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# North Canton, Ohio

## COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NOVEMBER 1992

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NBBJ

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## **FOREWORD**

The North Canton Community Enhancement Plan would not have been possible without the dedication and concerns of community leaders and interested citizens. This project was spearheaded by the staff of the City of North Canton and North Canton TAP (Talk About Potential). This public/private partnership was funded by The Hoover Foundation, the Herbert W. Hoover Foundation, The Hoover Company and funds released by City Council.



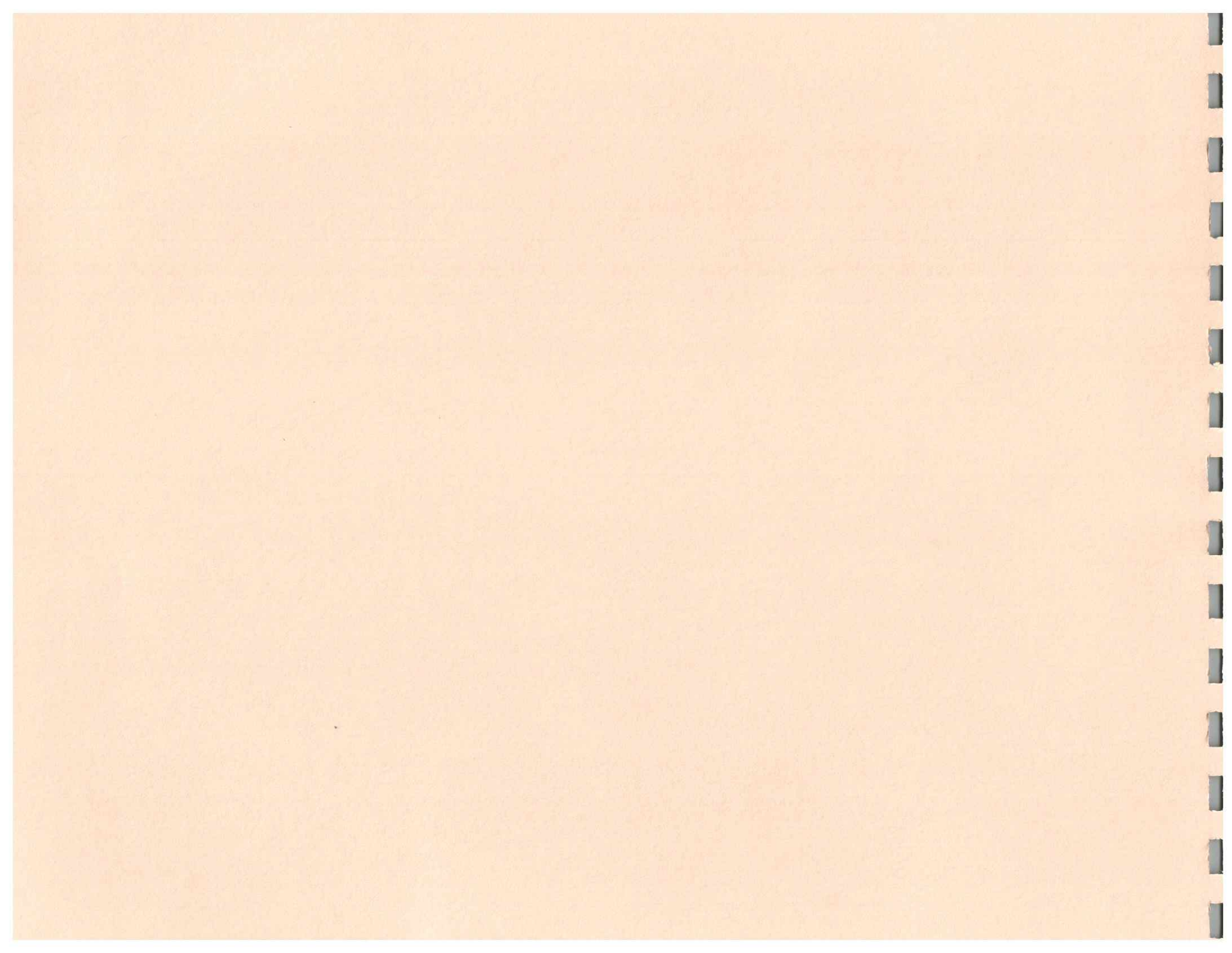
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*Section 1*

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# **STUDY BACKGROUND**





## PREFACE

North Canton has served as community for thousands of residents, as work place for thousands more, and as market place, and religious-cultural-educational center as well. There is a sense of permanence, of a certain unalterable stability about North Canton that comes from a blend of unique albeit difficult to describe components. Certainly, physical setting is a contributor including major community "orienting devices" that change slowly, if at all; The Hoover Company, the center core of the community, Main Street as a community spine, and even mature trees reinforce a sense of permanence. The delivery of high quality services to its citizens has been a hallmark of North Canton and its city government, educational system, and social and cultural services.

