

Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Oxford Township Unincorporated Area

2024 Update

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Definition of Land Use Plan

A Land Use Plan is a statement of goals and objectives for the future of a community, accompanied by maps that assist in relating the goals and objectives to distinctive features of the community's landscape. It differs from a Zoning Ordinance and a Subdivision Ordinance, which are legal documents with detailed regulations governing what is currently permitted on specific parcels of land within a community. A Land Use Plan offers a broad vision for how a community wishes to see its land used in the future.

Executive Summary and Introduction:

This Plan Draft was prepared by a citizens committee appointed in 2024 by Oxford Township Trustees Norma Pennock, Kate Rousmaniere, and Gary Salmon. The purpose of the Plan is to guide future development in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township.

Planning Process

This Plan is the second update of a Plan prepared by a committee of citizens appointed in 2007 by the Oxford Township Trustees and adopted in 2008 by the Butler County Planning Commission. It was first updated by a committee of citizens appointed in 2014 by the Oxford Township Trustees and adopted in 2015 by the Butler County Planning Commission.

The Oxford Township Land Use Plan Committee members responsible for preparing this Plan were Remah Dinc, Joe Dumyahn, Larry Fink, John Kinne, Zack VanGordon, Mike Smith (representing the City of Oxford), and James Rubenstein (chair). The committee was assisted by Butler County Department of Development staff, including Director David Fehr and Planning Administrator Craig Flaute. A public meeting was held in October; approximately 70 persons attended.

The Oxford Township Land Use Plan Committee held its final meeting in December 2024. Feedback from the public meeting was considered, and a final draft was then sent to the Oxford Township Trustees for their review. Following the Trustees' review in early 2025, a final version will be submitted to the Butler County Planning Commission.

Principal Recommendations

- The extensive contiguous expanse of farmland and sensitive natural areas in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township, surrounding the City of Oxford, is one of this community's most important resources. Finding practical ways to encourage preservation and protection of these resources is a central core value of this Plan.
- Under current Butler County zoning and subdivision regulations, it is a permitted use for most farms to be entirely subdivided into development parcels. As a result, Oxford Township, though it has had only modest population growth, lost approximately 800 acres of farmland between 2007 and 2024.

- Encouraging the preservation and protection of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township's farmland and agricultural landscape which contributes to the quality of life for the residents of the Oxford area.
- The unincorporated portion of Oxford Township has an inventory of sensitive environmental features that are critical to conserve, including streams, flood plains, steep slopes, wooded area, and areas with potential for aquifer pollution.
- Encouraging the conservation of environmental features and preservation of farmland should be the starting point for identifying appropriate land use activities in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township.
- This Plan recommends allocation of land to four uses:
 - **Agriculture / Conservation Development areas.** Land suitable for continued agricultural production, natural areas, or conservation development (which is defined and explained in detail in Chapter 2), and containing no environmentally sensitive features and characteristics, as defined later in this Plan.
 - **Environmentally Sensitive areas.** Land suitable for continued agricultural production, natural areas, or conservation development, containing one or two of the environmentally sensitive features and characteristics defined later in this Plan.
 - **Areas Unsuitable for Development.** Land best left in a natural state or given the highest priority for protection, as a result of possessing three or more of the environmentally sensitive features and characteristics defined later in this Plan.
 - **Public Lands.** Land owned by local, state, or federal organizations, or Miami University Lands.
- If an owner wishes to develop a property, this Plan recommends that the owner be encouraged to develop the property consistent with conservation development principles. Conservation development starts by identifying areas on a property with sensitive environmental and cultural features and clustering houses away from those sensitive areas. The open space is protected permanently by a conservation easement, a legally binding agreement that restricts unwanted development into perpetuity. Conservation development principles apply equally well to individual lots as to clustered developments.
- Clustering housing on parcels smaller than 5 acres is possible because Butler County Health Department may permit placement of leaching fields off-site as long as the fields are protected by permanent easement that prevents heavy equipment or impermeable surfaces.

- Under current Butler County regulations, a farm located in the agriculture/conservation development and sensitive environmental areas can be entirely subdivided into houses on large lots, and the land is lost as farmland forever. Under conservation development, houses can be clustered on a relatively small percentage of the land, leaching fields and road access can also be clustered on a relatively small percentage of the land, and farming or natural areas could remain forever on the majority of the land, with protection through a conservation easement.
- Conservation developments need to be sited in such a way as to encourage the maintenance of large contiguous areas for agriculture, because small patches of farmland may not be sustainable. For example, if a 50-acre property preserves 40 acres of farmland, those 40 acres would be most sustainable for farming if they are adjacent to other farmland.
- Oxford Township seeks closer cooperation with Butler County, the City of Oxford, neighboring townships, and Miami University to assure the fiscal viability of the Township and secure innovative zoning and subdivision regulations needed to implement this Plan.
- The transportation network of the Oxford area should emphasize opportunities for walking, biking, carpooling, and buses. The safety of existing roads in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township should be improved, rather than construct new roads.

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1 Rural Character

The unincorporated portion of Oxford Township consists predominantly of farmland and sensitive natural areas in character. Oxford Township residents place a high priority on preserving that character.

Goal

Preserve the rural character and the predominantly rural and agricultural landscape of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township.

Objectives

- Preserve and protect sensitive environmental areas, that are specifically identified later in this plan.
- Maintain a rural landscape through preservation of large contiguous areas rather than small isolated patches.
- Minimize the loss of land for agriculture and other uses consistent with maintaining a rural character.

Discussion

Oxford Township is situated in the northwest corner of Butler County. It is bounded by Milford Township on the east, Reily Township on the south, Preble County on the north, and Franklin and Union counties, Indiana, on the west. Total land area of Oxford Township is approximately 36.9 square miles. The City of Oxford comprises approximately 7.8 square miles. This Plan covers the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township, which encompasses approximately 29.1 square miles of Oxford Township.

Future Land Use Plan Map

The recommended future Land Use Plan Map is shown in Figure 1-1. The map recommends allocating the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township to four land use areas:

- **Agriculture / Conservation Development areas.** Land suitable for continued agricultural production, natural areas, or conservation development (which is defined and explained in detail in Chapter 2), and containing no environmentally sensitive features and characteristics, as defined later in this Plan.
- **Environmentally Sensitive areas.** Land suitable for continued agricultural production, natural areas, or conservation development, containing one or two

of the environmentally sensitive features and characteristics defined later in this Plan.

- **Areas Unsuitable for Development.** Land best left in a natural state or given the highest priority for protection, as a result of possessing three or more of the environmentally sensitive features and characteristics defined later in this Plan.
- **Public Lands.** Land owned by local, state, or federal organizations, or Miami University Lands.

Population and Housing

The U.S. Decennial Census of Population and Housing publishes data for the City of Oxford and for the entire 36.9 square-mile Oxford Township, including both the City of Oxford and the unincorporated portion. Population data for the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township is obtained by subtracting the U.S. Census data for the City of Oxford from the U.S. Census data for the entire 36.9 square-mile Oxford Township.

Table 1-1 shows the official Decennial Census populations for Oxford Township and the City of Oxford for 2000, 2010, and 2020. According to the Census, the population of the entire 36.9 square-mile Oxford Township was 24,133 in 2000, 23,661 in 2010, and 25,469 in 2020. The Census population for the City of Oxford was 21,943 in 2000, 21,371 in 2010, and 23,035 in 2020. By subtracting the City's population from the entire Township population, the population of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township was estimated to be 2,190 in 2000, 2,290 in 2010, and 2,434 in 2020.

Based on the Census data, the population of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township is estimated to have increased by 4.6 percent between 2000 and 2010, by 6.3 percent between 2010 and 2020, and by 11.1 percent between 2000 and 2020. According to the Census, the population of the City of Oxford declined by 2.6 percent between 2000 and 2010 and increased by 7.8 percent between 2010 and 2020 and by 5.5 percent between 2000 and 2020.

Table 1-1. Oxford Township and City of Oxford Population

	Population			Percent change		
	2020	2010	2000	2010-20	2000-10	2000-20
Unincorporated portion	2,434	2,290	2,190	+ 6.3%	+ 4.6%	+11.1%
City of Oxford	23,035	21,371	21,943	+ 7.8%	(2.6%)	+ 5.0%
Oxford Township total	25,469	23,661	24,133	+ 7.6%	(2.0%)	+ 5.5%

Sources: 2000, 2010, and 2020 U.S. Census of Population and Housing

The U.S. Census estimated the number of dwelling units in 2020 as 8,187 in the entire Oxford Township and 7,187 in the City of Oxford, and therefore an estimated 1,000 in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township. According to the Census, the 1,000 dwelling units in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township in 2020 included 950 occupied units and 50 vacant ones. The City of Oxford figures do not

include group quarters, such as university Residence Halls. Table 1-2 shows the Census figures for dwelling units in 2000, 2010, and 2020.

Table 1-2. Oxford Township and City of Oxford Dwelling Units

	2020	2010	2000
Unincorporated portion	1,000	1,005	909
<i>Occupied</i>	950	922	868
<i>Vacant</i>	50	83	41
City of Oxford	7,187	6,622	6,134
<i>Occupied</i>	6,309	5,799	5,870
<i>Vacant</i>	878	823	264
Oxford Township Total	8,187	7,627	7,043
<i>Occupied</i>	7,259	6,721	6,738
<i>Vacant</i>	928	906	305

Sources: 2000, 2010, and 2020 U.S. Census of Population and Housing

Land Use Changes

Between 2000 and 2020, the City of Oxford grew through annexation from 6.0 square miles to 7.8 square miles, and the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township consequently declined from 30.9 square miles to approximately 29.1 square miles.

Table 1-3. Land use in unincorporated portion of Oxford Township 2024

Land Use	Acres	Percent
Agriculture	12,978	70.6
Residential	3,571	19.4
10+ acre lots (Agricultural Estate)	1,171	6.4
5-10 acre lots (Rural Estate Residential)	1,384	7.5
1-5 acre lots (Low Density Residential)	826	4.5
¼-1 acre lots (Suburban Residential)	190	1.0
<¼ acre lots (High Density Suburban Residential)	0	0.0
Non-residential	1,828	9.9
Public & semi-public	796	4.3
Recreation	1,017	5.5
General Business	6	0.0
Office	10	0.1
Total	18,378	100.0

Source: Butler County Department of Development

The land area of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township was estimated to be approximately 18,378 acres in 2024 (Table 1-3). Agriculture was the largest use of land, approximately 71 percent of the total (Figure 1-2). Low-density residential areas (lots exceeding 5 acres) accounted for approximately 14 percent of the land in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township and nonresidential

activities (primarily Miami University Natural Areas and Hueston Woods State Park) approximately 10 percent.

Undeveloped land forms a ring surrounding the City of Oxford. Most of the undeveloped land on the north, west, and south sides is farm acreage. The ring is completed on the east side by Miami Natural Areas. The ring of undeveloped land is interrupted in several places by residential lots that are mostly larger than 5 acres. Most of these large residential lots are strung out along Booth, Brown, Oxford-Milford, Riggs, Ringwood, and Stillwell Beckett roads.

The unincorporated portion of Oxford Township lost 620 acres of land to annexation between 2007 and 2014, but only 178 acres between 2014 and 2024 (Table 1-4). Between 2007 and 2014, 330 acres of agricultural land were lost, whereas land devoted to residences increased by 248 acres. Between 2014 and 2024, the principal change in land use in the incorporated portion of Oxford Township was annexation by the City of Oxford of the eastern half of Miami University's Airport (OXD).

Table 1-4. Land use change in unincorporated portion of Oxford Township

Land Use [acres]	2007	2014	2024	'07-'14 Change	'14-'24 Change
Agriculture	13,331	13,001	12,978	-330	-23
Residential	3,325	3,573	3,571	248	-2
10+ acre lots (Agricultural Estate)	1,050	1,171	1,171	121	0
5-10 acre lots (Rural Estate Residential)	1,263	1,384	1,384	121	0
1-5 acre lots (Low Density Residential)	816	827	826	11	-1
¼-1 acre lots (Suburban Residential)	183	191	190	8	-1
<¼ acre lots (High Density Suburban)	13	0	0	-13	0
Non-residential	2,520	1,984	1,829	-537	-154
Public & semi-public	1,326	951	796	-375	-155
Recreation	1,092	1,017	1,017	-75	0
General Business	92	6	6	-86	0
Office	10	10	10	0	0
Total	19,176	18,556	18,378	-620	-178

Source: Butler County Department of Development

The amount of land devoted to residential purposes increased at a relatively rapid rate during the first years of the twenty-first century. According to the Butler County Department of Development, the amount of land classified as residential in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township increased by 63.3 acres per year between 1999 and 2007 (Table 1-5). The growth during that period is attributable to housing starts averaging nearly 11 per year, and averaging nearly 6 acres per house.

The amount of land converted from agricultural to residential in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township has declined sharply since 2008. Annual housing starts have averaged 3.3 per year between 2008 and 2014 and the

same 3.3 per year between 2015 and 2024. Although housing starts remained the approximately the same during the two time periods, the amount of land converted from agricultural to residential declined in 2015-2024 compared with 2008-2014. The average house was built on nearly 11 acres of land between 2008 and 2014, compared with 4.8 acres between 2015 and 2024.

Table 1-5. Residential land conversion in the unincorporated area of Oxford Township

Time period	Land converted from agriculture to residential [acres/year]	Annual housing starts	Acres per house
1999-2007	63.3	10.7	5.9
2008-2014	35.4	3.3	10.8
2015-2024	15.8	3.3	4.8

Source: Butler County Department of Development

The conversion of agricultural land to residential land in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township has slowed, from 63 acres per year in the first years of the twenty-first century to 16 acres per year more recently. Nonetheless, the rural character is threatened by the conversion of farmland, because the average residential lot is around 5 acres strung out along rural roads. Population is growing slowly, and the number of new housing starts is low in the unincorporated area of Oxford Township, but the area is still losing 16 acres of farmland to residences annually. Implementing strategies to reduce conversion of land from agriculture to residential is critical to preserving the rural character of Oxford Township.

