

# FORT THOMAS COMMUNITY PLAN

DECEMBER 2018



*The Official Comprehensive Plan for the City of Fort Thomas*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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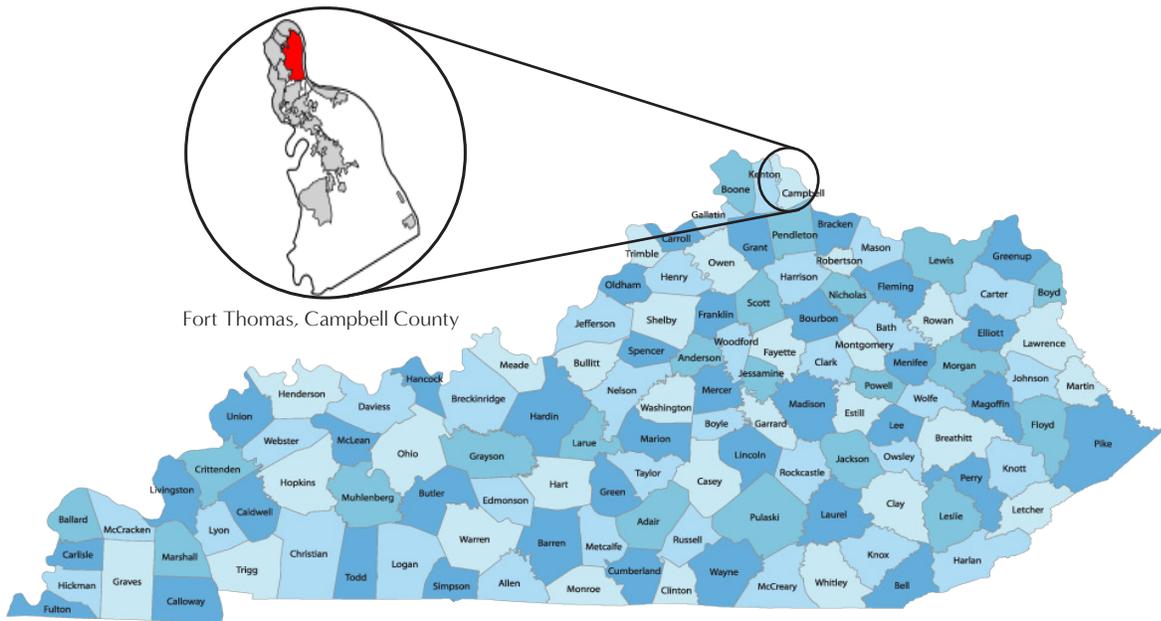
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# INTRODUCTION

By all accounts, Fort Thomas is an attractive and thriving community situated at the “top of Kentucky.” Known for its hilltop ridges overlooking the Ohio River, Fort Thomas is just minutes south of downtown Cincinnati, Ohio in Campbell County, surrounded by six other municipalities: Newport, Dayton, Bellevue, Highland Heights, Woodlawn and Southgate. Yet, despite urban influences along our borders, including the convenience of quick interstate access, we have been able to maintain the feeling of small town living and a high level of community involvement.

Fort Thomas adopted its first Comprehensive Plan in 1969 and has engaged in six updates since. While the Commonwealth of Kentucky requires regular updates to a municipality’s Comprehensive Plan, we realize the benefits of coming together as a community to reflect upon and update our vision for the future of Fort Thomas. We also believe that it is important to expand the breadth of our planning process to include an update to the Fort Thomas Parks and Recreation Plan as well as other topics (such as regional collaboration and partnerships) that are not required elements. It is our goal to be proactive in ensuring that future private development as well as public expenditures are consistent with community resources and priorities. Thus, we have prepared this 2018 Fort Thomas Community/ Comprehensive Plan over nearly a two year planning process that started with a community visioning effort, and which has incorporated the voices of several hundred residents.



## PLAN ORGANIZATION

The Community Plan is presented in three parts:

**Part 1** Overview of the Vision for Fort Thomas presents our long-term vision and goals for the future. It also includes the overall context in which we conducted the planning process: an examination of recent trends, an overview of the issues and challenges that are addressed in the plan, a summary of the process and public engagement efforts, and a guide for how to use the plan. In essence, Part 1 serves as an executive summary.

**Part 2** Planning Elements is the core component of this plan, which spells out our policies and strategies for each of the major topic areas. The chapters in Part 2 are broken down by committee as follows:

**Chapter 2.1 : Land Use & Zoning** focuses on the types of development and redevelopment that are acceptable for Fort Thomas, the preservation of trees and hillside areas, the current economy and future economic development.

**Chapter 2.2 : Transportation & Connectivity** focuses on the condition and safety of existing streets, pedestrian walkways, and bicycle facilities, Transit Authority of Northern Kentucky bus route plans, future Kentucky Transportation Cabinet corridor plans, and additional connectivity needs for parks, schools, and the river.

**Chapter 2.3 : Parks & Open Space** focuses on the existing parks, seeking community input for improvements, researching trends and best practices, and exploring opportunities to improve connectivity between community assets.

**Chapter 2.4 : Public Utilities & City Owned Facilities** focuses on promoting all essential utility services economically, evaluating the development of future telecommunication facilities, providing technology that parallels the needs of the community, and determining if existing city buildings (and a building the City hopes to acquire) meet the needs of the City.

**Chapter 2.5 : Regional Partnerships & Collaboration** focuses on inter-local agreements for development, Northern Kentucky bike trail with other educational/recreational amenities, archaeological sites, and sustainability initiatives.

**Chapter 2.6 : Focus Area Plans** are devoted to four select areas of the city and provide the mechanism to incorporate the topical recommendations from the various committees into a consolidated master plan for each specific area. The areas include the Town Center area, the Midway/Tower Park area, the Alexandria Pike (US 27) corridor and the Riverfront Greenway.

**Part 3** Achieving the Vision – Funding and Implementation is devoted to carrying out the plan recommendations. Developed by the Funding and Implementation Committee, this part provides a summary of current City revenue and spending; outlines an implementation strategy for the priority projects and action steps; and identifies potential funding sources and funding partnerships. Some of the plan’s recommendations require additional study and the development of more detailed action steps that go beyond the scope of this project.

## What is a community plan?

This Community Plan, adopted by the Fort Thomas Planning Commission on December 19, 2018, is the City’s official Comprehensive Plan. It is a guiding policy document for use by the City’s decision makers - elected officials, appointed board and commission members and City administration - when addressing growth and development issues, public expenditures and programming, and by residents and developers.

It is a comprehensive document that outlines the vision of the future of Fort Thomas, with strategies, key action steps and funding recommendations to achieve our vision.

## LEGAL FRAMEWORK

This Community Plan for the City of Fort Thomas, Kentucky is the City's official Comprehensive Plan and has been prepared and adopted in a manner that is consistent with the requirements for comprehensive plans set forth in Chapter 100 of the Kentucky Revised Statutes. This plan is intended to serve as a policy guide to the city. The Fort Thomas Planning Commission is the primary public agency responsible for preparing and administering the required comprehensive plan.

*“Start with the end in mind.”*

—Stephen Covey, *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*



# PART 1

## OVERVIEW OF THE VISION FOR FORT THOMAS

**Part 1** presents our long-term vision and goals for the future, and provides a general overview of how we arrived at our vision and goals. Topics covered include: an examination of recent trends, an overview of the issues and challenges that are addressed in the plan, a summary of the process and input from public engagement efforts, and a guide for how to use the plan. In essence, Part 1 serves as an executive summary.

**VISION, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES** Where we want to be

**CONTEXT** Why we did the plan

**PLANNING PROCESS** How we created the plan

**MOVING FORWARD** Ways to use the plan



# Vision, Goals and Objectives

## Vision

As with any planning endeavor, defining an overall vision and set of goals is an important step to preparing an implementable plan. To develop a vision we must look into the future, think creatively and ask ourselves what we want Fort Thomas to be in 20 years or so. But first, it is important to establish our core principles to help frame our vision and goals.

## Core Principles

The following core principles form the foundation of our vision for the future of Fort Thomas.

Stay true to our history and who we are as a community:

**Small Town Family Values.** Fort Thomas has been a family-oriented community for years, which has been achieved through walkable neighborhoods and the scale of homes and buildings within the city, and undergirded by our excellent school system and numerous community events that draw us together. All of these features contribute to the small town feeling we all enjoy, where everyone knows each other and generations remain committed to the city's future.

**Sense of place.** This is also established through the scale of development, as well as our history which is still evident through the structures and the iconic features, such as the stone walls, tree lined streets, and water tower that remain.

**Be Sustainable.** Fort Thomas is primarily a residential community. Yet, we need a balance of land uses to help retain an adequate tax base, while at the same time preserving green space and natural resources such as our hillsides and greenbelt along the river.

**Build on our strengths.** Fort Thomas is known for its quality housing, parks, business districts, riverfront corridor and hillside greenbelt. These are all assets that can be leveraged for our future improvement.

**Value collaboration.** We understand our community is one of many in the northern Kentucky area all striving for the same prosperity. We have a shared future, one that is influenced by what happens along and near our borders. We all benefit by working together, collaborating and coordinating our efforts to best leverage our efforts.

**Continue the momentum and quest for continual self-improvement.** Fort Thomas has a history of providing leadership by example, valuing education, and promoting health and wellness.

## Goals and Objectives

The statement of Goals and Objectives, included on the following pages (11 through 17), serve as a guide for the physical development and economic and social wellbeing of Fort Thomas.

## Planning with a Vision

The vision guides goal-setting, policies and actions by providing context for understanding community concerns, prioritizing issues and determining action steps. Plans and actions based on clear goals and objectives are more likely to succeed.

Through the planning process, we have developed an overall vision and overarching goals for Fort Thomas. In addition, each planning topic has more specific goals and objectives.

## OVERALL VISION FOR FORT THOMAS

To be a sustainable family-friendly bedroom community that is known for its dominate natural environment that creates a “city in a park” atmosphere, with excellent schools, beautiful trees, walkable neighborhoods, safe streets, parks and recreation system, cultural heritage, vibrant business districts, and other amenities that contribute to the high quality of life residents have come to expect.

## OVERARCHING GOALS

Recognizing the need for both a City-Wide Parks & Recreation Plan Update and a Comprehensive Plan Update, the goals of the planning process are to:

- » Create a coordinated Community Plan that addresses in detail topics that are relevant to the city’s current challenges and opportunities.
- » Engage both City Council and City Staff actively in the process.
- » Receive community input to help ensure that the plan is reflective of the community’s needs, desires and aspirations.

## LAND USE & ZONING

### VISION

To ensure that Fort Thomas continues to be an attractive, desirable and family-friendly city with a park-like setting where people choose to live, work and play, and where businesses choose to do business and invest in our community.

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

#### L1 Enhance our quality of life.

- L1.1 Continue to be a good place to raise a family, characterized by good schools and safe neighborhoods.
- L1.2 Promote neighborhoods and business districts that foster walking, biking, social interaction and sense of community.
- L1.3 Foster investments that retain our history and distinct character.
- L1.4 Enhance the natural physical beauty of our city provided by the Ohio River, mature trees, wooded hillsides, and scenic views.

#### L2 Maintain and improve our housing stock and neighborhoods.

- L2.1 Continue to require regular housing and property maintenance to ensure our housing stock and neighborhoods retain their viability and desirability.
- L2.2 Promote continued investments in existing housing by making it easier to expand, provided expansions are compatible with the neighborhood.
- L2.3 Encourage a variety of housing types in select locations that meet the needs of residents, including older residents who desire low-maintenance, single-floor living, as well as younger adults who have not yet started a family.
- L2.4 Ensure that new housing is compatible with the character of the surrounding area.
- L2.5 Provide neighborhood-focused programming to help build “community” and strengthen ties to the neighborhoods.

#### L3 Strengthen business districts and economic wellbeing

- L3.1 Create a unique character and theme for each business district. Continue to foster investment, infill development/re-development that creates and enhances vibrant and resilient mixed-use business districts, oriented primarily to the needs of residents, and which includes a central gathering place.
- L3.2 Foster new economic development along Alexandria Pike (US 27) that takes advantage of access to the interstate, potential for Smart City investments and proximity to major employers such as Northern Kentucky University and St Elizabeth Healthcare.
- L3.3 Ensure that new economic development is compatible with and enhances the existing character of the surrounding area and the overall “city in a park” character.

#### L4 Protect our natural resources.

- L4.1 Continue to protect the greenbelt along the Ohio River by strengthening regulations and building partnerships.
- L4.2 Ensure that new development is designed in ways that protect and take advantage of natural features, such as mature trees, hillsides, and scenic views, that contribute to Fort Thomas’ character.
- L4.3 Ensure that new development is constructed in ways that conserve natural resources by being energy efficient and reducing storm water runoff.

## TRANSPORTATION & CONNECTIVITY

### VISION

To be the most walkable and bike-friendly community in Kentucky, with a well-connected and attractive multi-modal transportation system so that citizens can safely and comfortably travel between all neighborhoods, schools, parks, business districts and other key destinations within the city and throughout neighboring communities, whether on foot, bike, car or other form of transportation.

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

#### **T1 Improve and maintain our infrastructure so residents of all ages can move safely throughout Fort Thomas.**

- T1.1** Ensure that all sidewalks within the city are ADA compliant.
- T1.2** Provide safe and highly visible pedestrian and automobile access at all schools and parks in the city.
- T1.3** Provide safe and highly visible accommodations at all crosswalks in the city.
- T1.4** Monitor speed limits and make modifications when warranted.
- T1.5** Continue systematic maintenance of infrastructure.
- T1.6** Continue to support public transit options in the City.

#### **T2 Make it easy and enticing to move about Fort Thomas.**

- T2.1** Create distinctive gateways at key entries into the city.
- T2.2** Provide signage throughout the city to indicate directions, distances, destinations, and parking.
- T2.3** Beautify major corridors/routes in the city and create a cohesive feel between districts.

#### **T3 Encourage more active forms of travel to foster residents' health and wellbeing.**

- T3.1** Formulate a Complete Streets Policy to guide the City's efforts to increase multimodal travel options.
- T3.2** Create a complete sidewalk network in the city that provides connection within and between all neighborhoods.
- T3.3** Gain "Bike Friendly City" status from the League of American Bicyclists by providing cycling accommodations/routes throughout the city.
- T3.4** Collaborate with adjacent communities to create interconnected sidewalk, trail and multi-use path networks.
- T3.5** Evaluate key roadways for road diet/multi-use path/bike lane opportunities.

#### **T4 Improve Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8) and increase access to river frontage along the corridor.**

- T4.1** Celebrate the Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8) corridor as part of Northern Kentucky Riverfront Commons, a Scenic Byway, and a destination for boaters, cyclists and park/trail users.

## PARKS & OPEN SPACE

### VISION

To preserve and enhance the quality of the environment so that our community embodies a “city within a park”.

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

#### **P1 Preserve and enhance quality of open space assets.**

**P1.1** Preserve and enhance the hillside greenbelt and urban tree canopy.

**P1.2** Enhance connectivity of and accessibility to community assets for all users (pedestrian, bicyclists, vehicles) by developing a Safe Routes to Parks strategy.

**P1.3** Enhance community gateways.

#### **P2 Continue to enhance the city parks and recreation facilities for all users.**

**P2.1** Identify and enhance the unique role each park plays in the total experience of Fort Thomas by identifying recreational uses and facilities that are missing from the current supply and collaborate to meet those needs (such as a splash park, zip lines, camping/glamping, ropes course, climbing wall, skate park, and pump track).

**P2.2** Invest in the enhancement and maintenance of existing assets (park infrastructure, structures, etc.)

**P2.3** Build community gardens.

#### **P3 Invest in Tower Park as a regional destination**

**P3.1** Take advantage of Tower Park’s numerous great assets and leverage its potential as a hub of activity.

**P3.2** Maximize the city’s only ball field that is sized for adult recreation leagues and users, recognizing its function as an important community gathering spot.

#### **P4 Provide for a high-quality parks and recreation system in an efficient manner**

**P4.1** Maximize opportunities to foster partnerships and share investment to enhance parks, trails, and gateways in a cost effective way.

**P4.2** Work collectively with the schools and other groups to provide for recreational opportunities in ways that reduce redundancy.

**P4.3** Encourage community stewardship through citizen advisory/volunteer groups and a tool to make it easier to volunteer.

**P4.4** Encourage budget allocation for capital and operation (including maintenance, staffing, programming, and fundraising for capital projects).

#### **P5. Increase residents’ use of park/recreation facilities and programs.**

**P5.1** Provide a stronger social media presence to inform residents of assets and events and invite visitors to Fort Thomas.

**P5.2** Enhance online scheduling tools so park assets (fields, shelters, etc.) can be utilized/scheduled/reserved more easily and efficiently.

## UTILITIES & CITY OWNED FACILITIES

### VISION

To maintain a high level of public utilities and community facilities to meet the needs of both residents and businesses within the city, staying abreast of state of the art advances in technology to provide efficient and effective services.

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

#### **U1 Continue to provide and maintain all essential utility services as economically and sustainably as possible.**

**U1.1** Coordinate closely with local utility companies on construction and reconstruction projects in order to minimize costs, which in turn will keep service disruptions to a minimum.

**U1.2** Ensure all new development/ redevelopment is constructed in an environmentally friendly manner that incorporates the natural environment, reduces the need to construct man-made control measures and does not negatively impact utilization.

**U1.3** Maintain and improve stormwater quality and reduce quantity.

#### **U2 Promote technology within our community so that it parallels the needs of our population.**

**U2.1** Work with neighboring communities and other public and private regional entities to form a 5 Year Smart City Plan.

**U2.2** Become best-in-class with technology.

**U1.3** Evaluate existing city regulations associated with the development of future telecommunication facilities and update as needed.

#### **F1 Maximize the utilization of city owned facilities.**

**F1.1** Identify the priority facilities and the unique features of each facility: City Building, Armory, Mess Hall, and Stables Building (which has the potential to be owned by the City).

**F1.2** Develop a vision for each facility based on its location, strengths and opportunities.

**F1.3** Improve and enhance City website.

## REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

### VISION

To work proactively and collaboratively with our neighboring communities, the County, the State, and other regional partners on areas of shared interest and mutual benefit that improve the quality of life, health, economy, environment and governance of Fort Thomas and the region.

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

#### **R1 Enhance recreational and open space preservation opportunities by working with both public and private sector partners.**

**R1.1** Collaborate with potential partners to create destination recreation activities at Tower Park (e.g. zip lines/ropes course, bike park).

**R1.2** Partner with local schools and possible private partners to provide upgrades to recreational/sports facilities.

**R1.3** Maximize opportunities to foster partnerships and share investment to enhance Sargeant Park.

**R1.4** Collaborate with potential partners to re-open trail loops around the reservoirs.

**R1.5** Collaborate with potential partners to preserve, enhance and properly manage our forested hillside greenbelt.

#### **R2 Improve transportation and access by joining together mutual interest groups.**

**R2.1** Collaborate with potential partners to improve the I-471 & the Grand Avenue corridor.

**R2.2** Collaborate with potential partners to improve the I-471 & the Memorial Parkway corridor.

**R2.3** Work across all levels of government to enhance riverfront connectivity along Mary Engles Highway (KY 8), and support rebirth of the Coney Island Ferry.

#### **R3 Capitalize on gateway improvement projects.**

**R3.1** Collaborate with the County and all of our neighboring communities that share a boundary with Fort Thomas to preserve and enhance our border areas and gateways in ways that benefit each other.

**R3.2** Collaborate with the County on unincorporated areas around the perimeter of the city, such as the end of Crowell Avenue.

#### **R4 Use all necessary resources to develop economic development opportunities.**

**R4.1** Collaborate with potential partners on a Riverfront connection to Tower Park/Midway Historic District.

**R4.2** Connect with potential partners to create a shared vision for the US 27 corridor, with emphasis on economic development and Smart City opportunities.

**R4.3** Collaborate with public and private sector partners (federal, state and local) on our business districts.

**R4.4** Leverage our history and assets to maximize cultural tourism.

## FUNDING & IMPLEMENTATION

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### VISION

To maximize funding opportunities for needs within the City, while providing a systematic approach to implementing the priority elements of the Community Plan.

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

#### **Develop strategies to implement the Community Plan.**

Identify the components of the Community Plan that have the highest priorities for implementation, using input from citizens.

Identify, where possible, the specific city department responsible for taking the lead on priority projects.

Identify potential partners that can help carry out the priority components.

Develop an action plan for implementation to help guide City officials, potential partners, and other public and private entities.

#### **Seek and identify funding sources that are available for the priority components in the Community Plan for both short and long range projects.**

Identify the various public, private and nonprofit funding sources that are available in order to consider the widest range of options possible, with an emphasis on obtaining funds from sources other than local sources.

Create a detailed matrix by topic and funding mechanism to help identify funding priorities.

## Context

### Why We Did the Plan

Fort Thomas last updated its Comprehensive Plan and Parks and Recreation Plan in 2005. Since then, we as a community, region and nation have witnessed numerous changes in trends related to population, housing, consumer buying habits, retailing and economic development. This section provides an overview of the city, current conditions and trends and how these influence planning for our future.

#### Regional Context

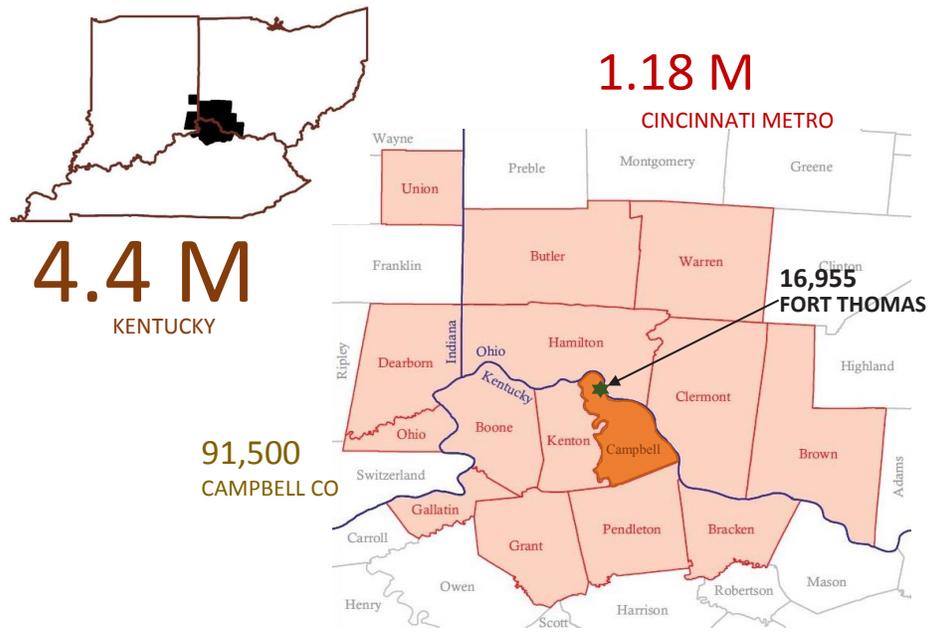
The Greater Cincinnati metro area (of which Fort Thomas is a part) includes portions of three states (Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana) anchored by the city of Cincinnati, Ohio. Formally known as the Cincinnati metropolitan statistical area (MSA), Greater Cincinnati has an estimated population of 2.18 million and is the largest metropolitan area involving Kentucky (27th-largest in the United States). Between 2015 and 2016 the population of the Greater Cincinnati metro area grew 0.1 percent, while median household income grew from \$56,826 to \$60,260, a 6.04 percent increase. By 2030, the metro area population is projected to increase by 5 percent.

The Greater Cincinnati metro area is within 600 miles of twelve major metropolitan areas. The region is known for its diversity. The Ohio Kentucky Indiana Council of Governments (OKI) is the metropolitan planning organization that provides regional planning assistance. Since 2005, growth in the region has been guided by the How Do We Grow From Here? – Strategic Regional Policy Plan (SRPP), which contains a vision for regional vitality, sustainability, and competitiveness, focusing on the land use–transportation connection. In 2014, OKI updated the SRPP to reflect the impact of recent events such as the “Great Recession” and the significant anticipated changes in demographics, particularly as the baby-boom generation ages.

Fort Thomas, located in the northeast corner of Campbell County, Kentucky along the Ohio River, is part of the Northern Kentucky region. Northern Kentucky consists of a tier of three counties (Campbell, Kenton, and Boone) at the extreme northern tip of the state. Northern Kentucky is directly south of and across the Ohio River from Cincinnati.

As a subset of the Greater Cincinnati metro area, Fort Thomas is impacted by the issues and trends facing the region. For example, because of the ease of access within the region via Interstates 71, 75, 471 and 275, the regions labor market and housing market are both defined by the Greater Cincinnati metro area. As a result, Fort Thomas competes with other municipalities in the region for residents and businesses (including their customers and employees).

# CONTEXT- Why We Did the Plan



Part 1, Figure 1. Regional Population Map



Part 1

### HISTORY- Events That Shaped the City

Originally named the District of the Highlands, Fort Thomas was created by a special act of the Kentucky General Assembly in 1867. Although predominantly rural in character at this time, the District of the Highlands nonetheless became the location of summer homes for some of the affluent citizens of Cincinnati and Newport. The boundaries of the District of the Highlands were very similar to the present city limits, though minor annexations and de-annexations have taken place on the borders of the city over the years.

The Fort Thomas military fort (named for General George Thomas, the “Rock of Chickamauga” of Civil War fame) was constructed between 1898 and 1901 on a high elevation in what is now the southern part of the City of Fort Thomas. The Fort Thomas military post was destined to become the social and physical center of the community in the years to come. Indeed, one of the City’s most significant landmarks is a large 100 foot tall stone water tower, built to provide water for the hundreds of troops stationed here during the Spanish-American War.

Another major event that shaped the pattern of development in the city was the dedication of rights-of-way for an electric railway through the city in the late 19th century. The railway from Newport traversed North and South Fort Thomas Avenue. Due to difficulties in acquiring further rights-of-way, the line terminated first at Dixie Place, then at Bivouac Avenue, then at the water tower on the fort, and finally at a point north of Alexandria Pike.

The District of the Highlands incorporated as a city in 1914, and at the same time adopted the name Fort Thomas. In 1920, with the city having grown to approximately 5,000 residents, Fort Thomas became a city of the fourth class.

During the years when the Army Post was activated (until approximately 1948), there was a bustle of activity as troops from Ohio, Indiana, and all sections of Kentucky arrived by train through Newport and Cincinnati. Enlistees were brought directly to Fort Thomas by bus or trolley, lived in the barracks buildings, dined in the Mess Hall, and marched daily on the drill fields (now converted to ball fields).

The Fort was deactivated by the U.S. government in the early 1970s, at which time the City was able to acquire a portion of the government’s holdings with the stipulation that the land would be devoted to “recreational purposes for the citizens of the area.” The remainder of the Fort property was divided among other entities, for example, the Army Reserve Center utilizes some of the remaining buildings, while the Veterans Administration retained and still maintains a hospital/care unit facility.

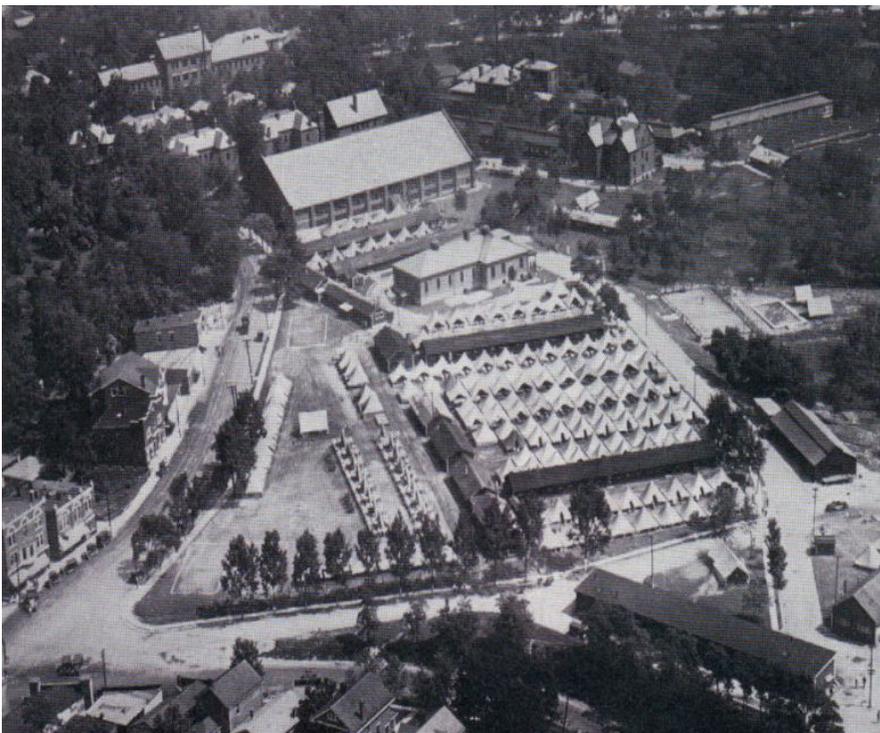


## CONTEXT- History

Over the years, the City has made numerous improvements to the Fort property, now known as Tower Park, including: re-purposing the Armory building, once used for military drills in inclement weather, into a recreational facility and the Mess Hall into a Community Center for meetings and events; and developing outdoor recreational facilities such as tennis courts, ball fields, picnic shelters, walking trails, and a playground.

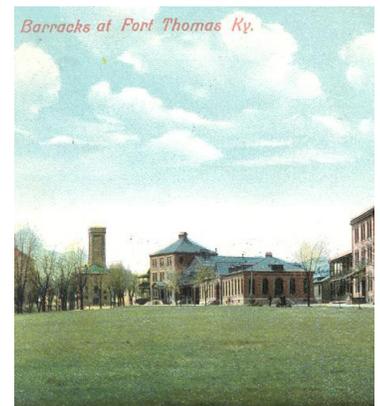
The Fort Thomas military post has had an enormous influence on the development patterns of the City. The Midway Business District located adjacent to the Fort Thomas Military Post was established early on and had the reputation as the soldiers' "amusement strip". In fact, the name Midway comes from an observer's comment that the district reminded him of Chicago's "Midway Carnival" that he had seen at the 1893 World Columbian Exposition.

The City and local residents have taken an active role in preserving the Fort and Midway District as key contributors to the city's history. The Fort Thomas Heritage League worked for many years to get the 61-acre Tower Park property designated as a National Historic District. In addition, the Heritage League raised money for the restoration of the Mess Hall (now the City's Community Center), and the City has been instrumental in the restoration and reoccupation of a number of classic Victorian brick homes and Queen Anne style homes located on the former Fort property that were constructed as living quarters for military officers. Such restoration efforts have been recognized both locally and state-wide: the restoration of Officers' houses on Pearson Street and reoccupation as private homes was presented with an Ida Lee Willis Preservation Award by the Kentucky Heritage Council in 1992, and the Cincinnati Preservation Association in 1994 presented their award "to the Military Commons in recognition of the exterior renovation of the senior officers' homes circa 1892, at the original Fort Thomas Military Fort." All of these homes have been extensively renovated on the inside while a covenant with the City keeps the exteriors in their original condition. All of these homes are on the National Historic Register.



**DISCOVER...** how a military barracks, bare-knuckle boxing ring, the gruesome murder of a pregnant woman, and a local pub contribute to the rich historical heritage of the City of Fort Thomas.

[www.fortthomastour.com](http://www.fortthomastour.com)



### Development Patterns<sup>1</sup>

There are distinct chapters in the city's history, which start in the early 1870s. Each phase of development is clearly defined by population and housing growth with differences in density and character.

#### RURAL ESTATES PHASE

...1850 to 1900 Population grows to 2,000

During this period, the area is known for its rural estates and individual farms. The U.S. Census of 1870 lists 617 citizens and by 1880, the number had reached 814. The Fort Thomas military fort was built at the end of this period.

#### FORT AND RESORT DESTINATION

...1900 to 1930 Population growth from 5,028 to 10,000

The 1920s witnessed a tremendous housing boom in Fort Thomas, during which time the city doubled its population. Most of the development during these years took place along North and South Fort Thomas Avenue and along Memorial Parkway between Tower Hill Road and Military Parkway. The electric railway (which traversed North and South Fort Thomas Avenue and Memorial Parkway) influenced the pattern of growth in the community. While topography had a significant impact on the street layout, the electric railway was more of a catalyst for economic and population growth in the city. Housing construction was of high quality and 28 percent of the city's current housing stock was built during this time.

#### CITY OF BEAUTIFUL HOMES

...1930 to 1950 Population growth from 10,000 to 11,000

The Depression and World War II slowed the growth of the city during the 1930s and 1940s. Many civic improvements, however, were completed during this time utilizing the various federal agencies and programs created as part of the "New Deal." An addition to Highlands School, which later became the senior high school, was constructed in the 1930s using Public Works Administration funds. Works Progress Administration (WPA) and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) personnel were utilized to construct street improvements, sewers, improve public parks, and for a variety of other projects during this period.

<sup>1</sup> Content for this section comes from the 2005 Comprehensive Plan, The City of Fort Thomas History page on the city website, Fort Thomas Background from the City's Welcome to Fort Thomas booklet and Historic Walking Tour of Fort Thomas Kentucky website

<http://www.fortthomastour.com/map.php?axn=set&id=1#long>



Photos from NKYview.com

## CONTEXT- Development Patterns

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### POST WAR BOOM

...1950 to 1970 population growth from 11,000 to 16,300

The years following the end of World War II until 1960 were tremendous growth years for the city, with residential construction occurring at a rapid pace. As suburbanization occurred in many urban areas across the United States, Fort Thomas experienced an increase of over 2,258 housing units during this period, a 75 percent increase from the 2,992 units in 1950. With the continued outward movement of housing construction, Fort Thomas is defined as a first-ring suburb of the city of Cincinnati. In the early 1960s a new shopping area was constructed at the southern end of the city, and in the late 1960s a new city building and YMCA were built.

### CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE

...1970 to 2000 Population fluctuated between 16,000 and 16,500

The 1970s was a time of maturation for Fort Thomas. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, construction of Interstate Routes 471 and 275 was completed. These new highways increased access to all areas of Cincinnati for those living in Northern Kentucky. However, the interstate development also led to a shift in traffic and business development away from the existing commercial centers and toward the emerging interstates and outlying suburbs. In terms of population, the 1970s through the 1990s was a time of slowed, even stagnant population growth, however, the city still experienced development pressures with the construction of over 1,770 housing units. Much of this new development occurred on infill lots or on lots with steeper slopes that were considered unable to be developed in the past, or in apartment buildings along the major streets. During this period, the nation as a whole witnessed the decline in average household size, from an average of 3.33 persons per household in 1960 to 2.62 by 2000. This trend was due to a number of factors including families having fewer children as well as the overall increase in divorce rates, which explains how the population can stay the same while the number of housing units increased.

In spite of a multitude of environmental concerns associated with construction on these slopes (such as slippage, landslides, and excessive water runoff), new development continued to be proposed for these sites. In addition, infill “flag lots” and the use of shared driveways for new developments were common during this time.

During the late 1990s the City undertook a long-range strategic visioning process to update the Comprehensive Plan. One common theme that arose throughout this planning process was the need to reinvest in and revitalize the city’s urban core, specifically its historic business districts which were beginning to show signs of economic and physical decline.

### 2000 TO PRESENT

...Population remains stable with approximately 16,300 residents

Similar to the last three decades of the 20th century, since 2000, the population has been stable. However, in contrast to many other urban communities, housing construction continued despite the housing crisis of 2008. As of 2017, Fort Thomas estimated population is 16,263 and is the 25th largest city in Kentucky. Population density is 2,867.5 people per square mile. Much of the attraction of Fort Thomas has been the excellent school system, which continues to attract families, as well as its location and easy access to downtown Cincinnati.

In 2000, the city created an urban design and streetscape master plan for the center of town. During this same period, the city was designated as a Renaissance Kentucky/Main Street community for its CBD revitalization efforts and received funding to underwrite some of the initial streetscape revitalization costs, specifically a CBD utility relocation project, market study, and new CBD streetscape design and engineering. Subsequently, the City hired a Renaissance / Main Street manager and created the Fort Thomas Renaissance Board pursuant to the requirements of the state Renaissance Kentucky/Main Street program.

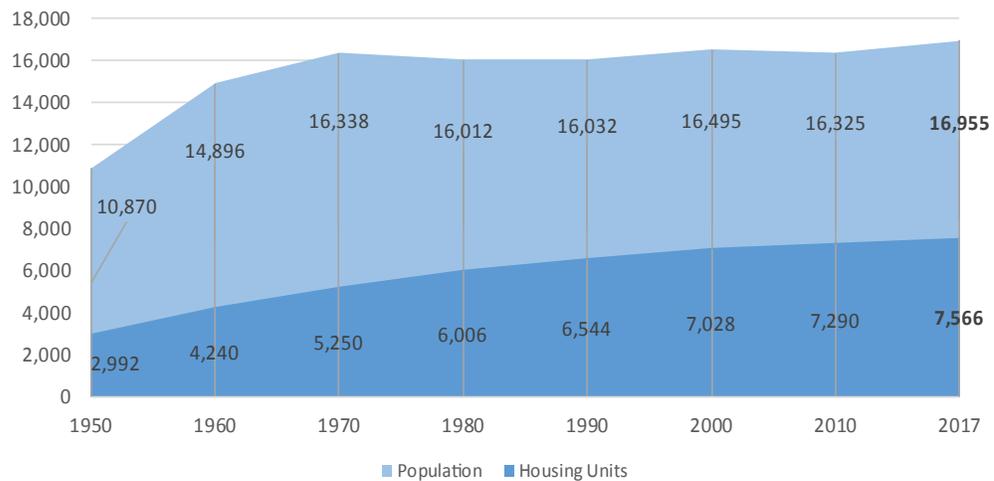
Fort Thomas continues to be a dynamic community committed to improving the quality of life of its residents. The challenge facing residents and city leaders is to maintain and increase the level and quality of public services while protecting the general health, safety and welfare of its residents.

## Demographic Trends

### POPULATION

Fort Thomas' estimated 2017 population is 16,955 with 7,566 housing units. The City's population remained fairly stable between 1970 and 2010 (fluctuating between 16,000 and 16,500 residents), while there was a small but steady increase in the number of housing units. The small fluctuations in population over the last few decades despite new housing units is not surprising due to changes in household size and composition. However, since 2010 there has been a notable 3 percent increase in both population and housing units.

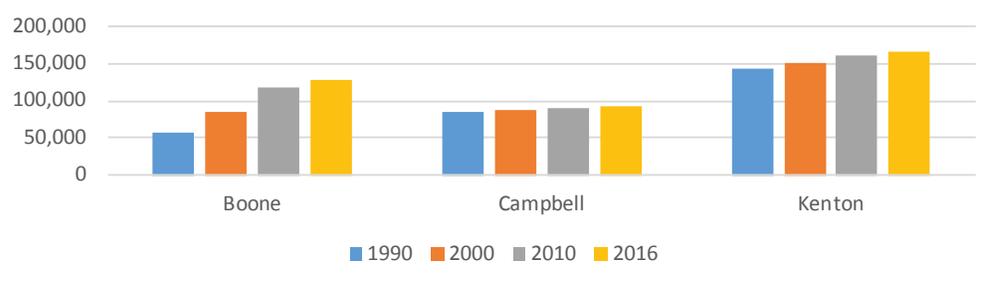
### FORT THOMAS POPULATION AND HOUSING GROWTH



Part 1, Figure 2. Fort Thomas Population and Housing Growth

Fort Thomas is a mature city that is nearly built-out and there is very little room for growth. Likewise, other communities in Campbell County are or have already reached maturity. As a whole, Campbell County's population growth since 2000 was only 4 percent, compared to counties with larger amounts of vacant (and more easily developable) land (9 percent for Kenton County and nearly 50 percent for Boone County).

### TRI-COUNTY POPULATION TRENDS

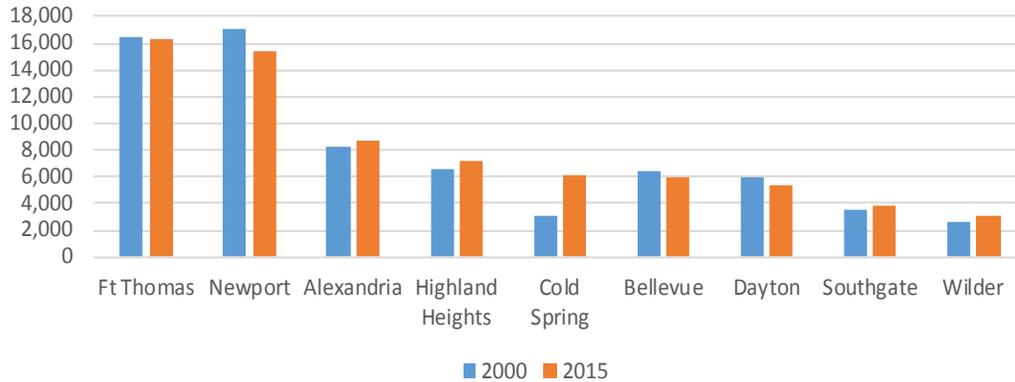


Part 1, Figure 3. Tri-County Population Trends

## CONTEXT- Demographic Trends

Between 2000 and 2015, Campbell County's population grew by 2,859, primarily through the nearly doubling in size of Cold Spring (+3,025) as well as sizable growth in Highland Heights (+598), Alexandria (+449), and Wilder (+439 persons). With the significant reduction in Newport's population since 2000 (-1,620), Fort Thomas has become the largest city in Campbell County.

### POPULATION CHANGES CAMPBELL COUNTY CITIES (2,000+ POP)



Part 1, Figure 4. Population Changes Campbell County Cities

### CAMPBELL COUNTY CITIES POPULATION CHANGE (1980-2015)

Area	Census Years					Change from 2000 to 2015		
	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015	Amount	%	Annual %
Woodlawn	331	308	268	229	252	-16	-6%	-0.40%
Wilder	633	691	2,624	3,035	3,063	439	17%	1.12%
Southgate	2,833	3,266	3,472	3,803	3,821	349	10%	0.67%
Silver Grove	1,260	1,102	1,216	1,102	1,154	-62	-5%	-0.34%
Newport	21,587	18,871	17,048	15,273	15,428	-1,620	-10%	-0.63%
Mentor	169	169	181	193	224	43	24%	1.58%
Melbourne	628	660	467	401	408	-59	-13%	-0.84%
Highland Heights	4,435	4,223	6,554	6,923	7,152	598	9%	0.61%
Dayton	6,079	6,576	5,966	5,338	5,381	-585	-10%	-0.65%
Crestview	528	356	471	475	378	-93	-20%	-1.32%
Cold Spring	2,117	2,886	3,086	5,912	6,111	3,025	98%	6.53%
California	135	130	86	90	121	35	41%	2.71%
Bellevue	7,678	6,997	6,480	5,955	5,921	-559	-9%	-0.58%
Alexandria	4,753	5,592	8,286	8,477	8,735	449	5%	0.36%
Ft Thomas	16,012	16,032	16,495	16,325	16,326	-169	-1%	-0.07%

Part 1, Table 1. Population Changes Campbell County Cities (1980-2015)

Population projections for the Greater Cincinnati region forecast the population to increase 5 percent between 2016 and 2030 (from 2.18 million to 2.29 million). Campbell County's population is projected to grow by 4,160 residents (4.5 percent) and is one of only eight of the region's 15 counties expected to increase in population. At the local level, the city's population is expected to grow by nearly 400 people by 2022 to 17,329 residents. (ESRI)

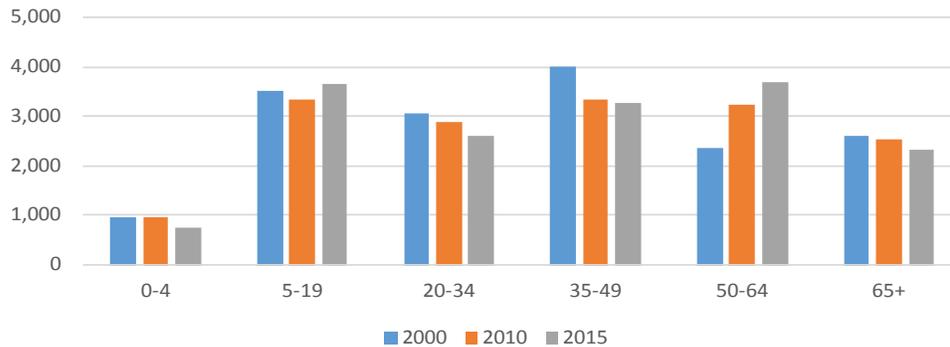
## CONTEXT- Demographic Trends

### AGE

As is the case with many communities, the “baby boomer” generation will continue to cause short-term population increases in successively older age groupings. This creates a wavelike effect in the populations of these age groups. The baby boomer generation, for example, is responsible for the spikes in the population of the 50 to 64 age bracket in 2010 and 2015 for both Campbell County and Fort Thomas. As this generation ages, there will be corresponding increases in demand for services (public and private) geared toward an older population. As this generation continues to leave the workforce, increases in senior service demands are expected. However, unlike Campbell County’s 7 percent increase in the millennial generation (age 20 to 34), and 11 percent in the 65 years and older group, Fort Thomas has seen a decrease in both of these age groups, 14.5 percent and 11 percent respectively.

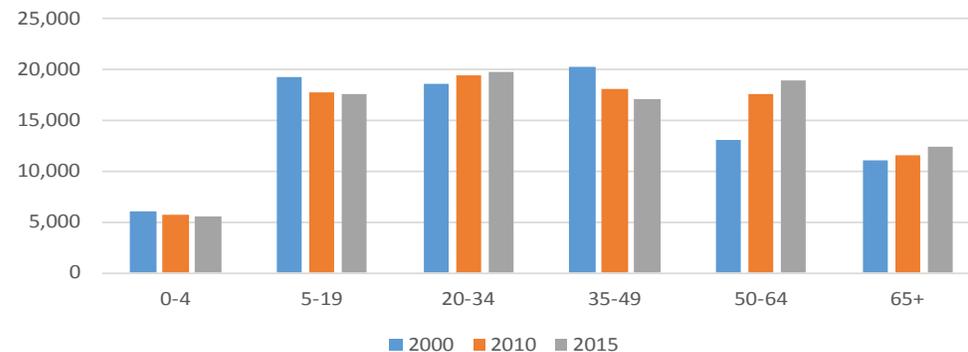
These differing statistics may be due to a shortage of housing to meet the needs of these two age groups. Another factor is likely a result in the millennial generation choosing to live in more urban settings, while families with children (35-49 year olds) often move to communities with good schools. This is evident in Fort Thomas, which has had a 4 percent increase in the number of school-age residents (5 and 19 year olds), while the county as a whole has experienced a 9 percent decrease.

### FORT THOMAS POPULATION BY AGE



Part 1, Figure 5. Fort Thomas Population Change by Age

### CAMPBELL COUNTY POPULATION BY AGE

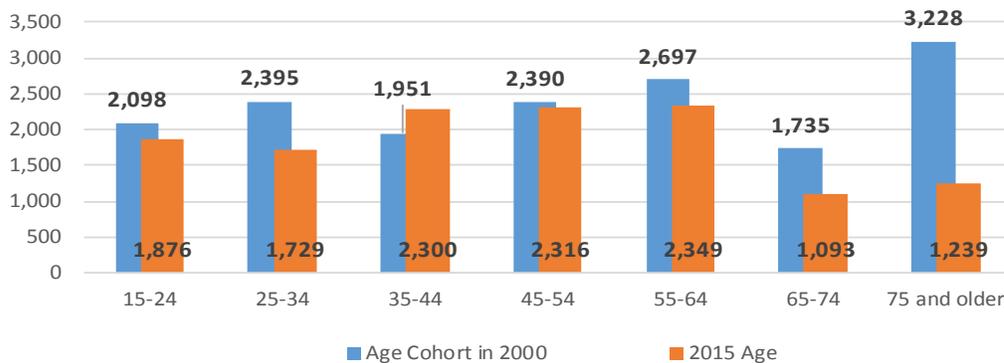


Part 1, Figure 6. Campbell County Population Change by Age

## CONTEXT- Demographic Trends

Another way to look at population change is to examine the change in age cohort group over time. For example, in 2000, there were 2,098 children between 0 and 9 years old living in Fort Thomas. By 2015, that group (now between the ages of 15 and 24) had decreased to 1,876 residents. This is likely due to residents leaving for college. More striking is the 28 percent decline in the number of people who were between 10 and 19 years old in 2000 and who are now between 25 and 34 years old; compared to the 18 percent increase in the number of residents who are now 35-44 years old. In addition, while much of the decline in the number of residents older than 65 is likely due to death, some of these former residents have likely moved out of the city, despite the fact that median age of the population in Fort Thomas (39.2) is slightly older than Campbell County (37.3) and the Cincinnati metropolitan area as a whole (37.5)

### FORT THOMAS POPULATION BY AGE GROUP

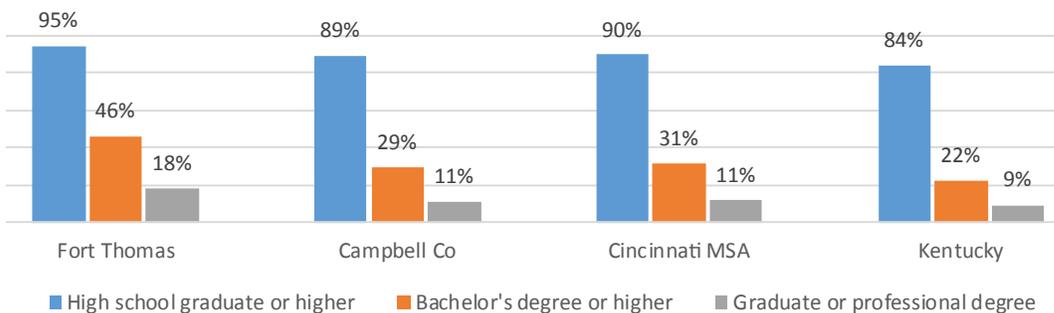


Part 1, Figure 7. Fort Thomas Change in Population by Age Group

### EDUCATION ATTAINMENT

In regard to educational attainment, a significantly higher percentage of adults in Fort Thomas have a college degree than in the other jurisdictions. This compares to the excellent quality of the Fort Thomas Independent School District.

### EDUCATION ATTAINMENT, RESIDENTS 25 YEARS AND OLDER



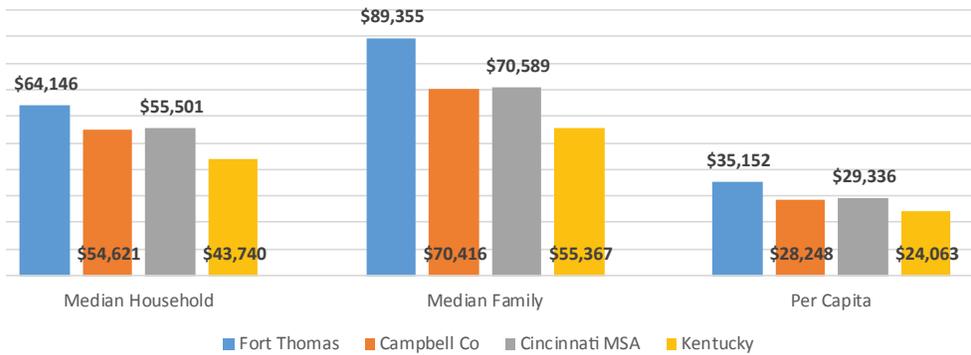
Part 1, Figure 8. Education Attainment, Residents 25 years and Older

## CONTEXT- Demographic Trends

### INCOME

Not surprising given the education attainment, Fort Thomas residents and households have a higher income than the metro area, which is more pronounced for family households (27 percent higher than the Cincinnati MSA). In addition, the median family income grew at a higher rate (41.8 percent between 1999 and 2015) than for other household types and jurisdictions.

### MEDIAN INCOME COMPARISONS (2015)



Part 1, Figure 9. Median Income Comparisons (2015)

However, despite the above median incomes, according to the US Census, 26 percent of households in Fort Thomas pay 30 percent or more of their income toward housing costs. Households that pay more are considered cost burdened because they may have difficulty paying for non-housing needs such as food, clothing, transportation, childcare, and medical care. This is the threshold beyond which housing becomes unaffordable. An affordable house for Fort Thomas residents would be in the range of three times the median income or approximately \$195,000. The median value of an owner-occupied house was \$200,600 in 2017.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> US Department of Housing, and Urban Development, 2012

**HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS**

Fort Thomas has a slightly higher percentage of family households and households with children under 18 than in Campbell County, the Cincinnati Metro area and the state; and a slightly lower percentage of elderly households.

	2011-2015		2011-2015		
	Fort Thomas		Campbell Co	Cincinnati MSA	Kentucky
	#	%			
<b>Total Population</b>	16,326		91,475	2,139,466	4,397,353
<b>Total Households</b>	6,422	100%	35,477	822,679	1,708,499
Family households	4,217	65.70%	63.40%	65.50%	66.50%
Married couples	3,818	51.70%	46.80%	48.30%	48.90%
Nonfamily Households	2,205	34.30%	36.60%	34.50%	33.50%
<b>Household Composition Characteristics</b>					
Householder living alone	1,817	28.30%	29.60%	28.40%	28.10%
Households with one or more people under 18 years	2,132	33.20%	29.90%	32.50%	31.80%
Households with one or more people 60 years and older	2,151	33.50%	34.10%	34.00%	36.20%
Householder 65 years and over living alone	604	9.40%	10.40%	9.80%	10.40%
% of persons living alone		33%	35%	35%	37%
<b>Average Household Size</b>	2.48		2.49	2.54	2.5
SOURCE: American Community Survey 2011-2015					

Part 1, Table 2. Fort Thomas and Regional Household Characteristics

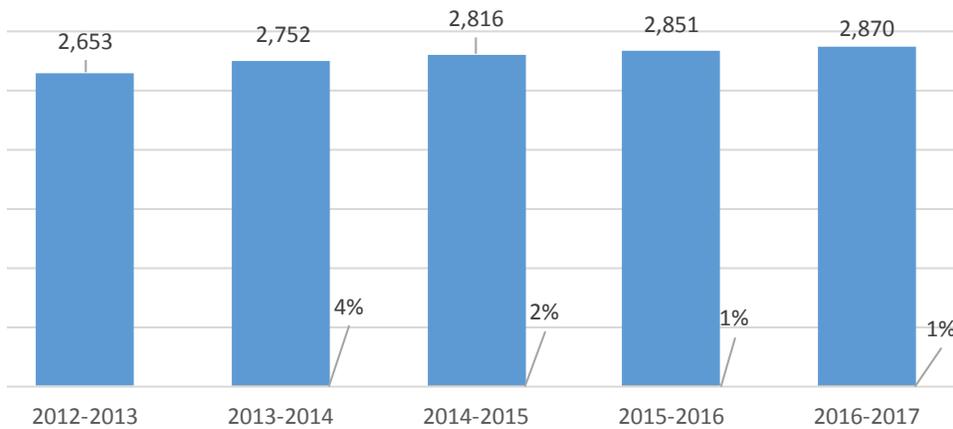
Fort Thomas households share many of the same characteristics as the Cincinnati metropolitan area: 66 percent of households are families where two or more related people live together, while 28 percent are people who live alone. Unlike most other communities, the percentage of households that are families, including married couples, has increased since 2000. This is despite a national trend when family households are declining overall.

## CONTEXT- Demographic Trends

### SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

Annual enrollment for the Fort Thomas Independent School District averaged 2,788 students between the 2012-2013 and 2016-2017 school years. During that time, enrollment has consistently increased though at a slower rate each year, from nearly 4 percent to just 0.65 percent.

### FORT THOMAS INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS ANNUAL AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE AND PERCENTAGE INCREASE

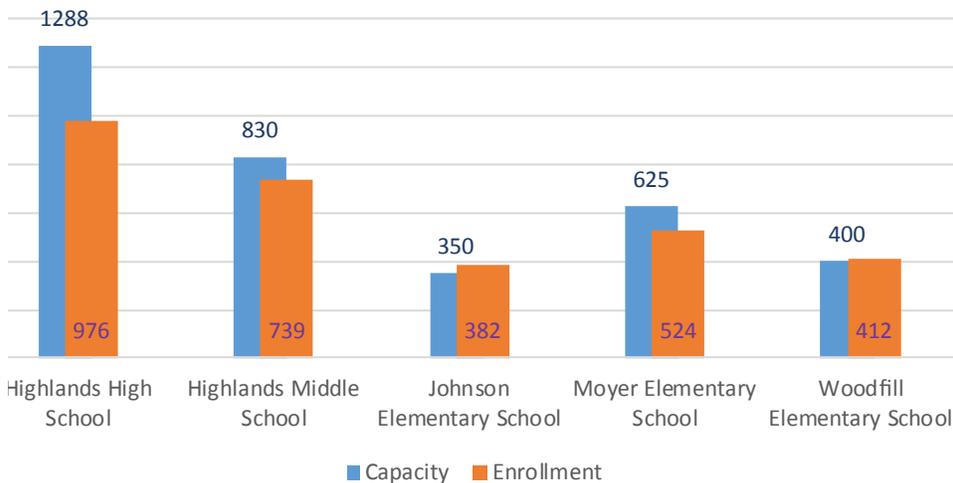


Part 1, Figure 10. Fort Thomas Independent School Average Daily Attendance

### FACILITIES

According to the Fort Thomas Independent Schools District Facilities Plan (8/2017), enrollment at the elementary schools exceeds capacity at both the Woodfill and Johnson buildings. As a result, the facilities plan includes new construction of the Johnson Elementary School, which would increase the student capacity from 350 to 500, plus space for 75 preschool students. Other capital construction priorities include renovations to the Highlands Middle School, upgrades to the Highlands High School and a new multi-purpose support building at the athletic complex at Tower Park.

### FORT THOMAS SCHOOL BUILDINGS - CAPACITY VS ENROLLMENT



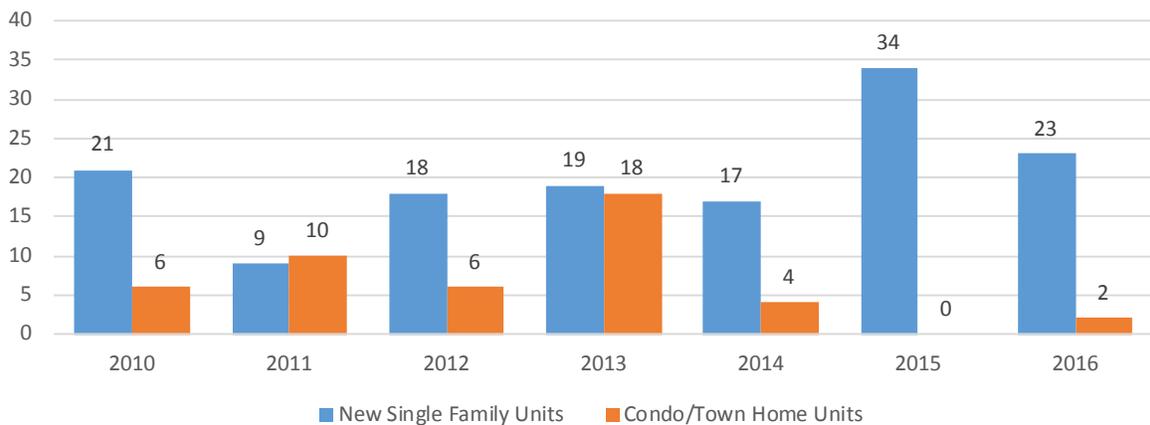
Part 1, Figure 11. Fort Thomas School Buildings- Capacity vs Enrollment

Part 1

### HOUSING UNIT CHARACTERISTICS

According to the US Census Bureau, Fort Thomas experienced an increase of 262 housing units between 2000 and 2010. The City's building permit data provides an indication of single-family and condominium housing growth in the City. Between 2010 and 2016, the City issued permits for 141 single-family homes and 46 condominium/town home units. In addition ESRI estimates the total housing units in Fort Thomas for 2017 at 7,566. The city's newest apartment complex (The Overlook) located at the north end along Memorial Parkway is currently under construction, and as new units become available, will increase the total units in the city.

### SINGLE-FAMILY & CONDO, NEW CONSTRUCTION BUILDING PERMITS



Part 1, Figure 12. Single-family and Condo New Construction Building Permits

New housing construction has continued to occur, but the rate of new construction has declined since 1970 – from about 75 units per year in the 1970s to about 26 units per year in the 2000s. Between 2013 and 2016 the annual average has been 23 single-family houses and about six condo/town homes.

## CONTEXT- Demographic Trends

Based on the census data, there has been an increase in the vacancy rate since 2000, which is similar to most other communities due to the lingering effects of the housing crisis.

### TOTAL HOUSING UNITS (2000-2017)

	Census 2000		Census 2010		2017	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Total Housing Units	7,028	100%	7,290	100%	7,566	100%
Vacant	286	4.1%	503	6.9%	598	7.9%
Occupied	6,742	95.9%	6,787	93.1%	6,968	92.1%
Owner*	4,709	69.8%	4,695	69.2%	4,630	61.2%
Renter*	2,033	30.2%	2,092	30.8%	2,338	30.9%

Source: US Census 2000, 2010; 2017 - ESRI data

Part 1, Table 3. Fort Thomas Total Housing Units (2000-2017)

### FORT THOMAS & REGIONAL TOTAL HOUSING UNITS (2015)

	Fort Thomas		Campbell Co	Cincinnati MSA	Kentucky
	#	%			
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	7,108	100%	100%	100%	100%
Vacant	686	9.7%	10.8%	10.3%	12.1%
Occupied Units	6,422	90.3%	89.2%	89.7%	87.9%
Owner-occupied Units	4,630	72.1%	68.7%	66.4%	67.2%
Renter-occupied Units	1,792	27.9%	31.3%	33.6%	32.8%
Median Value of Owner Occupied Houses	\$192,700		\$150,400	\$153,400	\$123,200
Median Gross Monthly Rent	\$755		\$748	\$751	\$675

SOURCE: US Census, 2015 ACS \*Caution, data has a high margin of error.

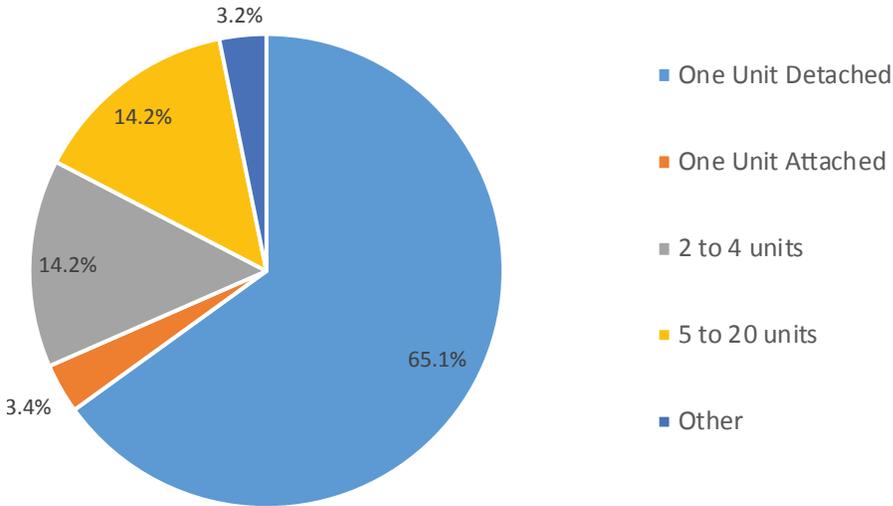
Part 1, Table 4. Fort Thomas and Regional Total Housing Units

Fort Thomas has a lower vacancy rate and a higher owner-occupancy rate than Campbell County, the Cincinnati Metro area and the state. In addition, the median value of owner-occupied housing is significantly higher in Fort Thomas than for the metro area and state, while the gross monthly rent is only slightly higher than in the metro area.

## CONTEXT- Demographic Trends

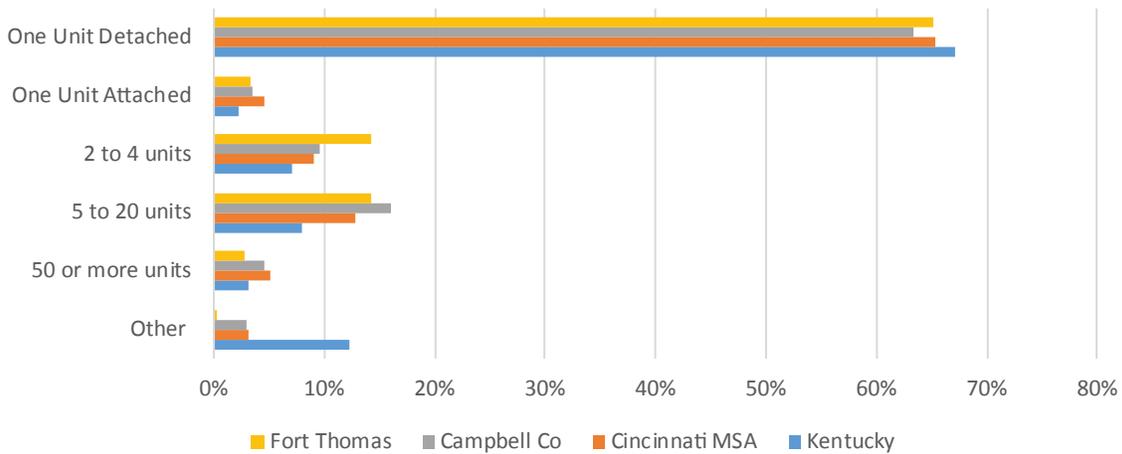
Single-family homes comprise nearly 2/3s of the units in Fort Thomas, similar to other jurisdictions, but the City has a higher percentage of duplexes, triplexes and quads than in the other jurisdictions.

### FORT THOMAS HOUSING TYPES



Part 1, Figure 13. Fort Thomas Housing Units by Type

### COMPARISON OF DWELLING UNIT TYPES (2015)



Part 1, Figure 14. Fort Thomas and Region Comparison of Dwelling Types (2015)

# CONTEXT- Demographic Trends

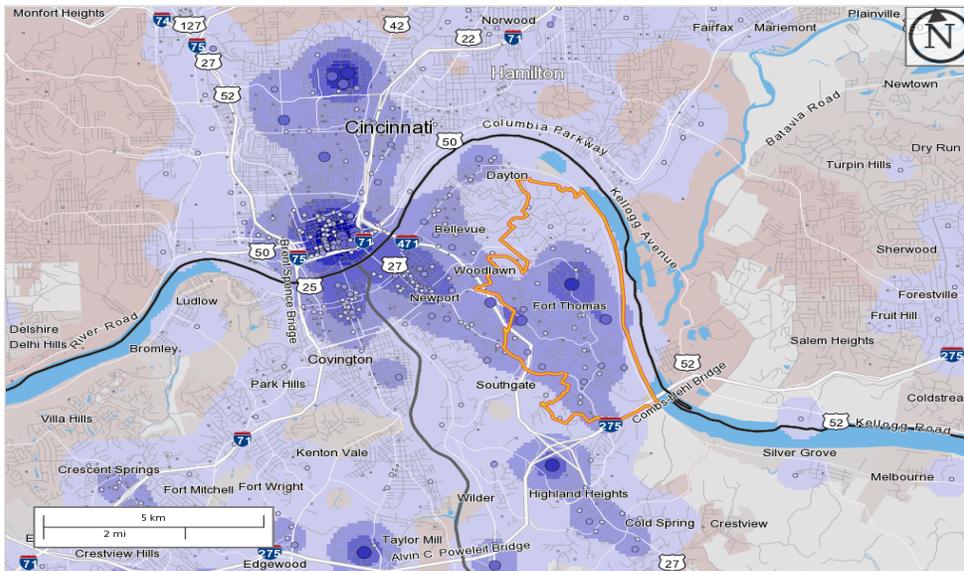
## NEIGHBORHOOD WALK SCORE

A walkable neighborhood is one that is designed with streets for all types of transportation, and has amenities such as shops, schools, parks and public spaces within a walkable distance. Based on the Walk Score website algorithm, Fort Thomas, at its center, is considered “Somewhat Walkable” with a score of 51 out of 100, and noted that some errands can be accomplished on foot.

