

# Rocky River Upper West Branch

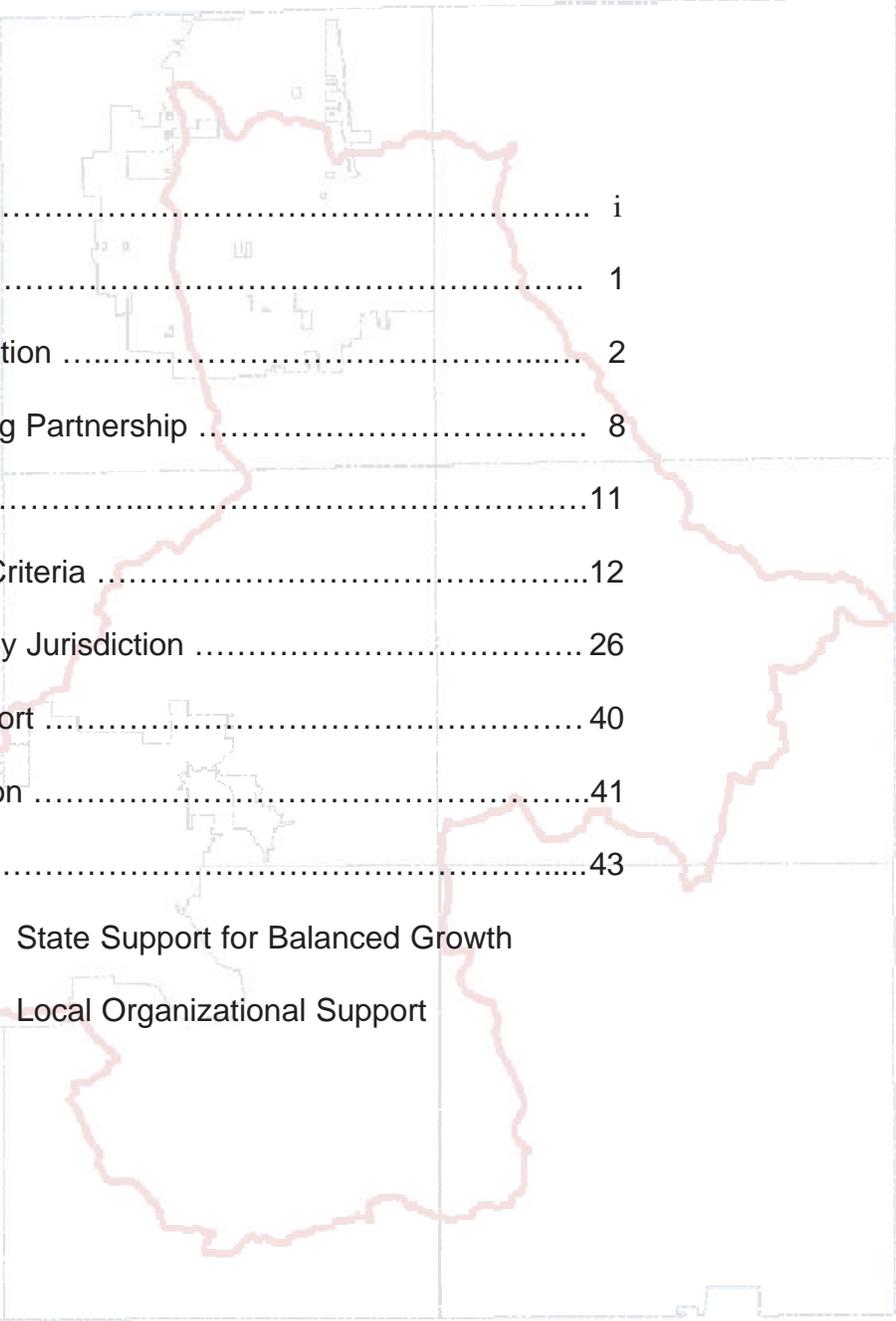


**Watershed  
Balanced Growth Plan  
2009**



# Rocky River Upper West Branch

## CONTENT



A map of the Rocky River Upper West Branch watershed is shown in the background. The watershed boundary is outlined in a light red color. The map includes a grid of latitude and longitude lines and shows some major roads and water bodies within the watershed.

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*Appendix A:* State Support for Balanced Growth

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This plan was prepared by the Medina County Soil & Water Conservation District on behalf of the Rocky River Upper West Branch Watershed Planning Partnership under a grant BG-04 awarded by the Ohio Lake Erie Commission .

# Watershed Balanced Growth Plan





# Rocky River Upper West Branch

## INTRODUCTION

Lake Erie is Ohio's greatest natural resource and provides tremendous natural and economic benefits to all Ohioans. It truly is a resource of global significance. As part of the Great Lakes, it is part of an interconnected, natural system with one fifth of the world's surface freshwater and many rare ecosystems. These lakes have also been the source of one of the world's leading economies.



The citizens of Ohio are stewards of this valuable resource. To protect the health of the lake and its ability to sustain economic prosperity in the 21st century, they must work together in their own communities and in cooperation with other communities throughout the Great Lakes Basin.\*

\*from Ohio Lake Erie Commission's *Linking Land Use and Lake Erie: A Planning Framework for Achieving Balanced Growth in the Ohio Lake Erie Watershed*

*Balanced Growth is a strategy to protect and restore Lake Erie and its watersheds to assure long-term economic competitiveness, ecological health, and quality of life.*

The Balanced Growth Initiative does not place restrictions on where development can occur. Through incentives, local governments are encouraged to come together as a watershed (region) to identify where development would be most appropriate.

### PLANNING BY WATERSHEDS

Watersheds are the most practical geographical units to consider when addressing water quality. The cumulative impact of local land-use decisions is reflected in the overall health of Lake Erie.

A Watershed Balanced Growth Plan is a framework for coordinated, regional decision-making about how growth and conservation should be promoted by local and state policies and investments in the context of watersheds.

The Rocky River Upper West Branch is one of four pilot watersheds selected by the Ohio Lake Erie Commission to develop a Watershed Balanced Growth Plan. The overall goal of this project is to develop a tool for preserving a healthy watershed while promoting a strong, diversified economy.

#### Elements of Balanced Growth Plans

- voluntary
- locally driven
- watershed-scale planning units
- augment local comprehensive plans
- supported by state incentives

#### Project Tasks

- Organize The Rocky River Upper West Branch Watershed Planning Partnership.
- Develop land-use suitability criteria.
- Identify Priority Land-use Areas.
- Reach consensus with local jurisdictions.
- Obtain Resolutions of Support.
- Submit plan for State endorsement.

#### Benefits of participating in a Balanced Growth Plan

- ◇ Enhanced access to state programs and funding identified in the *Balanced Growth Strategy* as "special incentives"
- ◇ Direct working relationships with state agency personnel across all the Ohio Lake Erie Commission members and other agencies involved in decision making and program implementation. This enhanced communication will connect communities to state programs that will help them meet their own local goals.
- ◇ Greater predictability that would streamline the decision making process for private sector developers.



*The Upper West Branch Balanced Growth Plan was designed to promote the guiding principles of the Lake Erie Protection and Restoration Plan.*

## 10 Guiding Principles for a Sustainable Lake Erie Watershed

*Attaining a living equilibrium between a strong, diversified economy and a healthy Lake Erie ecosystem*

### Activities in the Ohio Lake Erie watershed should:

1. Maximize investment in existing core urban areas, transportation, and infrastructure networks to enhance the economic vitality of existing communities.
2. Minimize the conversion of green space and the loss of critical habitat areas, farmland, forest and open spaces.
3. Limit any net increase in the loading of pollutants or transfer of pollution leading from one medium to another.
4. To the extent feasible, protect and restore the natural hydrology of the watershed and flow characteristics of its streams, tributaries, and wetlands.
5. Restore the physical habitat and chemical water quality of the watershed to protect and restore diverse and thriving plant communities and preserve rare and endangered species.
6. Encourage the inclusion of all economic and environmental factors into cost / benefit accounting in land use and development decisions.
7. Avoid development decisions that shift economic benefits or environmental burdens from one location to the other.
8. Establish and maintain a safe, efficient, and accessible transportation system that integrates highway, rail, air, transit, water, and pedestrian networks to foster economic growth and personal travel.
9. Encourage that all new development and redevelopment initiatives address the need to protect and preserve access to historic, cultural, and scenic resources.
10. Promote public access to and enjoyment of our natural resources for all Ohioans.



# Rocky River Upper West Branch

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### ROCKY RIVER UPPER WEST BRANCH WATERSHED PLANNING PARTNERSHIP

Medina County Board of Commissioners  
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Rocky River Watershed Council  
Jared Bartley

Western Reserve Land Conservancy  
Chris Bunch  
Bill Jordan

Real Estate and Development Community  
Jim Gerspacher

### ABOUT THE PLANNING PARTNERSHIP

This Balanced Growth Plan has been developed through the efforts of the Rocky River Upper West Branch Watershed Planning Partnership. This group was assembled to include representatives from the conservation, development, and agricultural communities as well as individuals from agencies with responsibility for local and regional infrastructure and planning.

### STATE SUPPORT



The Ohio Lake Erie Commission (OLEC) is responsible for coordinating state policies and programs that are related to Lake Erie and its surrounding areas. The Lake Erie Commission's role is to preserve and protect Lake Erie's natural resources, protect the ecological quality of its watershed, and promote economic development of Ohio's North Coast.

The commission comprises the directors of:

- Ohio Environmental Protection Agency**
- Ohio Department of Agriculture**
- Ohio Department of Development**
- Ohio Department of Health**
- Ohio Department of Natural Resources**
- Ohio Department of Transportation**

Funding for the grant used to develop of the Rocky River Upper West Branch Balanced Growth Plan as well as three other pilot projects, was provided by the **Ohio Water Development Authority**



through the Ohio Lake Erie Commission. In addition, the OLEC provided guidance and support and facilitated information sharing among the four pilot watersheds.

### ADDITIONAL SUPPORTING AGENCIES

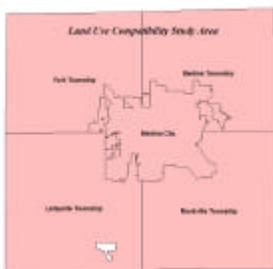




The Upper West Branch, located in the heart of Medina County, is comprised of four sub-watersheds and a portion of a fifth at the headwaters of the Rocky River. In recent decades, the portion of the county located in this watershed has experienced unprecedented growth as urban sprawl expanded outward from the Cleveland and Akron metropolitan areas. While this boom brings the benefits of improved services and increased revenues, it also threatens the very natural features that have made the area so attractive.



The groundwork for the Rocky River Upper West Branch (RRUWB) Watershed Balanced Growth Plan was laid in two prior works, the Joint Economic Planning Committee of the Medina County Development Corporation's *Land Use Compatibility Study*, and the Rocky River Watershed Council's *Rocky River Watershed Action Plan*.



The Land Use Compatibility Study was an exercise in which five communities (Lafayette, Medina, Montville and York Townships, and the City of Medina) attempted to integrate the improvement of economic conditions with the preservation of the ecological integrity and natural features that are primary assets of the area. The study combined available natural resource, infrastructure, zoning and other information to identify land most suited for conversion to commercial and industrial uses, and those areas in which development should be avoided. It was intended for use by community leaders to assess the effectiveness of land use regulations, plans, and patterns against the stated objectives of sustaining natural systems and

features and avoiding increased costs, to guide them in making adjustments, and to aid in determining the appropriateness of requests for variances and changes to zoning.

The RRUWB Watershed Balanced Growth Plan is also intended to assist in achieving goals and objectives identified in the Rocky River Watershed Action Plan. Foremost of these goals is protecting and restoring riparian corridors along the Rocky River, its tributaries, and headwater streams.



### GOALS and OBJECTIVES

In conjunction with the Ohio Lake Erie Commission and the local communities within the watershed, the Rocky River Upper West Branch Watershed Planning Partnership will develop criteria to identify and designate Priority Conservation Areas (PCAs), Priority Development Areas (PDAs) as well as Priority Agricultural Areas (PAAs) contained within the watershed and:

- \* Will build upon the original Joint Economic Planning Committee (JEPC) Land Use Compatibility Study and provide a foundation for expansion of the concept of PCAs, PDAs and PAAs within the Rocky River Upper West Branch Watershed and also within other watersheds identified in the JEPC Land Use Compatibility Study;
- \* Initiate implementation of PCAs and PDAs that will assist in achieving goals and objectives identified in the Rocky River Watershed Action Plan such as protecting and restoring riparian corridor along the Rocky River, its tributaries, and headwater streams; and
- \* Will develop and provide participating political jurisdictions that have land-use authority with a toolbox of land-use measures, including common zoning language, federal, state and local incentive programs, and best management practices that could be used to guide protection of PCAs and development toward PDAs. The toolbox should make development decisions more predictable, allowing jurisdictions to achieve a clearer and more consistent vision for the future of development.



# Rocky River Upper West Branch

## MAKE-UP OF THE WATERSHED

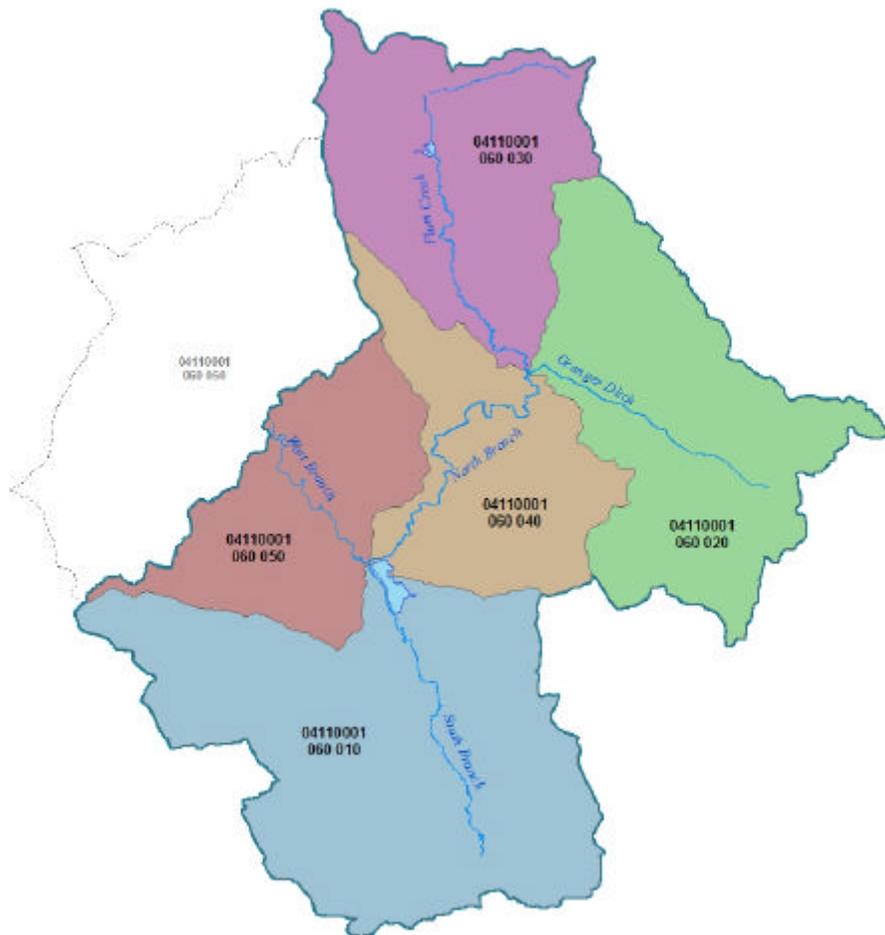
### LOCATION and SIZE

The Upper West Branch is comprised of four sub-watersheds and a portion of a fifth\* at the headwaters of the Rocky River and contributes nearly 25% of the Rocky's total drainage area. This area was selected for the pilot project because of the significant impact activities here have on the entire Rocky River watershed and Lake Erie.



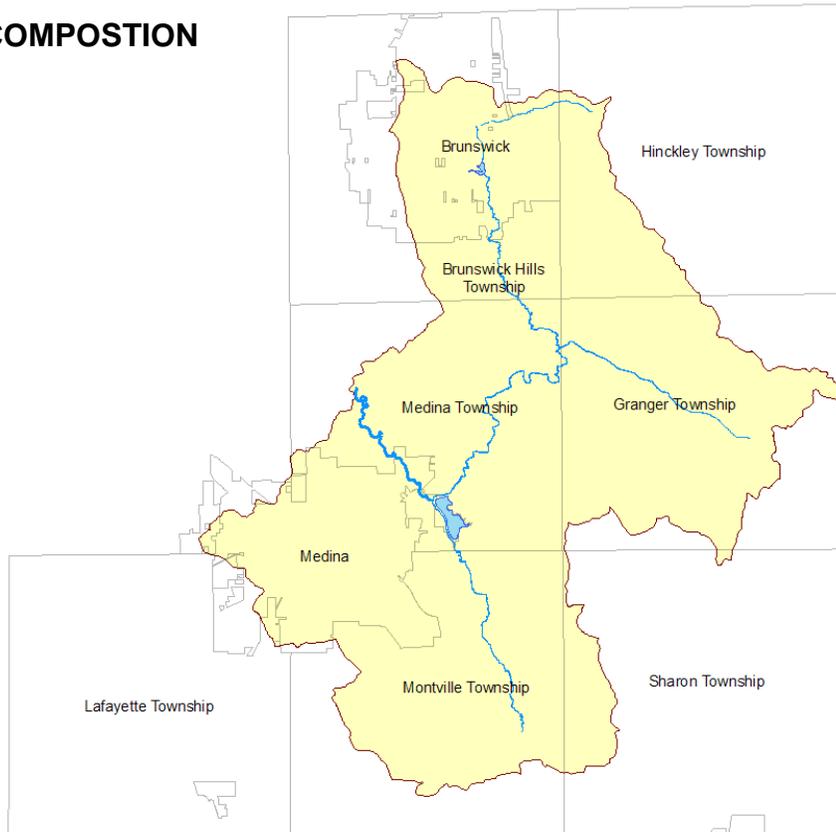
These sub-watersheds are identified by the following USGS 14-digit Hydrological Unit Codes (HUC):

14-digit HUC	Sub-Watershed	Acres	Sq Mi
04110001-060-010	South Branch Rocky River	14,671	22.92
04110001-060-020	Granger Ditch	9,742	15.22
04110001-060-030	Plum Creek	8,204	12.82
04110001-060-040	North Branch Rocky River	6,338	9.90
04110001-060-050*	West Branch (partial)	5,991	9.36
<b>Total</b>	<b>Upper West Branch Rocky River</b>	<b>44,946</b>	<b>70.22</b>



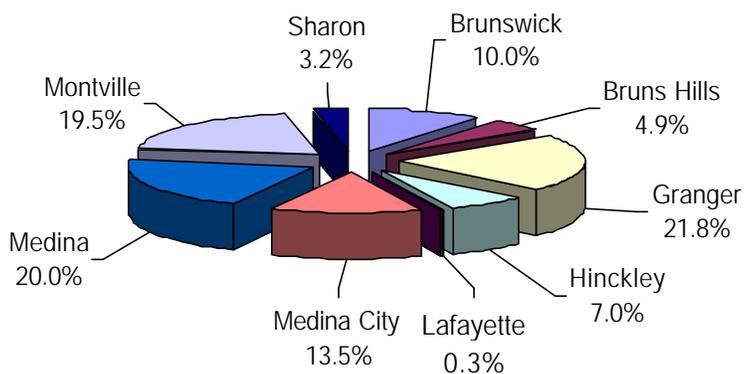


## POLITICAL COMPOSTION

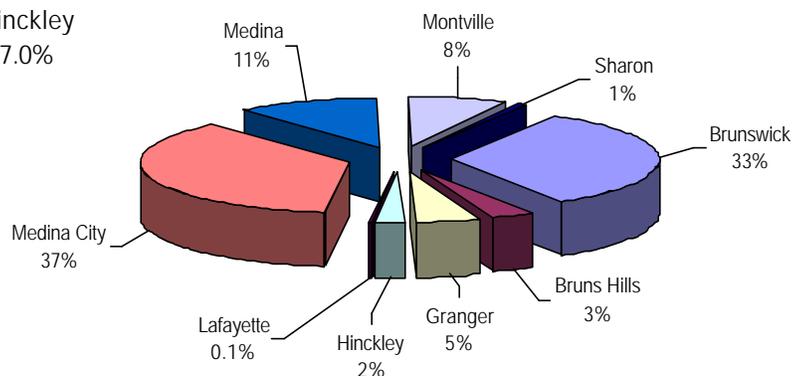


The entire Upper West Branch lies within Medina County. Portions of 7 townships (Brunswick Hills, Granger, Hinckley, Lafayette, Medina, Montville, and Sharon) as well as the municipalities of Brunswick and Medina, share the watershed.

**% of Land Area**



**% of Population (06)**



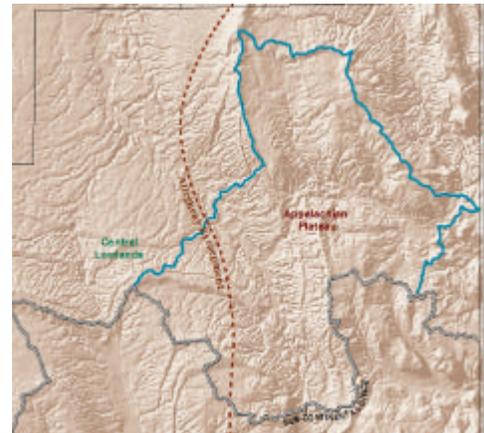


# Rocky River Upper West Branch

## NATURAL FEATURES AND CHARACTERISTICS

Nestled along side the sub-continental divide which separates the Ohio River and Lake Erie drainage basins, the Upper West Branch watershed features more than 400 miles of streams, 1000 acres of ponds and lakes, and 12,000 acres of woodlands.

Along with proximity to the sub-continental divide, the watershed also straddles the boundary of two physiographic regions. The majority of the watershed lies east of the Allegheny escarpment and resides on the fringe of the Appalachian Plateau. This area is characterized by higher elevations and steeper slopes. The southwestern portion graduates into the more gentle terrain of the central lowlands.



Glaciers from the last ice age have also impacted the face of watershed as 78% of the soils found here are formed from till and 8% from glacial outwash.



### Natural Resources



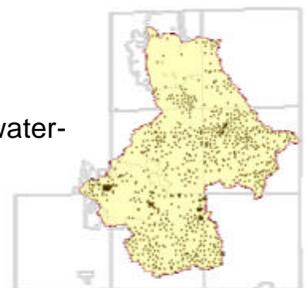
The most significant natural resource of the watershed is the over 31,000 acres of soils categorized as “prime farmland soils” by the USDA-NRCS. This accounts for nearly 70% of the watershed’s soils.



While much land has historically been held in agriculture and more recently given rise to accelerated residential and commercial development, 27% of the watershed is still covered by woodlands.



In addition to prime soils and timber potential, the watershed also boasts 934 oil and gas wells.



