



North Canton Master Plan



2012





Prepared for the

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and



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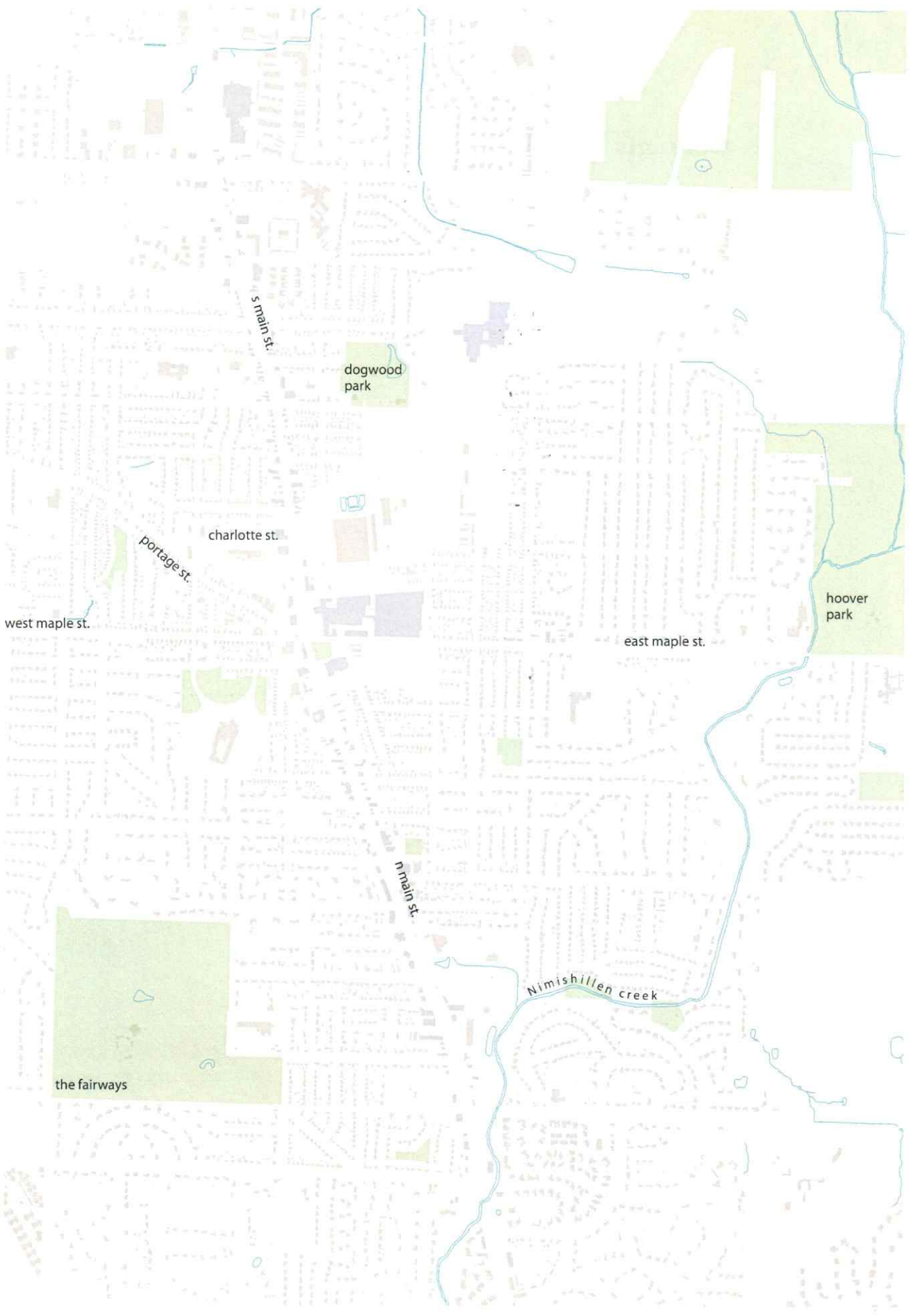


North Canton Master Plan



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s main st.

dogwood park

charlotte st.

portage st.

west maple st.

the fairways

n main st.

Nimishillen creek

east maple st.

hoover park

The City of North Canton is at a pivotal moment, transitioning from the time when the Hoover Corporation was headquartered in the city and provided a steady source of employment and tax revenues. Currently, the city is being repositioned for success in a more diversified regional, national, and global economy.

