

- 2015 -

# AREA PLANS

Rockside Road

Downtown

East Pleasant Valley Road

Cloverleaf

Community Campus



  
The City of  
Independence

August, 2015

City of Independence, Ohio

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# AREA PLANS OVERVIEW

## CITY OF INDEPENDENCE

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**Supporting documents are found in a separate Appendix:**

- Appendix A. Economic Analysis and Strategic Recommendations
- Appendix B. Development Regulations Analysis and Strategic Recommendations
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- Appendix D. Open House Summary

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# INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND



## Letter from Mayor Kurtz

In the fall of 2014, we began a process to envision the future of five key districts within our community. Together, we analyzed trends, made honest assessments of the existing conditions, and developed a clear set of recommendations to help move Independence forward. We did this work because we have a responsibility to future generations. We wish to pass along an even stronger city that maintains its role as a leader within our region.

Our future success is by no means guaranteed. This region's communities stand at a crossroad where inaction will certainly result in decline. The world is moving too quickly to adopt a "hold-don't move forward" strategy. The plans are bold precisely because they must be. We must embrace small changes that can help our community prosper, while maintaining the values that have shaped and formed Independence into what it is today.

By taking the time to consider our next steps, our investments become more strategic and have greater leverage. They are grounded within a shared vision for our future. The Area Plans, then, are an act of stewardship. They help to identify and preserve the strengths of Independence for future generations, while also recognizing key deficits that, over the decades, may have a negative effect.

The Area Plans introduce a new, more progressive era of development for two of the city's most important districts, Downtown and Rockside Road. For these areas, recommendations have been made to remake portions of the districts in a more traditional and competitive form. We do this not because it's fashionable, but because it will improve the lives of our current and future residents.

As the plans move from the page to the pavement, we'll continue to work together and ensure our values are captured and our community remains strong. I thank the Planning Committee for their hard work, and all those who gave up their time to help develop this agenda for action.

Regards,



Gregory P. Kurtz  
Mayor, The City of Independence



## Purpose Statement

*The Area Planning process for the City of Independence was initiated as a key action of the Economic Development Strategic Plan completed in 2013. The Strategic Plan called for area plans, design improvements, and market analysis for the major non-residential areas of Independence, including Downtown, Rockside Road Corridor, Community Campus, Cloverleaf, and East Pleasant Valley Road. The plans are a method for achieving the community's goals through deliberate action. The documents identify physical and market conditions, expose development constraints, and propose high-level recommendations for long-term improvement.*



## Through the area plans, we will...

### **Enhance the quality of life for current and future residents.**

The area plans were initialized to improve the lives of current and future citizens of the City of Independence through careful analysis and strategic recommendations.

### **Provide long-term fiscal strength.**

The city has enjoyed decades of fiscal stability thanks in large part to the success of its commercial districts. The competitive advantage of Independence is strong, but not guaranteed. The plans assess the condition of each area, and recommend actions to ensure each will improve its fiscal contribution.

### **Create environments that attract high-paying jobs.**

Market demands in Northeast Ohio are changing. Dense, mixed-use districts have successfully attracted tenants who are looking for dynamic environments for their employees.

### **Address the demand for housing options.**

If the city is to maintain its role as a premier location to live, work, and raise a family, it must provide housing options that are attractive to individuals and families in all stages of life.

### **Diversify the tax base with new opportunities.**

Taking advantage of growth sectors within the new economy may require the city to think outside of its current collection of businesses and uses. To be sure growth industries have a place in Independence, the plans have examined trends in the regional economy to pinpoint new opportunities and place them in the appropriate area.

## Regional Context

Independence is part of the Cleveland Metropolitan area, a former center for American manufacturing. With the decline in this sector's employment, the region's economy diversified. This diversification led to large gains in health care and professional services bolstering the demand for high-quality office space, especially in suburban contexts. More recently, however, the suburban office market has slowed, and demand has shifted back toward downtown Cleveland or other dense, vibrant corporate centers.

### INDEPENDENCE, OHIO

**Location a driving force for development.** The city's proximity to downtown Cleveland, and Cleveland Hopkins International Airport, along with its centrality within the region, combine to generate significant development demand from businesses. At the crossroads of two major interstates, the city allows businesses access to the full metropolitan area workforce without some of the costs associated with an urban office location.

**Slow but steady growth in population and developed area.** Covering just over 6,700 acres, much of Independence has developed as single family homes. The five non-residential areas being studied comprise 1,783 acres which represents 26% of the city. The city has just over 7,000 residents.



**Few remaining areas for new development.** Similar to other inner-ring suburbs in the region, Independence is surrounded by other jurisdictions. Because land resources are finite, development decisions are increasingly important. Very few prime development sites remain within the city.

**A local economy driven by professional services and health care.** Between 2000 and 2011 professional services and health care each added hundreds of new jobs within the city. The area has a competitive advantage as a location for administrative services and has an increasingly higher share of these professions as a result.

### THE ROLE OF THE AREA PLANS

The Area Plans are a vision for the future of the city's planning areas. Each document identifies an action agenda intended to strengthen each area long-term and improve the quality of life for current and future residents. The Area Plans will:

**Inform policy.** The plans provide a framework for decision making, but lasting change will come through policy decisions and changes to the development regulations.

**Direct resources.** The plans provide strategic recommendations to address vulnerabilities or opportunities within each planning area, while providing a playbook for a range of community actors (public, private, non-profit).

**Provide a vision for future development or redevelopment.** Development concepts were created for key districts like Rockside Road and Downtown.

**Strengthen the five planning areas.** As market demands shift, the city must cultivate environments that are competitive within the new model.

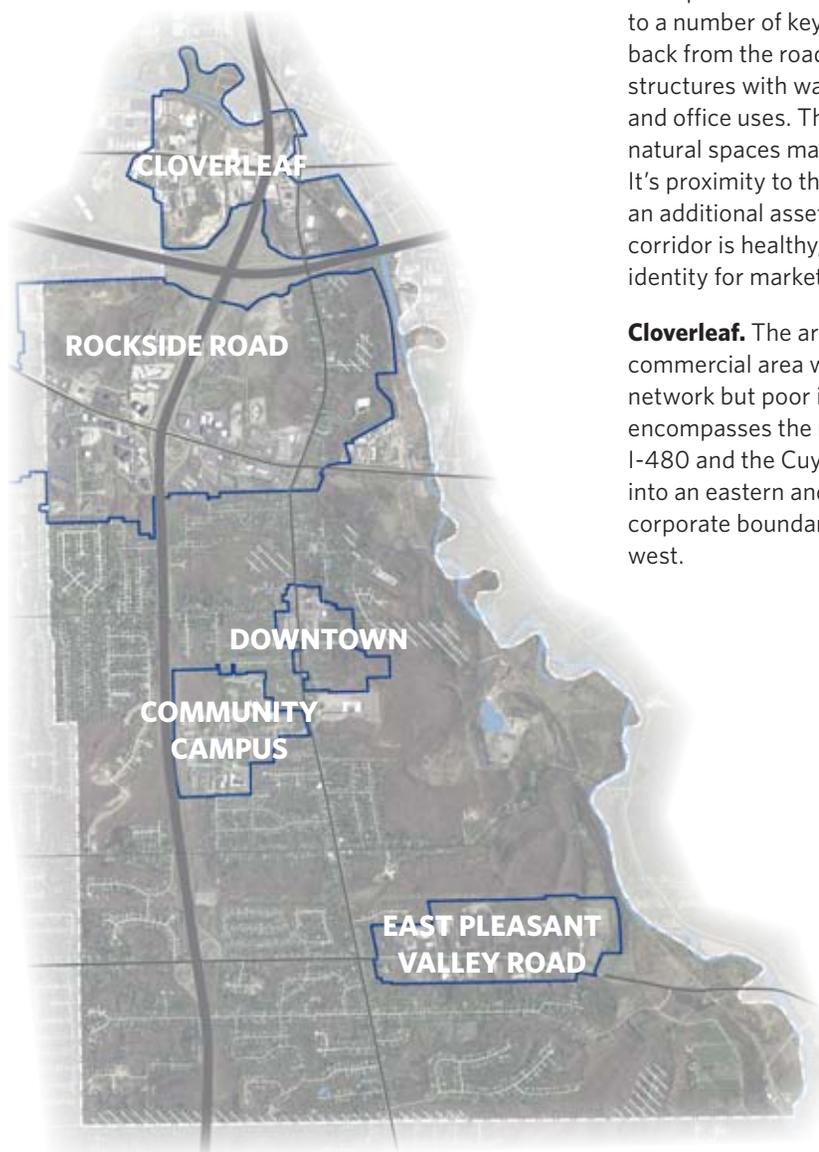
**Improve the quality of life for current and future residents.** Ultimately the area plans were developed to improve the overall livability of the city and improve the lives of its residents.

## INTRODUCING THE PLANNING AREAS

**Rockside Road.** The corridor is roughly 1,000 acres shared between the cities of Independence (800 acres) and Seven Hills (190 acres). The area gained a regional identity in the 1980's, 90's and 00's as a top office destination in the Cleveland Metropolitan area. Through this period, many office buildings, 12 hotels and over 20 restaurants were constructed, all with tremendous access to downtown Cleveland, Cleveland Hopkins International Airport, and Northeast Ohio. While still currently a productive regional employment node, the cities of Independence and Seven Hills initiated an area planning process to consider the future of Rockside Road.

