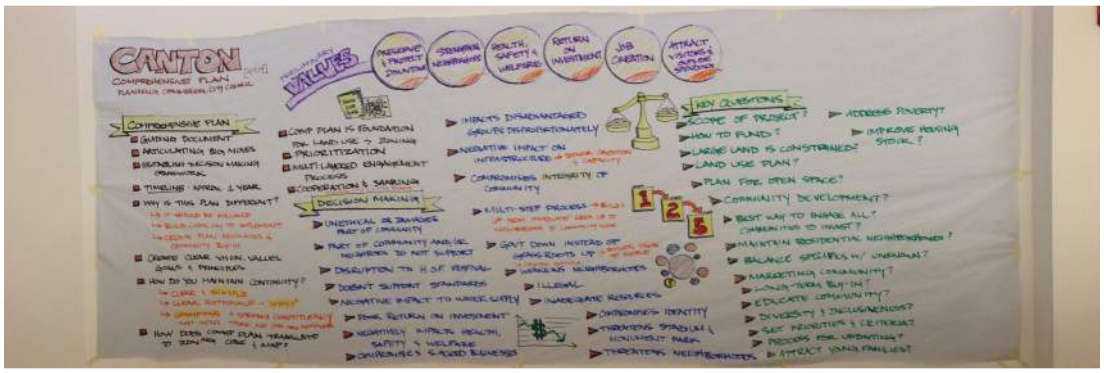
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN - CITY OF CANTON, OH

August 9, 2015

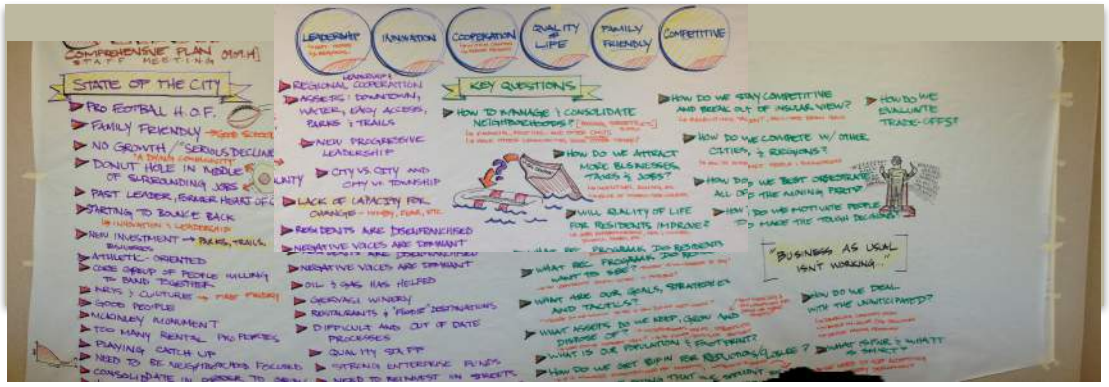
This version is ready for review/consideration by the Canton City Council.

Contents

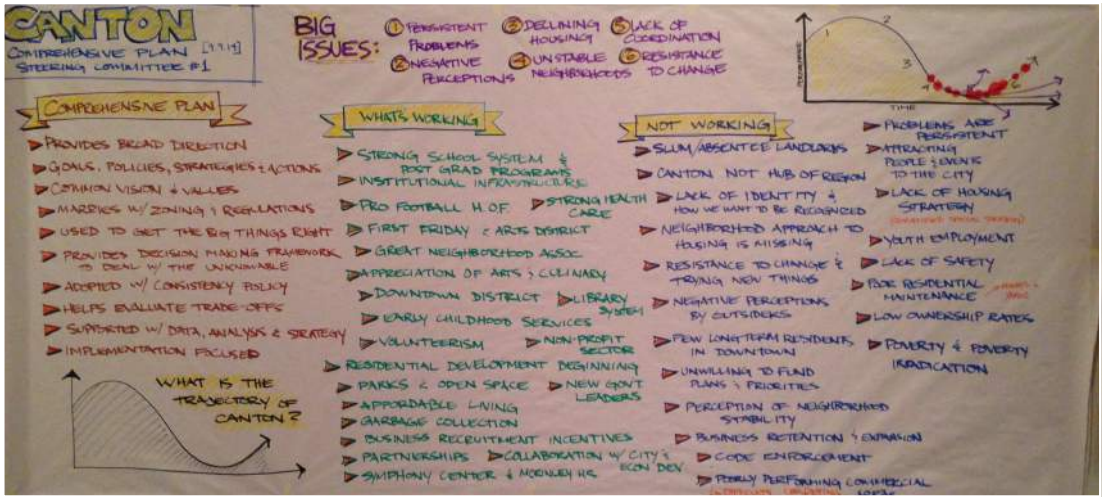
Foreword	.....	3
Summary	.....	8
User's Guide	.....	10
Principles, Values, Implementation, Framework	.....	11
Fair Housing Statement	.....	12
Strategy	.....	19
Notes + Analysis	.....	41
Applying the Plan	.....	61



- Preserve + Protect Downtown
- Strengthen Neighborhoods
- Health, Safety + Welfare
- ROI
- Job Creation
- Attract Outside Spending



- Leadership
- Innovation
- Cooperation
- Quality of Life
- Family Friendly
- Competitive



- Persistent Problems
- Negative Perceptions
- Declining Housing
- Unstable Neighborhoods
- Lack of Coordination
- Resistance to Change

Foreword

The City of Canton may be at a crossroads. Like so many American cities that came of age during the first half of the 20th century, the Second World War also ushered into Canton the construction and development of factories, rail yards, homes and community serving businesses, and the roads that connected them. As Canton grew in prosperity and population, its footprint grew as well, both in size and density. The city expanded outward. And it also grew inward, with increasing densities of families serviced by alleys and courts between streets, avenues, and roads. By 1950 Canton was the 8th largest city in Ohio. Today, Canton remains the 8th largest of Ohio's 250 cities. But there are significant differences between then and now.

Then (1950)	Now (2015)	
117,000	73,000	People
35,000	30,000	Households
21,000	16,000	Homeowners
300	3,500	Abandoned Housing Units

- Canton, smaller in terms of population than in every year since 1950, is today a city with more housing units than there is a market for them. An extra 3,500 housing units means that it can sometimes be hard for sellers to get the price they seek. As a result, owners are sometimes less willing to invest in their homes while living in them, concerned they may never get their money later. This can make the market problem worse. (Boehlke)
- Each week, there are now 5,000 fewer households going to the grocery, to the ice cream shop, to the dry cleaner, and so forth. As grocers and druggists and others make less money, their properties also become less desirable as measured by the present value of future cash flows. Just as the Canton's residential neighborhoods began to empty out, so too did its shopping centers and commercial corridors see marked increases in vacancy. Today, reduced spending (from fewer households who also, on average, earn less today than in the past) translates into about two million square feet of retail space that isn't supported. At best, such space tends either to be leased by nonprofit organizations or churches when no longer able to secure higher grade tenants, or becomes vacant if not abandoned.
- Each week, there are now 5,000 fewer households using city playgrounds and recreational spaces. This means that fewer parks could meet current needs, and the same is true for other kinds of infrastructure, such as sidewalks, water and sewer pipes, street lamps and tree canopies and everything else. Having "too much" of any of these each carries an expense. Excess space becomes both under-utilized and under-maintained; both can be problematic, especially in the area of disorder and crime.
- Fewer households also need fewer roads. At about 30 feet of road frontage per house, Canton has about 110 miles of roads that need to be maintained that, because of market conditions, only to lead to empty structures or those with virtually no probability of productive near future use. Also, because the 3,500 vacant houses are scattered throughout the city, road maintenance can't be easily made more efficient; nor can decommissioning be accomplished inexpensively or at meaningful scale.

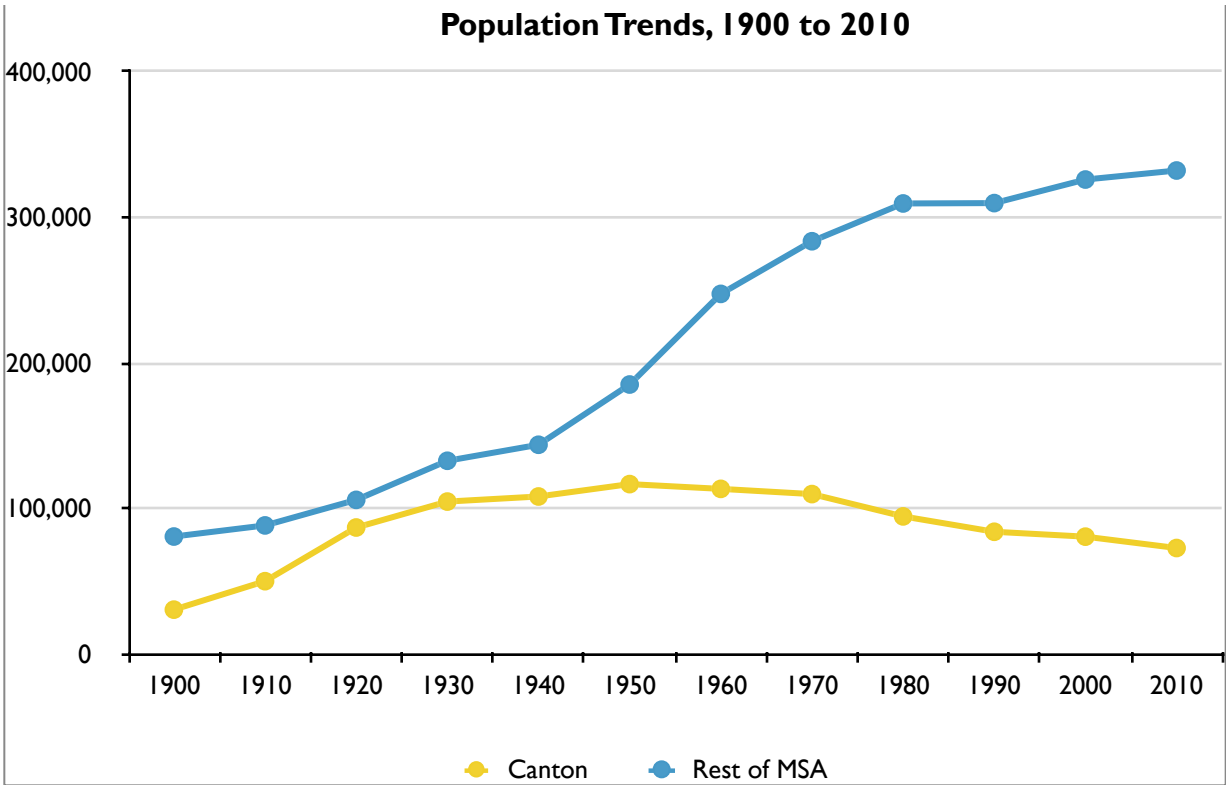
- About 3,000 fewer kids in the schools at any moment in time means that, on any given school day, Canton needs about 100 fewer classrooms than it did in 1950, or roughly 350,000 fewer square feet of combined classroom and other school space. Yet Canton quite recently built new schools, which makes today's work of "right-sizing" the city that much more difficult.
- All of this vacancy and excess capacity can have a big impact on crime. Persistent vacancy can frequently lead to disorder, and disorder is a primary precursor for crime. (Skogan) Crime aside, disorder is also the single most important factor in discouraging investment (time, energy, money) by owners in their homes and businesses in their buildings. Wherever vacancy is prolonged, disinvestment only tends to get worse. Public safety concerns mount, and then pressure increases to react and respond to demands for costly police and related services. The underlying problems remain.

- As population losses triggered disinvestment, disinvestment triggered flight. This pattern was exacerbated by the 'pull' of newer stocks, the allure of greater comparable safety in the suburbs, and implicit assurances from FHA/HOLC-driven redlining and other practices that those leaving Canton they would find, in the suburbs, stable property values and other benefits. As falling demand and subsequent disinvestment occurred year after year, the value of housing and other real estate plummeted. The upside to falling housing and commercial real estate values is that residential property becomes more affordable to buyers and renters of lesser means, and, likewise, store and other commercial business space becomes more affordable to businesses with thinner balance sheets. The downside is that higher numbers of households of lesser means residing in older, less marketable sections of Canton risk leaving a community prone to concentrations of poverty that are frequently racial in nature. (Jargowsky)

Moreover, and this is a big part of the challenge, just outside of city limits are other jurisdictions with far lower tax rates and homes with higher principal value. This makes for a self-perpetuating problem of ever higher tax rates in the city as a means of offseting ever smaller numbers of tax payers with ever higher demands for social and other services. (Wilson, Highsmith, et.al.). Indeed, Canton has lost population directly proportional to its suburban neighbors' growth. Development throughout Stark County - principally at the edges - was (and in many cases remains) attractive, and many Canton families left (and continue to leave) for the suburbs. As more and more Canton families chose to leave and buy in the suburbs, this led to a growing capacity in the suburbs to support their own restaurants and shops.

This great shift occurred between 1950 and 1970, and by the time Belden Village Mall opened in 1970, Canton had already been losing population for 20 years. Of course, this was occurring in every industrial city in the United States; Canton was not alone. And, it was also a trend that was not especially easy to see. From 1950 to 1960, Canton lost roughly 60 people each week, a number hardly noticeable. And over the course of the 1960s, Canton was losing

just 70 people per week, still a number not easily seen in real time. But in the 1970s, this jumped to approximately 300 people leaving Canton each week – a number equal to the size of McKinley High School's graduating class. The 1980s were challenging, too – the equivalent of Timken High School's graduating class (roughly 200 people) were leaving weekly.



Perhaps because the city's population losses started slowly, many remained optimistic. In hindsight, it is regrettable that Canton tore down its historic City Hall, but at the time it was an act of tremendous hopefulness.

In the mid and late 1960s, the national economy was strong, as was Ohio's. Canton knew it had to compete in the region, and with a sense of confidence it built a new City Hall to complement its Memorial Civic Center. Canton made a strong effort to hold steady against a national tide of suburbanization and related issues of fragmented government at the regional level.

But that national tide simply proved too strong. In the 1950s, 35,000 households earning very good wages were part of a system with enough economic power to pay for the schools and parks and roads and water treatment systems needed by a growing city of 120,000 and possibly more. Today, Canton has the same infrastructure to take care of, but has too few people earning too little to adequately cover accompanying costs. So a very real challenge the community faces in 2015 is how to take care of the city when it has about half as much revenue as it used to have to do the job.

Today, there is no getting around the fact that the Canton community is faced with a very difficult dilemma. It must to be able to generate revenues sufficient to cover expenses. The community's (public) revenue comes from income tax—from people who both live and work in the city. When the city loses people or businesses, it loses income to support its infrastructure and public services.

Healthy businesses are critical. Today Canton is a city of just under 30,000 households collectively earning about $1B a year. However, of that, the community spends about $350M locally, and far less of this amount is actually spent in the city itself—**most of the community's disposable income is going to the suburbs.**

Every dollar spent in Stark County but not in the City of Canton becomes a dollar that can make surrounding suburban jurisdictions stronger, and because the region is not growing, each of those dollars (and the individual decisions behind them) risks further weakening Canton.

Canton must be able to compete with the suburbs and other nearby cities in the struggle to retain and attract residents. It needs its neighborhood housing conditions and quality of life to improve. Canton has to become safer, and more serviceable. The city's roads need to be improved and the downtown has to be revitalized.

Of course, each and every one of these essential tasks takes money, and time, and effort, and champions. And many of Canton's families are struggling just to make ends meet even as many of the city's businesses are striving to stay competitive. So how can Canton become healthy? How can Canton turn excess industrial and commercial space into productive use?

How can Canton get its housing supply more in balance with its population and build a firm floor in its market so that values are stable? How can Canton possibly do this?

1. Since Canton has more space, buildings, and demands for services than it can really afford, it must **reduce its net obligations** as best it can.
2. Second, to remain competitive (attractive to businesses and households) Canton can't reduce its obligations haphazardly, or equally everywhere. It must make sure it **preserves the city's key assets, and improves the quality of life**. This means it must to **concentrate efforts** and carefully **prioritize** where investments are made in its roads, parks, police, sidewalks…everything.
3. Third, Canton can't just balance its books in ways that reposition the city to succeed if, by the manner in which it does that, it turns its back on its most vulnerable citizens. Canton is a community. Circumstances require Canton to be **smart**. But it must also be **fair**.

This plan starts by preserving strengths – assets that are marketable, have real economic value, and which Canton cannot afford to lose.

Canton has many notable assets, small, medium, and large. From Taggarts to the McKinley Memorial to the Canton Classic Car Museum to Malone University, Canton has many treasures.

The city's biggest assets are downtown, Aultman Hospital, Mercy Hospital, Timken Steel, and the Pro Football Hall of Fame. These strengths - alone and in tandem - constitute the geographic, economic, and cultural foundation for Canton going forward. Each is an asset with an outsize role in the city's present strength. Each is an asset that is indispensable - cultural, civically, and economically. And none can be taken for granted. Downtown occupancy rates demand attention, as does the absence of housing downtown. No sector of the American economy is more fluid today than health care, and both Aulmtan and Mercy have to remain competitive in an incredibly dynamic industry. Timken Steel today - as ever - must contend with discounted foreign dumping, vacillating energy prices, and changing environmental and labor frameworks. And while no one can easily conceive that the Pro Football Hall of Fame might locate elsewhere, Dallas, Indianapolis and other cities are doing their best to bring the Gold Jacket to their community instead of Canton.

Canton has many strengths beyond these, of course, but these are the ones it must to focus on with determination and energy *right now*. Over time it can grow them individually and be intentional about connecting them. And as it connects them physically and otherwise, their growing strengths can multiply more widely throughout Canton.

While Canton is building upon these strengths - growing them and connecting them - it will also be encouraging reinvestment in and around smaller community assets in the city's residential neighborhoods. It will be seeding future potential gains in areas where marketable community strengths already exist and where future opportunity is therefore most likely to occur. Across the city where it makes sense to do so, Canton will be facilitating reinvestment in creative ways, finding and leveraging hidden value when possible. And in those parts of the city without such pockets of easily predictable near future strength, where the market no longer functions in a healthy way and where recovery may be beyond the city's means to trigger, it will be encouraging investments designed to enhance neighborhood safety and quality of life. Such investments can hold these places steady until the city is able to more substantially intervene.

Summary

Today's traditional comprehensive plans have two distinguishing characteristics.

The first is that their origins lay in the work of planning for growth, which is presumed. So planning has been - for the last half century - a process that channeled expectations of growth in a logical way. Plans had (and almost all still do) a housing "element" (section), an "element" for parks, an "element" for transportation, and so forth. The second defining quality of traditional plans is their sequencing. Plan…and afterwards..implement. But because implementation is, at heart, about allocating the resources needed to do so, thousands of communities across the country have repeatedly found themselves with plans (visions) that sit on the shelf unimplemented because the resources needed - and the willingness to spend them - did not materialize. This is a more acute dilemma in American weak market cities like Canton where implementation is - owing to resource scarcity amid great and competing need - about tradeoffs; and tradeoffs are, at their core, about saying yes to some ambitions and no to others.

The Canton City Council explicitly requested both an implementable plan and one that would make Canton strong. Consequently, this plan is market-based. It does not presume growth. Instead, it works within the realities of a region that is not growing, and which in fact is moving northward away from Canton at a steady clip towards a resurgent Akron and recovering Youngstown. It works within the realities of the troubling socio-economic trends of the city itself, where population loss has been prolonged, where incomes are down, and where the costs of catching up on years of deferred maintenance are going to be expensive if the community decides doing so is a priority. In this respect, this plan is not at all traditional; it is planning for a future where growth cannot be presumed, where excess roads and houses and industrial buildings all have a cost to recover, a cost that - at least today - exceeds the market's willing to pay for those costs, and a cost that worsens if ignored. This plan is not only market-oriented and thus not organized on any assumption of growth, it is also - and therefore - not organized into traditional chapters (or elements). Instead, given the severity of the challenges facing Canton, it is organized into *priorities*.

1. The priority that requires the most immediate attention is the protection of the city's largest and most important assets. These are Canton's downtown, the Pro Football Hall of Fame, Aultman Hospital, and Timken Steel. There are many other very important strengths in Canton. The First Ladies' Museum. Monument Park. Stark State. And more. But these - the largest - assets are so important that their loss - indeed any diminishment - would so adversely affect the city that they require attention.
2. Second, the city's neighborhoods and residential quality of life are a priority. Today there isn't a firm floor in the city's housing market or in the city's commercial market, either. There's too much supply, the supply that does exist is not compelling to the market, the competition generally offers better options, and demand is limited. Properties need reinvestment. Disorder requires attention. Safety is a critical consideration.
3. Third, throughout the city, the conditions of property tax delinquency, abandonment, blight, and decayed infrastructure are so severe and prevalent that real progress on protecting the core assets or enhancing residential quality of life will not be possible if unaddressed. So there must be a commitment to move such property towards a productive potential future.

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User's Guide
(Why plan, what the plan for Canton needs to accomplish, and how to do it)

At the beginning of the process to create this plan, work sessions were held with the City Council, Planning Commission, and city staff experts in the areas of transportation, engineering, zoning, public safety, education, parks, housing, and infrastructure. During these sessions, the following question was asked: "what are the three key questions this plan, when complete, must answer?" The most prevalent responses are shown here:

What are the 3 key questions this plan needs to address?	
City Council and Planning Commission	**Senior City Staff**
• What is the future direction of and vision for this community? • What are our assets and market strengths, and how do we protect and leverage them? • How do we best market and sell our community to new residents and companies? • How do we adopt a consistent policy tied to this vision and the city's existing strengths, and that addresses serious land use and housing challenges? • What should our priorities be? What criteria should be used to set/rank these priorities? • How does this plan get updated and kept relevant going forward? • Where do we start, and when?	• Where are we? How did we get here? What is the overall situation? • What are our relative goals for the near- and long-term, based on our defined situation? • What "things" need to be fixed in the next 5 years, 10 years, or 15 years? • How should we be using our limited resources? Where are we wasting resources that could be better used elsewhere? • What are we (as government leaders) not doing that we should be doing? What are some outside ideas that may work here? • What are we (as government leaders) doing that we shouldn't be doing? • How could we (as leaders) work more in unison? Will usage of the plan enable various departments to better collaborate? • What more can be done to attract young, educated individuals and families to the city? • What recreation programs or opportunities do residents want to see? • What is the best way to consolidate neighborhoods into more cohesive areas?