## ECONOMY

Fort Thomas is predominately a bedroom community and most residents commute elsewhere for their job. Of the 7,874 residents in Fort Thomas employed, only 6.4 percent (505 in 2015) are employed within the City limits, and the other 7,369 residents work elsewhere.

Conversely, there are 3,691 primary jobs at public and private establishments in Fort Thomas, and only 13.7 percent of those jobs are held by residents. Over 54 percent of the jobs in Fort Thomas are in the Health Care industry, the next highest percentage (11 percent) are in Educational Services, followed by Accommodations and Food Services (5.1 percent), Retail Trade (4.9 percent) and Other Services (4.3 percent). In addition, 24 percent of the jobs in Fort Thomas are held by workers who are 55 years or older and could retire in 10 years.



Map Legend

Job Density [Jobs/Sq. Mile]	Job Count [Jobs/Census Block]
■ 5 - 48	• 1 - 2
■ 49 - 180	• 3 - 10
■ 181 - 399	• 11 - 33
■ 400 - 705	• 34 - 78
■ 706 - 1,100	• 79 - 153
	<b>Selection Areas</b>
	★ Analysis Selection

Part 1, Figure 15. Cincinnati Area Job Density and Job Count Map

**Land Use Characteristics**

Not surprising, 66 percent of the land area in the city is devoted to residential development, while 15 percent is public/semi public use, including parks and protected open space. Less than 2 percent is occupied by business uses, of which approximately 50 percent is devoted to retail. The land use summary indicates that there are about 540 acres of vacant land; 94 percent is zoned residential and only about 32 vacant acres are zoned for business use. However, very little of the residentially zoned vacant land is suitable for development – most is located on steep slopes (20%+) and zoned for R1AA development (with a one-acre minimum lot size). In contrast, only 12 acres of vacant land is zoned for nonresidential development mostly in the Professional Office District (3.7 acres) and the Highway Commercial District (3.3 acres).

Part 1

Land Use	Acres	%
<b>Residential</b>	<b>2,088</b>	<b>57%</b>
Single Family	1,831	50%
2-Family	62	2%
Multi-Family	194	5%
<b>Business</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>2%</b>
Office	27	1%
Mixed-Use	6	0%
Retail / Services	45	1%
<b>Public/-Semi-Public</b>	<b>467</b>	<b>13%</b>
Parks / Recreation / Open Space	222	6%
Public / Institutional (Public, Churches, Hospital, Nursing Home)	219	6%
School	27	1%
<b>Public Right-of-way</b>	<b>472</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>Total Developed Land</b>	<b>3,105</b>	<b>85%</b>
<b>Vacant</b>		
Zoned Residential	511	14%
Zoned Business	32	1%
<b>Total Vacant Land</b>	<b>543</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Total Area</b>	<b>3,648</b>	<b>100%</b>

Part 1, Table 5. Fort Thomas Existing Land Use



### **PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES**

There are over 220 acres in the city devoted to park land, recreation facilities and open space. Much of this is city-owned land, including five park facilities and six fields that are well distributed throughout the community. These areas are identified as “Recreation” on the Existing Land Use Map, which generally reflects the boundaries of the city’s park properties. Additional recreation facilities are provided by quasi-private entities such as the Highland Country Club, Fort Thomas Swim Club, and YMCA.

### **INFILL AND REDEVELOPMENT**

Fort Thomas has very little greenfield land left for development, and much of the remaining land is located on steep hillsides where development is restricted. Much of what makes Fort Thomas a highly desirable place to live is our excellent school system. However, in order to remain a desirable community where people choose to live and invest in, we have to stay up to date and responsive to current trends in housing demand, retail offerings, public amenities including our park and leisure time activities, technology, etc.

It is often believed that new construction (e.g. new investment) is needed to continue to create an increasing tax base that can support the services we desire. In some cases that means redeveloping older structures that no longer meet contemporary needs – whether from a housing standpoint, offices, retail or restaurants. In other cases that means developing on the small vacant (and often scattered) lots that remain. And in still other locations it is necessary to concentrate and coordinate public investments in public gathering spaces, recreational amenities, road and streetscape improvements with private investment in buildings.

### Natural Features

#### TOPOGRAPHY AND DRAINAGE

As noted in the 2005 Comprehensive Plan, the rugged topography of Fort Thomas has had a decided impact upon the development of the city, with steep slopes occurring along most of the hillsides. Elevations range from 455 feet at the Ohio River to over 850 feet on the tops of the ridges. The majority of the development of the community has taken place along the tops of these ridges. The remaining land has, for the most part, been left undeveloped.

There are two major ridges in Fort Thomas, see **Part 1, Figure 17**. Topographic Map. The northernmost ridge follows N Fort Thomas Avenue from Dixie Place to Gregory Lane with a westward extension from N Fort Thomas Avenue occurring along the route of Rossford Avenue. The other major ridge exists along either side of North and South Fort Thomas Avenue and Memorial Parkway to the southern city limits. A continuation of this ridge projects from Fort Thomas Avenue in a westerly direction along the route of Highland Avenue.

Several valleys project into the center of the city. The most noticeable are those that follow Covert Run Pike, Waterworks Road, Tower Hill Road, and River Road. Several other valleys extend from Grand Avenue toward the center of the city and from Mary Ingles Highway toward the middle of Fort Thomas. Many of these valleys contain slopes of 30%. Nearly all of the remaining vacant land in Fort Thomas has slopes of 20% or more. The high bluff along the eastern boundary of the city acts as a natural levee protecting the City of Fort Thomas from flooding by the Ohio River.

For the most part, surface drainage is accomplished in the city through the natural valleys that occur here. Generally speaking, the area east of North and South Fort Thomas Avenue drains directly into the Ohio River. The area south of Highland Avenue and west of S Fort Thomas Avenue drains toward Three Mile Creek. The remaining area north of Highland Avenue drains toward Newport.

#### NATURAL FEATURES

As noted earlier, the topography has had a significant influence on the street and neighborhood development pattern. In addition, there is very little vacant land remaining and most of it is along hillsides and impacted by steep slopes. The City adopted Hillside Development Regulations to reduce the development pressure on these steep slopes, in order to maintain the integrity of the natural environment and the safety of persons and property within the city.



Part 1, Figure 17. Fort Thomas Topographic Map

**TREE CANOPY**

Fort Thomas is also known for its extensive tree canopy. Mature trees line many of the neighborhood streets and main corridors, and nearly all of the undeveloped hillsides are heavily wooded. The 2014 Urban Tree Canopy Study included an assessment of tree canopy in Northern Kentucky, and Fort Thomas has a 57 percent tree canopy cover. While this is the same as the overall average for Campbell County, it is much higher than the percentage for neighboring communities, such as Newport (33%), Bellevue (36%) and Dayton (38%).

# Planning Process

## How We Created the Plan

The Fort Thomas Community Plan (FTCP) combines the state-required update of the city's comprehensive plan, with an updated Parks and Recreation Plan, and an intentional focus on coordinating with neighboring communities for mutual benefit, including transforming Alexandria Pike (US 27) into a regional "Smart Corridor."

The process was structured with the following principles and outcomes in mind:

**Keep the "big picture" in the forefront.**

A community is like an organism and all the parts must work together in order to sustain the City's future. The Community Plan works to align city programs, projects and government in a synergistic relationship.

**Establish a sound basis in fact for decisions.**

The qualitative data incorporated reviewed and analyzed as part of the planning process allows policies and strategies to be based on fact.

**Coordinate local decision-making.**

Outlining specific goals in the Community Plan will enable local decision makers to align around a city-wide vision and ensure that all projects are supported by the greater community.

**Involve a broad array of interests in discussions about the future.**

Our Community Plan incorporated many different voices and a variety of interests to ensure that recommendations are well-rounded and all-inclusive.

**Build an informed constituency.**

The public process facilitated during the creation of our Community Plan should build a strong constituency for the ideas and recommendations of the plan. This ensures that development decisions based firmly in the goals of the Plan are supported by a large portion of the community stakeholders.

### Process

#### VISIONING EXERCISE- DECEMBER 2016

The City realized the need to develop a foundation for building the next Comprehensive Plan update, Parks and Recreation Plan update, and developing policies for pedestrian and bicycle improvements.

As a built-out community, surrounded by other municipalities with shared interests, and as a bedroom community for major Cincinnati metro employees, we realized the need to work with neighboring communities and county and state agencies to address some of the issues.

Observations and ideas were collected during three stakeholder meetings held between October and November 2016.

In December 2016, the Fort Thomas Vision report was distributed.

#### COMMUNITY PLAN INITIATION- SEPTEMBER 2017

The outcome of the visioning exercise was the administration/city council's decision to embark on a community plan. The City established a Technical Planning Team to provide guidance and a strategic framework to lead the planning process. Professionals from CT Consultants and Human Nature (many of whom are residents of Fort Thomas) were retained. From the start, Fort Thomas City Council and staff were an integral part of the development of the plan.

The planning process was organized around six different topics, each the focus of a separate committee:

- » Land Use and Zoning
- » Parks and Recreation
- » Transportation and Connectivity
- » Public Utilities and City Owned Facilities
- » Regional Collaboration and Partnerships
- » Funding and Implementation

Six committees were created to examine each topic in depth. Each committee was deliberately structured to include an elected official and appointed commission member as co-chairs with city staff and planning team support. Additional committee members included interested residents, business owners and representatives from key stakeholders such as Fort Thomas Independent Schools, Campbell County, and Northern Kentucky University.



### The process was divided into three phases:

- » Awareness Phase
- » Exploration phase
- » Implementing the Vision phase

The multiple committee structure provided the opportunity to delve deeply into developing concrete park improvement plans, brainstorming reuse strategies for various public facilities and hammering out potential redevelopment opportunities to strengthen the city's traditional business districts, all with the overarching goal of building on the city's history and existing development patterns.

In addition, the pro-active nature of coordinating with our neighbors for mutual benefit helped to build partnerships and expand our understanding of how best to work together. The committees gained invaluable insights from engaging such a broad range of stakeholders, regional partners and valuable subject matter experts.

### **AWARENESS PHASE- SEPTEMBER 2017 THROUGH JANUARY 2018**

The Awareness Phase began with a public meeting held on September 25 inviting interested residents to attend, learn about the process and sign up for a committee.

During the Awareness Phase the technical team and committees accomplished the following:

- » Created a website to post the work of the committee, a calendar of meetings, and existing policy documents such as the 2016 Visioning Report, relevant city plans and the Fort Thomas zoning ordinance.
- » Summary/Audit of 2005 Plan
- » SWOT Analysis
- » Gathered Best Practices information
- » Created a six part community survey
- » Posted news of the committees' work on Fort Thomas Matters blog

The Awareness Phase wrapped up on January 24, 2018 with a public presentation of the committees' finding and an open house style community forum with large informative displays with separate stations for each committee.

### **EXPLORATION PHASE- FEBRUARY THROUGH JUNE 2018**

During the Exploration Phase each committee spent considerable time investigating and discussing the available options. The format of these gatherings included:

- » Committee meetings
- » Walking tours, site visits
- » Meetings with regional representatives and other stakeholders
- » Presentations by subject matter experts



## PLANNING- Process

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On June 25, 2018, a second public forum was held to present the various options and possibilities explored during the previous months. A key part of the public forum was the opportunity for attendees to comment on the numerous diagrams and plans, and to provide input on specific projects and potential funding sources.

### IMPLEMENTING THE VISION PHASE- JULY THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2018

- » Goals and Objectives adopted by the Planning Commission
- » Planning Commission presentation on September 26, 2018.

### ADOPTION PROCESS

According to KRS 100.197, the Planning Commission is responsible for the adoption of the Planning Elements in the Plan. The Planning Commission held its requisite public hearing on October 17, 2018 at the Mess Hall. Prior to the start of the public hearing, residents were invited to attend an open house and presentation of the Community Plan. The format of the open house was similar to the public forums held in January and June and included all of previously prepared display boards.

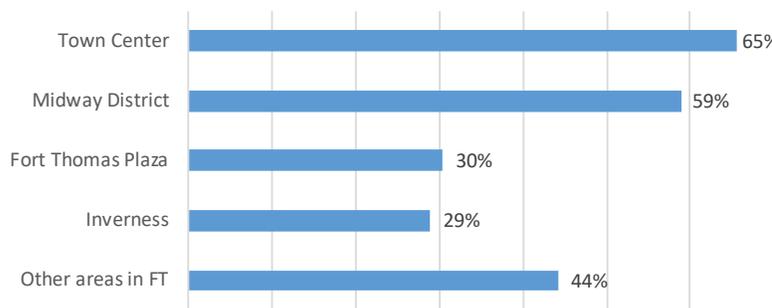
The Planning Commission further reviewed and discussed the Community Plan at its subsequent meetings in November and December, formally adopting the Plan at its December 19, 2018 meeting.

## Input from Public Engagement Activities

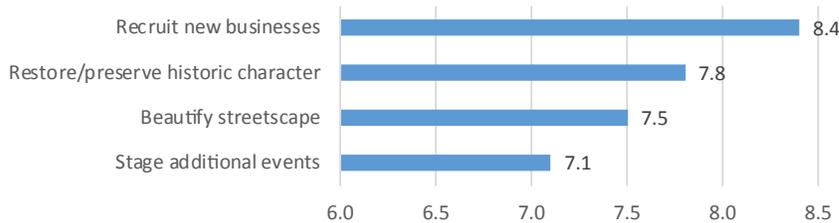
The online survey, segmented into six parts, one for each committee, was created and shared with the community as a whole on the City of Fort Thomas website and paper copies of the survey were available at the City Building. The survey was conducted between December 2017 and July 2018 and elicited comments from over 900 residents. While the survey was open to all, and therefore the results should not be taken as statistical certainty, there were some interesting findings that informed the decisions made by each of the committees.

### LAND USE AND ZONING SURVEY

In total 917 people completed the land use and zoning survey. A majority of respondents visit the two primary retail districts (Town Center District and Midway District) at least monthly.



The four highest ranking activities that the City should undertake to enhance the business districts include:



The majority believe more parking is needed, especially in the Midway District and in the Town Center District.

### Business Districts in Most Need of Enhancement...

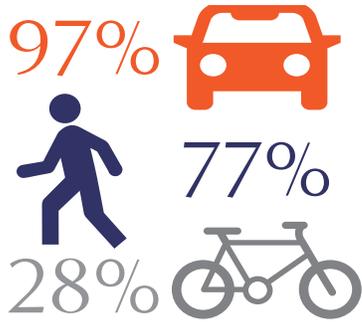
1. Town Center
2. Midway District
3. Fort Thomas Plaza

### Type of Businesses Desired...

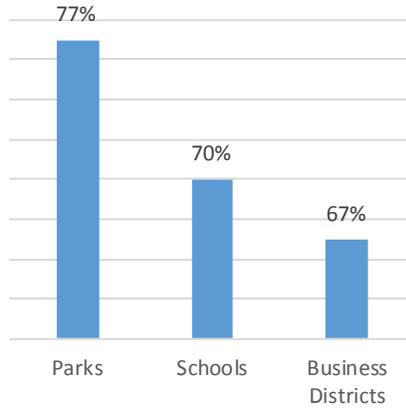
1. Sit-down restaurant
2. Fast-casual restaurant
3. Bakery

## TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTIVITY SURVEY

### How do Fort Thomas residents travel?



### Residents' Top Destinations in the City



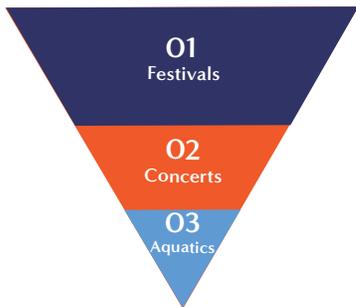
Part 1

## PARKS AND OPEN SPACE SURVEY

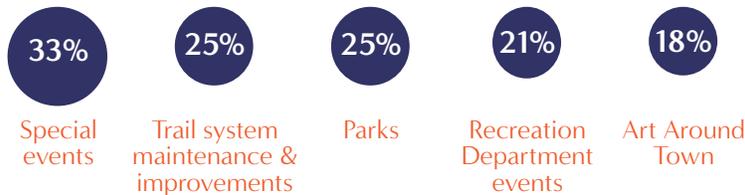
### Top 5 Amenities that Draw Residents to Parks Outside of Fort Thomas



### Top 3 Suggested Park Improvements



### Residents are willing to volunteer for:

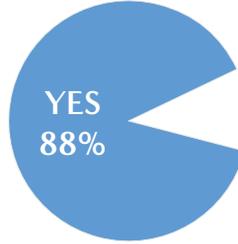


## UTILITIES AND CITY OWNED FACILITIES SURVEY

Do you feel that city wide WiFi should be a priority?



Do you feel that your residence/business is adequately serviced by utilities?



I love the plans to make the city buildings more engaging. It looks dated and we need ways to bring people together for events that support city development.

GREAT things are happening over at Tower Park.

I would like to see the armory available for more general use. It would be nice to bring back activities for tweens and teens.

Part 1

## REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS SURVEY

Residents want to see collaboration on...

58% Route 8/Ohio River Road

53% Destination Facilities

48% Tower Park/Midway

33% River Road



## FUNDING AND IMPLEMENTATION SURVEY

Top 3 Preferred Funding Methods...

78% Grants

54% User Fees

20% Property Tax Increase





# Moving Forward

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## Ways to Use the Plan

This Community Plan reflects the wide variety of land uses and public infrastructure within the city and serves as the vision for future development and public investment in Fort Thomas. It should be used by the City Administration when discussing projects with private developers and by the City Planning Commission as a guide for refining the City's zoning codes and ordinances. Each new Council and staff person should be familiar with the Plan recommendations and community goals defined herein.

This Plan is applicable to every project in Fort Thomas. In fact, the vision and goals set by the community cannot be fully accomplished unless they guide new projects, new policy, and new programs city-wide. The ability of the City and other development institutions (county, educational, health, and federal) to accomplish this community vision is directly linked to the ultimate success of Fort Thomas. It is the responsibility of all involved to ensure future projects are consistent with the intent of the Plan.

- » Guides future decisions for rezoning, plan approval.
- » Helps identify future capital improvements for fiscal planning.
- » Provides predictability for current residents and businesses.
- » Helps private property owners make decisions about investments in the community.



# PART 2

## PLANNING ELEMENTS

**Part 2: Planning Elements** is the core component of this plan. It spells out our goals and policies for each of the major topic areas. The six chapters in Part 2 include specific recommendations for projects, programs and administrative issues that are important to the on-going planning agenda of the City.

**Chapter 2.1 Land Use, Urban Design & Economic Development** focuses on the types of development and redevelopment that are acceptable for Fort Thomas, the preservation of trees and hillside areas, the current economy and future economic development. **L**

**Chapter 2.2 Transportation & Connectivity Plan** focuses on the condition and safety of existing streets, pedestrian walkways, and bicycle facilities, Transit Authority of Northern Kentucky bus route plans, future Kentucky Transportation Cabinet corridor plans, and additional connectivity needs for parks, schools, and the river. **T**

**Chapter 2.3 Parks & Open Space Plan** focuses on the existing parks, seeking community input for improvements, researching trends and best practices, and exploring opportunities to improve connectivity between community assets. **P**

**Chapter 2.4 Utilities & City Owned Facilities Plan** focuses on promoting all essential utility services economically, evaluating the development of future telecommunication facilities, providing technology that parallels the needs of the community, and determining if existing city-owned buildings meet the needs of the City. **U**

**Chapter 2.5 Regional Partnerships & Collaboration** focuses on inter-local agreements for development, Northern Kentucky bike trail with other educational/recreational amenities, archaeological sites, and sustainability initiatives. **R**

**Chapter 2.6 Focus Area** is devoted to four select areas of the city and provides the mechanism to incorporate the topical recommendations from the various committees into a consolidated master plan for each specific area. The areas include the Town Center area, the Midway/Tower Park area, Alexandria Pike (US 27) Corridor, and the Riverfront Greenway. **F**



### CHAPTER STRUCTURE

Chapters 2.1 through 2.5 represent the work of the individual committees and highlight the work that was integral to developing each topic's goals and objectives. To provide consistency in Part 2, each of these chapters includes the following components:

- » Vision, Goals, and Objectives
- » Summary map
- » Summary of existing conditions,
- » Highlights of the SWOT analysis: (S) strengths, (W) weaknesses, (O) opportunities, and (T) threats,
- » Overview of survey responses, and
- » Recommendations for achieving the topic's goals and objectives.

Chapter 2.6 is unique in that it brings together the various strategies that relate to land use, parks, transportation, parks and open space, utilities, city buildings and regional partnerships that pertain to the four key focus areas of the city so that a holistic plan is created for each area.

Each chapter is written to be a stand-alone document that provides sufficient information to explain the policies and strategies. Not surprising, there are a number of instances where policies and strategies apply to more than one topic area. For example, providing trails and bike path improvements are discussed in Chapter 2.2 Transportation, Chapter 2.3 Parks and Open Space, and Chapter 2.5 Regional Partnerships. Whenever this occurs, cross-references are provided as follows:

#### Reference List

- L** Chapter 2.1  
Land Use
- T** Chapter 2.2  
Transportation and Connectivity
- P** Chapter 2.3  
Parks and Open Space
- U** Chapter 2.4  
Utilities and City Owned Facilities
- R** Chapter 2.5  
Regional Partners
- F** Chapter 2.6  
Focus Area Plans

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER GOALS

CHAPTER 2.1 Land Use & Zoning	CHAPTER 2.2 Transportation & Connectivity	CHAPTER 2.3 Parks & Open Space	CHAPTER 2.4 Utilities & City Owned Facilities
<p><b>L1</b> Enhance our quality of life.</p> <p><b>L2</b> Maintain and improve our housing stock and neighborhoods.</p> <p><b>L3</b> Strengthen business districts and economic wellbeing.</p> <p><b>L4</b> Protect our natural resources.</p>	<p><b>T1</b> Improve and maintain our infrastructure so residents of all ages can move safely throughout Fort Thomas.</p> <p><b>T2</b> Make it easy and enticing to move about Fort Thomas.</p> <p><b>T3</b> Encourage more active forms of travel to foster residents’ health and wellbeing.</p> <p><b>T4</b> Improve Mary Ingels Highway (KY 8) and increase access to river frontage along the corridor.</p>	<p><b>P1</b> Preserve and enhance quality of open space assets.</p> <p><b>P2</b> Continue to enhance the city parks and recreation facilities for all users.</p> <p><b>P3</b> Invest in Tower Park as a regional destination</p> <p><b>P4</b> Provide for a high-quality parks and recreation system in an efficient manner.</p> <p><b>P5.</b> Increase residents’ use of park/recreation facilities and programs.</p>	<p><b>U1</b> Continue to provide and maintain all essential utility services as economically and sustainably as possible.</p> <p><b>U2</b> Promote technology within our community so that it parallels the needs of our population.</p> <p><b>F1</b> Maximize the utilization of city owned facilities.</p>

CHAPTER 2.5  
Regional Partnerships & Collaboration

<p><b>R1</b> Enhance recreational and open space preservation opportunities by working with both public and private sector partners.</p> <p><b>R2</b> Improve transportation and access by joining together mutual interest groups.</p> <p><b>R3</b> Capitalize on gateway improvement projects.</p> <p><b>R4</b> Use all necessary resources to develop economic development opportunities.</p>
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CHAPTER 2.6  
Focus Area Plans

<p>Town Center and its vicinity</p> <p>Midway/Tower Park and its vicinity</p> <p>Alexandria Pike (US 27) Corridor</p> <p>Riverfront Greenway</p>
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## CHAPTER 2.1

# LAND USE, URBAN DESIGN, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

City planning includes examining the land use and interrelationship patterns of our community (residential neighborhoods, business districts and employment centers) and determining the most appropriate, economic, feasible and desirable location, arrangement, character and density of future uses. And likewise, discouraging development of areas that are unsuitable for development. For the most part, this chapter focuses on land uses related to how private property owners develop, maintain and invest in their properties.

Generally, communities seek new development and growth as a way to maintain an adequate tax base. Yet, how much land is developable dictates whether the community is geared toward new development, infill or redevelopment. As developable land in Fort Thomas becomes scarce with little ability to expand our current borders, we must refine our expectations for future investment to identify suitable areas for infill development and areas where redevelopment is desirable.

In most cases, infill and redevelopment will take place only to the extent that a market exists for such development of private property. This chapter discusses policies and recommendations that are primarily related to regulations and incentives to foster and guide the development and use of private property. Other aspects related to use of public land, such as park and recreation facilities, transportation, and public services /community facilities are discussed in subsequent chapters.

This chapter includes an overview of existing land uses, as well as summaries of the land use committee's SWOT Analyses and the Community Survey results.

Using all of the insights gained from the public input as well as discussions among the Land Use and Zoning committee, the Plan's Land Use goals and objectives are divided into four categories:

- » Quality of Life
- » Residential and Neighborhoods
- » Commercial, Retail and Economic Development
- » Environmental Preservation

Each of these categories is examined in detail in the rest of this Chapter.



## LAND USE & ZONING

### VISION

To ensure that Fort Thomas continues to be an attractive, desirable and family-friendly city with a park-like setting where people choose to live, work and play, and where businesses choose to do business and invest in our community.

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

#### L1 Enhance our quality of life.

- L1.1 Continue to be a good place to raise a family, characterized by good schools and safe neighborhoods.
- L1.2 Promote neighborhoods and business districts that foster walking, biking, social interaction and sense of community.
- L1.3 Foster investments that retain our history and distinct character.
- L1.4 Enhance the natural physical beauty of our city provided by the Ohio River, mature trees, wooded hillsides, and scenic views.

#### L2 Maintain and improve our housing stock and neighborhoods.

- L2.1 Continue to require regular housing and property maintenance to ensure our housing stock and neighborhoods retain their viability and desirability.
- L2.2 Promote continued investments in existing housing by making it easier to expand, provided expansions are compatible with the neighborhood.
- L2.3 Encourage a variety of housing types in select locations that meet the needs of residents, including older residents who desire low-maintenance, single-floor living, as well as younger adults who have not yet started a family.
- L2.4 Ensure that new housing is compatible with the character of the surrounding area.
- L2.5 Provide neighborhood-focused programming to help build “community” and strengthen ties to the neighborhoods.

#### L3 Strengthen business districts and economic wellbeing

- L3.1 Create a unique character and theme for each business district. Continue to foster investment, infill development/re-development that creates and enhances vibrant and resilient mixed-use business districts, oriented primarily to the needs of residents, and which includes a central gathering place.
- L3.2 Foster new economic development along Alexandria Pike (US 27) that takes advantage of access to the interstate, potential for Smart City investments and proximity to major employers such as Northern Kentucky University and St Elizabeth Healthcare.
- L3.3 Ensure that new economic development is compatible with and enhances the existing character of the surrounding area and the overall “city in a park” character.

#### L4 Protect our natural resources.

- L4.1 Continue to protect the greenbelt along the Ohio River by strengthening regulations and building partnerships.
- L4.2 Ensure that new development is designed in ways that protect and take advantage of natural features, such as mature trees, hillsides, and scenic views, that contribute to Fort Thomas’ character.
- L4.3 Ensure that new development is constructed in ways that conserve natural resources by being energy efficient and reducing storm water runoff.



### Existing Land Uses

Fort Thomas is a 5.2 square mile community, with approximately 85 percent of the land area already developed. Perched on a bluff overlooking the Ohio River, Fort Thomas' development pattern clearly reflects the environmental and social factors that formed the city. The river and neighboring communities form strong boundaries which have contained the city in a relatively small land area. Small lots, leading to higher densities in walkable compact neighborhoods and mixed use areas have developed in response to the constrained land area. The city's early development as a Fort and a summer destination and its desirable location overlooking the Ohio River attracted builders and landowners whose attention to quality and stability have been the driving forces of Fort Thomas' urban form, and which now contributes so much to our culture, heritage and sense of place.

With over 57 percent of the city devoted to residential uses (67 percent of all developed land), Fort Thomas is clearly a bedroom community. Our residential neighborhoods, mostly single-family homes, are situated on hilltops, along the valleys, on flat-street subdivisions and on gently curving, tree-lined streets. As indicated on Table L1 Existing Land Use, only small amounts of the city are devoted to two-family houses and multi-family dwellings. The Existing Land Use Map illustrates the distribution of land uses.

With over 70 miles of streets (totaling more than 470 acres), public street rights-of-way comprise the second largest "use" of land in the city. This is not surprising given the small average size of the house lots and the topography that results in a number of subdivisions with cul-de-sacs.

Public and semi-public uses such as government, schools, and parks facilities make up the third largest category with more than 467 acres (12.8 percent of the city). The largest subcategory with 222 acres is parks, recreation and open space, of which 180 acres are city-owned parks and recreation facilities and approximately 42 acres are protected open space. [See Chapter 2.3 for further discussion of Parks and Recreation].

Another 219 acres are devoted to governmental and quasi-public uses, some of which are the city's largest employers, such as St. Elizabeth Healthcare, the Fort Thomas Independent School system, and two nursing homes - the Highlands of Fort Thomas/Barrington Health Care Facilities and Carmel Manor. In addition, there are two federal facilities located within Fort Thomas both adjacent to Tower Park: the VA Hospital and U.S. Army Reserve Engineering Complex.

Also included in the public land use category are two reservoirs for the Northern Kentucky Water District, one each at the northern and southern ends of the city. The reservoir at the north end along Memorial Parkway encompasses 21 acres of open space, including seven acres of water. The reservoir in the southern part of the city, on Military Parkway adjacent to the Midway District, encompasses 44 acres, including 11 acres of water. While the total area of the two reservoirs is only 65 acres, their highly visible locations along or near major streets contribute to the "city in a park" character.

### What are the differences?

**Existing Land Use** describes how a building or property is actually being used. Categories include: residential, commercial, office, industrial, parks, and public /institutional (such as schools, churches, libraries).

**Zoning** regulates where the various types of land uses may be located (through zoning districts), as well as a number of aspects of development including types of structures that may be built, height of buildings, how they are to be built, how much parking is required, etc. The existing land use does not necessarily reflect current zoning. Zoning is a key legal tool that cities use to implement their land use plans.

The **Future Land Use Plan Map** provides a generalized view of how land in Fort Thomas is intended to be used. It does not necessarily show land use as it exists today, and it does not show zoning information.

## CHAPTER 2.1 LAND USE

Just over 2 percent of the city (78 acres) is devoted to business uses. The economic base of the community is comprised mostly of professional offices and service-oriented businesses, with retail shops that provide the essentials for daily living such as convenient stores, banks, restaurants, drug stores, and beauty shops. There are no industrial or manufacturing businesses within Fort Thomas, though there are two areas where the zoning allows such uses.

Our two primary/traditional main street type business districts were developed along Fort Thomas Avenue to meet the needs of local residents. The historic Midway District developed in response to the needs of fort personnel and visitors. The center of town (referred to in this Plan as the Town Center, but also known as the Central Business District (CBD), City Center, and Uptown) anchored by the City Building, is located at the intersection of N Fort Thomas Avenue and Highland Avenue, along the path of the electric rail line not far from the High School and Middle School campuses.

The Inverness Business District, a smaller secondary traditional main street type business district, is located north of the Town Center District at the intersection of N Fort Thomas Avenue and Memorial Parkway.

Additional commercial areas are located closer to the western edge of the city: along Grand Avenue near St. Elizabeth Healthcare and further south at the intersection of Highland Avenue where the Highland Plaza and various office buildings are located; and along Alexandria Pike (US 27) reflective of the Pike's prominence before the construction of the I-471 expressway. Commercial locations along Alexandria Pike include the Fort Thomas Plaza at the northeast quadrant of the I-471 exit, and smaller concentrations of commercial / office uses south of the I-471 ramps, with nodes at the intersection with S Fort Thomas Avenue and at the southern end near the city border.

### EXISTING LAND USE IN FORT THOMAS

Land Use	Acres	%
<b>Residential</b>	<b>2,088</b>	<b>57%</b>
Single Family	1,831	50%
2-Family	62	2%
Multi-Family	194	5%
<b>Business</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>2%</b>
Office	27	1%
Mixed-Use	6	0%
Retail / Services	45	1%
<b>Public/-Semi-Public</b>	<b>467</b>	<b>13%</b>
Parks / Recreation / Open Space	222	6%
Public / Institutional (Public, Churches, Hospital, Nursing Home)	219	6%
School	27	1%
<b>Public Right-of-way</b>	<b>472</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>Total Developed Land</b>	<b>3,105</b>	<b>85%</b>
<b>Vacant</b>		
Zoned Residential	511	14%
Zoned Business	32	1%
<b>Total Vacant Land</b>	<b>543</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Total Area</b>	<b>3,648</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table L1. Fort Thomas Existing Land Use

### Zoning

There are fewer than 550 acres of vacant land, much of which is zoned for low-density residential and located on the forested hillsides overlooking the Ohio River and the Licking Valley. The city adopted hillside development regulations a number of years ago so development on much of the vacant land is already restricted.

With over 85 percent of the city developed, the pattern of land uses is not going to change significantly, especially since there is little development potential on much of the remaining vacant land. As a result, much of this Plan is focused on areas of the city that are in need of redevelopment and other pockets that were never developed yet could accommodate compatible infill development.

There are 16 different zoning districts in the current zoning code: nine residential districts, five nonresidential districts including the Central Business District (CBD) and two conservation districts. Over the course of the planning process a number of issues were raised regarding the effectiveness of the existing zoning. The Land Use and Zoning Committee discussed the potential for developing more of a performance-based code, where uses can be considered based on the context and the uses impact on the surroundings, and a more form-based code in certain areas of the city that would provide greater guidance to developers about the types of development that are acceptable.