**Downtown.** The planning area is centered around the intersection of Brecksville Road and Chestnut Road. The area's character and history have made it the traditional center of the community. Recently, increasing vacancies and a disjointed development pattern have shifted the retail focus away from Downtown. The lack of downtown housing has diminished the captured market, resulting in further challenges for retailers. While Downtown has struggled recently, opportunities exist within a large collection of land that is currently owned by the city. This area could be the location for a new transformative downtown development.

**Community Campus.** The campus houses a majority of the community's civic, educational, and recreational uses. In an area just over 160 acres, the area contains the High School and Middle School, City Hall, Civic Center, Fire Department, City Service Facility, Library, and a little more than a dozen playing fields, tennis courts and recreational spaces. This concentration of community spaces makes for a busy and vibrant district. Within the planning area are several large parcels with little or no development. These undeveloped areas represent the best opportunities for future civic development.



**East Pleasant Valley Road Corridor.** The corridor is an important working district for the city and is home to a number of key employers. With buildings set back from the road, the area includes a mix of large structures with warehousing, light manufacturing, and office uses. The combination of these uses and natural spaces make this district unique to the region. It's proximity to the Cuyahoga Valley National Park is an additional asset that could be leveraged. In all, the corridor is healthy, but lacks a cohesive, recognizable identity for marketing and promotion.

**Cloverleaf.** The area is a primarily an industrial and commercial area with good visibility from the highway network but poor identity as a cohesive district. It encompasses the northern portion of the city between I-480 and the Cuyahoga River. It is bisected by I-77 into an eastern and western portion and the city's corporate boundary defines the border to the east and west.

## Planning Process

The Area Planning process for the City of Independence took place over an eight-month period. The final results of the process represent a blending of conclusions drawn from technical research, and the intuition and expertise of local stakeholders and the community at-large.

### Determining the planning areas and boundaries.

Working with city officials, the planning team determined the boundaries of the five planning areas. The planning areas are primarily the city's non-residential areas, with the exception of Downtown. As the planning process evolved, some existing downtown residential areas were incorporated into the Downtown planning area.

## TECHNICAL RESEARCH

**Analysis of existing conditions.** The planning team gathered data for all of the planning areas from a wide range of sources. An analysis was then performed to determine the assets and opportunities existing within each planning area.

**Analysis of the office and retail markets.** A market analysis was performed with two key areas of focus: the office market with special attention to Rockside Road, and a retail assessment targeting the Downtown area. These findings were used by the planning team to inform the process and help develop recommendations and strategies.

**Review of existing development regulations.** The city's code was reviewed to identify opportunities, but more importantly, key limitations that may preclude the implementation of critical elements of the plan.

**Review of existing planning material.** Historic plans were gathered and reviewed to determine recommendations or information that may still be relevant and should be incorporated into the plans. The planning team also referenced past plans to determine the relative implementation success for each effort.

**Mapping environmental constraints.** After physical data was gathered, detailed mapping analysis was conducted. Areas with steep slopes and wetland were identified, so the planning team had an understand of areas most appropriate for future development.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**Results from two public planning workshops.** The planning process included two rounds of community input where participants were able to review the findings and share their thoughts on the direction of the plans. The community process attracted hundreds of participants and generated extensive feedback which helped inform and direct the process.

**Work of the planning committee.** A fourteen-member planning committee was created to provide feedback to city officials and the planning team. The committee represented a wide range of interests including land owners, business leadership, developers, and local residents.

**Stakeholder interviews.** Dozens of interviews were conducted with key stakeholders for each of the five planning areas.

**Working with City Council.** The planning team facilitated three work sessions with council at critical points in the process.

## WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY

The Area Planning process included large-scale public meetings where residents were encouraged to attend and share their ideas for the future of the planning areas. Between the two area workshops in September and the Open House in May, hundreds of participants were able to add their voice to the final plan. The process generated close to 1,000 comments and ideas.



*Downtown and Beyond Planning Workshop*



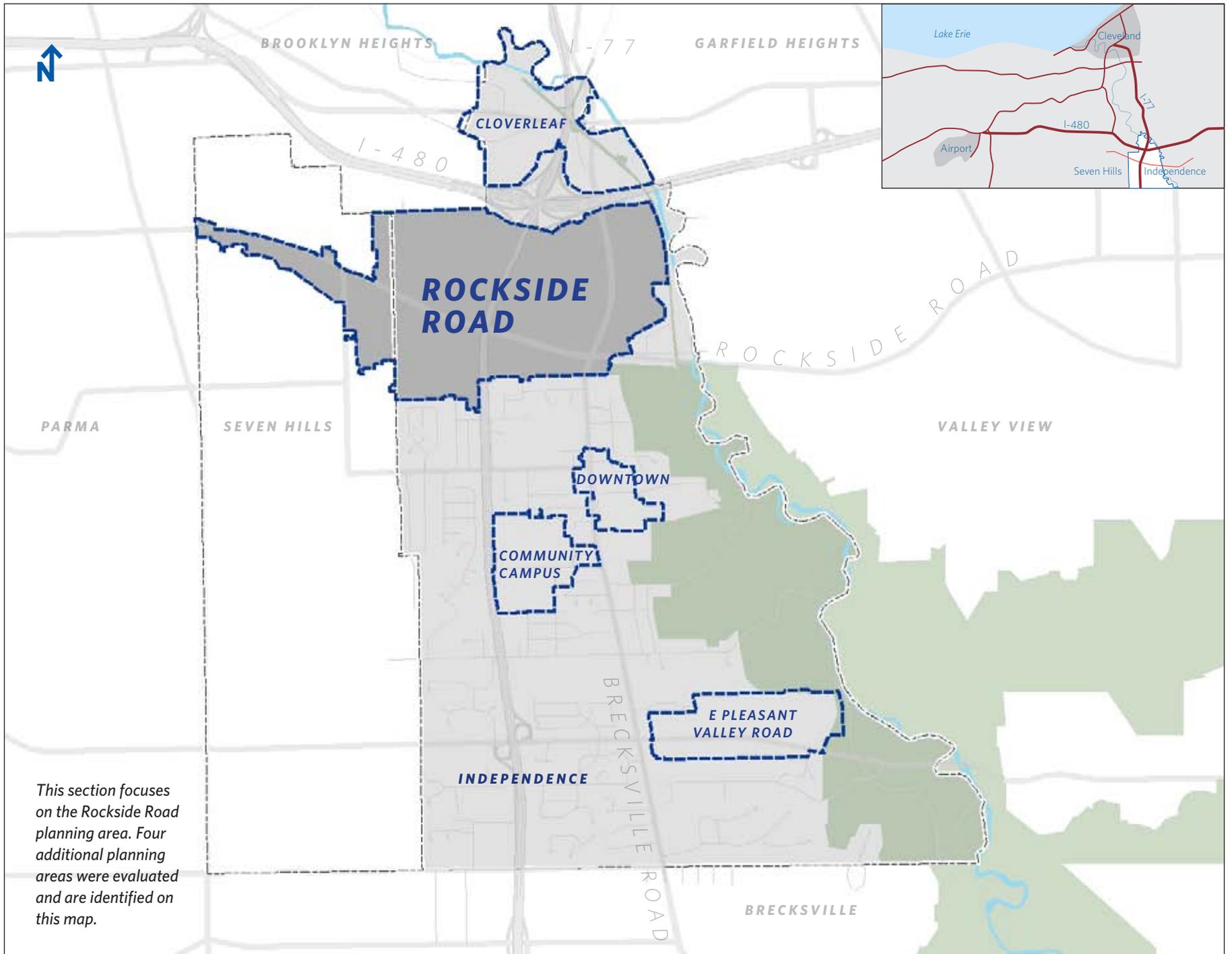
*Rockside Road Planning Workshop*



*Area Plan Open House*

# KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS





*This section focuses on the Rockside Road planning area. Four additional planning areas were evaluated and are identified on this map.*

**Context Map**

# ROCKSIDE ROAD

## AREA PLAN SUMMARY



### Rockside Today

The Rockside Road Business Corridor is roughly 1,000 acres shared between the cities of Independence (800 acres) and Seven Hills (190 acres). The area gained a regional identity in the 1980's, 90's and 00's as a top office destination in the Cleveland Metropolitan area. Through this period, many office buildings, 12 hotels and over 20 restaurants were constructed, all with tremendous access to downtown Cleveland, Cleveland Hopkins International Airport, and Northeast Ohio. While still currently a productive planning area, the cities of Independence and Seven Hills initiated an Area Planning process to consider the future of Rockside Road.

### KEY FINDINGS

**The entire corridor is approaching build out.**

**240**<sub>ac</sub>  
REMAINING  
DEVELOPABLE LAND

Developable land includes areas not limited by severe topographic or wetland limitations. Between the two cities the corridor is just over 1,000 acres in total.

**Buildings are nearing 30 years old on average.**

**1987**  
AVERAGE YEAR-BUILT FOR  
MULTI-TENANT OFFICE BUILDINGS

Of the 4 million sq ft of office space within Independence and along the corridor, roughly 1.7 million, or 43%, is defined as class "A". As buildings age their class ratings typically decline.

**The city swells each day by three times its resident population.**

**+21,000**  
DAYTIME POPULATION

The residential population of approximately 7,100 nearly triples during the day due to commuters and visitors to the community. Of the roughly 21,000 workers, fewer than 2,000 are residents of Independence.

## The Vision for Rockside

*The Rockside Road corridor should leverage its reputation as a premiere office location in metropolitan Cleveland to launch a new development concept that meets the emerging demand from businesses and their employees for a more walkable and mixed-use office district. This new pattern should be emphasized in future development projects and also encouraged when redevelopment occurs. The Brecksville Road corridor, north of Rockside Road, should be considered as an area for possible transition from residential to commercial uses. In the spirit of collaboration, Independence should consider cooperating with Seven Hills on initiatives of mutual benefit within the Rockside Road corridor.*

## Overall Recommendations

### 1 Improve connectivity for pedestrian and vehicular traffic

Connections across the planning area are key to improving the level of service for Rockside Road. Currently, there are limited east-west connections.

