



# 2015 Wilmington Comprehensive Plan

# Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Mayor Randy Riley for breathing life into planning efforts and working collaboratively with the Clinton County Regional Planning Commission on the first update to the Wilmington comprehensive plan in 37 years. Thank you to the Wilmington City Council Judiciary Committee (Rob Jaehnig, Loren Stuckert, Randi Milburn) for serving as the steering committee throughout the plan process and shepherding this plan through to its adoption. Thank you to the former CCRPC executive director Chris Schock, the Mayor's Office, Brenda Woods and Andrea Tacorante, for your support as well as to Joe Merritt and the County GIS Department for providing the invaluable data needed for planning in our county.

Finally, thank you to the groups that participated in focus groups, interviews, and to the hundreds of citizens that provided input, feedback, and vision to the development of this document.

-Taylor Stuckert, Executive Director, CCRPC

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# Executive Summary

It is a foundational belief of the Clinton County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) that planning decisions should be made at the regional level. This planning document was developed with support from the diverse membership of the CCRPC, the City of Wilmington Mayor's office, Wilmington City Council, the business community, and numerous citizens. The development of this document involved more than just the individuals that reside inside the city boundaries and it is the first to document a shared future land use plan between the City of Wilmington and Union Township. Overall, the input received from the public included residents, business and non-profit leaders, and public officials representing all parts of Clinton County.

From the county-wide, regional perspective, Wilmington plays a crucial role as the county seat. As the only city in the county, the health of Wilmington has been, is, and will be a significant indicator of the overall health of Clinton County.

The adopted title for the 2015 Wilmington comprehensive plan, "Plan Wilmington: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow," captures not only the sought-after vision for this document, but also evokes the current state of Wilmington—a community once again confronted with change. Wilmington is a community with a rich history and heritage. It is also a community that has assumed many different identities throughout its history and is presently in the midst of developing a new identity for its future, which has yet to be fully defined.

For the stakeholders involved in the development of this plan, much of what will shape the community's future identity will depend upon the following key areas:

## **Business and Entrepreneurial Growth and Development**

Wilmington is the economic center of the county and will need to continue to be proactive in ensuring a local economic environment that welcomes new investment and encourages entrepreneurial growth and development. Understanding the qualities and characteristics of the community which are attractive to new investment and attractive to entrepreneurial growth will play an important role in future economic development efforts.

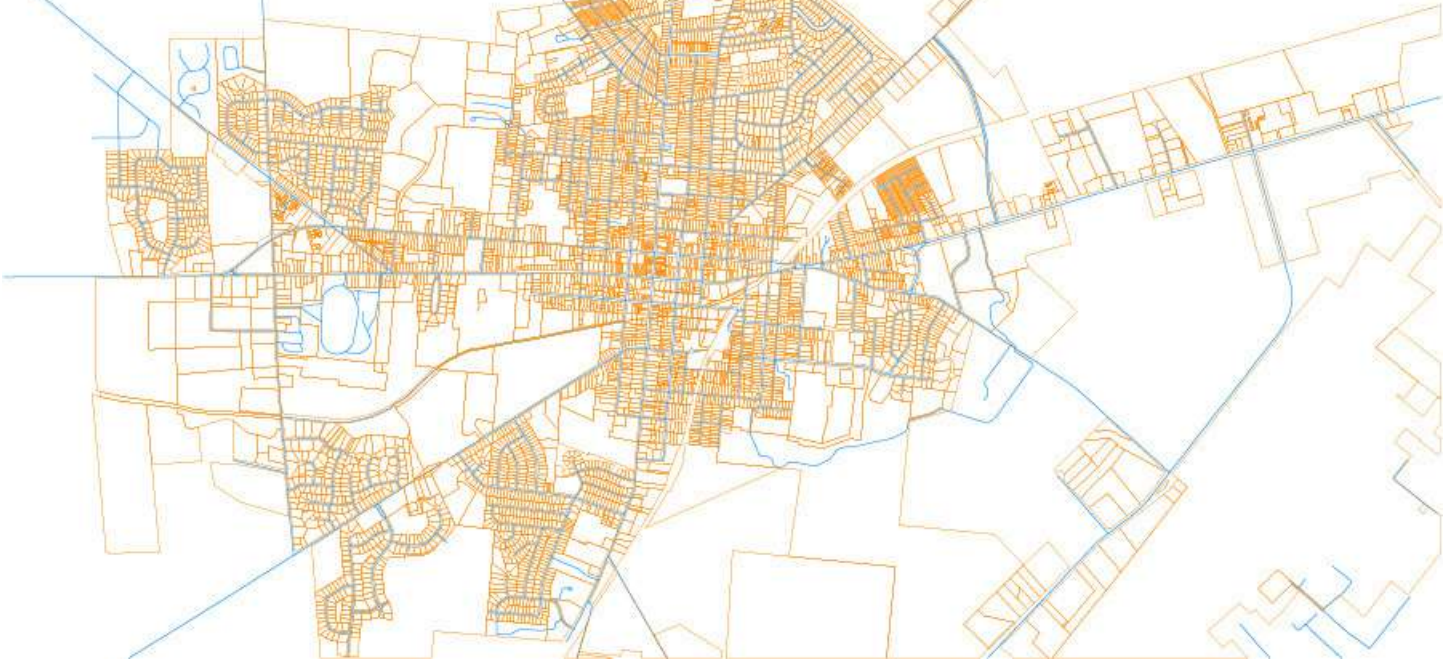
## **Residential and Commercial Growth**

Having the most developed urban fabric and infrastructure, and in the interest of preserving productive open space in the county, Wilmington should be a regional focus for new residential and commercial development. This will involve not only new growth, but also targeted in-fill development and investment in areas with existing infrastructure. The City will need to prioritize areas for growth and areas for targeted in-fill development, and identify the tools needed to help drive this investment.

## **Services and Infrastructure**

In response to citizen feedback, improving existing services and prioritizing infrastructure investment will be a focus of the City going forward. Wilmington offers a unique level of municipal services for a small community and will need to continually refine and prioritize its services to meet the demand of residents and businesses alike. There are other areas that residents feel need more resources such as city code enforcement, streets, and parks and recreation. The challenge will be ensuring that these additional service demands are met while continuing to deliver the existing set of municipal services.

# YESTERDAY, TODAY, TOMORROW



## **Downtown Preservation and Development**

The historic fabric of Wilmington is one of its most valuable assets, and is currently experiencing a renaissance through new investment and interest. Given the importance of these assets to Wilmington's uniqueness and identity, it is essential that they are preserved and leveraged appropriately. Through the City's support of the ongoing momentum in the historic downtown, these assets will continue to play a key role in future development and provide value for future generations.

## **Local Focus and Identity**

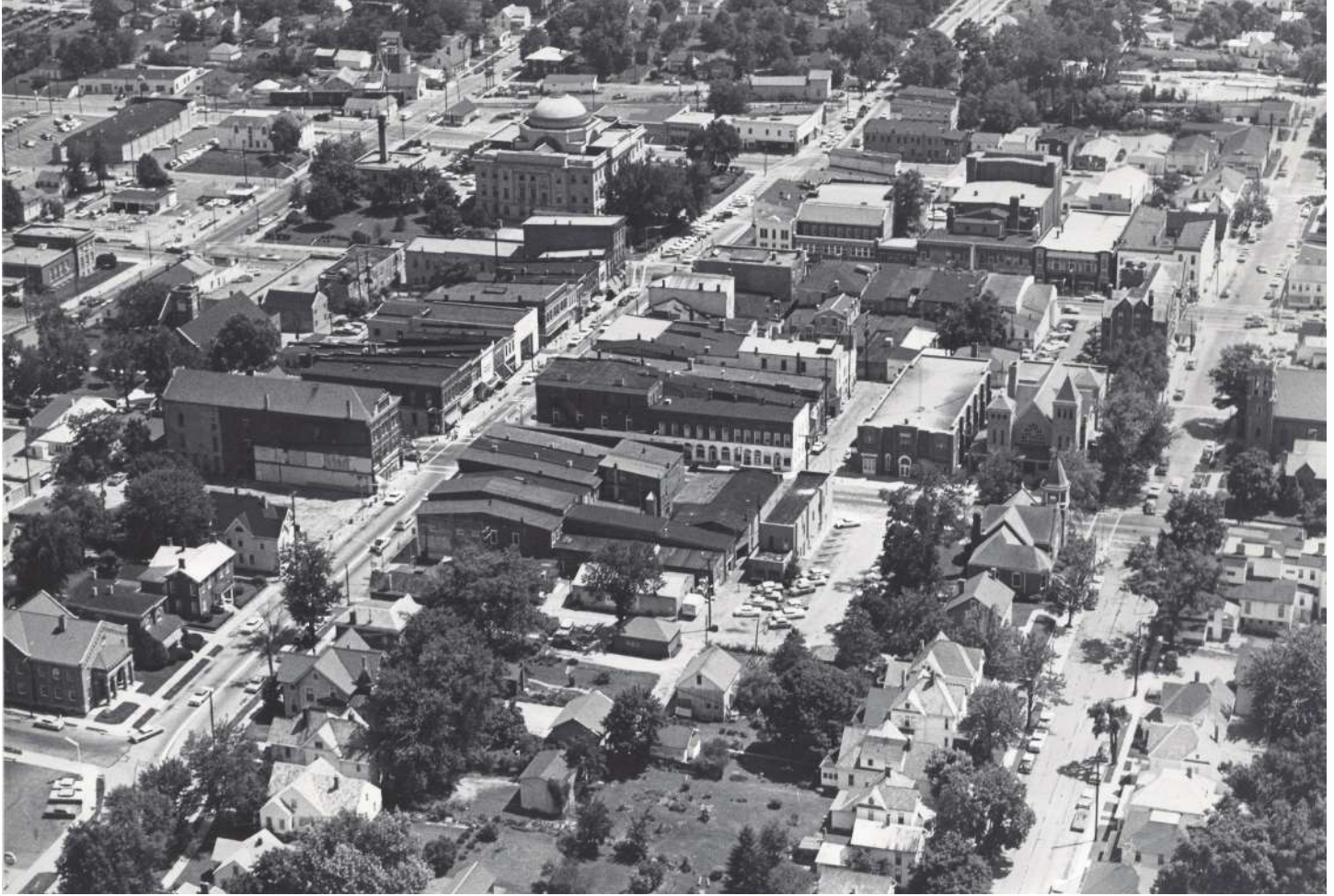
As Wilmington sees growth in its future it should not lose sight of its local identity. After all, the things that are unique to Wilmington are what will set it apart from other communities and serve as its most powerful tool for future prosperity. Too much focus on growth without concern for preserving identity would be a mistake. To protect against this, the City will need to continually work to develop preservation priorities and empower the groups and individuals that are tasked with preserving this identity.

The guidance that this comprehensive plan seeks to provide reflects the objectives of the above key planning areas. As Wilmington moves forward into its future, it is imperative that this plan, as well as future planning documents are updated and continue to reflect the community's desired vision of development. Finally, it will remain just as important to study the wisdom learned and experiences gained from yesterday, to confront the change of today, in order to be better prepared for tomorrow.



# Introduction and History



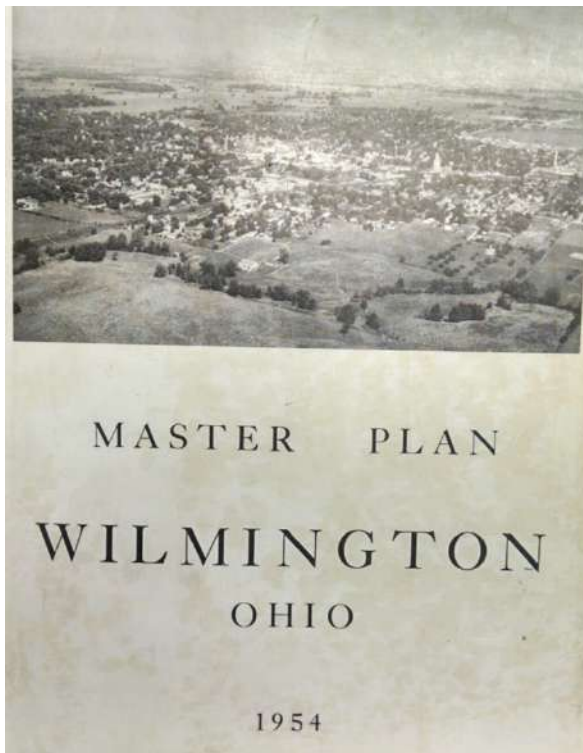


## Introduction to Wilmington

Wilmington is a small community of 12,520 in Southwest Ohio that serves as the county seat and the urban center of Clinton County. Wilmington and Clinton County both pride themselves, as indicated by their adopted slogan, of being a “great place to call home.” Certainly the meaning of this statement has been as varied as the number of individuals that have come to call this community home over its 205-year history. In its earliest years, people arriving to Wilmington likely saw a place to build—new families, new businesses, new fortunes and estates, and for many Quaker settlers, a place in which to build a Religious Society of Friends. Later, Wilmington grew to be place to invest—to buy into and leverage what had already been built and create new growth—all premised on the notion of this being a great community.

Today, what does it mean for Wilmington to be a “great place to call home?” For many it is a safe community, one where citizens both young and old feel free to live, walk, and work without fear of crime or injury. It includes the desire to have strong neighborhoods, where individuals and families are invested, know one another, and are happy to be living in Wilmington. Many want to see a growing entrepreneurial economy that helps to fuel the on-going momentum in the downtown and which leads to greater small business growth throughout the entire community. For many, making Wilmington a great place to call home means having amenities such as quality parks, trails, and recreational activities. Most citizens have expectations for quality of service amenities including schools and municipal services.

Above all, it appears that making Wilmington a “great place to call home” entails preserving what it is that makes Wilmington, “Wilmington.” In other words, it is strengthening and preserving the core identity of what makes Wilmington a unique community. As growth continues to expand outward from surrounding metropolitan regions, and the local economy continues to rebound from the recession and the recent economic crisis, it will be important for citizens and the City alike to not lose sight of what makes Wilmington unique, how to leverage this uniqueness, and continue to sustain a community that future generations feel is a “great place to call home.”



## The Wilmington Plan

The last planning document officially adopted by the City of Wilmington was the 1978 “Land Use, Thoroughfare and Open Space Plan.” The 1978 “master” plan was the first community planning document since the 1954 master plan, and the first since the closure of the Clinton County Air Force Base in 1971—an event with serious economic implications, and which marked the end of one era for Wilmington and the beginning of another.

Similar to the 1970s, Wilmington is currently in the middle of a transformative period—the end of one era and the beginning of another—with the recent loss of its largest employer DHL in 2008. While the loss of DHL had greater economic implications as it cost nearly 10,000 jobs and had an economic impact of nearly half a billion dollars, it is eerily similar to the 1971 base closure in both the gravity of the situation, as expressed by community members, and by the similar community response that followed each event.

This proposed comprehensive plan will be Wilmington’s first in 37 years. As Wilmington has now faced two major economic crises that have taken place at the same air park, new planning efforts should, in addition to providing a framework for growth and development, aim to be more explicit in articulating a desired vision for the community, and resolute in promoting a policy framework which will improve economic and community resilience.

The sections of this planning document follow a similar flow as the process used to develop the comprehensive plan. The process began with data collection and analysis of various existing conditions related to the physical, social, cultural, and economic development of the community. This analysis gave a statistical overview of not only the conditions of Wilmington today, but the conditions over time, and mostly since the 1978 plan. While the statistics following an economic crisis will rarely be overly positive, it is important for Wilmington to understand and to aim at least at its historical heights.

Next came the public participation process. Input from citizens and those familiar with the community is critical to any planning process. The information gathered provides an “on-the-ground” perspective of community life, and how life in Wilmington has changed, for better or worse, through the diverse experiences of people who have lived in the community. In an effort to gain genuine anecdotal evidence of issues in Wilmington, the results from the existing conditions report were not included in the public meetings. The public participation process included a number of public meetings, focus groups, and an online survey that, in the end, engaged and gathered feedback from over 300 individuals.

After the data collection process was complete, recommendations were developed and formed the implementation section of the plan. Throughout the planning process, the judiciary committee of Wilmington City Council was regularly consulted, served as the steering committee for the plan, and, most important, gave guidance to the recommendations and implementation of this planning document.



In its 205-year history there have been several distinct eras which have defined the physical, social, cultural, and economic development of Wilmington, OH. Looking back in time, one can more easily discern how each of these eras marked a significant shift in the growth trajectory of the community and subsequent future development.

## Growth and Development in Downtown—1865-1900

One of the early eras of significant change to the community was the era of Downtown Development in the latter half of the 19th Century.

Following its founding in 1810, Wilmington spent the next several decades slowly growing and building a town. However, much of what we see in downtown Wilmington today was not constructed until after 1865. This era, heavily marked by post-Civil War construction, replaced much of the pre-Civil War urban fabric with popular 19th Century architectural styles such as Victorian, Gothic Revival, and Italianate.

In just 35 years, at least 32 commercial buildings that still exist in downtown, as well as many others that have since been demolished, were constructed. In addition to downtown development, Wilmington saw the establishment of Wilmington College, a public library, and the beginnings of many present-day neighborhoods. The way this era physically transformed Wilmington is only rivaled by the development of Rombach Avenue in the latter 20th Century.





## The Building of Monuments—1910-1928

Following an era of immense physical change, Wilmington's era was a coming of age and an era of cultural growth: the iconic centennial celebration, the laying of the first paved streets, and the construction of three of its most prominent buildings—the Clinton County courthouse, the Murphy Theatre and the General Denver Hotel.

The construction of the Clinton County Courthouse was supported in a popular referendum by 75% of the county population. Replacing the much smaller previous courthouse with one of Ohio's grandest public structures, required the clearance of an entire city quadrant, and a now, mostly-forgotten neighborhood called, "the Shadagee."

The General Denver Hotel, built by A.P. Eveland, a local contractor, is today what it was always intended to be—a unique place for our community to gather and our guests to stay. Funded by community members, through the purchase of shares sold by the Wilmington Commercial Club, the General Denver Hotel has for nearly 100 years carried out this mission.



The Murphy Theatre was Charles Murphy's "gift to his mother" and the bedrock for Wilmington's unique source of theatrical and musical arts. When told that the theatre was a "bad investment," Mr. Murphy said, "that's not an investment, that's a monument."

Today, when we discuss the things that we are proud of in Wilmington, or what makes the community stand apart from others, much of it came from this era. It is as if following the large centennial celebration, the community wished to focus on legacy planning and building monuments that would stand for generations.

# Airbase and Commercial Growth—1955-1970



The next major transformative period for Wilmington came mid-20th Century.

The area began to see many new changes through commercial and residential growth and development. However, these new changes also came with the loss of existing urban fabric and rural lands. The seminal event, and what was described at the time as being the “greatest single influence [of the] century,” was the arrival of the Clinton County Strategic Air Command, Air Force base.

Also arriving were large employers, new subdivisions, plans for a west side shopping area, the beginning of the Rombach Avenue strip development, the birth of the Chamber of Commerce, and the growth of Clinton Memorial Hospital.

Physically, the era was heavily marked by a desire for “modern” development, and of accommodating the automobile. Down came many historic structures that were to be replaced with parking lots and auto-oriented services like drive-thrus.

Through this era of great change, as documented in the local press, the community voiced much uncertainty as to how this economic growth, particularly the arrival of the SAC Base, would affect the physical and social landscapes of Wilmington.

This era which began with much uncertainty, quickly ended with similar uncertainty, as it was announced on March 4, 1971, that the Clinton County Air Force Base would be closing—a moment which the president of a local bank likened to the “end of the world.” 35 years later, the community would again be confronted with a very similar experience—an economic crisis caused by the loss of a large employer—at the same location.



