

3.0 Forming the Plan

Latonia Small Area Study

The Latonia Small Area Study is designed to bring about rejuvenation of Covington's Latonia neighborhood. This section of the plan will describe challenges and resources discovered throughout the public involvement and research phases of the planning process. To accomplish this transformation, dynamic community involvement and citizen leadership will continue to be needed to bring the plan to life.

RESOURCES AND CHALLENGES

Several resources and challenges were expressed for the Latonia neighborhood. These respective subsections outline the most frequently mentioned topics as discovered through surveys, conversations at the first public meeting, key person interviews, and during Task Force meetings.

Resources

Numerous attributes like housing, retail, transportation choices and safety were mentioned as resources found in Latonia, but one of the most commonly reported assets was the area's small town feel and character. People in the neighborhood indicated they feel they know their neighbors and share camaraderie in the fact that they live in Latonia. The neighborhood has a strong sense of place, which serves as a positive from a marketing standpoint and should be built upon in the future. Many of the ideas in the Recommendations and Implementation Strategies section work toward strengthening the small town feel and character of the area, and building upon existing strengths.

The next most frequently reported asset to Latonia was its location. People feel the neighborhood is well situated in the overall context of the Greater Cincinnati area and that it has good access to numerous transportation options. Respondents also reported that convenient amenities were located close by. Capitalizing on the neighborhood's location is another asset the next section of this document works towards maximizing. Efforts such as wayfinding programs to help people from outside the area locate amenities more quickly and easily are just one of the ideas to capitalize on the neighborhood's location.

Challenges

As with resources, numerous challenges were reported in the Latonia neighborhood. The most frequently reported challenge dealt with the loss of businesses and the resulting empty retail space. Respondents seemed concerned with empty storefronts as they believed these spaces tended to make the area look rundown. Staff research and market study findings echoed the concerns of respondents in this regard. Several ideas are proposed to help make Latonia a more inviting area for businesses in the future, which are described in the Recommendations and Implementation Strategies section.

The next most frequently reported challenge to the area pertained to home ownership rates. Conversations with the public indicated many people felt the area was losing home owners and gaining renters to a point that was detrimental to the neighborhood. The market study affirmed the assumption that homeownership rates were declining but also revealed that rental units are declining. Due to both of these rates declining, the area has seen the percentage of vacant units rise to undesirable levels. Census data and demographic projections indicate the percentage of vacancy in Latonia will rise from actual levels of 5.09 percent in 1990 and 5.93 percent in 2000 to a projection of nearly 18 percent in 2013. The market study describes normal vacancy percentages for an area such as Latonia as approximately 5 percent. This indicates changes should be made to strengthen the housing market. Detailed information concerning the market study and its recommendations can be found in The Market – Housing, Commercial, and Industrial chapter in subsection 4.2 and in the full market study available at www.nkapc.org.

Deteriorating properties and lack of maintenance of buildings and grounds were another significant concern reported during the data collection phase of this study. Respondents felt some properties have been neglected, leading to a

disheveled impression of the neighborhood. The market study echoed this sentiment and suggests potential solutions such as general beautification programs, targeted code enforcement, and rental inspection programs to help remedy the issue. Respondents also mentioned concerns about litter, which many people felt increased as property maintenance worsened. Ideas for addressing property upkeep, maintenance, and litter can be found in subsection 4.2 and in the full market study available at www.nkapc.org.

Some other challenges to the area that were mentioned with less frequency than the previously described issues include: crime and drugs, a lack of representation in City government, and insufficient code enforcement abilities to combat deteriorating properties. Potential solutions for these issues, as well as others mentioned in the *Existing Conditions Report*, are outlined in the Recommendations and Implementation Strategies section of this document.

Addressing the Challenges

Desired businesses and amenities was another aspect of the plan that public discussion helped to clarify. Questions on the public opinion survey and a significant portion of the first public meeting were designed to gain insight on what the public wants and needs within the neighborhoods. A majority of the responses to these questions indicated that people in the area want a sit-down, family style restaurant. While the market study indicates a national chain restaurant is not likely to locate in the area within the near future, it does outline a higher potential for more locally oriented/locally owned restaurants to be established in Latonia.

