

Chapter Nine

Executive Summary

It is hoped that the Huron County, Ohio Comprehensive Land Use Plan becomes a working document that has significant impact on how growth and development is managed by Huron County officials and the local jurisdictional representatives within the county boundaries.

Implementation of this report will be the responsibility of the Huron County Commissioners and the designated agencies that serve county residents. Local jurisdictions are encouraged to work with the commissioners, the Huron County Planning Commission and others to manage a consistent pattern of growth as development and redevelopment occurs throughout the county.

Use of the Plan

The utilization of the Huron County, Ohio Comprehensive Land Use Plan can occur in many ways. First and foremost is the influence it is hoped to have on future land use decisions throughout the county. As the Huron County Planning Commission and other agencies that may become involved in making land use decisions and recommendations get involved in reviewing future development proposals, it is hoped that development proposals are looked at with the following criteria in mind:

- Is the proposed development consistent with the policies and recommendations within this document?
- Is the proposed development consistent with land use patterns throughout the county?
- Is the proposed development committing land to the best use possible?

It is also recommended that when elected and appointed public officials within Huron County make future decisions on investments and development of public utilities, decisions are made that are consistent with the policies and recommendations included in this land use plan. It is also hoped that when officials throughout the county revise existing or create new land use regulations this land use plan is taken into consideration throughout the decision making process.

Updates

The last Comprehensive Land Use Plan for Huron County was completed in 1971. Here we are in 2007, thirty-six years later, revisiting issues related to the future growth and development of the county. A lot has changed since then. It is hoped that this plan will be revisited every five years to measure the impact growth and development is having on the

citizens of Huron County. Goals and policy statements should also be revisited, and revised if necessary, or new ones established based on relevancy to current conditions. The Huron County Commissioners should reconvene the task force every five years to report back on whether or not each element of this plan is relevant or revisions need to occur.

Policy Statements and Recommendations

What follows is a compilation of the Goals, Policy Statements and Recommendations that the Huron County Comprehensive Land Use Planning Task Force recommended throughout the Plan. This information is categorized by each subject area that was reviewed.

Economic Development

1.	Promote Huron County as a single location for development, understanding that communities and sites within the county may compete for a business, but that locating the business within the county is a “win” for all of the county.
2.	Zoning should help guide industrial, commercial, and service businesses to appropriate and targeted locations based on their intensity of use, and impact on adjacent and nearby uses and infrastructure (water, sewer, roadway). Zoning is helpful in this regard in municipalities and in unincorporated areas. Encourage consistency in zoning throughout the county’s townships and municipalities wherever feasible, particularly within adjacent jurisdictions. Additionally, encourage townships to develop uniformity within their zoning codes.
3.	Slow, steady growth is projected for the County. Over the next twenty years, the need for additional land for industrial development is likely. Such use should be guided to existing or future identified sites and industrial parks. County and local officials should also make provision for the assembly of large sites, to be able to respond to larger prospective projects. Maintain a countywide database of prime locations (buildings, sites, and industrial parks) for industrial development, housed at the Huron County Development Council.
4.	When industrial site needs cannot be satisfied by existing available buildings or sites within municipalities, land which is adjacent to or in close proximity to those municipalities should be given highest priority. A major reason is the availability or low development cost of infrastructure extensions, proximity to employment bases, and orderly growth considerations. Priority sites should also be located adjacent to or in close proximity to appropriate transportation routes (highway and rail), corridors, and intersections.
5.	Provision of municipal services to new industrial sites as described in #4 above can be provided through annexation. Affected local jurisdictions (municipality and township) <i>may</i> pursue the creation of a Joint Economic Development District or Cooperative Economic Development Agreement.
6.	Regardless of the pursuit of new business ventures, primary emphasis should be placed on the retention and expansion of existing businesses. Efforts should be made to accommodate expansions of businesses at their current sites whenever feasible.
7.	Huron County is located at the fringe of the Lake Erie tourism region, which continues to grow in stature as a major destination. While Huron County’s position may be considered secondary, its proximity to the lakefront counties and several destinations (such as Norwalk Raceway Park) help position it for a moderate level of tourism related development. Encourage tourism-related business that benefits from the county’s rural, natural, and historic assets, but