## WILMINGTON NEWS-JOURNAL

thirty-second Year, No. 118

Wilmington, Ohio, Thursday, March 4, 1971

14 Pages

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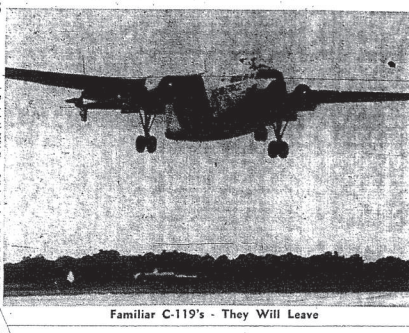
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The fury of the war in Laos  
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Local Leaders  
Respond To  
Base Closing

The News-Journal today con-  
tained Wilmington Mayor Dale  
Minton, State Senator Max H.  
Dennis and Wilmington Cham-  
ber of Commerce President  
Mrs. Charles Henke concern-  
ing their reactions to the closing  
of Clinton County Air Force Base  
by June 30.  
Mayor Minton commented,  
"Certainly Wilmington regrets  
the closing of the base and for  
many reasons. It will have a  
heavy economic impact on Wil-  
mington and Clinton County.  
Many people live here who are  
connected with the base. It will  
be a big change for them in  
many ways. We have always  
had extremely good relations  
with the base. The people con-  
nected with the base have been  
good, solid citizens. This  
closing will be a difficult adjust-  
ment."  
Sen. Dennis said, "This is a  
white, car-



Familiar C-119's - They Will Leave

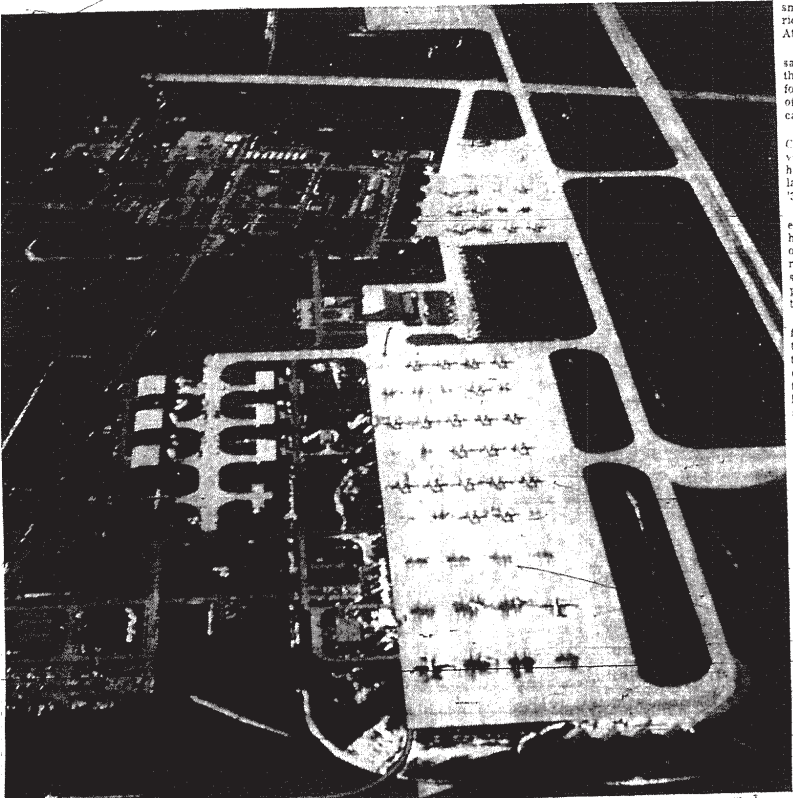
\$9 Million Payroll,  
Job Loss Involved

Clinton County Air Force  
Base, caught in a massive cut-  
back imposed by the U.S. De-  
partment of Defense, will close  
its gates on June 30, 1971.  
The closure means the re-  
moval of a \$9 million annual  
payroll from the community,  
the deactivation of the 302nd  
Special Operations Wing and the  
900th and 907th Special Oper-  
ations Groups. The 160th Air  
Rescue Group, ASG, will be re-  
located.  
In explaining the planned  
abandonment of the sprawling  
1,436-acre military installation,  
the Air Force said it would take  
an estimated \$5 million in im-  
provements to bring it up to  
standards.  
Brig. Gen. Ben Mangina, base  
commander, told the News-  
Journal today that he had re-  
ceived no official word of the  
closure and that for the present,  
he had no comment to make.  
His office also said that the  
Congressman planned to appeal  
other governmental agencies to  
find ways and means of utilizing  
the base.  
Lockbourne Air Force Base  
has also been hit by the defense  
spending cutback. The Colum-  
bus base will revert to the  
Strategic Air Command. The  
tactical airlift wing there will  
be deactivated and the combat  
crew training squadron will be  
transferred to England AFB,  
La.  
The outback will mean a re-  
duction of 2,300 military person-  
nel and an increase of 250  
civilian personnel at Lock-  
bourne.  
Powell's office said it had



## Revisioning and Retooling—1971-1979

### CCAFB Closes; New Era Begins



In addition to the changes at the air park, agriculture in the county saw new heights with pork production and Wilmington College underwent a transformation and pivoted its student recruitment from a national to a more regional reach.

The closure of the base is another case of a clear and distinct ending of one era and the beginning of another. Following a moment of “economic crisis,” the community responded.

Led by the four-year-old Wilmington Community Improvement Corporation (CIC), there was momentum channeled towards a focus on revisioning and retooling. It started with the purchase of the air park at a cost of \$1.2 million. Having only \$7,000 in assets, the CIC received two, \$100,000 checks from two local banks—enough for the down payment on the \$1 million federal loan needed for the purchase.

With a new, local owner, the air base became an industrial park, landing Ferno-Washington as its first tenant in 1972. Then came new educational facilities Great Oaks and Southern State Community College, the growth of light manufacturing and skilled tooling jobs, with companies like Cincinnati Milacron and Kurz-Kasch, and by the end of the decade—Airborne Express.

### Local CIC buys Base property

The industrial portion of Clinton County Air Force Base, totalling 832.625 acres, was purchased today by the Community Improvement Corporation of Wilmington for \$1,200,000.

Representing the CIC at the closing in the General Services Administration offices in Chicago were James Miller, Wilmington city solicitor and Thomas J. Hunter, president of the corporation. The two men presented a check for \$120,000 on 15 per cent down payment to GSA officials and were handed a deed to the property, subject to a 20-year mortgage on the balance at seven and a quarter per cent interest.

Delivery of the deed culminated a community acquisition program that began March 4, 1971, when the Department of Defense announced the base would be closed June 30, 1971.

The CIC of Wilmington is a non-profit corporation made up of city and county officials and businessmen, organized May 23, 1967, for the development of industry.

Its members are Mayor Dale Minton, Councilman Donald Babb, Councilman William Haines, Miller, Stephen Smith, Maynard Davids, Robert Olinger, Thomas O'Neill, D. M. Fife and Hunter.





## Airborne and Walmart—1980-1999

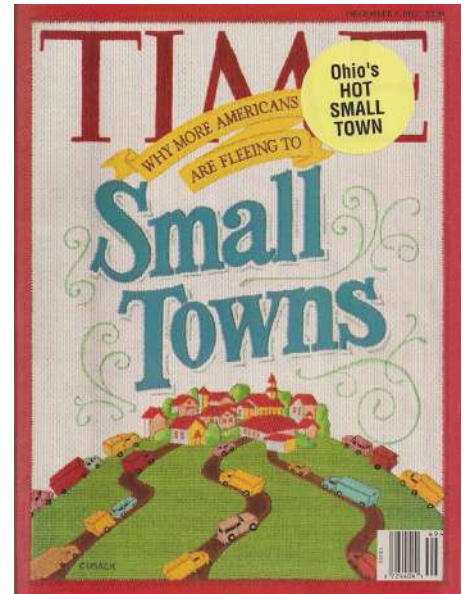
Much of the economic prosperity observed in the 1990s was initially sparked in April, 1980 with the sale of 450 acres of airbase property, including the airstrip to Airborne Express—making Airborne the first airline to ever purchase its own airport.

Subsequent, steady economic growth that further shaped the community continued with the arrival of Ohio's first Walmart in Wilmington.

This era saw continued growth at the air park and Airborne Express, further commercial strip expansion along Rombach Avenue. The City also witnessed a decrease in many of the former mainstay small businesses, and local manufacturers.

Residential development, in the form of new, larger subdivisions, was for the first time, mostly taking place outside of Wilmington, in Union, Vernon, Clark, and Chester Townships.

The old City building was replaced with today's City Hall, the Bengals' Summer Camp left Wilmington for Georgetown, Kentucky, and Wilmington increasingly was becoming a major source of employment for a multi-county region.



## Transition to DHL—2000-2008

At the turn of the 21st Century Wilmington was reaching new heights in economic growth. Airborne Express, which had accumulated nearly 20% of the domestic shipping market, sold its ground operations and the Wilmington Air Park to DHL for \$1.05 billion in 2003.

The purchase and major expansion of the air park by DHL heightened what was already shaping up to be a prosperous era in Wilmington following the 2001 recession. The community saw a new wave of commercial development, including one of the largest Super Walmart's ever built at the time, and also a boom in residential development—culminating with the approval of Wilmington's largest subdivision, which never came to fruition.

With the proposal of building Ohio's first and only casino resort, and a saturation of economic activity, Wilmington was perhaps on the edge of its most transformational era yet. And then, as we had experienced before in the era of the Airbase, much of what was anticipated was quickly forgotten.

## Post DHL—2008-?

Like 1971, 2008 was a year largely defined by economic crisis, and definitively marked the end of one era and the beginning of another.

Much of what initially transpired with the loss of DHL and the local efforts to respond to the crisis, eerily mirrored the 1971 base closure and the CIC's efforts. Local leaders, in parallel fashion, worked immediately to successfully gain control of the air park, and have already begun the process of re-visioning the future of this asset.

The over-arching theme which has come to define this "DHL-era" is "lack of control." Much of the change that took place in the community, while generally viewed as positive, was the result of decision-making taking place somewhere besides here—with little-to-no community input.

So it is fitting that the era came to a close through a series of events and decisions which also took place outside the community—with the most important decision of this era—DHL's decision to close its Wilmington hub, being made in a boardroom thousands of miles away in Bonn, Germany.

Perhaps it is also fitting that the post-DHL era has been riddled with overtures of "regaining control" and a theme of being more prepared for the future by observing lessons learned from the past. In short: the focus has been on the "lessons learned from DHL."

Currently underway, Wilmington's new era has so far generally observed themes such as economic growth in agriculture, building upon strengths in trade & transportation, innovations in education, explicit demand for supporting local businesses, renewed interest in preservation and investment in downtown and historic properties, and a desire for greater economic diversity and resiliency.

Each of these eras represent the collection of key events and citizen contributions that when viewed together, illustrate major shifts in Wilmington's growth trajectory. As it has throughout history, the effect and impact of what happens today in Wilmington—the events and individuals that define its growth—will likely not be understood for many years.

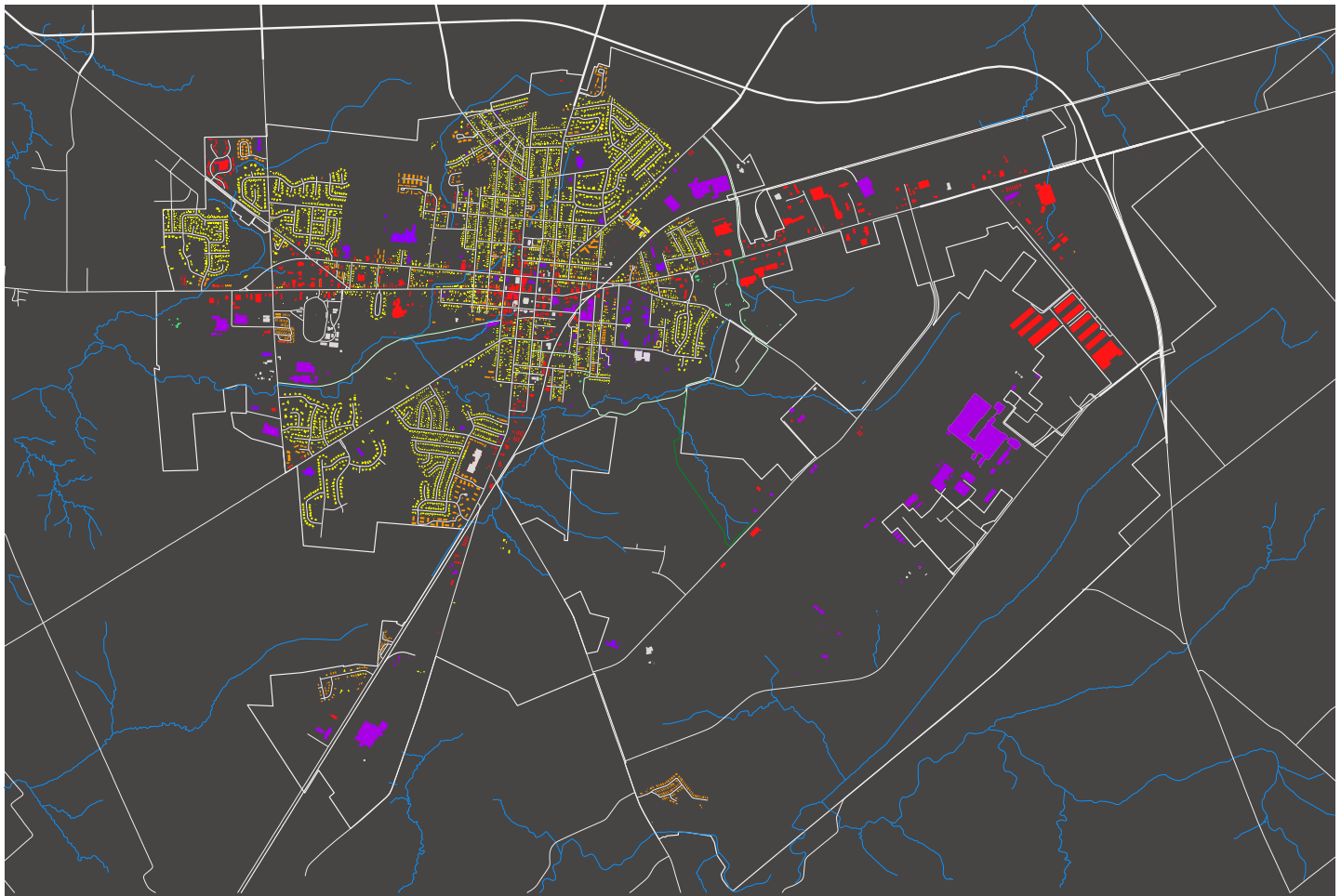
These key moments in history are like individual dots in time. It is not until we are able to look back that we understand the interconnectedness of each individual event and how each help shape Wilmington.

Moments of civic engagement, community leadership, citizen investment, physical, social, cultural, and economic development—all currently unrealized—will author this era that is currently being written. Understanding the path that has led Wilmington from yesterday to today will help in developing a vision for tomorrow.



# Existing Conditions

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Res-Single Family 77.6%	Res-Multi Family 10.6%	Commercial 7.3%	Institutional 1.5%	Industrial 1.5%	Government 1.2%	Parks 0.3%
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## Wilmington Structures by Land Use

### Introduction

Since the 1978 plan, Wilmington has observed significant changes in all aspects relevant to planning. Some changes have direct ties to the vision and recommendations of the 1978 plan; other changes have been discussed in previous plans, yet never addressed from a policy or investment standpoint; and many of the other changes have had direct or indirect ties to unforeseen events, such as the recent economic crisis stemming from the loss of DHL in 2008.

This section will consider many of the observable changes in the community over the three decades following the last plan. The objective of this exercise is to highlight potential lessons that can be observed, from both anticipated and unanticipated experiences, which will lay the foundation for the new comprehensive plan. This comparative section will be outlined by the following categories:

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



# Population and Demographics

Over the past 40 years Wilmington has observed a variety of changes in its overall population and demographic picture. As demonstrated through the public participation process, many of these changes have been observed at the citizen level with little-to-no statistical support or coloring. That many of these changes have been trending for several years and are now being anecdotally observed suggests that the consequences of these changes are at least beginning to be realized and that the potential, yet unrealized consequences of these changes are concerning for community members.

Many of the changes in population and demographic statistics reveal issues needing to be addressed by planning and policy measures from the City. These issues all have causal or correlative relationships with historic changes related to Wilmington's physical, economic, social/cultural, and environmental development. Furthermore, these changes and the issues which stem from them will influence future development for Wilmington in each area of development. Thus, identifying the change and acknowledging the issue is only the first step—attempting to better understand the root of each issue and building strategies to address each priority issue will also need to follow.

This section will discuss notable changes in population and demographic statistics since the 1978 plan, priority issues related to these changes, and the real and potential affect these issues can have on Wilmington.

Notable issues identified through changes in population and demographic indicators are:

- Lagging population growth rates in Wilmington
- Aging population
- Dramatic decline in educational attainment rates
- Declining median household income
- Increasing poverty

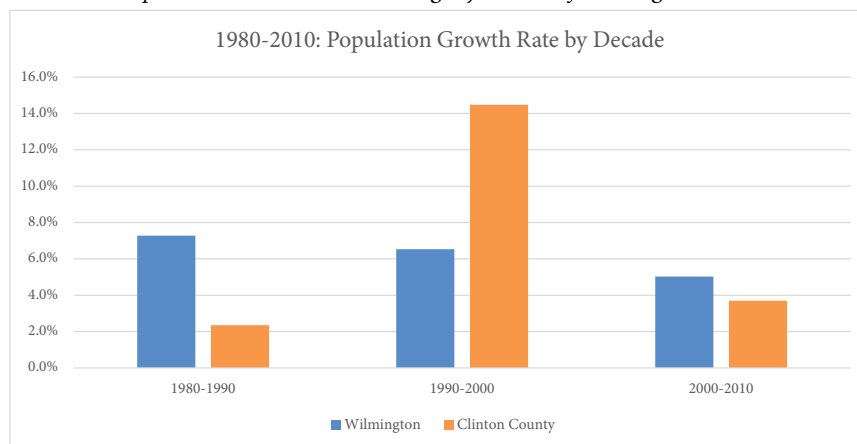
## Growth Rates

Wilmington has observed an increase in population every Census since 1860 (table to right). However, the growth rate between each Census has not been equal, and the two lowest percentage growth rates occurred between 1970-1980 (3.9%) and 2000-2010 (5%). Both of these decades saw negative economic shocks—the closure of the Clinton County Air Force Base in 1971 and the loss of DHL in 2008.

Wilmington Historic Population		
Census	Population	Growth Rate
1860	915	-
1870	2,023	121.1%
1880	2,745	35.7%
1890	3,079	12.2%
1900	3,613	17.3%
1910	4,491	24.3%
1920	5,037	12.2%
1930	5,332	5.9%
1940	5,971	12.0%
1950	7,387	23.7%
1960	8,915	20.7%
1970	10,051	12.7%
1980	10,442	3.9%
1990	11,199	7.2%
2000	11,921	6.4%
2010	12,520	5.0%

Wilmington's growth rates over the last three decades have recently trailed that of the County's. Between 1990 and 2000, Clinton County had over double the growth rate in population than that of Wilmington. This marked the first time in forty years, and only the second time ever, that the county growth rate has out-paced the City of Wilmington (Figure 1). (Also of note, this shift takes place parallel to a period of increased residential development in the townships, which will be discussed in the sections further below).

Figure 1: 1980-2010 Population Growth Rate Percentage by Decade of Wilmington and Clinton County, OH.



Source: Census, 2010; Minnesota Population Center. National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0, 2011.

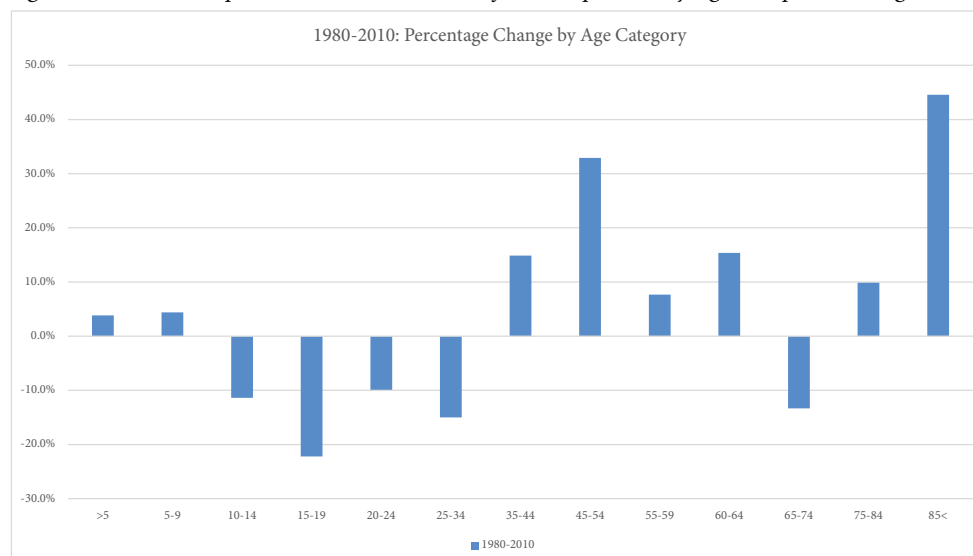
## Age Demographics

Wilmington currently has a relatively low median age of 33.7 (increased 13% from 1980-2010), which is significantly less than the state median age of 38.8 (2010), and is likely due to the presence of Wilmington College—a 4-year private, liberal arts college located in Wilmington.

Outside of median age, Wilmington, like many small towns across the country, is experiencing trending losses of its younger demographics. This trend is most observable in working-age cohorts. In addition, as life expectancies continue to increase as well as the aging of “baby boomers” (46-64 years old in 2010 Census), so too have there been observable increases in these age groups.

Since 1980, both of these trends can be seen as the majority of population decreases in age categories are 34 and under, and the largest percentage population increases are seen in age categories are above age 45—with the largest overall percentage population increase is in the age 85+ category (Figure 2).

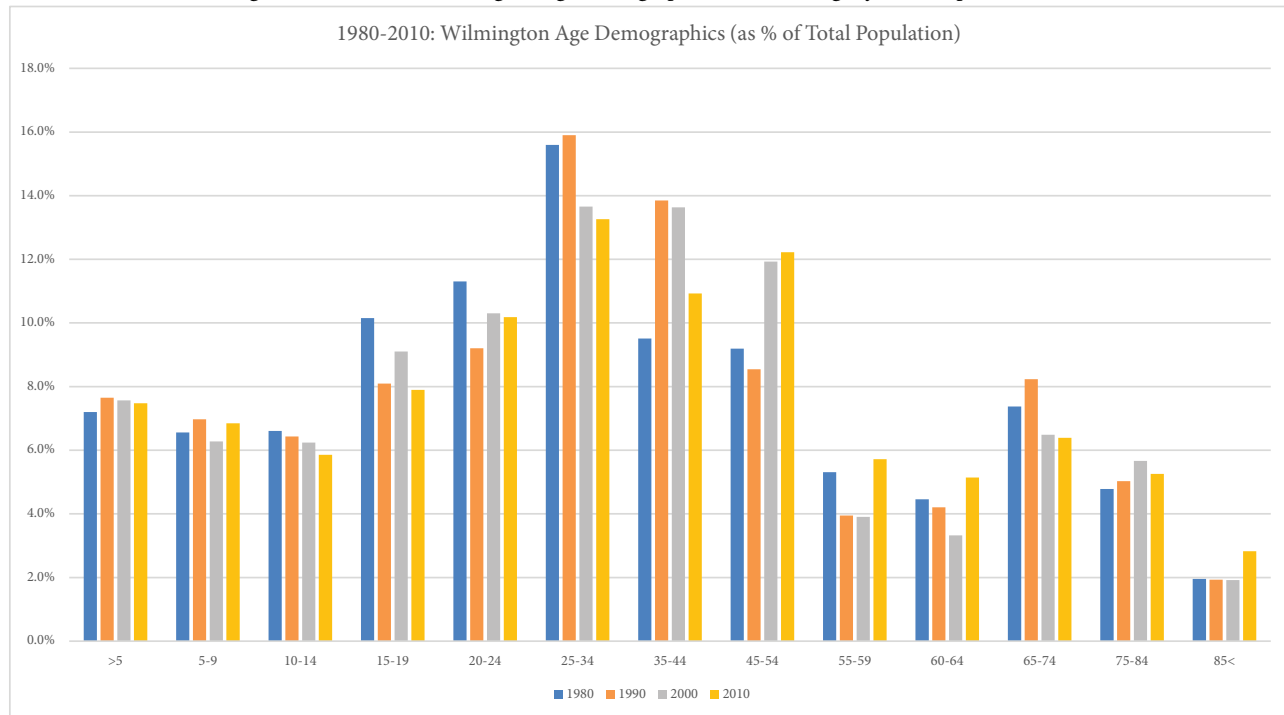
Figure 2: 1980-2010 Population Growth Rate as % of Total Population by Age Group in Wilmington, OH.



