

## Chapter 2: Existing Conditions

### Introduction

To prepare effective plans and recommendations, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the existing conditions of the Plan Area. A significant part of any planning process is the systematic identification and evaluation of the facts and issues that have led to the current situation and that will have an impact on future activities. This process must be based to the greatest extent possible on factual information, and must distinguish between actual conditions and perceptions or assumptions about those conditions. The perceptions of residents and stakeholders can have as strong of an impact on a Plan area as factual conditions, but the differences between the two types of information must be understood.

This chapter outlines the findings of the Existing Conditions analyses that were conducted as a part of the Pearl and Center Roads Corridor Plan. Where indicated, additional background information may be found in Appendix A.

### Study Area (Figure 1)

The Study Area defined for the Pearl and Center Roads Corridor Plan is shown in Figure 1. This Study Area was formulated to meet several conditions:

- It must include as much of the land potentially impacted by the Corridors as possible, including some areas, such as the largely residential frontage along Center Road west of Pearl Road, that are not expected to experience redevelopment pressures.
- It must allow users to focus on those properties or portions of properties that have a reasonable chance of experiencing commercial redevelopment during the Plan period. In most cases, the Study Area is limited to only those parcels that have frontage on Pearl or Center roads, or which historically function as a unit with properties that have frontage on Pearl or Center roads, such as parking lots. In most cases, the Study Area boundary follows existing property lines, but in some cases existing parcels include back land that is unlikely to develop with the frontage portions of the parcels as a result of slope or infrastructure constraints.

The Study Area includes 1,010 existing parcels and approximately 8 miles of frontage on Pearl and Center roads. Pearl Road extends approximately 4.17 miles through the Study Area, and Center Road through Brunswick is approximately 3.80 miles in length.

It should be noted that the Brunswick Town Center area is depicted on these and subsequent maps as it may appear upon completion. At the time of this writing, Phase 1 of the project is under construction, and subsequent phases have not been finalized.



*Insert figure 1 – study Area*

## Existing Land Use (Figure 2)

The Study Area’s existing land uses were determined on the basis of visual surveys conducted in July and August 2003. Existing properties were categorized according to their uses at the time of that survey. Since some specific land uses may have changed during the period identified, this inventory should not be interpreted as a definitive statement of a parcel’s use at the time of the publication of this document, but the map as a whole should be interpreted as a depiction of the Study Area’s land use trends and characteristics at the time of the Plan.

Since land use is often confused with zoning, a brief explanation may be necessary. An Existing Land Use analysis sorts the types of land uses that are occurring in a Study Area into a small set of categories in order to determine the relative proportions of the types of land uses that are occurring. Land Use is determined by an visual evaluation of the actual activity that appears to be occurring on the site from the public right of way, regardless of its zoning. As a result, a property that has a dwelling on it but is zoned for commercial development will be classified as a residential property in the Existing Land Use, but will be counted as a commercially-zoned property in the Zoning Analysis. Zoning classifications are based on the community’s zoning code, but land use categories are designed to best explain the Study Area. Additionally, a property that is used for a commercial activity but does not show any evidence of that use from the street (for example, there is no sign identifying the business) may not be classified by that business activity.

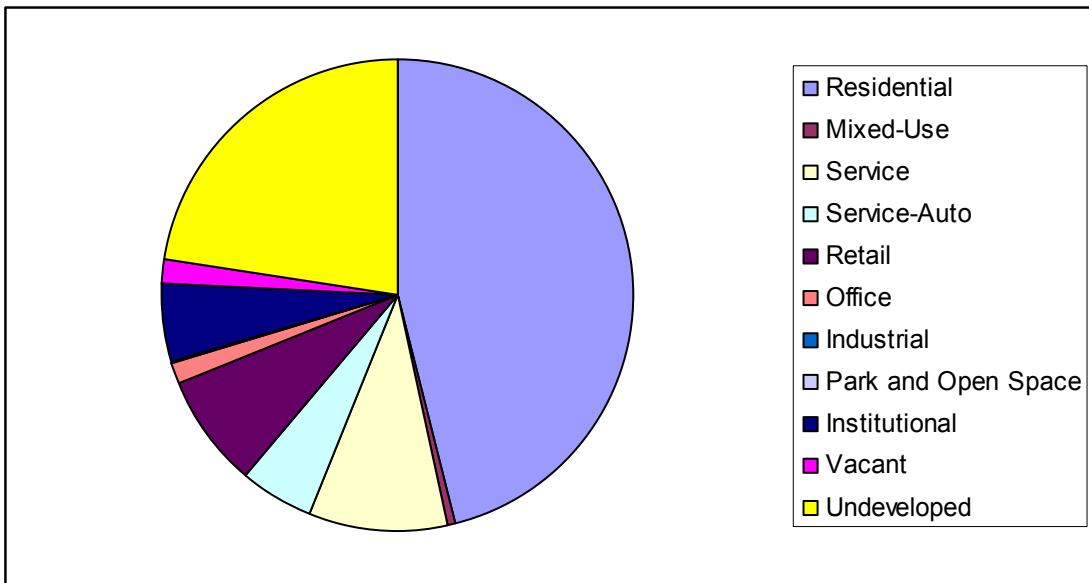
The following table summarizes the overall proportions of the various land use types found in the Study Area.