A more abstract contributor to a community's sense of stability and permanence is the character and values of its people as expressed through the successive generations of individuals who comprise a community's citizenry and its leadership. Many communities have distinguishing physical characteristics that can contribute to a community's unique identity; most communities with a professionally managed city government and educational system can also point with pride to delivering high quality services. What distinguishes communities is the character of its people and a sense of mission, a sense of community involvement as a requirement of leadership within the community. This is North Canton's greatest community enhancement. Without a concerned and

involved leadership, and supportive citizenry, a community and what it becomes is a matter of happenstance and not guidance.

Those individuals within the public and private sector who have a leadership role in North Canton's future then take their place in a long line of leaders who have stewarded the community to what it is today. If North Canton has been this successful so far, won't it continue to be successful? How stable or how fragile are communities? Can and how do communities move from a growth phase to a maturity and maintenance phase? These and many other questions in the minds of North Canton's leadership have lead to the undertaking of a community-wide planning effort designed to take stock of the community at present; evaluate its resources, its character, anticipate future trends and impacts, and help lay out a course of direction for positive enhancement of North Canton and its future.

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## **WHY AN ENHANCEMENT PLAN?**

Why an Enhancement Plan? Is an Enhancement Plan different from a Master Plan? Planning as an action helps to identify factors that can be controlled, factors that cannot be controlled, and, as a result, how can one influence a future. Many community plans and planning efforts are need- or problem-driven; for example, a planning effort for a high growth community certainly would have to address how to appropriately manage ongoing, dynamic growth in that jurisdiction. Such planning efforts would be a reactive response to a given problem or issue (growth) and would attempt to identify how such issues can be rectified.

A Community Enhancement Plan is different. An Enhancement Plan is a proactive versus a reactive planning action that anticipates problems and undertakes timely actions so that the problem never occurs. For example, for North Canton, an Enhancement Plan means ongoing investment and maintenance in the Downtown community core that is not necessitated by the core needing to be redeveloped. The underlying purpose of the North Canton Community Enhancement Plan is to identify wise investments to be made into the community in time, resources and talent that will best assure that North Canton's values as a community, as a physical place, and as a people, will stand the test of time and be preserved for future generations to enjoy.

## **PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF STUDY**

In addition to providing some insight as to how North Canton has changed over the last thirty years since its first comprehensive plan, the purpose of the study effort is to:

- identify and enhance North Canton's unique character as a basis for future reinvestment
- assure continued commitment to investment as well as reinvestment in the community by developing strategies for enhancing these unique characteristics
- improve the overall economic base and provide additional areas for community activities
- examine potential expansion into adjacent geographic areas that may contribute positively to the community's image
- list specific policy implications and capital improvement projects for the community to pursue for the next ten to twenty year period.

The Community Enhancement process, unlike the traditional comprehensive planning process, first requires a thorough understanding of the community's character before planning for future change. In that way, potential negative impacts of change (on behalf of the general population) are moderated because those special characteristics that contribute to a community's uniqueness are not overlooked. Instead, the

identity and unique features of North Canton will be retained and will serve as a basis for further community enhancement.

Because of the potential for future community expansion, the study limits include a much broader area than the present jurisdictional boundaries. North Canton's growth is blocked by Canton to the south and I-77 to the west. Fewer constraints to expansion exist to the north and east which also coincide with where growth is likely to occur (See Map 21). Because North Canton derives much of its economic base and community image from the Main Street Corridor, particular emphasis was placed on Main Street and the core area at the intersection of Maple and Main Streets for future enhancement and investment.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The following principles were adopted at the onset of the study:

1. Understand all facets of the community.
2. Recognize the importance that the established "community landscape" plays in creating and sustaining community identity.
3. Provide for a wide array of "spaces, places and services" for residents.

4. Maintain a sense of history by recognizing and integrating the old into the new.
5. Increase awareness of community features and community pride among the general population.
6. Focus on minimum investment for maximum results.