Aside from a sit-down style restaurant, respondents indicated a high desire for recreational activities in the area. Amenities such as a bowling alley, skate park, gym, horse racing museum and playhouse, were ideas gathered

through public input. Not all of these facilities are likely to be constructed in Latonia; however, there is a highly reported desire for some type of recreation in the area. While the market study indicated little market demand for entertainment and recreation facilities in the immediate future, the idea should be explored in more detail as rejuvenation of the area proceeds.

Other suggested amenities for the area were parks and open space, including additional outdoor recreation trails, a community pool, additional retail, a neighborhood center that could encompass a youth and/or senior recreation facilities. Details on ideas for accomplishing amenities like these are outlined in the Recommendations and Implementation Strategies section of this document.

CONCEPT

One of the initial steps in plan creation is the establishment of an overall concept for the study area. Concept diagrams provide a visual representation of the vision for the study area outlining overarching themes of the plan. These visualizations were created through discussions with the public and Task Force and serve as a guide for future growth and development decisions within the study area.

The *Latonia Small Area Study* has three concept level diagrams, two of which are found in this section and the last in the Latonia Plaza Redevelopment section on page 81. The first level is the Conceptual Land Uses map (Figure 3.0.5 on page 11) and deals with land uses. The second level, Conceptual Transportation Network, displayed in Figure 3.0.14 on page 21 encompasses transportation concepts for the overall area. The third level deals with conceptual redevelopment of the Latonia Plaza shopping center land and is collocated with other recommendations for that specific area. These concept diagrams should be thought of as bigger picture visualizations.

Conceptual Land Uses

Conceptual land uses as shown in Figure 3.0.5 on page 11 illustrates anticipated future uses that are appropriate for the study area.

A-Ritte's Corner Area

Ritte's Corner is one of the unique places that people identify when they think of Latonia. Characteristics such as the area's historic architecture, business composition, building height massing and placement, streetscape, and the unusual 5-way intersection all help to make the area identifiable. Efforts should be taken to build upon the assets of the architecture and sense of place in Ritte's Corner to strengthen this part of the neighborhood and extend its character into other parts of Latonia. Recommendations outlined in areas B and C are designed to complement the Ritte's Corner area and should help strengthen the core of Latonia.



Figure 3.0.1: Ritte's Corner

B-Latonia Plaza Area

Several comments were received through public interaction stating respondents wished to see redevelopment in the Latonia Plaza area of the neighborhood. Façade improvements were installed fairly recently, however, buildings in the complex are nearing fifty years old. According to the market study typical commercial structures have an expected lifespan of approximately twenty-five years before reconstruction takes place. While

reports indicate the buildings are structurally sound, their size (width, height and depth) does not meet the needs of more modern business models. The result is that redevelopment of the shopping center is a desirable outcome of this plan.



Figure 3.0.2: Latonia Plaza Area

Detailed redevelopment ideas were pursued for the shopping center as a part of this planning effort, which can be found in section 4.8 Latonia Plaza Redevelopment on page 83. A more comprehensive concept diagram for the Latonia Plaza area served as the guiding framework for the development of these ideas and can be found on page 85.

C-Decoursey Avenue

Existing uses in areas along Decoursey Avenue north of 36th Street and south of 32nd Street do not complement the urban character of Ritte's Corner. Uses in this section of the neighborhood



Figure 3.0.3: Decoursey Avenue

range from single family detached housing units to older industrial buildings to auto-oriented type businesses more typical of development styles that existed approximately 20 years ago. As the natural turnover of properties occur, redevelopment in this area should move towards a more urban form of development that already exists in Ritte's Corner. Replicating the existing urban fabric will help to strengthen the core of the neighborhood and work towards creating a more pedestrian friendly atmosphere that eventually could extend northward from the redevelopment Latonia Plaza shopping center to the vicinity of 32nd Street.