	<p>which does not exploit or denigrate those resources. Use the county's existing network of Chambers of Commerce and other business associations to promote tourism throughout the county.</p>
8.	<p>Encourage and develop programs, services, and incentives that maintain Huron County's competitive advantages for business growth. These may include workforce development, financial incentives, adequate utilities, logistics for distribution of products, entrepreneurial development and counseling, and other assistance. One business amenity that is needed within the county is a facility to house business meetings ranging from small functions to larger (several hundred people) meetings.</p>
9.	<p>Maintain an economy of scale in supporting and coordinating local efforts and development organizations with the countywide Huron County Development Council.</p>
10.	<p>Support Huron County's agricultural sector, which is the primary land use in the county, by taking steps to preserve farmland and minimize its loss, and by seeking complementary businesses such as value added food processing and large scale farming operations if they conform to standards of health and environmental integrity.</p>
11.	<p>Encourage the continuous improvement of information and communications technology to ensure that Huron County is a competitive location for technology-based business. Takes steps to proactively position Huron County and its communities for emerging technologies.</p>
12.	<p>Facilitate commercial and industrial development through maintenance of a business-friendly permitting and inspection process. Explore alternatives to the existing use of an outside commercial inspection and plan approval process (through Richland County), including initiation of a Huron County office, if such an office can be self-sustaining, or dedicated staff operating from another entity (i.e. Richland County, Erie County/Sandusky).</p>
13.	<p>Preserve those features that set Huron County apart as a business location with a desirable quality of life. Such features include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Open space and recreational opportunities b. Leisure activities, including access to water, golf, walking trails, and other amenities. c. Outstanding generalist and specialist health care facilities and professionals.

14.	Huron County has organized a task force to look at problems and the future plans for building regulations for commercial development throughout the county. It is recommended by the task force that the County look at the option of creating its own Commercial Building Regulations department or contract with another county or organization that can provide these services. A local, county-wide commercial regulations department would allow for more control, accountability, and more efficient service to Huron County businesses and industries which will create a positive impact on economic development.
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Public Facilities

15.	Continue to develop public facilities that are based on a solid plan.
16.	Ensure that all public facilities are easily accessible to all persons, placed in desirable location, properly maintained and operated in a cost effective manner.
17.	Enhance city and county parks, reservoirs, and other surface water. An Effort should be made to conduct a thorough inventory throughout the County
18.	Encourage Intergovernmental collaboration.
19.	Facilitate the development of needed facilities, seeking a balance of public and private facilities, based on a needs assessment and inventory of current facilities.

Quality of Life

20.	Promote Huron County as a place to live, work, shop, obtain services, and pursue leisure activities.
21.	Include consideration of all residents in an effort to maintain and/or improve the quality of life in the county.
22.	Preserve what truly is a peaceful quality of life.
23.	Balance the effect that small town life and affordable land costs will continue to draw people to Huron County with the resulting increased demands on services.

Services

24.	Consider outsourcing county services if it would be cost effective and maintain or increase the level of service.
25.	Meet the service needs of planned expanded growth areas and industrial areas.
26.	Provide the taxpayer with the best quality services at the lowest possible cost.

27.	Maintain and/or improve the services provided to the residents of the county.
28.	Any new county government facilities should be planned with accessibility by all Huron county citizens in mind.
29.	Senior centers currently exist in Willard and Norwalk; Bellevue has its own organization that meets at the Bellevue Community Center. Plans call for a new Norwalk facility to be sited on Shady Lane. Due to changing demographics communities should be encouraged to expand existing and develop new senior services and facilities.
30.	There is a need for meeting facilities that can be used by public and private organizations for gatherings. Currently, facilities cannot adequately accommodate larger gatherings of several hundred people.