### 2 Continue to market key development sites

A number of strategic development sites still exist throughout the corridor. These should be marketed creatively to maximize their potential.

### 3 Consider rezoning the residential parcels along Brecksville Road north of Rockside Road

A zoning change in this area could result in an area with uses more consistent with the remainder of the Rockside Road corridor. This area also provides an opportunity for small businesses to possibly own property in the Rockside Road planning area.

### 4 Encourage redevelopment of aging office buildings to increase connectivity, promote walkability, and build a vertical mix of uses

As aging buildings reach the end of their useful lives, redevelopment should be consistent across the corridor and meet the emerging demand for walkable, mixed-use office districts.

### 5 Allow for the infill of parcels within existing development

Allowing for a greater intensity or utilization of a parcel may incentivize property owners to reconsider unproductive spaces on their land.

### 6 Create park and gathering space opportunities in the area

The corridor has no public parks, open spaces, or gathering spaces. A suitable location should be identified in each quadrant to provide future opportunities.

### 7 Improve the overall aesthetics of the corridor

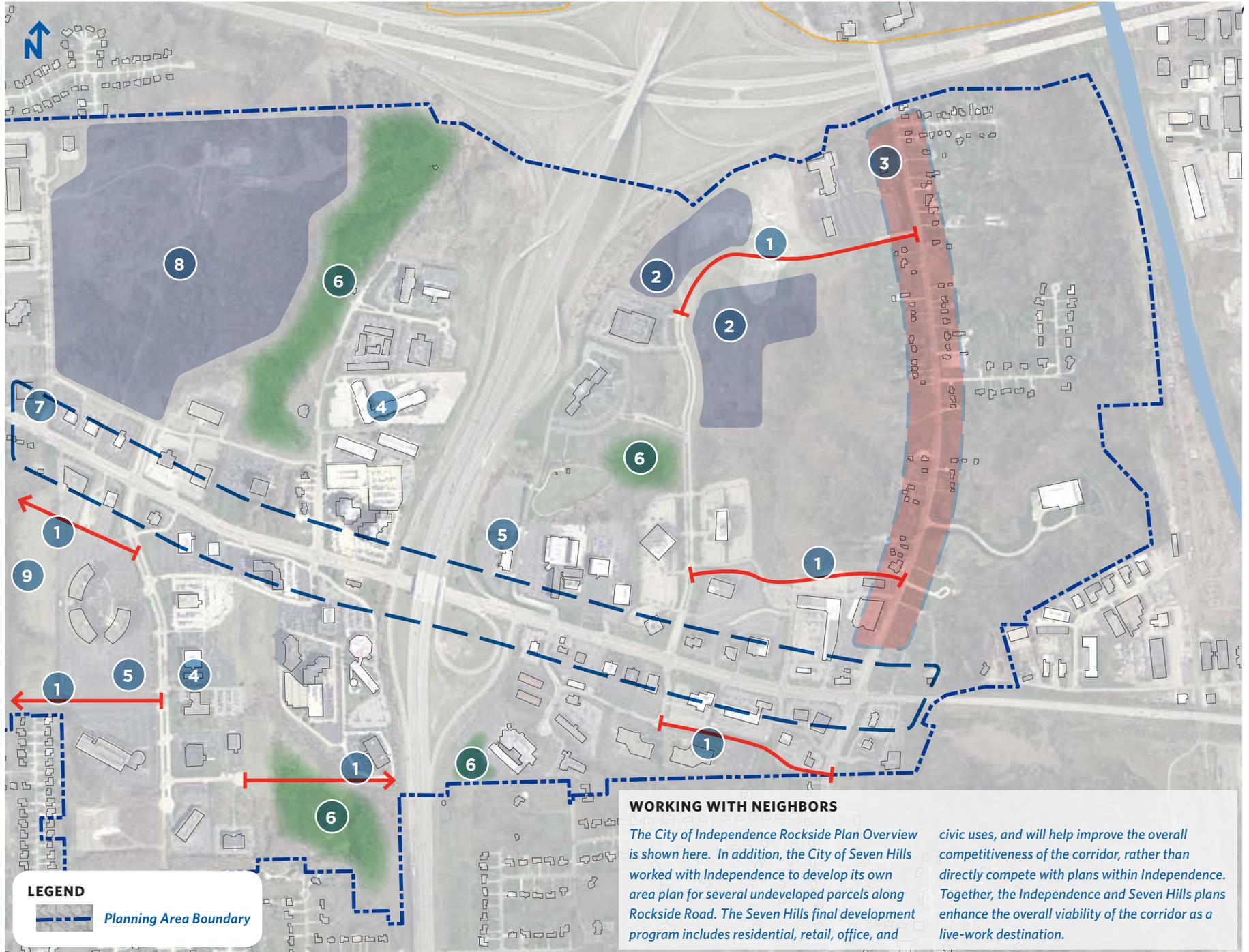
The identity and aesthetics of the Rockside Road corridor could be improved through strategic initiatives that add visual interest to the public realm.

### 8 Facilitate development of the parcels in the Development Priority Area of the planning area with a competitive product that maximizes the area's potential

The Development Priority Area of the planning area contains approximately 70 acres. This constitutes one of the largest amounts of developable land in the planning area.

### 9 Work with Seven Hills to create a mutually beneficial development program for the Rockside Road corridor

The City of Seven Hills worked in collaboration with Independence to develop its own Area Plan for undeveloped parcels along Rockside Road. The final development program will help improve the overall competitiveness of the Rockside Road corridor. In the long-term, the two cities should pursue an agreement to work together to improve the corridor.



**Rockside Plan Overview**

## Development Priority Area

The northwest quadrant of the planning area contains approximately 70 acres of undeveloped land. This constitutes one of the largest amounts of developable land in the planning area. In 2014, Independence purchased two parcels within the area comprising approximately 33 acres. A conceptual development framework has been developed for this area and the surrounding parcels. This concept includes a potential development yield for the area and aligns with the emerging market for walkable, mixed-use employment centers.

*The Rockside Development Priority Area includes the parcels in the far northwest quadrant of the planning area.*



### DEVELOPMENT INTENT

- 1 Develop into a denser, mixed-use district with residential opportunities**

The development pattern for Rockside will integrate uses into a walkable framework that creates a live, work, and play (24-hour) district.
- 2 Implement a transportation and pedestrian framework to improve connectivity**

The future street framework will seek to improve connectivity. New connections will support on-street parking and create a safe, pleasurable experience for pedestrians.
- 3 Create a 24-hour district with a myriad of amenities for workers and residents**

The Development Priority Area will be a destination for workers and residents alike. The district will include amenities such as restaurants, retail, and entertainment, along with residential options.
- 4 Dedicate green space for active and passive recreation and connect to existing natural areas**

Green and open spaces will be a priority for future projects located within the Development Priority Area. These new spaces will connect to existing natural areas within the Rockside Road corridor.
- 5 Offer flexibility to accept a drop-in corporate headquarters campus**

The new development pattern for will not preclude the incorporation of a large corporate “drop-in” development. Recent regional examples prove this pattern is a more competitive model for such large-scale users.



**LEGEND**

- Mixed-Use Employment Center**  
Mixed-use with retail or small office on the ground floor; office on upper floors
- Mixed Density Residential**  
Mix of residential options at higher densities
- Parks and Open Space**  
Dedicated space for active and passive recreation

**CONCEPTUAL PLAN**

The Priority Development Area, at just over 70 acres, represents the largest contiguous set of developable parcels within the Rockside Road corridor, and the entire city. In the conceptual plan, the area would transform into a vibrant, mixed-use district, with high-quality office space supporting restaurants, retail, and new residential options for workers. The Priority Development Area can usher in a new direction for the Rockside Road corridor and meet the strong regional demand for mixed-use office centers rather than auto-centric office parks.

**DEVELOPMENT YIELD**

The conceptual land use plan illustrates yield potential for the planning area. Although the current market would not support immediate absorption of the development program, phasing of the project over several years would spread out the demand over several cycles of the market. The plan includes:

- Between 1.4 and 1.6 million square feet of mixed-use employment space. This portion of the planning area would allow for a diversity of uses including office, retail, and dining. The concept can also accommodate a large drop-in corporate headquarters.
- There is an opportunity and market for mixed density residential options designed for employees within the Rockside Road corridor.

**Building Footprints**

*Proposed building locations are schematic in nature and are representations of scale and form. As development takes place, different lot organizations may suit certain uses. Relationships and building density illustrate preferences in character and public spaces to inform future development.*



**Street Framework: Looking Northwest**

*The proposed street hierarchy is shown above. All streets in this area should balance pedestrian and vehicular movements, and provide ample on-street parking. Interior streets will be more narrow and serve as connections to surface and structured parking.*

# DOWNTOWN AREA PLAN SUMMARY



## Downtown Today

The Downtown planning area for the City of Independence is centered around the intersection of Brecksville Road and Chestnut Road. The area's character and history have made it the traditional center of the community. Recently, increasing vacancies and a disjointed development pattern have shifted the retail focus away from Downtown. The lack of housing has diminished the captured market. While Downtown has struggled recently, opportunities exist within a large collection of land that is currently owned by the city. This consolidation of ownership could allow for a new transformative development.