### Fort Thomas Zoning Districts

Residential-1aa Zone (R-1AA)

Residential-1a Zone (R-1A)

Residential-1b Zone (R-1B)

Residential-1c Zone (R-1C)

Residential-1d Zone (R-1D)

Residential-2 Zone (R-2)

Residential-3 Zone (R-3)

Residential-5 Zone (R-5)

Residential Cluster Development Overlay Zone (RCD)

Central Business District (CBD)

General Commercial Zone (GC)

Highway Commercial Zone (HC)

Professional Office Building Zone (PO)

Light Industrial Park - Research Zone (IP)

River Preservation Zone (RP)

Conservation Zone (CO)

# CHAPTER 2.1 LAND USE

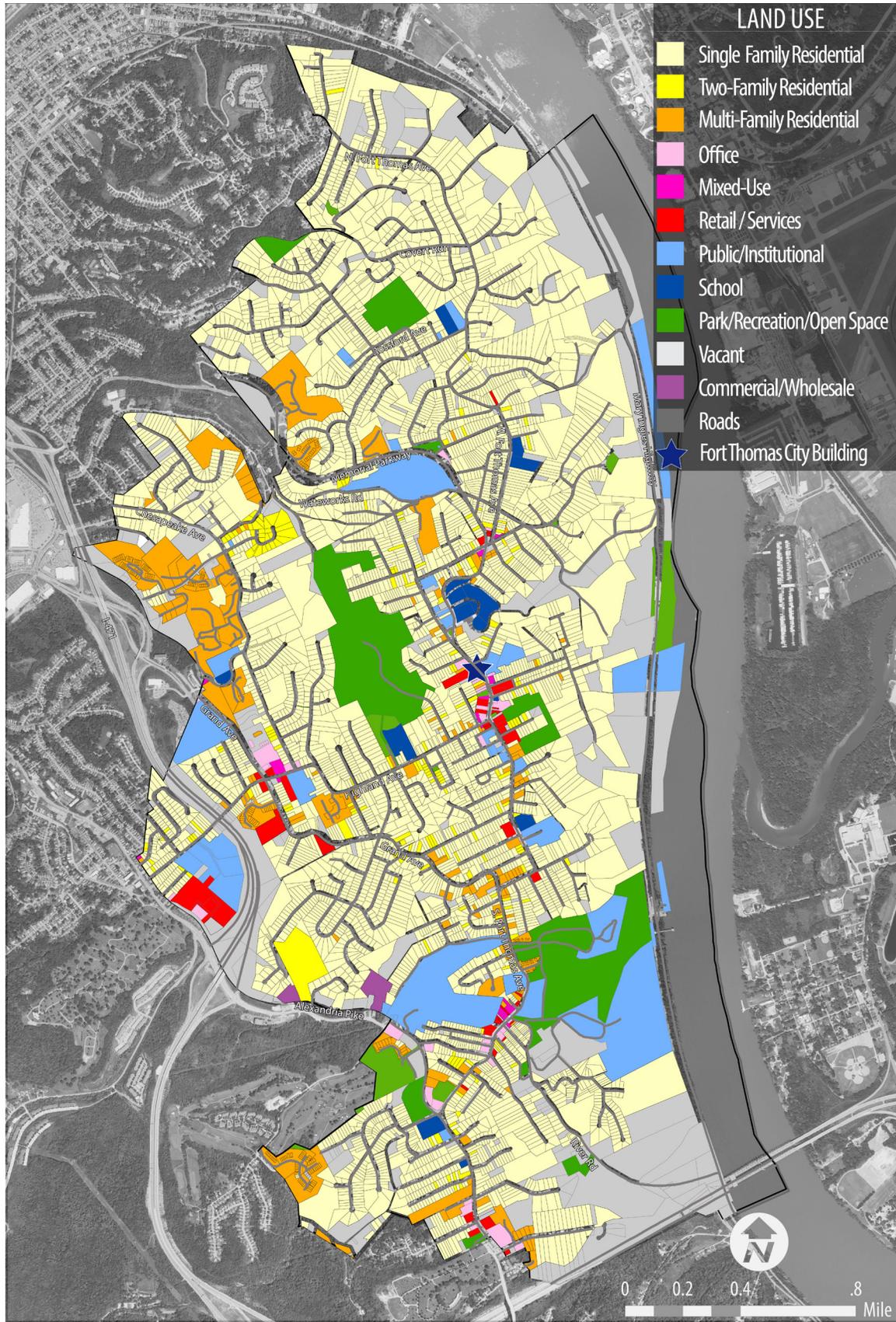
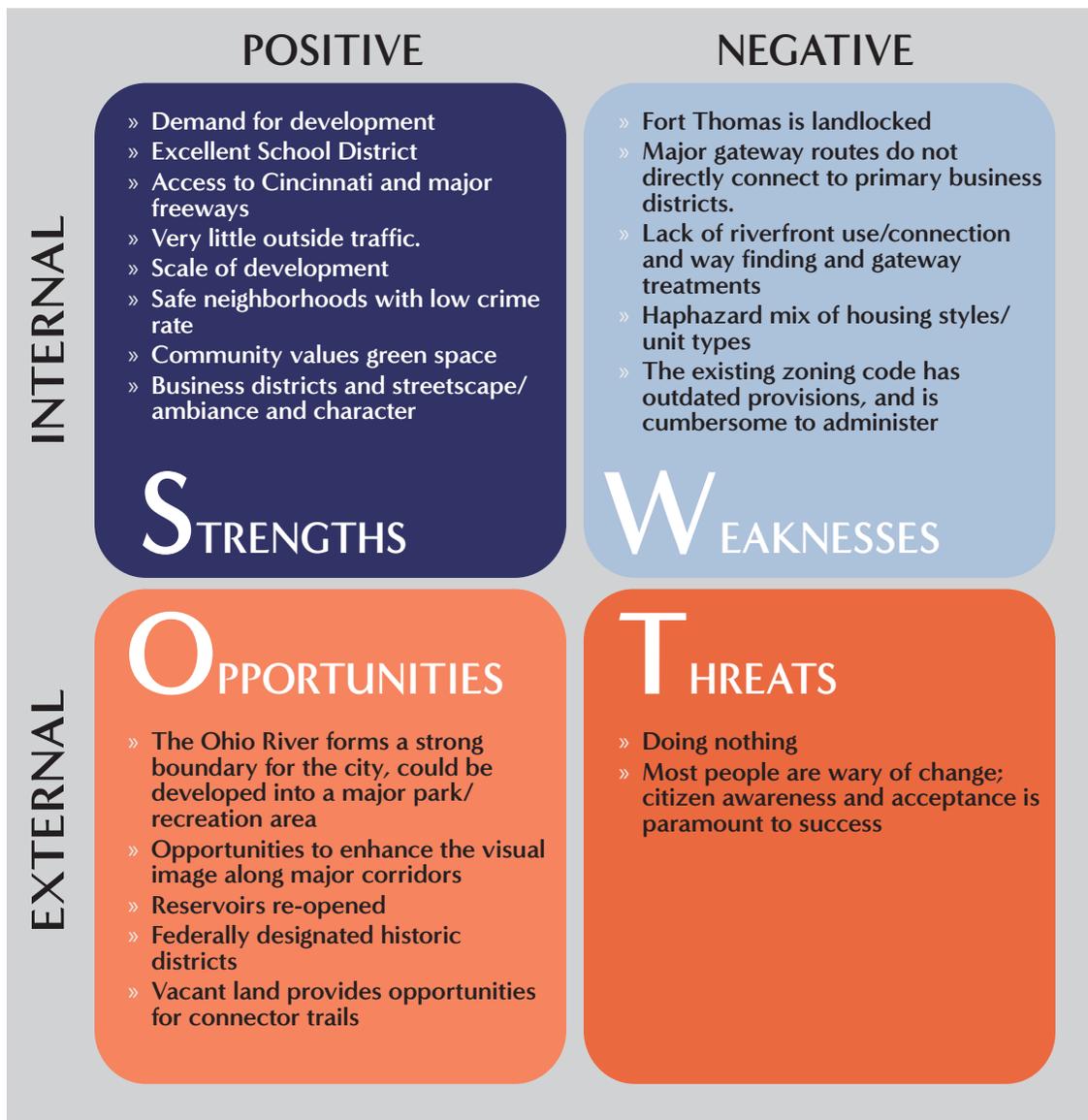


Figure L2. Fort Thomas Existing Land Use Map

SWOT ANALYSIS

During the Awareness Phase, the Land Use and Zoning Committee conducted a SWOT analysis to identify the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats the city faces related to land use and development. Strengths (S) and Weaknesses (W) are internal factors over which the city has some control, while Opportunities (O) and Threats (T) are external factors and constraints over which the city has little or no control. Conducting a SWOT analysis is a way to focus on our strengths, minimize threats, and take the greatest possible advantage of opportunities.

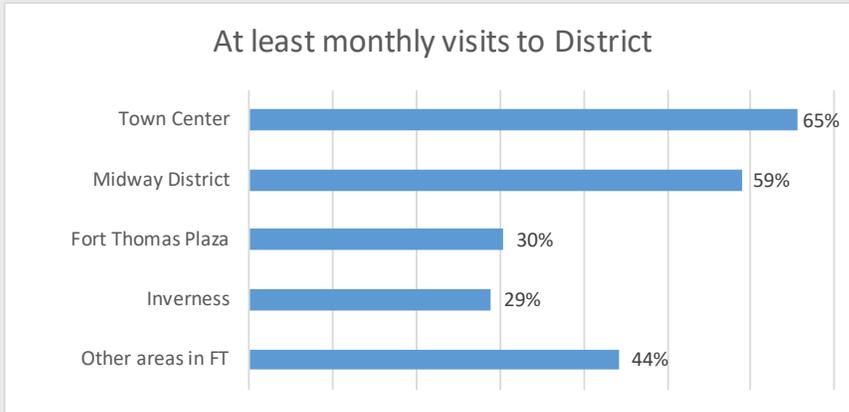
The most critical SWOT elements identified are illustrated below, while the complete Land Use and Zoning SWOT matrix is included in Appendix A.



Part 2

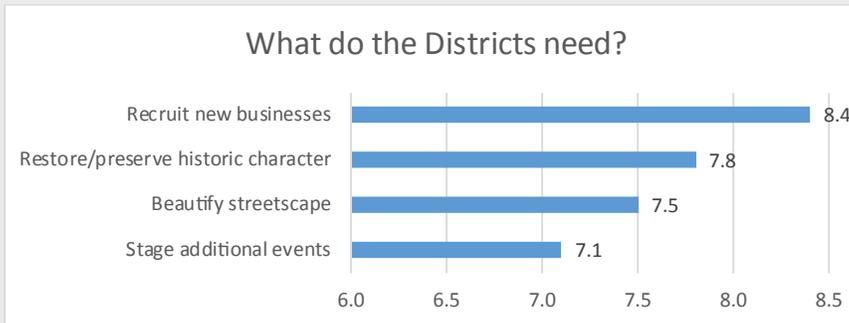
COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

Total Responses: 917 People



Top 3 Business Districts in Most Need of Enhancement...

1. Central Business District
2. Midway District
3. Fort Thomas Plaza



Type of Businesses Desired...

1. Sit-down Restaurant
2. Fast-casual restaurant
3. Bakery

What kind of new housing is needed?

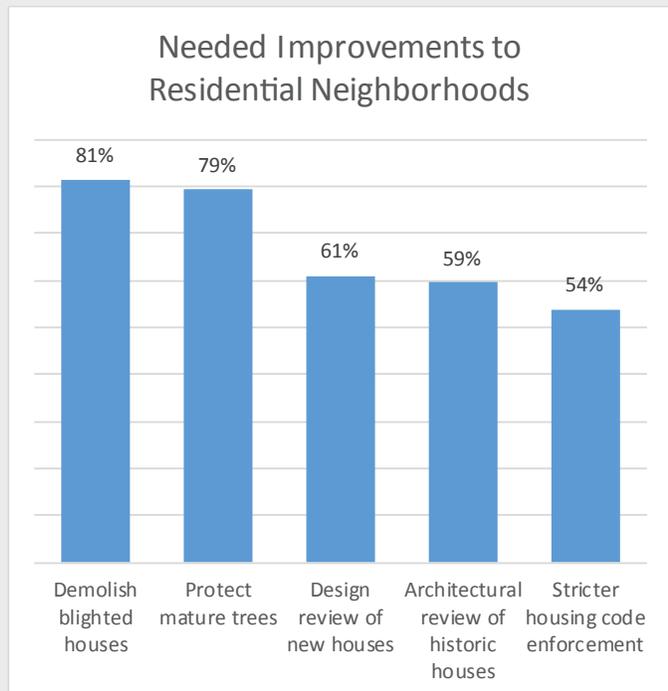
56%... Single-family homes

42%... Townhomes in/adjacent to Business Districts

34%... Low maintenance cluster homes

33%... Above storefronts in Business Districts

28%... Independent living for older adults



### Community Survey Results

Based on the SWOT analysis, the committee developed a set of survey questions to help guide the formulation of policies and strategies related to land use and development.

The Land Use questions focused primarily on residents' views regarding the most important actions for revitalizing business districts and residential neighborhoods. A total of 917 people completed the land use survey. A summary of the survey findings are included in the following sections devoted to Residential Neighborhoods and Business Districts. The complete results from the survey are found in Appendix B.

In regard to improvements to residential neighborhoods, the two highest ranking activities that the city should undertake included demolishing blighted houses and protecting mature trees – each had an average ranking above 7.5 out of a scale of 10. Design review of new homes, home additions and historic homes are also important activities for the city to consider, as well as stricter enforcement of the housing maintenance code.

While only 17 percent of respondents felt that additional housing options are needed in the city, new single-family homes were noted most often as the type needed, followed by townhouses in or adjacent to the business districts.

When asked how often people spend money in the various business districts in the city, 844 people (92 percent of respondents) noted they shop or dine at least once or twice a year in Fort Thomas, most often at retailers, restaurants and other businesses in the Town Center Business District. Over 62 percent reported visiting the Town Center Business District (CBD) at least monthly.

When asked to rank various activities the City could take to enhance the business districts, recruiting new businesses was the number one choice, followed by restoring/preserving the historic character of the districts; beautifying the streetscapes and hosting additional events to bring the community together. In addition, more than 60 percent of respondents felt that more parking was needed in the business districts, primarily in the Midway district.

More than 70 percent of respondents noted that more sit-down restaurants were the type of business most desired. Between 59 percent and 57 percent of respondents also said that more fast-casual restaurants and a bakery were most desirable.

### Future Land Use Plan

The following section fulfills the requirement for a Land Use Element under the provisions of KRS, Chapter 100.

The land use element is intended to do the following:

- » Indicate a logical progression and “destination” for the future development of Fort Thomas, taking into account various physical, infrastructure and public service systems that may enhance or hinder placing certain land uses in specific areas of the city.
- » Provide a tool for management of growth and development.
- » Provide guidelines for future land use decisions to further the stated Goals and Objectives included in this Community Plan.

The City of Fort Thomas is an established community with little opportunity to expand beyond the present corporate boundaries. Since Fort Thomas already has many of the necessities required for a high quality of life, this plan focuses on finessing its resources and raising its standards. Details like pedestrian amenities, maintenance of existing structures, adequate buffering and separation between differing land uses, economic development, improved pedestrian and vehicular linkages, and streetscape improvements are areas of concern.

This plan anticipates that implementation of the land use elements will be achieved by specific land use regulatory tools, including zoning and subdivision regulations, design review, and tree/landscape controls. But before revisions can be made, the Planning Commission will, after adoption of this Plan, need to undertake a more detailed evaluation of the existing regulations.

The categories used for the future land use plan are explained below and vary slightly from the existing land use categories shown on Figure L2 Existing Land Uses.

The Future Land Use Plan Map (figure L3) illustrates how the City should continue to develop to best recognize the goals and objectives of this Plan, according to the following categories:

### Land Use Categories

#### Single-Family Residential

Neighborhoods where the dominant housing is single-family detached housing units located on various size lots within residential neighborhoods. While the neighborhoods differ from one another, within the neighborhood, houses tend to have a similar style, setback and lot size.

#### Multi-Family Residential

Areas shown as Multi-family on the Future Land Use Plan are either currently developed as such or zoned for multi-family development.

### **Urban Residential**

Residential development located adjacent to business districts that is intended to provide a transition between the business uses and the surrounding residential neighborhoods. These areas are identified for planned redevelopment to provide new housing to meet the needs of nontraditional smaller households such as empty nesters and young professions. It is anticipated that new zoning regulations will be needed to provide flexibility in layout and design while providing a higher quality and more efficient development pattern for the City. Increased residential density should be given careful consideration because of the growing demand for housing adjacent to Main Street districts, which is a vital element for successful mixed use and pedestrian-friendly Main Street environments.

### **Corridor Residential**

Pockets of single-family houses are found along Alexandria Pike, a transportation corridor with challenges that may make it difficult to maintain the residential environment in the long term. Special care needs to be taken to protect the existing residential uses, while understanding that redevelopment of properties with frontage on the corridor may be appropriate when consistent with the City's economic development objectives for Alexandria Pike to be a Smart Corridor.

### **Recreational Areas**

All public or semi-public lands being used for either passive or active recreation.

### **Schools**

All land owned and operated by the Fort Thomas Independent School District. This includes buildings, recreational areas and undeveloped land.

### **Public/Institutional**

Both public and institutionally owned non-recreational lands open to the public such as government buildings, large churches, libraries, cemeteries, etc.

### **Main Street Mixed-Use**

This designation is applied to three areas that exhibit the traditional main street type of development. The Plan encourages the development of mixed uses in this area including retail, entertainment, office, residential, public and semi-public uses. The form of new development in these areas is envisioned to build upon and enhance the mixed use pedestrian destination environment, with small setbacks.

### **Office/Neighborhood Commercial**

Reflects the existing small-scale commercial (retail/office) nodes that were developed with a more suburban character, with off-street parking, and are located closer to the western edge of the City, near the I-475 highway. These nodes are surrounded by residential neighborhoods and emphasis in this plan is on connectivity and aesthetics.

### **Mixed Use Economic Development Corridor**

The Alexandria Pike (US 27) corridor is the one street that provides direct connection from surrounding communities through Fort Thomas to the I-475 highway. Existing commercial nodes are the focus for economic development.

### **Hillside / Greenbelt**

All dedicated areas of open space or areas with more than a 20 percent slope making development undesirable or costly.

# CHAPTER 2.1 LAND USE

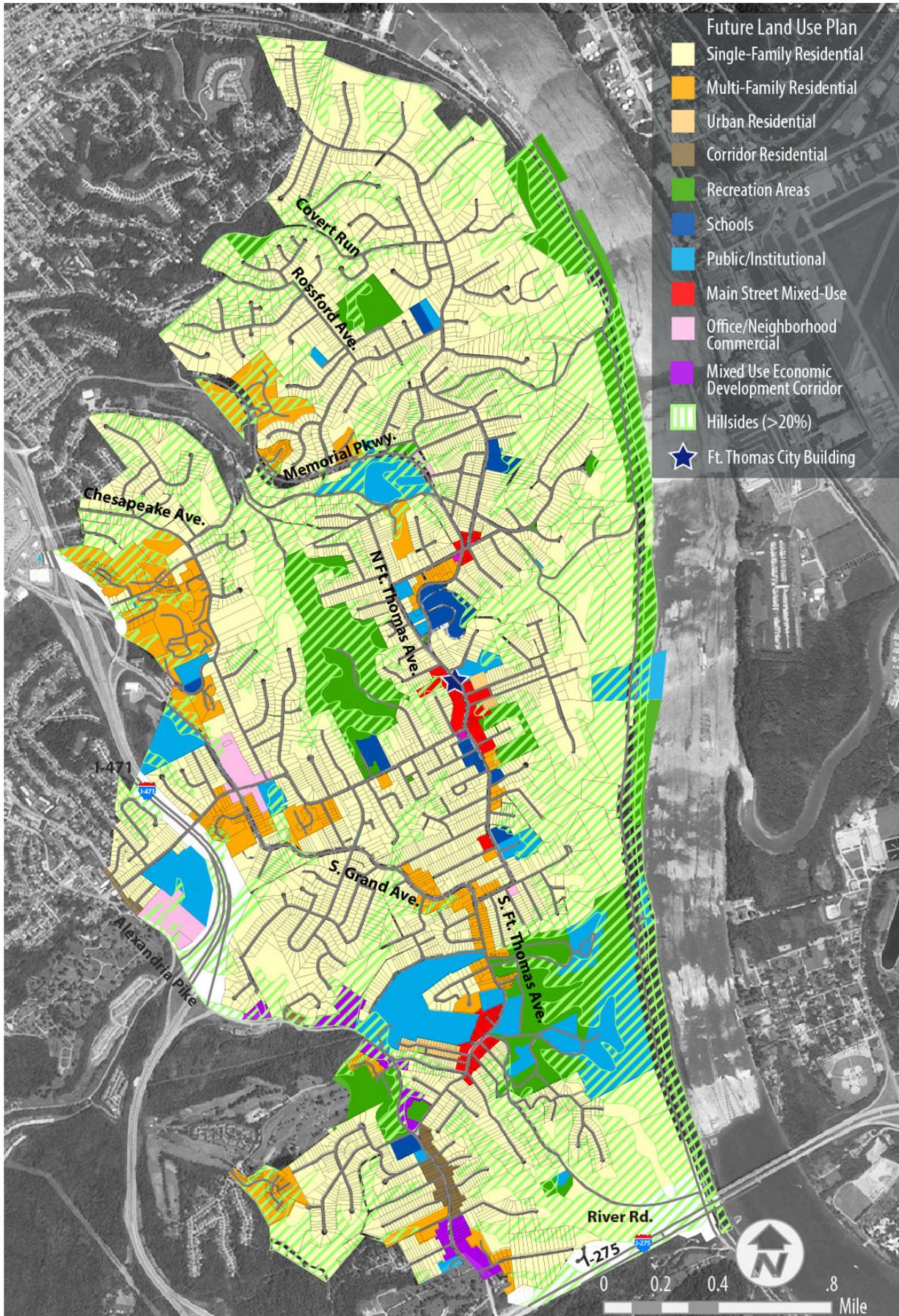


Figure L3. Future Land Use Plan Map

A larger more detailed map is available online and at the City Building.

### QUALITY OF LIFE

The quality of life we enjoy in Fort Thomas is the primary reason many people move here and stay for years. The quality of our built environment, and preservation of our cultural heritage and natural environment significantly contribute to our overall quality of life and sense of community. It is imperative that we not take these features for granted; that we continue to maintain and even enhance the characteristics and amenities that make Fort Thomas a great place to live, work, and play.

#### Recommendations:

The following objectives overlap with some of the objectives for housing, business, and natural resource preservation, and likewise many of the action steps outlined in subsequent chapters also help to achieve our Quality of Life objectives.

#### L1 Enhance Our Quality of Life

**L1.1** Continue to be a great community to raise a family, with good schools and safe neighborhoods. **T P U**

**L1.1.1** Continue to invest in infrastructure, parks and recreation, sidewalks and bike paths, and public services such as police and fire

**L1.1.2** Continue to support school activities and partner with the school district as opportunities arise. **R**

**L1.1.3** Continue to enforce and strengthen property code maintenance to ensure properties continue to be well maintained

**L1.2.** Promote visually pleasing, well-maintained, walkable neighborhoods and vibrant business districts to foster social indicators and sense of community.

Having well-maintained neighborhoods and vibrant business districts foster walking, interaction among neighbors and a sense of belonging so that Fort Thomas remains a place where people want to live, work, shop, etc.

**L1.2.1** Evaluate the zoning code and expand the City's design guidelines to foster housing and business improvements, infill development and redevelopment that is designed to retain our small town, compact walkable character with well-designed buildings, houses with front porches, and tree canopy. Specific situations where zoning updates and expanded design guidelines are needed are highlighted throughout this chapter.

**L1.2.2** Continue to make sidewalk and multi-modal transportation improvements to make it easy to move about the city with a transportation network that provides pedestrian and bike connectivity.

**T P**

**L1.2.3** Continue to provide community facilities such as parks and recreation facilities **P**

#### L1 Reference List

- T** Chapter 2.2  
Transportation and Connectivity
- P** Chapter 2.3  
Parks and Open Space
- U** Chapter 2.4  
Utilities and City Owned Facilities
- R** Chapter 2.5  
Regional Partners

## CHAPTER 2.1 LAND USE

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**L1.3** Foster investments that retain our history, cultural heritage and distinct character.

The “image” of Fort Thomas is formed by “the quality of a place that makes it distinct, recognizable and memorable.” This is what provides a “sense of place” and distinguishes historic neighborhoods and business districts with landmark buildings and place-based architecture from “anywhere USA”.

**L1.3.1** Increase local efforts to preserve/protect historic sites and structures in Fort Thomas. As part of this effort, pursue potential funding for preservation efforts from local, state and federal programs.

**L1.3.2** Develop a local historic preservation plan, with recommended elements to help guide activities. Elements to include are:

- » Discussion of issues, problems, and opportunities associated with our historic resources;
- » Summary of approaches that work best to preserve our important heritage assets; and
- » Goals and strategies related to the appropriate use, conservation, preservation, and protection of our assets, given Fort Thomas’ unique circumstances.

**L1.3.3** Develop and provide resource materials regarding appropriate building rehabilitation techniques for home owners and commercial building owners.

**L1.3.4** Consider becoming a certified local government.

Becoming certified provides the ability to compete annually for matching grants for approved projects. There are 23 certified local governments (CLG) in Kentucky, including Bellevue, Covington, and Newport. The National Historic Preservation Act [NHPA] and the State of Kentucky require a local government seeking certification to meet five broad standards:

- » Enforce appropriate state and local legislation for the designation and protection of historic properties. In Kentucky, a local government must adopt a local historic preservation ordinance that meets KHC guidelines (see the Kentucky CLG Manual for complete information). The preservation ordinance is usually a section of the local zoning ordinance.
- » Establish an adequate and qualified preservation commission [architectural review board], as stipulated in state and local legislation.
- » Establish and maintain a system for the survey and inventory of historic properties.
- » Provide for adequate public participation in the local historic preservation program, including the process of recommending properties for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.
- » Satisfactorily perform any other responsibilities delegated in the CLG agreement.

**L1.4** Embrace and enhance the natural physical beauty of our city provided by

## CHAPTER 2.1 LAND USE

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the Ohio River, mature trees, wooded hillsides, and scenic views.

In general, this includes promoting the overall beautification of Fort Thomas. As part of this strategy, all new residential and economic development should be designed to enhance the overall “city in a park” character.

**L1.4.1** Utilize natural features to enhance our gateways and entry corridors in order to present a welcoming and visually pleasing “front door”. This includes preserving the natural landscaping along roadways such as Memorial Parkway, River Road, and Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8). **P**

**L1.4.2** Enhance the City’s tree planting program to increase the City’s overall tree canopy coverage. In addition, consider requiring new development to provide a minimum amount of tree planting in front yards and limiting the amount of impervious area as a percentage of the development site. **P**

**L1.4.3** Continue to preserve the steep hillsides through regulations that restrict development. See L4 for more discussion.

### HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

#### Existing Conditions

The number of Fort Thomas residents has remained fairly stable over the last few decades hovering between 16,000 and 16,500 people from 1970 through 2010, with the US Census reporting the 2010 population to be 16,325. At the same time there has been a continual increase in the number of housing units from 5,250 in 1970 to 7,290 in 2010. While the US Census Bureau's estimates of population and housing for 2015 indicate no growth, the ESRI Corporation estimates the city's 2017 population at 16,955 and the number of housing units at 7,566, which seems more in line with the City's building permit data.

It is a well-known fact that good schools are a critical component of a successful community. Indeed, the Fort Thomas Independent School District has a reputation as an academic leader throughout the state, and is a key factor in attracting residents and businesses to the city. As a result, the public school enrollment has steadily increased an average of 1 percent annually and is reaching capacity of the elementary schools. In fact, the district has plans to reconstruct one of the elementary schools to increase capacity by 150 students. Therefore, it is not surprising that the majority of households in Fort Thomas are married couples (51.7 percent which is five percentage points higher than the percentage of married couples in Campbell County), while only 28 percent of households are comprised of a person living alone.

In recent years there has been some shifts in the population make-up, with an increase in the percentage of family households, but with declines in the number Millennials (persons between the ages of 20 and 39) and persons over the age of 65, all in contrast to the general trends in Campbell County. One explanation for the declines could be a limited supply of housing that meets the needs of smaller households – one and two persons without children – which includes both young professionals and empty nesters.

An examination of income data illustrates the large differences in resources between households comprised of married couples, usually with both adults working, compared to nonfamily households which tend to have only one person earning an income (82 percent of nonfamily households are comprised of a person living alone).

Fort Thomas' married couples households have a median income that is 56 percent higher than the median income for all households in the city, and 166 percent higher than nonfamily households. Different types of households have different housing needs both in terms of size and affordability. While the median value of owner occupied homes in 2016 was \$200,600 according to the American Community Survey, there is a wide range of housing stock within the city with values ranging from \$55,000 to over \$2 million.

## CHAPTER 2.1 LAND USE

Yet, the latest housing affordability data indicate that 26 percent of Fort Thomas households (38 percent of renters and 21 percent of owners) pay more than 30 percent of their monthly income for housing costs, a threshold that HUD uses to determine affordability. This is an increase from 2000 when 22 percent of households (35 percent of renter households and 16 percent of owner households) were paying more than 30 percent of their monthly income for housing costs.

	Median Income	Affordable House Price (3x Annual income)	Households with income less than \$35,000*	Households with income greater than \$100,000**
Families	\$93,571	\$280,713	11%	46%
Married Couples	\$106,910	\$320,730	5%	56%
Nonfamily	\$40,207	\$120,621	44%	13%
SOURCE: American Community Survey 2012-2016, calculations by CT Consultants.				
* Households earning \$35,000 can typically afford a \$105,000 home				
** Households earning \$100,000 can typically afford a \$300,000 home				

Table L2. Fort Thomas Household Incomes

Another factor to consider regarding the housing stock is the age of the homes in the city. Knowing that the city celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2017, it is understandable that more than 80 percent of the single-family and two-family homes are 50 or more years old, and 50 percent of all houses were built before 1949, see Figure L4, Residential Buildings Year Built.

Older houses often lack the types of contemporary amenities that homebuyers are looking for, such as larger kitchens, more closet space, plenty of bathrooms, larger master bedrooms with ensuite baths. Often homeowners who want to expand and remodel their existing house encounter problems with the current zoning regulations, which are not tailored to the specific neighborhood development patterns found in Fort Thomas, such as lot size, lot width, building setbacks from the street and spacing between houses. In addition, older houses are more expensive to maintain, and there is a limited market for fixer-uppers as many contemporary home buyers are not willing to invest the time to do extensive rehab.

It is important to encourage housing additions/remodeling and new housing construction in order to continue to accommodate current residents who desire to “move up” or have changing housing needs (such as empty nesters), as well as attract young professionals. One of the missing household types noted throughout the planning process is housing for smaller households, including upscale rental units that are attractive to both empty nesters and Millennials.

## CHAPTER 2.1 LAND USE

At the same time, there is a goal to maintain a certain percentage of owner-occupied units. The City's homeownership rate has remained fairly constant at approximately 69 percent since 2000. With the recent construction of apartment units along Memorial Parkway, the percentage of owner-occupied units is approximately 67 percent. One of the findings of the community survey was that of those who thought more housing is needed in Fort Thomas, 56 percent felt that new single-family homes are needed.

There is very little residential vacant land that can support new large-scale development. Of the 511 acres of vacant land zoned for residential, 90 percent is limited to single-family development. However, most of the vacant parcels are heavily impacted by steep slopes. While there are some smaller vacant parcels that could be combined for new development (such as parcels along Newman and Maine Avenues), these areas are surrounded by existing neighborhoods and appropriately zoned for single-family.

The Land Use and Zoning Committee did however discuss the future of the Carlisle site (24 acres along Memorial Parkway) because of its prominent location at a major gateway into the city.

While the majority of the site is in the City of Newport, the 6.5 acres in Fort Thomas are flat and where building construction is most likely to occur. The site is zoned R-5 multi-family and is located across the street from the recently completed Overlook of Fort Thomas development. The site includes a large amount of fill material, raising the question as to whether or not the site can support new construction, but it is likely that as technology advances, development will occur sometime in the future.

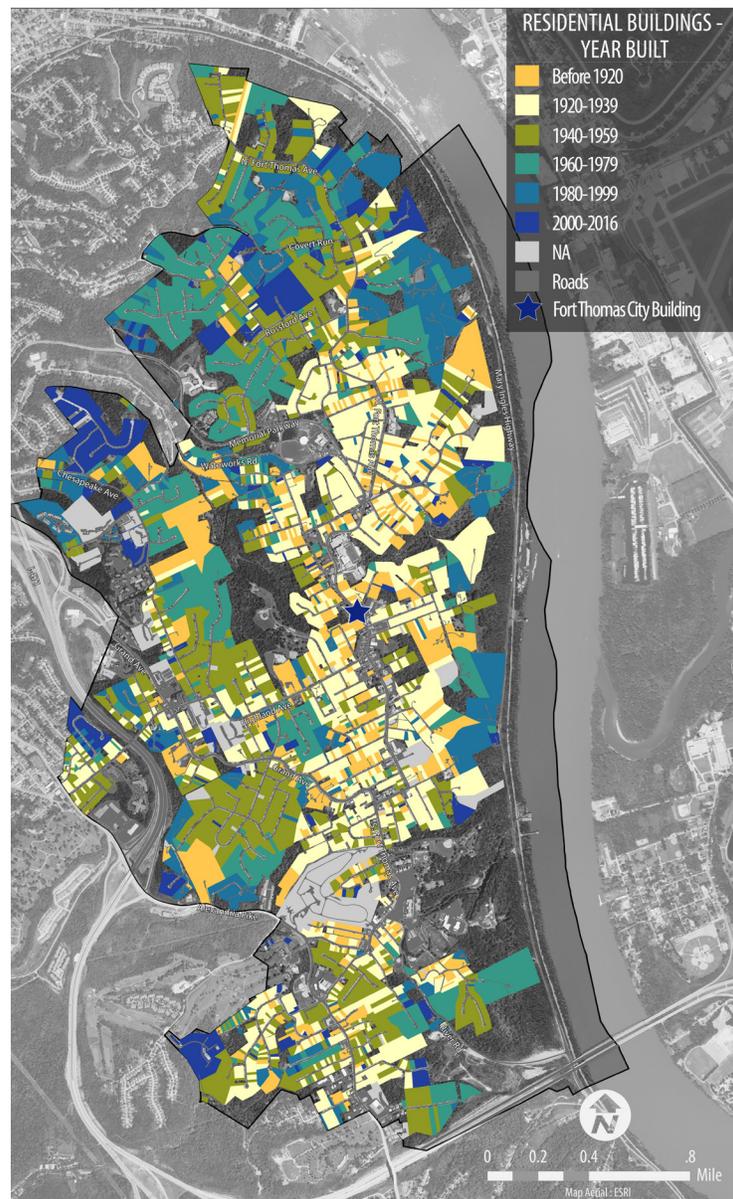


Figure L4. Residential Buildings Year Built Map

Other issues related to neighborhoods include problems with short term rentals, including renters hosting parties that attract a lot of cars, unruly people and noise. Many issues are related to code enforcement which can be cumbersome and lengthy to actually resolve problems. This is a concern not only for Fort Thomas but for many other Kentucky communities. Indeed, the general assembly recently enacted rules that allow greater enforcement at the local level, and enable local governments to take action more quickly without relying so heavily on the court system.