Future Land Use

31.	Incorporate a process into land use planning that promises the highest and best use of any given site. At this time the Huron County Planning Commission and the Huron County Soil and Water Conservation District are the two agencies that are perhaps most involved in addressing land use issues on a county wide basis. Through membership most communities and interest groups are represented. The creation of a future land use map along with these policies will serve as another tool that can be used by these two organizations along with others to address this policy.
32.	Preserve prime areas for farming and protect existing farmlands where feasible. The recommendations from the 1999 Farm Land Preservation plan designate prime area of farmland to be preserved. If the current trends of commercial and industrial development occurring along highway corridors and within incorporated areas continues this policy statement can be accomplished to some degree. The issue of large lot single family home building in unincorporated areas will have negative impacts on preserving prime farmland throughout the county, and should be considered carefully.
33.	Continue to emphasize wise land use throughout Huron County. The comprehensive land use planning process is one that takes a long-term commitment by not only elected and appointed officials but citizens of a community as well. Consistency of thought and decision-making must occur through time and also through various terms and appointments of elected and appointed positions of government. Hopefully this Comprehensive Land Use Plan for Huron County will serve as a tool for consistency and wise land use decision making into the future.

34.	Assist in the development of uniform township zoning throughout the county, where possible. Fifteen of the nineteen townships within Huron County currently utilize zoning regulations as a land use tool. Unfortunately a lot of the development that is occurring in the county is located in several townships that are not zoned. Along with that issue there exist at times inconsistencies with development that is occurring within these unzoned townships and development that is occurring in the municipalities located nearby, and among the zoned townships in some cases.
35.	Encourage strategies that promote infill and the use of land within and adjacent to municipalities, where services and infrastructure can be provided most efficiently. There are a number of strategies, described within the plan, that could be utilized to promote this type of development. Various incentives could be utilized as well. The County Planning Commission and the Huron County Development Council could be excellent conduits to facilitate these strategies.
36.	Encourage compatible land uses along planned commercial or business corridors, in efforts to promote the highest and best use of land along with minimizing conflict in traffic circulation, drainage, water and sewer utilization, and basic community services. A pattern of land uses should be created as new development occurs along these corridors. When plans are proposed there should be mechanisms established throughout the county that can provide for a thorough review by not only building officials but fire, safety, and transportation officials as well. While looking at various issues related to their respective authority, officials should also look at minimizing the potential conflicts in land use patterns. When reviewing development in this regard, there should be a smooth transition between single family and multi family development, commercial and industrial, and all of the various land use types as to how they relate to each other. Conflicts should be minimized and solutions should be explored to eliminate any potential conflicts.
37.	Incorporate flexibility in the planning process, to allow for desired changes in future development patterns. There should always be the ability to amend or appeal the decisions made by public officials related to development patterns. There should also be the ability to make changes that will improve these patterns. A thorough review and amendment process will be an important piece of the implementation stage of this land use plan.
38.	Encourage the use of tools that aid coordination between adjacent jurisdictions in minimizing land use conflicts and promoting tax revenue sharing resulting from new development. These tools could be incentives provided by the State of Ohio. Other tools such as development agreements between various political jurisdictions could also be utilized. Agreements related to water and sewer development are yet another example. While looking at these tools the Huron County Planning Commission and the Huron County Development Council can be excellent conduits to facilitate projects through the political process.

Natural Resources

39.	<p>Practice Efficient Land Use Policies. While Huron County is largely rural, and may not need to address principles of sustainable development throughout the entire county, the principles associated with “new urbanism”, which advocate development within and near established urbanized areas and activity centers, are worth considering when endeavoring to preserve and not encroach upon the county’s natural resources and other sensitive areas. The use of a Joint Economic Development District or Cooperative Economic Development Agreement, described in Chapter 8, offers another means of guiding development to unincorporated areas that are adjacent to and coordinated with urbanized municipal areas.</p>
40.	<p>Incorporate Huron County’s New Subdivision Regulations: Huron County has recently approved new amendments to their subdivision regulations that bring them in line with new State legislation in Amended Substitute Senate Bill 115, where lots between 4 and 20 acres are then not, by definition, a “subdivision”, but are subject to a mid-level review that is nearly identical to the “Minor Subdivision” review process. Also, this allows for lot splits of Minor Subdivisions that are reviewed without a plat to still be reviewed for compliance with health and sanitary regulations, including rules governing household sewage disposal systems. In Huron County’s Subdivision regulation changes adhering to the provisions of S.B. 115, there are five basic changes, largely addressing the need to regulate the creation of large rural parcels of five to twenty acres. These include the definition of large lot divisions as 5 to 20 acres, property review procedures for lot splits, criteria for subdivision approval, procedures for approval, and frontage and other criteria for lots. The subdivision regulations further provide that no more than five lots, including the original tract, may be approved without going through the major subdivision process, which became effective January 1, 2007.</p> <p>The effect of these changes is to bring additional control and guidance to the development of lots that are five acres and larger. These lots were previously outside the purview of the review and analysis process, and these changes will provide more control over the conversion of undeveloped land and farmland to residential and other uses. These changes are recommended for approval and implementation throughout Huron County.</p>
41.	<p>Adopt Recommendations Presented in the 1999 Farmland Preservation Plan. It has been seven years since the Huron County Farmland Preservation Plan was developed and presented to the County. The following is a selected list of recommendations from that report, that are aligned with the goals and objectives of this comprehensive plan and thus should be considered as the County continues to develop.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In order to educate the county about farmland issues, it would be valuable to offer a one-day seminar to offer more in-depth information about topics related to