# Watershed Balanced Growth Plan

## POPULATION

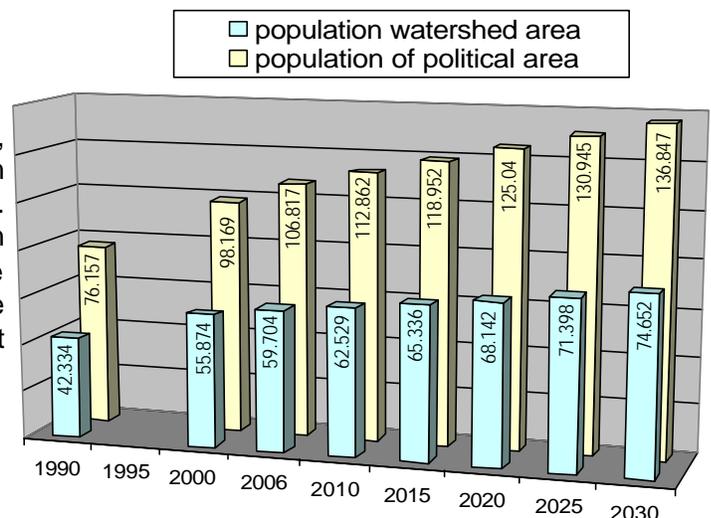


According to data from the 2000 census, the watershed of the Upper West Branch was home to 55,874 residents. Population estimates indicate this number had increased to 59,704 in 2006. Balanced growth projects are based on watersheds. Political boundaries however, often do not fit entirely into the confines of the watershed as is the case of the 9 jurisdictions that comprise the Upper West Branch. While the population within the watershed is used for State endorsement purposes, the entire population of each community will benefit from implementation of special incentives.

POPULATION DATA	2000 census		2006 estimate		2010 projection		2020 projection		2030 projection	
	entire jurisdiction	within watershed								
Brunswick	34481	<b>19287</b>	35107	<b>19638</b>	36000	<b>20137</b>	39000	<b>21815</b>	42000	<b>23493</b>
Brunswick Hills TWP	4376	<b>1198</b>	7135	<b>1953</b>	7340	<b>2009</b>	8500	<b>2326</b>	9000	<b>2463</b>
Granger TWP	3928	<b>2567</b>	4517	<b>2952</b>	4000	<b>2614</b>	4500	<b>2941</b>	5820	<b>3803</b>
Hinckley	6753	<b>1229</b>	7693	<b>1401</b>	8366	<b>1523</b>	8873	<b>1615</b>	8394	<b>1528</b>
Lafayette TWP	5507	<b>41</b>	5386	<b>41</b>	7500	<b>56</b>	9632	<b>72</b>	10819	<b>81</b>
Medina	27479	<b>22995</b>	26267	<b>21981</b>	29105	<b>24356</b>	30011	<b>25114</b>	30777	<b>25755</b>
Medina TWP	6057	<b>4703</b>	8568	<b>6653</b>	8000	<b>6212</b>	9000	<b>6988</b>	11387	<b>8841</b>
Montville TWP	5344	<b>3488</b>	7135	<b>4656</b>	8017	<b>5232</b>	10474	<b>6836</b>	12499	<b>8157</b>
Sharon TWP	4244	<b>365</b>	5009	<b>431</b>	4534	<b>390</b>	5050	<b>434</b>	6151	<b>529</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>98169</b>	<b>55874</b>	<b>106817</b>	<b>59704</b>	<b>112862</b>	<b>62529</b>	<b>125040</b>	<b>68142</b>	<b>136847</b>	<b>74652</b>

SOURCE: 1990 & 2000, U. S. Census Bureau; 2005 - 2030, County projections - State of Ohio, Office of Strategic Research; Sub-county allocations - NOACA in cooperation with Medina County Planning Commission

Population Projection



Until the recent turmoil in the housing market, Medina County and the Upper West Branch in particular, experienced unprecedented growth. This chart projects population increases based on the trends of the past two decades. While no one can predict with absolute certainty what the future population of the watershed will be, it is most likely that the growth trend will continue.

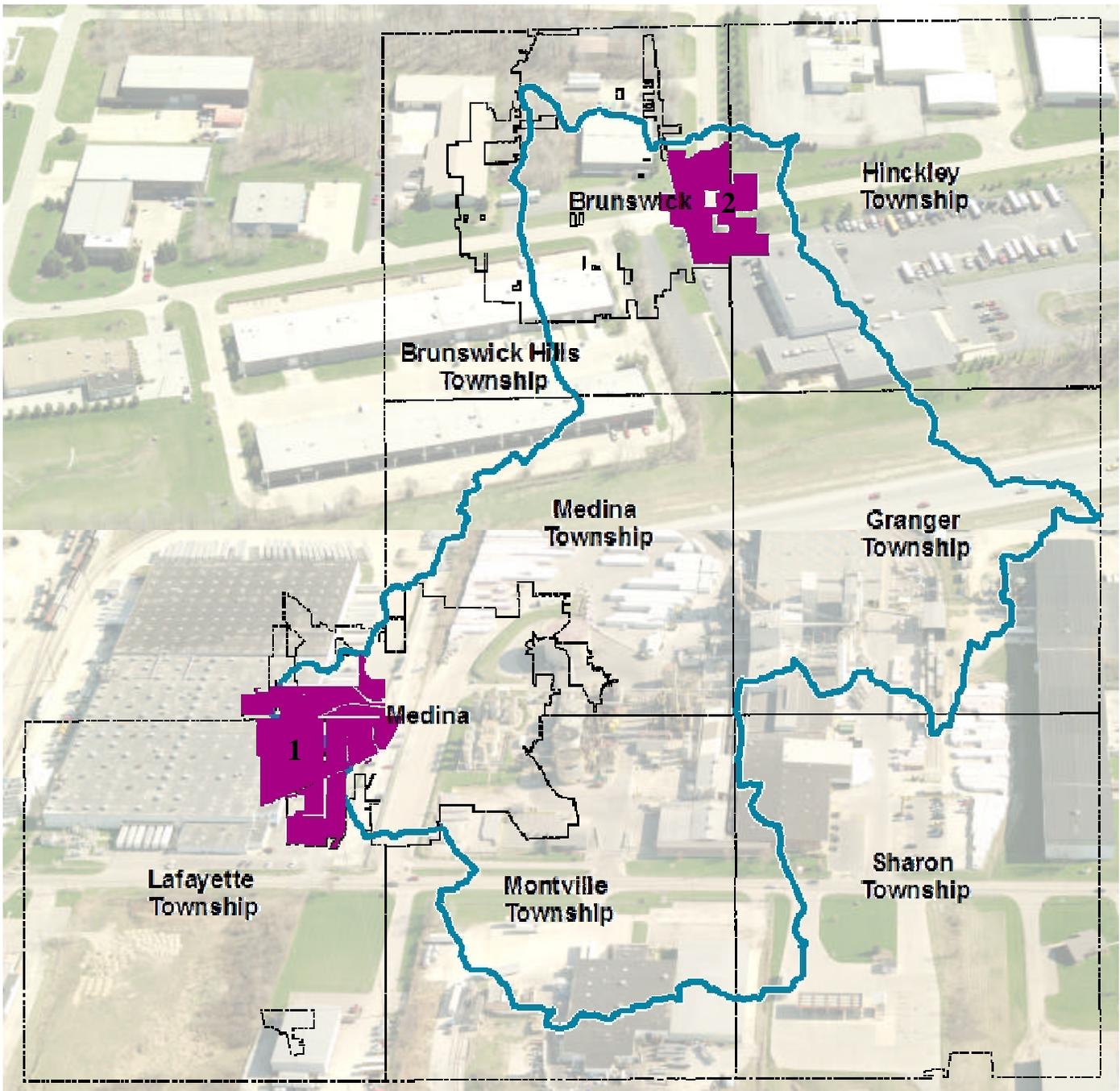


# Rocky River Upper West Branch

## INDUSTRY AND ECONOMICS

The watershed is home to a variety of light industry which is primarily concentrated in two sites, one in the southwest portion of the City of Medina (1) and the other along the City of Brunswick/Hinckley Township border (2).

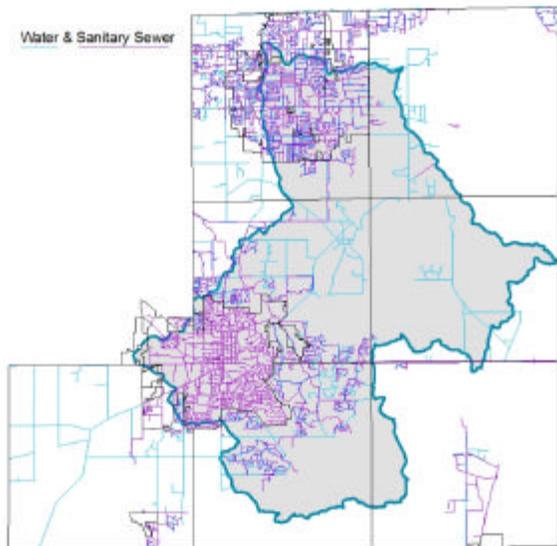
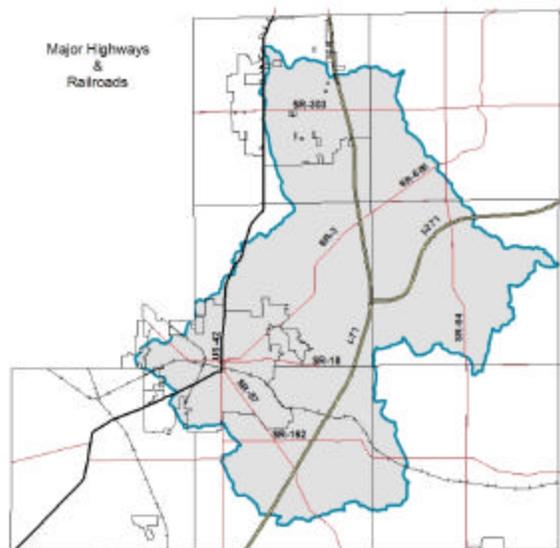
The variety of goods manufactured include specialized machine parts, building and remodeling materials, business products, pet foods, novelty items, as well as the byproducts of a growing recycling and recovery industry.





## INFRASTRUCTURE

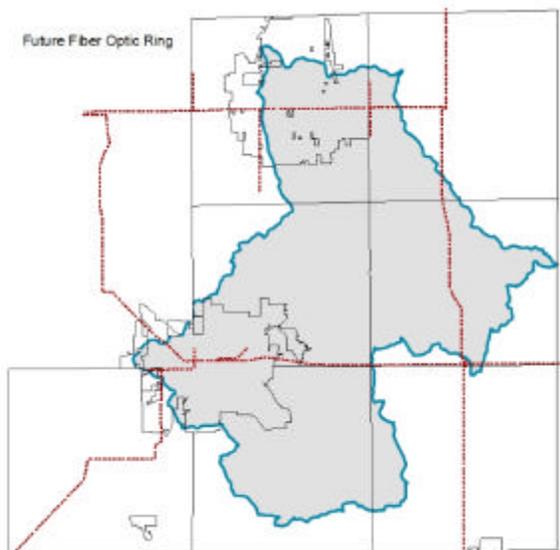
The watershed is well served by a transportation system that includes Interstate 71 with 3 interchanges, Interstate 271 with 1 interchange, US Route 42, 7 state routes as well a network of county, township and municipal roads and streets.



Water drawn from Lake Erie and supplied by The City of Cleveland, The Avon Lake Water Facility and Rural Lorain County Water, is available to a major portion of the watershed.

Sanitary sewers currently service the most densely populated areas with the potential for service to be expanded to nearly 60% of the watershed upon local request.

The most anticipated addition to the watershed's infrastructure is construction of a fiber optic ring that will serve the technology needs of commerce, government, and educational institutions.





# Rocky River Upper West Branch

## WATERSHED PLANNING PARTNERSHIP

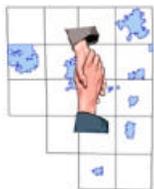
### MEMBERS

The Rocky River Upper West Branch Watershed Planning Partnership is composed of representatives from the **conservation**, **development** and **agriculture** communities as well as members from agencies that are responsible for infrastructure and services. A Medina County Commissioner was also included in the Partnership to represent **government** interests. Two more members, one to represent the municipalities and one to represent the townships will be added in the spring of 2009.

This diverse make-up addresses the Lake Erie Protection and Restoration Plan guideline “Encourage the inclusion of all economic and environmental factors into cost / benefit accounting in land use and development decisions.”



- Rocky River Watershed Council**
- Medina County Park District**
- Western Reserve Land Conservancy**
- Medina County Soil & Water Conservation District**
- Medina County Department of Planning Services**
- Medina County Economic Development Corporation**
- Medina County Home Builders Association**
- Medina County Emergency Management Services**
- Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency**
- Medina County Highway Engineer**
- Medina County Sanitary Engineer**
- Medina County Commissioners**
- Farm Bureau**





## GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

As grant administrator, the Medina County Soil & Water Conservation District has the responsibility for scheduling meetings, setting agendas, moderating procedures, and coordinating consensus building. The Partnership also organized four subcommittees: conservation, development, agriculture, and tool box. These subcommittees meet informally and report back to the Partnership with recommendations concerning their area of consideration.

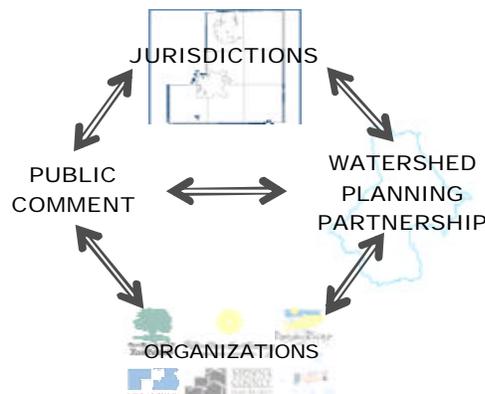
## DECISION MAKING PROCESS AND RULES

Meetings, which are scheduled as needed, are held in a roundtable format in which all members are free to express their views and concerns. Decisions are approved upon consensus of the Partnership. While not needed for approval, every reasonable effort is made to reach unanimous consensus on all Partnership decisions.

## INCORPORATING PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comment is a key component to an open and inclusive process. Forums for public comment are available in the plan at four levels: Jurisdictional, Organizational, Planning Partnership, and Public Meeting.

1. *Jurisdictional level*- citizens comments regarding the Balanced Growth Initiative voiced in Trustee, City Council, Zoning and Planning Commission meetings, etc. are noted and forwarded to the Watershed Planning Partnership for review and consideration.
2. *Organizational level*- as stakeholders, members of organizations such as Medina County Farm Bureau, Medina County Friends of the Park, Rocky River Watershed Council, Medina County Planning Commission, Medina County Home Builders Association, and Western Reserve Land Conservancy, have a vested interest in the watershed. Public comment and organizational position forged by such comment regarding the Balanced Growth Initiative is brought to the attention of the Watershed Planning Partnership as a result of these organizations having representation on the Partnership itself.
3. *Planning Partnership level*- as the Watershed Planning Partnership becomes aware of public concerns regarding the program, individuals are invited to Partnership meetings to make comments.
4. *Public Meeting level*- meetings for the purpose of hearing public comment and updating the map will be held at a minimum, on an annual basis. Such meetings are to be advertised and open to the public.





### POST ENDORSMENT ROLE AND STRATEGY

At the completion of the grant process, the Medina County Department of Planning Services will assume custodianship of the program. The Medina County SWCD will work with MCDPS to ensure continuation and continuity of the local understanding and commitment to the Balanced Growth Program.

The Department of Planning Services will provide oversight when development plans for areas that lie within in the Upper West Branch Watershed are presented through the normal county review process. These plans will be cross-checked with the location of PAA's, PCA's and PDA's . Appropriate comments and notifications will be made.

The Department of Planning Services will also work closely with jurisdictions in the Rocky River Upper West Branch Watershed that wish to update or revise local comprehensive plans. The MCDPS, in cooperation with the Medina County Commissioners, may provide financial incentive grants to assist local communities in these efforts.

### SCHEDULE

The Watershed Planning Partnership will *at a minimum*, convene annually. In addition to members of the Partnership, an invitation to attend will be extended to representatives from each of the 10 jurisdictions in the watershed. These annual meetings will be advertised and open to the public.

The intent of these meetings is to:

- Review, update, and amend the priority land use map.
- Review and if necessary, amend the plan document.
- Disseminate information on incentives and other State programs.
- Provide a forum for jurisdictions to share balanced growth experiences as well as unveil future plans for the watershed.

### PROCESS for UPDATE

The Medina County DPS and SWCD will share the responsibility for timely updating the priority land use map due to more accurate or current data becoming available.

Requests for modifications to the map beyond periodic updating may arise to reflect jurisdictional desires (such as changes in land use zoning, designation of local preference areas, etc.) or to address public concerns regarding land use designation. Such requests will be brought to the table by members of the Partnership or at the request of watershed stakeholders including local jurisdictions, individuals, organizations and interest groups for discussion. The map will be amended upon on consensus of the Watershed Planning Partnership along with agreement of the jurisdiction(s) affected.

Changing the text of the plan document may become necessary for purposes of, but not exclusive to modifying the criteria for designating PAAs, PCAs, and PDAs; adding or deleting members of the Planning Partnership; adding additional jurisdictions to the watershed; or amending the policies and procedures spelled out in the plan.

Requests for amendments will be brought before the Watershed Planning Partnership for discussion and enacted upon on the group's consensus in conjunction with the agreement of a majority of the jurisdictions participating in the Balanced Growth Initiative.

All map and text changes will be locally generated and shared with the Ohio Lake Erie Commission for informational purposes only.

It should also be noted that no revision to a community's original Resolution of Support would be required to enact such changes.



The Balanced Growth Initiative provides a framework that the Watershed Planning Partnership can use to create plans that contribute to the goal of protecting and restoring Lake Erie for the benefit of all Ohio citizens and visitors. A community that agrees with this goal and chooses to participate fully could (*but is not required to*), for example, incorporate the Priority Conservation Areas and Priority Development Areas into their comprehensive plans. This will enable the state to direct state funding to the jurisdiction in a manner consistent with local desires as expressed in their comprehensive plans.

### LOCAL PARTICIPATION

Participation in the program at all levels is *strictly voluntary*. Individual communities are asked to pass resolutions of support for the program if they are within the watershed. Beyond that, there are *no* requirements to take any actions or obligations to pursue any suggested implementation strategies. It is the hope of the state agencies that make up the OLEC to *encourage* local planning efforts that the state can then be responsive to while planning or implementing state funded projects.

### RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT

By passing a Resolution of Support for the Balanced Growth Initiative, the jurisdiction is agreeing:

- ◆ to adopt the designation of **Priority Conservation Areas, Priority Development Areas, and Priority Agricultural Areas** within the jurisdiction as identified in the Balanced Growth Plan
- ◆ to direct the Watershed Planning Partnership to seek endorsement of the Balanced Growth Plan by the Ohio Lake Erie Commission in order to permit the jurisdiction to seek the benefits and incentives provided by this endorsement
- ◆ that the Priority Conservation Areas and Priority Development Areas within the jurisdiction identified in the Balanced Growth Plan are to be used by State of Ohio Agencies to guide state activities and programs and serve as the basis for special incentive programs to be directed to the watershed
- ◆ to *encourage* the protection of Priority Conservation Areas and *promote* development of Priority Development Areas.

Communities may offer or withdraw support at any time before or after a plan is endorsed. Should a community withdraw its support, it would no longer be eligible for special state incentives.

### NON-SUPPORTING JURISDICTIONS

Local communities who do not adopt resolutions of support for the Balanced Growth Plan *are not* eligible for the extra points, funding, or any other added consideration within the special incentives. They are treated as if they were not in the watershed and do remain eligible to compete for other programs just like any other jurisdiction not participating in the Balanced Growth Initiative.

Should a non-supporting jurisdiction desire to reverse its position, it can at any time, become eligible for the special incentives by offering a Resolution of Support to the Rock River Upper West Branch Watershed Planning Partnership.



## Rocky River Upper West Branch

### PRIORITY CONSERVATION AREAS

#### **What is it?**

A *Priority Conservation Area* is a locally designated area targeted for protection and restoration.

#### **Who would designate a PCA?**

- \* PCAs would be designated by local Watershed Planning Partnerships in consultation with local and state governments.
- \* PCAs would be designated as part of a Watershed Balanced Growth Plan.

#### **What is the purpose of designating PCAs?**

- \* Protect the ecological health of the watershed and tributaries.
- \* Provide a process by which areas containing environmental, natural, historic or archaeological resources of critical watershed concern may be identified and protected from substantial deterioration or loss.
- \* Provide procedures by which areas of critical watershed concern may be designated.
- \* Protect and enhance public health, safety, and welfare.
- \* Guide state programs, policies, and investments that influence the location of conservation and/or development.

#### **What types of areas could be designated as a PCA?**

- \* The determination of what areas are designated as PCAs is decided upon by the Watershed Planning Partnerships.
- \* Examples of types of areas include; parks, forests, wildlife refuges, wilderness areas, scenic areas, aquatic preserves, areas of critical habitat for endangered or threatened species, rivers, frequently flooded areas, lakes, estuaries, aquifer recharge areas, geologically hazardous areas, prime farmland, coastal and riparian lands, recreation areas, and other environmentally sensitive areas in the watershed.

#### **What factors could determine the designation of a PCA?**

- \* Whether the ecological value of the area is of substantial watershed or basinwide significance.
- \* Whether the ecological functions provided by the area are of substantial watershed or basinwide significance.
- \* Whether the area is susceptible to significant natural hazards that would affect existing or planned development within it.
- \* Whether the area contains designated critical habitat or any threatened or endangered plant or animal species.
- \* Whether the area contains a unique, ecologically sensitive, or valuable ecosystem whose loss or decline would negatively affect watershed, state, or national biodiversity.
- \* Whether the area offers significant recreational, historical, or quality of life benefits.
- \* Whether the area offers opportunities for ecological restoration in urban areas.



