

General Plan Update Steering Committee Meeting #5

November 4, 2020
6:30 PM

Steering Committee #5 for the Geauga County General Plan update was held at 6:30 PM on November 4th, 2020, via Zoom.

This document summarizes discussion highlights from the meeting:

- Public Forum / Virtual Workshop Results (see below)
- Review of Draft Plan Recommendations (see next page) and revisions as presented at the 11/10 Planning Commission meeting

Please note: This document reflects a summary of the discussion that took place at this meeting. Additional stakeholder input (e.g. community surveys, forums, etc.), quantitative analysis, and Planning Commission guidance will be incorporated in developing the General Plan.

Public Forums / Virtual Workshops Summary of Feedback

- 79 total participants
- Housing preferences showed higher levels of support (vs Community Survey) for different housing types:
 - Senior Housing (70% Yes; 19% No; 11% Unsure)
 - Conservation Development (61% Yes; 18% No; 21% Unsure)
 - Mixed-Use Development (50% Yes; 30% No; 20% Unsure)
 - Support lower for Market-Rate Workforce Housing (41% Yes; 40% No; 19% Unsure)
- Connections
 - High support for Broadband investments (76% Yes; 14% No; 10% Unsure)
 - Support lower for Workforce Transit (35% Yes; 34% No, 31% Unsure)
 - Top Amish Safety Improvements: SR 87 Buggy Lanes, SR 608 Buggy Lanes & Climbing Lanes)
 - Top trail type desired was multi-use (52%)
 - Trail preference for inter-park connections (58%) vs Intra-park (42%)

Draft Recommendations

Land Use

Preservation of Rural Character	Geauga County is a predominantly rural community that presents a unique opportunity to reside in a tranquil country setting near Northeast Ohio's major urban employment centers. Any future development should complement the County's rural character in size, scale, and appearance.
Commercial Corridors	The County's major highways are the primary location of commercial and industrially zoned properties. The County should assist local governments in maintaining vibrant commercial and industrial corridors (such as US 322 in Chesterland and SR 87 in Newbury) through technical support and possible financial assistance (e.g. Revolving Loan Fund for commercial revitalization).
Town Centers	Several of the County's rural Townships have established Town Centers (e.g. Russell, Thompson) that could be enhanced through landscaping, wayfinding, and commercial revitalization efforts. The County should assist Townships seeking to enhance their town centers with technical support and possible financial assistance (e.g. Revolving Loan Fund for commercial revitalization).

Revised Draft Recommendations

Revised draft land use recommendations were not revised substantively.

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Draft Recommendations

Housing

Senior Housing	Nationwide housing trends indicate Baby Boomers wish to remain in their community as they age into their senior years. The Model Zoning Code should provide best practices accommodating senior-friendly housing such as “step-down” lower maintenance housing types and lot sizes, as well as dedicated senior housing facilities.
Conservation Development	Residential subdivision activity has slowed in Geauga County over the past decade as overall real estate market trends favor smaller, lower maintenance lot sizes. Conservation Development is a development technique to conserve ecological resources on a portion of subdivision while accommodating more dense lots resulting in a development at the same overall density as the underlying zoning. The Model Zoning Code should include a best practice for a Conservation Development Planned Unit Development (PUD) as conditional use to appropriate residential districts.
Mixed-Use Development	While the County is predominantly rural, limited strategic opportunities exist for denser, mixed-use development. In locations where adequate infrastructure capacity exists or is readily available (e.g. Chardon and Bainbridge) these efforts should be encouraged.
Market Rate Workforce Housing	The County has a limited amount of smaller residential lots (less than 1 acre) and apartment units. Efforts should be to encourage such denser development types in urbanized areas in close proximity to employment centers and commercial services such as the City of Chardon and the Village of Middlefield.

Revised Draft Recommendations

Revised draft housing recommendations were not revised substantively. Conservation development language was clarified to specify “density neutral”.

