Taylor Stuckert, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Community Planning in Community Planning.

It is entitled:
35 Years On: Setting the Foundation for a New Comprehensive Plan for Wilmington, OH

Student's name: Taylor Stuckert

This work and its defense approved by:

Committee chair: Carla Chifos, PhD

Committee member: Christian Schock, MCP, MSc

Committee member: Michael Romanos, PhD
35 Years On: Setting the Foundation for a New Comprehensive Plan for Wilmington, OH

A thesis submitted to the Graduated School of the University of Cincinnati in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF COMMUNITY PLANNING

School of Planning
College of Design, Architecture, Art & Planning

April 2013

By

Taylor Stuckert
Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy, Butler University, 2005

Committee Chair: Carla Chifos, Ph.D.
Members: Michael Romanos, Ph.D., Christian Schock, MCP, MSc
Abstract:

The last planning document adopted by Wilmington, OH was the 1978 “Land Use, Thoroughfare and Open Space Plan.” The 1978 “master” plan was the first community planning document following the closure of the Clinton County Air Force Base in 1971—an event with devastating economic implications. Rather than creating a plan that reflected the newly gained insights during this transformative period in the community, the plan instead was a technical document that broadly analyzed community conditions and offered planning recommendations and guidelines focused on future growth and development.

The 1978 plan, like many of the HUD-funded plans spawned from Section 701 of the Housing Act of 1954, is generic in nature and did not provide Wilmington with needed strategic recommendations aimed at addressing prevalent planning issues at the time, or which would enable the community to better prepare and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

As was the case during the 1970s, Wilmington is currently in the middle of a transformative period with the recent loss of its largest employer, DHL in 2008—an economic shock that cost nearly 10,000 jobs and an economic impact of nearly half a billion dollars.

Wilmington is now in the process of developing its first new comprehensive plan in over 35 years. As Wilmington has now faced two major economic crises that have taken place at the same air park, a new plan for Wilmington will need to be more explicit in articulating a desired vision for the community, and direct in addressing the risks and uncertainties that the community wishes to avoid.

Using an overview and analysis of the 1978 plan as a comparison, this paper will begin the discussion of building the framework and vision for a new plan for Wilmington that will be strategic in responding to current conditions and providing a tool capable of responding to future issues. Wilmington is long overdue for a new plan, and it will be essential that the next planning phase and subsequent plan reflect the observed changes and lessons learned over the past 35 years.
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to my thesis committee of Dr. Carla Chifos, Dr. Michael Romanos, and Chris Schock. Their support and guidance of this thesis project has allowed me to explore new depths of research and knowledge regarding my hometown of Wilmington, Ohio. This exploratory process has further exposed me to the rich history and dynamic character of this small town and further instilled my commitment to this place.

Many thanks to my editor, motivator, and constant support, Sarah Hawley; Mark Rembert, the other co-founder of Energize Clinton County along with myself, and Dessie Buchanan for sustaining the energy and operations of the organization while I was completing this degree; and Chris Schock, again, for being such a great friend and mentor, and inspiring the planner in us all.

This thesis would not be possible if not for the support of my parents, Loren and Sherry Stuckert. They presented to my siblings and me the most effective cost/benefit case study for the value of knowledge and continued education when they decided to finish degrees with five children. The love and sacrifice they have provided my family and friends is a constant source of humility and sincere gratitude for all with which I am blessed.
Table of Contents

Introduction .................................................................................................................................................. 1

Section 1: Overview of 1978 Land Use, Thoroughfare and Open Space Plan ........................................ 3
   Existing Conditions of Wilmington, OH—1978 ..................................................................................... 3
   Goals and Policies of 1978 Plan ............................................................................................................ 11
   The Land Use, Thoroughfare and Open Space Plan ............................................................................ 11
   Implementation of the 1978 Plan ......................................................................................................... 17
   Conclusion of Plan Overview .............................................................................................................. 21

Section 2: A Review of Updated Conditions and Trends ................................................................. 1
   Population and Demographics .............................................................................................................. 2
   The Built Environment .......................................................................................................................... 11
   The Local Economy ............................................................................................................................. 18
   Parks and Natural Resources .............................................................................................................. 24
   Summary and Conclusion of Updated Existing Conditions .................................................................. 26

Section 3: A New Plan for Wilmington .................................................................................................... 1
   Regulations/Policies ............................................................................................................................ 3
   Economic Development ......................................................................................................................... 4
   Community Development ..................................................................................................................... 6
   Social Development .............................................................................................................................. 9
   Institutional and Comparative Advantages .......................................................................................... 12

Conclusion .............................................................................................................................................. 1

Works Cited .............................................................................................................................................. 1

Appendices ............................................................................................................................................ 1
List of Figures

Section 1
( None)

Section 2

Figure 1 "Family Tree of Planning History" (Kaiser & Godschalk, 1995) ................................................................. 1
Figure 2 1980-2010 Population Growth Rate Percentage by Decade of Wilmington and Clinton County, OH. ........ 4
Figure 3 Difference from 1980-2010 in Percentage of Total Population by Age Group in Wilmington, OH. ........... 5
Figure 4 Wilmington Age Demographics, as Percentage of Total Population, 1980-2010................................. 5
Figure 5 Population Growth Rates by Age Group in Wilmington, OH 2000-2010...................................................... 6
Figure 6 Percentage of Wilmington Residents > age 25 with at Least a Bachelor’s Degree 1980-2010 ......... 7
Figure 7 Educational Attainment Rates 1980-2010 in Wilmington, OH (age 25 and above) ......................... 8
Figure 8 Comparison of Median Household Income between Wilmington, Clinton County and State of Ohio 1980-2010 (Inflation Adjusted).......................................................... 9
Figure 9 2010 Household Income by Income Categories ....................................................................................... 10
Figure 10 2010 Median Household Income Wilmington, OH (Inflation Adjusted)............................................ 11
Figure 11 Reduction in Home Ownership in Wilmington, OH 1990-2010 ......................................................... 13
Figure 12 Commercial Acreage in Wilmington, OH 1953-2013 ............................................................................ 14
Figure 13 Commercial Acres per 100 Residents in Wilmington, OH .......................................................... 15
Figure 14 Negative Growth Rate of Manufacturing Sector in Wilmington, OH 1980-2010 .................. 19
Figure 15 Positive Growth Rate in Transportation Sector in Wilmington, OH 1980-2010 .................. 20
Figure 16 Industry Sectors as Percentage of Total Workforce in Wilmington, OH 1980-2010 .................. 21
Figure 17 Growth Rate of Wilmington Industry Sectors 1980-2010 ............................................................. 22
Figure 18 Growth Rate by Industry Employees in Clinton County 2006-2011 ........................................ 23
Figure 19 Wilmington Parks and Green Space Acres 1978-2013 .......................................................... 25

Section 3
( None)

Appendices

Figure 20 2013 Average Property Tax per Acre by Land Use Classification in Wilmington, OH ............................ 3
Figure 21 2013 National Average Earnings and Unemployment Rate by Education Level ......................... 4
Introduction
The planning profession’s relatively short history one of continual evolution and growth that is marked by several distinct philosophical eras of the land use plan which Edward Kaiser and David Godschalk “likened to a family tree” (Kaiser & Godschalk, 1995, p. 366). The tree (see below) illustrates the various genres of land use plans that were developed throughout the 20th century and provides contextual framework for the reading and analysis of plans of drafted in different planning eras.

![Family Tree of Planning History](image)

This paper examines the last plan adopted by Wilmington, OH—a “land use, thoroughfare and open space plan” that is a clear archetype of plans created during a distinct era. The era was one in which many community plans were completed to satisfy requirements for the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s “701” program, which required the completion of comprehensive plans to qualify for federal aid and grants (Kaiser & Godschalk, 1995).
While this era defines the general nature of Wilmington’s 1978 plan, and much of what the plan sought out to accomplish, there are other elements of the plan and the historical context in which was developed that provide the foundation for the creation of a new plan for Wilmington. An examination of the 1978 plan as a preface to the creation of a new plan is warranted for the following reasons:

1. The 1978 plan was written shortly after a major crisis in Wilmington—the 1971 closure of the Clinton County Airforce Base. The economic crisis resulting from the closure of the airforce base is considered to be a defining moment in Wilmington’s 203 year history.

2. Considering the gravity of the 1971 base closure, how the event is discussed and the role that the crisis had in the development of the 1978 plan should be analyzed.

3. The 1978 plan will provide a baseline for examining changes and trends in existing conditions today in Wilmington.

4. Given that Wilmington has not had a plan update in 35 years, re-visiting the 1978 plan should underscore the need to continually understand and incorporate innovations in planning techniques, changes in community conditions, and discovery of new economic development opportunities for Wilmington.

5. With Wilmington experiencing an economic crisis in 2008 that exceeded the force of the 1971 airforce base closure, the 1978 plan and what it did or did not accomplish will strengthen the argument for the development of a more strategic plan that reflects these transformative events.

This paper will begin with an overview of the contents of the 1978 plan—what was featured and how were planning issues discussed. Following the overview will be an update and discussion of existing conditions following the 1978 plan, and how these conditions reflect changes since the last plan. The final section will discuss the basis for Wilmington next comprehensive plan, the issues that should be prominently discussed in the new plan, and new, innovative planning topics that should be explored.
Section 1: Overview of 1978 Land Use, Thoroughfare and Open Space Plan

The 1978 Land Use, Thoroughfare, and Open Space Plan (1978 Plan) is the last planning document implemented by the City of Wilmington. The plan was originally intended to be a three-part preliminary document to a new master plan, which would plan for thoroughfares, land use, and open space (Graham, 1978). As it turned out, however, the three-part series was pitched by consulting firm Hurley, Schnaufer, and Associates, as the new master plan for Wilmington—the first since 1954 (Wilmington News-Journal, 1978).

The plan was drafted to provide guidelines for the future growth of Wilmington and the surrounding 3-mile area through the year 2000 (Wilmington News-Journal, 1978). It was partially funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) under the provisions of Section 701 of the Housing Act of 1954, and thus resembles many planning documents of that era in communities across the country.

The 1978 plan thus was a boiler plate planning document that provided a broad analysis of the community with a focus on future growth. The recommendations were inert as they do not produce policies which could substantiate the manifested vision of the plan. This is not unusual for HUD-funded planning documents of the time, and many similar examples can be found in communities through the state and country.

Existing Conditions of Wilmington, OH—1978

The analysis of Wilmington’s existing conditions was laid out in the 1978 plan in five categories: population and demographics; natural features; existing land use; existing thoroughfares; and public facilities and utilities. Each of these categories contained sub-categories addressing different
components of each main category and highlighted any notable data found in the existing conditions analysis process. Below is a summary of the contents and highlights of the 1978:

- **Population and Demographics**

  This section of the plan utilizes 1970 census data, along with some local data sources (such as building permits) to outline the existing conditions related to population growth, population characteristics, and economic characteristics of Wilmington. While the data is limited compared to data resources today, it does provide useful information regarding the existing conditions of the time, which will assist in understanding observable changes in the time following the plan leading to today’s existing conditions. The subsections are:

  - **Historic Growth**

    The historic growth section provides a summarized account of Wilmington’s history beginning with its founding. The section describes the closing of the Air Base in 1978 as “perhaps the greatest single influence this century” (Hurley, Schnaufer & Associates, 1978, p. 4). However, this is the only section where the closure of the airbase is noted for its significance and, as mentioned in the introduction, the recommendations of the plan do not reflect any planning-related insight gained from the experience of this economic catastrophe.