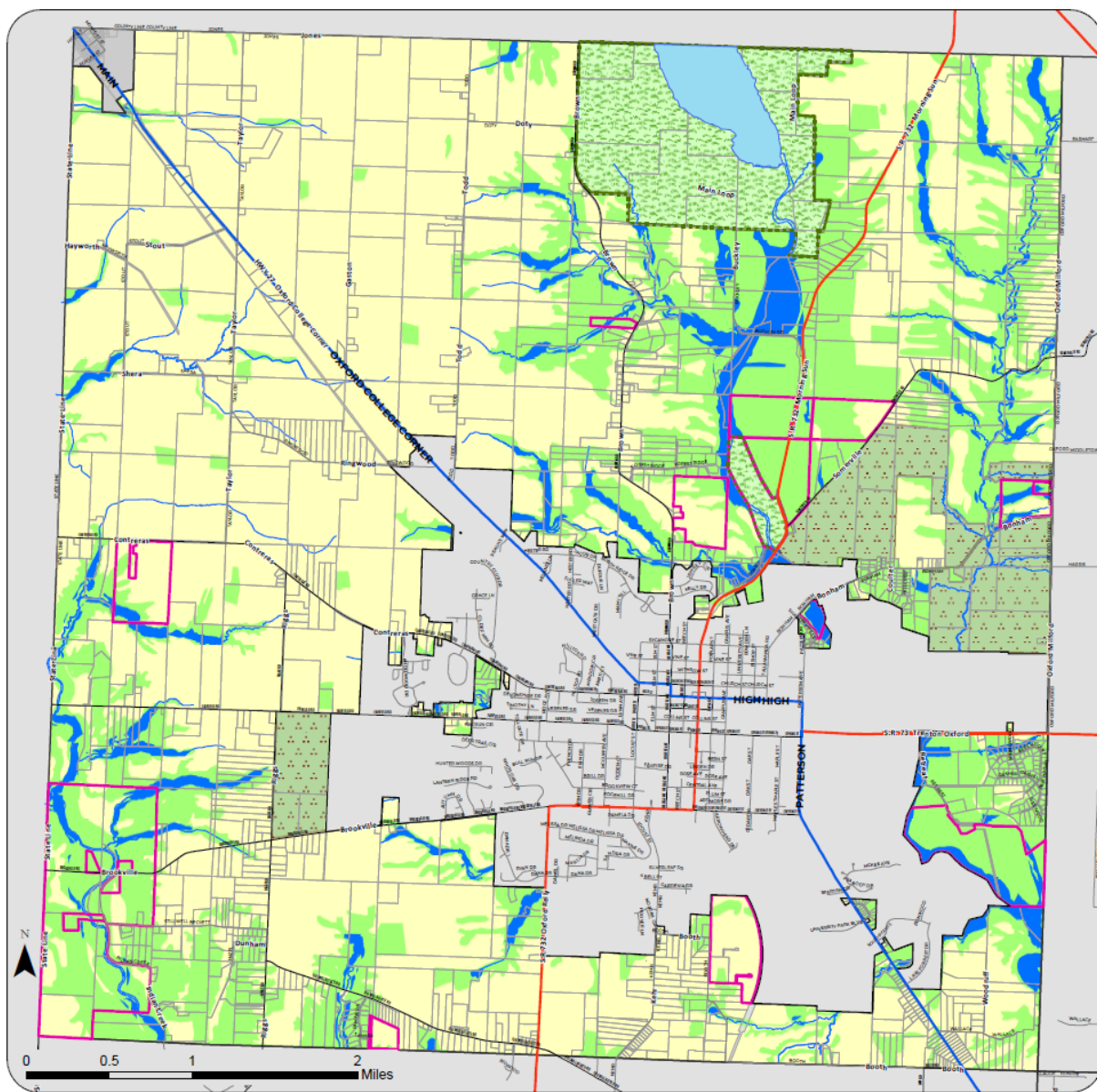
Recommendations

Preserving the rural character of Oxford Township through sensitive design of new residential areas is good for the City of Oxford's economy. People want to live in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township because of its rural character, so taking steps to preserve that rural character best serves the residents of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township as well as the entire Oxford area community.

- **Land Use Plan.** Adopt a Land Use Plan designed to preserve and protect the rural character of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township.
- **Land Use Plan Map.** Adopt a Land Use Plan Map consistent with the goal of preserving and protecting the rural character of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township.
- **Conservation Development Principles.** Incorporate principles of conservation development as the principal basis for classifying land uses in the Plan and Map. Rural character is composed of many physical and cultural features, as discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. When land is proposed for conversion from agricultural to other land uses, if conservation development principles are

followed, the first step in the development process is to identify the distinctive physical and cultural features situated on that property. New residences can be positioned on a property so that these features are not damaged.

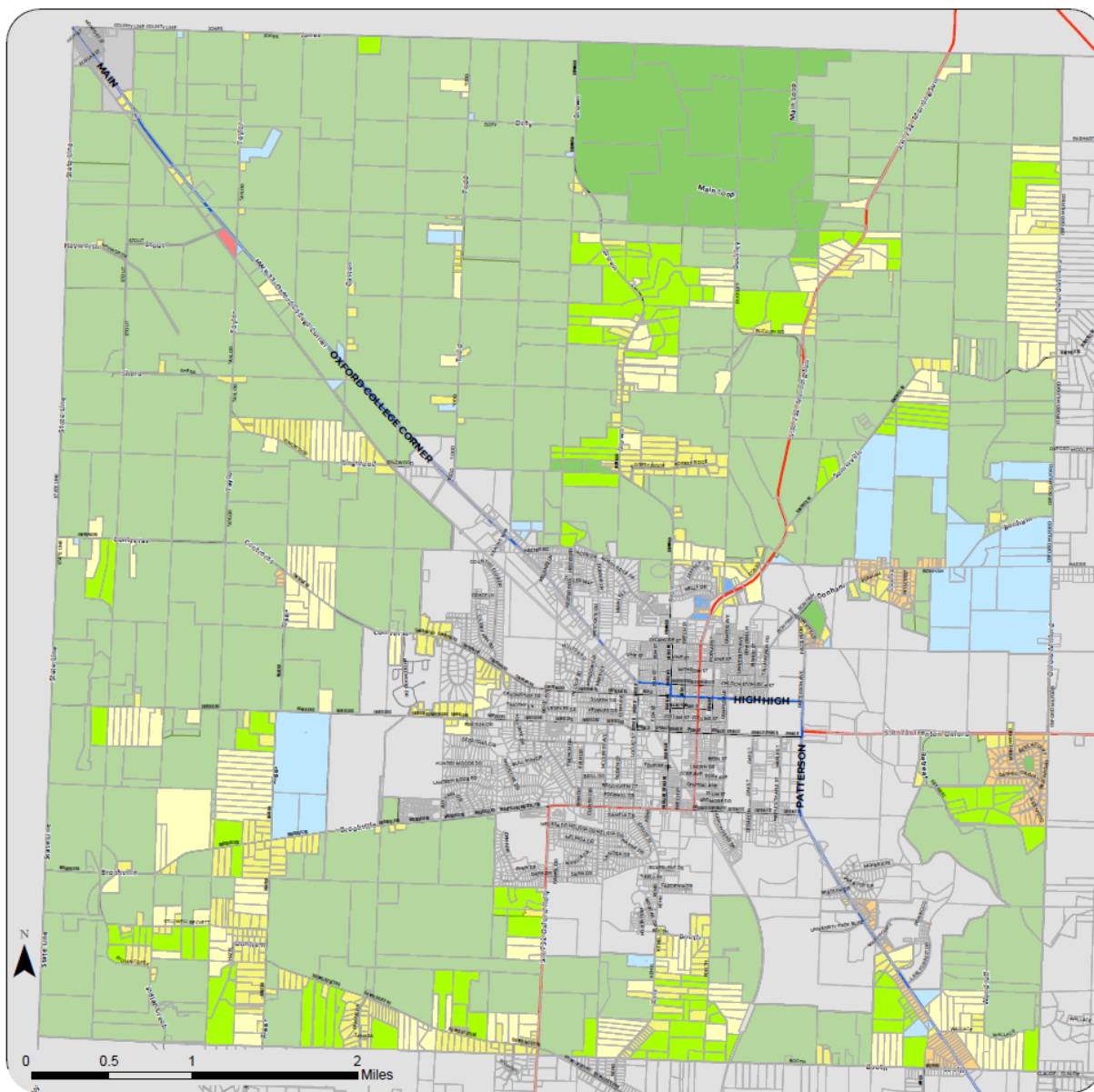
Figure 1-1. Future Land Use Plan, unincorporated portion of Oxford Township



- Agriculture/Conservation Development Areas
- Environmentally Sensitive
- Unsuitable for Development
- State/County Parks
- Miami University Lands
- Private Conservation Easements
- Township Boundaries

Map prepared by Butler County
Department of Development

Figure 1-2. Existing land use, unincorporated portion of Oxford Township



- Township Boundary
- 2024 Land Uses**
- Agriculture
- Agricultural Estates (10+ acres)
- Rural Estate Residential (5-10 acres)
- Low Density Residential (1-5 acres)
- Suburban Residential (<1 acre)
- Office
- General Business
- Recreation
- Public / Semi-Public
- Incorporated City/Village
- Neighboring Township

Map prepared by Butler County
Department of Development

2 Conservation Development

The unincorporated portion of Oxford Township has sensitive natural resources, including several streams with associated floodplains, steep slopes, and wooded areas, as well as viewsheds. This Plan seeks to assure conservation of these natural resources.

Conservation development is a process for developing a site while conserving a large percentage of the land in permanent open space. The approach was developed by Randall Arendt, a landscape planner who serves as Senior Conservation Advisor at the Natural Lands Trust. Conservation development allows for the same number of structures to be built as permitted in the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Ordinance, but in a less land-consumptive manner than other approaches to development.

Conservation development protects rural features such as woods, meadows, steep slopes, floodplains, critical habitats, scenic views, archaeological sites, historic buildings and their settings, wetlands, streams, farmland and other types of open space. While protecting the rural character, conservation development also protects the rights of property owners.

A conservation development starts by identifying key natural and cultural resources to be protected. The sensitive features of the unincorporated area of Oxford Township are identified in this chapter. In a conservation development, structures would be located away from the sensitive environmental features.

Goal

Preserve and protect the sensitive environmental features of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township, including streams, floodplains, steep slopes, and wooded areas, as well as viewsheds.

Objectives

- Preserve as open space the portion of properties situated in the most sensitive environmental areas of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township.
- If new structures and other permanent features were to be built in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township, they should avoid sensitive areas and be sited in a way that maintains continuous wooded areas and farm fields and prevents their fragmentation.
- Encourage preservation of cultural facilities and human artifacts on the landscape.

Discussion

This Plan focuses on protection of six sensitive environmental features in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township. These are blue line streams, 100-year flood plains, areas of potential aquifer pollution, steep slopes, wooded areas, and endangered species. Also of importance are natural areas under legal protection and viewsheds.

Streams

The unincorporated portion of Oxford Township has several blue-line streams. In this Plan, a blue-line stream is defined as one that appears on the United States Geological Survey topographic map. The USGS itself does not use the term blue-line. The three most extensive blue-line stream systems in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township are Four Mile Creek, Harkers Run, and Indian Creek (Figure 2-1).

Four Mile Creek extends for 5½ miles through Oxford Township in a generally southerly direction from Acton Lake in the north to the southeast corner of the township. Harkers Run flows for 4 miles through Oxford Township from the northeast corner of the township into Four Mile Creek in the southeast part of the township. Indian Creek runs for 5 miles in a southerly direction along the west side of Oxford Township. In addition, Collins Run flows in a generally easterly direction for the most part within the City of Oxford, and Lick Run flows in a northeasterly direction into Four Mile Creek at the southeastern corner of Oxford Township.

Oxford Township has two 100-year floodplains. A 100-year floodplain is the area adjoining a river or stream covered by water during a 100-year flood. A 100-year flood is the level of flood that has a 1 percent chance of occurring (or being exceeded) in any single year.

Oxford Township's most extensive floodplain is located along the Four Mile Creek (see Figure 2-1). The floodplain forms a corridor typically between ¼- and ½-mile wide. The majority of the floodplain is on the east side of the Four Mile Creek, although for the first mile south of Acton Lake it is mostly on the west side. A smaller floodplain is associated with Indian Creek on the west side of Oxford Township. Approximately 1,000 acres or 5 percent of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township is located in a floodplain. Most of this land is currently either used for agriculture or in Miami University Natural Areas.

Aquifer Pollution Potential

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Water evaluates the susceptibility for contamination of the ground water, including such factors as depth to water, net recharge to the aquifer, aquifer type, soil type, topography, type of material above the aquifer, and hydraulic characteristics of the aquifer. In Oxford Township, the most extensive area vulnerable to ground water pollution is in the Four Mile Creek floodplain (Figure 2-2). Secondary areas of relatively high potential for ground water pollution are found along Harkers Run and Indian Creek.

Steep Slopes

Associated with the blue-line streams in Oxford Township are steep slopes along the stream banks (Figure 2-3). The slopes shown in Figure 2-3 are those classified as highly erodible by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Wooded Areas

Wooded areas are also associated with the creek corridors. Approximately 3,000 acres or 16 percent of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township is wooded (Figure 2-4). The area between Four Mile Creek and Harkers Run is the most extensive wooded area on privately owned land. A large percentage of the wooded land is within Hueston Woods State Park or Miami University Natural Areas.

Endangered and Threatened Species and Protected Lands

Note: Information in this section and in Figure 2-5 has not been updated since 2008. At present, ODNR will not allow publication of current locations in a document of this type.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Natural Areas and Preserves supplied the 2008 Land Use Plan for the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township with records of rare or endangered species in Oxford Township (Table 2-1). Two species were cited by ODNR in the 2008 Oxford Township Land Use Plan as endangered (Blue Corporal Dragonfly and Snowy Campion flower), four were cited by ODNR in the 2008 Plan as threatened (Five-angled Dodder vine, Missouri Gooseberry, Soft-leaved Arrow-wood, and Upland Sandpiper), and two were cited by ODNR in the 2008 Plan as potentially threatened (Deam's Three-seeded Mercury plant and Three-birds Orchid).

Table 2-1. Endangered and threatened species in Oxford Township.

Common name	Scientific name	Status
Blue Corporal Dragonfly	<i>Ladona deplanata</i>	Endangered
Snowy Campion	<i>Silene nivea</i>	Endangered
Five-angled Dodder	<i>Cuscuta pentagona</i>	Threatened
Missouri Gooseberry	<i>Ribes missouriense</i>	Threatened
Soft-leaved Arrow-wood	<i>Viburnum molle</i>	Threatened
Upland Sandpiper	<i>Bartramia longicauda</i>	Threatened
Deam's Three-seeded Mercury	<i>Acalypha virginica</i> var. <i>deamii</i>	Potentially threatened
Three-birds Orchid	<i>Triphora trianthophora</i>	Potentially threatened

Source: Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Natural Areas & Preserves.

The habitat for several of these endangered and threatened species is already in a protected area, such as Hueston Woods and Miami University Natural Areas

(Figure 2-5). In some cases, the habitats are primarily in jurisdictions adjacent to Oxford Township.

Approximately 1,362 acres within Oxford Township are currently protected by conservation easements through the Three Valley Conservation Trust. These areas are located to the west, north, and south of the City of Oxford. Also shown in Figure 2-5 are other protected lands in Oxford Township, including approximately 978 acres in Hueston Woods State Park, 754 acres in Miami's natural areas, and 230 acres in Miami's airport. The 73-acre Mill Race Preserve, which is a Butler County Metro Park, is shown as a park on Figure 2-5 but is counted above in the Three Valley Conservation Trust easement total.

Viewsheds

When houses and driveways are strung out along Oxford Township's roads, they cut off the ability of the public to view and experience much of the rural landscape. Remaining stretches of farms, woods, and other rural elements are hidden from the public by visual barriers. Figure 2-6 shows examples of some of these stretches of open roadway relatively free of houses and driveways in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township. These areas of scenic views are referred to in this Plan as "viewsheds." The preservation of Oxford Township's rural character requires maintenance of a critical mass of the open "viewsheds" along the rural roadways.

The conversion of agricultural land to low-density housing affects scenic views. In the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township, scenic views are composed of a combination of fields, fencerows, farm buildings, woods, and drainage courses. These items appear either in the foreground along roads in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township or far away towards the horizon.

Oxford Township also contains one of Ohio's 27 scenic byways designated by the Ohio Department of Transportation. The scenic byway through Oxford Township, called Presidential Pathways, commemorates the lives of U.S. presidents William Henry Harrison and Benjamin Harrison. Figure 2-6 shows the route of the Presidential Pathways through Oxford Township.

Along the viewsheds are important human artifacts, as well as natural features. Examples include the Black Covered Bridge and the Doty Pioneer Farm and Cemetery.

The presence of one of the examples of a viewshed in Figure 1-2 is not a reason to stop a new development there. Rather, a viewshed offers guidance to encourage sensitive design.

Combining Environmentally Sensitive Features

Figure 2-7 combines the information shown on figures 2-1 through 2-6. Each of the six environmental features shown on figures 2-1 through 2-5—blue line streams, 100-year flood plains, aquifer pollution potential, steep slopes, wooded areas, and endangered species—were weighted the same. When the six features are combined,

the area considered the most environmentally sensitive is on the east side of Oxford Township along Four Mile Creek and Harkers Run. A secondary area of sensitivity appears on the western side of Oxford Township along Indian Creek. Figure 2-7 also shows the lands that are protected through easements, parks, and university.

