

City of Conneaut  
2017 Comprehensive Plan Update

# Advisory Committee Packet of Materials Meeting #5 September 12, 2017, New Leaf Church

Distributed 9/11/17

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# Meeting #4 Summary

## Advisory Committee Meeting, June 27, 2017

### Attendance

- 12 Advisory Committee members (based on sign-in sheet)
 

Penny Armeni	Michael Legeza	Judy Parlongo
Becky Gaugh	Lembit Napp	Stephanie Seagal
Kerry Gerdes	Mindy Notte	Diana Spencer
Bill Kennedy	John C. Palo	Kathy Zapitello
- Debbie Newcomb, Conneaut City Council; Angel Wassey; Martha Sorohan, The Courier
- Jim Hockaday, Conneaut City Manager
- Representatives from CT: Kristin Hopkins, Dana Cohen

### Summary

#### Summary of Meetings - Comments/Questions

The meeting opened with a summary of the Public Forum (July 25, 2017) and the Focus Group sessions for Green Space, Downtown, and Waterfront held on August 22 and August 23, 2017 (pages 2-13 and Appendices pages 18-24 of Meeting #4 Handout).

There were a few comments on the Focus Group sessions:

- Add “Downtown Redevelopment Districts (DRD)” as a potential financing option for the Harbor area and downtown as an effective tool for economic development. A DRD operates similar to Tax Increment Financing, but with an emphasis on promoting the rehabilitation of historic buildings. Like TIFs, the funding can be used to finance public infrastructure projects. In addition, funding can support a wider range of purposes, including private capital improvement projects, and to support a community improvement corporation or other type of nonprofit whose primary purpose is to redevelop historic buildings or otherwise promote or enhance the district.
- The “Actions” for Green Space should include the addition of trails on the back half of the school property.
- There were questions regarding the Harbor area dredging and how it is funded (what entities are responsible). It was noted that Canadian National is responsible for their own dredging.

The updated/refined vision and goals presented at the public forum were also included in the packet (pages 14-15 of Meeting #4 Handout). There were no comments on using these refined statements.

#### Review and Discussion of Draft Policies

Kris Hopkins (CT) presented a map of the “First Cut” Priority Development and Conservation Areas which includes both their location and general strategy (page 16 of Meeting#4 Handout) – “first cut” meaning that

these areas are up for discussion with the committee and subject to revisions. The priority development areas were largely selected based on advisory committee and focus group member comments. These areas have been identified as areas with greatest potential and where the greatest efforts should be made to spur development or foster conservation. The priority conservation areas were largely based on conversations from partner conservation agencies in the focus group session. Areas on the map that are not "highlighted" as an area for priority development or conservation means that they would remain as currently zoned but the city/community would not take an active role in promoting development or conservation.

### **Priority Development Areas:**

This section began with a brief presentation of the "metrics" of retail potential in Conneaut (page 2-3 of Meeting #4 PowerPoint Handout). More technical details were provided in the PowerPoint handout for those who are interested but were not discussed in the meeting (page 9-13 of Meeting #4 PowerPoint Handout). The overall goal is to create shovel-ready sites. There are a various minimum requirements when it comes to attracting economic development, but the bottom line for Conneaut is that there is an abundant supply of zoned land. The question is where it is in the best location. Another prime considerations for promoting retail is in regards to the population base within the traditional trade area of 5-10 mile radius, however this all "goes out the door" with tourism because tourists come from much farther. Research shows people who come to Marina are 30-50 miles away.