**Table 1: Land Use Categories**

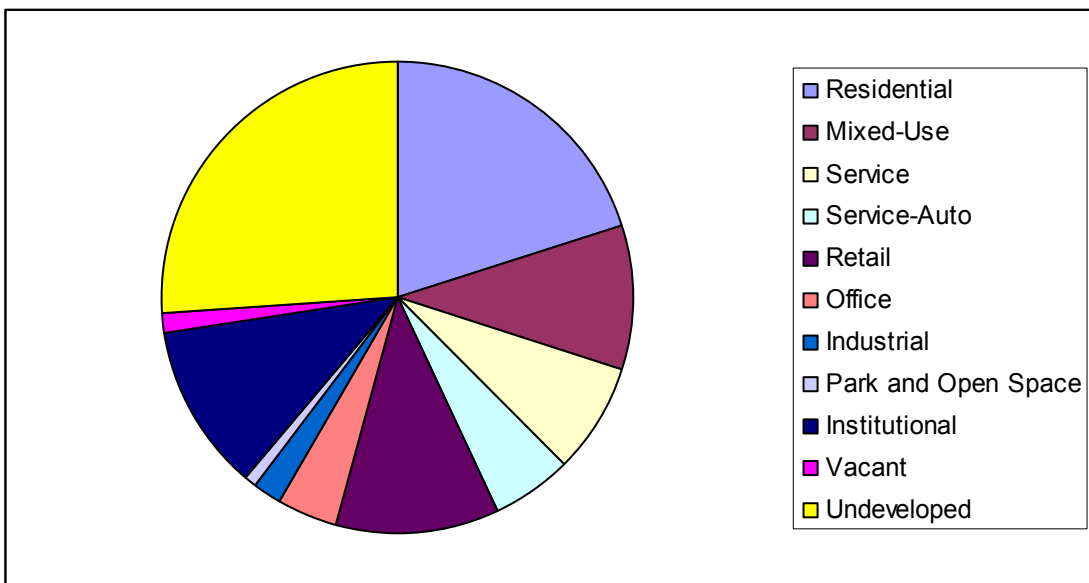
<b>Land Use Category</b>	<b>Number of Parcels</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>	<b>Area in Acres</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>
Residential	466	46.14%	288.8	19.98%
Mixed-Use	5	0.50%	144.6	10.00%
Service	96	9.50%	108.3	7.49%
Service-Auto	50	4.95%	79.9	5.53%
Retail	79	7.82%	159.7	11.04%
Office	14	1.39%	60.8	4.21%
Industrial	2	0.20%	28.4	1.97%
Park and Open Space	1	0.10%	13.8	0.95%
Institutional	54	5.35%	165.1	11.42%
Vacant	17	1.68%	17.9	1.24%
Undeveloped	226	22.38%	378.3	26.17%
<i>Total</i>	1010	100.00%	1445.5	100.00%

Charts 1 and 2 below demonstrate the distribution of land uses by number of parcels and by total acreage.

**Chart 1: Share of Land Use by Number of Parcels**



**Chart 2: Share of Land Use by Acreage**



These charts illustrate several key characteristics, including the following:

- Residential properties make up almost half of the Corridors' parcels, but only 20% of its total acreage due to the small size of the majority of the lots. This proportion is somewhat skewed by the inclusion in the Study Area of the predominately residential frontage along Center Road west of Pearl Road. There is also a notable concentration of residential properties along Center Road between Cross Creek Drive and Princeton Drive, and scattered residential properties north and south along Pearl Road.
- The mixed use category is dominated by the Brunswick Town Center property and reflects its present parcel configuration and expected future development. Since the property consists of one parcel, it is not possible to split out the different types of land uses into accurate numbers of acres that correspond with the other Land Use Categories.
- Service and Auto-related Service were split into separate categories for this analysis due to the large number of auto-related service businesses in the Study Area and the fact that businesses that cater to automobiles and trucks usually have different site characteristics than other service businesses. Together they account for approximately 15% of the Corridors' parcels and 13% of the Corridors' acreage. Both types of businesses are scattered throughout the Corridors with few notable concentrations of similar businesses.
- Retail land uses occupied approximately 8% of parcels and 11% of total land acreage. Retail properties are also scattered throughout the Corridors.
- Industrial and office land uses represent very small amounts of the land in the Corridors, It should be noted that a significant amount of Brunswick's economic strength is derived from Manufacturing sector businesses, as discussed in the Economic Analysis, but that the majority of these businesses fall outside the Study Area boundaries.
- The Park and Open Space category includes only one property within the Study Area, which is Neura Park.
- Brunswick has a relatively high proportion of Institutional properties within the Study Area, including schools, churches, the civic center campus and the municipal center. These land uses occupy approximately 11% of land within the Study Area boundaries. Several of the largest parcels command highly visible frontage on Center Road.
- The Vacant land use category includes a very small number of parcels and a small proportion of the Study Area's land use. This finding generally corresponds with the conclusions of the building vacancy analysis memo (Figure 9), which concluded that the Study Area had very few vacant properties as compared to the entire land area of the corridor.

The analysis includes a small number of rear lots and other small parcels that are associated with a developed parcel but do not have any development on them themselves. Since the vacancy

analysis in Figure 9 analyzed vacancies by building rather than by parcel, these numbers do not exactly align.

- Over one quarter of the total amount of land in the Study Area is Undeveloped, making this the largest land use category in terms of total acreage and the second-largest in terms of the number of parcels. A significant portion of this undeveloped land is located west of Pearl Road and south of Laurel Road; the northern portion of this area is under preliminary analysis for development, while the southern portion faces topographic limitations in terms of supplying sanitary sewer to the acreage that does not front on Pearl Road. Additionally, several undeveloped parcels on the northern portion of Pearl Road consist of long lots with narrow street frontage, and at least two of these lots have significant topographic features in their rear acreages.

Vacant parcels, however, are scattered throughout the Corridors, and while some may consist of fractions of an acre, a large proportion of these lots occupy two or more acres. Additionally, as noted in the Economic Analysis (Figure 8), many of the commercial and service lots in the Corridor have been developed at very low densities; these properties may present opportunities for additional development.



*Insert Figure 2 - existing land use*

## **Hydric Soils (Figure 3)**

Hydric soils are types of soils that have a tendency to retain water or block water from seeping into the earth. Hydric soils have an impact on the potential future development of an area because they may present site engineering and environmental constraints that may influence the type, location, cost and intensity of future development. There are a wide variety of types of hydric soils: many must simply be accounted for as an element of site engineering, while some may make it costly or difficult to build in a particular location. In most cases, the impact of hydric soils on future development depends largely on the type of development that is being considered, and whether the construction methods and building loads being considered can be accommodated on a site in a cost-effective manner. In a few circumstances, the presence of hydric soils may indicate wetlands, floodplains or other environmentally-significant areas that will require special consideration.

