



Ashtabula

Downtown and Harbor Districts Revitalization Plan

Prepared for

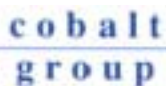
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December 3, 2002

The Charrette Team

For the Community Charrette, the UDC assembled a volunteer group of experienced designers, including architects, landscape architects, urban designers and planners, to assist the UDC and Cobalt Group Project Team in developing physical design concepts for the Downtown and Harbor Districts of Ashtabula. All of the sketch graphics presented in this report were prepared by the following participants during the three days from April 27-29, 2002.



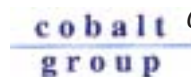
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The members of the charrette team thank the City of Ashtabula and all the residents who participated in the charrette process for their hospitality and interest in our ideas.

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Executive Summary

Purpose

The City of Ashtabula's historic commercial streets, Main Avenue in the historic downtown area, and Bridge Street in the Harbor district, have long been centers of community life. Over the years they have suffered from changing economic conditions and the loss of retail uses to automobile-oriented commercial corridors. Two consultants, the Urban Design Center of Northeast Ohio, and Cobalt Group, Inc. were asked to identify new opportunities for these historic areas.

The Urban Design Center was hired to conduct an urban design charrette in order to develop new design ideas for downtown and the Harbor district. Cobalt Group, already involved in the community visioning process known as Imagine Ashtabula, was engaged to conduct a market analysis. Under the guidance of the Ashtabula Community Development Department, the consultants worked together to develop this revitalization plan for Ashtabula's historic commercial districts.

Process

The community charrette was held April 26-29, 2002 to generate public input, to develop initial design concepts, and to obtain feedback on the initial concepts. Extensive preparation for the charrette included base mapping, analysis of the physical environment, and primary and secondary economic and demographic data collection. Community input was generated from stakeholder interviews and public meetings throughout the charrette. After the charrette, the design concepts were refined and implementation strategies were prepared.

Findings

Ashtabula faces certain economic challenges. Major employment sectors in Ashtabula County include

manufacturing and services. Business starts and terminations have offset each other, contributing to a stagnant economic situation. More commuters leave Ashtabula County for work than commute into the county, which translates into lost income tax revenues and discretionary spending. The county has a comparatively high unemployment rate, although the unemployment rate is decreasing. Ashtabula County's population declined in the 1980's and increased slightly in the 1990's. Population growth is occurring in less-populated areas of the county, where most new housing construction is occurring. To attract this population growth to the City of Ashtabula, new housing strategies are needed.

The City of Ashtabula has a number of important assets. Its transportation network is excellent, including port, highway and rail connections. There are an abundance of natural resources including multiple parks, the river valley known as the Gulf, and the Western Reserve Greenway. Environmental restoration efforts in the Fields Brook tributary are underway. Historic properties and museums provide cultural amenities. The strengths of the community need to be reframed in terms of the present social and economic climate to form an accurate picture of the community's needs and to ensure that the social and economic infrastructure is meeting these needs.

Recommendations

In both the downtown and harbor commercial districts, vacant and underutilized properties detract from the cohesive nature of the historic centers. Reinvestment in existing buildings combined with new residential development will be necessary to inject a new vibrancy into Main Avenue and Bridge Street. In this plan, specific redevelopment target areas are identified

within the downtown and harbor study areas. For each target area, an overall concept, objectives, and implementation strategies are proposed.

A set of guiding principles was formulated to direct the recommendations. The goal of the plan is to create a new economy for the City of Ashtabula by leveraging local resources and strategic investments to meet community needs.

In the downtown district, the traditional general retail base has been greatly eroded as retail has migrated to other commercial corridors. As a result, there is a need for a new economic base and a new way of defining the district. Downtown is redefined as a civic core supported by an educational campus, connections to new recreational amenities in the gulf, targeted commercial redevelopment, and new housing. Three redevelopment target areas are identified for downtown: the North Park District, the Civic District, and the South Park District.

The harbor district has the potential to become a thriving retail and entertainment center. Proximity to the Lake Erie waterfront, the unique character and topography of Bridge Street, and the feasibility of infill development in the area are conditions which will enable the district to become a regional destination. Four redevelopment target areas are identified for the harbor district: Waterfront, Historic Bridge Street, Center Square, and Harbor Neighborhood.

The Gulf runs the length of the City of Ashtabula and is adjacent to both the harbor district and the downtown district. It provides a significant opportunity to connect the two districts physically and mentally to each other and to their environment. This plan views the Gulf as a latent economic and recreational asset which needs to be triggered by new investment. Three redevelopment target areas were identified for the Gulf: Gulf Harbor, Gulf Downtown, and Gulf Link.



View towards the harbor on historic Bridge Street

Methodology

Project Approach

The project began with a focus on two study areas:

- the Main Avenue Commercial District
- the Historic Harbor District

Representatives of the Cleveland-based Cobalt Group and urban design consultants from the Urban Design Center of Kent State University partnered to bring a multi-disciplinary approach to this project.

This approach is based on the recognition that many older communities located in the “manufacturing Mid-West” are more frequently being confronted with economic conditions that are not easily diagnosed and remedied, let alone within their control. What is more frequently the case is the need for these communities to look closely at a broad set of systems. These systems include, but are not limited to the economic, education, health, human services, transportation and ecological systems. Specifically, it is important to analyze a variety of indicators in each of these systems to understand the condition of the current marketplace and the likely condition of the marketplace in the future.

The current stagnant market conditions in the City of Ashtabula are not unique. Rather they are indicative of the stagnant market conditions in Ashtabula County, Northeast Ohio, and the state of Ohio. For example, while certain economic indicators such as new housing and business starts indicate that there is economic activity in Ashtabula, the lack of new housing in the City and an almost equal number of busi-

ness closings, indicates economic stagnation. These market conditions, however, are more than a cyclical downturn. In fact, the current market conditions are better characterized as a result of incipient decline, that is, a slow disinvestment in a community over a long period of time.



A plethora of economic data can be found throughout this report. Analysis of these data strongly suggests that bold actions must be taken to chart the future of Ashtabula City as well as Ashtabula County. The contents of this summary report present a sequence of inter-related, long-term, comprehensive strategies to begin the redevelopment of the City's two main retail/commercial districts. If adopted and implemented, this approach will serve as the foundation for the redevelopment of the City of Ashtabula. Also, it will serve as the platform on which the County can re-position itself as a major regional economic center of activity.

We believe it is imperative that the civic, business, and education leaders in the City of Ashtabula convene and agree to act strategically and in unison to capitalize on proposed investments, community assets and connections to larger education and economic systems which can serve as catalysts and bridges to a new economy for the city and region.



Ashtabula Harbor



Main Avenue

Study Areas

In developing the scope of this project, the Department of Community Development at the City of Ashtabula recognized that it was important to address redevelopment issues and opportunities in the two main commercial districts simultaneously. It was important to focus on study areas that could serve as catalytic target areas. That is, areas that could attract investment, leverage it, and spark other development activities.

While both districts function as commercial, mixed-use areas, each district historically has attracted a different set of users. In addition, both districts possess immediate opportunities for redevelopment. However, the existing conditions of the Historic Harbor District and its proximity to tourism and entertainment opportunities place it in a better position for attracting private sector-driven investments. The planning and assessment of this study area was driven by the need to define these private sector investment opportunities and the public sector activities that would complement and attract private investment.

It was acknowledged that redeveloping both districts is important for the overall health of the City and the County. Both districts serve as gateways to the community, one by land and the other by water and land. It also is important to link the activities in these study areas via "The Gulf" (a 450-acre area which is part of the Ashtabula River watershed) in order to set the stage for additional investments in parks, greenspace, and coastal water/land management.

Finally, the ten-year rebuilding plan for all Ashtabula Area City Schools (AACS) buildings presents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make recommendations that would leverage this \$100 million investment. Not only is this an opportunity because the investment in new school buildings would be scattered throughout the City and contiguous townships, but, because the disposition of existing buildings and school campuses need to be determined simultaneously. Furthermore, there are infrastructure and roadway improvements that need to occur with the building of new schools. It only seems logical to look at the total plan and to make investment decisions that leverage other investments. This presents a unique opportunity for public engagement in a broader discussion about the redevelopment of the City.

These study areas overlap with three elementary school attendance areas. The current high school for students in grades 10 - 12, the 9th grade school building, and Chestnut Elementary School are located in the study areas. As outlined in the chart below, decisions about the following school campuses will need to be

made in terms of the building disposition and location of new schools.

AACS Schools Located in the Study Area

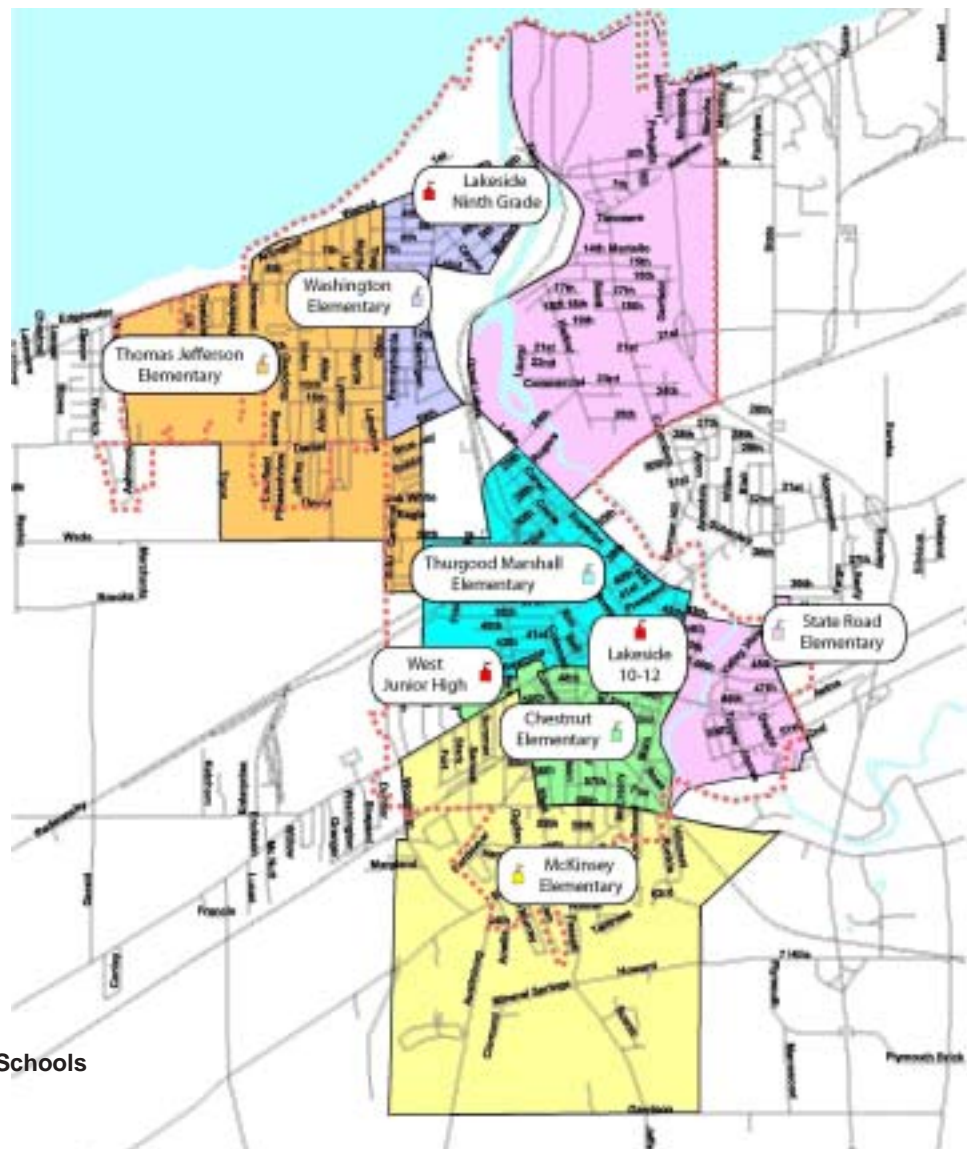
Lakeside 10-12	3.86 acres
Lakeside 9	2.34 acres
Washington E.S.	3.42 acres
Thurgood Marshall E.S.	7.95 acres
Chestnut E.S.	3.86 acres

Currently, the school activity in the study areas is significant. While the high school's relocation to another part of the school district may be imminent, the effects of this move should be understood more fully, as should the disposition of the remaining building and Board of Education Offices. Also, re-siting or eliminating elementary schools has the potential to have adverse affects on the contiguous neighborhoods. It is important that these discussions occur in a larger community context. There is a strong case for gathering and processing public input as these decisions are being made.

Data Collection

In order to prepare a comprehensive set of recommendations, the data collection for this study included gathering and analyzing a very comprehensive set of data that allowed the project team to gain a general understanding of the issues and opportunities confronting the two study areas.

The organizing framework for the data collection was influenced by two catalytic events: the successful and intensive effort to merge Ashtabula and Harbor High Schools in 2000; and the subsequent planning efforts of the Imagine Ashtabula organizers who initiated a planning process in January 2001 to define a new vision for the city in January, 2002. With support from the Ashtabula Foundation, the City of Ashtabula and the Ashtabula Area City Schools, a group of local Chestnut neighborhood residents, school district officials, city officials and other interested stakeholders conducted an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities



Ashtabula Area City Schools Attendance Areas

and constraints of the City using the Chestnut neighborhood as a microcosm of the City. What emerged from this preliminary planning process between the City of Ashtabula and the Ashtabula Area School District was that there were there were four key areas of opportunities or assets before the City:

- school facilities and programs;
- parks and recreation;
- technology infrastructure; and
- economic development.

Building on these preliminary planning activities, the data collection process was conducted in six steps:

1. **Secondary data were collected** by Cobalt Group to provide an overview of the existing market conditions (see the Appendix for a comprehensive list of data).

2. A **geographic information system (GIS) base mapping project was completed** by the Urban Design Center from October, 2001 to March, 2002. The base maps developed for this project were the first of their kind in Ashtabula County.

3. **An analysis of the physical environment** was prepared by the Urban Design Center. Data were collected on land use, building condition and character, and circulation patterns. Spreadsheets showing elevations of the streetscape with information on each parcel were prepared.

4. **Primary data collection occurred** through Key Leader Interviews and field verification of existing conditions.

5. Throughout the process **key leaders, residents, business owners and property owners, in and out of**

the community, were engaged regularly. Residents were also encouraged to provide feedback and suggestions via e-mail. All interested individuals provided important feedback on specific recommendations as they were being developed. This public participation was a key component of the planning process and lays the groundwork for immediate plan implementation.

6. **A three-day community charrette was held** April 26-29, 2002 to provide the community with an opportunity to learn about the planning and assessment process and provide direct input into planning and development strategies.

Community Charrette

A twelve-person project team including architects, landscape architects, and planners met with the public over a period of three days and worked late into the night to give form to the community's ideas. The charrette culminated in a public meeting on April 29 when the designers' proposals and the plan's guiding principles were presented. These principles helped shape the recommendations presented in this report.

Charrette Input

In general, charrette participants agreed that the community needs to leverage local and regional investments which are pending or underway. These include the Western Reserve Greenway, new schools, public infrastructure such as roads, parking facilities and sewers, the proposed Nordic Energy Power Plant, construction of the longest covered bridge, the lighting of the lift bridge, and other River Partnership activities. In addition, needs like student housing for KSU's Ashtabula campus should be examined more closely to determine how this development fits into an overall housing strategy for the City.

Charrette participants also agreed that the City and region are rich with natural resources including Lake Erie, Ashtabula River, the Gulf, and the Port. Similarly, there are multiple groups working to expand programs and services that incorporate or celebrate these resources, and that document the region's cultural history and heritage. These groups of stakeholders include, but are not limited to professionals, city leaders, small business owners in the North Park section of downtown, Kent State University, the Library, the Schools, and the tourism industry.



