

# VISION 2040



PLAN. EXECUTE. ADVANCE.





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**Site & Situation**



**Population**



**Infrastructure**



**Economy**



**Downtown**



**Redevelopment**

# VISION 2040 plan. execute. advance.

## PUBLIC PRIORITIES

- Blight
- Crime
- Downtown Revitalization
- Economic Development
- Pedestrian Facilities
- Negative Perception
- More Greenspace/Parks

## REDEVELOPMENT

### **Densify**

**Population Density-**  
**1970 - 4,800 per sq. mile**  
**2020 - 2,636 per sq. mile**

### **Encourage Building Improvements**

### **Maximize ROI**

**Tipping Point Neighborhoods**  
**Opportunity Zones**

### **Develop Commercial Corridors**

## INFRASTRUCTURE



### **Housing**

Harsany & Associates assessed the Lima housing stock in 2020. The report generated shall be the authority for overhauling the housing stock. Removing blight, improving rental properties and addressing safety were top recommendations.



### **Transportation**

Lima has 50+ traffic signals unwarranted by volume, 17 are in the CBD. Lima's road conditions were the least satisfactory infrastructure item assessed in the public survey.



### **Active Transportation**

Sidewalks and multi-use trails were valued by the public. Encouraging active participation are important to Limans as the public health metrics regarding overweight and obesity are notably worse than the state average.



### **Lima Water**

Lima enjoys a state of the art water treatment facility.

## DOWNTOWN

### **Discourage Surface Parking**

**CBD Core = 35% Off-Street Occupancy**

### **Add Park Space**

### **Dispel False Crime Narrative**

### **Support Mixed-Use Developments**

## POPULATION

2000	40,263	
2010	38,771	
2020	35,579	
2030	33,520*	Projected
2040	31,178*	Projected

## ECONOMY

### **Attract New Business**

### **Strategic Planning & Collaboration**

### **Workforce Development**

### **Infrastructure/Site Preparedness**

### **Regional Resiliency**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Lima's first comprehensive plan in over half a century was conceived to guide the city in an era of transition. The plan aims to address the city's struggles and build upon its successes. Vision 2040 was written by the Lima-Allen County Regional Planning Commission in conjunction with the City of Lima's administrative leadership.

A comprehensive plan must accomplish two main feats. It is imperative to establish baseline data relative to its populace and conditions for infrastructure within the city while also providing direction and guidance for the future. Vision 2040 also supports a redevelopment plan as Limans beg for aesthetic enhancements and beautification throughout the community.

The first priority was public participation. The process was open for months and consisted of surveys, online and hard copies, and in-person community events. It is the responsibility of the resident to give planners their vision of Lima.

The public had a high degree of consensus regarding Lima's leading obstacles.

- Blight/Housing Conditions
- Downtown Revitalization
- Negative Perception
- Crime/Safety
- Economic Development

Housing and economic improvements have been addressed at length in recent reports by Harsany & Associates and the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. To maximize government resources and lean on expertise in given fields, Vision 2040 addresses these topics without duplicating the work of other adopted documents. The plan aims to use data to eliminate emotions and direct decision-makers to thought processes that are logical, efficient, and most impactful for the greater good of the City of Lima.

LACRPC excels in one expertise above all others, collecting and applying data to lend an empirical lens to public issues. The role of the RPC has been to locate and utilize data that illuminate areas for improvement without relying on the biases that accompany anecdotal evidence. Metrics allow for a clear assessment and an efficient approach to redevelopment that maximizes return on investment. Similar to most cities of Lima's size, the population is declining and is projected to continue.

Improvements must be aggressively pursued to reverse the downward trend. Providing a safe community with coveted amenities could retain more Limans and offer a different lifestyle than surrounding communities. Aesthetic appearance should also be considered when introducing new amenities, such as additional recreational and entertainment opportunities, intended to elevate the quality of life in Lima. Beautification along with amenities will help to attract more residents and keep residents in Lima.



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- 2000 – 40,263
  - 2010 – 38,771
  - 2020 – 35,579
  - 2030 – 33,520 \*Projected
  - 2040 – 31,178 \*Projected

Public participation revealed some concern that Lima's youth reaches adulthood and moves to more populated metropolitan areas. Data from the American Census Bureau has corrected that notion showing that Limans born after 1985 have stayed home. Reversing the trend is an important step on the path to growing a population.

Expanding a demographic is a difficult task. Smaller municipalities all over the country have been saddled with this hurdle as the population of the United States continues to drop. The success of that feat is correlated with an economy that is sturdy at its worst.

Attracting more well-paying jobs is a priority. That accomplishes two needs for Lima: 1) raising the median household income, and 2) increasing the tax base. First, Limans must be in a position to fill those roles. Workforce development is key for an area that has difficulty filling the better-paying jobs in the area.

Lima's economy is inextricably connected to the surrounding area. A regional approach to economic strength is the only logical effort. Citizens from Allen and adjacent counties commute to the city daily for job opportunities.

There is a disparity between the education levels of residents of Lima and the surrounding area. With an emphasis on education and job skills training, Limans would be more likely to be employed in positions to boost the median household income. Per capita median income levels are as follows:

- Lima - \$18,868
- Allen County - \$27,215
- Ohio - \$32,780

Lima administration recognized the challenges in its housing stock and commissioned Harsany and Associates for a study completed in 2020. The Housing Assessment shall be the primary guide for decisions around the housing stock for the foreseeable future. Vision 2040 was careful not to duplicate the work of Harsany only complementing the effort when necessary.

- 6,000 homes need major rehabilitation
- Many housing systems (such as wiring, HVAC, and plumbing) are beyond their useful life and obsolete
- Vacant property rates are high and worsening

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The automotive transportation system was rated poorly by the survey participants. The road conditions were one of the biggest complaints of the government-sponsored infrastructure. It should be noted that many roadway users are unsure of which streets are the responsibility of the City of Lima versus roads maintained by the Ohio Department of Transportation or the Allen County Engineer's Office.

Lima's roadway network is seemingly efficient relative to larger Ohio cities, but data indicates there is substantial room for improvement. There are over 50 traffic signals in Lima that do not meet the *volume* warrants. Established industry leaders FHWA and ODOT advocates against maintaining unwarranted traffic lights. Unnecessary lights cause traffic delays and extraneous emissions among other hazards like a potential danger to vehicles and pedestrians.