  - **Characteristics and Trends from 1970 census data**

    This subsection of the plan provides a positive analysis of demographics without making any normative statements regarding the findings—something the authors considered to be outside the scope of the master plan (p. 13). Highlights of this sections included the high levels of racial and ethnic diversity,
compared to other “similar communities” in Ohio; the relatively high proportion of elderly citizens (particularly woman age 75+); the high level of mobility since the 1960 census (likely reflecting the presence of the airbase); and the relatively small proportion of persons working outside of Clinton County suggesting a strong, diversified economic base (again, preceding the closure of the airbase).

Also highlighted was the high level of education attainment in Wilmington as compared to other similar communities and Ohio as a whole. Persons with 4 or more years of college was nearly 13% of the total age 25+ population compared to the state level of 9%. The plan suggested that such high levels of education attainment may suggest that Wilmington has “strong leadership” (p. 13). Wilmington also notably had a high percentage of low income earners, compared to “other urban” areas, and compared to the state, had only high levels of low and middle income earners. This is noted because Wilmington had high levels of educational attainment and high proportion of “working professionals,” yet is low in income categories (p. 17).

- Recent Changes from 1970-1978

This section of the plan focused on changes since the 1970 census, which, as mentioned, provided the data for the above characteristics and trends section. Seven years following the closing of the airbase, the plan projected that Wilmington’s population had grown and that the economy was continuing to grow due to a diverse industrial base. The industrial base, at the time, was anchored by employers such as Cincinnati Milacron, Inc., Ferno-Washington, Inc., Irwin Auger Bit Company, and Textron Inc./Randall Co. Division—each with between 300 to 600 employers (p. 20).
This section also included future population projections to the year 2000. The projections, which were broken into four trajectories (Series A-D) ranged from a population of 12,811-20,100 in Wilmington in the year 2000.

- **Natural Features**

  The natural features section provides a review of key natural features in and around Wilmington and the 3 mile boundary with the focus being to plan for future growth that is in harmony with natural features and resources. The section utilizes data from the U.S. Geological Survey maps, Ohio Department of Natural Resources Publications, U.S. Soil Conservation Soil Survey, and local studies and reviews. Natural Features section contains the following subsections:

  - Geology
  - Drainage
  - Flooding
  - Air and water quality
  - Water pollution
  - Soils
  - Scenic Features

- **Existing Land Use**

  Land use analysis at this time was limited due to the lack of geographic information system (GIS) technology and no maintained databases of real estate or land use information. All land use analysis was accomplished through on the ground surveying which was then matched with existing map surveys. Much of the surveying was left to the interpretation of the surveyor as to
the use and intensity of use of land. For instance, as noted in the plan, if a commercial user owned five acres of land, but the surveyor only noticed two acres of developed land (buildings, parking lots, etc.), then the remaining three acres would be classified as “vacant” (p. 36).

- **General Findings**

  The general findings compared changes in land use from the 1954 Master Plan to the 1978 Plan, or 1953-1978. The findings over the 25 year period are as follows:

  - **Residential:** Residential development saw a 34% increase (+183 acres) of which 96% was in single-family residential and a 4% increase in multi-family and mobile homes.

    The pattern of residential development showed a concentration in and closely around the City of Wilmington. The 1978 plan expressed a need to keep these residential areas well separated from high-density uses (p. 40).

  - **Commercial:** The period between 1953 and 1978 saw Wilmington’s first commercial-strip development mainly on Rombach Avenue and in the Southridge Neighborhood, and thus dramatic increases in commercial land use.

    Commercial land use over the 25 year period saw an increase of over 350% (+147 acres) in Wilmington, and as noted in the plan, is largely attributable to larger commercial sites for shopping centers, drive-in movies, drive-in banks, drive-in restaurants, and motor vehicle sales (p. 40).
• Industrial: Like commercial development at the time, industries were seeking large-site, one-floor operations, and a bounty of off-street parking for development. Wilmington saw an increase of 100% in industrial land use over the 25 year period with most of that being attributed to the new industrial focus at the abandoned air force base—called in the 1978 plan, the Industrial Air park (p. 41).

• Land Use Projections

Land use projections were calculated using the population projections and assumed trends in development and calculated to acres/100 persons. The projections suggested land use development would double across all major categories by the year 2000 (residential, commercial, and industrial). I will discuss the future land use projections further in later sections.

• Existing Thoroughfares

The analysis of thoroughfares in the 1978 plan was predicated on the ever-increasing demand for automobile use at the time. This perspective deeply affected the development of communities across the country and underscored significant debates in the planning profession and process. As will be discussed later in this paper, this trend has shifted, and now many communities are attempting to reverse much of the street and thoroughfare development that was driven by the “car culture.” As a result of this shift in planning paradigm, much of this analysis will appear dated.
The discussion of thoroughfares in the plan relates to routes carrying heavier traffic loads such as: major city streets (including moderate size streets serving residential areas), township roads, county roads, and state and federal highways. As the plan rightly points out, many of the local through streets were built without cars in mind, and yet, many were (and are) being used as main thoroughfares, which were not the original intended use. The plan falls short, however, by suggesting a false dichotomy to the situation—that the only options are to redesign existing streets or build new thoroughfares. More on this will be discussed in later sections.

- **Local Streets**

  The plan felt that the right-of-way widths on smaller streets (less than 50 feet width) were inadequate to meet the needs of residents and that pavement widths less than 34 feet were inadequate in that they could not provide parking on both sides of local streets. The plan called for 50 feet right-of-ways and 35 feet pavement widths to be the minimum standard going forward (p. 48).

- **State and Federal Highways**

  The plan felt that Wilmington had adequate regional access through its state and federal highway, but should look into long-term solutions regarding potential increases in through traffic in the downtown.

- **Public Facilities and Utilities**

  The public facilities and utilities section of the plan provides a broad inventory and analysis of local institutions and facilities in Wilmington. The types of institutions and facilities outlined in the plan are the following:
Schools

Local public schools were going through a consolidation phase as enrollment numbers were down in elementary schools. The plan references future plans of the public school district to phase out older schools operating out of historic buildings and focus on constructing more modern facilities in the community.

Southern State Community College “North Campus” in Wilmington was only a couple of years old at the time of the plan and had approximately 250 students.

Wilmington College, a four-year liberal arts college, too was growing, and forming new plans to address needs at the time. One issue of note is that in 1970 Wilmington College had an enrollment of approximately 1,000 students, 65% of which were from out of state. Over the next five years, enrollment fell by half and the school began forming a plan to redesign their mission around career-oriented education and limit recruitment of students around the area rather than serving students nationwide. The plan viewed the new strategy as a success as it boosted recruitment numbers (p. 58).

Parks

During the period of this plan, park facilities in Wilmington were significantly less than they are today—though the existing facilities were quite similar in their use and function. The park facilities in the plan focus on J.W. Denver Williams Memorial Park (30 acres) and a handful of smaller neighborhood parks. The plan also briefly mentions the Wilmington College recreational facilities, golf courses, County Fairgrounds, and Cowan Lake State park as nearby recreational facilities.
O Other Community Facilities

This section covers public facilities including: Clinton County Court House; Wilmington City Hall; City Maintenance and Service Center; Clinton Memorial Hospital; Clinton County Historical Society; and the Wilmington Public Library.

O Sewer and Water Facilities

Water facilities were significantly different for Wilmington during the plan period. At the time, Wilmington water usage was approximately 1.2 million gallons a day pumped from Cowan Creek. Discussion had begun around this time about joining regional water efforts through the Caesar Creek Reservoir which was under construction. Similarly, the water treatment facility during the planning period was in a different location in Wilmington with less activity.

Goals and Policies of 1978 Plan

According to the plan, the Goals and Policies section is derived from a Goals Inventory Questionnaire completed by local community leaders (p. 66). The outcome of these surveys formed the goals and policies outline from the plan. The goals and policies are somewhat broad and without attached strategies for implementation. The entirety of the goals and policy inventory can be found in the appendix section, item 1.

The Land Use, Thoroughfare and Open Space Plan

In the section following the overview and analysis of the existing conditions in Wilmington and goals and policies provided by plan development participants, is the Land Use, Thoroughfare, and Open Space
Plan. While the plan was seen as a “flexible” document which provides a framework of choices, the authors stressed that “the Plan must be recognized as the official public policy guide towards community development and growth” (Hurley, Schnaufer & Associates, 1978, p. 71). How this plan was used as tool or guide for future development will be discussed in later sections. The plan sections are as follows:

**Land Use Plan**

The focus of the land use portion of the plan was on residential in-fill development of low to moderate density with “clusters” of high-density residential development (p.72). In addition, the plan calls for commercial development to be targeted towards the downtown, central business district and the industrial park (Air Park) out on the southeast boundary of Wilmington. The plan outlines the vision of land use development through the following sections:

- **Single Family (Moderate Density) Residential**

  As discussed above, the central focus for residential development was encouraging in-fill development in vacant pockets in Wilmington, which is a progressive vision that does not follow current land use patterns today in Wilmington. The plan suggested the development of neighborhood patterns rather than piecemeal residential development.

- **Multi-Family (Higher Density) Residential**

  As mentioned, the plan calls for “clusters” of multi-family development that, like single family development, are concentrated in neighborhood patterns. The plan even allows for the development of mobile home parks with a minimum site size of 25 acres. The plan encourages multi-family housing to be placed strategically throughout Wilmington and primarily near major
arterial thoroughfares. The description of the multi-family land use strategy and vision for multi-family development reflects an image of isolated multi-family units that are disconnected from surrounding communities.

- **Agricultural and Residential**

  Around the city is a proposed “band” of scattered residential development that is to be mixed in with the predominant agricultural use in that area. The plan calls for these areas of development to be designed in such a way as to preserve the rural character and natural features of the area and to discourage random developments, but the plan does not suggest how this can be accomplished.

- **Commercial**

  Commercial land use in the plan was divided into two types: “local and general business” and “other commercial” (p. 77). The former covers most traditional commercial uses such as retail stores, restaurants, etc. while “other commercial” covers storage warehouse, wholesale establishments, golf driving ranges, and truck freight terminals.

  While the plan does call for greater attention to be focused towards development of the downtown central business district, it sees the downtown’s function as primarily office space with some mixed-use residential, and suggests moving most commercial retail functions outside of the downtown.

  Most of the commercial retail development is recommended to be placed on both sides of town, with neither side becoming overly dominant in commercial development. The plan also discourages the development of any long commercial strips or scattered commercial site
development, and prefers planned-unit developments that incorporate both multi and single family housing.

- **Industrial**

  The plan suggests that industrial sites would require features and amenities such as sizeable lots, good utilities, and access to the freeway. The plan proposed that the majority of new industrial development should take place at the Wilmington Industrial Air park facility as it could meet much of the demanded features of industrial development. As mentioned earlier, the plan does not discuss at any reasonable length the previous closure of the Wilmington Airbase or the need to consider ways to diversify the local economy beyond the air park.