1. Redevelop Harbor Area (regarding strategies on page 3-4 of Meeting #4 PowerPoint Handout)
  - The comment was made at the focus group sessions to "let's see what the developer proposes". The Mixed Use Planned Development District recommendation would provide the desired flexibility, however, it is important to think through the range of uses and appropriate development standards as well as the PUD review process. A more flexible district with fewer standards may provide greater latitude to the developer, but may also result in a longer review/negotiation period in order to arrive at a mutually agreeable development (between the city and the developer).
  - The use of the sandbar is still a question, there was no consensus thus far. Birding is important however it is unclear to what extent recreational improvements should be made.
  - Canadian National is a large land owner, but is not engaged in this process. CN has no motivation to be involved with this project. What can be done to encourage their participation? CN is a railroad, is tax exempt and their lack of interest in the City is not unique - not likely much can be done to change that.
  - Collaboration is key, there are a lot of entities who have a stake.
  - Studies have been done on the need for expanding the Marina. There is a wait list and a demand for slips for larger boats. Bigger boats will bring people with more money. Other ports are maxed out as well. There is a need.
  - Would the Economic Development person be just for the harbor? The focus of the discussion was on the harbor but there is a need for ED in the whole City so it is feasible they could be responsible for both.
  - There is also a need for more seasonal cottages, rental properties, and air bnb, etc. and it is hard for people to find them; need to find a way to better advertise these facilities.... 40% of bed tax comes from these types of lodging options. It is also important to make sure there are lodging options for families.
  - When considering the need for new regulations regarding Airbnb, it was noted that the City does not have the resources to add more regulation and inspection to police the quality of

- individual rental properties. The County has thought about implementing a recognition program to identify properties that meet quality standards. Bed and breakfasts should be regulated in zoning, but it is not necessary to regulate air bnb.
- in the focus group it was discussed that developing condos is a priority as well as improving existing housing. A hotel is likely to be attracted to the area only after the residential population and restaurant/retail environment is improved. The City is waiting on the results of the County's hotel feasibility study.
  - In response to the recommendation to improve the existing hotel it was noted that it serves a certain clientele and is not where vacationing families are likely to stay.
  - It was recommended to consider establishing a "Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area (DORA) in the harbor area. Such an ordinance would identify a specific area where alcohol beverages in open containers would be permitted. They have been created in other places in Ohio (i.e. Toledo) but it was opposed in Geneva on the Lake because it seems to target young adults. The same could be a concern in Conneaut – the harbor area is and should remain a family friendly environment. The City can control, however, the activities permitted, hours, and how it is implemented so it is possible that the City could look into where a limited location may be appropriate.
  - The harbor needs an anchor tenant as an attraction to spur foot traffic. We have very few direct metrics on the number of visitors attracted to the area. The closest the Tourism Board has is a Bed Tax.
  - It was suggested to put out an RFP for Lakeview Park. Developers can present their plan and it can be a requirement to include a connection to the Marina. There was another suggestion that Lakeview Park be oriented towards families i.e. a splash park. There would still need to be a hotel but because the land is in city ownership it should be for family access and connectivity (bikes).
  - Regarding the types of new development that would be acceptable in the area, Condos 2-3 stories would be appropriate, seasonal would also be appropriate. No high rise, as it would be out of place in the area.
  - Garages for large boats needs to be addressed in the zoning. There have been many variance requests. Covered boat storage is an identified need.
2. Revitalize Downtown (regarding strategies on page 4-6 of Meeting #4 PowerPoint Handout)
- A proposed rezoning map for Downtown was presented. It was clarified that the purpose of the reducing the area of the B-3 Downtown Zoning District is to focus retail in a specific area. Kris Hopkins noted that an oversupply of commercially zoned land lower the purchase price for development, which can lead to a lower the quality of retail. Another reason to rezone predominately residential areas around downtown to a residential district is to protect these neighborhoods from redevelopment.

Comments included:

- It is not appropriate to rezone the residential portion to on the west end to R-4. It was historically R1 with nice historic homes and larger lot sizes.
- The northeast residential portion is a low priority. 90% of the area are dead end streets and it will never be retail, there is no connectivity. Some are nice homes and others are not.
- It is best to determine how you want it zoned now so that you can rezone all at once.
- State Street there are a few hair salons and it should stay commercial- proposed boundary should be revised.

3. Foster New Development (regarding strategies on page 6-7 of Meeting #4 PowerPoint Handout)
  - Kris Hopkins explained that in order to revise the zoning for the interchange, the natural boundaries (wetlands) serve as a good transition point to residential.
  - There were no other comments.
  