The Community Enhancement Plan study process involved nine work steps in which the consultant worked with representatives of the City of North Canton, the business community and community residents.

The first step in the process included an orientation with resident and business groups through the TAP group. Interviews were then conducted with over twenty-five community leaders identifying their perceptions of North Canton's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and constraints. These interviews were supplemented with a random mailer survey of North Canton residents and businesses.

Existing conditions within North Canton were then analyzed and reviewed in the first Workshop with the Resident and Business Groups. In that first workshop, a questionnaire was submitted to each group asking what they felt was important and unique about North Canton. Following this work session, general goals, objectives and enhancement strategies were

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developed and then reviewed in a second workshop with both the resident and business groups.

**GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES:**

The following twelve goals serve as a basis for more specific objectives and strategies in response to community growth and change:

- Promote economic development.
- Maintain excellence in education.
- Protect natural resources.
- Preserve historic and cultural values.
- Maintain delivery of high value government service.
- Control and encourage appropriate land use, both new development and re-development.
- Provide appropriate housing to meet citizen needs.
- Maintain, enhance and evolve recreational opportunities to meet citizen needs.
- Ensure long-term viability of Main Street as center core and spine to North Canton.
- Preserve and enhance important community visual images.
- Preserve and enhance community environmental qualities.
- Encourage and promote appropriate annexations.

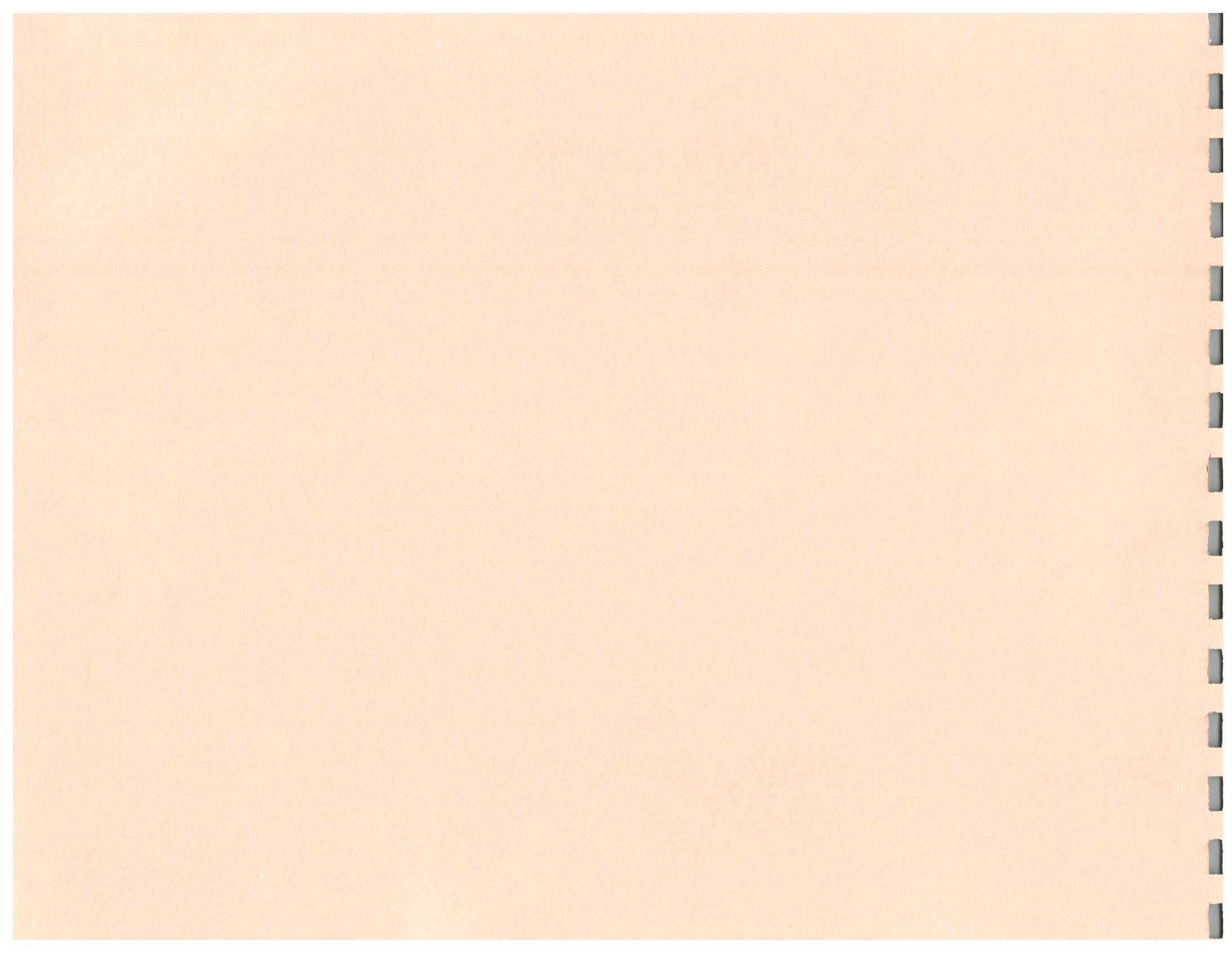
Once these strategies were identified, community enhancement projects were reviewed and prioritized in a third and final workshop, including a list of capital and non-capital enhancement projects. Each project was later outlined in specific detail including responsibility, timing, estimated cost and potential funding sources.