**A few key property owners control the majority of downtown property**

55%

LAND CURRENTLY OWNED BY THE CITY OR A LOCAL CHURCH

Between the City of Independence and a few key churches, the majority of land in the planning area is controlled. Consolidation of this land can be used to develop the master plan for Downtown.

## KEY FINDINGS

**Vast space consumed by surface parking**

9<sub>ac</sub>

LAND COVERED BY SURFACE PARKING LOTS

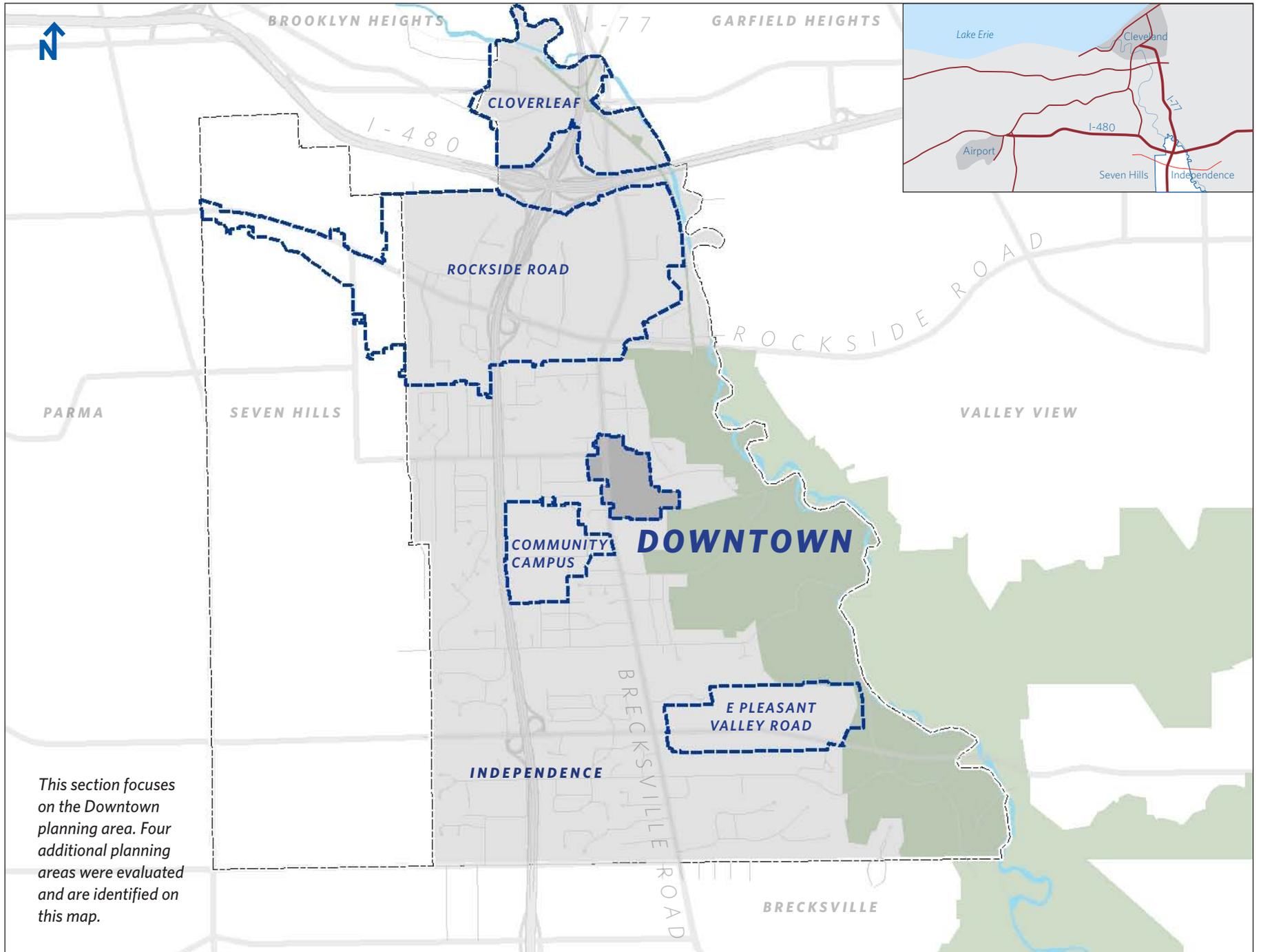
Surface parking lots cover a large amount of the Downtown planning area. These surface lots are generally placed on the frontage of Brecksville Road and imply a vast sense of space as you travel along the corridor.

**Brecksville Rd design does not match the area's character**

67<sub>feet</sub>

WIDTH OF BRECKSVILLE ROAD

The large roadway that cuts through Downtown Independence consists of four travel lanes, one central turning lane, and an apron that transitions back and forth between parking spaces and turning lanes.



**Context Map**

## The Vision for Downtown

*Downtown should emerge as a vibrant and competitive town center that attracts residents and visitors, and captures the spirit of the community. The district will consider the form of development just as closely as its function. Great care will be taken to ensure that new buildings meet the character of a traditional downtown and bolster the reputation of the district as the vibrant community center. Housing will play a critical role in this transformation. A range of options will be included, helping to build a captive market for retailers along Brecksville Road. Improvements to the streetscape will balance vehicular movements with the pedestrian experience. Commercial investment will seek to leverage proximate assets to the downtown, including the 20,000+ workers along Rockside Road and the Cuyahoga Valley National Park. In all, the Downtown area will transform into a walkable and vibrant town center that serves residents, and attracts visitors from the Cuyahoga Valley National Park.*

## Recommendations

### 1 Improve the streetscape along Brecksville Road

The width of Brecksville Road creates a challenging environment for pedestrians. By decreasing this curb-to-curb distance, Brecksville Road will begin to balance the need to accommodate vehicular traffic with the desire to improve pedestrian safety.

### 2 Reserve opportunities for park space and trail connections

Small, centrally located park spaces should be reserved as the planning area is developed.

### 3 Institute regulatory controls to guide development

To achieve the goals of the Downtown development concept, changes to the city's development regulations will be necessary.

### 4 Develop a marketing concept for downtown Independence

Marketing Downtown is a basic component of successful examples from the region. A brand and communication tools will help regionally expose the area and incentivize further investment while attracting visitors and residents.

### 5 Encourage the location of a civic or community use

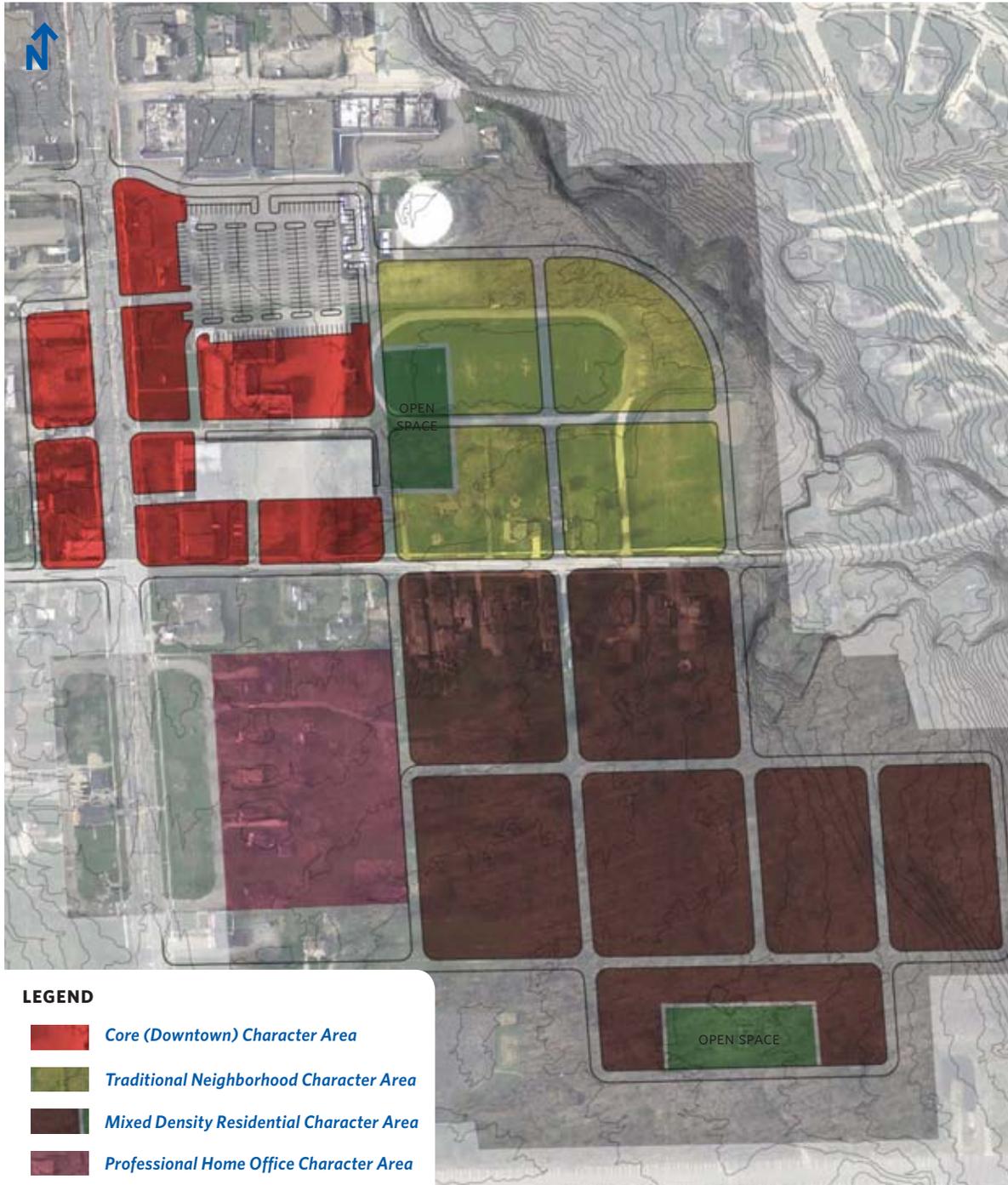
Currently, the vast majority of the city's civic uses are located within the Community Campus. These facilities work well in a downtown setting as their constant foot traffic provides an attractive market for retailers.