### SWOT ANALYSIS - Housing and Neighborhoods

- » Neighborhoods have a quaint character, housing stock remains attractive and has retained its value.
- » Distinct neighborhoods formed by topography.
- » Good location; proximity to Cincinnati.
- » Zoning Code helps preserve the character of existing neighborhoods when new infill housing is constructed.

## S TRENGTHS

- » Age of housing: Older housing stock.
- » Lack of certain types of housing: Home prices are high, Lack of transitional housing for seniors. Some residents want to downsize. There is a lack of affordable/ starter housing.
- » Need a balance of multi-family units in appropriate locations.
- » Lack of yard maintenance in some areas, and concerns about code enforcement.
- » Complaints about parking and noise with unregulated short-term rentals.
- » Flag lots have been an issue.

## W EAKNESSES

## O PPORTUNITIES

- » Areas with opportunities to build infill housing that is compatible with the neighborhood.
- » Some areas are ripe for redevelopment, including older multi-family housing that could be redeveloped to meet zoning and character of surrounding neighborhood.
- » Adding landscaping, and providing incentives to homeowners to invest in housing to improve the neighborhoods.
- » Create a form-based code that describes the design requirements for row houses, townhomes, etc.
- » Potential for establishing historic districts (such as Sargeant Ave neighborhood) that would provide eligibility for historic tax credits.

## T HREATS

- » Aging homes and size of units do not meet current needs.
- » Absentee landlords and rental units that are not maintained.
- » Difficulty in preserving smaller older homes.

### Recommendations:

## L2 Maintain and Improve Our Housing Stock and Neighborhoods

**L2.1** Continue to require regular housing and property maintenance to ensure neighborhoods retain their viability and desirability.

**L2.1.1** Continue to pursue new/improved regulations to address code violations more effectively at the local level.

**L2.1.2** Develop programs to encourage property owners to invest in and maintain their properties. Consider a civic group (volunteer organization) to provide education, support, perhaps materials, etc., all of which help build “community” and strengthen ties to the neighborhoods.

**L2.2** Promote continued neighborhood investment through renovations and rehabilitation of homes, along with compatible additions and new infill construction and other improvements that help neighborhoods retain their viability and desirability.

**L2.2.1** Encourage sensitive renovations to older homes as a way of retaining the original character of Fort Thomas neighborhoods.

**L2.2.2** Provide design resources and education to home owners to raise awareness and provide assistance in housing renovations and additions; for example, compile an archive of photos, guidelines tailored to neighborhood characteristics. Consider the creation of a volunteer committee.

**L2.2.3** Update the residential district zoning regulations to better suit the existing development patterns for the various neighborhoods, e.g. lot size, front setback from the street, and width/depth of side and rear yards, and reduce the administrative burden of reviewing variances.

- » Develop more flexible regulations and provide guidance to address site-specific issues for unique parcels.
- » Develop regulations to guard against the unnecessary demolition of existing smaller, older, houses and construction of a new house that is larger than typical for neighborhood. **F**

**L2.2.4** Explore the possibility of allowing existing larger homes (on select streets near amenities and business districts) to be used for bed-and-breakfast inns and other short-term rentals with specific regulations to ensure compatibility with neighboring properties, adequate parking and screening.

**L2.2.5** Consider reuse for housing if VA Hospital leaves.

### L2 Reference List

**R** Chapter 2.5  
Regional Partners

**F** Chapter 2.6  
Focus Area Plans

**L2.3** Encourage new residential construction in limited locations to accommodate different/ changing needs and preferences of the population.

**L2.3.1** Allow housing in business districts—upper floors of retail/office buildings and freestanding residential buildings when designed and located to be compatible with the design and use goals of the business district (typically on the edges of the district or along secondary streets).

**F**

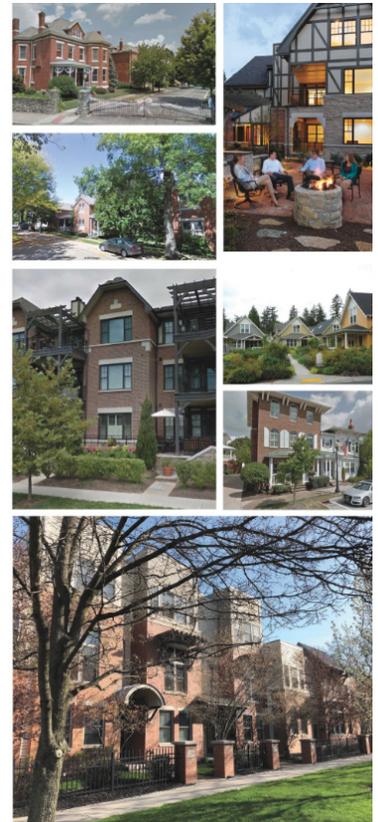
**L2.3.2** Encourage new housing redevelopment and infill development adjacent to business districts to expand housing options for empty nesters and young professionals (1 and 2 person households). **F**

**L2.3.3** Encourage compatible infill development on scattered vacant lots in existing residential neighborhoods. Infill development that is similar to the size and placement on the lot of the surrounding houses is a sustainable form of development that enhances a walkable environment, uses existing infrastructure, and reduces the need to develop the remaining and often challenging open spaces in the city.

**L2.3.4** Encourage construction of mid-rise residential (or office) building on the Carlisle development site along Memorial Parkway. Recognizing that any development will require proper construction techniques due to site conditions, the goal is to have a building(s) that take advantage of views of downtown Newport and Cincinnati, and the Ohio River, while not obstructing the view of travelers along Memorial Parkway. **R**

This site is a prominent gateway location so it is important that new development takes advantage of the opportunity to build a distinctive landmark building that contributes to the image of the City, making the form of the building more important than the use. Target market for smaller households – empty nesters and young professionals.

- » Require quality architecture with suitable design guidelines developed to ensure good design and a distinctive landmark building that contributes to the image of the City.
- » Revise the zoning to enable a taller building with a smaller footprint. Consider increasing the maximum height (currently 35 feet) and adding a large minimum open space requirement. Require an adequate setback from Memorial Parkway so that the natural character of the parkway is retained.
- » Retain a significant percentage of site as open space.



# CHAPTER 2.1 LAND USE

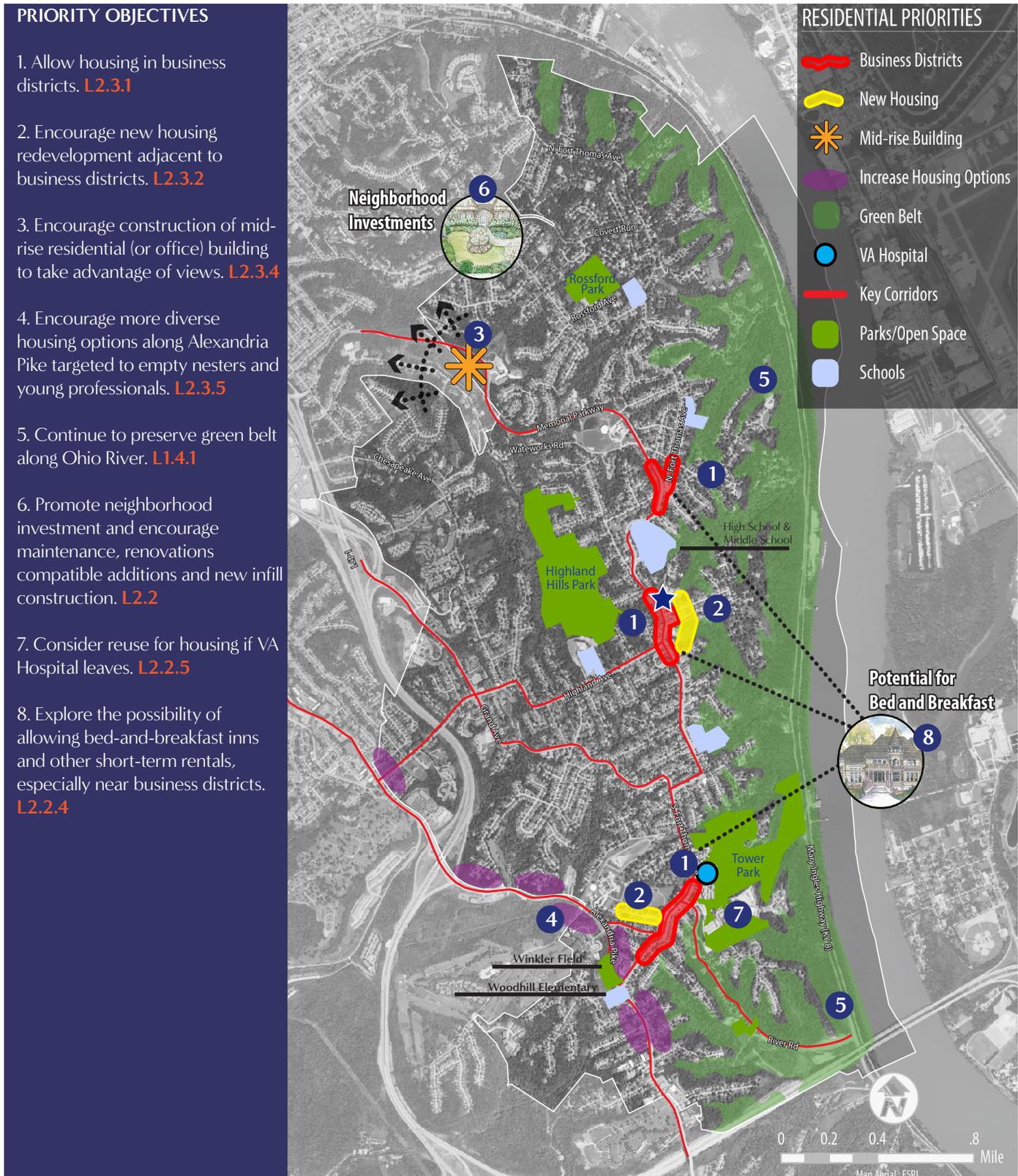


Figure L5. Land Use Residential Priority Objectives Map

**L2.3.5** Encourage more diverse housing options along Alexandria Pike targeted to empty nesters and young professionals (1 and 2 person households) as part of the Alexandria Pike regional economic development initiative envisioned by Fort Thomas and neighboring communities. The corridor is targeted for Smart City improvements and complete streets (multi-use paths, enhanced crosswalks, and connections with neighborhoods so residents can safely walk and bike to local destinations).



**L2.4** Ensure that new housing is compatible with the character of surrounding area.

**L2.4.1** Consider design guidelines that address the various types of new housing being considered: For example, ensure that new infill housing constructed in an established neighborhood (either on a vacant lot or after tearing down an existing house) is compatible with the character of the neighborhood concerning design issues such as the orientation of the garage to the street. The design guidelines should illustrate the desired features for new construction, including building features, landscaping in front yards, on-site circulation, and pedestrian access.

New design guidelines should be created, tailored to specific locations including:

- » Housing along Alexandria Pike (US 27);
- » New housing development on the Carlisle development site;
- » Infill development in mature neighborhoods.

**L2.5** Provide neighborhood-focused programming to help build “community” and strengthen ties to the neighborhoods.

**L2.5.1** Continue to provide recreational and social programs that encourage neighbors, friends and family to forge strong relationships as they spend time together, which helps to strengthen community ties and civic engagement. The City provides recurring, seasonal, summer youth and special activities, often with local partners and sponsor the Farmers Market. These programs help neighbors enrich their lives through pursuit of new skills and interests as well as connection to the city.

**L2.5.2** Consider creating a Home Repair Resource Program/Center, with emphasis on empowering residents with the knowledge and skills needed to properly maintain homes. Programming could cover hands-on workshops that cover techniques for home repairs, strategies for developing a routine maintenance schedule, financing repairs, and potentially even providing design advice. Consider partnering with an existing or new non-profit.

**L2.5.3** Consider developing a Tool Lending Library. A Tool Lending Library (TLL) is a collection of tools intended for public use in completing minor to moderate lawn and garden improvements and/or repairs. The intent of a TLL is to help reduce the expense of a home-related project by saving the added costs of purchasing tools. This sort of program is becoming common place in public libraries as the sharing economy grows in popularity.

### BUSINESS DISTRICTS AND ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

#### Existing Conditions

As noted earlier in Table L1 Existing Land Uses, only a small percentage of the city is devoted to business uses. Most residents work either in Cincinnati or the industrial or commercial areas of Northern Kentucky, and likely do much of their shopping outside of Fort Thomas. However, as highlighted in the community survey, there is a desire to enhance and redevelop where appropriate the existing business districts, and pursue economic development in select locations. There has been an increasing number of small businesses and retail established recently and a sizable number of in-home businesses all of which contribute to the local economy.

Yet, there are numerous changes occurring in the nature of retail businesses and shopping patterns and there is a growing need to attract businesses that will be resilient to these changes. For example, banks now require less space so the traditional bank building is becoming obsolete, and health care/ medical types of uses (such as dialysis) are likely to fill traditional retail space. Shoppers are looking for more experiences, and traditional bricks and mortar stores must adapt. In a similar manner, advances in technology, building construction, and automation, along with the potential for autonomous vehicles to dramatically change the need for parking, it is important for Fort Thomas to be forward thinking in regard to economic development.

#### Economic Development Efforts

Reinvestment in Fort Thomas' business districts and a vibrant business climate are critical components for a healthy community. Fort Thomas' heritage is rich in military history and architectural beauty and many of the city's economic development initiatives leverage our heritage.

Since 2002, the City has participated in the Renaissance program, Kentucky's statewide initiative that utilizes the National Main-Street approach for downtown/town centers revitalization with a focus on the preservation of the historic fabric of the community. Utilizing the Main Street four-point approach, the Renaissance program focuses on positively impacting the designated Renaissance business districts through economic and physical revitalization. The Renaissance program director is also the city's economic development director, and as such spearheads a number of efforts to improve how we live, work and raise families within the city. The program began with two designated districts: the Town Center and Midway. Program successes include establishing the Farmers' Market, the Fort Thomas Military and Community Museum, and the Historic Midway District, and spearheading façade improvements that were completed thanks to a grant program the City established.

One issue with attracting new businesses to Fort Thomas business districts is the generally low rents that businesses pay and the fact that many businesses in Fort Thomas own their building. Major renovations to existing buildings and new construction are viable only if the space can be rented at a point that covers the construction cost and then some. The same is true of residential rents.

#### Main Street Program

The Main Street program embraces a 4-point program (DOPE):

- » Design
- » Organization
- » Promotion and
- » Economic Vitality

Fort Thomas is one of 92 cities in the Commonwealth that participates in the National Main Street Program.

### Business Niches

There are several distinct business districts and commercial nodes within the city, each with its own character, that provide different types of retail, professional office or service businesses. Three districts are eligible Renaissance Districts due to their configuration and concentration.

### Town Center Business District

**(also referred to as Central Business District (CBD), City Center, and Uptown)**

The Town Center District is the civic center of the community anchored by the Fort Thomas Municipal Building, post office, central office of the Fort Thomas Independent School District and the nearby High School and Middle School campuses. The Town Center streetscape was redesigned to add intersection bump-outs. A public plaza /gathering space with a new clock tower was constructed between Lumley Avenue and Miller Lane to further strengthen the civic nature of the district. The Town Center District is a vital part of Fort Thomas: it boasts the city's largest concentration of retail and service-oriented businesses that serves the needs of local residents such as: banks; restaurants; gift shops; art oriented shops; stores that offer items for every-day needs; hair salons; and medical, legal, real estate, and insurance offices. The character of the district supports pedestrian traffic, hosts a number of events and is easily accessible by surrounding neighborhoods. It is a Renaissance District.

#### Some of the challenges in the Town Center District include:

- » Lack of suitable buildings needed to expand the commercial base for a sustainable town center.
- » A number of the buildings are not ADA compliant and have other code deficiencies such as no sprinkler system.
- » Approximately half of the buildings in the District are houses. There are a number of issues with houses: they are generally set back too far from the sidewalk to create the traditional "main street" feel, and it is hard to retrofit houses into retail space.

### Midway Business District

The Midway District is an historically significant business district flanked by recreational space and a mix of land uses. This Fort Thomas Renaissance district has historically been home to restaurants, bars, entertainment, and home furnishings. Its location adjacent to Tower Park, a popular Fort Thomas recreation area, makes it an ideal place for businesses that serve recreational needs such as sporting goods and fitness related services. Attracting more of these businesses; along with pursuing National Historic District designation, additional streetscape enhancement and parking/way-finding needs of the district will augment the character and marketability of the Midway District. The Midway streetscape has been renovated with brick crosswalks and attractive landscaping, new street construction, lighting, benches and banners, which has brought a new cohesiveness to the area. The façade improvement grant money was instrumental in generating building façade improvements, but there is no money left. In 2018, two buildings at the eastern end of the district (1011 and 1013 S Fort Thomas Avenue) were renovated and occupied by new businesses. The City is working with the Army Corp of Engineers on adaptive reuse options for the Stables Building, which overlooks the soccer field.

### Inverness Business District

The Inverness area has traditionally been a neighborhood business district catering to the interurban transportation system users. This small area has gradually evolved into less of a stand-alone, independent business district and more into a mixed use area of public plaza civic space, service and retail-oriented businesses, dining and residential uses. The redevelopment of a former auto service station into a public plaza/greenspace for the hosting of community events is a good example of the natural evolution of this area.

### Alexandria Pike Corridor

The Alexandria Pike (US 27) area was developed when the corridor was a major commuter route into the Cincinnati metropolitan area, and includes a combination of residential areas with commercial nodes at major intersections. Business activity catered to the commuting traffic. Commuters generally take I-471 today and the businesses on Alexandria Pike reflect this shift. As a result, this corridor has experienced a gradual shift away from auto-related and retail business and instead toward office type uses, including the redevelopment of a large parcel that formerly housed an independent grocery and hardware store into prime office space. This area has the greatest potential for new economic development/redevelopment due to its proximity to I-471, I-275, Northern Kentucky University and other nearby employment centers.

This corridor provides direct access between I-471 and the Midway District and is one area of the city where major new economic development should be encouraged. The Regional Collaboration committee explored the potential to make this a “Smart” corridor (as in “Smart City”) as a way to attract new economic development, especially given its proximity to I-275 and Northern Kentucky University. Preferred new development is high-value and high-wage jobs in order to maximize this area for the city’s tax base (and not uses that have few employees and low-wage jobs).

### What is a Smart City?

A Smart City is a municipality that uses **information and communication technologies (ICT)** to increase operational efficiency, share information with the public and improve both the quality of government services and citizen welfare. The use of Smart City technologies results in cost efficiencies, resilient infrastructure, and an improved urban experience, and can be a means to solve the city’s economic, social and environmental challenges.

The term “Smart City” emphasizes the integration of technological networks and the built environment. An increasingly interconnected world (through mobile Smart phones, cloud-based computing, etc.), combined with a more mobile workforce (through telework, flexwork, etc.) has allowed some types of work to be done almost anywhere, anytime.

The **Internet of Things (IoT)** is the network of physical objects—devices, vehicles, buildings and other items—embedded with electronics, software, sensors, and network connectivity that enables these objects to collect and exchange data.

### **Grand Avenue corridor/ Highland and Grand intersection with Highland Plaza**

The Grand Avenue business area is a mix of retail/service and office with excellent access to and from the major transportation routes leading into Cincinnati. Restaurants and retail shops have been established at the northern end of Grand Avenue, across the street from St Elizabeth Healthcare which straddles Fort Thomas and Newport. A larger office and retail area is located further south at the intersection of S Grand Avenue and Highland Avenue, which includes the popular Highland Plaza. The plaza has a good complement of stores, restaurants and offices, along with sufficient off-street parking. The easily accessible location near St Elizabeth's medical facilities and retirement communities makes this area a perfect location for medical offices, drug stores, and medical supply stores. This niche would not interfere with the success of the other commercial centers in the community.

### **Fort Thomas Plaza**

The Fort Thomas Plaza, located at 90 Alexandria Pike is a typical suburban strip retail center with 52,000 square feet of building floor area built in 1989. Over the years, tenants have changed and the plaza has struggled trying to compete with newer retail destination spots such as the Newport Pavilion and Newport on the Levee. Yet there are a number of positive aspects, including: it's right off of I-471, sits on hill with good visibility, and it is the halfway point of all Campbell County. For years, the City has been trying to attract a hotel to support the out-of-town visitors who come for the numerous military and sporting events that take place every year in Fort Thomas.

SWOT ANALYSIS  
Business Districts and Economic Development

- » For nearly 20 years, the City has had an economic development director, actively participated in the state’s Renaissance/ National Main Street Program, and annually hosted several events.
- » In the past, the City has assisted/facilitated development projects and parking improvements.

**S**TRENGTHS

- » Limited vacant land to attract “greenfield” economic development.
- » City does not currently provide tax incentives.
- » Complaints of limited parking.
- » The city is lacking in the range of retail and services provided, need for more restaurants, more events. There is no continuity among the various business districts.
- » Vacancies in the downtown (generally recognized as N Fort Thomas Avenue and Highland Avenue); but given the size of the population, how sustainable is it to try to attract more businesses?
- » The Town Center lacks a specific label/ identity.

**W**EAKNESSES

**O**PPORTUNITIES

- » Increase density in the traditional “Main Street” districts as a way to increase development and provide more retail and housing.
- » Potential to create a development committee.
- » Build on the existing businesses with business types that are/ will be suitable for local business districts.
- » Provide financial incentives to attract economic development, high-tech businesses and small businesses to Fort Thomas.
- » Consider more form-based and performance-based development regulations, and add more flexibility in the range of uses permitted in business districts.
- » Enhance/ expand design review.

**T**HREATS

- » Lack of parking (real or perceived).
- » Changing nature of retail, banking and other services that could cause vacancies in business districts.
- » Current zoning and decision making practices in the primary business districts may make it difficult to attract and retain businesses.
- » Concerns that increasing density in the business districts will be in conflict with maintaining the bedroom community character and feel.

### Recommendations:

### L3 Strengthen our Business Districts And Enhance our Economic Well-Being

**L3.1** Continue to foster investment, infill development and redevelopment that create and enhance vibrant and resilient mixed-use business districts, each with a unique theme and sense of place, oriented primarily to the needs of residents, and which include a central gathering place.

**L3.1.1** Continue to strengthen the Town Center (primary business district) with a family- friendly focus and concentration of restaurants, convenience goods, and services - destination businesses that generate walk-in business and compliment the civic and retail aspects (e.g. small grocery and pharmacy). Develop a Town Center Master Plan that outlines specific action steps using the strategies in Chapter 2.6 Town Center Focus Area as a starting point. **F**

**L3.1.2** Continue to build on the successes of the Midway District (primary business district) with an entertainment/recreation focus and good connections to Tower Park. Develop a Midway District Master Plan that outlines specific action steps, using the strategies in Chapter 2.6 Midway Focus Area as a starting point.

**F**

**L3.1.3** Enhance secondary business districts (Inverness and the general Grand/ Highland business area); through the use of well-designed signs, landscaping and streetscape treatments to create distinctive places.

**L3.2** Foster investment, infill development and new economic development along Alexandria Pike (US 27) as a primary mixed-use corridor that takes advantage of access to the interstate, potential for “Smart City” investments and proximity to major employers such as Northern Kentucky University and St Elizabeth Healthcare. Develop a Corridor Plan as recommended in Chapter 2.6 Alexandria Pike (US 27) Focus Area. **F**

**L3.3** Enhance the City’s business attraction and retention strategy to attract the right retailers and other businesses to the city’s various business districts and economic development areas to promote a healthy economy with a stable and diversified employment base:

**L3.3.1** Continue to strengthen Fort Thomas Plaza; promote and attract new businesses to create a more vibrant plaza.

**L3.3.2** Conduct a market study to identify the need for/lack of specific businesses and the potential for attracting them to the city. Elements of the market study could include:

- » Conducting a survey of businesses to identify existing obstacles as well as what local businesses need to be successful.
- » Collecting community feedback to better understand why locals shop (or don’t shop) in the business districts, similar to surveys that have been done in the past.

**L3.3.3** Reestablish the façade improvement incentive program, and identify/ evaluate the need for other assistance the city can provide to support local business owners.

**L3.3.4** Conduct a parking study in each business district and consider creating a parking district – so that individual businesses are not required to supply their own parking.

**L3.3.5** Foster low-impact, home based businesses. Evaluate the current home occupation regulations and update as needed to encourage and facilitate home based businesses while ensuring they are compatible with the neighborhood.

#### L3 Reference List

**T** Chapter 2.2  
Transportation and Connectivity

**F** Chapter 2.6  
Focus Area Plans



Figure L6. Fort Thomas Economic Development Priority Objectives

Part 2

**L3.4** Ensure economic development is appropriate for its location and compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

**L3.4.1** Establish form-based code regulations tailored to specific commercial areas of the city. Develop regulations that address:

- » Appropriate building setbacks from the street to define a uniform building edge
- » Building height requirements to accommodate the desired types of buildings and uses, recognizing that first floor commercial and two levels of residential are currently not possible with the current maximum height limits.
- » Appropriate setback for buildings when adjacent to single family homes with specific attention to buffering requirements that will protect the adjoining neighborhoods. This is particularly important for the edges of business districts to adequately buffer the adjacent single-family neighborhoods.
- » Permit flexibility in parking requirements including allowances for shared parking and off site arrangements.
- » See also L1.2.1 for a discussion of zoning updates

**L3.4.2** Consider expanded use of design review for all nonresidential development/redevelopment. Review and revise the existing design guidelines to address landscaping guidelines, general architectural materials, massing, and signs. **F**

**L3.5** Develop branding strategy that includes recommendations for streetscape treatment, banners, signs, etc. for major corridors that connect to the primary business districts.

**L3.5.1** Create, brand and market each business district, based on its own character and purpose.

**L3.5.2** Install wayfinding signs, and enhance entry signs and street banners to incorporate the branding strategies developed. **T**

### NATURAL RESOURCE PRESERVATION

Fort Thomas is known for its topography and extensive tree canopy. Mature trees line many of the neighborhood streets and main corridors, and nearly all of the undeveloped hillsides are heavily wooded. The 2014 Urban Tree Canopy Study included an assessment of tree canopy in Northern Kentucky, and Fort Thomas has a 57 percent tree canopy cover. While this is the same as the overall average for Campbell County, it is much higher than the percentage for neighboring communities, such as Newport (33 percent), Bellevue (36 percent) and Dayton (38 percent).

As noted earlier, much of the remaining vacant land in Fort Thomas is impacted by steep slopes. Recognizing that areas where slopes exceed 20 percent are valuable and irreplaceable resources that merit special protection, the City has utilized hillside development controls in the Fort Thomas Zoning Ordinance to regulate hillside development. The hillside development controls were established to protect and enhance the valuable natural areas and open spaces that remain in the city. See Map Figure L7 Vacant Land and Hillsides Greater than 20 Percent.

### Recommendations:

#### L4 Protect our Natural Resources

**L4.1** Continue to protect the greenbelt along the Ohio River by strengthening regulations and building partnerships.

**L4.1.1** Review and strengthen as needed the Hillside Development Control regulations.

**L4.1.2** Work closely with the Fort Thomas Forest Conservancy to protect the hillside through conservation easements and other techniques. **P R**

**L4.1.3** Develop flexible regulations to encourage infill development in order to reduce demand for development on hillsides, preserve green space, and reduce the need to build more roadway.

**L4.2** Ensure that new development is designed in ways that incorporate, protect and take advantage of the mature trees, hillsides, and scenic views. Rely primarily on education, awareness and perhaps incentives to encourage the use of landscaping and tree planting balanced by reasonable regulations.

**L4.2.1** Promote sustainable development practices that are beneficial for both the property owner and the community as a whole.

**L4.2.2** Promote the benefit of trees such as reducing the heat island effect, providing improved infiltration of storm water runoff, and increasing property values, etc.

**L4.3** Ensure that new development is constructed in ways that conserve natural resources by being energy efficient, reducing storm water runoff, etc.

#### L4 Reference List

- P** Chapter 2.3  
Parks and Open Space
- U** Chapter 2.4  
Utilities and City Owned Facilities
- R** Chapter 2.5  
Regional Partners

## CHAPTER 2.1 LAND USE

**L4.3.1** Investigate the need for additional engineering and site design standards for grading, storm water runoff, drainage and vegetation clearance that will reduce development impact on natural systems and minimize hazards to public safety. These provisions could be incorporated into the subdivision regulations, zoning ordinance and/or tree commission ordinance to ensure adequate review as part of the development or subdivision plan process.

**U**

**L4.3.2** Develop educational materials that highlight recommended methods of reducing energy consumption and explain the benefits of green infrastructure such as rain gardens.

**L4.3.3** Encourage new development and redevelopment to follow Low Impact Development principles. Consider incorporating Low Impact Development (LID) standards, such as limits on the amount of impervious area, into special economic development programs that utilize tax abatement incentives.

**U**



Figure L7. Fort Thomas Vacant Land and Hillsides Greater than 20 Percent



## CHAPTER 2.2

# TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTIVITY

Transportation plays a vital role in all our lives, as it provides means for people or goods to travel from one point to another for business or recreational needs. As transportation needs have evolved over the years, the transportation topics addressed in comprehensive plans have expanded. The transportation network within Fort Thomas is not only part of our local system but also an integral part of the regional transportation system, with major highways including I-275, I-475, and Alexandria Pike (US 27) along our borders and major roadways such as Grand Avenue (KY 1892), Memorial Parkway (KY 1120), N Fort Thomas Avenue (KY 1120), and S Fort Thomas Avenue (KY 1120) running through the city and connecting to other communities.

The transportation system in Fort Thomas serves four broad user groups: (1) people traveling between destinations within the city; (2) people traveling into the city from other areas; (3) people traveling from the city to other areas; and (4) people passing through the city. Recognizing these facts, previous city leaders made the decision to become part of the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments (OKI), the organization charged with the planning and coordination of regional transportation for this region. This Community Plan lays out improvements to address the local needs while also recognizing the relationship between the Fort Thomas transportation system within the larger OKI region.

There are a number of existing conditions in our transportation system, development patterns, and natural features that influence residents travel modes, patterns and behavior. For example, the proximity and orientation of the interstates (I-275 and I-471) allows residents to easily travel via automobile to other destinations and communities within the area while also reducing the amount of cut through traffic. Our community is very walkable, the existing road and sidewalk networks provide good access to the schools throughout the City, however, there are gaps within the sidewalk network and sections where the sidewalk has deteriorated and no longer meets the ADA standards. The City has acquired grant money to add sidewalk to sections of N Fort Thomas Avenue (KY 1120).

The Ohio River runs along the entire eastern edge of the City, yet the river frontage is not being utilized. This is in part due to the limited access to the corridor and the existing conditions of Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8), Tower Hill Road, and River Road (KY 445). Improvements to the roadways, additional pedestrian paths, and better utilization will make the riverfront corridor more accessible and appealing. However, Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8) and River Road (KY 445) are currently owned by the state and any improvements or modifications would have to be approved by the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC).



## TRANSPORTATION & CONNECTIVITY

### VISION

To be the most walkable and bike-friendly community in Kentucky, with a well-connected and attractive multi-modal transportation system so that citizens can safely and comfortably travel between all neighborhoods, schools, parks, business districts and other key destinations within the city and throughout neighboring communities, whether on foot, bike, car or other form of transportation.

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

#### **T1 Improve and maintain our infrastructure so residents of all ages can move safely throughout Fort Thomas.**

- T1.1** Ensure that all sidewalks within the city are ADA compliant.
- T1.2** Provide safe and highly visible pedestrian and automobile access at all schools and parks in the city.
- T1.3** Provide safe and highly visible accommodations at all crosswalks in the city.
- T1.4** Monitor speed limits and make modifications when warranted.
- T1.5** Continue systematic maintenance of infrastructure.
- T1.6** Continue to support public transit options in the City

#### **T2 Make it easy and enticing to move about Fort Thomas.**

- T2.1** Create distinctive gateways at key entries into the city.
- T2.2** Provide signage throughout the city to indicate directions, distances, destinations, and parking.
- T2.3** Beautify major corridors/routes in the city and create a cohesive feel between districts.

#### **T3 Encourage more active forms of travel to foster residents' health and wellbeing.**

- T3.1** Formulate a Complete Streets Policy to guide the City's efforts to increase multimodal travel options.
- T3.2** Create a complete sidewalk network in the city that provides connection within and between all neighborhoods.
- T3.3** Gain "Bike Friendly City" status from the League of American Bicyclists by providing cycling accommodations/routes throughout the city.
- T3.4** Collaborate with adjacent communities to create interconnected sidewalk, trail and multi-use path networks.
- T3.5** Evaluate key roadways for road diet/multi-use path/bike lane opportunities.

#### **T4 Improve Mary Ingels Highway (KY 8) and increase access to river frontage along the corridor.**

- T4.1** Celebrate the Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8) corridor as part of Northern Kentucky Riverfront Commons, a Scenic Byway, and a destination for boaters, cyclists and park/trail users.