Source: Census, 2010; Minnesota Population Center. National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0, 2011.

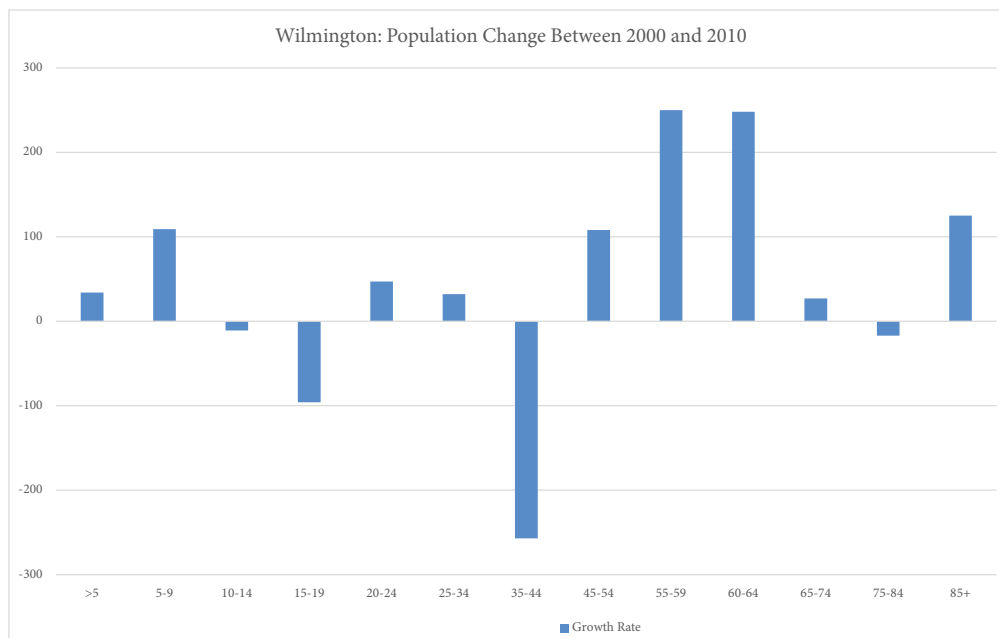
While the previous chart illustrates the overall percentage change from 1980-2010, the chart below provides the percentage change between each individual decade. Of note, in 1980 and 1990, the 25-34 year old age group was 69% and 87% larger than the 45-54 age group respectively, and today is only 9% larger. Additionally, the 35-44 age category, which saw growth from 1980, had the most dramatic decrease over the last decade (Figure 3). In other words, age groups are not simply shifting from one category to the next with each Census. Instead, some age groups are observing net losses from one decade to the next. This is most clearly observed in the 2000-2010 Census where the 45-54 year old category did not observe a percentage increase that was close to being similar to the percentage decrease in the 35-44 age category (Figure 4).

Figure 3: 1980-2010 Wilmington Age Demographics, as Percentage of Total Population.



Source: Census, 2010; Minnesota Population Center. National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0, 2011.

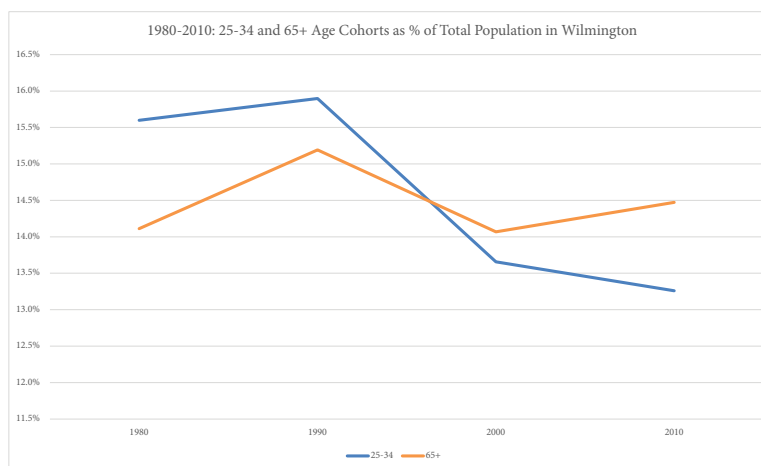
Figure 4: 2000-2010 Population Growth Rates by Age Group in Wilmington



Source: Census, 2000; Census, 2010.

Historic changes in aging trends can also be seen when comparing 25-34 and 65+ age categories. For the past two censuses there have been steady declines in 25-34 year olds and increases in 65+. The 2000 Census marked the first time that the 65+ cohort made up a larger percentage of the population than 25-34 year olds (Figure 5).

Figure 5: 1980-2010 Growth rates of 24-34 and 65+ Age Cohorts as % of Total Population in Wilmington



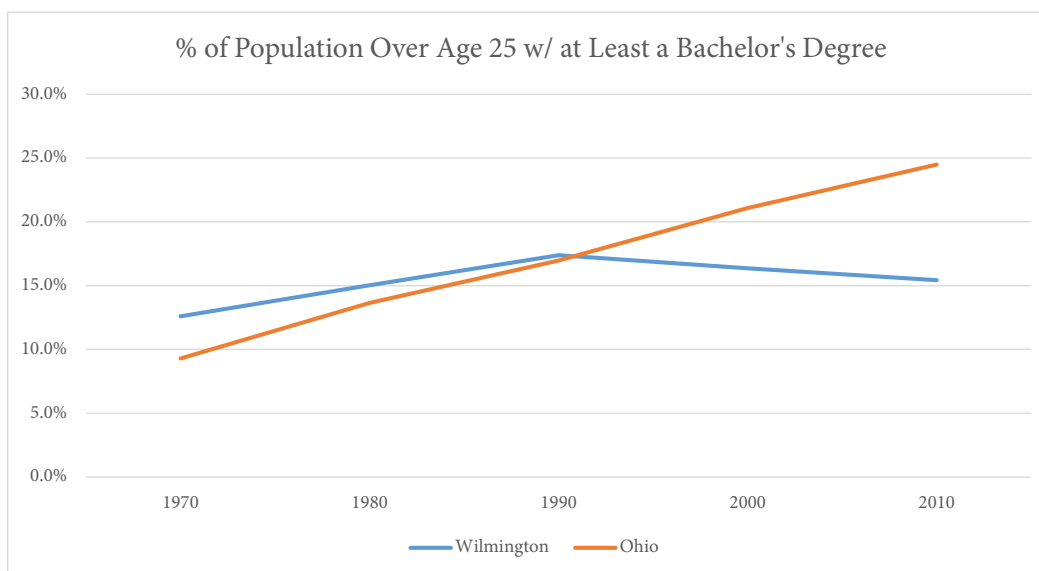
Source: Census, 2010; Minnesota Population Center. National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0, 2011.

## Educational Attainment

A potential consequence of DHL's presence in the last decade is the disincentive created for higher education due to the availability of competitive wages and benefits for relatively low-skill, service-sector employment. With a strong local presence of such professional opportunities, students over the past few decades have increasingly been incentivized to bypass higher educational attainment for employment out of high school.

Whereas the 1978 population was noted for its uniquely high levels of educational attainment, today the situation is 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 24.5% (Figure 6). The 1978 educational attainment rate in Wilmington was 13% compared to the 9% at the state level. Wilmington's current educational attainment rate is only 2 percentage points higher than it was in 1978, while the state's rate is 15.5 percentage points higher. Over the last 40 years, Wilmington's population has fallen notably behind in retaining and attracting college-educated citizens even while having two post-secondary institutions in the city limits.

Figure 6: 1970-2010 Percentage of Wilmington Residents > age 25 with at Least a Bachelor's Degree



Source: 2007-2011 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, 2010; Minnesota Population Center. National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0, 2011.

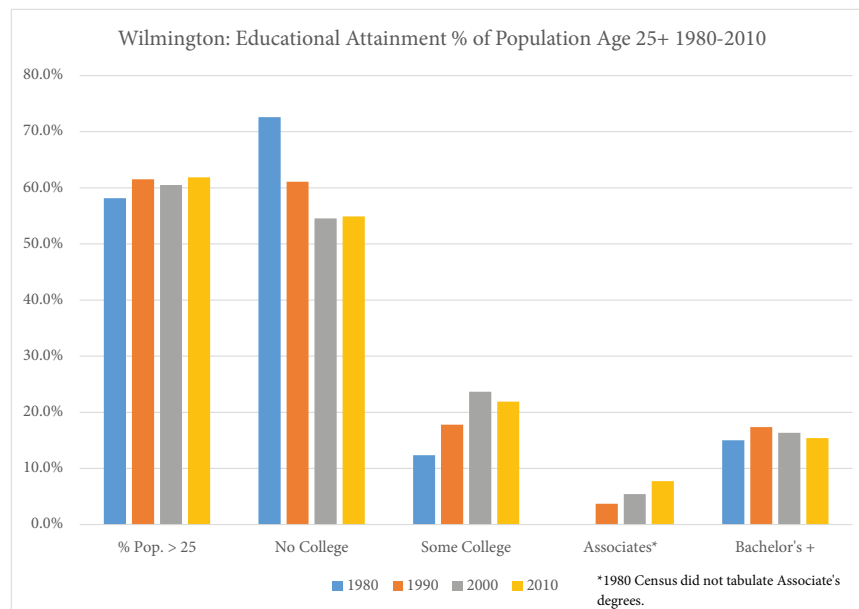


Additionally, with relatively high access to post-secondary educational opportunities in Wilmington, the declining number of individuals graduating with bachelor's degrees or more could also suggest a historical disconnect between the city and these institutions. Between 1990 and 2000, Wilmington saw a net *loss* of 17 residents with at least a bachelor's degree, and from 2000 to 2010, there was only a net gain of 16 residents. However, from 2000 to 2010, Wilmington College graduated 2,411 students with bachelor's degrees, of which approximately 362 were graduates from Clinton County. In essence, Wilmington is only adding in residents with at least a bachelor's degree the equivalent of 0.6% of an average graduating class from Wilmington College each year.

Aside from the declines at the bachelor's+ category, positive trends in educational attainment are observed 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.

Finally, the lagging indicators of a potential disincentive for pursuing higher education from the presence of an employer such as DHL is not only seen in the declining bachelor's degree+ numbers, but also in the population with no college attainment. From 2000-2010, Wilmington actually observed an increase in residents over the age of 25 with no college attainment (Figure 7). This is the only increase observed in this category over at least the last forty years.

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



Source: 2007-2011 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, 2010; Minnesota Population Center. National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0, 2011.

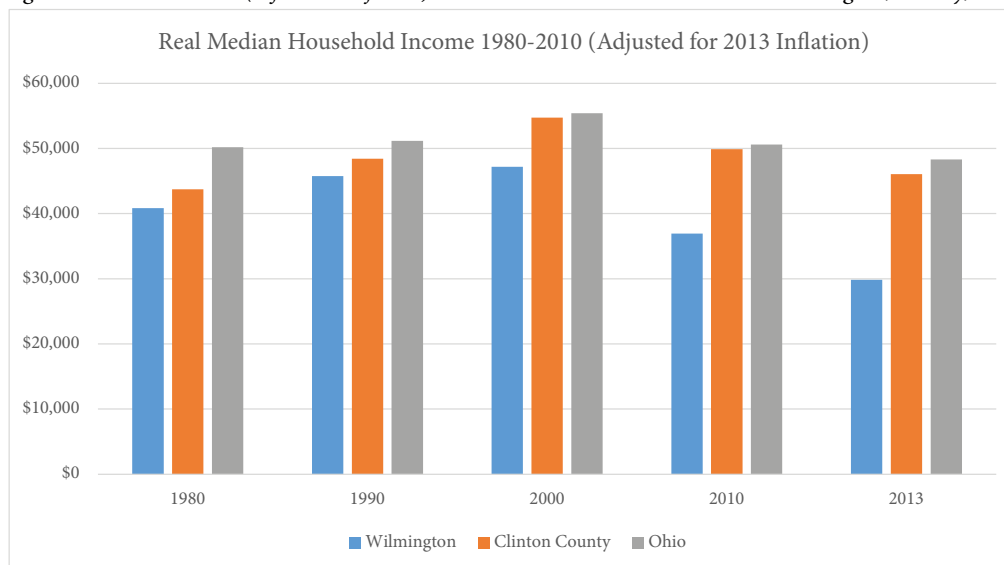
## Income

It was noted in the 1978 plan that the high levels of educational attainment of the time did not correlate with higher incomes in the community, a fact which was viewed as a positive characteristic for Wilmington. This is because the presence of an educated, yet affordable population would indicate high level of quality of life and community desirability—a place people wish to live even it means earning less. Today, such a workforce would still be viewed positively by potential employers. However, the observed declines in educational attainment coupled with lower income levels paints a different picture and has a potential negative effect on the types of employers that Wilmington is capable of attracting.

It was also noted in the 1978 plan 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 still show a high level of low-income earners, but the level of middle-income earners has since declined. Compared to the state of Ohio, Wilmington is above state levels in low-income categories and below state percentages in middle-income categories.

In addition, median household incomes grew through the decades of growth (1990-2000), but have since fallen to below 1980s levels. While both the county and state median household income levels observed declines in the recession, neither were as dramatic as Wilmington's, which fell to \$29,828 in 2013—a 37% decrease from 2000, when median household incomes in Wilmington peaked.

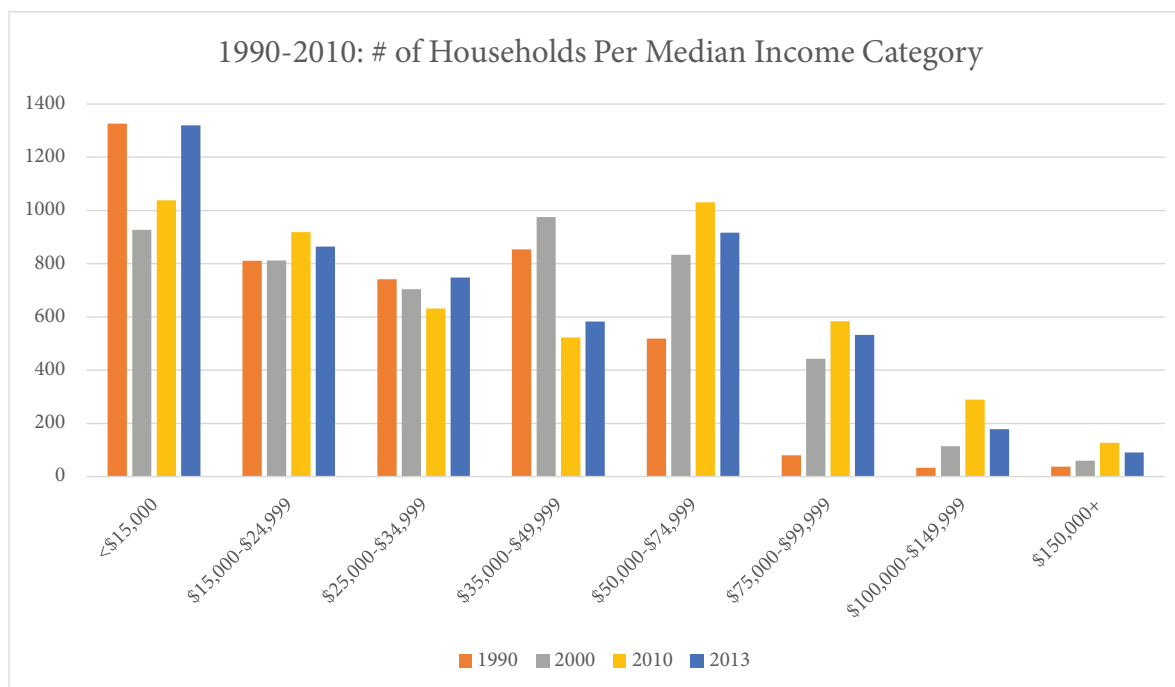
Figure 8: 1980-2013 Real (Inflation Adjusted) Median Household Income between Wilmington, County, State



Source: Census, 2010 and 2009-2013 American Community Survey; Minnesota Population Center. National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0, 2011.

Over the past 20 years, Wilmington observed decreases in the number of households in the lowest and middle income categories, while seeing increases in middle-low and higher income categories. These decreases in the lower income categories have since been reversed, and in the case of households in the lowest income category, are at near similar levels as there were in 1990—when \$15,000 was equivalent to more than \$27,000 in 2014 dollars. Additionally, the upward trends in the number of households in higher income categories have started to see declines following the recession.

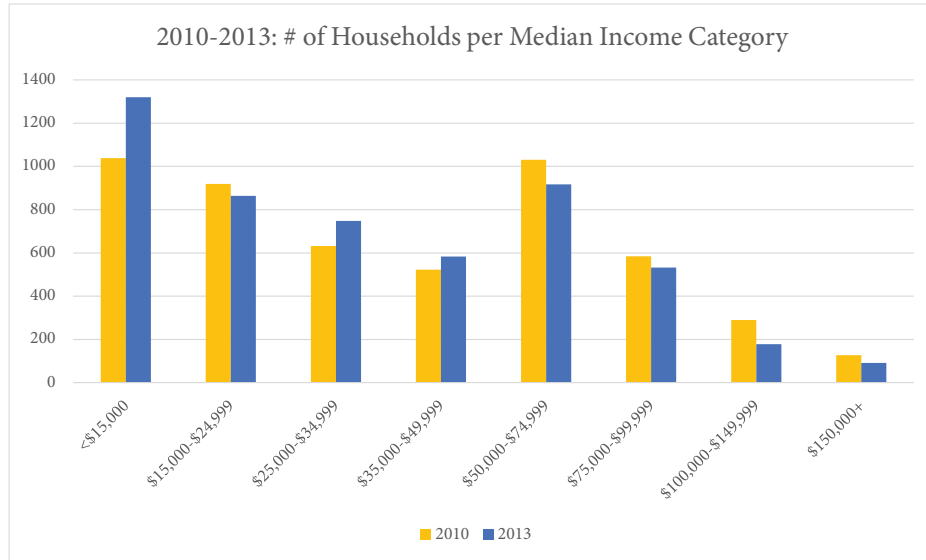
Figure 9: 1990-2013 Total Wilmington Households per Median Income Category



Source: Census, 2010 and 2009-2013 American Community Survey; Minnesota Population Center. National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0, 2011.

The decreases in the number of households in the lowest income categories from 1990-2000 are most certainly due to the increases in low-skill jobs in Wilmington through the “boom years” at the Wilmington Air Park. As mentioned, these decreases have since flipped with notable increases in the number of low-income households following the loss of DHL in 2008. This has been more pronounced in just the last few years. From 2010 to 2013, Wilmington saw a 27% increase in the number of households earning less than \$15,000 a year (Figure 10).

Figure 10: 2010-2013 Total Wilmington Households by Median Income Category

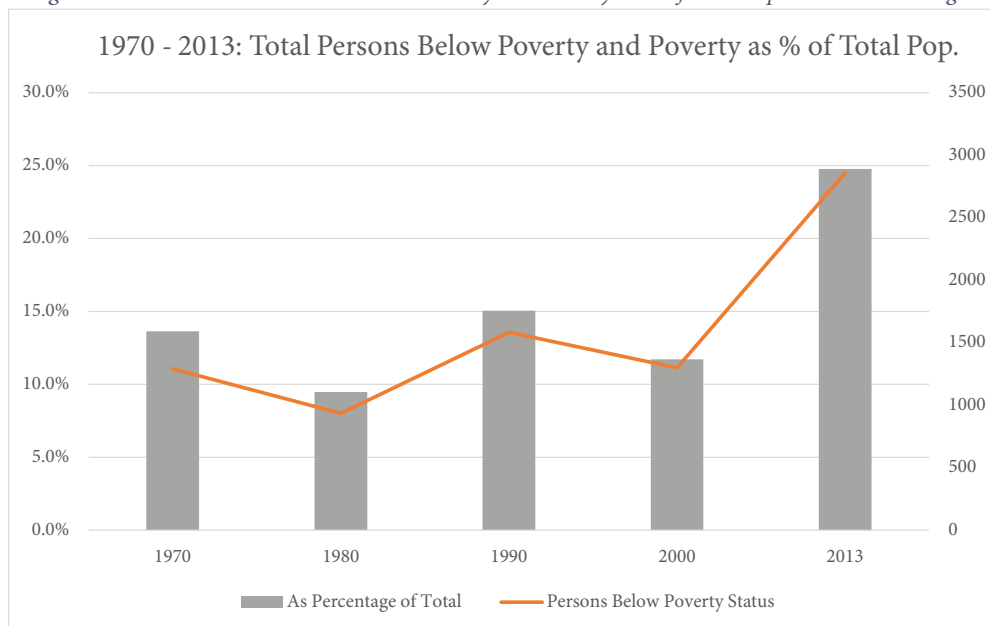


Source: Census, 2010 and 2009-2013 American Community Survey

## Poverty

One concern following the loss of DHL has been the potential for increases in poverty locally. Through the 1990s and early 2000s Wilmington saw steady declines in local poverty rates. However, from 2000-2013, there has been a 120% increase in the number of individuals below the poverty line. The number of individuals below poverty as a percentage of total population went from 11.7% to 24.8% in the same time period (Figure 11).