Growth in energy industry is presenting new economic development opportunities in Stark County and the surrounding region. North Canton is well-positioned to capitalize on these opportunities, especially if the city makes strategic use of its potential development sites and, at the same time, invests in public amenities that enhance the quality of life for existing and future residents. North Canton's traditional strengths, including a central location, convenient highway access, established local businesses and cultural institutions, well-maintained housing stock, excellent schools, and a robust park system, provide a basis for the city's continuing success. This Master Plan is intended to reinforce these strengths and foster community reinvestment in three major categories:

1. *Identity*: promoting the identity of the city as a good place to live, work, visit, and establish a business; and reinforcing the character of the historic downtown area as a regional destination.
2. *Corridors and Connections*: connecting the city's unique natural and cultural assets in ways enhance the city as a whole, improving access to key destinations, and making the city a more pedestrian and bicycle-friendly place.
3. *Development sites*: identifying potential development uses for vacant and underutilized properties in the city and establishing development guidelines to ensure that any new construction is in keeping with community priorities, values, and preferences.

The downtown area, along Main Street and centered on the Hoover complex, is the crux of this plan. Historic buildings, a quaint small town character, and several downtown institutions establish the city's fundamental identity. Calming traffic, creating a downtown event space, and cultivating other downtown destinations will help to establish a critical mass of activity in the downtown area and a compelling identity for the city. The Hoover complex, with its iconic smokestack, already functions as a recognizable downtown landmark. With some public and private investments in signage, pedestrian amenities, parking consolidation, green space improvements, and infill development, the downtown area will attract businesses and residents, and anchor new investments throughout the city

The Master Plan was developed by the City of North Canton and the North Canton Chamber of Commerce, with input from a project steering committee and the community of large and the assistance of the Kent State Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative. Major recommendations of the plan include:

Identity

- Phase out the city's current tagline as "The Dogwood City" and reinforce the identity of the city as simply North Canton.
- Develop attractive signage for major gateways to the city and the downtown area.
- Transform the downtown area into a "front door" destination by encouraging businesses to orient their primary entrances toward Main Street, rather than accommodating most customers through rear entrances facing parking lots behind the businesses. This can be accomplished by consolidating rear parking lots and establishing attractive passageways that lead people to the front (Main Street-facing) entries. Allowing on-street parking is another possible way to promote pedestrian activity along Main Street.
- Create a downtown event space, such as an amphitheater in Bitzer Park (see pages 39-41) and establish additional, year-round event programming in the downtown area.

- Enhance downtown green spaces such as the lawn in front of the Hoover Building and Bitzer Park with seating, lighting, and other amenities that will support programming and increase community use.

Corridors and Connections

- Deploy traffic calming measures to slow traffic along Main Street in the downtown core. These measures include more prominent pedestrian crossways, signage directing visitors to key destinations and nearby parking areas, and a front-door orientation for Main Street businesses to increase pedestrian activity.
- Create a system of wayfinding signage that makes the city's major destinations more prominent and easier to find.
- Consider sharrows, bicycle lanes, and bike paths to better accommodate bicycle traffic on city streets, particularly between the downtown area, the park system, and Walsh University. (See the Corridors and Connections section beginning on page 45 for specific recommendations).

Development Sites

- Establish a parking strategy for the Hoover District by consolidating existing parking lots in the downtown area for shared use, and creating a new landscaped parking lot or structure in proximity to the Hoover complex, the library, and downtown businesses. The site bounded by Hower, Witwer, and Orchard Streets (see page 37) was identified as a potential site for additional parking. New parking directly in front of the Hoover Building is discouraged in order to preserve the character-enhancing front lawn currently in this location, which could be used in the future for public use and outdoor dining in conjunction with new uses in the Hoover building.
- Future development of the Applegrove site should avoid the rear (western) end of the site due to the likelihood of remnants from earlier mining activity. A future building footprint should also avoid the area at the northeast corner of the site, immediately adjacent to the intersection of Stratavon and Main Street, since this is a low spot on the site that is prone to flooding. A specific

future use for the property was not identified; the development guidelines on pages 64-69 simply indicated a range of preferred development configurations for the site.

- The Elementary School site on Charlotte Street is well suited for future green space use as a town commons.
- Waterside Centre has been platted for future development as a retail/office complex. The proximity of the site to Nimishillen Creek provides an opportunity to showcase this natural asset and create bicycle and pedestrian connections to the creek, as shown on page 74-77.
- The largest potential development site is the publicly owned Fairways at North Canton Golf Course. The on-going use of the site as the golf course is in question and the City is exploring other uses that respect surrounding residential areas, retain public access to the site, create new jobs, and generate additional tax revenue. Possible new uses include an office park and/or a senior-friendly housing community. Construction should be avoided in the northeast corner of the site, the lowest area of the site where water drains. Flooding concerns in the adjacent residential neighborhood make it especially important that any new development on the golf course site does not exacerbate flooding issues. Possible development configurations are shown on pages 78-81.
- Redevelopment is encouraged for residential-scale properties on North and South Main Street, particularly those in blighted and underutilized condition. A strategy of land assembly, consolidating individual houses into larger development parcels, will support more economically viable businesses along Main Street.