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***Section 2***

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**THE COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN**



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## INTRODUCTION

A successful planning effort entails three primary ingredients:

- **A Plan:** one of the end products of a study effort, a guideline that is both practical and yet creative
- **A Process:** a procedure or methodology by which goals, problems, and resulting strategies become articulated, an effort that includes problem-seeking as well as problem-solving
- **Participation:** the “people” side of the equation, the involvement of citizens, community leaders and other interested parties in the planning process that ultimately produce a plan; participants who understand the community’s past and present and who have been willing to struggle with defining its future.

Within the following section, the North Canton Community Enhancement Plan, as one of the two products of the planning process, is described in detail. A second and more critical product is to achieve participation; North Canton is blessed with strong public and private leadership, and with concerned, involved citizens. Within Section II of this report, an Action Plan Matrix has been provided that lists individual actions that can enhance the quality of life and sense of community in North Canton. Participation is everything. Many creative planning concepts are contained within the following section;

however, it is only through the actions of people, individually and collectively, that the unique qualities of North Canton as a community can be preserved and enhanced.



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## **GOALS, OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES**

The following goals, objectives and strategies were formulated as a result of the Citizens' Survey, Business Survey and the community workshops that were attended by individuals representing various groups throughout the City. A broad variety of objectives are possible for inclusion within the Enhancement Program, however the following twelve major objectives were considered to have the highest priority:

### **I. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

- A. Establish an economic development group as a public/private partnership as the entity most responsible for economic development activities.
- B. Inventory economic development opportunities and sites within North Canton with specific focus upon North Main Street.
- C. Monitor vacancy trends along North Main Street and maintain general overview of rent structure on North Main Street and competitive space elsewhere in the region.
- D. Develop a variety of tools or incentives that may be used to achieve economic development:
  - public relations, marketing and distribution of information

- ombudsman or liaison
- financial assistance
- tax abatement

### **II. EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE**

- A. Continue high level of community involvement in school educational activities and programs.
  1. Allow students to participate directly with business and industry in order to establish vocational interest early in life.
  2. Continue to encourage and expand day and night use of existing facilities by general population.
  3. Increase use of volunteers from general community, especially elderly citizens.
- B. Encourage shared use of educational programs and facilities with other institutions.
  1. Work with Walsh College and other post-secondary institutions in potential joint programs offered to the general public.

2. Continue collaborative efforts with Walsh College and other public school districts.
- C. Provide adequate educational and support facilities for future growth and change.
1. Reserve alternative sites for future facility location and expansion within the developing area (e.g. Plain and Lake Townships).
- D. Increase educational opportunities for all age groups as a means of improving work force adaptability to changing market place.
1. Tailor educational programs specifically to the interests and needs of the elderly.
  2. Ensure that school facilities are handicapped accessible and convenient, safe parking is available adjacent to building entries.
- E. Expand program to incorporate information on regional history and North Canton's natural and cultural heritage as part of both the elementary and secondary programs.
1. Continue to expand Heritage Society's programs to include natural and cultural characteristics of

the region as well as North Canton in order to increase awareness of the community.

2. Incorporate the resources of the North Canton Playhouse through historical theatrical productions as well as already established social theatre.
  3. Encourage the expansion of the Chautauqua concept and programs as they relate to North Canton's cultural efforts.
- F. Continue periodic communication of school programs, issues and needs to the community through available media.

