Ohio Balanced Growth Program

Plans and Partnerships

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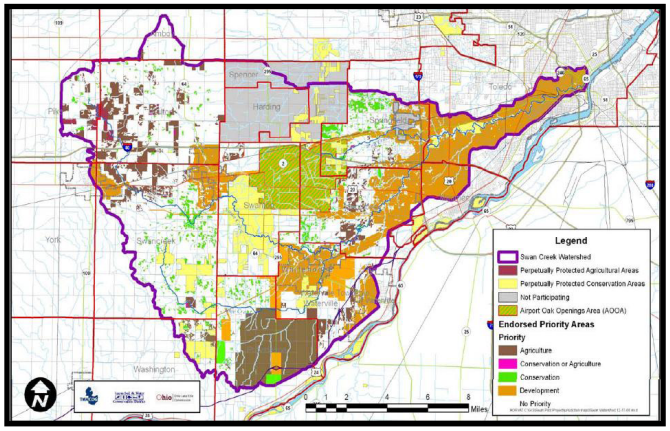
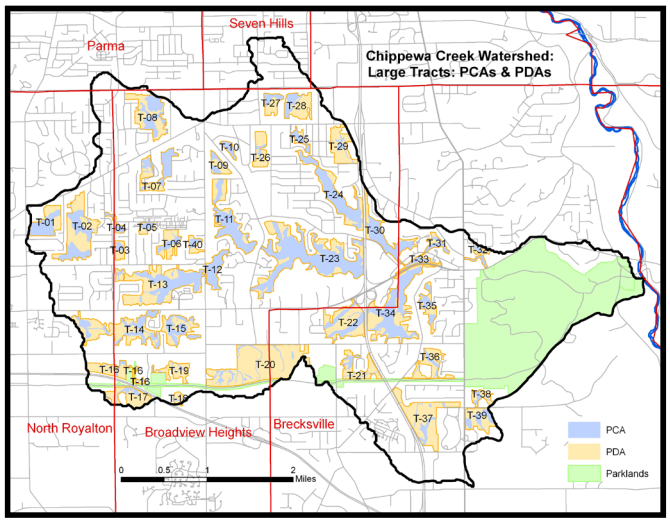


Large Watershed: Swan Creek

This is an example of a priority areas map from a large watershed with more than 20 jurisdictions participating. A technical subcommittee developed the criteria and resulting areas. Each jurisdiction was offered the opportunity to review and modify the proposed priorities. A special priority area that overlapped several communities was used around an airport located near sensitive resources.



Small Watershed: Chippewa Creek

This is an example from a small watershed with five jurisdictions. In this case, there was high level participation by the mayors and city staff in determining criteria and priority areas. Sensitive resources were set aside as priorities for conservation, and large areas were identified as suitable for development or redevelopment.

What is a Watershed Planning Partnership?

A Watershed Planning Partnership is the organization that will prepare a Watershed Balanced Growth Plan.

The partnership should be a regional effort that can be organized in flexible ways to respond to local preferences. The partnership work should be open, inclusive, and focused on consensus building.

Who are the members of the Partnership?

Membership in a Watershed Planning Partnership is voluntary. However, a Partnership should be inclusive of all interests, including representatives from local governments, planning agencies, councils of governments, special purpose authorities, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholder groups.

Watershed Planning Partnerships must demonstrate the support of local governments with land use planning and implementation authority; and should seek to meet the following threshold targets:

- Representation from communities containing at least 75% of the land area within the watershed,
- Representation from communities containing at least 75% of the population within the watershed, AND
- Representation from at least 75% of the local governments that have land use control authority in the watershed.

To assist with coordination and provide input, state agency representatives should be involved as nonvoting, ex-officio members.

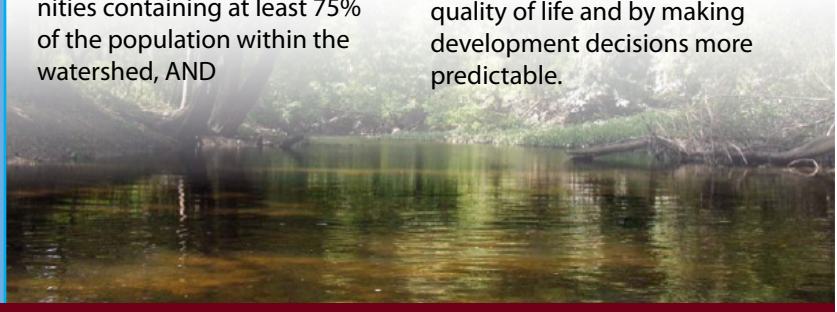
The partnerships can contract with existing planning agencies, universities, nonprofit organizations, or private consultants for staff support.