# CHAPTER 2.2 TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTIVITY

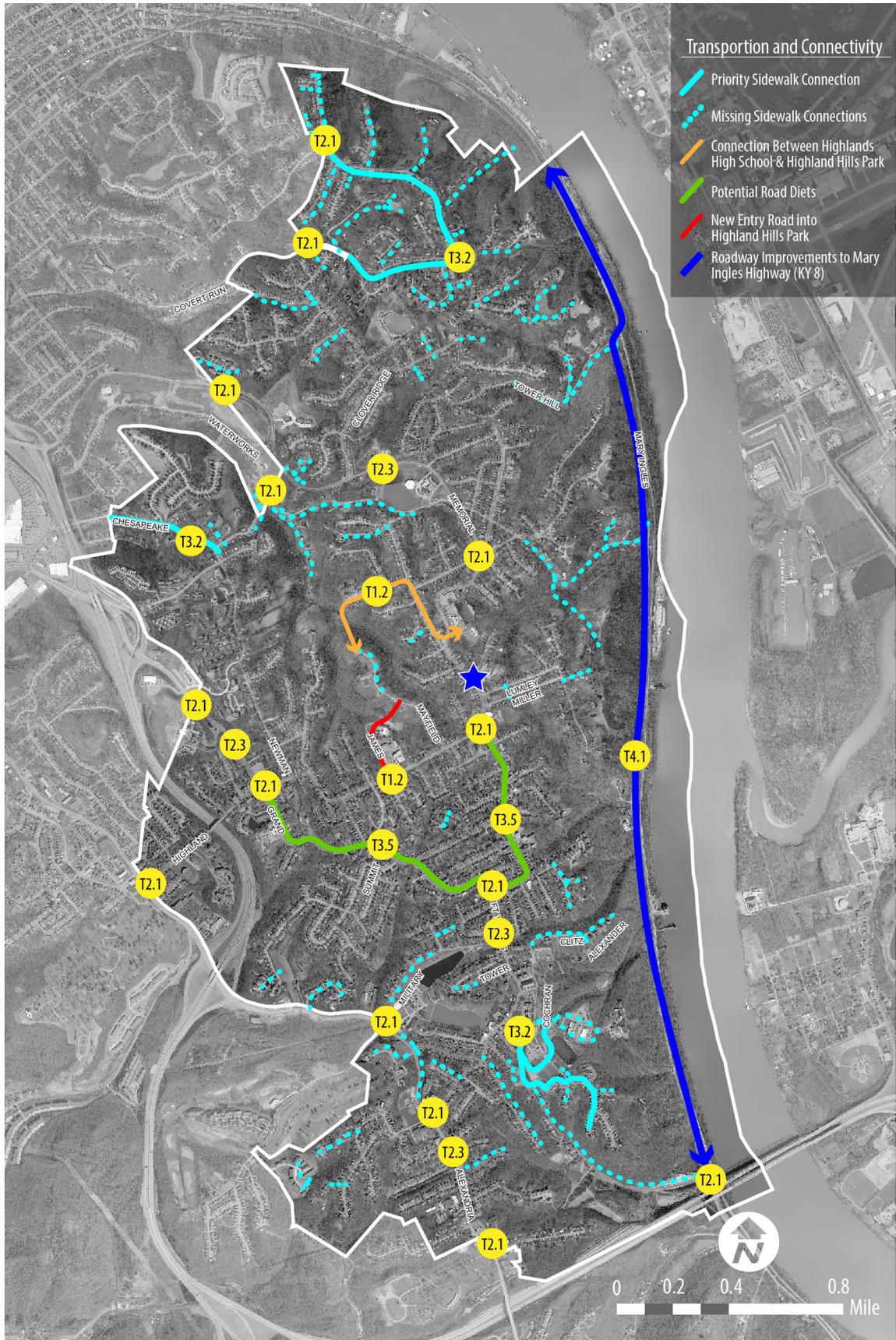


Figure T1. Transportation and Connectivity Summary Map

## CHAPTER 2.2 TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTIVITY

Safety is also a key factor in evaluating our existing transportation system. The safety of all travelers (pedestrians, bicyclists and drivers) on S Grand Avenue (KY 1892) has been called into question, as drivers often exceed the speed limit on this winding stretch of road. S Grand Avenue along with S Fort Thomas Avenue (KY 1120) are candidates for road diets that could help reduce speeds and improve accommodations for alternate modes of transportation. Yet, again, both of these streets are owned and maintained by the state, and any changes or improvements would need to be approved by KYTC.

Nationally, as well as in Fort Thomas, there is growing interest in the benefits of fostering a more active lifestyle through walking and riding bikes more often. Yet, our transportation system has been designed primarily to meet the needs of motorists. A number of improvements could be made to our current system to better accommodate various modes of travel, such as improving crosswalk visibility, installing advanced signage, adding dedicated bike lanes, pavement markings, wider sidewalks, multi-use paths, and bike racks. The city has several good recreational trails, however, these can always be expanded and improved.

### SWOT ANALYSIS

During the Awareness Phase, the Transportation and Connectivity Committee conducted a SWOT analysis to identify the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats related to the city's transportation network. Strengths (S) and Weaknesses (W) are internal factors and constraints over which the city has some control, while Opportunities (O) and Threats (T) are external factors and constraints over which the city has little or no control. Conducting a SWOT analysis is a way to focus on our strengths, minimize threats, and take the greatest possible advantage of opportunities.

The most critical SWOT elements identified are illustrated below, while the complete Transportation and Connectivity SWOT matrix is included in Appendix A.

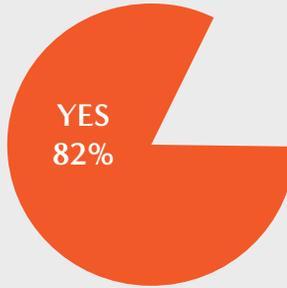


COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

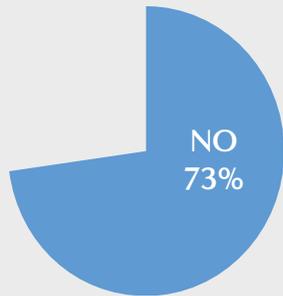
Total Responses: 655 People



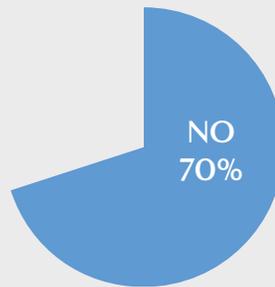
Is the existing road system accommodating for cyclists?



Does the sidewalk system meet your needs?



Are additional crosswalks needed?



Should the speed limit change on the street where you live?

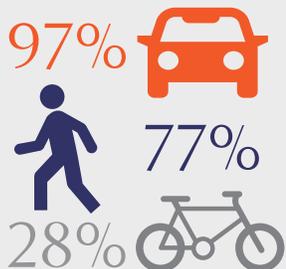
Residents' Top Destinations in the City...

77%... Parks

70%... Schools

67%... Business Districts

How do Fort Thomas residents travel?



Part 2

### T1 Improve and maintain our infrastructure so residents of all ages can move safely throughout Fort Thomas.

**T1.1** Ensure that all sidewalks within the city are ADA compliant.

As the transportation networks continue to age, regular maintenance is needed. This includes the resurfacing and reconstruction of the pavement, repairs to the sidewalks, and plowing and treating the roads during the winter. It is important for this maintenance to continue. As part of this regular maintenance, special attention should be taken when evaluating the condition of the sidewalks and curb ramps to keep them in compliance with ADA requirements.

**T1.2** Provide safe and highly visible pedestrian and automobile access at all schools and parks in the city.

One location where improvements can be made is at the entrance to Highland Hills Park - including improvements to James Avenue.

#### Recommendations:

**T1.2.1** Improve the intersection of James Avenue and Highland Avenue. **P**

**T1.2.2** Connect James Avenue to Highland Hills Park.

**T1.2.3** Develop new trail between Highlands High School and Highland Hills Park.

#### T1 Reference List

- L** Chapter 2.1  
Land Use
- P** Chapter 2.3  
Parks and Open Space

## CHAPTER 2.2 TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTIVITY

**T1.3** Provide safe and highly visible accommodations at all crosswalks in the city.

Many Fort Thomas residents walk throughout the city whether to get to and from destinations or for recreational purposes. As such crosswalk safety is an import issue especially around the school and on roadways with heavy vehicular traffic. There are many options that can be considered to help improve crosswalk safety. At crossings, the pavement can be striped with perpendicular bars (piano keys) or diagonal bars between two parallel stripes (zebra striping) instead of the traditional parallel stripes. At mid-block crossings, a yield line can be marked in advance of the crossing to make drivers more aware of the upcoming crosswalk. Along the centerline of the road, in-pavement collapsible signs can be installed, and flashing lights can be added to crosswalks signs, which will only flash when there is a pedestrian waiting to cross. At signalized intersections, the signal timing can be adjusted to allow for pedestrians to cross before the vehicles. Additionally, right turns on red can be prohibited. To improve safety at night, additional lighting can be provided either via street lighting or in pavement lights.

### Recommendations:

**T1.3.1** Develop a crosswalk safety plan.

- » Allows for a consistent approach throughout the city.
- » Emphasize strategies to be utilized at schools and major routes that the children use to commute to school.

**T1.3.2** Restripe crosswalk markings that have faded.

**T1.4** Monitor speed limits and make modifications when warranted.

Currently the speed limit throughout the city is 25 miles per hour unless posted otherwise. As indicated by the results of the community survey, a majority of respondents believe that the speed limit should remain the same on the street where they live. However, some respondents indicated that the speed limit should be decreased. The City Council has the authority to hear requests for modifications to the speed limit on local streets. It is recommended that residents who would like the speed limit to be modified make a request to the City and that the City evaluate the request to determine if a modification is appropriate.

**T1.5** Continue systematic maintenance of the infrastructure.

As the transportation networks continue to age, regular maintenance is needed. This includes resurfacing and reconstruction of pavement, repairs to sidewalks, and plowing and treating roads during the winter. It is important for this maintenance to continue. As part of this regular maintenance, special attention should be taken when evaluating the condition of the sidewalks and curb ramps to keep them in compliance with ADA requirements. **L**

**T1.6** Continue to support public transit options in the city.

Public transit provides a valuable service to Fort Thomas. Currently, the Transit Authority of Northern Kentucky (TANK) provides public transit with connections between most communities in Northern Kentucky as well as connections to Cincinnati. Unfortunately, the ridership within Fort Thomas has decreased, in fact, only 4 percent of the community survey respondents indicated that they use public transit. Over the last several years, TANK has responded to the decline in ridership by decreasing and changing the bus routes that go through the city. It is important that Fort Thomas maintains a TANK bus route through the city or provide some other form of public transit for those needing an alternate mode of transportation.

### T2 Make it easy and enticing to move about Fort Thomas.

#### T2.1 Create distinctive gateways at key entries into the city.

Most communities in Northern Kentucky abut one another. It is therefore important to have gateways that are identifiable as portals into the city of Fort Thomas. These gateways should reflect the historical and desired characteristics of the city so that travelers know that they are in Fort Thomas. Gateways are not simple signs and landscaping, it is culmination of several factors that give traveler a sense of space and character of the community. This can be accomplished by implementing improvements outlined above for cycling, sidewalks, crosswalks, streetscape, and signage. **P R**

#### T2.2 Provide signage throughout the city to indicate directions, distances, destinations and parking.

Wayfinding signage has become a standard in many communities as a way of informing people of the surroundings in an unfamiliar environment. It is important to provide easily understandable information at strategic locations, such as gateways and business districts, to guide people in the right directions. An effective wayfinding system should create a comprehensive, clear, and consistent visual communication system that is concise and only show the information that is needed.

The complexity of Fort Thomas' terrain and roadway system can create an obstacle for visitors and residents alike to actively make use of the multiple recreational areas and business districts located throughout the city. The success of the local businesses relies on patronage from customers beyond the city's residential base, however many are at a disadvantage being situated off the area's high traffic corridors and along routes that may be confusing for those not familiar with the area. Additionally, much of the parking within the business districts is not being utilized as it is often in areas that are not clearly visible by drivers on the street.

Wayfinding signage also serves modes of transportation other than automobile. Pedestrians and cyclists use the signage to move around the city. In active cities such as Fort Thomas, there are opportunities to develop dedicated wayfinding signage for recreational purposes. These could include route and mile markers.

Wayfinding signs are highly customizable and present opportunities to brand the city and districts within the city. Illustrations incorporated into the design can help identify key aspects of areas such as arts districts, historic districts, museums, parks, retail/shopping districts, and food/restaurant districts.

#### T2 Reference List

- L** Chapter 2.1  
Land Use
- P** Chapter 2.3  
Parks and Open Space
- U** Chapter 2.4  
Utilities and City Owned Facilities
- R** Chapter 2.5  
Regional Partners
- F** Chapter 2.6  
Focus Area Plans

## CHAPTER 2.2 TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTIVITY

In addition to wayfinding signage, interpretive signage can be used to promote Fort Thomas' cultural and natural history and serve as an engaging tool to preserve the history of the community as it evolves over time. While there are many forms of interpretive signs, the most commonly recognized is a wayside sign. Waysides typically include both text and graphical elements, which connect the viewer to the landscape, concisely orienting the resources and themes represented at the spot the visitor is standing. These signs can enhance people's understanding of the city and encourage enjoyment and pride.

### Recommendations:

**T2.2.1** Develop a signage/branding strategy for consistent visual signage throughout the City. **L**

**T2.2.2** Provide wayfinding signage at gateway entries into the city and at key intersections, including:

- » Intersection of River Road (KY 445) and S Fort Thomas Avenue (KY 1120)
- » Intersection of River Road (KY 445) and Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8)
- » Intersection of Tower Hill Road and Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8)
- » Intersection of Alexandria Pike (US 27) and S Fort Thomas Avenue (KY 1120)
- » Intersection of Grand Avenue (KY 1892) and S Fort Thomas Avenue (KY 1120)
- » Intersection of Grand Avenue (KY 1892) and Highland Avenue
- » Intersection of Highland Avenue and N and S Fort Thomas Avenue (KY 1120).
- » Intersection of Memorial Parkway (KY 1120) and N Fort Thomas Avenue (KY 1120)
- » Memorial Parkway (KY 1120) at the Fort Thomas/Newport Line
- » Covert Run Pike at the Fort Thomas/Bellevue Line
- » Dayton Pike/ N Fort Thomas Avenue at the Fort Thomas/Dayton Line
- » Waterworks Road at the Fort Thomas/Newport Line
- » Grand Avenue (KY 1892) at the Fort Thomas/Newport Line
- » Highland Avenue at the Fort Thomas/Southgate Line
- » Alexandria Pike (US 27) at the Fort Thomas/Southgate Line
- » Alexandria Pike (US 27) at the Fort Thomas/Highland Heights Line

**L P F**

**T2.2.3** Indicate key destinations on wayfinding signs, such as:

- » Business Districts
- » City Facilities
- » Parks
- » Schools
- » Library

**L U F**

**T2.2.4** Provide signage to indicate areas with off-street parking in the business districts. **L F**

**T2.3** Beautify major corridors/routes in the city and create a cohesive feel between districts

### Streetscapes

Over the last 18 years, improvements have been made to the streetscape in and around the business districts, primarily on Fort Thomas Avenue (KY 1120). These have included the construction of new sidewalks with brick pavers, relocating utilities underground, installing decorative street lighting, landscaping, and benches. The improvements have had a positive response. As there is a large separation between districts, the streetscape treatments have not yet been applied to the sections of the corridor between the districts. These sections have been described as being stark and disjointed. There continues to be a desire to beautify the city by utilizing these same techniques along Fort Thomas Avenue (KY 1120) and other major corridor and create a cohesive feel as people travel throughout the city. Incorporating pedestrian amenities such as benches, trash receptacles, drinking fountains, and lighting help promote a more active lifestyles.

### Recommendations:

**T2.3.1** Beautify/improve the streetscape along S Fort Thomas Avenue (KY 1120) between the Town Center District and the Midway District.

- » Street lighting
- » Pedestrian rest area amenities
- » Landscaping
- » Sidewalk with brick pavers

**T2.3.2** Beautify/improve the streetscape on other major corridors throughout the city including Alexandria Pike (US 27), Grand Avenue (KY 1892), Highland Avenue, and Memorial Parkway (KY 1120). **R**

- » Street lighting
- » Pedestrian rest area amenities
- » Landscaping
- » Sidewalk improvements
- » Special attention around schools

### Alexandria Pike (US 27) Corridor

Alexandria Pike (US 27) serves as a major route within Fort Thomas and surrounding communities. As it plays a vital role to the economic development of the area, it is important to have a clear vision for the future of the US 27 corridor that is consistent throughout the region. With that in mind, representatives from Fort Thomas met with the County, Southgate, and Highland Heights in May 2018 to collaborate on a vision for the US 27 Corridor. This included opportunities for commercial development, improvements to existing open spaces, addition of new transportation options for pedestrians and cyclists, and Smart City strategies. **L U R F**

### Recommendations:

**T2.3.3** Work with surrounding communities and stakeholders to improve the US-27 Corridor.

**T2.3.4** Repair I-275 bridge

**T2.3.5** Develop a regional multi-use path network from Northern Kentucky University to Newport.

**T2.3.6** Improve streetscape along the corridor with an emphasis on green streets.

### T3 Encourage more active forms of travel to foster residents' health and wellbeing.

**T3.1** Formulate a Complete Streets Policy to guide the City's efforts to increase multimodal travel options.

"Complete Streets" are designed to provide safe accommodations and access for all users including pedestrian, cyclists, motorists, and public transit users of all ages and abilities. Complete streets may include sidewalks, bike lanes, special bus lanes, comfortable and accessible public transportation stops, frequent and safe crossing opportunities, median islands, accessible pedestrian signals, curb extensions, narrower travel lanes, and roundabouts. **P**

**T3.2** Create a complete sidewalk network in the city that provides connection within and between all neighborhoods.

The City of Fort Thomas provides sidewalks along a majority of the streets within the core of the city. Refer to city sidewalks map below. However, there are gaps within the network that need to be addressed. These are typically located toward the edges of the city. Of the sections that have no sidewalk, the following sections of sidewalk have been identified as having the highest priority.

- » N Fort Thomas Avenue (KY 1120) from Covert Run Pike to the corporate limits
- » Covert Run Pike from N Fort Thomas Avenue (KY 1120) to the corporate limits
- » Chesapeake Avenue from Kyles Lane to the corporate limits
- » Army Reserve Road
- » Sergeant Avenue

**P**

#### T4 Reference List

**P** Chapter 2.3  
Parks and Open Space

**R** Chapter 2.5  
Regional Partners

## CHAPTER 2.2 TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTIVITY

The City recently received funding to install new sidewalk along N Fort Thomas Avenue (KY 1120) from Covert Run Pike to the corporate limits. Plans are being developed for anticipated construction in 2019.

**T3.2.1** Recommendation: Fund or apply for funding to install sidewalks on roads that currently have no sidewalks:

- » Covert Run Pike
- » Chesapeake Avenue
- » Army Reserve Road
- » Sergeant Avenue

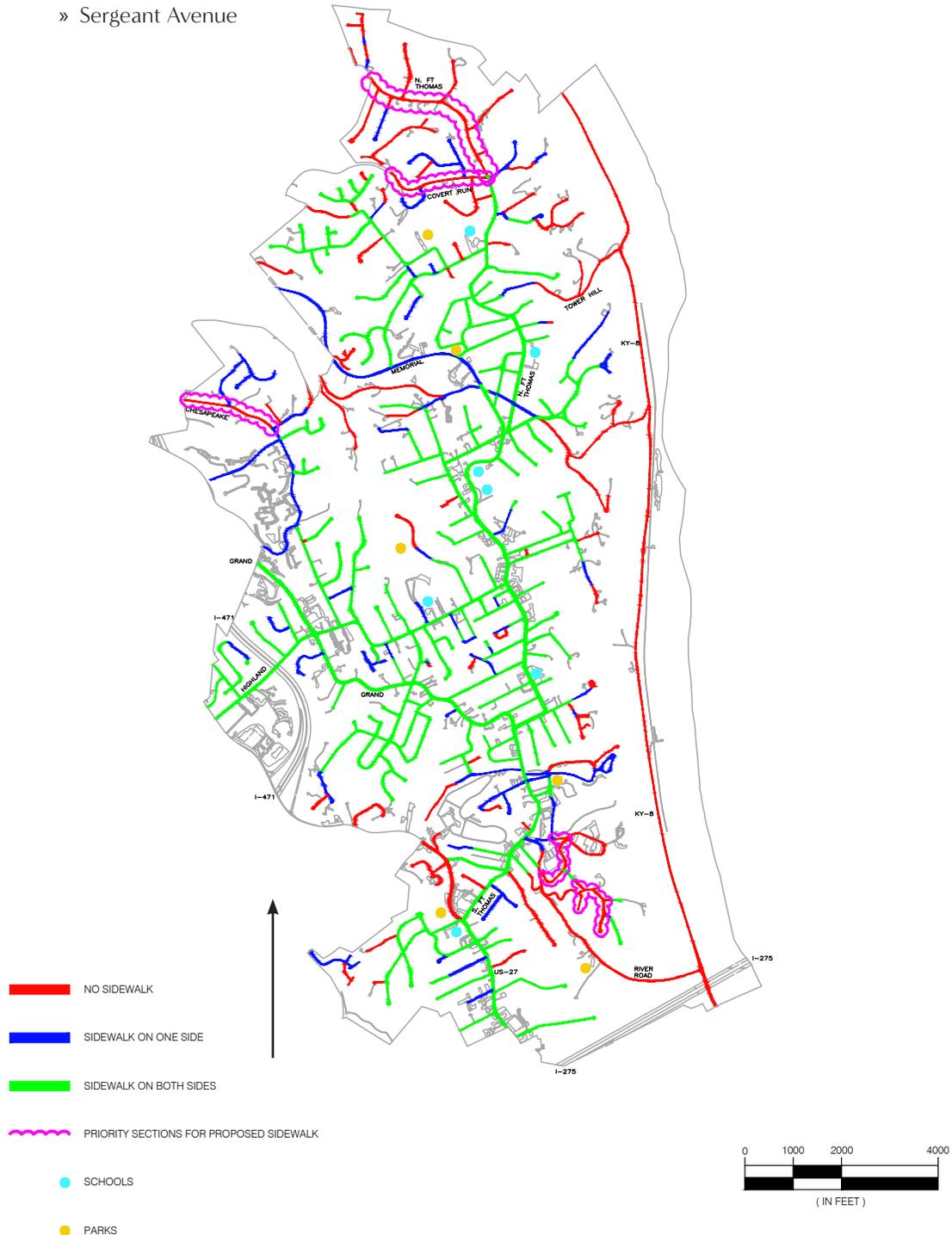


Figure T2. Fort Thomas City Sidewalk Map

## CHAPTER 2.2 TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTIVITY

**T3.3** Gain “Bike Friendly City” status from the League of American Bicyclists by providing cycling accommodations/routes throughout the city.

The City of Fort Thomas is an active community with many of its residents of all ages and skill level riding bikes. As the survey indicated, the existing transportation system within the city is not accommodating for cyclists. If the changes were made throughout the city, cycling would become a more attractive transportation mode choice and would promote a healthy lifestyle.

Other desired improvements include: providing bike racks at key locations such as the business districts and parks, bike rental available throughout the city, cycling/pedestrian rest area amenities (benches, drinking fountains, etc.), dedicated bike lane, sharrow pavement markings and share the road signage along preferred bike routes, multi-use paths, and wider sidewalks. All of these improvements would help work toward creating a “bike friendly city.”

The popularity of bike-sharing services, such as Red Bike, continues to grow. The service allows people to rent a bicycle at one location and drop it off at another. This provides an alternate mode of travel for those without bikes or those who do not want to leave their bike unattended for prolonged periods of time. However, the heavy frames of these bikes do create a challenge for cyclists traversing hilly terrain, such as the terrain throughout parts of Fort Thomas. The emergence of electric bicycles seeks to relieve the issue. In addition, the concept has spread to electric scooters across the nation. If the electric scooter trend spreads to Fort Thomas, it may be important for the City to regulate their use. Currently, the scooters would be regulated the same as bicycles.

### Recommendations:

**T3.3.1** Install new bike racks at strategic locations.

- » Business Districts
- » Parks
- » City Facilities

**T3.3.2** Mark bicycle routes to make motorist aware that they are driving on a preferred bike route.

- » Dedicated Bike Lanes
- » Sharrow Pavement Markings
- » Share the Road Signage

**T3.3.3** Provide rest amenities along identified bicycle routes.

- » Benches
- » Drinking Fountains

**T3.3.4** Establish public/private partnership to provide bicycle rentals at strategic locations throughout the city.

- » Business Districts
- » Parks

## CHAPTER 2.2 TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTIVITY

**T3.4** Collaborate with adjacent communities to create interconnected sidewalk, trail, and multi-use path.

Locations where sidewalk connections with adjoining communities are important include: N Fort Thomas Avenue (KY 1120) Connection, Covert Run Pike Connection and Chesapeake Avenue Connection.

OKI has identified and classified bike routes throughout the region. The roads in Fort Thomas considered to be preferred bike routes include Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8), River Road (KY 445), Tower Hill Road, Fort Thomas Avenue (KY 1120), Highland Avenue, Waterworks Road, Newman Avenue, and Chesapeake Avenue. Additionally, Memorial Parkway (KY 1120), Grand Avenue (KY 1892), and Alexandria Pike (US 27) were identified as routes to be used with caution. **P R**

**T3.5** Evaluate key roadways for road diet, multiple-use path, and/or bike lane opportunities.

Safety issues have become more apparent on the four-lane roadways throughout the city including Grand Avenue, N Fort Thomas Avenue (KY 1120), and S Fort Thomas Avenue (KY 1120). The traffic volumes, lane widths, and lane configuration allow for motorist to travel along the roadways at higher speed without much encumbrance. Law enforcement helps by ticketing offenders, but unfortunately, there is not enough manpower to be able to constantly patrol these sections. In order to change the behavior of motorist on these roadways, physical changes should be considered.

“Road Diet” is a technique of reducing the number of lanes and/or the width of the lanes in order to make improvements for all modes of transportation. These lane reductions allow for potential new turn lanes, bike lanes, on-street parking, and wider sidewalks. Road Diets have shown to reduce speeds and provide safer conditions for pedestrians and cyclists.

According to the Federal Highway Administration, four lane roadways with an average daily traffic of less than 10,000 vehicles is a great candidate for road diets in most instances. According to OKI and KYTC traffic counts, the average daily traffic on Grand Avenue (KY 1892) from Highland Avenue to S Fort Thomas Avenue (KY 1120) and on S Fort Thomas Avenue (KY 1120) from Grand Avenue (KY 1892) to Highland Avenue is approximately 6,000 vehicle per day.

The existing section of Grand Avenue (KY 1892) between Highland Avenue and S Fort Thomas Avenue (KY 1120) is approximately 50 feet wide from back of curb to back of curb with four 12 feet wide lanes. A road diet for this section would likely consist of resurfacing and restriping the existing pavement. The new striping would allow for a 12 feet wide lane in each direction, a 14 feet wide shared turn lane, and a 6 feet wide dedicated bike lane in each direction. Refer to the figures below.

# CHAPTER 2.2 TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTIVITY

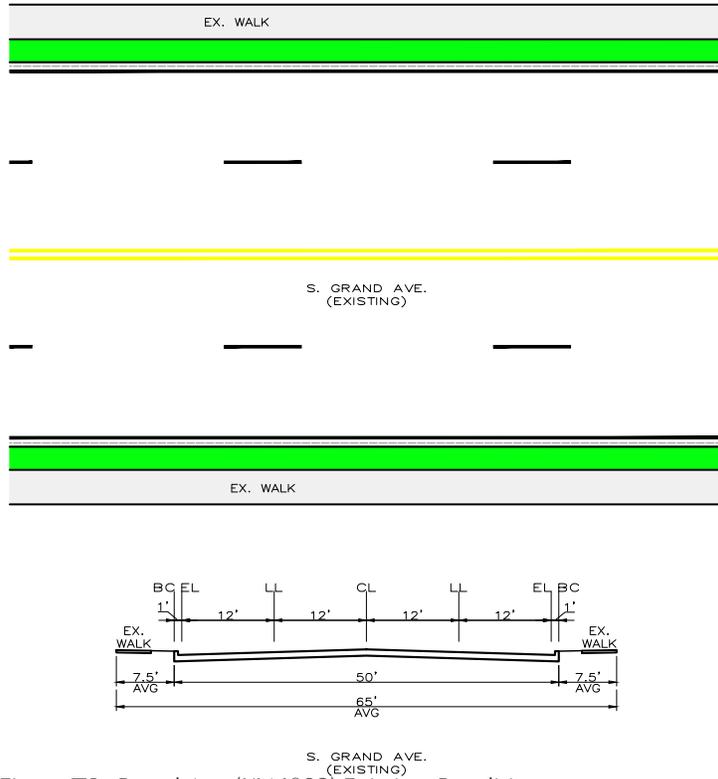


Figure T3. Grand Ave (KY 1892) Existing Conditions

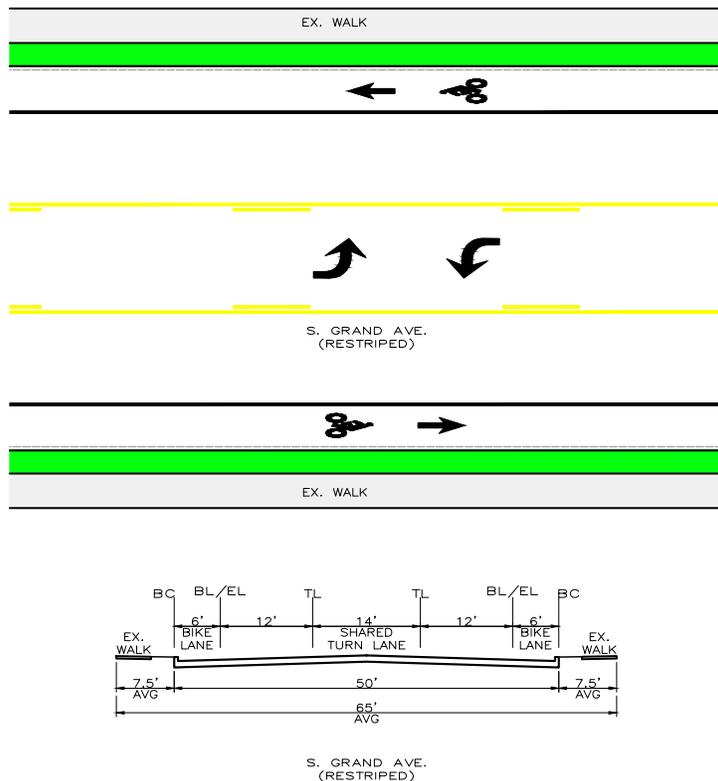


Figure T4. Grand Ave (KY 1892) Proposed Road Diet

Part 2

## CHAPTER 2.2 TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTIVITY

The existing section of S Fort Thomas Avenue (KY 1120) between Grand Avenue (KY 1892) and Highland Avenue is approximately 61 feet wide from back of curb to back of curb with four 10 feet wide lanes, a 4 feet wide center median, and 8 feet wide parking lanes on each side. A road diet for this section would likely consist of resurfacing and restriping the existing pavement and modification to the center medians. The new striping would allow for an 11 feet wide lane in each direction, a 10 feet wide median with left turn lanes at the intersections, a 6 feet wide bike lane in each direction, and an 8 feet wide parking lane each direction. The bike lane would be located between the parking lane and the automobile lane. Where possible, portions of the existing median would be removed to allow for left turn lanes. However, to do so could require some relocation of overhead utilities, as there are utility poles located in the center median near some of the intersections, refer to Figures T4. and T5.

As both Grand Avenue (KY 1892) and Fort Thomas Avenue (KY 1120) are owned by the state, all road diet improvements would need to be submitted and approved by KYTC.

Congestion at the intersection of Grand Avenue (KY 1892) and Highland Avenue is a problem for many residents. Restricted right turn movements on red and limited ability to make left turn movements from Highland Avenue onto Grand Avenue (KY 1892) at times due to heavy through traffic movements have caused the intersection to operate inefficiently. As Grand Avenue (KY 1892) currently has two lanes in each direction, alternative intersection designs could take up significantly more room, and therefore are considered to be unfeasible. If a road diet could be achieved on Grand Avenue (KY 1892), alternative designs such as a roundabout could be feasible for this intersection. Special considerations should be made for improving the intersection as a Road Diet is more closely evaluated. **P R**

### Recommendations:

- T3.5.1** Conduct study to evaluate the feasibility of proposed road diets.
- T3.5.2** Present study to KYTC for approval of road diets.
- T3.5.3** Work with KYTC to have roads restriped to proposed configuration when the State resurfaces the roads.
- T3.5.4** Improve the efficiency of the intersection of Grand Avenue (KY 1892) and Highland Avenue.