Housing

Senior Housing	Nationwide housing trends indicate Baby Boomers wish to remain in their community as they age into their senior years. The Model Zoning Code should provide best practices to accommodate senior-friendly housing such as “step-down” lower maintenance homes and lot sizes, as well as dedicated senior housing facilities.
Conservation Development	Residential subdivision activity has slowed dramatically in Geauga County over the past decade as overall real estate market trends favor smaller, lower maintenance lot sizes. Conservation Development is density-neutral development tool that accommodates smaller lot sizes while preserving a portion of a subdivision. The Model Zoning Code should include a best practice for a Conservation Development Planned Unit Development (PUD) as a conditional use that could potentially be applied for on a case-by-case basis in appropriate residential districts.
Mixed-Use Development	While the County is predominantly rural, limited strategic opportunities exist for denser, mixed-use development. In locations where adequate infrastructure capacity exists or is readily available (e.g. Chardon and Bainbridge) these efforts should be encouraged.
Market Rate Workforce Housing	The County has a limited amount of smaller residential lots (less than 1 acre) and apartment units. Efforts should be made to encourage such denser development types in urbanized areas in close proximity to employment centers and commercial services such as in the City of Chardon and the Village of Middlefield.

Draft Recommendations

Natural Resources

Public Conservation of Land	Over 12% of the County's land area is protected as public open space. The County should not pursue the acquisition of additional land for conservation purposes.
Private Conservation of Land	There are over 100 privately owned parcels under conservation easement in Geauga County. While private individuals have the right to enter into conservation easements, the County should not encourage or facilitate additional conservation easements.

Revised Draft Recommendations

Natural Resources recommendations were revised to include language that the fiscal impacts of conservation of land should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Natural Resources

Public Acquisition of Land	Over 12% of the County's land area is comprised of tax-exempt properties. The County should carefully consider the fiscal impacts of removing a property from the tax base on a case-by-case basis before pursuing the acquisition of additional land for conservation or other purposes.
Private Conservation of Land	There are over 100 privately owned parcels under conservation easement in Geauga County. While private individuals have the right to enter into conservation easements, the County should educate the public on the fiscal impacts of preserving a property in perpetuity on a case-by-case basis before encouraging or facilitating additional conservation easements by third parties.

Draft Recommendations

Infrastructure

Transportation	Work with government funding agencies (e.g. NOACA, ODOT, and OPWC to proactively seek leverage outside federal and state funding assistance for the preservation of roadway pavement, bridges, and culverts, as well as strategic safety and operational enhancements. Work with the Amish community and government funding agency partners to improve heavily traveled Amish routes as identified in ODOT's 2016 Geauga County Amish Safety Study.
Water & Sewer	Ensure future water and sewer expansion projects are in concert with higher intensity development areas identified in local land use plans and zoning to maximize return on investment.
Broadband	Broadband connectivity speeds in Geauga County lag behind much of the Cleveland metropolitan area, particularly in the Southeastern portion of the County. The County should explore potential partnership models for enticing private fiber optic company investment in underserved areas of the County.
Transit	Consideration should be given to coordinating with existing regional transit agencies in Northeast Ohio to provide a "last-mile" connection from larger Regional Transit Authority transit hubs to commercial industrial employment centers in Geauga County.

Revised Draft Recommendations

Revised draft recommendations were not revised substantively.

Infrastructure

Transportation	The County should work with government funding agencies (e.g. NOACA, ODOT, and OPWC to leverage outside federal and state funding assistance for the preservation of roadway pavement, bridges, and culverts, as well as strategic safety and operational enhancements. The County should continue to work with the Amish community and funding agency partners to improve heavily traveled Amish routes as identified in ODOT's 2016 Geauga County Amish Safety Study.
Water & Sewer	The County should work to ensure future water and sewer expansion projects are in concert with higher intensity development areas identified in local land use plans and zoning to maximize return on investment.
Broadband	Broadband connectivity speeds in Geauga County lag behind much of the Cleveland metropolitan area, particularly in the Southeastern portion of the County. The County should explore potential partnership models for enticing private fiber optic company investment in underserved areas of the County.
Transit	Consideration should be given to coordinating with existing regional transit agencies in Northeast Ohio to provide a "last-mile" connection from larger Regional Transit Authority transit hubs to commercial/industrial employment centers in Geauga County (e.g. Warren to Middlefield).

Draft Recommendations

Economic Development

Business Retention & Expansion	Formalize an ongoing Business Retention & Expansion program that conducts regular visits to local businesses to better understand their current and future needs. Identify and engage corporate leaders living in Geauga County and connect with them to see what it would take to encourage them to locate operations here.
Industrial Parks	The County should continue to leverage their existing Community Reinvestment Areas (CRAs) to incentivize private investment in new, rehabilitated, and expanded commercial/light industrial properties that result in long-term increases in property tax revenue and job growth.
Strategic Development Areas	County Leadership should further explore partnerships with Geauga University Hospitals at the expanding County office campus to energize the current footprint into a “health care hub” which will be further enhanced by the relocation of the County Administrative offices to this location.