The majority of hydric soils known to exist in the Pearl and Center roads corridors are loams, which are generally acceptable for construction provided that buildings are designed with adequate foundations. Pockets of these soils are scattered sporadically throughout the Study Area; they occur least frequently along the Pearl Road frontage (which traverses a natural ridge) and more frequently in the vicinity of Brunswick Lake.



*Insert Figure 3 – hydric soils*

## Floodway, Flood Plain and Wetlands (Figure 4)

Wetlands and floodplains also impact development by introducing both site engineering constraints and by triggering legislative requirements. The U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) regulations governing eligibility for flood insurance and flood assistance require that no structure be placed in a floodway that will alter the flow of waters in a flood event. Additionally, FEMA requires that structures within a 100-year Flood Plain be constructed or have their existing structures modified such that the lowest floor commonly used for human activity is a minimum of one foot above the base flood level.<sup>2</sup> As a result, construction of buildings in the floodway is generally prohibited (although structures without walls and paved surfaces are usually acceptable), and construction in a 100-year Flood Plain can only occur with extensive site engineering. Depending on the type, quality and location of wetlands, the presence of these natural resources may also introduce regulatory requirements and constraints to development.

Relatively few locations in the Study Area, however, are significantly constrained by floodways, flood plains or wetlands. The most significant concentration of these conditions occurs in the vicinity of Brunswick Lake, where the ongoing development of the Brunswick Town Center is in the process of addressing these needs at this time. Narrow floodways and floodplains also extend north of Brunswick Lake along Plum Creek and a smaller drainageway to the west of Plum Creek. The Pearl Road portion of the Study Area includes no significant flood areas and very few wetlands of any type.

The majority of the Center Road portion of the Study Area falls within the Plum Creek watershed, while Pearl Road follows a natural ridge and divides several watersheds from each other.

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<sup>2</sup> The floodway is the area adjoining a waterway that will fill with water to a certain depth as a result of most significant precipitation events. The 100-year Flood Plain is area determined by hydrogeologic modeling to have a 1% chance of experiencing a significant flood per year. There is also a 500-year flood plain, but restrictions on development in these areas are generally minimal.



*Insert Figure 4, Wetlands and Flood Plains*

## **Slope Analysis (Figure 5)**

Locations of steep slopes represent the final physical development constraint with potential to impact the Study Area. In general, slopes of less than 25% are considered buildable in Northeast Ohio, although the willingness of a given developer to do so will depend on the developer's experience with steeper slopes and the cost/benefit ratio of accommodating a steep slope on a given project. Slopes over 25% are generally not built upon in Northeast Ohio, although there are some exceptions.

Very few significant slope locations occur in or near the Study Area. There are a few isolated locations of steep slopes on the west side of Pearl Road, along the crest of the valley of the West Branch of the Rocky River. With the possible exception of a few very limited, isolated exceptions, these slope characteristics should not present any significant constraint to the future development of the Pearl and Center roads corridors.



*Insert Figure 5, Slope Analysis*

## Existing Zoning (Figure 6)

This section reviews the existing zoning code of the City of Brunswick as it relates to development and potential development along the Pearl and Center roads corridors. Zoning is the legal mechanism that communities use to enforce land use policy, regulate land uses by district and to control the way uses are sited and designed. Zoning authority is provided to the City of Brunswick through State enabling legislation. Today, many communities use zoning regulations to regulate land use through the application of traditional regulations such as front, side and rear yard setbacks, height requirements, and permitted uses.

Large numbers of communities are now including regulations beyond the traditional zoning regulations and are using them to control the design and orientation of buildings in certain areas in order to provide a cohesiveness and character that create a sense of place.

The following observations were derived from the existing Brunswick Zoning Code:

1. Currently, there are nine (9) zoning districts within the study area under the City of Brunswick jurisdiction. These areas are comprised of:
  - Two (2) commercial districts: General Commercial and Highway Commercial;
  - One (1) Office/Commercial district;
  - Two (2) Special Planning Districts (SP-1 and SP-2);
  - Three (3) Residential Districts: Rural, Low and Medium Density Residential; and
  - One (1) Industrial District: Light Industrial District.

While all of these districts are within the study area, several do not directly front on Pearl or Center roads. However, a majority of the parcels with frontage on these roads are zoned for a commercial use. The issue with multiple zoning districts within this study area is that it is extremely difficult to create any type of cohesive design or cohesive type of use group along these primary corridors.

2. The commercial districts permit a wide variety of uses along Pearl and Center roads providing for an appropriate mix of retail, service and office activity. However, the C-H Highway Commercial District also provides for Sexually Oriented Businesses as a principally permitted use. The rationale behind this decision was due to a Court Case that required the City of Brunswick to permit Sexually Oriented Businesses as a principal use. It is also interesting that the “principal access point to the community” as stated in the purpose is the location for adult related uses.
3. Sexually oriented businesses are permitted uses in the C-H Highway Interchange and the General Commercial districts. The City may wish to move these types of uses to conditionally permitted so that the Planning Commission has the ability to review the impact of such uses on surrounding properties.

4. There are several parcels, some of which are extremely large, that are included within the study area that are not in the City of Brunswick and are part of the unincorporated area of Brunswick Hills Township. The issue with parcels that are not located within the jurisdictional limits of the City is that the City has no legal mechanism to enforce land use or zoning requirements to provide a cohesive corridor or to enforce property maintenance through zoning or other regulatory controls that the City has in place for parcels within the City limits of Brunswick. One option for zoning control on Township property is identified in number 8 below. Another may be for the City to request that the Township update the Township Zoning Resolution districts that are located along Pearl and Center roads and have the Township contract with the City to enforce Township Zoning.
  