Input from City Council, Planning Commission, and senior staff at the city illustrate that the community understands the nature of problems Canton is facing and has preliminary intuition about the nature of the solutions. City Council was very clear that it was seeking a plan specifically focused on implementation. Nine public meetings throughout Canton were held at the beginning of this process to elicit input from the community. A representative Steering Committee of 18 residents and business stakeholders met regularly to ensure this plan was based a set of core values and planning principles reflective of both the community's aims and concerns. Community reactions to previous drafts were incorporated. The business community was consulted. There has been extensive coverage of the planning process in the Canton Repository. Across the board, the community has expressed a desire for the City of Canton to succeed in becoming stable, then leveraging stability to become vibrant. It has expressed concerns about costs and about fairness as well.

Planning Principles

Guiding planning principles appropriate to market and demographic reality provide the basic structure for this plan. The city's physical form must be sized to its financial (what it can afford to take care of) and civic capacity (what it is willing to prioritize and attend to). Interventions aimed at revitalizing Canton will need to be substantial and focused, for success to be a genuine possibility. The chief aims of all efforts in the coming years should be for Canton to become economically and civically strong, able to compete for a fair share of the region's thriving businesses and working and middle class households. It can achieve these aims if it sizes its budget to its population and socio-economic profile, mobilizes the whole community to invest in the future, focuses dollars, works to be able to compete against other cities for market share, and aims over time to become more economically diverse.

Competitive

Like all cities, Canton exists within a region of overlapping housing markets and retail trade areas. Employers in and outside the city have employees living everywhere from Canton to Jackson. But the trend has been for economically stronger businesses and households to increasingly settle outside of Canton, the result of which has been to soften prices in the city, which in turn continues to render Canton ever more fiscally vulnerable. For this trend to be halted and then reversed, Canton needs to become a place that people and businesses choose to invest in because it makes sense to them to do so. This is a chief basis of fiscal sustainability. Another indispensable ingredient for long term success is self-reliance. For Canton to succeed, not only must resources be focused and the city sized to carrying capacity, the resources used to stabilize and then revitalize Canton must come from within. Every increment of reliance on outside (state or federal) dollars to reposition Canton is a step away from residents and business stakeholders themselves taking responsibility for Canton's past and future. Being competitive is only partly about market share and fiscal stability; it is also about self reliance and a demonstrated willingness to pay one's own way. Such a willingness is one of the most profound signals that can be sent to market seeking, above all, confidence.

- A critical test to be applied to each land use and development decision going forward is whether or not it will likely result in Canton becoming more competitive within the region. The burden should be on a proposal to demonstrate how it makes the city's market position stronger. Only those proposals that clearly promise to strengthen the City in relation to the region should receive public resources; a proposal that might add a dollar to the city is not a good proposal if in the nature of it, the competition benefits by more than a dollar.

Right-sized

The City has already reduced the level of services it provides to a bare minimum. While slight additional efficiencies may yet be found, efficiencies alone are not likely going to be enough to make Canton a more desirable place to live and work. What is partly needed beyond greater efficiency is for the city to actually reduce the amount that it maintains – reduce the linear miles of maintained streets or annually-repaired water and sewer lines; reduce the acreage of parks for which it is responsible; reduce the number of seriously distressed properties that are inefficiently served by utilities, foster increased crime, and burden emergency services. Until such balance is achieved, the city will remain in a weakened state. The current condition of property (public and private) and the city's current reputation in the region are such that working piecemeal on these challenges will not work.

- A critical test to be applied to each land use and development decision going forward is whether or not it will likely result in moving Canton towards or away from being right-sized. All else being equal, and while a portfolio approach is appropriate, only those proposals likely to help Canton rebalance excess supply should be approved.

Focused

As Canton's experience over the last several decades has shown, the challenges are deep enough, and widespread enough, that merely spreading available revenue lightly over the whole of the city has not kept pace with the rate of deterioration. This has been and remains the case whether the issue is roads (which deteriorate faster than the community has been willing to repair with its own money), or distressed housing (which infects surrounding property faster than the community has been willing to strategically demolish with its own money). When faced with this reality, and limited resources, the right strategy is to focus resources geographically where they are likely to have the biggest impact (to positively affect the most people and to stimulate the largest private market response), and towards middling conditions (which are less costly to bring to par). Such impacts are essential to keep key areas healthy and stabilized, and leverage the capacity to next improve the areas around them, thus gradually expanding outward until the whole city may again function in healthy ways.

- A critical test to be applied to each land use and development decision going forward is whether or not it will likely result in a continuation of focused energy in targeted geographies so as to achieve a concentration of development activity. Until the city's supply and demand are in sustainable balance, only those proposals that maintain geographic focus should become high priority endeavors.

Diverse

Diversifying Canton means retaining Canton's existing large employers, but also significantly increasing the number of small and medium sized businesses. This will require that Canton invest in growing existing and creating newly attractive settings, livable nearby neighborhoods for employees, and a trained pool of workers. Diversity also means that Canton be the home of choice to working and middle class families, whom today consistently choose the suburbs instead. It means that Canton needs to invest in making sure – through parks and other amenities, though a vibrant downtown, through healthy neighborhoods, and eventually through strong schools – it can compete for young families, working and professional. It means that Canton, though affordable overall, must remain so to low and moderate households. And diversity means absolute adherence by the City of Canton and all of its partners to Fair Housing. The Fair Housing Act requires HUD and the City of Canton as a program recipient to promote fair housing and equal opportunity to ensure that all people have the right to fair housing regardless of their race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability or familial status. New rules mean that HUD will provide Canton with clear guidelines and data -- including searchable geo-spatial maps that incorporate data sets about income, race, disability status and other measures -- that can be used to reach these goals. New rules clarify and simplify existing fair housing obligations and create a streamlined process for evaluating fair housing. This plan has been designed to fully embrace the spirit and letter of the Fair Housing Act.

- A critical test to be applied to each land use and development decision going forward is whether or not it will likely result in Canton becoming diverse. All else being equal, only those proposals that clearly aim to achieve an diverse economic and residential outcome should receive public resources.

Guiding Values

Repositioning Canton may be demanding, and may require that potentially difficult decisions be made. That may mean potentially tough trade-offs loom. It may not be possible to treat every interest or neighborhood equally at the same time. There is not likely enough money to do that. Some actions may need to precede others. Therefore, Canton will need to go forward based on the priorities that have arisen as a result of decline: core assets that are risk and which require attention, neighborhoods that are at risk and which require attention, and tax delinquency and blight and disinvested infrastructure throughout that also require attention. Over time, to benefit all of Canton, the community will be guided by the following fundamental values, even if priorities change.

✓ **Smart**
Decisions should result in a strengthened Canton economy. If efforts do not strengthen the city's economy, Canton may continue to decline, and that won't benefit anyone. Therefore Canton must measure success first by an increase in the city's net revenue, and second by an improvement in its reputation.

✓ **Fair**
Decisions have to reflect a commitment to all citizens of Canton in genuine, relevant, and meaningful ways. Canton may not be able to be equal all the time everywhere, but there is a commitment to get there. Just as investment and tradeoff decisions have to be focused on fiscal outcomes, so too much they always take into context social equity.

✓ **Balanced**
Canton does not have the luxury of being able to give higher priority to social equity than basic fiscal survival. Not today. Yet successful repositioning cannot be done if the price is to turn its back on the community's most vulnerable. A balance will be needed so that the resulting outcome is a city that is both stronger and more equitable.

Leadership

To achieve a successful turnaround while incorporating core values and planning principles, leadership will be required. From those in Canton with formal authority – elected and appointed officials – to those with informal authority – residents and business stakeholders – leadership will be needed to mobilize the community to adapt.

- Canton will need to adapt from a city dependent on a few large employers to an independent community in partnership with many small and medium sized businesses.
- Canton will need to adapt from a city that relies on a "worst first" criteria for the deployment of scarce resources to a "catch up and keep up" approach that protects critical assets and has a well cared for infrastructure.
- Canton will need to adapt from a city where "need" dominates prioritization debates to one where the chief focus is on stimulating demand.
- Canton will need to adapt from an unhealthy reliance on private philanthropy and government grants to fill the void left by deindustrialization and globalization, to self-financed recovery grounded in sweat equity and sacrifice.

Such adaptation may prove to be very difficult, and so leadership provided by those with both formal and informal authority is likely to be essential.

Implementation

Implementation will hinge on several points. Adoption and utilization of constructive decision-making frameworks will be needed. Deployment of scare resources will need to be based on objective data and judgment. There must be a commitment at every level to investment that is asset-oriented and focused. Public and private spending have to be aligned. The long term and the public realm must constitute the backbone of recovery. A comprehensive plan neither grants nor takes away any vested rights. Adoption of a comprehensive plan in Ohio does not require that it be funded or followed. Implementation only occurs when it is funded and when accompanied by the parallel co-adoption of a development (or zoning) code that regulates form, and by affirming the plan's goals and frameworks each time a development arises that requires some kind of decision. The likelihood of implementation can be increased if Canton also passes a "consistency policy" binding the city to resolve land use and development issues in a manner consistent with the comprehensive plan.

Adopting a Consistency Policy

The "consistency" policy states simply: "All land use-related decisions by the City will be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan." Being consistent with the comprehensive plan does NOT mean that the plan is "carved in stone" and cannot be changed. In fact, the opposite is true. If the plan does not reflect current conditions, current priorities, or current goals, it will cease to be useful and will gradually be ignored. Therefore, the plan should be updated or amended as often as necessary to make sure it reflects current values, priorities, and conditions. Therefore, being "consistent" with the Comprehensive Plan means following two simple rules. First, if the proposed action is NOT consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, Canton decision-makers will either a) deny the proposal, or b) modify the comprehensive plan so that the proposed action IS consistent. Second, in updating the comprehensive plan, the level of consideration (the amount of analysis and public involvement) will be consistent with the significance of the issues involved.

Making Major and Minor Amendments

This Comprehensive Plan could be changed through two kinds of amendments:
The first - minor amendments - are changes that merely clarify, refine, or correct elements of the plan without modifying the underlying intent of the plan. These kinds of changes can be made administratively by the a city's planning director, with advance notification of the Planning Commission and City Council. Minor amendments may be called up by the Planning Commission or City Council if they are considered not to be minor in nature. The second - major amendments - are significant changes to the policies, maps, priorities or goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan. Major amendments should be approved by the City Council. Public outreach for major amendments should be commensurate with the impact of the change.

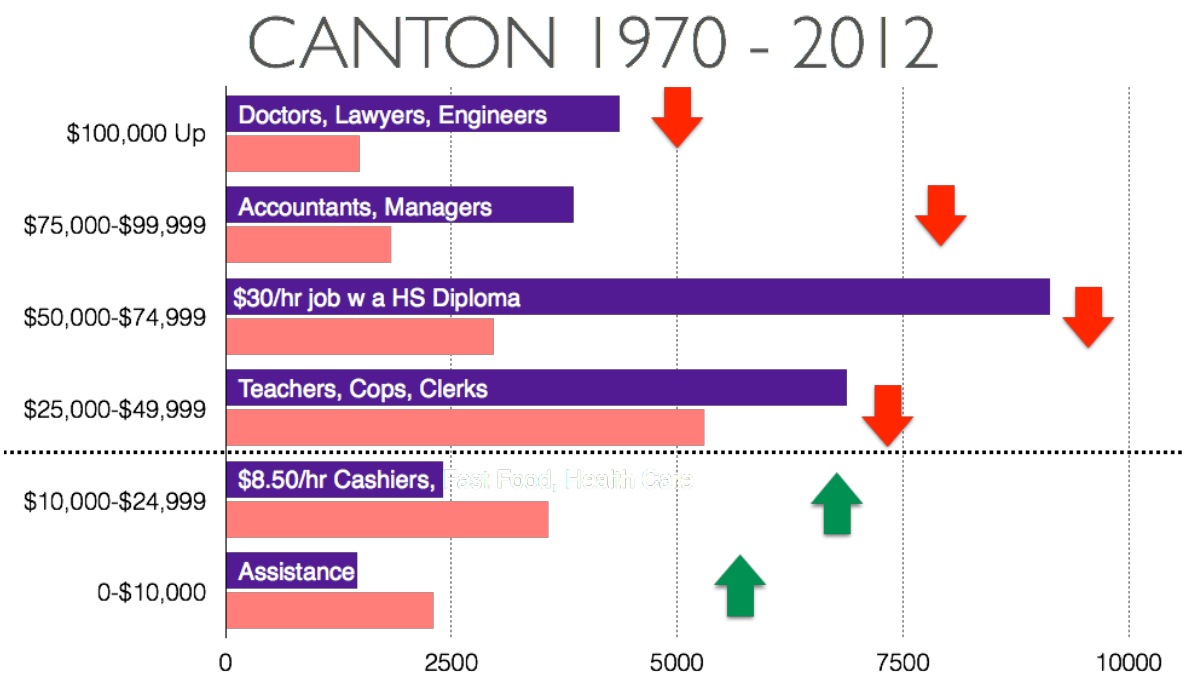
Implementing Formal Annual Reviews

To further assure the currency, and relevance of the Comprehensive Plan, the Planning Department should conduct an annual review of the Comprehensive Plan, and report to the City Council each year on the implementation status of plan-based actions. As part of this review, city staff and members of the planning department should remove actions that have been completed or are no longer relevant, and add and/or prioritize actions for the upcoming year (including any minor or major amendments). The City should conduct a formal review and update of the Comprehensive Plan regularly.

The Framework

Overview

Canton's population is nearly 40% smaller today than it was at the city's peak, in 1950. Today's roughly 73,000 residents face significant challenges. Most simply, and most pressing, Canton's current 73,000 residents need to cover the cost of managing and maintaining the component parts of a city built to accommodate almost twice as many residents. With scarce tax dollars (a function of there being fewer tax payers), Canton's current 73,000 residents must do the work of managing and maintaining in a way that - optimally - repositions the city for future success. This is a challenge many cities in America today are facing, yet there are few roadmaps that Canton can follow.

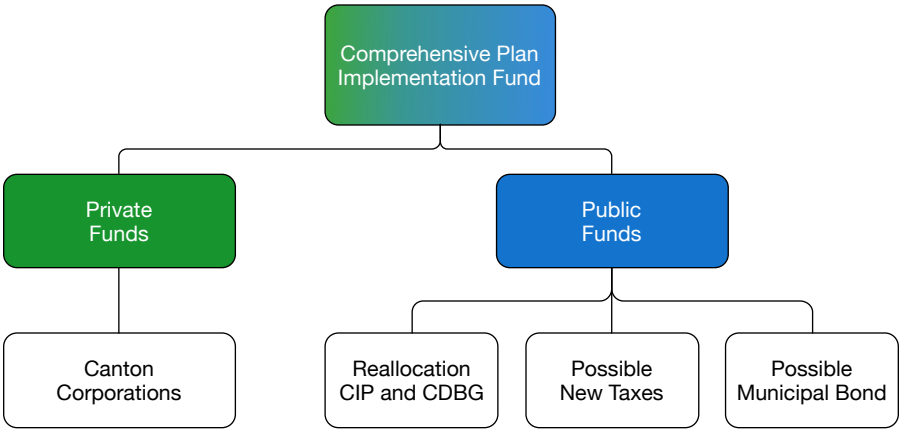


To reposition Canton successfully, the city will need to find a way to make do with less. For example, Canton can either pave all roads less, or pave fewer roads to high quality standards. Take care of all parks less, or take care of fewer parks in a way that is optimal. Demolish some (but not all) seriously distressed properties in neighborhoods throughout the city or target demolitions to fully remove abandoned buildings from a few designated areas.

The city is not in a financial position to have to both ways. So, how can local officials and neighborhood residents and stakeholders decide the best ways to accomplish these and other objectives in a manner that is efficient from a resource use perspective, while creating a return on those dollars when possible? How can the community work together to put Canton on a firm footing financially speaking, and to the extent possible, do so without being unfair?

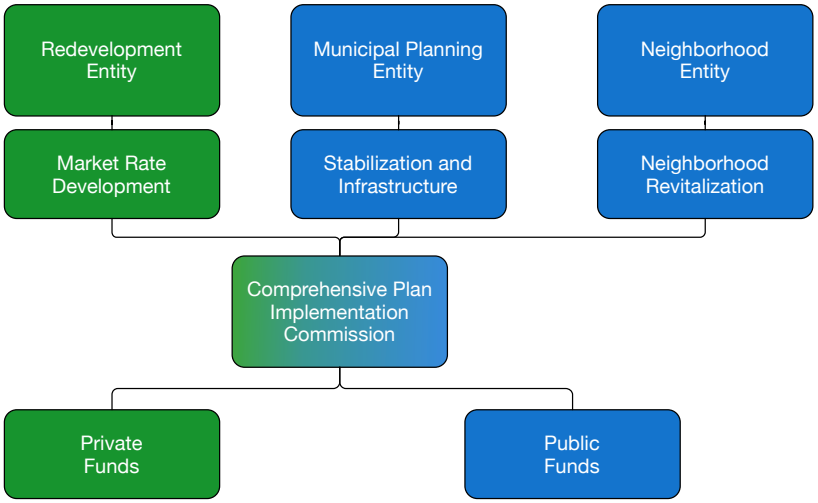
This plan is a guide for facing exactly this challenge.

It does so by recommending reinvestment by the city and a host of private sector partners where public and private resources might be potentially merged.



It does so through the recommended reliance on an **alternative system of plan implementation**. In the potential system proposed here, a Comprehensive Plan Implementation Fund could be created, and then administrated jointly by representatives of the community, representatives of the Canton City Council, and representatives from the private sector.

- **Approximately One Third** of such a reinvestment effort could be governed by a newly created (or rechartered existing) public-private corporation (here referred to as an Enterprise Fund Redevelopment Corporation), designed to administer the plan and undertake real estate development using public resources directed towards plan implementation by the City Council. Its resources could come from the Implementation Fund on an annual basis following submittal and approval of an annual work plan for the coming year and review of the previous year(s) work. The Corporation could be chartered to focus almost exclusively on market-rate and market-oriented work around key city assets as detailed in this plan.



- **A Second Third** of the effort might be managed by a new municipal planning office designed to coordinate planning and zoning, housing and community development, comprehensive plan implementation, and regulatory matters associated with land use and development, as well as oversee infrastructure reinvestment. If created, this would be the office that would review development proposals and make expert recommendations to the City's Planning Commission and City Council.

- **The Final Third** of the effort might be managed by a new (or modified existing nonprofit) corporation, chartered to build resident leadership capacity through healthy neighborhood revitalization work throughout Canton. With 11,000 tax delinquent properties scattered across the city, along with numerous challenges at the neighborhood level, coordination of neighborhood improvement, home ownership development, affordable housing, and community reinvestment would be overseen by this corporation.

Implementation would require new revenue, the reorganization and re-prioritization of existing municipal dollars, significant private sector investment, unprecedented cooperation, the creation of new entities authorized to implement the plan, the adoption of new regulations, and a greater commitment to the good of the city overall than to servicing parochial interests.

Assets and Liabilities

Canton has many large scale assets that are attractive to businesses as well as residents. Major assets include Stadium Park, a growing network of regional trails, major employers (Aultman and Mercy Hospitals, Timken Steel, and others), the Pro Football Hall of Fame, and the Downtown (hotels, offices, restaurants, brewery, Market Square, arts district, and events)

Canton also has many smaller scale assets that play an important part in neighborhood quality of life. These include a well managed system of schools, many of which have been recently constructed or renovated, neighborhood and community parks, sports complexes, churches and synagogues, small and intermediate commercial centers, and Colleges and vocational schools.

In addition, Canton has significant community-based capacity. Public officials and city staff who have adroitly steered Canton through the worst economic period in American history except for the Great Depression, roughly 1,500 industrial small businesses and a knowledge base of how to "make" things, a core of young entrepreneurs committed to Canton, and philanthropic and charitable institutions deeply connected to the community

Canton faces some significant hurdles that impact the city's future, over which Canton has little to no direct control. The region itself isn't growing – people are moving from cities to suburbs but the total isn't increasing; and Ohio's tax policies generally favor suburban growth in Townships and Counties over the practice of municipal frugality in its cities.

However, Canton also has many challenges over which it can exert influence and have a direct positive impact. It can address the realities of a smaller and less affluent population where specific liabilities result, including reduced demand for real estate, reduced levels of reinvestment in private property, reduced per-capita revenue from income taxes, reduced demand for quality retail, increased demand for services (social and safety), increased rental tenancy, and increased absentee ownership

Such liabilities interact with and reinforce one another, serving to increase their negative effects on the City of Canton.

As a result, the city's strengths are compromised. Downtown cannot easily compete, much less anchor a Canton comeback so long as it is surrounded by blight on one hand, and demand for commercial real estate is not intentionally channeled into downtown on the other.

The city's 1,500 small businesses are starved for networks and capital and marketing and promotions. They are not becoming what they could in terms of growth, job creation, and wealth creation. Every day this remains the status quo, the city's entrepreneurs will look increasingly towards suburban areas in the county, to Akron, and other markets to find future prosperity.

Canton's hospitals compete for employees like every other business. Attracting the best doctors has become a task made tougher each year that the downtown fails to fully recover and each year that the city's neighborhoods continue to decline. Residential life in Canton – despite rich architecture and walkable neighborhoods supported by a potentially great park system – is undermined by a lack of economic diversity, a downtown without a vibrant resident component, and scant reason to confidently invest in upgrading one's home.