D-Latonia Centre



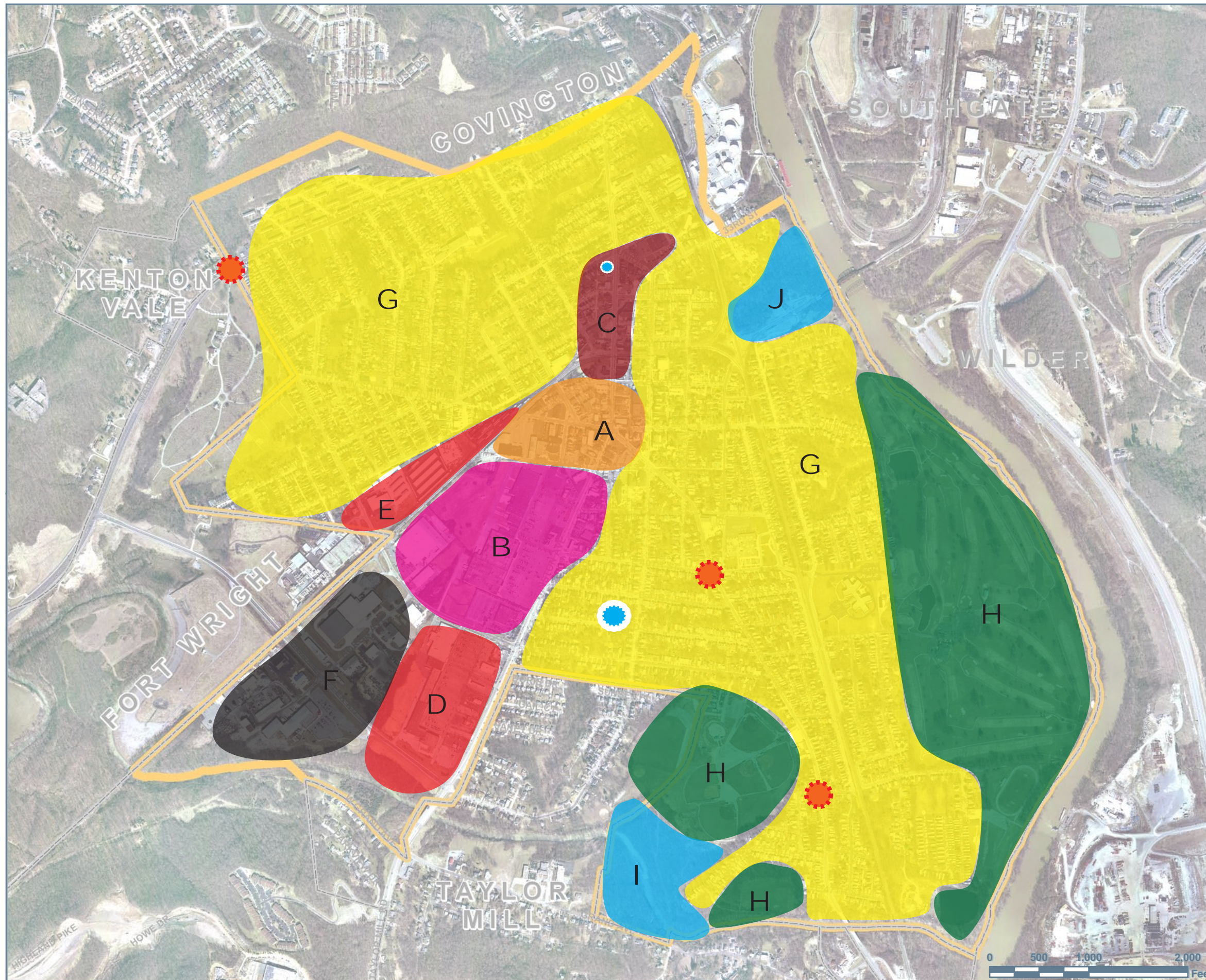
Figure 3.0.4: Latonia Centre

The Latonia Centre is located along the west side of Winston Avenue from Howard Litzler Drive to 43rd Street, immediately south of the Latonia Plaza. Latonia Centre was developed more recently than Latonia Plaza and is comprised of large commercial structures and out lot parcel development. Conceptually these commercial uses are viable in this location for the planning period.