Historic Bridge Street

As the three-day planning process unfolded, the community further explored opportunities to use these resources and investments to meet community needs. Community needs were defined broadly including a performing arts center, community recreation center, formal music programs, new market rate housing, a community-based learning resource center, a computer/media center, safe and clean neighborhoods, public access to the lakefront, convenient/accessible public transportation, updated zoning codes, and bike ways.

In general, participants expanded their thinking when asked to identify new opportunities in the City. Many of the items in the following list are both needs and opportunities. What is significant about them is that the community is thinking comprehensively and inclusively. While the study areas were closely examined, their relationship to the remaining City neighborhoods and contiguous townships was also studied. The following list is a compilation of ideas which were generated throughout the charrette. While it is not an exhaustive list of development opportunities, it helped focus the planning recommendations in areas where investments and resources converge. The following list contains specific action strategies and project-specific ideas.

General Ideas

- Harbor High site - convert to market rate housing/condominiums, a museum, student housing, elder hostel
- Sidley/Marshall Property - convert to hotel and mixed-use tourist destination
- Accommodate fishermen and other sports enthusiasts
- Examine potential relocation of Goodwill Industries to convert parcel to a better use
- Convert the physical environment in harbor to one similar to “Bar Harbor, Maine”
- Remove legal and ownership barriers to redeveloping hotel, other parcels
- Coordinate investments
- Learn from successful projects elsewhere
- Incorporate telecommunications into business development
- Reuse old factory property and redevelop into other uses
- Maximize Park Rangers for safety enforcement
- Link Gulf to organized sports
- Create equestrian loop trails
- Improve signage and sign conformity
- Attract expanded programming for local media
- Establish a farmer’s market
- Community center

- Festivals
- Expand bus hours to 9:00p.m.
- Establish a permanent Amtrak station
- Covered bridges
- Mental health housing projects
- Light the lift bridge
- Designate the east end of Walnut Boulevard as a special museum district
- Mandate local government to preserve, maintain, and restore all brick streets in the Historic Harbor District

Community Services Partnerships

- Multi-generational community center/recreation facility
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters
- Partnerships with Cooperative Extension Service



Planning Director Mike Penna pointing out key issues on the charrette team’s orientation bus tour



The charrette team collecting information on the Harbor District

- YMCA
- Community-based Education Resource Center
- Ashtabula Arts Center
- Restoration of Shay's Theatre
- Conneaut Community Center
- Rabbit Run Theatre
- Library Expansion
- Redevelopment of the Old City Hall
- Redevelopment of Hotel
- KSU Educational, Research and Service Learning Programs
- Keep banks, professional offices, utilities and government offices downtown
- Reinvigorate merchants' association

Identity/Image

- We can be "wowed!"
- Build neighborhood pride
- Celebrate history
- International connection to the world through the port commerce
- Bridges
- Beaches/lake
- Small businesses

Special Attractions

- Ashtabula Lighthouse Summer Festival

- Covered Bridges Festival
- Walnut Beach/Lakeshore Park/Point Park Activities
- Outdoor movies, beautiful sunsets, bird watching
- Heritage/Multi-Ethnic Museum
- Kent State Summer Outdoor Concerts
- Lift Bridge Celebrations
- Farmer's Market in partnership with St. Peter's Church/South Park
- Tour bus destinations/tours

Education

- Service learning connected to development projects, specifically with regards to housing
- University-Community Partnerships
- Community-based education
- Rebuilding of District's schools

Public Infrastructure

- Center St. connection to Main Ave.
- 46th St. converted to two-way
- Maximize parking deck capacity
- Buy one building a year to gain site control

Transportation

- Train to stop at old depot facility
- Evaluate public transportation system



At work with residents on Saturday afternoon

Housing

- Warehouse/loft residential units
- Mixed-use buildings
- Student housing/efficiencies/lofts

Recreation

- Connect all existing recreation areas
- Revitalize access points to gulf
- Summer recreation program
- Intramural sports (seasonal)
- Movie theatre
- Youth center

Investments

- Retail is the lifeblood of a community
- Bicycle shop to support Greenway activity
- Library/community resource center concept including a coffee shop (supporting small business), copy center, Internet access (department store layout with softened interior design)

Key Issues

- Roads/curbs need repairing
- Improve lighting
- Litter/overflowing trash cans, abundance of litter on streets
- Sign posts to Downtown and Harbor
- Tendency to ignore North Main past North Park to Rt. 20

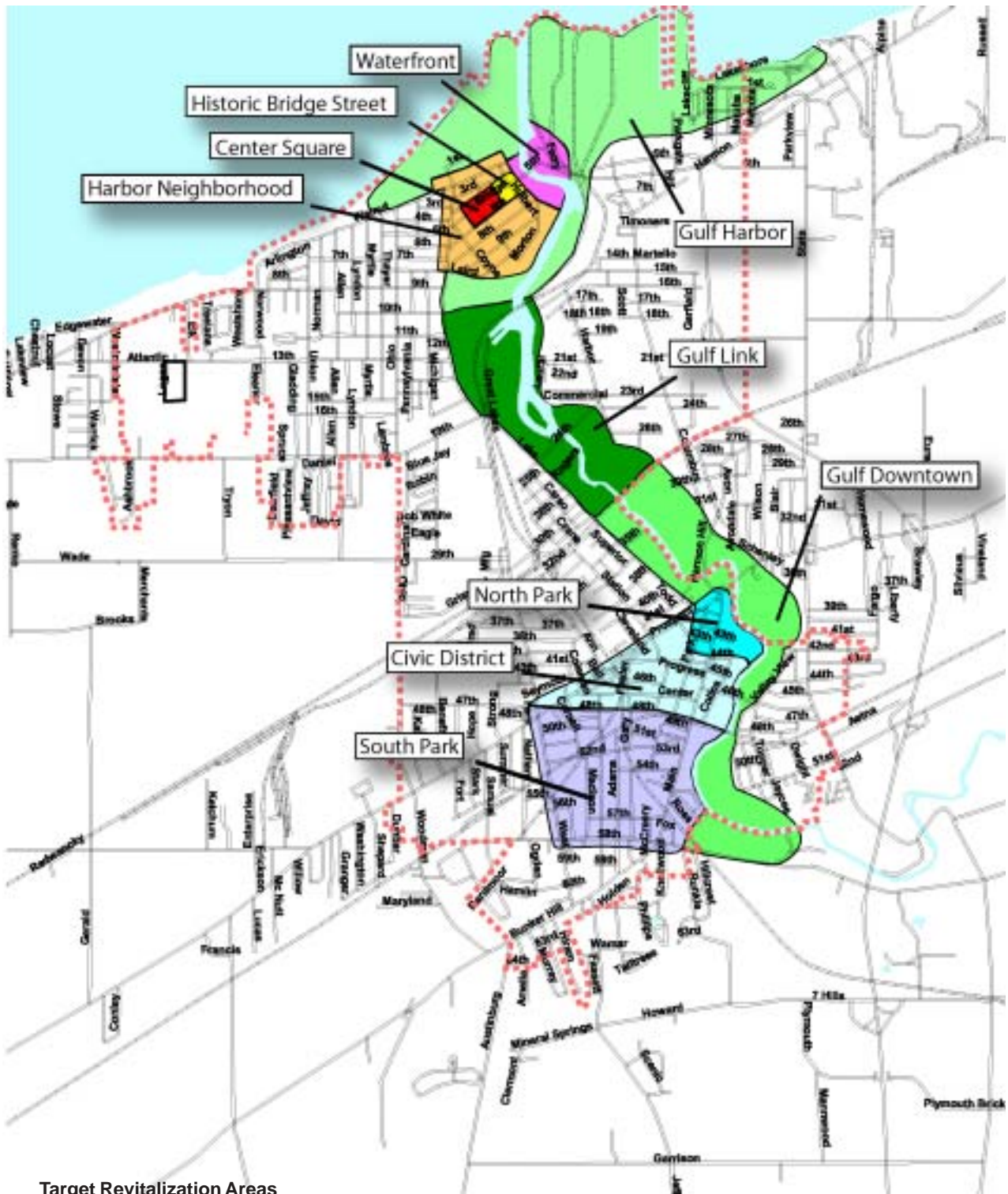
- Lack of regional draw (events)
- Multi-jurisdictional problems:
 - River boundaries and under-utilized Gulf
 - Lack of regional approach to development and government
- Adequate parking for tour buses
- Inappropriate temporary displays in storefronts
- Substandard housing in Main Ave. study area
- Code enforcement
- Empty storefronts and upper floors
- Lack of identity/personality for Main Ave.
- Absentee property owners
- Poor traffic volume on nights and weekends on Main Ave.
- Condition and character of parking deck
- Need to improve lighted area north of Route 20
- Few reasons to visit Downtown
- Need places for tourists to stay
- Enforcement of Historic District guidelines
- Crime and safety in contiguous neighborhoods/drugs
- Vacant buildings/broken windows
- Inappropriate mothballing techniques for vacant buildings
- Faded, inappropriate signage
- General shabby appearance
- Taverns should be “tavern/restaurant” type establishments



Exchanging ideas over a preliminary sketch

Target Areas

The investigation of the study areas and input generated during the charrette process led to the identification of priority target areas for new initiatives and redevelopment.



Target Revitalization Areas

Existing Conditions

General study findings are reviewed in this section, presenting an analysis and synthesis of data that can be found in more detail in the Appendices of this report. The purpose of this section is to present a comprehensive overview of the existing conditions in Ashtabula County, the City of Ashtabula and the study areas to:

- provide background on the current conditions of the study and related areas; and
- identify trends or influencing factors which may impact the successful implementation of the recommendations of this study.

A Brief History

“Ashtabula” is an Indian word meaning “river of many fish”. Various Native American tribes vied for control of the area and for nearly a hundred years from 1635 to the early 1700s, no one tribe claimed Ashtabula as its home but several tribes enjoyed the abundance of fish and game in the area. By the late 1700s, the Massasaugas tribe began to settle the area but they were soon controlled by the larger Iroquois tribe. It is believed that the Iroquois and Algonquin Indian nations considered the Ashtabula River the boundary line between their territories.

By 1801 the first Europeans had arrived on the shores of Lake Erie. Thomas Hamilton built a log cabin at the mouth of the Ashtabula River and became the first settler to the Connecticut Western Reserve. Because of its plentiful fish and game, the area began to grow. By 1837, the area was marked by rapid progress and

more European settlers moved to Ashtabula. The harbor had been improved and steamboats were introduced. In 1852, the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railroad were built which helped to stimulate growth. The railroad had many advantages, not least of which was the introduction of the first foreign settlers, the Irish. Italians, Finns and Swedes soon followed, attracted by work and business opportunities.

Ashtabula’s position along Lake Erie made it a critical link for the Underground Railroad. Many runaway slaves spent time at the Historic Hubbard House before setting sail for freedom in Canada.

Following the Civil War, in 1873, the Pittsburgh, Youngstown and Ashtabula (PY&A) Railroad laid tracks



Historic details of the housing in the Harbor District

to the Harbor, creating jobs and more opportunities for the pivotal Harbor district. The Harbor later became one of the largest ore and coal ports in the world.

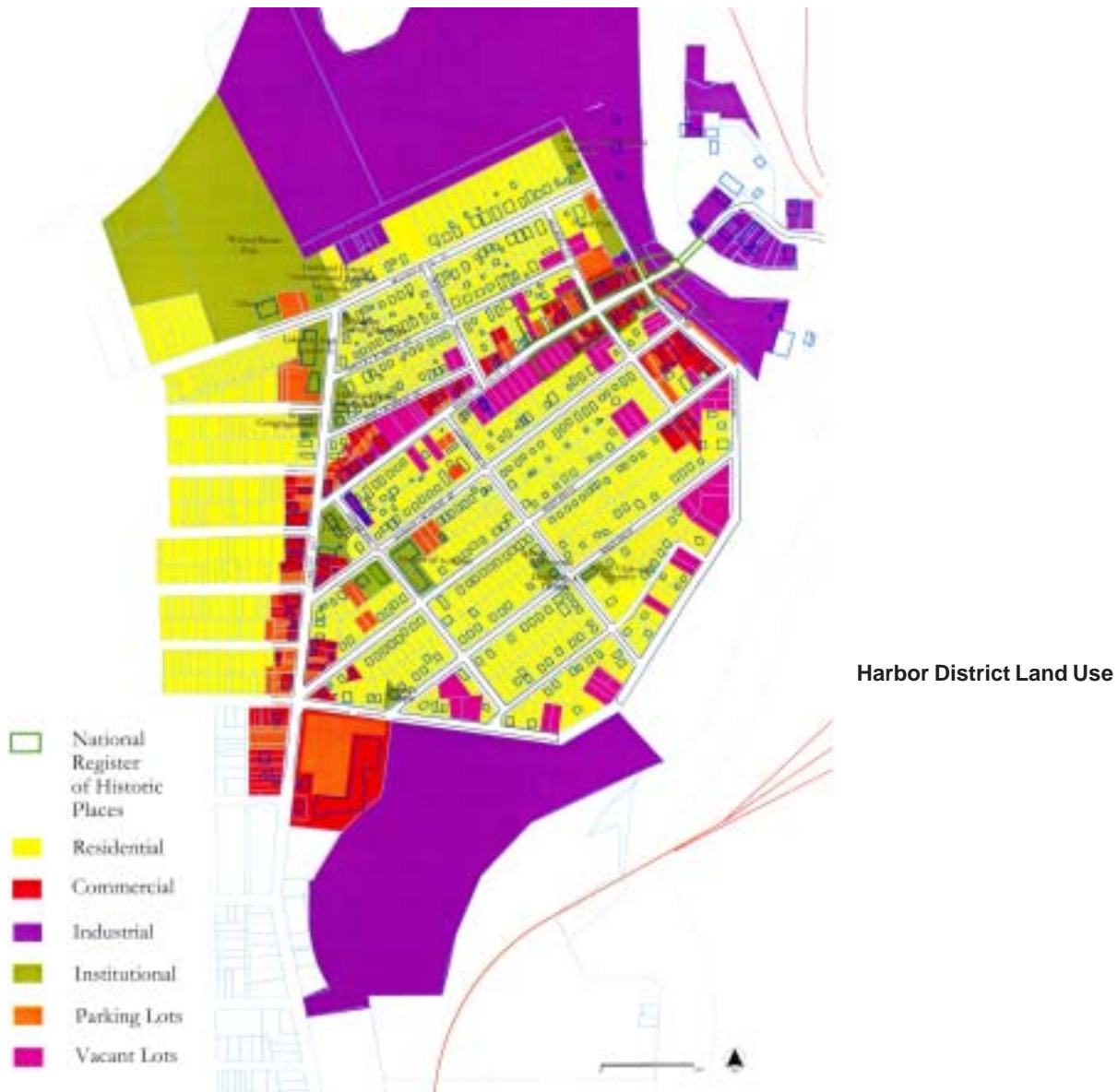
The county of Ashtabula was established in 1808, but the city itself was not incorporated until 1892. By the time of incorporation, Ashtabula was a bustling community with a modern hospital, an electric rapid transit system and a telephone company. By the turn of the century, the population was a healthy 12,949.

The 1900s saw great changes in Ashtabula. Its access to Lake Erie and nearly 30 miles of shoreline helped position Ashtabula as a major shipping and commercial center. In the first half of the century, Ashtabula experienced the same shifts as many other port cities of the Midwest and Northeast, and as a result its industrial base changed. During the 1950s, the

area experienced immense growth with its expanding chemical industry and increasing Harbor activity making Ashtabula one of the most important port cities of the Great Lakes.

The population of Ashtabula County reached its peak of 104,215 residents during the 1970s. The population in the City of Ashtabula grew steadily until 1970, since when it has been declining just as steadily. According to U.S. Census data, population figures for the County and City in 2000 were 102,728 and 20,962 respectively.