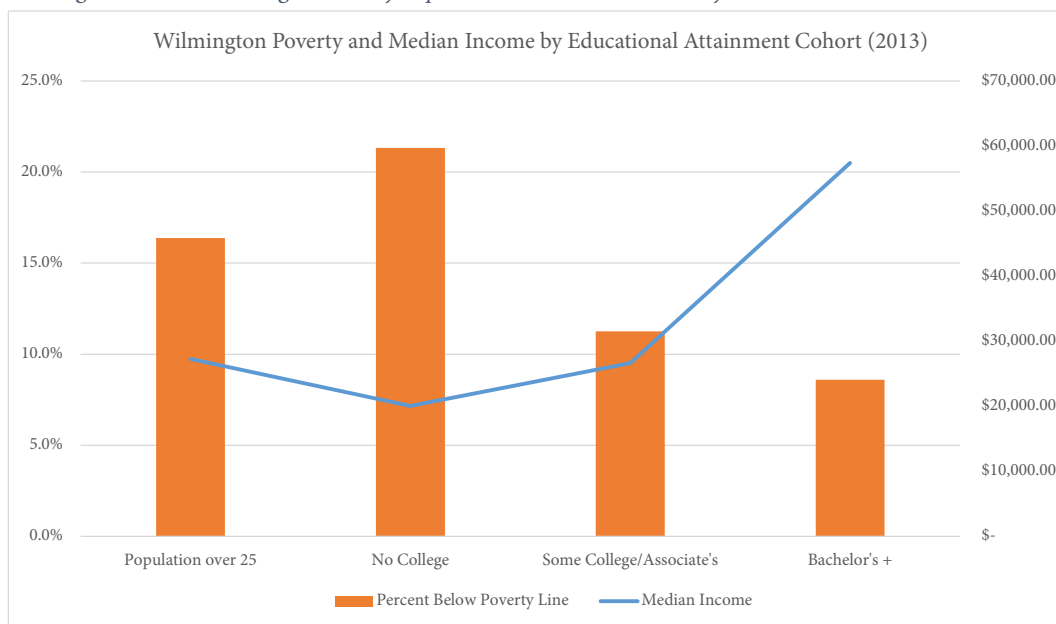
Figure 11: 1970-2013 Total Persons below Poverty and Poverty as % of Total Population in Wilmington



Source: Census, 2010 and 2009-2013 American Community Survey; Minnesota Population Center. National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0, 2011.

When comparing income and poverty to educational attainment rates, there are noteworthy observations. Individuals in the lower educational attainment cohorts show lower median incomes and a higher percentage below poverty. As educational attainment rates go up, so too does median income as well as lower poverty rates (Figure 12).

Figure 12: 2013 Wilmington Poverty Population and Median Income by Educational Attainment Cohort

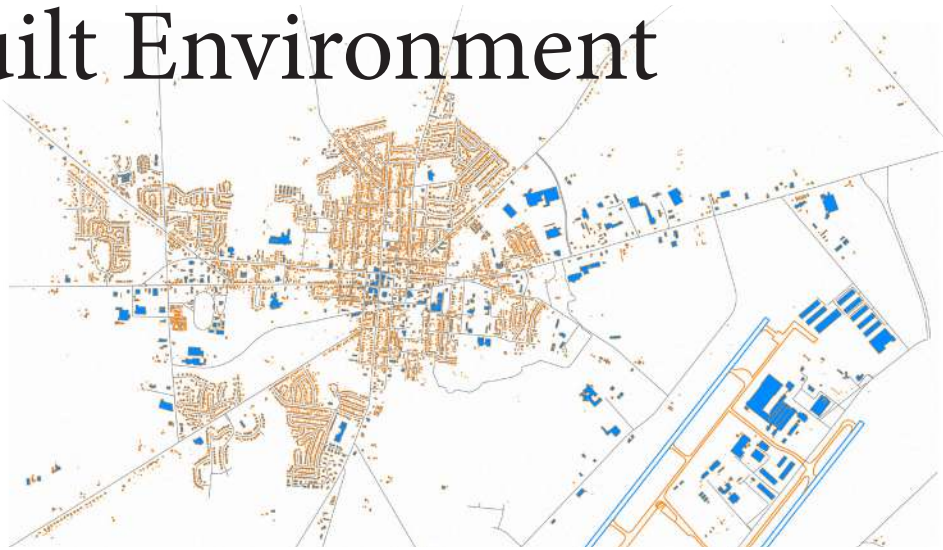


Source: 2009-2013 American Community Survey

Overall, the existing conditions related to population and demographics are not positive for Wilmington and hopefully represent “the bottom” of the economic crisis and decades of indicators masked by general economic prosperity. Issues stemming not just from the presence of DHL, but also those generally faced by smaller, rural communities over the last several decades are apparent. These issues will have a direct impact on the ability of the City to continue to meet the demands of existing services and will limit the ability of the City to address the need for future service expansion. Being responsive to the current conditions of population and demographics should be a high priority for the City going forward. Finally, understanding the relationship between the changes in population and demographics and changes in the built environment, which will be discussed in the next section, will help shape policy to address priority concerns for the community.



# The Built Environment



Existing land use in the 1978 plan painted a picture of steady growth (since the previous 1954 plan) and projected that growth would double by the year 2000. Issues related to growth or a lack of growth do not appear to be a major factor leading to current conditions of the built environment. Rather than dramatic change to the built environment over the last 40 years, there have been a number of development-related shifts which have occurred in various forms and degrees.

Significant shifts in the built environment over the past several decades include commercial growth, particularly along Rombach Avenue; residential growth beyond the City boundaries in Union Township and elsewhere in the county; declining home ownership, property values, and neighborhood stability in the urban core; lack of investment in the historic downtown; and expansion at the Wilmington Air Park.

These shifts in the built environment were almost all in response to demographic and economic changes taking place in the community as well as macro-level economic pressures. Most of the change over the last several decades is in some way tied to growth at the Wilmington Air Park, and more recently, the unexpected economic crisis.

Notable issues related to the current conditions of the built environment in Wilmington are:

- Changes in housing tenure—declining home ownership and associated issues in neighborhood stability;
- Lagging new construction, particularly compared to the rest of the county;
- Lack of infill development and new service customers on existing infrastructure;
- Dated or vacated commercial fabric;
- Needed improvements to access and connectivity of thoroughfares;

## Residential Development

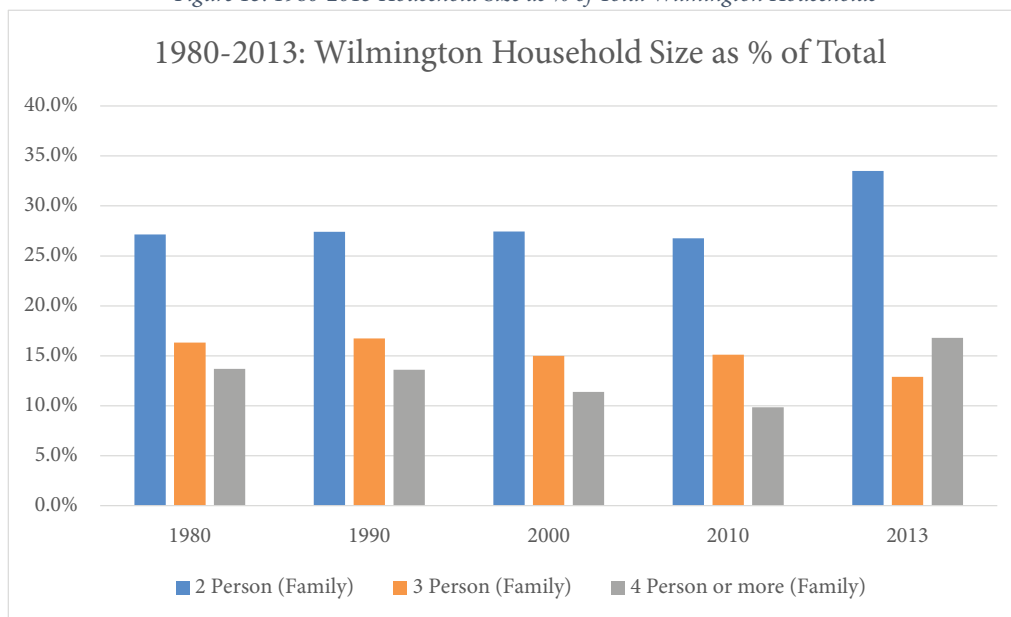
The 1978 plan focused on encouraging infill residential development, with some strategic multi-family housing developments, and the preservation of older residential areas of the community. The plan noted that Wilmington had observed an increase in residential land use from 537 acres to 720 acres (+183 acres) from 1953 to 1978. Since then, residential acreage in Wilmington has 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 coupled with increased development outside the City in the townships.

In addition to the lack of new residential development, and more importantly infill development, changes in the housing tenure have likely played a significant role in shaping the current condition of residential land use. As will be discussed below, decreasing rates of home ownership, and the consequences of this trend, are very likely connected to the decreases in median income and increases in poverty levels discussed in the previous section. In addition, declining home ownership rates are likely connected to other negative issues throughout the City as there are many studies which have produced a compelling argument for the importance of home ownership to overall community health.

## Household Size

In 2013, average household size was 2.21, slightly down from 2.28 in 2000. Through the decades, most of the change in household size has been at the percentage increase in 2 person households going from 27.2% in 1980 to 33.5% in 2013 (Figure 13). This increase in 2-person households correlates with the aging of the population and increase in empty nesters as well as other factors discussed in the previous section.

Figure 13: 1980-2013 Household Size as % of Total Wilmington Households

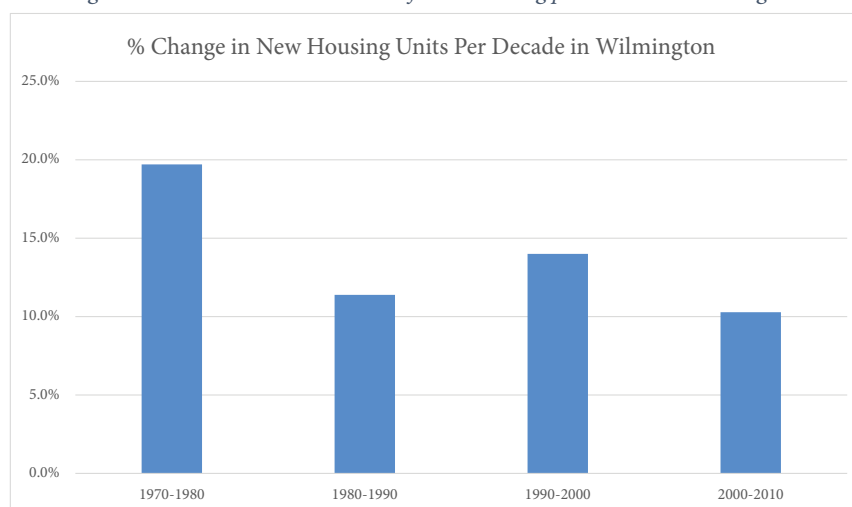


Source: Census, 2010 and 2009-2013 American Community Survey; Minnesota Population Center. National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0, 2011.

## Residential Construction

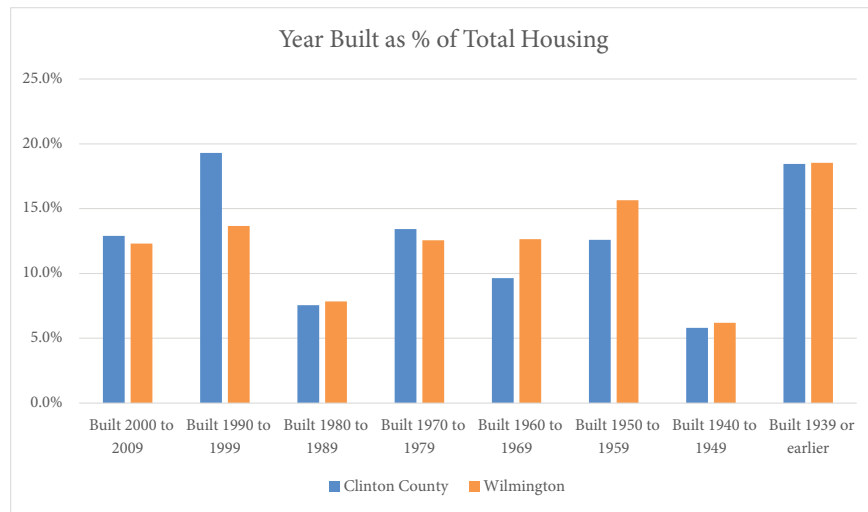
Not surprisingly, during a down housing market nationally, the growth rate of new housing units in Wilmington was low during the last decade, 2000-2010 (Figure 14). However, growth rates in new housing have declined each decade since 1970. The one exception being the high growth decade of 1990-2000. However, even during this period of growth, Wilmington was out-paced by the rest of Clinton County. Compared to the county, Wilmington's housing stock is more aged, with a majority of housing units having been built before 1970, whereas the majority of county housing was built after 1970 (Figure 15).

Figure 14: 1970-2010 Growth Rate of New Housing per Decade in Wilmington



Source: Census, 2010; Minnesota Population Center. National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0, 2011.

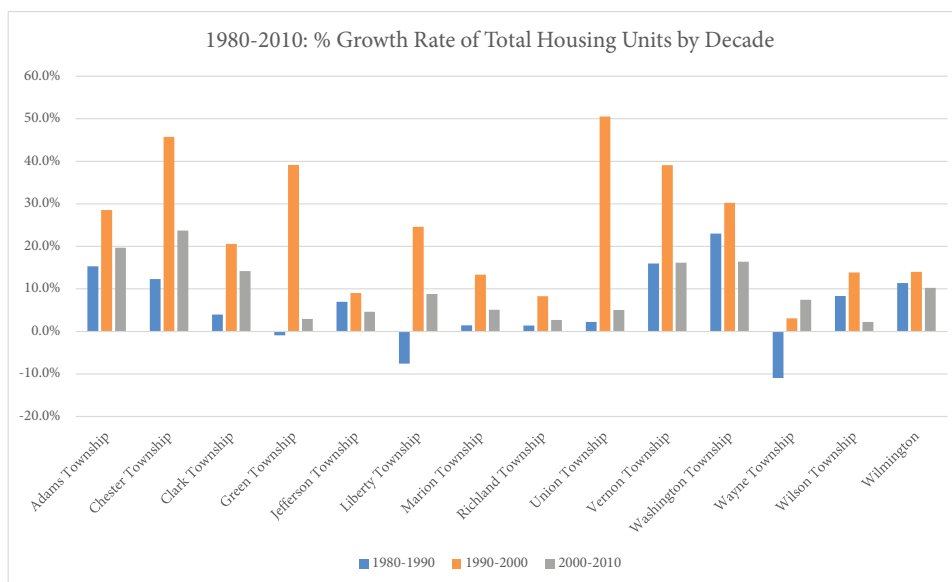
Figure 15: Age of Structure as % of Total Housing in Wilmington and County



Source: Census, 2010; Minnesota Population Center. National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0, 2011.

During the growth period of 1990-2000, most of the new residential construction in Clinton County was taking place outside of Wilmington—primarily in Union and the western townships of Vernon, Clark and Chester Township (Figure 16). This decade saw twice as many townships out-pace Wilmington in new housing construction compared to the previous decade. The growth rate of new housing in Union Township from 1990-2000, alone, was 2,100% more than its growth rate in the previous decade (1980-1990).

Figure 16: 1980-2010 Growth Rate of New Housing Units by Decade in Wilmington and Townships

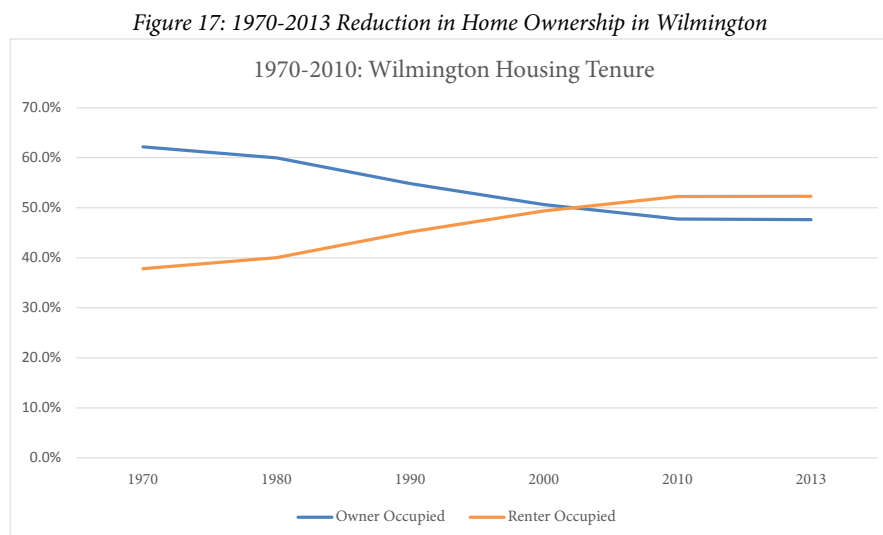


Source: Census, 2010; Minnesota Population Center. National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0, 2011.

## Housing Tenure

An issue that has developed over the last few decades is the decrease in home ownership rates and the rise of renter-occupied housing in Wilmington. In the 2010 census, for the first time, renter-occupied housing exceeded 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.

Since 1970, the number of owner-occupied homes, as percentage of total homes, has fallen from 62.2% to 47.6% in 2013—a reduction of nearly 23.4%. Similarly, since 1970, the number of renter-occupied homes in Wilmington has gone from 37.8% to 52.3% in 2013—an increase of 38.3% (Figure 17).



Source: Census, 2010 and 2009-2013 American Community Survey; Minnesota Population Center, National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0, 2011.

## Commercial Development

Between 1953 and 1978 Wilmington saw a significant increase (over 350%) in commercial development acreage, mostly due to the new Rombach Avenue strip development. It was recommended in 1978 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 overall 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 (Figure 18). Additional commercial acreage has occurred due to annexations on the eastern portion of Wilmington following the development of a new Walmart Supercenter in 2002.

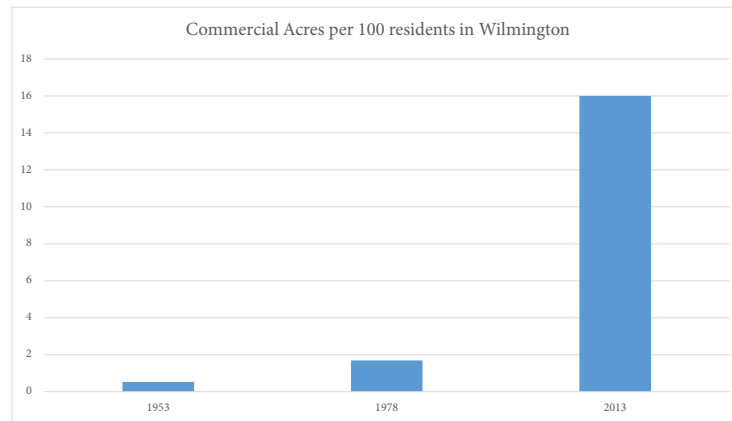


Source: 1978 Wilmington Plan; Clinton County Auditor Data, 2013.

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 (Figure 19).

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 the 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 would not be classified as vacant.

Figure 19: 1953-2013 Commercial Acres per 100 Residents in Wilmington, OH



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

The growth in commercial development has without a doubt been one the most significant shifts in Wilmington's built environment. In addition to new growth, there have been more recent changes related to commercial land use stemming from the loss of DHL as well as macro-level shifts in consumer behavior and commercial activity. There are a number of commercial centers in Wilmington which once were thriving and today show many signs of wear and decline (pictures below). While some commercial areas show signs of activity, there are other areas with much blight—large amounts of unused parking capacity, deteriorating surface lots, dilapidated buildings, and a look of near-abandonment. Each of these commercial areas appear disconnected and like islands in the City.