Ohio Lake Erie  
Commission

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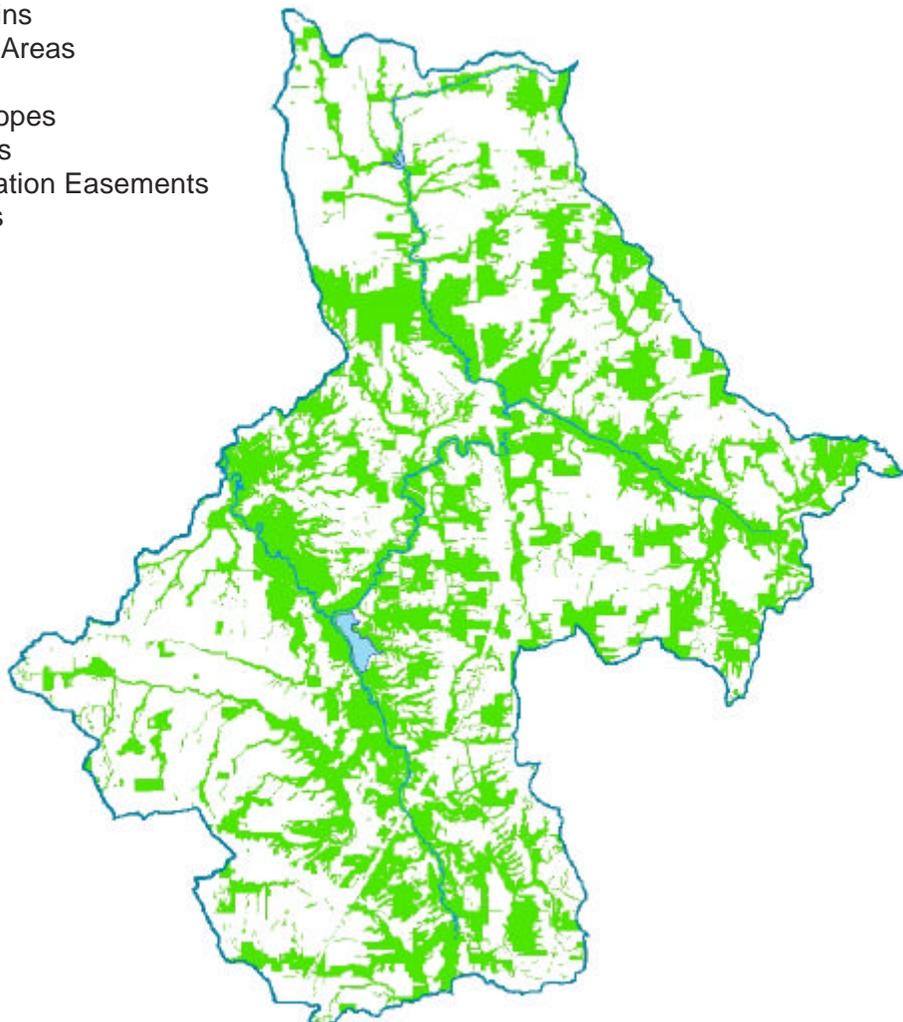


The criteria employed to designate Priority Conservation Areas were selected to identify the features critical to the ecological health of the Upper West Branch watershed as well as to promote the guiding principles of the Lake Erie Protection and Restoration Plan that address conservation. Among those guiding principles are:

- \* Minimize the conversion of green space and the loss of critical habitat areas, farmland, forest and open spaces.
- \* To the extent feasible, protect and restore the natural hydrology of the watershed and flow characteristics of its streams, tributaries, and wetlands.
- \* Restore the physical habitat and chemical water quality of the watershed to protect and restore diverse and thriving plant communities and preserve rare and endangered species.
- \* Promote public access to and enjoyment of our natural resources for all Ohioans.

To promote these guidelines, the Watershed Planning Partnership selected the following criteria to identify and designate PCAs:

1. Floodplains
2. Riparian Areas
3. Forests
4. Steep Slopes
5. Parklands
6. Conservation Easements
7. Wetlands



**Priority Conservation Areas**



# Rocky River Upper West Branch

## CRITERIA APPLIED

Areas meeting any of the following criteria are identified as PCA

### Criterion 1- FLOODPLAINS

Areas that meet one of the following conditions:

- Within a 100-year floodplain designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency
- Classified as flood prone soils by the NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service)



*Rationale:*

Floodplains are important resources that provide a wide range of benefits to the watershed and its inhabitants. These benefits include natural flood and erosion control, water quality maintenance, ground water recharge as well as the creation and enhancement of agricultural lands. Selection of floodplains as a conservation criterion also augments Medina County's Stormwater Regulations which require compensatory storage for any loss of FEMA 100-year floodplain due to development.

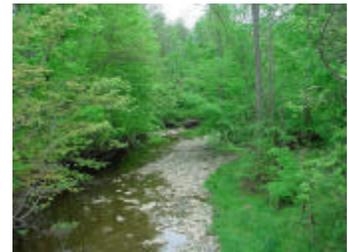
*Further defining factor:*

The delineation of floodplains should be done by hydrologic analysis and verified by the Medina County Highway Engineer's office.

### Criterion 2- RIPARIAN AREAS

Areas that meet one of the following conditions:

- Within 120' of the edge of a stream that drains 20-300 sq mi
- Within 75' of the edge of a stream that drains 0.5-20 sq mi
- Within 25' of the edge of a stream that drains under 0.5 sq mi



*Rationale:*

Riparian or streamside areas also provide a variety of important functions in maintaining the overall health of the watershed. Included in these functions are:

- Reducing property loss from excessive erosion by slowing water and dissipating energy.
- Temporarily storing flood water and reducing downstream impacts.
- Recharging and discharging groundwater.
- Protecting water quality by filtering and entrapping sediments.
- Building and providing wildlife habitats.

*Further defining factor:*

Riparian Areas should be delimited along all streams with a defined bed and bank. The width of the area is determined as a function of the size of the upstream watershed.



## Criterion 3- FORESTS

Areas covered by 20 or more contiguous acres of forest.

### *Rationale:*

The degree of value and protection efforts can be a function of the size and shape of woodlands. Larger wooded areas typically provide a greater diversity of wildlife habitat and narrow wooded areas between larger woodlands can provide corridors to allow for wildlife movement. Additionally, the infiltrative capacity of larger forested areas is key to ground water recharge.

### *Further defining factors:*

Woodlands associated with a stream or wetland.

Wooded strips adjacent to a stream can greatly benefit the water body. The forest can stabilize the stream bank controlling erosion, help keep nutrients and pesticides from reaching the water, provide shade to stabilize water temperature and provide for a more varied wildlife habitat. Forested stream buffers therefore offer a high degree of protection for a stream. Forested wetlands can also provide a high quality of wildlife habitat and are often considered high value wetlands.

Quality and age of the stand.

Stands of mature forests can provide habitat for certain wildlife species, especially cavity nesting birds.



## Criterion 4– STEEP SLOPES

Areas located on slopes with a steepness of 12% or greater.

### *Rationale:*

Steep slopes promote rapid runoff. When cleared, these areas are a potential source of high amounts of sediments to adjacent streams.



## Criterion 5– PARKLANDS

Parcels held by the Medina County Park District.  
Parcels held by the Cleveland MetroParks.  
Parcels held as municipal and township parks.

### *Rationale:*

Land set aside as parkland protects critical conservation areas as well as providing open space and recreational opportunities for the residents of the watershed.





# Rocky River Upper West Branch

## CRITERIA APPLIED (CONTINUED)

### Criterion 6– CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

Parcels held in conservation easements by the:

- Western Reserve Land Conservancy – Medina/Summit Chapter
- Cleveland Museum of Natural History

*Rationale:*

Conservation easements provide a tool for preserving properties that have natural, agricultural and/or archeological characteristics such as wetlands, forests, crops and pastures.

*Further defining factors:*

The Western Reserve Land Conservancy envisions a healthy and scenic landscape, a patchwork quilt of large natural areas connected by wildlife and river corridors, a beautiful region interspersed with well-planned agricultural, residential, and commercial development that supports the people of our region now and forever.



### Criterion 7– WETLANDS

Areas identified on the *National Wetlands Inventory* that intersect with *hydric soils*.

It should also be noted that wetland areas not identified on this layer are likely lie within areas already covered by the above conservation Criteria.

*Rationale:*

Similar to the benefits of riparian areas and floodplains, wetlands:

- reduce the severity of downstream flooding by acting as sponges that retain excess water
- improve water quality by breaking down, using or retaining nutrients, organic wastes and sediments
- recharge ground water
- provide habitat for fish and wildlife
- increase opportunities for recreation

*Further defining factors:*

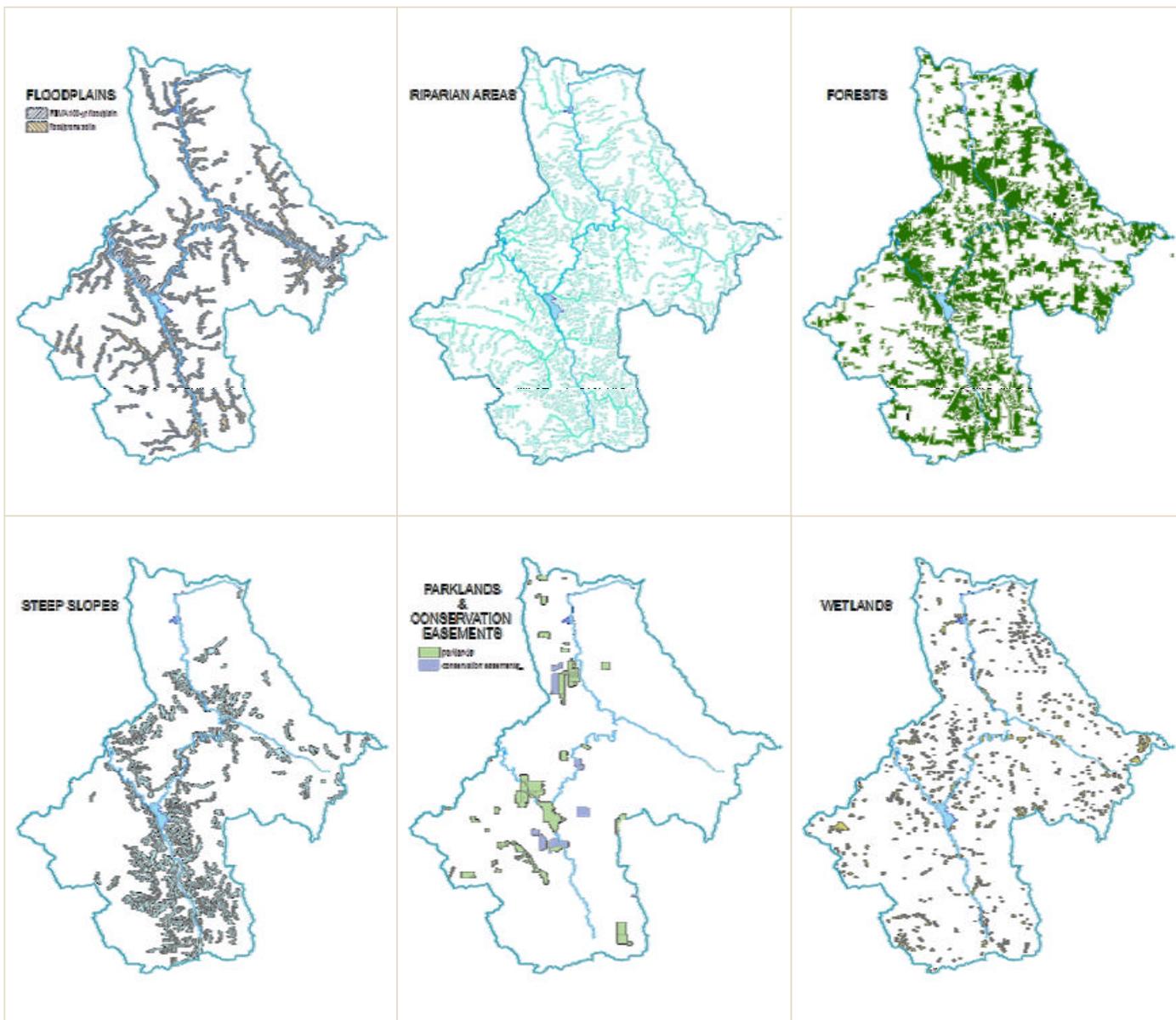
Three criteria are used to identify wetlands: the presence of hydrophytic vegetation, hydric soils, and water at or near the surface during part of the growing season. When a delineation study is done on a particular site and accepted by the US Army Corps of Engineers and/or the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, wetlands can be classified into Category 1 (low quality), Category 2 (moderate to high quality) and Category 3 (high quality). Varying width buffer areas may be established around the wetlands according to these categories.





With the primary goal of the Balanced Growth Initiative being to improve water quality, the Watershed Planning Partnership opted to apply these seven criteria to the entire watershed as if it were a blank slate. Doing so does create some gray areas where PCAs overlap with already developed areas. It was reasoned that identifying and honoring the PCA components of these areas would provide an opportunity for the conservation of critical environmental features. Consider that developed parcels contain a variety of structures (houses, buildings parking lots, etc.). Such parcels may also be crossed by or adjacent to streams. Lineal features such as riparian areas and floodplains may separate structures from streams. Designating these as Priority Conservation Areas would:

- Provide local officials access to state programs to help preserve the functionality of all streamside areas.
- Help educate landowners of the critical nature of these areas.
- Alert potential developers to where constraints to development exist.





## Rocky River Upper West Branch

### PRIORITY AGRICULTURAL AREAS

Agriculture is an important land use to consider when developing a watershed balanced growth plan. The Rocky River Upper West Branch Watershed Planning Partnership opted to create a separate priority category for agriculture rather than trying to fit it into the category of PCA or PDA for the following reasons:

- Agricultural land use could be classified as a factor for either conservation or development based on practices applied.
- Representatives from Farm Bureau indicated that farmers want to keep their options open for how their land will be used.
- It is hoped that farms located in areas designated as PAAs will receive extra consideration for state agricultural programs.
- There is a strong desire to preserve the watershed's rural heritage.

**Criteria applied-** Farmland enrolled as AG (Agricultural) Districts.

#### *Rationale:*

Originally, all soils classified as "prime farmland soils" by the NRCS, USDA, were being considered to designate PAAs. With nearly 70%% of the watershed covered by these soils, this factor was not limiting enough. The next step was to look at where operating farms were located within the watershed. Eventually these operating farms were narrowed down to ones that are enrolled in the Agricultural District program. It was felt that these farms showed a higher degree of commitment toward maintaining the land in agriculture. In a sense, Ag Districts may be viewed as the agricultural equivalent of enterprise zones.

#### *Further defining factors:*

##### Operating farms.

Active farm operations as opposed to once farmed land or land being held for development speculation would have a greater potential for long-term stability of use.

##### Landowner cooperation.

The cooperation of the owner of a farm is very important to maintain the land in agriculture.

##### Locally significant farms.

Locally significant farms may not have all of the characteristics of prime farmland but its importance to the local community's economy or local character that the local community may wish to help maintain the agricultural use.

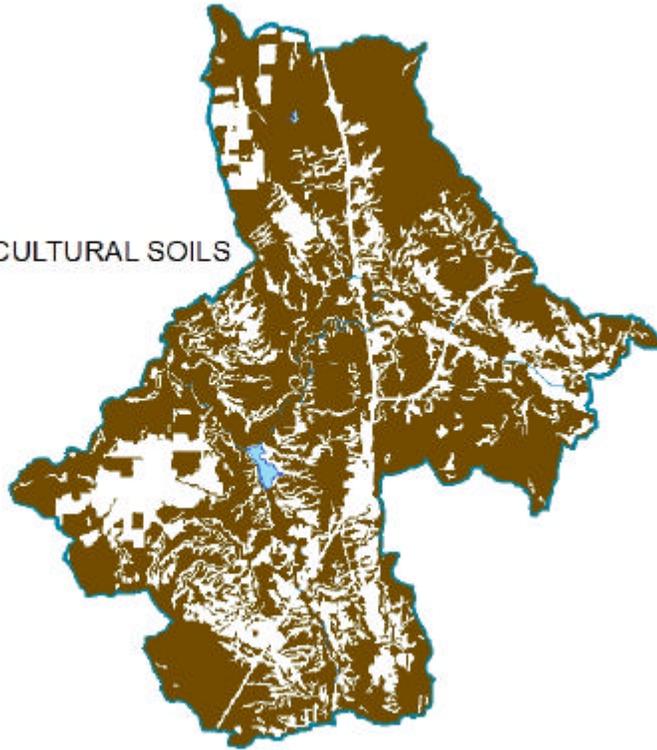
##### Presence of local utilities (May be a negative factor.)

Farmland that is within easy access to public utilities such as central sewer and water may be committed to development due to the higher value of the land and the community's need to recoup the capital investment in the infrastructure.

It should be noted that this layer will tend to be fluid due to the ability of farmers to opt into or out of the program as desires change.

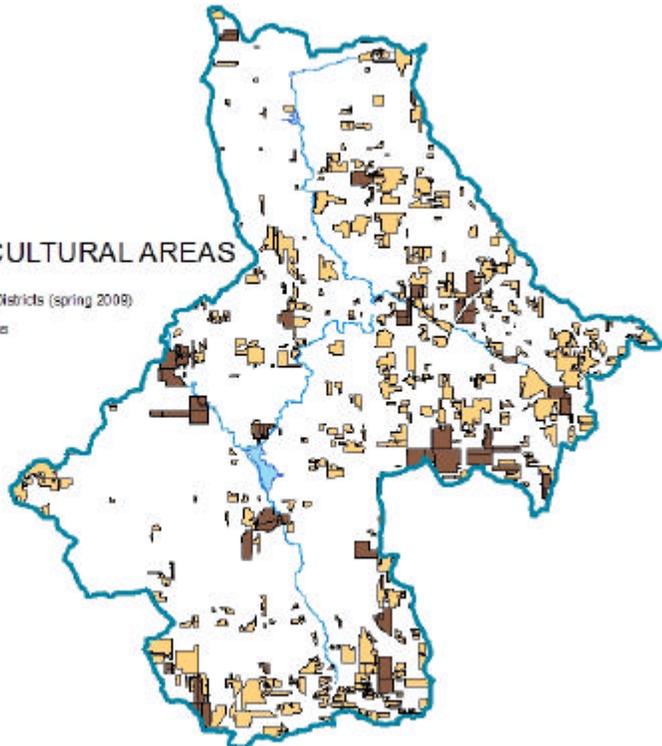


PRIORITY AGRICULTURAL SOILS



PRIORITY AGRICULTURAL AREAS

- Ag Districts (spring 2009)
- farms





## Rocky River Upper West Branch

### PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT AREAS

#### **What is it?**

A *Priority Development Area* is a locally designated area where growth and/or redevelopment is to be especially promoted in order to maximize development potential, efficiently utilize infrastructure, revitalize existing cities and towns, and contribute to the restoration of Lake Erie.

#### **Who would designate a PDA?**

- PDAs would be designated by local Watershed Planning Partnerships in consultation with local and state governments.
- PDAs would be designated as part of a Watershed Balanced Growth Plan.

#### **What is the purpose of designating PDAs?**

- Provide a process whereby Watershed Planning Partnerships and local governments may coordinate future development in a mutually efficient and complementary manner.
- Encourage a pattern of efficient and contiguous development.
- Encourage preservation and adaptive reuse of urban infrastructure.
- Protect agricultural and forest lands, scenic areas, and other natural resources, living and nonliving from suburban sprawl.
- Identify areas where urban services are being or will be provided.
- Encourage growth where infrastructure capacity is available or committed.
- Reduce the costs of providing urban services.
- Guide state policies and investments that influence the location of development.

#### **What types of areas could be designated as a PDA?**

- The determination of what areas are designated as PDAs is decided upon by the Watershed Planning Partnerships.
- Examples of types of areas include; existing urban areas, industrial parks, special development districts, ports, brownfields, areas with existing or planned infrastructure, and undeveloped areas designated for future growth and development.

#### **What factors could determine the designation of a PDA?**

- Areas that are already characterized by urban growth and have adequate existing urban services.
- Existing urban areas that can be redeveloped.
- Areas primarily characterized by urban growth that are or will be served adequately by a combination of existing and future urban services provided by public or private entities.
- Other areas where growth will be encouraged and that can be served by future urban services in an efficient manner.
- The co-location of activities that are complementary to quality of life, such as proximity to natural areas, the interconnection of recreational corridors and alternative transportation systems.



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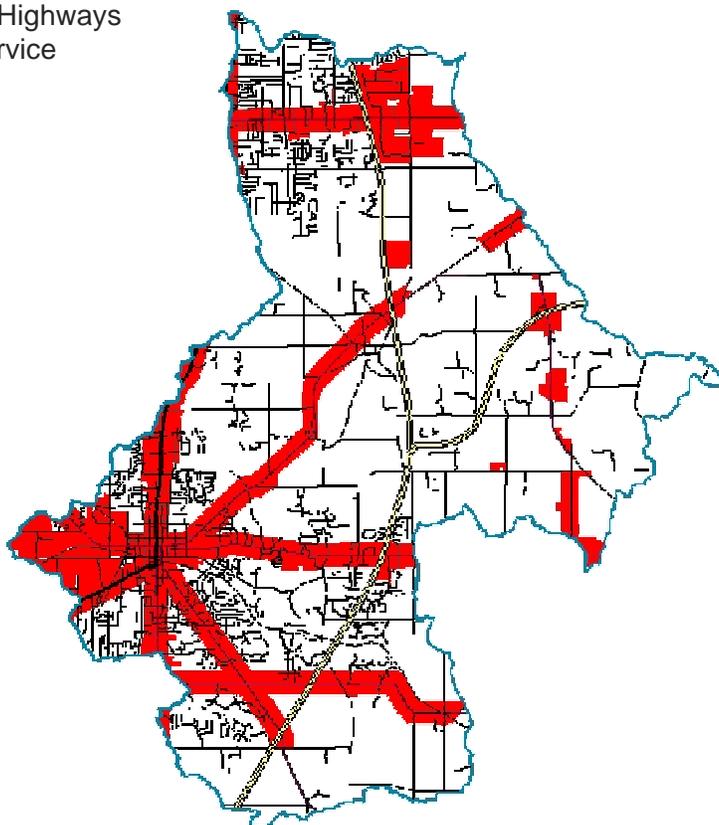


The criteria employed to create Priority Development Areas were selected to identify the sites where infrastructure important to the economic development and redevelopment in the Upper West Branch watershed exist or are likely to exist in the future as well as to reflect community desires. The Priority Development Areas promote the guiding principles of the Lake Erie Protection and Restoration Plan that address development. Among those guiding principles are:

- \* Maximize investment in existing core urban areas, transportation, and infrastructure networks to enhance the economic vitality of existing communities.
- \* Avoid development decisions that shift economic benefits or environmental burdens from one location to the other.
- \* Establish and maintain a safe, efficient, and accessible transportation system that integrates highway, rail, air, transit, water, and pedestrian networks to foster economic growth and personal travel.
- \* Encourage that all new development and redevelopment initiatives address the need to protect and preserve access to historic, cultural, and scenic resources.

To promote these guidelines, the Watershed Planning Partnership selected the following criteria to identify and designate PDAs:

1. Current Zoning
2. Enterprise Zones & Community Reinvestment Areas
3. Proximity to Major Highways
4. Sanitary Sewer Service



**Priority Development Areas**



# Rocky River Upper West Branch

## CRITERIA APPLIED

### RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT



The entire Pilot Project Area, where not in conflict with priority conservation or priority commercial/industrial development areas, currently developed areas, or jurisdictional desires, has high potential for residential development.

*Further defining factors:*

Density of development will depend on the availability of public sewer and water, local zoning and market forces.

### COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT



#### **Criterion 1- COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL ZONING**

*Rationale:*

Current commercial/industrial zoning was selected as a tool to identify PDAs because it

- reflects community desires as to where development should occur
- readily identifies areas where infrastructure is already in place
- provides a snapshot of where redevelopment could occur
- and streamlines the approval process for development projects

*Further defining factors:*

Zoning regulations for each of the jurisdictions is unique to that community. For permitted and conditionally-permitted land uses and lot requirements, the zoning code or resolution for the appropriate community should be verified.

#### **Criterion 2- ENTERPRISE ZONES AND COMMUNITY REINVESTMENT AREAS**

(in conjunction with Criterion 1 above)

*Rationale:*

Both Enterprise Zones and Community Reinvestment Areas exist within the watershed. These areas offer incentives in the way of tax abatement to promote commercial/industrial expansion, redevelopment and recruitment.