Today, Ashtabula is a community that has successfully combined the advantages of small town living and a rural lifestyle with the activity of the major metropolitan centers of Cleveland, Youngstown and Erie, PA.



Land Use and Zoning

Land Use

Historic Harbor District

The Historic Harbor District's land use can best be categorized as a mix of commercial and residential uses. The land north of the district is industrial land primarily used for commerce related to Port of Ashtabula activities at Pinney Dock. Just south of the Historic District is additional industrial land that blends into existing recreational uses. While the land use and zoning of the Historic Harbor District are fairly consistent, the vacant land and proliferation of parking lots on Bridge Street results in a disconnected landscape. Residential areas to the north and south of Bridge Street are in good to ex-

cellent condition. A significant number of homes in the northern residential district have undergone historic rehabilitation.

Downtown Commercial District

The Downtown District, focused on Main Avenue, is primarily a mix of commercial and institutional uses and parking. There is a limited amount of industrial land on the western border of the study area, and residential pockets in the southern part of the study area (Chestnut neighborhood). Vacant parcels, vacant buildings and the proliferation of surface parking lots present a disorganized and unplanned landscape.

Downtown District Land Use



Zoning

Residential Zoning

Three residential zoning districts govern single family and two-family housing in the City of Ashtabula. The Multiple Dwelling District allows limited multi-family development. Planned Residential Development zoning and Integrated Residential Development under a Special Use Permit enable less restrictive multi-family housing development. The R-A residential overlay district allows certain office uses and home occupations in addition to the underlying residential zoning.

Commercial Zoning

Commercial zoning districts include Local Business, General Commercial, Central Business, and Shopping Center. The General Commercial designation allows a wide range of commercial uses. The Central

Business designation allows all General Commercial uses and adds some light industrial uses. Central Business District Zoning is located in the Main Avenue downtown district between W. 44th Street and W. 48th Street. Main Avenue to the north and south of the Central Business District and most of Bridge Street is zoned General Commercial.

Industrial Zoning

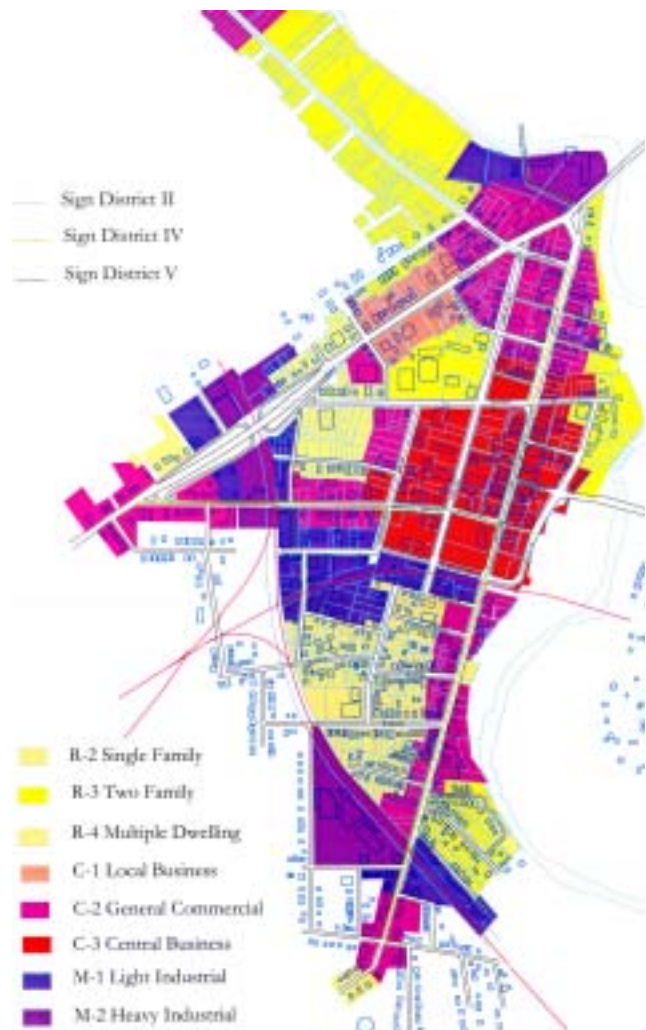
Industrial zones include Light Industrial, Heavy Industrial, and Controlled Industrial. The Bridge Street waterfront area is zoned for industrial uses.

Design Controls

Five sign districts control the size and placement of signs. The Harbor Restoration Overlay provides for a local historic district with a design review board to oversee changes.



Harbor District Zoning



Downtown District Zoning

Demographic Trends

Ashtabula County experienced its peak population in 1980.

Census Counts 1870-2000

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

	POPULATION	
	Ohio	Ashtabula Co.
1870	2,665,260	32,517
1880	3,198,062	37,139
1890	3,672,329	43,665
1900	4,157,545	51,448
1910	4,767,121	59,547
1920	5,759,394	65,545
1930	6,646,697	68,361
1940	6,907,612	68,874
1950	7,946,627	78,695
1960	9,706,397	93,067
1970	10,652,017	98,237
1980	10,797,630	104,215
1990	10,847,115	99,821
2000	11,353,140	102,728

From 1980 to 1990 the county population declined 4.2%. However, despite population losses during the 1980s, this trend was reversed during the 1990s when the county population increased 2.9%.

Ashtabula's population ranks 27th among Ohio's 88 counties, and is representative of the shifting demographic trend documented in Northeast Ohio where out-migration occurs from the central urban core to outlying counties.

Unfortunately, the increase in population in the County has occurred primarily in townships and villages in the county. Likewise the growth of school-age children occurred in the smaller, more rural townships in Ashtabula County.

The migration data confirm these trends. The migration data also confirm the fact that population growth is stagnant. In other words, while the overall migration level has declined, the number of people leaving the county has been offset by the number of people moving into the county.

Study Trade Area

For the purposes of this study, the Trade Area has been defined as Ashtabula City, Ashtabula Township, Plymouth Township, and Saybrook Township. The total population of the Ashtabula Trade Area is 56,333, which represents slightly more than 50% of the county's total population. This Trade Area is reflective of the population patterns of northern Ashtabula County and the boundaries of the Ashtabula Area School District.

Population Projections

Population projections made through 2015 show continued growth in the county's population. If current trends are not reversed, however, the City of Ashtabula will continue to experience population loss to less populated areas of the county. As discussed in the "Housing" section of this chapter, new housing construction activity and building permit activities also support this trend.

Net Migration Flows 1988-1999

Source: Internal Revenue Service

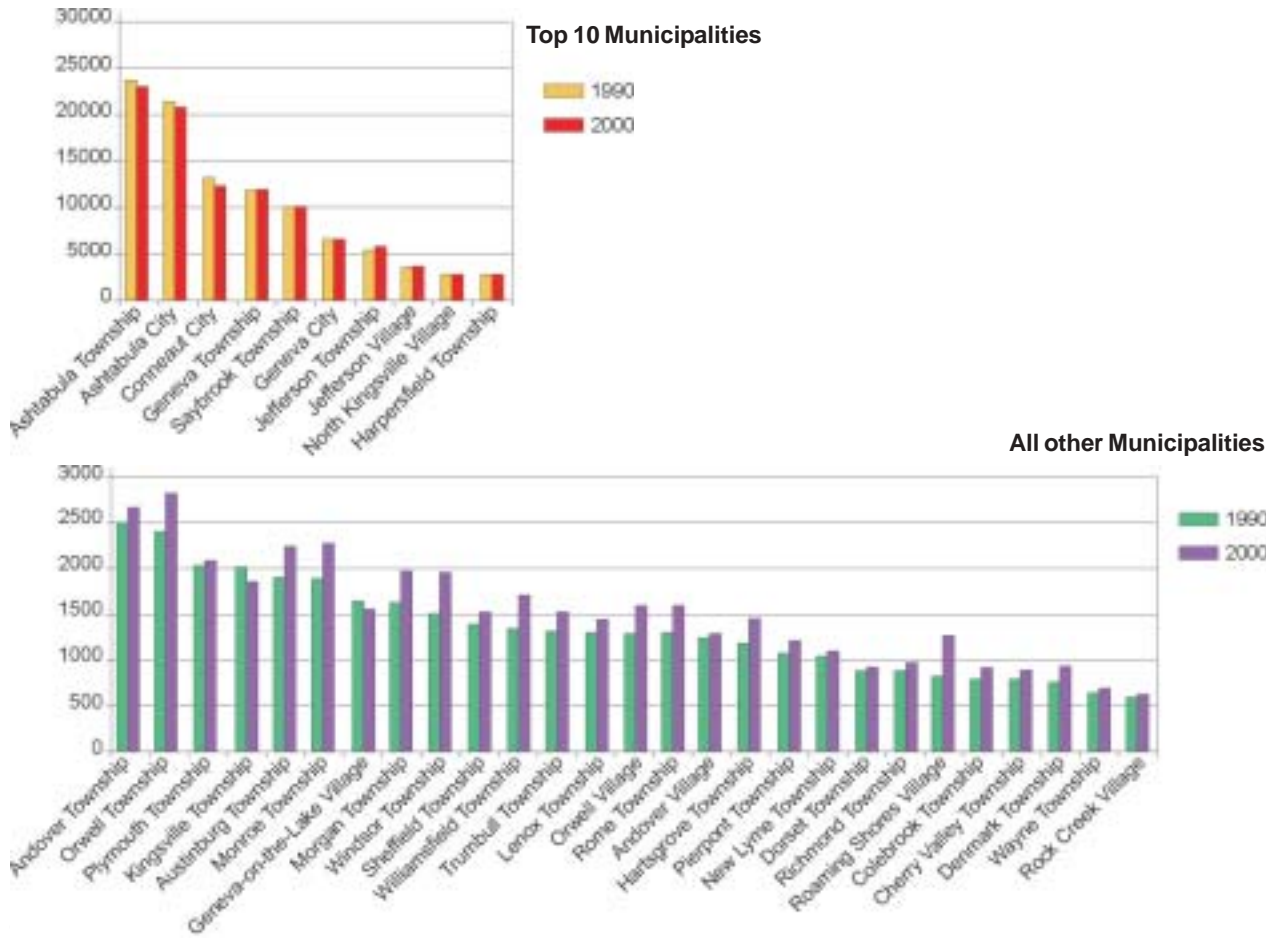
	YEAR-to-YEAR CHANGES	
	Ohio	Ashtabula Co.
1988-'89	- 27,251	-578
1989-'90	- 19,952	64
1990-'91	- 2,826	- 31
1991-'92	- 1,221	89
1992-'93	- 5,764	161
1993-'94	- 15,722	297
1994-'95	- 7,440	174
1995-'96	- 7,656	197
1996-'97	- 19,743	364
1997-'98	- 25,284	13
1998-'99	- 19,944	- 76
Net Flow		
1988-99	-152,803	969

Population Projections

Projections have been rounded to the nearest 10.

	POPULATION	
	Ohio	Ashtabula Co.
1990 Census	10,847,115	99,821
<i>Projected population:</i>		
1995	11,112,810	102,400
2000	11,288,760	102,728
2005	11,518,970	107,100
2010	11,738,930	109,700
2015	12,060,620	113,500
<i>Projected percent change:</i>		
1990-'95	2.4%	2.6%
1995-'00	1.6%	1.6%
2000-'05	2.0%	3.0%
2005-'10	1.9%	2.4%
2010-'15	2.7%	3.5%
1990-2015	11.2%	13.7%

1990 and 2000 Population, Ashtabula County



Market Indicators

As documented by the Community Development Market Indicators data, the City of Ashtabula has one of the lowest housing owner-occupancy rates (58%) in the county. This explains why the condition of a portion of the housing stock in the study area and in areas contiguous to the study area is sub-standard.

There is also a direct correlation between median mortgage and rent levels and median household/family income levels. Despite the lack of new housing development in the City of Ashtabula, the data indicate that median mortgage and rent levels are sufficient to support the development of new, moderately priced owner-occupied housing and for-rent housing units. Housing

rehabilitation is also needed to increase the percentage of owner-occupied units in the city. And, as indicated in the table below, personal per capita income has increased steadily since 1994.

While per capita income has increased at the county level, it is still below the state and national averages. Also, when comparing poverty rates for families and families with children, the City rates are 18% and 26% respectively, while the corresponding county rates are 9% and 15%. There is also a wide disparity in income between the older established municipalities in the northern part of the County when compared with the growing, more rural areas in the southern part of the county. In summary, the geographic areas that are growing are also attracting the wealth.

Personal Per Capita Income, Ashtabula County Ranking, 1994-1999

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

Income Rank	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	Net Change in Rank*
Ashtabula County	58	58	56	57	58	56	2

* The richest county has a rank of 1; the poorest ranks 88th

Personal Per Capita Income: 1994-99

(in current dollars)

Income	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	1999 Rank
U.S	\$22,581	\$23,562	\$24,651	\$25,874	\$27,321	\$28,546	
Ohio	\$22,063	\$22,887	\$23,613	\$24,916	\$26,189	\$27,171	
Ashtabula County	\$17,729	\$18,216	\$18,951	\$19,865	\$20,664	\$21,685	56

Total Personal Income: 1994-99

(in thousands of current dollars)

Income	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	1999 Rank
Ohio	\$245,156,112	\$255,312,920	\$264,164,634	\$279,366,842	\$294,306,657	\$305,855,474	
Ashtabula County	\$1,802,521	\$1,858,955	\$1,940,850	\$2,046,623	\$2,133,411	\$2,241,057	29

Community Development Market Indicators

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

City or Township	Total Population	Total Households	Total Units	Owner Occupied Rate	Renter Occupied Rate	Per Capita Income	Median Household Income	Median Family Income	Median Mortgage	Median Rent
Andover Village	1,269	427	463	59.5%	40.5%	14,702	31,250	45,526	753	441
Ashtabula City	20,962	8,435	9,151	58.4%	41.6%	14,034	27,354	33,454	753	468
Conneaut City	12,485	5,038	5,710	70.0%	30.0%	14,703	31,717	37,955	686	465
Geneva City	6,595	2,515	2,660	63.7%	36.3%	16,940	35,048	41,511	874	453
Geneva-on-the-Lake Village	1,545	665	1,167	54.7%	45.3%	15,860	29,583	31,786	818	502
Jefferson Village	3,572	1,357	1,425	61.7%	38.3%	18,371	36,883	46,312	819	463
North Kingsville Village	2,658	1,029	1,127	86.9%	13.1%	23,000	44,276	52,417	906	429
Orwell Village	1,519	618	660	62.0%	38.0%	16,160	33,214	41,705	850	492
Roaming Shores Village	1,239	486	641	93.8%	6.2%	26,470	57,431	64,750	1,161	788
Rock Creek Village	584	195	201	78.5%	21.5%	13,276	35,536	37,917	867	604
Andover Township	2,672	980	1,234	74.5%	25.5%	16,427	33,578	45,319	772	431
Cherry Valley Township	857	290	339	86.2%	13.8%	14,964	39,333	46,667	750	375
Ashtabula Township	23,239	9,412	10,183	60.2%	39.8%	14,394	27,956	35,149	738	469
Colebrook Township	887	296	319	83.1%	16.9%	13,874	41,827	42,734	783	450
Denmark Township	880	307	335	86.0%	14.0%	15,444	30,969	31,136	850	498
Dorset Township	892	308	335	86.7%	13.3%	15,713	39,712	41,786	856	633
Geneva Township	11,954	4,681	5,431	68.2%	31.8%	16,548	33,517	40,358	860	470
Harpersfield Township	2,603	970	1,036	86.7%	13.3%	21,112	53,812	56,136	1,076	514
Hartsgrove Township	1,395	483	510	85.7%	14.3%	16,686	45,385	50,179	916	375
Jefferson Township	5,559	2,059	2,159	70.3%	29.7%	19,366	41,426	48,524	852	496
Kingsville Township	1,847	652	676	79.6%	20.4%	16,097	32,453	36,728	863	468
Lenox Township	1,388	497	524	90.1%	9.9%	19,563	44,688	44,420	962	710
Monroe Township	2,268	753	807	89.5%	10.5%	14,856	42,006	45,323	761	477
New Lyme Township	1,072	386	420	80.1%	19.9%	16,430	38,750	39,688	684	468
Orwell Township	2,830	1,054	1,119	71.7%	28.3%	16,211	35,938	45,982	844	488
Pierpont Township	1,197	428	474	84.8%	15.2%	13,775	32,500	36,250	863	413
Plymouth Township	2,081	781	812	91.7%	8.3%	14,726	37,012	41,711	907	515
Richmond Township	937	334	392	87.7%	12.3%	13,720	32,188	34,625	969	298
Rome Township	1,568	594	731	88.7%	11.3%	21,256	51,875	62,292	952	564
Saybrook Township	10,051	4,141	4,664	83.0%	17.0%	20,756	42,145	47,803	887	492
Sheffield Township	1,491	517	547	90.1%	9.9%	22,987	55,650	56,900	963	490
Trumbull Township	1,461	517	542	90.7%	9.3%	16,943	43,696	48,750	1,196	497
Wayne Township	653	227	250	81.9%	18.1%	14,268	22,679	48,523	850	475
Williamsfield Township	1,683	611	822	80.7%	19.3%	14,328	28,657	41,437	774	430
Windsor Township	1,932	531	579	87.0%	13.0%	16,364	40,214	43,000	876	467

Race

Ashtabula City's minority population is 3.3% higher than the State of Ohio, and almost three times higher than Ashtabula County's. Nevertheless, the City has only a small proportion of the state's minority population.