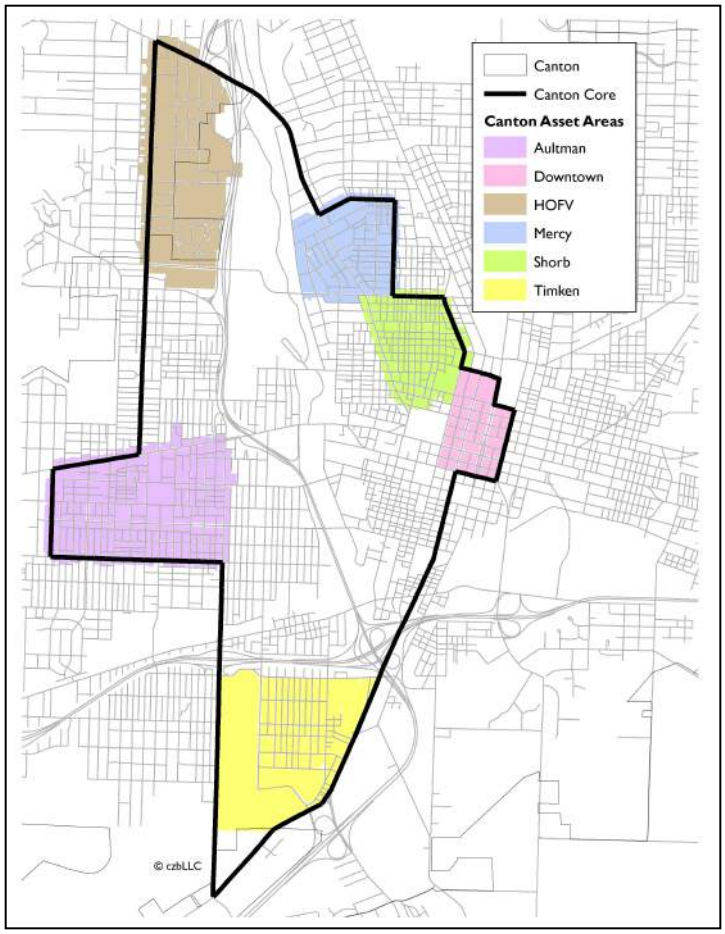
Much will be required—of the city government, of city residents, of local corporations, and even of the region – if these troublesome cycles are to be reversed. When 75 percent of the professional employees of the city's largest corporations no longer choose to live in the city, Canton has a problem that is serious, and that requires a serious plan. Consider that Timken Steel and Aultman Hospital together employ 11,000 workers of whom more than 8,000 do not live in the City of Canton and who therefore have a non-city orientation.

Specifically, much more will be required of local residents and local businesses, non-profits, and philanthropic organizations, if this is to change, as it is highly unlikely that substantial new revenue is going to materialize from outside the community (from either the federal government or state government).

Strategy

Introduction

To successfully make the most of scarce resources, this plan organizes the City of Canton into three main areas that every citizen needs to understand in terms of location (where), role (how it affects the city and how the community will need to influence it), actions (what needs to occur), and implications (how the areas interconnect).

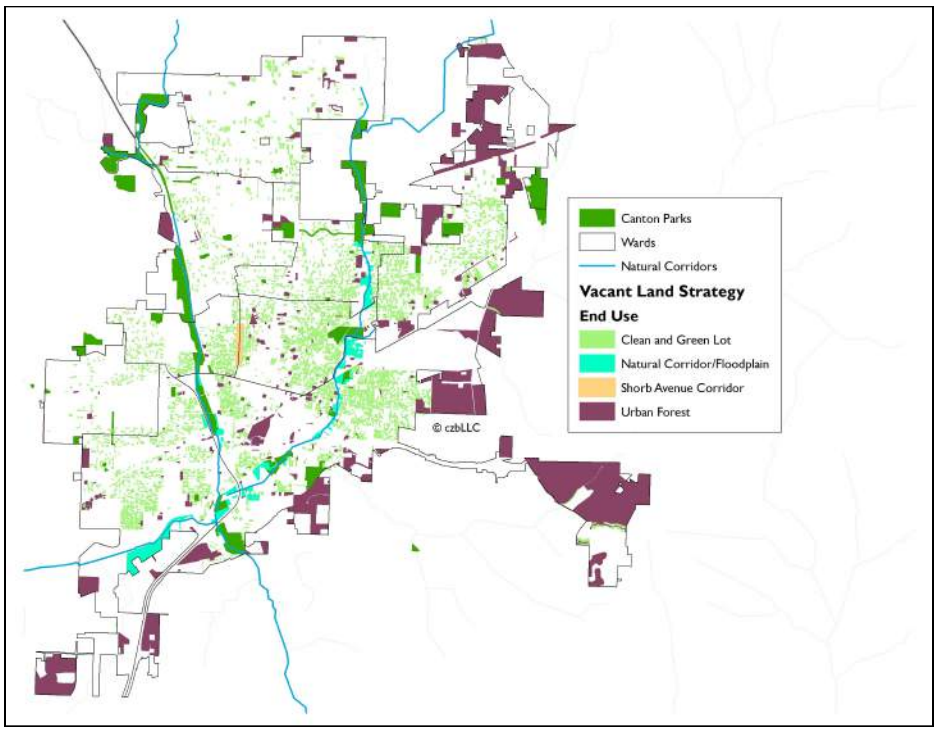


The first – or Targeted Core Investment Areas – contains those blocks around key identified assets absolutely crucial to the city's long term health. This plan identifies those assets – or vital organs - designates a targeted geography around them that requires massive reinvestment, and prescribes a set of general steps that must be taken by the community to achieve a successful outcome. A successful outcome in these areas is eventual market vibrancy once supply and demand have come into balance following intensive investments in infrastructure, right-sizing, resident leadership, and real estate. The selection of these assets, the determination of the targeted geography, and the steps this plan recommends be taken were all based on the guiding principles of sound planning in weak markets, and the core values of the Canton community. These areas constitute a tiny 3.5 percent of the city's land area, but the overwhelming majority of its economic foundation.

It is envisioned that the core of the work undertaken to strengthen the city's chief assets will be undertaken by a new entity such as an Enterprise Fund Redevelopment Corporation.

The work entails concentrated acquisition and improvement of property around key assets, coordination of major infrastructure investments, and the development of new market rate and affordable housing, as well as new mixed-used development upon market stabilization.

The second contains those sections of the city identified as being in the flood plain and not easily conducive to prolonged residential settlement or new development of any kind given environmental and financial considerations, and also areas that require adaptive repurposing to natural corridors, urban agriculture, or cleaned and greened lots. This plan identifies these areas and prescribes a set of general steps that must be taken by the community to achieve a successful outcome. A successful outcome in these areas is control - perceived and real - where instead of settlement in the flood plain that will never have resale value, and instead of large tracts of underutilized industrial parcels, and thousands of smaller, blighted parcels, *new* trails, *new* green spaces, and the potential for interim uses like nature preserves may become possible. The selection of these areas – which constitute about 21% of the city's last area - was based on the guiding principles of sound planning in weak markets, and the core values of the Canton community.



It is envisioned that the core of the work undertaken to stabilize these parts of Canton would be shared by the city's new Office of Planning working hand in hand with a possibly new resident-led community based organization. The work entails conversion of tax delinquent and troubled property to productive use; sometimes as cleaned lots deeded to adjoining owners, sometimes as natural areas, and always in working partnership with the community, who it is envisioned will prioritize which parcels to address in which order.

The third area of focus – the city's residential neighborhoods – contains those residential parts of the city not in the core and not in the flood plain, and generally disincludes conversion areas of fallow property (tax delinquent, abandoned, blighted). These residential areas are the lifeblood sections of Canton – the majority of the city's residential neighborhoods where families are raised, yards are mowed, groceries are bought, little league is played, and children attend school.

While this plan identifies (by subtraction) these sections, and while these sections constitute roughly 76% of the city's land area, **the job of deciding which specific neighborhoods to invest in, in what ways, and in what order, has been left entirely up to the community itself because it is a task best done by residents, themselves.**

What is designated in this plan is a set of guiding principles (right-sized, focused, competitive, diverse) combined with core values (smart and fair and balanced) that the community itself should apply in the course of undertaking the hard work of prioritizing.

There are 26 neighborhoods in the city.

The targeted core investment areas constitute parts of six neighborhoods plus downtown and the new Hall of Fame Village.

For the remaining residential neighborhoods in the city not in the flood plain, prioritization will require the community to determine how to make the most with limited resources.

It is envisioned that the essence of the work undertaken to strengthen the city's residential neighborhoods will be a combination of strategic demolition, vacant parcel control and subsequent investments in beautification, upgrades to owner-occupied homes, enhanced code compliance efforts on some blocks, fierce code enforcement work on others, resident leadership development, and community building all under the rubric of the Healthy Neighborhoods model pioneered in Baltimore and practiced by the Community Building Partnership of Stark County. These efforts, if undertaken, might be overseen by a new (or existing) resident-led community-based organization which would have to prioritize the work.

The key aspect of the work confronting Canton is the need to size the city's real estate to the financial capacity of the households and businesses that call Canton home, and to do so in ways that reposition the city to compete in the region. This is a tall order, and there is no evidence anywhere in the United States that this can be done quickly or inexpensively.

1. To transform the core will require disciplined targeting of public and private resources over a sustained period into vibrant, mixed-use areas, and then connecting them in ways that reinforce downtown.
2. To transform the flood plain and the thousands of vacant, fallow, tax delinquent, and other problem properties will require creative repurposing of some land into urban agricultural use, some parcels into cleaned and greened condition, and others into natural corridors that can double as trails and other amenities.
3. To transform Canton's neighborhoods not in the core – more than 20 – will require the community to come together to decide which neighborhoods to focus on first and which to get to later. This is a complex, expensive, and unprecedented undertaking. It will require a

massive infusion of public and private resources. It will require the creation of new plan implementation entities – one public (a new, fully staffed city planning office), one private-private (a new, fully staffed redevelopment corporation), and one non profit (a new or re-chartered existing community development corporation)

Actions

The following section illustrates ways to translate the principles (right-sized, focused, diverse) and priorities (core area protection and reinvestment, tax delinquent and troubled area control and stabilization, residential neighborhood quality of life) of the plan into specific actions to be funded and taken.

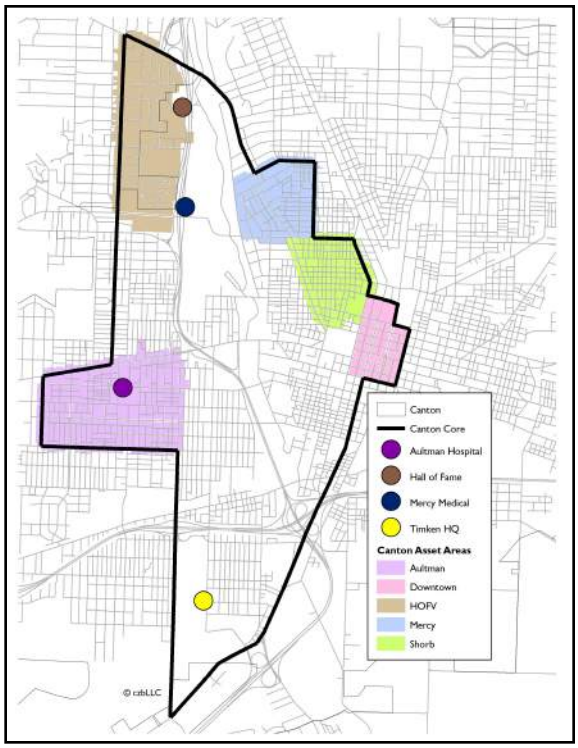
The first section describes the five Core Targeted Investment Areas.

The second section describes the areas that conversion (sometimes referred to as repurposing).

The third section discussed how to identify and apply the principles to the city's many residential neighborhood areas.

1. Core Targeted Investment Areas

Concept plans have been developed for each of the five core targeted investment areas. These concept plans are intended to give on-the-ground examples of how to apply the principles to specific sub-areas. It is expected that these concept plans will be revised and refined by city staff, possibly working with a new redevelopment corporation, and implemented according to annual prioritization and funding availability.



The core areas are adjacent to each other and intended therefore to reinforce each other. They surround and help strengthen Canton's indispensable Downtown, and they are all connected together by transportation corridors. In addition, each is important for its own unique reasons, such as their importance to major employers, and their capacity to be home to working households. They are anchored by critical community institutions, and always contain important gateways to Canton that serve as potentially high-impact first impressions.

Timken Steel Area

The guts of Canton's manufacturing past are being transformed in real time at Timken Steel, and exemplified by the design, financing development, procurement, installation, uniqueness, and operation of the company's new Jumbo Bloom Vertical Caster. Such creativity and risk-taking exemplify and model the essential recovery path for the City of Canton: reinvestment and choice. For Timken Steel to succeed in recruiting world class talent, it will need the City of Canton to make investments in infrastructure on par with its investments in equipment and training. World class talent requires a thriving downtown equal in quality to its Bloom Caster, good schools, well maintained parks and amenities, a vibrant cultural life, quality retail, and excellent housing options downtown and in traditional neighborhood settings. These elements of a revitalized and repositioned Canton are essential for Timken Steel to remain in, be profitable, and thrive in Canton.

Aultman Hospital Area Neighborhood

The Aultman Hospital neighborhood is one of the most important areas in Canton, vital to the long term health of the city given the Hospital's powerful economic presence. The neighborhood is a mixed-use area of about 300 acres crossed by a main commercial corridor (SW Tuscarawa), and anchored by Aultman Hospital. Decades ago the hospital was surrounded by single family homes (where many employees lived). Over time, as the neighborhood began to decline and workers moved to more remote (commuting) locations, they were replaced by less-financially-strong households and renters. Maintenance of homes and properties began to decline, and the hospital began to acquire declining blocks to convert them to parking lots as a defensive measure aimed at protecting the hospital. Neighboring owners, meanwhile, often interpreted such actions with concern, concluding that Hospital-

driven real estate activities were a threat more than a reaction. Today the hospital is effectively "walled off" from the neighborhood by undistinguished parking lots. If the trend continues, Canton runs the risk of further neighborhood decline, making the area less desirable for employees and hospital clients. Hospitals in many other communities, faced with similar problems have relocated to more suburban locations. For Aultman to do so would not only remove strong households from the Canton community, but would also dramatically reduce income tax revenues to the city.

How to revitalize the Aultman neighborhood?

The vision for the Aultman neighborhood is to "re-weave" the hospital back into the surrounding blocks, making the hospital part of the neighborhood rather than separate from it, and making the neighborhood an even more desirable place to live. The key target market - though not the only one - is hospital workers.

Gradually transitioning and eventually restoring the neighborhood around the hospital can be done by converting portions of parking lots back to a range of residential and compatible office and commercial uses.

Mostly residential, it is envisioned this area will have multifamily dwellings nearer the hospital, and single family detached homes further away, resulting in a range of densities from moderate (10-20 du/acre) to higher (20-30 du/acre) over time. The essential thrust of the work is the reinvestment in the homes of owners with a commitment to the neighborhood, buttressed by mixed-use infill and high impact beautifying infrastructure.

The existing pattern of neighborhood-serving retail (local restaurants, medical office, shops) will be permitted at all major corners so that the neighborhood becomes a complex mix of uses tying the neighborhood together with a strong framework of street trees, wide sidewalks, and boulevards to make walking appealing and safe. Creating several new neighborhood parks to within easy walking distance of most residents is also important.

Pro Football Hall of Fame Village Area

The HOF is currently a relatively small (but hugely important) attraction that gives Canton worldwide recognition (as the birthplace of professional football). It also brings approximately 200,000 visitors/year to the Canton area.

The HOF currently occupies a roughly 30 acre site near the intersection of Fulton Drive and I-77. At the time of this document, plans are being formulated by the Hall of Fame Board to dramatically expand the scope and quality of the attractions at the HOF "village," including:

- An expanded HOF building
- An expanded stadium field for HOF-related events
- A football-oriented theme park
- A mixed use "Village" of hotels, restaurants, offices, medical research facilities
- Venues for other sports, including soccer fields and other spaces.

The area envisioned for the expanded Hall of Fame extends from I-77 west to Broad Avenue, from Fulton Drive south to 13th Street (which becomes 12th Street east of I-77). The expanded area is currently composed of primarily residential uses, as well churches, an elementary

school, and the McKinley High School complex: the school, natatorium, performance center, and football stadium.

When completed, the entire area will be a significant tourist destination with significant office workers and restaurant activity. To effectively take advantage of the HOF expansion requires a maximum number of the HOF jobs (operations, services, and construction) are directed to Canton residents and businesses. This can be achieved by a commitment to preferential hiring of Canton residents, sourcing supplies and services to Canton businesses, locating spin-off businesses in Canton, training programs to allow Canton residents to upgrade and qualify for jobs. A strong link between the HOF and other areas of Canton (especially the downtown) is also critical. This can be achieved by creating strong "must see" destinations in the downtown to draw HOF visitors. This can include specific HOF-related places (Market Square, sculptures) as well as a commitment to hold HOF-related events in the downtown (parade and other investiture ceremonies). It will be important to make sure that existing anchor tenants in the downtown (restaurants, retailers) are not outcompeted and forced to close or relocate.

Improving the transportation connections to downtown along both Fulton Road and 13th/12th Streets will be important. New paving, street trees, sidewalks, buried or relocated overhead power lines are necessary. Transit connections need to be considered if the new Village and downtown links are required to handle significant loads.

Mercy Area Neighborhood

The Mercy neighborhood is one of the keystones to the recovery of Canton, for it connects stable but at-risk residential areas along Fulton and Monument *both* with one of the city's major anchoring institutions – Mercy Hospital - *and* with the distressed areas closer to downtown in the presently distressed Shorb part of the city. The Mercy neighborhood includes areas on both sides of Fulton Road, extending from Monument Road east to approximately Oxford Avenue, and from approximately 12th Street north to 17th Street.

The neighborhood is predominantly a single family residential area with a mix of housing stocks dominated by wood-framed "four squares," (c 1915), cottages and bungalows of wood and brick, and several larger brick homes of greater stature. Along Fulton Road are also a number of apartment buildings as well as several commercial clusters, including Canton's own Taggart's ice cream parlor.

West of Fulton Road the topography drops noticeably down to Monument Park/Road. A number of homes front directly on the park. The Mercy neighborhood includes several "brick streets" that are remnants of one of Canton's historically rich traditions. There are also a number of redundant alleys in various sectors of the neighborhood.

The largest concentration of vacant, delinquent and distressed housing occurs in the southern and southeastern quadrant of the neighborhood. The Fulton-12th Street intersection is an important decision point with the potential to leverage both a new Hall of Fame Village by facilitating a link to downtown, and Mercy as a hub of pioneering medical services and long standing community partnership. The entire 12th Street corridor today under-performs commercially to a significant degree, despite significant public upgrades. The essence of needed commercial revitalization along 12th Street – and throughout Canton – is, in point of fact, not contained in the physical infrastructure. Infrastructure is only a down payment on

future vitality, and offers no guarantee. Actually becoming a high performing commercial corridor will require that the adjoining neighborhoods become high performing places where residents are confident enough to invest in their homes. Today's distress and crime have to be replaced with confidence and reinvestment.

The vision for the Fulton corridor is a grand boulevard that links the Hall of Fame to the Downtown, surrounded by a range of healthy homes – from modest to stately - and anchored by commercial "centers" at 12th-Fulton, Taggarts (14th Street), 16th-Fulton, and the commercial center at Fulton-21st-24th.

The primary market for the Mercy neighborhood is hospital workers and young families wanting to live near downtown and near Monument and other parks and emergent retail amenities.

The strategies for revitalizing the Mercy neighborhood include:

- Reinvesting in the homes of owners with a commitment to the neighborhood.
- Making streetscape improvements to Fulton Road and 12th Street (some of which are already in the planning stages).
- Making major streetscape improvements to the 12th-Fulton Road intersection to help it function more effectively as a walk-to commercial center
- Acquiring and redeveloping distressed, vacant and delinquent properties in the areas adjacent to the 12th-Oxford intersection.
- Re-zoning and incentivizing small-scale commercial additions to extend and reposition the intersection now anchored by Taggart's into a neighborhood commercial "center."
- Selective refurbishment and infill redevelopment along Fulton Road; densities along Fulton could be as high as 30 units/acre, but the boulevard should also retain grand single family homes.
- Preservation of the "brick streets," and extension of new, short brick streets to the Taggart's center.

The Shorb Corridor Area

The Shorb area is directly north of the Downtown. It is transected by three important arterials: Fulton Road, Shorb Avenue, and McKinley Avenue on the east. It extends from approximately 6th Street to 12th Street.

The Shorb neighborhood has a number of important community institutions. In the southeast quadrant are the Basilica of St. Paul, Summit Elementary School, King Park, and Iron Workers Union Hall. In the north/northwest quadrant are the Arts Academy and the Fulton/12th Street commercial corridor. Fulton Road connects the Hall of Fame to Downtown, and 12th Street is an important connection from the south end of the Hall of Fame area to Mahoning Road.

However, by far the most noteworthy aspect of the Shorb area today is its distress and reputation in the region. Dilapidated housing, crime, disorder, abandonment, and blight. The Shorb Avenue has one of the highest concentrations of vacant, tax delinquent, and distressed housing in the city, and it sits just north of the downtown, its significant blight exerting a powerfully negative influence on the entire area. Left as is, the market will not conclude that areas around it are safe for reinvestment, and this includes Canton's downtown, the single most important asset in Canton.

Within Shorb are also a number of redundant alleys that can be decommissioned The eastern boundary of the neighborhood is created by the large expanses of (mostly vacant) parking lots broken up by scattered office buildings.

The strategies for the Shorb neighborhood include:

- Reinvesting in the homes of owners with a commitment to the neighborhood.
- Removing the blighted conditions on Shorb Avenue. This could be done by acquiring the distressed, vacant and delinquent properties, clearing them, and then installing temporary landscaping and holding the consolidated properties for eventual redevelopment. The interim condition could be 7-8 blocks of "parkway" character.
- In the SE quadrant, working west and north from 6th-High Streets, it could be beneficial to the market to acquire, assemble, and redevelop block-sections (both sides of the street wherever possible) into a variety of density types: town homes, small apartments, and single family homes (on larger lots).
- A similar strategy could be applied working south and eastward from the 12th-Fulton intersection, focusing on redeveloping/rehabilitating key homes along Fulton Road as well as the blocks faces on streets perpendicular to Fulton Road.
- A new pocket park west of Fulton Road could provide walk-to recreation (Monument Park is actually cut off by the railroad tracks and creek), as well as a focal point for this neighborhood.
- Decommissioning the redundant alleys in the northern tier of the neighborhood will help reduce the city's road maintenance costs, if the community believes this makes sense.

Downtown Canton

Roughly 9,400 people work in downtown Canton, making it almost twice as large, in employment, as the city's largest employer (Aultman Health Foundation). If downtown Canton – during daytime working hours – were an independent city, it would be larger than 30 percent of Ohio's communities. These workers are a captive market for downtown businesses, representing at least $48 million in annual retail market demand. It has a strong core of historic commercial buildings offering four great benefits:

1. Concentration and contiguity: Together, downtown Canton's buildings create a dense, easy-to-navigate district that promotes walkability, multiple uses, and business clustering and that facilitates business and entrepreneurial collaboration.
2. Unique visual identity: Together, downtown Canton's historic buildings help create a unique visual identity for the district and community. This is particularly appealing to Millennials and creative-economy businesses – and particularly vital in attracting younger workers
3. Adaptable for many types of uses: Historically, downtown commercial buildings have been used for many different types of businesses. A building that once housed a blacksmith's shop might now be a florist; a bank might now be a restaurant; a upper floor of offices might now be apartments. Their adaptability makes older downtown buildings an important asset as a community's economy evolves over time to meet new needs and pursue new opportunities.
4. Affordably adaptable for new purposes: The availability of federal and state historic rehabilitation tax credits, and federal New Markets tax credits, makes rehabilitation of older and historic downtown buildings a more financially attractive alternative to building new commercial or mixed-use buildings elsewhere.