4. Expand Industrial Zoning (regarding strategies on page 7 of Meeting #4 PowerPoint Handout). The proposed rezoning for this area included expanding industrial zoning along the north side of Underridge Road between Rt 7 and Furnace.
  - Industrial development should be required to provide design elements like ponds and fountains and landscaping similar to industrial development in Solon.
  - Underridge Rd has a high slope on the south end. A marginal road could be built across "Gill property" to open it up for development.
    - There was some discussion regarding the potential for retail (i.e. an outlet mall) in this area:
    - One option would be to add retail as a conditional use to the M-1 district. Kris Hopkins suggested a high acreage requirement for retail if the goal is to allow large scale retail.
    - Another option is to rezone to B-1 with industrial as a conditional use. The City would not want to turn down retail if it were proposed. Flexibility is important and the City would not want to limit development.
  - A concern was raised that malls are changing and a mall might not be a good use. There was not a consensus on this issue. It was noted that this issue could be further reviewed by the Planning Commission later on in this planning process. Kris Hopkins explained that while it is typical to pursue the zoning changes recommended in the plan soon after the completion of the comprehensive plan, it is also possible to identify areas of the city where two or more development scenarios are reasonable, and that rezoning could be done at a later date. For example, this area could be identified in the plan as appropriate for "nonresidential development".

### Priority Conservation Areas

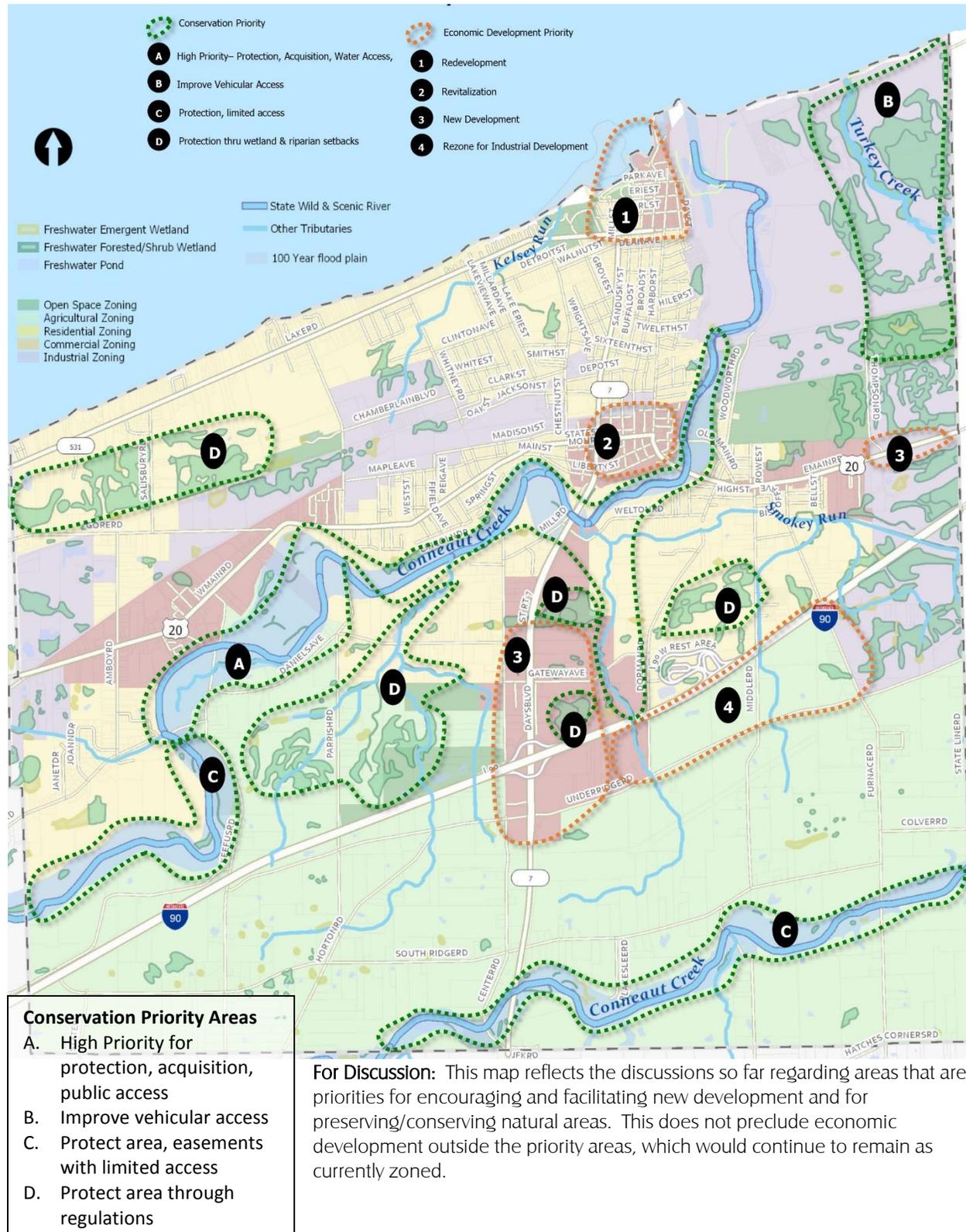
The priority conservation areas were presented briefly but will be discussed at the next meeting due to time constraints. The Greenspace Focus group largely focused on conservation efforts with partner agencies, with little discussion on City-owned parks. AT the September Meeting, the advisory committee will consider improvements to the various City owned parks and discuss the best use of the sandbar.