# CHAPTER 2.2 TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTIVITY

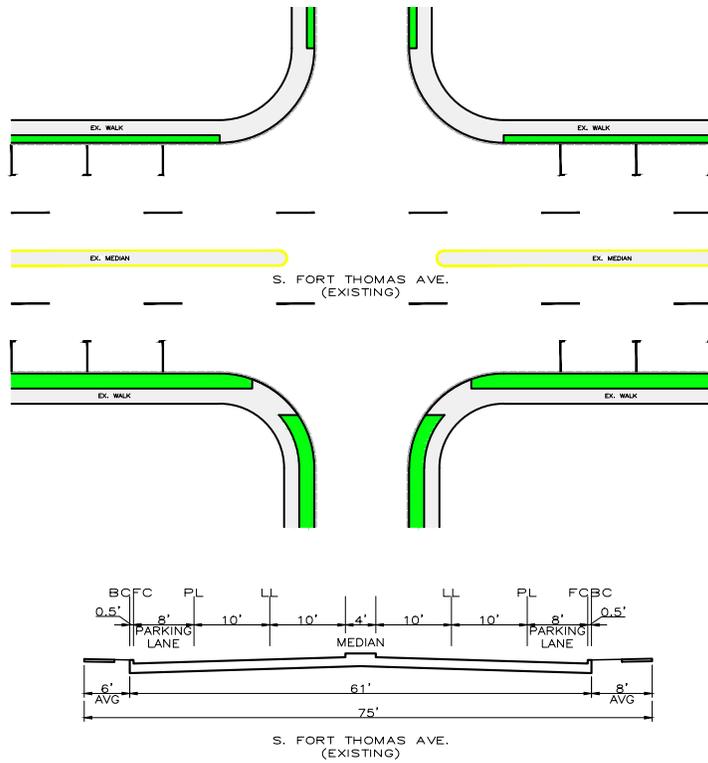


Figure T5. S Fort Thomas Ave (KY 1120) Existing Conditions (typical intersection) with

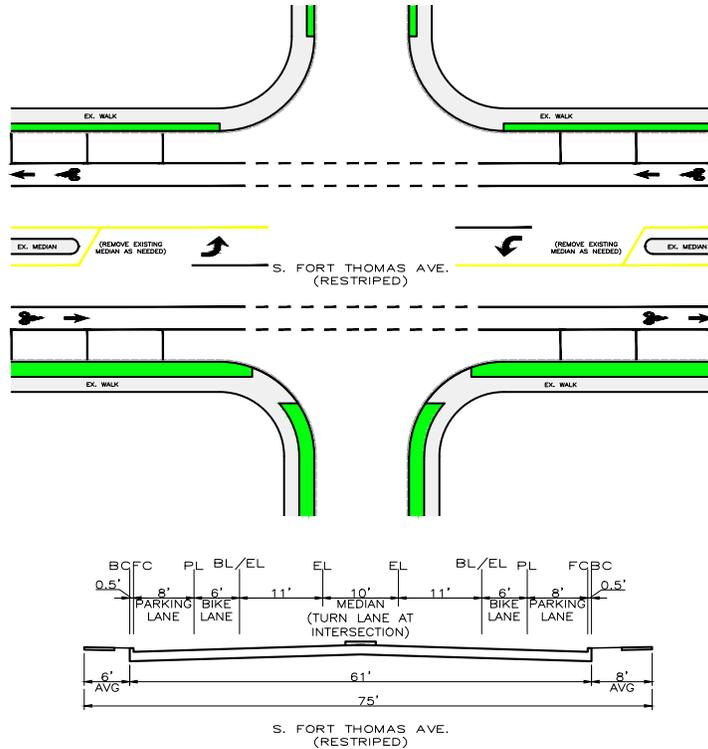


Figure T6. S Fort Thomas Ave (KY 1120) Proposed Road Diet (typical intersection)

Part 2

### T4 Improve Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8) and increase access to river frontage along the corridor.

**T4.1** Celebrate the Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8) corridor as part of Northern Kentucky Riverfront Commons, a Scenic byway, and a destination for boaters, cyclists and park/trail users

The City of Fort Thomas has approximately 3.7 miles of river frontage along the Ohio River on the eastern border of the city. This corridor has been left a largely underutilized resource, only being utilized by a small marina (Aquaramp) and the Northern Kentucky Water District. This is primarily due to the limited access and elevation difference from the rest of Fort Thomas. Currently, access from the city to the riverfront is provided by Tower Hill Road and River Road (KY 445). Tower Hill Road starts at N Fort Thomas Avenue (KY 1120) and works its way toward Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8). The western section of the road is approximately 24 feet wide with curb and sidewalk on both sides. As it continues to descend the hillside, it becomes a winding, narrow road (17 feet wide in some areas) with no sidewalks or pedestrian facilities. Along the southern edge of the narrower portion, the ground slopes down steeply toward a creek bed and some portion of the roadway has had to be stabilized with concrete pier walls. Conversely, the ground on the northern end slopes up steeply. Due to the complexity of the existing topography, adding pedestrian and dedicated cycling amenities within the right-of-way will require the City to seek significant funding assistance. Until such time as this can be accomplished, the use of this road for pedestrian amenities will not be possible and alternate access routes should be considered.

River Road (KY 445) is a state route that starts at S Fort Thomas Avenue (KY 1120) (at the Midway District) and works its way down to Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8). The roadway provides 11 feet wide lanes in each direction. There is an approximately 400 feet stretch of sidewalk on one side of road on the section closest to the Midway District. This road can be dangerous due to the grade curves, and the number and steepness of driveways on both sides. Similar to Tower Hill Road, the ground on both sides of road is steeply sloped, which creates challenges on providing pedestrian amenities on this road. As this roadway is owned by the State, any improvements would be subject to approval by KYTC.

#### T4 Reference List

- P** Chapter 2.2  
Transportation and Connectivity
- R** Chapter 2.5  
Regional Partners
- F** Chapter 2.6  
Focus Area Plans

## CHAPTER 2.2 TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTIVITY

Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8) runs along the Ohio River from KY 237 near Francisville, KY to US 62 in Maysville, KY. Within the city, the road follows along the west side of the CSX railroad tracks from the southern city limit to Tower Park Road, where it crosses under railroad and follows along the east side of the railroad north toward Dayton. The road is currently classified a major collector roadway. However, recent traffic counts have indicated that only 600 to 700 trips are made on the section between River Road (KY 445) and Tower Hill Road. Similar to River Road (KY 445), this is a State owned route and changes would be subject to approval by the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet. As the traffic counts on this section no longer correlate with the current road classification, it would be advantageous for the City to work with the State to change the classification of this section of the road and reduce the speed limit to better accommodate recreational amenities along the riverfront corridor.

The river frontage provides opportunities for water transportation connections. This could include water taxis to and from the opposite bank of the Ohio River, where large recreational and entertainment destinations are located. The 3.7 mile stretch provides opportunities for kayaking and canoeing along the Ohio River and if done in conjunction with other riverfront communities could create a new regional network.

Large portions of land along the riverfront corridor remains undeveloped. Additionally, the City owns several large parcels along the corridor. These parcels could be developed into new park areas with recreation amenities. **P R F**

### Recommendations:

**T4.1.1** Work with the State to reclassify Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8) and reduce the speed limit to create a park road feel. **R**

**T4.1.2** Develop new pedestrian/cycling paths and trails from Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8).

- » Paved multi-use path from Tower Park.
- » Trail from Highlands High School
- » Trail from the Intersection of Lincoln Road and N Fort Thomas Avenue (KY 1120).
- » Trail from N Fort Thomas Avenue (KY 1120) just to the south of Barrett Drive

**T4.1.3** Develop a multi-use path between Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8) and the CSX railroad. Work with surrounding communities to create a regional network.

**T4.1.4** Add parking at strategic locations along Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8) to accommodate the needs from the proposed park amenities.

**T4.1.5** Create water trail for kayaking and canoeing.

- » Public/private partnerships for equipment rentals.
- » Provide areas to launch and retrieve boats at key nodes along the corridor.
- » Work with surrounding communities to create regional network.

**T4.1.6** Repair/Reconstruct damaged sections of Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8).



## CHAPTER 2.3

### PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

For most Fort Thomas residents, the forested hillsides are considered a valuable asset to our quality of life, offering a unique and irreplaceable setting of a ‘City within a Park’.

This plan envisions ways to strengthen our parks and open space system. As our community grows and evolves, parks and open spaces serve as a primary outlet for physical exercise and mental and social expansion and appreciation for our natural environment.

In a growing community with a fully developed core, the need for open space to gather, exercise and recreate increases and the ability to efficiently use the open space that’s available becomes increasingly valuable.

It is clearly documented that parks and open space add to the quality of life in our communities. Millennials as well as many older residents maintain active lifestyles and place high value on quality of life issues and the environment. For many years, surveys consistently rank open space, bike trails and jogging and walking trails at the top. Many corporations shift their working environments to attract the best workers. They also look to expand and locate in areas where the living environment meets the needs of their workforce.

It is also difficult to draw boundaries around parks and open space resources like trails, as they are often available for all to use. When a city or unincorporated area of the region is successful, the entire region benefits. Therefore it makes sense for the region to work together to strive for high quality of life environments to make our region a desirable place to live, work and play. The Regional Partnerships & Collaboration Committee further explores this notion of collaborating with neighboring jurisdictions and stakeholders in Chapter 2.5.



## PARKS & OPEN SPACE

### VISION

To preserve and enhance the quality of the environment so that our community embodies a “city within a park”.

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

#### **P1 Preserve and enhance quality of open space assets.**

**P1.1** Preserve and enhance the hillside greenbelt and urban tree canopy.

**P1.2** Enhance connectivity of and accessibility to community assets for all users (pedestrian, bicyclists, vehicles) by developing a Safe Routes to Parks strategy.

**P1.3** Enhance community gateways.

#### **P2 Continue to enhance the city parks and recreation facilities for all users.**

**P2.1** Identify and enhance the unique role each park plays in the total experience of Fort Thomas by identifying recreational uses and facilities that are missing from the current supply and collaborate to meet those needs (such as a splash park, zip lines, camping/glamping, ropes course, climbing wall, skate park, and pump track).

**P2.2** Invest in the enhancement and maintenance of existing assets (park infrastructure, structures, etc.)

**P2.3** Build community gardens.

#### **P3 Invest in Tower Park as a regional destination**

**P3.1** Take advantage of Tower Park’s numerous great assets and leverage its potential as a hub of activity.

**P3.2** Maximize the city’s only ball field that is sized for adult recreation leagues and users, recognizing its function as an important community gathering spot.

#### **P4 Provide for a high-quality parks and recreation system in an efficient manner**

**P4.1** Maximize opportunities to foster partnerships and share investment to enhance parks, trails, and gateways in a cost effective way.

**P4.2** Work collectively with the schools and other groups to provide for recreational opportunities in ways that reduce redundancy.

**P4.3** Encourage community stewardship through citizen advisory/volunteer groups and a tool to make it easier to volunteer.

**P4.4** Encourage budget allocation for capital and operation (including maintenance, staffing, programming, and fundraising for capital projects).

#### **P5. Increase residents’ use of park/recreation facilities and programs.**

**P5.1** Provide a stronger social media presence to inform residents of assets and events and invite visitors to Fort Thomas.

**P5.2** Enhance online scheduling tools so park assets (fields, shelters, etc.) can be utilized/scheduled/reserved more easily and efficiently.

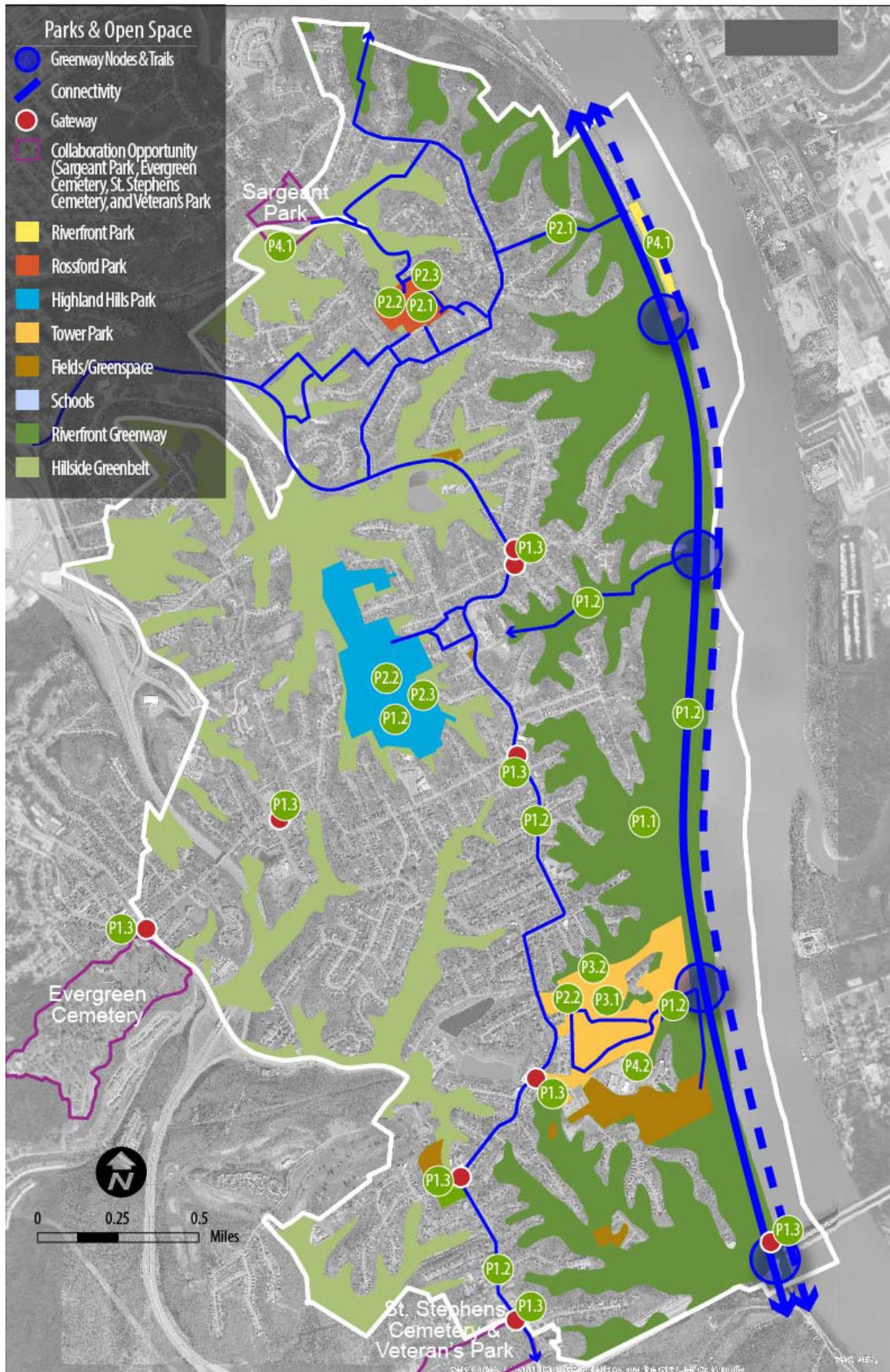


Figure P1. Parks and Open Space Summary Map

PARK AVAILABILITY, NEEDS & DEFICIENCIES

As population continues to increase and communities evaluate/address quality of life issues, the availability of public parks and open space becomes a recurring topic of interest. Many cities evaluate park availability by calculating acreage of park land per 1,000 residents and compare these numbers to neighboring cities of similar population size and density (or those they wish to emulate).

Table P1 below compares 2010 population counts to acres of available public park area in peer counties and cities. Data from the Trust For Public Land, the Census Bureau, Planning & Design Services (PDS), OKI Regional Council of Governments (OKI) and Human Nature was used to complete this analysis.

		2010 Population <sup>1</sup>	Park Acres	Citizens Per Park Acre	Park Acres Per 1,000 Residents	Land Area (Acres)	Park Area As % of Land Area
<b>Fort Thomas<sup>2</sup></b>		<b>16,325</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>11.0</b>	<b>3,864</b>	<b>4.7%</b>
Local Jurisdictions <sup>2</sup>	Mariemont (Village)	3,403	117	29	34.4	543	21.6%
	Fort Mitchell	8,207	11	719	1.4	1,977	0.6%
	Montgomery	10,251	168	61	16.4	3,402	4.9%
	Blue Ash	12,114	178	68	14.7	4,858	3.7%
Northern Kentucky <sup>3</sup>	Campbell	90,336	1,946	46	21.5	96,838	2.0%
	Boone	118,811	3,372	35	28.4	157,670	2.1%
	Kenton	159,720	1,941	82	12.2	102,560	1.9%
	<b>Northern Kentucky Total</b>	<b>278,531</b>	<b>5,313</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>19.1</b>	<b>260,230</b>	<b>2.0%</b>
Regional Cities <sup>4</sup>	Lexington	295,803	6,077	49	20.5	181,536	3.4%
	Cincinnati	296,943	6,820	44	23.0	49,883	13.7%
	Cleveland	396,815	3,130	127	7.9	49,726	6.3%
	Louisville	714,501	16,778	43	23.5	237,115	7.1%
	Columbus	787,033	10,847	73	13.8	138,988	7.8%
	Indianapolis	820,445	11,170	73	13.6	231,317	4.8%
National Trend (National Recreation & Parks Association, 2017)					9.6		

1 US Census, April 1, 2010

2 Analysis completed by Human Nature (January 2018), park acres do not include schools, natural areas or undeveloped park land.

3 Analysis completed by PDS (March 2016); data source (OKI)

4 Analysis completed by Trust For Public Land, 2012

Table P1. Benchmarking: Fort Thomas Compared to Peer Cities and Counties

According to this data, Fort Thomas falls behind both Boone, Kenton, and Campbell Counties and other peer cities in the amount of park acres available to it residents (in park acres per 1,000 residents and park area as a percent of total land area). While Fort Thomas parks comprise a higher percentage of total land area, there are more residents per acre of park land. Park areas do not include those associated with schools, natural areas or undeveloped park land.

### MAINTENANCE & STAFFING

The current staff for the Fort Thomas Parks & Recreation Department includes two full time employees and a range of 10 to 15 part time/seasonal employees (10 hours or less per week) in the winter and 25 to 30 part time/seasonal employees (10 hours or less per week) in the summer. A Municipal and County Parks and Recreation Study by the National Recreation and Parks Association and other agencies indicates that for communities with a population of less than 25,000, the median number of permanent staff is four, with 25 seasonal employees, a one to six ratio of permanent to seasonal.

Another indicator of services is measured by the number of residents served per permanent staff. For communities under 25,000, 2,500 residents are served for each permanent staff person. At the current population of Fort Thomas, this would require 6.5 full time employees with a corresponding ratio of 30 to 36 seasonal employees. While Public Works provides services for facilities in the Parks & Recreation Department, the percentage of their time that is dedicated to the Parks & Recreation Department would need to be calculated to determine the level of service.

Citizen volunteer groups (e.g. Friends of Tower Park, Trails Teams, and Park Ambassadors) can be utilized to fill any gaps and maintain an exceptional level of service for the Fort Thomas community.

## CHAPTER 2.3 PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

### EXISTING FACILITIES

The City of Fort Thomas has a great base of gateways, parks and recreation facilities.

Map ID	Name	Acres	Classification	List of Facilities
<b>Gateways</b>		<b>0.60</b>		
1	Grand Ave & Highland (SE Corner) Gateway Park	0.24	Pocket Park	Benches, landscape, children statue
2	Alexandria & Highland Gateway Sign			Welcome to Fort Thomas Sign
3	Alexandria & Fort Thomas Ave (NE Corner)	0.02	ROW	Landscape bed
4	Highland & Fort Thomas Ave			CBD bump outs
5	Inverness Gateway (N Corner)	0.10	Pocket Park	Benches, landscape beds, trellis
6	Inverness Gateway/Rob Roy Park	0.25	Pocket Park	Benches, landscape beds
7	River Road & Fort Thomas Ave (Midway Gateway)			
8	Alexandria Pike			
9	River Road & Mary Ingles (Route 8)			
<b>Parks</b>		<b>180.59</b>		
P1	Highland Hills Park	76.24	Large Park	Baseball field, shelters (2), restroom, playground, dog park, frisbee golf, trails, parking, sand volleyball courts
P2	Tower Park	66.63	Large Park	Shelters (3), baseball/softball field, amphitheater, playground, tennis courts (6), basketball courts (2), sand volleyball courts (4), armory gymnasium facility, community center, parking, restrooms, mountain bike trails, hiking trails
P3	Rossford Park	15.74	Neighborhood Park	Baseball field (2), practice field (soccer, mixed-use), shelter, restrooms, playground, paved walking trails, basket ball (half court), parking
P4	Landmark Tree Trail	20.78	Greenspace	Hiking trails
P5	Riggs Memorial (Southgate) Park	1.20	Park	Playground, shelter, walking path
<b>Fields</b>		<b>19.41</b>		
F1	River Road Field	2.94	Athletic Field	Soccer fields
F2	Shawnee Field	0.64	Athletic Field	Baseball field
F3	South Park Field	10.20	Athletic Field	Soccer field (tournament level and practice), parking
F4	Winkler Field	5.63	Athletic Field	Baseball fields, soccer practice field, parking
<b>Undeveloped/Open Space</b>		<b>43.56</b>		
A	Riverfront Park (undeveloped)	8.02	Future Park	Future hiking trails
B	Route 8 Parkway Land	35.54		Forested

Table P2. Fort Thomas Existing Park Facilities

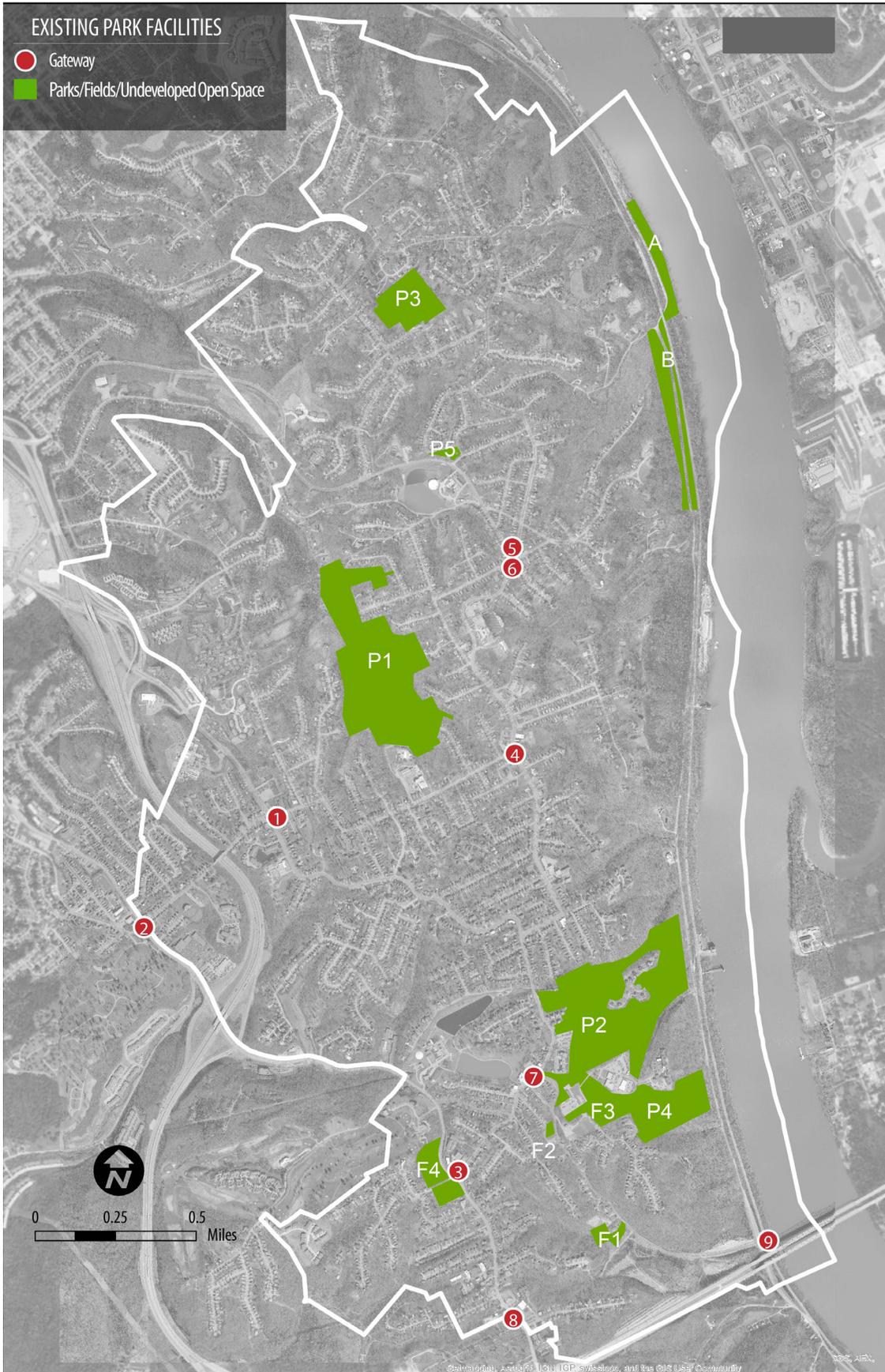


Figure P2. Fort Thomas Existing Park Facilities Map

## CHAPTER 2.3 PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

### EXISTING PROGRAMS

The Fort Thomas Parks and Recreation Department offers a wide variety of programs at the City's numerous facilities. Park shelters are available for rent at Highland Hills, Tower and Rossford parks, and adult league teams are offered in softball, tennis, volleyball and flag football. A number of other organizations also use the City's facilities to provide health, wellness and sports programming.

Table P3 below provides highlights of the variety of programs that have been offered at City facilities over the last five years. Attendance figures are provided where available (figures for 2018 events were provided if they were available at the time of the study). While attendance levels have increased over the years (e.g. Summer Playground Program, Senior Games, Tiny Tots), many programs limit attendance due to space/staffing. The increase in programming attendance indicates the increased level of interest in health/wellness programming for residents of all ages- youth, families, and seniors.

Facility/Program	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>Park Shelter Rentals</b>					
Tower Park	140	162	158	166	
Highland Hills	83	99	94	92	
Rossford	47	55	43	47	
<b>Adult Leagues</b>					
Co-ed Softball (teams)	4	4			
Men's Softball (teams)	21	20	15	14	
Co-ed Doubles Tennis (players-3 seasons)	98	103			
Men's Tennis Leagues	32	32			
Ladies Tennis League	25	9			
Total Tennis Leagues	155	144	66	85	
Tennis Tournament (teams)	17	17	16	16	
Adult Volleyball (teams) 3 seasons	155	135	135	107	
Men's Flag Football (teams)	5	6	5	5	
Church Softball League (teams)	7	7		8	7
Fall Softball (teams)					
Men's Basketball (teams)	8	6			
<b>Youth Programming</b>					
Teeter Tots Program (children and parents/week)	376	400+	137	145	50
Youth/Middle School Boys Basketball League (players)	40			42	
Jr. Basketball League (teams)	?				42
<b>Fitness Classes</b>					
Step Aerobics (Avg./day)	8	8		8	
Yoga (individuals- 6 sessions)	116	116			
<b>Armory Gymnasium</b>					
Walkers (average per day)	25	25	25	25	25
Court Rentals	60				
Open Gym Admission	\$7,238	\$9,764	\$7,103		
Armory Room Rentals	103	150	172	158	
Community Center Retals	55	72	71	73	
No longer offered				New programs	
Previously cancelled but coming back next year				In progress	

Table P3. Highlights of Existing Programs

## CHAPTER 2.3 PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

Facility/Program (continued)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>Special Events</b>					
Spring Egg Hunt (children)	++	++	++	++	cancelled (weather)
Senior Games (individuals-winter/spring)	103/273	150/300+	150/350+	150/350+	150/350+
Touch A Truck	400+	500+	yes	200+	
Jack-O-Lantern Walk (participants)	3631	4000	yes	yes	
Movie Nights (avg.)	125	125	yes	yes	
Mom Preschool Expo					200
<b>Summer Activities</b>					
Summer Playground Program (children/week)		50+	150	180	390
Tiny Tots Camp (children)	116	120	120 cap	120 cap	170
Basketball Clinic/Camp (participants)	225		89	90	150
<b>Mess Hall Rentals</b>					
	55	72	71	73	
<b>Community (Organized by 3rd Party)</b>					
Holiday Walk	?	?			yes
Get Fit with Jared				yes	yes
Yoga in the Park				yes	yes
Summer Concert Series (people)	100-500+				
Senior's Bridge Club (ladies/month)					
Lego League					
Archery					
Art Around Town (vendors)					
YMCA Soccer					
YMCA Basketball					
YMCA Firecracker 500 and Fun Run					
Highlands HS & Middle School					
Armory Basketball Courts (hours)	76.5	76.5	yes	yes	yes
Tower Park Tennis Courts (hours)	110	110	yes	yes	yes
Highland Hills Park Ball Field (hours)	225	225	yes	yes	yes
Winkler Ball Field (hours)	225	225	yes	yes	yes
Junior Football League (teams)	12	12	yes	yes	yes
Campbell County North Soccer Club (teams)	80+	80+	yes	yes	yes
YMCA/Knothole	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
				In progress	
<b>New Programs for 2018</b>					
Cooking Class	Fall Movie				
Camp Out	Girls MS Basketball				
Stretch n Grow	Kickball Tournament w St. Elizabeth				
Pizza & Pumpkin Family Fun Night	Fall Softball				
Dog Days @ Highland Park	Zombie Teen Party w Library				
PrimeTime Basketball Camp	Earth Day				
Great Outdoor Weekend					

Table P3 (Cont.). Highlights of Existing Programs

**SWOT ANALYSIS**

During the Awareness Phase, the Parks and Recreation Committee conducted a SWOT analysis to identify the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats the city faces in providing parks and recreation facilities and programming. Strengths (S) and Weaknesses (W) are internal factors over which the city has some control, while Opportunities (O) and Threats (T) are external factors and constraints over which the city has little or no control. Conducting a SWOT analysis is a way to focus on our strengths, minimize threats, and take the greatest possible advantage of opportunities.

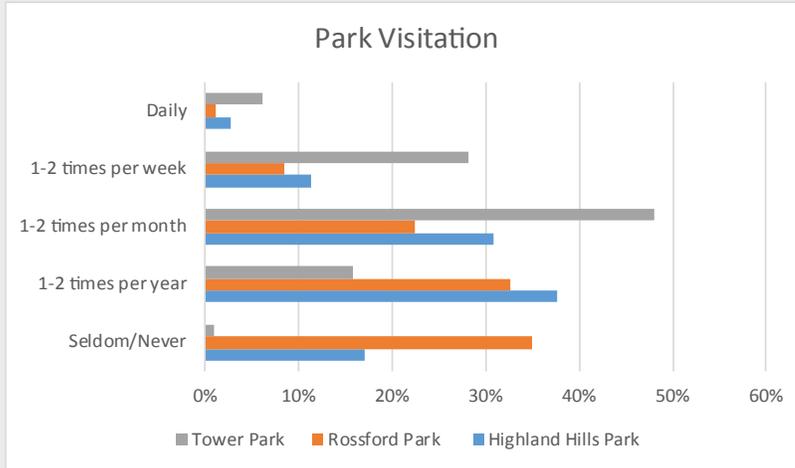
The most critical SWOT elements identified are illustrated below, while the complete Parks and Recreation SWOT matrix is included in Appendix A.



Part 2

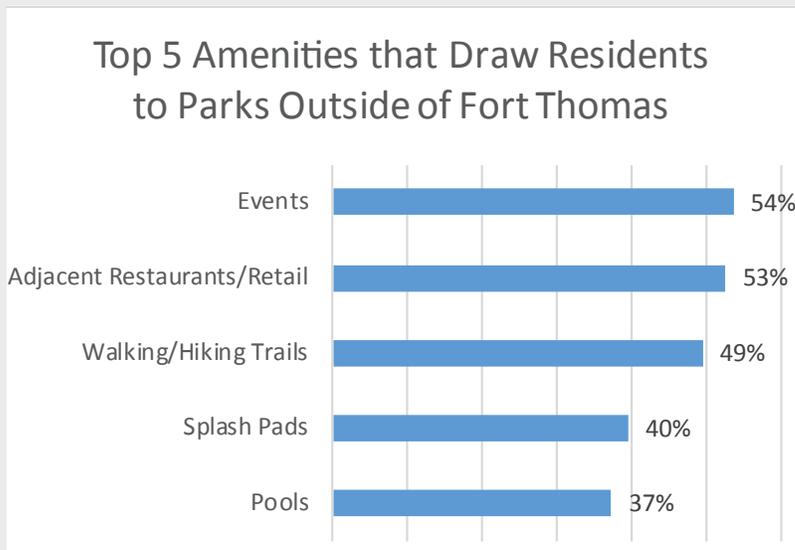
COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

Total Responses: 774 People



Top 3 Park Enhancement Priorities...

1. Festivals
2. Concerts
3. Aquatics



Which Park Amenities Attract Fort Thomas Residents?

- 64% ... Trails
- 63% ... Events
- 59% ... Playgrounds

Residents are willing to volunteer...



See Appendix for detailed survey results.

### Recommendations:

#### P1 Preserve and Enhance Quality of Open Space Assets.

##### P1.1 Preserve and enhance the hillside greenbelt and urban tree canopy.

In order to preserve and enhance the quality of the environment so that our community embodies a “city within a park”, we must also preserve and enhance our forested hillsides, urban tree canopy, and connectivity.

Collaborating with the Fort Thomas Forest Conservancy and the Hillside Trust would allow the City to work with private property owners to preserve the greenbelt and protect it from development by offering conservation easements for high priority areas (e.g. riverfront). Once easements are in place, restoration efforts could be focused toward invasive species removal, reforestation and creek/riparian corridor restoration.

Fort Thomas and its neighbors could strengthen capabilities in urban tree management by hiring/consulting an arborist to minimize risks associated with tree health/disease (e.g. the Emerald Ash Borer) and improper pruning, as well as street trees, landmark trees, and park trees.

By preserving our hillside greenbelt and urban canopy, we are also preserving community character/views and environment/ecology/habitat while creating linkages and connecting assets (e.g. parks, schools, neighborhoods) throughout the community. **R L**

##### Community Character/Views

The community considers the hillside greenbelt a valuable natural resource that is worth preserving.

##### Environment/Ecology/Habitat

Reforesting our hillsides also helps combat soil erosion and stormwater runoff. By planting the right species, reforestation efforts help make forests more resilient to future challenges like climate change, wildfire, and the Emerald Ash Borer. Forests also provide habitat for an incredible diversity of wildlife. As trees grow and consume air, they remove harmful pollutants from the air and mitigate the effects of global climate change. Reforestation helps re-establish forest canopy cover and improve our “natural air filter”. The links between our mental and physical well-being and nature are clear. Research shows that we are happier and less stressed when we spend time in nature. Canopy coverage also reduces the “heat island” impact, reducing air temperatures and making the outdoor air temperatures cooler.

#### P1 Reference List

- L** Chapter 2.1  
Land Use
- T** Chapter 2.2  
Transportation and Connectivity
- R** Chapter 2.5  
Regional Partners
- F** Chapter 2.6  
Focus Area Plans

## CHAPTER 2.3 PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

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**P1.2** Enhance connectivity of and accessibility to community assets (especially parks, open spaces, schools, commercial areas, civic centers and neighborhoods) for all users (pedestrian, bicyclists, vehicles) by developing a Safe Routes to Parks strategy.

Safe Routes to Parks is the National Recreation and Park Association's (NRPA's) campaign to implement environmental, policy, and program strategies that create safe and equitable access to parks for all people.

Public parks provide highly valued benefits (e.g. economic viability, environmental conservation and improved health) to local communities. Communities are working on strategies to make it easier and safer for people to be physically active. Adults that live within a half mile of a park visit parks and exercise more often, but according to the 2014 State Indicator Report on Physical Activity, less than 38% of the U.S. population lives within a half mile of a park. Therefore more safe and convenient places are needed for Americans to be physically active in their communities.