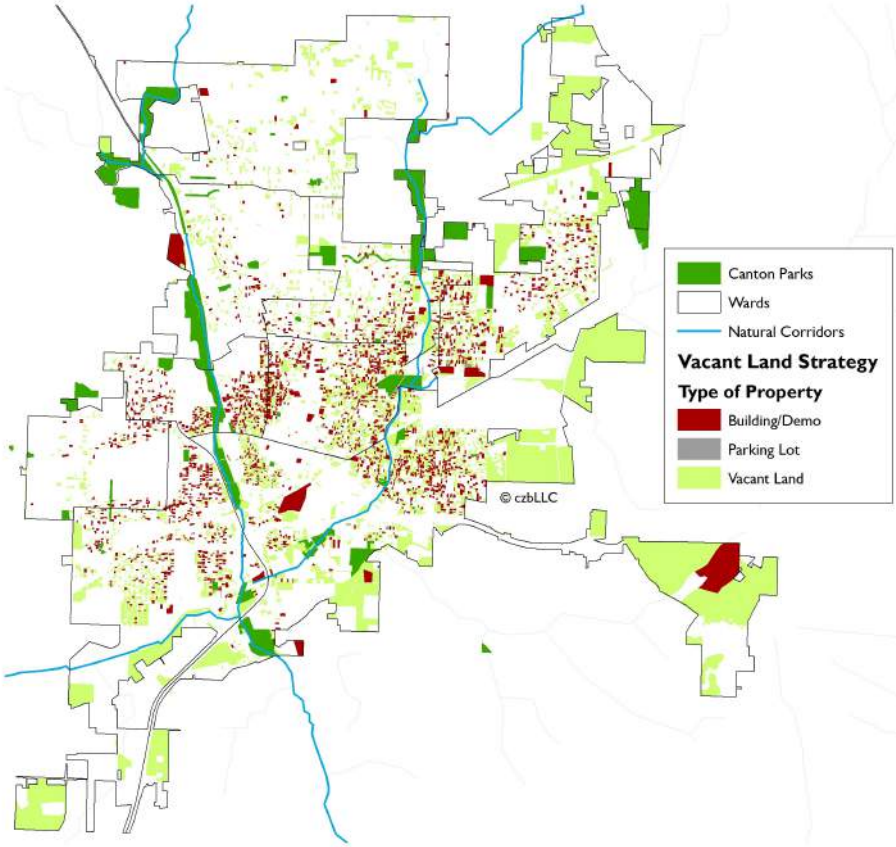
Downtown has a broad mix of uses. Downtown Canton includes public- and private-sector offices, retail businesses, small industries (and some larger ones), arts institutions, entertainment venues, nonprofit organizations, religious institutions, restaurants, sports facilities, public assembly space, and many other uses. It is the city's most walkable district, with the greatest potential of all the city's commercial districts and corridors to be economically self-sustaining.

The recommended strategies for Downtown include

- Consider implementing the 2012 Downtown Plan (rev.)
- Invest as feasible in infrastructure and establishment of a hierarchy of spaces within downtown, culminating at Market Square
- Create new housing downtown when possible. New residents create new market demand for retail businesses, offices, restaurants, arts institutions, religious institutions, and entertainment venues, augmenting the market demand already generated by downtown workers and visitors. They also make building rehabilitation and ongoing maintenance more profitable for property owners, supplementing rents from ground-floor retail, restaurant, and office uses. Almost all downtown buildings could make use of federal and state historic rehabilitation tax credits and, while still available, federal New Markets tax credits.
- Consider adopting a comprehensive downtown business development strategy, supported by local government and a critical mass of downtown property owners. The business development strategy could be based on concentrations of businesses eventually grouped in several nodes throughout the district, including nodes that primarily provide commercial activities for downtown workers, that serve as entertainment hubs, and that cultivate small, creative-economy industries. The downtown business development strategy could be widely disseminated, reviewed with all downtown property owners, and supported by local government, nonprofit organizations involved in economic development, area realtors, commercial lenders, and others actively involved in business development.
- Possible make a strong commitment to funnel new development into the downtown, rather than allowing it to spill into outlying areas. Just as with residential development, Canton suffers from a glut of commercial centers. Proximity to other businesses is essential for almost all businesses, making it possible for them to benefit from shared visibility and foot traffic. In order to stanch the glut of commercial space, it is essential that the community – local government, private-sector developers, community development organizations – make a strong commitment to funnel new commercial development into the downtown area and that they back up this commitment with a robust set of financial and regulatory tools and incentives.
- When feasible and appropriate, make adequate capital available for small business development and expansion. Canton, Stark County, and the State of Ohio make capital available for business development, but almost all of these capital sources favor development of larger businesses, not small ones. Nationally, most new business growth and new jobs come from small business development. To support and accelerate downtown business development, it will be essential to make adequate capital available for small business development and expansion.

2. Areas Needing to be Repurposed or Converted to Productive Use

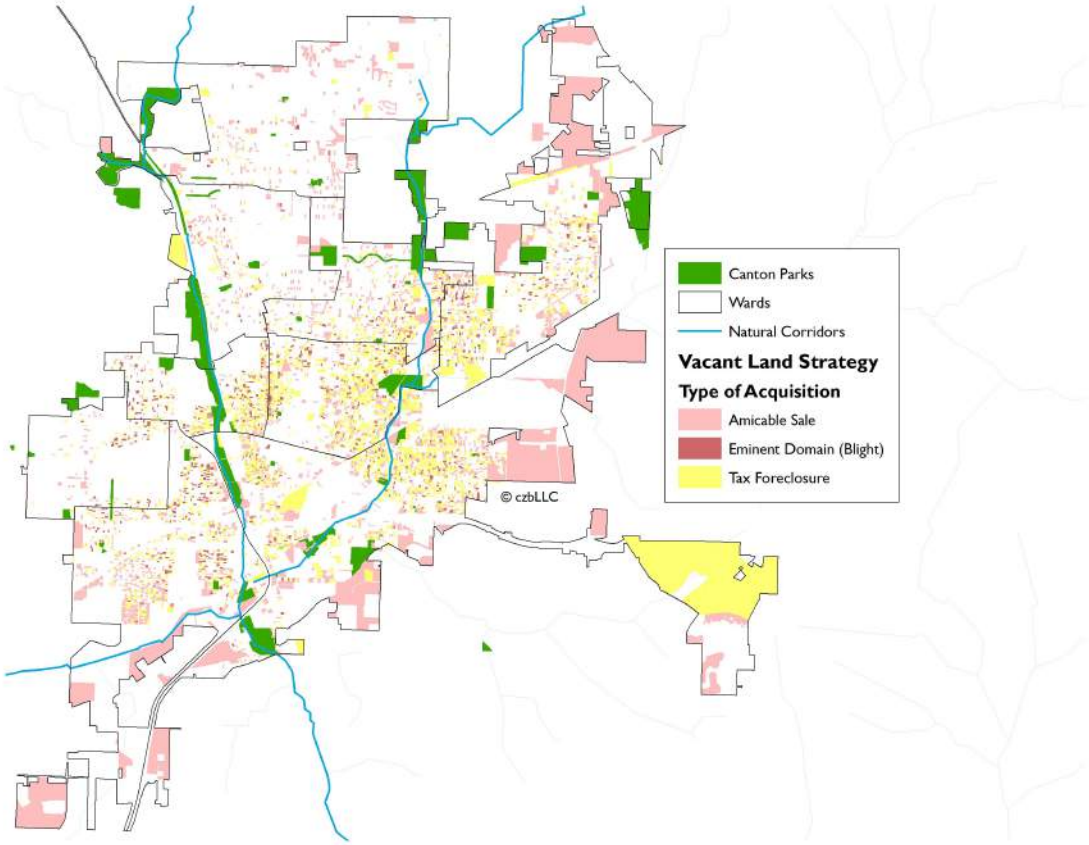
The work facing Canton requires that the city's vital organs be protected and nurtured back to health as the highest priority. But it also requires that a large area – 20.8% - of the city be stabilized.



Today there are 210.8 acres of vacant land and parcels with tax delinquent properties that adjoin streams and highways should be converted to natural corridors, giving visual and other relief to the city.

There are also thousands of tax delinquent as well as vacant residential properties and also vacant industrial and commercial land that, when assembled constitutes another 2,000 acres suitable for urban agriculture assembly, and, as such, represent a profoundly important opportunity for the city to both obtain control over troubled sites and create entrepreneurial options for many.

Of greater value to the community from a resident leadership development point of view and from the perspective of facilitating stabilization in residential areas – especially those most challenged – is the **opportunity to convert 982 acres of small vacant residential parcels or distressed or tax delinquent residential properties**.

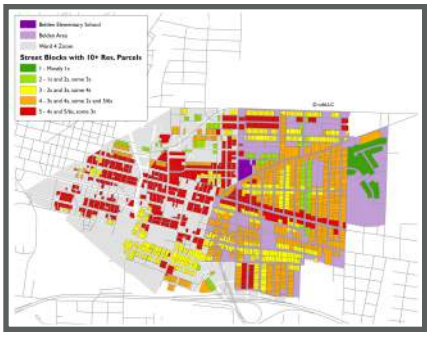


Through scaled and highly targeted acquisition and demolition when needed, coupled with stewardship agreements between owners and the city, thousands of vacant lots and distressed houses can become community assets through concerted, disciplined cleaning and greening efforts. In some cases ownership may remain unchanged where owners agree to permit the city to clean and green. In others, acquisition and demolition – done strategically – might also create assets. The combination of new natural corridor space and new space for urban agriculture along with cleaned and greened lots throughout the city can potentially transform flood plain and blight into important community assets with tremendous payoffs towards stability. Each can become an opportunity for resident leaders to come together in the work of future stewardship and subsequent transformation of adjoining residential areas into healthy neighborhoods over time.

While work is occurring to protect the city's core assets, work can also occur to convert distressed and tax delinquent properties to interim stable condition. Through a combination of amicable sales by the city and its agents, tax foreclosure and partnership with the County Land Bank, and other measures, large amounts of land can first be controlled then held for future use and in the interim, maintained in a neutral condition to protect property values.

3. Neighborhood Areas

Canton cannot survive economically if the Core Targeted Investment Areas are not stabilized and heavily invested in. But while the core of Aultman-HOFV-Mercy-Shorb-Downtown-Timken are the city's vital economic organs, Canton is comprised of dozens of neighborhoods where family life must remain rich and where economic vitality must be a priority, too.



A dilemma facing Canton is that the cost of properly revitalizing the vital organs is such that hard choices need to be made about priorities across the balance of the city. To achieve eventual citywide vitality, investments of public resources must be married with investments aimed at growing community capacity.

This is best done according to the exact same planning principles and with a commitment to the exact same guiding values that serve to designate the Core. There is a substantial difference in execution, however. This plan spells out the steps to be taken to revitalize specifically-named parts of the core. While each year hence, circumstances will dictate the need for flexible revision of the intervention strategies contained here, the general thrust in the core will remain the same: protect assets by investing in the relatively strong areas around them, coupling such work with sufficient and targeted deployment of public and private resources to catch up on infrastructure and trigger private sector reinvestment confidence.

This plan, by design, does not – however – spell out the steps for stabilizing the rest of the city or specify which neighborhoods should be addressed to what level of finish in what order.

Instead, for neighborhood areas, this plan defaults to the guiding planning principles and the community's commitment to being both smart and fair on a portfolio basis. The community will have to decide – subject to resource availability – how much to spend where, and routinely revisit the issue as conditions change and market shifts dictate. There are many potential candidate areas throughout Canton. As noted, additional work will be required to identify them and coordinate their revitalization with the City's regular departmental activities, as well as non-profit groups, and local residents.

Whichever areas of Canton outside the core are selected by the community for reinvestment, investments of public dollars should be made based on the following guiding principles, leadership elements, and implementation criteria:

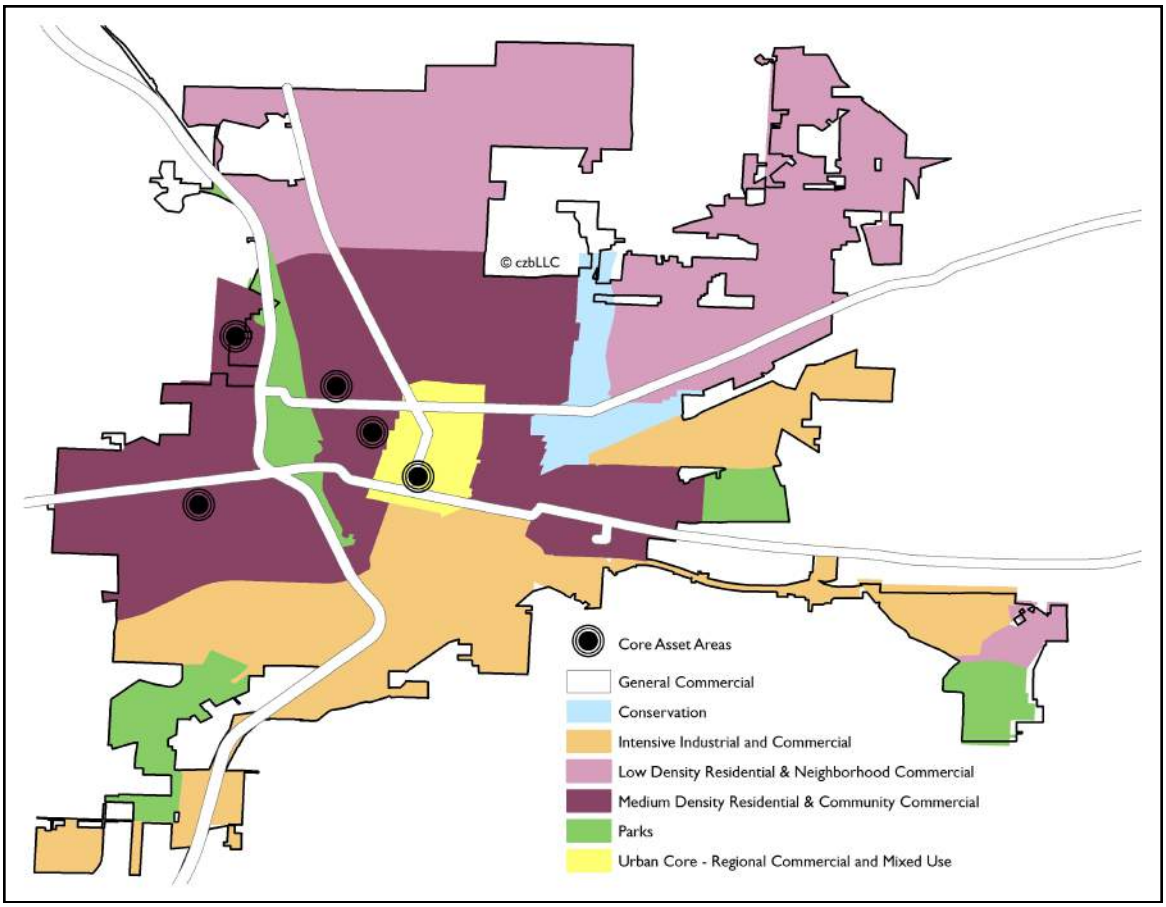
- Investments should be aimed towards right-sizing Canton's problem of excess supply. The city has excessive housing for its population, particularly excess housing that is not marketable today. The city has excessive commercial space. The city has excessive roads and alleys and parks and industrial parcels, each with a cost that exceeds the city's capacity to bring it up to date and thereafter properly manage it. So any public money deployed outside the core has to follow the same principle of aiming to right size. The addition of new supply has to receive deliberate consideration of this matter.
- Canton may stabilize if investments are geographically focused, instead of spread thinly in a diffused manner. There are more blocks than the city can afford to take care of, more need for police than the city has officers, and more need of park maintenance than the community can support.
- Any public investments outside the core have to be oriented around identified assets key to strengthening the city as a whole. That means deploying resources around important community assets like churches and schools, but always through the lens of whether "that" church or "this" school has an easily identifiable link to helping stabilize the city's economic condition. Investments should be aimed at successfully repositioning the area in question. So not only must they aim to right size, and be focused, they have to aim for economic diversity. Canton's problem of concentrated poverty cannot be improved by actions that reinforce such concentrations, so every effort must be made to economically diversify the city's neighborhoods.

In addition to targeted areas themselves that the community chooses to prioritize, when the community considers what investments to make where outside the core targeted areas, marketability and visibility also matter. For these reasons, certain intersections may be more valuable targets for consideration as priorities than others. The following are recommended for consideration:

- 12th and Fulton NW
- 25th and Fulton, NW
- Broad and 13th, NW
- Tuscarawa and Maryland, SW
- Harrison and 6th, SW
- Tuscarawa and Harrison, SW
- Tuscarawa and Brown, NW

For the above intersections, consideration might be given to connecting them to specific, focused efforts the community decides should occur in certain neighborhoods. A key to maximizing the impact of scarce resources is - whenever possible - to avoid the act of "orphaning" an area, be it a new school or a new housing development or a refurbished park. The above intersections have to make "connective sense" which means that if the community decides to invest in upgrading a given intersection or corridor, the selected site(s) should meaningfully connect to other investment activities, whether capital such as infrastructure or resident leadership development.

In the course of implementation, there will be competing challenges requiring attention on an on-going basis. Sometimes future challenges will be about the future land uses in a particular part of Canton.



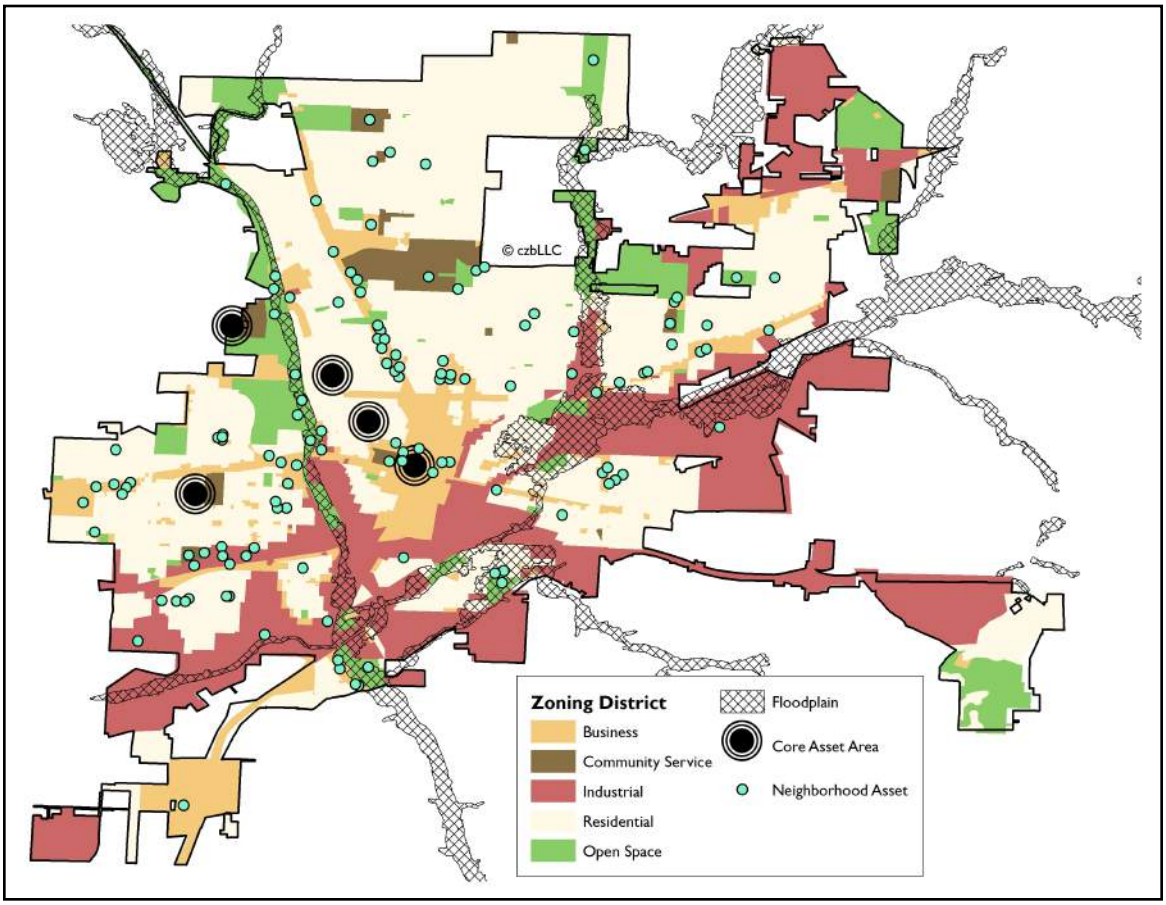
Canton, like most cities that matured at the turn of the 19th century and boomed through the second world war, grew outwardly, and settled in layers. Future redevelopment will have to reckon with the disposition challenges and costs of leveraging or other coping with existing and often obsolete property. Where intensive industrial and commercial uses are shown above, residential development is not optimal, and vice versa.

Departure from the above general designations should occur when the result is both fair and smart, resulting in a stronger Canton fiscally, a more socio economically diverse Canton, and a Canton more poised to compete in the region for a fair share of strong working and middle income households and growing businesses.