Expansion to the active transportation system consisting of sidewalks and multi-use trails was thoroughly supported by the public participation process. The emphasis on active transportation and recreational facilities is important for a community whose obesity rates are concerning. Obesity is linked to several leading health problems that overtax our local health system.

The municipal water supply system is a highlight of Lima's infrastructure. The city's treatment plant is state-of-the-art. Lima can treat 30 million gallons per day.

Just as the Housing Assessment is the north star in residential stock evaluation, the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) shall assist in determining the economic needs of Lima. The CEDS was developed over a decade ago and continues to be updated for Allen County in its entirety. Workforce development was cited as a priority of the CEDS and affirmed by data uncovered in the writing of Vision 2040.

Downtown has been a focus of public and private entities over the last decade. There are opportunities downtown to densify the population and add amenities that cater to younger people utilizing vacant spaces filled with surface parking lots. Only 35% of the off-street parking is occupied in the central business district core which has 12 acres devoted to off-street parking.

The public was very supportive of more parks and more park amenities. Parks have been shown to bolster revitalization in some situations. A park downtown would be an ideal place for both employees, downtown residents, and visitors enjoying retail or restaurant spaces to congregate and share in fraternal activities.

Anecdotally, some residents have cited crime as a reason they do not feel a level of comfort downtown. Violent crime data from 2016-2019 shows that downtown has less crime than most of the City. This is only part of the (often inaccurate) negative perception that plagues Lima.



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Lima's population density has fallen drastically over the last few decades. In 1970 there were 4,800 Limans per square mile. The latest census shows roughly 2,600 Limans per square mile. As redevelopment continues, understanding the detriment of sprawl is vital to the city's fiscal health.

- Increased energy usage
- Over-reliance on automobile
- Detrimental to water quality

There are many opportunities for infill development, and changing zoning to allow for residential uses outside of single-family homes increases density and improves a family's financial abilities in a community with old housing stock and lower median household incomes. Dense populations are efficient to maintain and grow.

Strategies have been established by the Harsany Report by classifying neighborhoods into three categories: healthy neighborhoods, tipping point neighborhoods, and revitalization neighborhoods. Encouraging redevelopment in tipping point neighborhoods allows for maximum return on investment by catching aesthetic downturns before it reaches the worst-case scenario. Making use of opportunity zones and qualified opportunity funds are also important tools for Lima to stretch the impact of financial investment.

Lima has targeted a corridor with the established qualified Opportunity Zones. Bellefontaine Avenue is an important corridor that moves nearly 20,000 vehicles daily. Corridors like this move traffic in and out of the city and are often the only roadways that nearby residents traveling through Lima actually traverse. The most popular corridors connect Lima's east and west gates. Those corridors are logical locations for improvements with the major traffic drivers located to the east and west.

The City has been making strides in the right direction. With a continued focus on the greater good and using metrics to maximize private and public investments, Lima will build on its current momentum. Following data and evidence-based practices are the only way to reach a consensus and capitalize on the best opportunities for the community.

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# PREAMBLE: VISION 2040



## INTRODUCTION

*"The residents have given us their vision of Lima. Vision 2040 arranges the path to advancement."*

In the latter months of 2020, the City of Lima noticed obstacles stemming from the lack of a comprehensive plan. City officials approached the Lima-Allen County Regional Planning Commission (LACRPC) to develop a plan for policymakers. Vision 2040, conceived by the City in conjunction with the LACRPC, aims to shape community evolution over the next two decades. Otherwise known as a master or general plan, the document is designed to reflect the current state of the City and a vision for fostering substantive progress.



## Introduction

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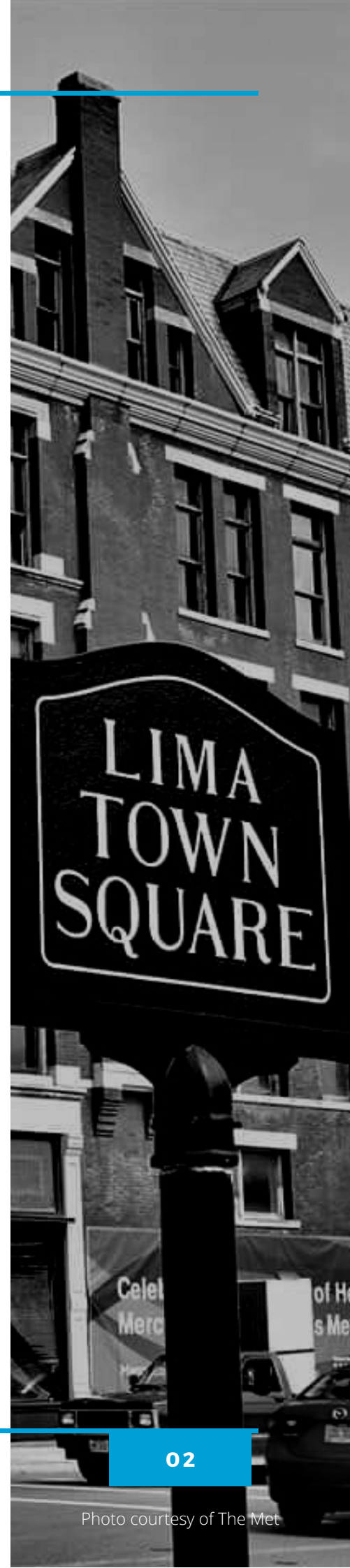
Establishing baseline data is one of the most important aspects of a General Plan. Synopsizing an aerial view of current metrics leads to a better understanding of the shortcomings that may be prohibitive to the end goals. Comprehensive Plans provide a glancing action plan, while the City will focus on details as the plan is implemented.

Public participation proves to be a valuable and necessary resource to local government decision-makers. A sampling ensures the community's willingness and ability to support action steps brought forth by the planning process. The community survey, City staff SWOT, and public engagement meetings molded Vision 2040 along with parallel philosophies from LACRPC planners. The survey was open for well over 30 days to residents of the area with an emphasis on, those who live and/or work in the City. The plan's inception was well-timed with the release of the 2020 Census results, our nation's largest data collection enterprise. The most recent, reliable information was coupled with the insights of the City's staff and area residents to provide a well-rounded view of the community today and where it hopes to arrive.