<p>farmland development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • core of basic information, including a clear how-to guide on all relevant and required planning and review processes (such as in the subdivision guidelines discussed previously), should be placed in the hands of prospective and actual purchasers of rural real estate, distributed by Realtors, lenders, county agencies, townships, libraries, and other locations. • Encourage infill development whenever possible. Development should be encouraged where public utilities are already in place or easily accessible. • Promote clustering of development where possible, in such a way that the use of buildable land is minimized, houses or other buildings are located closer together, and open space can then be maximized. • Review and apply, as appropriate, available farmland and resource preservation tools and their applicability to Huron County. Existing and potential tools are described within the Natural Resources chapter. <p>Further, agriculture as a primary economic force, industry, and land use within Huron County should be supported by encouraging development of food processing and other agriculturally related businesses (such as biodiesel or ethanol processing plants, which are currently under development throughout much of Ohio and the Midwest). Agribusiness can be promoted through local tourism efforts, and the importance of Huron County agriculture should be publicized.</p>
<p>42. Follow established procedures for erosion and sedimentation control</p> <p>One significant impact of any development upon the environment is the erosion and sedimentation that results from altered patterns and pathways for storm drainage. Typical problems encountered with new developments include a large increase of area exposed to soil erosion and runoff; increased volumes of runoff, soil movement, sediment and peak flows caused by removal of natural cover, increase in impervious surface areas, changes in drainage areas and the volume and duration of water concentration caused by grading and related factors, reduction of water intake of soils from compaction by construction equipment, and prolonged exposure of unprotected sites to adverse weather.</p> <p>The “general principles for effective water management and erosion/sedimentation control” should be applied in practical combinations to provide effective erosion and sedimentation control. In addition to these principles and practices, it is noted that all subdivisions shall be reviewed by the County Engineer to see if control measures are needed to minimize water, erosion, and sediment problems. An erosion and sediment control plan shall be submitted for all subdivisions containing more than ten lots or having proposed street construction. Those with less than ten lots, which are a portion or phase of a larger proposed allotment, shall submit a tentative NPDES erosion and sediment control plan for the entire allotment. The County Engineer, upon recommendation from HSWCD, shall accept or suggest modifications of all erosion and sedimentation control plans.</p>
<p>43. Incorporate environmental considerations in all development planning and review processes. It is recommended that a number of environmental factors, many of which are taken from the seminal publication, “Caring for the Land: Environmental</p>

Principles for Site Design and Review" (Bruce Hendler, 1977), also be considered. Those factors, which should be considered when a new development project is being considered or planned, are listed in the Natural Resources chapter, and should be consulted.