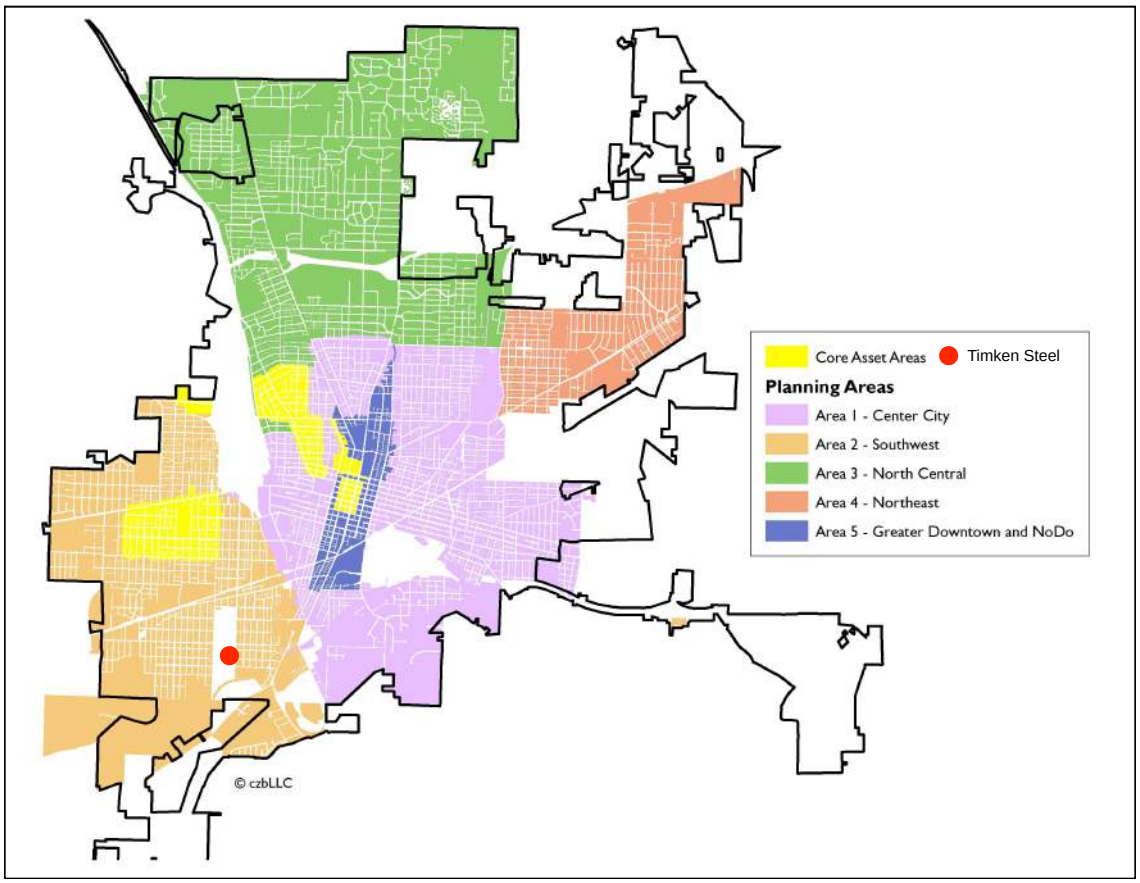
In general, where medium density residential and related commercial uses are shown, migration to low density infill is discouraged. Where flood plain designations undermine the value of real estate, development is strongly discouraged. This is a strategic comprehensive plan for guiding Canton's redevelopment. Residential quality of life is one of the most important aims that the community must pursue. Sometimes future challenges will about the

specific zoning designation of a specific parcel. In all cases, market conditions will have an outsize role.

Redevelopment in the neighborhoods should be oriented around assets - churches and thriving neighborhood businesses, well attended social clubs and parks that are in frequent use and well cared for, community centers and ballfields and high performing schools.



To help guide decision-making for strengthening the city's neighborhoods and doing so with limited resources, this plan breaks the city down into five sections referred to as PLANNING AREAS.



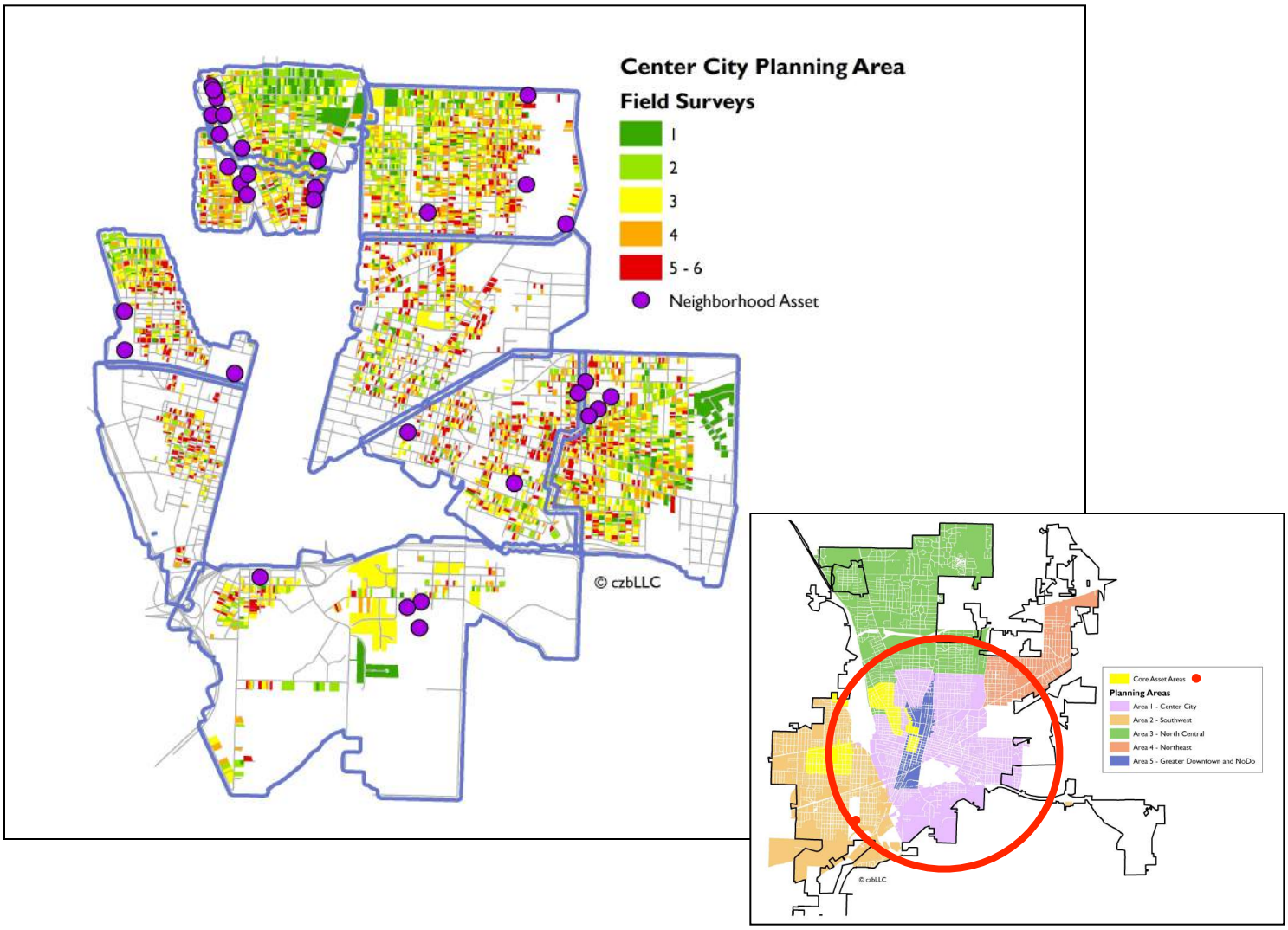
In each section of the city, calculations were made to estimate the costs of moving weak blocks (in terms of market conditions and resulting values) into a more stable condition, moderately stable blocks into a genuinely stable condition, and stable blocks into healthy circumstances. Assumptions were then calculated on an iterative basis, modeling the effect of positive intervention prompting reinvestment in a self fulfilling virtuous manner opposite of solidified current disinvestment trends.[1]

The first are those Center City neighborhoods in PLANNING AREA 1 (minus the blocks in the Shorb area and the Mercy Area (which this plan addresses as part of the Core Targeted Invested Areas).

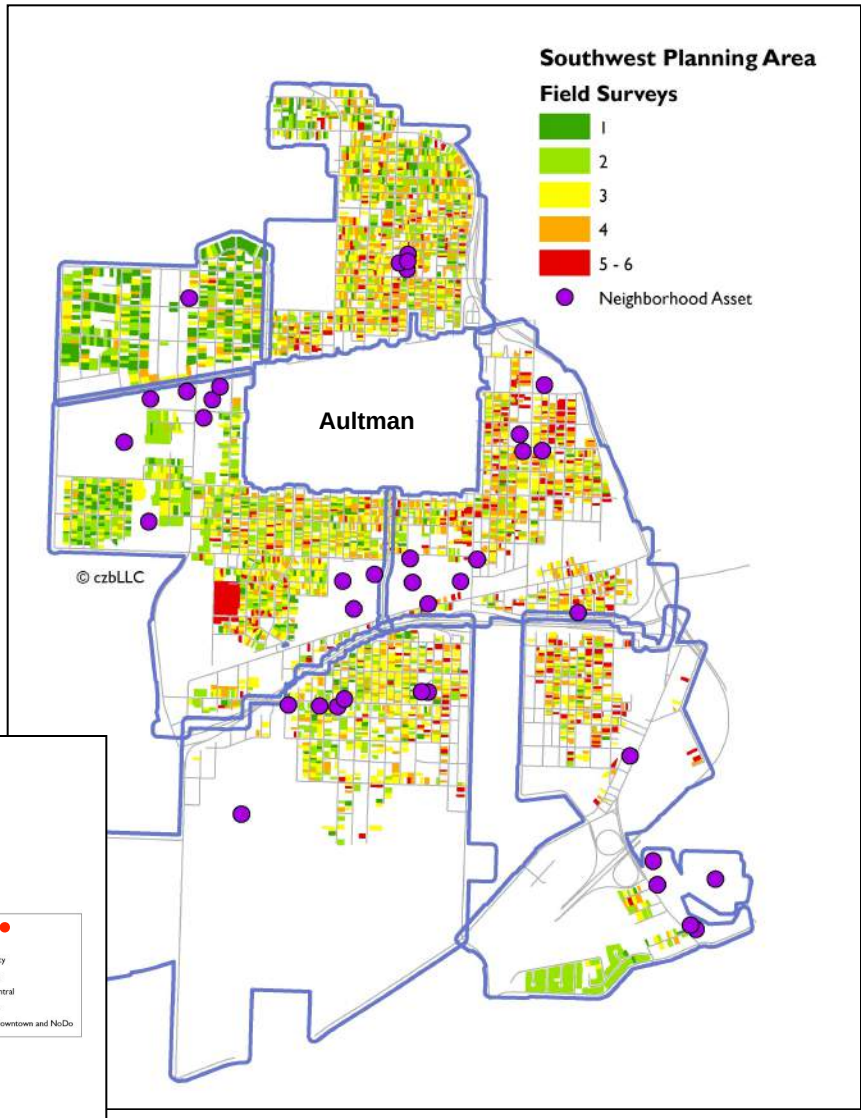
They are Belden East and Belden West, Brick Roads, Gibbs, Greater O'Jays, North Central, Old Southwest, Sherrick SE, and West Park. These are the oldest and most challenged of Canton's neighborhoods, with housing stocks typically smaller and more frequently in troubled condition. The redevelopment of these neighborhoods will take a long time to result in market stability, much less market strength, so interventions need to take account of the costs not just in dollars but in time, complexity and opportunity. In these neighborhoods the severe challenge of handling thousands of transactions to address foreclosure, tax delinquency,

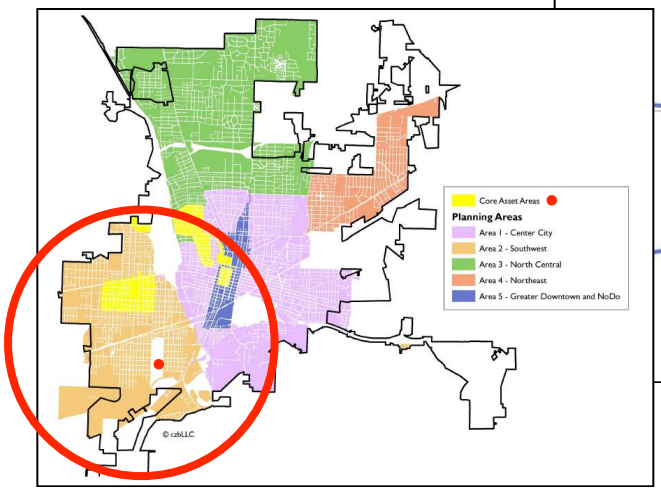
abandonment, and blight will necessitate creative partnerships with the county land bank, constant vigilance regarding positive redevelopment impacts on downtown, on crime, and on blight, and disturbing impacts on vulnerable populations. A balance will have to be sought.

It is estimated that $21.8M would be needed to minimally stabilize all of the blocks of all of these Center City neighborhoods, and $35.2M would be needed to bring all of these neighborhoods back to a marketable condition. For $11.65M, it is estimated that all of the 2,773 blighted properties and vacant lots could be acquired and demolished and subsequent greened. Such aspirations come with considerable expense. It is recommended that the decision about which properties to strategically address in what order be made by the new by the community itself working with the city's staff, planning commission, and city council which together would determine which areas require attention at what moment in time.



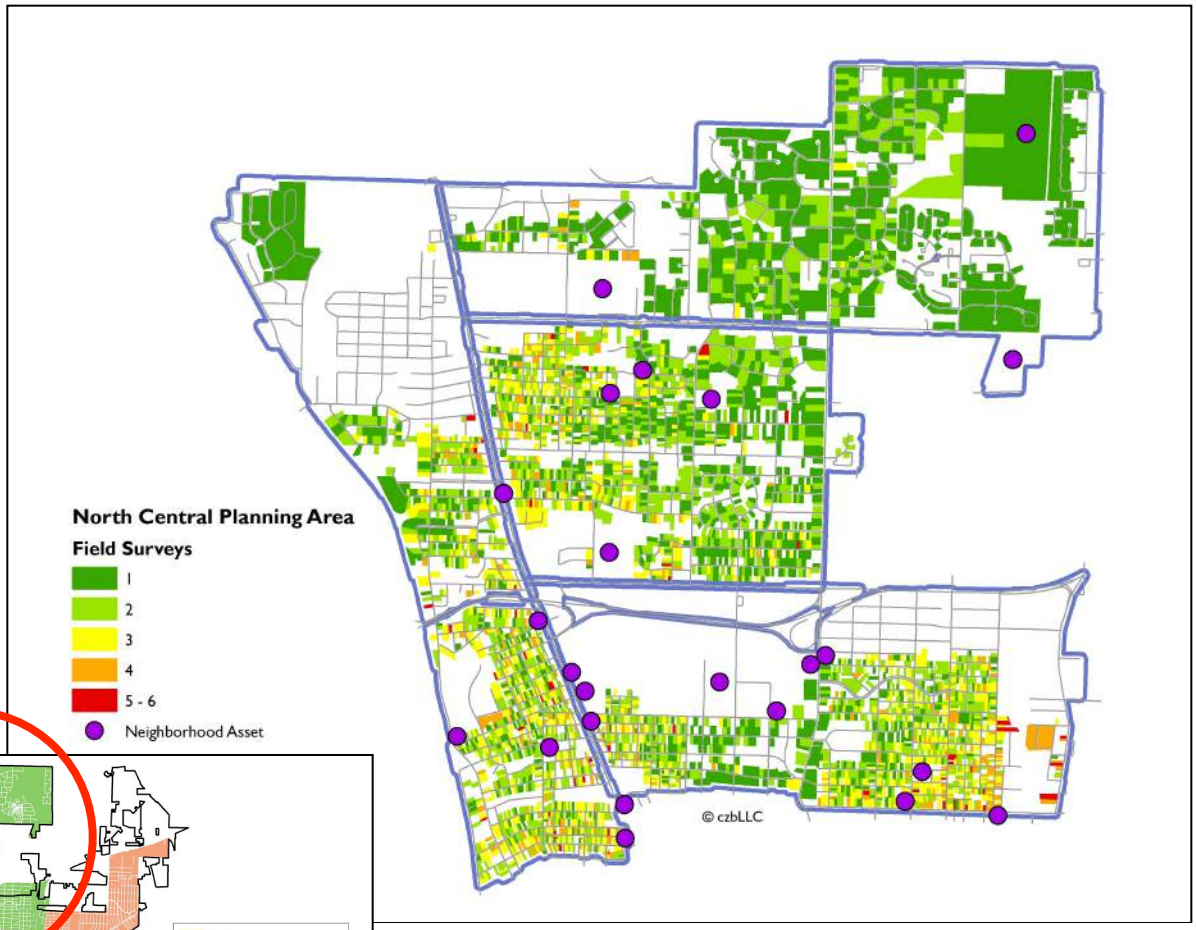
The second are those neighborhoods in Southwest Canton, in PLANNING AREA 2 (minus the blocks around Aultman Hospital.

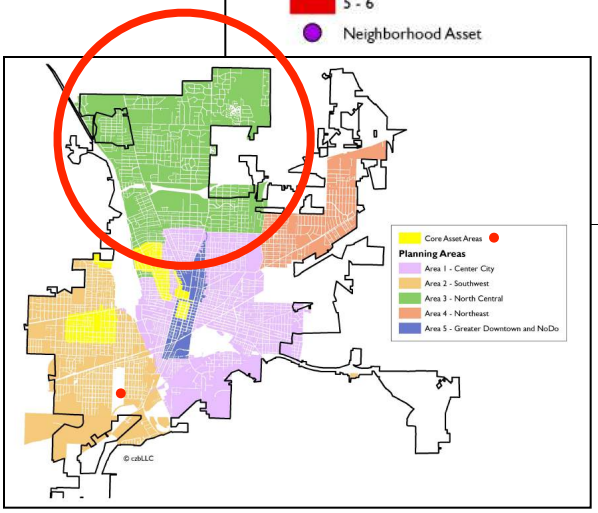




This area includes the Fairgrounds neighborhood, Harter Heights, and other Southwest residential blocks. It is estimated that $12.7M would be needed to minimally stabilize all of the blocks of all of these Southwest neighborhoods, and $35.9M would be needed to bring all of these neighborhoods back to a marketable condition. For $6.6M, it is estimated that all of the 1,125 blighted properties and vacant lots could be acquired and demolished and subsequent greened. Such aspirations come with considerable expense. It is recommended that the decision about which properties to strategically address in what order be made by the new by the community itself working with the city's staff, planning commission, and city council which together would determine which areas require attention at what moment in time.

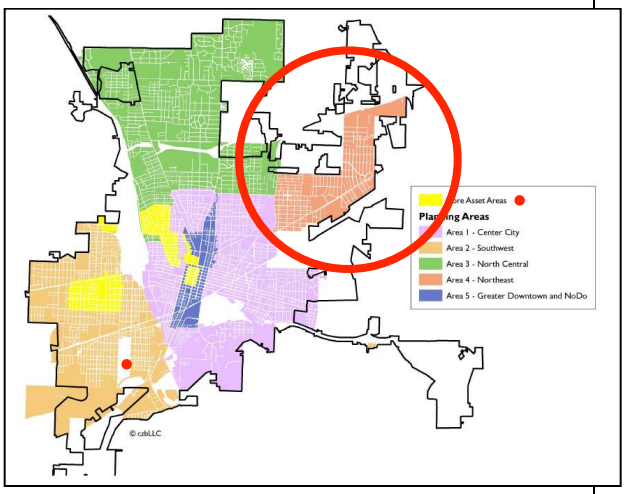
The third area are those neighborhoods in North Central Canton (PLANNING AREA 3) hat constitute the strongest part of the city's residential real estate market. Improvement of a small number of negative image causing properties will have a significant positive impact and at very little cost.

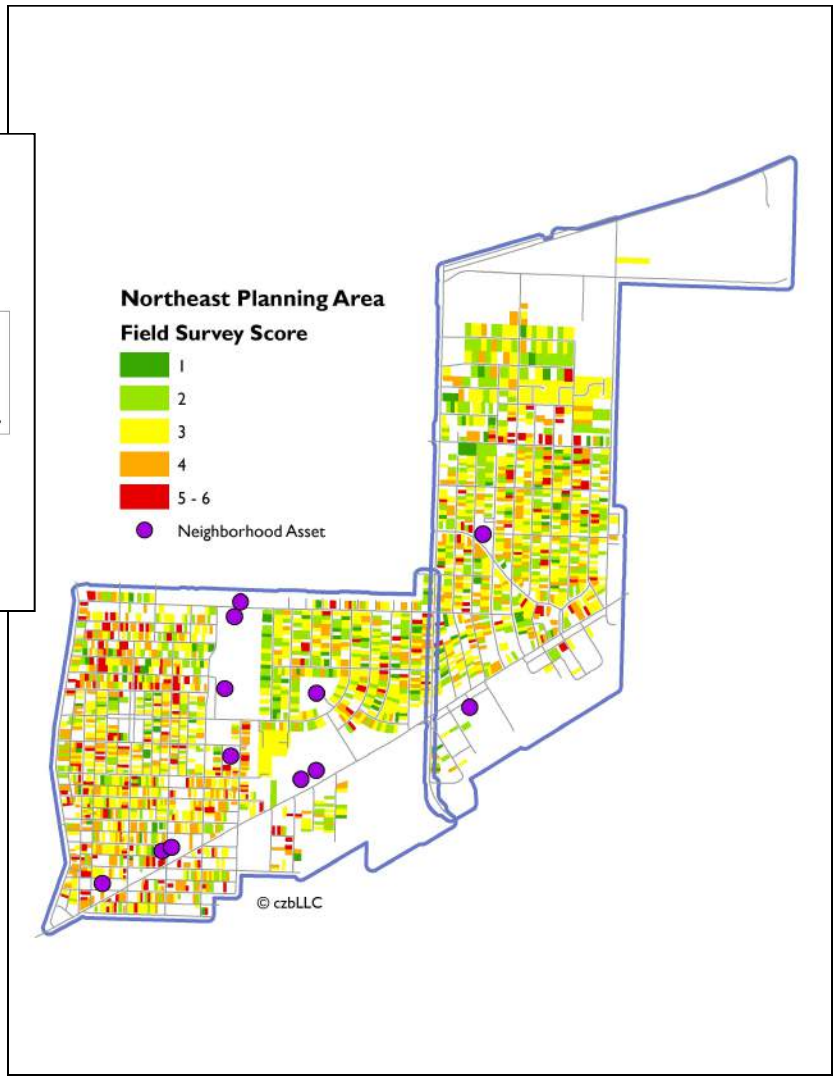




This area includes the Cleveland Corridor neighborhoods, North Ends neighborhoods, and West Park. $7.8M would be needed to minimally stabilize all of the blocks of all of these Northeast neighborhoods, and $12.7M would be needed to bring all of these neighborhoods back to a marketable condition. For $7.1M, it is estimated that all of the 719 blighted properties and vacant lots could be acquired and demolished and subsequent greened. Such aspirations come with considerable expense. It is recommended that the decision about which properties to strategically address in what order be made by the new by the community itself working with the city's staff, planning commission, and city council which together would determine which areas require attention at what moment in time.