### Planning Philosophy

Relative to comprehensive plans, Vision 2040 has an interesting dynamic as its most impactful component is more akin to a revitalization plan than a comprehensive plan. Vision 2040 set out to establish baseline data and goals for the future. Then, a sub-plan will address areas for redevelopment and techniques to achieve the vision established by public participation efforts. The revitalization plan will build on the momentum already generated by the traditional comprehensive planning topics.

The City battles a negative perception often worse than its reality; however, this document recognizes some of that negative mythology, but also substantial room for progress. The Harsany Report, published in early 2020, identified blighted real estate as the primary challenge for Lima. That sentiment was confirmed repeatedly throughout the public participation process of Vision 2040. This plan will address blight and decaying neighborhoods in the most economically efficient manner possible, using data-driven approaches to determine the locations for investment that will have tangible improvements for our community while minimizing the taxpayers' burden.



# Introduction

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Addressing misperceptions, blight, and poor housing conditions around the city are not the only communitywide concerns. The plan also works towards neighborhood building, improving safety, economic prosperity, and other issues continually cited as a detriment to the quality of life for the Community at Large. Progress on this scale is difficult to achieve. Even in the best of circumstances, it is an odyssey rife with logistical, political, and financial hurdles. Nevertheless, public participation efforts have produced a consensus on top priorities for City officials. These are the points upon which this document will focus. The residents have rendered their vision of Lima. Vision 2040 arranges the path to advancement.

## Comprehensive Planning Process

The planning process is comprised of a series of data collection efforts. Vision 2040 may surprise readers in that much of the data was sourced from the American Community Survey (ACS), despite the recent 2020 decennial census data release. Like the once-a-decade census, the ACS is also a product of the United States Census Bureau. The ACS assembles data yearly and samples information to questions outside the decennial census.

While the census bureau is the source of data, the Lima community is the source of direction. Early in the planning process, the primary focus was public engagement. The vision of Lima belongs to its residents and taxpayers. It is the responsibility of planners to advise a path leading to that vision and the onus on decision-makers to walk that path until the year 2040. A comprehensive plan is a living document designed to be updated as recommendations are implemented to keep up with the evolution of the City of Lima.

## Issues of Concern

The public was eager to share concerns in the online survey, to which we received just over 200 responses. An additional effort in the form of a SWOT Analysis distributed to the City staff returned 40+ results. The in-person events returned drastically less data. However, the concerns remained constant throughout. Here is a sneak preview of the top five points of emphasis in no particular order:

- Blight/Housing Conditions
- Crime/Safety
- Downtown Revitalization
- Economic Development
- Negative Perception

These and related issues will be explored throughout the document in the most efficient manner. Discussions with City officials regarding these problems have been ongoing throughout the planning process. Lima's leadership has developed goals and guiding principles to answer the public.



# Introduction

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## Community Vision

The Lima community relies upon planners and policymakers to breathe life back into its neighborhoods, nightlife, and commercial areas. Cosmetic upgrades alone will mightily improve Lima's negative perception and safety concerns. There is strength in the community. That is what Lima wants. Economic prosperity, well-attended parks, fruitful school systems, etc.; that is the path to achieving unity that will bolster resident involvement, a key component to a city's revitalization.



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# SITE AND SITUATION



## INTRODUCTION

Understanding the community's foundational layer is imperative to foster responsible development. An area's historic, geologic, geographic, climate and drainage patterns are staples of any comprehensive plan. Familiarity with these topics encourages development in the most suitable locations and aids policymakers in ensuring residents utilize our community resources optimally.



## Site & Situation

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### City History, Government, and Attributes

Following the surrender and subsequent relocation of the Shawnee people, the Lima area was clear for development. By 1831, Ohio legislation formally founded Allen County and established the City of Lima as its seat. The city covers an area of approximately 13.8 square miles and is the largest of two cities in the county. It is bordered on the west by American and Shawnee Townships and to the east by Bath and Perry Townships.

A mayor and city council structure governs the City of Lima. The council consists of nine members: a president, a clerk, and a representative from the seven wards. Additional positions and departments within Lima's governmental structure include an auditor, chief of staff, building department, finance department, human resources, law director, public works department, police, fire, and utilities department. The mayor also appoints members to several boards and commissions. Map SS-1 and Map I-3 can be found in the Appendix. In addition, displayed is the city's central location amidst other political subdivisions within Allen County and functional class roadways, respectively.

### Climate and Natural Features

Glacial pass through the region produced the Great Lakes with distinct geologic and topographic characteristics. The aftermath of that movement has brought about a lack of significant elevation change across the city. Lima's subtle topography peaks in the southeast portion of the city and flows back to the Ottawa River, which courses through the center of the municipality.

The flat ground nurtured the conception of the Great Black Swamp of centuries ago. The 7,000 square mile swampland adjoining Lake Erie was the defining feature of northwestern Ohio and deposited nurturing soils that helped establish the area as an agricultural center. The completion of the Miami-Erie Canal and other drainage efforts by 1800s era settlers drained the swamp over several decades. Still, some flooding is not uncommon with heavy rainfall. The city drains to municipally maintained stormwater facilities and subsequently the Ottawa River Watershed, including some of the area's high-volume creeks like Lost Creek and Sugar Creek.

This part of Ohio experiences cold winters and hot summers. This climate contributes to the area's penchant as an agricultural producer with a long growing season of 5 to 6 months. The average annual precipitation is 37.3 inches. Of this, roughly 20 inches usually falls from May through October. The growing season for most regional cash crops occurs within this period. During the winter months, the average snowfall is 26.5 inches. On average, 40 days per annum have at minimum 1 inch of snow on the ground, but it varies considerably from year to year.

### Floodplains & Wetland

Lima resides in the county's middle ground. The lower elevation is north of Lima, save the Ottawa River valley. The area south-southwest of the city is the county's high ground registering around 900 feet above sea level.