Race: Population Counts

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

	Total Population	White	Black or African American	American Indian and Alaska Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	Some other race	Total Minorities excluding bi- and multi-racial*
Ohio	11,353,140	9,645,453	1,301,307	24,486	132,633	2,749	217,123	88,627	1,766,925
Ashtabula County	102,728	96,635	3,247	195	346	25	2,292	878	6,983
Ashtabula City	20,962	17,753	2,053	60	84	11	1,115	527	3,850
Ashtabula Township	23,239	19,910	2,104	60	114	11	1,182	553	4,024
Plymouth Township	2,081	2,002	50	4	5	-	16	-	43
Saybrook Township	10,051	9,631	223	13	46	-	127	33	442

Race: Population Percentages

	Total Population	White	Black or African American	American Indian and Alaska Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	Some other race	Total Minorities excluding bi- and multi-racial*
Ohio	100.0	85.0	11.5	0.2	1.2	-	1.9	0.8	15.1
Ashtabula County	100.0	94.1	3.2	0.2	0.3	-	2.2	0.9	6.8
Ashtabula City	100.0	84.7	9.8	0.3	0.4	0.1	5.3	2.5	18.4
Ashtabula Township	100.0	85.7	9.1	0.3	0.5	-	5.1	2.4	17.4
Plymouth Township	100.0	96.2	2.4	0.2	0.2	-	0.8	-	3.6
Saybrook Township	100.0	95.8	2.2	0.1	0.5	-	1.3	0.3	4.4

** Due to reporting methods, individuals could count themselves as being of more than one race. The data in these tables include One Race data only.*



Typical neighborhood street in Ashtabula

Retail

In August 2000, the Northeast Ohio Area Coordinating Agency (NOACA) issued a report, *Northeast Ohio Regional Retail Analysis*, which was prepared in partnership with the Cuyahoga County Planning Commission and the Planning Commissions of Geauga, Lake, Lorain, Medina, Portage County and the City of Cleveland. This report included a seven-county region

as its study area (Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, Medina, Portage and Summit).

While Ashtabula County does not participate in NOACA activities and was not included in the study area, the study's findings are relevant for the Ashtabula retail market. Key findings and their correlation to Ashtabula are presented in the following table.

NOACA Northeast Ohio Regional Retail Analysis

Corresponding Findings in Ashtabula County

Abundance of retail space

The seven county region has more than 27,000 stores and 135 million square feet of retail floor space.

Convenience and shopping goods and services, which exclude car dealerships, hotels, commercial amusements and office space, total 79.2 million square feet.

There are more than 37 square feet of convenience and shopping floor space per capita in the region.

There are more than 10 million square feet of vacant retail space in the Northeast Ohio region, and this vacancy rate of 7.4% is slightly more than might be expected for a region of its size.

There is an abundance of vacant and underutilized retail space in the City of Ashtabula and contiguous townships. Retail inventories were compiled for:

- Saybrook Plaza
- Ashtabula Mall
- Main Avenue Harbor District
- Other contiguous locations in Ashtabula County

While there are an abundance of local, regional and national retailers in the trade area, the majority of retailers are national discount chains or specialty discount retailers.

Retail sector is a significant employer

More than 200,000 persons, or 20% of the region's workforce are employed in the retail sector.

More than 8,000 persons, or 17% of the county's workforce, are employed in the retail sector.

National retail trends affect every community

A total of 10.1 million square feet of new retail recently has been constructed or proposed for the region.

The region is saturated in the convenience and shopping and goods categories by more than 6 million square feet.

There is an overwhelming amount of vacant land, 77 square miles, zoned for more retail in the region.

Following national trends, the majority of new retail construction is occurring on Route 20 near the Route 11 interchange.

The majority of the retail spaces on Main Avenue and in the Historic Harbor District are vacant buildings or vacant lots.

Spatial Supply and Demand Conditions

There is a spatial mismatch between the location of proposed developments and the areas that are under served.

There is sales leakage from the central cities and many denser, older communities in the region.

Overbuilding results in new space which competes with existing commercial districts for market share, often leading to lower rents, more marginal businesses, increased vacancies in older retail areas, and reduced property revenues for school district communities.

Without the benefit of public subsidies in proportion to the subsidies that go to new developments, older retail districts will find it more difficult to compete for market share and may experience private disinvestment.

The proliferation of national retailers in many retail categories threatens locally owned businesses that provide a uniqueness and character to retail districts.

Except for groceries and a limited number of professional services (legal, insurance, medical), City residents must travel outside of the City to neighboring townships for convenience, hard goods and soft goods shopping.

The overbuilding of retail which has occurred in Ashtabula Township on Route 20 has lured retailers out of the City. Retail property/building owners who remain in the City are unable to command market rate lease rates as a result of the competition with newer retail space.

Interviews with building owners and tenants during the Charrette weekend confirmed that lease arrangements and rates in the Main Avenue and Historic Harbor District are inconsistent and below market. This disparity removes the incentive for building owners to invest in and improve the physical condition of their retail properties. National retailers are the dominant retailer in Ashtabula County. Only a handful of local retailers prosper in either district.

Land Use Management

Under Ohio Law, proposed retail project which have regional implications with regard to traffic generation, environmental consequences, regional tax inequalities and impact other retail areas are subject only to local land use management authority.

Because many local government zoning codes do not provide for mixed uses and flexible zoning techniques, the development of continuous strips of shopping areas has occurred in many parts of the region.

Large tracts of privately owned land in developed areas, including golf courses and environmentally sensitive areas, have been targeted for retail development.

Other than existing zoning maps, the City has not adopted a land use plan, nor have they developed policies to encourage mixed use buildings in the two study areas.

While the retail market is experiencing contraction, future development of retail in the county will go unchecked without a strong regional plan to regulate it. Large parcels of land like golf courses and farms are present in large numbers throughout the County.

(Continued.....)

Environmental Impacts

Retail projects can have significant environmental impacts that extend well beyond the local jurisdiction in which they are located.

Excess parking capacity, common throughout many areas of Northeast Ohio, unnecessarily increases the amount of stormwater that washes directly into urban streams. Land area developed for retail use in the study area increase surface runoff by 874 million cubic feet annually.

If all vacant land in the region currently zoned for retail was developed, surface runoff could increase by an additional three billion (3,000,000,000) cubic feet per year.

The traffic associated with a typical large super-regional shopping center (such as each of the eight largest shopping centers in the study area) generates quantities of air emissions causing the centers to rank among the top sources of carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons within the study area.

Transportation

Retail establishments are significant generators of traffic, accounting for as much as four times the volume generated by office uses, eight times the volume of light industrial uses, and twenty-four times the volume of residential uses, and using an equal area of developed land. It is estimated that shopping trips in the study area currently generate 5.6 billion vehicle miles annually in the study area.

The highway transportation network, particularly the interstate highways, provides excellent accessibility to shopping areas for both employees and residents of the region.

The heavy traffic and large numbers of turning movements generated by retail development result in a higher number of accidents. The number of accidents around four major shopping centers in the region was three to six times greater than in nearby non-retail areas.

Numerous businesses are located in a linear pattern along thoroughfares which were zoned entirely for retail development decades ago.

Most proposed retail development in the region is at the edge or beyond the service areas of public transit providers, thereby limiting the access of transit dependent residents for shopping or employment.

New retail projects located near the Route 11/Route 20 interchange also impact their environment.

Given the current vacancy rate, there is excess parking capacity in the Main Avenue District and the parking garage

While the transportation infrastructure necessary to support retail also assists with other forms of economic development, funds for neighborhood improvements such as new sidewalks, curbs and streets go unmet.

Ashtabula has access to an extensive interstate highway system.

Construction of the Route 84 bypass away from downtown and the Route 20 bridge bypass redirected traffic from the Main Avenue District.

The county public transportation service has been characterized as inadequate for city residents who rely on public transit to go shopping.



Existing retail space on Main Avenue

In addition to the specific findings of the NOACA analysis, national retail trends are affecting the retail sector of Northeast Ohio including:

- Dynamic changes in the retail industry are affecting older and newer communities;
- Redevelopment of Older Retail Districts, while appealing, requires subsidy, a consolidation of retail in a single district, redevelopment of former retail buildings, and public-private partnerships to implement;
- Threats to retail development such as a downturn in the economy;
- Form vs. Function retailing which requires a consumer to pick between “big box” or Main Street-style retailing;
- The Proliferation of “big box” stores continues to happen even though markets may be saturated, likewise, the predicted problem with

abandoned “big boxes” in the future is already an issue for older communities as consolidations and bankruptcies increase;

- An increase in electronic commerce threatens locally-owned specialty retailers who often compete with low-capital start-ups doing business on line;
- The homogenization of retailing affects the quality and diversity of retail offered in a community; and
- Developments of retail/entertainment venues are increasing in number, but tend to follow trends in popular culture, not local tradition.



Retail in the historic Bridge Street District

Ashtabula County Retail Sales

As indicated by the chart below, the condition of the retail sector in Ashtabula County has been influenced by downturns and upswings in the national economy. However, while total retail sales have increased, the number of retail firms has decreased and sales leakage is increasing.

Shopping Center Vacancy Rates, Northeast Ohio

Source: CB Richard Ellis, January/02

	2002	2001
City of Cleveland	8.5%	4.9%
Western suburbs	5.1%	4.2%
Eastern suburbs	9.2%	10.8%
Geauga County	5.0%	10.0%
Lake County	7.7%	3.7%
Lorain County	12.7%	8.0%
Medina County	12.0%	7.1%
Portage County	13.8%	8.5%
Summit County	10.9%	6.7%
Stark County	10.6%	4.0%
Total	9.2%	6.4%

Shopping center vacancy rates were considerably higher in 2002, which is a reflection of national economic and retailing trends. One needs only to consider the standards for the industry’s delivery format to understand the retailing industry in the United States today which continues to be defined by one of the following formats:

- Large Super Regional Center;
- Small Super Regional Center;
- Regional Center;
- Community Center;
- Neighborhood Center;
- Convenience Center;
- Power Center;
- Big Box Retailer; or
- Large Drugstore.

All of these formats recognize that “bigger is better” which translates into the need for older retail/commercial districts to consolidate existing retail into a smaller district when they are unable to compete with large contiguous tracts of land needed to construct large buildings and parking lots to handle the large volume of auto traffic.

Total Retail Sales

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis

Fiscal Year	Current \$ Total Retail Sales (in millions)	Constant \$ Total Retail Sales (millions, base=FY'71)	Number of Retail Firms	Current \$ Sales per Firm	Constant \$ Sales per Firm	Per Capita Sales	Pull Factor
1987	\$488,124.00	\$176,856.52	579	\$843,047	\$305,452	\$4,888	0.83
1992	\$570,685.00	\$166,866.96	1,094	\$521,650	\$152,529	\$5,665	0.77
1997	\$711,144.00	\$180,952.67	429	\$1,657,678	\$421,801	\$6,903	0.75

Housing

More than 50% of the county's housing units reside in the study's trade area. One-third (32%) of the county's housing stock was constructed prior to 1939, and 35% was constructed between 1940 and 1970. Thus, over two-thirds of the housing stock is over 30 years old.

Specifically, in the City of Ashtabula:

- 65% of the housing units are single unit detached structures;
- large, multi-unit structures (buildings with more than 20 units) constitute only 8% of the City's housing units;
- In 2000, the median housing value was \$69,600;
- 58% of the housing units are owner-occupied; and
- due to the large number of housing units in the northern part of the county, median housing values in the City of Ashtabula and Ashtabula Township contribute significantly to lowering the County's median housing value.

Ashtabula County Housing Unit Summary

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

New Homes in 2000	447
County Population	102,728
Target Area: Total No. of Housing Units	22,496
Total of 24 other Ashtabula Co. Townships: Total No. of Housing Units	21,296
Ashtabula County: Total No. of Housing Units	43,792
Land Area (Sq. Miles)	703
Density (Persons/Sq. Mile)	146
Population Growth Annualized, 1990-2000	2.9%

Trade Area Housing Characteristics

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

Target Area City or Township	Total Population	Total Households	Total Units	Owner Occupied Rate	Renter Occupied Rate	Per Capita Income	Median Household Income	Median Family Income	Median Mortgage	Median Rent
Ashtabula City	20,962	9,151	2.45	58.4%	41.6%	14,034	27,354	69,600	753	468
Ashtabula Township	23,239	10,183	2.43	60.2%	39.8%	14,394	27,956	68,100	738	469
Plymouth Township	2,081	812	2.66	91.7%	8.3%	14,726	37,012	92,600	907	515
Saybrook Township	10,051	4,664	2.43	83.0%	17.0%	20,756	42,145	88,300	887	492
Ashtabula County	102,728	43,792	2.56	90.0%	10.0%	16,814	35,607	85,300	826	473

New Residential Building Characteristics

While the number of private housing building permits declined in 1995 and 1997 in Ohio and Ashtabula County, a significant increase occurred from 1998 to 1999, during which time the number more than doubled for Ashtabula County. While this trend continued in 2000 with 443 new homes being constructed, the majority of the new homes built in that year were constructed outside of the trade area.

Source: Realty One New Home Market Report Vol. 1, 2001.

Likewise, the value of private housing units authorized by building permit declined in 1995 and 1997 for Ohio, and declined in 1997 and 1998 for Ashtabula County. However, a significant increase occurred from 1998 to 1999 for Ohio and Ashtabula County.

In Northeast Ohio, however, there was a precipitous slowdown of housing starts in 2000 which began to indicate a dramatic, real-time fluctuation and response to softening economic conditions that have not been present in previous decades. This trend is likely to be reflected in data yet to be reported for 2001 and 2002. While interest rates continue to remain at historically low levels, current national and regional economic conditions are likely to impact the demand for new housing construction.

Also, national trends such as master-planned communities, which are designed to attract active, conscientious and contributing community members and consumers seeking a lively, social environment, are likely to build out at a much slower pace. However, the trend of consumers seeking engagement with their neighbors, wanting a social environment, a rich variety of services, and access to public amenities is likely to continue with a continued emphasis on smart growth and sustainable development.