E-Former Railroad Rolling Stock Storage Area

The land immediately northwest and across the railroad from Latonia Plaza was at one point a railroad rolling stock storage facility. Today

Figure 3.0.5 Conceptual Land Uses



Legend

-  Residential
-  Urban Core
-  Redevelopment Area
-  Commercial & Highway Retail
-  Strengthen and Tie to Ritte's Corner
-  Light Industrial (High Tech / Green)
-  Recreation Area
-  Opportunity for New Recreation Area
-  Neighborhood Retail Node



Figure 3.0.6: Former Railroad Storage Area
 this area encompasses the Railway Museum of Greater Cincinnati, American Self Storage, and Kelly Brothers Home Center. There is also a small section of single family residential homes immediately across Latonia Avenue from the Home Center. As redevelopment occurs, the vision is to phase out the small section of single family residential uses to allow for expansion of the existing commercial node.

F-Industrial Land

Section F of the Concept diagram shows the area identified for industrial uses. This area lies generally in the vicinity of Boron Drive and Howard Litzler Drive, to the southeast of the railroad. Proximity to these transportation routes with easy access to the interstate system allows for easier movement of goods, which is essential for successful industry. Conversations with the Task Force regarding industrial uses indicated the community would like to retain some land within the study area for these



Figure 3.0.7: Industrial Land

ventures. These industrial uses should be of the high-tech or green industry variety and be compatible with adjoining and nearby land uses within Latonia.

G-Residential Areas

Residential uses comprise a majority of the study area and constitute a key component of the overall health of the area. While commercial revitalization is often considered as the first step in rejuvenating an area, it is generally one of the last indicators of success. Examples such as the City of Bellevue’s Fairfield Avenue revitalization occur only after several years of neighborhood residential rehabilitation. This plan recognizes residential areas as a cornerstone of Latonia’s success and provides recommendations for strengthening the neighborhood early in the implementation process. Details of these revitalization ideas can be found in the next section of the document, Recommendations and Implementation Strategies.



Figure 3.0.8: Residential Street

Neighborhood Retail Nodes

The lack of neighborhood-level retail options outside of the Winston Avenue shopping corridor calls for new choices in the study area. These new shopping choices will allow residents to walk or ride a bike to pick up convenience items, without having to drive to Winston Avenue. Three locations were identified as potential nodes that could service numerous residential properties. These areas have existing retail structures, some of which are currently vacant, that could support new ventures.

Parks

H-Existing Recreation Areas



Figure 3.0.9: Local existing park

Existing pocket parks and the larger public and private recreation uses such as the Bill Cappel Youth Sports Complex and Twin Oaks Golf & Plantation Club provide a good foundation for establishing a strong urban park system for the Latonia neighborhood. This urban park system will need to be strengthened through the establishment of linkages using greenways and the natural resources that encompass the study area that include the Licking River and Banklick Creek.



Figure 3.0.10: Bill Cappel Youth Sports Complex

I-Latonia Banklick Preserve Recreation Area

During the course of the *Latonia Small Area Study* the City of Covington in association with the Northern Kentucky University (NKU) Center for Applied Ecology began efforts to

work on stream restoration and invasive species removal for this section of the neighborhood.

The area proposed for improvement is within a floodplain and is predominantly wooded. The establishment of this area as a nature preserve will not only serve as an amenity for the Latonia neighborhood but will also enhance Banklick Creek, which has been deemed as an impaired stream by the Kentucky Division of Water. Further information regarding floodplains, watersheds, and green infrastructure can be found in section 4.4 Green Infrastructure.