The area in blue is not extensive. Excluding blue areas situated within protected areas, approximately 300 acres, or 2 percent of the remainder of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township, are unsuitable for development. Most of the land unsuitable for development consists of blue-line streams with their adjacent flood plains and steep slopes.

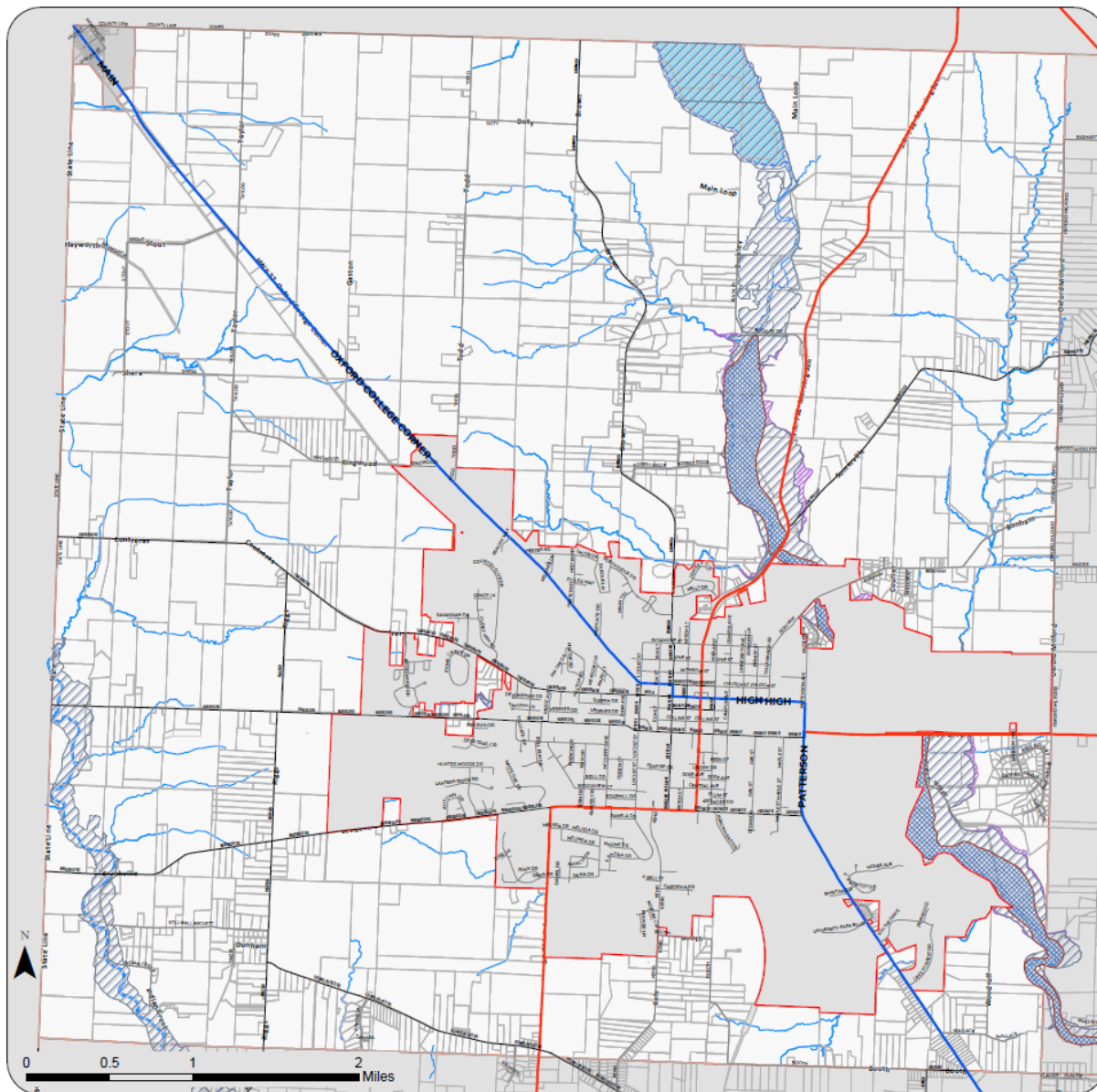
Excluding protected areas, around 20 percent of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township is in green. Much of this area comprises woods, flood plains, and steep slopes that do not appear in blue.

Excluding protected areas, more than three-fourths of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township are in tan. Although not classified as possessing one of the six environmental features shown in green or blue on Figure 2-7, much of the tan area is farmland, so is an important asset in the preservation of rural character. Development of these properties should be done in a manner that preserves as much farmland as possible.

Recommendations

- **The Plan's land use classifications can serve as the basis for locating new structures and other permanent features.** The distribution of the various sensitive environmental areas should be the basis for guiding the location of new structures and other permanent features.
- **The most sensitive environmental areas should be protected.** New development should be prevented from occurring in the most sensitive environmental areas of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township, as shown in Figure 2-7.
- **Development to be consistent with land use classification.** If new structures and other permanent features are proposed other than in the most sensitive areas, they should be built in a manner consistent with the classification of land uses in this Plan.
- **Minimize adverse environmental impacts in all cases.** Areas in green in Figure 2-7 are environmentally sensitive but could accommodate new structures and other permanent features by following a plan that minimizes environmental impacts.
- **Follow Conservation Development principles in all cases.** Areas in tan in Figure 2-7 are appropriate for new structures and other permanent features that follow conservation development principles, such as clustering of structures.

Figure 2-1. Floodplains & blue line streams, unincorporated portion of Oxford Township



LEGEND **FIOC**

Township Boundary

Parcels

100 Year Floodplain

ZONE_SUBTY

100-Year Floodplain

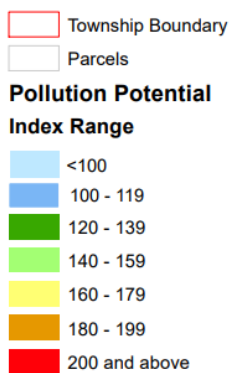
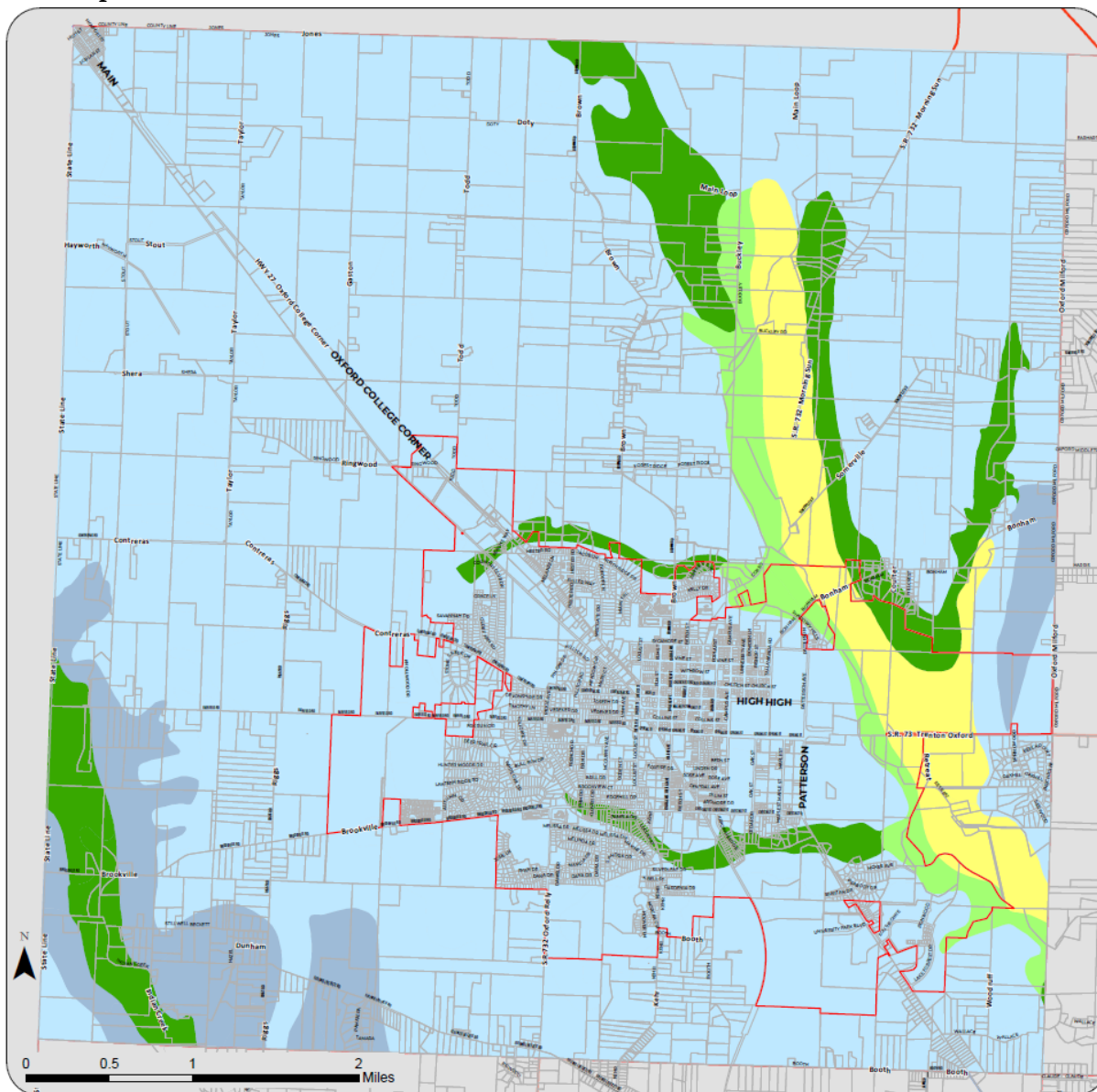
Floodway

500-Year Floodplain

Acton Lake

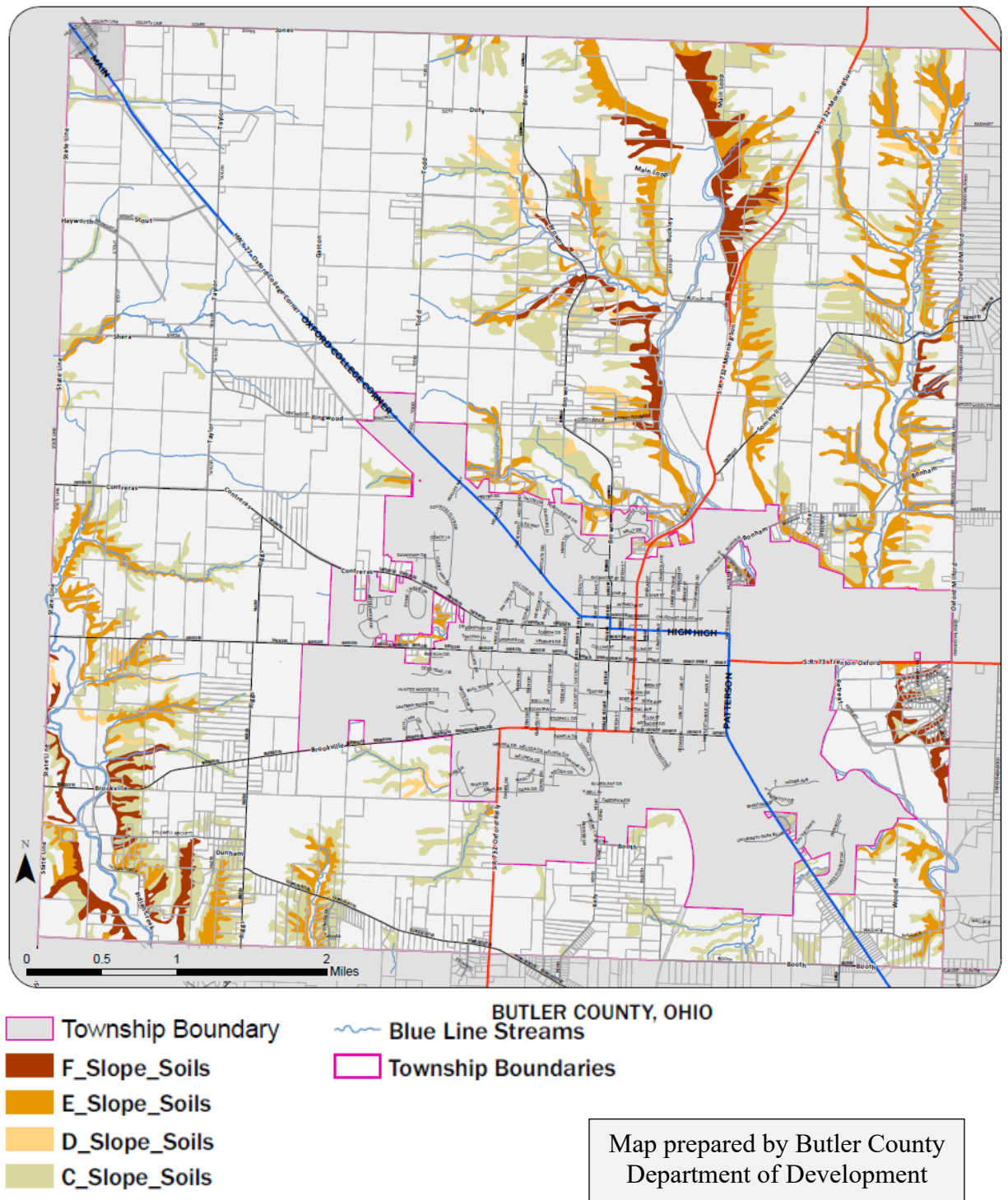
Map prepared by Butler County
Department of Development

Figure 2-2. Aquifer pollution potential, unincorporated portion of Oxford Township



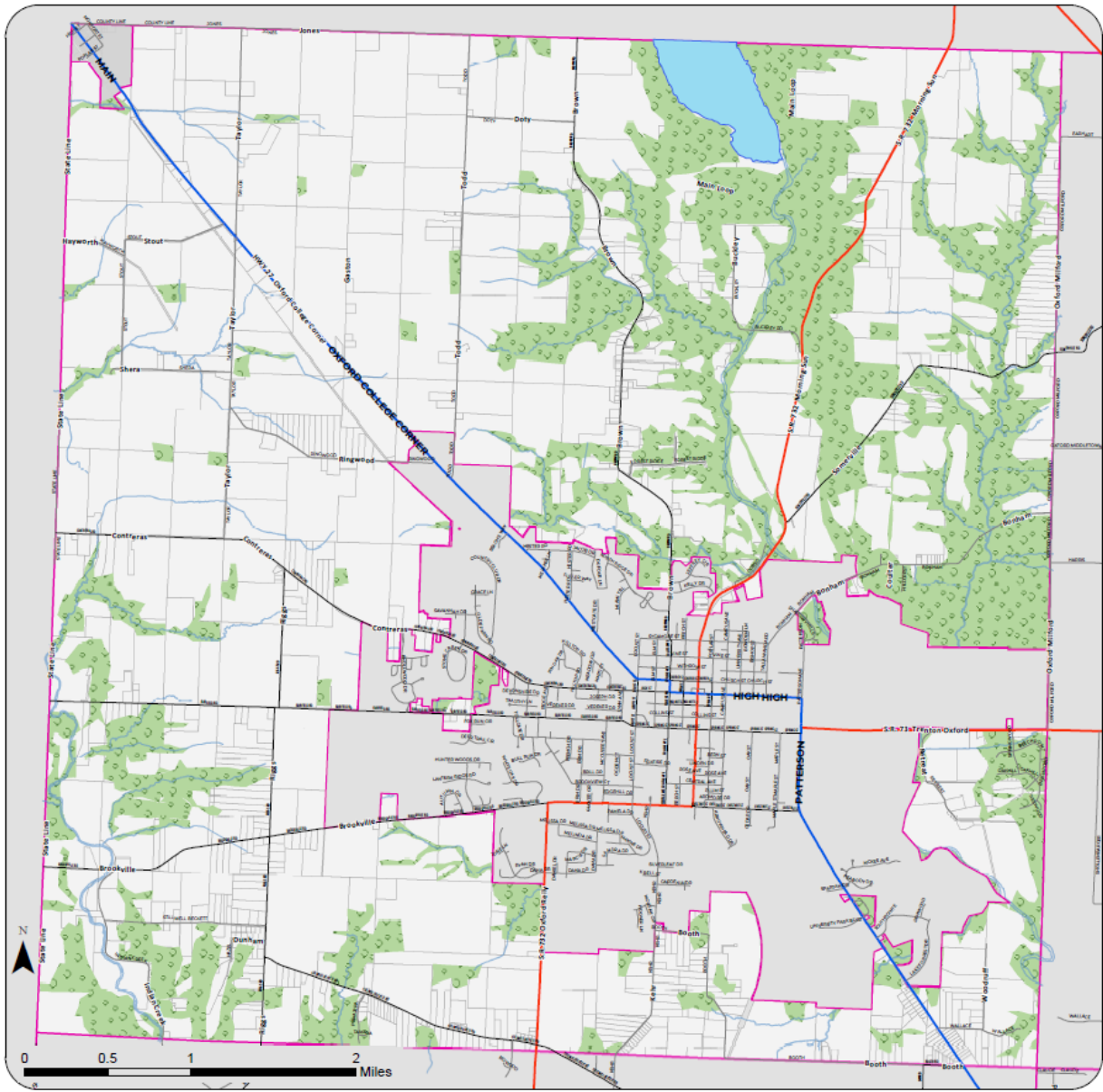
Map prepared by Butler County
Department of Development





Figure 2-3. Steep slopes, unincorporated portion of Oxford Township



Soils with Slope Class C, D, E, or F are also considered Highly Erodible Lands (HEL) by the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service.