### 6 Develop diverse, high-quality housing options

By allowing the development of more diverse housing options, the city can create a market in Downtown that provides a wider set of housing options for both current and future residents.

### 7 Implement the Downtown development concept

The development concept for Downtown Independence provides a framework for future investment. The concept was developed to capture the community's vision for the area and provide a tool for the plan's implementation.



**LEGEND**

- Core (Downtown) Character Area*
- Traditional Neighborhood Character Area*
- Mixed Density Residential Character Area*
- Professional Home Office Character Area*

**Downtown Development Concept**

**THE DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT**

The development concept for Downtown Independence provides a framework for future investment. The concept was developed to capture the community's vision for the area and provide a tool for the plan's implementation. Different from a more rigid site plan, the concept visualizes a possible future for Downtown should the recommendations be fully realized. It is intended to inspire future development or redevelopment but is not the only preferred scenario.

**DEVELOPMENT INTENT**

- Develop a mixed-use district to serve as the heart of the community
- Establish a street network to improve circulation
- Improve Brecksville Road for pedestrian interaction and traffic calming
- Offer a diverse set of new residential opportunities for future and existing residents of Independence
- Increase the Downtown housing base to support future retail

**DEVELOPMENT MARKET**

Between the Downtown character areas there is an opportunity to meet the current market demand of 40,000 to 90,000 sq ft of additional retail space and housing marketed to empty nesters and young professionals. As market demand increases over time, the development concept provides opportunity for additional retail, office, and residential units within Downtown.

## A LONG-TERM APPROACH

It is clear that the full realization of the vision for Downtown Independence will take place over a series of development phases. The scale of the project and the realities of the short-term (five year) market demands insist on a phased approach to development.

The image to the right illustrates two proposed initial phases to satiate the short term demands of market and initiate the development process. Beginning with the former middle school site, the rendering shows three new mixed-use buildings lining Brecksville Road. Further east, the mixed-density residential neighborhood has been developed along with several surface parking lots.

The phased approach to development relies heavily on strong development regulations which, through the zoning code, enforce a development pattern that matches the vision for Downtown. A gradual development approach allows a single developer or multiple developers to invest in the planning area.



*A phased approach to the transformation of Downtown Independence would rely on strong development regulations and a slow aggregation of development phases.*

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# EAST PLEASANT VALLEY ROAD

## AREA PLAN SUMMARY



### East Pleasant Valley Today

The East Pleasant Valley Road Corridor is an important working district for the city and is home to a number of key employers. With buildings set back from the road, the area includes a mix of large structures which house warehousing, light manufacturing, and office uses. The combination of these uses and natural spaces makes this district unique to the region. It's proximity to the Cuyahoga Valley National Park is an additional asset that could be leveraged. In all, the corridor is healthy, but lacks a cohesive, recognizable identity for marketing and promotion.

### KEY FINDINGS

**Large building footprints throughout the area.**

93,934

AVERAGE BUILDING SQUARE FOOTAGE

Large building footprints contribute to large amounts of impervious surfaces within the area.

**Distinct area created through similar zoning pattern.**

91%

PERCENT OF ACREAGE ZONED LIGHT MANUFACTURING

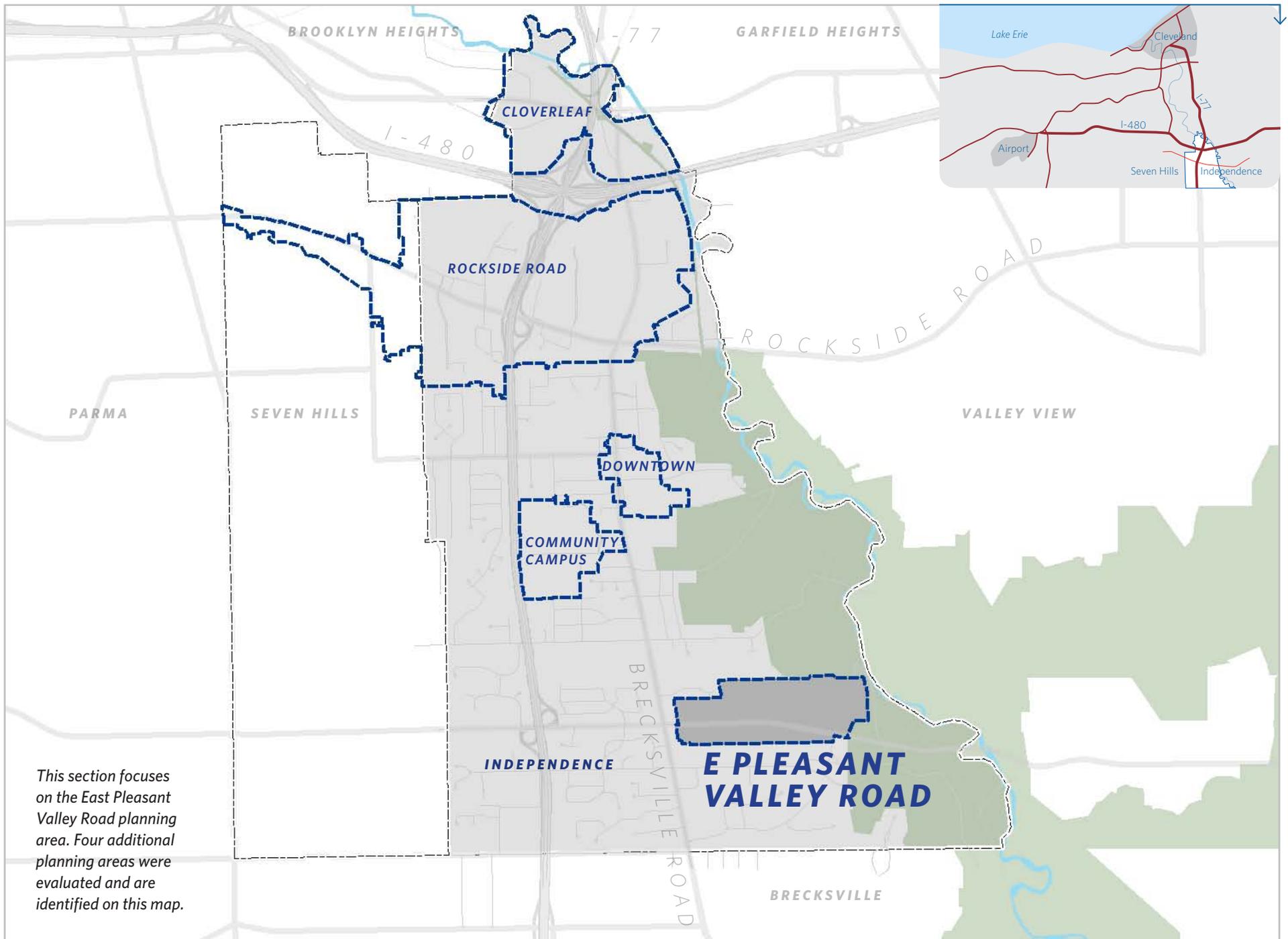
Zoning throughout the area has led to a cohesive appearance with similar building type, setbacks, and intensity of uses.

**Aging building stock.**

1975

AVERAGE YEAR OF BUILDING CONSTRUCTION

As new tenants arrive to the area, existing facilities typically require updates and renovations.



*This section focuses on the East Pleasant Valley Road planning area. Four additional planning areas were evaluated and are identified on this map.*

**Context Map**



**East Pleasant Valley Amenities**

## The Vision for East Pleasant Valley Road

*The East Pleasant Valley Road corridor will be strengthened as a key center for business that improves the overall fiscal health of the city. Through enhancements to the area's aesthetics and identity, the corridor can be effectively marketed to minimize vacancy and improve the environment for workers. There are great opportunities within the corridor to create new recreational uses such as trails and open space. These should be explored and strategically implemented.*

## Overall Recommendations

### 1 Improve the streetscape and general aesthetics along East Pleasant Valley Road

Lighting, landscaping, and pedestrian amenities, along with strict code enforcement, can help to build a safer corridor for pedestrians and a more beautiful area for the city.

### 2 Review or develop creative incentives to fill existing or future vacancies

Financial incentive packages are a standard method for attracting new investment into vacant or underdeveloped areas of a city.

### 3 Market an industrial campus for remaining undeveloped parcels

While future opportunities for redevelopment may emerge, these sites are logical development options for the near-term.