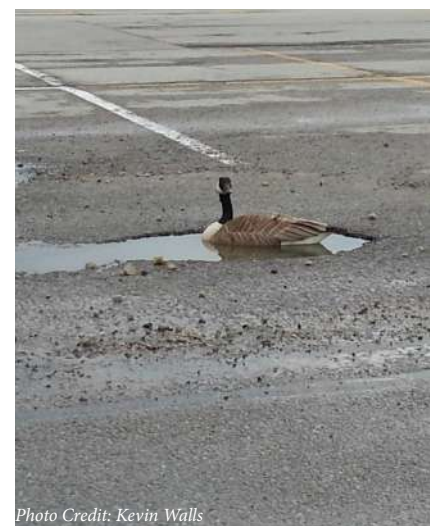


Photo Credit: Kevin Walls



## Industrial Development

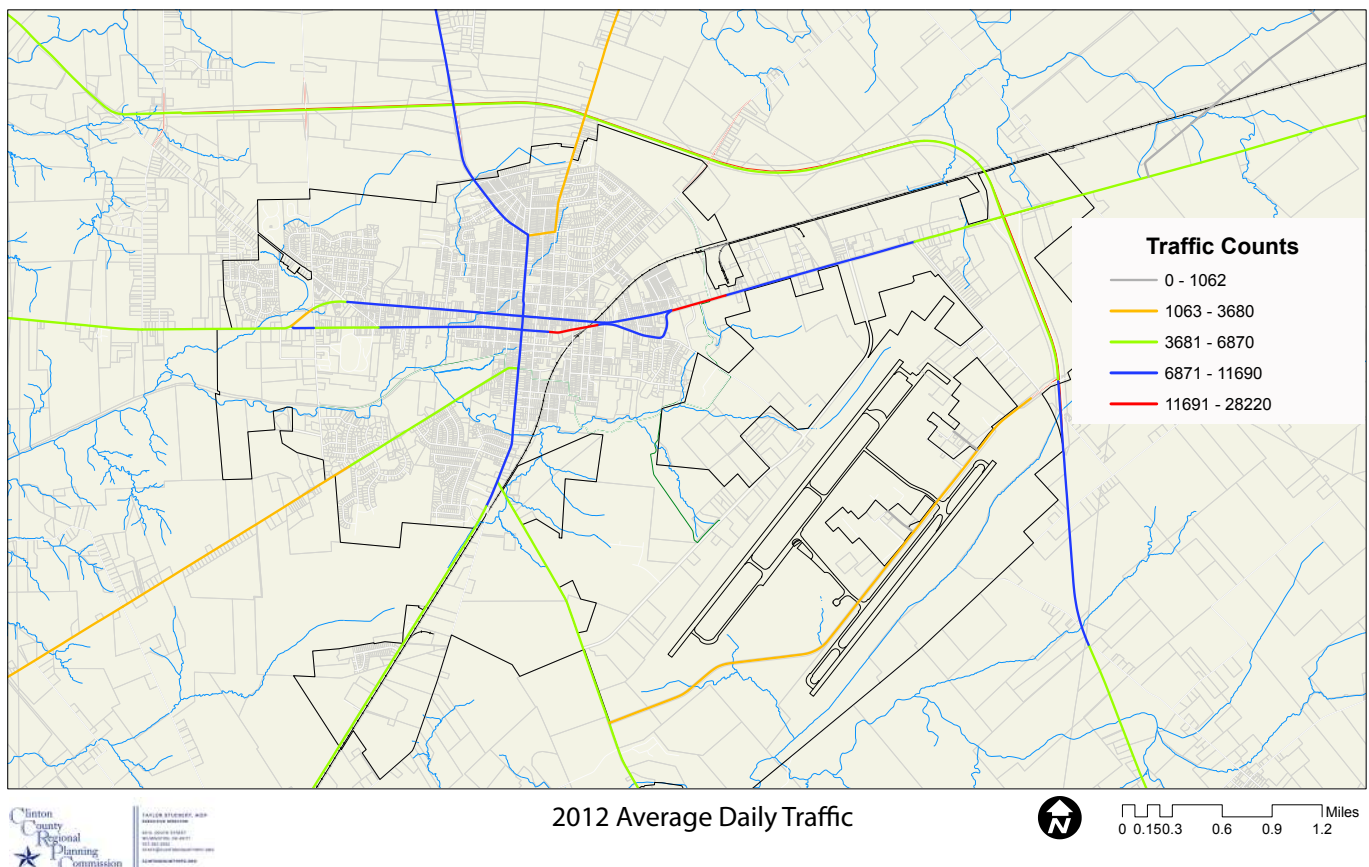
In 1978, Wilmington had a diverse industrial base anchored by a multitude of equally sized companies such as: Cincinnati Milacron, Inc., Ferno-Washington, Inc., Irwin Auger Bit Company, and Textron Inc./Randall Co. Division—each with between 300 to 600 employees. The 1978 plan showed that when including 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.

Including the Wilmington Air park, industrial land use acreage in Wilmington totals 1833 acres—a 697% increase from 1978. Not including the Wilmington Air Park, currently 90% of available industrial land is in use. The growth of the Wilmington Air Park following the 1978 plan has been the main source of industrial growth in Wilmington, as well as local economic activity, which will be discussed in the next section.

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 growth at the air park), industrial growth has stayed somewhat close to projections of the last 35 years.

## Transportation

In Wilmington's more recent history, thoroughfare planning has primarily 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 which focuses on transportation diversity and the walkability of communities.



Since the 1978 plan there have been some notable changes to the thoroughfare inventory in Wilmington such as the 73 by-pass, David's Drive, and the widening of Rombach Avenue to 4 lanes. 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.

As an effect of the 73 by-pass there have also been changes to the flow of traffic through Wilmington. This was an important topic in the public participation process as many residents noted that the flow of traffic was negatively affecting neighborhoods and increasing traffic in some areas. In addition, recent changes in transportation have highlighted areas that are in need of greater connectivity, such as southern Wilmington, which was significantly limited during bridge construction on South 68, and Prairie Ave./134 thoroughfare access.

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. Recently, the first-ever comprehensive trails and greenway plan for Clinton County was adopted, which 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. Many examples throughout town show a lack of emphasis on pedestrian safety and accessibility.

However, some work has already begun to improve connectivity and safety such as the urban trail connector, connecting Wilmington College to the downtown via the Sugartree Street Corridor.



*Top-left: Rombach Ave. crosswalk worn away (credit: Google Maps)*

*Bottom-Left: Crosswalk on N. South Street between Locust and Main Street.*

*Below: N. South Street Crosswalk poorly marked.*



# The Local Economy

Over the past 37 years Wilmington has seen many changes in its built environment. The most observable changes have been the dramatic growth in commercial development, particularly along Rombach Avenue, industrial growth in and around the air park, the construction of the 73 by-pass, and changes to the form of residential areas, especially older neighborhoods. No doubt much of this change is directly tied to economic changes both locally and beyond the community, and any negative impacts caused by these changes were countered by the positive impacts of economic growth and prosperity. In other words, the built environment we see today was developed in response to an economy that has since dramatically changed. The ways in which Wilmington's present economic conditions influence changes in the future built environment remain to be seen.

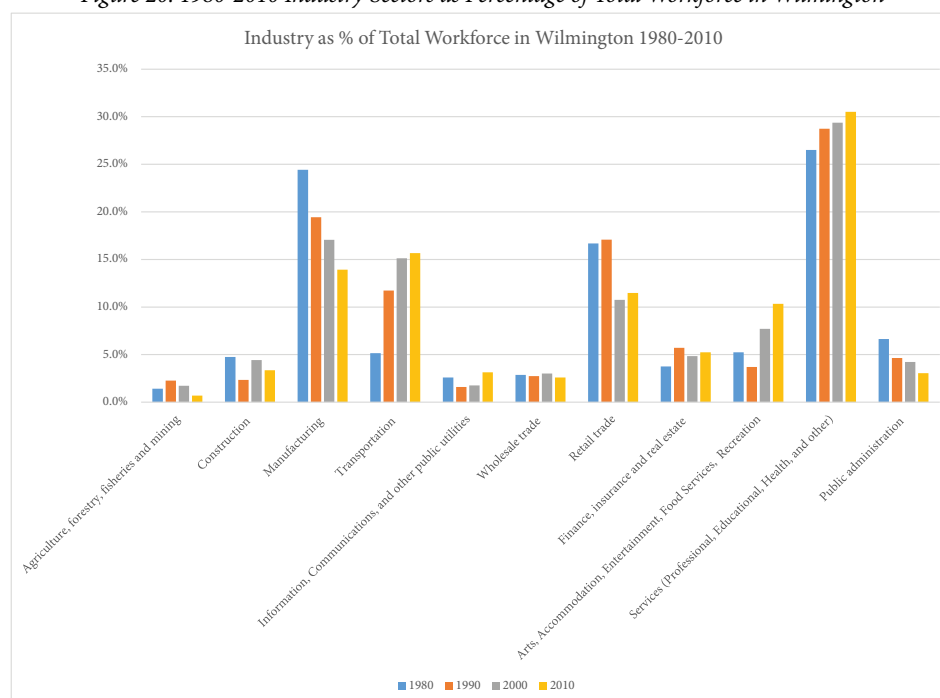
Like many rural places across the country, Wilmington and Clinton County have seen major transformations to the local economy over the past half century. More recently, in 2008, Wilmington was faced with a nationally-spotlighted economic crisis when its largest employer at the time, DHL made the decision 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 being labeled by many in the media as 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. In the plan, analysis of the local economy was limited to a small list of specific employers anchoring the industrial base. As mentioned in the previous 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 employees.

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 20<sup>th</sup> 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.

Within the City of Wilmington, the service sector (including professional, educational and health) has shown relative stability over the past 30 years compared to other areas of the economy.

Figure 20: 1980-2010 Industry Sectors as Percentage of Total Workforce in Wilmington



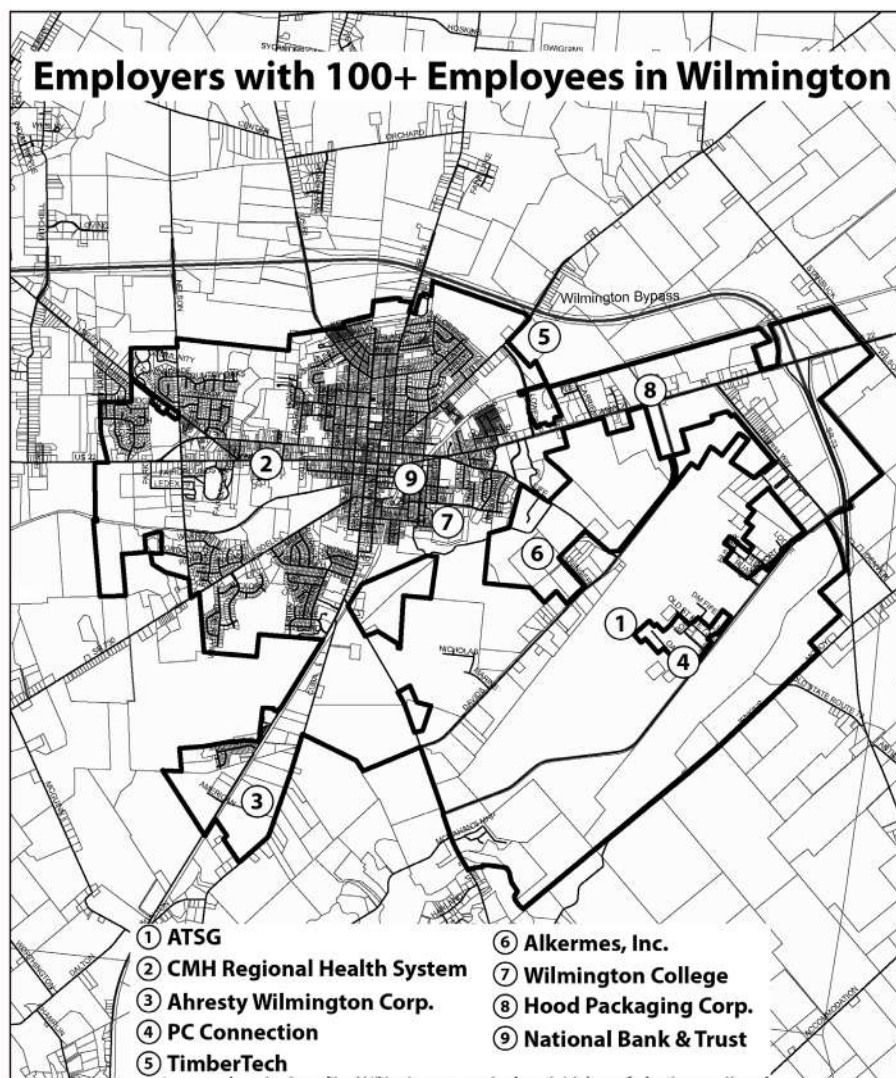
Source: Census, 2010; Minnesota Population Center. National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0, 2011.



Below is a list and map of companies located within the City of Wilmington with at least 100 employees.

ATSG, Inc. (AMES/ABX)	1,000	Alkermes, Inc.	275
CMH Regional Health System	700	Wilmington College	196
Ahresty Wilmington	400	Hood Packaging	191
Ferno-Washington	338	Walmart	150
TimberTech	300	National Bank & Trust	140

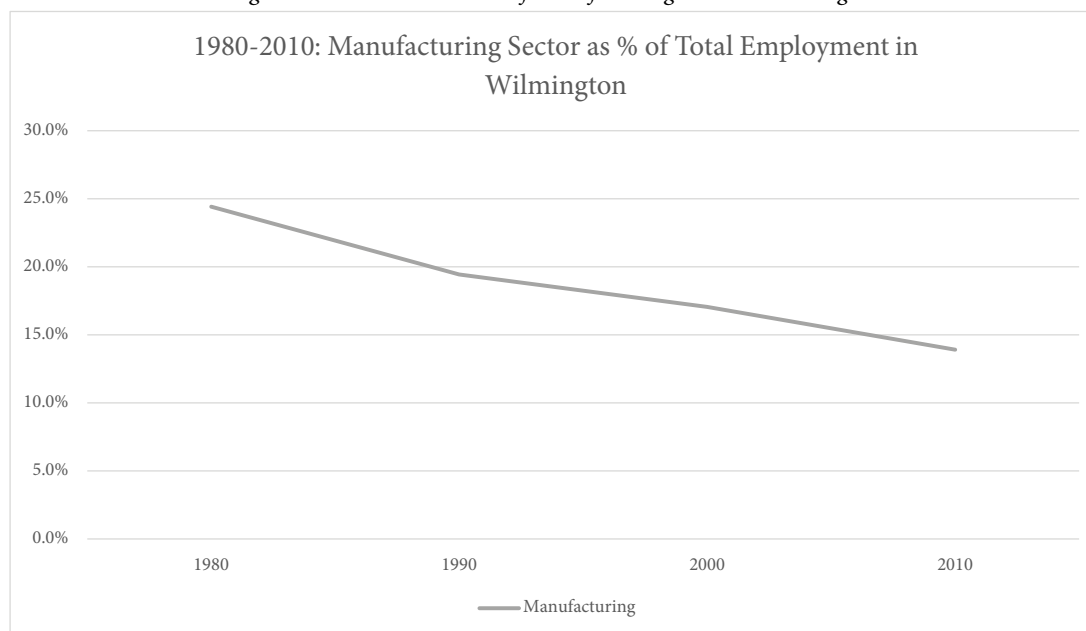
Figure 21: Wilmington Employers with 100+ Employees





As mentioned previously, and which is not unique to Wilmington, the manufacturing sector of the economy has experienced steady decline through the last several decades (Figure 22).

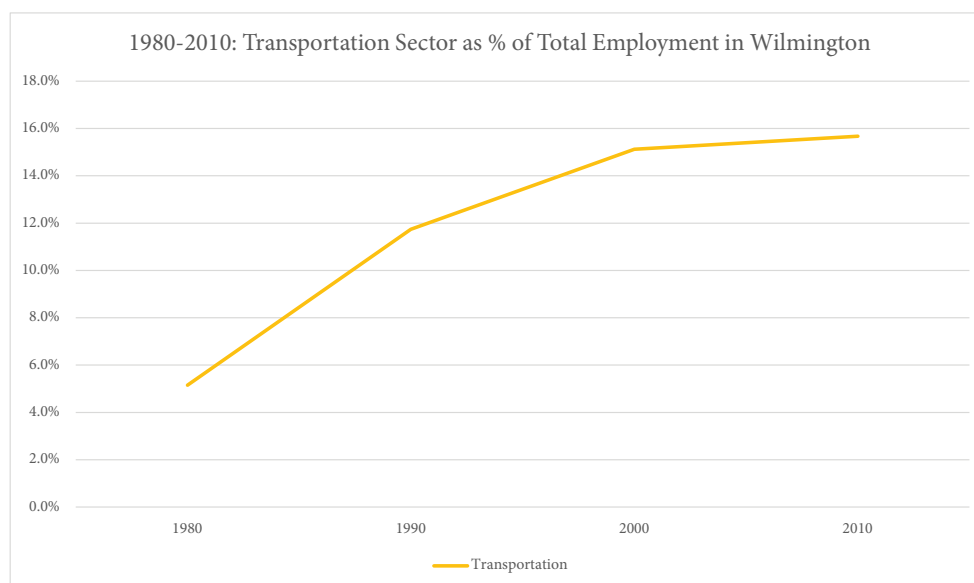
Figure 22: 1980-2010 Decline of Manufacturing Sector in Wilmington



Source: Census, 2010; Minnesota Population Center. National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0, 2011.

For Wilmington and Clinton County, transportation industries replaced manufacturing as the economic base. From 1980-2010, the transportation economy saw over 207% growth (Figure 23). Most of this growth was driven by activity at the Wilmington Air Park with the arrival of Airborne Express and later DHL, as well as expansion by R&L Carriers.

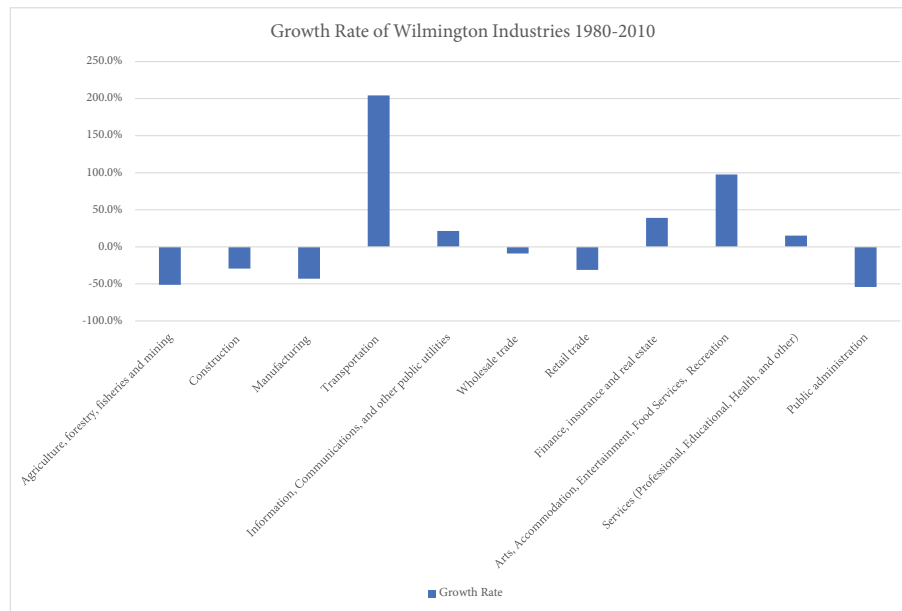
Figure 23: 1980-2010 Positive Growth Rate in Transportation Sector in Wilmington



Source: Census, 2010; Minnesota Population Center. National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0, 2011.

Transportation easily saw the highest growth rate of any industry in Wilmington from 1980 through 2010. At its peak, the transportation sector accounted for nearly 40% of the workforce in Clinton County—a height which was placed in perspective after the 82% fall caused by DHL (Figure 24).

Figure 24: 1980-2010 Growth Rate of Wilmington Industry Sectors



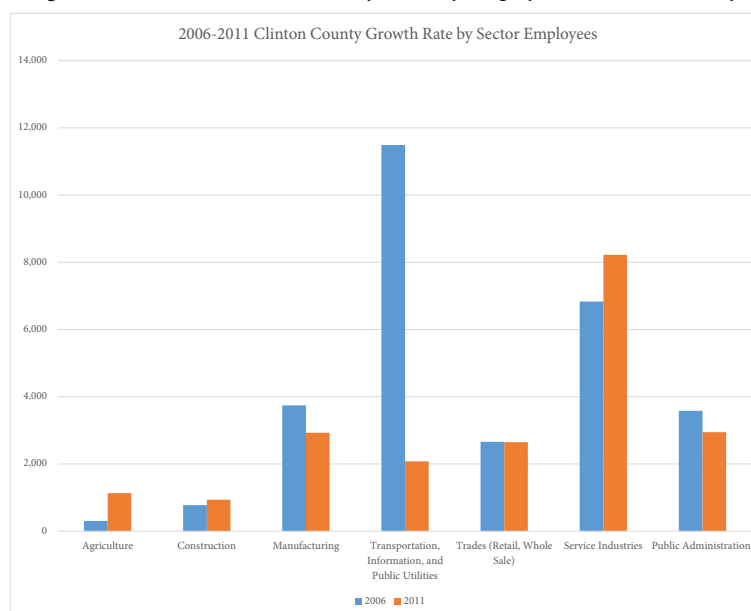
Source: Census, 2010; Minnesota Population Center. National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0, 2011.

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.

Following the loss of DHL, Wilmington saw much of the growth in the transportation sector erased. A 2009 report titled, “Clinton County Recovery Strategy Guidelines,” submitted by a team from the University of Cincinnati (led by Dr. Michael Romanos), EMHT (Peter Mallow), and the Clinton County Regional Planning Commission, provided the most immediate analysis of the impact of DHL’s departure on Clinton County as a whole. The graph below illustrates the gravity of DHL’s departure and the erased growth in the transportation sector of Clinton County’s economy using data from that report as well as 2011 IMPLAN data (Figure 25).

Not surprisingly, Wilmington saw notable increases in its unemployment rates following the loss of DHL (Figure 26). However, though unemployment has decreased, so too has labor force participation (those employed or actively seeking employment) declined. Thus the declines in unemployment should not be strictly interpreted as people finding jobs.

Figure 25: 2006-2011 Growth Rate by Industry Employees in Clinton County



Source: Clinton County Recovery Strategy Guidelines, 2009; IMPLAN, 2013.