### III. NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION

- A. Improve community access to existing natural areas in order to maximize environmental awareness.
1. Improve access to Nimishillen Creek area from neighborhoods.
  2. Obtain access easements or share utility easements within the flood plain area for improved access.

3. Locate passive recreational uses along flood plain areas and adjacent to streams, ponds, wetlands, and mature vegetation within ravines.
  4. Construct signage and identification of such areas where possible and where such areas are visible from public rights-of-way.
- B. Incorporate distinct community natural resources as integral part of future development and re-development proposals.
1. Establish development standards within zoning requirements that protect and enhance site features as a part of the development process (e.g. sedimentation requirements, wetland preservation, etc.).
- C. Develop a community environmental awareness program with information disseminated through the schools, potential field trips, and recreation-sponsored seminars for adults as well as children.

#### **IV. CULTURAL RESOURCES & HISTORIC CONTINUITY**

- A. Provide centralized, visible and accessible facilities for accommodating cultural events and activities.
1. Locate facilities adjacent to existing institutional uses within the historic North Canton core.
  2. Provide other cultural facilities adjacent to existing recreation, education or other institutional facilities in prominent locations.
  3. Preserve and enhance existing spaces for informal group settings as well as open plaza areas for large events.
  4. Provide appropriate pedestrian furniture, pedestrian scale lighting and landscaping along Main Street at strategic locations and within the Town Square area.
- B. Encourage the maintenance and enhancement of significant and/or historic community places.
1. Continue to acknowledge community landmarks through designations, through a regular "historic places" media column, and plaques.

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2. Ensure that new development or re-development adjacent to community landmarks is done sensitively and respects the historic setting.
- C. Restore older historic structures and unique areas for active reuse as a means of linking the community with the past.
1. Establish annual historic tours of New Berlin houses, churches, notable gardens and other areas of historic significance.
  2. Provide technical assistance to residents in older historic neighborhoods in restoring older structures (e.g. information about the origin of the structure, etc.).
  3. Recognize and award well-done restorations.
  4. Establish a system of identifying and protecting historically important properties through legislation. Investigate becoming Certified Local Government (commission to oversee uses of historical properties).

## V. GOVERNMENT SERVICE DELIVERY

- A. Continue providing a high level of government services to all citizens.
1. Encourage program publicly recognizing government employees' dedication to service within all city departments on a regular basis.
- B. Maintain perceived levels of safety throughout the entire community through prevention, visible presence and immediate response.
1. As community expands, locate any future satellite facilities in strategic locations (e.g. along or near North Main Street).
- C. Continue volunteer status of fire services which provide highly dedicated, cost-effective fire prevention and protection.
1. Promote volunteer status of fire department as excellent example of government and business working for community interest.
- D. Provide for convenient, safe pedestrian and vehicular circulation within the community.

1. Provide alternate freeway access to and from the northern area of North Canton and encourage the extension of Brumbaugh Street to the Airport.
  2. Consider and support appropriate new I-77 interchange locations to augment present access points.
  3. Clearly evaluate impacts of roadway widenings as a means of accommodating additional traffic volume on community and neighborhood integrity.
- E. Encourage regular interaction between adjoining police and fire safety forces.
1. Encourage other jurisdictions to share the benefit of North Canton's expertise through joint training programs.
- F. Increase awareness of child and adult day care situation and opportunities currently available.
1. Function as conduit for information on availability, access and funding for child and adult day care services and facilities.

2. Latchkey programs (such as YMCA and Faith United Methodist Church).

## VI. LAND USE CONTROL

- A. Maintain integrity of small community while allowing for development and re-development opportunities.
1. Discourage redevelopment of residential corridors (e.g. major east-west routes) into non-residential uses.
  2. Concentrate retail development at major nodes or intersections rather than "stripped" continuously along frontage or corridor (e.g. Market Avenue and North Main Street).
  3. Identify and analyze likely major redevelopment sites along North Main Street.
- B. Encourage development in areas with infrastructure already in place.
1. Evaluate costs and benefits of developing within present City of North Canton limits before considering development outside North

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Canton's jurisdiction or within recently annexed areas.

2. Give priority to areas inside North Canton School District.

C. Improve compatibility between various land use types and intensities by adhering to specific performance criteria.

1. Recognize potential impacts of infill development on neighboring properties and provide adequate transition between mix of uses and/or combination of appropriate setback, screening or buffering.