### **Next Steps and Other Notes...**

The next Meeting will take place on September 12, 2017 at New Leaf Church, and will pick up where we left off with the conservation and recreation pieces.

There was also a final comment regarding the need to establish a committee to be responsible for implementing the priority action steps that are identified in the plan. The concern is that without such a committee, the recommendations in the plan will not get accomplished.

# “First Cut” Priority Conservation and Priority Development Areas



**DRAFT Conservation and Recreation Policies** (first presented at 8/29/17 meeting)

- 1) **Conneaut Creek is the High Priority** for Conservation/Protection, Acquisition and Public Access Improvements, from Camp Peet to the Woodworth Rd ramp, and south along the North-South Smokey Run tributary to the Middle School. Confirm priorities for preservation/conservation, as well as appropriate recreation related development improvements
  - a) Create map of larger region to show context – include all of Conneaut Creek (in OH), and PA game lands that provide access to Turkey Creek Metroparks
  - b) Build a trail along Conneaut Creek to provide connections between Camp Peet and Downtown; and along North-South Smokey Run tributary to connect to Gateway Schools (and the Outdoor Learning Center/Discovery Trail)
  - c) Identify and create additional sites for access to the river, parking for the hike/bike trails:
    - i) Add kayak launching area near Old Main Street
    - ii) Make sure these facilities are easy to find with good wayfinding signs.
    - iii) Make sure there are adequate trash receptacles at these sites.
  - d) Expand camping along the Creek
  - e) Identify potential locations for recreation business related uses such as kayak/canoe rentals
  - f) Install interpretive signage along the trails
  - g) Establish criteria to guide future land acquisition/conservation, such as land adjacent to existing park
- 2) **Create access to Turkey Creek Metroparks**; Partner with PA to establish interstate connections with adjacent PA game lands
- 3) **Protect the remaining portion of Conneaut area through conservation easements** that keep the land in private ownership with limited access:

Encourage and promote private donations of land through establishment of conservation easements. Begin a conservation easement campaign that educates and encourages large lot owners to place the unused portions of their properties into a conservation easement to be held by the Western Reserve Land Conservancy. In many cases this underdeveloped land provides productive storm water management and water quality services that are beneficial to the City and the watershed.
- 4) **Adopt regulations that will protect Sensitive Natural Areas** Revise the Zoning Code to:
  - a) Establish riparian and wetland setback regulations – with setback based on drainage area of waterway
  - b) Create conservation subdivision regulations that encourage preservation of natural features without reducing the development potential, with a percentage of land preserved as open space
  - c) Restrict tree clearing in riparian and wetland setback areas
  - d) Consider a conservation overlay district that would apply primarily to residential land - restrict tree removal, allow limited recreation related businesses