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# POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS



## GOALS

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- Continue Economic Revitalization
- Support Multipurpose Development
- Improve Educational Attainment
- Increase Municipal Funding

City of Lima Population Projections from 2000-2040		
Year	Population	% of Total Population
2000*	40,263	-
2010*	38,771	-3.7
2020*	35,579	-8.2
2030	33,520	-5.8
2040	31,178	-7.0
*Decennial Census Populations		

## Population Characteristics

Sourcing data from bona fide origins allows planners to forecast with the highest degree of comfort and accuracy. In the field of urban planning, data is rarely hard and fast. Planning data reflects a snapshot in time or often an estimation of that frame. People, transportation, and various infrastructure utilizations are innately fluid. In the field of population and demographic estimates, the United States Census Bureau reigns supreme. All population data provided in this report comes from one of two sources; a decennial census or the American Community Survey (ACS) for mid-decade numbers.

### A Declining Population

In the classrooms of academia, planning students are taught the best practices for managing urban growth. Unfortunately, as many cities in the Rust Belt are learning, there are no tried and true tactics for a graceful decline. Lima's population has been dropping steadily since 1970 when nearly 54,000 permanent residents supported the city. The 2020 decennial census identified Lima's population as nearly 18,000 fewer, a loss of almost 34%. Over the same span, Allen County lost roughly 9,000 of its 111,144 permanent residents. The declining trend in Lima is fairly consistent with heavily industrialized areas of yesteryear. For example, Cuyahoga County, Ashtabula County, and Sandusky County have seen a greater than 3.5% population loss in the past ten years alone. If current trends continue, Lima's population is projected to estimate at just over 31,000 by 2040.

Vision 2040's public participation process documented some concern from the public that Lima does not retain its youth, that young men and women leave for college and never return for permanent residence. However, the most recent data has shown an apparent shift for the better. The Population Groups Table breaks down the age cohorts for each of the last three decennial censuses and the 2015 ACS. There is a clear division between people born before and after 1985.

<b>Population Groups Over Time as a Percentage of the Total Population</b>				
<b>Age Cohort</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2020</b>
<b>&lt;5</b>	<b>8.3%</b>	<b>8.4%</b>	<b>7.5%</b>	<b>8.2%</b>
<b>5-14</b>	<b>14.8%</b>	<b>15.2%</b>	<b>15.3%</b>	<b>13.4%</b>
<b>15-24</b>	<b>15.9%</b>	<b>15.9%</b>	<b>17.1%</b>	<b>15.1%</b>
<b>25-34</b>	<b>14.0%</b>	<b>13.6%</b>	<b>13.1%</b>	<b>15.4%</b>
<b>35-44</b>	<b>14.6%</b>	<b>11.4%</b>	<b>12.1%</b>	<b>11.8%</b>
<b>45-54</b>	<b>11.7%</b>	<b>12.8%</b>	<b>12.3%</b>	<b>12.3%</b>
<b>55-64</b>	<b>7.5%</b>	<b>10.9%</b>	<b>11.5%</b>	<b>11.0%</b>
<b>65-74</b>	<b>6.8%</b>	<b>6.2%</b>	<b>6.1%</b>	<b>7.4%</b>
<b>75-84</b>	<b>4.5%</b>	<b>3.9%</b>	<b>3.1%</b>	<b>3.3%</b>
<b>85+</b>	<b>1.9%</b>	<b>1.7%</b>	<b>1.8%</b>	<b>2.2%</b>
<b>Total (If Appli.)</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>



## Population Characteristics

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Limans born from 1976 to 1985 left Lima at a much higher rate than those born from 1986 to 1995. If one was ten years old in 2000, the number of his/her peers in 2020 dropped from 6,150 to 5,480, a loss of 11%. The older age group experienced a much sharper decline. That cohort fell from 6,600 to 4,200 in that same 20 years. Those 2,400 residents (born 1976 – 1985) represented a staggering 40% of the entire population loss from 2000 – 2020.

2020 decennial census data shows Lima's population as a young one. A population skewed younger can be valuable for a community. Young folks are more able to produce in the workforce. Generally, younger people have more energy, a better aptitude for technical work, and a desire to earn. With the proper skill set, young people can drastically change the economic prosperity of any community. Bringing young couples with children to a community is proven to reverse population decline.

### Population Retention/Growth

City officials view population growth as a necessary component to bolster the quality of life for Limans. Among other benefits, demographic expansion is directly tied to a sturdy economy. City officials and private investors have begun revitalization efforts by implementing amenities that resonate with young people. There are no guarantees in city planning, and reversing population decline has been a tricky task for medium-sized cities nationwide, but these strategies best suit the City of Lima:

- **Continue Economic Revitalization Efforts:** In recent years, the city has prioritized the revitalization of the downtown area, which the community has outwardly supported. Partnering with agencies like The Lima Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Lima Inc. to connect to local investors has made great strides in restoring the downtown area. Supporting downtown restoration as a City was a notion supported by over 80% of survey respondents- the highest level of concurrence in the public participation effort.
- **Support Multipurpose Developments:** Sprinkled throughout thriving cities across the U.S. are instances of housing and commerce coexisting with great success. This mixed-use planning philosophy helps develop a densely occupied, efficient cityscape where people have organic opportunities to cultivate community by shopping or working in their neighborhoods. Mixed-use developments limit urban sprawl while growing affordable housing opportunities. In addition, such developments draw young professionals into the housing adjacent to recreational spaces.
- **Improve the Educational Attainment of Citizens:** Lima residents have lagged behind both the State and the surrounding county in terms of educational attainment. In an area as rich in higher education institutions as Lima, there should be a great emphasis on the types of programs offered in the local area, not only in the traditional college route but also in technical and trades programs. By instilling the economic values of these programs in Lima students, the city can produce residents with higher earning potential to fill higher paying jobs in greater community.

## Population Characteristics

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- Increase Municipal Funding: Vibrant cities nationwide all have one thing in common- the ability to fund municipal projects that improve the quality of life for residents and draw those from the greater community. The survey returned results that show a public consensus yearning for aesthetic enhancements. However, implementing those improvements is costly, and that revenue is difficult to generate with the population shrinking and consisting of lower median incomes than the state average. The loss of population in Lima has led to less tax revenue for the City to maintain its infrastructure, let alone make improvements. Growing the number of Limans is one of the few ways to boost revenue without raising tax rates for residents.