The fourth area are those neighborhoods in Northeast (PLANNING AREA 4) that constitute the part of the city's residential real estate market developed mainly between 1940 and 1980. This area includes the residential blocks around Crenshaw and Madge Youtz schools and those along Mahoning Road.





It is estimated that $7.9M would be needed to minimally stabilize all of the blocks of all of these Southwest neighborhoods, and $20.6M would be needed to bring all of these neighborhoods back to a marketable condition. For $4.9M, it is estimated that all of the 855 blighted properties and vacant lots could be acquired and demolished and subsequent greened. Such aspirations come with considerable expense. It is recommended that the decision about which properties to strategically address in what order be made by the new by the community itself working with the city's staff, planning commission, and city council which together would determine which areas require attention at what moment in time.

The bottom line on the city's neighborhoods is contained in the following summary table.

Planning Area	Area	Minimum Clean Up on 100% of Blocks	Stabilize 100% of Blocks	Revitalize 100% of Blocks
1	Center City	$11.6M	$21.8M	$35.2M
2	Southwest Canton	$6.6M	$12.7M	$35.9M
3	North Central	$7.1M	$7.8M	$12.7M
4	Northeast	$4.9M	$7.9M	$20.6M
		$30.2M	$50.2M	$104.4M

Consequently, every penny the community has on hand - regardless of the source of those funds - less than $104.4M for these areas of the city alone - *even without yet counting Downtown, the area around Aultman, the Shorb Corridor, or the Mercy Area, or the connecting roads linking these Core Assets* - choices will have to be made about where to start work, and what to leave for another day. Aspirations come with expense. It is therefore recommended that the decision about which properties to strategically address in what order be made by the new by the community itself working with the city's staff, planning commission, and city council which together would determine which areas require attention at what moment in time.

Summary of Intervention

It is expected that a new system for decision making may be needed and that the foundation for those future decisions is contained in this plan. It is expected that as market conditions change and progress is made, new organizations possibly created to implement this plan will make adjustments to strategy. It is recommended that such adjustments continue to reflect the principles and values contained in this plan, or that they be amended accordingly.

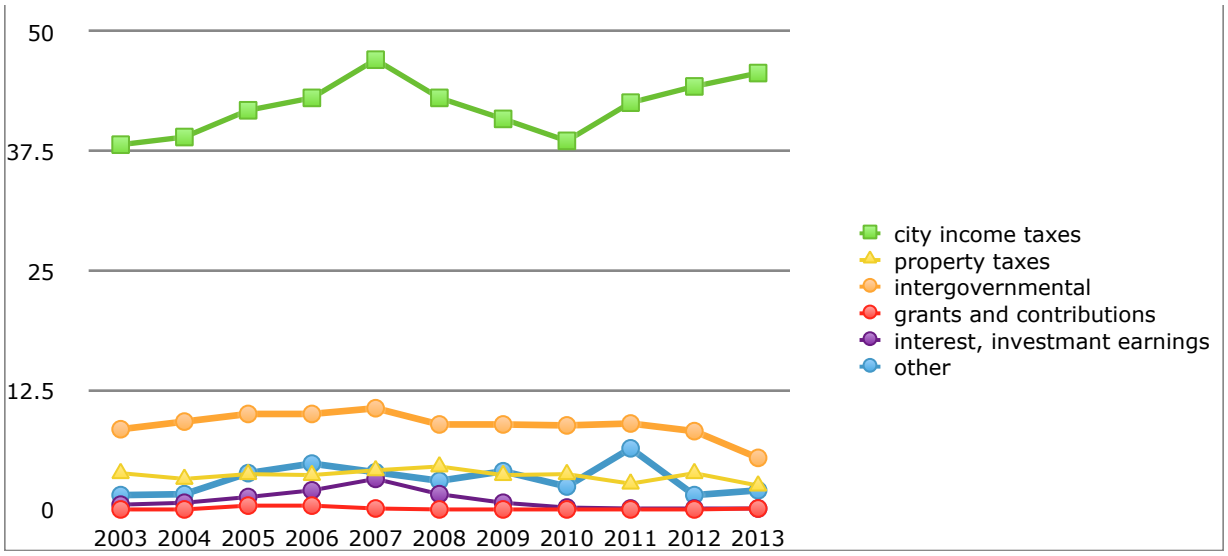
In sum, the city's core assets - its Downtown, Timken Steel, and major neighborhood-anchoring assets like the Hall of Fame and the city's two hospitals - need to be protected by large scale redevelopment efforts aimed at repositioning Canton to succeed in the region. It is recommended this work be carried out with a mixture of public and private funds over a sustained period of time. This plan does not stipulate what the right balance of public versus private dollars should be, or their origin. That, like the amount raised and how prioritized and deployed, is up to the community. In any event, core assets need to be connected over time so that a true area of concentrated strength emerges.

Parallel to the work on the core, the city's flood plain and other properties are in need of repurposing may require attention. It is recommended this be carried out with public funds totaling and also occur over a period of times. It is not possible to predict the cost of acquisitions years in advance, and much of these investments will overlap with on-going core asset and neighborhood work. And parallel to both core asset revitalization and troubled property repurposing, the city's 26 neighborhoods must be strengthened in a strategic manner and it is recommended that this work be resident led.

Notes and Analysis

Revenue

Canton's largest, by far, source of revenue is income tax. For example, Figure 5.1 below shows the relative proportions of Canton's various revenue sources over a 10-year period:



Source: Canton Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports

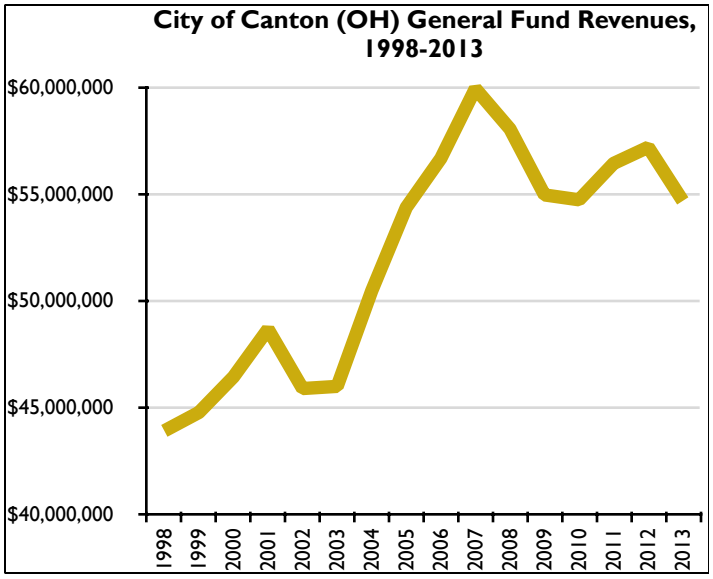
The general fund collects roughy $55M annually. Enterprise funds (covering sewer and water) collect around $151M for a total revenue of about $206M.

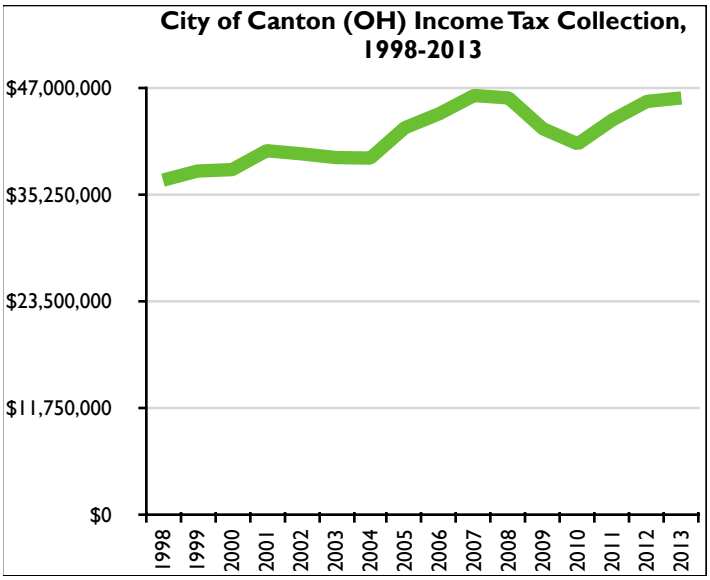
Like all cities in Ohio, Canton's primary source of revenue for the General Fund (excluding Enterprise funds that charge their own fees for services) is income tax. Canton's income tax (2%) is levied first on where people work, and second on where people live.

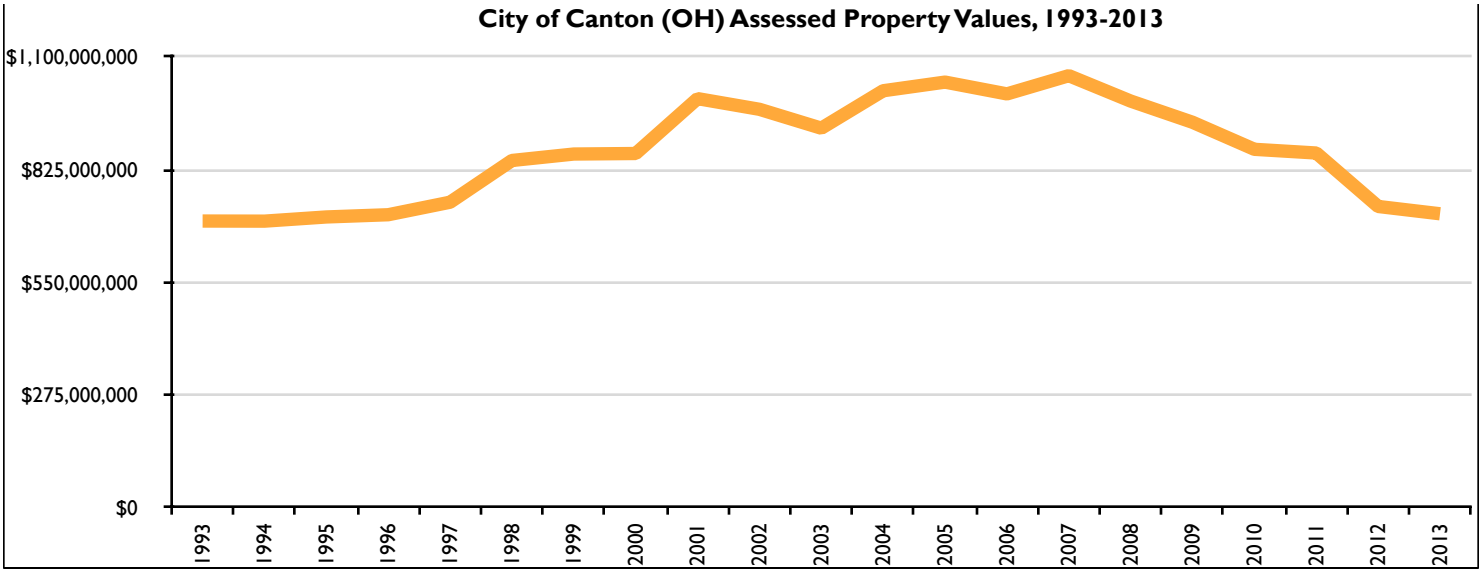
People who work in Canton, whether they live in the city or commute in, pay 2% income tax to Canton. People who live in Canton, but who work elsewhere, pay Canton 2% minus any income tax they pay where they work. Therefore, in jurisdictions that don't have an income tax, Canton receives all 2%. However, in jurisdictions that do have an income tax, depending on how much those areas levy, Canton may receive anywhere from .5% (if the other jurisdiction levies 1.5%) to 0% (if the other jurisdiction levies the full 2%). This means that for those who live in Canton but work elsewhere, Canton provides city services without receiving much, if any, income tax to pay for those services[2]. Fortunately, Canton is a major employment center in the region, and many more people commute in to work, than do commute out.

Dependence on income tax, and the policy implications that creates, are not likely to change without major state-level initiative. How income tax is shared between communities can be adjusted somewhat by Canton, but it is a highly charged political issue. The reality for now is, if there is a desire in the Canton community to increase the City's income, there will have be a focus on income tax.

The most impact on revenues will result from an increase in the number of people that work, and live in Canton, especially those with higher incomes, and that means that employers have to be able to retain these workers and be successful recruiting wise in the future.

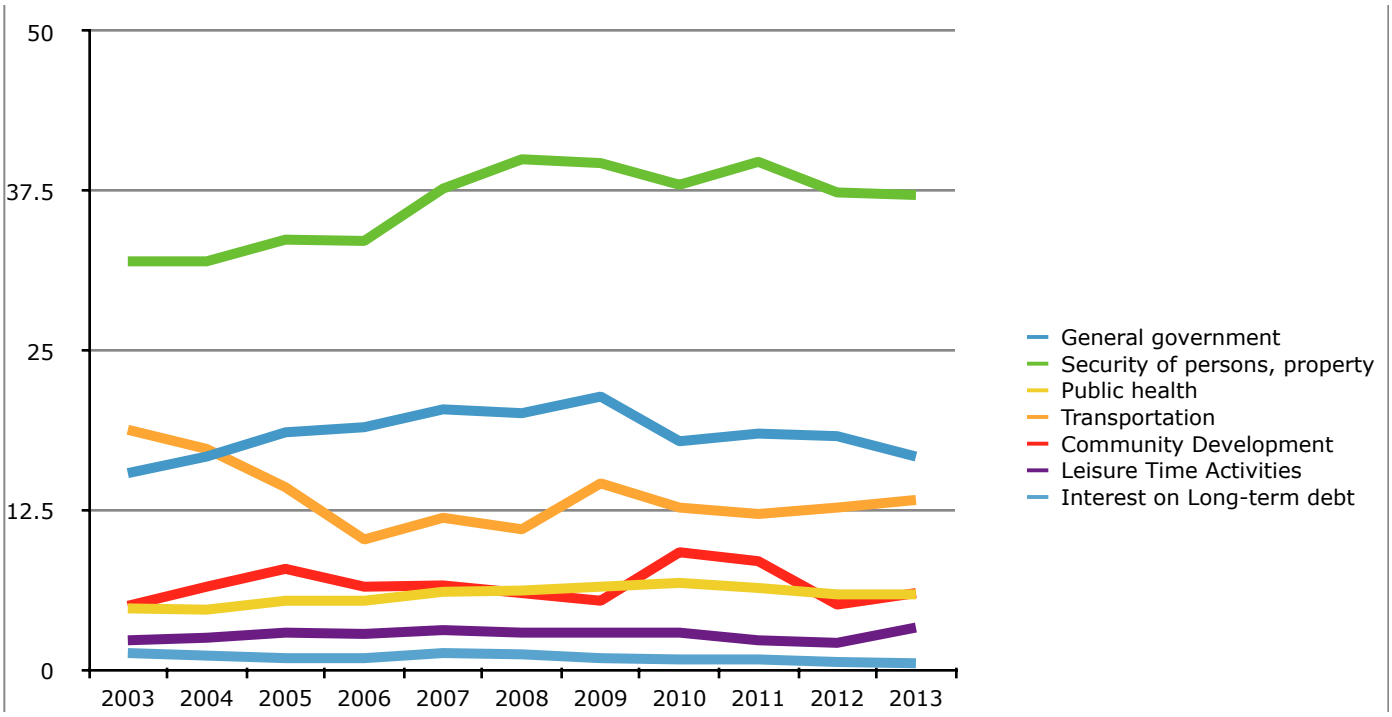


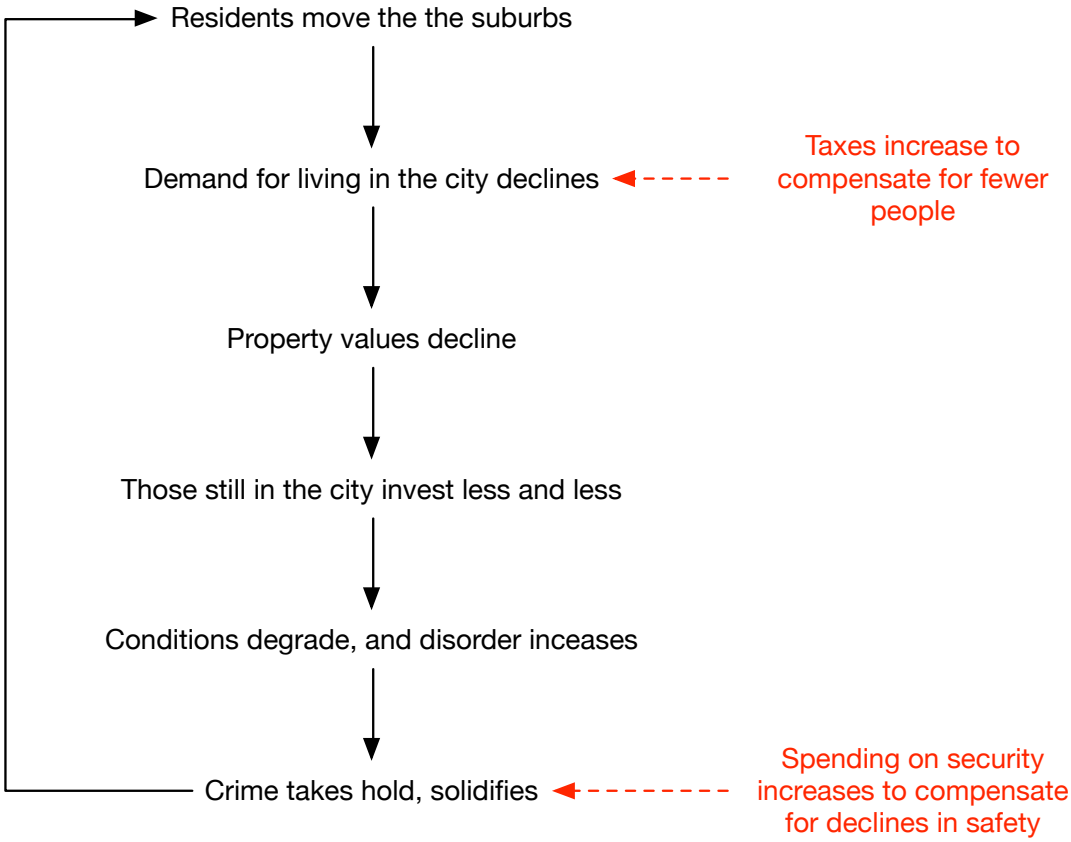




Spending

The below diagram illustrates City expenditure patterns from 2003 to 2013.





The security budget (police and fire protection) grew the most, and consumes the largest share of the City budget. This is a reflection of increasing levels of disorder across the city, especially in Canton's more troubled neighborhoods as well as in formerly vibrant but presently fallow industrial and blighted commercial areas. Increased levels of disorder mean higher costs for public safety. Spending on public safety is a perpetually losing proposition until underlying distress and consequential disorder are tamed. Decades of focus around *responding and reacting to rising crime* instead of investing in growing demand have helped produce a self-fulfilling negative feedback loop in Canton that may now require attention.

History

Canton was one of the entrepreneurial centers of the previous century. For the auto industry it was the equivalent of what today's "Silicon Valley" is to the technology sector. Canton was home to "makers" - people who knew how to forge, mill, bolt, and assemble. Like Silicon Valley is today, these skills in Canton were unique and commanded high wages. As Canton grew in prosperity and population, its footprint grew as well, somewhat in size, but more so in density. As Canton expanded it also grew inward, with increasing densities of families serviced by alleys and courts between streets, avenues, and roads.

In 1950 at the city's height, Canton had a fairly well-matched supply of homes for its population, as well as sidewalks and parks and streets and shops and jobs and factories. Canton fairly efficiently used its roughly 30 square miles. It had jobs and houses near those jobs. There were places to shop. Churches. Social clubs. Parks. And a vibrant downtown. By 1950 Canton was the 8th largest city in Ohio, with nearly 120,000 people. Today, Canton remains the 8th largest of Ohio's 250 cities, but now has a population of about 70,000. As manufacturing gradually went overseas seeking cheaper labor, Canton began to experience a long, slow jobs decline. As foreign markets flooded the US with less expensive goods, prices in the US fell and labor cuts were inevitable.

With the jobs decline came a gradual decline in housing demand. Canton households stopped maintaining homes to the same level of standards as in earlier generations. Many of the homes built from 1890 to 1920 were not well built to begin with. But starting in the early 1950s, as housing was built in Jackson Township and North Canton, the older homes in Canton, being close to rail yards and factories, were not especially easy to market to an emerging middle class that was growing distinct from the city's pre-war working class roots.

The rise of the automobile that Canton helped produce gave America unprecedented freedom to travel—to live, to work, and to shop. This in turn played a major role in the growth of the suburbs. More and more middle class Canton families chose to buy in the suburbs, and these trends eventually led to a growing appetite in the suburbs for their own restaurants and shops, and eventually businesses. Decreasing demand to live in Canton preceded decreasing demand to shop and recreate in Canton. Of course, this was occurring in every industrial city in the United States; Canton was not alone. And, it was also a trend that was not especially easy to see. From 1950 to 1960 Canton only lost about three families a week, a number hardly noticeable. It would not be until the period 1970-1990 when, on average, the exodus was easier to see.

From 1975 to today, Canton has declined in population and in socioeconomic strength. Population-wise, the the region has stayed about the same, suggesting that at least some of the population exiting Canton has either been relocating within the region or has been offset by

others moving into the region (but not into Canton itself) from elsewhere. Today Canton has lower numbers of families with elementary-aged children with children in school in Canton (over 6,000 enrolled in 2000, down to approximately 4,500 in 2014). The number of families headed by a single parent rose from 47.7% to 60.4% from 2000-2012. Throughout most of southern Canton, Census poverty tracks are well in excess of 40% in 2012 (a poverty rate of 20% is considered high; 40% is considered extreme). One in three Canton families are classified as low-income. 57% of Canton households earn less than $35,000 a year, compared to 32% of Stark County households. As a result, Canton has lost income tax revenue, but also, perhaps more significantly, it has lost significant numbers of strong households with the ability to buy, *and maintain*, homes. Meanwhile, property standards have been significantly declining for decades.

Consequence

Population loss overall combined with reductions in average household income mean that Canton today has less revenue than it needs to keep up with the costs of managing the city on a day to day basis. Road maintenance and storm water management costs, housing market maintenance and reinvestment, and government services alike all have been cut over the years. The aggregate consequence is substantial, representing a combination of negative home equity, significant tax delinquency, and abandoned, and poorly maintained homes. As these exist in the context of carrying costs for old infrastructure, on-going “keep up” costs, and the opportunity cost of not investing in the long term, the challenges are not minor.