- e) Revise the site plan review requirements to require detailed inventory of natural features (wetlands, streams, steep slopes, etc)
- 5) **Create a wetlands mitigation bank area** that can assist in economic development of commercial/ industrial properties that are impacted by wetlands.
- 6) **Market the recreation/natural areas:**
  - a) Create map and develop a branding campaign through partnership with Ashtabula County Tourism Bureau
  - b) Install appropriate way-finding signs to guide people from I-90, SR 7, US 20, the Circle Lake Route, etc.
  - c) Establish metrics to quantify attendees, especially at Township Park
  - d) Contact the Adventure Cycling Association to be added to their bicycle facilities registry
- 7) **Promote/create events** that showcase the area's natural features and amenities
- 8) **Allow hunting on public land.** Continue to update/fine tune the City's ordinance for hunting on public land
- 9) **Develop a City Parks Improvement plan** so that each park has a primary focus (see park inventory on next page) as a way of establishing a sustainable parks system.
  - a) Redevelop Lakeview Park
    - i) Retain public open space – with splash park or other recreation facility
    - ii) Relocate the ball diamond ); create public
  - b) Liberty Ave park focus - tennis courts (recently rehabbed)
  - c) Dean Ave park focus – basketball courts
  - d) Malek Park – identify priority improvements, restore the ball diamond to replace the one at Lakeview Park
- 10) **Create an improvement plan for the Sand Bar:**
  - a) Identify the best use of the property, how m as:
    - i) Preserve the beach
    - ii) Maintain the walking paths
    - iii) Consider primitive or yurt camping
    - iv) Retain a portion of Sand Bar for a bird sanctuary
  - b) Dredge the area north of Naylor Drive (see also Harbor Focus Group discussion) to create more boat slips
  - c) Develop a strategy for using dredged material; Conduct a cost analysis of establishing a dewatering location

- 11) Create bike paths and hike/bike trails to make it easier and safer to ride a bike in and around the City, especially to community facilities such as the Harbor area, Downtown, Conneaut Creek, the schools, the library, etc.
- a) Convert “Old Mill Road to a bike and pedestrian trail
  - b) Connect Conneaut Township Park to the Marina and sandbar via a multi-purpose trail
  - c) Fix up Chestnut Street for bike access to the lake.

Table 1. Inventory of Select Parks and Recreation Facilities in Conneaut

	City Parks					Other Rec Facilities		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	Dean Avenue Park	Hayward Park	Liberty Street Park	Lakeview Park	Malek Park/ Arboretum	Township Park	Sandbar	CLYO Conneaut Local Youth Org.
Acres	1.5	1	1.4	8.2 (8.7?)	41	60	41	20
Amenities								
Children’s Play Equipment	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Tennis Courts	X		X			X		
Baseball Field				X	X			X
Basketball Courts	X			X				
Soccer/Football Field						X		X
Picnic Area				X	X	X		
Monuments				X				
Trail					X		X	
Beach/Swimming						X	X	
Fishing						X		
Concession Stand						X		
Observation/Birding					X		X	
Views of Lake Erie/ Sunset viewing				X		X		
Walking paths							x	
Parking Lot					X	X		
Restroom						X		
Characteristics/ Comments				mostly mowed-grass green space with a few clusters of deciduous trees	Malek Park is the largest city-owned park, but is not very accessible to residents			

## Neighborhood and Housing

Issues related to housing construction:

- 44% (2,463) of houses were built in 1939 or earlier – depending on the level of maintenance provided over the years, many are in need of rehab and renovation
- There has been only approximately 212 new housing units constructed in the last 17 years

Year Structure Built	Units	%
Built 2010 or later	0	
2000 to 2009	212	4%
1970 to 1999	1,130	20%
1940 to 1969	1,863	33%
Built 1939 or earlier	2,463	43%
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	<b>5,668</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: 2015 American Community Survey Data

Housing Type	Number	Avg Floor Area (sq. ft)	Avg Market Value
Single Family Detached	115	1,805	\$170,468
Two- and Three- Family	4	1,635	\$103,725
Condominium	24	1,100	\$160,433
Farm House	13	2,519	\$261,085

Source: Ashtabula County Auditor's records  
Does not include apartment buildings, Does not include "manufactured homes"

- Approximately 27 houses have been built since 2010, including The Shores – redevelopment of the golf course.
- Older houses are more expensive to upgrade to contemporary standards – to be competitive with new housing. There is a limited market for fixer-uppers, many buyers are not willing to invest the time to do extensive rehab.
- New housing is needed to attract certain types of new residents, and for existing residents who desire to “move up” or have changing housing needs (such as empty nesters)
- There are an estimated 906 vacant housing units (2015 ACS), approximately 250 – 300 are seasonal, recreational units.
- The median value of owner occupied houses is \$87,000, and median monthly gross rent is \$576.
- The median household income is \$33,396 for all households and \$41,444 for families.
- Approximately 15% of Conneaut households pay more than 30% of their income for housing (applies to households with household income of less than \$45,000 per year.
- Another 15% spend less and could afford to move up to a higher valued housing unit (see Table 5. Supply and Demand analysis). Based on this there is a market for higher value houses.

