is stated as policy. This work will rely on a dedicated Plan Implementation Advisory Committee.

With the absence of zoning it is important to designate certain areas that are best suited for specific types of land use. For example, light and medium commercial areas are best concentrated near residential areas in order to reduce infrastructure impacts. Floodplain areas have some of the most fertile soils and may be best suited for growing crops. Most land in Athens County can grow magnificent hardwood forests. Forests provide the valuable resources of timber, natural buffers, wildlife, water purification, and open spaces.

Land use planning is the combination of art and science that allows citizens to use land and its many resources in order to obtain a good standard of living without diminishing those resources. If a desired resource is being diminished or producing negative byproducts through its use, then further planning investigation can help find different or better ways to use that resource.

The main concepts put forward in this Plan can be summarized as follows:

- Concentrate residential and commercial developments in areas with public sewer available.
- Encourage opportunities for citizens to walk and bike to work, shop and play.
- Preserve the scenery and history of Athens County through education.
- Strive to protect environmentally sensitive lands and agricultural lands for future generations.
- Careful consideration should be given to utilities placement.
- Strive to provide public sewer to areas with dense settlements.

- Promote good planning communication among county departments and units of local government, particularly for land use in the city's 3-mile planning region.

GOALS & POLICIES

Goal 1: Promote Planning Education.

Provide the general public with information about planning.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. The Regional Planning Commission should provide a quarterly media information sheet with updates.
- B. Perform weekly updates to the RPC website.
- C. Provide landowners with knowledge about how best to conduct forest and land management.
- D. The County should work with the Soil and Water Conservation District to promote mutual education goals.

Goal 2: Utilize Planning Tools and Resources.

Decision makers should assess available planning resources and use them to guide the County.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. Create a future land use map using this Plan's policies as a guide.
- B. Only locate new utilities after conducting a detailed planning assessment that includes site assessment, impact analysis, and carrying capacity of the resources.
- C. Give careful consideration to locating utilities.
- D. The County could adopt an access management program for its roadways.
- E. The County may work with non-profit organizations to purchase land and easements for conservation purposes.
- F. The County should continue to recognize the importance of the Geographic Information System and may provide support, both financial and in-kind, to insure its longevity.

Goal 3: Natural hazard planning is a priority.

Continue to incorporate natural hazard planning into local decision making.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. Apply to the Community Rating System for floodplain management and set policy to continually improve the rating.
- B. The Natural Hazard Planning Committee should continue to oversee grant applications and administer the program.

Goal 4: Provide particular attention to planning for the Hocking River Valley.

The Hocking River Valley is a geographic area that encapsulates most of the planning issues discussed in this Plan and deserves special attention.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. The Hocking River Valley may be a special overlay designation on the future land use map.
- B. The River Valley is one of the county's most scenic assets and efforts should be made to preserve its beauty.
- C. Encourage conservation easements in the Hocking River floodplain.

Goal 5: Development practices.

Planners should recognize positive land uses and promote them and should recognize negative land uses and curtail them or minimize their impacts.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. Encourage appropriate agricultural land uses including grassland farming, rotational grazing, small scale uses, and forest production.
- B. Seek the means to construct alternative public sewer systems in smaller towns and villages in order to allow areas for some residential and commercial growth. The Village of Amesville can be used as a model.

- C. Efforts should be made to keep open spaces, agricultural, and forest lands intact.
- D. Work with forestry practitioners and private landowners to cooperatively create economic opportunity from managed timber harvest.

Goal 6: Implementation.

When feasible the County Commissioners should strive to implement policies of this Plan.

Policies for Consideration:

- A. The County Commissioners should appoint a Plan Implementation Advisory Committee to oversee and monitor Plan implementation.
- B. The Plan should be updated every 5 years.
- C. The County Commissioners may encourage policies that consider state, federal, and international issues such as climate change whenever possible.

ATHENS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN APPENDIX A

PLANNING HISTORY OF ATHENS COUNTY

Due to its low population density, rugged topography, and extractive industrial past, land use planning in Athens County, until recently, has not been a priority for local governments. The first settlers arrived in the late 1700's and early 1800's. The settlers lived in small towns laid out in a traditional street grid pattern often on level floodplains. Water for transportation and power for the grist mills determined the early settlement patterns. Due to their location along waterways, flooding has plagued the development of many of the county's communities. Community growth was generally not undertaken with a long-term, planned approach.



*Photo of: White's Mill and the Hocking River
Photo from: (Google website)*

The growth of communities in the coal mining regions of northern and western Athens County was tied to the rise and fall of the mining economy. Towns were located close to the mines and in some cases were owned by the mining company.

Housing and commercial lots were created with little regard for issues like crowding and open space. Public water was not available in many places until the 1960's. Public sewer was first available in the cities of Nelsonville and Athens.

Chauncey obtained a sewer system in the 1950's; The Plains in the 1960's; Glouster, Trimble, and Jacksonville in the 1980's, and Buchtel and Albany shortly after 2000. The dispersed settlement pattern in Athens County means that public sewer is not available to many areas.

The condition of housing stock, while showing signs of improvement in recent decades, has lagged behind other parts of Ohio. With buildings often not well constructed and with limited maintenance, the aging housing inventory often meant that living standards lagged. Census data indicates that housing stock has generally improved, but that there are sub-regions where housing standards are still too low to be acceptable. Only the Cities of Athens and Nelsonville have code enforcement to insure that minimum health and safety standards are met. The Athens City-County Health Department has also incorporated a more scientific approach with site analysis to insure that minimum health standards can be achieved with home sewage treatment systems. Housing needs of low and moderate income people are met by several local non-profit agencies including Tri-County Community Action Agency, Athens County Metropolitan Housing Authority, and Habitat for Humanity. There are never enough funds to take care of the great need for improved housing opportunity for poor and disadvantaged people. Tri-County Community Action Agency has been conducting housing rehabilitation programs since the mid 1970's and prepares the County's Housing Improvement Program Plan every three years. The Metropolitan Housing

Authority provides government rental subsidies for eligible individuals and families. Habitat for Humanity works with eligible families to assist them with building a new home.

Athens County, Athens City, and the City of Nelsonville produced a series of planning documents in the 1960's and 1970's. A list of these documents is provided in Appendix 3. With impetus from elected officials, concerned citizens, and local agencies such as the Ohio State University Extension Service and the City-County Health Department, attention turned to the importance of good land planning decisions and to the negative ramifications of poor land use planning or lack of planning altogether. There was recognition that planning decisions had to be coordinated among local governments. The Athens County Regional Planning Commission was organized in the late 1960's as one of the efforts to improve planning and coordination. The principal rural water systems in the County are Le-Ax, Sunday Creek, and Tupper Plains-Chester. The County Commissioners also had an above-ground tank built and purchase water from the City of Athens in order to serve The Plains. The availability of rural water systems, particularly with the construction of the Le-Ax system in southwestern and western Athens County, led to the growth of dispersed residential subdivisions. Regulations were subsequently adopted by Athens City and County to insure that new subdivisions met minimum standards for transportation, sewer, water, and guidelines for home sites. The need to ensure that appropriate industrial areas are provided was also recognized and several industrial areas were designated on West Union Street in the City of Athens and on Poston Road outside of The Plains.

Zoning as a land use regulatory tool is not widespread in Appalachia Ohio. Within Athens County only the Cities of Athens and Nelsonville and the Village of Albany are zoned. Athens City adopted zoning in 1969, Nelsonville in 1998, and Albany in 2005. Twice previously Nelsonville Council had adopted zoning regulations which were repealed by voter referendum. Zoning appears to be a mainstay in Nelsonville with the 1998 passage of the zoning ordinance.

Floodplain management is a high priority for local governments that have floodplain areas within their jurisdictions. Floodplain mapping improvements and a major effort by the state of Ohio in the 1980's helped to make floodplain management a local reality. A series of significant flooding events in the late 1990's and in 2004 and 2005 pointed out the importance of maintaining an active floodplain management program. Specifications regarding construction techniques and required elevations are enforced by Mayors, City Managers, and Service Directors in the incorporated areas and by the Regional Planning Commission in unincorporated areas. The effects of severe storms, primarily hurricanes and flooding, at the national level prompted the federal government to require that local governments prepare hazard mitigation plans in order to be eligible for federal disaster relief in the event of a disaster. These plans were prepared by the county and all incorporated jurisdictions between 2002 and 2005. Successful mitigation plans that involved property buyouts were written for Amesville, Doanville, Sugar Creek, and Glouster following floods that occurred in 1997, 1998, and 2004. Federal funds are combined with local funds and in-kind to purchase properties that were substantially damaged in flood prone areas. Damaged homes are demolished and properties are subsequently owned by

local government and must remain as permanent open space.

The County first hired planning staff in the mid 1970's when federal funding was available to prepare land use plans and implement programs, primarily aimed at assisting communities with high numbers of low- and moderate-income (LMI) citizens. Many communities in Appalachia met the LMI requirements. Planning staff worked for a Council of Governments whose Board consisted of the three County Commissioners, the Mayor of the City of Athens, and two Athens City Council members. Ample federal grant funding allowed for a staff of a dozen employees dealing with administration of housing and infrastructure programs.

Funding for these programs received a series of cutbacks with changes in federal administrations beginning in 1980. The planning office, under the Council of Governments, was eventually dissolved due to funding and local politics. Tri-County Community Action Agency stepped in to plug some of the gaps with Community Development Block Grant administration. The County Engineer used his staff to continue the County's subdivision and floodplain management programs. In 1992, the County made a commitment to more comprehensive floodplain and subdivision management programs and hired a full time Planning Director. An Administrative Assistant position was subsequently created in 1998. Since the mid 1960's the Athens County Regional Planning Commission has continued to meet and provide planning assistance to the County Commissioners and other local governments. The need for a Comprehensive Plan update is recognized by the Athens County Commissioners. Managing local government is increasingly complicated by new challenges posed by an increasing

population, advances in communication technology, new highway construction, new mandates from the state and federal levels of government, business startups and closings, rising costs, and a plethora of related planning issues and opportunities. It is hoped that the next chapter in local land use planning will be the successful adoption, support, and implementation of the 2009 Athens County Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

ATHENS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN APPENDIX B

AUTHORITY FOR PLAN PREPARATION

The Ohio Revised Code (ORC 713.21) gives County Commissioners the authority to create and support a Regional Planning Commission. ORC 713.23 gives Regional Planning Commissions the authority to prepare plans. The following is excerpted from ORC 713.23:

- (A) The regional or county planning commission may make studies, maps, plans, recommendations and reports concerning the physical, environmental, social, economic, and governmental characteristics, functions, services, and other aspects of the region or county, respectively. The commission may make such studies, maps, plans, recommendations, and other reports as to areas outside the region or county concerning the physical, environmental, social, economic, and governmental characteristics, functions, services and other aspects which affect the development and welfare of the region or county respectively, as a whole or as more than one political unit within the region or county.
- (B) The duties of the planning commission include, but are not limited to
 - (1) Preparing the plans, including studies, maps, recommendations, and reports on
 - (a) Regional goals, objectives, opportunities, needs and

standards, priorities and policies to realize such goals and objectives.

- (b) Economic and social conditions.
 - (c) The general pattern and intensity of land use and open space.
 - (d) The general land, water, and air transportation systems and utility and communication systems.
 - (e) General locations and extent of public and private works, facilities, and services.
 - (f) General locations and extent of areas for conservation and development of natural resources and the control of the environment.
 - (g) Long-range programming and financing of capital projects and facilities.
- (2) Promoting understanding of and recommending administrative and regulatory measures to implement the plans of the region.
 - (3) Collecting, processing, and analyzing social and economic data, undertaking continuing studies of natural and human resources, coordinating such research with other government agencies, educational institutions, and private organizations.

- (4) Contracting with and providing planning assistance to other units of local government, councils of governments, planning commissions, and joint planning councils; coordinating the planning with neighboring planning areas; cooperating with the state and federal governments in coordinating planning activities and programs in the region.
- (5) Reviewing, evaluating, and making comments and recommendations on proposed and amended comprehensive land use, open space, transportation, and public facilities plans, projects, and implementing measures of local units of government; and making recommendations to achieve compatibility in the region.
- (6) Reviewing, evaluating, and making comments and recommendations on the planning, programming, location, financing, and scheduling of public facility projects within the region and affecting the development of the area.
- (7) Undertaking other studies, planning, programming, conducting experimental or demonstration projects found necessary in the development of plans for the region or county, and coordinating work and exercising all other powers necessary and proper for discharging its duties.
- (8) Carrying out all of the functions and duties of a director of economic development under division (B) of section 307.07 of the

Revised Code pursuant to any agreement with a county under division (A)(1) of that section.

Athens County Comprehensive Land Use Plan Appendix C

PREVIOUS PLANS AND STUDIES

- 1968 Sewer and Water Study
- 1969 Land Use, Traffic and Transportation, Community Facilities and Utilities Studies
- 1969 An Economic Base and Population Study
- 1969 Natural Resources Study
- 1970 Recreation and Tourism Study
- 1970 Industrial Development Study
- 1970 The physical and Economic Influence on Athens County of the Current and Planned Future Development of Ohio University
- 1970 Comprehensive Development Plan
- 1978 Comprehensive Land Use Plan
- 1989 Land Use Plan
- 1991 Hocking River Land Use Plan

ATHENS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN APPENDIX D

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Sue Foster, Co-Chair
Karl Runser, Co-Chair
Remaining members are the Co-Chairs of the task forces

TASK FORCE MEMBERS COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Bob Eberts, Co-Chair
Ted Linscott, Co-Chair
Pamela Callahan
Rich Campitelli
John Costanzo
George Eberts
Milena Miller
Andrea Reik

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Leslie Schaller, Co-Chair
Jennifer Simon, Co-Chair
Paige Alost
Teny Bannick
Angie Cantrell
Linda Clark
Michael Daniels
Lissa Jollick
Joe McGowan
Tina Meunier
Robin Stewart
Paula Tucker
John Wozny
Mary Ellen Wozny

ENVIRONMENTAL & NATURAL RESOURCES

Tim Traxler, Co-Chair
Rory Lewandowski, Co-Chair
Darren Cohen
Cheryl Coon
Donna Goodman

Dick Hogan
Dan Imhoff
Kevin Lewis
Lorraine McCosker
Cindy Riviere
Mike Steinmaus
Pete Woyar

HERITAGE, ARTS & CULTURE

Sandra Sleight-Brennan, Co-Chair
Gerry Hilferty, Co-Chair
Jackie Fokes, Co-Chair
Paul Harper
Patty Mitchell
Carol Patterson
Emily Prince
Mary Ann Reeves
Cecilia Rinaldi
Brenda Ruth
Susan Urano

HOUSING

Ed Baum, Co-Chair
Anita Mondo, Co-Chair
Keith Andrews
Teny Bannick
Barb Conover
Kathy Durand
Debby Holtel
Craig Kinzelman
Tom Lovdal
Doug Stanley

PARKS & RECREATION

Penne Smith, Co-Chair
Nancy Walker, Co-Chair
Jim Bernosky
Greg Broadhurst
Phil Cantino
Chris Knisely
John Knouse
Chad Wilberger

TRANSPORTATION

Elaine Mather, Co-Chair
Ann Fugate, Co-Chair

Al Blazevecius
Ann Bonner
Marshall Brudno
Mike Canterbury
Ken Carley
Stehanie Filson
Ted Foster
Deb Fought
David Gedeon
Steve Jeffers
Marco McVey
Archie Stanley
Robert Wiley
Tom Wolf

PLANNING STAFF

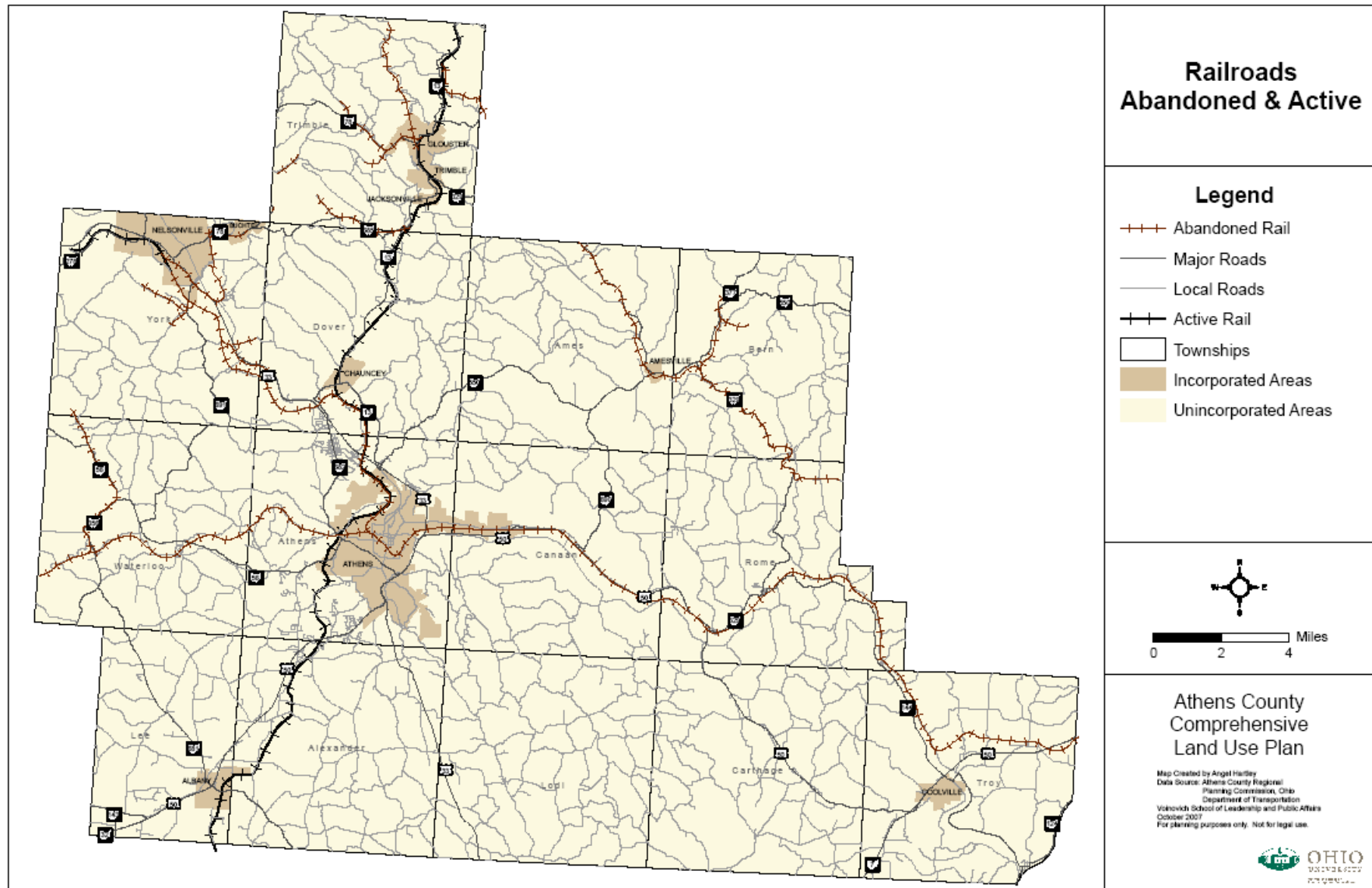
Bob Eichenberg, Planning Director
Linda Watkins, Administrative Assistant
Lori Burchett, Graduate Intern