5. All new uses and substantially modified uses within the commercial and industrial districts require site plan review pursuant to Chapter 1278. This proactive approach is extremely beneficial to the City because it permits the City to review projects prior to construction or modification to determine the impact on surrounding sites. However the existing site plan review process only includes general guidelines for design. While this may be acceptable, it will not help to establish consistent design along the corridor if the City is interested in that type of regulation. For example, some communities require appropriate building orientation along primary corridors. In those cases, buildings are to be designed where the front entrance faces and is parallel to the right-of-way. An obvious example of a newer structure in Brunswick where this would have helped is the Walgreens building located at the northeastern corner of the Pearl and Center roads intersection. The building entrance is not oriented towards either road and has a primarily blank façade facing Center Road.
  
6. Sign regulations, as identified in Chapter 1270 of the Brunswick Zoning Code, permit freestanding signage extremely close to the public right-of-way. In most cases in commercial districts, signage is permitted to within two (2) feet of the right-of-way as established in the various tables in the Sign Chapter. This can create potentially hazardous conditions with respect to vehicular circulation and also promote visual clutter by permitting signs to be massed directly along the thoroughfare.



*Insert Figure 6, Existing zoning*

## Existing Visual Character (Figure 7)

Figure 7 presents a spatial analysis of the existing visual character of the Study Area. Most of the individual factors noted in this analysis are identified by the Figure's annotations; however, several broader issues should be noted:

- Most of Pearl Road north and south of the Center Road intersection presents a deteriorated appearance in terms of the physical character of the roadway. At a minimum, this area needs new curbs, new driveway aprons, and new or upgraded sidewalks. Lengths of sidewalk occur intermittently along Pearl Road.
- The vicinity of the I-71 interchange along Center Road presents a particularly menacing appearance at present and fails to function as an effective gateway to Brunswick. The City has recognized this concern and has made some effort to improve the aesthetics of the interchange area by installing signs and associated landscaping, and a class at Brunswick High School has prepared a site improvement plan that may provide a foundation for improvements to the site. However, it is essential that this interchange area be substantially upgraded in order to ensure that it creates an attractive, functional and cost-effective “front door” for the City of Brunswick.
- Entrances into Brunswick along both corridors are minimally defined and would benefit from additional definition. In late 2003, the City installed monument signs at most of these locations, but additional landscaping and other aesthetic treatments may be desirable to emphasize the entrance into Brunswick and to capitalize on the investment represented by these signs.
- Several areas of the Corridors benefit from attractive views. Properties along Center Road east of Pearl Road enjoy attractive downhill views toward the Brunswick Lake area, while properties on the west side of Pearl Road feature impressive views across the Rocky River valley. These properties overlook attractive rural and natural areas, and command views of several miles.
- Center Road is visually dominated by an extensive collection of overhead transmission lines. These lines serve as a primary local and regional conduit of electrical, telephone and cable services, as well as powering local street lights via overhead laterals. Although trees and flags have recently been installed, additional improvements will be necessary to lessen the impact of these overhead lines. Burying these lines underground would be exorbitantly expensive due to the number and size of lines.



*Insert Figure 7, Visual Analysis*

## Economic Analysis

The economic analysis for the Pearl and Center Roads Corridor Plan consisted of two separate activities: a visual assessment of economic conditions and issues along the Corridors, and a quantitative analysis of the Brunswick ZIP code's economic activity on the basis of data available from the U.S. Census Bureau and the Northeast Ohio Regional Planning Commission. The findings of the quantitative analysis are presented here; the data supporting this analysis is presented in Appendix A.

### Visual Economic Assessment (Figure 8)

As with the Visual Analysis presented in Figure 7, most of the individual factors noted in this analysis are identified by the Figure's annotations. However, several broader issues should be noted:

- Overall, the City has a generally robust mix of healthy economic activity. No specific strength appears to stand out.
- Retail property appears to be overbuilt, and a significant proportion of existing retail establishments are smaller than industry standards. There is some evidence of a trend toward retail buildings being converted for offices and services.
- The Corridors have a high incidence of fast food, drive-through banks and gasoline stations.
- There has been relatively little new investment of any type on Pearl Road in last 20 years.
- Large portions of both corridors are dominated by small, narrow lots that may present significant challenges to redevelopment
- Existing buildings are generally small for their lot sizes.
- A large proportion of the existing buildings lack architectural detailing, such as window or eave treatment, interesting façade treatments and other hallmarks of higher-quality development.
- There is a significant amount of undeveloped land available, especially on Pearl Road. There is also a significant amount of underutilized acreage available behind existing buildings on north side of Center Road, as well as other locations.
- The built environment is generally low-density, dominated by small buildings on large parking lots. Reuse opportunities may be limited due to size and quality of construction of buildings, and relatively large size of lots in proportion to buildings may lead to high maintenance costs or deferred property maintenance on the part of owners/tenants.

- Most businesses on the corridors are functioning as islands. The distance between existing buildings may constrain opportunities for developing niches and allowing businesses to develop a synergy with each other.
- Pearl Road's economic function is impaired by several factors, including the continuation of a rural character that does not reinforce the idea of a commercial corridor; large physical distances between businesses in existing, rural-scale buildings; poor property appearance; low traffic volumes; lack of major destinations and deferred road maintenance.
- Few properties, except strip malls, have shared parking or internal access between parking lots.
- Lot development standards have clearly improved significantly – new construction site design is much improved, but most existing site design predates this.
- The City does not appear to be capitalizing on its access to the interchange as much as it could. There is a significant concentration of interchange-oriented businesses in the vicinity of the interchange, such as restaurants and automobile dealers, but there is little in these locations as this time that will function as broad-appeal regional economic destinations.