# INFRASTRUCTURE



## GOALS

- Implement Housing Task Force Goals
  - 6k Homes Need Major Rehab
- Increase Active Transportation
  - Improve Public Health
- Improve Traffic Level of Service
  - 50+ Unwarranted Signals by *Volume*
    - Traffic Delays
    - Unsafe
    - Increased Emissions

The residents of this city see its infrastructure as the most important provision of local government. Infrastructure was most often the source of frustrations from those documented in the public participation process. Residents focus on what is most visible; housing, commercial buildings, and roadways are most commonly cited as concerns, but the underground infrastructure is just as vital to the community.



## Housing

In 2019, Mayor Berger solicited the guidance of Harsany & Associates on the era's most topical infrastructure, housing. The Columbus-based consulting firm was hired to develop a report followed by recommendations and sustainable strategies to improve the city's quality and availability of attractive housing options. The report prompted a committee to examine housing needs in 2020, the Lima Housing Task Force.

While the Regional Planning Commission has no interest in duplicating the work of the Harsany Report, housing stock is an important piece of the infrastructure to be addressed in a comprehensive plan. Therefore, the most relevant information has been cited from the Harsany Report for contextual purposes in Vision 2040. LACRPC and its partners at the City of Lima recognize that the Harsany Report stands on its own and should be the guidebook for improving housing conditions as well as the recommendations stemming from the Lima Housing Task Force.

The Housing Assessment found a significant need for housing stock revitalization. Blighted lower-income housing and homes that surround it encourage folks searching for better housing to look elsewhere. Most commonly, this results in only those residents without options. Harsany assigned distress scores to each neighborhood and categorized them by healthy neighborhoods, tipping point neighborhoods, and revitalization neighborhoods. Tipping point neighborhoods promise the best return on investment as less capital is required to return a neighborhood to a healthy status.

The occurrence of vacant properties is high and growing. The median home values are low and getting worse. Relative to the state of Ohio, median home values steadily declined from 2013 to 2019. The ratio of rental properties to owner-occupied properties tilts in the wrong direction for Lima. Over 54% of homes are occupied by renters compared to just 33% for Allen County. Only 12% of Lima homes were built after 1980. The assessment projects that nearly 6,000 homes need major rehabilitation. Some Harsany recommendations:

- Develop and implement overarching neighborhood revitalization plans
- Remove blight
- Improve existing rental properties
- Address neighborhood safety and crime
- Set housing goals
- Continue efforts to address regulator barriers and seek to continue to improve customer service
- Market Citywide Community Reinvestment Areas and tax abatements for new construction and major rehabilitation of a residential property
- Offer Tax Increment Financing for developments in targeted areas

# Infrastructure

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## Water

A state-of-the-art water treatment system with abundant capacity is one of Lima's greatest assets. Reservoirs located both east and west of Lima hold over 14 billion gallons of storage for Lima's municipal water customers, some of which are even outside the City boundaries. The 30 million gallon per day treatment plant that is located on Wayne Street processes 14 million gallons of water daily. A new SCADA system is in process of being designed which will allow operators to monitor and adjust plant operations from the control room rather than at specific locations within the plant. A surplus of clean water is a great strength and a necessity for industrial enterprises selecting sites for development.

## Wastewater

Lima has been treating its wastewater since 1930. The system employs a three-stage process that has been in place since the 1970s. In 2018, the plant was expanded to an average dry weather flow of 18 million gallons per day (MGD) with a peak wet weather capacity of 70MGD. Within the next 3 years the treatment plant will receive upgrades to the aeration tanks, Nitrification Towers and Anaerobic Digesters at a cost of approximately \$10 million. Lima's Wastewater Treatment Plant is located in the city's southwest quadrant on Fort Amanda Road.

## Sewer

Lima has sewer customers both inside and outside of its city borders. The entire system faces \$150M in upgrades to satisfy the Federal and State Clean Water Act Mandates. The Clean Water Act regulates pollution into the water table by regulating surface water quality standards. The utility department raised rates in 2020 to support the system overhaul. Recent improvement included a 13 million gallon underground storage tank at Simmons field that is designed to help prevent combined sewer overflows during heavy rainfall events. Future improvements to the sewer system include the replacement and lining of 2,700 feet of large diameter sewers on High Street and Jameson Avenue. Upgrades to the Allentown Road, West Street and Koop Road basins will be completed within the next 10 years to accommodate flows for a 6 hour duration of a 25 year storm.

## Stormwater

The Engineering Division of the Public Works Department utilizes best management practices to control discharge for stormwater drainage. Most discharges require coverage under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System. The system intends to prevent pollutants carried by runoff into local surface waters and consumed by residents and/or wildlife.

## Transportation

Survey respondents routinely mentioned transportation infrastructure. Aside from improving road conditions, residents also expressed interest in upgrades to the active transportation system. The ADA transition plan, adopted in 2019, ensures facilities will be improved to compliance status as time and budgetary constraints permit, as required by the United States Department of Justice. In part, the plan works to improve deficiencies in the city's pedestrian network.

# Infrastructure

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In 1992, the Rotary Riverwalk/Ottawa River Bikeway was conceived. Initially, the path stretched 4.2 miles from Heritage Park- south of Lima to the Collet Street area for recreation. Currently, the trail system spans 13 miles. The riverwalk/bikeway will continue to be an important network for residents of the greater Lima community as additional parks, and green spaces are developed.

Opportunities for active transportation will continue to be important for community health. As of 2019, 39.3% of Limans were obese, not including those whose body mass index scored as *overweight*. Obesity causes heart disease, strokes, diabetes, and many health detriments that cause a tax on the public health system at current rates.

Lima's road conditions were rated by online survey respondents as 2.6 out of 5, the worst rating of any public service. It should be noted that the confidence level of the respondents is questionable when it comes to differing between the City roads and those belonging to Allen County or even the local townships. Several instances in the public participation process point to nescience in that regard.

The biggest opportunity for upgrades regarding the roadway transportation system is in the spirit of efficiency. Regional Planning maintains a log of every signalized intersection in Allen County and updates traffic volumes as data is collected. Traffic volumes are fluid from day to day and year to year, but generally speaking, Lima's traffic counts are decreasing in the core of the city. The decline in population and traffic generators has left many traffic signals unwarranted by volume. The central business district alone has 17 unwarranted traffic signals with 50+ citywide.