The North Canton Master Plan is a living document, designed to be implemented and adapted as new opportunities emerge. The final section of this plan, beginning on page 83, describes some initial action steps and community priorities.

Master Plan Process

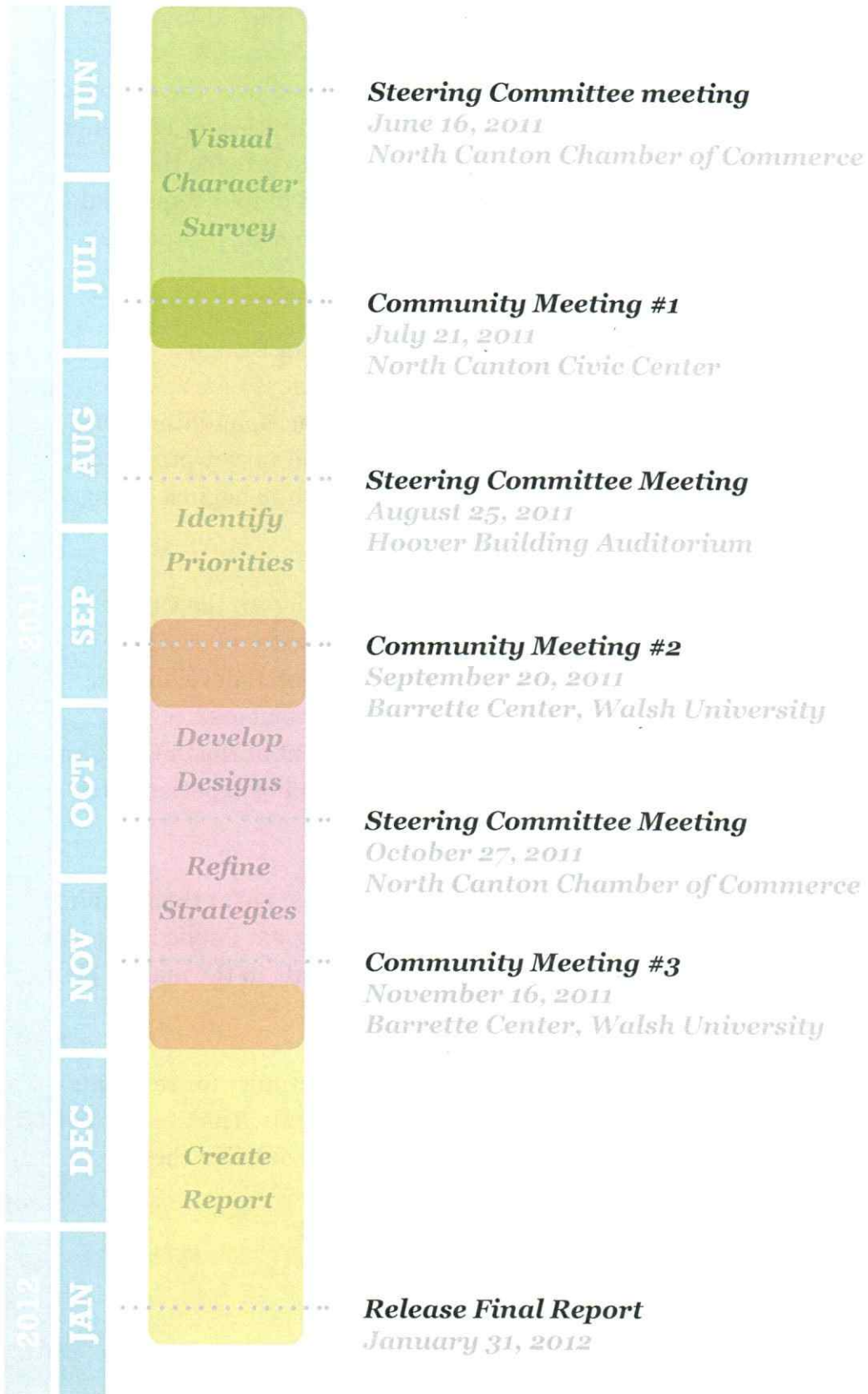
The North Canton Master Plan was developed over the course of eight months and included multiple opportunities for residents, business owners and government officials to provide their input. The planning process was comprised of four sequential development stages, with each stage culminating in a public community meeting.