### 4 Explore recreational and open space opportunities

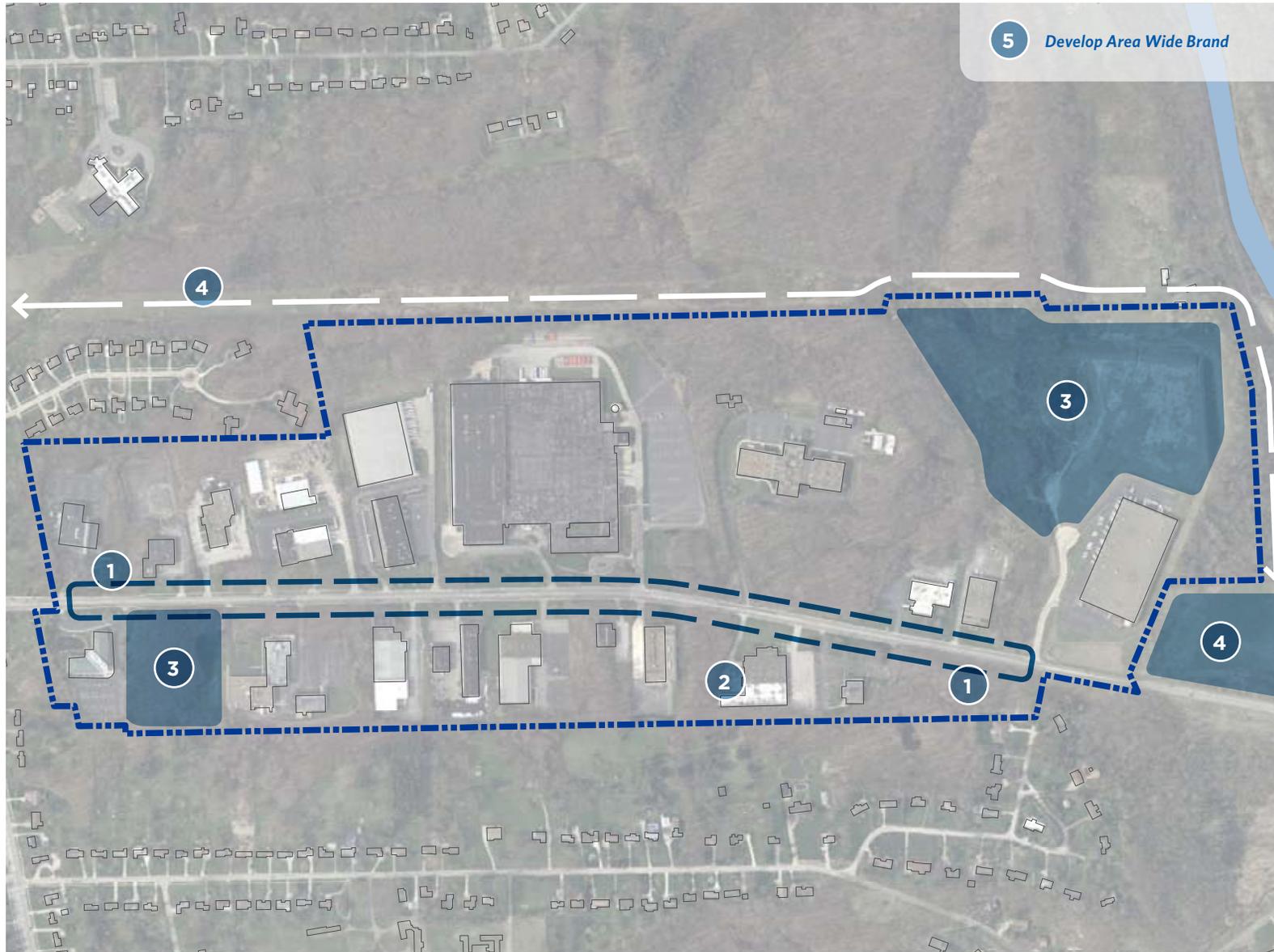
To take advantage of its natural setting and proximity to the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, the city should consider strategies to strengthen the connection of the area to the park and regional trail system.

### 5 Develop a unique brand for the corridor reinforced through physical signage and marketing materials

The corridor should cultivate an identity based on the unique characteristics that distinguish it from other commercial areas within the city and throughout the region.

AREA WIDE

5 *Develop Area Wide Brand*



East Pleasant Valley Road Plan Overview

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# CLOVERLEAF

## AREA PLAN SUMMARY



### Cloverleaf Today

Cloverleaf is a primarily industrial and commercial area with good visibility but poor identity as a cohesive district. The area encompasses the northern portion of the city between I-480 and the Cuyahoga River. It is bisected by I-77 into an eastern and western portion and the city's corporate boundary defines the border to the east and west.

### KEY FINDINGS

289

ACRES OF LAND IN THE CLOVERLEAF STUDY AREA

With connection points to several surrounding communities, the couple hundred acres comprised in the study area are bounded by the Cuyahoga River and I-480, as well as a CSX railroad.

83%

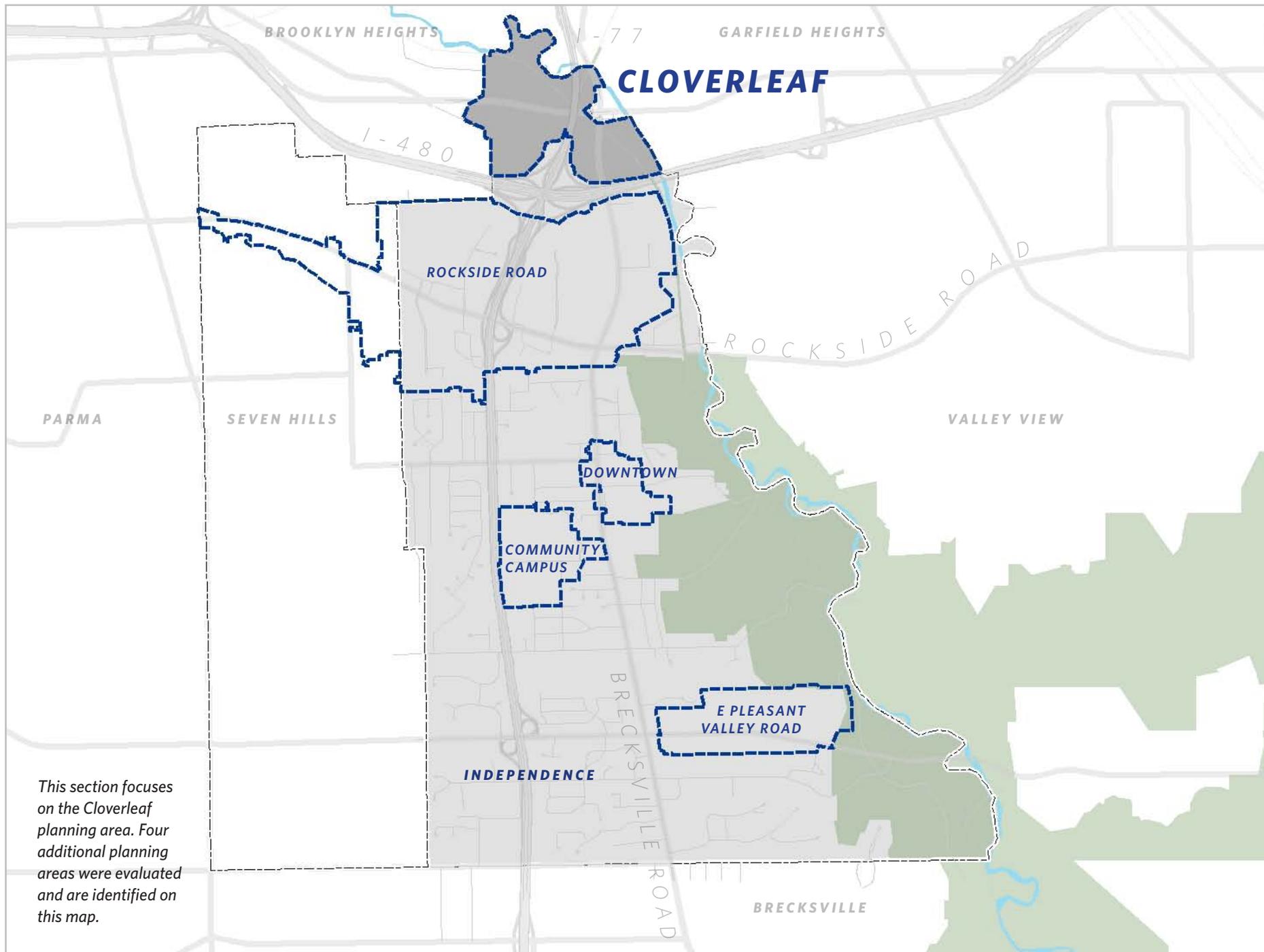
ZONED AS EITHER COMMERCIAL OR LIGHT INDUSTRIAL LAND

The array of transportation options makes Cloverleaf a convenient location for industrial uses and warehouses.

100

MILLION GALLONS OF STORM WATER CAPACITY DURING EVENTS

The confluence of West Creek and the Cuyahoga River exists within the Cloverleaf planning area and is largely effected by significant storm events as both water courses swell to flood stages.



*This section focuses on the Cloverleaf planning area. Four additional planning areas were evaluated and are identified on this map.*

**Context Map**



**Cloverleaf Amenities**

## The Vision for Cloverleaf

*Cloverleaf will be strengthened as an industrial and manufacturing planning area through the maintenance and improvement of its infrastructure, the appropriate enhancement of its streetscape and aesthetics, and the cultivation of a unique brand for marketing purposes. Development and redevelopment will leverage the district's unique visibility and greater access to the region. Finally, the West Creek Confluence Stream Restoration project will be supported and strengthened to enhance this unique amenity and to promote it as a regional recreational attraction.*



## Overall Recommendations

### 1 Explore creative development and redevelopment opportunities

Creative redevelopment will be necessary to make use of transitional or vacant spaces over time.

### 2 Improve the streetscape and general aesthetics throughout the planning area

Stakeholders and business owners within the Cloverleaf planning area have expressed an interest in initiatives to beautify the area.