The layman associates traffic signals with increased safety over those controlled by stop signs, but traffic management experts use data to support the contrary. The Federal Highway Safety Administration and the Ohio Department of Transportation advise against the practice of implementing and/or maintaining unwarranted traffic signals. Detriments of maintaining unwarranted traffic signals include:

- Increased red light running
- Shifting travel to less adequate routes
- Can increase the frequency of crashes
- Additional harmful pollutants from unnecessary emissions
- Excess delays

## Transportation Services

Lima is well-served by the Allen County Regional Transit Authority (RTA). RTA transit center is located in downtown Lima adjacent to the central business district core. There are 10 flag routes to carry passengers around Allen County, including two routes that serve Bluffton and Delphos community members. The UPLIFT ADA Paratransit service is available by application for riders who require additional considerations. In addition, private services like the Black & White Cab Co. and Lyft are also available.



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# ECONOMY



Photo courtesy of Ayers Photography

## GOALS

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- Workforce Development
- Attract New Business
- Infrastructure/ Site Preparedness
- Strategic Planning & Collaboration
- Regional Resiliency

The status of Lima's economy was one of the primary concerns raised in the public engagement process. A healthy economy is a tide that raises all boats. The atrophy of economic strength has a direct correlation to the city's largest problem cited by survey respondents—blight.

## Job Market

The seemingly depleting number of quality jobs was continually cited as the number one issue in the economy. Area manufacturing leaders had far more employees when Lima was at its peak. The Ford Motor Co., Dana Incorporated, Procter & Gamble, the Joint Systems Manufacturing Center, and the oil refining complex have historically provided the greatest number of well-paid opportunities to workers in the area. Today, many of those top employers host a fraction of their workforce from 30 years ago.

There is also evidence that points to the community's inability to fill quality jobs that are currently available. Nearly every major employer in the county is currently searching for employment candidates. Limans need additional education and/or training to fill the jobs capable of boosting the economy in a meaningful way.

Participants from the public also questioned the area's ability to provide fruitful employment to college graduates returning home. Table 3 analyzes the employment sectors of Lima and Allen County permanent residents versus the remainder of Ohio. There are no glaring discrepancies between the percentage of employees per sector locally versus the state of Ohio.

## Area Incomes

Table 4 depicts the breakdown of household incomes in Lima and the surrounding area of Allen County. On average, the households in the county outearn those in the city by a staggering 44%. Per capita, Allen County has the same number of households annually earning  $\geq \$75,000$  as those earning at least \$50,000 in Lima.

What is the difference between residents of the two political boundaries? What is the basis of the income disparity? It is not the employment sectors; there is little outstanding difference. An examination of Table 4 reveals a stark contrast in levels of education. Allen County has a 23% rate of residents with an associate's or bachelor's degree. In comparison, Lima has roughly 17.5% when numbering residents with graduate degrees per capita; Allen County has over twice as many as Lima.

## Isolating a Regional Economy

Assessing Lima's economy in a vacuum is difficult. Lima is the destination of nearly 35,000 trips originating in Auglaize, Putnam, and Hardin counties every week during the AM peak. A StreetlightData analysis proves what planners have been speculating- for the general population, political boundaries are no boundaries at all. Traffic movement into Lima during peak AM hours indicates that many people who work in Lima reside outside the city.





A countywide Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) written in 2005 received its latest update in 2021. Although the CEDS does not speak exclusively to the City of Lima, it is a fool's errand to isolate the city economically. Just as *Vision 2040* points to the Harsany Report as the authority on housing, the CEDS shall serve the same purpose for economic development where applicable.

Over 80 pages in length, the CEDS aims to establish historical and current baseline information before setting goals and a plan of action. The CEDS top priorities include:

- Workforce Development
- Attract New Business
- Infrastructure/ Site Preparedness
- Strategic Planning and Collaboration
- Regional Resiliency

The CEDS results from a continuing participatory economic and development planning effort completed by participants representing the diverse interests of the community. The CEDS Advisory Committee represented political subdivisions from throughout the county and other political and quasi-political entities such as the chamber of commerce from the greater Lima area. It is a thorough report which received regular updates and stands alone as the economic development plan for LACRPC's planning area.



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# DOWNTOWN



## GOALS

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- Discourage Surface Parking
  - 35% Occupancy Rate
- Create More Park Space
- Dispel Crime Narrative
- Utilize Riverfront

The highest concentration of recent development has been in the downtown area. Rhodes State College's 50,000 square foot Borra Center for Health Sciences has inspired a renewed interest in an urban area that had suffered disinvestment since the suburbanization of retail, food service, and residential population. The City of Lima and private investors alike hope to continue to build on the momentum that has been generated.

## Downtown

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### Surface Parking Lots

Throughout the United States, cities are starting to identify the issues that come from an overabundance of parking spots and taking steps to reduce the land dedicated to serving that function. In 2017, RPC surveyed 35 blocks in the CBD and identified nearly 30 acres of off-street surface parking, over 12 of the 30 acres are in the CBD Core. Extraneous surface parking creates serious problems including:

- Eyesores
- Excess runoff
- Inefficient/wasteful
- Desolate aesthetic

The most recent parking study conducted by CT Consultants of Sunbury, OH. estimated that surface parking lots in the 12 block CBD core make up 45% of the total parking. Overall, the downtown core is occupied at a 35% rate. The targeted rate is 85%-90%.

RPC's parking study was completed in 2017, just weeks before Lima agreed to move forward with CT Consultants to complete additional work on the topic. Both studies reached the same conclusion, there was an overabundance of parking downtown. A parking surplus creates a perception that there are few attractions in the area. Vibrant cities are not overflowing with parking options. These lots are being eliminated from areas where bustling activity is desired in forward-thinking cities.

### Park/Greenspace

Parks that provide opportunities to rest, exercise, and congregate can aid in the revival of commercial areas that are undergoing threats. The public was clear about supporting parks and park amenities throughout the public participation process for Vision 2040. Downtown is devoid of park space and a park integrated into the riverwalk network would create more foot traffic downtown as well as provide a space for downtown residents and employees to recreate throughout the day. There are current proposals for additional park space downtown.