**Thoroughfare Plan**

The thoroughfare plan was a clear product of its time. Its vision of thoroughfare development is premised by its defining of thoroughfares as “larger than average” streets, roads, or highways designed to address medium to long range trips (1 mile for this plan). The thoroughfare plan reflects a strong auto-centric paradigm that persists through many planning documents of its time. The thoroughfare plan was divided into the following sections:

- **Principal Arterials**

  The principal arterials in the plan are rightfully coordinated around existing heavy-trafficked federal and state routes of which there are three in Wilmington—U.S. 68; U.S. 22 (and S.R.3); and S.R. 73. The plan proposes a circumnavigable by-pass highway reconstructing U.S. 68 west via Nelson Avenue. This project is recommended to begin very shortly due to the concern of future development being an obstacle to its construction.
The second proposed modification is to the U.S. 22 and S.R. 73 (Wayne Road, Main and Locust Streets, and Rombach Ave.) arterial. The plan recommends a connector road be constructed between Fife and Rombach Ave. In addition the plan recommends that Wayne Road be widened to four lanes to provide “adequate” road widths.

• Minor Arterials

The plan calls for modifications to be made to major streets and roads to make them perform as minor arterials coordinated to provide greater trip efficiency with the principal major arterials. This would involve widening widths, limiting access (joint driveways), and adjusting frontage regulations. These focus mainly on streets intersecting with federal state highways such as South South Street, Truesdell Street, and West Main Street.

Some new arterials are proposed to connect the proposed U.S. 68 bypass around Wilmington and a route that will connect Fife Avenue to the Industrial Air park. Additionally, a connector is proposed for U.S. 22 east to Prairie Avenue.

• Collector Streets and Roads

Collector streets are intended to reduce the burden of the minor arterials by focusing on trips of short to moderate distances, and diverting through traffic from residential areas. Streets recommended for modification are North Wall and High Streets providing links to Prairie Avenue and Doan Street connecting South South Street to Grant Street. Modifications would mostly involve increase of right-of-way widths with a focus on improving automobile travel efficiency, access for police and fire, and providing room for potential bus services (in long term future).
Open Space Plan

The main focus for the open space portion of the plan was on parks and flood plains. In addition the plan outlines the need to preserve woodlands, public green space, and farmland within Wilmington boundaries which contribute to the overall inventory of open space. The open space plan was divided into the following sections:

• Parks

The plan calls for an additional 200 acres of park space to be created for Wilmington to meet the national standards projected for the year 2000. In addition to preserving the large Denver Park in Wilmington, the plan suggests focusing on additional medium-sized parks along with seizing opportunities to develop small neighborhood parks and incorporating green spaces into subdivision regulations.

The plan also identifies two potential sites near existing residential areas for at least one additional large, community park. The first site would be located on the south side of the city and include approximately 50 acres of land near the B&O Railroad. The second site would be between West Main Street and the southeast portion of the Clinton County Fairgrounds. Highlighted issues with both of these sites are limited vehicular access; however, both sites would incorporate Lytle Creek corridor as a link between several major sections of Wilmington.

In addition to these sites two others are proposed in more removed parts of Wilmington. The first being 2 miles south of Wilmington east of S.R. 134 near two of the city’s reservoirs. The total proposed acreage of this site would be 250 acres. The second site would be approximately...
70 acres located west of the City on the south side of Main Street/U.S.22/3 (today called Stuckey Farms Park).

- **Flood Plains**

  The section on flood plains focuses on the flood plain maps created by what was then called the HUD Flood Insurance Program. These maps indicate areas of the 100 year flood plain and exclusively relate to the Lytle Creek flood plain for Wilmington and Todd’s Fork and Cowan Creek in the surrounding area. The plan recommends preserving all areas in the flood plain as open space which can be used for public parks, gardens, bikeways, or similar uses.

- **Schools**

  Due to the downward trends of school enrollment of the time, the plan supported the decision by the local school district to consolidate schools. However, the plan does caution that due to potential future growth, the district should be cognizant of ways to develop additional school buildings through either expansion of existing sites or potential new sites for the development of additional schools.

**Implementation of the 1978 Plan**

The implementation section of the plan called on local government, civic groups, businesses, and citizens to provide continued support for the document. The section is divided as follows:
• Zoning

Zoning is the main tool for implementation of the plan according to its authors. The plan recommended an update to the existing zoning ordinances in Wilmington so that the zoning code aligns with the vision for the plan. The following were the zoning recommendations in the plan:

- Establish a flood plain district with strict limitations on development.
- Establish a light industrial district with large yard areas and minimum nuisances.
- Update the zoning map so that it reflects the land use plan and identifies existing incompatible uses in residential neighborhoods.
- Update residential zone regulations so as to not allow high-density multi-family units in older, predominantly single-family neighborhoods.
- Revise business district regulations so that sites along major thoroughfares are not allowed to have only a 15 foot setback and up to 45 foot building heights and 90% lot coverage.
- Encourage planned unit development and include provisions to allow mixed use developments under certain circumstances.
- Add provisions to preserve and protect areas or sites of historic interest.

• Subdivision Regulations

The plan called for very broad modifications to the existing subdivision regulations. Without being too specific the plan recommends the following:
• Include an improvement guarantee to require the completion of specified improvements or to insure their completion within a reasonable time with a bond agreement.

• Consider provisions for extra-territorial jurisdiction of subdivision regulations which would extend 3 miles beyond the city limits.

• Extra-territorial should apply all city street, utility and similar specifications to single-family residential, multi-family residential, commercial, industrial, and any other category except scattered-site and agricultural.

• Capital Improvements Programming

The plan recommended a capital improvements program (CIP) to be established to help implement components of the plan—particularly for thoroughfare and park recommendations (p. 95). The CIP would provide a schedule of improvements over a period years that would provide details on the project, potential sources of financing, and provide a prioritized list of projects. The plan suggests that such a program, beyond planning for future projects, will assist in improving citizen happiness, encourage private development, and will counter out-migration trends.

• Timing (Staging)

The plan encouraged the development of guidelines and a map that would outline a desirable timeframe in which specific areas and components of the plan would be implemented. The plan acknowledges that such a recommendation will depend on various external factors such as
existing development trends, changes in the national economy, and availability of finances among other things. Therefore the timing guidelines were to be seen as “fairly tentative and subject to major changes” (p. 97).

- **Coordination**

The plan recommends that the Wilmington City Planning Commission expand its duties to include review of all land use, thoroughfare, and open space planning in the Wilmington planning area, including capital improvement programming, zoning, and subdivision regulations up to the 3 miles around Wilmington. To coordinate planning outside the city boundaries, the plan recommends close cooperation with Union Township. Additionally, the plan calls on the city to support and actively engage the Clinton County Regional Planning Commission for technical assistance and guidance in the coordination of the land use, thoroughfare, and open space plan and implementation.

- **Evaluation**

Finally, the plan recommends, as required by the Community Development Act of 1974, that in order to be eligible for additional “701” funds the community must establish and document the procedure that requires public officials to review the plan at least once every two years (p. 97). The review must involve an evaluation of the plan to determine the adequacy in reflecting present realities; the need to update sections; and to determine if goals and objectives of the plan are being met (p. 97). The plan recommended the following steps take place at least once every year as an evaluation procedure:
A notice be submitted to the local newspaper announcing a review of the plan, a date for a public hearing on the review, and an invitation be made for the public to participate and comment on the review process.

A brief report be drafted by the city administration on the progress of implementation activities related to the plan. The report could include: descriptions of building permits issued, zoning amendments, variances and other changes, subdivision plat reviews, annexations, major capital improvement projects, federal grant applications, and other similar activities (p. 98).

A brief report provided by the Regional Planning Commission regarding changes in countywide land use and community development trends as well as trends at state and national levels.

Announce public meeting and make public the recommended reports.

Prepare a brief report summarizing the conclusions of the City Planning Commission as to the current adequacy of the Land Use, Thoroughfare and Open Space Plan, implementation strategies, timing guidelines, and recommendations for improvements. Submit report to Wilmington City Council and make report public.

Conclusion of Plan Overview

The 1978 Land Use, Thoroughfare and Open Space Plan is a dated document in both its age and the planning framework which guides its recommendations. As discussed in the introduction section of this paper, the planning profession and planning documents have evolved as new philosophies and approaches to planning are developed, and as innovations in technology and other available tools allow
for more effective plans to be created. To this point, it is not surprising that the plan fails to cover much of what planners hope to accomplish through a comprehensive plan today, or to an extent, what was most paramount to Wilmington at that time (and years later)—the need for a strategic plan that addresses the primary issues and contributing factors related to economic vulnerability.

Also not surprising is that the plan does provide some recommendations that are still very applicable to the goals of planners’ today such as downtown development and preservation, in-fill development, regional perspective and coordination, and a holistic approach to community planning. The timeless nature of each of these recommendations should further emphasize their importance today. However, where the plan again falls short is that it does not provide a strategic framework that builds on a clear vision and strong emphasis on implementation of its recommendations.

Beyond the plan itself, the greatest issue with the 1978 plan is that it has not been updated, nor has a new plan been created in 35 years. Over this period of time, many of the existing conditions in the 1978 plan have changed dramatically—some are relatively the same. The following section will highlight many of today’s existing conditions in Wilmington as they have changed from the 1978 plans and discuss how these issues might be addressed given new trends in planning.
Section 2: A Review of Updated Conditions and Trends

This year marks the 35th year since Wilmington has implemented a new plan, or provided an update to the existing plan. Since the 1978 plan, Wilmington has observed significant changes in all aspects relevant to planning. Some changes have direct linkages to the vision and recommendations of the 1978 plan; some were discussed in the plan yet never addressed; and some changes, due to a variety of reasons, were not even mentioned in the plan—the inevitable, unexpected events that are possible.

This section will outline these observable changes and relate them back to the 1978 plan. The objective of this exercise is not to demonstrate where the plan was “right” or “wrong,” but to highlight disparities in the data that will be collected and analyzed for the next comprehensive plan. This will also begin the process of prioritizing the strategies for the next comprehensive plan. This comparative section will be outlined by the following categories:

- Population and Demographics
- The Built Environment and Land Use Development
- The Local Economy
- Parks and Natural Resources

Planning will never be fully capable of identifying all that will impact a community or even affecting that which it has correctly predicted. Even with plans in place, communities should still expect the unexpected in the built, social, and natural environments. Plans allow for communities to be able to analyze what they do know, match it with what they would like to see, and identify strategies which will hopefully lead to that desired vision. The element of surprise in the life of a community is one of the fundamental reasons to continually visit and update community planning documents, projects, and strategies—the unexpected is to always be expected.
Population and Demographics

As covered in the previous overview section, it was noted that during the era covered in the plan there were not many unique trends in population changes other than an unusually high percentage (7.4%) of women age 75 or more and a large proportion of 20-24 year olds, which the plan attributes to the presence of Wilmington College. Other highlights from this section in the plan included high levels of racial and ethnic diversity compared to other “similar communities” in Ohio; the high level of mobility since the 1960 census (likely reflecting the presence of the airbase); and the relatively small proportion of persons working outside of Clinton County suggesting a strong, diversified economic base (again, preceding the closure of the airbase).