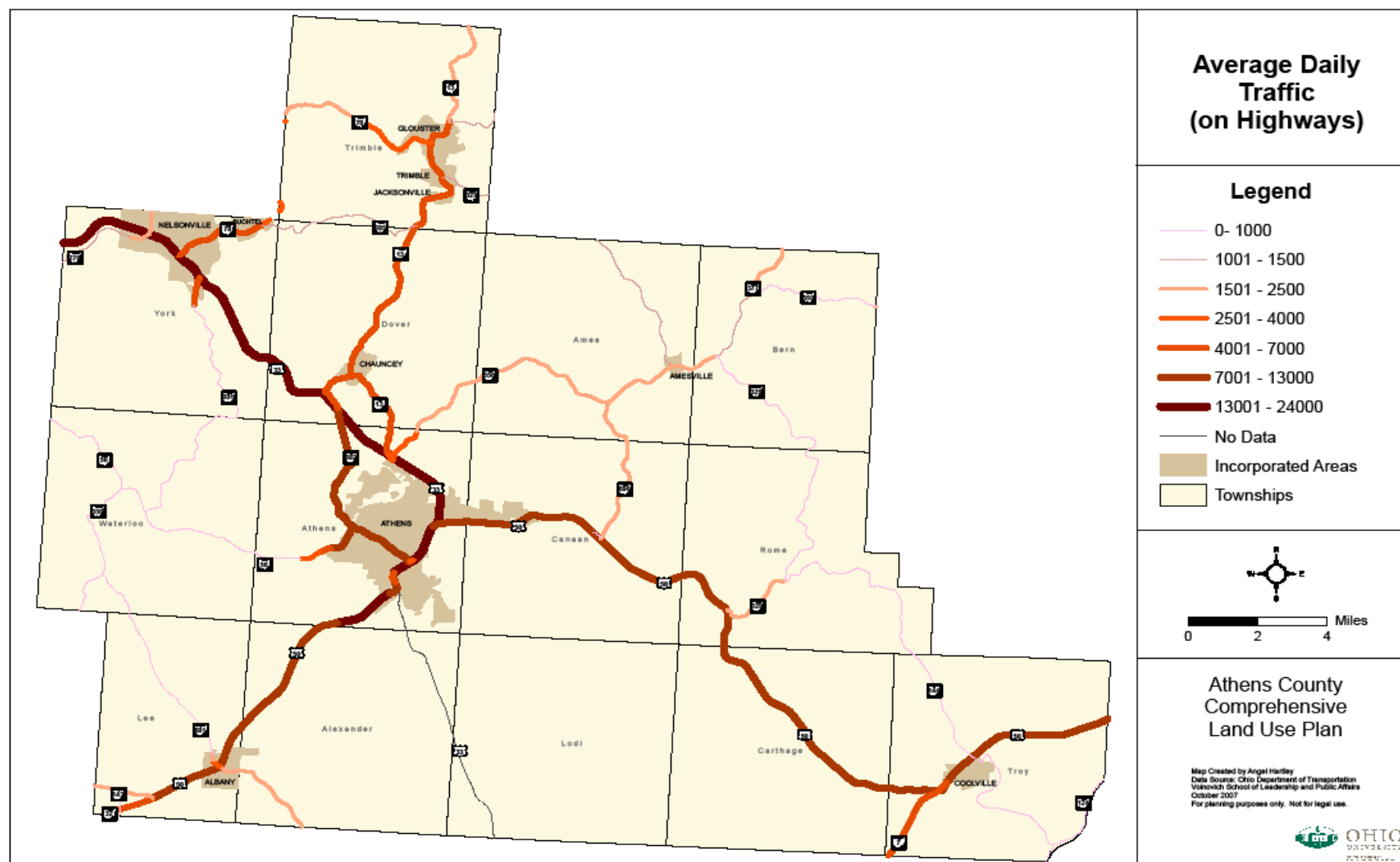
UTILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE

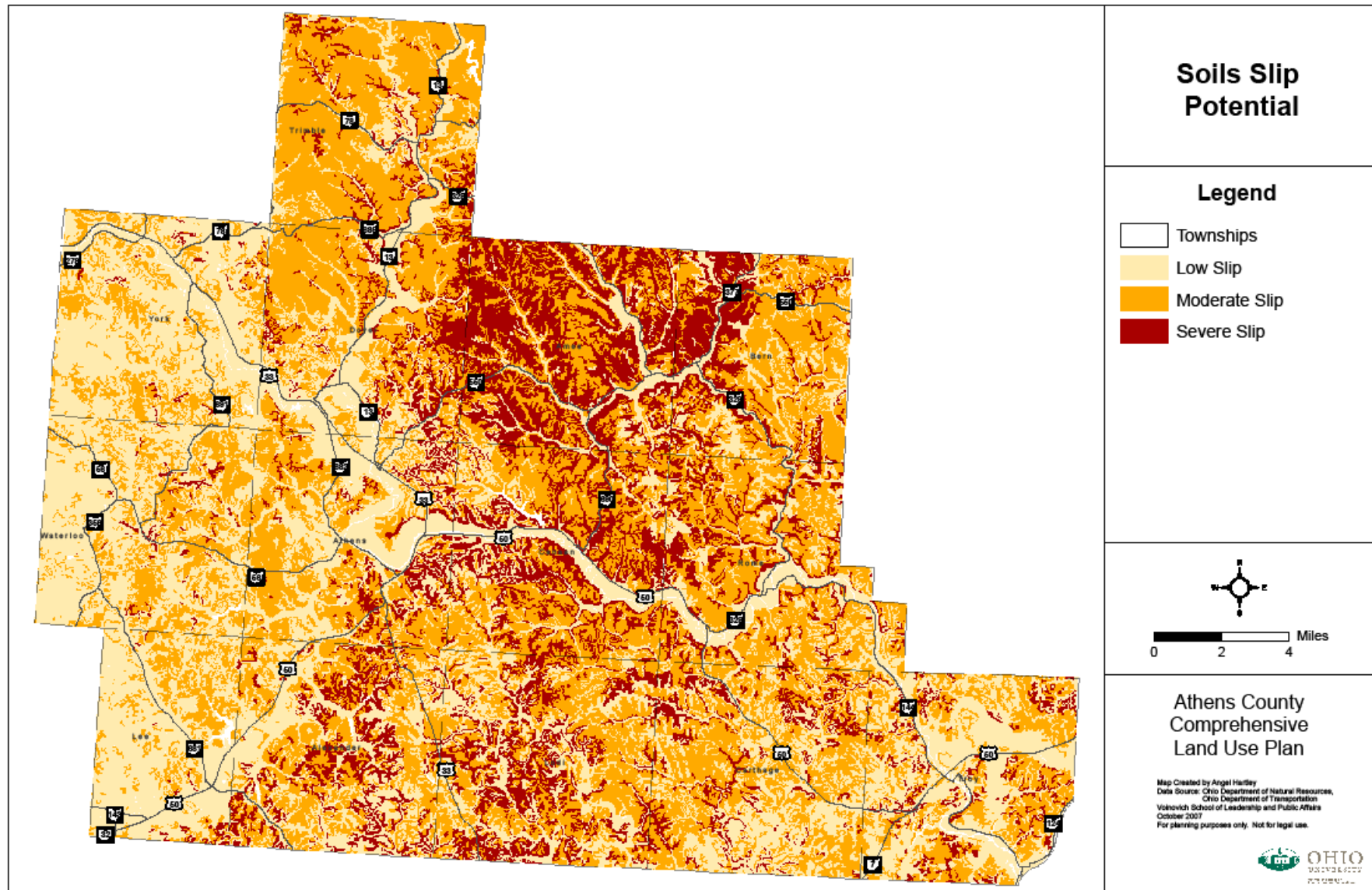
Kathryn Cooper, Co-Chair
Chuck Hammer, Co-Chair
Michael Barr
Scott Brooks
Thad Dye
Muriel Grim
Anita James
Jason Lawrence
Larry Payne
Jessica Stroh
Larry Wood

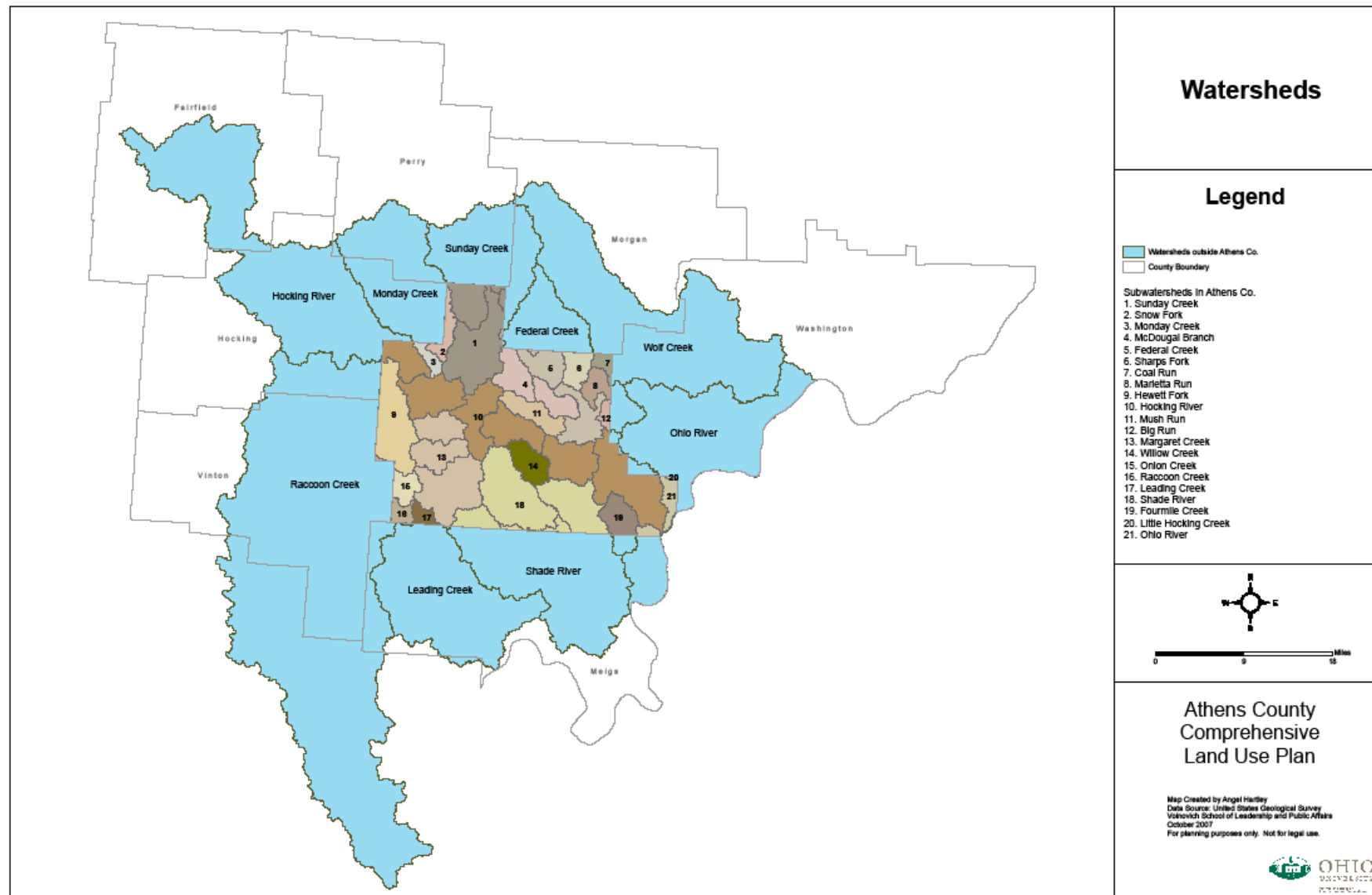
ATHENS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN APPENDIX E