Source: Realty One New Home Market Report Vol. 1, 2001.

Also, as indicated in the chart below, the largest taxable value of property in Ashtabula lies predominantly in the residential sector, as is the case for the State of Ohio (See Appendix C – Taxable Value by Industry).

Source: <<http://www.state.oh.us/tax/stats/>>, publication code PD31, 1993-99.

Residential Building Permits

Source: *Building Permits Survey, 1993-2000*

	Ohio	Ashtabula Co.
<i>No. of private housing units authorized by permit:</i>		
1993	44,387	281
1994	47,232	302
1995	44,818	299
1996	49,288	320
1997	46,493	245
1998	48,039	200
1999	55,888	481
1999 Rank		25

Value of private housing units authorized by permit (in '000s of current dollars):

1993	4,334,565	21,898
1994	4,805,939	22,212
1995	4,375,656	26,088
1996	5,001,701	28,738
1997	4,796,833	23,947
1998	5,410,913	21,924
1999	6,400,913	44,804
1999 Rank		27

Summary

Population trends, primarily the growth of population and new housing construction in less-populated parts of Ashtabula County, and stagnant economic conditions in the City and the County indicate a need to focus on residential housing as a revitalization strategy in the Study Areas. Specifically, the housing conditions in the trade area call for three types of housing strategies to affect an existing older housing stock and an abundance of vacant parcels, including:

- comprehensive housing rehabilitation strategies to impact older housing units;
- home repair strategies and code enforcement activities to impact newer housing units (units built since 1970);
- new housing construction strategies which bring owner-occupied, moderately priced housing to the City for young working individuals and families; and
- land use conversion strategies which convert vacant and sub-standard commercial buildings and vacant parcels to residential units in the target areas.



The variety of single family housing types in Ashtabula



Education

In the city of Ashtabula there are:

- 12 public elementary schools
- 3 public middle schools
- 1 public senior high school
- 7 private/parochial schools
- 1 special purpose school

The majority of students attend public schools. There are two public library branches located in the City.

Primary and Secondary education

The school system as a whole has been placed on Academic Watch by the Ohio Department of Education. Academic Watch is an accountability rating based on 27 standards which are minimum performance goals for public education. When a school system is placed on Academic Watch, it is because it has met only 9 to 13 of the 27 standards. Ashtabula Area City Schools (AACS) met only 10 standards for the 1999-2000 school year. This, however, was an improvement from the 1998-1999 school year when the district met only 5 of the 27 standards that resulted in an Academic Emergency rating.

During the most recently completed academic year the district had a student passage rate of 45.9% for reading on the Ohio Fourth Grade Proficiency Test. This low passage rate is often correlated to the poverty



Lakeside High School, Grades 10 through 12

index of the three participating Reading Excellence Act (REA) schools as documented by the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch: 85% for Chestnut Elementary, 82% for Thurgood Marshall Elementary, and 53% for McKinsey Elementary.

This finding is consistent with findings across the state as confirmed by the State Department of Education which cites in its publication *Committed to Success for All: 2002 Annual report on Educational Progress in Ohio*, "that the average difference in proficiency test passing rates for schools with 50 percent or more free- and reduced price lunch eligibility and those with less than 50 percent eligibility ranges from 10 to 39 percentage points. For every indicator, schools with low poverty have higher passing rates than schools with high poverty (see Appendix D). Furthermore, the county ranks first among all of Ohio's counties in the rate of overall poverty growth.

Other notes of concern derive from the fact that none of the five standards (Citizenship, Mathematics, Reading, Writing, Science) were met in the 2002 Grade 4 Proficiency Tests. For the Grade 6 Proficiency Tests, only one of five standards was met. For Grade 9, three out of five standards were met; and for Grade 12, four out of five were met.

In 1999, only 68.6% of high school seniors graduated, the rest were classified as dropouts. In 2001-2002, the district had a 92.9% attendance rate. However, the high school graduation rate broke down as follows:

- Female 78.4%
- Male 67.5%
- White 79.3%
- African American 52.1%
- Hispanic 23.1%

Significant efforts have been made to improve performance through the school district including securing and implementing a two-year federally funded Reading Excellence Act (REA) grant and focusing on improving proficiency test preparedness of elementary school students. One highlight and the key to the AACS's success with REA was its focus on community partnerships. Partnerships were established with the Ashtabula County District Library, Adult Basic Literacy Education (ABLE) of Ashtabula County, Head Start of Ashtabula, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Lake Erie College, Cleveland State University, Ashtabula County Ohio Reads, and local churches. These partnerships were vital to the overall success of the program because they enabled the AACS to address lifelong learning, beginning with

early literacy services and home visits through Head Start.

In the primary grades, students and teachers received focused, specialized instruction for overall literacy. Family literacy activities provided families with opportunities to read together and to receive instruction on how to make children effective readers, stressing the importance of reading together at home. Adult Basic Literacy Education provided literacy instruction, remedial college preparation, and workplace literacy training for adults. The success achieved by this comprehensive approach to literacy” linking the classroom, the building/district, and the family/community levels” demonstrates the profound impact a community has on education.

However, while great strides have been made during the last few academic years, a continuum of opportunities for youth ages 0 to 18 are not consistent and available at every age level.

Post-Secondary Education

Likewise, Ashtabula is plagued by a lack of real opportunities for young adults upon high school graduation. While many students may pursue post-secondary education, those that do leave the area often do not return because of lack of employment opportunities in their chosen field.

Kent State University Ashtabula Branch is the only post-secondary school in the county. There are opportunities and resources to establish and develop a university-community partnership that would build on the community’s commitment to education. A university-community partnership would be a first, strong step toward establishing a framework for economic development activities that could leverage many resources in and outside of the community. As the following points illustrate, University of Akron President Luis Proenza makes a strong case in support of the value of universities in providing innovation and resources for economic development:

Universities are sources of innovation for economic development. Some states have recognized that the role of innovation is so fundamental they have made higher education the infrastructure of their new economy. In the new economy, innovation drives technological change, and new technology, in turn, drives business success and new business creation. In today’s knowledge-based economy, human capital is business capital. Staying close to the source of knowledge creation is not just a good idea; it is a business necessity.

Universities are powerful engines that drive economic development. They do so because they play three major roles: The first is in workforce development; the second is the leveraging of new dollars into the economy; and the third is through research and the production of new knowledge. It is from research that new companies are born and new jobs are created; it is from research that new wealth is created and the economy expands. Education is infrastructure because new knowledge builds new wealth just as surely as new materials build new structures.

Conclusions

Throughout this study, much anecdotal evidence was collected to suggest that many of the youth of the community are not staying in the area for college or leave altogether on graduation from high school because of lack of job opportunities. Furthermore, those that have returned do so to be closer to family and friends, and they sense the urgency for city and school district leadership to act aggressively to improve economic and educational opportunities for residents of all ages.

The study areas encompass three attendance areas, and five of the District’s schools are physically located in the study area.

Despite a successful track record with community partnerships, significant proficiency test failure continues in the elementary grades. The district has delayed addressing the rebuilding of the elementary schools in lieu of making the building of a new high school a singular priority.



Chestnut Elementary School

Business and Industry

Transportation

Ashtabula County is located in the northeast corner of the state, bordering on Pennsylvania and Lake Erie, and is the largest of Ohio's 88 counties.

The county is well connected to the region through interstate highways including Interstate Highway 90, U.S. Routes 6, 20, and 322, and State Routes 84, 167, and 531 which cross the county east and west, and State Routes 7, 11, 45, 46, 193 and 534 which run north and south. The Ashtabula and Grand Rivers flow through Ashtabula County. Also, the Lake Erie Ports of Ashtabula and Conneaut provide access to Great Lakes shipping.

Ashtabula County is in the center of a national and international transportation network. The county boasts:

- Two deep-water ports on Lake Erie offering both dry bulk and container capabilities with ocean access through the Saint Lawrence Seaway; cargoes can be transferred from fresh water and salt water ships to rail or highway carriers with easy access to mid-western and northeastern markets;
- Significant railroad access from Norfolk Southern (east/west), CSX (south), Lake Erie and Bessemer to Port Ashtabula and Port Conneaut;
- East/West Interstate access (I-90) offers major interchange access to port facilities;
- A North/South four-lane divided highway access (State Route 11) to Youngstown-Warren and Pittsburgh areas to the south; and
- Air transportation is available from the Ashtabula County airport, Port Erie and Cleveland Hopkins International Airports.

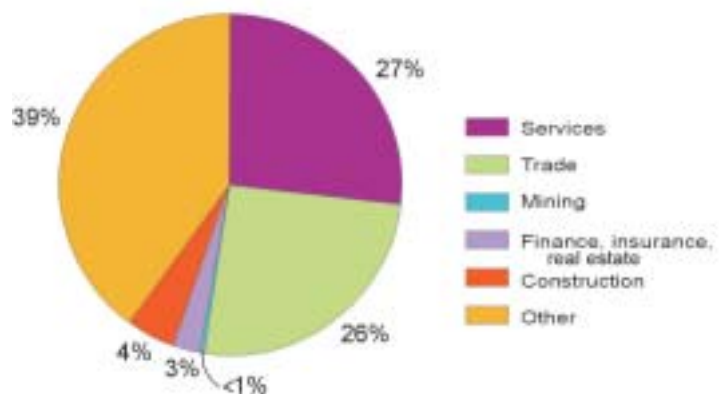
Located within 250 miles of Ashtabula County are the metropolitan areas of:

- Buffalo (131 miles)
- Cleveland (58 miles)
- Columbus (194 miles)
- Detroit (220 miles)
- Erie (50 miles)
- Pittsburgh (124 miles)
- Toledo (168 miles)
- Toronto
- Youngstown (58 miles)

Employment

Since 1994, full- and part-time employment in the county has increased 12.2%, which is slightly higher than the State of Ohio as a whole. Similarly, manufacturing employment in Ashtabula County has experienced a significant increase (17%) at a rate much higher than the state of Ohio, which only experienced a 1.7% increase in manufacturing employment. However, as a percent of total employment in Ashtabula County, manufacturing employment has remained constant at 22% since 1994. The County's three main employment sectors include manufacturing, services, and the trades.

In 2000 the manufacturing industry employed the most workers, 10,630, and the services industry was the fastest growing, increasing 10.7% over 1999. In 2000 the total employment for all industries in Ashtabula County was 35,317, with the Manufacturing industry claiming the largest portion—30.1%. Average weekly earnings for all industrial groups in Ashtabula County were \$478.20.



Total Full- and Part-Time Employment, 1994-1999

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	Changes: 1994-99	
							Number	Percent
Ohio	6,194,684	6,362,549	6,461,980	6,572,783	6,691,158	6,790,243	595,559	9.6%
Ashtabula Co.	44,009	45,039	46,120	46,540	48,323	49,379	5,370	12.2%

In 1999, Ashtabula County ranked 19th in unemployment among Ohio's 88 counties, and was 44.2% above the state unemployment rate. While the unemployment rate in the county has been significantly higher than the State of Ohio's, it has declined from a high of 8.1% in 1994 to 5.8% in 1999 and 5.5% in 2000.

The number of businesses declined in 1996 in Ashtabula County. Business declined in all areas except the number of active businesses in July/August. However, the number of active business in July/August, most likely due to seasonal commerce, has seen a slight decline since then, dropping 3% in 1999. Other areas that have experienced decline are:

- number of net formations in Ohio, dropping 77% from 1996 to 1998; and
- net formations/1,000 active business, dropping 76% from 1996 to 1998.

Also notable is the following:

- Although the number of business starts increased over 25% from 1996 to 1999, the number of business terminations increased by that same amount during that same time period.
- Although there was an almost 28% increase in the number of starts/1,000 active business from 1996 to 1999, the number of terminations/1,000 active business increased 29% during that same period.

Major Industries in Ashtabula County include:

- Aerospace
- Fiberglass
- Plastics
- Industrial gases
- Polymers
- Chemicals
- Building products
- Molded and machined automotive parts
- Lighting equipment
- Packaging materials
- Wine
- Propane cylinders
- Fine papers

While the business growth cycle has been erratic, as an indicator of economic growth, business starts and terminations have offset each other, thus contributing to a stagnant economic situation. This is further evidenced by the fewer number of site selections for new and expanding facilities and the lack of large manufacturing establishments present in the county.

During the last decade, the manufacturing sector of the economy has been hit the hardest. Northeast Ohio's economy, heavily dependent on its manufacturing base, may be experiencing market conditions that are slightly softer than other regions in the country with more diverse economic sectors.

Manufacturing Employment, 1994-1999

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	Changes: 1994-99	
							Number	Percent
Ohio	1,096,243	1,126,628	1,121,000	1,118,370	1,121,597	1,115,163	18,920	1.7%
Ashtabula Co.	9,660	10,154	10,478	10,338	10,749	11,323	1,663	17.2%

Manufacturing as a Percentage of Total Employment, 1994-1999

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	Change:1994-99
							Percent
Ohio	17.7%	17.7%	17.3%	17.0%	16.8%	16.4%	-1.3%
Ashtabula Co.	22.0%	22.5%	22.7%	22.5%	22.2%	22.9%	1.0%

Annual Civilian Labor Force and Unemployment Rate Estimates, 1994-99

Source: Ohio Bureau of Employment Services, Labor Market Information Division.

	1994		1995		1996		1997		1998		1999	
	Labor Force/Rate		Labor Force/Rate		Labor Force/Rate		Labor Force/Rate		Labor Force/Rate		Labor Force/Rate	
Ohio	5,542,000	5.5%	5,585,000	4.8%	5,643,000	4.9%	5,715,000	4.6%	5,689,000	4.3%	5,749,000	4.3%
Ashtabula Co.	45,800	8.1%	45,600	6.8%	46,200	7.2%	46,900	6.1%	47,100	6.2%	47,300	5.8%

Business Formations and Terminations

Source: Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
<i>Number of Business Starts in Ohio, 1993-1999:</i>							
Ohio	28,547	29,349	28,576	28,122	27,916	26,908	27,241
Ashtabula Co.	213	223	206	168	186	197	226
<i>Number of Business Terminations in Ohio, 1993-1999:</i>							
Ohio	24,287	24,788	23,958	22,360	29,021	25,827	Cannot be determined
Ashtabula Co.	207	196	171	142	196	191	determined
<i>Number of Net Formations in Ohio, 1993-1999:</i>							
Ohio	4,260	4,561	4,618	5,762	-1,105	1,081	Cannot be determined
Ashtabula Co.	6	27	35	26	-10	6	determined
<i>Number of Active Businesses, July/August, 1993-1999:</i>							
Ohio	224,003	229,138	231,924	236,103	229,454	227,193	229,130
Ashtabula Co.	1,828	1,881	1,916	1,947	1,921	1,855	1,891
<i>Starts/1,000 Active Businesses, 1993-1999:</i>							
Ohio	127.4	128.1	123.2	119.1	121.7	118.4	118.9
Ashtabula Co.	116.5	118.6	107.5	86.3	96.8	106.2	119.5
<i>Net Formations/1,000 Active Businesses, 1993-1999:</i>							
Ohio	19.0	19.9	19.9	24.4	-4.8	4.8	Cannot be determined
Ashtabula Co.	3.3	14.4	18.3	13.4	-5.2	3.2	determined
<i>Terminations/1,000 Active Businesses, 1993-1999:</i>							
Ohio	108.4	108.2	103.3	94.7	126.5	113.7	Cannot be determined
Ashtabula Co.	113.2	104.2	89.2	72.9	102.0	103.0	determined

Large Manufacturers

Number

The 200 Largest Manufacturing Establishments
in Ohio and Distribution, Ashtabula County, 1999

0

Exporting Manufacturing Establishments in Ohio,
Ashtabula County, 1999

68



Looking north across the Harbor

U.S. Government Procurement Contract Awards

Total U.S. Government Procurement Contract Awards declined for Ohio and Ashtabula County in 1994 and 1998. However, in 1996, Ashtabula County experienced a 38% increase over the previous year.