### 3 Develop a unique identity for the planning area

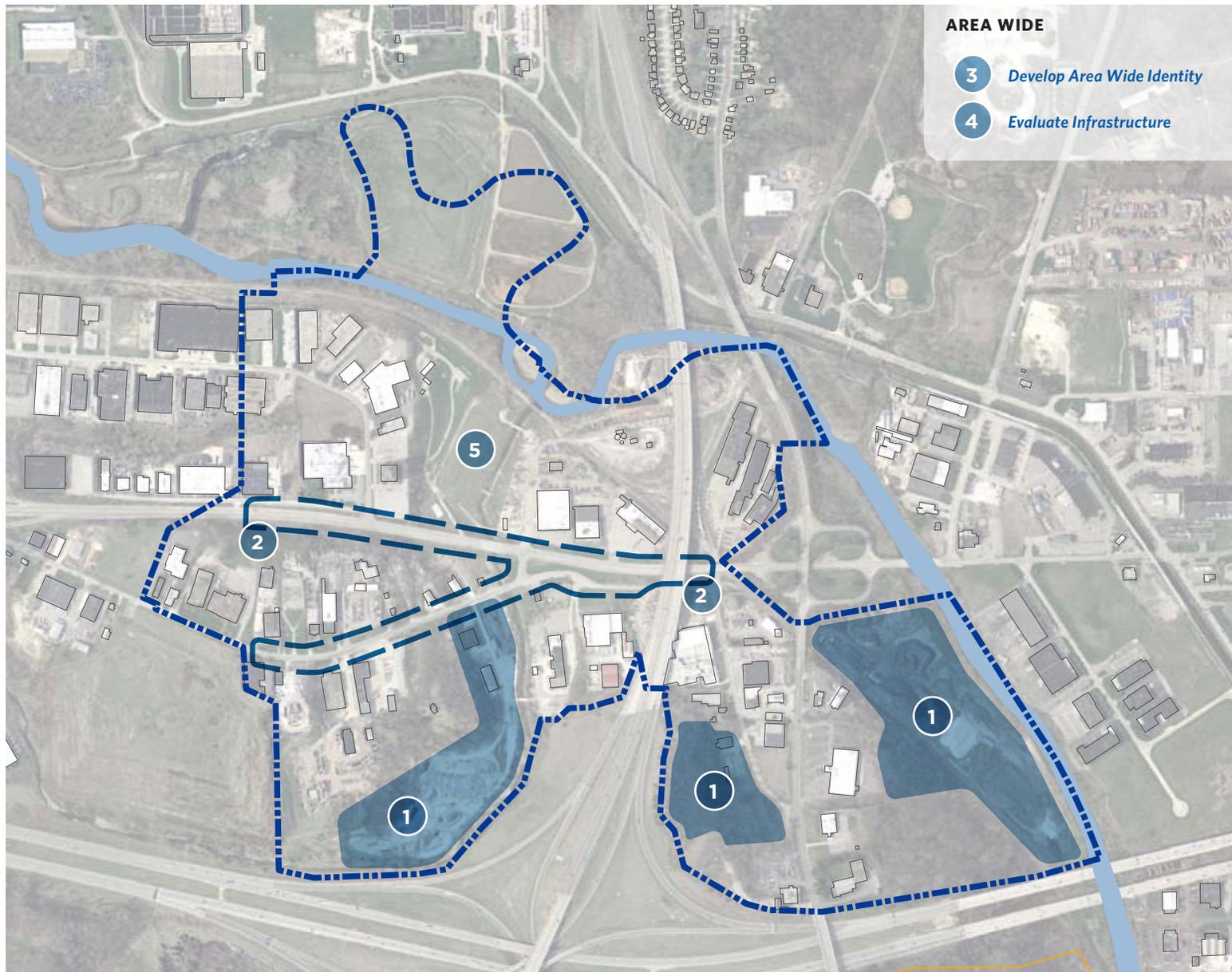
The Cloverleaf planning area should cultivate an identity based on the unique characteristics that distinguish it from other commercial/manufacturing districts within the city, or throughout the region.

### 4 Evaluate existing infrastructure

To ensure the long-term viability of the planning area, the city should consider Cloverleaf as a special infrastructure zone.

### 5 Support the West Creek Conservancy

The city should recognize this project as an important new amenity, work with the West Creek Conservancy to streamline future projects, and identify programs or activities to help activate the new park.



Cloverleaf Plan Overview

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# COMMUNITY CAMPUS

## AREA PLAN SUMMARY

### Community Campus Today

The City of Independence's Campus houses a majority of the community's civic, educational, and recreational uses. In an area just over 160 acres, the district contains the High School and Middle School, City Hall, Civic Center, Fire Department, City Service Facility, Library, and a little more than a dozen playing fields, tennis courts and recreational spaces. This concentration of community spaces makes for a busy and vibrant district. Within the planning area are several large parcels with little or no development. These undeveloped areas represent the best opportunities for the planning area to expand.

### KEY FINDINGS

161<sub>ac</sub>

ACRES OF LAND INCLUDED IN THE  
COMMUNITY CAMPUS STUDY AREA

Bounded by Brecksville Road and I-77, the area known as Community Campus plays host to the majority of civic institutions for the City of Independence.

83%

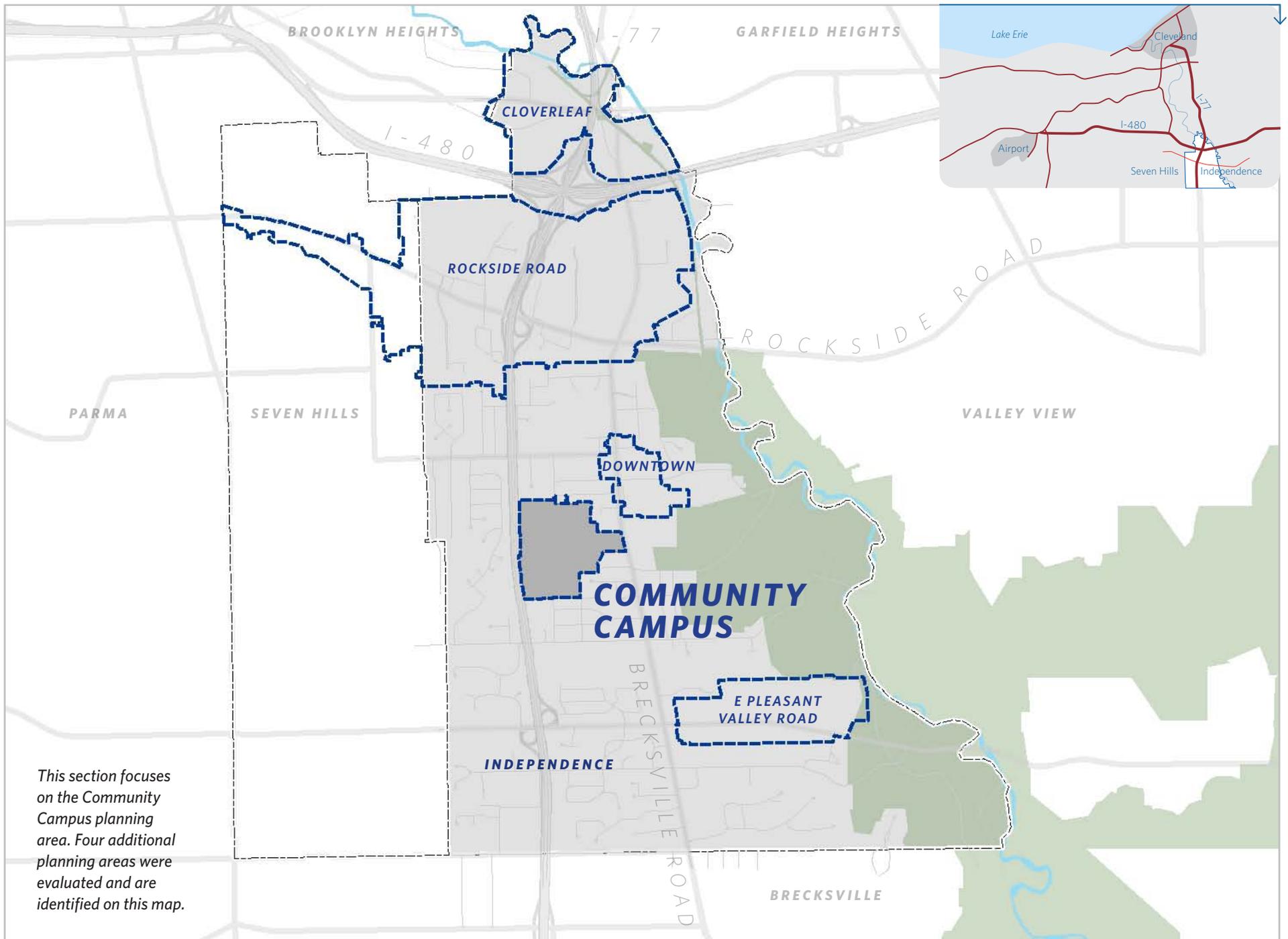
PROPERTIES OWNED BY THE  
CITY OR SCHOOL SYSTEM

The city owns a large majority of the parcels in the study area. There are three privately held parcels within the boundary, one being 26 acres alone.