## Criterion 3- PROXIMITY TO MAJOR HIGHWAYS

(in conjunction with Criterion 4 below)

Areas within:

- 1000 ft of State routes
- 1000 ft of US routes

*Rationale:*

Commercial and industrial development adjacent to major arteries makes sense in that these highways are built to accommodate heavy traffic volumes, offer convenience to the local population as well as reasonable access to the interstate highway system.

*Further defining factor:*

Interstate highways were excluded because they have limited access. Areas where there are interchanges would be accommodated as they occur at intersections with State routes.

## Criterion 4 SANITARY SEWER SERVICE

(in conjunction with Criterion 2 below)

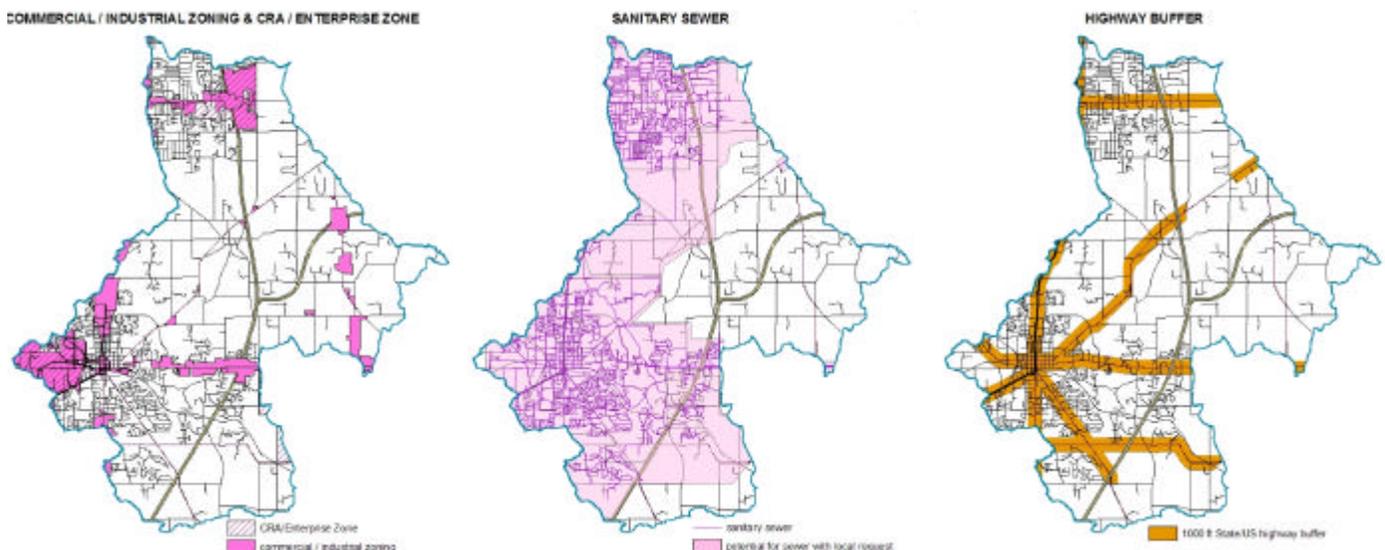
Areas with current sewer service or areas with the potential for sewer service upon local request.

*Rationale:*

Sanitary sewer service is an essential component to high density commercial and industrial development projects.

*Further defining factor:*

Although a sizeable portion of the pilot study area is projected to have future sewer service, actual expansion in some areas may be limited by construction expenses (i.e. digging through bedrock or the need to install pumping stations).





# Rocky River Upper West Branch

## CONFLICT AREAS

### PCA/PDA Overlap Areas

Numerous portions of the watershed meet the criteria for both priority conservation and priority development. The Planning Partnership decided that rather than designating these areas as one or the other, the watershed would be better served if they maintained a dual classification. In this way development and conservation could compliment rather than conflict with each other. Environmental conditions impacting stream quality could be addressed across the entire watershed while development could exist contiguous with adjacent PDA areas.

In applying state incentives to overlap areas, the first consideration would be given to protecting, preserving, or enhancing environmentally sensitive areas. Any project to promote conservation in these areas would be encouraged. Development would only be encouraged in these areas if appropriate BMPs were applied to protect the PCA component. These areas would be ideal for projects that would incorporate innovative features such as green roofs, pervious pavement and other low impact designs. Additionally, a high percentage of the site could be maintained in a natural state with the opportunity for amenities such as nature trails and the like.

Overlap areas are identified on the map with a distinct color. This color serves to alert developers that limitations exist for these areas.

### Local Preference Areas

Some areas meet the criteria for being identified as PDAs, but are not supported as PDAs by local jurisdictional comprehensive plans or desires. This situation arose in two communities; Hinckley and Medina Townships. In a compromise between the Watershed Planning Partnership and representatives of the two townships, it was agreed to identify these areas as a faded shade of the color used to identify other PDAs. At the suggestion of Media Township, these areas are to be termed *Local Preference Areas*. Additionally, the Medina Township representatives wanted the following statement to be included in the text to fully express the desires of their constituents:

“The Medina Township Trustees are designating the entire Route 3 corridor in Medina Township a *Local Preference Area*.”

A *Local Preference Area* is as an area which, "Based upon predetermined, universal criteria established by the Watershed Planning Partnership, might otherwise be considered to be a Priority Development Area (PDA), but in the Medina Township Route 3 corridor situation, is defined by the jurisdiction as a Priority Conservation Area (PCA) because it is a critically important resource area and an environmentally sensitive area that shall be protected according to Medina Township's comprehensive plan and zoning regulations.”

In the case of Hinckley, Township officials insisted that the Priority Land Use map clearly convey the Township's desire to maintain two areas (adjacent to sections of State Routes 3 and 606) as rural residential despite the fact that these sections meet criteria that would otherwise identify them as PDAs.

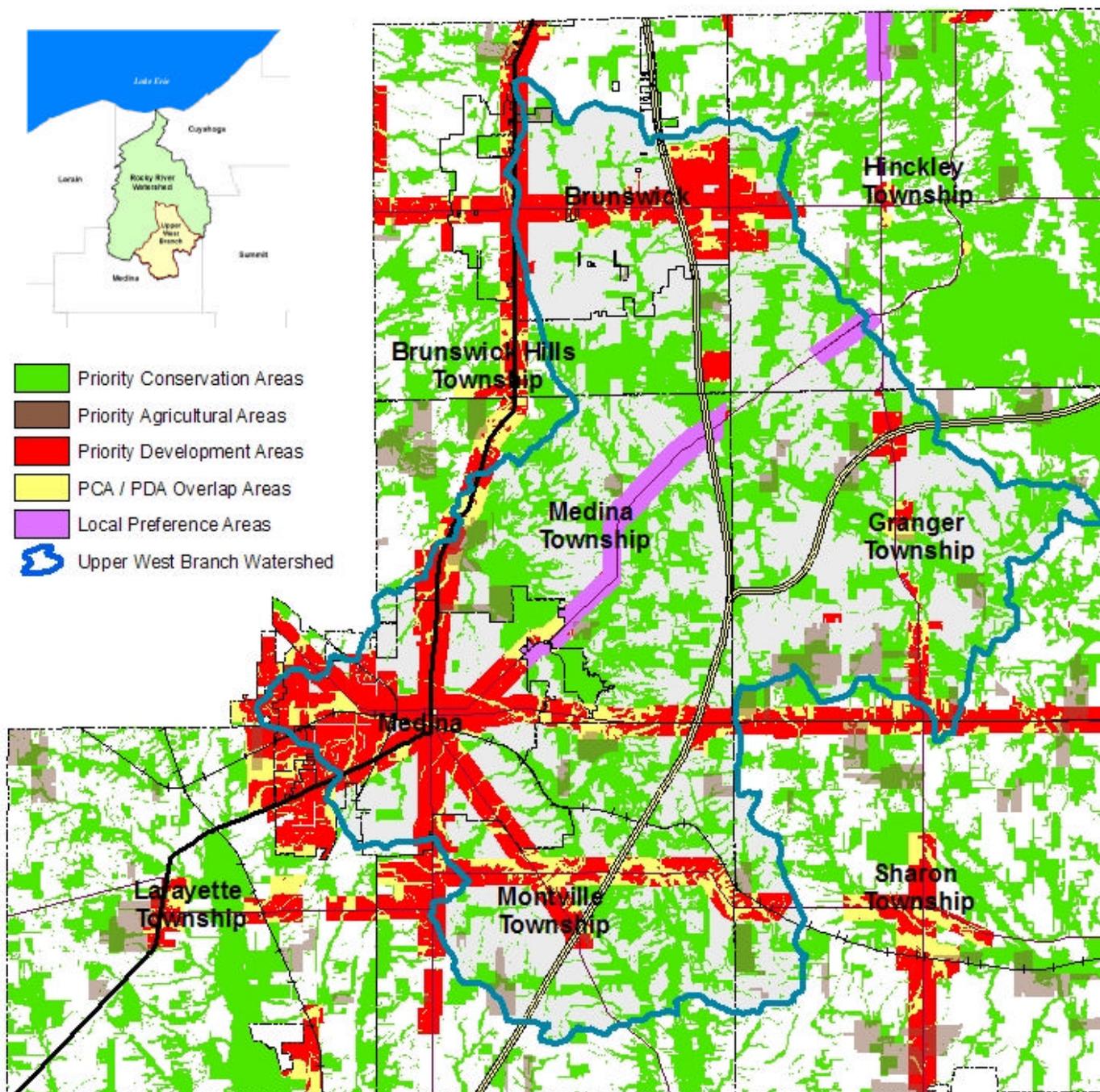
# Watershed Balanced Growth Plan

## PRIORITY LAND USE AREAS



While balanced growth plans are watershed based, the boundaries of political entities often do not fit completely into the confines of smaller watersheds as is the case in the communities that makeup the Upper West Branch. The Planning Partnership felt that it would be impractical, for purposes of planning, to employ a balanced growth strategy in only a portion of a jurisdiction. The Ohio Lake Erie Commission agreed to extend the benefits afforded by the Balanced Growth Initiative to the entirety of any jurisdiction with a footprint in the pilot watershed. (Subject to designation of PCAs and PDAs and achievement of State endorsement.)

### Upper West Branch of the Rocky River Watershed Priority Land Use Areas Extended to Political Boundaries

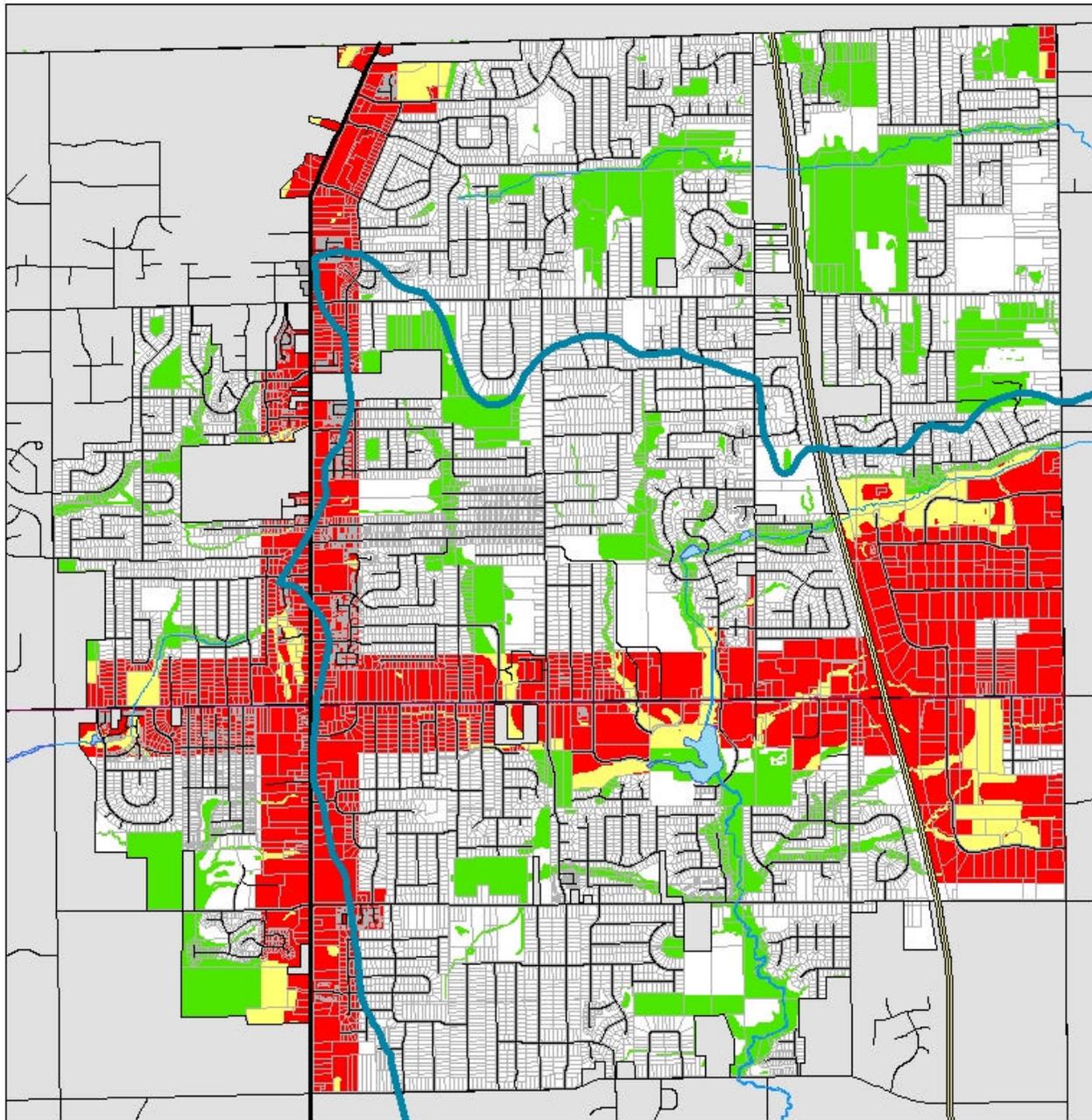




# Rocky River Upper West Branch

## LOCAL PRIORITY LAND USE AREAS

### City of Brunswick



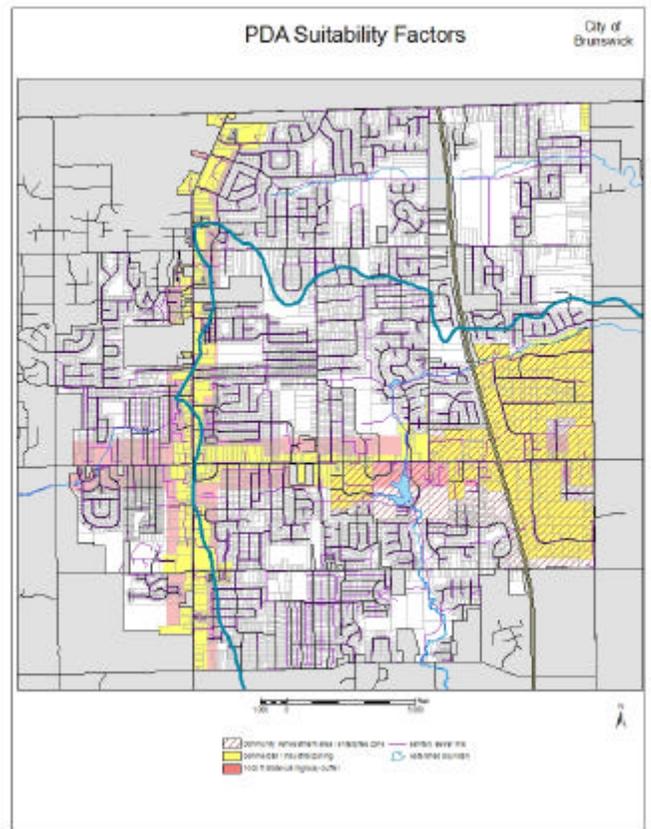
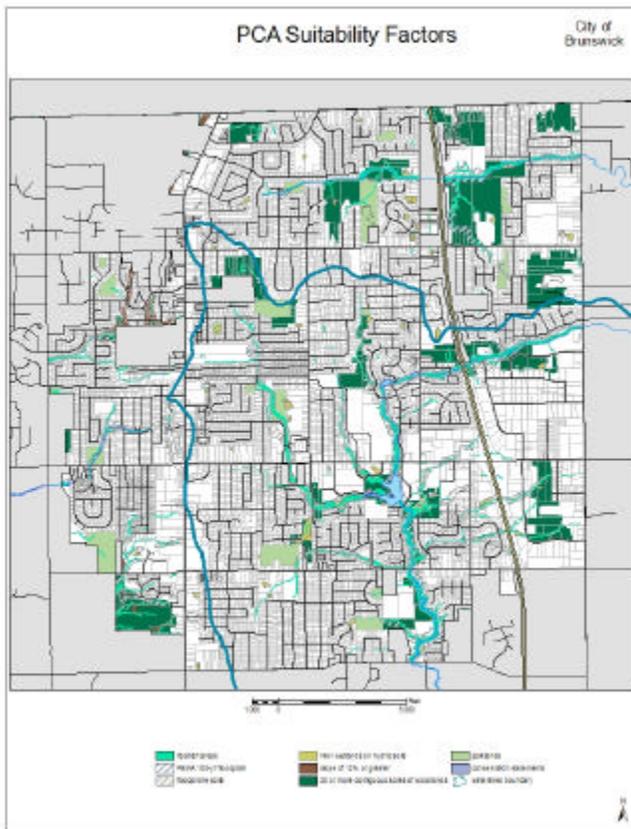
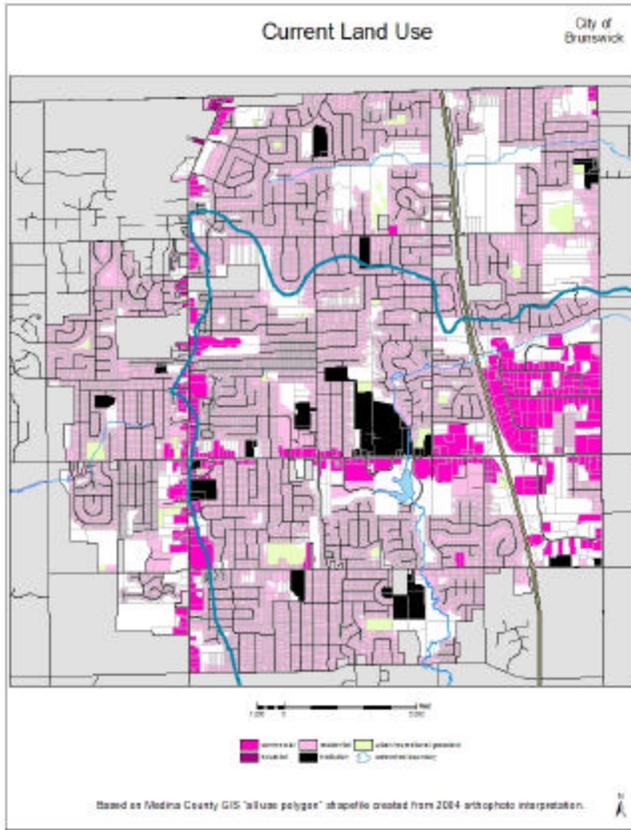
- |   |   |
|---|---|
|  Priority Agriculture Areas  |  Priority Development Areas                |
|  Priority Conservation Areas |  Priority Conservation/Development overlap |
|  watershed boundary          |   |

revised 1/27/09



# Watershed Balanced Growth Plan

## LOCAL SUITABILITY FACTORS

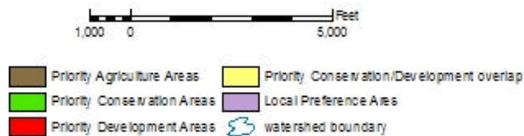
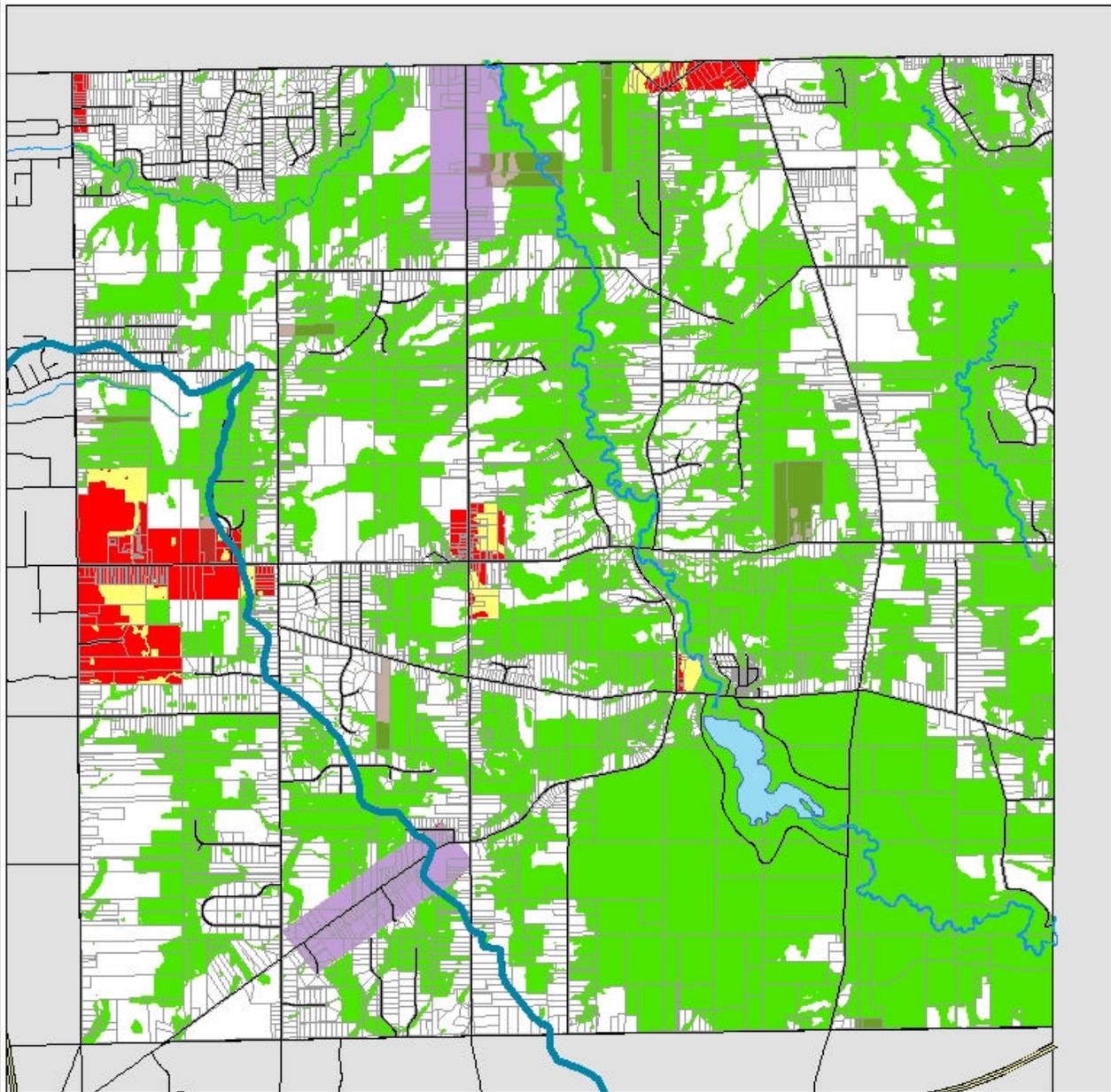