Total Department of Defense Procurement Contract Awards jumped almost 60% for Ashtabula County from 1994 to 1995; and jumped 37% from 1995 to 1996. However, the total dropped 28% from 1996 to 1997;

and dropped 27% from 1997 to 1998. This total then increased to 36% from 1998 to 1999.

The total Department of Defense Procurement Contract Awards for Ohio remained relatively steady throughout the time period. After a 28% drop in total U.S. Government Non-Defense Procurement Contract Awards occurred from 1994 to 1995, the total increased almost 40% the next year and continued to increase annually through 1999.

Procurement

Sources: Consolidated Federal Funds Reports; U.S. Bureau of the Census

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
<i>Total U.S. Government Procurement Contract Awards, 1993-1999 (in 000's of current \$):</i>							
Ohio	5,113,517	4,777,362	4,475,318	4,583,274	4,604,207	4,367,913	4,507,562
Ashtabula Co.	14,460	13,817	15,911	25,829	27,412	24,708	30,223
<i>Total Department of Defense Procurement Contract Awards, 1993-1999 (in 000's of current \$):</i>							
Ohio	3,450,042	2,946,411	2,630,805	2,735,950	2,711,822	2,469,406	2,596,718
Ashtabula Co.	3,071	3,411	8,421	13,353	9,623	7,043	11,037
<i>Total U.S. Government Non-Defense Procurement Contract Awards, 1993-1999 (in 000's of current \$):</i>							
Ohio	1,663,475	1,828,951	1,844,513	1,847,324	1,892,385	1,989,507	1,910,844
Ashtabula Co.	11,389	10,406	7,490	12,476	17,789	17,665	19,186

Commuting Statistics

The table on the following page illustrates the top counties from where residents commute to Ashtabula County for work, and for residents of Ashtabula County who commute to work outside of Ashtabula County. There are 63% more people leaving the county for employment. This significant difference can easily translate into lost income tax revenues and discretionary spending on local retail items and services such as food, gas and shopping.

County of Residence	Number of Residents of Neighboring Counties Working in Ashtabula	County of Work	Number of Ashtabula County Residents Working in Neighboring Counties (Outcommuters)
Lake	902	Lake	4,297
Trumbull	785	Cuyahoga	2,204
Crawford	587	Geauga	1,276
Erie	470	Erie	541
Geauga	237	Trumbull	447
Cuyahoga	209	Lorain	83
Mercer	108	Portage	78
Total	3,298	Total	8,926

Parks and Greenspace

The City of Ashtabula's recreational and cultural amenities include:

- 10 parks which comprise a total of 445.5 acres;
- 4 campgrounds;
- Walnut Beach;
- Historic Hubbard House/Underground Railroad Museum;
- Great Lakes Marine and U.S. Coast Guard Memorial Museum;
- Historic Railway Museum; and
- Rock and Mineral Museum.

Additional parks and recreational attractions in Ashtabula County include:

- Pymatuning State Park;
- Geneva State Park;
- 16 historical covered bridges;
- 12 area public golf courses;
- 22 tennis courts;
- 10 yacht clubs and marinas;
- Lake Shore Park in Ashtabula Township;
- Fishing charters;
- Geneva-On-The-Lake resort area;
- The Western Reserve Greenway; and
- The 450-acre "Gulf" and its Indian Trails.



Walnut Beach Park

Historic Harbor District and "The Gulf"

Located on Lake Erie, Ashtabula's Historic Harbor District features a variety of Northeast Ohio's finest natural and cultural resources (beaches, parks, marinas, and museums), all within walking and biking distance of each other. The District blends a mix of local retail, commercial, and residential activities to create a lively destination district situated at the mouth of the Ashtabula River.

Serving tourists and seasonal residents from the tri-state area of Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York, it also features one of only two Bascule Lift Bridges in the United States. A multi-colored lighting scheme for the bridge is the goal of a fund raising campaign, and is scheduled to be completed next year. Also, opportunities abound to connect to the "Gulf", a 450-acre natural area stretching from the mouth of the Ashtabula River on Lake Erie, to the southern end of the City of Ashtabula via the Western Reserve Greenway. Once completed, the greenway will serve as the pedestrian and bicycle spine of the City. It will be used as the mechanism to link the Historic Harbor District and the Main Avenue Commercial District, as well as to key recreational assets like Smith Field, Walnut Beach and Point Park.

Historically, the District served visitors and workers who arrived via the busy Ashtabula Port or Rail-



The Ashtabula River Valley

road Depots. Nearby lodging accommodations include 8 motels (381 rooms), 2 bed and breakfasts, and 4 campgrounds.

Downtown Commercial District

Ripe with history and tradition, the downtown Main Avenue District has served as the center of community interaction for almost a century. The Main Avenue District actually is comprised of three sub-districts: North Park District, South Park District, and the Central Civic District. North Park and South Park provide high-quality greenspace in the district. The eastern edge of this district sits atop the steep ridge of the Gulf.

Ashtabula River Watershed

The watershed is defined by the Gulf, a 450-acre parcel of dense forest and Indian Trails. While the majority of the Gulf and Indian Trails are under the jurisdiction of the Ashtabula Township Park Board, portions of the river's watershed run through the City.

Significant efforts have been underway to clean-up polluted portions of the river and its Fields Brook tributary. A group of principal responsible parties (PRP) has

been engaged in a process to outline the scope and fund the clean-up of the Fields Brook area. In fact, attention to the river and lake has been documented as early as 1977 when the Ohio Department of Natural Resources identified the Port of Ashtabula, Ashtabula River, and Walnut Beach Park as special management area nominations. Ongoing dredging of the river, protecting natural values and plant species, as well providing access to the lake and river to protect the condition of this sensitive area have been cited as ongoing priorities (See Appendix F).

Park planning efforts for the Gulf have been underway for over a year. There are multiple opportunities to enhance the Gulf's amenities, link it to the Western Reserve Greenway, and connect it to Lake Erie. Access to the Gulf is possible at a variety of points along the river.

Western Reserve Greenway

Recently featured in the *Plain Dealer*, a regional daily newspaper, the Western Reserve Greenway is one of 19 of the region's newest hike and bike trails. The first 6½ miles of the Western Reserve Greenway were asphalt-paved in the summer of 2002, and another eight are expected next year. The Ashtabula portion of the Greenway is part of the planned 85-mile Great Ohio



South Park

Lake to River Trail linking Lake Erie with the Ohio River. Obviously, by its location as the northern tip of the Greenway, the Ashtabula portion of the trail serves as a trailhead and has some of the greatest potential for attracting bikers, hikers, joggers, and cross-country ski and running enthusiasts on a year-round basis.

While completing the trail is the project's first priority, developing multiple access points near parking and other visitor amenities (food, lodging and supplies) is a critical next step for this project to maximize its benefit to the Ashtabula community. The Greenway also has the potential to be a non-auto-oriented intra-neighborhood or district connector within the City of Ashtabula. While possible access nodes and pathways extending into neighborhoods have been identified, the

entire Greenway network would be best served if they were identified and marked with a universal way-finding system. Likewise, the secondary pathways or "fingers" of the Greenway should be used to link parks, schools, and retail/commercial districts.

Finally, this abundance of natural resources serves as a living classroom, research lab and development venue for a variety of audiences including school-age children, university-based researchers and private research interests interested in the Great Lakes, its watersheds, and beaches. Similarly, there exists an opportunity to test and apply brownfield reclamation technologies in areas where industrial and commercial activities may have affected the quality of topography, soil and ground water.



Point Park

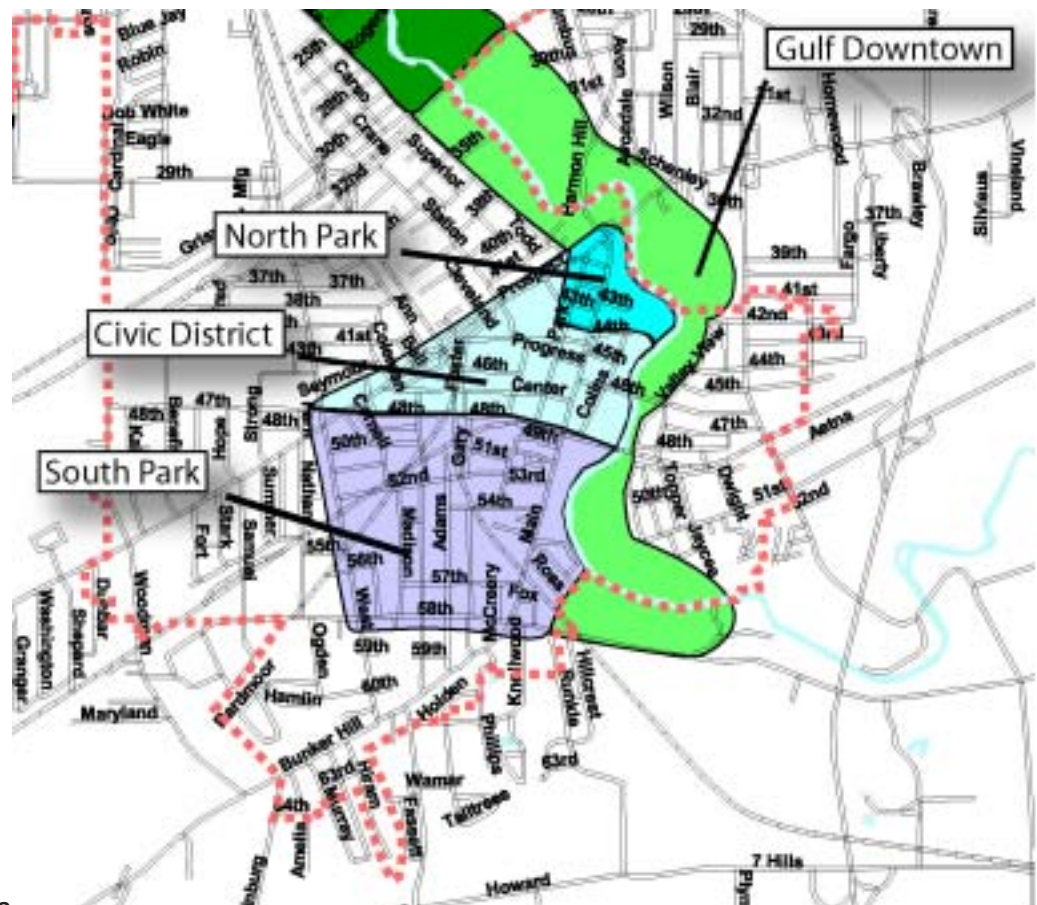
Design Concepts

Downtown District

A new economic base will be established for the Main Avenue commercial area by creating a new civic core defined by an educational campus and town center.

The city's capital investments and the existing Ashtabula city schools in the downtown area will be leveraged to attract additional assets. Downtown re-

development will be linked with recreation enhancements in the Gulf and potential Kent State University investments to create the educational campus. New housing will be brought into the civic core to build a vibrant downtown neighborhood. Downtown will be divided into three target areas: Civic District, North Park, and South Park.



Downtown Target Areas

Civic District

An educational campus is proposed to provide a new economic base for Main Avenue. Trailheads, scenic overlooks, and the presence of the Western Reserve Greenway connect the Civic District with the Gulf and its natural environment and promote natural resources tourism. The reconnection of Center Street to Main Avenue changes the traffic circulation downtown. With its proximity to the new Town Hall building and the restored theatre, the Center and Main intersection takes on new importance as a town center and focus of civic life.

Educational Campus

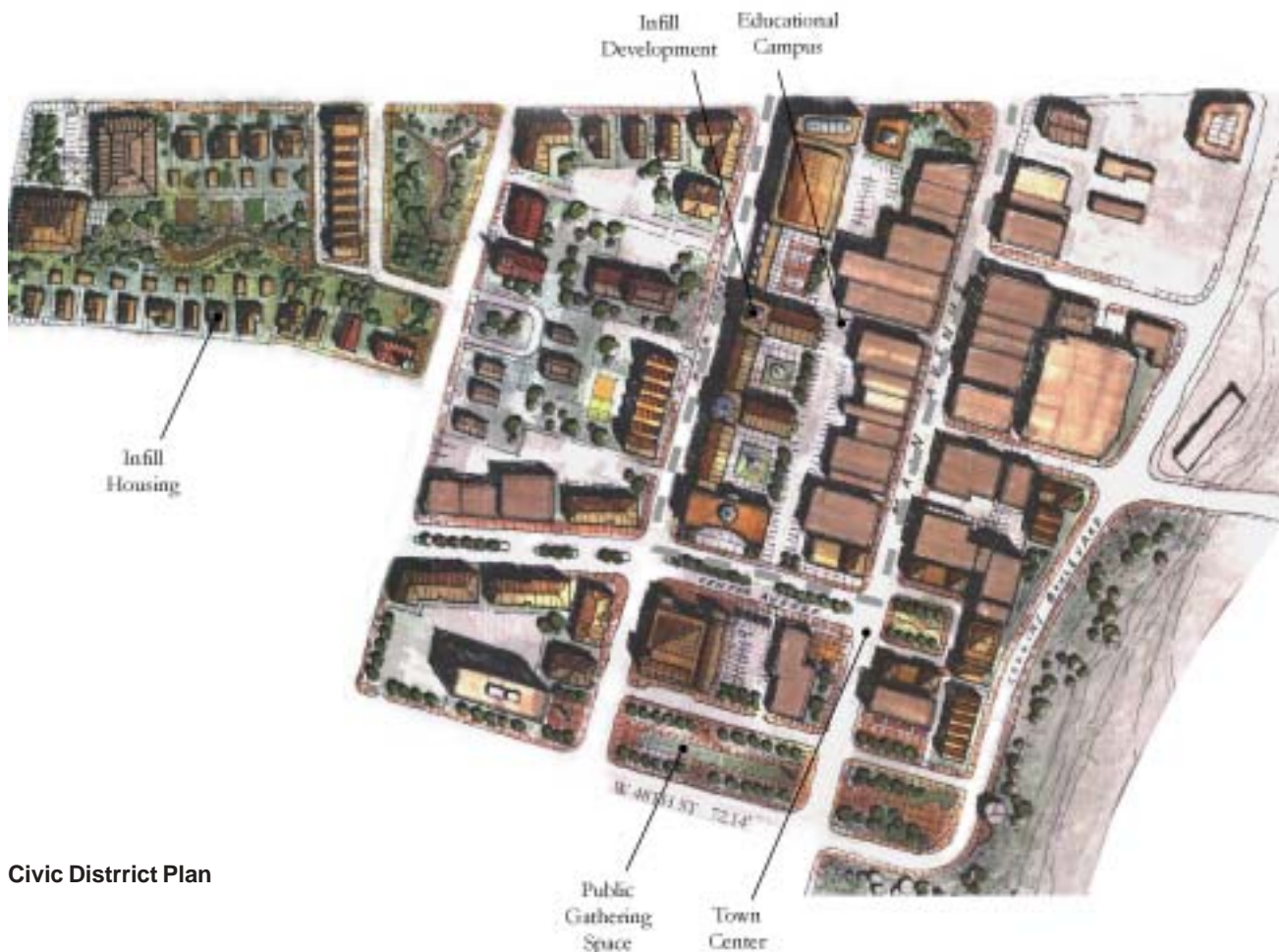
Search out opportunities to bring educational entities into downtown. Work with Kent State University's Ashtabula campus to consider locating university facilities and student housing downtown. Link the university to downtown through educational programming. Partner with Nordic Energy to provide an informational exhibit on its new environmentally-friendly coal plant and ethanol plant planned for a site near Ashtabula. Provide services and amenities which support environmental education and natural resource tourism in the Gulf. Preserve existing storefronts but join existing buildings

where needed to create larger spaces for offices, housing, and educational facilities. Use existing excess parking lots as sites for new office space fronting Park Avenue.