*Insert Economic Analysis (Figure 8)*

## Economic Data Analysis

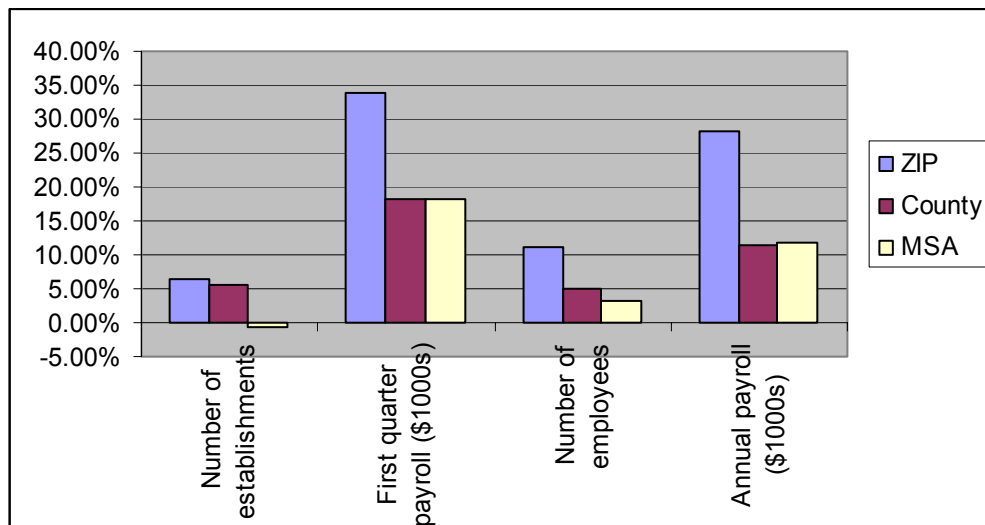
The economic data analysis for this project was based on the U.S. Census' *County Business Patterns* for 1998 to 2001. More recent data is not available at this time from this source or any other compatible source. The *County Business Patterns* series is among the most comprehensive and most reliable sources of economic information, and is one of few that allows direct comparisons between local and national data.<sup>3</sup> The *County Business Patterns* is also published annually, making it possible to examine individual trends from one year to the next.

The *County Business Patterns* provides data at the national, State, Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), County and ZIP code area levels. For the purposes of this analysis, Brunswick's Pearl and Center roads corridors are assumed to be identical to the 44212 ZIP code. Although it is understood that there are a small number of businesses in this ZIP code that are not on Pearl or Center roads, the overwhelming majority of businesses in this ZIP code are located on or near these two roads.

The Economic Data Analysis resulted in several key findings, which are summarized below. The full Economic Data Analysis may be found in Appendix A.

- Brunswick experienced proportionately stronger growth in the late 1990s and early 2000s than did Medina County or the Cleveland MSA. Not only did Brunswick experience higher growth percentages in the number of establishments and employees, but it experienced a higher rate of payroll growth.

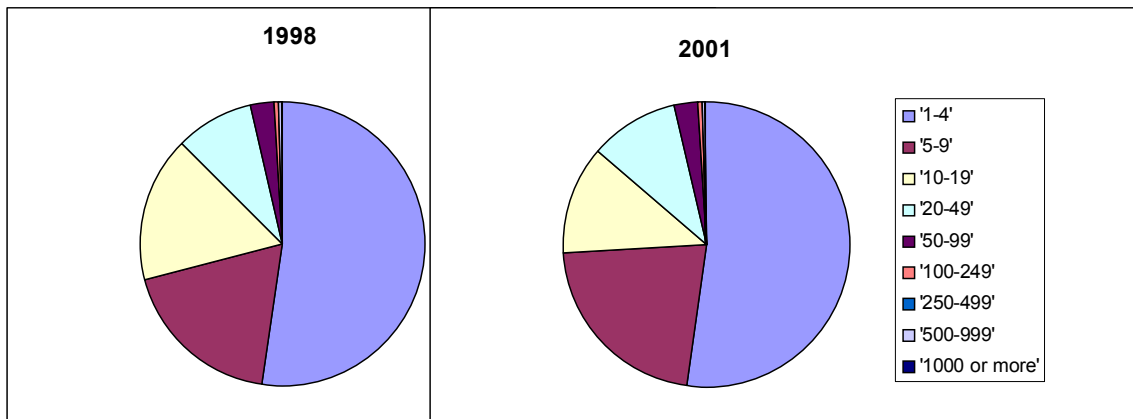
**Chart 3: Percent Change 1998 – 2001, All Areas**



<sup>3</sup> The 2002 Economic Census, which will also provide similar data, will not be published until 2004 and will not be available for this project.

- Brunswick added an extremely high number of establishments in this period – nearly one in five net new businesses in Medina County were established in Brunswick.
- More than 90% of Brunswick’s businesses employed less than ten people. This proportion is even higher for businesses that fall within establishment type concentrations, indicating that much of Brunswick’s economic strength lies in very small businesses.

**Chart 4: Establishment Size Distribution, Brunswick, 1998 and 2001**



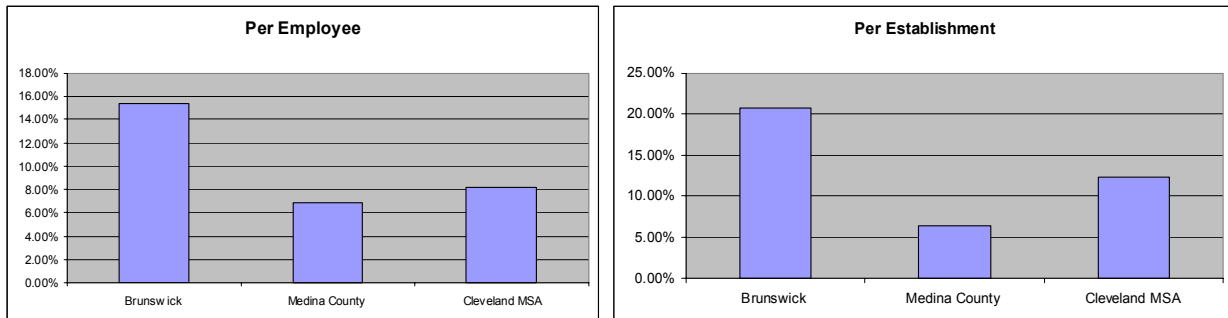
- Brunswick’s average payroll per employee has historically lagged that of the County and the Cleveland MSA, and Brunswick’s average payroll was still less than the average for the County and MSA in 2001. However, Brunswick experienced higher payroll growth per employee and per establishment during the study period.