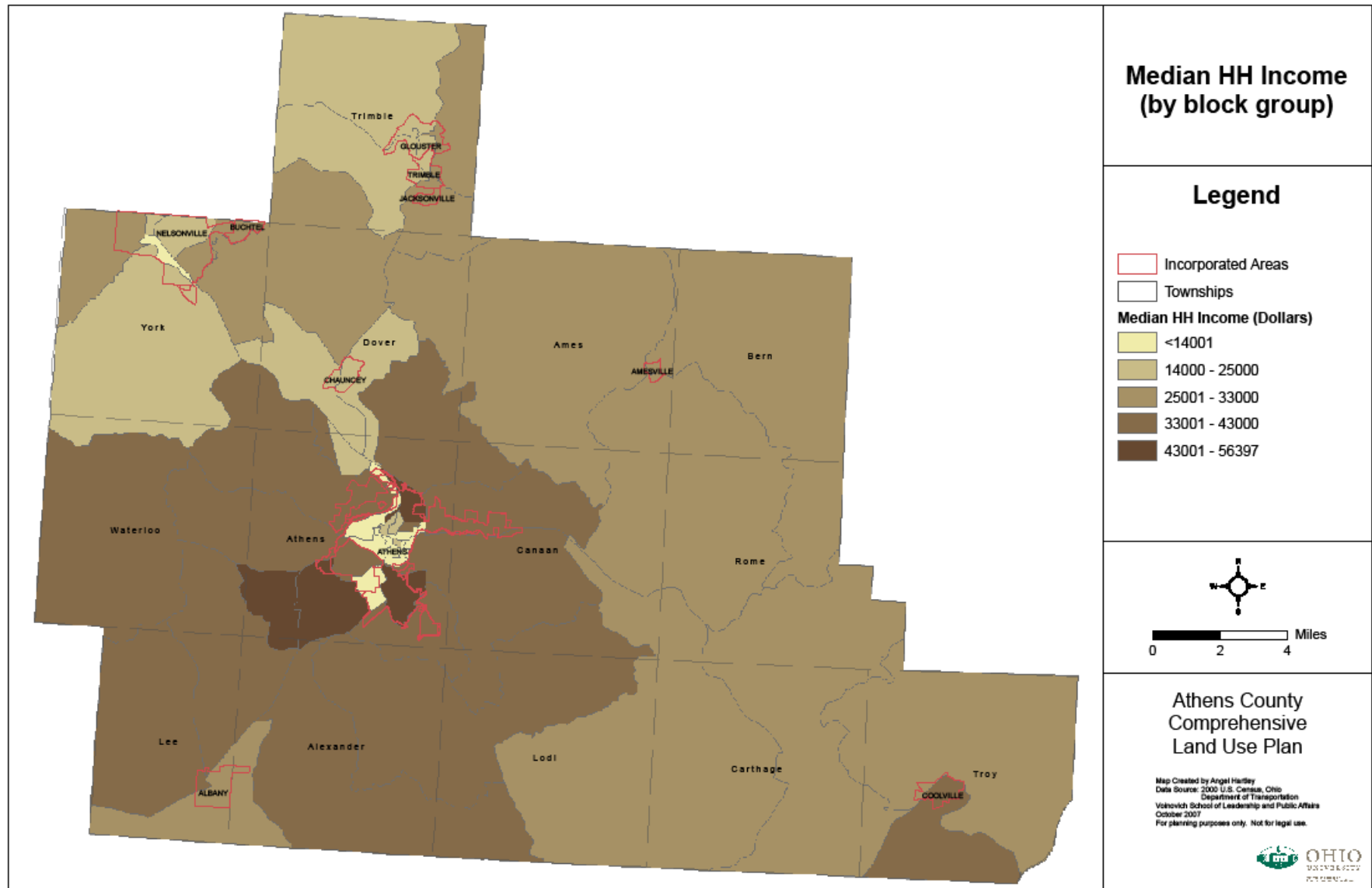
MAPS

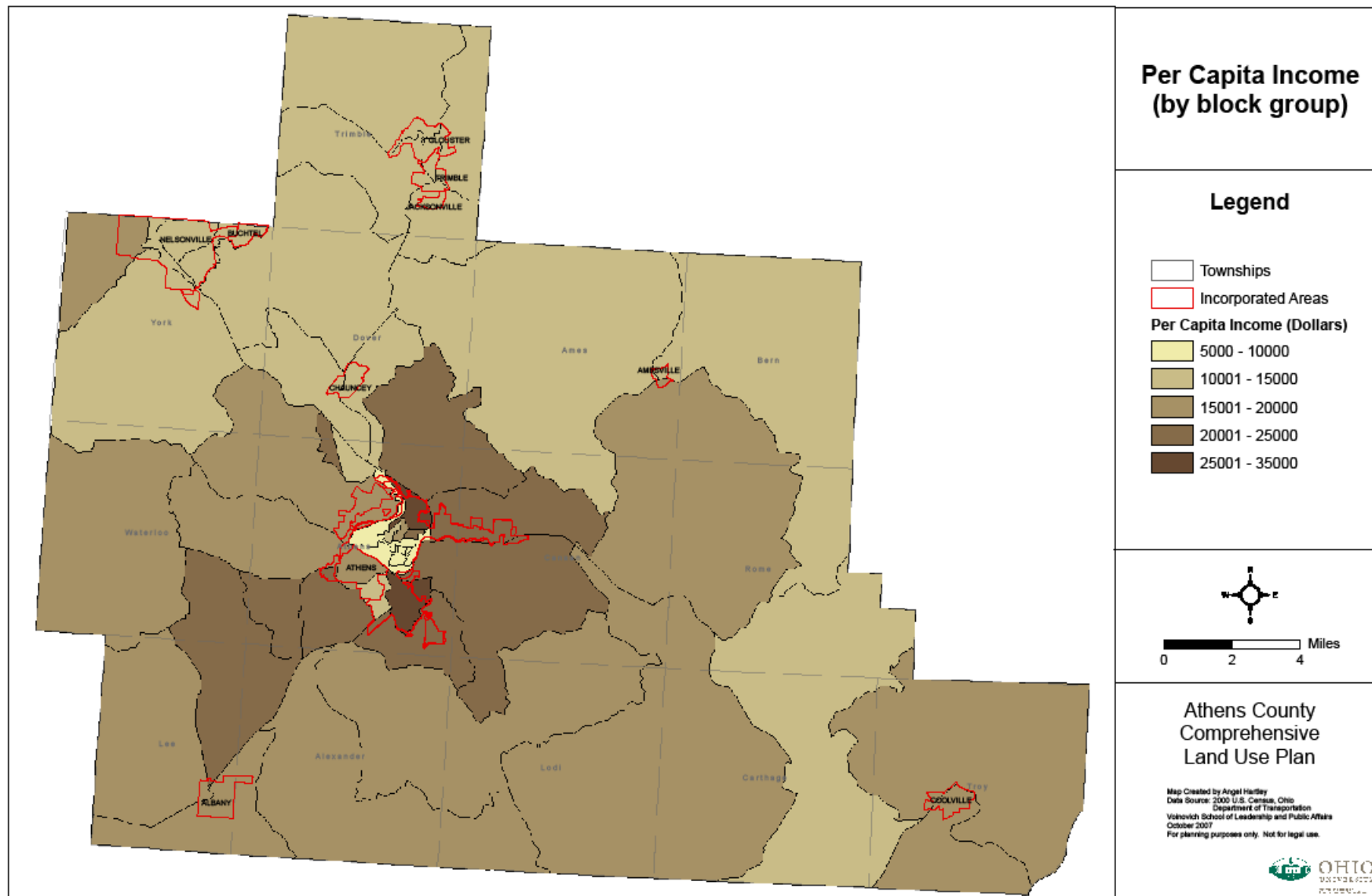


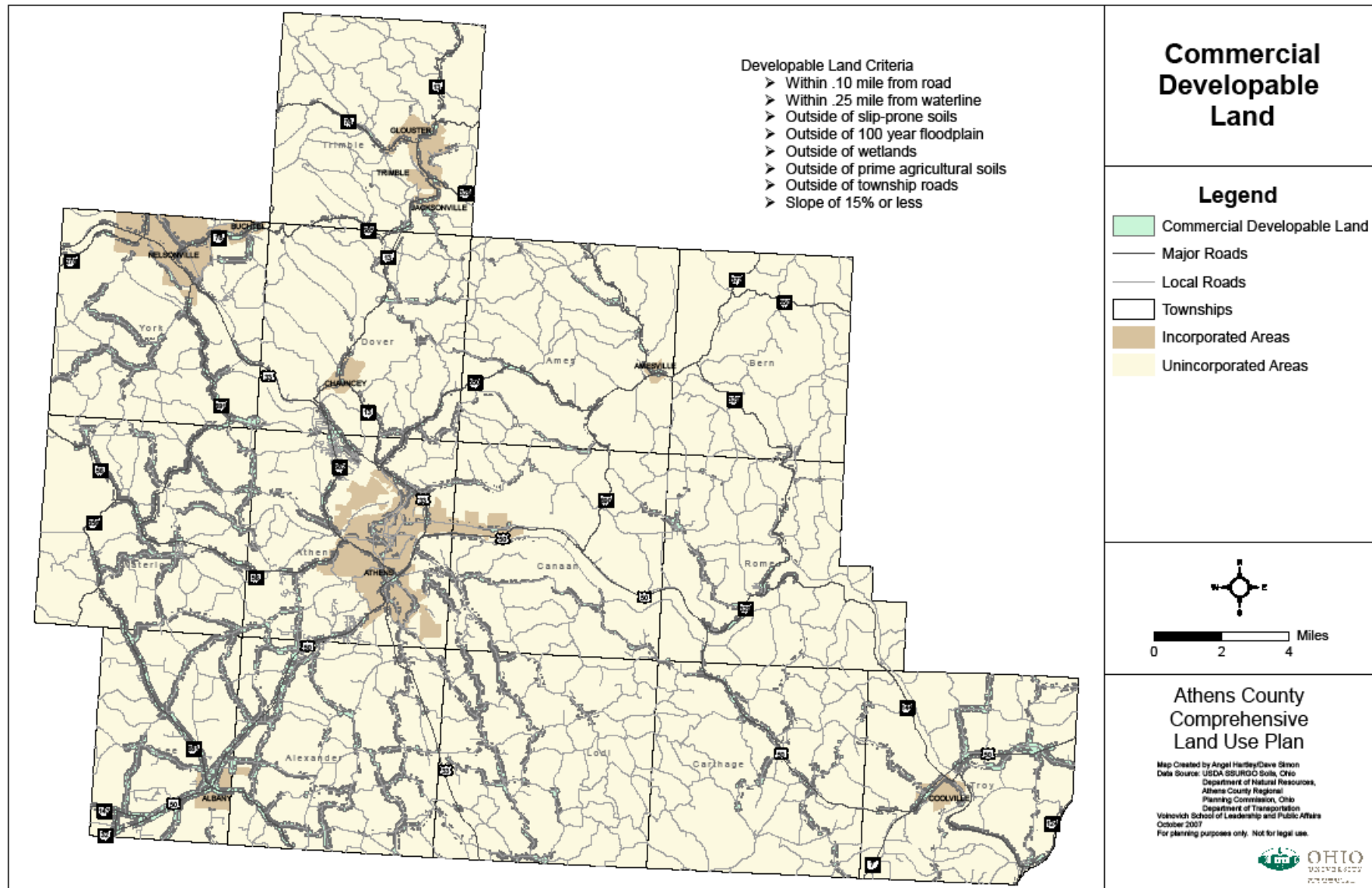


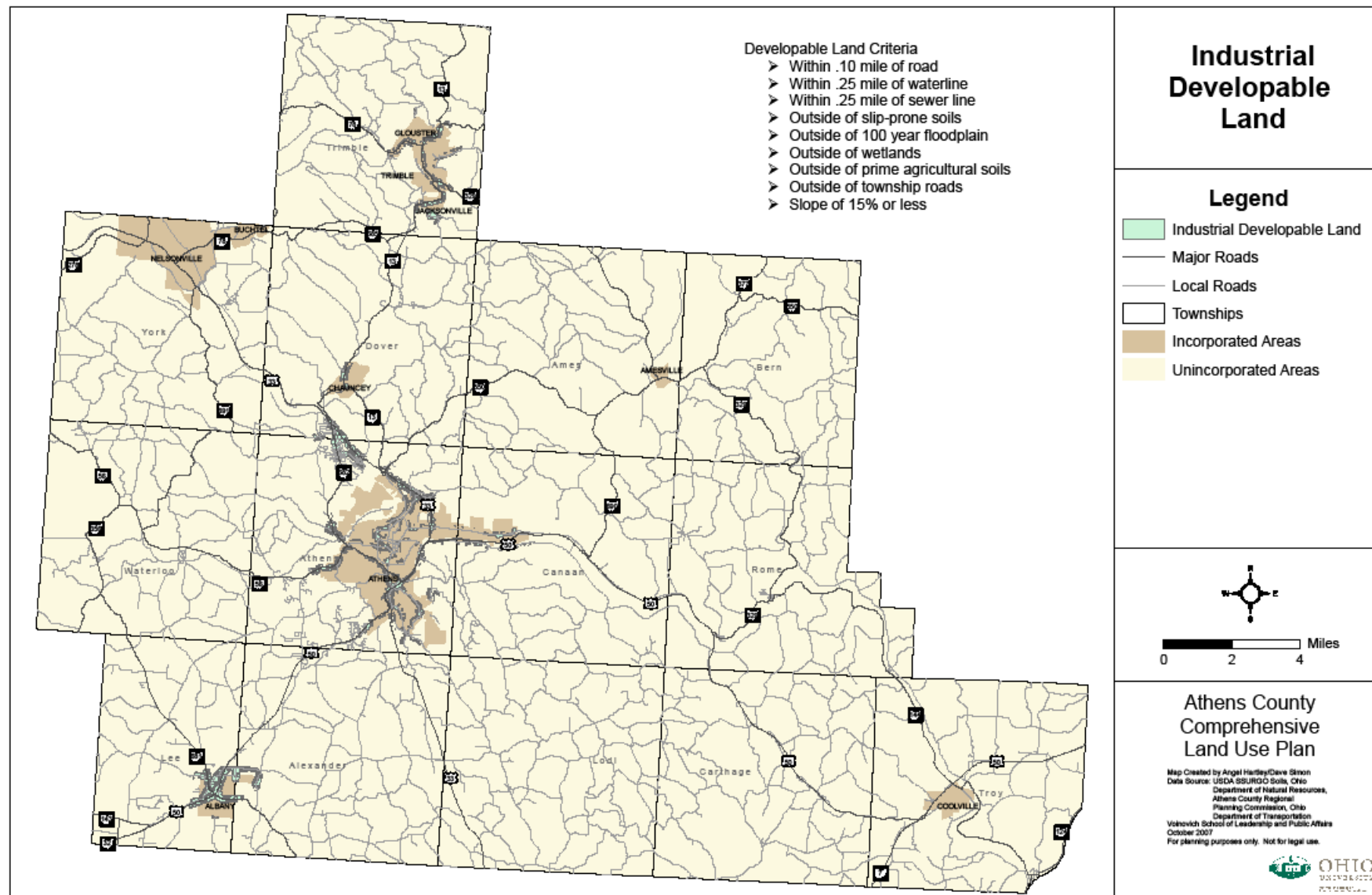


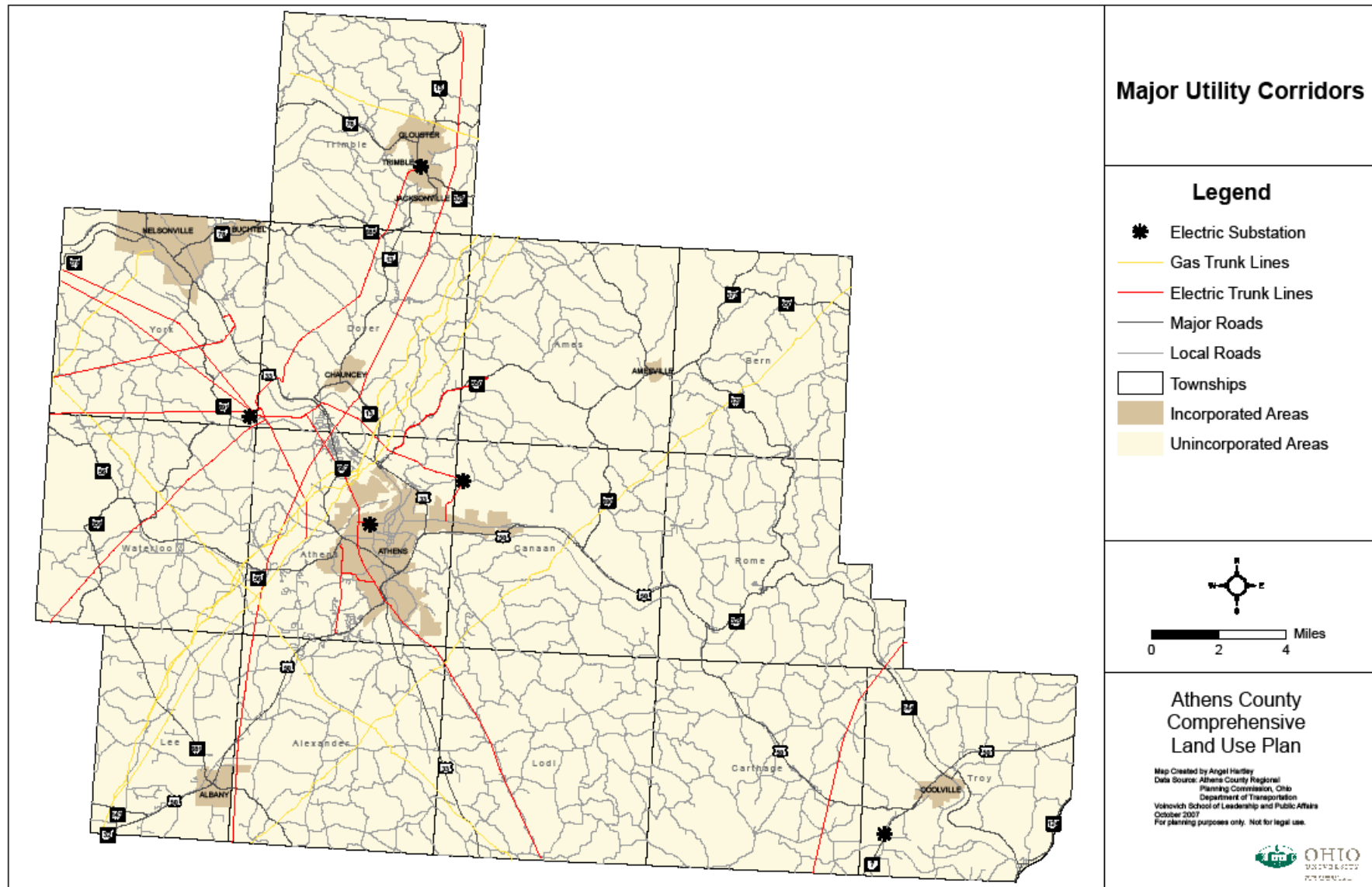


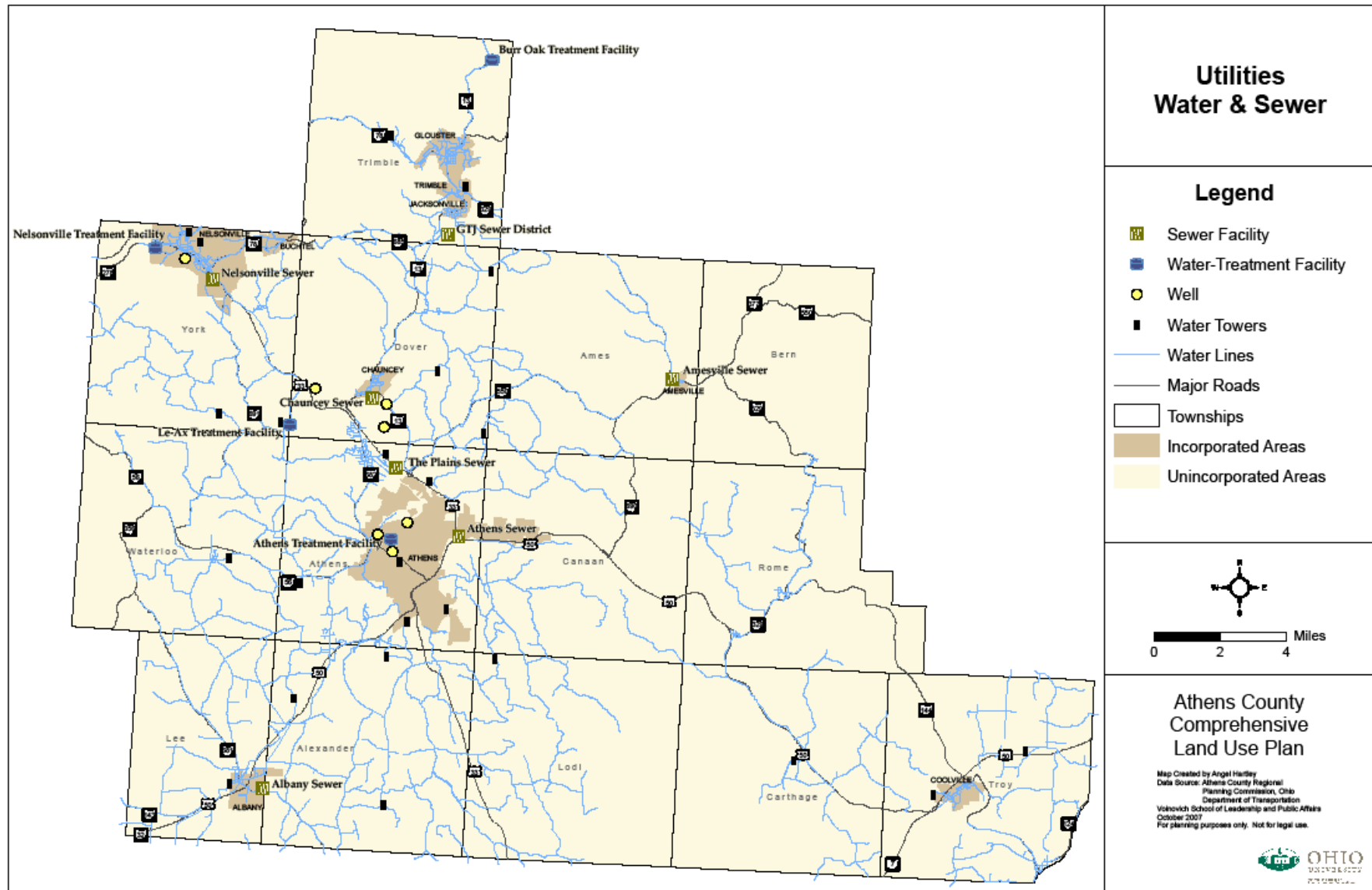


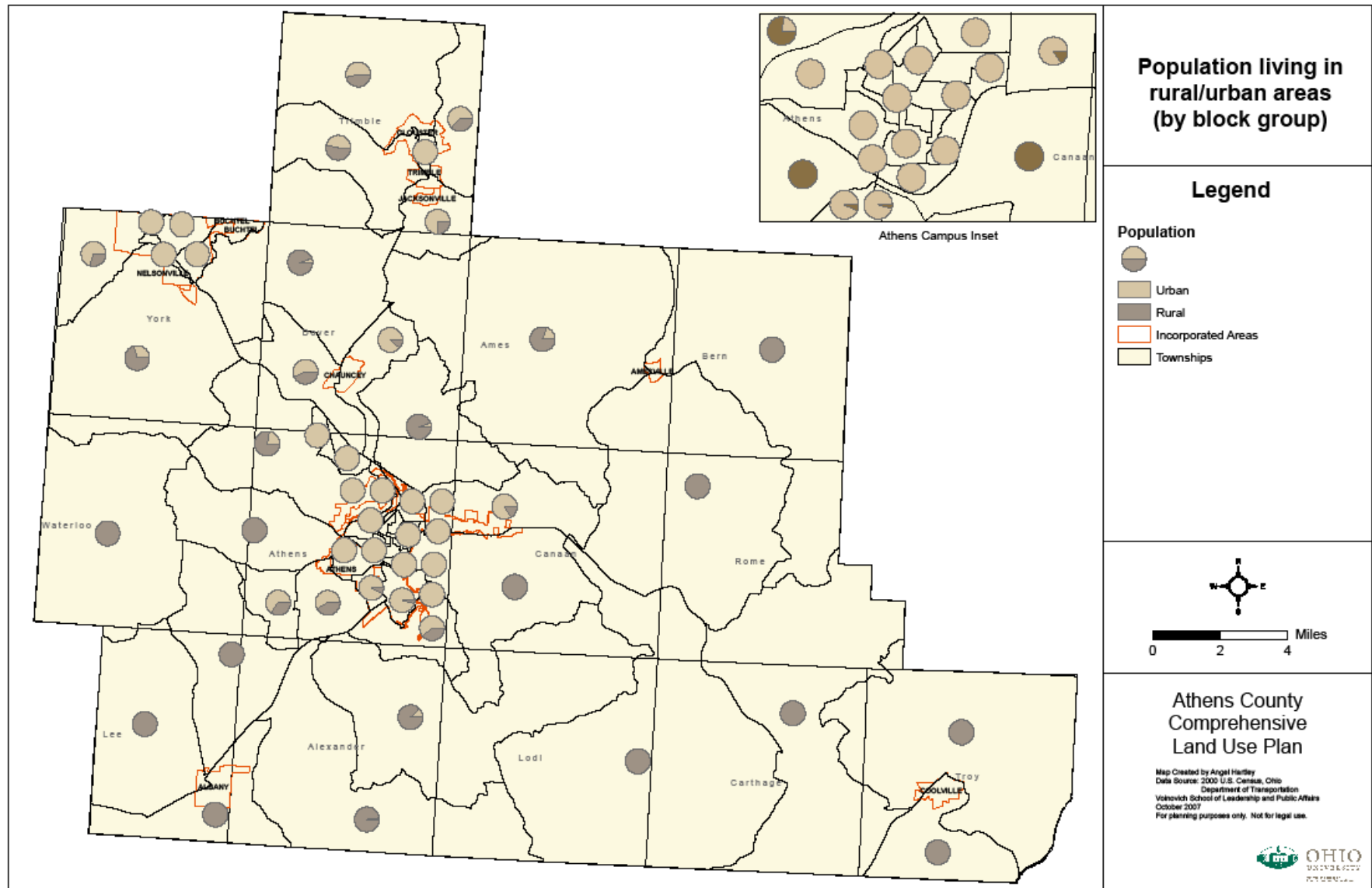


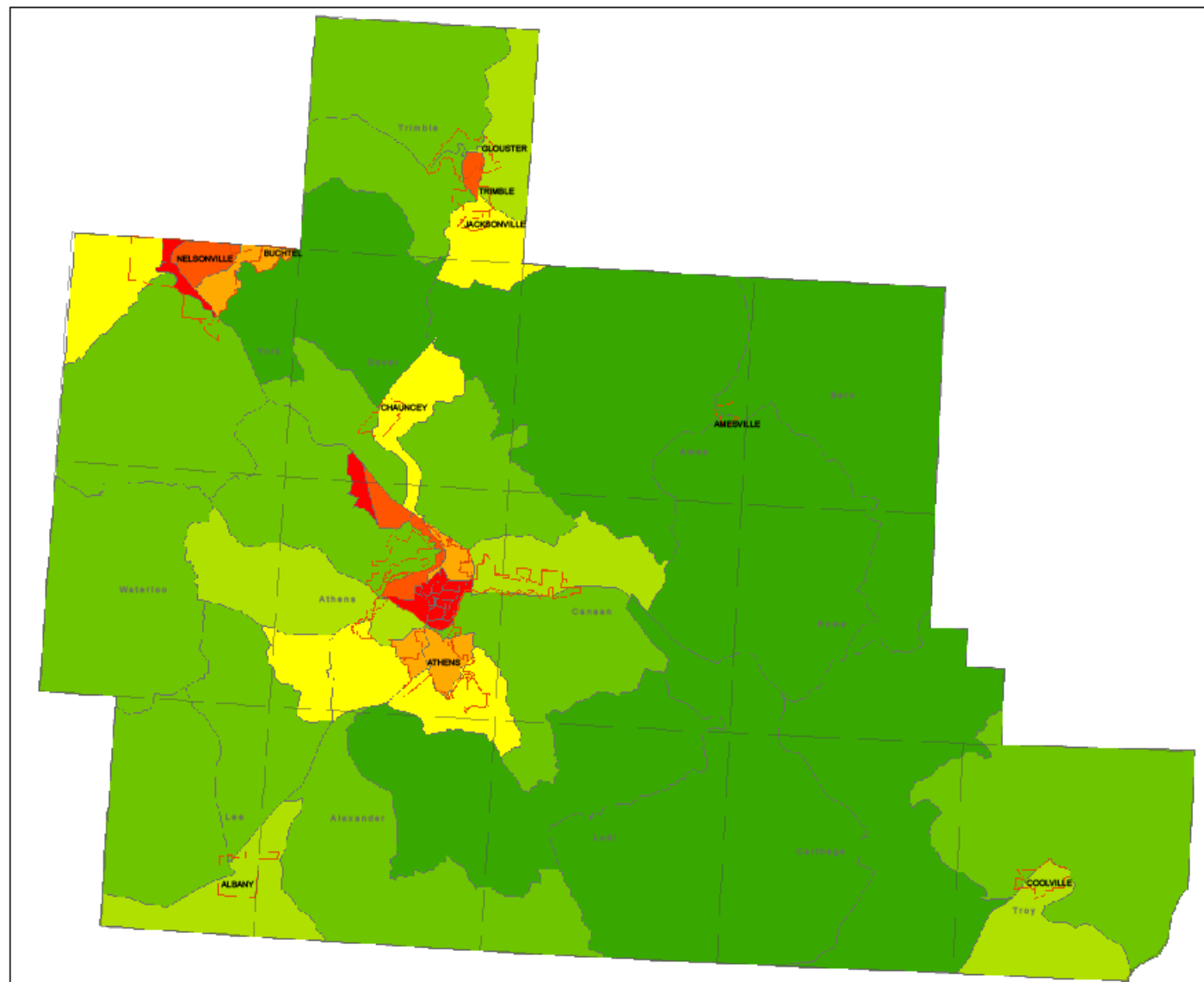












Total Population per Square Mile (by block group)

Legend

- Townships
- Incorporated Areas