Consider keeping a public school downtown in the Lakeside High School building to assure that downtown will continue to remain a vital center of community life. Use existing community resources such as the Shay's theatre building, the Ashtabula Public Library, and the Ashtabula Gulf as part of the school campus. Build new recreational and educational facilities in the Ashtabula Gulf to serve the school. If it is not possible to keep a public school in the building, find an alternative educational use for the building.

Town Center

Capitalize on Center Avenue's new status as a major entrance into the downtown district. Widen Center Avenue between Park Avenue and Main Avenue in order to continue the Center Avenue Boulevard median all the way from Elm Avenue to Main Avenue. Construct a new park framed by civic buildings on Main Avenue at the end of Center Avenue to serve as a community gathering place. Restore two of the key historical properties on Main Avenue near the town center: the



Civic District Plan



**New Town Center
in the Civic District**

Shay's theatre and the Ashtabula Hotel. At the south edge of the new town center create a new community green space and plaza which connects the town center to the Western Reserve Greenway, provides a place for community events, and leads to a scenic overlook on the edge of the Gulf.



Western Greenway Connection

Bring the Western Reserve Greenway into the heart of downtown via the railroad corridor to Main Avenue where Greenway travelers can patronize downtown businesses. Continue the route along Main Avenue to Lake Avenue, and along Lake Avenue to the Harbor District. Provide physical and visual connections to the Ashtabula Gulf from Main Avenue.

Infill Development

Identify properties that are underutilized. Identify opportunities for loft-style housing, apartments above shops, infill townhomes, and other new housing types on Main Avenue. Build new single family housing in the area bounded by W. 44th St., W. 46th St., Prospect Avenue, and Elm Avenue which supports the senior housing investment there.



Streetscape treatment in the Civic District

North Park District

The North Park District is proposed as a new mixed-use office/residential district that supports the Civic District and links to contiguous residential areas. A new gateway treatment where Main Avenue begins at Prospect Avenue will give Main Avenue a greater presence on Prospect Avenue and pull potential customers into the downtown district. Gateway Improvements

Give the entrance to Main Avenue from Prospect Avenue a new look that welcomes visitors. Remove the billboards and lead travelers into downtown with welcome signs, gateway buildings, and landscaping.

Infill Development

Encourage new office uses and mixed-use buildings and intermingle them with a range of housing

South Park District

This residential district supports the new Civic District and connects to adjacent neighborhoods. The South Park section of Main Avenue will evolve to become more residential in nature, supporting rather than competing with the Civic District. An active process of community engagement will continue to stimulate reinvestment and community pride.

Chestnut Elementary School

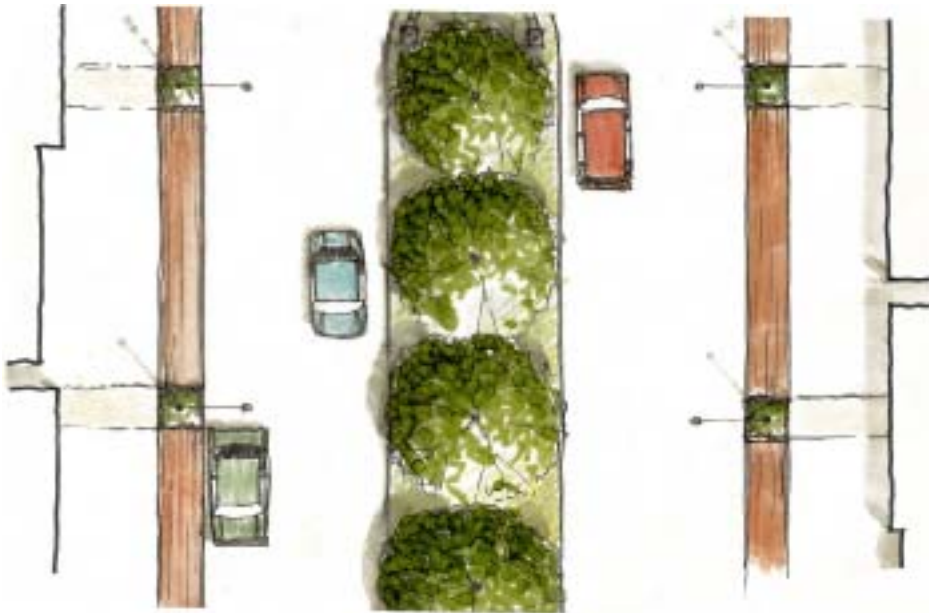
Continue to work with the community to develop plans for the future of Chestnut Elementary School. Keep the school in the neighborhood so that children can walk to school and so it continues to be a focus of neighborhood pride and involvement.

Housing

Encourage the maintenance and improvement of the existing housing stock through home repair and homeownership programs. To supplement existing housing, develop new residential infill on vacant lots and along Main Avenue.

Neighborhood Amenities

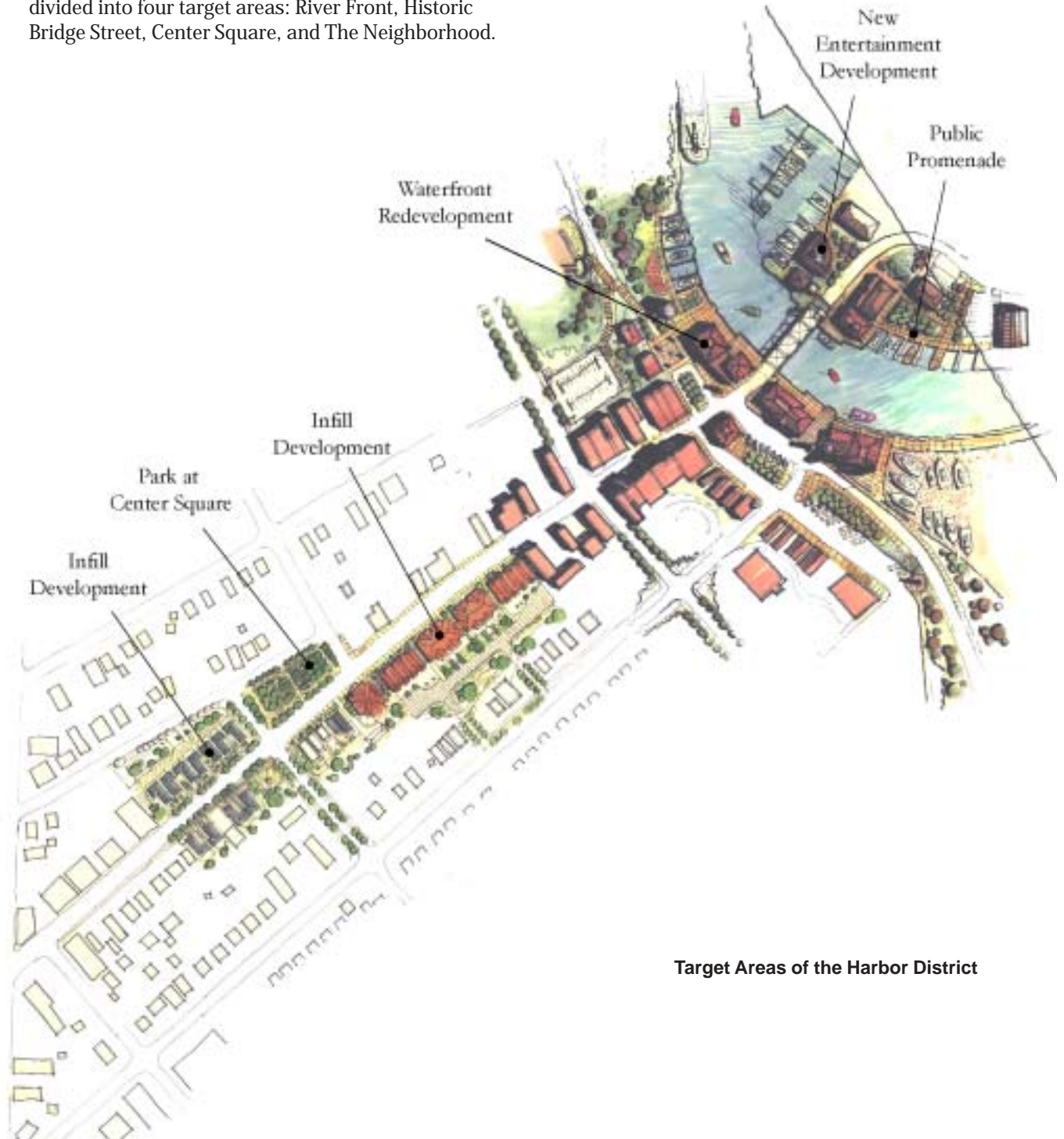
Transform South Park from a passive green space into an active part of urban life with a program of activities such as a farmer's market. Connect the neighborhood to the Civic District with a bike path.



North Park Boulevard treatment

The Harbor District

The Harbor District will grow into a popular regional tourism and entertainment destination that capitalizes on the waterfront and local historic resources to attract visitors. The business district is reconnected to the river and a new promenade is developed on the east side. Housing focused around a new park connects retail at the west end of Bridge Avenue with retail at the east end, near the river. The Harbor District is divided into four target areas: River Front, Historic Bridge Street, Center Square, and The Neighborhood.



Target Areas of the Harbor District

Historic Bridge Street

Historic buildings and retail uses are promoted and protected. Residential infill development that is compatible with the historic character of Bridge Street will complete the streetscape. Bridge Street businesses will prosper from waterfront tourist traffic and a mix of residences and retail.

Fully Utilize Historic Buildings

Fill the floors above storefronts with loft-style apartments and seasonal and student housing. Encourage retail and restaurants that cater to waterfront tourism.

Residential Infill Development

Extend the pedestrian-friendly nature of Bridge Street westward with the introduction of new multi-family and single-family housing. Ensure that the new housing is compatible with the historic character of the district and is designed to take advantage of the steep topography in the immediate area.

New Infill Housing on Bridge Street



Waterfront

Major waterfront redevelopment initiatives on both sides of the river transform the area immediately surrounding the lift bridge into a regional entertainment destination. The new mixed-use development provides increased public access to the waterfront, new waterfront living opportunities, new marina space, and new entertainment and retail uses.

Lift Bridge

Program activities to celebrate the lift bridge which could include innovative ideas like a musical accompaniment to the raising of the bridge or a sail-in movie theatre attached to the bridge.

Eastern Bank Redevelopment

Redevelop underutilized properties to create a new public promenade on the east side of the river lined with new residential and entertainment uses. Develop new public docking space connected to the promenade.

Western Bank Development and Connection to River

Extend the Bridge Street retail district all the way to the west bank of the river with new mixed-use buildings oriented towards the water. Pull the existing marina slightly to the south to accommodate new development. Provide additional marina space to the north of the new development.



Harbor Promenade

Trail Connections

Design the new waterfront development to highlight the Western Reserve Greenway as it passes along the harbor and turns toward Walnut Beach. Connect the Greenway to a trail leading into the Ashtabula Gulf, and to a walking tour of the Harbor District.

Highlight Industrial Heritage

Protect the viable industrial operations at the Ashtabula Port. Provide interpretation of industrial activities to promote them as part of the unique character of the waterfront.

Harbor Waterfront



Center Square

A new neighborhood gathering place is proposed as a focus for new housing that links to the historic business district and to contiguous residential areas. Housing centered around the new park will fill in gaps in the Bridge Street streetscape. The park will become the new residential core of the neighborhood.

Public Space

Convert underutilized and vacant land to a community asset in the form of a new public park. Attract visitors and residents alike to the park by connecting it to a network of pedestrian circulation.

Infill Housing

Develop new housing in the heart of the historic harbor district concentrated around the new park. Build new housing types such as townhomes which extend the range of housing types offered in the neighborhood.



Center Square Plan

The Neighborhood

The neighborhood is promoted to attract new residents to Ashtabula. Historic buildings and residential uses are protected. The neighborhood is connected to the waterfront and to the Ashtabula Gulf.

Tourist Circuit

Design a neighborhood walking tour highlighting historic buildings, museums, parks, views and connections to the Western Reserve Greenway trail.

Housing

Create home repair and homeownership programs to stimulate investment in the neighborhood. Develop infill housing which capitalizes on views of the waterfront and the Gulf.



The Gulf

The Gulf is transformed into a local community asset which attracts regional natural resource tourism to Ashtabula. Downtown Ashtabula and the Harbor District are connected by a trail system along the river, and by a series of scenic overlooks along the Western Reserve Greenway as it traverses the edge of the Gulf. There will be three target areas within the Gulf: Gulf Harbor, Gulf Link, and Gulf Downtown.



Target Areas of the Gulf District

Gulf Harbor

The experience of the Lake Erie waterfront is connected to the Ashtabula River by tying waterfront redevelopment to a network of trails along the edge of the Gulf and in the Gulf itself.

Regional Green Corridor Connections

Connect the Western Reserve Greenway with Lake Shore Park as well as Walnut Beach Park and the Sam Warren Nature Preserve. Connect this regional trail

system with a public promenade along the Harbor Waterfront.

Public Access

While promoting marina development, plan for the long-term goal of continuous public access along the Ashtabula River, with a trail system that ties into the Harbor Waterfront and the Western Reserve Greenway.



Gulf Link

The public sector will partner with private property owners with the long-term goal of establishing a continuous trail connection through the Gulf Link target area. Fields Brook remediation efforts will be leveraged to create new opportunities for sustainable development.

Public Access

Plan for a trail through Gulf Link which connects Gulf Downtown with Gulf Harbor. Use public land

purchases, funding for environmental remediation, easements, and cluster development to implement the trail connection.

Western Reserve Greenway Connection

The proposed route for the Western Reserve Greenway follows Lake Avenue. Promote the identity of Lake Avenue as a regional greenway connector and “green street” through extensive landscaping. Build scenic overlooks into the Gulf at strategic points.

Gulf Downtown

The Gulf Downtown target area is redeveloped to promote natural resources tourism and community-based education. Improved public access and enhanced recreational amenities encourages more activity in the Gulf and transforms it into an integral part of the experience of visiting, living, and working in downtown Ashtabula. Gulf Downtown is located on existing parkland, which allows it to become the focus of recreational and educational programs in the Gulf. A new route for the Western Reserve Greenway brings it through the heart of downtown where it connects to a trail system in the Gulf.



Gulf Downtown Plan

Western Reserve Greenway Connection

The proposed route for the Western Reserve Greenway as it enters downtown follows the railroad corridor to Main Avenue, follows Main Avenue through town to Lake Avenue, and continues along Lake Avenue. Connect this regional trail system with alternative routes leading into the Gulf and back. Promote the identity of Lake Avenue as a regional greenway connector and “green street” through extensive landscaping.

Views

Frame views into the Gulf by building scenic overlooks at strategic points. Enhance the scenic environment by protecting existing trees and creating new natural areas. Use trees to buffer existing structures and development.

Entrances

Rebuild existing entrances to the Gulf and create new entrances with new staircases and entry paths. Post signs marking the entrances and welcoming visitors with maps of trails and attractions. Connect entrances to Main Street visually through lines of sight and physically by specific routes with landscaping and signage.



Gulf Overlook

Trails

Lay out an extensive path and trail system with specific destination points. Establish a hierarchy of trails: semi-paved trails for biking and walking, dirt trails for running, and rough trails for hiking and biking. Build multiple bridges for added hiking interest and to utilize both sides of the river. Continue the use of extensive signage throughout the ravine. Organize trails around a series of destinations.