J-Latonia Depot Recreation Area

Recommendations of the *Licking River Greenway Master Plan* (Figure 3.0.12) describe a new park in the vicinity of the former Latonia Depot. This location is a key component of the proposed trail as it would allow for a bicycle and pedestrian river crossing between Latonia and Wilder on an abandoned water main bridge. Much of the land in this area is not built upon and lies within the floodplain presenting a good opportunity for a new park facility.



Figure 3.0.11: Latonia Depot Recreation Area

● Neighborhood Parks / Community Gardens

Opportunities for smaller parks and community gardens within the study area are also present. One such location already being explored is on the gas station property located on the

Figure 3.0.12 Licking River Greenway Master Plan

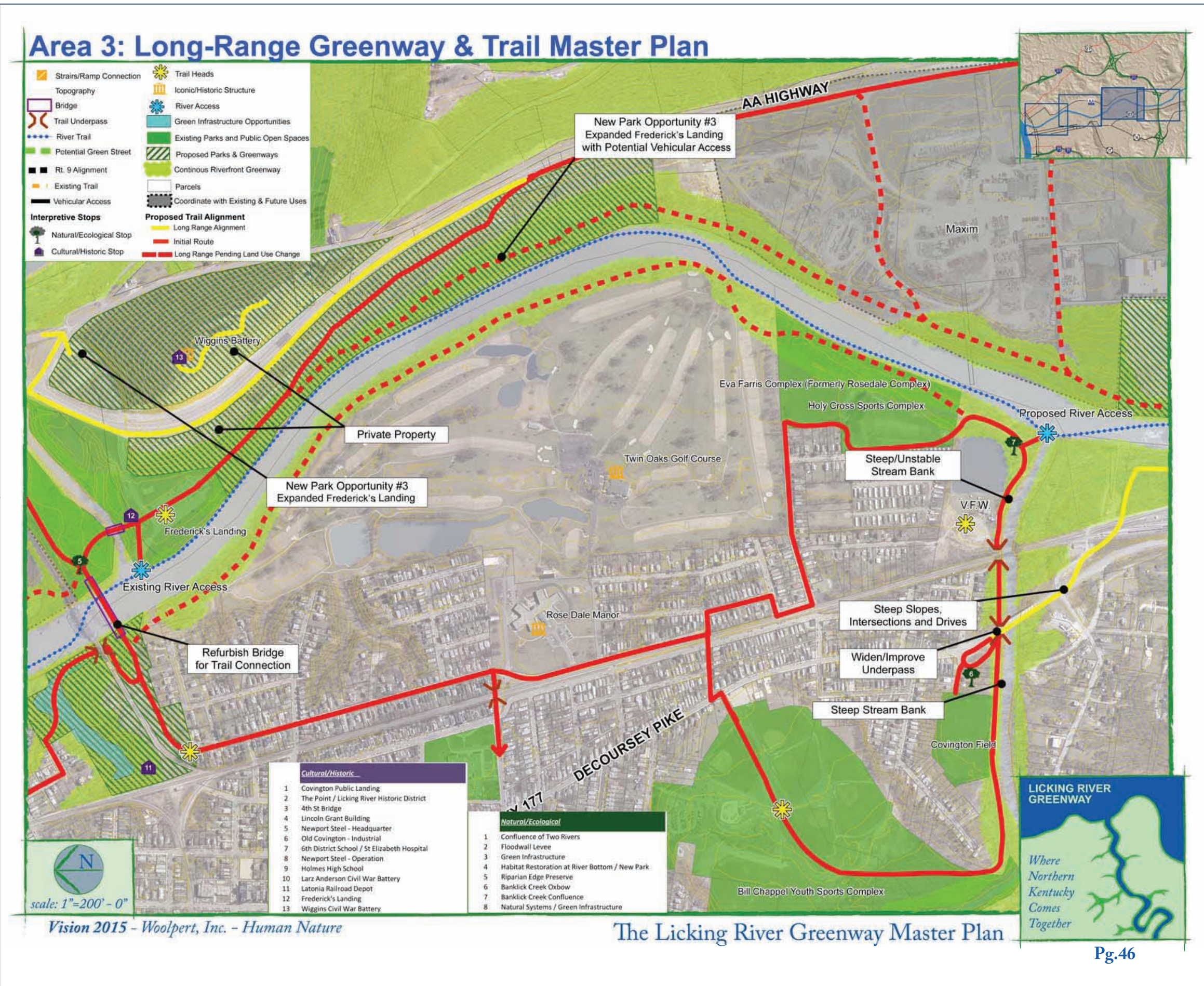
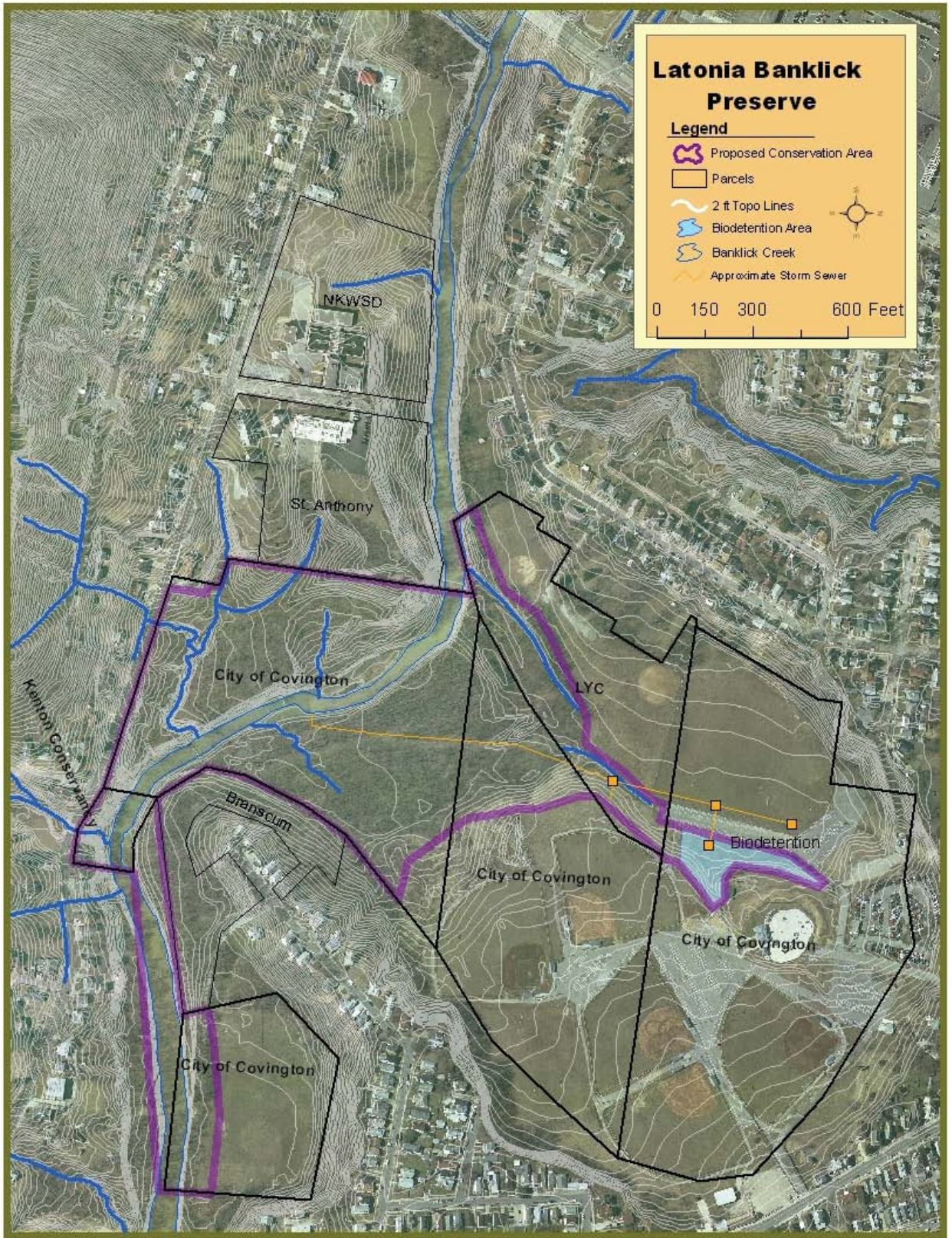