**Chart 5: Average Payroll, 2001**



Source: County Business Patterns, U.S. Census

**Chart 6: Change in Average Payroll, 1998 – 2001**



- A given industrial sector can be classified by a combination of two dimensions: the share of the total market (in terms of number of establishments) that the industrial sector occupies at a given time, and the rate at which the sector is adding establishments. For Brunswick, these two dimensions can be summarized by the following matrix:

**Table 2: Classification of Establishments by Change, ZIP Code 44212, 1998 – 2001**

<b>High Growth/High Share</b>	<b>Low Growth/High Share</b>
Construction	Retail trade Other services (except public administration)
<b>High Growth/Low Share</b>	<b>Low Growth/Low Share</b>
Manufacturing Finance & insurance Management of companies & enterprises Arts, entertainment & recreation	Transportation & warehousing Information Real estate & rental & leasing Educational services
<b>Moderate Growth/Share</b>	
Professional, scientific & technical services Wholesale trade Admin, support, waste mgt, remediation ser Health care and social assistance Accommodation & food services	

Source: County Business Patterns, U.S. Census

- The Construction sector appears to be the most robust of Brunswick’s industries, as measured by growth in the number of establishments. Construction was the only sector with a high growth rate and a high share of the local market, and this was not the case in Medina County or the nation. The Brunswick Construction sector is strongly dominated by businesses with less than ten employees, and the majority of establishment types in the Brunswick Construction sector do specialized construction work, such as painting or plumbing.

- The Brunswick Retail sector had the highest share of establishments among all sectors in Brunswick in 2001, but it had the second lowest growth rate. The Retail sector is not quite as dominated by very small establishments as some other sectors, but the majority of Retail sector businesses employ less than 10 people. Most significantly, the Retail sector shows very little concentration for a sector of its size – a rather small number of businesses are in establishment types that are shared by more than one other Brunswick business. There is a strong concentration of businesses in several auto-oriented establishment types, such as auto parts and accessories stores and gas stations, and a lesser concentration of businesses in food and pharmaceutical sales. Outside of these areas, however, Brunswick’s retail sector shows an exceptionally wide variety of establishment types.
- Small sectors (in terms of the number of establishments) that have experienced high growth in establishments in Brunswick include Manufacturing and Finance & Insurance. The economic impact of manufacturing is probably underestimated by this data due to the generally larger employment and payroll of manufacturing establishments. The significant growth in the manufacturing sector goes against the trend at both the county and national levels, where manufacturing sector growth has been flat or negative. The Brunswick Manufacturing sector is widely dispersed, with only three establishment types having more than one establishment in the City.
- Brunswick has an exceptionally large number of beauty salons, comprising over 23% of the Other Services sector. The Other Services sector has seen little net establishment growth.
- Several smaller sectors have experienced notable growth in Brunswick during the study period. Professional, Scientific & Technical Services; Wholesale Trade; Health Care & Social Assistance; and Accommodation & Food Service have all experienced solid growth. This growth is generally in line with or stronger than County and national growth trends, indicating robust local sectors.
- The Information sector, which includes internet, data transfer and storage and telecommunications technology is surprisingly absent from Brunswick, as compared to County and national trends. This may be due in part to the relatively recent availability of high-speed data transfer systems in this vicinity.

## Building Vacancy Patterns (Figure 9)

Figure 9 identifies vacant and partially vacant properties in the Pearl and Center roads corridor as of September 03, 2003. Vacancy status was determined by visual analysis. Percentages are approximate and are based on an estimate of the proportion of total square footage determined to be vacant at the time of the analysis. For the purpose of this analysis, only commercial vacancies were recorded; residential and institutional vacancies were not identified.

Vacancy status can change in a matter of days. Some of the buildings noted here have been vacant for several months, while others had only recently become vacant, and a few storefronts that had been vacant two weeks before had obtained new occupants by September 3. For this reason, this map should not be interpreted as a definitive inventory of vacant space; any such inventory must be updated constantly if it is to be accurate and would not provide significant benefits to a long term planning project. An up-to-date inventory is maintained by the City Economic Development Department, where it is used to manage the day-to-day recruitment of potential occupants. These maps attached to this memo should be viewed as a snapshot that gives us a picture of the corridors vacancy trends and allows us to draw some general conclusions for the purpose of long range planning.

These maps identify buildings that were entirely vacant on September 3 and buildings that were partially vacant on that date. Conclusions that can be drawn from this data include the following:

- A relatively small number of the total buildings in the Corridors are fully or partially vacant. Over 90% of the total number of buildings in the corridor is fully occupied, which is in keeping with or better than the current national vacancy rates for retail and office space.
- The vacancy rates of between 1% and 25% are dominated by the strip shopping centers. These properties fall into two types: the anchored shopping center, with one or two major spaces and several smaller spaces, and the non-anchored shopping center, which is generally a much smaller development that has a small number of spaces of approximately the same size. Some non-anchored shopping centers do have one space that is slightly larger than the others, but these spaces are not as visually or economically dominant as the traditional anchors. Anchored shopping centers include Hickory Ridge Plaza, Laurel Park Plaza and Topps Plaza, while non-anchored retail centers include Brunswick Plaza, Shenandoah Square, Rolling Hills Plaza and several others.
- All of the anchored shopping centers had at least 10% vacancy on September 3, and none had more than 25% vacancy on that date. The non-anchored shopping centers varied more widely, with two small strip centers having approximately 50% vacancy at that time, three having vacancy rates comparable to the anchored shopping centers and at least three enjoying full occupancy. The two non-anchored shopping centers in the northern portion of the Pearl Road corridor both had full occupancy at that time.
- Only four free-standing buildings out of approximately 200 were vacant on September 3, representing a much lower vacancy rate than the national averages for the retail and office sectors. The vacant buildings are all extremely small, utilitarian single-use structures. It was unclear on that date whether the Verizon building is actually vacant.



