

# Chapter One

## Introduction

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What follows is a report on a culmination of work that occurred over a two-year period of time starting in the winter of 2005. The authors have worked with numerous elected and appointed public officials in a process that involved information gathering, interviews, and policy decision making on a number of specific topics related to the future growth of Huron County. The last time a process of this nature was conducted in Huron County was back in 1971, over thirty years ago. It is hoped that this comprehensive land use plan be utilized to manage future growth within Huron County so that cohesive patterns of development occur over the next thirty years.

A comprehensive land use plan is a planning tool for future growth or decline. In the case of Huron County it is hoped that the comprehensive land use plan be utilized to manage future growth. Most importantly, it can be used as a tool to address the constant change and evolution that occurs over a certain period of time in a community. Comprehensive land use plans are prepared to address compatibility issues between various uses of land, management and preservation of natural resources, identification and preservation of historically significant lands and structures, and adequate planning for infrastructure needs. In other instances, comprehensive plans are utilized to address issues related to schools, recreation, and housing.<sup>1</sup> Participants in the process should approach each of these issues by trying to ask the following three questions:

- What is to be preserved?
- What is to be maintained?
- And, What is to be created?<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Conglose, John B. **Comprehensive Planning**. CDFS-1269-99, Ohio State University Fact Sheet, Land Use Series Community Development, 700 Ackerman Road, Columbus, OH 43202-1578

<sup>2</sup> Error! Main Document Only. **North Central Regional Center for Rural Development**. (February 2001). **Vision to Action: And Take Charge Too**. Iowa State University, Ames Iowa.

In the case of Huron County the following issues were discussed:

- Demographics;
- Economic development;
- Community facilities;
- Services;
- Quality of life;
- Present and future land use;
- Natural resources;
- Open space;
- Transportation;
- Infrastructure; and
- Utilities.

A total of sixty-seven (67) policy statements and recommendations were made regarding these subject areas.

The Land Use Planning Process for Huron County

The Huron County Commissioners established a Huron County Comprehensive Land Use Steering Committee that began meeting in January 2005. The Steering Committee met on a monthly basis.

The authors would like to thank the Board of Huron County Commissioners – currently comprised of Mike Adelman, Gary Bauer, and Ralph Fegley, for working with us in the development of the plan, and for the opportunity to take part in this important project. Thanks are also due to the Village and Township officials who met with us and provided information needed for the plan. The Huron County Planning Commission and Huron County Township Trustee Association also provided a helpful audience at meetings they held over the course of the development of the plan.

The largest amount of thanks should likely be reserved for the members of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, who attended a series of nearly monthly meetings that stretched over a two-year period. The contribution of the Steering Committee in shaping goals and recommendations, offering additional insights, reviewing and commenting upon the draft plan, chapter by chapter, was invaluable and irreplaceable.

The members of the Steering Committee over the course of the development of the plan included the following, some of whom retired and were replaced during the process, and others who were added to provide additional expertise and new perspective:

Huron County Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

Mike Adelman, Commissioner  
 Gary Bauer, Commissioner  
 Ralph Fegley, Commissioner  
 Jim Wiedenheft, Huron Co. Development Council  
 Joe Kovach, Huron County Engineer

B.J. Whitaker, County Auditor's office  
 Cary Brickner, Soil and Water Conservation District  
 Ed McConnoughey, Erie Basin RC&D  
 Bill Ommert, Huron County Emergency Management Agency

Jerry Shoemaker, Village of Greenwich  
Brian Humphress, City of Willard  
Jeff Crosby, City of Bellevue  
Dale Sheppard, City of Norwalk  
Ken Knuth, Village of Monroeville  
Fred Leber, Ridgefield Township  
Patrick Cassidy, Village of New London  
Shawn Tappel, Village of New London  
Tim King, Collins, Erie County Planning  
Commission  
Jack Jump, Huron County Health District

Carl Essex, Huron Co. Engineer's Office  
Peg Baird, Fisher Titus Medical Center  
Chris Raftery, Village of Monroeville  
Robert Harris, New London Township  
Lee Sparks, Norwalk Township  
Michael Nottke, Lyme Township  
Tom Reese, Northern Ohio Regional  
Water  
Russ Hetrick, SWCD  
Roland Tkach, Huron County Treasurer/  
Auditor

## A Brief Profile of Huron County

Huron County is located in north central Ohio, within a rural area between the Cleveland and Toledo metropolitan areas. An area encompassing approximately 497 square miles was first designated as Huron County in 1815. The U.S. Government granted a half million acres of land from what was referred to as the Western Reserve to compensate those who had homes and properties burned out by British Troops during the American Revolutionary War. The area became known as the "Fire Sufferer's Land" and later shortened to Firelands. The settlers who came to this area and were granted this land came from Connecticut. They fled from the towns of New Haven, New London, Ridgefield, Fairfield, Greenwich, and Norwalk. The settlers later named the communities in Huron County after these Connecticut towns.

The City of Norwalk is the county seat. With three cities, seven villages, and nineteen townships, the county has a variety of political subdivisions. While the county is primarily agricultural oriented, its population centers are home to numerous, sizeable industrial plants.

The railroad industry has played a major role in the growth and development of the county. Two national railroads operate major Midwest regional yard operations in the county. In Willard, where the community got its name from the founder of the B & O Railroad, there is a major east/west switching yard of the CSX Railroad. A major east/west switching yard of the Norfolk Southern Railroad is located in Bellevue.

Huron County is also on the southern fringe of the Lake Erie vacation area. The Cedar Point Amusement Park, a major destination point for travelers and tourists, is located fifteen miles north of Norwalk.

Agriculture still remains the king of the county economy, generating close to 70 million dollars into the Huron County economy annually. Most of the land in the county is in agricultural use, primarily growing the three main cash crops, which are corn, wheat and soybeans. Huron County continues to be one of the top counties in the state in terms of total farm income.