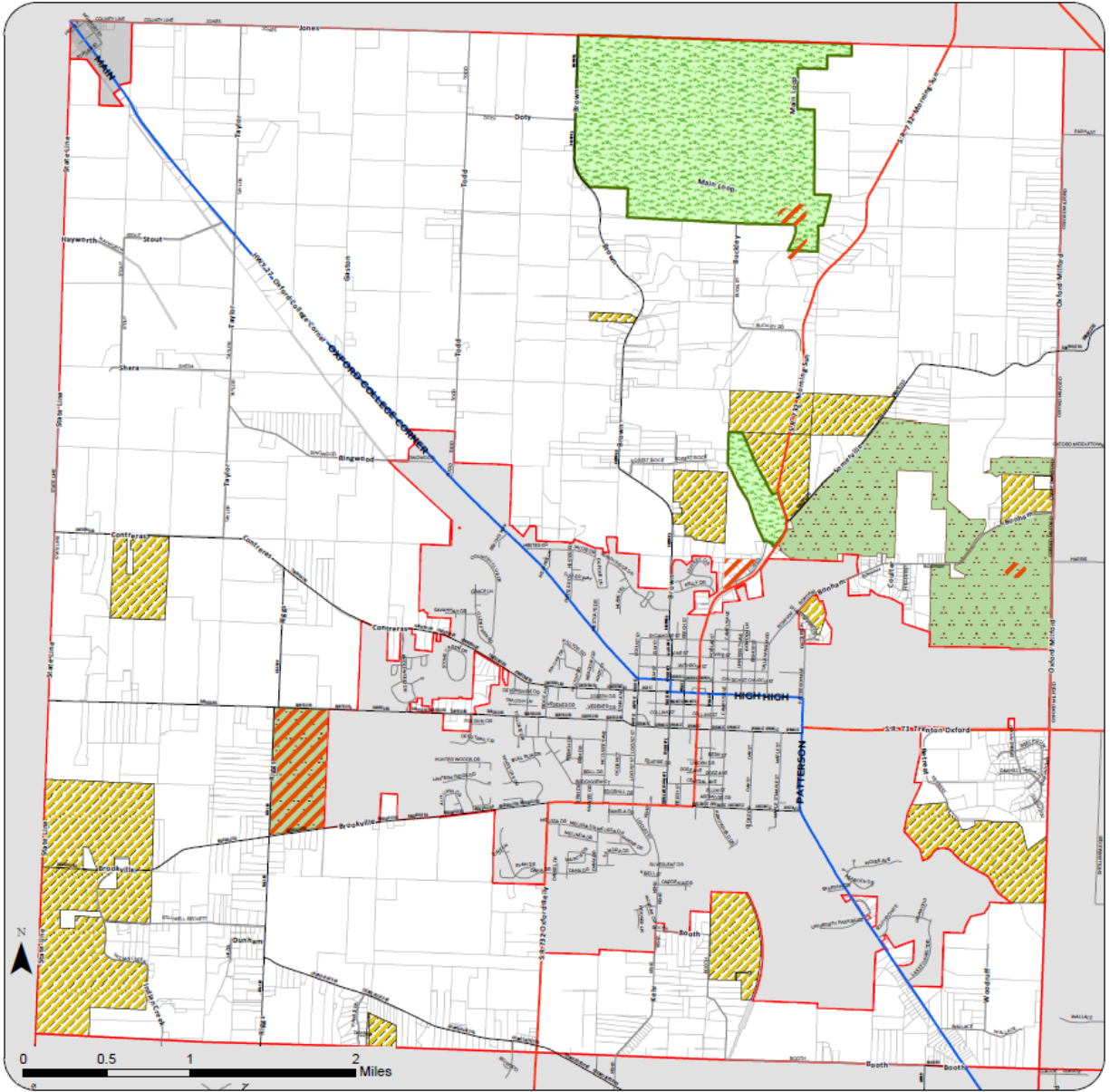
Figure 2-4. Wooded areas, unincorporated portion of Oxford Township



-  **Wooded Areas**
-  **Acton Lake**
-  **Blue Line Streams**
-  **Township Boundaries**

Map prepared by Butler County
Department of Development

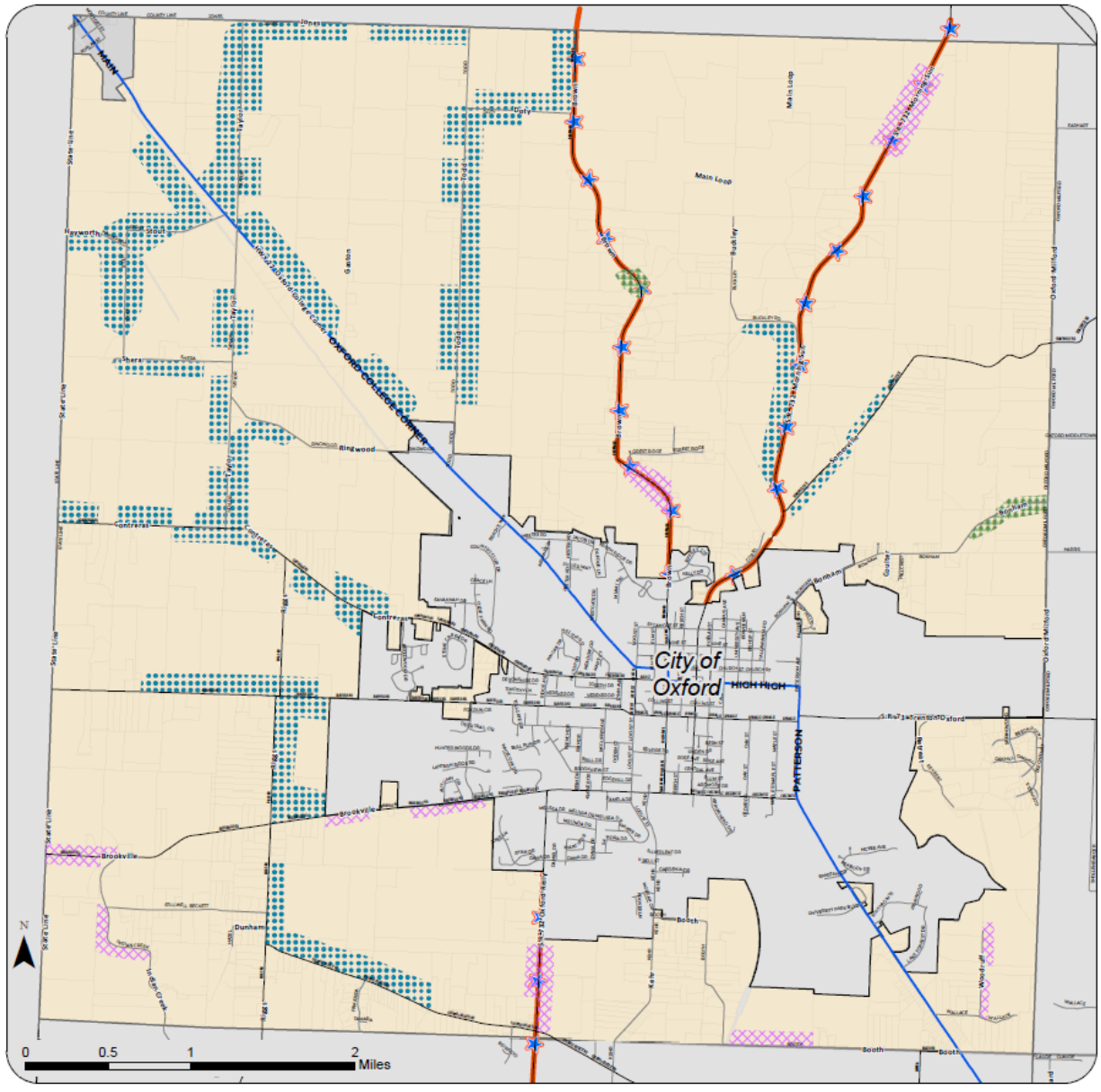
Figure 2-5. Endangered species and protected areas, unincorporated portion of Oxford Township (Note: This information has not been updated since 2008)




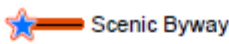


-  Endangered Species Location
-  State/County Parks
-  Miami University Lands
-  Private Conservation Easements
-  Township Boundaries

Map prepared by Butler County
Department of Development

Figure 2-6. Viewsheds & byways, unincorporated portion of Oxford Township



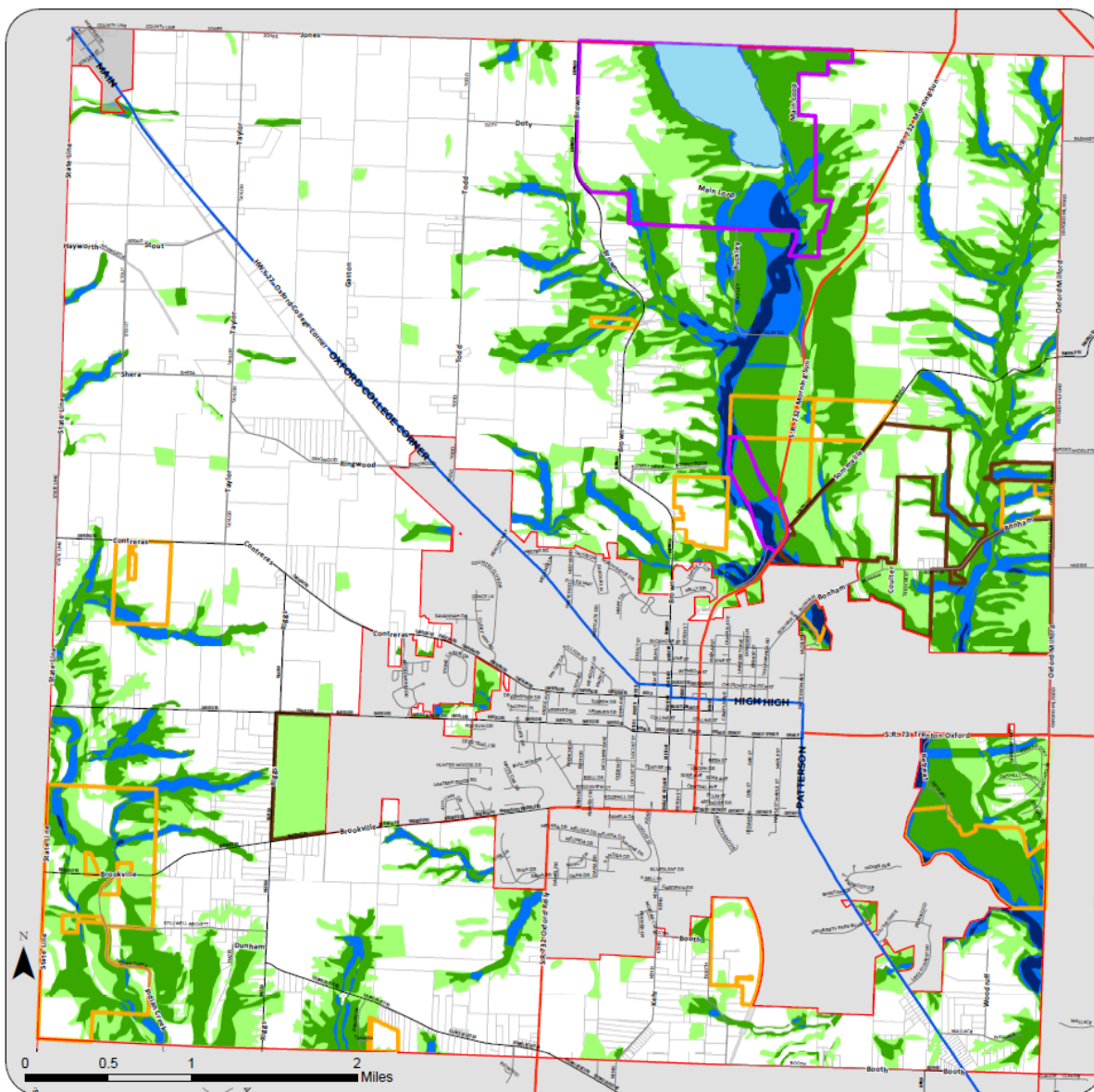
- Viewshed Type**
-  Large
 -  Local
 -  Wooded
-  Scenic Byway

Map prepared by Butler County
Department of Development

Presidential Pathways Ohio Scenic Byway

Traveling south to north, this 55-mile byway begins at the Indiana state line on Lawrenceburg Road in Hamilton County, winds through historic Oxford, Ohio, home to Miami University and ends in Hueston Woods State Park in Butler County. The byway follows a scenic path commemorating the presidential lives of two presidents: William Henry Harrison (1841) who was a renowned Indian fighter and whose family owned slaves in Virginia, and his grandson, Benjamin Harrison (1889-1893), an advocate of civil rights for Native and African Americans. The byway reveals what they helped to develop, what they might have seen, and what they left behind. William Henry Harrison had to drop out of college in order to support himself after his father died. Benjamin Harrison graduated from Miami University in 1852, and has an ongoing scholarship named after him which supports top scholars attending Miami, no matter their families' finances.

Figure 2-7. Environmentally sensitive lands, unincorporated portion of Oxford Township



- | | |
|--|---|
|  Acton Lake | Environmental Features |
|  Township Boundaries |  1 |
|  State/County Parks |  2 |
|  Miami University Lands |  3 |
|  Private Conservation Easements |  4 - 6 |

Map prepared by Butler County
Department of Development

3 Utilities for Conservation Development

Most of the utility services in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township are divided among multiple sources. The multiplicity of services is challenging for undertaking township-wide planning that promotes conservation development.

Goal

Promote the provision of utility services that maintains the rural character and landscape of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township.