Figure 26: 1970-2013 Unemployment and Labor Force in Wilmington

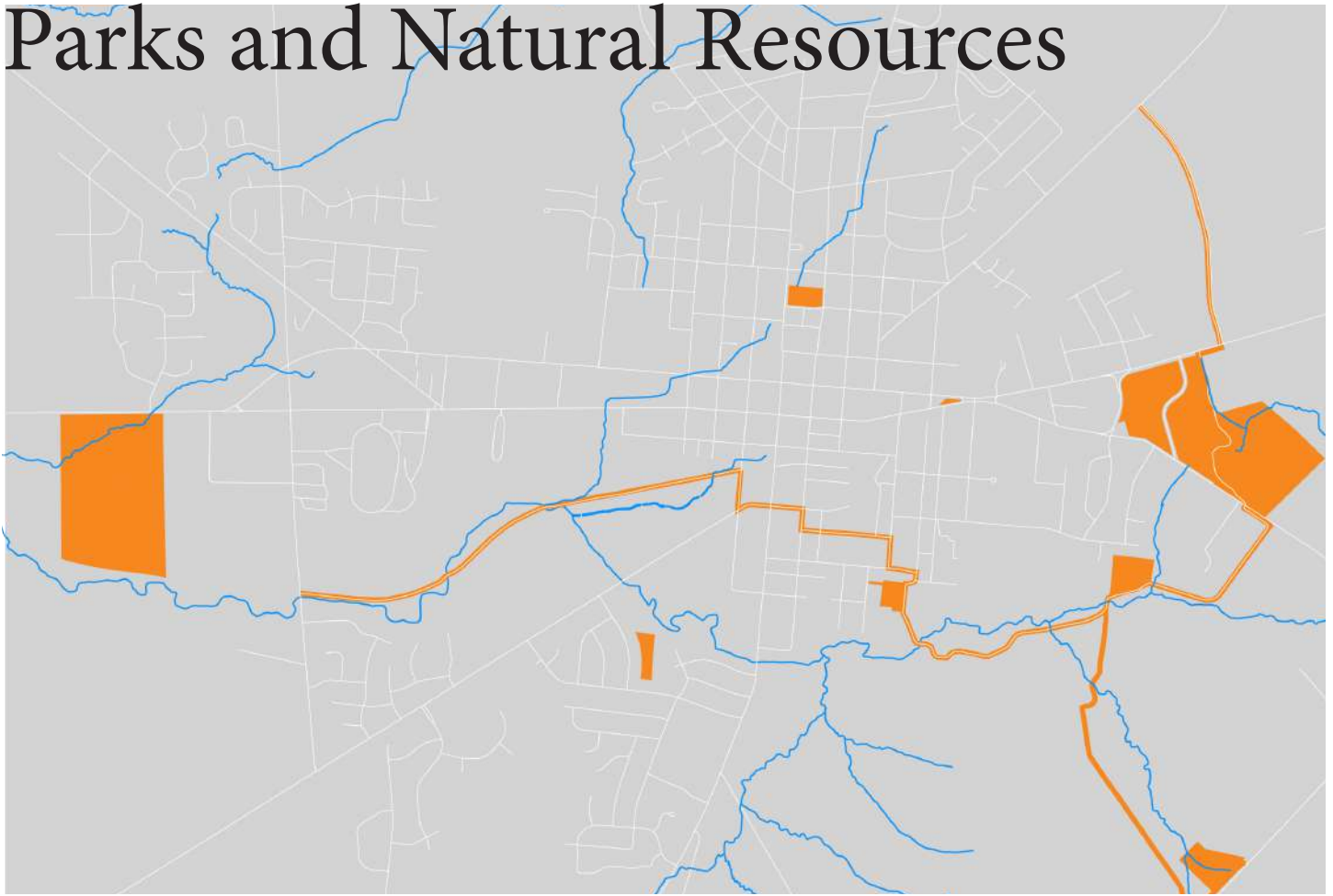


Source: Census, 2009-2011 American Community Survey; 2009-2013 American Community Survey; Minnesota Population Center. National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0, 2011.

Wilmington's economy exploded over the last several decades in ways that no one predicted even a decade removed from the closure of the air base in 1971. As noted in the previous sections, this economic boom has left a mark on Wilmington in many ways beyond the jobs that came and went and permanently changed the historic course of the community. Though Wilmington has proven the possibility, it is unlikely that the community will see another DHL-sized employer in the coming decades. Going forward, the economic outlook and economic development strategies for Wilmington should not hinge on the hopeful arrival on one large employer, and should instead focus on improving the community in ways that attract and retain the types of jobs that will ultimately contribute to improving the City as a whole.



# Parks and Natural Resources



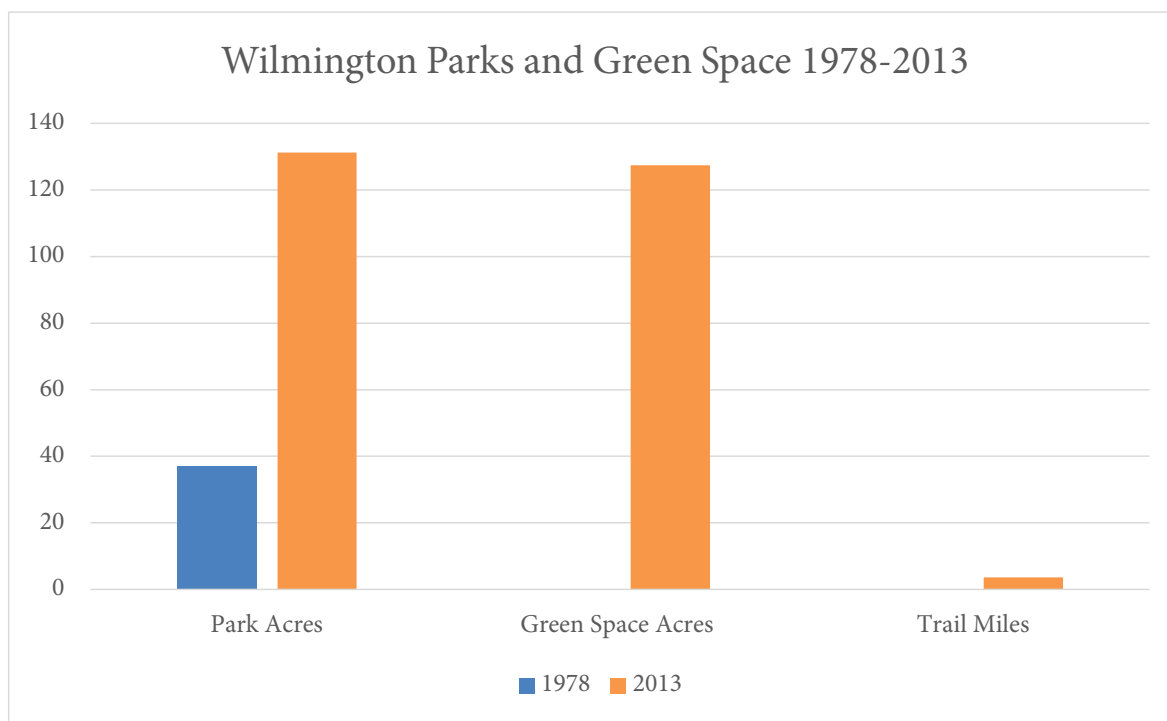
Park facilities in the City of Wilmington have seen some changes since the 1978 plan. Over the last several decades J.W. Denver Williams Memorial Park has remained the major park facility in Wilmington, and in addition to Southeast Neighborhood Park and the Point Park, Wilmington has added a handful of other facilities and a sizeable increase in park and green space acreage as well as the addition of trails.

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
- 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 27: 1978-2013 Wilmington Parks and Green Space Acres



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, which at one time was nearly \$100,000.

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. However, such revenue does not account for park users who live outside of the city borders. This revenue stream is further affected by the trends in residential land use in and surrounding Wilmington, household income trends, and other potential negative impacts on property values that would negatively affect the parks levy.

# Summary and Conclusions

Through this update of existing conditions it is quite clear that Wilmington has observed many planning-related changes over the past 37 years. Without a doubt, the most unexpected turn of events since 1978 was the growth of the Wilmington Air Park and the changes brought by the magnitude and size of employers Airborne Express and DHL. The way that one employer influenced every aspect of this community though unprecedented, is similar to the Clinton County Air Force Base.

While change is certainly always expected, and hopefully anticipated, many of the existing conditions experienced today are connected to growth at the Wilmington Air Park, and general, positive economic growth masking limited response to negative conditions occurring.

A summary of some of the notable changes in existing conditions are:

- Limited population growth
- Aging population
- Severe reductions in educational attainment
- Increases in poverty
- Changes in housing tenure (Renter/Owner-Occupied)
- Declining median household income
- Lagging residential development (and growth in townships)
- Major increase in commercial development/land use
- Dramatic changes in manufacturing and transportation sectors
- Positive increase in acreage for parks and green space

Many of the changes that Wilmington has experienced, and not just listed above, have no doubt influenced the perceived future trajectory for the community—by citizens, businesses, and government. The short-term effects stemming from each of these changes, and resulting issues, can have impacts on community and economic development priorities important to the City of Wilmington. Such impacts affect tax-revenue and the level of municipal services capable of being provided; demand for potential new residents to move into the City; retention of existing residents; retention and expansion of existing businesses; entrepreneurial and business development; continued loss of young residents and effects of “brain drain;” and greater development that increases strain on services and resources.



# Public Participation

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*Photo Credit: Jeep Jam, Main Street Wilmington*

## Introduction

From the end of July through October of 2014, the Clinton County Regional Planning Commission received citizen input on the Wilmington Comprehensive Plan from over 300 residents of Wilmington and Clinton County. The public participation process was conducted using a variety of outreach methods including general public meetings, focus groups, interviews, and online surveying. The goal of the this process was to capture the “on-the-ground” observations from community residents on living and working in Wilmington, and what they feel the priorities for the City should be for future planning. Described below is each method, audience, reported input, as well as analysis methodology, and conclusions of the public participation process.



# Focus Groups and Public Meetings

The primary method of outreach was the focus group method and the general-invite public meeting. For this method, public and private groups were contacted to host a plan meeting with board members, employees, or stakeholders (See Appendix A for a list of focus groups). For the general public meeting, information was shared in a press release published by the Wilmington News Journal (over 7,000 subscribers) and through various email networks (~6,000 total subscribers).

For both the focus groups and the public meeting, attendees watched a short video on major eras of development in Wilmington focused on moments of physical changes, economic development, and eras of social and cultural shifts. After the video, the attendees formed break-out groups to discuss Physical, Economic, and Social/Cultural Development from both their individual and group perspective and relating to the past, present, and future of Wilmington. The break-out groups were instructed to discuss each general category of development (Physical, Economic, Social/Cultural) as framed by three guiding questions:

*“What have we learned from the past?”*

*“What are we not doing today?”*

*“What should we be doing for tomorrow?”*

Since the goal of the discussions was to gather anecdotal data directly from citizens, statistical information related to various issues discussed were not presented.

Each of the focus group meetings and the public meeting had moderators who were strictly listening to and recording notes of the discussions on large sheets of paper. Following the meetings, the written notes of all the meetings were transcribed and then analyzed.

The analysis of the transcribed notes focused on identifying the “most discussed” categories and sub-categories of issues. After analyzing the notes, the categories identified were labeled as:

*Housing/Homeownership/Neighborhoods;*  
*Crime, Safety (and Safety Services);*  
*Downtown/Historic;*  
*Parks, Trails, Walkability, Pedestrian Safety, and Recreation;*  
*Economic/Business Development;*  
*Infrastructure, Physical Development, Services;*  
*Education;*  
*Social, Cultural, and Demographic;*  
*Other*



*Above: Members of the Wilmington City Parks Board*

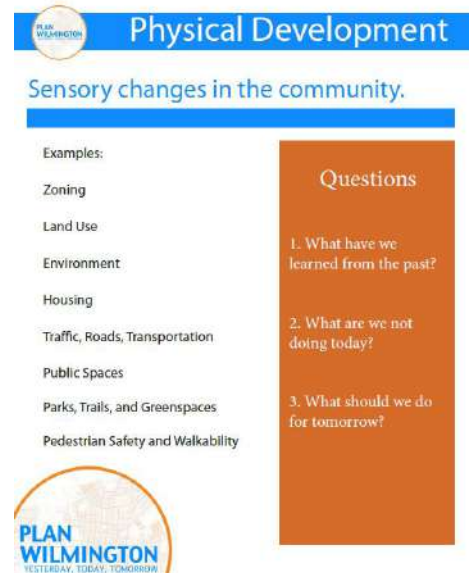


*Left: Wilmington-Clinton County Chamber of Commerce Board Members discussing planning priorities.*



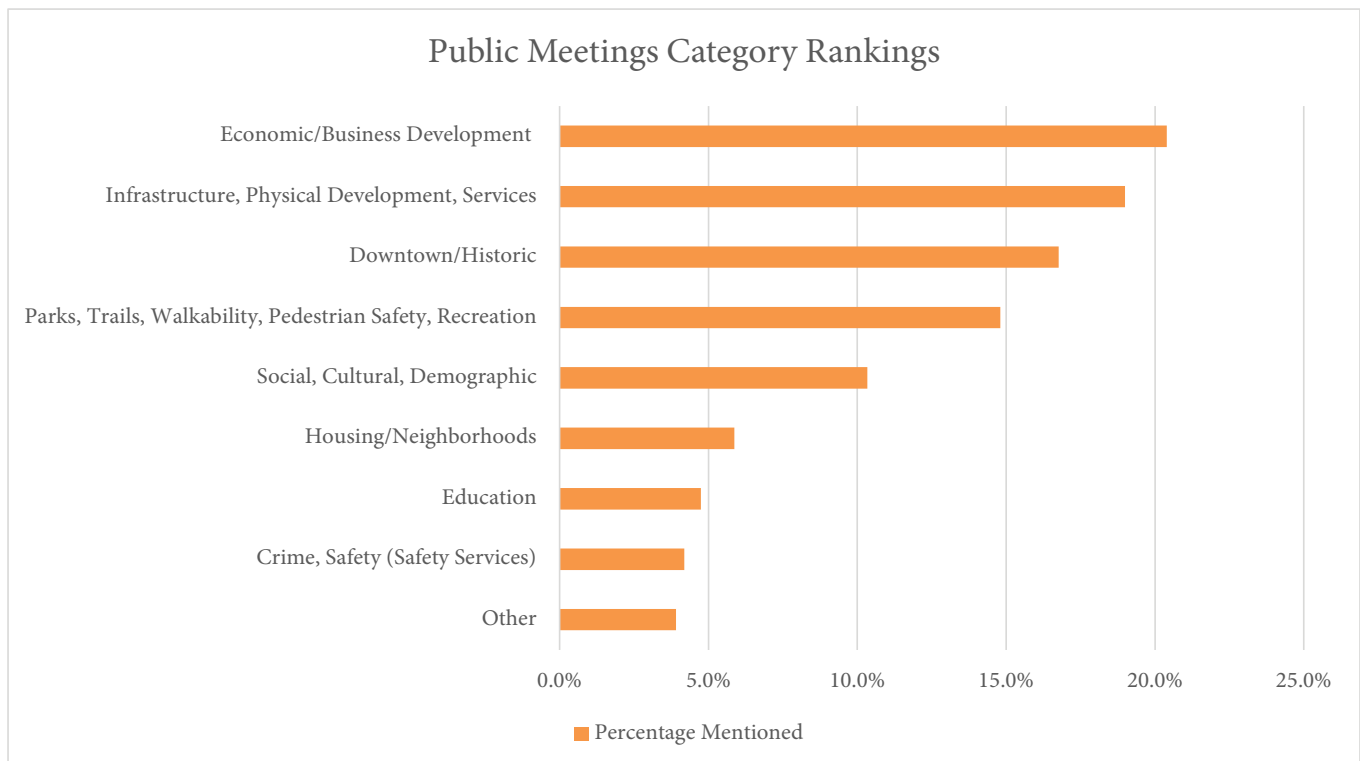
Left: Members of the Ministerial Association discuss their group feedback.

Below: A screen shot of one of the three discussion sheets used for the public meetings.



The categories were ranked based on each “mention” made by meeting participants and as interpreted from the transcribed notes. The mention totals reflect the total mentions of the topic categories summed from the mentions of each of the sub-category items. The tables of sub-categories, mentions, and whether mentioned in the Physical, Economic, or Social/Cultural discussions can be found in Appendix A.

Overall, the most discussed category of these public meetings was “Economic/ Business Development” (20.4%), followed by “Infrastructure, Physical Development, Services” (19%), “Downtown/Historic” (16.8%), “Parks, Trails, Walkability, Pedestrian Safety, Recreation” (14.8%), “Social, Cultural, Demographic” (10.3%), “Housing/ Neighborhoods” (5.9%), “Education” (4.7%), “Crime and Safety (Safety Services)” (4.2%), and “Other” (3.9%).



# Online Survey

An online survey was emailed to over 5,000 subscribers of three email databases and generated 228 complete responses. 53% of the respondents are current residents of Wilmington, while the remaining 47% consisted mostly of Clinton County residents (93% of the 47%).

The questions in the online survey focused on gathering feedback from respondents on what is observed and desired in Wilmington and what is desired in any community. To gather a weighted preference on particular issues, the survey focused the questions on specific, planning-related elements in the community. As an aside, when comparing the public meeting notes, it was noted that many of the elements in the survey were similar to issues discussed in the focus groups and public meetings.

On, “What is desired?” participants were asked, “When Visualizing the LOOK of your ‘dream’ community, how important are the following items?” The focus of the question was to gather feedback on what participants’ view as being priority elements of a “dream community.” The items listed were:

*Strong Neighborhood Identity;  
Quantity/Quality of National/Chain Businesses;  
Quantity/Quality of Independent/Small Businesses;  
Sense of Safety; Natural Features (Trees, Flowers, etc.);  
Cleanliness (litter, condition of buildings, etc.);  
Property Maintenance; Walkability (Pedestrian Safety);  
Parks, Trails, and Recreation;  
Quality/Quantity of Historic Properties*

The second question, was to gather feedback on how participants’ felt that the City of Wilmington prioritized these issues, based on the conditions they observe and perceptions that they have on current conditions. This question used the same “items,” or elements, and asked “How would you rank Wilmington’s demonstration of value regarding each of these?”

The final question was “How important of a role do you believe each of these play in the ‘SUCCESS’ of Wilmington?” For this question, the same items were used as the first two with the addition of “Cost of Services (Streets, Water, Sewer, etc.); A Vibrant Downtown; Quality of Schools.” These items were added to give additional feedback on Wilmington-specific issues which had also been discussed in the early focus groups and public meetings.

Participants were asked to rank the importance of each of the “items/elements” for each question using these rankings—“Not Important; Little Importance; Important; Very Important; Most Important.” Participants were also asked about residency, gender, age, and given the opportunity to provide comments.

The residency question allowed for the analysis of the online survey to compare perspectives from Wilmington residents, non-Wilmington residents, and combined results. This was especially valuable in understanding if there are major discrepancies between how Wilmington residents observe or value various planning priorities compared to non-residents.

The following graphs identify the ranking of elements rated “very



Are you a resident of Wilmington? \*

☐ Yes

☐ No

---

If outside of Wilmington, where do you reside?

☐ Union Township

☐ Other Clinton County Township/Village

☐ Other:

---

Gender \*

☐ Male

☐ Female

---

Age Group \*

☐ 18-24

☐ 25-34

☐ 35-44

☐ 45-54

☐ 55-64

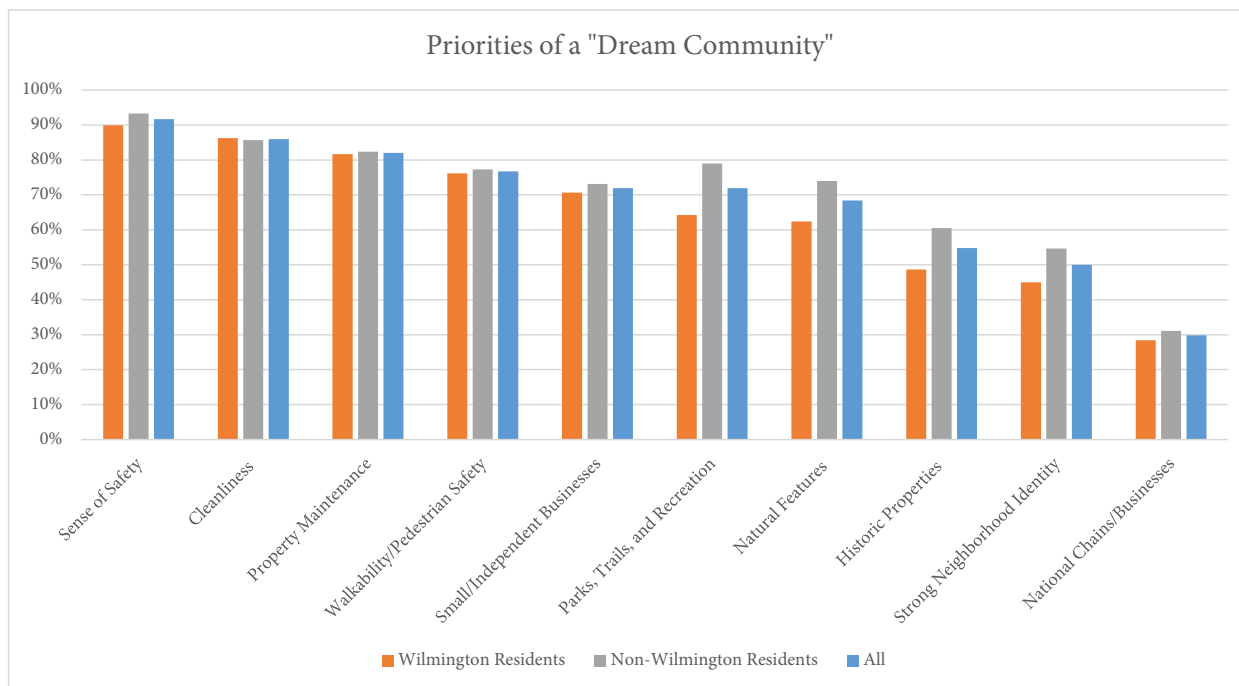
☐ 65+

Above: Screen shot of online survey.

important” or “most important” for each of the survey questions. For the entirety of the responses please see the appendix.