# of Units in Structure	Units	%
Single-family detached houses	4,281	76%
Single-family attached (condos)	42	1%
2 to 4 units in a building	582	10%
5 to 19 units in a building	144	3%
20 or more units in a building	260	5%
Mobile Home	359	6%
Total Housing Units	5,668	100%

Source: 2015 American Community Survey Data

Annual Household Income	Affordable Monthly Housing Cost	House Purchase Affordability Range (2)	Number of Units Demanded	Number Supplied		Net Demand
				Owner-Occupied	Renter-Occupied	
less than \$14,999	Less than \$375	less than \$40,499	852	532	342	-22
\$15,000 to \$24,999	\$375 to \$625	\$40,500 to \$67,499	821	512	579	-270
\$25,000 to \$34,999	\$625 to \$875	\$67,500 to \$94,499	835	723	444	-332
\$35,000 to \$44,999	\$875 to \$1,125	\$94,500 to \$121,499	615	519	183	-87
\$45,000 to \$49,999	\$1,125 to \$1,250	\$121,500 to \$134,999	233	182	51	0
\$50,000 to \$59,999	\$1,250 to \$1,500	\$135,000 to \$161,999	432	270	23	139
\$60,000 to \$74,999	\$1,500 to \$1,875	\$162,000 to \$202,499	450	177	11	262
\$75,000 to \$99,999	\$1,875 to \$2,500	\$202,500 to \$269,999	271	94	3	174
\$100,000 to \$124,999	\$2,500 to \$3,125	\$270,000 to \$337,499	117	85	0	32
\$125,000 to \$149,999	\$3,125 to \$3,750	\$337,500 to \$404,999	57	21	0	36
\$150,000 and more	\$3,750 and more	\$405,000 and over	79	10	0	69
Total			4,762	3,125	1,637	0

Data Sources: 2015 American Community Survey Data; Analysis by CT Consultants.

Zoning District	Total Vacant Acres	Unsewered Areas		Sewered Areas		Potential New Housing Units	
		Estimated Vacant Acres*	Potential units at 0.4 units per acre	Estimated Vacant Acres	Max Density for Single-Family	Potential Low	Potential High (For R-3 and R-4 where Apt are permitted)
A-1	2,464	2,464	986	0	N/A	986	986
R-1	538	269	108	269	2.6	807	807
R-2	1,065	532.5	213	533	2.6	1,598	1,598
R-3	254	0	0	254	4.1	1,041	4,420
R-4	202	0	0	202	6.1	1,232	3,515
R-5	188	0	0	188	6.1	1,147	699
Total	4,711	3,266	1,306	1,446		6,811	12,024

\*Assumes 100% of A-1 area and 50% of R-1 and R-2

Table 7. Potential Population Increase		
	Potential Low	Potential High
Additional population at 2.4 persons per household	16,345	28,857
<b>If only sewerred areas have housing development</b>		
New housing units	5,504	10,718
Additional population at 2.4 persons per household	13,210	25,722

## Draft Neighborhood and Housing Policies and Strategies

One of the primary goals Conneaut is to attract more residents who can support the retail stores, restaurants and services, and support community facilities desired by residents.

### 1) Encourage new housing construction in key locations to strengthen the neighborhoods:

- a) Encourage higher density housing in the Harbor area (see Harbor Area policies), higher value housing.
- b) Encourage infill housing in areas where water and sanitary sewer service already exists, and around the downtown area.
- c) Encourage construction of a variety of housing types to be attractive to wider market.
- d) Secondary areas for housing development include west of Parrish Road north of the railroad tracks and in the Dorman Rd area near the schools.