Objectives

- Work in cooperation with the County Health Department to identify techniques for handling wastewater consistent with preserving the rural character in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township.
- Identify innovative techniques for handling wastewater currently utilized in comparable Ohio communities suitable for conservation developments.
- Preserve as open space the portion of properties situated in wellhead protection areas.
- Complete availability of solid waste recycling opportunities throughout the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township.
- Work with Butler Rural Electric Cooperative, Duke Energy and AES to promote energy saving and renewable energy options for new and existing buildings and lighting in Oxford Township.
- Support educational programs for using resources more wisely.

Discussion

Water, wastewater, and solid waste management are utilities of particular concern in this Plan.

Water

Water service is provided by the City of Oxford and by the Southwest Regional Water District, as well as by individual wells and cisterns. The City of Oxford serves most of the households on the east side, including Springwood Subdivision, Bonham Road, and Millville Oxford Road. The City of Oxford also provides service in the

north and west, especially along portions of Contreras-and Todd Roads. Southwest Regional serves the outer areas of Oxford Township (Figure 3-1).

Wastewater

Wastewater is handled by the City of Oxford gravity flow sewer system in a small part of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township, especially along Bonham Road. The remainder of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township is served by on-site waste disposal systems.

The City of Oxford has previously identified “service boundaries” for water and wastewater, and indicated that the boundary limits were tentative estimates to be studied. The 2023 City Comprehensive Plan did not update or further study these boundaries; therefore, the 2023 City Comprehensive Plan merged the two boundaries into an Urban Service Boundary (Figure 3-2).

The need to maintain a large leach field for handling on-site wastewater has traditionally been cited as a reason for low density residential development. However, Butler County Health Department permits the leach field to be located on a different property from the one generating the waste as long as two conditions are met: (1) the leach field is delineated and protected by an easement and (2) the field is not compacted by heavy equipment or an impervious surface (see Figure 3-3).

Thus, the wastewater needs of several houses clustered on a small portion of a large rural property can be handled through clustering of leeching fields protected by easements regardless of location within the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township

Solid Waste

The principal solid waste contractor in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township is Rumpke. The waste is hauled to Rumpke’s landfill in Colerain Township. Households have several payment options for service depending on the amount of trash generated.

Rumpke currently offers curbside recycling in portions of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township. To recycle, other residents must separate materials at home and haul them to a drop-off center.

Natural Gas

Natural gas service within Oxford Township is provided by Duke Energy or by Glenwood Energy, depending upon location. Gas mains are extended into new service areas by the gas companies only when a sufficient number of property owners in the area are willing to support the effort and agree to become customers of the gas utility. This is generally not financially feasible for the utility company except in fairly dense residential areas.

Electricity and Lighting

Electricity in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township is provided either by Butler Rural Electric Cooperative, by AES, or by Duke Energy directly or through an electric aggregation program.

Renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind farms, are increasingly used to provide electricity in the United States. PJM, which is the regional transmission organization that coordinates the movement of wholesale electricity in the Great Lakes region, including Ohio, reports that in the region as a whole around 8% of electricity is generated by wind and 6% by solar. However, the siting of solar and wind farms can be challenging because of possible adverse impacts on rural character.

Most outdoor lighting in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township is provided by Duke Energy or Butler Rural Electric Cooperative through mercury-vapor lamps. Modern energy-efficient lighting designed to reduce light pollution would better promote the goal of this Plan to maintain the rural landscape, scenic views, and agricultural character of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township. Modern lighting would be more energy efficient, better protect ecosystems, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Waste Management Example

A conservation development is designed to protect a site's most significant natural and cultural resources while accounting for the need to provide utilities complying with Butler County Department of Health and Department of Development standards and regulations. Figure 3-4 illustrates the difference between a conventional development and a conservation development that complies with legal standards.

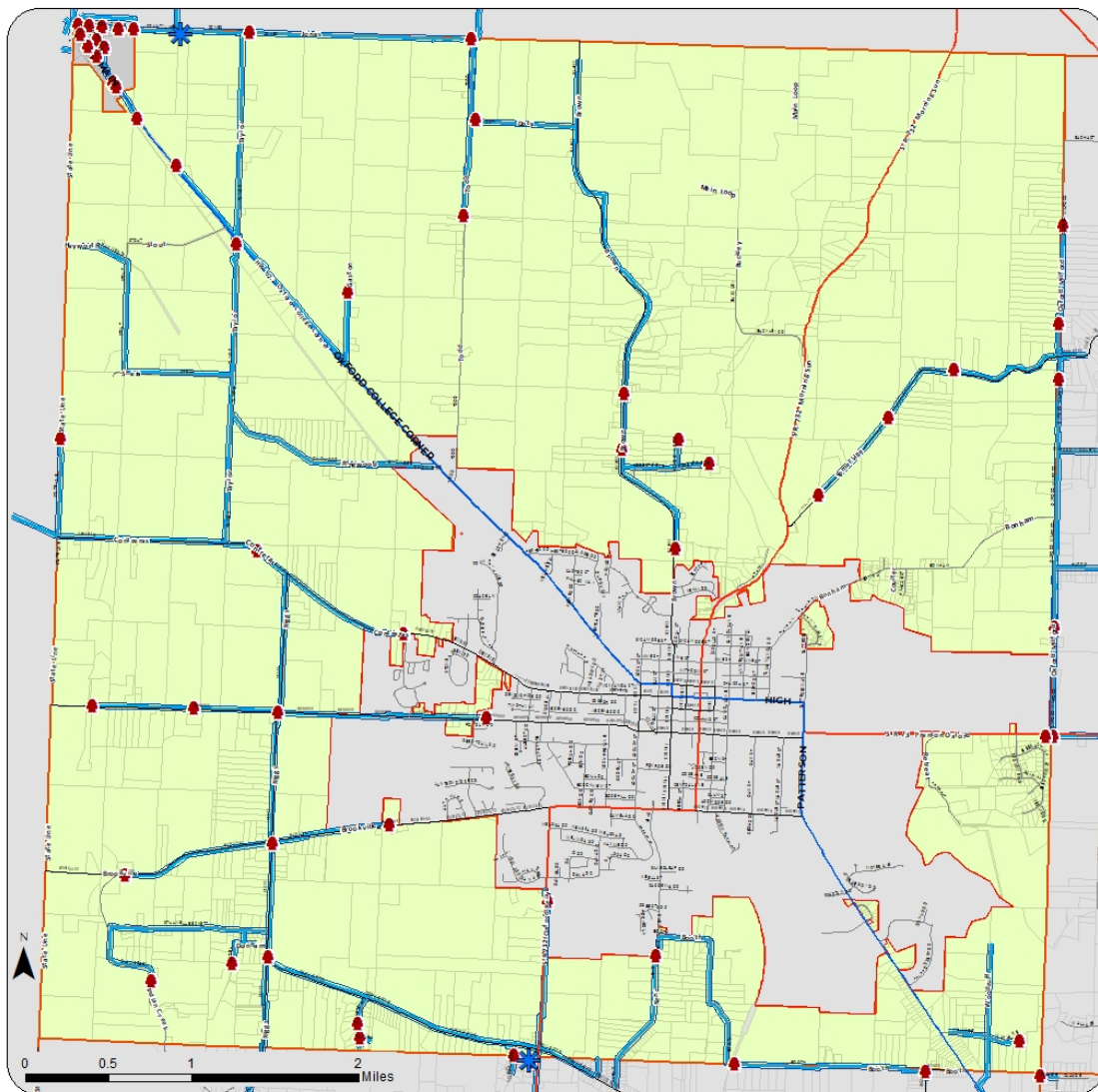
This is a typical process for a conservation development:





- Prepare Location Map compiled from existing publications, showing vegetative cover, topography, soils, and floodplains.
- Prepare Existing Resources and Site Analysis Map identifying significant natural resources, such as productive cropland, wildlife habitat, meadows, forests, stream valleys, significant trees; and significant cultural resources, such as farmhouses, barns, fences, and trails.
- Prepare Sketch Plan following these steps:
 - Identify Conservation Areas, such as wetlands, floodplains, and steep slope.
 - Locate house sites in areas not protected as open space.
 - Connect house sites with streets and trails.
 - Draw in lot lines.
- Prepare Preliminary Plan.
- Prepare Final Plan.

Recommendations

- A wastewater management plan that clusters leach fields in accordance with Butler County Health Department standards is especially critical in promoting conservation development.
- Solar and wind farms should not be sited if it is determined that the location will disturb viewsheds and environmentally sensitive areas.

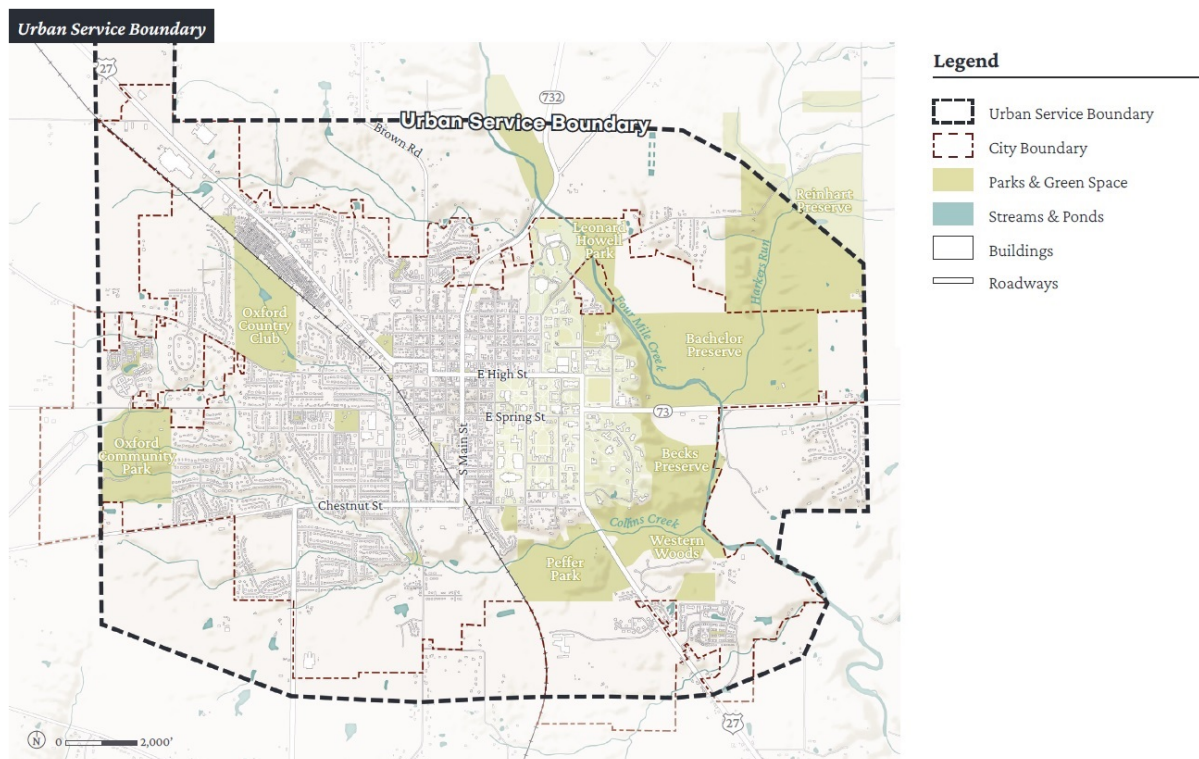
Figure 3-1. Southwest Regional Water District water line locations



-  Water Mains
-  Hydrant (may not have high pressure)
-  Water Tank
-  Township Boundary

Map prepared by Butler County
Department of Development

Figure 3-2. City of Oxford Urban Service Boundary



Map provided by City of Oxford

Figure 3-3. Example of clustering of leach fields

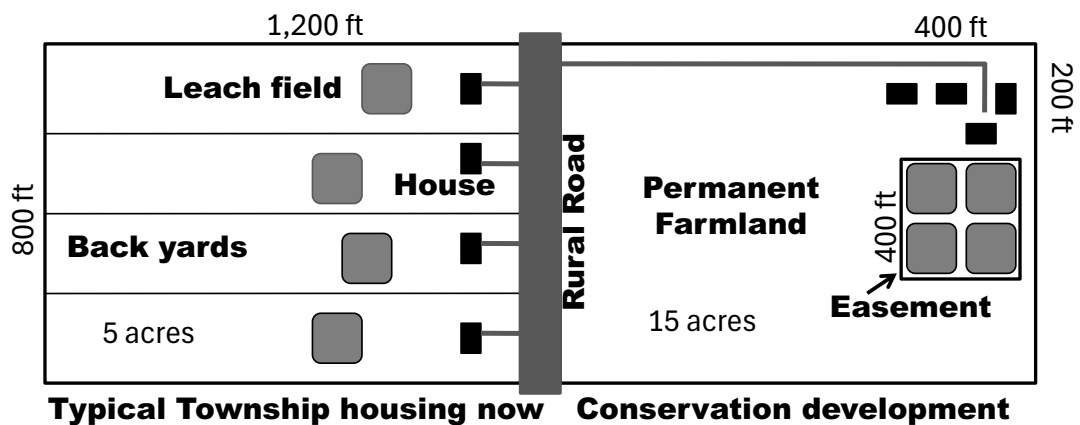
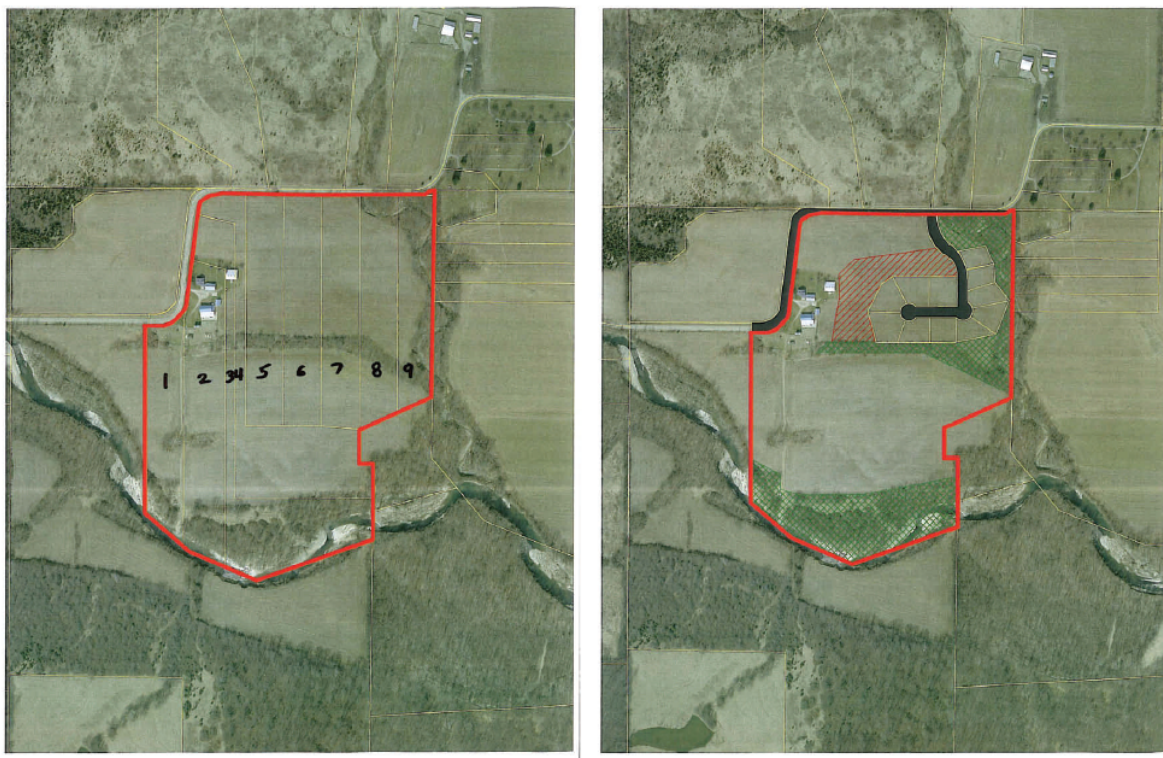


Figure 3-4. Theoretical example of conservation development



[Left] A 56-acre farm divided into 9 lots, as currently permitted. [Right] Conservation development on the same farm provides 11 building lots while protecting 45 acres as permanent farmland and woods.