D. Tailor development regulations to recognize uniqueness of specific areas, corridors, or places.

1. Create specific district regulations for existing development, as well as new development and redevelopment for the historic core of the community.
2. Develop standards for the Main Street corridor applicable to each segment governing building design, color and materials, signage,

lighting, parking, curb cut locations and landscaping.

3. Develop Corridor Review District for Market Avenue corridor for those uses fronting on Market Avenue and establish standards controlling setback, height, lot coverage, signage, lighting, parking, curb cut locations and landscaping.

E. Encourage continued citizen involvement in the development and enforcement of land use regulations.

1. Establish informal review of land use and development proposals prior to formal zoning hearings.
2. Encourage citizen involvement in enforcement of land use regulations by instituting public forums explaining the planning and zoning process as well as building code, housing code, etc. as a way to augment city enforcement.

F. Begin process of revising North Canton Zoning Code to accommodate more appropriate regulatory tools.

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## **VII. HOUSING AVAILABILITY**

- A. Encourage the development of adequate, conveniently-located, safe housing and support services for the elderly population.
  - 1. Identify possible redevelopment sites suitable for medium density housing.
  - 2. Create opportunities for elderly housing adjacent to core area of community in conjunction with redevelopment opportunities.
- B. Encourage affordable housing for young families.
  - 1. Identify and encourage site opportunities to construct moderately priced housing units specifically geared towards young families.
  - 2. Examine feasibility of special financing geared to young families.
- C. Provide housing for growing segments of population including single parent and empty-nester households.

- 1. Identify potential site areas where an increase in lot density would be acceptable.
- 2. Revise land use regulations to accommodate alternative housing configurations including zero lot line, patio home development and other increased density forms.

### **D. Closely monitor indicators in neighborhood to determine trends.**

- 1. Conduct inventory of housing within older areas of community and areas undergoing a transition period (e.g. New Berlin area and adjacent neighborhood in northwest quadrant).
- 2. Maintain and enforce housing maintenance code and guide public investment to forestall neighborhood decline.

## **VIII. RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES**

- A. Upgrade existing parks to allow for a variety of recreation activities for all age groups and interests.
  - 1. Consider purchasing vacant land south of Price Park - expand park facilities.

**B. Provide additional indoor and outdoor recreational facilities to accommodate expanding programs.**

1. Locate parks adjacent to natural areas to allow for a variety of passive and active recreation interests.
2. Optimize use of existing facilities including municipal, as well as, school and college facilities.
3. Expand the YMCA Community Building facility to accommodate additional programs.
4. Create additional recreation space within existing as well as in expanding quadrants.

**C. Avoid overdevelopment of specific, more centrally located facilities such as Price Park.**

1. Preserve balance between passive and active recreational demands for each park setting.
2. Establish “inviolable” passive use zones where appropriate.

**IX. MAIN STREET VIABILITY**

**A. Improve variety and mix of business establishments along Main Street corridor while maintaining predominance of locally owned and operated businesses.**

1. Involve economic development organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce in attracting new business formation.

**B. Target specific retail uses to offset retail displacement by office development.**

1. Focus on specialty retail uses including food, restaurant/dining, delicatessen, confectionery, bakery, ice cream, etc.

**C. Build on long-term customer loyalty as marketing edge.**

1. As part of direct mail advertising, investigate customer preferences and changing needs (e.g. credit given for repeat business in the form of bonuses, discounts, etc.).



D. Recognize and enhance distinct characteristics of each corridor subdistrict or segment as a means of improving orientation.

1. Make improvements to corridor that respond to unique characteristics of each segment (e.g. urban improvements for core area, street tree and lawn improvements for balance of corridor, enhancement of lawn strip).

E. Collectively promote Main Street as a retail shopping area.

1. Organize a Main Street management program to generally promote/advertise Main Street businesses in local and regional news media as "New Berlin" businesses, North and South Main Street, etc.

## X. VISUAL IMAGE

A. Promote and enhance community identity by reinforcing sense of entry and arrival into the community.

1. Install entry treatment at major gateways into the community e.g. Main Street North and

South, Everhard, Maple, Applegrove and Portage Streets.

2. Demark original New Berlin core area through strategic location of entry features on both North and South Main Street, west on Maple and Portage and east on Maple.
3. Detail pavement and crosswalk areas to reinforce sense of entry.

B. Maintain the visual presence of significant structures and major vegetation areas, views and landmarks.

1. Limit height of structures along Main Street to below major tree canopy to protect views of church spires, Hoover stack and water tower.
2. Maintain and protect double tree row on Woodrow Street.