10

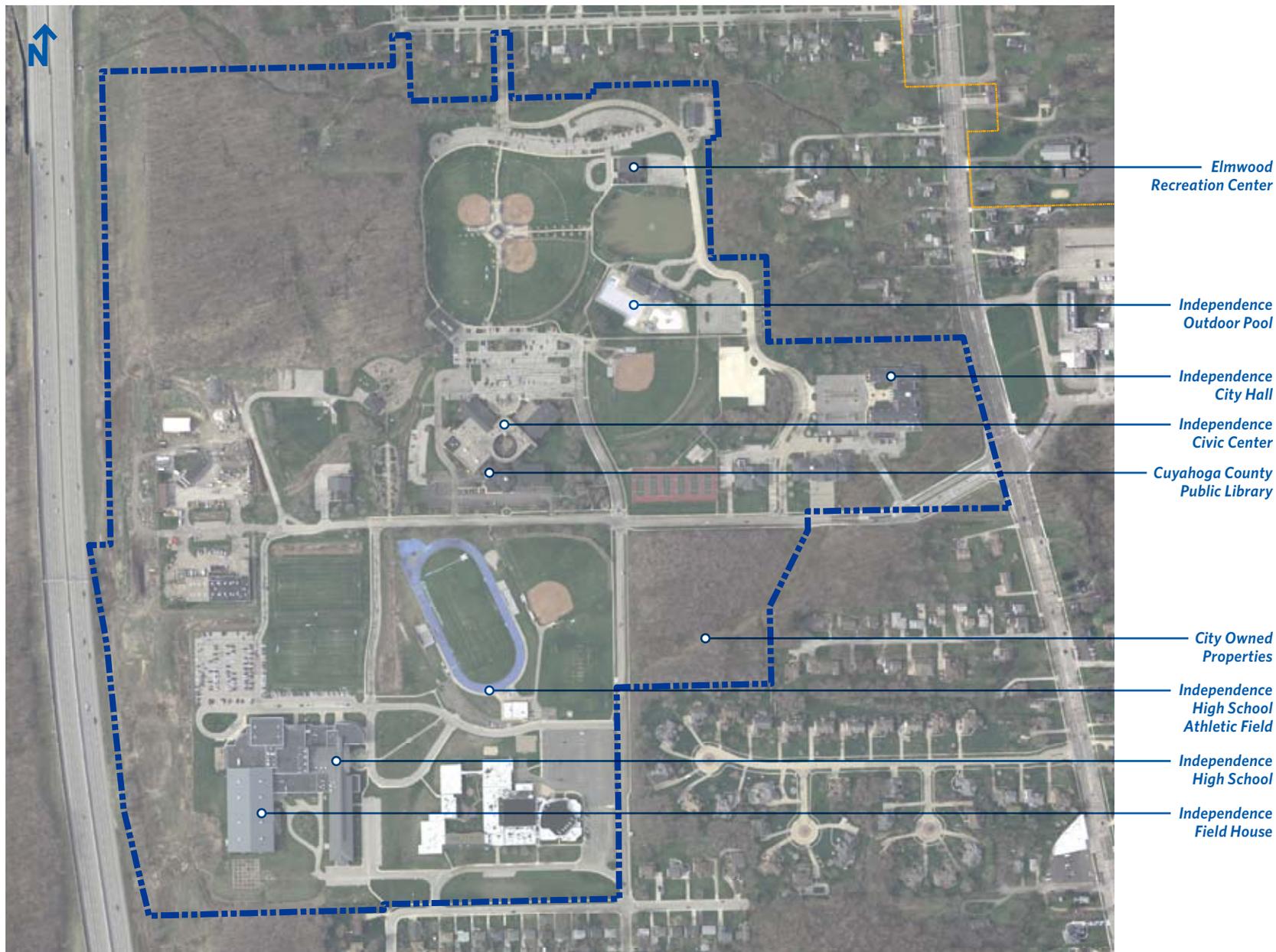
ATHLETIC FIELDS

Recreational amenities abound. In addition to the athletic fields there are tennis courts, a swimming pool, playgrounds, horseshoe pits, bocce courts, and a recreation hall.



*This section focuses on the Community Campus planning area. Four additional planning areas were evaluated and are identified on this map.*

**Context Map**



Community Campus Amenities

## The Vision for Community Campus

*The Community Campus will maintain its role as the activity center of the city by considering the incorporation of uses that compliment its existing civic character and strengthen its viability as a cohesive district. City leaders should consider the non-conforming uses within the planning area and examine the cost/benefits of possible relocation. Additional parcels within the planning area, not currently owned by the city, should be considered for possible consolidation into the campus. City leaders should also consider the merits of exploring independent and/or assisted living facilities within the campus planning area. Greater accessibility into and out of the area will be a priority and include not only vehicular traffic, but pedestrian and cyclists as well. Streetscape and gateway improvements will improve the aesthetics and identity. Overall, the Community Campus will continue to serve as the center of activity for the city by supporting existing uses, considering the relocation of non-conforming facilities and the incorporation of new complementary uses.*

## Overall Recommendations

- 1 Evaluate acquisition opportunities for vacant or undeveloped land adjacent to the campus**

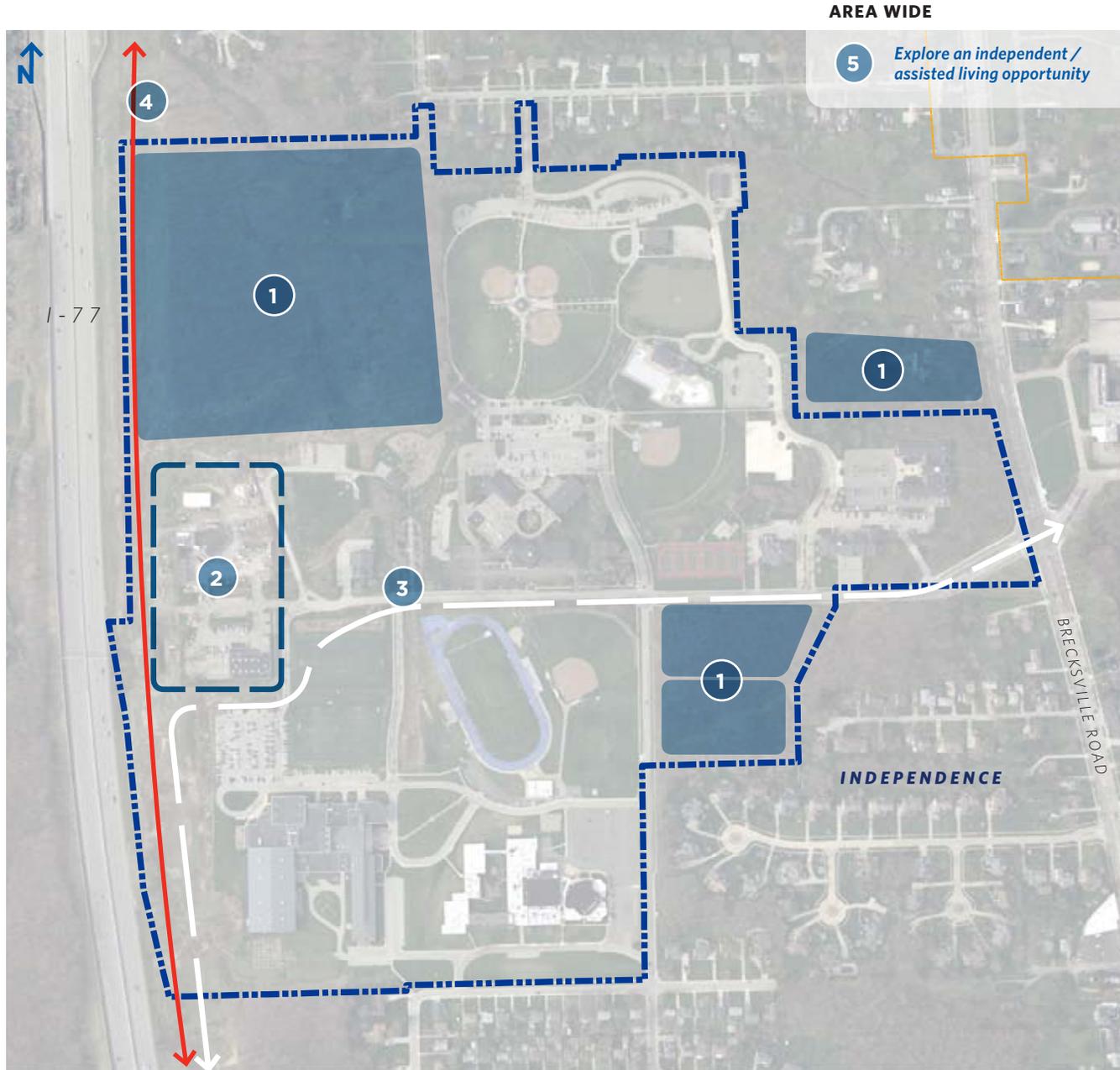
Undeveloped parcels adjacent to the campus should be considered for purchase by the city when available to improve the land area and flexibility of the campus in the future.
- 2 Consider the relocation of the city's service facility**

Moving the city's service facility to a more appropriate area of the city would remove any potential conflicts and also create an opportunity for re-purposing the site's ten acres.
- 3 Connect the campus to local and regional all-purpose trails**

A connection across the campus from the future Hemlock Creek Trail could occur along Selig Drive and then continue south and west until meeting with the existing regional trail system in the City of Seven Hills.
- 4 Improve access and navigability**

A new connection could run north and south from Chestnut to Hillside. The connection should be tested within affected neighborhoods, and scaled (full service road or multi-use path) based on the leadership's best judgement.
- 5 Explore an independent/assisted living opportunity**

The city should carefully explore the development of an independent and/or assisted living housing facility in the Community Campus study area.



Community Campus Recommendations Overview