Figure 3.0.13: Latonia Banklick Preserve



3.0 Forming the Plan

southwest corner of 32nd Street and Decoursey. A neighborhood level park, or parks, should be explored in conjunction with existing or future vacant parcels located within residential areas. These recreation areas could be simple in design with vegetable gardens, playground equipment, and/or open space, thus requiring less funding for maintenance.

Mobility Concept

The conceptual transportation network as illustrated in Figure 3.0.15 on page 21 encompasses a wider view of major traffic generators in the Latonia area and makes general suggestions on how to improve travel within the neighborhood.

Strengthening Connections

One of the primary objectives for transportation improvements is to strengthen connections across Latonia. While the neighborhood consists of an urban grid network of streets there are several intersections with odd alignments and roads that do not run parallel to one another. Furthermore, the rail lines provide significant barriers to interconnectivity for all modes of transportation. These characteristics coupled with one-way streets tend to make the area difficult to navigate for both residents and non-residents.

Routes within the study area that carry the most traffic are identified in the concept diagram as those that require strengthening by the use of wayfinding or removal of stop signs.. For detailed information on how this plan proposes strengthening connections please see the transportation and streetscape sections of the Recommendations and Implementation Strategies section.

Winston Avenue Streetscape Improvements

Public input indicated a strong desire to see Winston Avenue morph into a more pedestrian friendly corridor. Streetscape improvements



Figure 3.0.14: Winston Avenue

such as street trees, vegetated medians, and widened tree lawns could be implemented to make the street more accommodating for all types of users. More substantial changes such as reducing the number of travel lanes, providing spaces for on-street parking, and adding non-traversable medians where appropriate are strongly recommended by this plan. More details on these changes are provided in Chapter 4.6.

Shared Use Paths

Shared use paths are another step toward the overall study's goal of increasing mobility of all types in the Latonia area. Two potential paths are identified in the concept diagram including; a trail to connect Bill Cappel Youth Sports Complex to Victory Avenue Covington Field and a grade-separated rail crossing connection in the vicinity of Eugina Avenue and West 38th Street. The rail crossing, which could be a shared use path or a pedestrian only crossing, could work towards connecting the northwest section of the neighborhood to the redeveloped Latonia Plaza Shopping Center area.

Greenways

The *Licking River Greenway Master Plan*, prepared by Vision 2015, recommends implementing a greenway along the Licking River from the Ohio River to I-275. This plan also carries forward the idea of implementing greenways throughout the neighborhood and that connect to the larger system along the

Licking River. These connections could be along natural features like the Licking River and Banklick Creek, and connect existing and proposed parks whenever possible.