Many of the changes in population and demographic statistics that have occurred over the last 35 years reveal issues needing to be addressed by planning and policy measures. Such issues will have theoretical causal or correlative relationships with both past and future factors related to economic, social, and environmental trends in Wilmington. Thus, identifying the issue is only the first step—getting at the root of the issue and building strategies to address the issue will also need to follow.

The short-term effects stemming from issues related to population and demographics can have impacts in many areas of community and economic development important to the City of Wilmington. Such impacts can be seen on tax-revenue and level of municipal services capable of being provided; demand for new residents to move into city; retention of existing residents; providing an encouraging environment for retaining and expanding existing businesses; demonstrating a desirable environment for potential entrepreneurs and businesses; the loss of young residents and effects of “brain drain;” and the likelihood of undesirable development which will require more resources to address once established.
If identified issues related to population and demographics are not strategically addressed and short
term impacts continue to persist, it will eventually lead to the likelihood of long-term impacts that will
require generations to address. Such long-term impacts could be a critical loss of tax base and ability to
provide a demanded level of municipal services; the inability to attract new residents or retain existing;
a growing disconnect between the historical and cultural importance of the community and its
residents; and the consequences of undesirable development which promulgates and compounds
issues.

- Population

The 1978 plan provided future population projections to the year 2000, which were broken into
four trajectories (Series A-D) with Wilmington populations ranging from 12,811 to 20,100. The
actual population for Wilmington in 2000 was 11,921, which was only 890 off from the Series A
trajectory of 12,811 and only 291 more than today’s population of 12,520 (U.S. Census, 2010).

While today’s population of 12,520 is near the Series A trajectory in the 1978 plan, it should be
noted, and to an extent expected, that today’s population count has been influenced by various
factors. As will be seen in the built environment section, Wilmington has likely experienced
some stunted growth in population caused by a lack of residential development within the city
borders, continued inefficiencies in non-vacant residential acreage in the city, and lack of
residential in-fill development. In addition, increased development throughout Clinton County
and on the periphery of the City of Wilmington has likely contributed to the loss of some
population to the county (see Figure 2). Considering the severity of each of these issues it could
be that Wilmington has had a loss of potentially thousands of residents.
Within the story of total population trends is another story related to age demographics in the population. Wilmington, like many small towns across the country, is dealing with trending losses of its younger demographics—also known as “brain drain.” Since 1980, this trend can be seen as the largest decreases in age categories are 34 and under, and the largest increases are seen in age categories above age 45—with the largest percentage increase in the age 85+ category. One age category, 35-44, which saw growth from 1980, had the most dramatic decrease in numbers over the last decade—and should be closely observed.
Figure 3 Difference from 1980-2010 in Percentage of Total Population by Age Group in Wilmington, OH.

Figure 4 Wilmington Age Demographics, as Percentage of Total Population, 1980-2010.

Figure 5 Population Growth Rates by Age Group in Wilmington, OH 2000-2010

Educational Attainment

Whereas the 1978 population was noted for its unusually high levels of educational attainment, today the picture has reversed. In Wilmington today, the population above age 25 with at least a bachelor’s degree is 14.8% while the State of Ohio is at 24.5% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011). The 1978 educational attainment rate was 13% compared to the 9% 1978 state educational rate. Wilmington’s educational attainment rate is only 2 percentage points higher than 1978. Clearly the population in Wilmington has fallen far behind in retaining and attracting college-educated citizens even while having two post-secondary institutions in the city limits.
The 1978 plan noted that the high levels of educational attainment did not correlate with higher incomes in the community, but that this was to be viewed as an asset to potential employers. Today it would still be considered an asset to potential employers to have an affordable and highly-educated workforce. The severe drop in educational attainment coupled with the lower income levels (next subsection) creates a different picture to potential employers and will potentially limit the types of employers that Wilmington is capable of attracting.

Furthermore, with the high-level access to post-secondary educational opportunities in Wilmington and the number of individuals graduating with bachelor’s degrees suggest a grave disconnect between the city and these institutions. From 2000 to 2010, Wilmington added only 16 residents over age 25 with at least a bachelor’s degree (though a loss of 1% of population age 25+). In that same time span, Wilmington College graduated 2,411 students with bachelor’s
degrees, of which approximately 362 were graduates from Clinton County. Wilmington only adds in residents with at least a bachelor’s degree the equivalent of 0.6% of an average graduating class from Wilmington College each year.

*Figure 7 Educational Attainment Rates 1980-2010 in Wilmington, OH (age 25 and above)*

Positive trends in educational attainment show increases in the percentage of residents receiving some college education and associate’s degrees. These increases can likely be attributed to the presence of Southern State Community College’s Wilmington Campus, and the growth of Southern State since the 1978 plan.
• Income

The 1978 plan noted that, compared to “other urban areas,” Wilmington had a high percentage of low income earners, and that compared to the state of Ohio, there was a high level of both low and middle income earners. Today’s household income levels show still a high level of low income earners, but the level of middle income earners is no longer high. Compared to the state of Ohio, Wilmington is high in low income areas and below state percentages in middle income areas.

Figure 8 Comparison of Median Household Income between Wilmington, Clinton County and State of Ohio 1980-2010 (Inflation Adjusted)


Over the past 20 years, Wilmington has seen decreases in the lowest income category, but also in middle income categories, while seeing increases in middle-low and higher income categories.
This would suggest that over this period of time there has been some upward mobility in household incomes in Wilmington, though the upward movements have only taken place on the tail ends.

Figure 9 2010 Household Income by Income Categories

The decreases in the lowest income category could be tied to the increases in low-skill jobs in Wilmington through the boom years at the Wilmington Air Park. These jobs likely drew from both the lowest-income earners and low-middle-income earners, whereas high-middle income shifted more towards the highest-income categories. This has created a slight inverse bell curve for household incomes in Wilmington, which reflects state and national trends (see Figure 9).
The 1978 plan’s coverage of existing land use conditions in Wilmington painted a picture of steady growth (since the previous 1954 plan) and projected that growth would double by the year 2000. The authors of the plan likely envisioned the boundaries of Wilmington continuing to grow, which they did, but not to extend likely expected. Additionally, where there were increases in land use types they were mostly concentrated in commercial land use development, whereas the plan saw the biggest increases coming from residential.
Residential

The 1978 plan focused on encouraging in-fill residential development, with some strategic multi-family housing developments, and the preservation of older residential areas of the community. The plan noted that Wilmington had observed an increase in residential land use from 537 acres to 720 acres (+183) from 1953 to 1978. Since then residential acreages in Wilmington have increased only 84 acres to 804 acres. This relatively smaller increase is not surprising due to the limited amount of new residential space available within the city limits over the past 30 years.

Even with this relatively slight increase in total residential acreage, Wilmington has likely observed a significant increase in the vacancy of residential acreage. The extent of this increase in vacant residential acreage is not capable of being known as the 1978 plan did not differentiate vacant residential acreage with non-vacant. However, in Wilmington today, only 39% of available residential acreage is considered non-vacant. This would suggest a dual trend of reduction in existing residential fabric (demolition/loss of homes) and the lack of new, in-fill residential development within the City of Wilmington. This should underscore the sensitivity Wilmington has with residential demolitions as in-fill development is uncommon.

The 1978 plan projected for 1315 total residential acres (single and multi-family) to accommodate a projected 16,857 citizens, and would create a ratio of roughly 8 acres per 100 residents for residential use. Instead, with a current population of 12,520, the ratio has decreased to 6 acres per 100 residents. While this does suggest more density in Wilmington, the ratio’s decrease is likely driven more by the combination of increased residential development outside Wilmington borders and over-projections of population increases in the 1978 plan.

Another issue that has developed over the last few decades has been the decrease in home ownership rates and the rise of renter-occupied housing in Wilmington. While the rate of rent-
occupied houses has slowly and steadily come closer to the 50% mark, the latest census actually shows that for the first time, renter-occupied housing exceeds owner-occupied housing in Wilmington (U.S. Census, 2010). This is certainly correlated with the presence of DHL as it employed many transient employees such as pilots, but it is also likely tied to reductions in median household income levels, and residential development outside the city borders.

*Figure 11 Reduction in Home Ownership in Wilmington, OH 1990-2010*

![Graph showing reduction in home ownership in Wilmington, OH 1990-2010](Source: ESRI Community Analyst, 2013; Census, 2010).

- Commercial

As noted in the plan summary section, between 1953 and 1978 Wilmington saw a significant increase (over 350%) in commercial development, mostly due to the new Rombach Avenue strip development. The plan recommended that commercial development focus both on either side of the city and to an extent in the downtown CBD (mostly professional offices).
Since the 1978 plan, Wilmington has observed an increase of 1749 commercial acres (+930%). The Rombach Avenue commercial area has seen dramatic commercial development that grew parallel with job growth in Wilmington. Some other areas, such as Southridge and the West Side, too, have observed growth, but nothing as close in comparison to Rombach. Additional commercial acreage has occurred due to annexations on the eastern portion of Wilmington following the development of a new Walmart Supercenter in 2002.

**Figure 12 Commercial Acreage in Wilmington, OH 1953-2013**

Even with over-projections on population growth, the 1978 plan only envisioned seeing 423 total commercial acres and 2.50 acres per 100 residents. Instead, the ratio is at 16 acres per 100 residents—more than five times the projected ratio with 4,000 less residents than projected.

*Source: 1978 Wilmington Plan; Clinton County Auditor Data, 2013.*
The amount of acreage far exceeded the expectations in Wilmington in 1978. This is likely due to the unexpected increase in economic growth due to the development of the Wilmington Air Park which had yet to take place. Today, 89% of commercial acreage is currently in use as 247 acres remain vacant. There is potential that this number changes due to the negative impact that job loss has on commercial activity in Wilmington. It also does not reflect underutilization as vacancy only appears when commercial activity fully ceases to exist—therefore strips with few tenants will not be classified as vacant.

*Figure 13 Commercial Acres per 100 Residents in Wilmington, OH*

*Source: 1978 Wilmington Plan; Clinton County Auditor Data, 2013.*
Industrial

In 1978, Wilmington had a diverse industrial base anchored by a multitude of equally sized companies such as: Cincinnati Milacron, Inc., Ferno-Washington, Inc., Irwin Auger Bit Company, and Textron Inc./Randall Co. Division—each with between 300 to 600 employees (p. 20). The plan showed that when including the Wilmington Industrial Air Park (was not yet annexed in Wilmington) in industrial land use tabulations, Wilmington had shown increases of over 100% in industrial land use between 1953 and 1978.

Counting the air park, Wilmington had a total of 230 acres of industrial acres. Today, Wilmington has a total of 301 acres—a 31% increase since the 1978 plan. Currently 90% of available industrial land is in use. This figure does not include the Wilmington Air park which is now owned by the Clinton County Port Authority and is classified as public property rather than industrial. Clearly, though, the growth of the Wilmington Air park following the 1978 plan was the main source of industrial growth in Wilmington, industrial land use, as well as local economic activity, which will be discussed in the next section.