# Rocky River Upper West Branch

## LOCAL PRIORITY LAND USE AREAS

### Hinckley Township

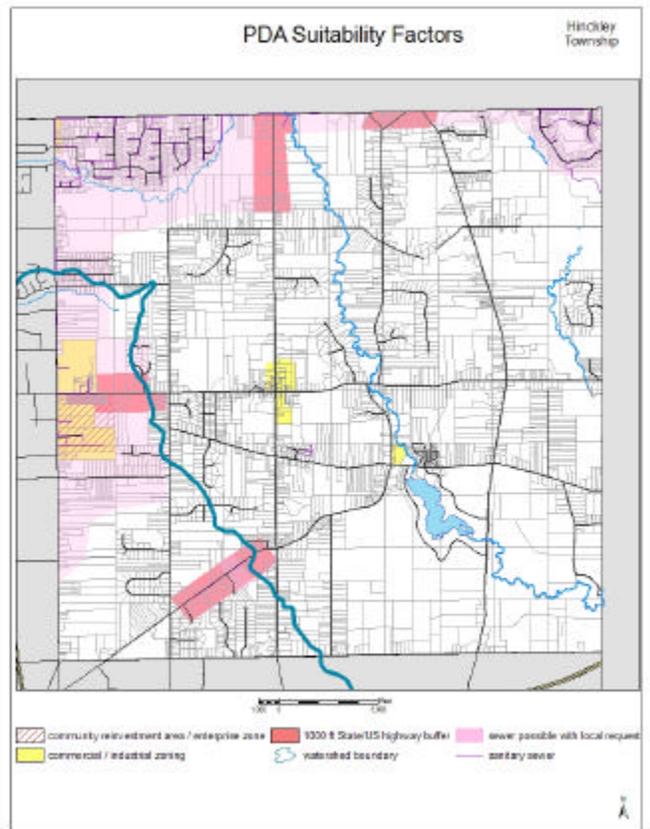
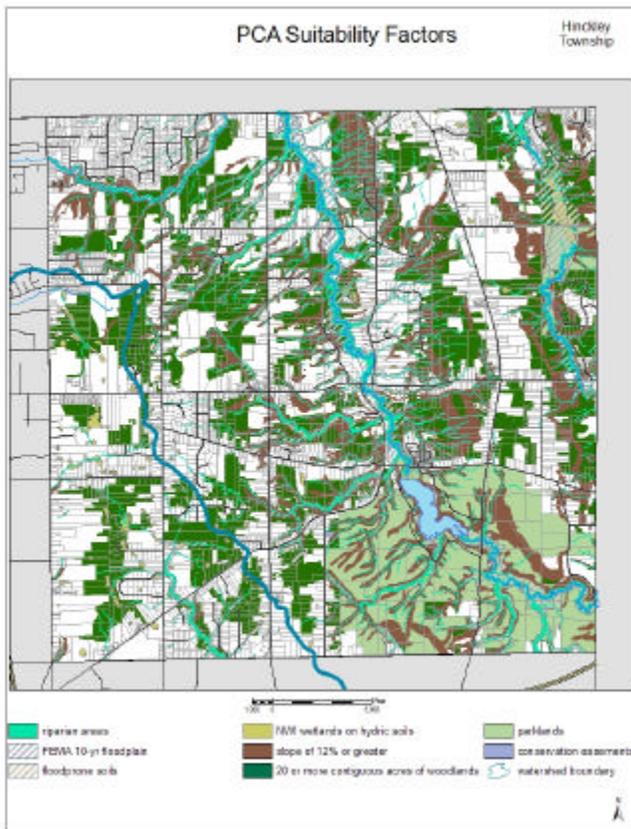
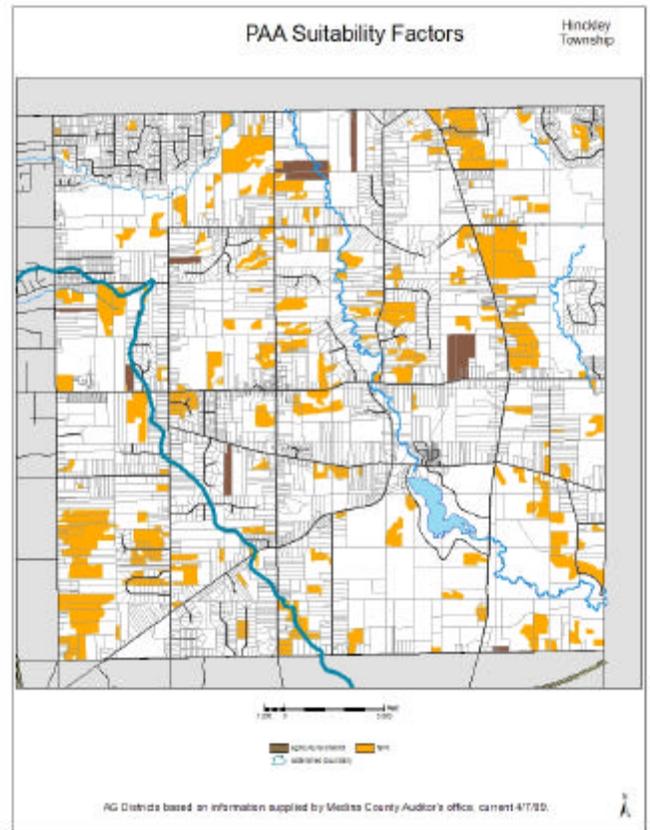
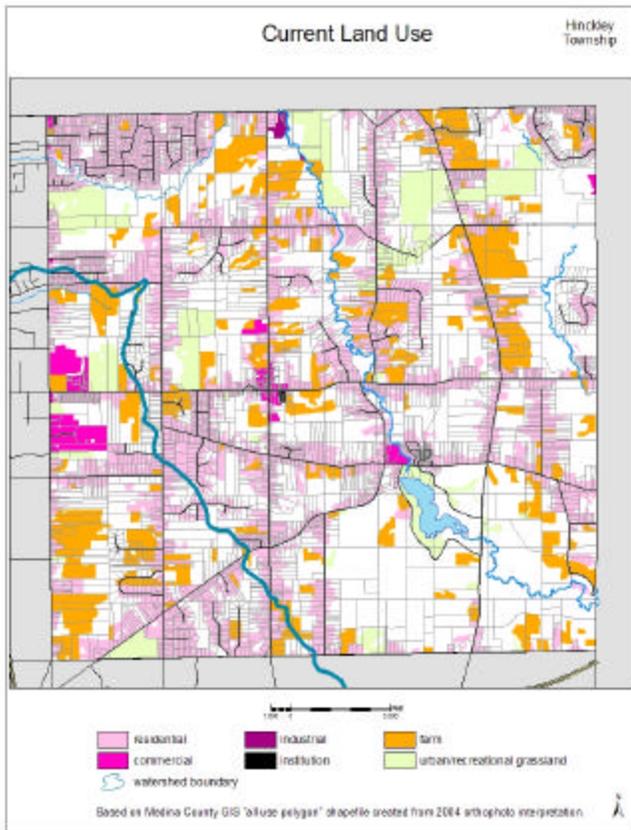


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# Watershed Balanced Growth Plan

## LOCAL SUITABILITY FACTORS

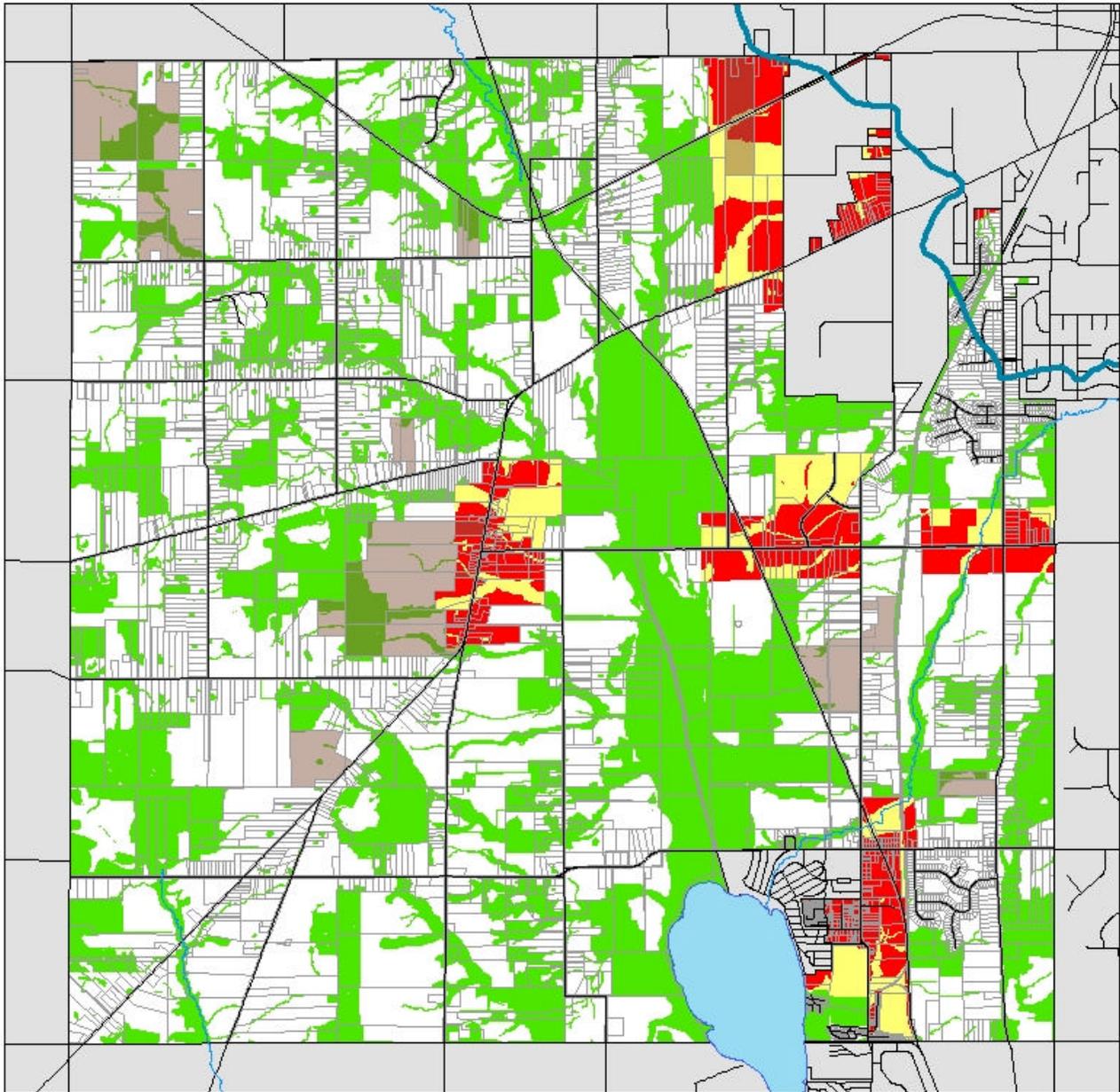




# Rocky River Upper West Branch

## LOCAL PRIORITY LAND USE AREAS

### Lafayette Township



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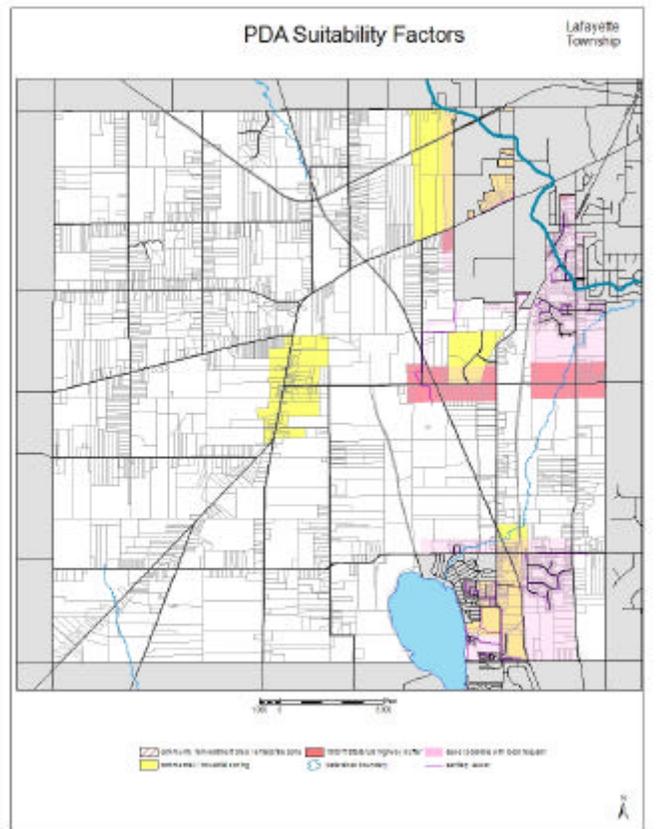
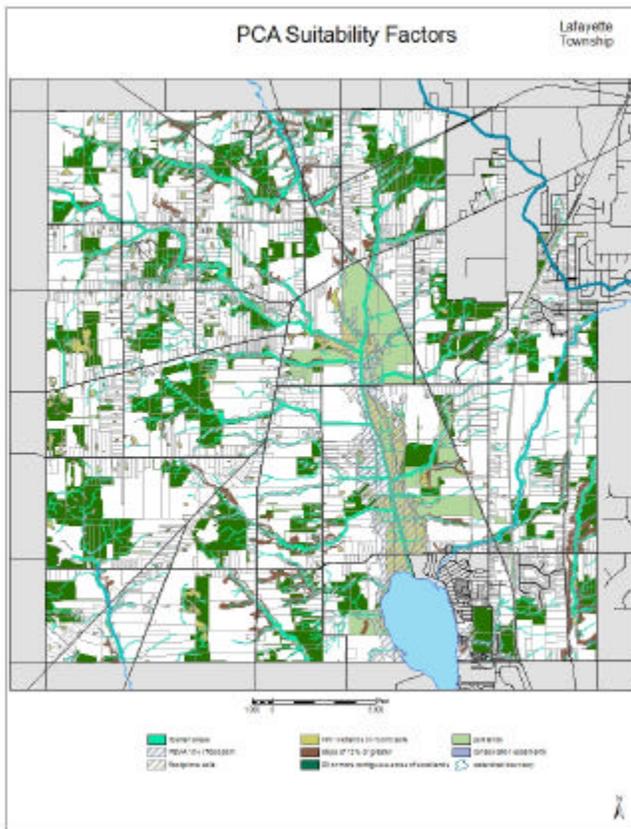
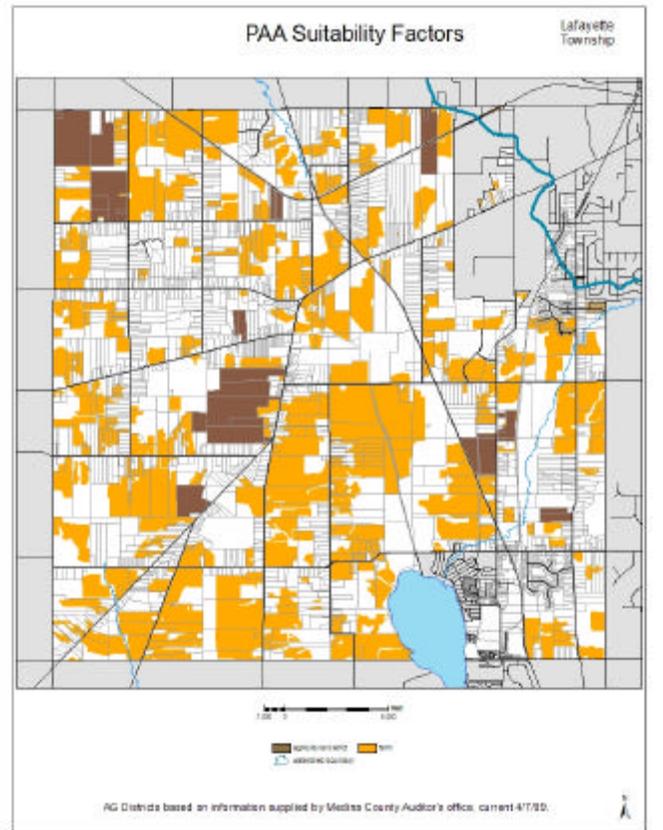
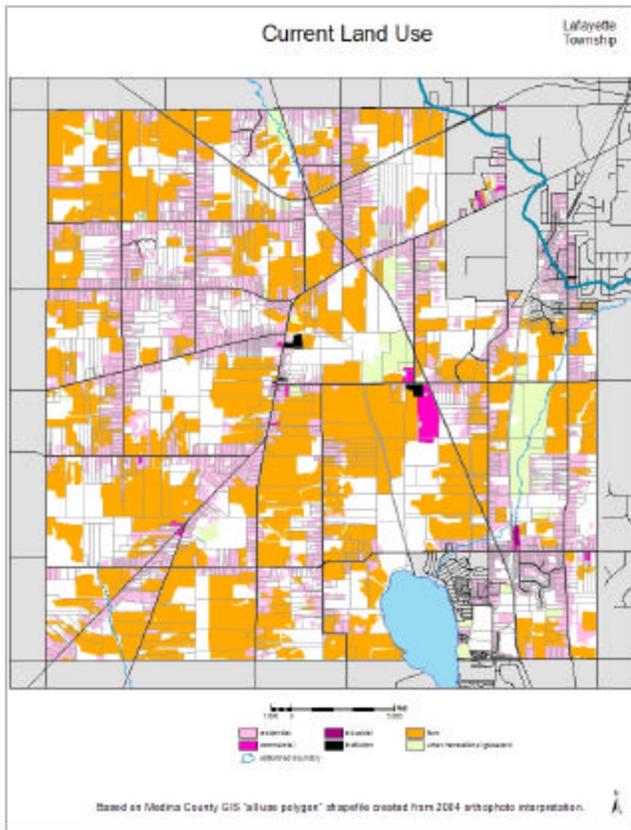
- Priority Agriculture Areas
- Priority Conservation Areas
- Priority Development Areas
- Priority Conservation/Development overlap
- watershed boundary

revised 5/4/09



# Watershed Balanced Growth Plan

## LOCAL SUITABILITY FACTORS

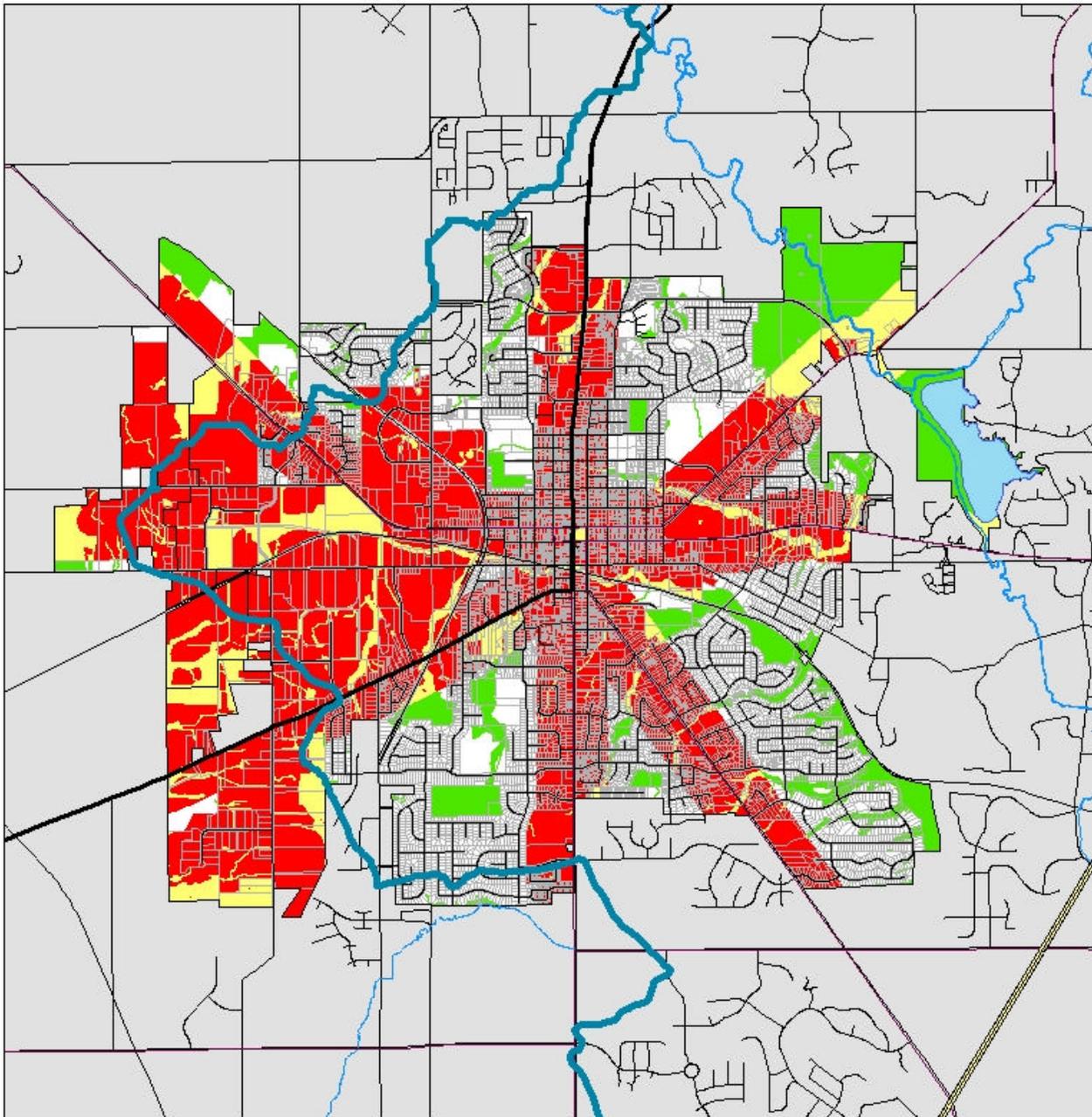




# Rocky River Upper West Branch

## LOCAL PRIORITY LAND USE AREAS

### City of Medina



- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Priority Agriculture Areas  | Priority Development Areas                |
| Priority Conservation Areas | Priority Conservation/Development overlap |
| watershed boundary          |   |