Transportation

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| 44. | Although Townline Rd. 12 is in good condition, there is need for another improved east-west roadway in the county. This lack of east-west mobility can be alleviated with the improvement of US 224 to a four-lane highway and its realignment to bypass Willard. Although less costly alternatives may need to be considered in the short run, long-range planning should target the upgrade of US 224 to a four-lane, limited access highway throughout Huron County, with the four lane configuration reaching east to its intersection with I-71. |
| 45. | In order to provide proper long-range planning for roadway widening and expansion, current zoning and land use practices should incorporate mandated "super setbacks" along the US 250 and US 224 corridors, as well as along US 20 east of Norwalk. This will allow for easier land acquisition, clearance, and site preparation for future widening projects. Rights of way should be under site control, with easements. Ideally, US 250 should be of a four-lane configuration from US 224 to Erie County, where it is now four lanes. A critical improvement is needed to reconfigure the turn and bridge in Fitchville. Additionally, in the short term, sufficient shoulders should be constructed along the two-lane Route 250. This may include converting ditches to culverts, but the safety factor associated with emergency needs to exit the travel lanes should be met as soon as possible. |
| 46. | Long-range planning should also continue to include consideration of a north-south bypass in Norwalk and an east-west bypass in Bellevue. The Norwalk bypass may include the aforementioned Greenwich-Milan Townline Road, with consideration to a northern extension to rejoin US 250. Several southerly alternatives for the Bellevue bypass have been proposed. In proposing bypass alignments, the upgrading of existing roadways should be considered where feasible |
| 47. | In the shorter, term, Greenwich-Milan Townline Road has emerged as a de facto Norwalk bypass, and plans are underway to obtain ODOT funding to improve the road to State safety standards and roadway width, 12 foot lanes and six foot graded shoulders. The portion of this roadway from US 250 north should become an extension of SR 601 and be marked as a bypass for Norwalk and direct route to Norwalk Raceway Park and other destinations to the east of Norwalk. |
| 48. | The intersection at US 224 and SR 13 should be improved to better accommodate truck traffic and turning movements. Other intersections and roadway segments requiring attention include: SR 103 south of Willard, the 99/547 intersection in Monroeville (to accommodate truck turns), US 250 and South Norwalk Road (where a right turn lane can be easily demarked along southbound US 250), and the |

	roadway fronting the Western Reserve school complex (where a turn lane should be constructed for reasons of public safety).
49.	Local officials must work within a regional context to maximize political clout. This regional support may come from an emerging Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) being formed in Erie County. The potential for Huron County's (or a portion of the County, such as the more northerly municipal areas of Norwalk, Monroeville, and Bellevue) inclusion within the MPO should be explored. Other regional affiliations may include working with the Toledo Port Authority. Further, Huron County should build a consortium with Ashland and Richland Counties for cases when a combined effort will assist in advocating for a mutually desired project.
50.	Local officials should involve ODOT and its Ashland District Office in their planning efforts, in order to advocate for priority projects. Advocacy of projects with ODOT should be aggressive and consistent. Local officials should explore how to provide significant local matching funds to gain ODOT's attention.
51.	The County and its affected subdivisions, with the Emergency Management Agency serving as lead agency on such projects, should continue to advocate for and support these improvements, with a prioritization of need for crossing improvements, and the ultimate goal of lights and gates, if not grade separations, for every crossing.
52.	Early stage planning is underway for high-speed passenger rail between Cleveland, Columbus, and Cincinnati. It is possible that the rail route will pass through southern Huron County. County officials should monitor the progress of this project and advocate for a regional stop within the county. It may be more realistic to locate a maintenance facility for the upgraded line in Huron County.
53.	Huron County's airports should be promoted and more fully publicized as community and economic development tools and resources. Funding should be sought for needed upgrades to ensure that these facilities can optimally serve their customer base of businesses and individuals. The possible relocation of the Huron County Airport should be carefully studied, contingent upon the availability of Federal and State funding to make the project locally cost-effective.
54.	Drainage is a significant issue throughout the county and should be addressed by a comprehensive, prioritized plan, in order to keep roadway surfaces safe during periods of high rainfall. Plans should call for a prioritized listing of areas that flood frequently, and clearing of drainage ways and streams in a manner that is environmentally acceptable.