Including today’s tabulation of the Wilmington Air park as industrial land use brings Wilmington’s total industrial land use acreage to 1833 acres—a 697% increase from 1978’s tabulation which included the air park. Under these tabulations, Wilmington currently has nearly 15 acres per 100 residents. The 1978 Plan, again under the projection of over 16,857 residents, projected only 2.80 industrial acres per 100 residents. Without including the air park, the ratio today is 2.4 industrial acres per 100 residents, which is less than the projected total from the 1978 plan for the year 2000. This would suggest that, barring any anomalous events (such as the explosion of growth at the air park), industrial growth has stayed somewhat close to projections of the last 35 years.
• Thoroughfares

As discussed in the plan summary section, much of the recommendations regarding thoroughfares focused on auto-dependent development—the widening of road ways, creating greater traffic capacity in older parts of the city, and providing more traffic capacity to smaller “collector” streets. This type of traffic development is mostly a dated trend in planning that is now shifting towards a new direction that focuses on transportation diversity and walkability of communities.

With that in mind, there have been some notable changes to the thoroughfare inventory in Wilmington that still fit the vision of the 1978 plan such as the new Wilmington By-pass, David’s Drive, and the widening of Rombach Avenue to 4 lanes following the plan. These additions reflect the car-centric theme of the 1978 plan along with continued development of infrastructure on the eastern portion of town where much of the commercial and retail activity is located.

Like many communities nationally, Wilmington, too, is exploring the diversification of its transportation networks and providing greater walkability throughout the city. Programs such as Safe Routes to School and organizations like the Clinton County Trails Coalition have already accomplished much in this direction. This year the Clinton County Regional Planning Commission finished the first-ever comprehensive trails and greenway plan for Clinton County that highlights many opportunities to develop greater access for walking, cycling and other alternative modes of transportation.

In addition to the many accomplishments the community has made, there are still many areas of the community that need greater connectivity beyond car-orientated networks. Some work has already begun to improve walking connectivity to Wilmington College through the Sugartree Street Corridor Project (see appendix).
There still is some need, however, to consider various transportation development opportunities that are still car-oriented. With the addition of the Wilmington By-Pass, and subsequently less traffic through the City of Wilmington, consideration should be given to re-orienting streets in downtown throughways and other smaller streets through older residential areas. Additionally, the City should be cognizant of potential desire to re-orient major thoroughfares such as US 68 and US 22/3, both of which currently run through downtown Wilmington.

The Local Economy

Like many rural places across the country, Wilmington and Clinton County have seen transformations to the local economy over the past half century. More recently, in 2008, Wilmington was faced with a nationally-spotlighted economic crisis when its largest employer at the time, DHL made the decision to close operations. The economic crisis, which involved the loss of approximately 10,000 jobs and an economic impact of nearly half a billion dollars, led to Wilmington and Clinton County to be labeled the “poster child of economic disaster” and the “ground zero of the great recession.”

A major shortcoming of the 1978 plan was its limited discussion on the local economy. Due to the nature of the plan, and plans of that era, economic development discussions were framed mostly from land use perspectives. Thus, in the 1978 plan, the analysis of the local economy was limited to a small list of specific employers anchoring the industrial base. As mentioned in the plan summary section, the industrial base, at the time, was anchored by employers such as Cincinnati Milacron, Inc., Ferno-Washington, Inc., Irwin Auger Bit Company, and Textron Inc./Randall Co. Division—each with between 300 to 600 employers.
Each of these employers would be classified as members of the “manufacturing” industry in the local economy. Consistent with the national trend of declining manufacturing at the close of the 20th Century, Wilmington, too, saw a steady decline in manufacturing from 1980 to 2010 as seen in the graph below. In fact, only one of the listed “anchor businesses,” Ferno Washington, still remains in Wilmington.

*Figure 14 Negative Growth Rate of Manufacturing Sector in Wilmington, OH 1980-2010*

Replacing manufacturing as the economic base over the past 35 years has been transportation industries, which saw over 200% growth from 1980-2010. Most of this growth was driven by activity at the Wilmington Air Park with the arrival of Airborne Express and later DHL. As will be illustrated further down, this industrial sector is also one which took the largest hit in the economic recession caused primarily by the loss of DHL and nearly 10,000 jobs in the sector.
Within the City of Wilmington, only one major industry category, the service sector (including professional, educational and health) has shown stability over the past 30 years. As mentioned before, the other major industry categories—manufacturing and transportation—have both demonstrated significant change and volatility in recent years.

However stable or unstable industries have been, the growth rate is likely the most alluring element of local economic development strategies. Thus, with transportation showing such significant growth over the past 30 years, Wilmington’s economy grew increasingly dependent on this one sector.
With the loss of DHL nearly five years passed, Wilmington should be in the process of fully understanding and acknowledging the impact of the crisis, and outlining economic development strategies that reflect new realities. A 2009 report titled, “Clinton County Recovery Strategy Guidelines” and submitted by a team from the University of Cincinnati (led by Dr. Michael Romanos), EMHT (Peter Mallow), and the Clinton County Regional Planning Commission (Chris Schock), provided the most immediate analysis of the impact of DHL’s departure. The report illustrated the growth of the transportation sector using 2006 IMPLAN data.

The graph below illustrates the gravity of DHL’s departure and the erased growth in the transportation sector of Clinton County’s economy with 2011 IMPLAN data. However, the most significant sector growth was in agriculture—an economic base sector for Clinton County, and one which was
recommended to be targeted for growth by the 2009 plan (University of Cincinnati, EMHT, Clinton County RPC, 2009, p. 20).

Figure 17 Growth Rate of Wilmington Industry Sectors 1980-2010

Over the past 35 years, the local economy of Wilmington and Clinton County developed almost exclusively around the transportation sector likely due to its dramatic growth and the belief in its ability to provide long-term growth for the area. At its peak, the transportation sector accounted for nearly 40% of the workforce in Clinton County—a height which was greatly placed in perspective after the 82% fall caused by DHL.
From a planning perspective, the repeat in disaster, in the same physical location, is almost as alarming as the DHL crisis. As mentioned in the plan summary section, the 1978 plan makes brief mention of the 1971 closure of the Clinton County Airforce Base (now the Wilmington Air Park and previous home to DHL), was “perhaps the greatest single influence [in the 20th] Century” (Hurley, Schnaufer & Associates, 1978, p. 4). It will be critical that Wilmington’s next plan involve much greater discussion on local economic development issues, adopting lessons learned from the past, and creating economic development strategies which reflect issues and understanding.

*Figure 18 Growth Rate by Industry Employees in Clinton County 2006-2011*

Parks and Natural Resources

Park facilities in the City of Wilmington are relatively similar to those discussed in the 1978 plan. Much of the changes in existing conditions have been aligned with the recommendation from the 1978 plan. In addition to J.W. Denver Williams Memorial Park, which remains the major park facility in Wilmington, and the two other parks discussed (Southeast Neighborhood Park and the Point Park), Wilmington has added a handful of other facilities and a sizeable increase in park and green space acreage since 1978.

Below is an inventory of Park Facilities and Green Space/Natural Features:

- J.W. Denver Williams Memorial Park (existed in 1978 Plan)—33 acres
- David R. Williams Memorial Park (post 1978 Plan)—26 acres
- Southeast Neighborhood Park (existed in 1978 Plan)—3 acres (undergoing renovations)
- Galvin Park (post 1978 Plan)—2.7 acres
- Point Park (existed in 1978 Plan)—0.91 acres
- Lytle Creek Nature Preserve (post 1978 Plan)—127.5 acres
- Luther Warren Peace Path (post 1978 Plan)—1.2 miles
- 4-C Bicentennial Trail (post 1978 Plan)—1.3 miles
- Judy Gano Trail (post 1978 Plan)—0.4 miles
- Lowes Drive Path (post 1978 Plan)—0.7 miles
Figure 19 Wilmington Parks and Green Space Acres 1978-2013

Wilmington Parks and Green Space 1978-2013

Source: 1978 Wilmington Plan; City of Wilmington, 2013

The increase in park facilities and natural resources is certainly a positive change in conditions for Wilmington. However, such increases in amenities and services provided by the city come at increased costs and require sufficient funding. In 2012 the Parks, which is administered as a commission separate from the City of Wilmington, lost its financial support of $31,000 from the city’s general fund.

The Parks Commission has made many costs savings measures following reductions in revenues. Currently, over 65% of the Park’s operating revenues comes from a Parks levy generated from property taxes in the City of Wilmington. The main problem with this structure is that it does not account for park users who live outside of the city borders. This problem is further exacerbated by the trends in residential land use in and surrounding Wilmington, HH Income trends, and other potential negative impacts on property values that would negatively affect the parks levy.
The recently completed 2012 Clinton County Comprehensive Trails and Greenway Plan made recommendations for alternative structures for park administration such as a county-wide metropolitan parks structure, and consideration for other types of funding mechanisms (Clinton County Regional Planning Commission, 2012, p. 9). As conditions in Wilmington are trending in such a way as to suggest increase strain on revenue, considering other alternative strategies for funding and administering the parks system in Wilmington should be considered in a new plan.

**Summary and Conclusion of Updated Existing Conditions**

Through this update of existing conditions it is quite clear that Wilmington has observed many planning-related changes over the past 35 years. While change is certainly always expected, and hopefully anticipated, many of the changes described above would likely be viewed those involved in the creation of the 1978 plan as surprising given the conditions described in the plan.

Issues that are currently trending from the existing conditions update:

- Slow population growth
- Aging population
- Low occupied rates for residential land use
- Decreases in median household income
- Severe reductions in educational attainment at the bachelor’s degree level and above
- Steady decreases in manufacturing sector
- Sharp decrease in transportation sector
- Excessive commercial development for existing market demand
- Positive increase in acreage for parks and green space
In addition to it being 35 years since Wilmington last worked on creating a new plan, the need for a new plan is greatly underscored by the economic crisis of 2008 and the issues that have been trending and recently magnified due to the fallout of this crisis. By documenting and attempting to fully understand the root and trajectory of these changes, Wilmington will have the foundation for creating a new plan for the future.

In outlining the issues relevant to the new plan, the goal is not to simply regard the plan as a counter-attack. Instead, the goal is to understand where Wilmington has been, where it is, and where it would like to be in the short and long-term future.
Section 3: A New Plan for Wilmington

As mentioned in this paper’s introduction, there were several reasons for using the 1978 plan as a case study to prepare Wilmington for a new plan. One of the primary reasons was that the 1978 plan followed the 1971 closure of the Clinton County Airforce Base—an event that very much resembles the recent DHL crisis. What is striking is that the 1971 crisis seemingly had little-to-no influence or role in the vision of the 1978 plan, and little influence, subsequently, in planning-related activities in Wilmington over the next 35 years.

It will be critical to learn from the most glaring shortcoming of the 1978 plan—that it did not leverage the most recent crisis as a framework for future priorities. Without an emphasis of the impact and lessons learned from closure of the Clinton County Airforce Base, the 1978 plan was not set up to assist Wilmington in preparing for the future. This is especially evident by the recent economic crisis and how it closely resembles that of the 1971 base closure, and by the trending conditions that were not being addressed during years of prosperity. The next plan for Wilmington will need to fully embrace the lessons from the DHL crisis and the vulnerabilities that come with risky and unsustainable economic development, and the negative impacts that come with negligent community development.