	Existing Development Regulations	Proposed Conservation Development
Property size	56 acres	56 acres
Existing zoning regulation	200 foot road footage	Conservation Subdivision
Number of lots created	9	11
Average lot size	6.2 acres	0.65 acres
Amount of farmland saved	0 acres	30 acres
Amount of open space or wooded area	0 acres	15 acres
Number of driveway cuts into county road	9	1
Amenities	None	15 acres of green space, walking trails, rural views

4 Population Diversity

The population and housing stock in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township are less diverse than in the United States as a whole, according to the 2020 Census of Population and Housing and 2022 American Community Survey. A key approach to promote greater diversity is through a conservation development that offers innovative housing arrangements.

Goal

Promote a vibrant community in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township that values and supports current residents, as well as attracting and retaining people of all ages and backgrounds to live and work in the Oxford area.

Objectives

- Provide a greater choice of housing types, aimed at supporting diversity among the residents of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township.
- If new housing is proposed, recommend inclusion of:
 - A variety of housing and parcel sizes, consistent with conservation development principles.
 - Age-friendly housing and activities that make possible aging in place and improve mobility opportunities for differently-abled and disabled persons, consistent with conservation development principles.
 - Housing suitable for a variety of households, including multigenerational and non-traditional household composition, consistent with conservation development principles.
 - Some affordable housing that could accommodate some first-time home buyers through conservation development.

Discussion

The 2020 U.S. Census of Population and 2022 American Community Survey provide the most recent detailed statistics on population and housing for the City of Oxford and for Oxford Township (including both the City of Oxford and the unincorporated portion). Data for the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township are estimates based on mathematical equations that remove City of Oxford data from total Oxford Township data.

Demographic Character

According to the 2020 Census, the residents of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township are estimated to be 91.8 percent White alone, 5.5 percent two or more races, and 2.7 percent other races (Table 4-1). Around 1.2 percent are estimated to be Hispanic/Latino. The residents of the City of Oxford are around 80 percent White alone, 9 percent Asian, 5 percent Black alone, and 5 percent two or more races. In comparison, around 61 percent of the entire U.S. population is reported as White alone.

Table 4-1. Estimated population by race and ethnicity in Oxford Township

Race & ethnicity [percent]	Unincorporated portion Oxford Township [estimated]		City of Oxford		Total Oxford Township	
	2000	2020	2000	2020	2000	2020
White alone	95.2	91.8	91.6	80.7	91.3	79.6
Black alone	1.0	1.5	4.1	4.6	4.4	5.0
Asian alone	1.4	0.5	2.1	8.0	2.1	8.8
Other	0.0	0.8	0.2	2.5	0.2	1.5
2 or more races	2.4	5.5	2.0	5.2	2.0	5.2
Hispanic/Latino	1.6	1.2	1.7	3.7	1.7	4.0

Source: 2000 and 2020 U.S. Census of Population and Housing

The population of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township is estimated to be around eight years older than the U.S. average, 46.4 compared to 38.5. The residents of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township include around 25 percent over age 65, compared to 17 percent nationally. The higher median (“median” means half above and half below) age locally is also reflected in a lower percentage of children under age 15 than found nationally (14 percent in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township, compared to 18 percent nationally). (Table 4-2).

Table 4-2. Estimated population by age, unincorporated portion of Oxford Township

Population	Oxford Township unincorporated portion	City of Oxford	U.S.
Under 15 years	13.8	6.6	18.0
15 to 24	12.9	64.3	13.0
25 to 64	48.2	21.6	51.9
65 and over	25.1	7.5	17.1
Median age	46.4	21.2	38.5

Source: 2022 American Community Survey.

The household composition of the residents of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township differs from the national average in several respects (Table 4-3). Among the differences:

- The percentage of households that consists of a married couple is estimated to be higher in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township than in the United States.
- The percentage of families consisting of a male or a female householder with no spouse present is lower in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township than in the United States.
- The unincorporated portion of Oxford Township has a smaller percentage of nonfamily households, both those living alone and those living with others.

Table 4-3. Estimated population by household type, unincorporated portion of Oxford Township

	Oxford Twp unincorp area		City of Oxford		U.S.
	[percent]	2000	2020	2000	2020
Family household	79	71	38	39	65
Married couple	72	62	29	32	46
Other family	7	8	9	7	19
Male householder, no spouse	1	0	2	2	6
Female householder, no spouse	5	8	7	5	13
Nonfamily household	21	29	62	61	35
Living alone	19	22	30	33	28
More than one person	2	8	32	27	7

Source: 2000 and 2020 Census of Population and Housing

Butler County’s Rural Zoning Resolution, which covers the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township, defines family as: “a person living alone, or two or more persons living together as a single housekeeping unit.” The City of Oxford defines family as “a person living alone, or two or more persons related by blood, marriage or adoption, including minor children in the lawful custody of an adult member or members of the family, living together as a single housekeeping unit and occupying a single dwelling unit, or a group of not more than four unrelated persons living together as a single housekeeping unit occupying a single dwelling unit and using only common entrances and exits.” A Butler County definition similar to the city’s would be more appropriate for households in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township, because it would be more inclusive of the community, such as multigenerational households.

Housing

As with demographic features, the housing stock in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township is estimated to be more homogeneous than in the country as a whole. Locally, 84 percent of structures are estimated to be single family, compared to only 68 percent nationally (Table 4-4). Conversely, only 15 percent of structures are estimated to contain two or more dwellings in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township, compared to 26 percent nationally.

Table 4-4 indicates a small number of mobile homes in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township. At this time, installation of a new mobile home is not permitted.

Table 4-4. Estimated units in structure, unincorporated portion of Oxford Township

[percent]	Oxford Township unincorporated area	City of Oxford	U.S.
1 unit	84	48	68
2 units	5	6	3
3 or 4 units	8	10	4
5 units or more	2	35	19
Mobile homes	1	2	6
Total units	909	7,262	1.4 million

Source: 2020 Census of Population and Housing and 2022 American Community Survey

The unincorporated area of Oxford Township is estimated to contain a much higher percentage of owner-occupied dwellings and a smaller percentage of rental units than in the City of Oxford or the United States as a whole (Table 4-5).

Table 4-5. Estimated tenure of occupied housing units, unincorporated portion of Oxford Township

[percent]	Oxford Township unincorporated area	City of Oxford	U.S.
Single family	84	28	57
Multi-family	16	72	33
Group quarters	0	36	3

Source: 2020 Census of Population and Housing

Housing in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township is estimated to be larger than the national average. Nearly three-fourths of housing units in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township are estimated to have at least six rooms, compared with only around one-half in the City of Oxford and in the United States as a whole (Table 4-6).

Table 4-6. Estimated rooms in housing, unincorporated portion of Oxford Township

[percent]	Oxford Township unincorporated area	City of Oxford	U.S.
1, 2, or 3	1	16	13
4 or 5	26	36	35
6 or 7	37	29	30
8 or more	36	19	21

Source: 2020 Census of Population and Housing

The housing stock in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township is estimated to be older than the national average (Table 4-7). Around two-thirds of the housing in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township was built prior to 1979, compared with around one-half in the United States as a whole.

Table 4-7. Estimated year structure was built, unincorporated portion of Oxford Township

Year built / [%]	Oxford Township unincorporated area	City of Oxford	U.S.
1939 or earlier	15	9	12
1940 to 1959	24	8	15
1960 to 1979	27	29	25
1980 to 1999	14	30	26
2000 to 2009	16	17	14
2010 or later	4	6	9

Source: 2020 Census of Population and Housing

Residents in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township are estimated to have lived in the same house for about the same amount of time as the national average. Around 40 percent in both the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township and in the United States as a whole moved into their house prior to 2010, and around 60 percent since 2010. In the City of Oxford, only around 20 percent moved into their house prior to 2010 (Table 4-8).

Table 4-8. Estimated year residents moved into structure, unincorporated portion of Oxford Township

Year moved in [%]	Oxford Township unincorporated area	City of Oxford	U.S.
1989 or earlier	10	6	11
1990 to 1999	7	7	11
2000 to 2009	24	8	19
2010 to 2017	35	34	34
2018 to 2020	24	36	20
2021 or later	0	10	5

Source: 2020 Census of Population and Housing

The median value of owner-occupied housing in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township is estimated in 2022 to be much lower than in the nation as a whole, \$249,321 compared to \$320,900 (Table 4-9). In the United States, 36 percent of owner-occupied housing is estimated to be valued at above \$400,000, compared to 17 percent in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township.

Median monthly payments for housing are estimated to be much lower in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township than in the United States as a whole. The median rent is estimated to be \$433 in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township, compared to \$2,500 nationally. The median monthly mortgage payment is estimated to be \$1,596 in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township, compared to \$1,775 nationally (Table 4-10).

Table 4-9. Estimated value of owner-occupied housing, unincorporated portion of Oxford Township

Value / percent	Oxford Township unincorporated area	City of Oxford	U.S.
Less than \$100,000	6	6	12
\$100,000 to \$199,999	29	39	17
\$200,000 to \$299,999	30	30	18
\$300,000 to \$399,999	18	18	15
\$400,000 & above	17	8	36
Median	\$249,321	\$215,400	\$320,900

Source: 2022 American Community Survey

Table 4-10. Estimated monthly payments for housing, unincorporated portion of Oxford Township

[median]	Oxford Township unincorporated area	City of Oxford	U.S.
Monthly mortgage	\$1,596	\$1,705	\$1,775
Gross rent	\$433	\$832	\$2,500

Source: 2022 American Community Survey

Compared to the nation as a whole, the percentage of income expended on housing in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township is lower for both owner-occupants and renters. Around 58 percent of both owners and renters are estimated to be paying less than 20 percent of their income for housing in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township, compared with 45 percent of owners and 26 percent of renters nationwide (Table 4-11).

Table 4-11. Estimated percent of income spent on housing unincorporated portion of Oxford Township

% spent on housing	Unincorporated area		City of Oxford		U.S.	
	Owners	Renters	Owners	Renters	Owners	Renters
Less than 20%	58	58	71	22	45	26
20% - 29%	34	18	14	16	26	34
30% or more	8	24	15	62	29	50

Source: 2022 American Community Survey

Oxford Township strives to be welcoming to a diversity of households. The lack of diverse household composition can be attributed at least in part to the relatively homogeneous character of the housing stock in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township.

A larger supply of affordable housing would be an important asset for the Oxford community. Many workers at Oxford's largest employers do not live in the Oxford area. One reason for this is the relatively high cost of housing compared to other communities, primarily as a result of Miami students bidding up the price for rental housing. The stock of older housing in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township can be a useful source of affordable housing for the Oxford-area community. Affordable housing in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township should not be concentrated in a single enclave.

Recommendations

- Affordable housing should be available in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township.
- Mobile homes should not be permitted in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township.
- Special needs housing should be available as needed in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township.
- Butler County should adopt an updated definition of family that is inclusive of the more diverse variety of household composition found today.
- Multigenerational households, aging in place, and households with various compositions and values should be supported through more diversity in housing types.
- More affordable rental units should be promoted, but with leases for no less than 9 contiguous months in a 12-month calendar cycle.

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5 Rural Economy

The rural character of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township is defined primarily as an agricultural landscape. The preservation of the agricultural landscape depends on maintaining agriculture as a viable economic activity in the unincorporated portion Oxford Township. Other economic activities could be maintained in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township if they are compatible with proximity to agriculture.

Goal

Sustain and nurture a healthy economy in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township based on activities compatible with the rural character of the community and consistent with conservation development principles.

Objectives

- Identify ways that the Plan can help to maintain farming currently practiced in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township, as well as to encourage continuation of farming by subsequent generations.
- Prioritize preservation for agricultural uses of land classified as prime agricultural land.
- Facilitate employment opportunities for other members of households when one member already has a job in Oxford.
- Encourage installation and upgrading of technologies such as fiber optics that could better enable remote working by residents of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township.
- Attract and retain a limited number of small-scale businesses and family support services in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township that are compatible with agriculture and preservation of the rural character.
- Encourage cooperation with the City of Oxford to promote economic development throughout Oxford Township.

Discussion

Approximately 70 percent of the land in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township is used for agriculture (refer to Table 1-3). At the same time, less than 1 percent of the residents of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township are employed in agriculture. Maintaining the rural character of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township involves finding a balance between the agricultural landscape and the employment needs of the residents.

Agricultural Economy

Farmland in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township is productive. Nearly all of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township, with the exception of the stream valleys, is prime farmland or prime farmland if drained (Figure 5-1).

According to the 1981 Farmland Protection and Policy Act, “prime farmland is farmland that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber and oilseed crops, and is also available for these uses.” (bphc.hrsa.gov/policiesregulations/capital/environmentandhistoric/farmland.pdf)

Most of the farmland in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township is in large parcels of at least 50 acres (Figure 5-2). Large contiguous areas of farmland are important for maintaining agricultural activity as well as preserving the rural character.

Employment

Though most of the land in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township is used for agriculture, only a few residents are engaged in full-time farming as an occupation. The 2022 American Community Survey for Oxford Township (including both the City of Oxford and the unincorporated portion) identified the industry of employment for 9,201 people ages 16 and over (Table 5-1). The survey estimated zero persons employed in agriculture but noted that the margin of error is +/- 23 persons.

Table 5-1. Estimated industry of employment, residents over age 16, unincorporated portion of Oxford Township

Industry [percent]	Oxford Township unincorporated area			City of Oxford		
	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male
Educational services	32	25	37	40	36	45
Health care	12	20	7	5	8	1
Manufacturing	9	6	11	6	2	12
Food services & lodging	8	14	4	18	21	15
Retail trade	7	10	4	10	14	5
Administrative & support	7	3	10	2	1	4
Construction	7	0	11	2	0	4
Transport & warehousing	7	0	11	0	0	1
Finance & insurance	3	9	0	1	1	1
Professional & scientific*	3	4	3	2	1	3
Other services	5	10	2	14	16	9

* And technical services

Source: 2022 American Community Survey

Not surprisingly, given the proximity of Miami University, the industry most heavily represented among residents of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township is education. Approximately 32 percent of employed residents in the

unincorporated portion of Oxford Township are estimated to work in educational services and another 12 percent are estimated to be employed in health care services.

Associated with a university-oriented labor force, average level of education is higher in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township than the United States as a whole (Table 5-2). The residents over age 25 of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township include around 20 percent with a masters, professional, or doctoral degree, compared to 14 percent nationally

Table 5-2. Estimated education of residents, ages 25 years and over, unincorporated portion of Oxford Township

Educational attainment Age 25 & above	Oxford Township unincorporated area		U.S.	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Less than high school	5%	7%	8%	10%
High school graduate	27%	26%	27%	30%
Some college	15%	17%	15%	15%
Associate's degree	7%	5%	11%	10%
Bachelor's degree	27%	24%	24%	23%
Graduate/professional degree	19%	21%	15%	13%

Source: 2022 American Community Survey

Place of Work

An estimated 81 percent of employed residents over age 16 living in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township work in Butler County, according to the 2022 American Community Survey (Table 5-3). Another 14 percent commute to another Ohio county and 4 percent to another state.