Why participate in a Partnership?

Local communities that participate in Watershed Planning Partnerships will have input in the criteria used to designate priority areas and will gain access to state incentives made available to support development, conservation, and agriculture.

Local comprehensive plans based on the Balanced Growth Plan will be supported by technical studies, expertise, and data, and be coordinated with a larger regional planning effort. Local officials will have access to tools and technical assistance to improve local planning and reduce local infrastructure costs.

The local communities will help make themselves more competitive by creating a higher quality of life and by making development decisions more predictable.



Read endorsed plans on the Balanced Growth web site at http://balancedgrowth.ohio.gov/BalancedGrowth-Planning/EndorsedBalancedGrowthPlans.aspx

Balanced Growth Plans: Content

The suggested content for the Watershed Balanced Growth Plans is set forth in the Ohio Balanced Growth Strategy. In addition, there are now several endorsed plans available to review, each with its own locally influenced criteria and recommendations.

In general, plans should include:

A specific statement of how the Watershed Balanced Growth Plan will help achieve the goals and objectives of the program, while promoting economic development and quality of life in the watershed.

The identification of Priority Conservation Areas within the watershed to protect critically important ecological, recreational, agricultural, heritage, public access, and other resource areas.

The identification of Priority Development Areas within the watershed, which will be locally designated areas where growth and/or redevelopment should especially be promoted.

Documentation that justifies the designation of Priority Development Areas and Priority Conservation Areas.

Evidence that the process used to develop the plan was open and inclusive, and allowed for state staff review and input.

Factors to be considered in the planning process:

Population and population distribution in the watershed.

Natural resources, inventories and assessments which may include air, water, open spaces, public access, scenic corridors, and viewsheds, forests, soils, rivers, and other waters, shorelines, fisheries, wildlife, and minerals.

The amount, type, intensity or density, and general location within the watershed of various types of land uses and projections of land uses for the watershed.

The economy of the watershed, which may include amount, type, general location and distribution of commerce and industry within the watershed, the location of employment centers, and which should include analyses of trends of projections of economic activity.

Amount, type, quality, affordability, and geographic distribution of housing among local government units in the watershed.

General location and extent of existing or currently planned major transportation facilities of all modes, and utility, educational, recreational, cultural, and other facilities of significance.

Location, extent, and capacity of water resource infrastructure such as sanitary sewers, storm sewers, waste water treatment plants, and water treament facilities.

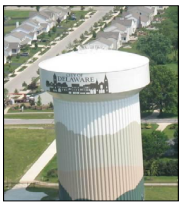
Geology, ecology, and other physical factors of the watershed, including land areas in the watershed subject to natural hazards.

The identification of features of significant statewide or watershed architectural, scenic, cultural, historical, or archaeological interest.

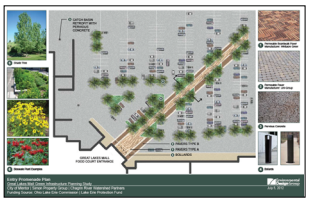
Amount, type, location, and quality of agricultural soils, lands, and economic activities.

Additional special factors of local interest as determined by the local communities, counties, private citizens, or others involved in the planning process.

Once the Watershed Balanced Growth Plan is complete and has acheived significant local support, the Commission (for the Lake Erie watershed) or the Council (for the Ohio River watershed) will review the plan for state endorsement. Once endorsed, the participating communities are eligible for incentives through select state programs (see web site Strategy page for complete list).



Implementation should be a specific element in the plan. Short and long term steps for the priority areas should be included, along with an outline of other actions desired at the local level such as code review and improvement, restoration projects, and projects for development or redevelopment. Examples include the City of Delaware (Olentangy River) receiving $1.2 million in loan discounts for infrastructure development (left) and site projects such as the $770,250 Great Lakes Crossing Mall (Chagrin River) storm water retrofit (right).



Ohio
Water Resources Council
Lake Erie Commission

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