- population_block_grp
- POP_SQ_MILE
- 24.128765 - 50.000000
- 50.000001 - 100.000000
- 100.000001 - 200.000000
- 200.000001 - 500.000000
- 500.000001 - 1000.000000
- 1000.000001 - 2000.000000
- 2000.000001 - 34595.076933

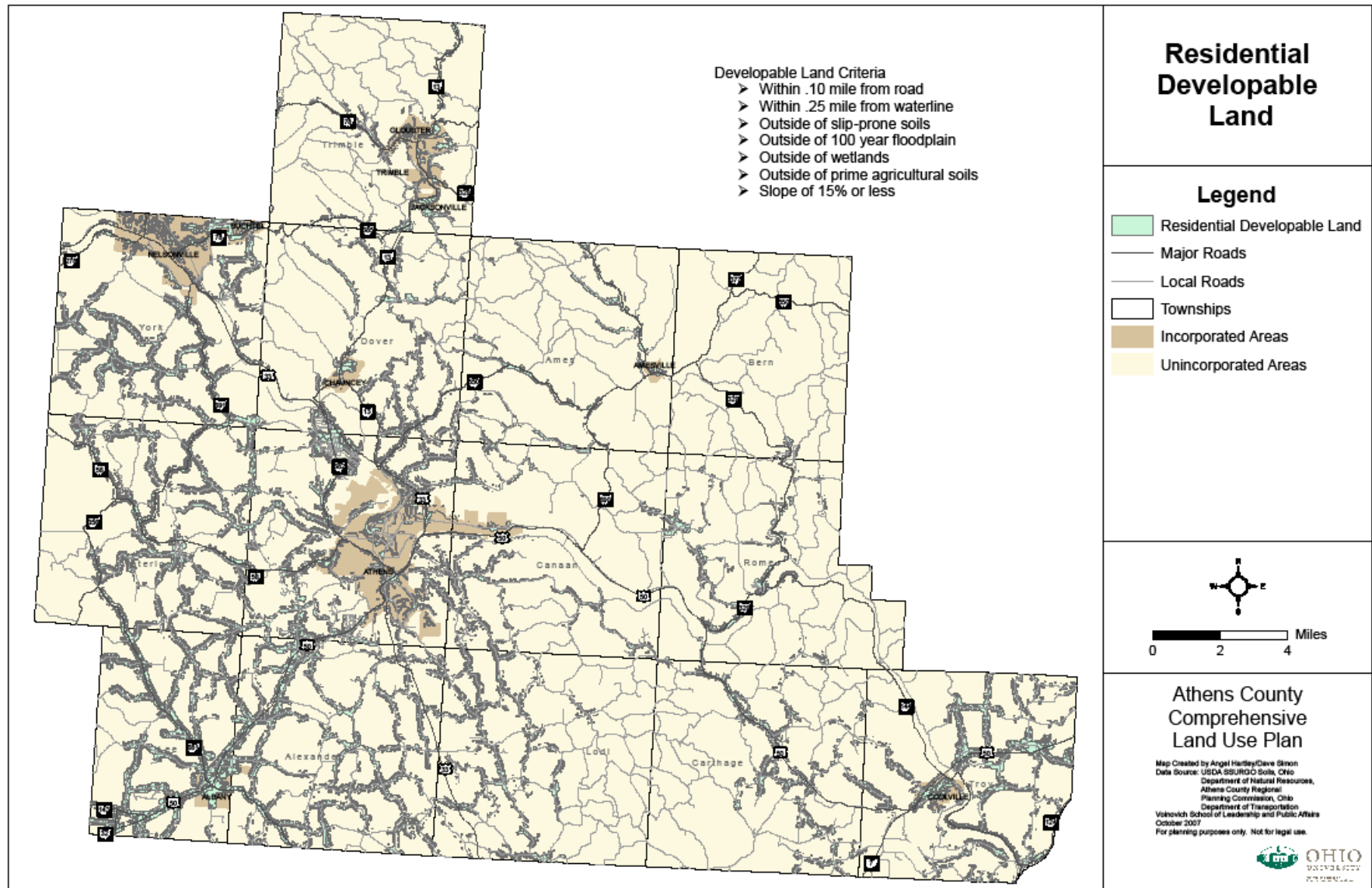


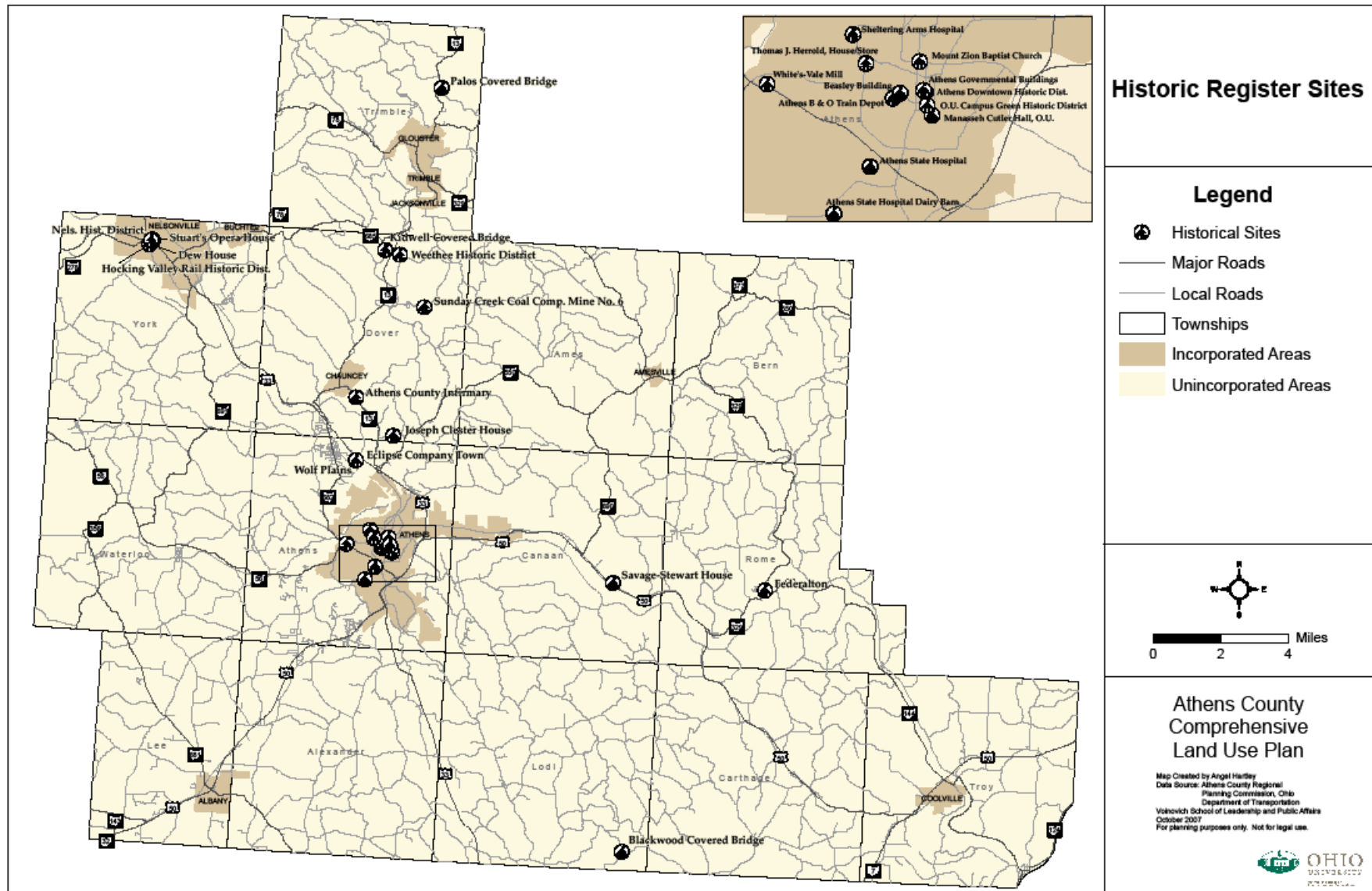
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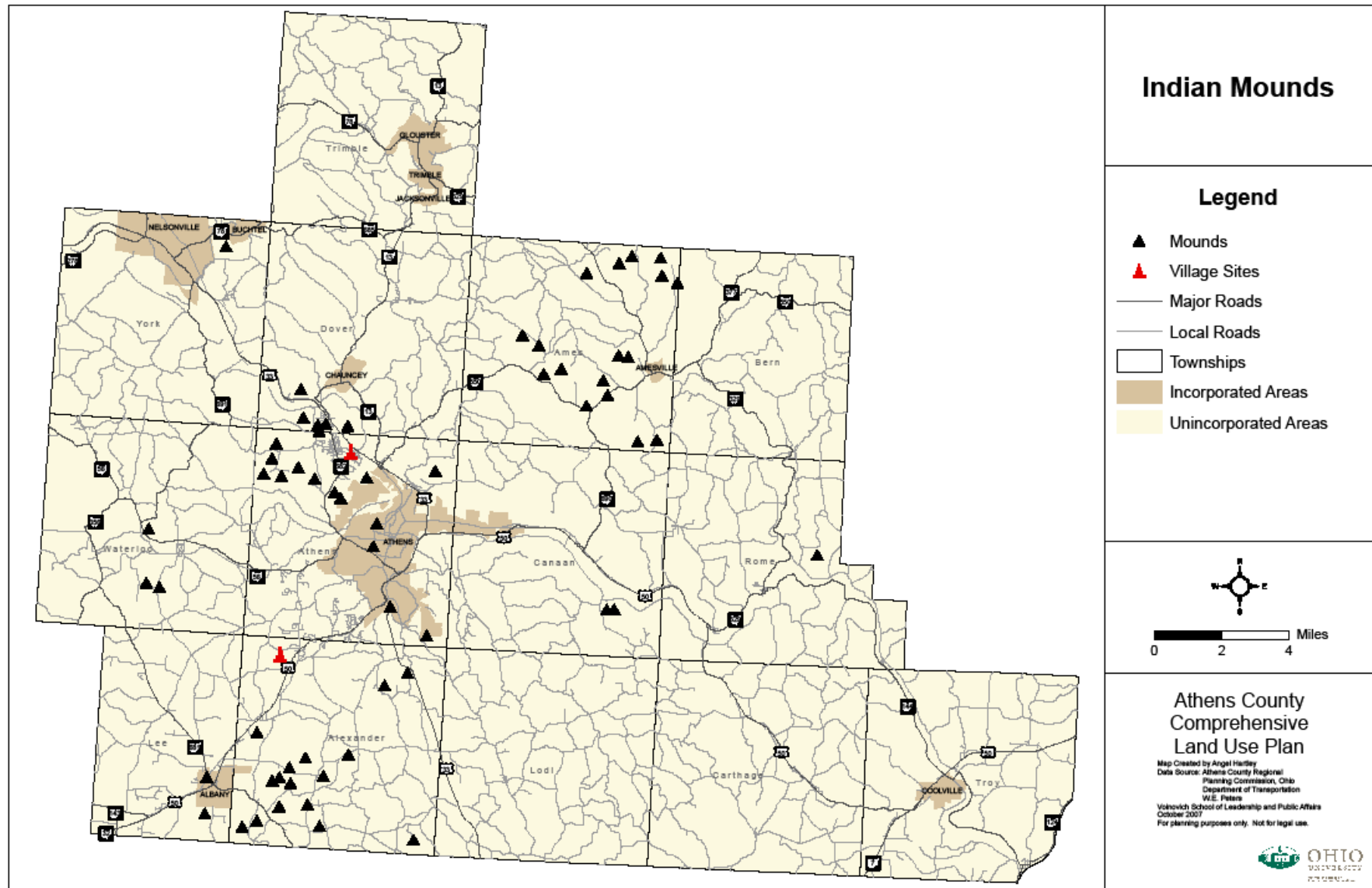
Athens County Comprehensive Land Use Plan