C. Protect important views of significant areas including valleys, open space and distant hills.

1. Incorporate as part of corridor review standards, provisions for protecting views of significant areas.

D. Retain visual character of “special” streets and incorporate attributes into new development.

1. Incorporate street tree planting program into subdivision regulations using a variety of indigenous species.
2. Encourage sidewalks where appropriate and pedestrian linkages between uses.

## XI. ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

- A. Utilize non-buildable areas as potential park and recreation sites.
- B. Continue efforts to reduce impact of solid waste disposal through recycling programs.
- C. Maintain a general high level of community appearance.
  1. Establish annual community clean-up program to pick up litter, trash, etc.
  2. Create annual awards for property beautification for both businesses and residences.

3. Develop maintenance and replacement program and encourage schools and civic organizations to participate and sponsor specific area street tree plantings.

## XII. ANNEXATION

- A. Formulate a clear policy within city government regarding stance towards annexation.
  1. Evaluate future annexation proposals on the basis of potential fiscal impact (costs and benefits) and contribution to community image.
  2. Identify potential annexation sites and develop priorities.
  3. Give priority to areas within North Canton School District boundaries.
- B. Develop appropriate annexation incentives if a proactive annexation stance is adopted.
  1. Determine clear, competitive advantages either in cost or timing of city services versus services by others.
  2. Promote advantages to prospective annexations.

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## **ENHANCEMENT CONCEPTS**

### **MAIN STREET AND NORTH CANTON TOWN SQUARE**

Main Street, including the central core area, is the community's most significant and unique feature. It is the public's window to the community. Main Street provides a spine for North Canton which links and organizes neighborhoods. Historically, development has evolved along Main Street. As future development occurs in the townships to the northwest and northeast, Main Street will need to adapt to continue to have a significant positive impact on the quality of life in North Canton.

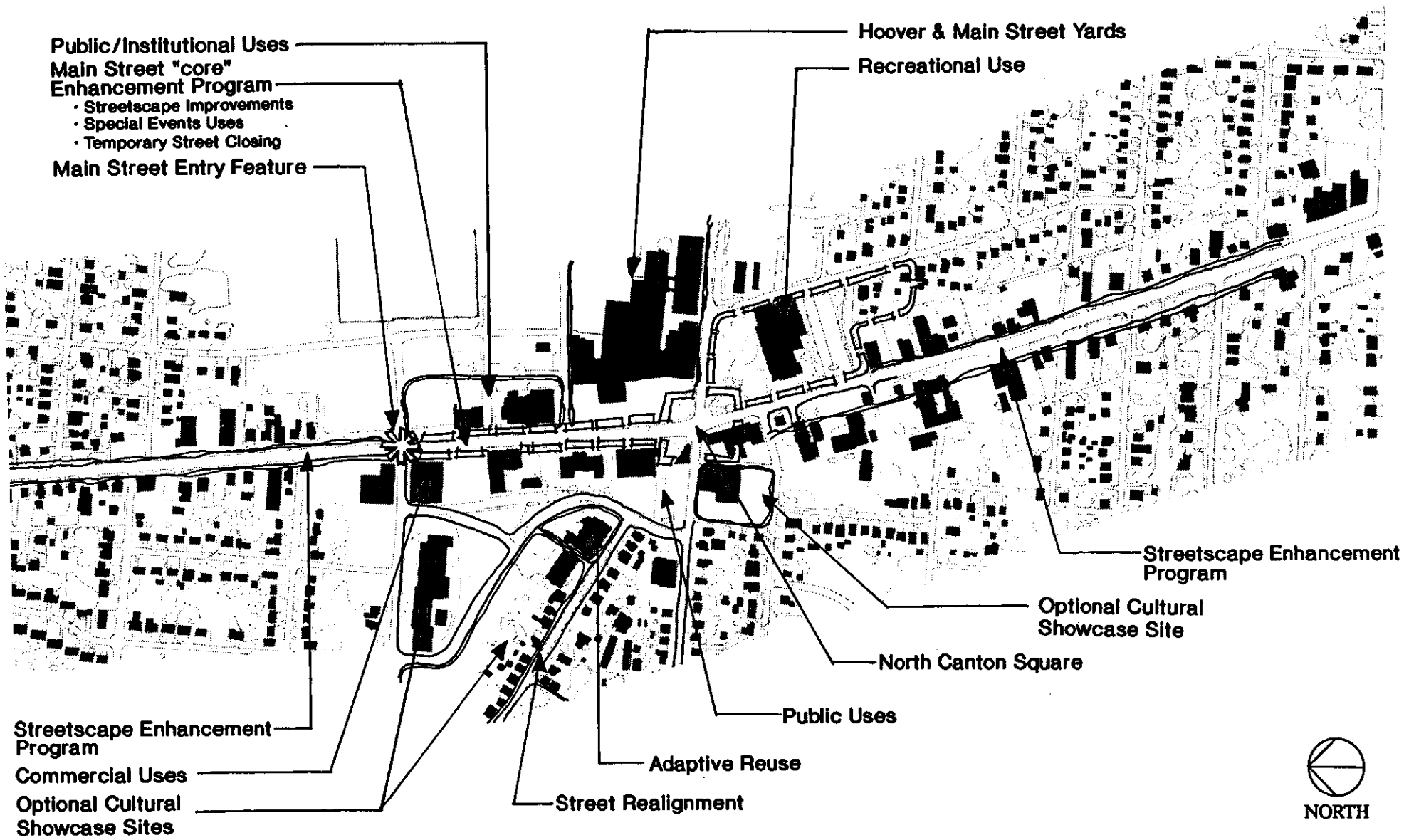
The intersection of Main Street and Maple Street was called The Square in a time when it was the single most significant community space. It provided all community needs including employment, shopping, government and education. The Square continues to be important to the community due to its unique and identifiable character. It is the area that defines the community's center, both in a physical sense as well as in a cultural, social and historic sense. The North Canton Square is the home of The Hoover Company, an employer and a landmark. The Square also includes the community's primary government, cultural and social facilities - City Hall, churches, the library, and the YMCA. This cultural and community neighborhood should remain compact, yet be able to expand as needed. The North Canton Square is unique within the