Applying the Plan to Canton’s Challenges

Residential Existing

Canton’s vacant and problem properties are not evenly distributed. They occur in varying degrees in different parts of the city. The variation is a continuum, from largely vacant with a few occupied homes surrounded by vacant homes or lots, to the other extreme of largely intact neighborhoods with every home occupied and well-maintained. Since the different conditions require different strategies, they can be broken down into three categories:

- Low vacancy/delinquency/distress
- Medium vacancy/delinquency/distress
- High vacancy/delinquency/distress

Where there is low vacancy amid distress, there is the probability of an urban scale recovery with a relatively moderate commitment of resources. This is not atypical of block conditions in the vicinity of Aultman Hospital.

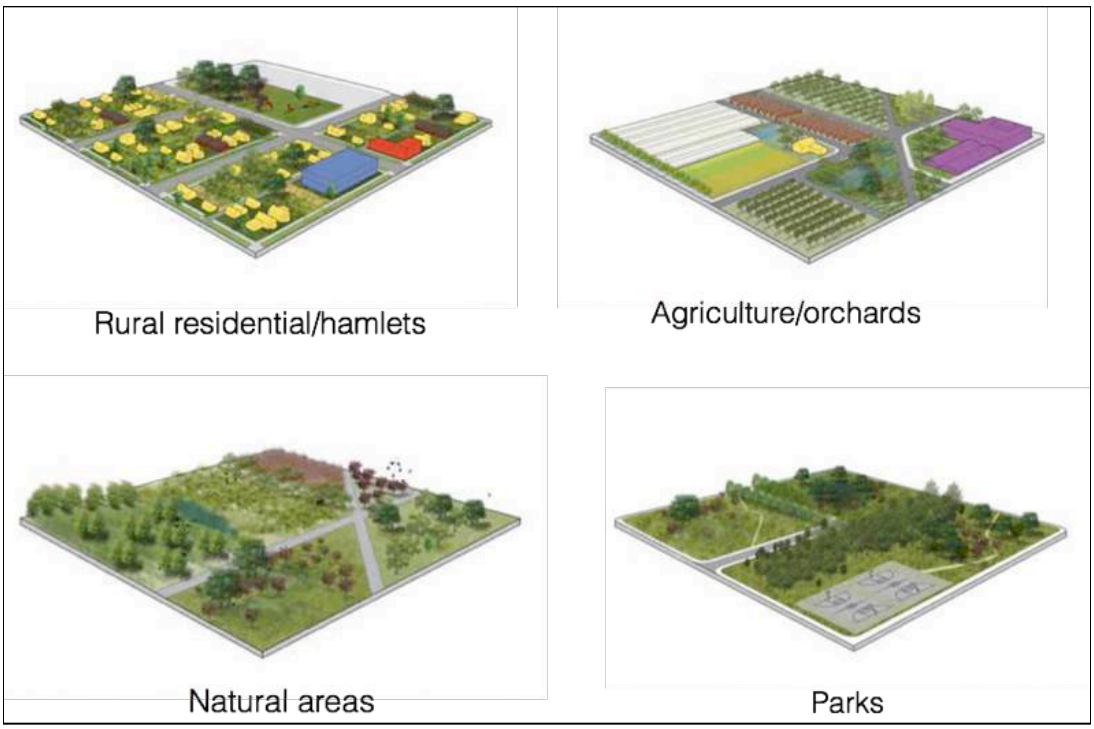
Where there is medium vacancy amid distress, a judgment call is needed, and will be influenced by the presence or absence of a genuine (marketable) asset in the immediate proximity. When absent, a medium vacancy block amid distress will often be too costly to recover; a better bet is often to stabilize the block instead of trying to revitalize it.

In those cases where there is high vacancy (of structures or lots) and distress, new investment will rarely be justifiable unless there is a compromised asset in the victim that the city cannot afford to lose This is the case with the area around Shorb Avenue. The best course in this case will be redevelopment and when not near an asset of citywide importance, conversion to natural spaces.

Residential Potential

Only a small percentage of Canton's vacant properties are likely to see redevelopment. Therefore, any strategy for revitalization must address the larger interim challenge of managing vacant land. While vacant land today fragments and isolates neighborhoods, it can become a means to re-weave neighborhoods together. The following future neighborhood patterns illustrate how vacant land might be incorporated in traditional familiar ways to create different but equally appealing living conditions.

- Rural acreage
- Large lot
- Hamlet cluster
- Traditional subdivision



Residential Land Use Directions

1. Establish and enforce clear standards for maintenance of vacant properties by private owners. This will increase the cost of doing business for those owners who have traditionally not maintained their properties adequately. It will also motivate responsible landlords while serving to penalize toxic speculators. For those who do not wish to meet the standards, it will drive their properties into the public domain.
2. In a focused, prioritized, and coordinated way, acquire, demolish, and assemble vacant and problem properties. It is expensive just to demolish buildings ($5,000-$6,000 for a typical single family residence). While the community will have to prioritize on an on-going basis as market conditions evolve, demolitions will be more valuable to the overall health of the city in this order

    - Core Areas
        - Downtown proximity
        - Aultman Hospital proximity
        - Mercy Hospital proximity
        - Hall of Fame Village proximity
        - Timken Steel proximity
    - In the immediate proximity of neighborhood asset areas, with a priority to areas around
        - Schools
            - High performing
        - Historic architecture
        - Parks
        - Community Centers
    - Areas to be repurposed, with a priority to areas
        - Visible from key intersections
    - Quick wins where cleared (clean/green) property can be conveyed to adjoining owner

Commercial Existing
Canton has a wide variety of commercial land use types, ranging from the dense, continuous storefronts of the downtown to small, and large, stand-alone establishments. They can be divided into five general patterns of commercial land use:

- Downtown
- Commercial strips
- Shopping malls
- Local centers
- Stand-alone stores, restaurants, dealerships, and the like

The fact that a significant portion of Canton's commercial areas have multiple vacancies reflects several concurrent trends:

- Canton's lower population
- Canton's lower average incomes
- Changing shopping tastes nationally (away from malls and strip centers to more pedestrian oriented compact centers)
- Aging developments (strip centers and shopping malls have proven to have a life-span of about 20 years before they enter into relatively rapid decline)

In sum, Canton has too much commercial square feet for the buying power of the surrounding community, and what Canton does have does not reflect current public demand. The result for Canton is numerous aged and declining strip commercial developments, often along major (highly visible) corridors that are not only underperforming financially, but also present a negative public image for Canton.

Commercial Land Use Direction
Over the last 50 years, even with economic ups and downs, what has proven to be more durable are walkable centers surrounded by, and including, residential areas. In an ideal world this should be part of Canton's vision for the future. However, with weak demand, there is little leverage or incentive for existing merchants to move to, or transform into, more compact, walkable centers. Zoning in a soft or weak market is not a particularly helpful tool to motivate the private sector, nor is over-reliance on code enforcement. Therefore, the next best options

for Canton are to start in the highest priority areas, designate key intersections to receive streetscape and intersection "character improvements" (such as below), and invest both robustly and for the long term:

- Street trees
- Low walls and landscaping to screen parking lots,
- Decorative sidewalks (e.g. brick inserts),
- Decorative street lights,
- Specialty paving in intersections,
- Attractive signage,
- Removal of overhead power lines

Employment and Business Existing Conditions

A continued shift towards a service-based economy is underway. Leading edge manufacturing (such as robotics as one example, or 3D printing as in America Make in Youngstown) will not occur at scale in Canton without financial and property (re)development incentives.

A significant constraint on Canton's economic growth is the shortage of good quality 'move-in' buildings and shovel-ready buildable sites. If a major corporation wished to move in, or expand, there are few vacant industrial and commercial buildings that are in move-in condition; most require major rehabilitation in order to be usable.

Even when there are larger sites available in employment districts, most of it is fragmented—often broken up by parcels held by speculators—and not suitable for redevelopment. The city will need to coordinate the acquisition and strategic repositioning of key properties along with appropriate locally-financed tax incentives for business expansion and start up.

Business Opportunities

Because Canton depends so heavily on income tax, and because income taxes are levied primarily based on where people work, employment (and incomes) are high priority for Canton. Canton has, and can have, significant opportunities to appeal to employment-intensive businesses

- There is a residual knowledge base of "maker" skills.
    - These require leveraging from an ever more intensive partnership in Canton among employers, Stark State, and local workforce development organizations
- Canton's downtown is attracting a younger and more tech-savvy class of entrepreneurs
    - These entrepreneurs want a vibrant downtown
- Young returnees to Canton express a deep commitment to Canton
    - These young households seek a vibrant downtown, and downtown housing options
- Canton still has an inventory of classic buildings that have the potential for adaptive re-use
- Canton has ample vacant land, with convenient road and rail access, that could be reassembled and made "shovel-ready.
- Canton has a core of over 1500 small businesses that provide a critical mass of experience to draw from

Business Direction

- Retain and grow existing businesses
  - To continue to be successful and remain in Canton they need
    - Safe, financially stable, and attractive surroundings
    - Livable communities close-by that appeal to their employees at all levels
      - Attractive, affordable housing
      - Parks, trails, and recreation
      - Appropriate choices in shopping, dining, and culture
  - An appropriately educated/trained population from which to draw workers
  - An attractive, flourishing downtown

- As valuable as are Canton's major employers, depending on a few large companies for employment leaves the city vulnerable to national and international competition, changes in technology, and internal politics.

- The city can help encourage small business development in a number of ways, including:
  - All of the needs listed above for existing businesses
  - Assistance in finding appropriate offices/buildings/land (including shovel-ready sites)
  - Concierge services to navigate regulations
  - Business accelerators
  - Financial assistance and/or reduced fiscal barriers (tax deferment)
  - Networking/ technical assistance
  - Digital infrastructure

- Potential fields for new business encouragement include:
  - Energy development, especially green energy
  - Recycling and re-use, such as industrial symbiosis
  - Applying new technology to small scale fabrication
  - Medical research and support

- Assemble, clear, stockpile shovel-ready sites

Traffic Circulation

The main traffic-related issues in Canton are the condition of existing roads, and the cost and extent of road maintenance.

Existing Conditions: Road Maintenance

Canton has approximately 450 miles of roadway for which it is responsible to provide maintenance (not counting Federal highways). Those roadways consist of 4-lane major roads, 3-lane collectors, 2-lane local streets, and 1-lane alleys (often named Court and Place, Terrace).

In recent years Canton has been periodically evaluating the condition of its roads. City staff estimates that to "catch up" – to do major reconstruction of the streets that are rated "poor" (60 or lower) – would require approximately $8-9 million. This represents approximately two year's worth of the current street improvement budget.

This problem did not occur overnight. With a street system designed for a population of 130,000, and an actual population that has been gradually declining to its current population of approximately 70,000, with concomitant declining revenues and increasing costs, the city has more roads than it can afford to maintain.

How significant is the problem?

One measure of a sustainable amount of roads to be maintained can be imputed from road maintenance budgets. A variety of studies show that the average useful life of an asphalt street is 15-20 years (before it needs to be substantially repaved). Over that period of time, the average life-cycle cost of an asphalt two-lane street is on the order of $300,000 per mile. By this measure, the average annual cost per mile of two-lane asphalt road ranges from $15,000 to $20,000 per mile. By this very rough measure, Canton should be spending $6.75M - $9M annually.

How much is Canton spending on road maintenance? Canton's annual budget for actual street maintenance and paving is shown below:

Fund Description	Actual 2011	Actual 2012	Actual 2013	Budget 2014
Street Maintenance	1,810,810	1,664,304	1,708,413	1,781,606
Capital Projects	10,700	366,395	275,433	116,087
Capital Projects	2,879,093	3,047,156	2,662,464	3,191,370
Total	**4,700,603**	**5,077,855**	**4,646,310**	**5,089,063**

Divided by Canton's 450 road miles, the cost/mile/year ranges from $10,000-$11,000 per mile per year. Thus, over the last several years Canton has been spending approximately 30% to 40% less than the amount required "keep up" with road deterioration.

How can the problem be remedied? A logical approach, and one that Canton, like many other cities, has been following, is to focus on the worst roads first. However, experts in the field advise that "worst first" is the wrong strategy to deploy when overall funding is inadequate. The reason is that "poor"-rated roads are much more expensive to fix than "fair"- or "good"-rated ones.

By focusing capital budgets on the worst, all the other roads deteriorate—that is, "good" roads become "fair", and the "fair" roads slip into the "poor" category. Canton must follow two courses of action concurrently: reduce the total amount of roads that must be maintained, and in so doing, cost-effectively make sure to adequately maintain the "good" and "fair" roads and then recapture the "poor" roads as funding permits.

Alleys
Alleys comprise a moderate portion of Canton's street system. Some of the alleys are of the traditional type that provide rear access to the narrow dimension of lots, efficiently serving multiple lots in a short distance. These are efficient and should be preserved.

However, there is another class of side-load alleys in Canton that cut across blocks parallel to the longest lot lines, and merely serve the four adjacent properties (occasionally they access interior lots). Many of these alleys could be removed from the city maintenance inventory by abandoning them to the adjacent lot owners, who could then keep, and maintain, them as individual or shared driveways.

Some side-load alleys should be preserved to avoid creating blocks longer than 600'-800'. Access to any utilities and key pedestrian routes should also be preserved.

Brick streets
There are a number of brick streets in Canton that are remnants of a bygone era. However, they continue to serve several important functions, including giving a unique neighborhood identity, calming traffic, and, in fact, they are quite durable (with proper technique, holes can be repaired without leaving a trace).

Canton's brick streets are worth the time and expense to presevre, which may lead to a new specialized work category. New technologies are also being developed to enable efficient laying of concrete paver streets, that may in fact turn out to be competitive (life-cycle costs) with concrete and even asphalt.

Reducing traffic signals
In 2013 Detroit hired professionals to study over 150 traffic lights and determine which needed adjustment, and which are so rarely traveled that they wouldn't be missed. The researchers from Wayne State University concluded that Detroit could remove at least 460 signals, *or 30 percent of its total inventory*.

They also identified three benefits of removing traffic signals:

- ✓ **Cost.** Operating a single traffic light can cost a city upwards of $8,000 a year. By that measure, Detroit could save nearly $3.7M in annual taxpayer costs by removing its lights, though there would be initial costs associated with tearing down signals and putting up stop signs.

- ✓ **Safety.** Counterintuitive as it might seem, removing urban traffic lights can improve overall traffic safety. Researchers have found that replacing signals with stop signs on one-way city streets can reduce collisions [3] - perhaps because, in the absence of street governance, everyone pays closer attention. [4]

- ✓ **Equity.** Many of the signals in the study were lights serving through traffic between the city and the suburbs. That Detroit taxpayers might be maintaining signals for the convenience of people who live outside the city suggests an equity component to light management as well.

Roads | Streets | Alleys Direction

As with other aspects of Canton's infrastructure, Canton has approximately 30% more than is needed and that can be affordably maintained. This can be done in several ways:

Reduce the total amount of streets that must be maintained

- Everywhere: remove redundant alleys
  - Cede alley ROW (except for utility or trail needs) to adjacent properties
  - Convert to gravel drive if requested
- In areas where whole blocks are, or can be, cleared, also decommission the streets:
  - Close them to through-traffic
  - Convert paving to landscape
  - Retain pedestrian path and single driveways as necessary

Achieve and maintain good road quality in the key Investment Areas

- In the Core Areas, maintain high road quality (80 to 100)
- In neighborhoods determined by the community to have a high priority, upgrade and maintain roads to fair-to-good quality (70 to 80)
- In all other areas continue current maintenance practices until market condition improvements justify expanded reconstruction.

Conduct traffic light optimization study to identify the extent to which traffic lights, and their associated costs, can be reduced.

Evaluate the feasibility of training workers to repair brick streets and even mass-install concrete paver streets.

Multi-modal Transportation System

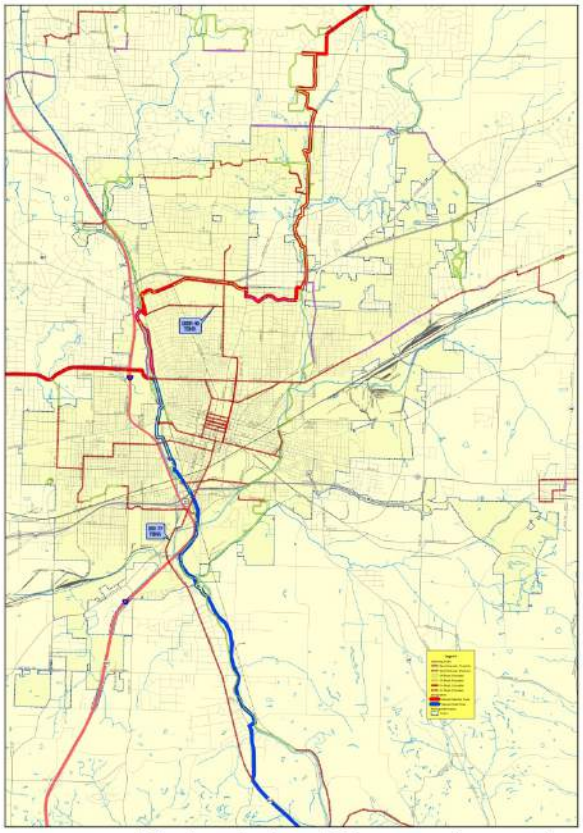
As part of revitalizing Canton's overall transportation system, it is important to incorporate complete street design into its muti-modal system. It is clear throughout the nation that vibrant communities recognize the importance of all modes of transportation including: cars and trucks, transit, bikes, pedestrians, handicapped accessibility, as well as commercial networks for trains, air, and waterways in certain regions. Canton is uniquely located in that it has direct access to most of these networks and quick access to air and commercial waterways.

Some of these modes such as the bicycling have in past years been viewed as strictly a recreational activity. However, in recent years, things have changed and bicycling is a desirable form of transportation for much more including commuting to and from destinations and well as a healthy and environmentally sound alternative to driving a car. Canton has made great strides and become a regional and statewide leader through is recent bike trail and bike lane efforts. Canton has developed a comprehensive plan to provide bike access across the entire City.

The transportation elements of this plan were developed based on the following:

1. The imperative to create a backbone bike system that is composed of off road trails,on-road bike lanes, or wide shoulders/sidewalks. Not every road should be specifically designed for bikes, but all roads are candidates.

2. The system must be developed so that it provides designated linkages between major assets (parks, hospitals, cultural destinations, schools, major employers) and destinations as well as neighborhoods.
3. The network should intentionally dovetail into the county, state and national systems.
4. Bicyclists will typically take the path of least resistance so make the network as convenient as possible. The plan must account for this.
5. It is important to utilize existing corridors to provide connections such as parks, utility easements, and under utilized roadways.



Canton must continue to construct this bike network. A well planned bike network is a strong asset for Canton and will provide a smart, fair, and balanced transportation system to the entire community.

In addition to the bike network, Canton must continue to work with SARTA to provide a strong transit system that provides direct linkages to all the community assets including the TIA's. Insuring that customers as well as employees have convenient access. This is an important element in helping people to find work and earn a living thus elevating all members of our community.

Future consideration should be given to the possibility of the City of Canton working to connect US30 to Pittsburgh as part of regional connectivity imperatives. Apropos of this, future consideration should also be given to connecting Canton to Cleveland, Akron, and within Canton proper, the HOFV to Downtown and the Hercules site with special event trains in the short run but with a long term eye towards commuter line development.

Parks

Existing Conditions

The City of Canton Parks Department is responsible for maintenance of 64 properties, of which approximately 58 are traditional parks, recreation areas, and open space. The remainder are medians, and small parcels of land.

The park sizes range from the 77-acre Stadium Park, to the .7-acre King Park. Canton's parks are classified into the following categories: large urban parks, community parks, natural areas, neighborhood parks, mini parks, and sports complexes. Some parks serve multiple purposes (e.g. a community park also serves as a neighborhood park for adjacent residents)

Levels of Service

Canton has a total of 790 acres of park properties. When divided by its approximately 70,000 population, Canton has a ratio of 11.3 acres for each 1,000 of population. This ratio is referred to as a Level of Service, or LOS. Many communities use LOS ratios to compare themselves to other communities and to monitor internal conditions over time. Where once there were national LOS standards developed by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA), in recent years the NRPA no longer publishes them, because many members felt they failed to effectively account for local circumstances and preferences.

However, in 2012, the Canton Joint Recreation District Strategic Business Plan referenced regional (Great Lakes/Midwest) LOS park standards of 12-14 acres/1000 population. By this standard, Canton compares favorably with the region.

Besides overall, total LOS averages, it is valuable to look at the LOS for various individual park types, and compare those to similar communities. Canton's existing LOS are shown in the chart below, along with several other comparable communities. By this comparison, Canton generally has much higher overall park acres, a more acres of community park, less acres of large, urban parks, a comparable level of natural areas, a more sports and special use parks.

	Existing Parks Level of Service (acres/1000 population)					
	Total	Large	Comm.	Nbhd.	Natural	Special
Canton	11.3	1.6	3.8	1.4	2.4	1.9
Youngstown	7.5	4.3	1.3	.63	NA	NA
Lorraine	8.4	4.0	1.0	.91	2.5	NA
Elyria	6.6	2.5	.65	.12	3.2	NA

Service Areas
Overall acreage ratios are one measure of service. Another is accessibility: how close are the parks to the people they serve?

This needs to be considered relative to park types: parks that are used somewhat less frequently such as for special events (e.g. sports tournaments) or that have special features (such as an arboretum or swimming pool) are often more widely spaced in a community and considered drive-to or bike-to facilities.

Parks that have features more desirable for frequent (even daily) use, such as neighborhood parks with playgrounds and basketball courts, are most valuable to the community when they are in walking distance.

In general, as shown below, Canton's parks happen to be located along 3 linear "fingers": one line of parks follows the Middle Branch of Nimishillen Creek, another follows the West Branch of Nimishillen Creek, and there is a third small cluster of parks near the western edge of Canton.

While this arrangement of parks facilities provides consistent drive-to access for most residents, it leaves large areas without convenient walk-to access (i.e. within a 5-7 minute walk), especially to neighborhood parks that are intended for daily usage.

Park Quality and Usage
A 2014/15 analysis commissioned by the Parks Department revealed the following usage levels:

Number of Parks at Various Usage Levels			
High	Mod	Low	No data or NA
20	19	13	14

So, 13, or roughly 22%, of Canton's parks have low usage levels. And the low-use parks account for about 15% of the total park acres (and they include only a very small acreage of natural areas).