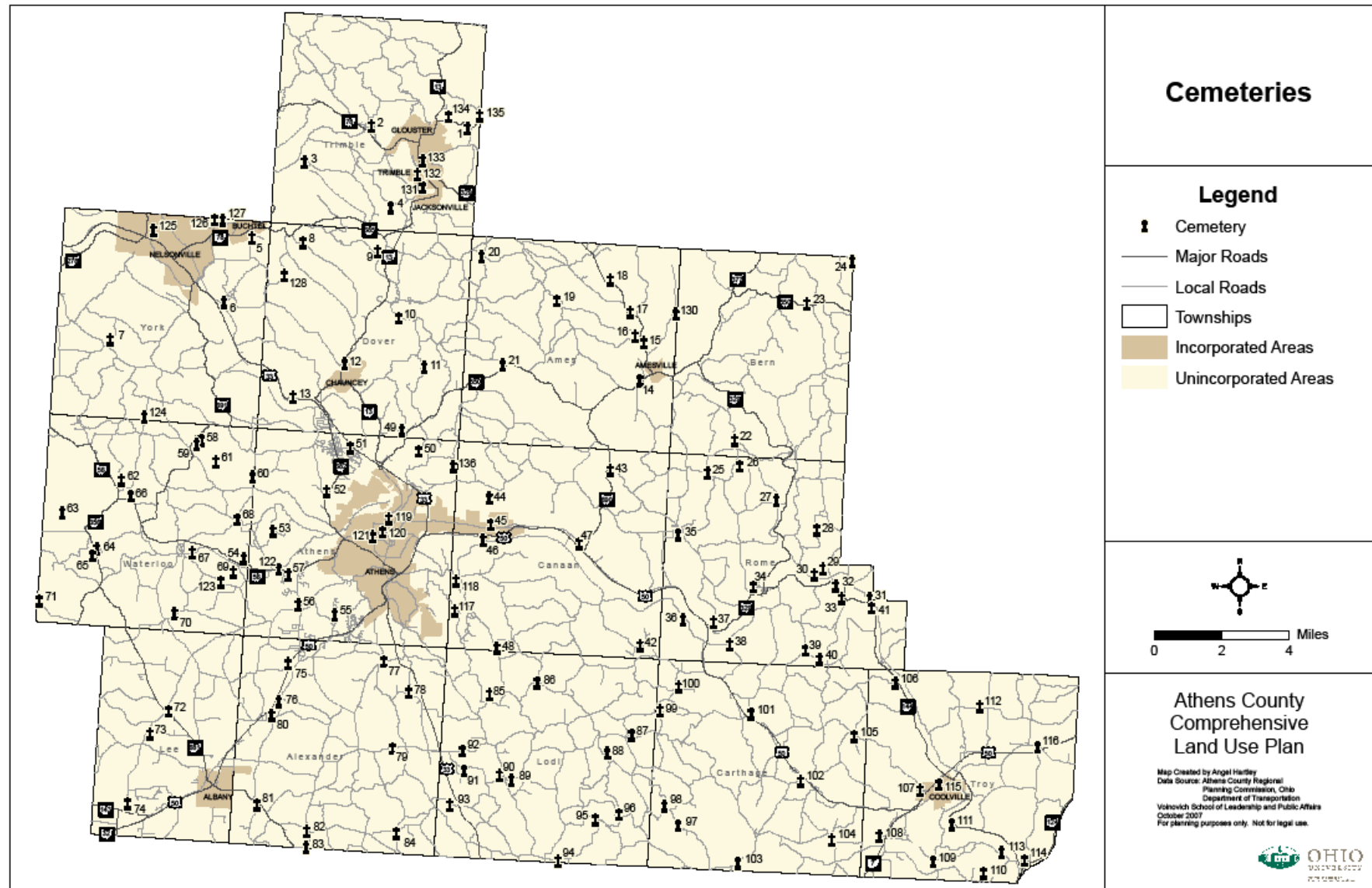
Map Created by Angel Hartley
Data Source: 2000 U.S. Census, Ohio
Department of Transportation
Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs
October 2007
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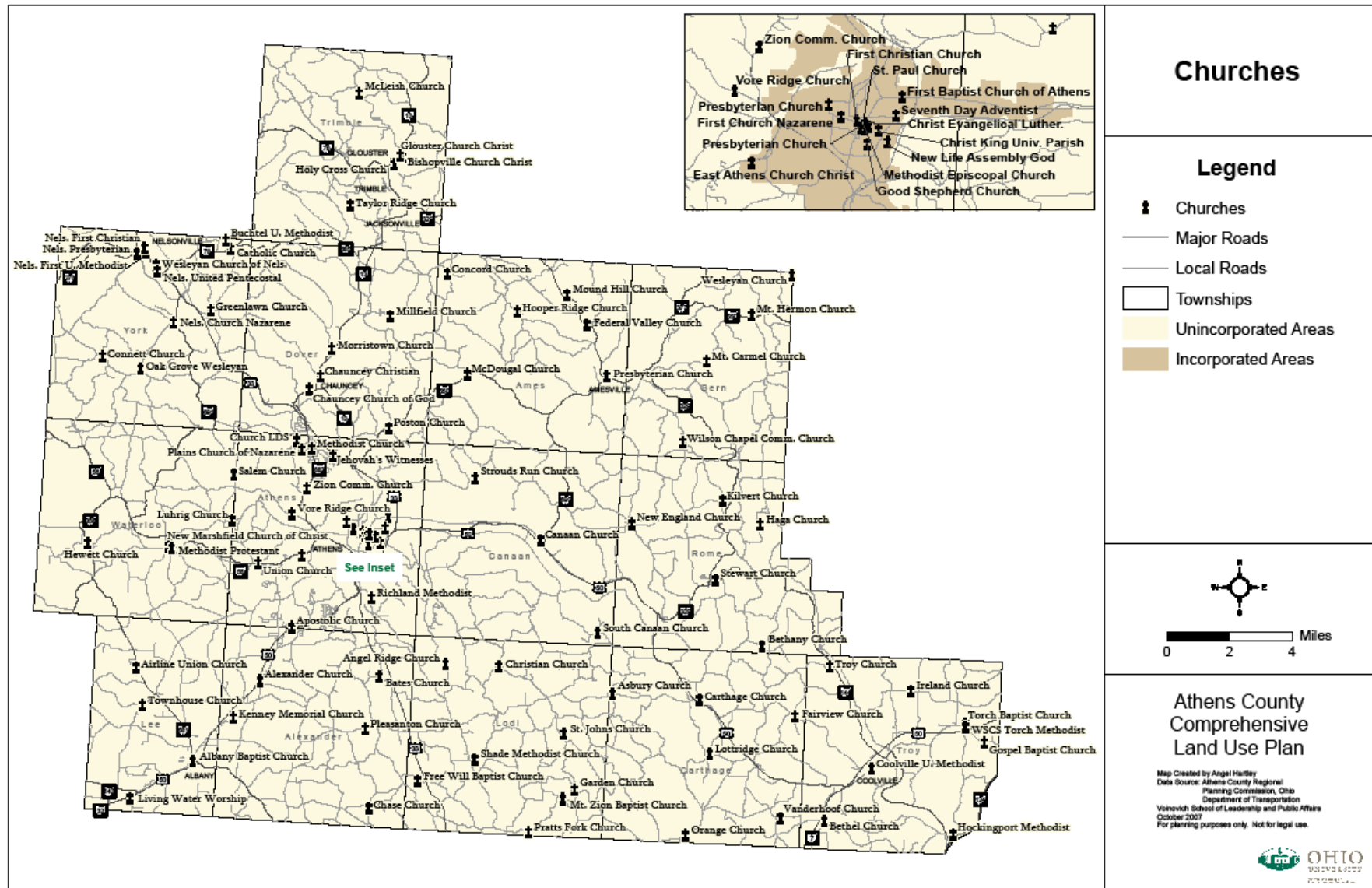


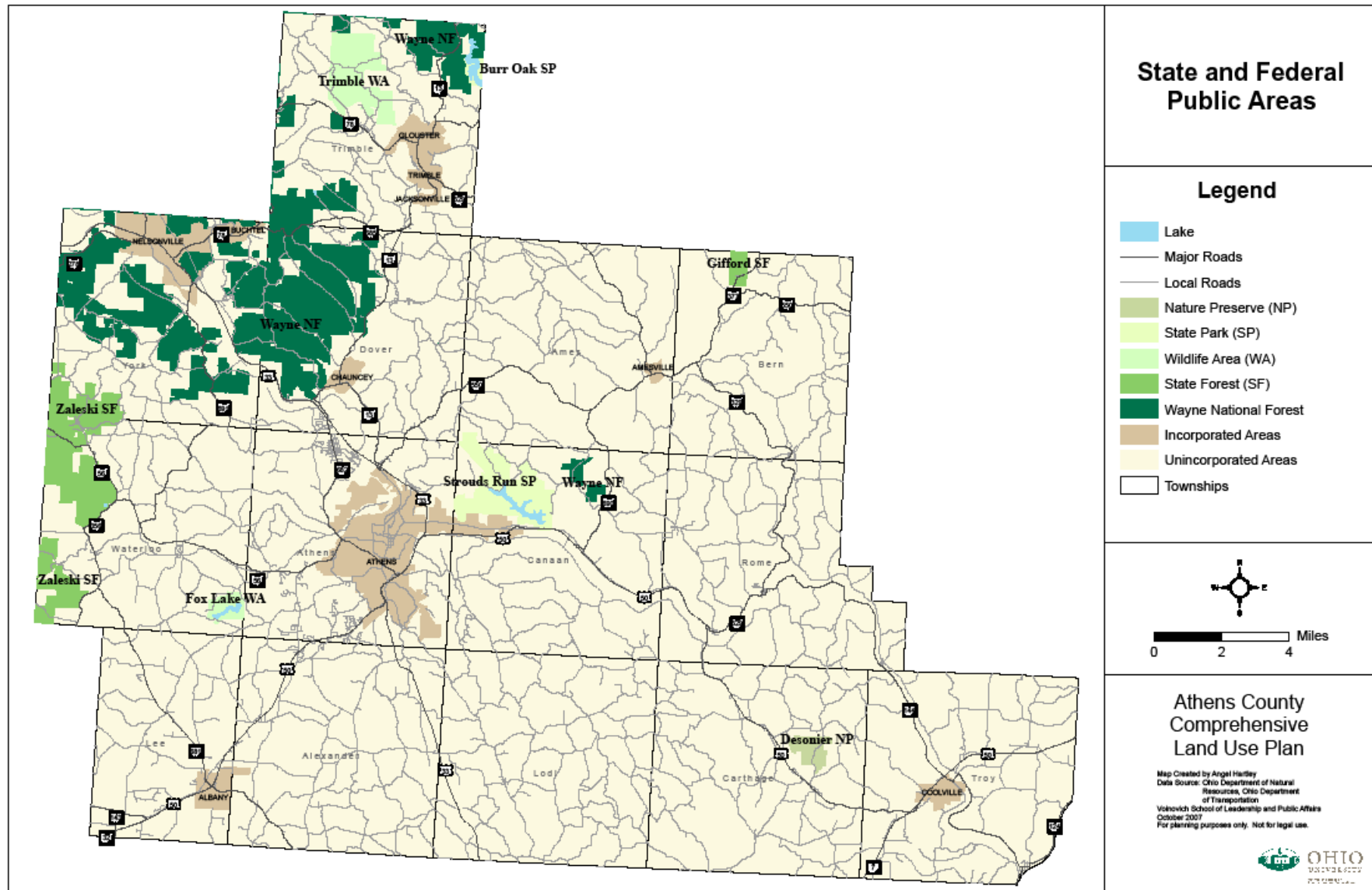


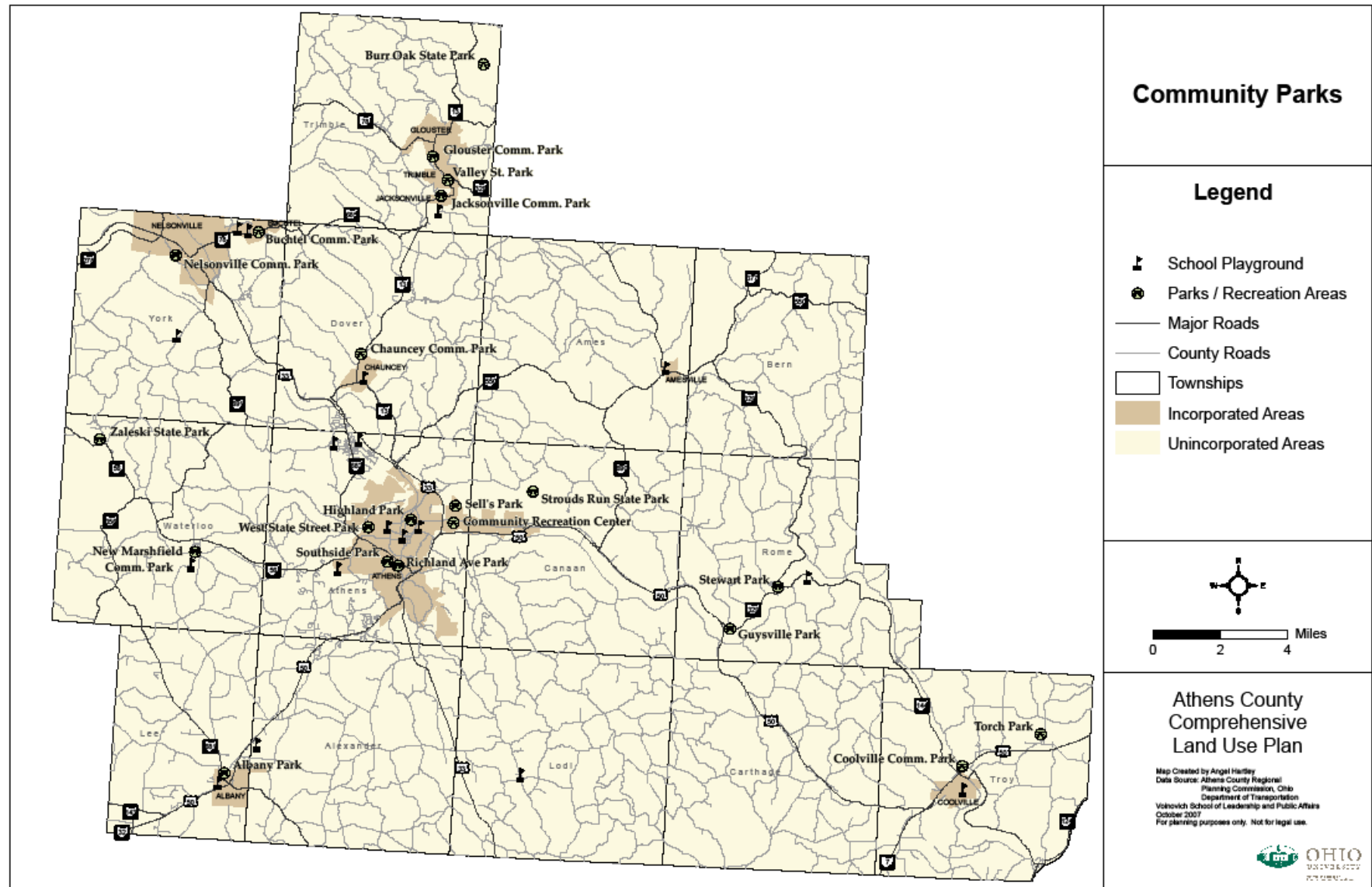


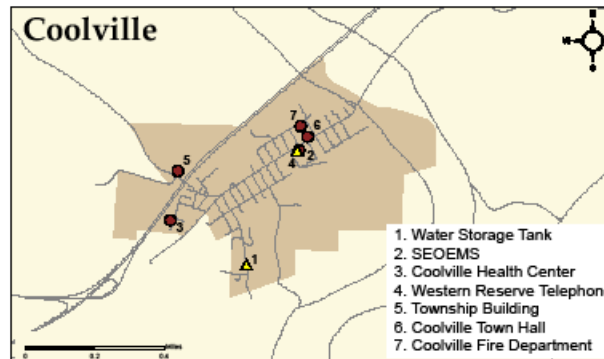
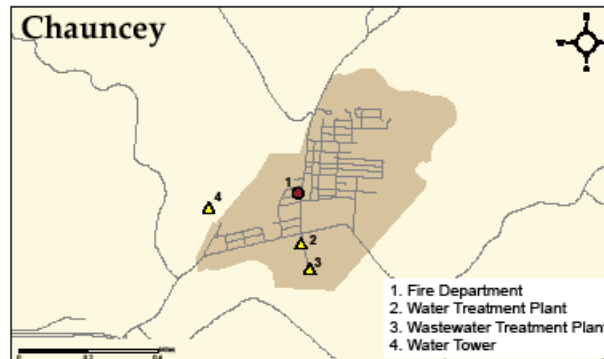
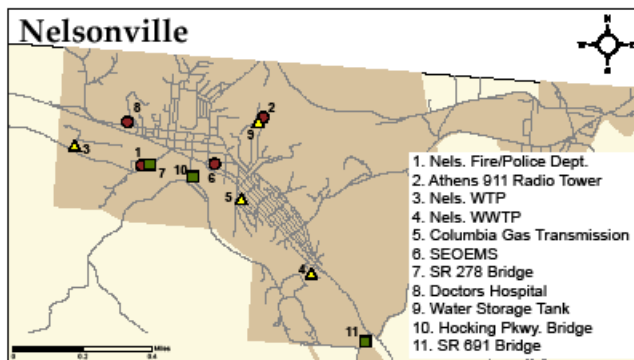
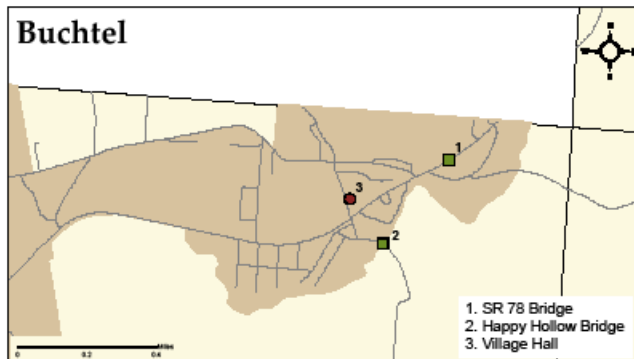
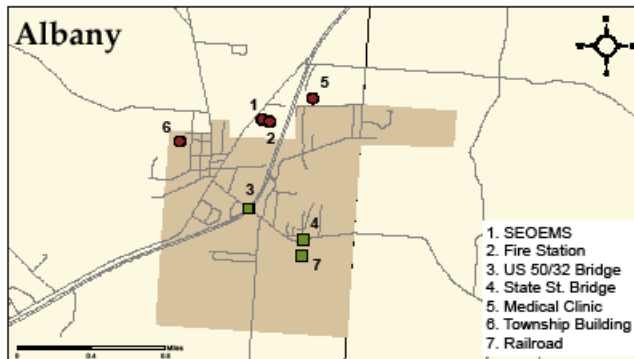












Critical Facilities Incorporated Areas

(of: Albany, Chauncey, Buchtel,
Coolville, Nelsonville, & Amesville)

Legend

- Essential Facilities
- ▲ Lifeline Utility System
- Transportation System
- Local Roads
- Incorporated Areas
- Unincorporated Areas