It is important to note that Wilmington’s lack of a plan is clearly not the sole cause for the loss of DHL. However, following the observation of various trends in Wilmington, it should be accepted that the ability for Wilmington to maximize the impact of the dramatic economic growth spurred by DHL’s presence, the ability to address issues that would influence the severity of the loss of DHL, and its level of preparedness for severe economic shock were greatly affected by the lack of a plan.

In his book “Community Planning: An Introduction to the Comprehensive Plan,” Eric Kelly states that since data collection and analysis are objective and rational, it is policymaking, which requires judgment and difficult choices, that is the most complex aspect of planning (Kelly, 2010). He goes on to say that
“policymaking for communities is particularly complex because it is not always clear who has the authority to make such a policy and because those who have the apparent power or authority may not choose to exercise it” (Kelly, 2010, p. 30). Policy is intended to be more detailed than goals and is needed in order to see implementation.

Kelly breaks elements of comprehensive plans in the following way (p.31):

- Goals: general aims (e.g. specified level of travel efficiency on principal arterials).
- Objectives: more specific than goals by providing measurable, mid-range strategies (e.g. to make traffic more efficient on principal arterials, build a collector street at a certain intersection).
- Policies: specific, operational actions with a purpose of short-term (usually) implementation.

Where the 1978 plan especially falls short is that it does not draw the attention of previous events that had significant development implications for the community and are valuable experiences for the community to build from going forward. To ignore, or limit the exposure of such events is to take wisdom and insight, gained at a great cost, for granted.

It will be essential that the next plan for Wilmington focuses attention on the lessons learned from the DHL event and how the community is made wiser through the experience. This does not necessarily mean that the community will be able to avoid another DHL-esque event, but such an event will not occur due to no planning efforts.

How does a community plan for such transformative events? Much of the planning that can take place in response to the DHL event does not have to be directly aimed at “preventing” another such event, but can instead involve many other focus areas that made mitigate the impact of such an event. In addition to this, planning can also focus on some of the direct issues tied to DHL’s arrival and departure.
In essence, Wilmington should not view the role of the plan as a simple measure of control which will produce desired outcomes and prevent undesired outcomes. Rather than viewing the plan as controlling outcomes, Wilmington should see the plan as preparation for outcomes—a tool which will allow for various events and outcomes to be compared to the vision expressed in the plan. This will require a greater understanding about choices, regulations and controls, and an acceptance of the direct and indirect effects that policy and planning decisions are capable of producing.

Much of the underlying cause for the DHL crisis had more to do with events taking place outside of Wilmington, such as shifts in global markets and corporate decision making, than decisions made by local leaders. Wilmington’s capacity to observe, prepare, and adapt to such changes are what will allow it to be more resilient. To be able to do so will require a strategic plan—it will have to truly serve a guide for decision making, a tool for understanding the breadth of interconnected planning issues, and is dynamic enough to continually incorporate and strategize around new innovations in technology, development, and planning.

**Regulations/Policies**

In order to guide the implementation of plan elements and goals there will need to be a greater emphasis placed on the regulatory and policy recommendations of the plan. This does not have to mean that the entirety of the plan is passed as a sweeping ordinance, but that various components of the plan are the foundation or impetus for new or modified policies in the City of Wilmington. Without a backbone of regulatory and policy-related influence, the plan will not be able to support the long-range decision making needed in Wilmington.

Producing regulatory outcomes will also incentivize the continual use and evolution of the new plan. By making adjustments to various regulatory controls based on new research and analysis, the plan is constantly adapting to revelations out changing conditions both inside and outside of Wilmington. This
will help alleviate the staleness associated with the 35 year-old 1978 plan and provide an opportunity for the plan to continually be relevant and have substantive benefits to the community.

Economic Development

One of the topic areas that is clearly lacking in the 1978 plan was a discussion on economic development for Wilmington. The lack of this discussion is notable due to the position of the 1978 plan being after the 1971 closure of the Clinton County Airforce Base and prior to the 2008 DHL departure at the Wilmington Air Park (formerly the airforce base). Both of these events have been considered a serious, transformative crisis for their time and the reason both were crises is due to the level at which the community depended economically on the presence of each operation.

It will be a grave mistake for the next plan to commit the same error as the 1978 plan by overlooking the DHL crisis and not drawing attention to the lessons gained through that experiences. Not only will Wilmington be at risk for yet another great economic crisis, but by following the traditional approach to economic development, it too will likely overlook opportunities for prosperous and sustainable economic growth and development.

The next plan for Wilmington will need to lead a serious discussion on the history of economic development in this community, outline the ways in which the community can be better prepared in the future, and provide a sustainable strategy for economic development efforts in Wilmington. The plan will need to consider the following issues:

- Micro and macro-economic analysis. Understandably, a town the size of Wilmington cannot afford to have the level of economic analysis that metropolitan neighbors employ. However, in this era of “big data” it is quite possible for Wilmington to have an improved understanding of economic conditions and trends at all levels.
Since the loss of DHL, Wilmington and Clinton County have already demonstrated the ability to achieve greater analysis and observation of trends in the local economy through its “Buy Local” efforts and partnerships with institutions such as JP Morgan Chase. Other resources such as IMPLAN are both affordable and capable of being analyzed and shared by institutions such as the Clinton County Regional Planning Commission.

Referring back to the need for policy, it will be essential that the plan lay out a policy framework for responding to new data and information that may require action on the part of local leadership. While “hindsight is 20/20,” there were still plenty of indicators, some of which are shown in the “updated existing conditions section,” that Wilmington could potentially be vulnerable to economic shock, and that more should be done to address other economic development-related issues such as lack of diversity in the local economy.

- A balanced approach. As just touched upon, a balanced approached to economic development that shifts attention to economic opportunities which counter the economic vulnerability caused by dominating sectors or businesses will be a needed component of the economic development strategy. The ability to absorb economic shock will greatly depend on the other employers in the local economy. In addition to the added ability to weather economic crises, encouraging the growth and sustainability of other employers, and a balanced, diverse local economy, will provide more opportunities for economic growth and an overall strengthening of the local economy during prosperous times.

- Development of a Disaster Response Strategy. While it is common for communities to have natural disaster response plans and guidelines, it is not common to have them for economic
disasters. After having faced two similar disasters 40 years apart and one that is still fresh in the minds of local leadership, Wilmington should begin developing the local strategies for economic disaster preparedness and response. This should involve reaching out to the regional and state leadership that were involved in the Wilmington Air Park redevelopment process, identifying a set of pre-emptive steps and indicators to monitor and from which to respond, and being able to not only replicate but exceed the accomplishments of the local leadership during the last economic crisis.

**Community Development**

Community development can be interpreted to mean many different things. For the purposes of Wilmington’s next plan, community development should reflect the definition offered by Amanda Inverarity from an article in *Planning*, which says that,

> Community development’ should not be confused with capacity building, community engagement and community participation. Community development has a role in all of these, but offers a more distinct and clear approach to tackling imbalances of power and decision-making so that communities can develop their confidence and assert more control over the issues with which they are concerned. Community Development has a clear set of values and principles that underpin the work, focusing practice and guiding practitioners (Inverarity, 2006, p. 1).

Community development is a broad way of identifying what the key issues are to Wilmington residents and providing leaders and residents with an explicit vision for what is wanted to be accomplished. Through the observations in the updated existing conditions sections, there are several key areas that the next plan should cover in regards to community development. Where the plan will differ from 1978
is how it will provide a strategic framework for not only addressing this issues, but laying the infrastructure needed to monitor and respond to similar issues in the future.

Keys issues related to community development, and broadly stated, are the issues that are connected to the built environment in Wilmington and the fiscal challenges currently faced by the city. These are issues that are very much capable of being addressed through modification of existing city policies, the adoption of new regulatory strategies, and the leveraging of existing assets. As previously stated, in responding to these issues, the purpose is not to guarantee a particular outcome as much as it is to identify the issues as important and demonstrate a proactive and strategic response. Key issues related to the community development that will need to be addressed are:

- **Neighborhood Preservation**
  Wilmington is losing residents to new developments just outside the community and also to nearby communities that offer better housing options for the working population. This is partly due to the deterioration of the local housing stock and the lack of policy aimed at preserving neighborhoods in the core of the city. It will be essential that Wilmington identify and protect Gateway districts coming into the city and identify and protect clusters of historic homes and neighborhoods. There are many ways the city can do these and should consider models such as the form-based code recently adopted in nearby Cincinnati, OH.

- **In-fill Development**
  Along with retaining existing residents and attracting new residents through neighborhood preservation, Wilmington will need to consider ways to incentivize in-fill development in the City. As discussed in the update of existing conditions sections, the most recent Clinton County Auditor data reports that only 39% of residential acreage is non-vacant. Residential acreage in
the City of Wilmington averages $6,490.25 per acres in tax revenue (both county and city), which equates to over $3 million in potential tax revenue by utilizing vacant residential acreage.

In addition to the overall losses in potential revenue from lack of residential development, residential development also provides more property tax revenue per acre than any other land use type—$6,490 per acre for residential uses vs. $2146 per acre for commercial uses (see Appendix, Item 2). With funding for schools, parks, libraries, and other amenities being based on property tax revenues, there should be more attention paid to the extreme imbalance towards commercial development over the past 35 years. Property taxes do not complete the entire tax revenue benefits from land use as sales and income taxes also play a major role. The new plan should weigh all the potential tax revenues and all real and potential costs when developing various land use strategies.

- Fiscal Challenges

The DHL crisis demonstrates the challenges that can quickly arise with the loss of an employer of which the city revenues overly depend. It also shows the importance of leveraging a prosperous economic growth in such a way as to assure revenue is at maximum potential should that employer leave. The new plan will need to identify the ways in which the city should be prioritizing its investments and the issues that should be closely monitored for inefficiencies.

A glaring instance of this is the way in which the city has funded its parks for the past quarter century. Through a survey completed this year by the Clinton County Regional Planning Commission on parks usage, it was able to demonstrate that much of the use of the parks is done by users who do not live in the City of Wilmington. As almost all of the current parks
revenue is generated by a parks levy, the services are being disproportionately carried by homeowners in the city.

The City of Wilmington will need to identify new ways to meet the fiscal challenges it currently faces and establish strategies which will assist the city in avoiding similar challenges in the future. Understanding the relationship between economic, community, and social development will be a necessary step for the city to take in order to prepare and invest in ways that are sustainable.

Social Development

Social Development is focused on the issues that apply to the various elements that paint the picture of people and place in Wilmington. It touches the various features of the population that can have an impact on overall community quality of life, and the sustainability of the community as affected by the relationship of present to future residents.

- Population

Even with modest population growth in the last census, Wilmington’s population has shown signs of stunted growth along with changes to the structure and makeup of the population. The lack of growth and change in population makeup is likely induced by a variety of factors such as improvement in transportation infrastructure which allowed for greater commuting; residential development outside Wilmington’s borders driven by factors such as subdivision regulations, zoning, and taxes; emigration of younger and working class residents; and increase migration to metropolitan areas.
Changes in total population or makeup of population are not useful in of themselves and need to be viewed within the context of what is desired by Wilmington. This issue can be seen in the 1978 plan which does discuss changes and projections in population, but does not discuss how these changes reflect the vision of Wilmington the community is seeking.