Table 5-3. Estimated place of work of employed, residents over age 16, unincorporated portion of Oxford Township

Place of work	Total	Female	Male
Butler County	81%	77%	83%
Another Ohio county	14%	18%	12%
Another state	4%	4%	5%

Source: 2022 American Community Survey

Table 5-4. Estimated commuting time to work, residents over age 16, unincorporated portion of Oxford Township

Industry	Oxford Twp unincorp area			U.S.			
	[percent]	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male
Less than 10 minutes		30	21	33	13	14	12
10 to 14 minutes		19	14	20	13	15	12
15 to 19 minutes		11	21	6	15	16	15
20 or more minutes		41	44	42	59	55	61
<i>Mean travel time to work (minutes)</i>		<i>22.6</i>	<i>25.0</i>	<i>20.5</i>	<i>26.4</i>	<i>24.5</i>	<i>28.0</i>

Source: 2020 U.S. Census of Population and Housing

The mean (simple average) commute time for residents of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township over age 16 is estimated to be much shorter than the national average for men and about the same as the national average for women. However, both men and women in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township are less likely than in the country as a whole to have commutes of more than 20 minutes (Table 5-4).

Income & Poverty

Per capita income is estimated to be approximately \$32,375 in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township, and median household income is estimated at approximately \$80,937. The estimated per capita figure in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township is lower than the national average of \$37,683, whereas the estimated household income level is higher than the national average of \$69,021 (Table 5-5).

Table 5-5. Estimated median income, unincorporated portion of Oxford Township

	Oxford Township unincorp area		U.S.	
	Per capita	Household	Per capita	Household
Approximate median income	\$32,375	\$80,937	\$37,683	\$69,021

Source: 2022 American Community Survey

Oxford Township has a lower percentage of households below poverty level than in the United States as a whole. Approximately 6 percent of the residents of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township are classified as living below the official U.S. poverty level, compared to around 12 percent in the country as a whole (Table 5-6).

Table 5-6. Estimated percent below poverty, unincorporated portion of Oxford Township

% below poverty	Age under 18	Age 18 to 64	Age 65 & above	Female	Male
Ox Township unincorp area	7%	6%	5%	7%	5%
United States	16%	12%	11%	13%	11%

Source: 2022 American Community Survey

The rate of unemployment in 2022 is estimated to be lower in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township than in the country as a whole for both men and women (Table 5-7).

Table 5-7. Estimated unemployment, unincorporated portion of Oxford Township

	Oxford Township unincorporated area		U.S.	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Percent Unemployed	1%	5%	7%	8%

Source: 2022 American Community Survey

Income and poverty levels are especially difficult to estimate for the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township. Data for the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township are estimates based on mathematical equations that remove City of Oxford data from total Oxford Township data.

The U.S. Census reports that the City of Oxford has a very low median income and a very high poverty level. Specifically, the City of Oxford's official median income is \$20,001 per capita and \$43,132 per household, and 46 percent are reported in the City of Oxford to be living below the official poverty level. These levels are probably attributed to Miami University students reporting personal income rather than that of their family.

Relationship to the City of Oxford's Economy

The City of Oxford's 2023 Comprehensive Plan addressed the local economy as follows:

“Oxford's local economy is built on its position as a college town, which is a major community asset but also poses unique challenges being so dependent on a single employer. . . . Additionally, Oxford's local businesses are dependent on the student population who live in Oxford during the school year.”

In view of the dominance of Miami University in the local economy, the City of Oxford's 2023 Comprehensive Plan made the following recommendations regarding economy:

1. Attract new businesses and employment opportunities to diversify the local economy.
2. Encourage entrepreneurship, innovation, and start-up businesses.
3. Support existing local businesses.
4. Attract visitors to Oxford year-round.

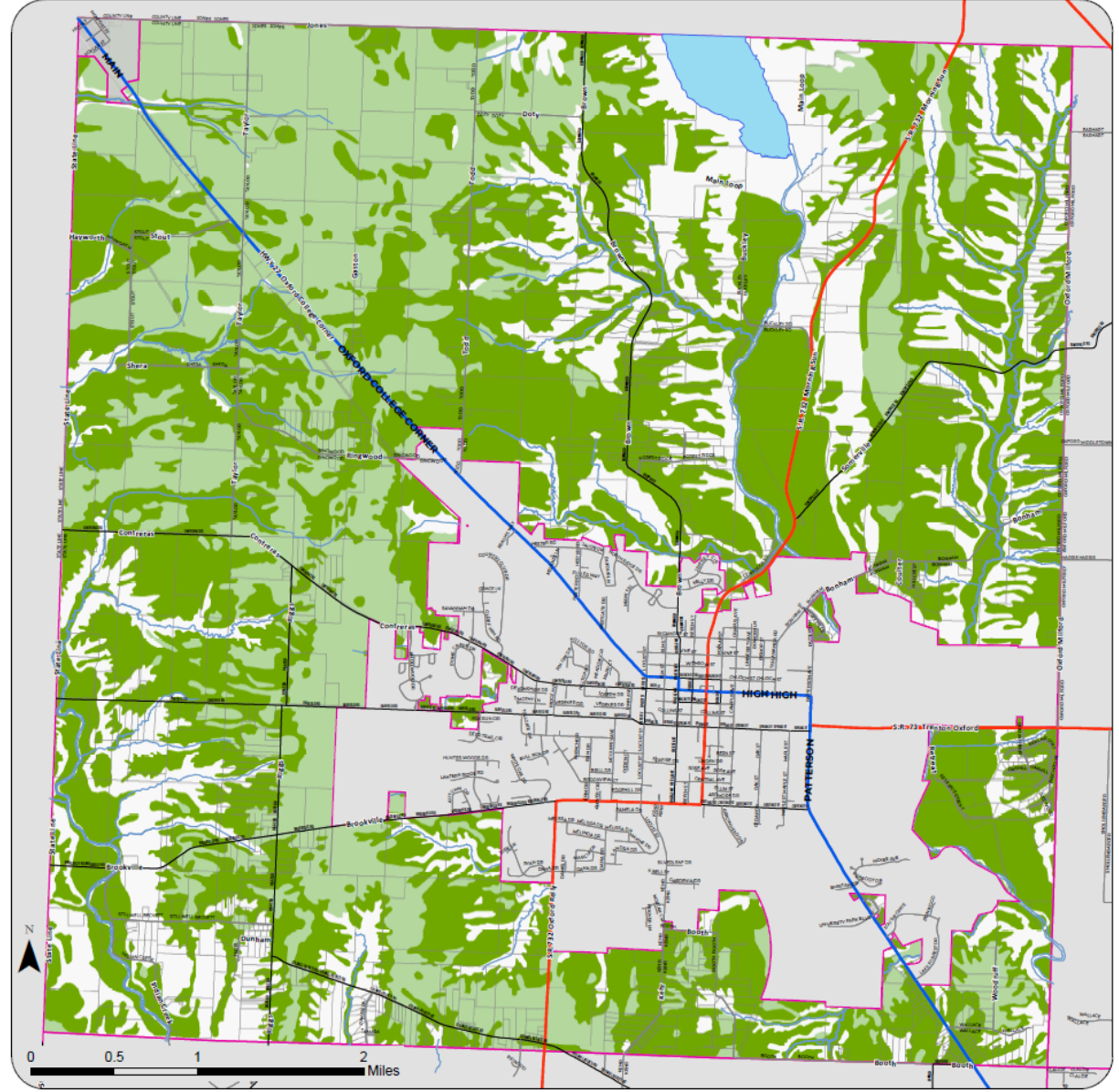
Given the importance of Miami University as an employer and services supported by the university student and staff population, the appropriate role for the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township in supporting the economy of the greater Oxford area is to maintain and protect the rural landscape and character that plays a major role in the attraction and retention of people to this community.


The unincorporated portion of Oxford Township could be an attractive location for a small handful of businesses that are compatible with the rural landscape.

Recommendations

- Contribute to the preservation of the rural character and landscape of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township through incentives that support and preserve farming as an economic activity.
- Protect large contiguous areas of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township for the continuation of farming.
- If a development is proposed, utilize conservation development principles, in order to encourage the retention of agriculture on the majority of the project land.
- Promote the rural character and natural attractions of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township as part of an area-wide economic development policy.

Figure 5-1. Prime farmland, unincorporated portion of Oxford Township

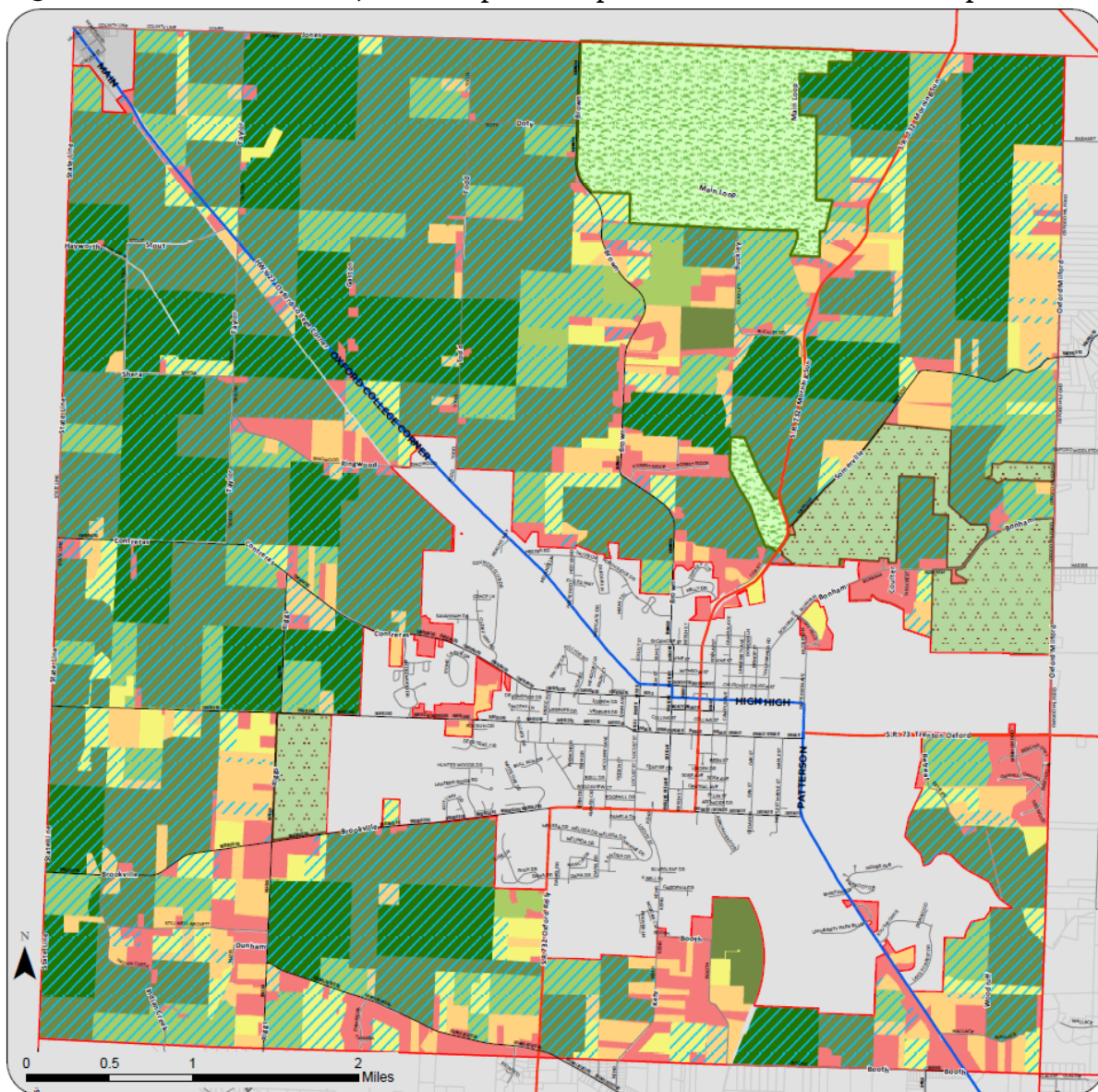


-  Prime Farmland*
-  Prime Farmland, If Drained*
-  Acton Lake
-  Blue Line Streams
-  Township Boundaries

Map prepared by Butler County
Department of Development

**Prime Farmland is a designation determined by the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service.*

Figure 5-2. Parcel size & CAUV, unincorporated portion of Oxford Township



- Township Boundaries
- State/County Parks
- Miami University Lands
- CLASS**
- Agricultural Valued Land
- OXTLandUse2014**
- ACRES**
- Up to 5 acres
- 5 - 10 acres
- 10 - 20 acres
- 20 - 50 acres
- 50 - 100 acres
- Over 100 acres

Map prepared by Butler County
Department of Development

6 Transportation Network

The planning of a transportation network takes into account future patterns of land use. Given the modest rate of growth of the population of Oxford Township – including the City of Oxford and the unincorporated portion – and the importance of maintaining the rural character of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township, the construction of new roads does not appear to be warranted. Improvements to existing roads could help to improve their safety.

Goal

Create a transportation network that includes opportunities for walking, biking, carpooling, and buses, and improves the safety of roads for personal and commercial vehicular traffic, while maintaining the rural character of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township.

Objectives

- Improve existing roads and intersections, rather than construct new roads designed to channel through traffic around the City of Oxford.
- Prioritize safety improvements at intersections and along road segments with high accident rates.
- Encourage improvement of existing roads through grading, curbs, and other safety-related engineering.
- Promote strategies that reduce demand for driving private cars, such as by integrating into developments alternative transportation opportunities, including sidewalks, crosswalks, and bikeways.
- Encourage further implementation of the Oxford Area Trails System.
- Encourage designation of radial bikeways in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township extending out from the City of Oxford.

Discussion

Transportation improvements are not planned in isolation of other elements of a community. Rather, the appropriate transportation network is a function of land use activities. Every trip has a place of origin and a place of destination; if these places are scattered and dispersed, then private motor vehicles are typically utilized. When origins or destinations are concentrated, and distances are shorter, alternatives to individual motor vehicles, including bicycles, walking, buses, and carpooling, may be effective.

Reflecting changing priorities with regard to transportation, the City of Oxford’s 2023 Comprehensive Plan renamed a chapter from “Transportation” to “Mobility.” The term “mobility” reflects the goal that pedestrian and cyclist mobility are to be treated with equal importance to vehicular mobility.

Mode of Travel

The principal mode of travel to work in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township is private motor vehicle, with an estimated 69 percent driving alone (Table 6-1). The estimated share of people driving alone to work represents a decline from estimates in the past, including 83 percent in 2000 and 86 percent in 2013.

Table 6-1. Estimated mode of travel to work unincorporated portion of Oxford Township

	Oxford Township unincorporated area	City of Oxford
Drive alone	69%	54%
Carpool	16%	7%
Bus	4%	2%
Bicycle	1%	4%
Walk	1%	21%
Work from home	9%	12%

Source: 2022 American Community Survey

In the past, no residents of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township reported commuting by bus. With the start of Butler County Regional Transit Authority service within Oxford and connecting Oxford with Hamilton, 4 percent of the residents in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township are now commuting by bus. No bus stop is located in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township, but several are located nearby.

Ownership of motor vehicles is relatively high in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township compared with the national average. An estimated 78 percent of households in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township have at least two vehicles, compared with 58 percent nationally (Table 6-2).

Table 6-2. Estimated vehicles per household, unincorporated portion of Oxford Township

# of vehicles	Oxford Township unincorporated area	City of Oxford	U.S.
0	1%	7%	8%
1	23%	37%	34%
2	47%	36%	37%
3 or more	29%	20%	21%

Source: 2020 U.S. Census of Population and Housing

Existing Roads

The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) tracks accident data and makes it available in various reports. Figure 6-1 illustrates a compilation of data from the most recent 6-year period preceding the committee's work. Intersections and road segments with high volumes of crashes during the period are shown.