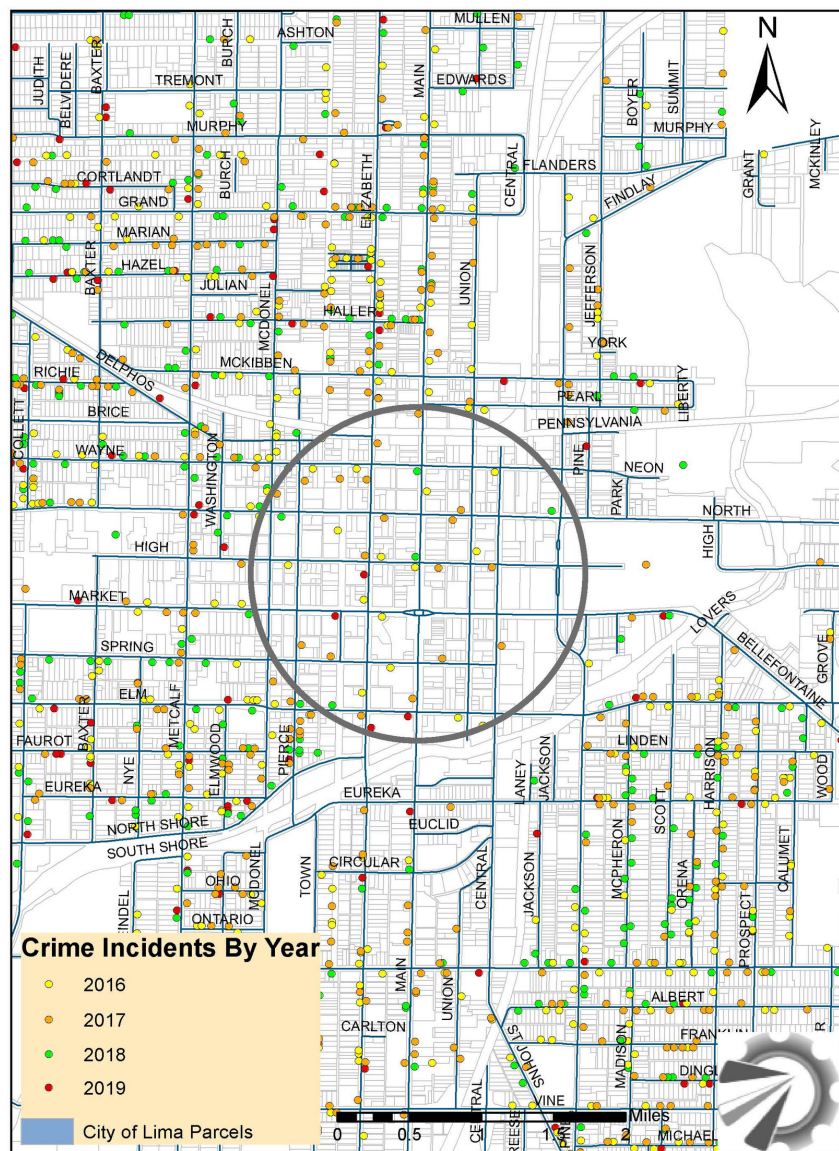
## Downtown

### Crime Perception

While downtown momentum is at its recent peak, there is still apprehension for some folks to enjoy nightlife downtown. The crime rate is raised as a concern for many reluctant patrons who fear they will be randomly targeted by violent criminals downtown. The latest crime data geolocated and mapped shows very little violent crime in the downtown core once instances of domestic violence have been removed.

Map D-1 shows instances of violent crime throughout downtown Lima sans domestic violence. The map is intended to realize crime statistics in the area and demythologize some of the rhetoric around downtown safety. Over the years, Lima has worked with several consultants on various projects to revitalize the downtown area. Those consultants have recommended marketing campaigns for Downtown Lima. Proper marketing can correct the misperception of high crime rates.

**Map D-1 Crime Incidents\* Map 2016-2019**





## Downtown

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### Sites with Big Potential

There are plenty of opportunities for development, but few sites are special. Few sites have more than the next available parcel on a prime corridor. There are sites in the central business district that offer something truly different for visitors and residents imploring for distinction.

Across South Main Street from the YMCA stands the vacant Riverfront One warehouse sandwiched between Post 1275 of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Ottawa River. 325 S. Main Street would provide a unique riverfront setting to attract consumers and the site is large enough to host a variety or multitude of merchants. The Lima Rotary Riverwalk runs parallel to the Riverfront One building, on the south side of the Ottawa to provide a steady stream of seasonal foot traffic and a truly extraordinary opportunity for an attraction in downtown Lima.

Diagonally across the intersection from the Riverfront site is the Allen County Memorial Hall. The nationally registered historic building has hosted both government offices and performances from a famous artist of the 1900s. The Beaux-Arts-styled building has an inspiring aesthetic in a great location near exciting development coming downtown in the near future.



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# REDEVELOPMENT



Photo courtesy of Downtown Lima Inc.

## GOALS

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### **Densify/Avoid Sprawl**

1970 - 4,800 per square mile

2020 - 2,636 per square mile

### **Maximize ROI**

Tipping Point Neighborhoods

Opportunity Zones

**Support Fiscally Responsible Dwellings**

**Encourage Building Improvements**

**Create Commercial Corridors**

# Redevelopment

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Development and/or redevelopment is a necessary component of revitalization. While much of the recent focus has been on downtown, there are opportunities to redevelop several areas of the city. Development is not best suited to occur organically. Those efforts must be driven with the proper foresight. Lack of planning has costly drawbacks, including:

- Sprawl
- Reacting is more expensive than anticipating
- Priorities get jumbled
- More resources required to maintain unorganized development

## Sprawl

A primary goal of planners all over the world is avoiding sprawl. Definitions vary and sprawl, suburbanization, and urban sprawl are sometimes used interchangeably. Each results in the spread of cities or suburban footprints, disproportionately to the increase in population typically accompanied by single-use zoning. Sprawl is costly to the environment and drains resources from local government entities. A dense population is an efficient population.

It is estimated that urban sprawl costs the United States over \$1 trillion annually. These costs include:

- Increased energy use
- Traffic congestion
- Prohibitive to active transportation
- Loss of water quality
- Loss of natural habitat and agricultural land
- Favors larger businesses

Efforts to develop and redevelop Lima would greatly benefit from focusing on infill opportunities—utilizing vacant parcels or those that are under-used. Infill development densifies municipalities. In 1970, there were roughly 4,800 Limans per square mile; in 2020, the density had fallen to 2,636 per square mile. Infill development is a goal of city staff, and densifying the city would allow for a walkable, efficient city with positive impacts in many facets.