Park Funding and Maintenance

In 2014 city residents passed a Parks Levy tax that replaced the Parks Department's $1.1M annual budget allocation with a $2.14M per year allocation for 3 years (total $4.6M). With the Levy Canton Parks now has approximately $1.61M for annual operating costs, and $0.53M per year for capital improvements. In addition, the Canton Joint Recreation District receives approximately $1.2M per year for recreation programming in Canton. Together, these two sources generate revenue that are compared to regional and national averages below.

	Canton			US Average	Note
	City	District	Total		
Acres (per 1,000)	11.3		11.3	12-15	NRPA Great Lakes Region
Per Capita Spending	22	17	39	73	
Maintenance Costs/Acre	$2,321			$5,000	
Acres Maintenance/FTE Staff	32			14.1	
Recreation $/Capita		16		$21	
FTE/1,000 pop			27	22	

Parks Direction

In summary, Canton is faced with significant challenges.

First, declining population and falling revenues put pressure on the City to make reductions in parks that are commensurate with down-sizing efforts in other departments.

Second, convenient, quality parks are an important part of Canton's quality of life, which must be improved for Canton to compete with surrounding suburbs, and other cities, for employees that generate Canton's primary revenue (income tax).

So, while down-sizing and reducing the maintenance requirements of the park system, at the same time Canton needs to create new neighborhood parks that will bring most homes within a 5-7 minute walk from a park. In doing both of the above, Canton must find a way to maintain its other well- and moderately-used parks at a safe, appealing level.

To address the above issues, following are recommended

1. Adopt the following LOS standards (80% of Canton homes to be within 5-7 minute walk of a neighborhood or mini park.)

Parks Levels of Service Standards:
(acres/1000 population)

	Total	Large	Comm.	Nbhd.	Natural
Existing	11.3	1.6	3.8	1.4	2.4
Proposed	11.3	1.6	1.5	1.8	4.4

The above standards will convert 140 of Canton's low-use Community Park acres to Natural Parks, and increase Canton's Neighborhood Park acres by approximately 28 acres, or an average of 14 2-acre parks. Conversion, re-use, and exchanges will allow additional neighborhood parks to be created within this standard and make parks walk-to accessible to most residents.

2. Evaluate existing low-use parks to determine specific candidates for re-use and/or conversion to the following uses:
   - Lower maintenance levels (less frequent mowing in all or certain areas)
   - Natural areas
   - Agriculture
   - Land exchange

3. Identify and adopt target areas for new neighborhood parks.

This map identifies existing parks AND conceptual locations for new neighborhood parks. This is intended only as a conceptual starting point for park locations. Future park site locations need to be revised and refined per recommendations below.

4. Designate specific new park sites in conjunction with actual public acquisitions of property and do so in conjunction with revitalization work around the city's core assets first, and second in residential areas near neighborhood assets.
5. Establish priorities for converting parks. This process will take time for analysis and public feedback before final decisions are made. To begin that process,the table below is a preliminary list of parks that are candidates for further study for conversion, re-use and/or downsizing.
6. With regard to recreation facilities, lower population and lower budgets dictate some level of reduction in recreation facilities themselves—perhaps as much as 25-30%

overall. Some reductions will naturally occur as parks themselves are converted or decommissioned, and these will typically affect the lower-use facilities. However, additional new facilities will need to be installed in new parks. And an emphasis on small neighborhood parks will require higher maintenance levels than previously required by Canton's higher ratio of large parks. Therefore, the staff and Parks Advisory Board need to undertake a careful analysis of how to further pare recreation expenses and facilities, considering for example: use levels, economic benefits, relative cost of maintenance, age profile of the adjacent neighborhood, and overall right-sizing priorities of the city.

ID	Name	Usage	Exist Type	Proposed Type	Acres	Comments
Parks to evaluate for decommissioning and conversion, re-use						
7	**Mini Park #3**	High	Mini Park		0.18	Corner location, but very low density nbhd, little need
22	**Mini Park #11**	Moderate	Mini Park		0.21	Side lot, mid block rural area.
15	**Mini Park #19**	Moderate	Mini Park		0.47	4 lots, surrounded by vacant lots, could be useful if block develops, otherwise…
10	**Mini Park #8**	Moderate	Mini Park		0.52	Mid block site surrounded by vacant land--little need
53	**Richard A. Mallonn**	Moderate		Special Use	24.34	NW of fairgrounds, small resid edge, serves twnshp!
41	**Bors Field**	Moderate	Special Use		7.93	Across from Water Dept. low use area, (water facility?)
65	**Jackson Park**	Low			1.59	Really a natural area along E Nim Cr, near swimming pool
35	**Oak Park**	Low	Community	Natural	7.86	Natural area, serves twnshp more than Canton, apts & homes 1 side
18	**Mini Park #32**	Low	Mini Park		0.10	One block from Meyer Park, no need
52	**Northview Park**	Low	Mini Park		1.18	Off a cul-de-sac in large lot subd, better use as residential
42	**Grovemiller Park**	None	No value		24.37	Outside Canton, NOT a community park--3 parcels, separated, much natural
2	**Park Connector Strip**	None	Greenway		0.41	Pot part of greenway, surrounded by roads, RR, creek
16	**Mini Park #9**	None	Mini Park		0.06	Corner lot, surrounded by vacant lots, little need
11	**Mini Park #5**	None	Mini Park		0.08	Side yard behind commercial--little need
14	**Mini Park #1**	None	Mini Park		0.17	Side yard between two homes
37	Jackson Pool	None	Neighborhood		3.90	
64	**Waynesburg Park**	None			2.76	Not even in Canton!! Very rural, homes 0 sides (slope)
66	**Triangle Peninsulas**	No Data	Gateway	Gateway	0.26	Maybe gateway landscaping?
59	**Colonial Park Blvd**	No Data	Special Use		6.55	Wide median, serves as walk-to mini park
Parks for further study and evaluation as to uses and maintenance levels						
56	Spiker Park	High	Community	Natural	26.71	Large natural park, homes 3 sides, lakes, serves twnshp
5	Mini Park #25	High	Mini Park		0.24	Two side lots adj to alley, high vacancy area, need?
12	Lee Park	Moderate	Neighborhood		3.21	West side Nim Creek, homes 1 side, surrounded by major roads
28	Cook Park	Moderate	Community	Natural/Grnwy	14.93	Creek confluence, adjacent to Nimisilla Park, greenway function, indust edges
39	Maple Playgound	Moderate	Mini Park	Neighborhood	1.01	Homes 4 sides--no amenities, close to another park
44	Bup Rearick Park	Moderate	Mini Park		5.16	Homes 2 sides, lots of open land, large lots, need??
46	Brian's Park	Moderate	Neighborhood		3.36	Good location for a nbhd park, steep slope up on east end.
20	Meyer's Park	Moderate	Neighborhood		**3.39**	**Good location for nbhd park, too large, 1/2 could be civic space or other use**
48	Herbruck Park	Low	Community		24.17	Long, narrow, next to Crenshaw MS, little rec development, homes 1 side
21	Riverside Park	Low	Neighborhood		10.85	Large park in rural nbhd, few homes nearby, could be large facility, little need
24	Canton Lincoln Hwy	Low	Special Use		1.75	Canton RR station on north side of Tusc, Skate Board only
9	Freeway Park	None		Comm/Natural	3.74	Could be comm park, if more land assembled

Sewer Existing Conditions

The City of Canton sewer system is comprised of two components: main lines and laterals.

The main lines are the responsibility of the City. By ordinance, the laterals (from the building to the main line) are privately owned and are required to be maintained by the building owner.

The entire system, mains and laterals, is old and requiring higher levels of maintenance.

However, with declining property values, and incomes in much of the city, the privately-owned laterals will become an even greater problem—not just for the building owners but for the City as well.

In 2013, the City received 602 water-in-basement (WIB) calls from city sewer customers. Upon receipt of these calls, the City dispatched a crew to investigate the cause of the WIB. Of the 602 calls, only 62 (about 10%) were caused by problems in the adjacent main sewer line (due to various reasons such as debris in the line, broken/deteriorated sewers, and/or grease). These problems in the main lines are referred to as Public WIB. When it was determined the main line was not the problem (90% of the time in 2013), the City crew informed the customer of apparent deterioration or blockages in the lateral. The City crew would recommend that the customer proceed with remediation efforts and repairs, as applicable, via a private contractor to correct private lateral deficiencies.

Sewer Issues

Although City reports do not indicate a high level of sewer line problems, only the 10% Public WIB's are included in the annual report. That over 90% of the problems (Private WIBs) are not being documented prevents a) identification of any patterns, trends, or progression of the problem, and b) an understanding of how big the problem really is. Worse, it is likely that the lateral sewer line problems will be placing a greater and greater financial burden on many of the very private properties we hope to revitalize.

Sewer Directions

1. Begin immediately to record the location of Private WIBs
2. Consider providing financial and technical assistance to private property owners to address Private WIB occurrences, in the following priority
    - Priority (Core Target) Areas
    - In neighborhoods determined by the community to have a high priority
3. Other areas with systemic health-threatening conditions
4. Other areas with patterns of Private WIBs
5. Other areas of the city

Water Existing Conditions

Canton has very high quality potable water obtained from wells scattered throughout the city and immediate surrounding area.

In addition to serving city residents, the Water Department also supplies water to several outlying areas. In exchange for higher water rates (2.5x city rates) the Water Department extends water and the service lines to carry it. This surcharge for exurban users helps reduce the water cost for Canton residents.

In some cases, the extension of water service is part of a more comprehensive agreement (JEDD (Joint Economic Development District) and CEDA (Cooperative Economic Development Agreement)) between Canton and a neighboring township.

The agreement can be for contiguous property (CEDA) or non-contiguous property (JEDD) in which the City provides water service, at in-city rates, in exchange for a sharing of income and property taxes and agreement regarding annexation or non-annexation of the property.
In a few cases, the expected development did not occur and the cost of extending the water line exceeded the actual revenues received by the City to date.

While the water system is well-maintained, like other aspects of Canton's infrastructure, the water system is also aging. Over the next several years the Water Department will likely be compelled to adjust the rate system to cover replacement costs.

Water Directions

1. Evaluate the potential to decommission water lines in conjunction with land clearance and conversion in fallow areas
2. Evaluate exurban water extension policies relative to the net cost/benefit and fiscal impact on Canton of facilitating suburban growth

Interdepartmental Coordination

- Organizational structure, roles and responsibilities
- Decision-making process
- How annual budgets are determined
- Canton Government Directions
    - A "consistency" policy
    - The annual budgeting process (demonstrate consistency)
    - Coordinating departmental plans and priorities (consistent with CP)
    - Development approvals (consistent, or amend CP)
    - Service extension agreements

Coordination with other agencies and non-government partners

- The role and impact of other government and non-profit agencies
    - School district
    - State and Federal highways
    - Non-government agencies
- Chamber of Commerce
- Non-profits
- Private companies (enlist their help in making decisions with public benefits)
- The potential impact of coordinated efforts
- Directions
- Consolidated/coordinated grant funding to achieve focus and avoid duplication

Applying the Plan

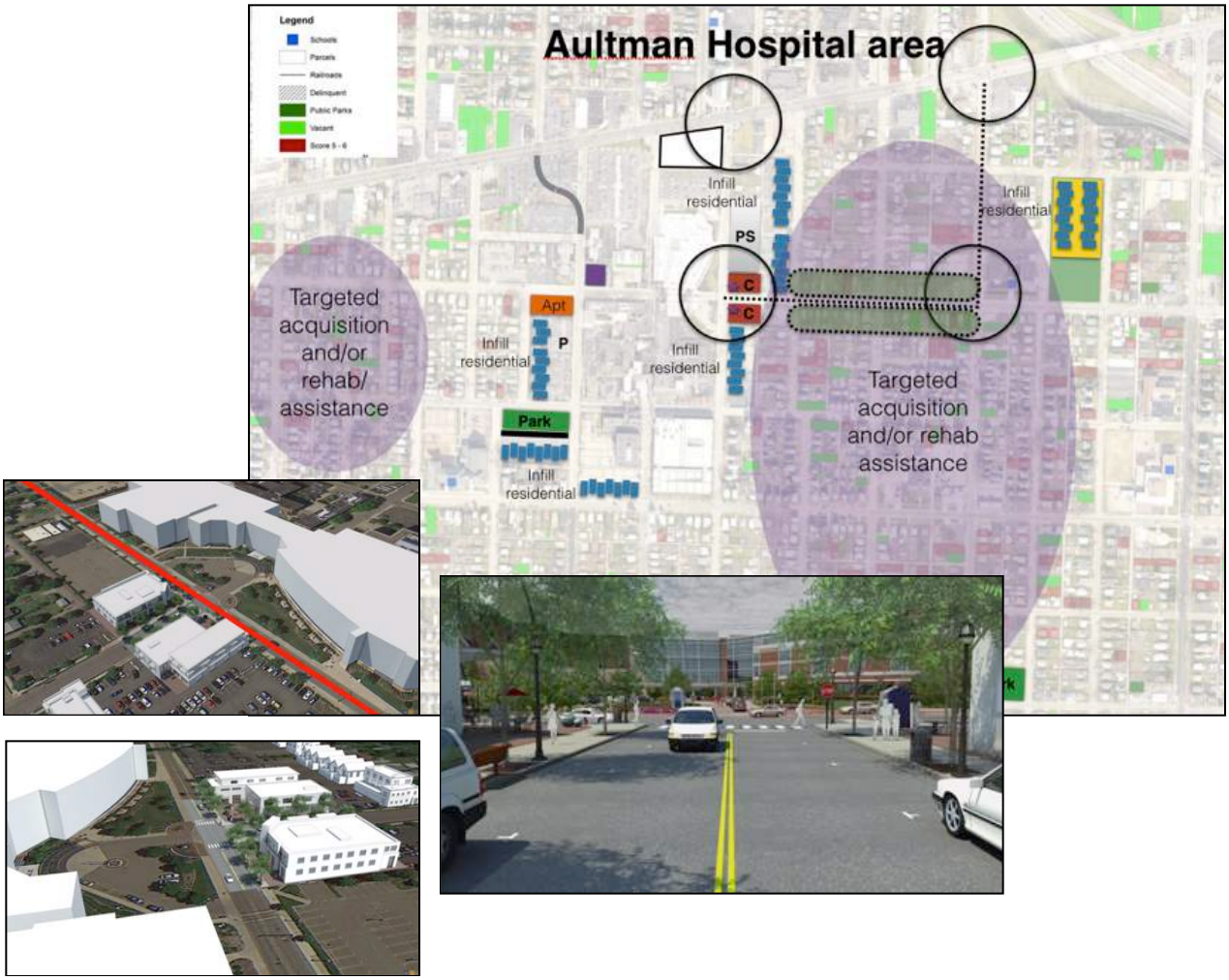
The following section illustrates several ways to translate the principles and priorities of the plan into specific actions. The first section describes the core areas. The second sections describes how to identify and apply the principles throughout the balance of the city.

Core Areas

Concept plans have been developed for each of the five Core Areas. These concept plans are intended to give on-the-ground examples of how to apply the planning principles to specific sub-areas. It is expected that these concept plans will be revised and refined by city staff and implemented according to annual prioritization and funding availability. The Core Areas are either directly adjacent or near to one other and therefore will, over time, positively reinforce each other. They surround and help strengthen the Downtown, and they are all linked together by transportation corridors. In addition, each is important for its own unique reasons. They surrounding major employers, are home to strong workforce households, are anchored by viable community institutions, and are along important gateways (first impressions) to Canton.

Aultman Hospital Area

The area around Aultman Hospital is critical to the long term success of the hospital, and therefore to Canton. The surrounding blocks need to be stabilized, and the high visibility of this institution needs to be leveraged. This will require extensive rehabilitation of the residential housing stocks, infill mixed-use development, and major infrastructure upgrades.



Hall of Fame Village Area

No development in decades has been as exciting for the Canton community as the recent development of the Pro Football Hall of Fame Village.

The Hall of Fame Village could have an economic impact of $15.3 billion to the local economy during the next 25 years and create tens of thousands of new jobs.

Most immediate would be the creation of nearly 2,800 Stark County construction jobs during the next four years, starting this summer, with an average salary of about $45,000 for the full- and part-time positions.

As the plans for the Village crystalize, it is recommended that the City of Canton work aggressively to link Village development to Downtown redevelopment, to encourage linked economic development of the new Village with the city's medical facilities and expertise, and with other economic development projects.

Mercy Area

The Mercy neighborhood is a big part of the recovery of Canton, for it connects stable but at-risk residential areas along Fulton and Monument both with one of the city's major anchoring institutions – Mercy Hospital - and with the distressed areas closer to downtown in the Shorb part of the city. It typifies the city's *middle market residential areas* that are <u>both at risk and at the same time, affordably recoverable</u>. Its location and relative market strength make its recovery imperative. Below diagrams illustrate the redevelopment that may be required.

Shorb Area

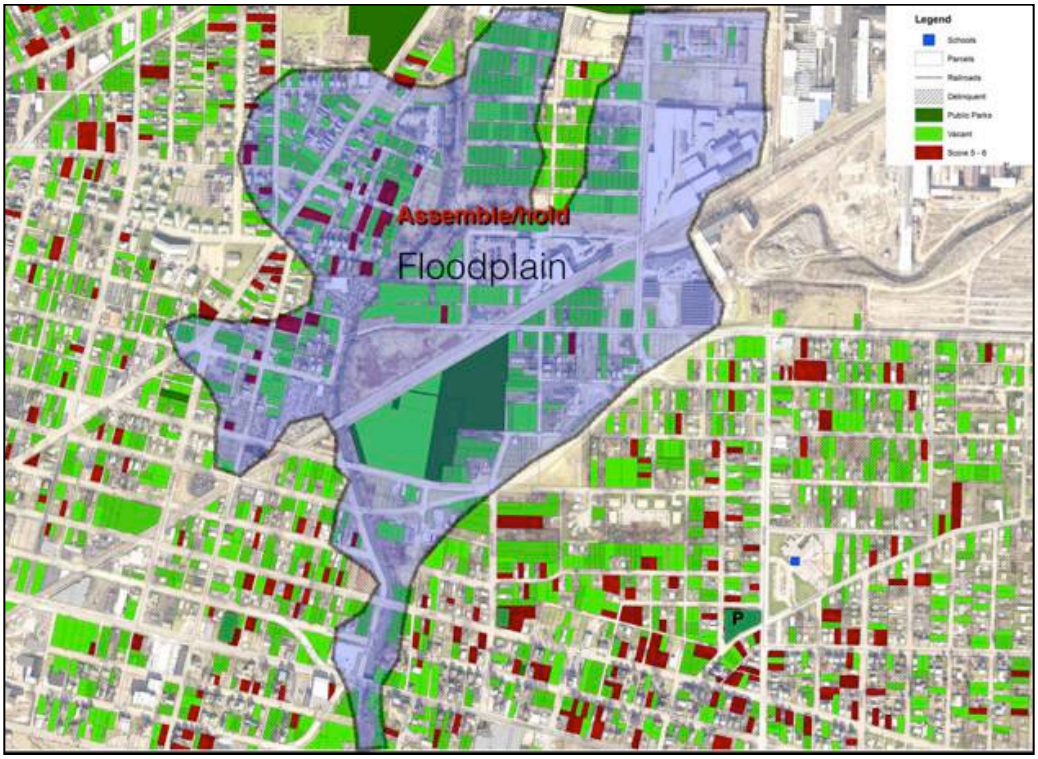
The Shorb area of Canton is distressed. Because the Shorb Area flanks Downtown, persistent blight in this area exerts a negative impact on Downtown and may require attention.

Downtown

Canton probably will not succeed if Downtown is allowed to deteriorate. Significant progress has been made the last 12 years, thanks to efforts by ArtsinStark, the Canton Development Partnership, the Special Improvement District, Canton Tomorrow, the Chamber of Commerce, and others. The Downtown Master Plan (rev 2013) can serve to guide future actions, and can function as a sub area plan.

Flood Plain

Several large neighborhoods are located in the 100-year floodplain, including a significant number of distressed and delinquent homes. Floodplains represent a known hazard to life and property. Furthermore, federal flood insurance is the only tool that homeowners can turn to to protect their investments. In recent years the insurance premiums for federal flood insurance have been repeatedly raised. The ultimate objective is insurance rates that pay their own way and are not subsidized by the general public. Rates will continue to climb. The net effect will be to make homes built in the floodplain more expensive.



Therefore, floodplain neighborhoods, especially where there are concentrations of vacant, distressed and delinquent homes are prime candidates for land conversion in Canton. Potential alternative uses of floodplain land are agriculture and open space/natural parks. Canton already has a beginning framework of open space and linear parks along its major waterways. Expanding this system through flood plain acquisitions and conversion will provide a larger, exceptional open space system. This will have several benefits such as reducing life and safety risks, reducing the “urban footprint” that must be serviced and maintained, removing blight influences on nearby neighborhoods, and even increasing property values on future adjacent development.

[1] Residential properties that received a #1 rating were analyzed, on average, to have a market value (2015) of $133,642. #2s have a market value of $101,151.#3s have a market value of $78,315. #4s are worth $58,506. And #5s are worth, on average $43,077. It was estimated that a residential property receiving a score of #5 - worst - exerted a -$5,000 drag on each property on the block. Market stability was calculated to be achieved when a block's average was 2.5. "Sweeps" were run in modeling exercises where each it was estimated that every #1 needed $1,000 in modest exterior polish and maintenance to remain a #1. Each sweep also aimed 30% of all #4s to an improved condition sufficient to become a #3, 30% of all 3s to an improved condition sufficient to become a #2, and 30% of all #2s to an improved condition sufficient to be a #1. It was estimated to achieve these goals would cost, respectively, $15,000, $10,000, and $2,500. Meanwhile it was estimated that the balance of the stocks not improved in any phase of reinvestment would still need to be maintained - that is not permitted to degrade in quality, and that would cost, respectively, $3,000, $3,000, and $1,000. Finally it was estimated that the average demolition costs for removing #5s would be $12,500 each. Neighborhoods doing well market wise in 2015 naturally require fewer rounds of less costly interventions than those in distress.

[2] Since Canton's property taxes are so low, and the city cannot collect sales taxes, it is not compensated in other ways either. These residents however DO contribute greatly to civic life in many other ways.

[3] http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0001457597000493

[4] http://www.citylab.com/cityfixer/2015/03/6-places-where-cars-bikes-and-pedestrians-all-share-the-road-as-equals/388351/