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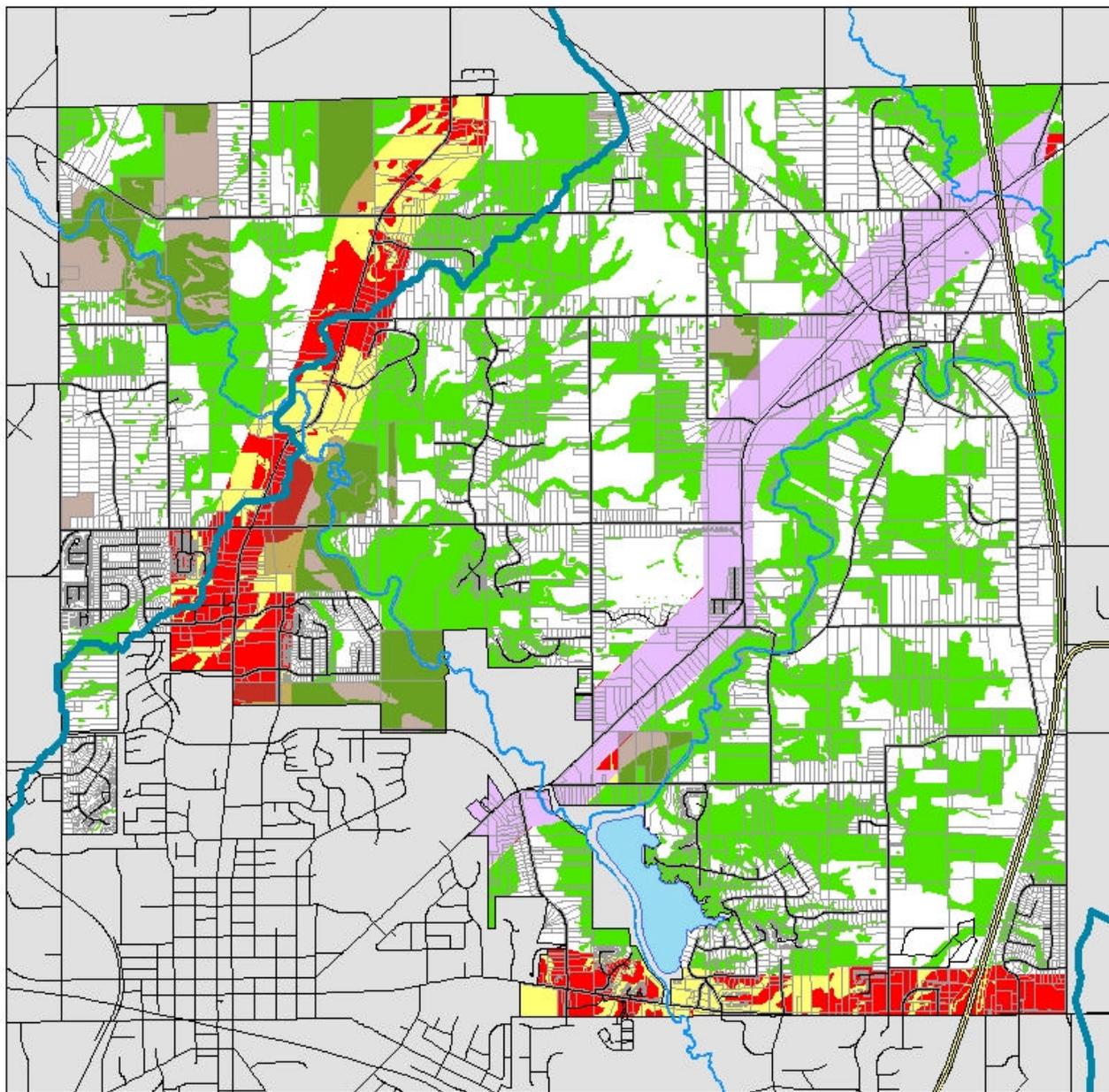




# Rocky River Upper West Branch

## LOCAL PRIORITY LAND USE AREAS

### Medina Township



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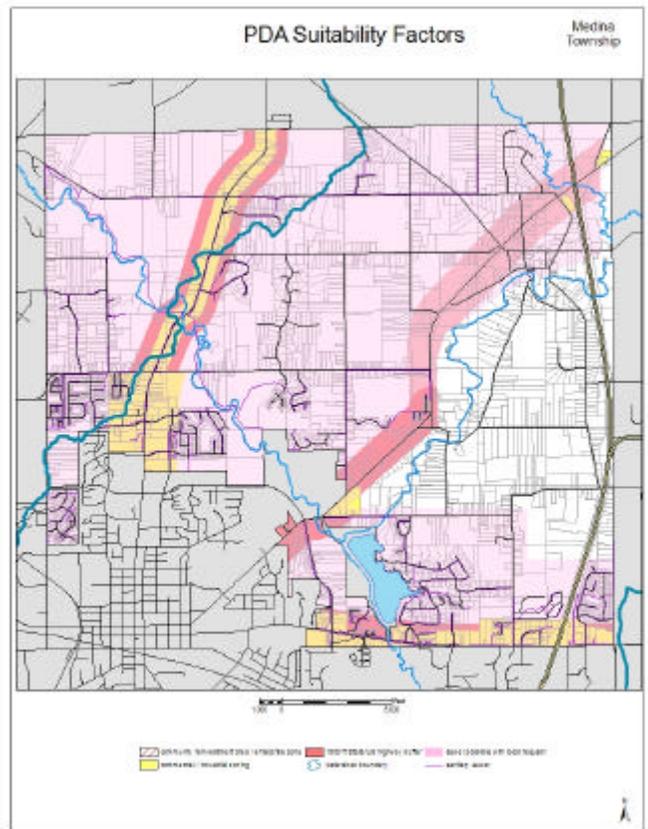
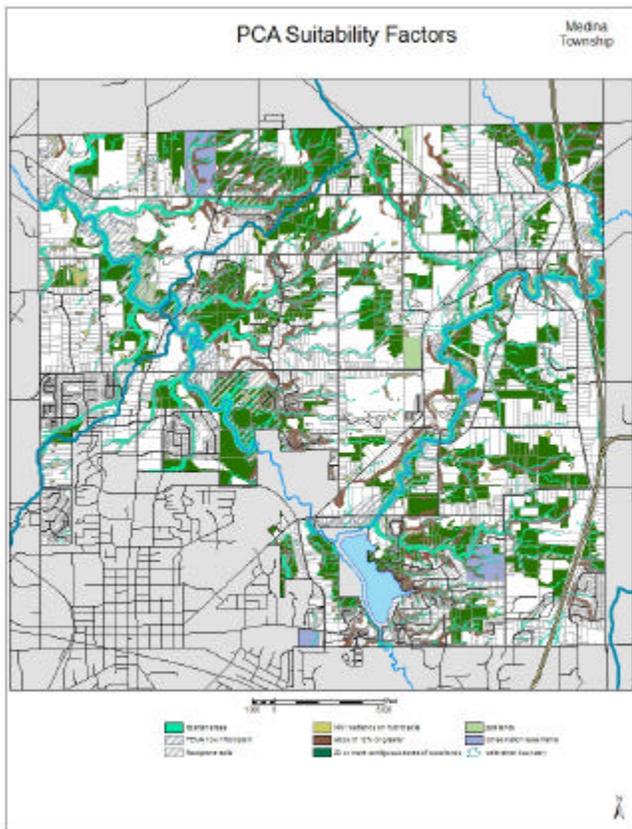
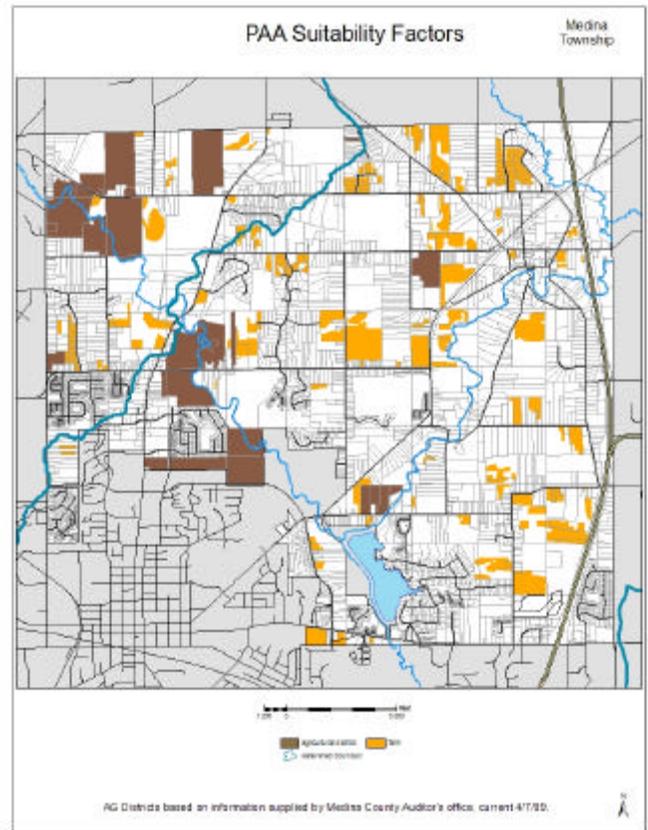
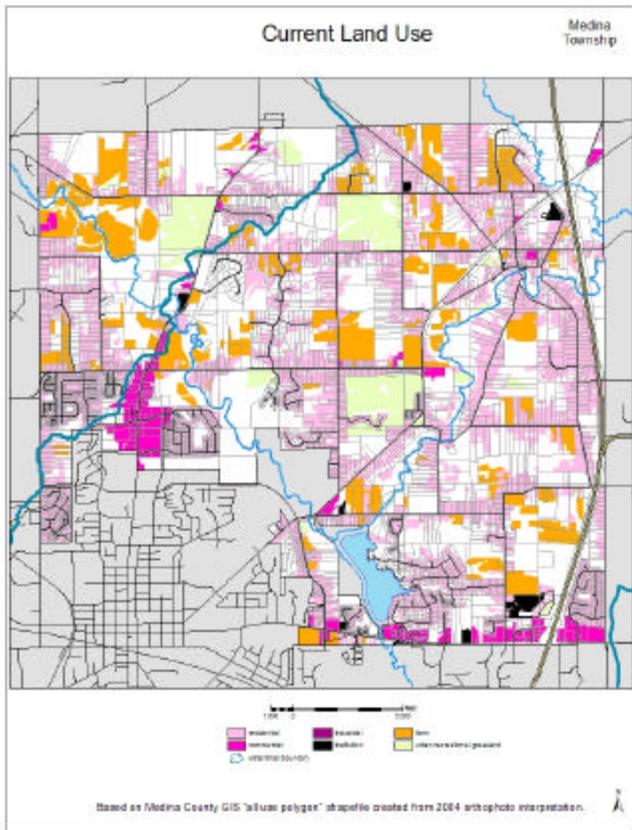
- Priority Agriculture Areas
- Priority Conservation/Development overlap
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- Local Preference Areas
- Priority Development Areas
- watershed boundary

revised 5/4/09



# Watershed Balanced Growth Plan

## LOCAL SUITABILITY FACTORS

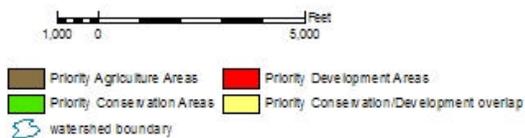
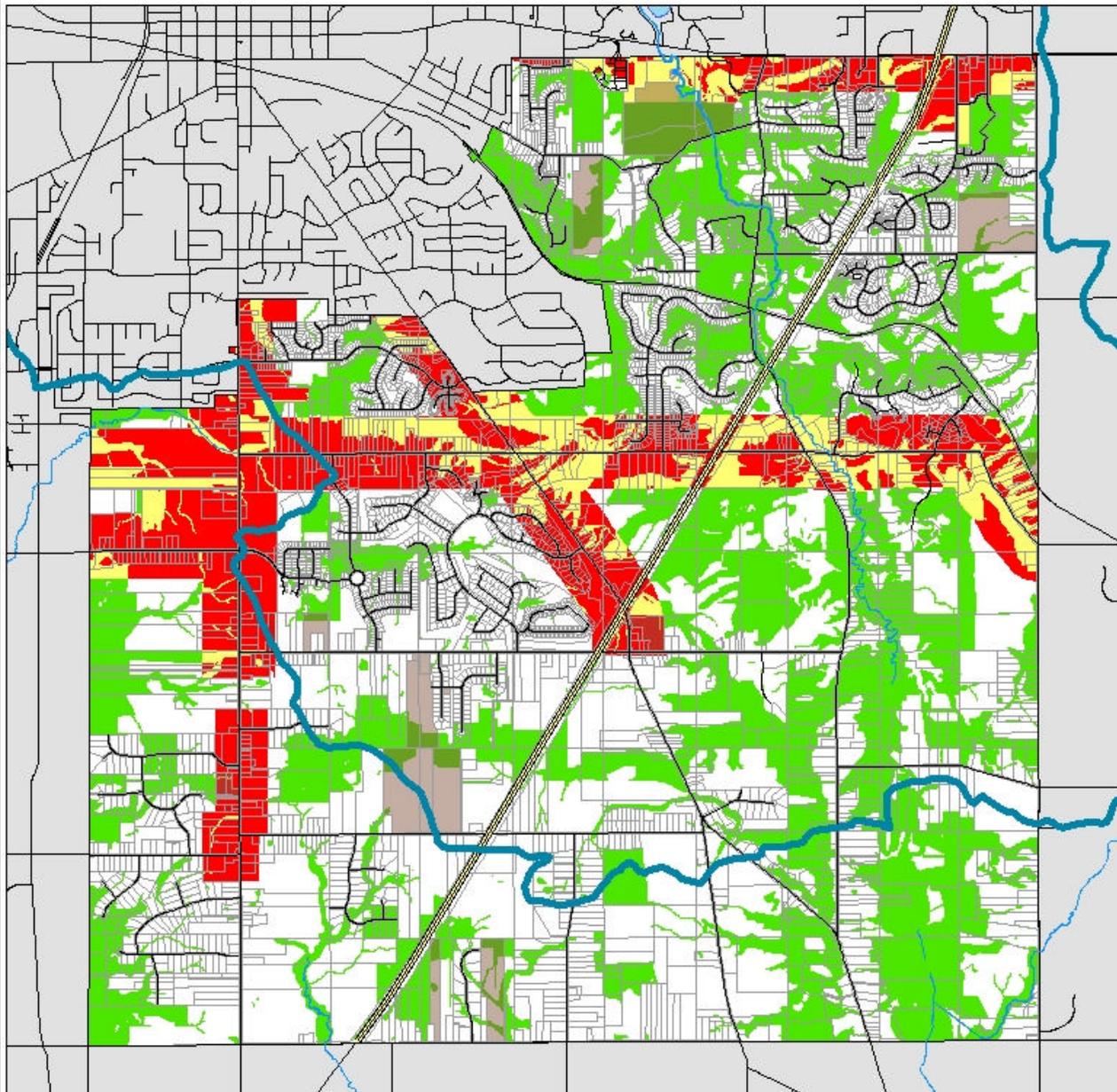




# Rocky River Upper West Branch

## LOCAL PRIORITY LAND USE AREAS

### Montville Township

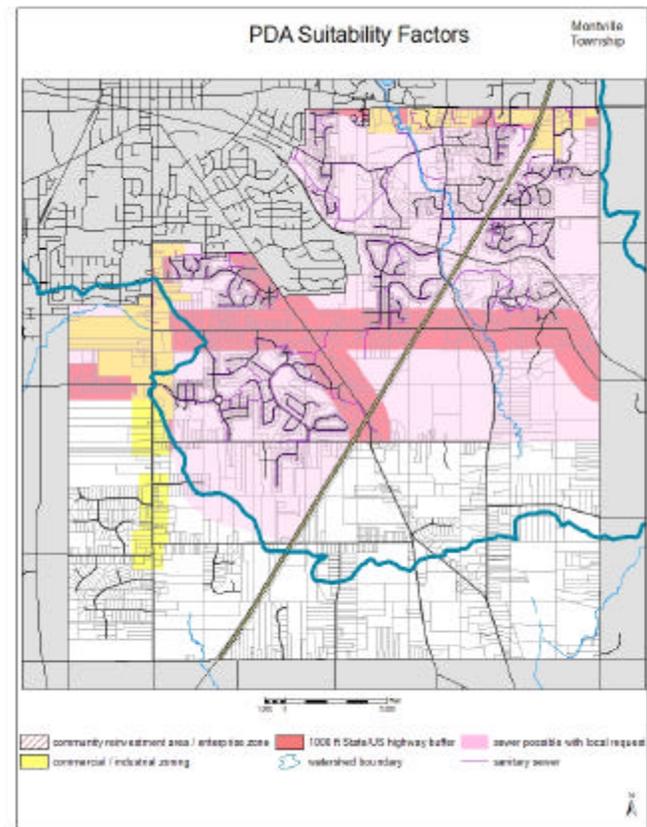
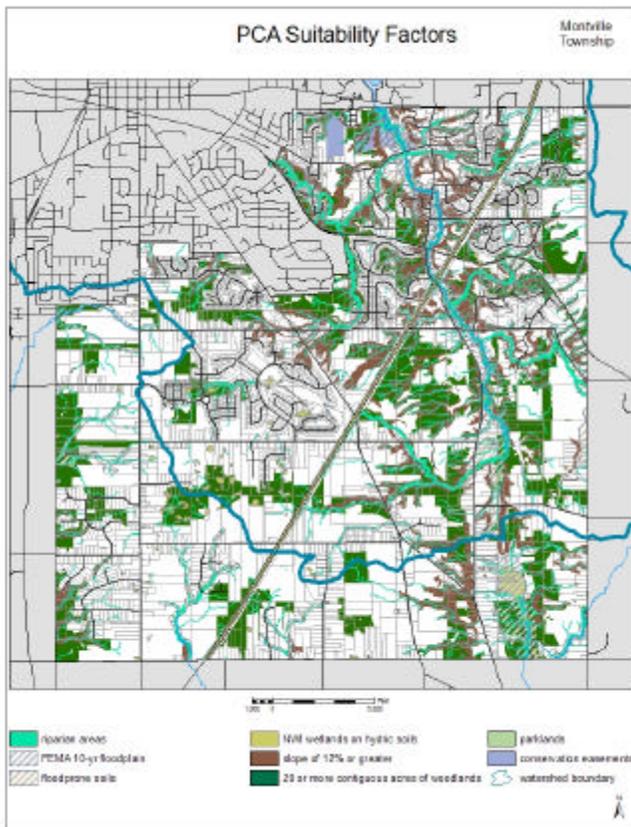
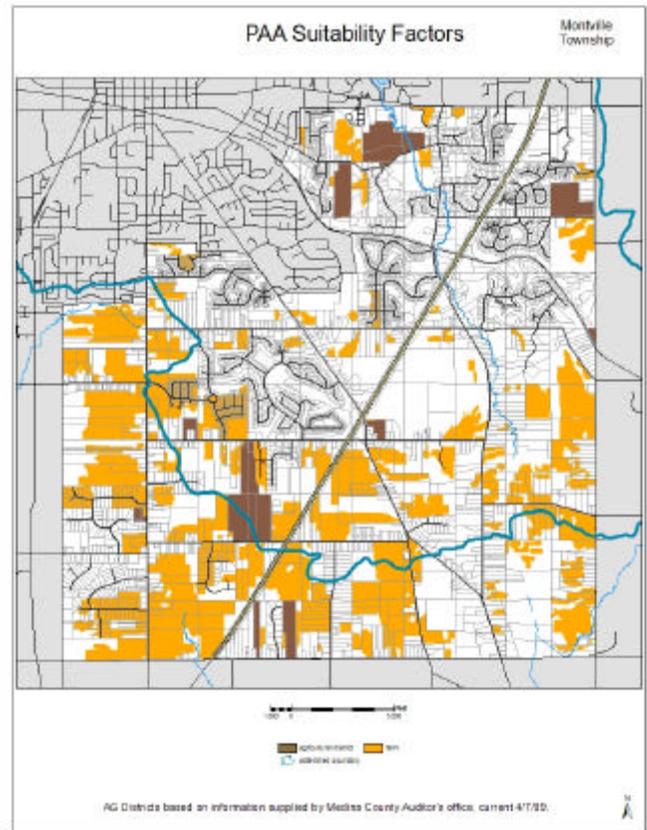
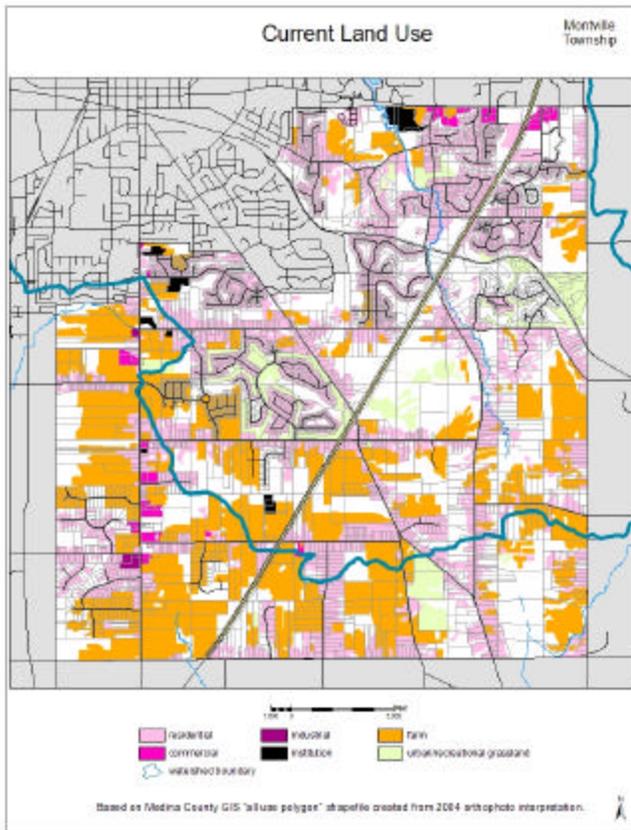


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# Watershed Balanced Growth Plan