Revised Draft Recommendations

Strategic Development Areas was revised to more generally reference “County offices” rather than “County administrative offices”.

Economic Development

Business Retention & Expansion	The County should formalize an ongoing Business Retention & Expansion program that conducts regular visits to local businesses to better understand their current and future needs. The County should work to identify and engage regional corporate leaders residing in Geauga County and connect with them to see what it would take to encourage them to locate operations here.
Industrial Parks	The County should continue to leverage their existing Community Reinvestment Areas (CRAs) to incentivize private investment in new, rehabilitated, and expanded commercial/light industrial properties that result in long-term increases in property values, job growth, sales activity, and tax revenue.
Strategic Development Areas	County leadership should further explore partnerships with Geauga University Hospitals at the expanding County office campus to energize the current footprint into a “health care hub” which will be further enhanced by the future relocation of County offices to this location.

Draft Recommendations

Economic Development

Intergovernmental Cooperation	Economic Development opportunities exist along major corridors in unincorporated areas beyond municipal boundaries. In such cases potential for Joint Economic Development District (JEDD) between municipalities and bordering Townships should be explored such as the agreement between Bainbridge Township and the City of Aurora.
Innovative Financing	The County should explore innovative financing mechanisms for strategic infrastructure investments such as Tax Increment Financing (TIF) which leverages future increases in property values to finance catalytic infrastructure projects. The County's certified federal Opportunity Zone in Middlefield Township should be promoted to encourage the private investment of capital gains into qualified real estate projects and businesses.
Marketing & Promotion	The County should update and modernize its website as part of a branding effort. A consolidated resource for available properties and supporting infrastructure should be made available to site selectors in the form of an interactive map.

Revised Draft Recommendations

Reference was added to "Intergovernmental Cooperation" regarding the pending JEDD agreement between Burton Village and Township.

Economic Development

Intergovernmental Cooperation	Economic development opportunities exist along major corridors in unincorporated areas beyond municipal boundaries. In such cases potential for a Joint Economic Development District (JEDD) between municipalities and bordering Townships should be explored such as the agreement between Bainbridge Township and the City of Aurora and the agreement being finalized between the Village of Burton and Burton Township.
Innovative Financing	The County should explore innovative financing mechanisms for strategic infrastructure investments such as Tax Increment Financing (TIF) which leverages future increases in property values to finance catalytic infrastructure projects. The County's certified federal Opportunity Zone in Middlefield Township should be promoted to encourage the private investment of capital gains into qualified real projects and businesses.
Marketing & Promotion	The County should update and modernize its website as part of a branding effort. A consolidated resource for available properties and supporting infrastructure should be made available to site selectors in the form of an interactive map.

Draft Recommendations

Community Facilities

Public Schools	The County and local government should collaborate with local school districts to ensure that future development results in positive fiscal impacts to the schools which are funded through property tax revenue. In particular, commercial/industrial properties are highly desirable from a school district standpoint as they increase the property tax base without increasing the student population.
Parks & Recreation	Geauga County has a tremendous number of public parks, nature preserves, and wildlife areas. Efforts should be made to expand recreational opportunities and public access to these properties, with an emphasis on enhancing trail access.

Revised Draft Recommendations

Under “Public Schools” reference as added to Berkshire Local School District collecting income tax. A “Higher Education recommendation was adding highlight the KSU Geauga Campus nursing internship program,.

Community Facilities

Public Schools	The County and local governments should collaborate with local school districts to ensure that future development results in positive fiscal impacts to the schools which are funded through property tax revenue and, in the case of Berkshire LSD, income tax revenue. In particular, commercial/industrial properties are highly desirable from a school district standpoint as they increase the property/income tax base without increasing the student population.
Higher Education	The County should build upon established partnerships with Kent State University Geauga Campus such as the nursing internship program which serves as a workforce pipeline for many healthcare organizations throughout the region and encourages future generations to work and live in the County.
Parks & Recreation	Geauga County has a tremendous number of public parks, nature preserves, and wildlife areas. Efforts should be made to expand recreational opportunities and public access to these properties, with an emphasis on enhancing trail access.