It is important to view each of the rankings within the context of the question. As mentioned, the first question related to participants’ “dream community.” Often, citizens will discuss features that they liked in a community they visited, or something they may have read or heard about in another community, or the things that they “wished” Wilmington did or had. In essence, the qualities of the “perfect community” from the participants’ perspectives.

When considering the most important planning priorities of their “dream community,” respondents rated “sense of safety” the highest and the presence or type of national chain businesses as the least important aspect of a “dream community.”



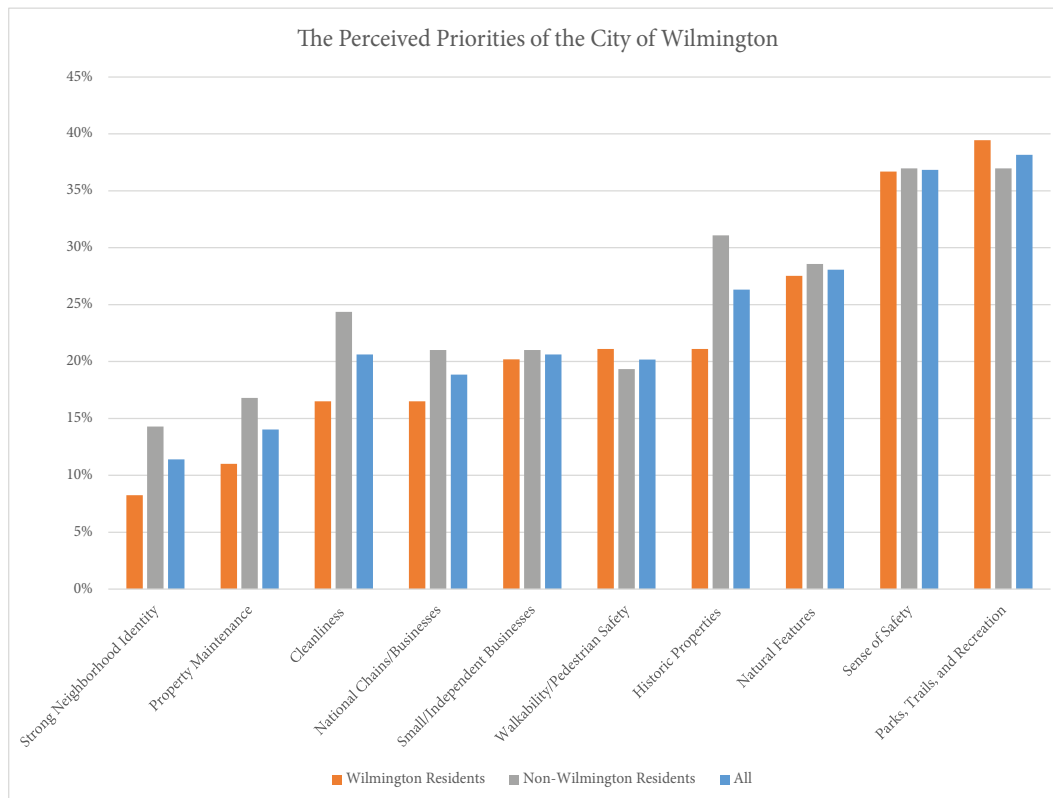
As mentioned, the focus of the second question in the survey was to get a sense of how participants felt the City of Wilmington performed in these planning-related areas (graph on next page). It was noted in the survey that the lowest ranking, “not important,” equated to “NOT currently being done by the City” (in the respondent’s observation). This data simply reflects the public perception and does not compare to the actual level of importance or response given to these issues by the City.

The rankings are displayed lowest to highest (left to right). The lowest ranking planning-related item was “Strong Neighborhood Identity.” In other words, the respondents felt that, from their observations, the “Strong Neighborhood Identity” was the least important item to the City. The highest ranking response was “Parks, Trails, and Recreation,” which translates as the respondents viewing this as a high priority, or important issue to the City. Neither of which were viewed as the highest priorities in a “dream community.” A positive observation from comparing this question to the first (“dream community”), is that respondents felt that, in their perspective, the City takes “sense of safety” seriously—an issue rated as most important planning-related element.

Negatively, however, “Property Maintenance” and “Cleanliness,” both high ranking “dream community” elements, were ranked low on how important respondents thought these issues were to the City. “Walkability/Pedestrian Safety” also was a lower ranking comparing to its importance to the respondents.

Again, the final question, “How important of a role do you believe each of these play in the ‘SUCCESS’ of Wilmington?” is looking at the perspective of planning-related priorities which respondents felt were either “Very Important” or “Most Important.” Not surprisingly, respondents felt that the high ranking priority for the future is “Sense of Safety” and the lowest ranking priority is “National Chains/Businesses.” These results are not surprising as they reflect the rankings in the “dream community” question.

Other priorities with similar importance to respondents were the “quality of schools,” “cleanliness,” “quality of services,” “vibrant downtown,” “property maintenance,” “small/independent businesses,” and “walkability/pedestrian safety.” Interestingly, “Cost of Services” ranked lower than “Quality of Services” in importance.



Tables showing the percentage rankings for each category can be found in Appendix B.



# Summary and Conclusions

The public participation process, involving over 300 citizens as well as stakeholder groups from the City and the Wilmington region provides an important snapshot to the concerns, priorities and ideas for the future of Wilmington and the surrounding region. Overall, citizens were excited to see that the City was drafting an updated plan and asking for citizen input. In each of the in-person meetings, participants appeared very engaged with the process and expressed pleasure for being given the opportunity to contribute to the planning process.

The results from the public participation process suggest that the City is, in the present, adequately providing certain services desired by citizens, but citizens wish to see adjustments or improvements in other areas. In addition, the feedback suggests that citizens are accepting of the costs of having even higher quality of services provided. This should not be interpreted to mean simply the payment of more money in the form of taxes, as policy, regulations and inconveniences can represent other examples of “costs.” (For example: the inconvenience of limited parking in downtown in exchange for preserving the historic fabric).

The responses also highlight a citizen desire to move the community past the “DHL crisis.” Not surprisingly, “Economic/Business Development” was the most discussed topic (24%) throughout the in-person meetings; however, what may have been a surprise, is that the most discussed component of this topic was entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurism is not surprising in of itself as most community members agree that “economic diversity” is important, but the expressed interest in diversity involved more of a desire to see innovation, uniqueness and the attachment to community that comes with entrepreneurs, rather than simply a generic form of growth.

This feeds into the next three most discussed topics, “Infrastructure, Physical Development, Services” (19%), “Downtown/Historic” (16.8%), and “Parks, Trails, Walkability, Pedestrian Safety, Recreation” (14.8%). Each of these topics are focused primarily on promoting quality of life in Wilmington, and residents felt that the level of quality of life in the community will have a profound impact on “Economic/Business Development.”

The input provided by participants in the public participation process, combined with demographic and socioeconomic research, will underpin the policy, land use, infrastructure, and programmatic recommendations of the Plan, and will help set a strategy for future decisions in the Wilmington area.



*Above: The audience at the General Public Meeting watch the Wilmington Plan Video prior to group discussion.*



# Recommendations

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The issues identified in the existing conditions section as well as those identified through the public participation section provide the basis for this plan's recommendations. Some issues identified should prompt immediate action as the short term impacts being observed will eventually lead to the likelihood of long-term consequences that could affect the community for generations to come. 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. Furthermore, the community will become even more dependent on growth coming from outside sources, much like a DHL-type employer, to sustain current levels of services.

The over-arching theme of the recommendations is to form a renewed focus on strengthening the foundation of Wilmington and to strategically prepare for the future. The comprehensive plan is presented as a framework for current and future policy decisions related to future development and growth in the City of Wilmington. The plan is not a regulatory framework in of itself, but should inspire potential policy considerations and future ordinances that promote the desired future for the City as expressed by its residents.

The following planning recommendations of this comprehensive plan are in response to the issues highlighted in the existing conditions section and the input from the community through the public participation process. Some of these recommendations provide suggestions for immediate action while others will require further research and planning-related efforts to implement.

This section will provide each of the recommendations as they pertain to the issues highlighted in the previous plan sections. Many of the issues discussed throughout the plan are inter-linked and relate to many planning categories such as physical and economic development. In all, the goal of the plan recommendations is to articulate the understood and accepted goals of the City of Wilmington in response to its existing conditions and its objective to work towards a desired future.

The table of recommendations outlines the plan recommendations, the planning area addressed (land use/physical development, economic development, thoroughfares/infrastructure, etc.), the time frame for implementation, and the agencies leading the implementation effort. The acronyms and terms used in the recommendations are defined in the table below.

<b>Plan Categories</b>	
LU/PD: Land Use/Physical Development	T/I: Thoroughfares/Infrastructure
QL/SCD: Quality of Life/Social, Cultural Development	ED: Economic Development
<b>Time Frames</b>	
OG: On-going (approved with plan, requires on-going implementation)	ST: Short-Term (1-3 years)
MT: Mid-Term (4-7 years)	LT: Long-Term (7-20 years)
<b>Agency/Who?</b>	
City: Administration/Appropriate Departments (Service, Streets, Building/Zoning, Parks, Water, Sewer, Solid Waste, etc.)	WCC: Wilmington City Council
WPC: Wilmington City Planning Commission	BZA: Wilmington Board of Zoning Appeals
CCA: Clinton County Agencies (Board of Commissioners, Economic Development Director, Township Trustees, County Engineer or Port Authority)	CCRPC: Clinton County Regional Planning Commission
DWCIC: Downtown Wilmington Community Improvement Corporation	MSW: Main Street Wilmington
CVB: Clinton County Visitors Bureau	COC: Wilmington-Clinton County Chamber of Commerce
CPD: County Parks District	CCTC: Clinton County Trails Coalition
WC: Wilmington College	SSCC: Southern State Community College
WCS: Wilmington City Schools	

## Future Land Use and Development

Since the 1978 plan there have been a series of annexations which have expanded Wilmington's corporate boundaries, though this expansion did not match historic expectations of growth. As such, there are many lessons learned from previous years of economic growth and development that present opportunities for growth within the existing boundaries, and to an extent, just beyond. These lessons involve greater attention to opportunities for in-fill development all of types and collaboration with the surrounding Union Township to ensure that new growth makes efficient use of available space and services.

Recommendation	LU/PD	T/I	QL/SCD	ED	TIME-FRAME	AGENCY/WHO?
Adoption of Future Land Use Map	X	X			OG	City, WCC, CCA
The future land use map presented in this plan (Appendix C) is the product of conversations with both Union Township and the City of Wilmington, and illustrates areas of residential, commercial, and industrial growth that align with both areas' vision for growth and development.						
Adopt a simplified "guide to development" that outlines development priorities for the City and which serves as a guide for planning-related issues by the City. (See Appendix D) for the proposed set of guidelines).	X	X	X	X	OG	WCC, WPC, BZA
Prioritize annexation of the various islands within the City boundaries and along Wayne Road.	X				ST	City, WCC, CCA
Create a landlord registry program for all individuals marketing and leasing residential units and a rental property inspection process.			X	X	ST	City, CCRPC
The program should create greater awareness for location and conditions of rental housing, establish greater communication between the landlord community and the City, and work to limit any potential adverse effects of rental properties on neighborhood stability and surrounding land/property values.						
Require developers to cover their entire share of new infrastructure improvements.	X	X		X	OG	City, WPC, BZA
Ensure that bonding requirements are met on all new developments.	X	X		X	OG	City, WPC, BZA



## Residential Development

Goal: Residential development will be a key part of the future success of Wilmington. Future residential development should focus on establishing strong neighborhoods through in-fill development, efficient greenfield development, and incentivizing new investment in the urban core as well as greater connectivity to other land use types throughout the City.

Recommendation	LU/PD	T/I	QL/SCD	ED	TIME-FRAME	AGENCY/WHO?
The future land use map illustrates most new residential development taking place in the north, primarily south of the 73 by-pass and/or connected to clusters of existing residential development (in Union Township as well), south along US 68 South, and west, again building on existing clusters of residential land uses.	X	X		X	OG	City, WCC, CCA, WPC, BZA, CCRPC
Establish a City-wide Community Reinvestment Area (CRA) that will offer a range of incentives for new, residential development and rehabilitation of existing structures. These incentives should prioritize rehabilitation of historic homes, in-fill development on lots with existing infrastructure, and new residential development within the City limits.	X		X	X	ST	City, WCC, CCRPC
Establish a neighborhood identity program and create a neighborhood map of the City that highlights “priority areas” for residential development as well as signage for designated area.	X		X	X	MT	City, WPC, CCRPC
Explore the development of a Land Bank program in which the City can obtain properties vacated, abandoned, and/or severely delinquent on taxes, and market these properties to potential buyers meeting established criteria. Organizations like the CIC should be considered to lead such a program.	X		X	X	ST	City, WCC, CCRPC
Encourage and support the conversion of existing multi-family residences that came from single-family split conversions.	X		X	X	OG	WPC, City
Establish Residential Improvement Districts (RID) that allow property owners to be voluntarily assessed for improvements identified through neighborhood meetings.	X	X	X	X	MT	City, WCC, CCRPC
Work with local law enforcement to enforce landlord responsibility laws and develop improved systems for addressing neighborhood safety and priority areas for the City.			X		OG	City, WCC

## Commercial Development

Goal: Commercial growth over the years has created a few established areas of commerce throughout the City. Future commercial land use should build upon existing commercial infrastructure by prioritizing new commercial growth near existing commercial clusters on the land use map as well as encouraging small and mixed-use commercial development in and around the downtown or areas where contextually appropriate.

Recommendation	LU/PD	T/I	QL/SCD	ED	TIME-FRAME	AGENCY/WHO?
Refer to the Future Land Use Map to identify areas prime for new commercial development.	X	X		X	OG	City, WCC, CCA, WPC, BZA, CCRPC
Large, greenfield commercial development should primarily be situated near existing clusters of commercial uses along Rombach Ave. and potentially areas east of US 68 N and South of the 73 by-pass.						
Develop strategies for addressing issues of vacant, blighted commercial properties.	X		X	X	ST	City, CCRPC
Address issues of unused, deteriorating parking lots, and consider additional changes to parking requirements.	X		X	X	ST	City
Promote greater connectivity between existing commercial clusters in the community.	X	X		X	OG	City, WPC, BZA
Require pedestrian safety/access improvements in new commercial developments.			X		OG	City, WPC, BZA

## Industrial Development

Goal: Industrial growth will be a key source to future economic development. Future industrial land use should focus development in and around existing industrial uses and designate areas identified in the future land use plan as most appropriate for future industrial development.

Recommendation	LU/PD	T/I	QL/SCD	ED	TIME-FRAME	AGENCY/WHO?
Industrial expansion should take place primarily in the South/SE quadrants of the City. Land near the Wilmington Air Park and East of US 68 South (see Future Land Use Map, Appendix C).	X	X		X	OG	WCC, CCA, WPC, BZA, CCRPC
Marketing of the former Randall Textron site should be a top priority for the City.	X			X	ST	City, WCC
Ensure that regular communication exists between the City and industrial users to encourage greater understanding of needs and vision for growth and expansion.				X	OG	City, CCRPC

## Thoroughfares, Infrastructure and Access

Goal: Prioritize maintenance of existing infrastructure and improve access while prioritizing safety of thoroughfares and pedestrian infrastructure throughout the City.

Recommendation	LU/PD	T/I	QL/SCD	ED	TIME-FRAME	AGENCY/WHO?
Create a Capital Improvement Plan for the City which prioritizes the need for re-paving and maintaining existing road infrastructure.		X		X	ST	City, WCC
Create a Capital Improvement Plan for sewer infrastructure		X		X	ST	City, WCC
Create a Capital Improvement Plan for water infrastructure		X		X	ST	City, WCC
Develop a map showing future, long-range infrastructure build-out for sewer, water, and roads.		X		X	MT	City, WCC, CCRPC, CCA
Continue to explore ways in which the City can distribute water regionally and develop new agreements.		X	X	X	OG	City, CCRPC
Seek additional sources of funding (such as OPWC) for thoroughfare development.		X		X	OG	City, CCRPC
Complete Airborne Road Connector Phase 1 (68 South to Cuba Road) (See: Future Land Use Map, Appendix C)	X	X		X	ST	City, CCRPC
Complete Airborne Road Connector Phase 2 (Cuba Road to Airborne Road)	X	X		X	ST	City, CCRPC
Complete connector roadway US 68 North to Prairie Ave.	X	X		X	MT	City, CCA, CCRPC
Complete connector roadway from US 68 South to Nelson Road	X	X		X	LT	City, CCA, CCRPC
Extend connector roadway from N. South Street to US 68 North to Prairie Ave.	X	X		X	LT	City, CCA, CCRPC
Comprehensively address pedestrian safety issues throughout the City and identify additional resources such as Safe Routes to School and other safety funds to implement projects.		X	X	X	OG	City, CCRPC
Require 3-feet of separation between cars and bicyclists throughout the City.			X		ST	City, WCC
Study potential for roundabout at N. South Street and Xenia Ave. (US 68 North) intersection (see Appendix F for renderings).	X	X		X	MT	City

## Downtown Development

Goal: Downtown Wilmington is a major key to the overall success and desirability of the community as a whole. The City should increase support to the established momentum taking place in Downtown Wilmington by leading the development of a Downtown Wilmington Master Plan and providing resources for infrastructure improvements and addressing quality of life issues.

Recommendation	LU/PD	T/I	QL/SCD	ED	TIME-FRAME	AGENCY/WHO?
Create a Downtown Wilmington Master Plan and business recruitment strategy.	X	X	X	X	ST	City, DWCIC, CCRPC, MSW, COC, CVB
Prioritize streetscape and design improvements to improve the pedestrian experience in the downtown.			X	X	OG	City, DWCIC, CCRPC, MSW
Improve the mid-block crosswalk on N. South between Main and Locust, establish a mid-block crosswalk on Main in front of the Murphy Theatre, on East Main from the alley to the courthouse and S. South Street from the alley to the courthouse.		X	X		ST	City
Replace parallel parking spaces with back-angled parking along Main Street from Mulberry to Walnut Street (see Appendix D for renderings).		X	X	X	MT	City, CCRPC, DWCIC, MSW
Reduce lane width along Main Street, between Farquhar Street to Wall Street from 12 feet to 10 feet for traffic calming and pedestrian safety purposes, and consider opportunities to add a curbed bike lane.		X	X	X	MT	City
Incorporate bump-outs along Main Street between Wood St. and High St., Locust Street from Walnut to Mulberry, and on Sugartree St. from Mulberry to Walnut St. to improve pedestrian safety and traffic calming.		X	X	X	MT	City
Prioritize the completion of the original streetlight vision (ex. Install on east side of South Street) and streetlight maintenance in the Downtown.			X	X	ST	City
Implement a combined parking strategy for the downtown using shared lots.	X	X	X	X	MT	City, DWCIC, MSW, CCPRC
Establish a Business Improvement District (BID) for the downtown, which allows property owners to be assessed for improvements and services.				X	ST	City, DWCIC, MSW, COC



## Parks and Trails

Goal: Wilmington's Parks and Trails are vital components of promoting quality of life and the attractiveness of the community. Residents and visitors alike look to the quality of the park and trail assets as indicators of investment and health of the City. The care and development of the City Parks system should be a high priority.

Recommendation	LU/PD	T/I	QL/SCD	ED	TIME-FRAME	AGENCY/WHO?
Create a City Parks Master Plan	X	X	X	X	ST	City, CCRPC, CCVB
Identify opportunities to increase financial support of the City Parks system			X	X	ST	City, WCC
Consider ways to establish stronger ties with the County Parks District through the possible establishment of a Metropolitan Parks District that encompasses the City and unincorporated areas of the County.	X		X	X	MT	City, CPD
Improve connection of Lowes Drive Trail and Judy Gano Trail and pedestrian crossing on Rombach Ave. (See Appendix F for renderings)		X	X	X	MT	CITY, CCTC
Complete work on the Luther Warren Peace Trail extension to South Street and the adjacent park on the former Manhattan Lounge lot including the re-location of the former Clinton National Bank columns.		X	X	X	ST	City, CCTC, CCRPC
Complete the proposed Q-Path connecting Wilmington College to downtown via Sugartree Street.		X	X	X	ST	City, CCTC, CCRPC, WC
Complete the linkage to the future Clinton/Fayette Friendship Trail East and the connection to the Todd's Fork Trail leaving from Morrow.	X	X	X	X	LT	City, CCTC, CCRPC, CVB
Establish linkage from the bottom of South Walnut Street to the Lytle Creek Greenway as well as develop parking facilities and new signage.	X	X	X	X	MT	City
Support continued acquisition for priority land adjacent to the Lytle Creek Greenway	X	X	X	X	MT	City
Complete sidewalks and create new pedestrian improvements including sidewalks and bike lanes on Fife Ave. from Alumni Circle to David's Drive.		X	X	X	MT	City
Complete sidewalk improvements along south side of Truesdell Ave.		X	X	X	ST	City

## Quality of Life

Goal: In addition to the recommendations above that promote quality of life, the City should continually monitor quality of life issues and indicators needing addressed, and prioritize policies and projects that positively benefit local quality of life.