## LOCAL SUITABILITY FACTORS

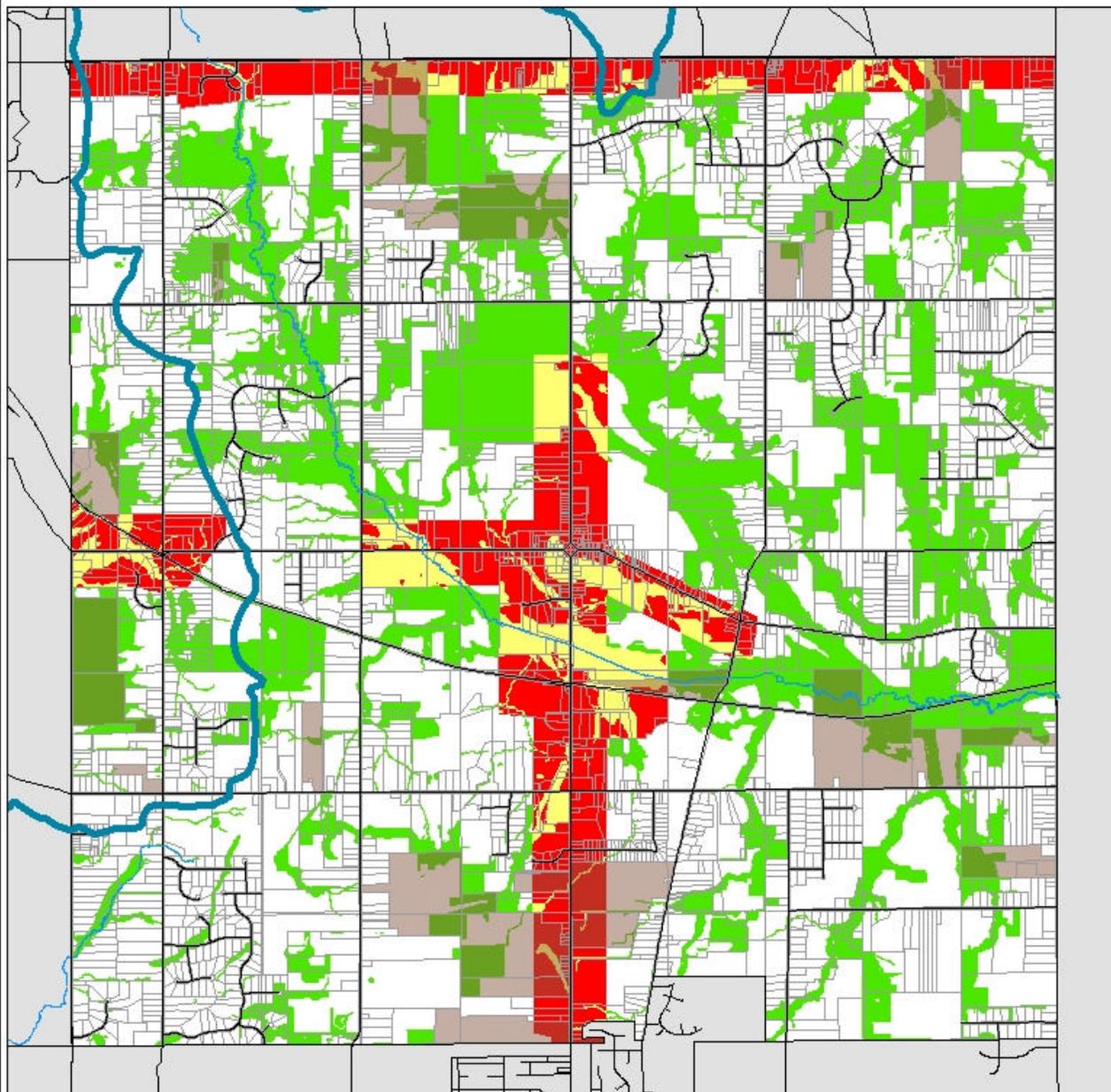




# Rocky River Upper West Branch

## LOCAL PRIORITY LAND USE AREAS

### Sharon Township



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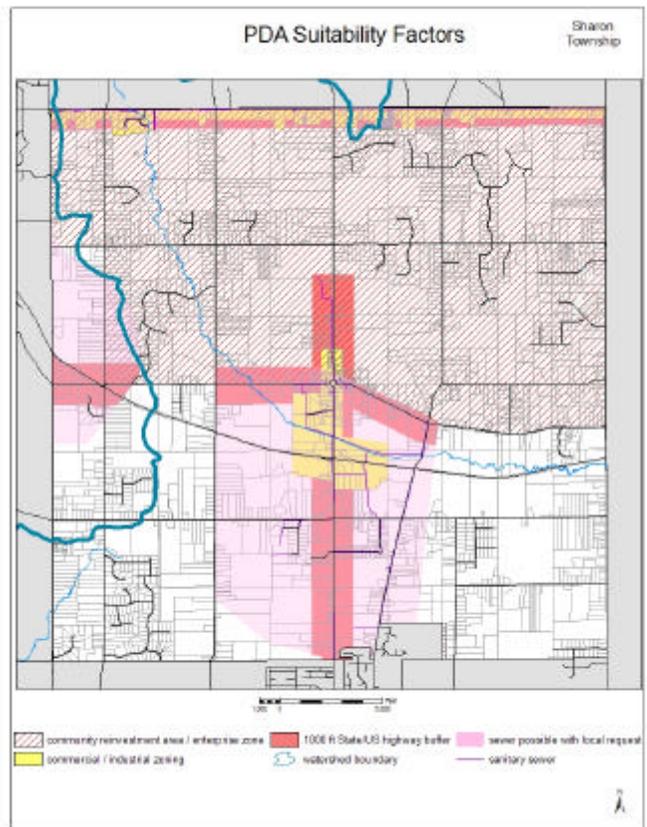
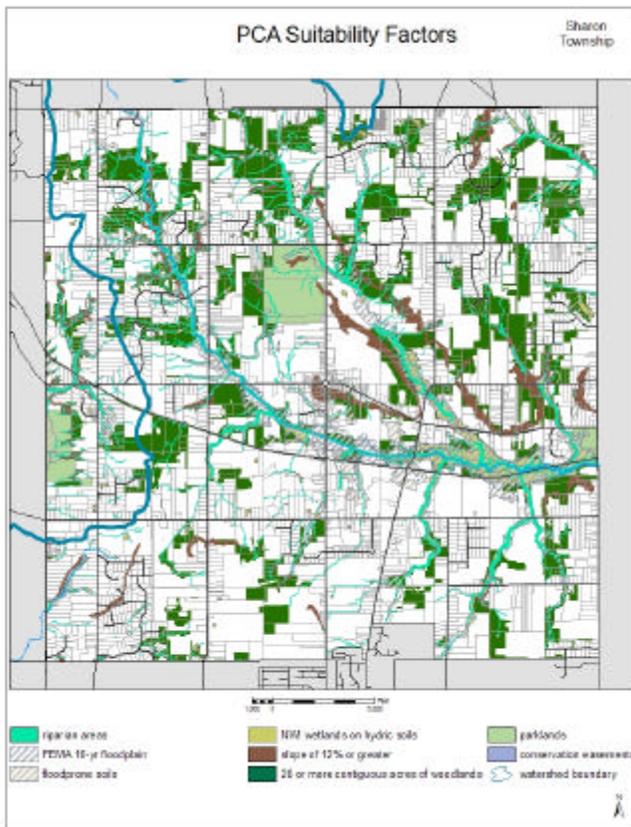
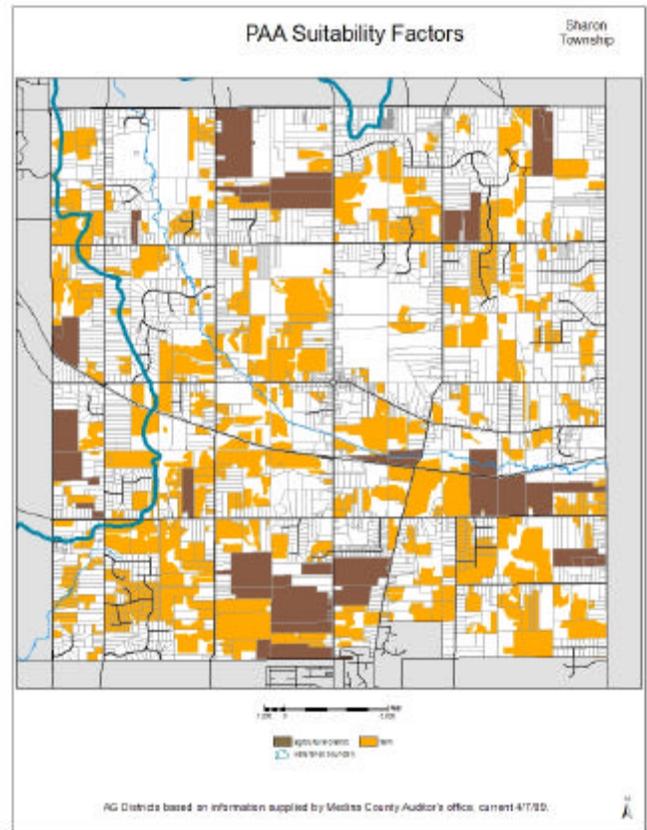
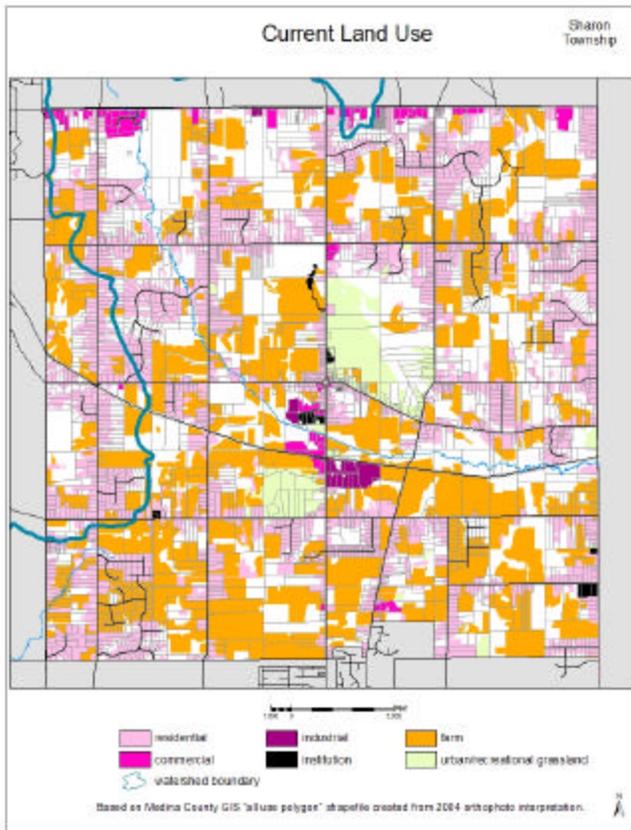
- Priority Agriculture Areas
- Priority Conservation Areas
- Priority Development Areas
- Priority Conservation/Development overlap
- watershed boundary

revised 5/4/09



# Watershed Balanced Growth Plan

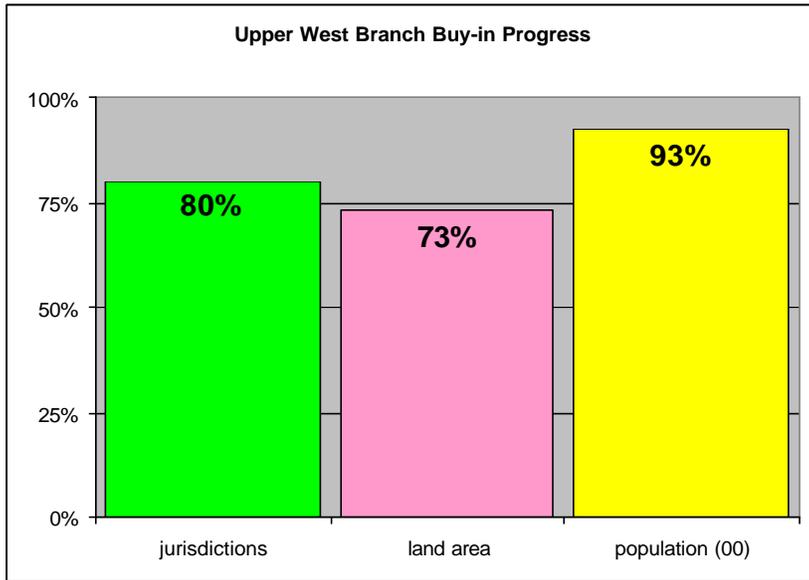
## LOCAL SUITABILITY FACTORS





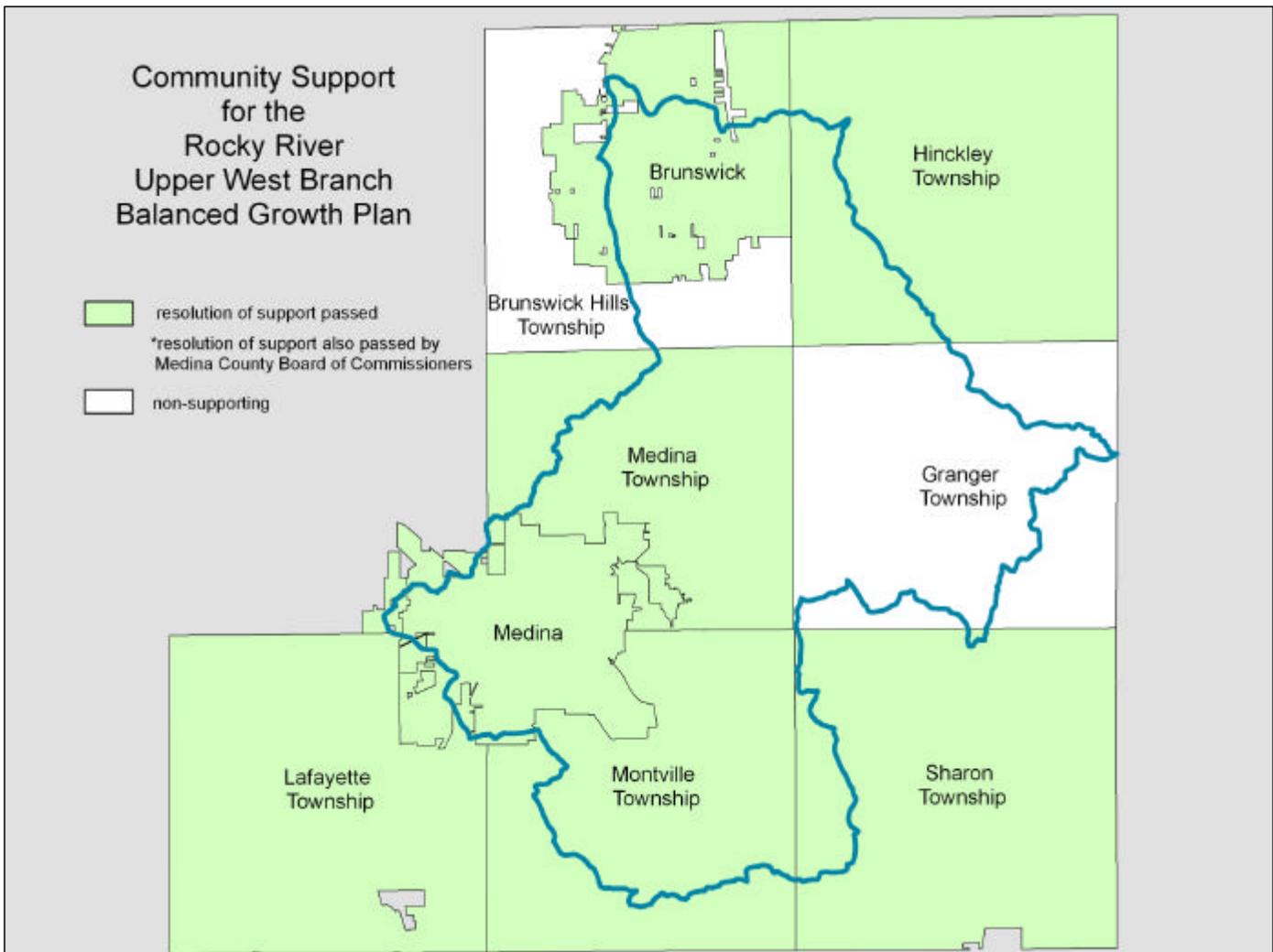
# Rocky River Upper West Branch

## JURISDICTIONAL SUPPORT



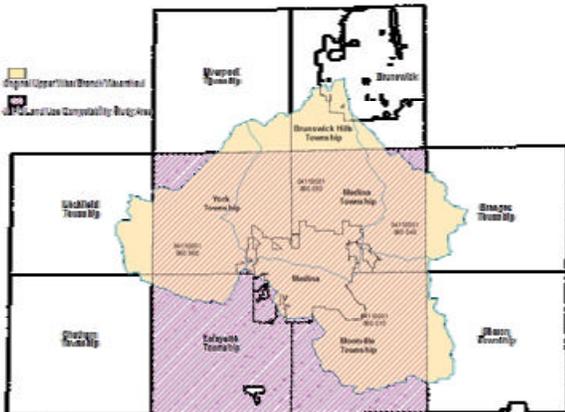
The current configuration of the Rocky River Upper West Branch watershed has the footprint of 9 local jurisdictions, 7 of which, along with the Medina County Board of Commissioners, have passed Resolutions of Support for the Balanced Growth Plan.

The 75% approval standard set for state endorsement is met for the percent of jurisdictions and percent of population, while the percent of land area falls just shy of the standard.



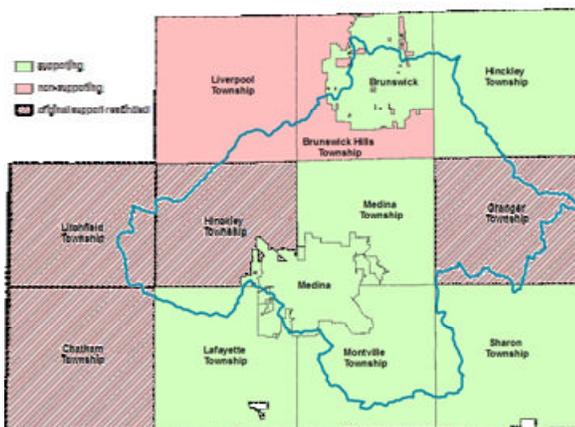
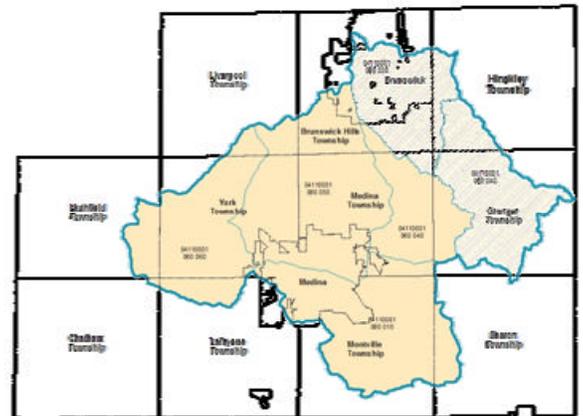
# Watershed Balanced Growth Plan

## WATERSHED EVOLUTION



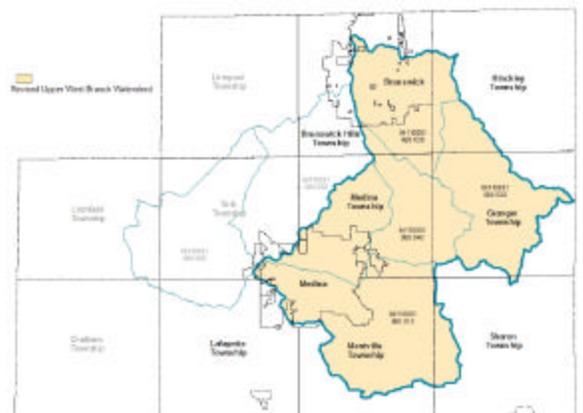
The original proposal for the Upper West Branch of the Rocky River Balanced Growth Initiative called for a watershed composed of 4 sub-watersheds, identified as 14-digit HUC 04110001 060- 010 (South Branch), -040 (North Branch), -050 (portion of West Branch), and -060 (Mallet Creek). This selection was also intended to coincide with the five communities that were the focus of the Joint Economic Planning Commission's 2004 *Land Use Compatibility Study*.

In October of 2007, the Watershed Planning Partnership opted to expand the original watershed by adding 14-digit HUC sub-watersheds 04110001 060- 020 (Granger Ditch) and -030 (Plum Creek). The rationale behind this move was to give more validity to the watershed concept by including all of the headwaters of the West Branch of the Rocky that drained to a common point at the confluence of Mallet Creek and the West Branch. This expansion also brought Hinckley Township into the program increasing the total number of jurisdictional units to 14.



By early 2008, 12 of the 14 jurisdictions had offered Resolutions of Support for the plan. In the months that followed however, 4 townships reversed position and rescinded their support. The result was a reduction in the jurisdictional approval rate from 86% to 57%. Despite vigorous efforts, the Partnership was unable to regain the lost support.

In order to achieve the 75% standard needed for State endorsement and preserve progress for supporting communities, the Partnership opted to reduce the size of the watershed by moving its mouth to a point 5½ miles upstream. This action eliminated sub-watershed 060 and a large portion of 050. While still representing a contiguous basin that would be in line with the Balanced Growth strategy of applying the program on a watershed basis, the new configuration effectively removes 4 of the 6 non-supporting townships while keeping in tact all 8 of the communities that support the plan.





# Rocky River Upper West Branch

## APPENDICES



## Appendix A

### State Support for Balanced Growth

- State Incentives for Local Governments
- State Program Inventory
- State Assistance Work Group
- Streamlining and Predictability Incentives
- Financial and Technical Special Incentives
- Best Local Land Use Practices

## Lake Erie Balanced Growth Program State Incentives for Local Governments

### What is the fundamental principle to guide state agencies under the Balanced Growth Program?

If local governments can agree on areas within a watershed where development is to be encouraged (PDAs) and areas where conservation activities are to be promoted (PCAs), the State of Ohio will support those decisions by aligning state programs to support those decisions, and conversely will not utilize state programs to violate those locally based decisions.

### What are the objectives of the state incentives package?

- Promote economically and environmentally sound watershed-based planning by local governments
- Provide incentives for development in PDAs
- Promote redevelopment in PDAs
- Provide incentives to promote conservation activities in PCAs

### What is included in the state incentive package for local governments?

- **State Program Inventory** – a list of all state programs and funding sources that could be used to support conservation in the PCAs and development or redevelopment in the PDAs.
- Opportunity to work with state agencies through the **State Assistance Work Group** – this group is charged with assisting the participating local governments in identifying and obtaining technical and financial resources that can be used to support PCAs and PDAs.
- **Streamlining and Predictability** – the State Assistance Work Group will develop methods to provide more advance predictability and streamlining for site related decisions in PCAs and PDAs.
- **Financial and Technical Special Incentives** – a list of these special incentives is provided in the Lake Erie Balanced Growth Strategy. The special incentives include specific grant and technical assistance programs that offer added consideration for projects that are within PCAs and PDAs.



For more information, please visit  
<http://lakeerie.ohio.gov> or call (419) 245-2514.

# Lake Erie Balanced Growth Program State Program Inventory

## How will the State Program Inventory help the Watershed Planning Partnerships?

This inventory is intended to be a resource for Watershed Planning Partnerships to help identify programs that will support conservation in Priority Conservation Areas and development or re-development in Priority Development Areas. These are existing state programs that have been identified as specifically impacting land use change decisions. The intent is that the state will consider the existence of PCAs and PDAs in the use of these programs to support land use planning and land use change that is beneficial to the local communities and to Lake Erie as outlined in the Lake Erie Protection and Restoration Plan.

## How is the State Program Inventory presented?

The State Program Inventory is a list of state programs compiled by whether or not they will support Priority Conservation Areas or Priority Development Areas. The list is structured by conservation or development effect, and then by three factors: infrastructure, direct site impact, and planning/technical assistance services. It is currently contained as an appendix in the Lake Erie Balanced Growth Strategy, which was approved in an updated version by the Ohio Lake Erie Commission on December 12, 2007.

## What is included in the State Program Inventory?

- **Conservation Programs** – there are a total of 45 state programs and funding sources in the Inventory that could be used to support conservation in the PCAs. This includes one program for Metro Park infrastructure, 30 that are site specific (for example, site acquisition or restoration), and 14 for services (such as forestry or watershed action plan technical assistance).
- **Development Programs** – there are a total of 109 state programs and funding sources in the Inventory that could be used to support development or redevelopment in the PDAs. This includes 33 programs for infrastructure (primarily transportation and water, through ODOT, OWDA, and OEPA), 65 that are site specific (for example, various community development programs), and 11 for services (such as minority business assistance or planning programs).

It should be noted that a few programs appear on both lists, since they could be used to support either conservation or development (for example, the ODNR – Division of Soil & Water Conservation, Streams and Storm Water Program serves a range of purposes).