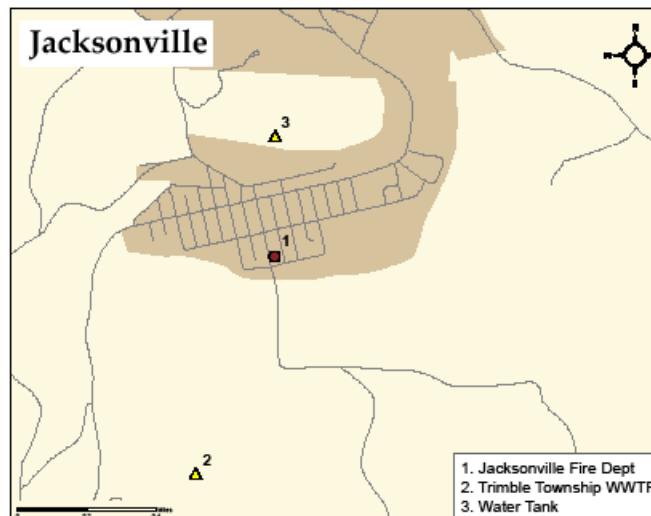
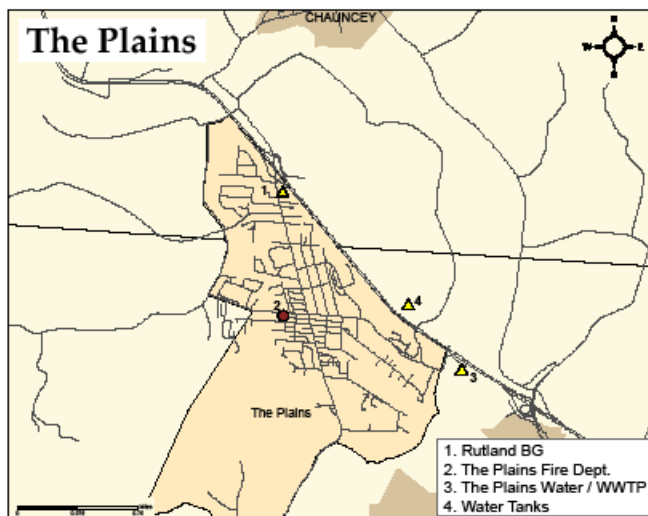
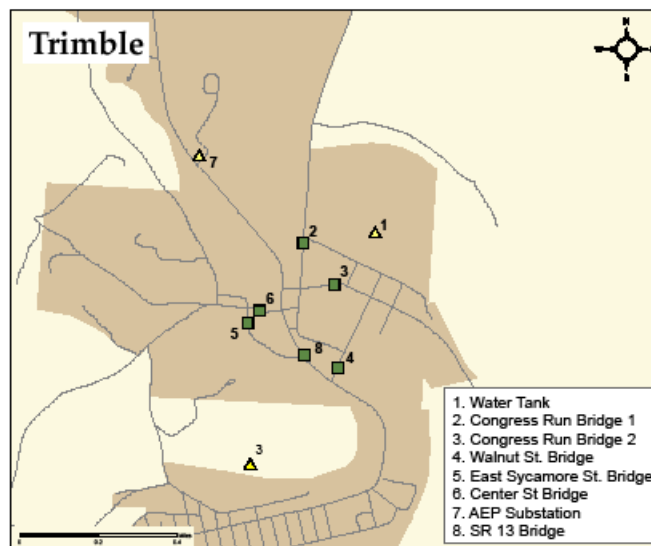
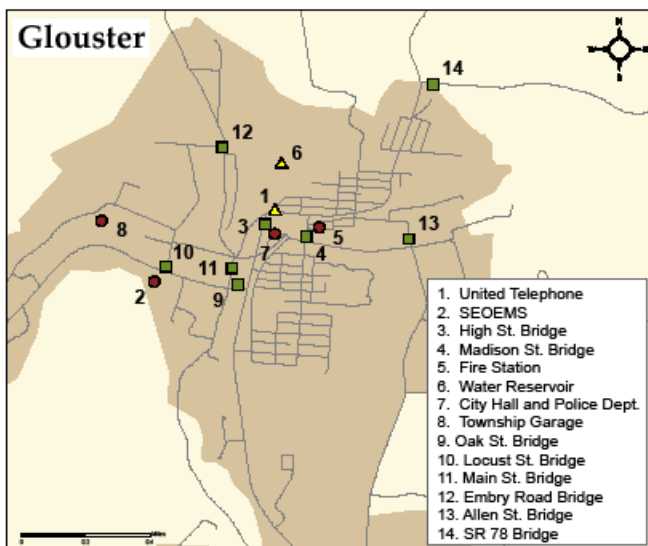


Note: Emergency shelters, while
considered to be critical facilities,
are shown on a separate map.
(See "Red Cross Shelters" map)

Athens County Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Map Created by Angel Hartley
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Critical Facilities Incorporated Areas & The Plains

(of: Glouster, Trimble, Jacksonville, and The Plains)

Legend

- Essential Services
- ▲ Lifeline Utility System
- Transportation System
- Local Roads
- The Plains
- Incorporated Areas
- Unincorporated Areas

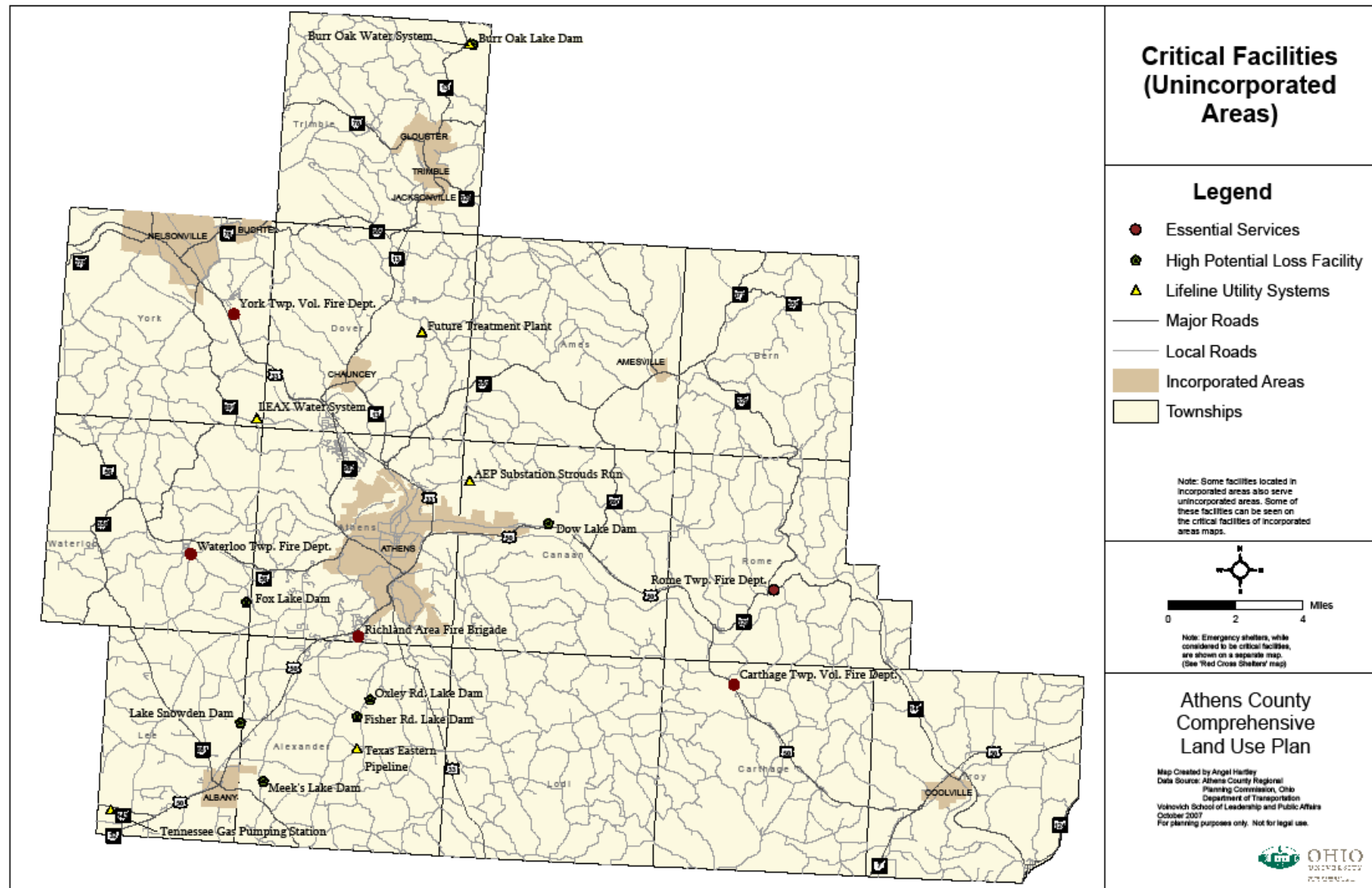


Note: Emergency shelters, while considered to be critical facilities, are shown on a separate map. (See 'Red Cross Shelters' map)

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Red Cross Shelters

Legend

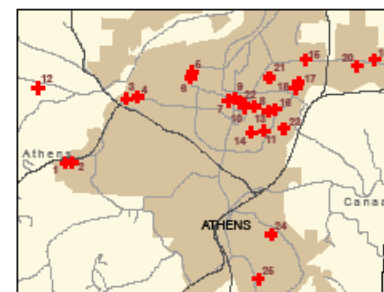
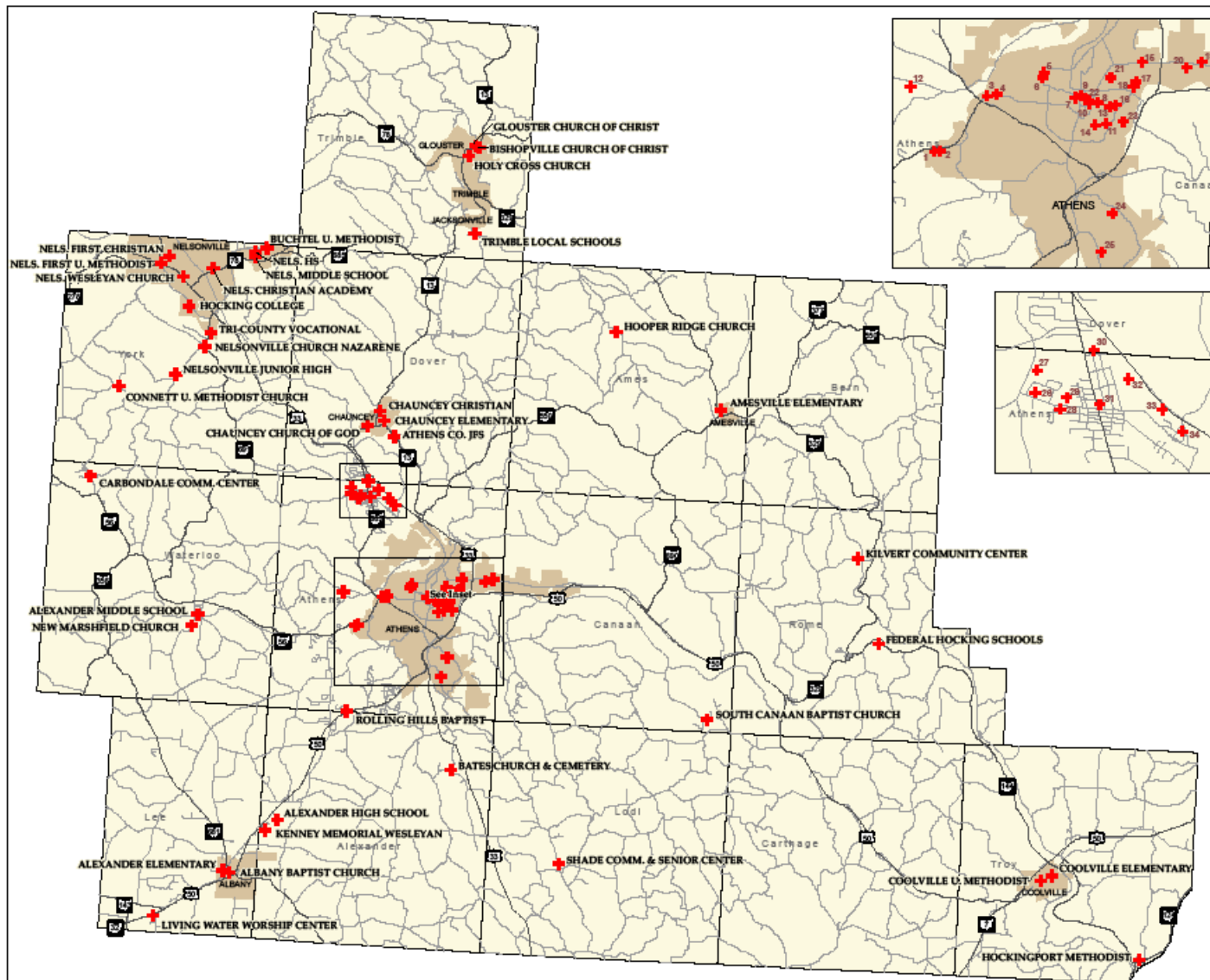
- + Red Cross Shelters
- Major Roads
- Local Roads
- Townships
- Incorporated Areas
- Unincorporated Areas

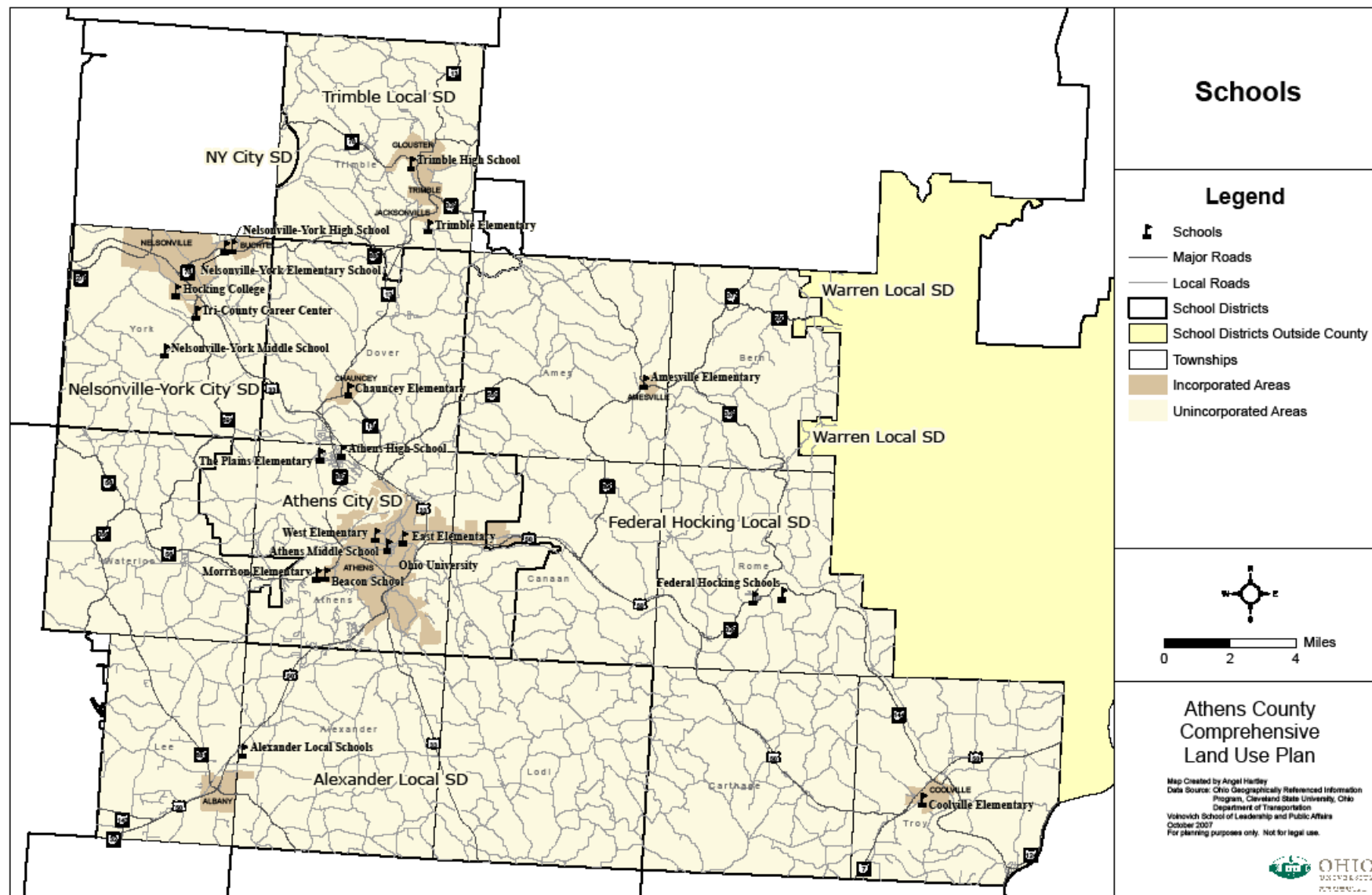


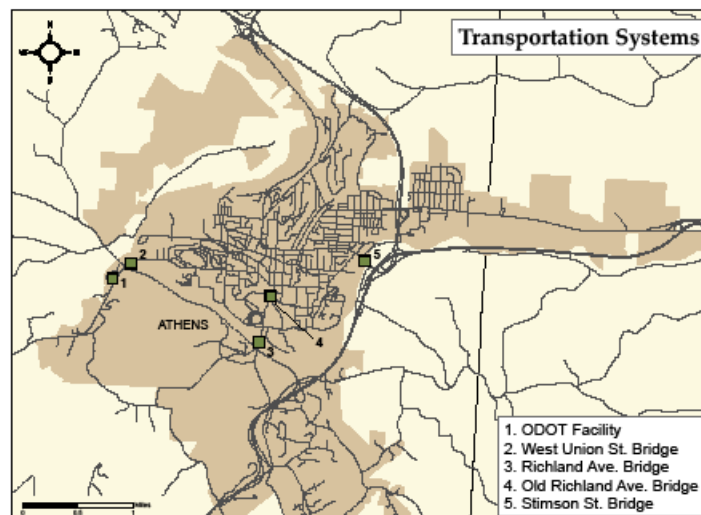
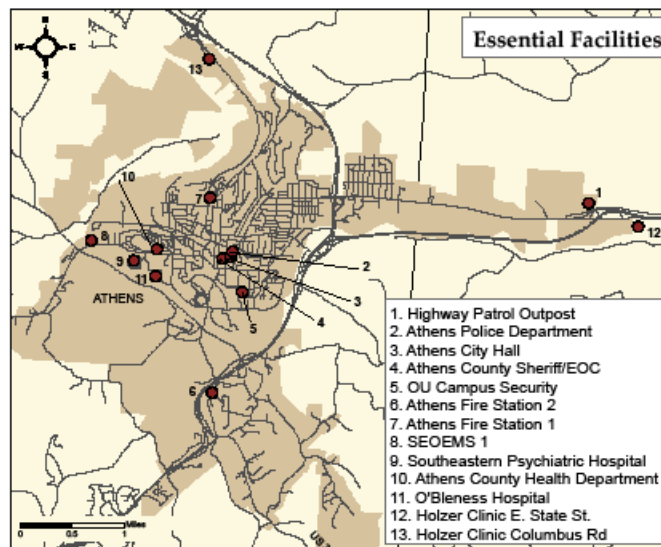
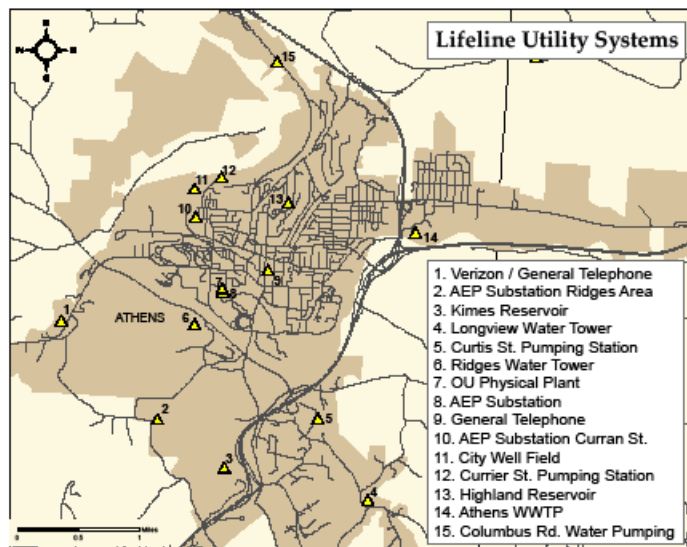
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Athens County Comprehensive Land Use Plan