Single-family homes are expensive to build and maintain. Lima's per capita income is far less than the state average, approximately 45% less. Dense populations tend to be built around cost-effective principles. Increasing density can be achieved without constructing expensive mid-rise apartment buildings with less traditional options like:

- Duplex, triplex, or fourplex
- Accessory dwelling units
- Community homes
- Tiny homes



# Redevelopment

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## Difficulties with Building Improvements

Discussion regarding the difficulty of residential and commercial building improvements within the city has been ongoing. Complaints have been regular from contractors clamoring that the city has too much red tape prohibiting building upgrades, more than other municipalities.

Despite efforts to pinpoint the extraneous regulations, a 2021 RPC survey to contractors/developers failed to identify the particular issues within the building codes

It is important to recognize that many improvements are necessary around the city. Often municipalities look to other cities as a model for their policy. If this community has utilized policies to achieve the desired quality, it must be the best route to arrive at that same place.

Code that adequately encourages plentiful upgrades and a code that maintains a city that has achieved its' goals are not to be confused. Much of the code in Lima was written in a bygone era, post-World War II when building materials and labor rates were worlds apart. It is important to recognize the difference between code that maintains an accomplished aesthetic versus a code that begs for improvements. A community on the rise must not be girded too tightly.

## Opportunity Zones

An opportunity zone is a tool developed in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017. Investments into Qualified Opportunity Funds boost low-income communities and adjacent neighborhoods and incentivize investment in these areas instead of other tracts that would have been more attractive to investors otherwise. America's governors have strategically nominated these opportunity zones to receive aid in a way that will lift the entire community by addressing underserved areas.

Lima has three opportunity zones. The zones are well-aligned to address important corridors that move traffic in and out of the city. Portions of Bellefontaine, North, and Market are all included in Lima's opportunity zones.

## Qualified Opportunity Fund

The Qualified Opportunity Fund is the dangling carrot for private investors. These funds are private-public partnerships that allow investors to defer tax on financial gains until 2027. The funds are an excellent way for investors to invest in their communities. Lima City Council approved legislation to establish an opportunity zone fund in 2021. Mayor David Berger estimated that the fund could leverage up to \$100M. The fund was anticipated to be functional in Q1 of 2022.

## Tipping Point Neighborhoods

As previously discussed, the tipping point neighborhoods are a prime selection for targeted investment. Metrics often drive investors, and ROI is often chief among them. Tipping point neighborhoods provide the quickest turnaround in improving blight and housing conditions. The main complaints garnered in the public participation efforts. Tipping point neighborhoods may also be good targets for small businesses as the proper new establishments are likely to lift the distress score of respective neighborhoods.

# Redevelopment

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## Corridors

The optimal approach may be selecting a corridor for targeted improvements. Corridors to and from traffic generators have a perception extending beyond the corridor itself. The appearance along major corridors in a given city heavily influences most travelers who rarely stray from arterial roadways. The entire city is often judged by the view from these routes. Strategically changing the aesthetics along these routes may be the most efficient way to improve the city's appearance to nonresidents.

Lima is sandwiched between two suburban areas that generate the most traffic in the county. Retail, restaurants, and the like have the strongest presence at Lima's east and west "gates". Traffic counts support that many trips are across town from the east to the west side. These corridors would maximize views of the improvements made. Allentown Road, Bellefontaine Avenue, Elm Street, Findlay Road, Market Street, and North Street are frequented by travelers.

## Future Land Use

In modern planning, form-based coding has theoretically garnered momentum and is being piloted in select neighborhoods in pioneering cities. One of the critical elements of form-based coding is the idea that the focus should be less on land usage and more on regulating the "form" of the building. Unlike more traditional zoning, this allows different land uses to occupy the same space.

Accommodating more businesses is necessary for providing additional higher-paying jobs for city residents. Lima's code does not prohibit businesses existing in residential neighborhoods. In the downtown region, several mixed-use buildings have been supported. City officials may have to start exploring the possibility of endorsing access to commercial entities in residential neighborhoods.

Expanding commercial property should target corridors with the capacity to accommodate traffic generated. High traffic count corridors on east and west routes through Lima are fit to receive the traffic and provide prime real estate with high visibility. The current climate is amidst a transition where downtown Lima is becoming a destination for businesses that were not locating there just a short time ago. As activity downtown inspires development, the traffic patterns are prime for change. This causes an additional variable in predicting the future to identify optimal places for growth. Downtown will continue to grow, but it is unlikely to cannibalize the businesses in Bath or American townships which drive east and west traffic. Those corridors are anticipated to continue to be highly important through the duration of Vision 2040.

Market Street, west of Jameson Avenue (pictured in Map R-8), is a primary candidate for a residential neighborhood to grant access to commercial entities by extending the office district. The corridor already supports several healthcare related businesses and has been proven to support more traffic. The appropriately sized and formed businesses could potentially spread as far west as possible without disrupting the historic district. Market Street moves only two-thirds of the traffic it once did during the bloom of the American Mall. In 1996, the west leg of Market and Nixon had an AADT of over 9,000 vehicles; in 2019, the same corridor hosted less than 6,600 vehicles daily.

## Redevelopment

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North Main Street offers a great location for the expansion of class 1 business retail and serves as the bridge from Northland to downtown. The corridor is strewn with residential and commercial land use. It offers an opportunity to continue developing a corridor in a tipping point neighborhood, remove blight, and connect two areas peppered with commercial land use. The corridor offers wide lane widths and ample room for on-street parking. See Recommendations on Map R-1.

Residential zoning was examined in areas of lower median household income. After examining incomes at the census block group level, RPC recommended a large swath of single-family homes be rezoned. Residents cannot adequately maintain a single-family home on incomes in the mid \$20,000 range. The area circled in the southeast quadrant of Map R-9 would be better suited for duplex, triplex, or fourplex homes.

Some minor changes on East Kibby Street would properly adjust that corridor to a more consistent business retail setting. From Main Street to Central Avenue a few parcels are currently being used for residential purposes. RPC recommends aligning those parcels with the class one business retail to better align with adjacent land use.