### 2) Enhance and revitalize older neighborhoods and Preserve homes and buildings with architectural or historical value

- a) Target the area between the Downtown and the Harbor for historic preservation, rehab and demolition of deteriorated housing – conduct a detailed study of this target area to develop a data base of housing condition.
- b) Continue to work with the landbank to acquire and assemble properties for redevelopment.
- c) Continue rehabilitation assistance programs for low-moderate income homeowners such as CDBG and HOME funds.
- d) Upgrade public infrastructure in the target area to make it more walkable and bikeable – maintain sidewalks, improve crosswalks, etc..

### 3) Tools to accomplish these objectives include:

- a) Amend the zoning code to make it more redevelopment friendly:
  - i) Ensure the minimum lot size requirements for each district are consistent with the existing development pattern – adjust the minimum requirements to reduce the number of variances needed for additions, and new development

- ii) Establish development standards for unsewered areas that are consistent with the County Health Department's rules for septic systems – minimum 2 acre lot size and minimum 200 feet of lot frontage.
- iii) Create regulations for bed and breakfast lodging in residential neighborhoods to ensure that the neighborhood character is not negatively impacted by them.
- b) Continue code enforcement, especially property maintenance.
- c) Provide redevelopment incentives
- d) Decrease city-wide vacancies to no more than 5% (excluding seasonal units) by working with local realtors.

## Draft Community Character and Image Policies and Strategies

### 1) Preserve Historic Features and Small Town Charm

- a) Continue & increase efforts to preserve/protect historic sites and structures in Conneaut
  - i) Create an inventory of Historic sites and structures so they are documented, marked,
  - ii) Establish and enforce regulations to encourage protection of historical sites
  - iii) Make resources available to property owners to help learn about proper care of historical structures
- b) Create a priority preservation district that includes the Downtown Conneaut area

### 2) Develop and build a unique branding campaign to promote Conneaut as a premiere tourist destination.

- a) Improve the appearance of infrastructure and create a welcoming atmosphere
  - i) Develop attractive gateways and streetscape improvements around key entry points and thoroughfares in the City
    - Broad street between downtown and harbor – creates a distinctive connection between two main tourist attractions
    - Along US 20 Corridor- the gateway to the downtown
    - Main Street from State St (west to Harbor St. (east)- create an attractive downtown
    - Harbor Area (Park Ave, Erie St, Lake Rd)
  - ii) Continue to implement consistent and legible wayfinding improvements that foster a sense of place
  - iii) Make improvements to sidewalks
- b) Create a branding campaign
  - i) Create a new slogan or reinstitute old “sharpest corner” slogan

- ii) Invest in a more accessible and welcoming welcome center, and update brochures and maps so all of the local amenities are easily found.
- iii) Hire economic development coordinator, partner with Tourism Board and/or hire a consultant to spearhead efforts.
- iv) Partner with “adventure cycling association” to promote Conneaut as a bike friendly attraction across the Great Lakes

3) Encourage increased property Maintenance and investment both residential and commercial

4) Preserve and Encourage our Agricultural Economy

- a) As noted above, establish development standards for unsewered areas that are consistent with the County Health Department’s rules for septic systems – minimum 2 acre lot size and minimum 200 feet of lot frontage.

The current A-1 Zoning District has a minimum 1 acre lot size requirement – so new subdivisions will not be built, though new houses could be built on frontage lots.

- b) Limit “City” type improvements in the A-1 District in order to preserve the lower density, rural character:
  - i) Retain the unpaved roads.
  - ii) Don’t extend water and sewer further into the A-1 District (though improvements are warranted to protect the investment and integrity of areas where the utilities already exist)
  - iii) Don’t rezone area west along Under Ridge Road – area is different than the east side where industrial/commercial zoning is appropriate. East of SR 7 parcels are larger fewer houses exist, hillside provides a natural edge/boundary and buffer
- c) Establish a farmers market that can provide locale farmers a venue for sales.