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Critical Facilities Athens City

Legend

- Essential Services
- ▲ Lifeline Utility Systems
- Transportation Systems
- Roads
- Incorporated Areas
- Unincorporated Areas

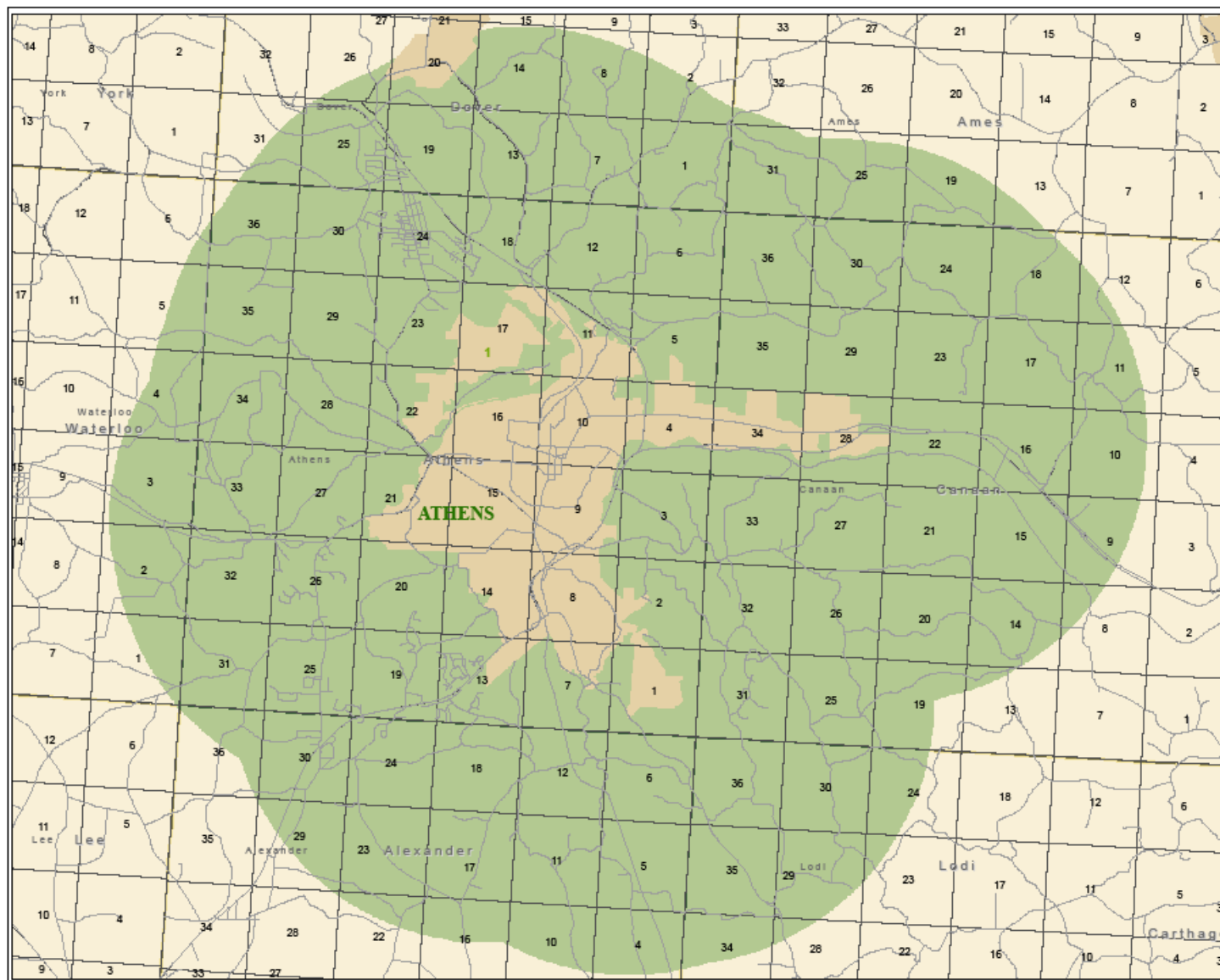


Note: Emergency shelters, while considered to be critical facilities, are shown on a separate map. (See 'Red Cross Shelters' map)

Athens County Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Map Created by Angel Hartley
Data Source: Athens County Regional
Planning Commission, Ohio
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Athens City 3-Mile Limit

Legend

- Local Roads
- 3-Mile Buffer
- Townships
- Sections

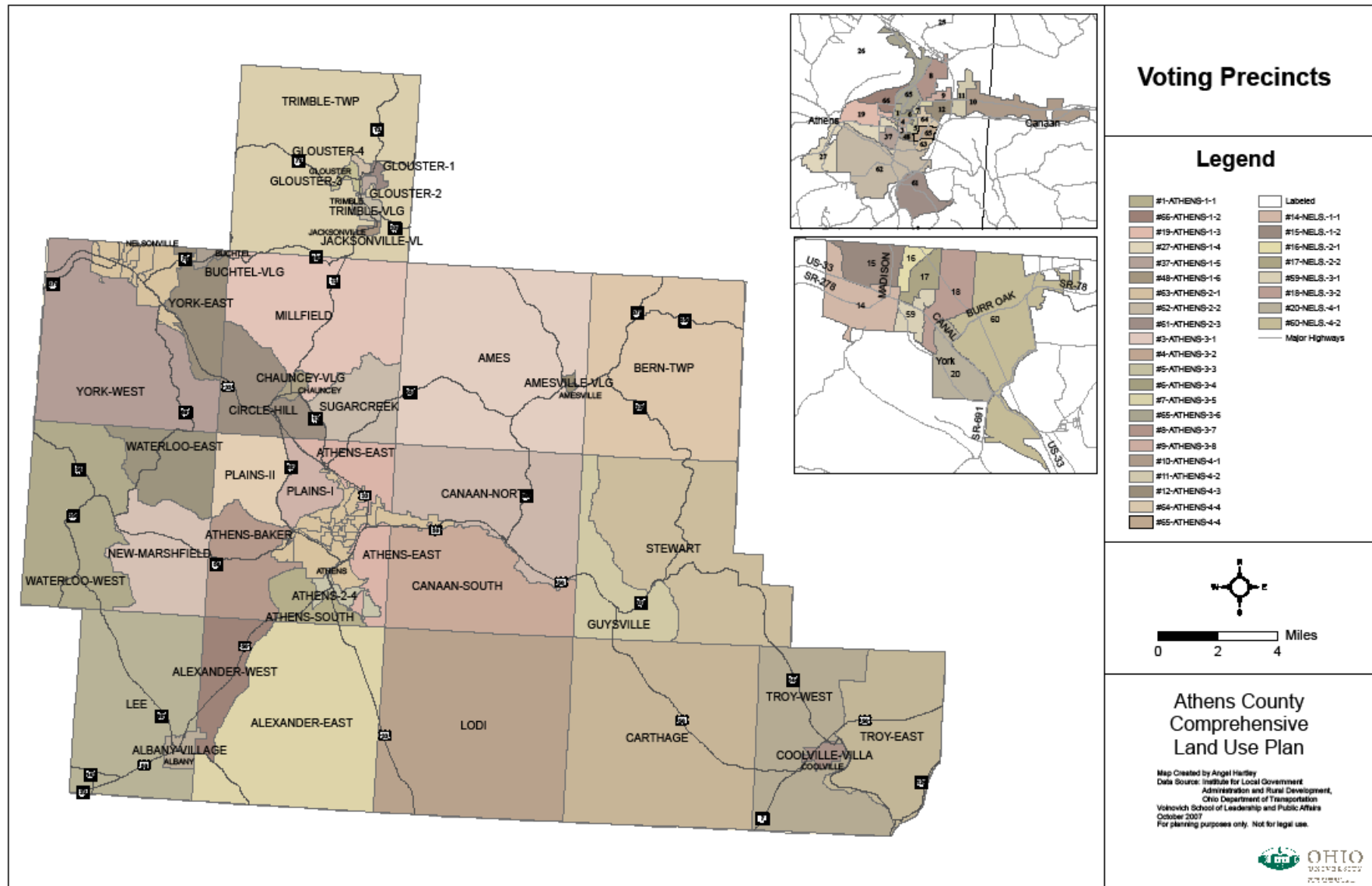


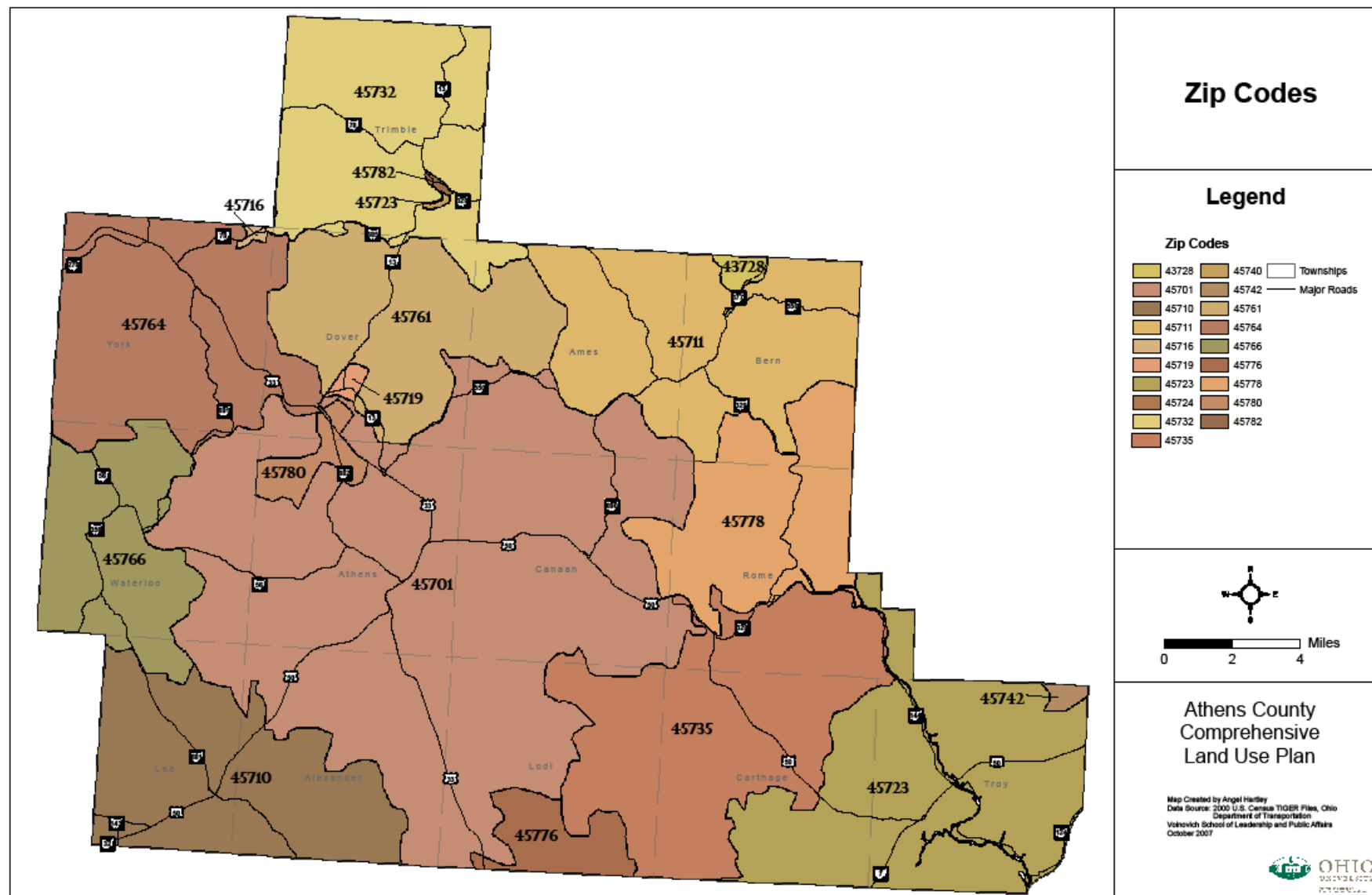
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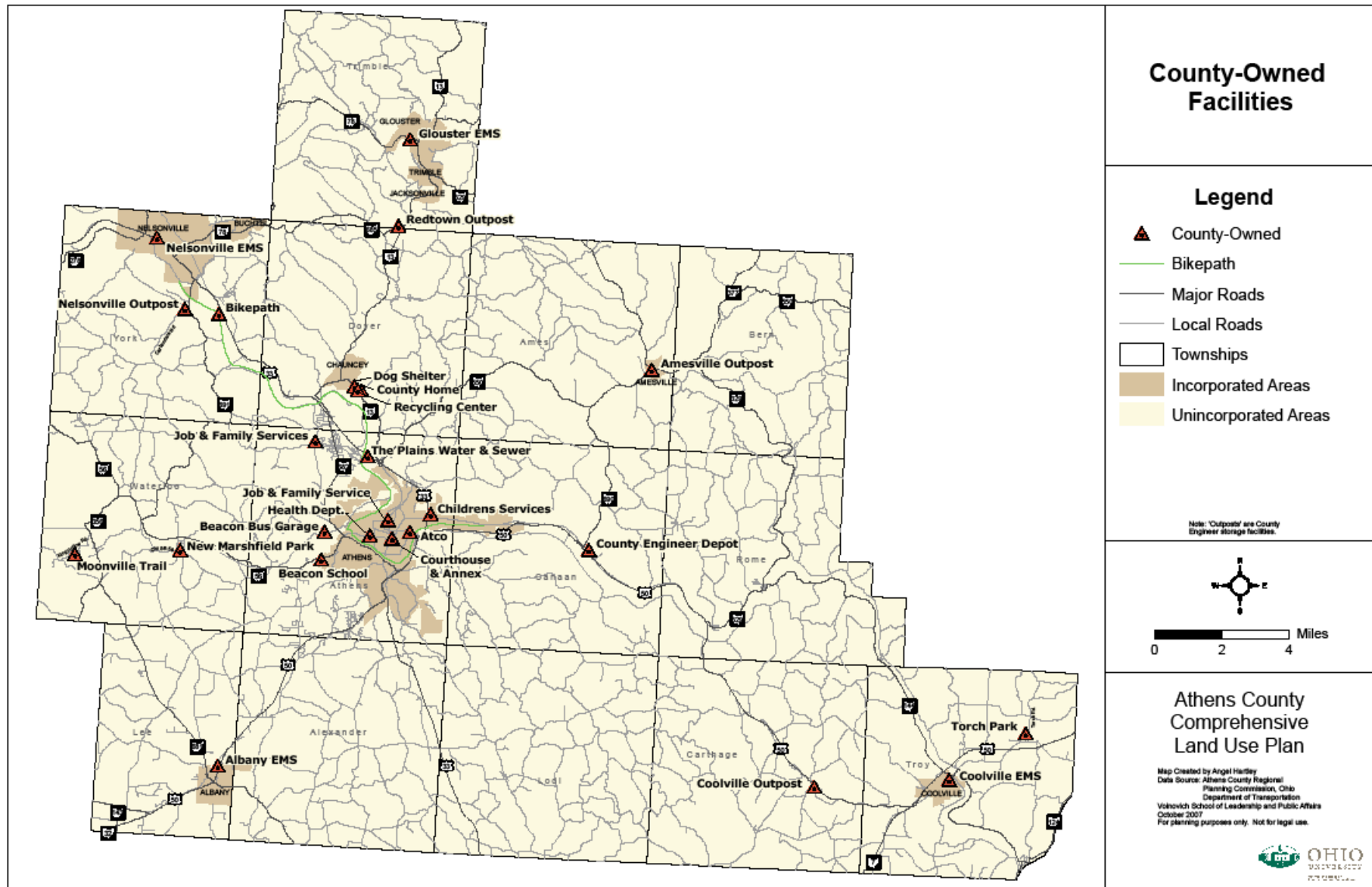
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ATHENS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN APPENDIX F
TRAILS, PARKS, AND RECREATION AREAS

<u>Parks and Recreation Areas - Local</u>			
<u>City/Village (Public)</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Activities</u>	<u>Land in Acres</u>
<u>Albany</u>	Alexander Schools	Adjacent to the school property. Baseball Fields at school.	45
	Fairgrounds	Equestrian Riding Facility - Horse Show Ring	6
<u>Amesville</u>	Elementary School	Baseball Field	9
<u>Athens</u>	East State Street	Basketball, Tennis, Racquetball, Swimming, Skate Park, Volleyball, Soccer, Picnic Area	
	West State Street	Baseball, Fitness Stations, Picnic Area	
	Riverside	Bikeway	
	Richland Avenue (Southside Park)	Playground, Picnic Area	
	Highland Avenue	Playground, Picnic Area	
<u>Buchtel</u>	Small Park SR78	Basketball Court, Playground, Baseball Field	2.5
<u>Chauncey</u>	Elementary School	Baseball Field, Soccer/Football, Basketball, Playground	6
	Small Park on SR13	Basketball Court	
<u>Coolville</u>	Small Park off OH 7/US50	River Access Park Area	8.54
<u>Glouster</u>	Park SR13/West high St.	Baseball Field, Football/Soccer Field, Tennis Court, Basketball Court, Volleyball Court	25
		Tomcat Trail	
<u>Jacksonville</u>		Picnic Area, Tomcat Trail	6
<u>Nelsonville</u>	Canal St. Park	Baseball Field	5.2
	Canal Street	Swimming Pool, Playground	1.5
	Watkins Street	Football Field, Baseball Field	
	Nelsonville City Schools	Baseball Field, Football Field	17.2
<u>The Plains</u>	Athens High School	Football/Soccer Fields, Tennis Courts, Basketball Court, Baseball Field	21
<u>Trimble</u>	Valley St. Park	Picnic Area	2.25
		Tomcat Trail	
<u>County</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Activities</u>	<u>Land in Acres</u>
<u>Athens County (Public)</u>	New Marshfield School	Baseball Field	2.5
	Ferndale Park (Troy Twp)	Baseball Field	13.5