- The road segment in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township with the most motor vehicle crashes between 2018 and 2023 was Brookville Road between Riggs Road and the western boundary of Oxford Township.
- Other segments with at least five crashes between 2018 and 2023 were:
 - Brookville Road along the southern boundary of Miami University Airport.
 - Contreras Road between the City of Oxford and Taylor Road.
 - Stillwell Beckett Road between Kehr Road and Riggs Road.
 - Somerville Road between Magie Hill Lane and Oxford Milford Road.
 - Brown Road between the City of Oxford and Forest Ridge Drive.

The three intersections with the most crashes between 2018 and 2023 were:

- Brookville and Riggs Roads.
- Bonham and Oxford Milford Roads.
- Stillwell Beckett and Kehr Roads.

During the period 2018-2023, fatalities are known to have occurred on Stilwell Beckett Road (between Riggs Road and Oxford Reily Road) and on Somerville Road (west of Oxford Milford Road). More recently, in April 2024 a fatality occurred at the intersection of Stilwell Beckett Road and Oxford Reily Road (SR 732).

Existing streets can be made safer and more “complete” through traffic calming devices, which are measures that control the volume of traffic, the speed of traffic, or both. Speed humps or tables, traffic circles, chicanes (S-curves), and narrowing at midblock or at intersections are examples of speed control measures. Oxford Township's first roundabout is planned for the intersection of Stillwell Beckett and Oxford Reily Roads (Ohio 732). In November 2022, the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and the governor's office announced a \$5.1 million state grant for this project, which is set for construction in 2028. As an interim measure, ODOT converted the intersection to a four-way stop with flashing red signals.

Oxford Area Trail System

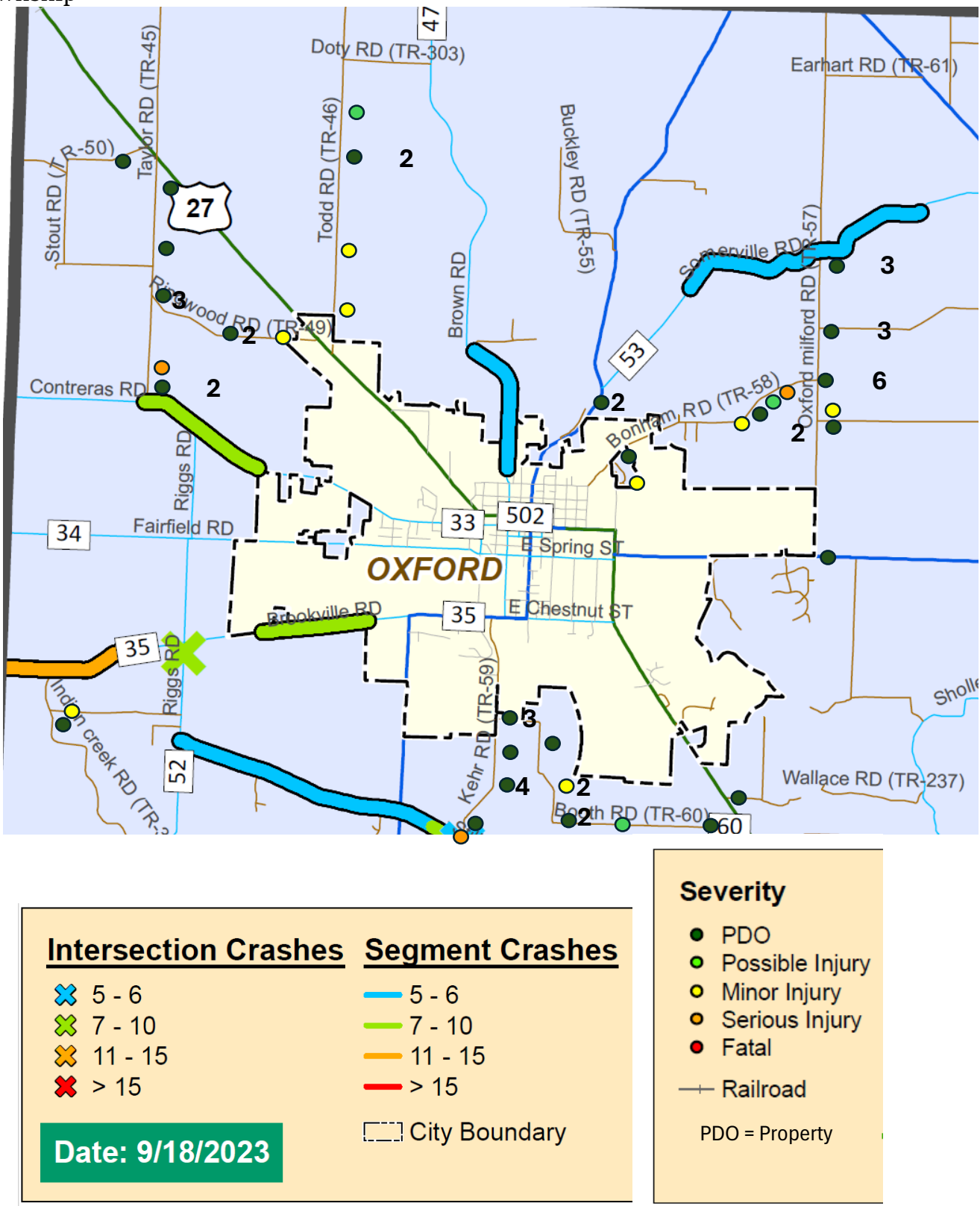
The Oxford Area Trail System is a plan to construct a loop around the City of Oxford for the use of pedestrians and bicyclists. Approximately 7 miles have been completed or are under construction, extending along the south and east sides of the City of Oxford.

A potential future connection of the trail system would be located along the north and west sides of the City of Oxford (Figure 6-2). In December 2024, Oxford City Council approved the route shown for this final link; it is entirely inside the City's corporate boundary.

Recommendations

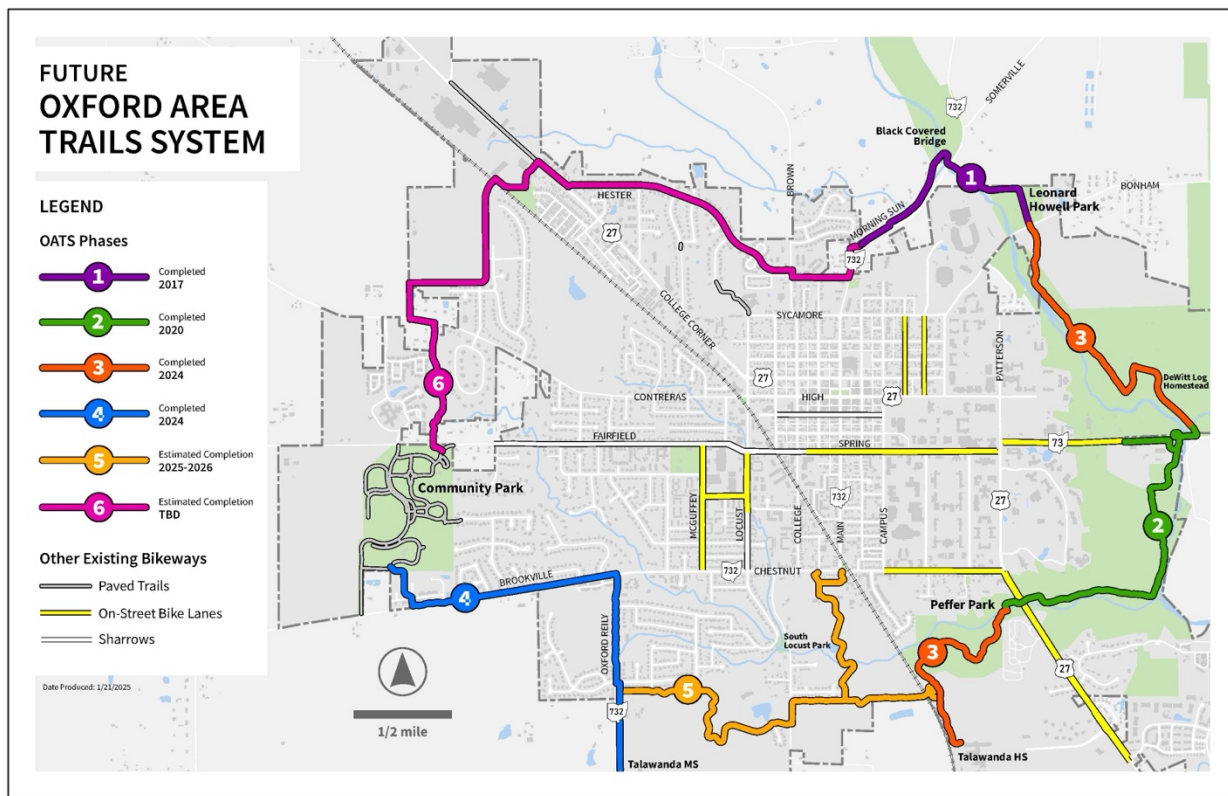
- Given the Oxford area's lack of population growth, the construction of new roads that could adversely affect the rural character of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township is unnecessary.
- The safety of intersections and segments with high accident rates can be improved through the use of traffic calming methods.
- Walking paths and bikeways should be added to existing roads, where needed and feasible.
- Discussions can be undertaken with property owners to identify possible routes for the Oxford Area Trail System perimeter loop and for radial routes extending out from the City of Oxford.

Figure 6-1. High crash locations 2018-2023, unincorporated portion of Oxford Township



Source: Ohio Department of Transportation

Figure 6-2. Oxford Area Trails System



Map provided by City of Oxford

7 Local Cooperation

In 1960, the City of Oxford was carved out of Oxford Township as an independent municipality with a charter form of government. The City's initial municipal boundaries coincided with the Mile Square. Through annexations, the City of Oxford has since expanded from the original 1 square mile to 7.8 square miles. Residents of the City are also residents of the Township and they vote in Township elections. They do not vote for Township levies.

Goal

Improve cooperation and coordination among Oxford Township, the City of Oxford, nearby townships, Butler County, and Miami University.

Objectives

- Undertake initiatives to expand coordination between Oxford Township and other units of local government, as well as Miami University.

Discussion

The City of Oxford and Oxford Township governments cooperate formally and informally in many respects. However, when it comes to land use regulations, the two jurisdictions operate independently. As a municipality, the City of Oxford has adopted its own zoning, subdivision, and other land use regulations.

The interests of the City and Township are deeply intertwined and highly symbiotic. Regularly scheduled joint meetings between Oxford Township Trustees and members of Oxford's City Council have provided a useful start. An even stronger formal relationship between the two would benefit both communities.

Strengthening formal relationships with Butler County would also benefit Oxford Township. The unincorporated portion of Oxford Township is covered by Butler County regulations. Butler County and City of Oxford land use regulations provide differing standards and processes. To carry out some of the goals of this Plan – notably promotion of conservation development principles – Oxford Township recommends that Butler County consider changes to its zoning and subdivision regulations.

Recommendations

- Establish a joint planning committee with the City of Oxford.
- Revise city and county zoning and subdivision ordinances so that the two provide more closely aligned zones and regulatory provisions for the City of Oxford and Oxford Township to incentivize conservation development.
- Seek representation on Miami University and City of Oxford committees, as well as nongovernmental boards, that have a direct impact on land use in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township.
- Develop joint planning initiatives with relevant stakeholders of adjacent townships concerned with land use planning to protect the rural character of the area.

8 Implementation and Fulfillment

Implementation of a Land Use Plan is typically undertaken through a community's Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Ordinance.

- A Zoning Ordinance is a law that regulates the permitted uses of land within a community, dividing areas into specific zones such as residential and agricultural and dictating the types of development that can occur in each zone, including building height, density, and lot size.
- A Subdivision Ordinance governs the process for dividing a parcel of land into smaller lots for development, setting standards for features such as street layout, lot size, and infrastructure requirements to ensure orderly growth within a community.

The Zoning Ordinance and the Subdivision Ordinance for the unincorporated area of Oxford Township are governed by Butler County. The goals of this Plan can be implemented most effectively if Butler County were to adopt innovative zoning and subdivision regulations. This Plan recommends that Butler County adopt innovative land use regulations that can best assist the unincorporated area of Oxford Township maintain its rural character.

Goal

Adopt innovative state-of-the-art land use regulations and techniques designed to implement the goals of this Plan and encourage other nearby localities to adopt similar tools.

Objectives

- Promote understanding of the principles underlying conservation development and the specific process of undertaking a conservation development.

Discussion

The typical housing development in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township divides a large property into as many lots as is permitted by the Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance, and health regulations. The two most frequent constraints on the number of lots are the amount of frontage available along a road and the amount of land needed for a leach field. The resulting pattern is a row of narrow and deep lots strung out along a rural road. The house is often sited relatively close

to the road and the deep narrow rear yard is either planted in grass or left to grow “wild.”

An alternative to this pattern of development, known as conservation development, has gained support in communities concerned with the loss of farmland through urban encroachment. Conservation development allows residential development while providing for more open space, including preservation of farmland.

Conservation development starts by identifying the sensitive environmental and cultural features of the property that are to be protected from destruction. Houses are clustered close together on the remaining portion of the property. Instead of becoming yards of individually owned lots, most of the land remains permanent agriculture, woods, or other open space. The open space is protected permanently by a conservation easement, a legally binding agreement that restricts unwanted development into perpetuity.

These are the principal steps in undertaking a conservation development.

- Prepare location map.
- Prepare existing resources and site analysis map.
- Prepare sketch plan that identifies conservation areas and situates houses in areas not protected as open space.
- Prepare preliminary plan.
- Prepare final plan.

Conservation development may result in higher overall development costs. Longer access roads and water lines may be needed to reach houses if they are set back further from the road. Site preparation costs may be higher to prevent damage to sensitive features and to place houses in the best possible locations. In such cases, higher development costs can be offset by permitting more housing units to be built than would be the case under “conventional” zoning and subdivision regulations. Furthermore, conservation developments around the country have been shown to generate more revenue per unit than “conventional” subdivisions, because consumers are willing to spend more for a house that overlooks open space rather than neighbors and roads.

To encourage conservation development in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township, Butler County zoning and subdivision regulations may need to be modified. Design standards may be needed to address the goals of conservation development. Examples are minimum lot sizes and minimum front, side, and rear setbacks. It is not appropriate in a long-range Plan, however, to make detailed recommendations concerning specific zoning and subdivision regulations. That job should be undertaken after adoption of this plan, by Butler County, and consistent with the goals of this plan.

Handling of wastewater is often the greatest obstacle to doing a conservation development in a rural area not served by a municipal sewer system, as in most of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township (see Chapter 4). Standards vary by condition of soil, but in the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township a leach field

of one-third acre is common. The leach field must be identified on a plat and protected legally from being covered by an impervious surface.

Butler County Health Department permits the leach field to be located on a different lot than the house as long as the field is protected by a legally recorded easement. The land above the field may not be developed, nor subject to disturbance or compaction. In terms of agriculture, the land above the field could be planted in grass or hand-tended crops but could not be planted and harvested using heavy mechanical equipment. As technologies improve, other alternatives, such as mechanical systems, constructed wetlands, land application, or small community systems, may be developed that are compatible with conservation developments in rural areas.

Conservation development principles apply at the scale of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township as a whole, as well as at the scale of individual properties. Development can be restricted in the portions of the unincorporated portion of Oxford Township considered most environmentally sensitive. However, restricting development in environmentally sensitive areas must be accompanied with protecting the ability of property owners to achieve fair market value from the sale of land for housing.

Recommendations

- Seek changes in zoning and subdivision regulations in order to incentivize conservation development.