Vegetated Buffers

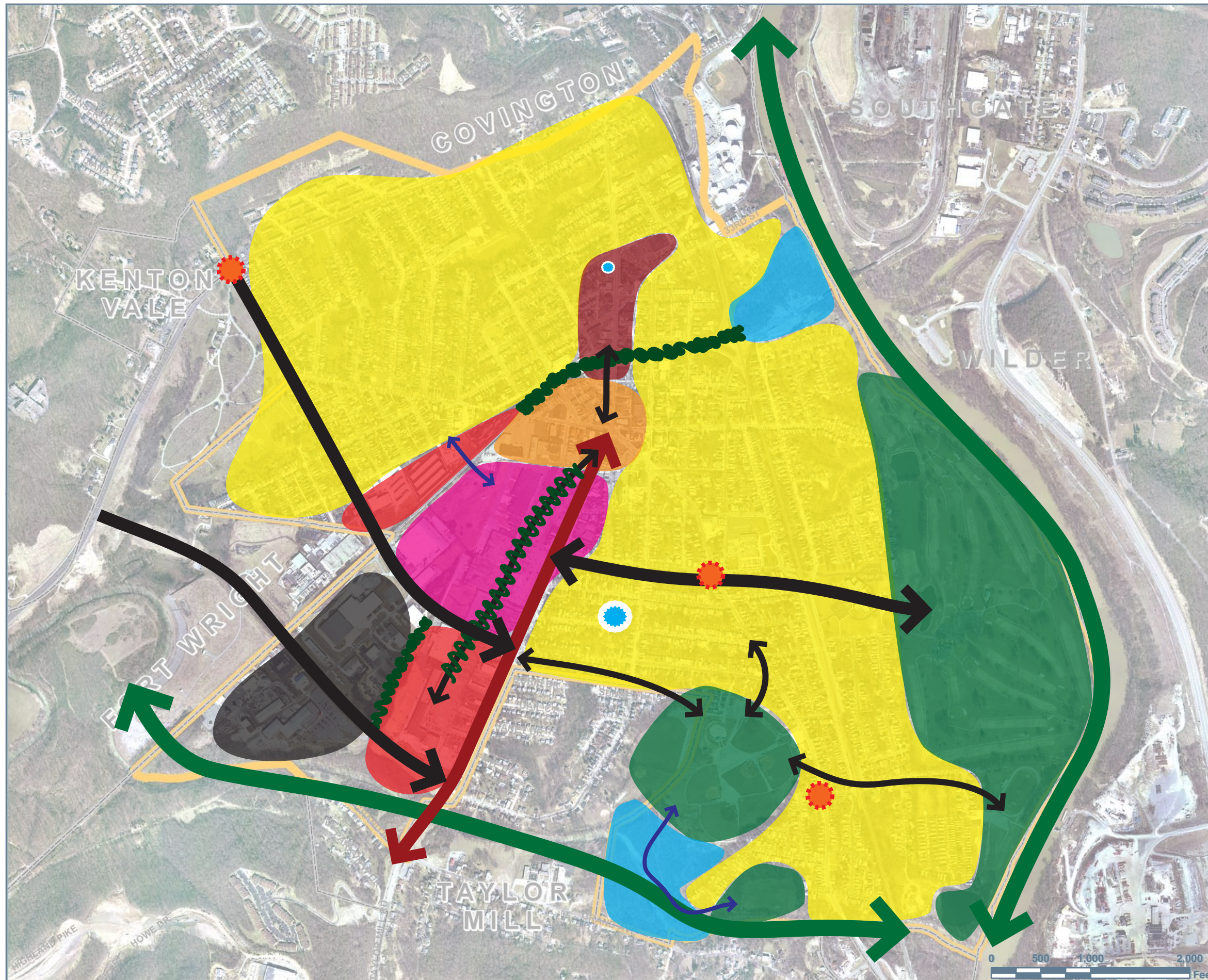
Three vegetated buffer areas are described in Figure 3.0.15 that would provide a visual and sound buffer between less intense and more intense land uses. The northernmost buffer is recommended along the railroad tracks that cross Decoursey Avenue and will provide a visual

separation between homes and rail facilities. The second vegetated buffer is illustrated along a parallel roadway in the Latonia Plaza area. This buffer should be landscaped with street trees and plazas to make it more aesthetically pleasing. The third vegetated buffer is identified in the area immediately northwest of the Latonia Centre shopping area and will serve as a visual barrier separating industrial and commercial land uses. More information about greenspace can be found in the green infrastructure and recreation sections of the plan.

Figure 3.0.15 Conceptual Transportation Network

Legend

-  Strengthen Connections
-  Streetscape Improvements
-  Greenway
-  Shared Use Paths
-  Plazas, Greenspace, or Vegetated Buffer
-  Residential
-  Urban Core
-  Redevelopment Area
-  Commercial & Highway Retail
-  Strengthen and Tie to Ritte's Corner
-  Light Industrial (High Tech / Green)
-  Recreation Area
-  Opportunity for New Recreation Area
-  Neighborhood Retail Node



Source: LINK GIS Date: October, 2010