	Hockhocking Adena Bikeway	Cycling	12 mile path
	Stewart Park	Picnic Area	1
	Guysville Park	Playground, Picnic Area	1
<u>Athens County Private</u>	Dirt Bike Raceway	Dirt Bike Racing	11 mile course
	Skyline Speedway	Auto Racing	40
	The Elm Golf Course	Golf	51
	Athens Country Club	Golf, Tennis	119
	Indian Mound Campground, Roundhouse Road, New Marshfield, OH	38 Campsties, Fishing, Swimming, Native American Museum, Sports Fields	36
	Carthage Gap Campground, Brimstone Road/CR56 off of Rt. 50, Coolville, OH	Fishing, Horseshoes, Swimming, Playground, Volleyball Court. 103 Full/35 primitive campsites	34
	Smoke Rise Ranch, Glouster, OH	Cabins, Horseback Riding, Penning/Cutting, Private Hunting Reserve, Horse Rental, Camping	2000
	Ketchum's RV Campground, Hockingport, OH	RV Camping. 90 Lots	21
	Rivers Bend RV Campground, Coolville, OH	RV Camping. 63 Lots	11.5
	Bobo RV Campground, Coolville, OH	RV Camping. 112 Lots	104
	Four Mile Campground, CR 59 and 4 Mile Creek, Coolville, OH	RV Camping. 15 Lots, Boat Ramp	
	Lazy Acres Campground, SR 144, Coolville, OH	RV Camping. 9 Lots	
	Athens Boat and Ski Club, Hockingport, OH	Boat Slips	3
	Russel's RV Park, Hockingport, OH	RV Camping	4
	Ford RV Park	RV Camping	

<u>Federal and State Natural and Recreation Areas</u>	-	-	-
<u>Name</u>	<u>Government Unit</u>	<u>Activities</u>	<u>Land in Acres</u>
<u>Strouds run Park - Dow Lake</u>	State	Fishing, Swimming, Hiking trails, Boating under 20 hp, Boat Rental, Picnic Areas, Sheltered and Non-Sheltered, Bridle Trails, Camping, Hunting, Volleyball, Playgrounds, Basketball Court	2606
<u>Burr Oak Park</u>	State	Fishing, Hiking, Backpacking, Swimming, Boating under 10 HP, Boat Rental, Tennis, Horseshoes, Volleyball, Camping, Lodging available--60 rooms.	2593
<u>Desonier Nature Preserve</u>	State		491
<u>Zaleski State Forest</u>	State	Hiking, Horse Trails, Hunting/Shooting Range, Camping	3460
<u>Waterloo Wildlife</u>	State		447
<u>Fox Lake Wildlife Area</u>	State	Hunting, Fishing, Boat Ramp	421
<u>Waterloo Wildlife Experiment Station</u>	State	Public Hunting, Fishing	1522
<u>Trimble State Wildlife Area</u>	State	Hunting, Fishing	2096
<u>Gifford State Forest</u>	State	Hunting, Hiking, Picnic Area	320
<u>Coolville Boat Ramp</u>	Federal	Picnic, Boat Launch	30
<u>Wayne National Forest</u>	Federal	Biking, Horseback Riding, Camping, Backpacking, Hiking	18632

<u>Trails In Athens County</u>	-
Athens Trail	The Athens Trail is a project being initiated to build a hiking trail around the City of Athens to improve trails access for area citizens and other hikers.
Adena-Hockhocking Bike Path	The Adena-Hockhocking Bike Path is an 18-mile multi-use (human power only) paved path that extends from East State Street in Athens to Hocking College (this is an outlink).
Moonville Rail-Trail	The Moonville Rail-Trail Project is constructing a multi-use trail on an old railroad grade in western Athens County. This is an outlink.
Buckeye Trail	The Buckeye Trail is a major hiking trail that loops around the entire State of Ohio, and passes through northern Athens County, where it is coincident with the North Country Trail and the American Discovery Trail (this is an outlink).
North Country Trail	The North Country Trail is a 4,000-mile trail that passes through northern tier states, from upstate New York to North Dakota. It is one of eight National Scenic Trails, and coincides with the Buckeye Trail in Southern Ohio (this is an outlink).
American Discovery Trail	The American Discovery Trail is a coast-to-coast trail that passes through central tier states, from the Delmarva Peninsula in Delaware to the coast of Northern California, and coincides with the Buckeye Trail in Southern Ohio (this is an outlink).
Strouds Run Area Trails	Trails at Strouds Run State Park, Riddle State Nature Preserve, City of Athens preserve lands and adjacent areas.
Other Area Trails	Other area trails at state parks, state forests, and national forest.
Other Regional Trails	Trails within reasonable driving distance, in Ohio, West Virginia, and Kentucky.

ATHENS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN APPENDIX G

LAND USE BY TOWNSHIP

ATHENS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN APPENDIX H
SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Athens County is preparing a Plan to determine how it should grow and what priorities exist for local government. We want to know your thoughts on several different topics. It is important that citizens have a chance to let their elected officials know what they think. The first page is background information about you. The remaining questions deal with local planning issues. Thank you for taking time to complete this survey.

Check all that apply

In which township do you live?

- | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alexander | <input type="checkbox"/> Bern | <input type="checkbox"/> Dover | <input type="checkbox"/> Rome | <input type="checkbox"/> Waterloo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ames | <input type="checkbox"/> Canaan | <input type="checkbox"/> Lee | <input type="checkbox"/> Trimble | <input type="checkbox"/> York |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Athens | <input type="checkbox"/> Carthage | <input type="checkbox"/> Lodi | <input type="checkbox"/> Troy | <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure |

If you live in a municipality or small town please check which one:

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Athens City | <input type="checkbox"/> Buchtel | <input type="checkbox"/> Jacksonville | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nelsonville | <input type="checkbox"/> Chauncey | <input type="checkbox"/> Murray City | Which one? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Albany | <input type="checkbox"/> Coolville | <input type="checkbox"/> Trimble | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Amesville | <input type="checkbox"/> Glouster | <input type="checkbox"/> The Plains | |

Do you own land in Athens County?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

How long have you lived in Athens County?

- ☐ Less than 1 year ☐ 1-5 yrs. ☐ 6-20 yrs. ☐ 21+ yrs.

Are you?

- ☐ Female ☐ Male

Your age?

- ☐ 16-24
☐ 25-34
☐ 35-44
☐ 45-64
☐ 65-75
☐ 76+

What is your employment status (**check all that apply**)?

- ☐ Stay at home parent
- ☐ Self employed
- ☐ Work for public sector
- ☐ Work for private sector
- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Work outside of Athens County
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Retired
- ☐ On disability leave

Athens County needs more (**check all that apply**):

- ☐ Parkland for passive recreation (hiking, bird watching, nature study)
- ☐ Parkland for ball sports
- ☐ Off Road Vehicle (ORV) trails
- ☐ Mountain bike trails
- ☐ Canoe and boat access
- ☐ Hunting and fishing
- ☐ Camping opportunities
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

The following community facilities need to be improved or expanded (**check all that apply**):

- ☐ Police
- ☐ Fire
- ☐ Emergency medical service
- ☐ Hospitals/Health care
- ☐ Senior centers
- ☐ Child care
- ☐ School buildings
- ☐ Libraries
- ☐ Public meeting spaces
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

Athens County needs more or better (**check all that apply**):

- ☐ Public water
- ☐ Public sewer
- ☐ Cell phone service
- ☐ High speed internet connection
- ☐ Electrical service
- ☐ Natural gas service
- ☐ Phone service
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

The greatest threat to our quality of life in Athens County is (**check all that apply**):

- ☐ Too many people
- ☐ Lack of zoning
- ☐ Uncontrolled growth
- ☐ Lack of jobs and income
- ☐ Lack of affordable housing
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

Please **pick three** important environmental issues that should be addressed with a county land use plan:

- ☐ Soil erosion
- ☐ Water quality in our streams and rivers
- ☐ Invasive species
- ☐ Air pollution
- ☐ Light pollution
- ☐ Noise pollution
- ☐ Unattractive properties
- ☐ Groundwater pollution
- ☐ Abandoned underground and surface mines
- ☐ Home sewage systems
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

Please rank the following to show which transportation areas should receive the most local attention with **1 being the most important and 9 being the least important**:

- _____ Airport and air travel
- _____ Bicycle transportation
- _____ State roadways
- _____ County roadways

- _____ Municipal roadways
- _____ Township roadways
- _____ Railroads
- _____ Public transportation
- _____ Other (please specify) _____

What type of housing would you be most likely to choose the next time you move? (**pick one**):

- ☐ Low-cost single family starter home
- ☐ Single wide manufactured home
- ☐ Mid-priced single family home
- ☐ Apartment or townhouse
- ☐ Condominium
- ☐ Assisted living/retirement
- ☐ Senior housing
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

Choose three characteristics that are most important to you when selecting a place to live:

- ☐ Proximity to schools, libraries, and churches
- ☐ Walkability
- ☐ Good traffic flow and access to roadways
- ☐ Proximity to shopping and services
- ☐ Safety
- ☐ Open space
- ☐ Other (please explain) _____

Choose three issues about local arts and heritage that are most important to you:

- ☐ Preservation of archaeological and burial sites (Cemeteries, Native American mounds)
- ☐ Preservation of historical and cultural sites (old barns, brick kilns, canal features)
- ☐ Need for more museums and cultural centers
- ☐ Promotion of arts, heritage and eco-tourism for the county
- ☐ Promotion and development of visual and performing art
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

Please rank the following economic development activities with **1 being the highest priority and 9 being the lowest priority.**

_____Manufacturing

_____Tourism

_____Small business

_____High technology

_____Education through Ohio University and Hocking College

_____Agriculture and locally produced food

_____Sustainable energy

_____Job Development

_____Other (please specify) _____

Please provide any other comments or opinions:

ATHENS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN APPENDIX A

SURVEY RESULTS

School District	# of responses	% of responses
Plains	59	6.31
West Elementary	63	6.74
Chauncey	48	5.13
Morrison	108	11.55
East Elementary	98	10.48
Trimble	94	10.05
Amesville	80	8.56
Coolville	52	5.56
Alexander	195	20.86
Nelsonville	129	13.80
	926	
Township		
No response	18	1.93
Alexander	98	10.48
Athens	311	33.26
Bern	16	1.71
Banaan	30	3.21
Carthage	22	2.35
Dover	51	5.45
Lee	48	5.13
Lodie	27	2.89
Millfield	1	0.11
Other	10	1.07
Rome	22	2.35
Trimble	77	8.24
Troy	75	8.02
Vinton	1	0.11
Waterloo	40	4.28
York	85	9.09
Not Sure	25	2.67
	957	
Municipality		
No response	199	21.28
Athens City	210	22.46
Nelsonville	91	9.73
Albany	90	9.63
Amesville	19	2.03
Buchtel	10	1.07
Chauncey	29	3.10
Coolville	29	3.10
Clouster	72	7.70
Jacksonville	9	0.96
Murray City	13	1.39
The Plains	38	4.06
Trimble	9	0.96
Other	117	12.51

	935	
Own land in Athens County		
No response	7	0.75
Yes	563	60.21
No	364	38.93
	934	
Lived in Athens County		
No response	19	2.03
Less than 1 year	132	14.12
1-5 years	442	47.27
6-20 years	308	32.94
21+ years	33	3.53
	934	
Gender		
No response	8	0.86
Female	756	80.86
Male	171	18.29
	935	
Age		
No response	5	0.53
16-24	24	2.57
25-34	381	40.75
35-44	387	41.39
45-64	134	14.33
65-75	4	0.43
76+	0	0.00
	935	
Employment Status		
No response	7	0.75
Stay at home parent	276	29.52
Self employed	123	13.16
Work for public sector	347	37.11
Work for private sector	136	14.55
Unemployed	44	4.71
Work outside of Athens County	86	9.20
Student	56	5.99
Retired	14	1.50
On disability leave	16	1.71
	1105	
Athens County needs more		
No response	102	10.91
Parkland for passive recreation	354	37.86
Parkland for ball sports	281	30.05
Off Road Vehicle trails	192	20.53
Mountain bike trails	101	10.80
Canoe and boat access	191	20.43
Hunting and fishing	190	20.32
Camping opportunities	354	37.86
Other	223	23.85

	1988	
Community facilities needs improved		
No response	77	8.24
Police	337	36.04
Fire	229	24.49
Emergency medical service	141	15.08
Hopsitals/Health care	354	37.86
Senior centers	92	9.84
Child care	284	30.37
School buildings	140	14.97
Libraries	45	4.81
Public meeting spaces	70	7.49
Other	75	8.02
	1844	
Athens County needs more or better		
No response	101	10.80
Public water	350	37.43
Public sewer	207	22.14
Cell phone service	483	51.66
High speed internet connection	378	40.43
Electrical service	97	10.37
Natural gas service	79	8.45
Phone service	84	8.98
Other	45	4.81
	1824	
Greatest threat to quality of life		
No response	19	2.03
Too many people	84	8.98
lack of zoning	27	2.89
Uncontrolled growth	109	11.66
Lack of jobs and income	823	88.02
Lack of affordable housing	474	50.70
Other	121	12.94
	1657	
3 important environmental issues		
No response	29	3.10
Soil erosion	166	17.75
Water quality in our streams and rivers	606	64.81
Invasive species	114	12.19
Air pollution	231	24.71
Noise pollution	87	9.30
Unattractive properties	526	56.26
Groundwater pollution	265	28.34
Abandoned underground and surface mines	230	24.60
Home sewage systems	218	23.32
Other	60	6.42
	2532	
Rank transportation areas to receive most local attention		
Airport and air travel		

0	76	8.13
1	64	6.84
2	18	1.93
3	30	3.21
4	28	2.99
5	83	8.88
6	100	10.70
7	172	18.40
8	261	27.91
9	103	11.02
Bicycle transportation		
0	76	8.13
1	42	4.49
2	49	5.24
3	43	4.60
4	40	4.28
5	108	11.55
6	187	20.00
7	173	18.50
8	164	17.54
9	53	5.67
State roadways		
0	75	8.02
1	225	24.06
2	88	9.41
3	121	12.94
4	196	20.96
5	86	9.20
6	67	7.17
7	45	4.81
8	18	1.93
9	14	1.50
County roadways		
0	59	6.31
1	218	23.32
2	326	34.87
3	154	16.47
4	87	9.30
5	54	5.78
6	15	1.60
7	13	1.39
8	7	0.75
9	2	0.21
Municipal roadways		
0	79	8.45
1	92	9.84
2	114	12.19
3	208	22.25
4	219	23.42

5	119	12.73
6	54	5.78
7	29	3.10
8	10	1.07
9	11	1.18
Township roadways		
0	56	5.99
1	258	27.59
2	173	18.50
3	181	19.36
4	138	14.76
5	52	5.56
6	36	3.85
7	20	2.14
8	13	1.39
9	8	0.86
Railroads		
0	81	8.66
1	24	2.57
2	27	2.89
3	32	3.42
4	19	2.03
5	85	9.09
6	144	15.40
7	213	22.78
8	237	25.35
9	73	7.81
Public transportation		
0	68	7.27
1	153	16.36
2	57	6.10
3	56	5.99
4	71	7.59
5	224	23.96
6	156	16.68
7	86	9.20
8	42	4.49
9	22	2.35
Other		
0	789	84.39
1	22	2.35
2	2	0.21
3	6	0.64
4	4	0.43
5	3	0.32
6	3	0.32
7	9	0.96
8	12	1.28
9	85	9.09

Type of housing next move		
No response	28	2.99
Low-cost single family starter home	166	17.75
Single wide manufactured home	55	5.88
Mid-priced single family home	528	56.47
Apartment or townhouse	13	1.39
Condominium	14	1.50
Assisted living/retirement	15	1.60
Senior housing	10	1.07
Other	106	11.34
3 characteristics most important in choosing place to live		
No response	15	1.60
Proximity to schools, libraries, and churches	631	67.49
Walkability	177	18.93
Good traffic flow and access to roadways	286	30.59
Proximity to shopping and services	200	21.39
Safety	745	79.68
Open space	500	53.48
Other	135	14.44
3 important issues about local arts and heritage		
No response	65	6.95
Preservation of archaeological and burial sites	612	65.45
Preservation of historical and cultural sites	629	67.27
Need for more museums and cultural centers	431	46.10
Promotion of arts, heritage and eco-tourism for the country	402	42.99
Promotion and development of visual and performing art	353	37.75
Other	37	3.96
Rank economic development activities		
Manufacturing		
0	68	7.27
1	90	9.63
2	113	12.09
3	112	11.98
4	107	11.44
5	110	11.76
6	100	10.70
7	100	10.70
8	111	11.87
9	23	2.46
Tourism		
0	64	6.84
1	36	3.85
2	39	4.17
3	51	5.45

4	65	6.95
5	80	8.56
6	107	11.44
7	149	15.94
8	273	29.20
9	51	5.45
Small business		
0	53	5.67
1	114	12.19
2	165	17.65
3	168	17.97
4	154	16.47
5	114	12.19
6	83	8.88
7	51	5.45
8	18	1.93
9	15	1.60
High technology		
0	68	7.27
1	49	5.24
2	58	6.20
3	102	10.91
4	104	11.12
5	140	14.97
6	150	16.04
7	140	14.97
8	104	11.12
9	21	2.25
Education through OU and Hocking		
0	58	6.20
1	162	17.33
2	146	15.61
3	101	10.80
4	78	8.34
5	123	13.16
6	95	10.16
7	80	8.56
8	78	8.34
9	14	1.50
Agriculture and locally produced food		
0	54	5.78
1	91	9.73
2	107	11.44
3	162	17.33
4	115	12.30
5	137	14.65
6	111	11.87
7	100	10.70
8	48	5.13

9	10	1.07
Sustainable energy		
0	62	6.63
1	95	10.16
2	103	11.02
3	99	10.59
4	127	13.58
5	103	11.02
6	97	10.37
7	127	13.58
8	108	11.55
9	17	1.82

Job development		
0	50	5.35
1	539	57.65
2	137	14.65
3	56	5.99
4	47	5.03
5	29	3.10
6	27	2.89
7	19	2.03
8	19	2.03
9	12	1.28
Other		
0	825	88.24
1	12	1.28
2	2	0.21
3	2	0.21
4	1	0.11
5	2	0.21
6	3	0.32
7	4	0.43
8	8	0.86
9	76	8.13

ATHENS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN APPENDIX J
OHIO COUNTY PROFILE - ATHENS COUNTY