## **APPENDIX - Green Space Focus Group Session**

### **Attendees:**

Larry Frimerman, Ashtabula Co Metroparks  
Matthew Smith, ODNR  
Brett Rodstrom, Western Reserve Land  
Conservancy

Bob Best, Ashtabula Metroparks  
Jack Polchosky, Snug Harbor Bait & Tackle  
Gary Coxon, Township Park Board  
Jim Hockaday

### **Potential**

- Lake Erie access, beaches, marinas – larger in comparison to other Ashtabula County communities
- High quality steel head fishing - recreation feature that makes Conneaut unique. Conneaut Creek is #1 priority for preservation and public access
- Not able to preserve everything, need to identify the priorities; this entails collaboration among the various entities that seek to conserve land in the city so that there is a balance between land conservation, public access and economic development initiatives.
- Three ways to address conservation of important natural areas:
  - Acquire land for public access – such as has been done with the new Turkey Creek Metropark, Camp Peet
  - Obtain conservation easements from land owners – the land remains in private ownership (and generally does not allow public access), but the easement preserves the land in its natural state
  - Rely on regulations – such as the Army Corps of Engineers wetland regulations, can also adopt local riparian and wetland setback requirements as part of the zoning code
- Preserved open space and trails are documented to increase the value of adjacent and nearby properties, which offsets the loss of development potential on conserved land
- Lakeview Park is underutilized, increase the economic value of the area while preserving public access and open space
- Dredge material from the harbor and federal channel can be a marketable commodity

### **Partners include:**

- City of Conneaut
- Conneaut Port Authority
- Township Park Commission
- Ashtabula County Metroparks
- Western Reserve Land Conservancy
- Persons who own property along the Creek
- Businesses who seek to develop parcels that have significant natural features on the land

**Actions:**

- Raise money (levy) to hire leadership that will be responsible for achieving the following actions
- Identify priorities for preservation/conservation, as well as appropriate recreation related development improvements
  - Create a map that shows a larger area to understand the context for open space preservation – include all of Conneaut Creek to the west, and PA gamelands /existing access to the east
  - Identify priority locations for trails (provide trail along Conneaut Creek to connect Camp Peet to Gateway Schools and Downtown)
  - Identify and create additional sites for access to the river, parking for the hike/bike trails
  - Identify potential locations for recreation business related uses such as kayak/canoe rentals
  - Install interpretive signage along the trails
  - Establish criteria to guide future land acquisition/conservation, such as land adjacent to existing park
- Create access to Turkey Creek Metroparks; Partner with PA to establish interstate connections with adjacent PA game lands
- Revise the Zoning Code:
  - Establish riparian and wetland setback regulations – Chagrin River Watershed Partners have model legislation, with recommended setback based on drainage area of waterway
  - Create conservation subdivision regulations that encourages the preservation of natural features without reducing the development potential, with a percentage of land preserved as open space
  - Restrict tree clearing in designated areas:
    - Important in riparian and wetland setback areas
    - Consider an conservation overlay district that would apply primarily to residential land and restrict tree removal
  - Revise the site plan review requirements – require detailed inventory of natural features on the development site (location of wetlands, streams, steep slopes, etc)
- Create a wetlands mitigation bank area that can assist in economic development of commercial/industrial properties that are impacted by wetlands
- Market the recreation/natural areas with:
  - Create map and develop a branding campaign through Strategic partnership with Ashtabula County Tourism Bureau
  - Install appropriate way-finding signs, to guide people from I-90, SR 7, US 20, the Circle Lake Route, etc.
  - Establish metrics to quantify attendees, especially at Township Park
- Promote/create events that showcase the area’s natural features and amenities
- Continue to update/fine tune the City’s ordinance for hunting on public land
- Establish a City Parks improvement plan so that each park has a primary focus, in order to eliminate redundancy and be more sustainable:
  - Relocate ball diamond on Lakeview Park
  - Liberty Ave park – tennis courts recently rehabbed, make Liberty Ave Park the one place for tennis courts

- Dean Ave park – basketball court
  - Malek Park, needs significant improvements, identify primary purpose for park
- Create an improvement plan for the Sand Bar:
  - Dredge the area north of Naylor Drive (see also Harbor Focus Group discussion) to create more boat slips
  - Retain a portion of Sand Bar for a bird sanctuary
- Develop a strategy for using dredged material; Conduct a cost analysis of establishing a dewatering location