- **Age Demographics**

One of the key issues regarding social development for Wilmington will be the aging population trend. As shown in the update of existing conditions section, since 1980, Wilmington has observed negative growth rates in all age groups between ages 10 and 34, and the largest percentage growth rate in the 85 and above category. Over the past ten years Wilmington saw the biggest decline in population from the 35-44 age group and equal increases between 55-60 and 60-64 year categories.

A report from the Center for Civic Partnerships titled, “Community Planning for Aging Well,” provides an excellent overview of some of the challenges that will come into play when planning for aging demographics (Center for Civic Partnerships, 2010). Many of the recommendations from this report will be helpful in developing needed planning strategies and reflect some of the on-going efforts the city and the Clinton County Regional Planning Commission has begun in regards to the issues of declining young populations.

Through public discourse and analysis, Wilmington will need to prepare strategies aimed at both attracting younger residents and accommodating older residents who wish to “age in place.” If left untouched, this issue could potentially lead to a situation where Wilmington is not positioned to attract a new generation of residents and older residents leave the community for
areas more accommodating to their needs. The new plan should be explicit in acknowledging the aging population trend, and that the vision of the plan is to align the community with a diversity of interests, rather than seeming negligent of all.

- Education

In 1992, then President George Bush released a report on education reform titled *Education 2000* which prompted the publishing of a paper titled, “Where Will All the Smart Kids Work?” by Frank Levy and Richard Murnane that considered the impact of education reforms on promoting economic growth (Levy & Murnane, 1992). As it happens to be, 1990 was also the last census in which Wilmington had a higher percentage of residents with at least a bachelor’s degree than the state of Ohio—17.4% to 17% respectively (National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0, 2011).

Since 1990, Wilmington has gone from being .4% higher than Ohio to 9.1% lower in percentage of residents with at least a bachelor’s degree. This is surely due to a variety of factors, but the largest influence has likely been the influx of jobs with minimal educational requirements such as many of those provided by DHL. In a January 2013 release, the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that Bachelor’s degree holders earn in median weekly earnings 36% more than individuals with an Associate’s degree and 46% more than those with “some college, no degree” (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013).

In addition to the effect DHL potentially had on educational attainment rates while in Wilmington, the impact that educational attainment has had on unemployment is also illustrated in the BLS graph (see Appendix, Item 3). This impact further demonstrates the role
that trends in the community have on the resiliency of a community. The high education rate was a noted condition in the 1978 plan and the low education rate should as well be noted in Wilmington’s next plan. The new plan will need to consider both direct and indirect strategies aimed at addressing this trend as education will continue to remain important to employers and will continue to impact Wilmington going forward.

Institutional and Comparative Advantages

A key component of being able to build a diverse set of strategies for development in Wilmington will be identifying and pursuing the diversity of institutional and comparative advantages that the community possesses. The Wilmington Air Park has, since the latter part of the 20th Century, been the centerpiece of institutional leverage in Wilmington while other assets have not been given as much attention or leveraged to the same degree.

There are too many assets emanating from local institutions and features that provide Wilmington with opportunities on which to build than can be covered in this paper. However, for Wilmington’s plan to truly provide a thorough understanding of development opportunities and strategies which address diversity issues in the local economy, it will have to exhaust all potential resources. Like the air park, there will still remain few major resources and assets that Wilmington should focus a great level of attention towards, but even some of these have perhaps gone untapped over the last 35 years.

A Sample of Key Institutional Assets

Below is just a sample of some of the key institutional assets present in Wilmington, and on which development strategies should be built. Each of these assets interplays well with other comparative and
locational advantages in Wilmington. For instance, the ways in which the air park re-develops could provide the needed momentum to spark new manufacturing opportunities that Wilmington would be well-positioned to pursue, or a collaboration with Wilmington College could lead to the development of a strong food-based economic clusters that would enhance Wilmington’s economic sustainability and competitiveness. Traditionally, many of these institutional assets are viewed in a vacuum and seen as only capable of providing an exclusive contribution towards economic development. This paradigm will need to shift in the new plan and assets will need to be viewed as much more dynamic, fluid, and capable of contributing to diverse strategies.

- Air park

The Wilmington Air Park, now owned by the Clinton County Port Authority, has been Clinton County’s most prominent institutional asset for over half a century. It has also been the source for Wilmington’s two largest economic crises and the nucleus to planning decisions for decades—from the building of the by-pass to the location of commercial development. Even post-DHL the air park remains a centerpiece to the community’s planning going forward. Though, it will be essential that it not be positioned for a third time to seemingly dictate the fate of the community.

In 2011 the Clinton County Port Authority completed a Wilmington Air Park Property Development Plan that envisions more diversity in uses at the air park (Clinton County Port Authority, 2011). These uses extend beyond the sole focus on transportation and logistics into sectors such as manufacturing and research and development (see appendix for Land Use Map).

In addition to the uses identified in the development plan for the air park, the new comprehensive plan could allude to even greater diversity by following some of the
recommendations from the previously referenced Clinton County Recovery Strategy Guidelines that the University of Cincinnati completed with the Clinton County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC). In this report, the team recommended that clusters be developed around manufacturing (which the Air Park plan discusses), agribusiness, and green development (University of Cincinnati, EMHT, Clinton County RPC, 2009).

Wilmington’s new plan should not only acknowledge the strategies outlined in both the Strategy Guidelines report and the Air Park Development Plan, but should also identify policies and strategies which align with these plans. Already the City has adopted policy regarding green development, the CCRPC has supported planning efforts around agribusiness, local food, and green development. The new plan should consider strategies that will build upon these on-going efforts and identify ways to align with other institutions such as Wilmington College and Southern State Community College on efforts involving green development and agribusiness.

- Wilmington College

Wilmington College, founded in 1870, is a small Quaker, liberal arts institution that has been a major presence in Wilmington for nearly 150 years. Over its long history the college has experienced many different eras of change, growth, and development. In its infancy, the college slowly built over many decades from the late 1800s to the 1920s into a formidable and sustainable institution (Boyd, 1949). Today, according to a recent economic study by the University of Cincinnati Economic Center, Wilmington College has a total economic impact of $29.8 million and accounts for nearly 600 jobs within Clinton County (University of Cincinnati Economics Center, 2010).
As mentioned in the 1978 plan summary section, Wilmington College was going through another era of change in the late 1970s. After enrolling nearly 1000 students in 1970, enrollment swiftly fell 48% over the next five years. It was at this time that the college decided to shift the focus of the institution from liberal arts to career-oriented education and enrolling students regionally rather than nationwide. Today’s enrollment still reflect this strategy as 70% of students come from Southwest Ohio and only 6% come from outside Ohio (Wilmington College, 2012).

The nature of Wilmington College’s role as an institution in Wilmington will be very important in the next plan. With Wilmington facing issues related to educational attainment, quality of life, and workforce development, Wilmington College’s involvement will be needed to address nearly all planning-related issues. As an institutional asset, Wilmington will need to incorporate the college’s mission and future development in its plan strategies and identify ways to align and leverage the goals of the college.

Over many years Wilmington College has developed a unique role as only one of two institutions in Ohio to offer a four year degree in agriculture—the other being The Ohio State University. Currently, both Wilmington College and Southern State Community College are exploring curriculum in sustainability, food economies, and agribusiness. These efforts also align with the previously discussed economic development clusters identified in the Clinton County Recovery Strategy Guidelines. Through the development of the new plan, Wilmington should consider ways that it can leverage these on-going efforts and institutional assets and diversify its economic development strategies.
• Water Capacity

In May 1990, Wilmington began an $8.5 million water project at Caesar Creek that would provide Wilmington access to millions of gallons of water (Wilmington News Journal and Brown Publishing Company, 1995, p. 46). Capable of treating 4 million gallons a day, the Wilmington Water Plan currently treats an average daily flow of 1.6 million gallons (City of Wilmington, 2013).

Wilmington originally established its own municipal water system so it could be a regional provider. However, for a variety of reasons related to inter-governmental cooperation, this objective has not been achieved and the city currently only serves approximately 4,952 customers within the City of Wilmington (including the Wilmington Air Park). Planning for greater access to quality water sources is a growing issue in the planning profession and devising more effective structures and agreements for sharing water resources is considered one of the top challenges (Page & Susskind, 2007).

Wilmington’s new plan should view its surplus water capacity as an institutional asset whose value will increase in the future. The plan should consider various strategies that will give the city a direction in how to manage this capacity and ways in which it can be leveraged for community and/or economic development purposes.

Other Potential Comparative Advantages

As previously mentioned, Wilmington will need to broaden its economic development perspective and begin pursuing innovative development strategies that align well with its institutional and comparative
advantages. Such an approach will require the community to continually be evaluating new innovations in development and planning, and considering ways that the plan can be framed around these desired strategies.

- Regional Economic Centers

Wilmington’s experience with the DHL crisis highlighted its regional economic position and demonstrated that economic crises do not follow geo-political boundaries (Hill, 1998). Rather than simply affecting the communities in which they are geographically located, economic crises extend to all communities that have economic ties to the crisis. In the case of the DHL crisis, there were six other counties that had DHL as their largest employer.

The DHL crisis demonstrated the inter-connectedness of regional economies and the need to build strategies to leverage this inter-connectedness rather than only understand it in times of crisis. It is in this regard that the Wilmington plan should consider strategies that not only create local economic development opportunities, but also innovations in regional economic growth.

With its position on the fringe of three metropolitan regions (Cincinnati, Dayton, and Columbus), Wilmington along with Clinton County and other adjacent counties could begin identifying regional partnerships that will aggregate local comparative advantages, provide regional economic development opportunities, and increase revenues to approximate local governmental entities.

Regional economic development will need to be a part of all local economic development strategies in the future. By leveraging its experience of regional economic impact through the DHL crisis, Wilmington could potentially be a regional leader in developing innovative economic development strategies that respect the reality that economic impact is not confined to geo-political boundaries.
Alternative Energy

Whereas urban land use only amounts to 2% of the total land use in Clinton County, cropland and pastures make up 81% of county land use (Ohio Development Services Agency: Office of Policy, Research and Strategic Planning, 2010). Traditionally, energy planning has been rooted in centralized, supply-side development—i.e. large infrastructure projects capable of meeting present and forecasted future demand (Andrews, 2008, p. 233). Currently energy production is becoming much more de-centralized by technologies such as wind turbines, solar panels, and reductions in energy demand through improvements in energy efficiency in buildings and modifications in energy user behaviors.

As mentioned previously, the City of Wilmington and the CCRPC are already involved in efforts promoting the energy efficiency and alternative energy technologies that provide local momentum in the de-centralization of energy development. In addition, the CCRPC, along with local non-profit Energize Clinton County have facilitated interest in the large-scale development of alternative energy development such as wind farms and utility-grade solar fields with some land even under contract for such purposes.

For these efforts to be institutionalized in the future vision for Wilmington, the new plan should acknowledge these efforts as not only priorities, but the beginning of the development of a potential economic base sector in Clinton County. Planning will be needed for land use and siting issues, public engagement, facilitation between land owners and investors, and advising on technological investments for the public sector (Andrews, 2008). As energy demands increase along with the economic incentives for adopting low-carbon emitting energy sources,
Wilmington and Clinton County will be positioned with available resources and should be prepared to develop these economic opportunities.

- Food Economy

Wilmington and Clinton County’s open space and agricultural heritage also provide an opportunity to capitalize on growing demand of local food—especially given its position between three metropolitan regions. To reach the demand in these regions will require planning strategies that focus on encouraging increases in local supply of value-added agriculture, develop local food processing operations, and facilitate the development of potential distribution enterprises.

The CCRPC along with the Center for Innovative Food Technology (CIFT) and Wilmington College have completed site development for food processing of value added agricultural products in its Tolliver Fields Plan (see appendix). As Wilmington College has a unique role in Ohio as an agricultural institution, and is shifting more attention towards sustainability initiatives, it is imperative that the college is involved in the development of food-related planning.

Just a decade ago planning food systems and the food economy were not considered to be a common endeavor of the planning profession (Kaufman & Pothukuchi, 2000). Planning has been much more involved in food-related issues as relating to quality of life, economic development, poverty, and social justice among other things. The next plan should begin by identifying the existing infrastructure and on-going efforts in Wilmington and Clinton County related to the food economy, and utilize the planning process to develop strategies that increase the capacity for Wilmington in Clinton County to be a key regional player in the food economy.
• Parks/Green Space

Another advantage that Wilmington and Clinton County possess are existing and potential parks and green spaces. This advantage can provide attractive amenities for potential new residents and a greater quality of life for existing residents. Research has shown that proximity to parks and green space elements does have a positive impact on real estate values (Asabere & Huffman, 2009; Crompton, 2001) and that homeowners are attracted to such features by demonstrating a willingness to pay a premium to be located within close proximity (vom Hofe & Parent, 2011).

Just this year, the CCRPC completed the first-ever, “Clinton County Comprehensive Trail and Greenway Plan.” The plan provides the county, including Wilmington, with many planning recommendations for trail and green space development, modification of existing thoroughfares to be more pedestrian-friendly, design recommendations for trail signage and features, and recommendations on alternative structures for county parks systems to be more efficient in distributing parks services to all users of the county.

Not only does Wilmington have a comparative advantage with existing and potential park and green space development, but there is already a foundation of research and planning for continued enhancement and development of this asset. The Wilmington plan will need to ensure that the strategies for the development of parks and green space development are built upon this foundation, and that planning recommendations are aligned with the vision of the trails and green space plan.
Conclusion

Experiencing two major economic crises at the Wilmington Air Park less than 40 years apart that were the product of excessive economic dependence on one employer is similar to a community experiencing two major floods in short enough time for most residents to have experienced the events. It is not often that communities experience such transformative events twice in the average citizen’s lifetime. It would be viewed as unequivocally irresponsible for leaders in such a community to not plan for another such event and develop strategies to mitigate the impact should a similar crisis re-occur.

Wilmington’s 1978 plan was inherently flawed by the lack of coverage given to the 1971 closure of the Clinton County Airforce Base and the absence of a discussion about planning-related issues that have connections to such an event—either in that the connections are capable of mitigating or even worsening impact. The DHL crisis of 2008 demonstrated some of the ways in which issues are capable of assisting or interfering with the community’s capacity to recover and the pace at which recovery occurs.

While the main wound has been the severe drop in employment, other issues such as attractive housing, declining education of workforce, and loss of new generations of educated professionals, enhance the injury caused by high unemployment. The counter to this is that planning programs and efforts that provide support to the business community, attempt to draw in young professionals, encourage the reduction of imported energy and promote the production and export of energy, and identify economic opportunities such as agribusiness and food systems that will assist in the healing of the wounds and cause the community to actually be stronger than it was prior to the crisis.

Even the perfect plan will be of little use if it is not consistently used for guidance and kept relevant by regular updates every few years. The fact that Wilmington has not updated its plan in 35 years cannot be overlooked in terms of the impact that it has had on the undesired changes in existing conditions observed in the community today. The need to implement a new standard of continual use and
The updating of the existing conditions, strategies, and overall vision of the plan will be as important as the plan itself.

The summary of priorities for the new plan is as follows:

- Give the experience and lessons derived from the DHL crisis the appropriate attention and role it deserves. That the plan is very much in response to this crisis, much as a flood plan is to a flood, should not be understated or overlooked.

- Be strategic. It will not be enough to simply outline the existing conditions and describe the objections and visions for the plan. The plan will need to provide detailed and thoroughly prepared strategies for achieving the vision desired.

- Redefine “economic development.” As it has been the poster child of traditional economic development of the 20th century, Wilmington needs to adopt a leadership role in re-defining economic development in the 21st century. Economic development cannot be viewed exclusively as increases in job numbers or any one tax revenue stream and must incorporate other factors which have equal weight in the overall economic development of the community. This entails the serious involvement of alternative strategies such as attention being provided to community and social development, and the exploration of innovative development opportunities that will build upon our existing institutional and comparative advantages. The strategies should strive to make Wilmington a competitive economic leader in the region and with sustainable ties to a burgeoning global economy.

- Prioritize issues. There are many different strategies Wilmington could adopt that will lead to a variety of outcomes. Not all of these desired outcomes or strategies will be of equal importance. It will be essential that the plan prioritize what issues are most important to Wilmington and
how the community would like to see these issues develop. The highest priority strategies and issues being addressed should be treated as such.
Works Cited


Clinton County Port Authority. (2011). *Wilmington Air Park: Airport Property Development Plan*. Wilmington: Clinton County Port Authority.


University of Cincinnati, EMHT, Clinton County RPC. (2009). *Clinton County Recovery Strategy Guidelines*. Wilmington: Clinton County Regional Planning Commission.


Wilmington College. (2012, October 23). Fall 2012 Enrollment Census. Wilmington, OH.


## Appendices

### Item 1:

**Goals and Policies from 1978 Plan from Goals Inventory Questionnaire**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Use</th>
<th>Thoroughfare</th>
<th>Open Space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Encourage a variety of industrial development types (especially light industrial).</strong></td>
<td>Equal thoroughfare accessibility should be given to all parts of the community although special emphasis should be considered for the needs of the central business district, outlying shopping centers, cross-town connectors, and loop roads bypassing most of the urban and suburban area.</td>
<td>Open space should be preserved in the form of small, scattered sites throughout the City and where they are unique or attractive natural features.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most new industrial development should locate in or around the Industrial Airpark.</td>
<td>Existing major arterials should be widened and through traffic on minor streets should be discouraged or prevented.</td>
<td>Locations which should be considered include those along the major streams and drainage ways, and/or adjacent to existing schools and other community facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most new commercial development should locate in the downtown business district.</td>
<td>Wide right-of-way and pavements should be provided along commercial, industrial, and similar land use developments; cul-de-sacs should be discouraged.</td>
<td>Types of open space which should be most encouraged are public parks, neighborhood playgrounds, and woodlands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage new commercial development with a variety of commercial stores and services, especially major shopping stores.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage and retention, enhancement and expansion of existing commercial and industrial enterprises in Wilmington.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New residential development should locate on vacant land within the community, in redeveloped older areas of the City, and in closely surrounding suburban areas.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential types which should be most encouraged are single-family homes on moderate size lots, and to a lesser extent doubles, townhouses, and apartment projects.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special emphasis should be placed on the redevelopment of older declining residential areas in the community.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Short Term Goals (* first year, ** second year)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Use</th>
<th>Thoroughfare</th>
<th>Open Space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provide a minimum of 100 acres of vacant land suitable for immediate industrial development, including at least two alternative sites.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Complete the proposed U.S. 22 East highway improvement project.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Acquire a large parcel of land for a new community park on the South, West, or North side of the City, in combination with unique or attractive natural features. (A minimum of 25 acres is suggested).</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Establish a major downtown improvement program.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Initiate detailed plans for a U.S. Route 68 bypass or other bypass routes as can be related to state needs and projections.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Acquire moderate size parcels of land (at least two) in existing or proposed residential neighborhoods for neighborhood parks and playgrounds. (A minimum of 5 acres each is suggested).</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Encourage the availability of a minimum of 100 acres of vacant land suitable for predominantly single-family residential neighborhood development within or adjacent to the city limits.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Construct local street improvements in coordination with a program of existing neighborhood preservation and revitalization.</strong> and **</td>
<td><strong>Prevent any new development from locating in the flood plains. Complete acquisition of pedestrian easement through the City along Lytle Creek.</strong> and **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Encourage the availability of a minimum of 20 acres of vacant land suitable for multi-family residential development, including several alternative sites.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Establish a program of existing neighborhood preservation and revitalization.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Long Term Policies

| Plan, Coordinate and program major capital improvements and public land acquisition on a five or six year schedule. |  |
| **Initiate studies, reviews and programs to assure appropriate levels of public services to all parts of the City.** |  |
| **Encourage and plan for the orderly extension of the City boundaries to incorporate all adjacent areas of community scale and intensity development.** |  |
| **Provide for the establishment and administration of regulations to ensure good quality development, protection and enhancement of existing development, and implementation of the goals for the growth and improvement of the City.** |  |
| **Initiate and implement progressive programs of neighborhood residential, commercial, and industrial preservation and revitalization in older areas of the City, with redevelopment to more appropriate uses where needed.** |  |
| **Initiate and assist in the implementation of programs to provide public information, education, and participation in the local and area-wide planning process.** |  |
| **Initiate and implement a coordination and evaluation program of the Land Use, Thoroughfare and Open Space Plan.** |  |
Short Term Policies (to be achieved in approx. 2 years)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prepare an initial capital improvements program for the City of Wilmington incorporating the recommendations of the Land Use, Thoroughfare, and Open Space Plan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review and revise the city subdivision regulations with special emphasis on regulation in the surrounding three-mile area.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review the city zoning ordinance and map and consider suggestions for revisions based on the recommendations of the plans.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare applications for and carry out neighborhood revitalization programs under the HUD Community Development Block Grant Program.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct and prepare detailed studies and plans for the enhancement and improvement of the downtown central business district.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiate and carry out a public information and education program on the purpose and general content of the Wilmington Land Use, Thoroughfare, and Open Space Plan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Item 2:**

*Figure 20 2013 Average Property Tax per Acre by Land Use Classification in Wilmington, OH*

**Figure 20**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property Tax Due per Acre for Wilmington Land Uses</th>
<th>Residential</th>
<th>Commercial</th>
<th>Industrial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Property Tax Due per Acre</td>
<td>$7,000.00</td>
<td>$2,000.00</td>
<td>$1,000.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Clinton County Auditor, 2013
Figure 21 2013 National Average Earnings and Unemployment Rate by Education Level

Education Pays

Unemployment rate in 2012 (%) | Median weekly earnings in 2012 ($)  
--- | ---  
2.5 | Doctoral degree 1,624  
2.1 | Professional degree 1,735  
3.5 | Master's degree 1,300  
4.5 | Bachelor's degree 1,066  
6.2 | Associate's degree 785  
7.7 | Some college, no degree 727  
8.3 | High school diploma 652  
12.4 | Less than a high school diploma 471  

All workers: 6.8%  
All workers: $815