Recommendation	LU/PD	T/I	QL/SCD	ED	TIME-FRAME	AGENCY/WHO?
Maintain support for existing policies and continue developing new policies such as Wilmington Succeeds to address the declines in educational attainment.			X	X	OG	City, CCRPC, WC, SCCC, WCS
Prioritize the preservation and review demolitions of all historic structures in the City.	X		X	X	OG	City, WPC, BZA
Re-establish the zoning enforcement department and ensure adequate code enforcement is taking place.			X	X	ST	City, WPC, BZA
Support the expansion and appreciation of technological infrastructure and skills development.		X	X	X	OG	City, WCC, CVB, WCC, CCRPC
Increase tools for local entrepreneurs such as training opportunities, venues for entrepreneurial development and collaboration.			X	X	OG	City, WCC
Continued collaboration and coordination with educational institutions particularly Wilmington City schools, Southern State Community College, and Wilmington College.			X	X	OG	City, WC, WCS, SCCC, CCRPC, WCC
Explore issues related to the senior population and effective ways to age in place.		X	X	X	ST	City, CCRPC
Encourage the expansion of recreational opportunities and infrastructure. Recommended improvements include a new splash park, a regional skate park, and a public recreational facility.	X	X	X	X	OG	City, CCA, CCRPC, CVB, WCC



# Appendices

# Appendix A

In-Person Public Participation Meetings		
Date	Group Affiliation	Attendees
7/25/2014	WCC Chamber	12
7/31/2014	CVB Board	6
8/1/2014	DWCIC	11
8/5/2014	Ministerial Association	8
8/12/2014	City Parks Board	3
9/4/2014	Public Meeting	18
9/9/2014	Port Authority	5
10/15/2014	Wilmington College	5
Various	Interviews	5
Total In-Person Participants		73

Housing/Home Ownership/Neighborhoods			
P = Physical Development, E = Economic Development, S = Social/Cultural Development			
Lack affordable homes	P	1	4.8%
Encourage/Incentivize Home Ownership	P	2	9.5%
Too many subsidized homes	P	1	4.8%
Absentee Landlords	E	1	4.8%
Low-income housing is drawing in the poor	S	1	4.8%
Too many rental properties	P	4	19.0%
Issues with housing along main thoroughfares	P	1	4.8%
Need to develop Neighborhoods (Create shared expectations)	P	4	19.0%
Encourage sense of ownership to promote neighborhood development	S	1	4.8%
In-fill housing, less sprawl	P	2	9.5%
Sidewalk/porches important to Neighborhood development	P	1	4.8%
Limited housing around air park	P	1	4.8%
Other		1	4.8%
Total Mentions		21	



Crime, Safety			
Crime Coverage (media)	S	2	12.5%
Reduce Crime	S	2	12.5%
Crime negatively affects tourism	S	1	6.3%
Other places cover crime issues better	S	1	6.3%
More education on crime needed	S	1	6.3%
Misguided Perception on Crime (feels generally safe)	S	1	6.3%
Maintain Realistic perspective on crime	S	1	6.3%
Perception of Crime	S	1	6.3%
Crime and Safety affected by Housing	P	1	6.3%
Illegal Drug Use (affecting schools and parks)	S	1	6.3%
Need City/County Fire District	S	1	6.3%
Drug Court	S	1	9.1%
Tools to help police promote safety	P	1	6.3%
Safe Streets	E	1	6.3%
Total Mentions		16	

Education			
Focus more on public education	P	1	5.9%
Incentives for locals to pursue higher education locally	E	1	5.9%
Diversify Education (Trade school, vocational, apprenticeships)	E	4	23.5%
Partnerships with Higher Ed (ex. Wilm Succeeds)	E	1	5.9%
Lack of Opportunity for College Grads	E	1	5.9%
Provide educational outreach on civic issues (forums)	E	1	5.9%
Create buy-in from schools	S	1	5.9%
Expand Wilmington Succeeds	S	1	5.9%
Experiential Academy positive	E	1	5.9%
Wilmington College (continue engaging, keep them here)	E, S	4	23.5%
Leverage College Education	S	1	5.9%
Total Mentions		17	

Downtown/Historic			
Continue Downtown Residential	P, S, E	4	6.7%
Progress Made in Downtown Development (continue it)	P, E	7	11.7%
Need a Parking Plan	P	2	3.3%
Need a Downtown Plan	P	3	5.0%
Need business strategy	P	6	10.0%
“nothing to do” (no desirable shopping)	P	2	3.3%
“low-rent businesses”	P	2	3.3%
Need to connect with other commercial districts	P	1	1.7%
Resources only focused on Downtown (“Rombach on own”)	E	1	1.7%
Lack of Focus on Downtown	P	2	3.3%
Loss of architecture	P	2	3.3%
Need better retention of Tenants	P	1	1.7%
Less trucks thru downtown	P	3	5.0%
There is Adequate Parking in Downtown	P	3	5.0%
Attractive to Young People	S	2	3.3%
Continue (or improve) Providing Structural Support (Design review, Code enforcement, Trash Pick Up)		3	5.0%
Non-downtown Business owners have negative perception of downtown	P	1	1.7%
Preservation Education	P	2	3.3%
3rd Fridays work well	S	1	1.7%
Homeless Shelters in Downtown are not good	S	1	1.7%
Hold all festivals downtown	S	1	1.7%
Maintain housing stock near downtown	P	1	1.7%
City should budget for downtown investment/More resources needed	P	3	5.0%
Murphy is centerpiece to downtown (needs to be focus)	S	1	1.7%
Connect college to downtown	S	1	1.7%
Preservation	P	3	5.0%
Create City position for Main Street Director	E	1	1.7%
Total Mentions		60	

Parks, Trails, Walkability, Pedestrian Safety, Recreation			
Need Parks Plan (and Trail Plan)	P, E	3	5.6%
Establish Parks Brand	E	1	1.9%
Bike Lanes	S	1	1.9%
Safe Streets	E	1	1.9%
Better Signage	S	1	1.9%
Improve Crosswalks	S	1	1.9%
More support for parks (incl. funding)	P, S, E	6	11.1%
Need to improve family environment	S, E	1	1.9%
Pool/Sprayground	S, E	4	7.4%
Frisbee Golf	S	2	3.7%
Parks are well used	P	2	3.7%
Access to Park from Fife (build sidewalk)	P	2	3.7%
Improve, connect, extend bike trails	P	3	5.6%
Improve pedestrian safety on Rombach (need handicap access)	P	1	1.9%
Improve walkability (major gaps)	P, S	5	9.3%
Capital Improvements: Health and Wellness Facility, Community Center, rec center, Sports Complex)	P	8	14.8%
Need Neighborhood Parks	P	1	1.9%
Park Aesthetics	P	2	3.7%
Dog Park	E	1	1.9%
Skatepark	S	1	1.9%
Every citizen 10 mins. Walk to trail/park	S	1	1.9%
Convert demolished lots into pocket parks	S	1	1.9%
Create a Parks District (with Union Township or County)	P	1	1.9%
Connect Wilmington to Morrow via trail	P	1	1.9%
Cannot focus exclusively on auto traffic (include foot and bike)	P	1	1.9%
Free Rec Options	S	1	1.9%
More Kids Programming	S	1	1.9%
Total Mentions		54	

Economic/Business Development			
Should be attracting employees/citizens (commuters)	E	4	5.5%
Focus on Diversity (additionally at the airpark)	E	7	9.6%
Keep wealth local (less franchises, more local businesses)	E	4	5.5%
Increase connectivity to other markets	P	1	1.4%
Build critical mass in business districts (identify districts, focus development)	E	1	1.4%
Workforce development (need quality workforce, apprenticeships)	E	7	9.6%
Too much focus on jobs alone (rather than what type)	E	3	4.1%
Focus on high-wage jobs	E	2	2.7%
Businesses look at quality of life factors	S	1	1.4%
Create cohesion between commerce districts (Downtown-Rombach-Walmart)	P	1	1.4%
Focus on tourism, visitors (increase hotel capacity)	E	2	2.7%
Marketing/Attractiveness (broaden strategies, what makes Wilmington unique?, more resources, collaboration)	E, S	10	13.7%
Business Financing, Revolving Loan Fund	E	2	2.7%
Need One-Stop/ Business Assistance	E	2	2.7%
Entrepreneurial Development/Training	E	10	13.7%
Lack of local support for entertainment/businesses	S	1	1.4%
Proactive Site Development (understanding commercial fabric physically)	P, E	2	2.7%
Business Communications (understanding the “missing link” with the community)	E	2	2.7%
Support for existing businesses	E	3	4.1%
Promote Corporate Citizenary (e.g. murals)	S	1	1.4%
Importance of Agriculture to local economy	E	3	4.1%
Didn't cater to small businesses	P	1	1.4%
Need City-Specific Economic Development Director	E	1	1.4%
Give downtown a special economic focus	E	1	1.4%
Too many dollar stores	P	1	1.4%
Total Mentions		73	

Infrastructure, Physical Development, Services			
Maintain, renovate current infrastructure/fabric rather than only building new (Capital Improvements)	P	8	11.8%
Connect existing developments (rather than continue spreading trend)	P	7	10.3%
Use Existing Infrastructure	P	1	1.5%
Connect Lowes Drive to 68	P	2	2.9%
Reduce Truck Traffic	P	2	2.9%
Focus on existing service delivery (quality of services)	E	4	5.9%
Annexation (entire airpark, islands)	P	3	4.4%
Zoning (restructure, prioritize uses)	P	6	8.8%
Connect 68 to Airborne Road	P	2	2.9%
Finish By-Pass	P	2	2.9%
Additional resources for deferred maintenance issues	E	1	1.5%
Code Enforcement (More resources)/Sidewalk Enforcement	E	8	11.8%
Taxi Service (Continue)	E	1	1.5%
By-Pass a Growth Barrier (Positive)	P	1	1.5%
Aggregate for Gas/Electric	E	1	1.5%
Value Architectural Character of Community	P	1	1.5%
Trees	P	1	1.5%
Leverage additional resources (civic groups, clubs, volunteers, probate)	E	2	2.9%
Share resources across departments	E	1	1.5%
Rail access to airpark	P	1	1.5%
Connect Nelson to 68/134	P	1	1.5%
Resist Strip Development	P	1	1.5%
Streets Levy	E	1	1.5%
Raise income tax rather than tax just citizens (property tax, water rates,etc)	E	1	1.5%
Need a Plan	E	1	1.5%
Move to Charter City	E	1	1.5%
More sidewalks needed	S	1	1.5%
Need Central Meeting Space (Town Square)	S	1	1.5%
Connect College and town	S	1	1.5%
21st Century Monuments	P	2	2.9%
Land Banking	P	1	1.5%
Sewer Plant Future	P	1	1.5%
Total Mentions		68	



Social, Cultural, and Demographic			
Involve younger generations more (community activities, etc.)	P	1	2.7%
Seniors: Aging Population, Maintain Senior Support	S	11	29.7%
Young Citizens: Attracting Young People, jobs for young professionals, support young professional programs	S	10	27.0%
Keep developing community events/festivals	S	2	5.4%
Leverage Social and Cultural Assets (Murphy Theatre)	S	1	2.7%
Influx of Homeless, Poverty	S	4	10.8%
Social Services (long-range considerations)	P	4	10.8%
Inclusiveness (lack of participation and information)	E	2	5.4%
Communication (between citizens and “city”)	E	2	5.4%
Total Mentions		37	

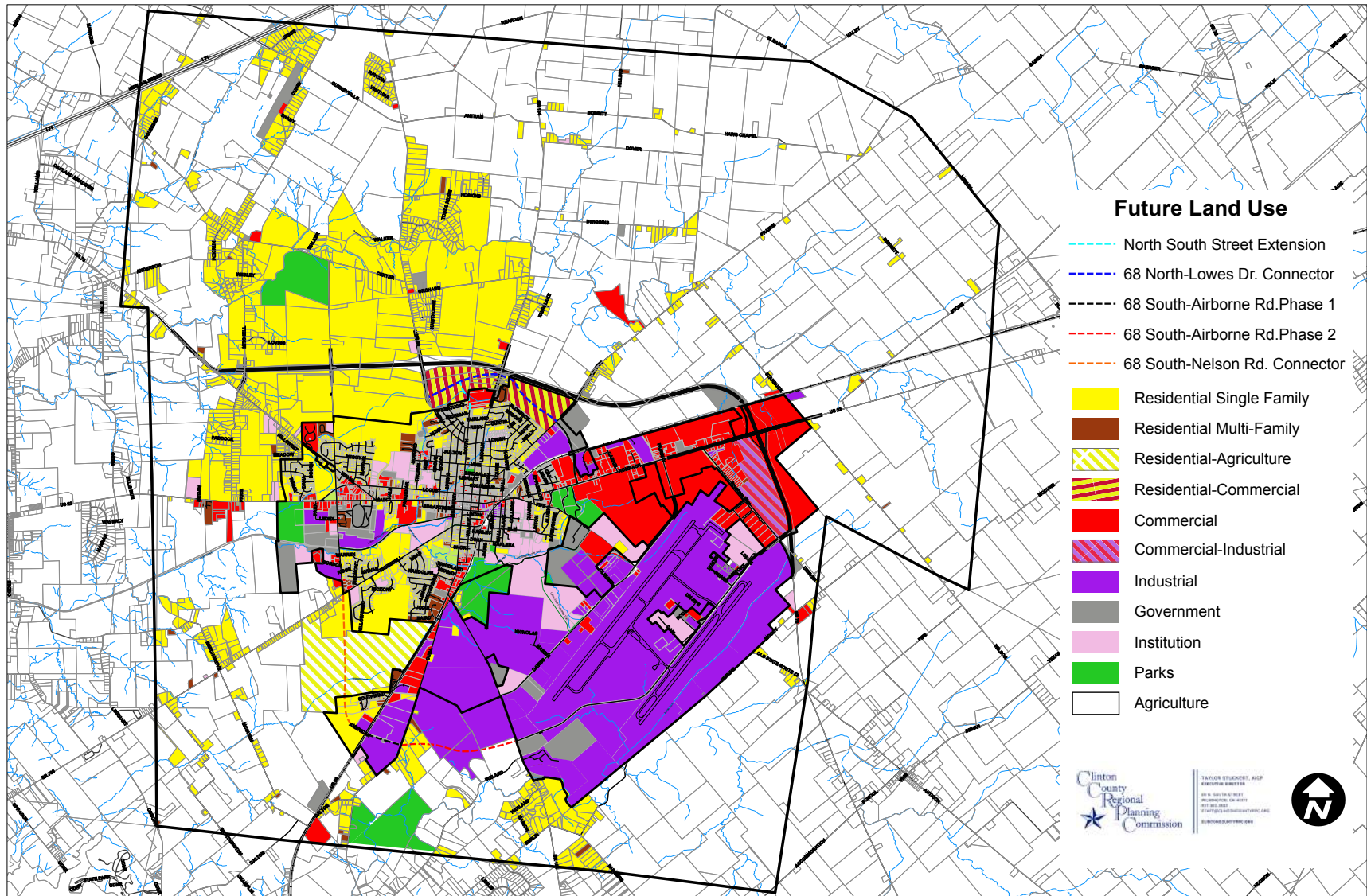
# Appendix B

Ranking of at least 'very important' in a "dream community"			
	All	Wilmington Residents	Non-Wilmington Residents
Sense of Safety	91.7%	89.9%	93.3%
Cleanliness	86.0%	86.2%	85.7%
Property Maintenance	82.0%	81.7%	82.4%
Walkability/Pedestrian Safety	76.8%	76.1%	77.3%
Small/Independent Businesses	71.9%	70.6%	73.1%
Parks, Trails, and Recreation	71.9%	64.2%	79.0%
Natural Features	68.4%	62.4%	73.9%
Historic Properties	54.8%	48.6%	60.5%
Strong Neighborhood Identity	50.0%	45.0%	54.6%
National Chains/Businesses	29.8%	28.4%	31.1%

Ranking of at least 'very important' in perceived priorities of the City of Wilmington			
	All	Wilmington Residents	Non-Wilmington Residents
Strong Neighborhood Identity	11.4%	8.3%	14.3%
Property Maintenance	14.0%	11.0%	16.8%
Cleanliness	20.6%	16.5%	24.4%
National Chains/Businesses	18.9%	16.5%	21.0%
Small/Independent Businesses	20.6%	20.2%	21.0%
Walkability/Pedestrian Safety	20.2%	21.1%	19.3%
Historic Properties	26.3%	21.1%	31.1%
Natural Features	28.1%	27.5%	28.6%
Sense of Safety	36.8%	36.7%	37.0%
Parks, Trails, and Recreation	38.2%	39.4%	37.0%

Ranking of at 'very important' for Wilmington's "future success"			
	All	Wilmington Residents	Non-Wilmington Residents
	Very Important +	Very Important +	Very Important +
Sense of Safety	90.8%	95.4%	86.6%
Quality of Schools	89.5%	91.7%	87.4%
Cleanliness	79.8%	82.6%	77.3%
Quality of Services	79.8%	78.0%	81.5%
A Vibrant Downtown	77.2%	77.1%	77.3%
Property Maintenance	75.4%	73.4%	77.3%
Small/Independent Businesses	75.0%	75.2%	74.8%
Walkability/Pedestrian Safety	66.2%	70.6%	62.2%
Cost of Services	63.6%	63.3%	63.9%
Parks, Trails, and Recreation	61.4%	57.8%	64.7%
Strong Neighborhood Identity	46.1%	43.1%	48.7%
National Chains/Businesses	38.6%	33.9%	42.9%

# Appendix C



Future Land Use: Union Township and Wilmington (2015)

# Appendix D



Back-angled parking renderings. (credit: Ang Li)





# Appendix E

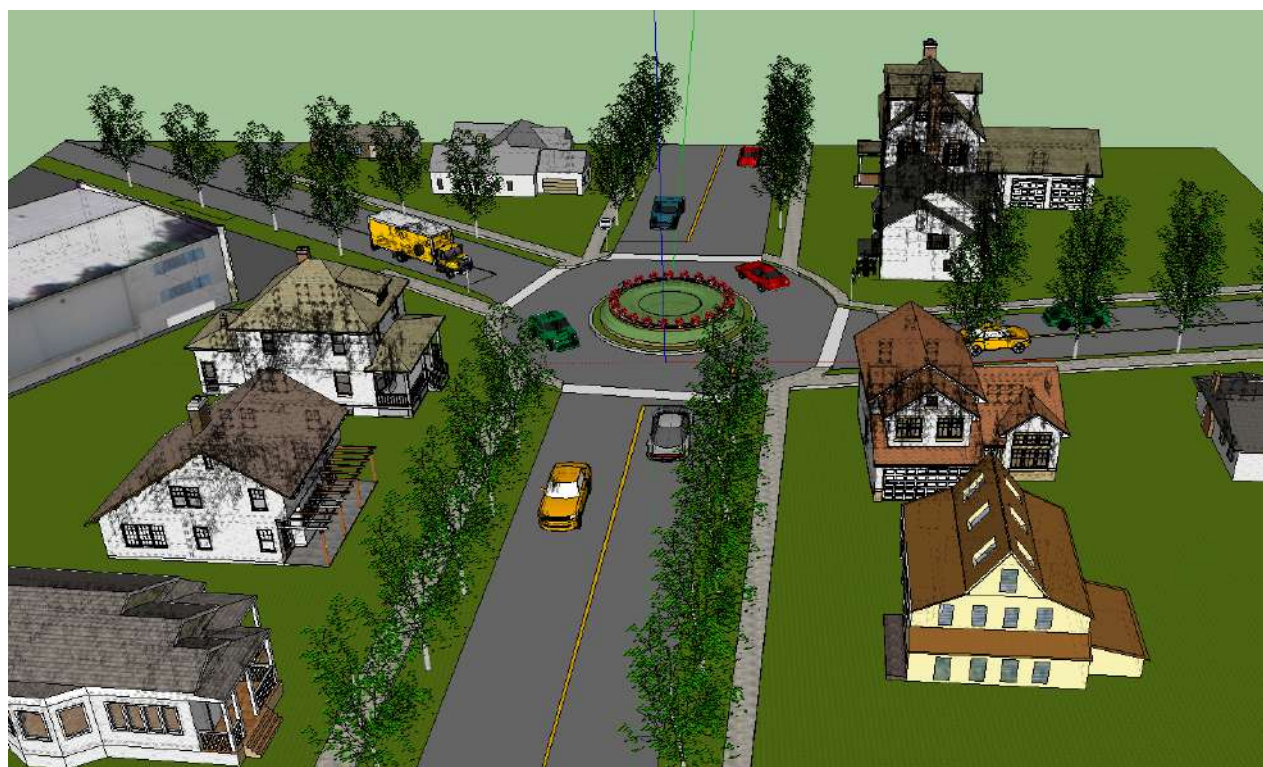
## City of Wilmington Guidelines for Development

1. As required by law, City Council, City Planning Commission, and Board of Zoning Appeals should reference the comprehensive plan, zoning ordinances and/or the Future Land Map in their findings.
2. The granting of variances to the zoning resolution and/or the subdivision regulations should accompany an identified finding of regulatory hardship.
3. Mixed-use development should be encouraged and viewed positively.
4. Differentiate the allowance of mixed uses from spot zoning. Spot Zoning is legally defined as “the process of singling out a small parcel of land for a use classification totally different from that of the surrounding area *for the benefit of the owner of such property and to the detriment of other owners.*”
5. All new development should include sidewalks, improve or sustain adequate walkability/pedestrian access, and demonstrate connectivity to existing, surrounding developments.
6. In-fill development, especially residential uses, is a priority.
7. Renovations of existing residential uses is a priority.
8. Encourage the restoration of single-family homes that have been converted into multi-family units.
9. All historic properties (older than 75 years) in the City of Wilmington should be viewed as positive assets and carefully considered before approving demolition.
10. Renovation of existing commercial areas should be a greater priority than establishing new, greenfield commercial areas.
11. Linkages to linear green spaces and recreational areas, or contributions to the city parks system in lieu of linkages, should be viewed as priority for new, greenfield development.

# Appendix F



*Connection of Judy Gano Trail to Lowes Drive Trail and improved pedestrian crossing. (credit: Ang Li)*



*Round-about at Xenia Ave./US68 and North South Street (credit: Ang Li)*