## Lake Erie Balanced Growth Program State Assistance Work Group

### What is the role of the State Assistance Work Group?

One of the state incentives for local governments is the opportunity to work with state agencies through the State Assistance Work Group. The State Assistance Work Group will be charged with assisting the Balanced Growth Watershed Planning Partnerships (WPPs) and participating local governments in identifying technical and financial resources that can support Priority Conservation Areas (PCAs) and Priority Development Areas (PDAs). The state agencies will assist in identifying sources of support, providing agency guidance on utilizing support, and promoting awareness of the local WPP intentions within the agencies.

### Which state agencies are currently represented on the State Assistance Work Group?

The agencies represented include the six member agencies of the Ohio Lake Erie Commission (Ohio Departments of Natural Resources, Development, Transportation, Agriculture, and Health, and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency), along with the Ohio Water Development Authority. These members have prior knowledge and involvement in the Lake Erie Balanced Growth Program and will be considered the chartering members. Federal agencies that provide funding for development and conservation projects, other state agencies, and appropriate institutional partners will also be invited as deemed appropriate by the chartering member state agencies.

### What are the specific goals of the State Assistance Work Group?

- Help Watershed Planning Partnerships and local governments identify the most appropriate programs from the State Program Inventory that will support the PDA and PCA areas in the watershed.
- Provide the agencies with knowledge and familiarity with each Balanced Growth Watershed Plan and the local development and conservation goals.
- Evaluate the impact of proposed rule changes by the state agencies and provide comments that best incorporate balanced growth considerations as new rules or rule revisions are developed. Review funding priorities to provide suggestions on how they can be supportive of balanced growth.
- Identify any additional programmatic resources or policy changes that will help align state programs and policies with Balanced Growth Watershed Plans.
- Develop public information resources (fact sheets and websites) to assist Watershed Planning Partnerships.

## Lake Erie Balanced Growth Program Streamlining and Predictability Incentives

Why would streamlining and predictability of state regulatory programs be an incentive?

The unpredictability and long time frame typically needed to secure permits presents significant challenges to successful development practice. Extended permit review periods and conflicting information across regulatory agencies jeopardizes private developer ability to finance projects reasonably and bring projects to completion. Therefore, state efforts to streamline these processes and make them more predictable would serve as an incentive for private developers and local communities if they could anticipate streamlined, predictable decision making to encourage development or redevelopment in the PDAs and consistently greater levels of difficulty for equivalent projects in PCAs.

Which state regulations can be streamlined and made more predictable?

- A rules package for **stream mitigation, wetland mitigation, and 401 certification** is in the process of being developed by OEPA. Development of these rules should provide improvements to predictability and timeliness in the permitting process.
- Ohio EPA is in the process of developing and issuing **general NPDES permits** for a variety of discharges in order to increase efficiency and to help make it easier for various dischargers to obtain an NPDES permit.
- Programs that require **consistency** between federal, state or local actions and specifically adopted plans (e.g. Ohio Coastal Management Program and Section 208 Plans) are another method that Watershed Planning Partnerships and local governments can use to assure that state and federal actions are consistent with their Watershed Balanced Growth Plans. Programs that depend upon local recommendations (e.g. ODOT in MPO areas) will reference consistency with a locally adopted and state endorsed Watershed Balanced Growth Plan where such a plan has been completed.
- The State Assistance Work Group will look at **additional methods** to provide more advance predictability pertaining to site-related decisions. While these regulatory changes will generally be available statewide, they also will address the need for state regulatory streamlining and predictability in Balanced Growth Watersheds.

## Lake Erie Balanced Growth Program Financial and Technical Special Incentives

### What are Financial and Technical Special Incentives?

These include existing funding sources and programs that have incorporated Balanced Growth-specific considerations in their applications processes.

### How will the Financial and Technical Special Incentives be applied?

The Financial and Technical Special Incentives will be available in watersheds that have a state endorsed Balanced Growth Plan or in some cases are working on a plan. They are generally in the form of additional consideration (extra priority ranking, interest rate discounts, or special support) for funding applications that will implement specific activities in PDAs or PCAs. There are also special considerations for technical assistance from the state in local communities that are participating in Watershed Planning Partnerships who have completed an endorsed Balanced Growth Watershed Plan.

### What is included in the Financial and Technical Special Incentives?

The following table is a short summary of what is offered as special incentives in Balanced Growth Watersheds. Complete descriptions of the programs, including the sponsoring agency and contact information, are contained in the Lake Erie Balanced Growth Strategy dated December 12, 2007 and in the State Program Inventory appendix to the Strategy.

### Special Incentives Summary Table

Coastal Management Assistance Grant Program	Technical and/or financial support for Balanced Growth Plan or proposed Projects in PCAs
Watershed Coordinator Grant Program	Additional points to applicants that indicate they have or are working on a Balanced Growth Plan or proposed projects in PCAs.
Recycling Market Development Grant Program	
Scrap Tire Grant Program	
Land & Water Conservation Fund Program	
Nature Works Program	
Clean Ohio Trails Program	
Recreational Trails Program	
Streams & Storm Water Program	Prioritize staff resources toward watersheds with endorsed Watershed Balanced Growth Plans.
Ohio Lake Erie Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program	Set aside an undetermined amount of funds from each fiscal year allocation of \$1 million toward PCAs, for eligible practices within eligible agricultural land use.

Grassland Restoration Program	Provide additional points to applicants working on a Balanced Growth Plan or who propose priority projects in a focus area.
Wetland Restoration Program	
Ohio Agricultural Easement Donation Program	Align for protection of PCAs.
Agricultural Security Area	
Clean Ohio Agricultural Easement Purchase Program	Modify to support PCAs.
Water Pollution Control Loan Fund	Align to support PCAs and PDAs including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding for best water quality management practices for land development</li> <li>• Funding for municipal storm water best management practices</li> <li>• Funding for land and water conservation and restoration actions with water quality benefits.</li> </ul> Additional priority points for qualifying Balanced Growth projects
Fresh Water Loan Group	Additional ½ percent discount on loans.
Community Assistance Loan Program	
Lake Erie Protection Fund	Priority for projects to develop and implement Balanced Growth watershed plans.
National Flood Insurance Program Community Rating System	Discounts to flood insurance premium rates on flood insurance policies sold for properties within the community.
Dam Safety Linked Deposit Program	Below market rate loans for the removal of dams.
Dam Safety Loan Program	
Floodplain Mgmt. Technical Assistance	FEMA approved flood mitigation plans result in local community eligibility for a full array of pre-and post-disaster mitigation funds and assistance. Inclusion of strategies and actions to address flood risk and protect floodplain resources in Balanced Growth Plans can easily be incorporated into mitigation plans.
Dam Safety Technical Assistance	
Statewide Geologic Mapping	Technical geological information in support of Balanced Growth Plan.
Ohio Coastal Erosion Area Remapping	
Side-scan Sonar Substrate Mapping	
166 Direct Loan Program	Strongly encouraged for businesses planning to expand within Priority Development Areas (PDAs).
Rapid Outreach Grant	
Roadwork Development (629) Account	
Ohio Job Creation Tax Credit	Tax credit would be strongly encouraged for businesses planning to expand within Priority Development Areas (PDAs).

208 Planning (aka State Water Quality Management Plan)	Provides a mechanism to strengthen local land use and sewer infrastructure planning; OEPA review of wastewater discharge permits and sewer PTIs in PDAs. "Specific prescriptions" regarding wastewater treatment and disposal options would be binding upon OEPA in permitting actions; permits must be consistent with approved 208 plans.
Clean Water Act Section 319 Implementation Grants Program	OEPA provides additional scoring/credit for projects that are proposed in watersheds where a Balanced Growth Plan has been completed.
Water Supply Revolving Account	Utilize priority point system for potential loan projects to recognize consistency with balanced growth plans.
Small City Program Transportation Enhancements	Participating in and meeting the Balanced Growth Initiative will be criteria that goes into selection of projects.

# Lake Erie Balanced Growth Program

## Best Local Land Use Practices

The *Best Local Land Use Practices* document prepared by the Balanced Growth Task Force contains three model regulations and eleven guidance documents that can be used by local governments to guide the location of development and improve its design. The document also contains recommendations to consider as local governments prepare comprehensive plans. The Task Force strongly recommends that local governments use comprehensive planning as a basis for land-use decision-making.

These model regulations have been thoroughly researched, drawing from actual practices in Ohio and other states. They constitute some of the very best land-use practices available for protecting and restoring sensitive areas *and* contributing to economic growth.

These model regulations are intended as guides. To be effective, new regulations must *only* be adopted after consideration and modification to reflect specific local conditions and after a careful review by the local government's legal advisor and others prior to adoption and use. This ensures that they will suit the individual needs of the community.

*The three model regulations include:*

### Surface Water Management

This model includes stormwater management, erosion and sediment control, and protection of riparian areas, floodplains, and wetlands. Local measures to reduce stormwater impacts and protect aquatic areas can show a direct saving of community dollars from managing stormwater and floods.



### Coastal Protection

The recommendations given stated that at a minimum, local governments should adopt provisions to assure all applicable state and federal permits are obtained prior to zoning and subdivision approvals. A floodplain management program should be in place. The Task Force recommended that the Lake Erie commission work with local governments to develop further recommendations to guide the design of modifications to waterfront property.

### Meadow Protection

This model can be used in communities where mowing regulations exist. It is intended to ensure that natural meadow areas are permitted and protected. These areas are not necessarily unkempt; they actually serve important natural functions to reduce runoff, improve its quality, and provide habitat.



The eleven Guidance Documents in *Best Local Land Use Practices* contain recommended best practices and links to regulations that have been successfully used by other communities. The subject areas included in this are:

Conservation Development allows for homes normally permitted on a parcel to be grouped together on smaller lots, while a sizeable proportion of the property is set aside as common open space.

Compact Development plans help conserve open space and natural resources while enhancing a particular development.

Source Water Protection addresses what local governments can do to protect their drinking water from point and nonpoint source pollution.

Agricultural Land Protection focuses on strategies that local governments can take to conserve valuable farm land, while protecting surface and groundwater resources.

Woodland Protection deals with practices that communities can use to conserve woodlots critical for environmental quality and community character.

Scenic Protection of views and other open space can increase recreational opportunities and improve economic growth.

Historic Preservation can increase property values as much as 20% and often lead to reinvestment in the community.

Protection of Steep Slopes from development can reduce uncontrolled stormwater flows, dangerous erosion, and flooding.

Transfer of Development Rights would allow rural landowners to maintain their properties, redirecting growth to more compact development areas, possibly in more urbanized areas.

Brownfields Redevelopment addresses strategies that would encourage the cleanup and reuse of brownfield sites, and polluted areas of land.

Access Management regulations give local government a means for minimizing traffic congestion and travel delay while enhancing safety.

The *Best Local Land Use Practices* document is available at Ohio Lake Erie Commission web site. For a paper copy, please contact the Commission office.



Ohio Lake Erie Commission  
One Maritime Plaza, 4th Floor  
Toledo, OH 43604  
Phone: (419) 245-2514  
Web: lakeerie.ohio.gov  
E-mail: lakeeriecommission@ameritech.net





# Appendix B

## Local Organizational Support

Medina County Commissioners  
Medina County Planning Commission  
Rocky River Watershed Council  
Medina County Soil & Water Conservation District  
Medina County Park District  
Western Reserve Land Conservancy  
Medina County Economic Development Corporation  
Medina County Home Builders Association



# Medina County Commissioners

Patricia G. Geissman  
Stephen D. Hambley  
Sharon A. Ray

County Administration Building  
144 North Broadway  
Medina, Ohio 44256

(330) 722-9208  
(330) 225-7100  
(330) 336-6657

Fax: (330) 722-9206

June 3, 2008

Mr. Ed Hammett  
Executive Director  
Ohio Lake Erie Commission  
1 Maritime Plaza  
Toledo, Ohio 43604

Dear Mr. Hammett:

We are writing to express our strong support of the West Branch Rocky River Watershed Balanced Growth Initiative. The Board of Medina County Commissioners urges you to consider providing state endorsement for this collaborative effort of communities concerned with the health of our watershed and Lake Erie.

Medina County is the fastest growing county in Northern Ohio and we could certainly use assistance with the challenges of balancing conservation with development and preserving our many environmental assets. The proposed projects in the Rocky River Watershed would go a long way to assist in that effort.

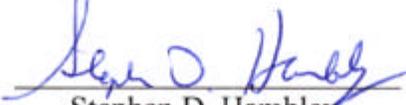
We believe that protecting Lake Erie and its watershed is an obligation shared by all governments, businesses, and residents. Eleven of 13 jurisdictions within the watershed have provided resolutions of support because they feel as we do, that a clean, healthy Lake Erie is imperative!

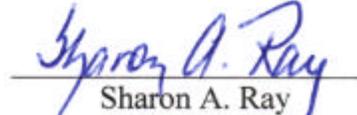
This Board wanted to make you aware of our support and goals and ask you to honor our request for State of Ohio Endorsement. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Board of Medina County Commissioners

  
Patricia G. Geissman

  
Stephen D. Hambley

  
Sharon A. Ray



June 5, 2008

Mr. Ed Hammett  
Executive Director  
Ohio Lake Erie Commission  
1 Maritime Plaza  
Toledo, OH 43604

RE: Medina County Balanced Growth Initiative

Dear Mr. VanLoon:

On June 4, 2008, the Medina County Planning Commission voted unanimously to support the West Branch Rocky River Watershed Balanced Growth Initiative which was comprised of representatives from the Rocky River Watershed Council, Medina County Soil & Water Conservation District, Western Reserve Land Conservancy and Medina County Agencies, such as the Park District, Department of Planning, Economic Development Corporation, Home Builders Association, Farm Bureau, Sanitary Engineer, Highway Engineer, Emergency Management Agency, and NOACA. This diversified group reached consensus on Priority Conservation Areas, Priority Development Areas and Priority Agricultural Areas and has received letters of support from 11 of the 13 jurisdictions within the watershed. It is the understanding of the Medina County Planning Commission that the Ohio Lake Erie Commission will be reviewing the Balanced Growth Initiative document for State of Ohio Endorsement late this summer. The Medina County Planning Commission, however, is not showing support for any Riparian setback areas for any community. The option of Riparian restrictions is the choice of the individual community, which is normally adopted through their zoning amendment process.

Sincerely yours,

Colene Conley, President  
Medina County Planning Commission  
124 W. Washington Street, Suite B4  
Medina, Ohio 44256





# Rocky River Watershed Council

6100 West Canal Rd., Valley View, OH 44125 — [www.MyRockyRiver.org](http://www.MyRockyRiver.org)

---

June 5, 2008

Ed Hammet  
Executive Director  
Ohio Lake Erie Commission  
1 Maritime Plaza  
Toledo, OH 43604

**RE: Support for the endorsement of the *Upper West Branch Rocky River Balanced Growth Plan***

Mr. Hammet,

The mission of the Rocky River Watershed Council (RRWC) is to protect, restore and perpetuate a healthy watershed through public education, watershed planning, communication and cooperation among stakeholders.

Both the collaborative process utilized in the development of the Upper West Branch Rocky River Balanced Growth Plan and the recommendations of the plan concerning Priority Development Areas, Priority Conservation Areas, and Priority Agricultural Areas support the RRWC mission. Additionally, the adoption of these recommendations by the participating communities will lead to improved water quality, not only in the project area, but also in the downstream portions of the watershed and ultimately in Lake Erie itself.

Furthermore, the Rocky River Watershed Action Plan (fully endorsed by OEPA and ODNR in 2006) states that the "maintenance of functioning riparian corridors along the streams of the Rocky River is the single most important step that can be taken to maintain water quality in the stream and minimize problems from future development." By identifying the riparian corridor of all streams in the project area as Priority Conservation Areas, the Upper West Branch Rocky River Balanced Growth Plan strongly and directly aligns with the goals set forth in the Watershed Action Plan.

Therefore, the Rocky River Watershed Council strongly supports and encourages the endorsement of the Upper West Branch Rocky River Balanced Growth Plan by the State of Ohio.

Sincerely,

---

Jared Bartley  
Rocky River Watershed Coordinator





# The Medina County Soil & Water Conservation District

6090 Wedgewood Road  
Medina, Ohio 44256

(Phone) 330-722-2628 Ext. 3      (Fax) 330-725-5829  
[www.medinaswcd.org](http://www.medinaswcd.org)

---

Ed Hammett  
Executive Director  
Ohio Lake Erie Commission  
One Maritime Plaza  
Toledo, Ohio 43604

May 20, 2008

RE: Balanced Growth Initiative

Dear Commission Members:

The Medina Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors are in support of the Upper Rocky River West Branch Balanced Growth Initiative as established by the local Watershed Planning Partnership.

We understand the criteria for Priority Conservation Areas, Priority Development Areas and Priority Agricultural Areas has been formally supported by resolutions from eleven jurisdictions out of the total thirteen.

We understand this is in compliance with the 75% requirements required by the Ohio Lake Erie Commission.

We understand that endorsement by the Ohio Lake Erie Commission and the State of Ohio should follow next and that financial incentives would become available to the watershed jurisdictions in the future.

We understand the voluntary nature in which this Initiative was created and supported locally by the jurisdictions.

Respectfully submitted by,

James R. Kamps  
Chairman, Board of Supervisors  
Medina SWCD





# MEDINA COUNTY PARK DISTRICT

6364 Deerview Lane • Medina, Ohio 44256

E-Mail: [parks@medinacountyparks.com](mailto:parks@medinacountyparks.com)

Website: [www.medinacountyparks.com](http://www.medinacountyparks.com)

**Board of Park  
Commissioners:**

Travis G. Crane  
Ian S. Haberman  
Dennis B. Neate

**Director:**

Thomas K. James

**Telephone:**

330-722-9364

330-336-6657  
Ext. 9364

330-225-7100  
Ext. 9364

**Fax:**

330-722-9366

June 2, 2008

Mr. Ed Hammett, Executive Director  
Ohio Lake Erie Commission  
1 Maritime Plaza  
Toledo, Ohio 43604

Dear Mr Hammett:

The Medina County Park District Board of Commissioners wish to express its support for the Rocky River Upper West Branch Balance Growth Initiative. The park board granted the authority to me to communicate this support at its May 22,2008 meeting.

The park district has been an active participant in this important planning process since the project began. A sensible approach to land development in the Lake Erie watershed will bring benefits to both current and future residents of our northern Ohio communities. By providing incentives to award development in appropriate areas, there will be an important tool to assist our communities with planning for the future.

We urge your support of the Rocky River Upper West Branc Balanced Growth Initiative and look forward to putting our planning efforts into action.

Sincerely,

Thomas K. James  
Director







*Western Reserve Land Conservancy*  
OUR LAND. OUR LEGACY.

June 16, 2008

Mr. Ed Hammett  
Executive Director  
Ohio Lake Erie Commission  
1 Maritime Plaza  
Toledo, OH 43604

RE: Rocky River Balanced Growth Initiative

Dear Mr. Hammett,

Western Reserve Land Conservancy fully supports the Upper West Branch Rocky River Watershed Balanced Growth Initiative. As a partner in this collaborative effort, the Land Conservancy believes the designation of all streams in the project area as Primary Conservation Areas aligns with our mission of conserving riparian corridors and protecting water quality. The designation of Primary Agricultural Areas within the watershed will provide another tool in the effort to preserve farmland in our region.

The development of the Balanced Growth Initiative has been effectively led by the Medina County Soil and Water District. They brought together a diverse group of business, government and non-profit organizations to develop a plan that represents the broad-based interests of the people who live and work in the watershed. Eleven of the thirteen jurisdictions in the watershed have provided resolutions of support because they recognize the need to take actions that will provide water quality enhancement in the project area, downstream and ultimately in Lake Erie.

The Land Conservancy encourages your support of the request for endorsement of the Upper West Branch Rocky River Balanced Growth Plan by the State of Ohio.

Sincerely,

Richard D. Cochran

---

P.O. BOX 314 - NOVELTY, OH 44072

MES C. SMIRA, CHAIR - JULIA S. BOLTON, VICE CHAIR - RICHARD S. GRIMM, VICE CHAIR - J. JEFFREY HOLLAND, VICE CHAIR - SANDRA PICKUT McMANNIS, VICE CHAIR - WILLIAM C. MULLIGAN, VICE CHAIR - RICHARD C. ODE, TREASURER - JAMES G. WATTERSON, SECRETARY - EDWARD E. MEYERS, ASSISTANT SECRETARY - NED BAKER - DICK BRUBAKER - OWEN M. COLLIGAN - EVAN R. CORNS - C. BEAU DAANE - STANLEY L. FISCHER - JAMES GERSPACHER - BERT N. GUDBRANDSON - DAVID HALSTEAD - RICK HAWKSLEY - SCOTT HILL - KATHY KEARE LEAVENWORTH - JOHN D. LEECH - JAMES R. LEVINE - KATHRYN L. MAKLEY - S. STERLING McMILLAN, IV - MARION OLSON - JORDON ONEY - TODD R. RAY - FRANZ SAUERLAND - THOMAS J. SCHULTZ - MICHAEL R. SHAUGHNESSY - DONNA L. STUDNIARZ - GRANT M. THOMPSON - TRACY WAILACH - NORMAN WEBB - RICHARD D. COCHRAN, PRESIDENT & CEO

T 440.729.9621

WWW.WRLC.CC

F 440.729.9631





May 19, 2008

Ed Hammett  
Executive Director  
Ohio Lake Erie Commission  
1 Maritime Plaza  
Toledo, Ohio 43604

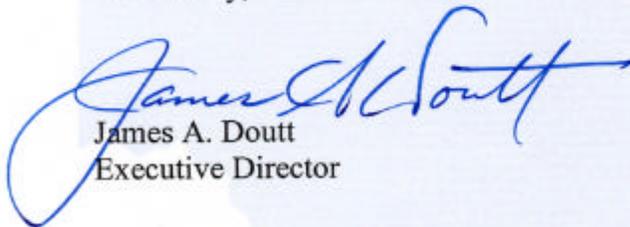
RE: Balanced Growth Initiative

Dear Mr. Hammett:

The Medina County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC) fully supports the efforts of the Watershed Planning Partnership with regard to the West Branch Rocky River Watershed Balanced Growth Initiative.

MCEDC has been active and fully engaged in the work of this Partnership from the onset of the effort. The process, led by the Medina County Soil and Water Conservation District, has been very thorough and the collaboration exhibited by the partners has resulted in a productive, interactive effort. The grant that was awarded by the Ohio Lake Erie Commission for this study had been put to good use and I encourage your support of our request for endorsement from the State of Ohio.

Yours truly,



James A. Doult  
Executive Director





**David J.  
LeHotan**

Acting Executive  
Director

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Medina, Ohio 44256

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June 17, 2008

Medina County Soil & Water Conservation  
6090 Wedgewood Road  
Medina, Ohio 44256

Dear Ladies & Gentlemen,

This letter is to signify that the Medina County Home Builders Association hereby agrees to The Balance Growth Initiative for The Lake Erie District as previously promulgated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David J. LeHotan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D".

David J. LeHotan  
Acting Executive Officer  
/sb

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**Mission Statement ...**

MCHBA is an organization of developers, contractors and providers of goods and services who are committed to promoting and protecting the growth of the housing industry, and thus the welfare of its membership.