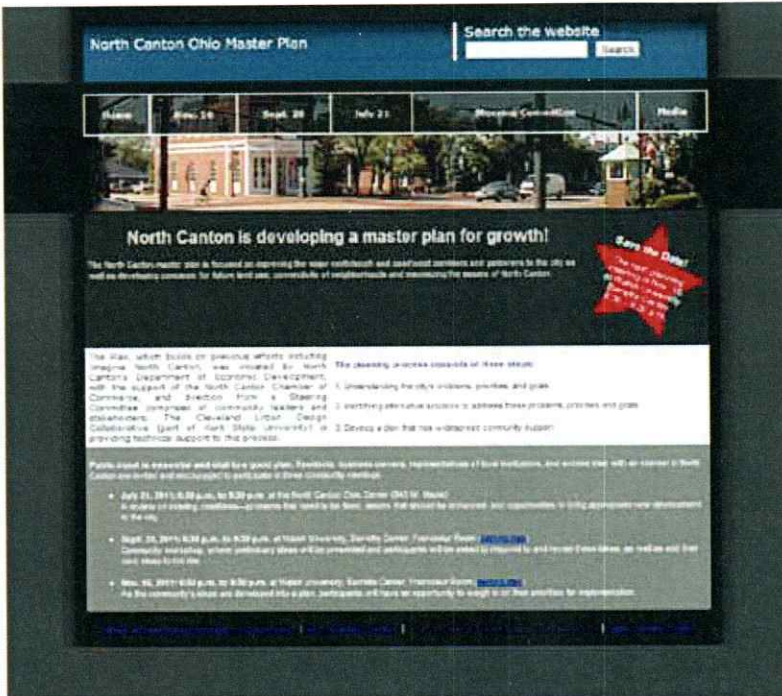
During the initial stage, the Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative (CUDC) team conducted a **Visual Character Survey** of North Canton's streets, green spaces, building stock, ecological systems, and overall identity. The survey provided a foundational set of observations from which to begin a dialogue with local stakeholders.

Based on feedback from Community Meeting #1, the CUDC team began to **Identify Priorities** for the master plan. These community-driven priorities included potential development sites, streetscape elements, gateway improvements, neighborhood connections and enhancement of North Canton's town center as a walkable, active, and defining experience for the city.

The main priorities outlined in the second stage of the planning process were vetted at Community Meeting #2. Public input was used to further **Develop Designs** of proposals in the master plan and **Refine Strategies** for implementation.

Community Meeting #3 provided an opportunity for residents to respond to the draft set of design proposals. The **Create Report** stage followed, as the design team compiled the recommendations into a final document.





ncantonmasterplan.org website



CUDC's Gauri Torgalkar takes notes during a community meeting breakout group



North Canton Master Plan booth at North Canton Main Street Festival

Engagement from a broad range of stakeholders is critical to the long-term success of a master plan. Voices from different parts of the community must be heard and incorporated into the master plan in order to achieve widespread community support.

In order to maximize the points of contact between the design team and community members, several modes of communication were employed to gather public feedback. Recognizing that not everyone will be able to attend meetings in-person, a website (ncantonmasterplan.org) was created and maintained by the North Canton Area Chamber of Commerce to provide timely updates on the planning process. The website posted presentations in advance of the public meeting dates, so residents could familiarize themselves with the content

before the meeting. Also, residents who were unable to attend the meetings could stay connected with the master plan's progress through the website.

In addition to the website, steering committee meetings and community meetings, the design team also used the North Canton Main Street Festival as an opportunity to make residents aware of planning process and solicit feedback. During the weekend festival, CUDC staff and steering committee members were stationed at a booth displaying boards and maps of the planning area, and answered residents' questions regarding the master plan process. The master plan also received extensive coverage in the local news media, including several articles in the *North Canton Patch*.



Community Meeting #1 at the North Canton Civic Center.

As a first step in the planning process, the CUDC team conducted an existing conditions analysis and visual character survey. This analysis was shared with the steering committee.

Some key observations gathered from this exercise include:

- The Hoover complex is a significant part of the town center. There is ongoing deliberation on the redevelopment of the campus and its role in the place-making efforts for North Canton Downtown.
- There are numerous community assets in North Canton that the residents are proud of and leave a strong impression on visitors. These assets, however, are physically separate from each other and not well-connected.
- Major entry points into North Canton are not clearly marked.
- Residents are proud of the family-friendly character of North Canton. However, this aspect of the community is not immediately apparent to the short-term visitors or passers-by.
- While the streetscape of Main Street is that of the primary commercial spine and town center avenue, it is mostly used as a main thoroughfare by vehicles going through North Canton to other destinations. This is, in part, because of high-speed traffic and minimal traffic calming practices.
- Downtown is a back-door destination. This means that most visitors to the downtown, park in the back of the businesses they are visiting and enter them from behind. This translates to fewer pedestrians along Main Street, which further encourages drivers to speed through North Canton.

On the following pages is the initial streetscape and visual survey analysis. It is organized as north-south (Main Street) and east-west (key streets that intersect Main Street).