*Insert figure 9*

## Property Ownership Patterns (Figure 10)

Figure 10 identifies the ownership status as of October 10, 2003 of all parcels that lie completely or partially within the Pearl and Center Roads Corridors Study Area. Data is derived from the records of the Medina County Auditor. For the purposes of this analysis, parcels were categorized on the basis of whether the address to which the property’s tax bill is sent has a 44212 ZIP code or an address in any other ZIP code. Properties are identified on the Property Ownership map (Figure 10) on the basis of this distinction.

A small number of parcels in the Study Area are not represented in the Medina County Auditor’s database or have a large number of joint owners of record, making the distinction between local and non-local ownership difficult to identify. These properties are identified as having No Data. As indicated on the map, the majority of the No Data acreage consists of three parcels on the east side of Pearl Road surrounding Laurel Road. These properties are currently under evaluation for development and may change ownership status in the near future.

Table 3 summarizes the total number of parcels and acres in each category:

**Table 3: Summary of Local and Non-Local Ownership, Study Area**

	<b>Number of Parcels</b>	<b>Percent of Total Parcels</b>	<b>Number of Acres</b>	<b>Percent of Total Acres</b>
44212	352	35%	616.3	43%
Other ZIP	583	58%	724.4	50%
No Data	75	7%	104.8	7%
<i>Total</i>	1010	100%	1445.5	100%

As Table 3 indicates, the majority of the properties for which ownership can be identified are owned by entities with tax bill mailing addresses outside of the 44212 ZIP code. In general, the Study Area has a higher number of local owners than one may find on many commercial corridors: local ownership of less than 20% of properties are not uncommon nationwide. In Brunswick, the local ownership category also tends to have a larger share of total acreage than its share of the number of parcels. It must be noted, however, that the local ownership percentages are skewed by several large parcels in the Corridors that are currently under City ownership, including the Town Center property and the civic center, as well as the school campuses. When these properties are removed, the proportion of local to non-local ownership approaches 30%. Additionally, it should be noted that the Study Area includes a significant number of residential properties, which are also primarily locally owned.

Significant concentrations of non-locally owned properties occur in the following areas:

- Center Road east of North Carpenter Road and the Brunswick Town Center
- The west side of Pearl Road south of the Center Road intersection.

- The east side of Pearl Road between Oxford Drive and Laurel Road
- The east side of Pearl Road between Regal Avenue and Keller-Hanna Drive
- The east side of Pearl Road between Beverly Hills Drive and Skyview Drive

Comparing Figure 10 to other existing conditions analysis maps indicates the following trends:

- Of the 79 parcels identified on the Existing Land Use Map (Figure 6) as having retail land uses, 11 are owned by an entity with a 44212 mailing address. The majority of these are less than two acres.
- Almost all of the existing multi-unit retail buildings are owned by entities with mailing addresses outside of the 44212 ZIP code.
- Land uses for parcels owned by entities with mailing addresses in the 44212 ZIP code vary across the spectrum and include virtually all of the available types of land use.
- Almost all of the multi-acre properties on Pearl Road that are designated on the Existing Land Use Map (Figure 6) as undeveloped are owned by entities with mailing addresses outside of the 44212 ZIP code.
- Sections of the corridors dominated by both types of properties were cited in the Economic Analysis and the Visual Analysis (Figures 7 and 8) as demonstrating weaknesses or threats. Corridor weaknesses, threats and other general negative impacts do not demonstrate any strong correlation with property ownership patterns.
- Of the 15 buildings identified as having any level of vacancy on September 3, 2003 (Figure 9, Building Vacancy), all but one are owned by entities with mailing addresses outside of the 44212 ZIP code.



*Insert Figure 10*

## Transportation System Analysis (Figure 11)

Figure 11 summarizes the transportation characteristics and issues affecting the Pearl and Center roads corridors. This analysis is based on site review, potential road improvement projects currently under consideration and traffic volume data available from the City of Brunswick and the Ohio Department of Transportation.

In this section, the name Center Road is used to designate State Route 303 within Brunswick, and the State designation is used when discussing segments of this roadway outside of Brunswick or when the Brunswick segments are being discussed as a part of their regional context. Similarly, Pearl Road is used to designate U.S. Route 42 within Brunswick, and the national designation is used when discussing segments of this roadway outside of Brunswick or when the Brunswick segments are being discussed as a part of their regional context.

Although it is understood that Center Road is sometimes perceived as having a high level of congestion, especially during rush hour, review of transportation records and activities do not indicate abnormal levels of peak hour congestion for a regional arterial route. Although it might be theoretically possible to increase the flow and speed of peak hour traffic on Center Road by adding additional lanes, such an approach would be highly expensive, would consume large amounts of valuable commercial frontage and would make it all but impossible for pedestrians to cross Center Road (see the Vision, Goals and Preferred Characteristics, Chapter 3, for a discussion of the importance of pedestrian crossing opportunities). As a result, a reasonable amount of congestion on Center Road during peak hours may be viewed as an largely unavoidable consequence of Brunswick's popularity as a residential location, and a condition that is preferable to the alternative: a high-speed corridor that has impaired economic power and is threatening to pedestrians.

Figure 11 identifies four types of transportation issues:

- *Strengths and Assets.* These items are existing characteristics that positively impact the Corridors' transportation function.
- *Weaknesses or Liabilities.* These elements are existing characteristics that have a mildly negative impact on the Corridors' transportation function, but the costs that would be associated with correcting them outweigh the potential benefits.
- *Issues to Address* include aspects of the transportation environment that present existing or future challenges that can be mitigated.
- *Future Transportation Issues* include items that must be considered in future transportation strategies.