Pontoon Bridge

Implementation

Guiding Principles

As this study has progressed, several discoveries have emerged as paramount to the successful implementation of the following recommendations. The planning team has chosen to collectively refer to these discoveries as the plan's guiding principles. The individual components of the guiding principles are simple and direct, but when joined together they create **a** formula for success that is unprecedented in the City's history. Furthermore, these ingredients for success emphasize the immediate need for the City's leaders to act quickly and collectively to begin moving toward achieving the goal of the redevelopment plan.

The goal is to create a new economy for the City, and ultimately the region. The goal will be achieved by focusing on the community's assets, resources and investment opportunities.

The common finding that has emerged from every category of data examined for the purposes of this study is the fact that the community's current systems are struggling to meet the needs of the community. While these systems still function, they are not operating at full capacity. Furthermore, the premises on which the systems are based have changed over time and may no longer be relevant. That is, the strengths of the community (its strategic location on a Great Lakes port and serving as a hub for rail road and manufacturing activity) need to be re-framed in the current socio-economic climate.

If left unchecked, the effect of relying on these outdated systems (educational, transportation, economic, and ecological) to serve as the social and economic infrastructure for the community will be devastating to the community. In fact, the trends identified in the Study Findings and recent public discourse involving

issues of education and governance i.e., the school's bond campaign and the charter change amendment, are real time examples of a breakdown in the community's ability to agree on how to best meet its own needs through cross-systems cooperation. What needs to happen is a conscious re-focusing of the community's method for problem solving: a new formula for success.

This **formula for success** presents an alternative approach that focuses on the issues which the community agrees are important: education, economic prosperity, a commitment to creating a high quality of life, and an appreciation for the abundant natural resources which define the City of Ashtabula and its neighbors. This formula for success recognizes the need to leverage resources (local and regional), leverage strategic investments (local and regional), and blend them to meet community needs. The recommendations put forth in this report are not a quick fix to dress up the Historic Harbor District or reclaim Main Avenue as the center of the community. What these recommendations present are several possible solutions to complex issues that when blended with other possible solutions have a greater likelihood of meeting the community's needs.

The formula is simple:

$$\begin{aligned} &(\text{Resources} \times \text{Proposed Investments}) + \text{Community Needs} \\ &= \text{opportunities to create} \\ &\quad \text{a new economy} \end{aligned}$$

What this formula means is that the City must multiply what exists (local resources) by what is likely to happen (proposed investments) and the sum of those resources will be added to the community to meet its needs.

Redevelopment Approach

As presented in the matrix below, this redevelopment plan relies on the following approach to implementation:

- Each sub-district in the study areas serves as a target area because it represents a **resource or pending investment**;
- The redevelopment plan outlines key objectives and **several supporting strategies** in each district;
- Each strategy is designed to not only capitalize on its resources and strengths, but the potential **investment that could be leveraged** from the school district's ten-year rebuilding project; and
- Each sub-district contains a **core area and an area of influence** based on the School District's prescribed attendance areas.

Redevelopment Opportunities Matrix

Redevelopment District	Redevelopment Area	Local Resources	Investment Opportunities (Strategies)	Key Objectives
The Harbor	Historic Bridge Avenue	Proximity to Lake Erie Historic buildings	Restore historic buildings Residential in-fill development Public-private partnerships	Entertainment Tourism Retail
	Waterfront	Lift bridge River's edge Access to Lake	Public infrastructure Promenade/Industrial heritage	Greenspace reclamation Public access
	Center Square	Available land location	Seasonal/Residential Public space	Residential
	The Neighborhood	Tourist attractions Historic housing	Walking tour Housing Determine disposition of Lakeside 9	Tourist circuit Strengthen neighborhood
The Gulf	Gulf Harbor	Lift bridge River	Promenade/Access to Lake Erie and river's edge	Public access
	Gulf Link	Interested property and business owners	Residential River clean-up (PRP remediation) Marinas/Docks	Residential Environmental Remediation
	Gulf Downtown	Parks Western Reserve Greenway	Connectors to the Gulf and Western Reserve Greenway Determine location of schools	Natural Resources Tourism Community-based Education
Downtown (Main Avenue)	North Park District	Professional services offices	Cluster office uses from Main Avenue District Mixed-use buildings Define district from Rt. 20 and Rt. 84 with signs/banners	Business development Create residential living opportunities
	Civic District	City Hall Senior Center Head Start Chamber of Commerce Ducro Funeral Svs. Hershey's Ice Cream Casa Capelli Army/Navy outlet Computer store Garfield's Restaurant Regional branches for: - CEI - Social Security Administration - U.S. Post Office	Restoration of Shay's Theater Redevelopment of Ashtabula Hotel site Library Existing Stakeholders Determine type of educational campus	Community engagement University-Community Partnership (Workforce Development) Economic development Code enforcement
	South Park District	Imagine Ashtabula Residential neighborhood	New residential Home repair Determine plans for Chestnut E.S. Link to Downtown w/bike path	Create residential living opportunities Community engagement Code enforcement

Redevelopment District	Redevelopment Area	Local Resources	Investment Opportunities (Strategies)	Key Objectives
The Harbor	Historic Bridge Avenue	Proximity to Lake Erie Historic buildings	Restore historic buildings Residential in-fill development Public-private partnerships	Entertainment Tourism Retail
	<p>Entertainment - Utilize local entertainment resources to create a venue for cultural arts and music programming.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify opportunities for outdoor entertainment/sports, e.g. outdoor movies, art shows with private promoters, bird watching, etc. Coordinate and publicize jointly programming/scheduling of Ashtabula Arts Center, Rabbit Run Theater, Covered Bridge Festival, Walnut Beach/Point Park/Lake Shore Park activities, etc. Explore idea of a multi-ethnic/heritage museum or interim facility in a store front 			
	<p>Tourism – Establish a vision for Bridge Avenue as a regional tourist destination.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a tourism development entity/position which serves as the redevelopment arm of the district To prioritize and focus tourism development opportunities expand local merchants association to include: museum representatives, retailers, commercial property owners, bed and breakfast owners, marina owners, local tour companies Identify opportunities on Bridge Avenue for seasonal lodging in upper floors of retail buildings utilizing historic tax credits, tax abatement and low-interest loans Create loft-style housing to attract young people to the upper floors of the retail buildings and to bring 24-hour life to the street, possibly marketing to students at KSU Ashtabula; a low-interest loan product with a local bank should be established to finance acquisition/rehabilitation Create a communications/marketing effort with Chamber of Commerce to promote tourism Create a framework/policy for daily hours of operation for museums, retailers, Ashtabula Lighthouse, etc. so tourists' choices are varied and there is "always something to do" year round 			
	<p>Retail - Strengthen and limit retail to the eastern edge of Bridge Avenue.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City should buy vacant land; create a parking plan and public park plan prior to initiating development Establish Historic Harbor District as a Community Reinvestment Area to allow for tax abatement on new and fully-improved properties/buildings; focus on low-capital retail enterprises Establish design guidelines for buildings and streetscape Ensure that retail and new development is re-focused (facing) on the river as much as possible. Identify locally-themed retail mix (supplies, sundries, restaurants, gift shops, galleries, taverns, wine bars, coffee shops, bicycle shops, etc.) and appropriate square footages to serve seasonal boaters, fishing, lift-bridge/covered bridge tourists, bird watchers, museum visitors, general visitors, and year-round residents 			
	Waterfront	Lift bridge River's edge Access to Lake	Public infrastructure Promenade/Industrial heritage	Greenspace reclamation Public access
<p>Public Access – See above "Tourism" and See below "Greenspace Reclamation"</p>				
<p>Greenspace Reclamation – Utilize scope and focus recent environmental remediation projects to define and leverage additional funding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convene PRP, present plan and request investment to target river dredging and creation of bulk-heading to allow for promenade/public access to river front Determine research, reclamation and coastal management project opportunities, e.g., eradication of invasive plant species on beach, learning laboratories for school-age children, etc. and apply for funding 				
Center Square and The Neighborhood	Available land location	Seasonal/Residential for young people Public space	Residential	

- Residential** – Create residential living opportunities to bring 24-hour life to the street.
- Below-market community development loans should be created to encourage homeownership
 - Create loft-style housing to attract young people to the upper floors of the retail buildings
 - Create seasonal rental opportunities for tourists, boaters, other visitors
 - Create seasonal for-sale opportunities for summer residents, investors, others
 - Incorporate semi-private and public park spaces in target area
 - Establish an ongoing code enforcement process for existing buildings (commercial and residential)
 - City should acquire and bank land for future development opportunities

The Gulf	Gulf Harbor	Lift bridge River	Promenade/Access to Lake Erie and River's edge	Public access
	Public Access - Establish public access strategy for Riverfront. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To leverage lift bridge lighting project, build and establish a public promenade/park along the east bank, then west bank of the Ashtabula River, to allow for public access and viewing points for the bridge • See "Greenspace Reclamation" above 			
	Gulf Link Private Development	Interested property and business Owners	Residential River clean-up (PRP remediation) Marinas/Docks	Residential environmental remediation
	Residential Housing – Utilize market rate housing strategies to repopulate the district. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private property owners along the Gulf to build for-sale housing units • Identify opportunities for loft-style housing, townhomes, and other innovative housing types in the district 			
	Environmental Remediation – Utilize remediation needs as an opportunity to clean-up land and create business and workforce opportunities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify additional environmental remediation needed from Fields Brook area to Lake Erie in order to remove barriers to development • Assess current parcels/ownership to determine if any parcels can be purchased and used for passive greenspace or public access along River • Identify opportunities for remediation/research in the Gulf, connect to university programs such as KSU's Resources Research Institute 			
	Gulf Downtown Public Access	Parks Western Reserve Greenway	Connectors to the Gulf and Western Reserve Greenway Determine location of Schools	Natural resources tourism Community-based education
	Natural Resources Tourism – Utilize natural resources tourism as an economic development tool. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize the Western Reserve Greenway as the pedestrian and bicycle spine of the City and use it as the mechanism to link the Historic Harbor District and the Main Avenue Commercial District, as well as to key recreational assets like Smith Field, Walnut Beach and Point Park • Conduct an inventory of natural resources and promote opportunities in the region • Create overlook points and access points to the Gulf; provide adequate parking/trailheads • Establish a Western Reserve Greenway Byway route from downtown to the Lake Erie via Lake Avenue 			
Community-based Education – Expand community partnerships and community-based education offerings. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish organizing framework for university-community partnership which links schools, nonprofit organizations, Ashtabula Area City Schools, Kent State University • Expand school-based programs such as the Waterways Adventure Grant to continue to develop a continuum of outdoor education curriculum and link with other curriculum e.g., as KSU's one-year Master's degree in outdoor education • Identify opportunities for lakefront and riverfront summer camp programs • Partner with Promoting Education in Ashtabula County (PEAC) to increase the number of college-bound students living in the County • Determine the future use of Lakeside 9 building; create adaptive reuse strategy • Determine plans for Washington E.S.; create adaptive reuse strategy 				

Downtown (Main Avenue)

North Park District	Professional services offices	Cluster office uses from Main Avenue District Mixed-use buildings Define district from Rt. 20 and Rt. 84 with signs/banners	Business development Create residential living opportunities
<p>Business Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify opportunities for accessing international markets through port commerce and port authority Cluster office uses from Main Avenue District into North Park District Create mixed-use buildings, where possible Define district from Rt. 20 and Rt. 84 with signs/banners 			
<p>Create Residential Living Opportunities - Utilize market rate housing strategies to repopulate the district.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with private property owners on Main Avenue to build or convert buildings to feature for-sale housing units on the upper floors Identify opportunities for loft-style housing, vertical condominiums, townhomes, and other innovative housing types in the district 			
Civic District	City Hall Senior Center Head Start Chamber of Commerce Ducro Funeral Services Hershey's Ice Cream Casa Capelli Army/Navy outlet Computer store Garfield's Restaurant Regional branches for: - CEI - Social Security Administration - U.S. Post Office	Restoration of Shay's Theater Redevelopment of Ashtabula Hotel site Library Existing stakeholders Determine type of educational campus Develop vacant land	Community engagement University-Community Partnership (Workforce Development) Economic development Code enforcement
<p>Community Engagement – Initiate a public engagement process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine future use of Lakeside H.S. and location of Board of Education offices Determine public infrastructure improvements needs to all districts in Main Avenue Study Area Determine public improvements needed to support the AACS rebuilding project 			
<p>University-Community Partnership (Workforce Development) – Establish broad-based partnership.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chamber of Commerce, Ashtabula Area City Schools (AACS) and Kent State University should establish a University-Community Partnership and convene partners such as Ashtabula County Port Authority, Regional Development Office/State of Ohio, Growth Partnership, Leadership Ashtabula, Ashtabula Foundation, Civic Development Corporation, Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC), Banks, other businesses. 			
<p>Economic Development – Stimulate opportunities for small business enterprises.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish Main Avenue Central Civic District Identify local retail opportunities such as bicycle shop, coffee shop, copy center, etc. for Main Avenue Civic District Conduct a feasibility study and determine how to apply for historic tax credits to restore Shay's Theater Conduct an existing conditions analysis of Ashtabula Hotel; create a working development partnership with owner and/or investors; create adaptive reuse strategy for site; seek equity financing Identify physical space needs for Ashtabula Library; develop capital investment plan Work with existing stakeholders to improve cleanliness of district, signage, and parking areas Create a land bank to receive tax delinquent properties (deed in lieu of foreclosure) and estate gifts 			
<p>Code Enforcement – Establish aggressive code enforcement and building condemnation/demolition protocol</p>			
South Park District	Imagine Ashtabula Residential neighborhood	New residential Home repair Determine plans for Chestnut E.S. Link to Downtown w/bike path	Create residential living opportunities Community engagement Code enforcement
<p>Community Engagement – Design a variety of activities to promote community engagement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate a public engagement initiative to determine plans for Chestnut E.S. Design and build a variety of mixed use spaces that encourage public interaction at appropriate times of day Blend school- and community-based programs to support long-term educational needs Create community-wide events which feature local resources, stimulate economic activity and promote community pride Establish a seasonal farmer's market at South Park Create home repair and homeownership programs to stimulate investment in the neighborhood Link to Main Avenue District w/bike path 			
<p>Code Enforcement – See above</p>			

Year-1 Priorities

Historic Harbor District

Objective: Establish a regional tourism and entertainment district and initiate market rate development by creating multiple public-private partnerships to develop vacant land and rehabilitate historic buildings.

Strategy: Create a public improvement plan to establish public access to the east bank of the River

Strategy: Create a public park and parking plan prior to initiating development

Strategy: Determine research, reclamation, and coastal management project/funding opportunities

The Gulf

Objective: Utilize natural resources tourism as an economic development tool

Strategy: Determine plans for Lakeside 9 and Washington E.S.

Strategy: Recognize the Western Reserve Greenway as the pedestrian and bicycle spine of the City and use it as the mechanism to link the Historic Harbor District and the Main Avenue Commercial District, as well as to key recreational assets like Smith Field, Walnut Beach and Point Park

Strategy: Establish a Western Reserve Greenway Byway route from downtown to the Lake Erie via Lake Avenue

Downtown District

Objective: Establish a Civic District, thus re-establishing the economic center of the city.

Strategy: Conduct a feasibility study and determine how to apply for historic tax credits to restore Shay's Theater

Strategy: Conduct an existing conditions analysis of Ashtabula Hotel; create a working development partnership with owner and/or investors; create adaptive reuse strategy for site; seek equity financing

Strategy: Identify physical space needs for Ashtabula Library; develop capital investment plan

Strategy: Work with existing stakeholders to improve cleanliness of district, signage, and parking areas

Strategy: Conduct a comprehensive building conditions analysis of contiguous buildings to improve conditions of blighted properties and to connect to other buildings that are assets in the Civic District.

Strategy: Determine plans for Lakeside H.S., Board of Education Offices, Thurgood Marshall, and Chestnut Elementary School

Strategy: Support local efforts to revitalize the residential housing stock in the Chestnut neighborhood.