Infrastructure and Utilities

55.	<p>The county will need to increase its access to a more substantial source of raw or treated water, and the logical source is Lake Erie. Methods should be encouraged to obtain water from sources along Lake Erie, including Erie County. Water in sufficient supply may be available in the Milan area, or within the NASA Plum Brook facility. Further, NORW is finalizing an agreement with Erie County to connect with their distribution system to furnish water to northwestern Huron County. Significant residential growth has been noted in the county's easternmost townships. Water, throughout the county, and especially in targeted growth areas, is a necessity in order to promote growth.</p>
56.	<p>Options should be investigated in which larger municipal sources of water furnish treated water to nearby smaller developed areas and villages. Cooperative efforts should result in the provision of water for all within the County. For example, Willard has furnished water to the village of Plymouth for many years, and New London extended distribution lines to every household in New London Township. Willard and New London have significant water capacity, and can furnish water either directly or indirectly by providing water to NORW. Indeed, New London is now providing water to NORW for distribution in nearby unincorporated areas.</p> <p>One potential area that could eventually be served by an outside entity is North Fairfield. Either NORWA, Norwalk, or Willard could provide water to this village's customers, who currently obtain village water from shallow wells. Similarly, New London's reservoir could supply Greenwich. In such cases, the County could help facilitate such a project and help in finding funding or endorsing applications. Lowest-cost alternatives that are the most logistically feasible (such as when NORW already has adequate lines within close proximity of a potential service area) should be recommended.</p>
57.	<p>The creation of one or more water districts may become a feasible option for the provision of water to developing areas outside but within close proximity to current municipal borders. A Willard water supply district could provide water to growth areas in nearby townships, and Willard has provided water to nearby areas where residences have inadequate water. As noted previously, New London has constructed water lines for all of New London Township. Further expansion into adjacent developed land can help guide land use if it is carefully planned, with larger capacity lines targeted to state highway corridors and sites where industrial and commercial development is desired.</p>
58.	<p>Huron County water providers should work to collaborate and negotiate with Northern Ohio Regional Water Authority in determining their respective service areas. This process of collaboration has been carried out between the City of Norwalk and NORW. Regardless of the outcome of such planning, care should be taken to ensure that designated growth areas would be served with adequate water (for drinking and fire protection) volume and pressure for the type of land use</p>

	<p>envisioned for that specific area. Planned industrial growth areas must receive sufficient water, with hydrants, to provide for necessary fire flows, as well as to serve any anticipated manufacturing processes.</p>
<p>59.</p>	<p>Another land use that may require additional infrastructure is rural recreational development. Erie County has provided water and sewer service to a number of significant recreational facilities such as the new Kalahari resort and convention center. Huron County could be the site for growth resulting from the growing significance of the area as a tourism destination</p>
<p>60.</p>	<p>As smaller wastewater treatment plants become obsolete or fall under mandates, communities should explore regional options with larger wastewater treatment plants linking smaller communities.</p>
<p>61.</p>	<p>Alternative sewage treatment technologies should be promoted in areas that exhibit special problems where there are documented health or environmental issues. Such alternatives as maintenance of septic systems, decentralized systems, and gray water systems should be explored.</p>
<p>62.</p>	<p>Local officials should obtain input from industrial and commercial businesses regarding their energy utility (especially electrical) needs and whether current and projected needs are being met. This information could be obtained through the retention and expansion program undertaken by HCDC. Data on business needs in areas where needs or projections are not being met should be communicated to the relevant utility provider, with provision for continued communication until needs can be met. Similarly, utility companies should inform local governments of planned improvements. A special need is for industrial parks to be in communication and coordinated with electricity and other utility (natural gas, broadband) suppliers to ensure that the needs of current and potential future users will be met in a manner that makes Huron County competitive as a business location.</p>
<p>63.</p>	<p>All areas of Huron County should be served by adequate cellular telephone service, and providers should be informed of any area in the county where service is inadequate. Currently, several areas and highway corridors are noted for unsatisfactory cellular service. Noted areas include US 20 and SR 18 east of Norwalk, and segments of Routes 4, 103, 224,99, 547, 162, and 250 (south of Fitchville).</p>
<p>64.</p>	<p>All areas of Huron County should be served by a level of Internet service that corresponds to the needs of the specific land use for that area. For example, designated industrial growth areas should be able to obtain adequate broadband service, through T-1 lines, cable service, DSL, wireless, or other means. Key target areas should also be developed that have wireless capabilities as well. Many areas within the county have no broadband capacity. However, many agricultural concerns have turned to satellite service for GPS and other needs, rather than broadband.</p>

65.	The Huron County Landfill, which now serves as a transfer station, should continue to maximize its ability to handle recyclables of all types.
66.	Industrial sites, parks, and planned growth areas should be planned and located in designated growth areas that can be served by adequate infrastructure.
67.	Stormwater management should be addressed throughout the county by aggressively eliminating combined sewers, including provisions for retention and other mitigation measures in new subdivision regulations, enclosing highway ditches where feasible, and including stormwater standards within a county thoroughfare plan.