The following conclusions can be drawn from this analysis:

- Neither Center nor Pearl roads are experiencing poor Levels of Service (LOS) at this time. Center Road's relatively recent improvements have given it surplus capacity when compared to current traffic volumes. Pearl Road has significant design constraints due to the roadway's age and deterioration, but current traffic volumes do not appear to be significantly impacting its LOS.
- The majority of the constraints that the Corridors face stems from access management concerns. As development on the Corridors increases, the large number of driveways and other access points located along the Corridors has the potential to create conflicts between opposing traffic turning movements, and this conflict is likely to increase congestion, slow travel times and decrease the corridors' capacity. In some locations, such as Center Road immediately east of the Pearl Road intersection, the large number of small, narrow lots will make it difficult to implement access management controls, unless a number of these lots are assembled to create a larger development site. In locations where larger lots are available or may be expected to be assembled, access management will play a key role in maintaining the capacity of the Corridors. Although a certain level of congestion may be appropriate in pedestrian environments in order to "calm" traffic and make the environment more conducive to pedestrians, Center and Pearl roads may be expected to continue to operate as major regional arterials, and it will be necessary to retain their ability to move through traffic. Additionally, the type of congestion created by uncontrolled access management often results in an increased accident rate, which does not support pedestrian activity.
- As discussed in more detail in the Visual Analysis (Figure 7), the majority of both corridors lack all but the most basic pedestrian amenities, and some areas lack any pedestrian facilities whatsoever. Both roads present relatively few opportunities for pedestrians to cross the street. Although there are traffic signals and cross walks at most major intersections, these crossings are widely spaced, particularly on Pearl Road. Additionally, many of the pedestrian crossings allow relatively little time for a pedestrian to cross the street, presenting a particular challenge to any pedestrian who is not able to move across the lanes quickly.
- The intersection of Pearl and Center roads is extremely wide, with multiple through lanes and turn lanes at all four corners. Although this design facilitates the efficient movement of traffic through the intersection, resulting in relatively short queues for an intersection that handles this amount of traffic, the width of the roadway creates challenges for pedestrians attempting to cross the street within the time allotted by the signal.
- The Pearl Road corridor has experienced a relatively high level of deterioration as a result of the age and level of use that the surfaces have sustained. Although Pearl Road is in better condition than many major corridors in the Greater Cleveland area, the level of deterioration does impair the road's operation, since the condition of the roadway

sometimes prevents traffic from traveling at the optimal design speed. This is particularly true north of Keller-Hanna Drive and south of Laurel Road. Given the current low traffic volumes this road is experiencing, the limitations presented by the roadway’s condition do not create a significant impediment to the Corridor’s overall activity at this time. However, additional development and increases in local traffic volumes may increase the impact of the roadway’s deterioration on its LOS.

- The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) is currently beginning the process of evaluating potential improvements to Route 42 between the Medina Square and Center Road; ODOT is currently evaluating several potential improvement strategies for this segment. However, it is possible that improvements may not be constructed for more than 10 years, due to ODOT procedures and funding cycles. Additionally, there are no known plans at this time to improve Route 42 north of Center Road.

### Corridor Traffic Volumes

Existing traffic volume counts were conducted at the primary intersections along the Corridors in 1999 and 2001, and these counts provide further evidence of the existing travel characteristics along the Corridors. The following tables identify Eastbound/Westbound and Northbound/Southbound traffic through selected intersections; these counts are given in terms of Average Daily Traffic (ADT), which are the estimated average two-way traffic volumes in a 24-hour period. The Volume Index column indicates the relative proportion of volume being carried by an intersection in comparison to the most heavily-traveled intersection in this category.

**Table 4: Selected Intersection Traffic Volumes, Eastbound/Westbound<sup>4</sup>**

Road	At Intersection	Total ADT		Date of Count
		Eastbound / Westbound	Volume Index	
Boston Road	Pearl Road	10,450	0.25	2001
Grafton Road	Pearl Road	8,950	0.22	2001
Center Road	Pearl Road	32,950	0.80	1999
Center Road	Hadcock Road	28,800	0.70	1999
Center Road	Carpenter Road	29,500	0.72	1999
Center Road	I-71	41,200	1.00	1999
Center Road	W 130th	13,300	0.32	1999
Laurel Road	Pearl Road	6,250	0.15	2001

<sup>4</sup> The reader should keep in mind that traffic volumes provided do **not** indicate that 171,400 cars are moving through Brunswick per day. These counts indicate all vehicles moving through all intersections during the day, and one trip may be counted at several intersections. For example, a single vehicle moving from Pearl Road to I-71 along Center Road will be counted at four separate intersections. As a point of comparison, the ADT for I-71 in 1999 was 61,470.

**Table 5: Selected Intersection Traffic Volumes, Northbound/Southbound**

Road	At Intersection	Total ADT		Date of Count
		Northbound / Southbound	Volume Index	
Pearl Road	Boston Road	13,750	0.75	2001
Pearl Road	Grafton Road	15,800	0.86	2001
Pearl Road	Center Road	18,300	1.00	2001
Pearl Road	Laurel Road	15,500	0.85	2001

These tables allow us to draw several conclusions, including the following:

- Center Road carries two to three times more traffic than Pearl Road, depending on the locations.
- The overwhelming majority of east/west traffic through Brunswick is carried by Center Road. Boston Road, Grafton Road and Laurel Road carry some east/west traffic, but volumes through these intersections are generally one-half to one-fourth of the volumes for Center Road intersections.
- The change in traffic volumes recorded between the I-71/Center Road intersection and the West 130<sup>th</sup> intersection indicates that very few vehicles are using Center Road/Route 303 as a regional east-west connector. This is in part due to the rural character of most of the land east of Brunswick. Increasing population and development trends in northern Summit County raise the possibility of increased traffic volumes on Route 303 in the future, particularly in the easternmost parts of the Center Road Corridor east of I-71, but the relative lack of development pressure in eastern Lorain County make it unlikely that Route 303’s overall traffic volumes will increase significantly over the next 10 years.
- Pearl Road appears to be functioning primarily as a local arterial for trips whose duration makes the trip to I-71 unnecessary. As is the case along much of U.S. Route 42, the construction of I-71 largely eliminated Route 42’s historic regional arterial function. Pearl Road is, however, more heavily traveled than any other road in Brunswick with the exception of Center Road and I-71.



*Insert Figure 11 - transportation*