larger developing metropolitan area; Jackson Township, Plain Township, and development north in Lake Township which represent a suburban land use pattern, absent a true core. Investment in this core area, The Square, is an investment in North Canton itself, its identity, its citizens' gathering spot and its point of origin as the crossroads of the community (Map 1).

Main Street can be divided into three distinct segments. Characteristics such as roadway width, traffic volumes and non-residential uses are generally consistent along its entire length within North Canton. However, each of the three segments: the Core, North Main and South Main, have unique issues which need to be addressed.

The Core includes The Square and extends from Seventh Street to Glenwood Street. The Square includes development on both sides of Main Street from the YMCA to Charlotte Street. The Square's prominent features include:

- The Hoover Company and its large lawn
- Citizens Bank building
- The YMCA and Bitzer Park
- Historic storefront buildings
- City Hall, the library and the fire station
- churches.



MAP 1  
**MAIN STREET ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM**

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Other portions of the Core Segment of Main Street include:

- narrow residential lots and structures converted to retail and service businesses
- locally owned and operated businesses.

The North Main segment extends from Seventh Street to the corporate limits at Orion Avenue. This segment's characteristics include:

- modest to large scale strip commercial development
- ability to accommodate new development including regional retail, fast food restaurants, and auto service
- automobile oriented in scale, signage and convenience.

South Main Street is defined by a changing land use pattern at Glenwood Street and continues to the corporate limits at 50th Street. Its prominent features include:

- consolidated residential lots converted to strip commercial development mixed with single and multi-family development and offices
- steep slopes and Nimishillen Creek which have helped to preserve open space.

Recommended actions to promote a viable and high quality Main Street are based on an analysis of the street's strengths and weaknesses. In addition, recommendations respond to concerns voiced by the community in public meetings and in a random mail survey.

An excellent opportunity exists for re-establishing the North Canton Square as the social gathering place for the community. Once again, The Square can become a vital part of community life, providing a home for cultural facilities, a staging place for special events and a quality pedestrian space for people to take pride in and enjoy. Many opportunities exist to create "gathering places" for the community within the North Canton Square, including the Hoover front lawn, Bitzer Park, the existing Portage School property, City Hall and the library, as well as the Hoover Stadium area and the Hoover recreation fields. The key to enhancing their use is to provide safe and convenient pedestrian environments that are physically and visually linked.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Enhance and expand The Square as the community's central space for cultural, social and government functions. It is important to allow existing community facilities to expand while encouraging additional cultural facilities to locate within The Square area. This can be facilitated by the following actions: