

Executive Summary

The 2003 Henry County Comprehensive Plan is the byproduct of several years of research, analysis, and coordination amongst the several local political subdivisions and numerous county agencies. The Plan's primary mission, while largely focused on the promotion of compatible land uses and the effective placement of infrastructure, is to be a living document rich with county information that's absolutely necessary for public officials, business owners, and residents to make more informed decisions concerning the county's built and natural environments.

The Henry County Planning Commission recognizes the changing environmental, social, and economic factors that affect land use and development in Henry County. Over the last decade, Henry County and selected political subdivisions have witnessed the "urban" fringe of the Toledo Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) creep closer west into Henry County, where townships such as Washington, Liberty and Freedom have noticed an increase in scattered residential development. This growth within these areas has created concerns about traffic, adequacy of services, the loss of agricultural lands and open space, and community identity.

There are several current initiatives being embraced throughout the County that will profoundly benefit the County's overall quality of life, land usage, and infrastructure (water and sewer utilities and thoroughfare network) over the next decade. These initiatives are discussed throughout this Plan and are the basis for several of the Plan's strategies and recommendations.

1. The recent formation of Henry County's Regional Water and Sewer District will provide a valuable tool in assisting the County minimize potential health hazards and guide growth to preferred locations around the County.
2. The anticipated realignment of US 24 will provide the County and region with the more expeditious flow of goods and residents from the Toledo to Fort Wayne, Indiana. Ohio Department of Transportation officials have set a tentative date for construction initiation of 2009 for this "Fort-to-Port" realignment project.
3. The replacement of the Perry Street Bridge in Napoleon.
4. The anticipated second river crossing bridge in Napoleon on Industrial Drive, linking US 6/24 with the eastern portion of Napoleon and Harrison Township.
5. Improvements to the Maumee and Western railroad infrastructure will assist the County in promoting its economic interests within the region and be an added tool by which regional and local businesses transport goods.
6. The future should witness more of Henry County's communities embracing proactive economic development initiatives similar to Hamler's recent purchase of land to market for future development.
7. New industrial parks in Napoleon (North Pointe and Commerce industrial parks) will expand the county seat's ability to retain and recruit existing and future businesses and employers.

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8. The anticipated reuse of the former Oakwood Plaza will not only save the county's land resources, but also assist the county and Napoleon in providing additional space for the many public and government employees working in the county.
9. The future should witness an increased level of cooperation amongst Henry County's political subdivisions. The recent joint sharing of resources between Liberty and Washington townships in building the new fire and EMS facility is good example.
10. The need to be innovative in the development and deployment of economic development tools and incentives will become increasing more important in the future with the CIC taking the lead in promoting Henry County to existing businesses and outside economic interests.
11. The development of an updated master plan for the Henry County Airport will allow the airport board to attain additional federal and state funding assistance to help it expand its current capacity and infrastructure.
12. Napoleon's south side will be home to a new water tower that will allow the city to ensure safe and adequate water supplies to businesses and residents.
13. On the education front, Henry County's local school districts should continue to witness the fruits of many years of hard work by teachers and school administrators. In 2003, two of the County's four primary school districts- Patrick Henry and Holgate- witnessed a marked improvement in their district's overall ratings, both receiving "excellent" ratings. Over the last few years, the Napoleon local school district also improved their state ratings, from "continuous improvement" to "effective."

To help facilitate the above mentioned "trends", seven (7) County Concept Areas (CCAs) were established and are clearly delineated within the Land Use chapter in this plan. These areas were selected because of their close and contiguous proximity to historical and anticipated growth, good thoroughfare networks, and water, sewer, and other utility issues. Because of this commonality, the county and the various political subdivisions within a CCA will be better able to coordinate and guide development within each CCA. The partnerships will be the focus for cooperative planning between the county, townships, villages, and the City of Napoleon for the wise management of Henry County's land resources and the achievement of widely shared values and common goals.