Access to green space ties directly to an individual's health and well-being. Those who live closer to parks will visit them more often. Those who are unable to walk to parks are less likely to visit them and are therefore deprived of the many benefits that parks offer. It is essential that parks be easily accessible to all citizens. A route to a park should be 1/4 mile (5 minutes) and no longer than 1/2 mile (10 minute walk). The National Recreation and Park Association believes that the key to ensuring accessibility to parks is through creating safe routes to parks within our communities.<sup>1</sup>

There are physical and social barriers that make walking to parks undesirable, such as lack of proximity to parks, lack of infrastructure (e.g. sidewalks), and crime and traffic safety concerns. Removing barriers and making parks accessible to everyone is a goal that is being addressed by park professionals across the country.

Within the Fort Thomas trail network, there are regional, local and site trails that enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors and connect community assets- parks, schools, neighborhoods, and business districts. There are also different trail typologies that include multi-purpose/shared-use, sidewalks, and park trails (both paved and soft surface).

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<sup>1</sup> NRPA. Safe Routes to Parks: Improving Access to Park through Walkability. 2016

### PRIORITY PROJECTS

#### Regional Trail Network (Riverfront Greenway/Commons)

##### P1.2.1 Riverfront Greenway / Riverfront Commons (KY 8) Shared-Use Path

The future of the riverfront and Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8) is envisioned as a Riverfront Greenway, a continuous passive recreation/greenspace with Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8) embodying a local park road with designated stops, pedestrian/cyclist crossings and an adjacent shared use trail as an extension of the Riverfront Commons network. This Greenway would incorporate several nodes that will function as small designated parking areas, trailheads, and kayak put-ins and take-outs. They will also serve as access points for paved shared-use trails (like the Tower Park Connection) that connect the riverfront to Fort Thomas. **F**

Passive recreation amenities along the riverfront could include: hike/bike trails, picnicking, kayaking, and camping. **F**

##### P1.2.2 Tower Park Shared-Use Path Connection

The proposed riverfront node at Tower Park includes a proposed paved shared-use trail as a multi-modal connection for pedestrians, bikes, skates, etc., connecting the regional Riverfront Greenway/Riverfront Commons network to the Fort Thomas local trail network through Tower Park.

The proposed alignment would utilize the stream corridor/access path/current hiking trail and connect to existing assets (e.g. the basketball courts, tennis courts, Armory, playground, amphitheater, and Mess Hall). The stream has recently been restored by NKU and as part of those efforts, a conservation easement was created that overlaps the proposed trail alignment. After meeting with NKU, the conservation easement will allow the City to construct a paved trail along the stream corridor with coordination with NKU. This alternative would use an existing trail corridor and could offer the opportunity to expose and educate the public on NKU's stream restoration efforts. **F**

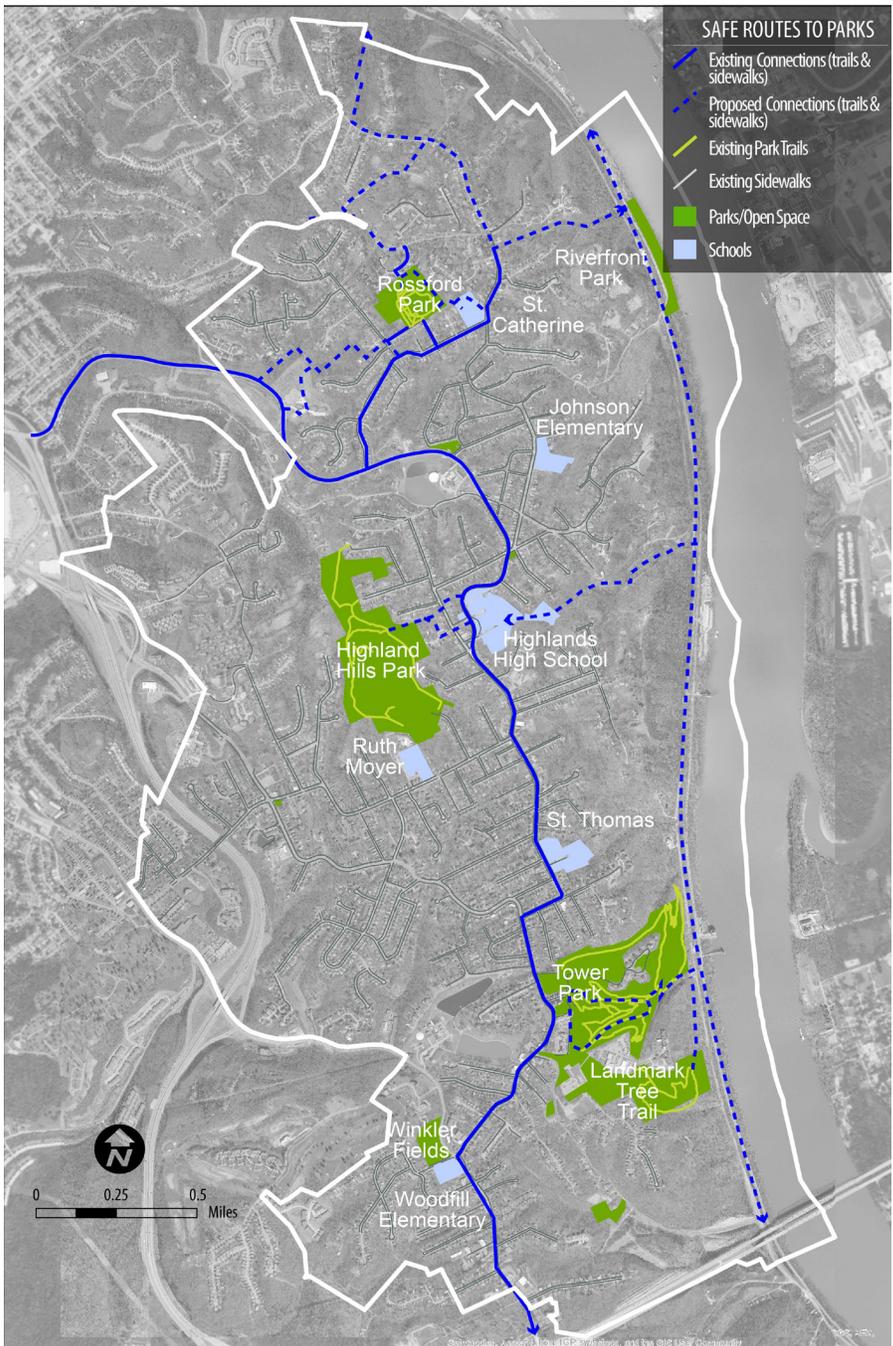
##### P1.2.3 Highlands Shared-Use Path Connection (regional/local)

A proposed trail would link the regional Riverfront Greenway/Riverfront Commons trail network to the local Fort Thomas network through Highland Hills Park, Highlands High School and a ravine down to the proposed Highlands/Riverfront Greenway node. Coordination with both public and private property owners would be necessary to make this connection. **F**

#### Local Trail Networks

##### P1.2.4 Alexandria Pike (US 27) Shared-Use Path

Through the Regional Partnerships & Collaboration Committee's work, coordination with Highland Heights has identified mutual interest in collaborating on a coordinated vision for the Alexandria Pike (US 27) corridor that includes a separate off-road shared-use path to connect to NKU. This connection would provide complete streets that are safe and equitable for all users, green street amenities that would provide stormwater and traffic calming benefits, and link to existing greenspaces (St. Stephen's Cemetery and Veteran's Park). Combined, these strategies would elevate the Alexandria Pike (US 27) corridor to one with exceptional parkway character. **F**



**31%** of Fort Thomas is within 1/4 mile (5 min. walk) to the closest park

**70%** of Fort Thomas is within 1/2 mile (10 min. walk) to the closest park

**30%** of Fort Thomas cannot easily access a park (greater than 1/2 mile or 10 min. walk)

Figure P3. Fort Thomas Safe Routes

### P1.2.5 Memorial Parkway Scenic Corridor

The proposed vision for Fort Thomas' most scenic corridor includes beautification efforts to preserve/enhance its scenic quality, views and bikeway/pedestrian usage. Opportunities to improve the aesthetics of the parkway include installing ornamental amenities (e.g. stone walls, seating, lighting, landscaping). The City could consider partnering with the Fort Thomas Forest Conservancy to improve the aesthetics of the corridor by removing dead and diseased Ash trees and reforesting with native species. The parkway was named as a tribute to the military and these improvements would help realize and celebrate this intention. **L T**

## Site Trail Network (Park Trails)

### P1.2.6 Landmark Tree Trail – Pedestrian Connection to Riverfront Greenway

The plan proposes extending the Landmark Tree Trail to connect to the proposed Riverfront Greenway/Riverfront Commons trail and Tower Park Connector trail. There is an opportunity to collaborate with Carmel Manor to enhance this trail network.

### P1.2.7 Rossford Park Pedestrian Connection

The plan proposes coordinating with St Catherine school/church and property owners adjacent to Rossford Park to construct a pedestrian pathway to enhance connectivity and use of St Catherine's parking lots outside of operation hours.

### P1.2.8 Riverfront Park & Covert Run Pedestrian Connection

A proposed trail would connect N Fort Thomas Avenue (just south of Covert Run) down to Riverfront Park by coordinating with public and private property owners and connecting to the proposed Riverfront Park/Riverfront Greenway node. **F**

### P1.2.9 Reservoir Trails

Collaborating with the Northern Kentucky Water District on re-opening trail loops around the reservoirs would allow the community to fully celebrate this underused asset. The reservoir trails were once open to the public for daily recreation but have been closed since 2011 and many Fort Thomas residents have expressed interest in reopening these trails. **R F**

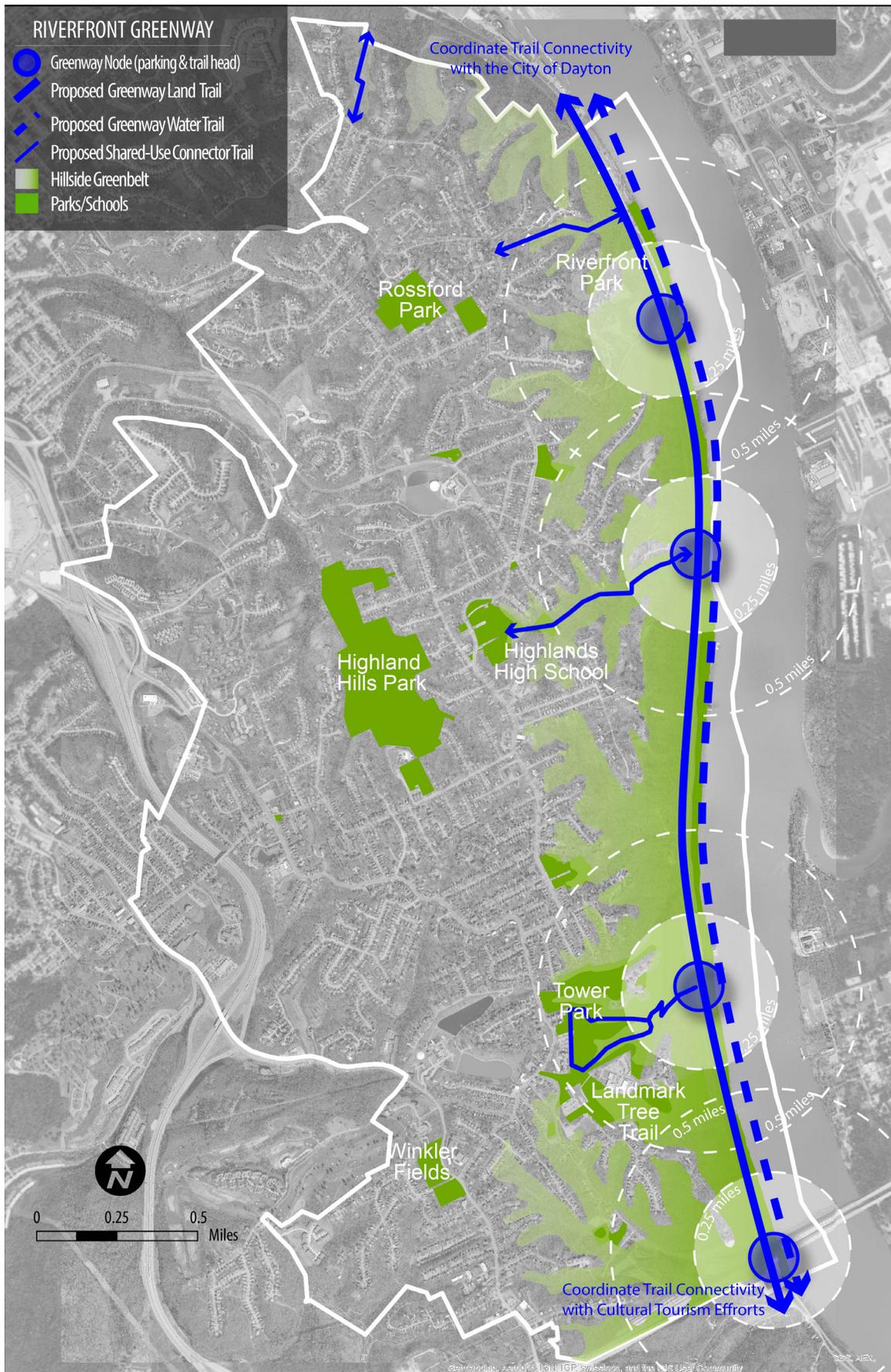


Figure P4. Fort Thomas Greenway

### P1.3 Enhance Community Gateways.

Gateways play an important role in introducing and defining a local community. They are the point of arrival and entrance into the community and should therefore reflect both the historical and desired character of Fort Thomas.

A gateway is not just a line on a map or a sign, monument or wall delineating city limits, it is a moment that marks the arrival into a community. Some techniques used to welcome residents and visitors at these arrival points may include improvements to the streetscapes such as sidewalks, consistent crosswalks, bike lanes, lighting, street furniture, and landscaping. The amount and location of green-space and the types and organization of land uses will also create a sense of place in Fort Thomas. Ultimately, the maintenance of the gateway areas will reflect the impact that these components have on those arriving to Fort Thomas.

#### The gateways into Fort Thomas include:

- » Intersection of River Road (KY 445) and S Fort Thomas Avenue (KY 1120)
- » Intersection of Alexandria Pike (US 27) and S Fort Thomas Avenue (KY 1120)
- » Intersection of River Road (KY 445) and the Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8)
- » Intersection of Tower Hill Road and the Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8)
- » Memorial Parkway (KY 1120) at the Fort Thomas/Newport Line
- » Covert Run Pike at the Fort Thomas/Bellevue Line
- » Dayton Pike at the Fort Thomas/Dayton Line
- » Waterworks Road at the Fort Thomas/Newport Line
- » Grand Avenue (KY 1892) at the Fort Thomas/Newport Line
- » Highland Avenue at the Fort Thomas/Southgate Line
- » Alexandria Pike (US 27) at the Fort Thomas/Southgate Line
- » Alexandria Pike (US 27) at the Fort Thomas/Highland Heights Line

Guidelines for the treatment of gateways will be helpful to decision makers as the gateways to the community are improved. Guidelines should consider the location, scale, character, materials, and function of the gateways. The guidelines should be flexible enough to allow room for unique site conditions and character, but strict enough to create consistency.

These gateways also provide an opportunity to partner with major land owners and corporations (e.g., St Elizabeth Healthcare along Grand Avenue), Fort Thomas Green Team and the Garden Club. **L T R F**

**P2 Continue to enhance the city parks and recreation facilities for all users.**

**P2.1** Identify and enhance the unique role each park plays in the total experience of Fort Thomas through improvements to existing parks.

- » Identify and establish recreational uses and facilities that are missing from the current supply of amenities in Rossford Park, Highland Hills Park, and Tower Park.
- » Collaborate to address the missing supply of amenities (such as a splash park, zip lines, camping/glamping, ropes course, climbing wall, skate park, pump track, accessible play equipment, inclusive playgrounds, etc.).

P2 Reference List

- L** Chapter 2.1  
Land Use
- T** Chapter 2.2  
Transportation and Connectivity
- U** Chapter 2.4  
Utilities and City Owned Facilities
- R** Chapter 2.5  
Regional Partners
- F** Chapter 2.6  
Focus Area Plans

**Rossford Park**

Rossford Park is an actively used neighborhood park that is adjacent to St Catherine of Siena School. The park has recently constructed ball fields, shelters and playgrounds. It is recommended that this park remain a recreational activity center that draws teenagers and adults with new exercise stations and increased sports/fitness/wellness programming. Raised community garden plots would encourage visitors of varying generations. Maintenance should be ongoing and opportunities to collaborate with the school are encouraged whenever possible.



Figure P5. Rossford Park Enhancements Map

## CHAPTER 2.3 PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

### P2.1.1 Rossford Park Enhancements (See also Figure P5)



A Exercise Stations along Loop



B Playground Shade Structures



C Update Play Structures



D Community Gardens

E Improve wayfinding and signage

Figure P6. Rossford Park Enhancements

### Highland Hills Park

Highland Hills Park is a great centrally-located neighborhood park with many amenities that residents enjoy. However, this park also struggles with issues of circulation. As the only entrance into the park, Mayfield Avenue experiences high traffic volumes that negatively impact its residents. In 1999, the Long Range Planning Committee suggested James Avenue as an alternative entrance to the park. **T U R**

**P2.1.4** Consider improvements to James Avenue Entry (Highland Hills Park)

**P2.1.5** Consider improvement to Mayfield Avenue (Highland Hills Park)

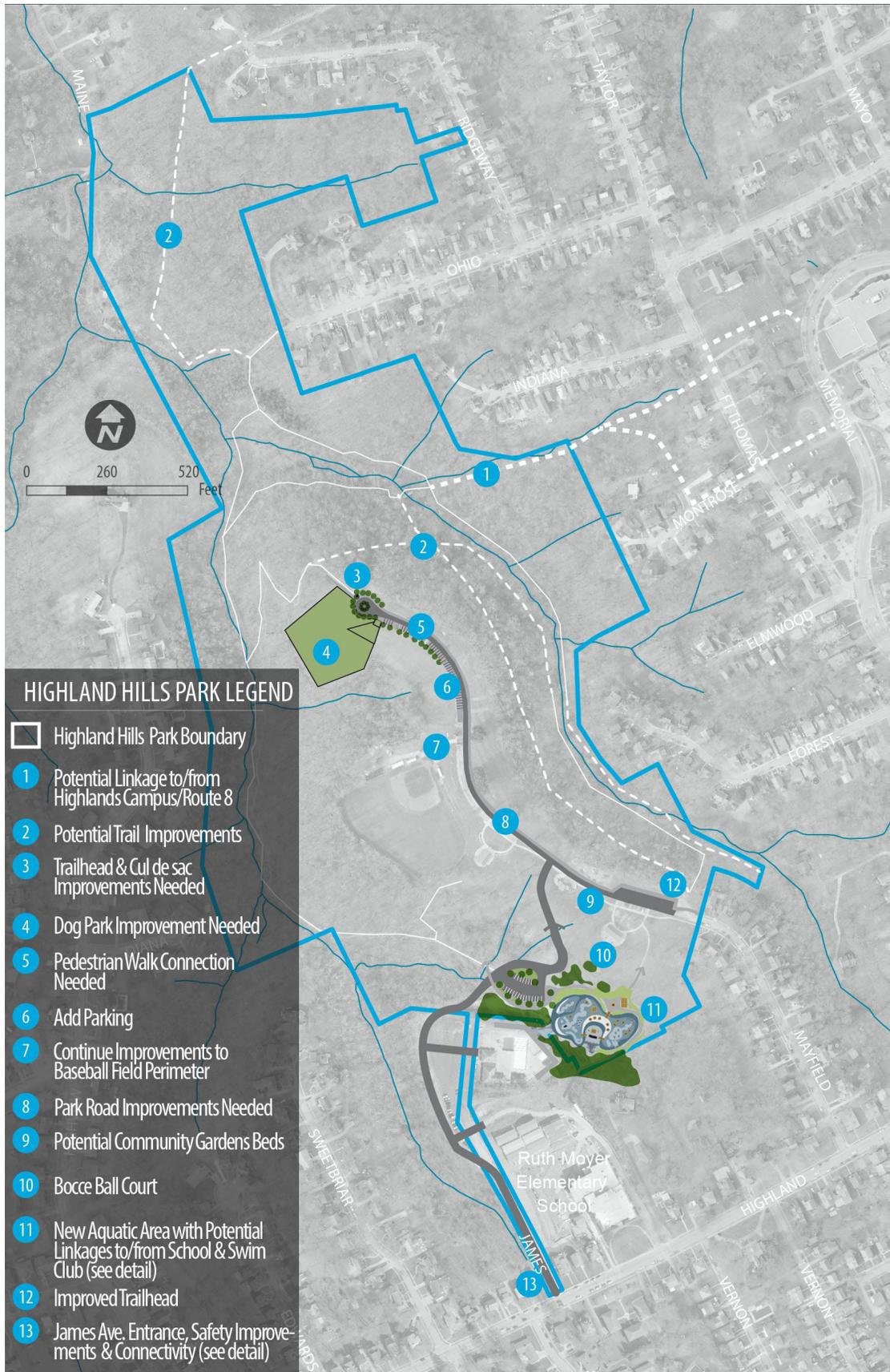


Figure P7. Highland Hills Park Enhancements

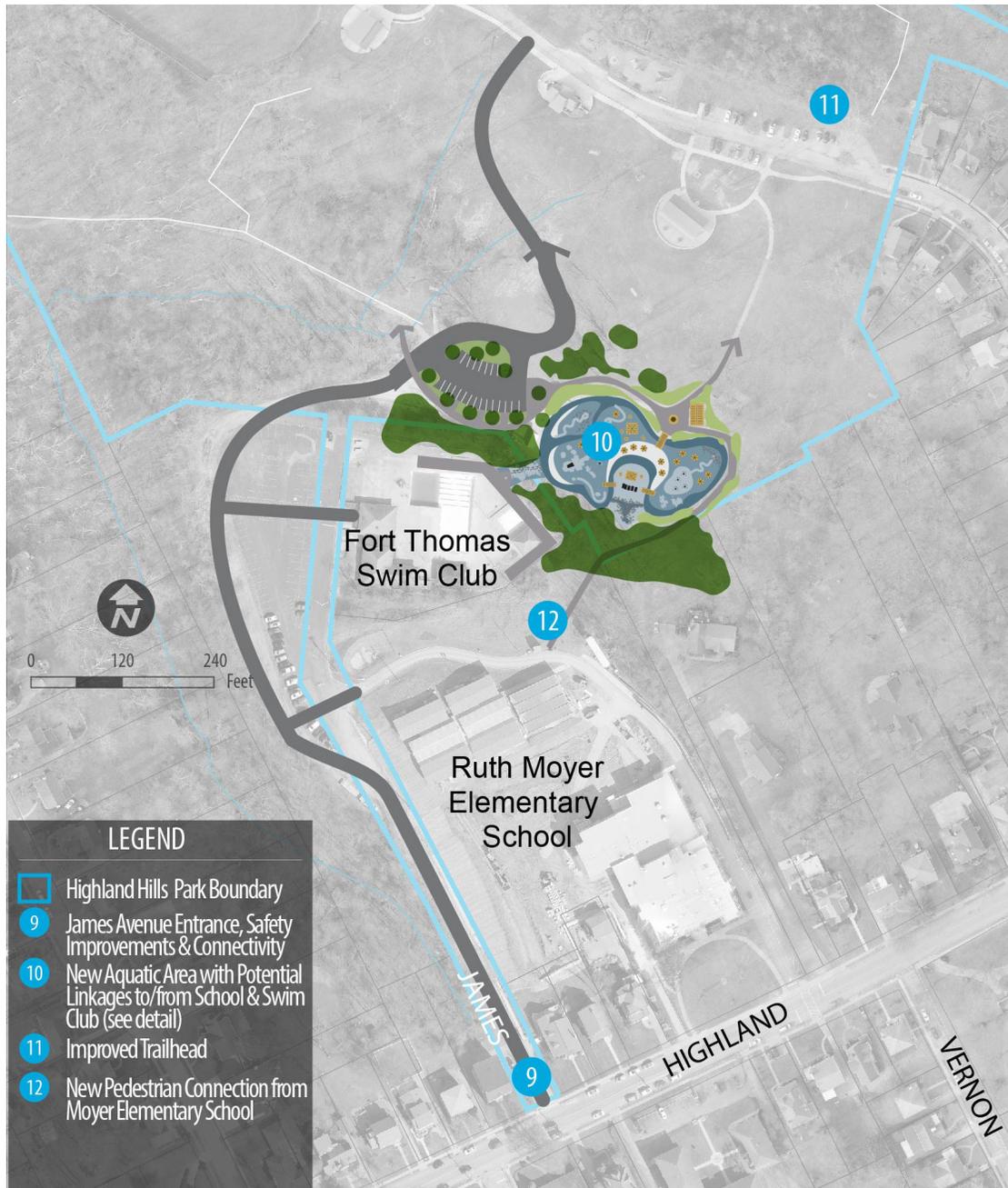


Figure P8. Highland Hills Park Entry Enhancements

**P2.1.6** New Splash Park (Highland Hills Park)

To provide a much needed amenity for the community, a splash park is proposed at the sand volleyball courts in Highland Hills Park, adjacent to the Swim Club property, an area that is underutilized and close to a school. There is an opportunity to phase the design/construction of the water facility to begin with zero-depth water features, shade structures, tables/chairs, restroom/shelter facilities and additional parking. Over time this splash park could be expanded to include a lazy river, spray areas for tots and visitors of all ages, waterfalls, water play areas, lounge chairs and tables, and restroom/shelter facilities. The concept also proposes a pedestrian connection to/from Moyer Elementary and the Swim Club.

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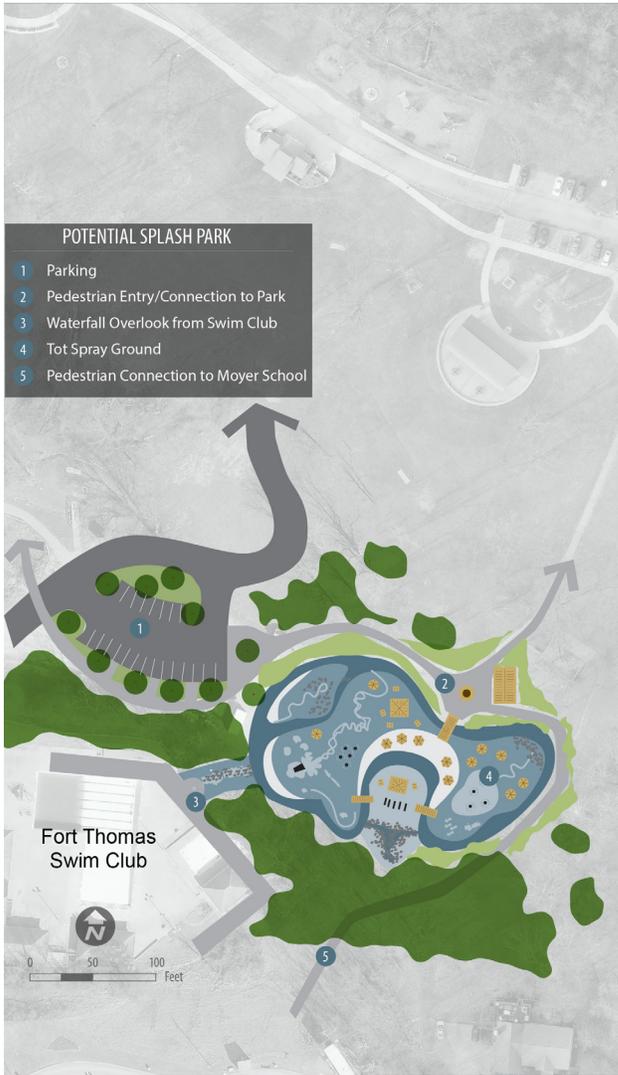


Figure P9. Potential Full Build Out Splash Park(Highland Hills Park)

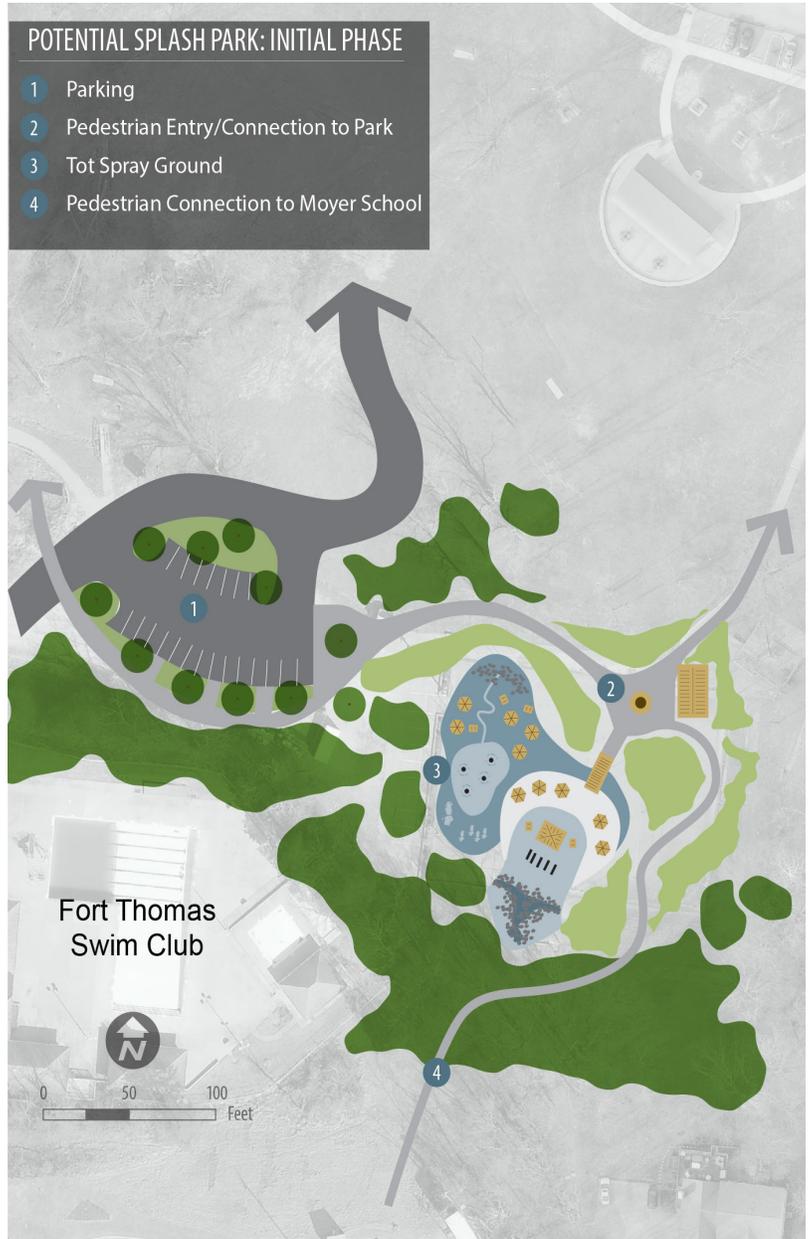


Figure P10. Initial Phase Splash Park (Highland Hills Park)

Part 2



## CHAPTER 2.3 PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

### P2.1.7 Additional Park Features and Improvements (Highland Hills Park):

#### Additional New Feature Improvements



- E** Frisbee Golf Improvements Coordinated with New Roadway Alignment
- F** Improve Signage/Wayfinding

Figure P11. Additional Park Improvements (Highland Hills Park)

## CHAPTER 2.3 PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

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**P2.2** Invest in the enhancement and maintenance of existing assets (park infrastructure, structures, etc.) system wide.

**System-wide improvements include the following potential projects:**

### **P2.2.1** Shade Structures

Upgrading existing park amenities (e.g. playgrounds) by adding shade structures to protect users from the sun/heat would improve visitor use and comfort.

### **P2.2.2** Play Equipment Updates

As playgrounds age, structures will need to be replaced/upgraded to increase safety, level of interest, accessibility, and inclusiveness. While all new playgrounds must have accessible design features, it is also important to upgrade existing playgrounds for compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) standards to ensure that play equipment is readily accessible and useable by individuals with disabilities.

### **P2.2.3** Bike Racks

As Fort Thomas focuses on connectivity and becoming a bike friendly community, essential amenities such as bike racks will be needed at community destinations (e.g. parks, schools, libraries, churches, business districts).

### **P2.2.4** Communications to foster citizen involvement (e.g. Friends of Parks Groups, Trails Team, Ambassadors)

Fort Thomas is blessed with residents who love their community and are willing to volunteer and serve for the greater good. Establishing an organized system to advertise volunteering opportunities (e.g. recreational programming, special events, park cleanup/maintenance, and trail maintenance) and organize/implement volunteer group events would provide a valuable service to the City.

### **P2.2.5** Health & Wellness Programming with sponsorship opportunities for all age groups

There is a high level of interest in more programming/events within the Fort Thomas parks, especially those relating to health and wellness (i.g. exercise classes, sports leagues/camps). There is an opportunity to collaborate with local partners (e.g. St Elizabeth Healthcare, NKU, YMCA, local gyms/fitness centers) to sponsor events within the parks.

### Additional New Feature Improvements to Park System



### Additional Park System Improvements

- E Unified Signage/Wayfinding
- F Consistent Trail Guidelines
- G Connectivity & Linkages
- H Fitness/Wellness/Marked-Distance Trails
- I Improved Maintenance
- J Collaborate with City of Dayton on Sargeant Park
- K Collaborate with City of Southgate on Evergreen Cemetery
- L Collaborate with City of Highland Heights on St. Stephen's Cemetery and Veteran's Park

Figure P12. Additional Potential Park System Wide Improvements

#### **P2.3** Build community gardens.

In addition to exploring opportunities of incorporating community gardens within the Fort Thomas Parks system, opportunities to collaborate with open space property owners (e.g. schools, churches, Northern Kentucky Water District) to implement community garden programs on their sites should be explored.

**P3 Invest in Tower Park as a regional destination.**

**P3.1** Take advantage of Tower Park’s numerous great assets and leverage its potential as a hub of activity.

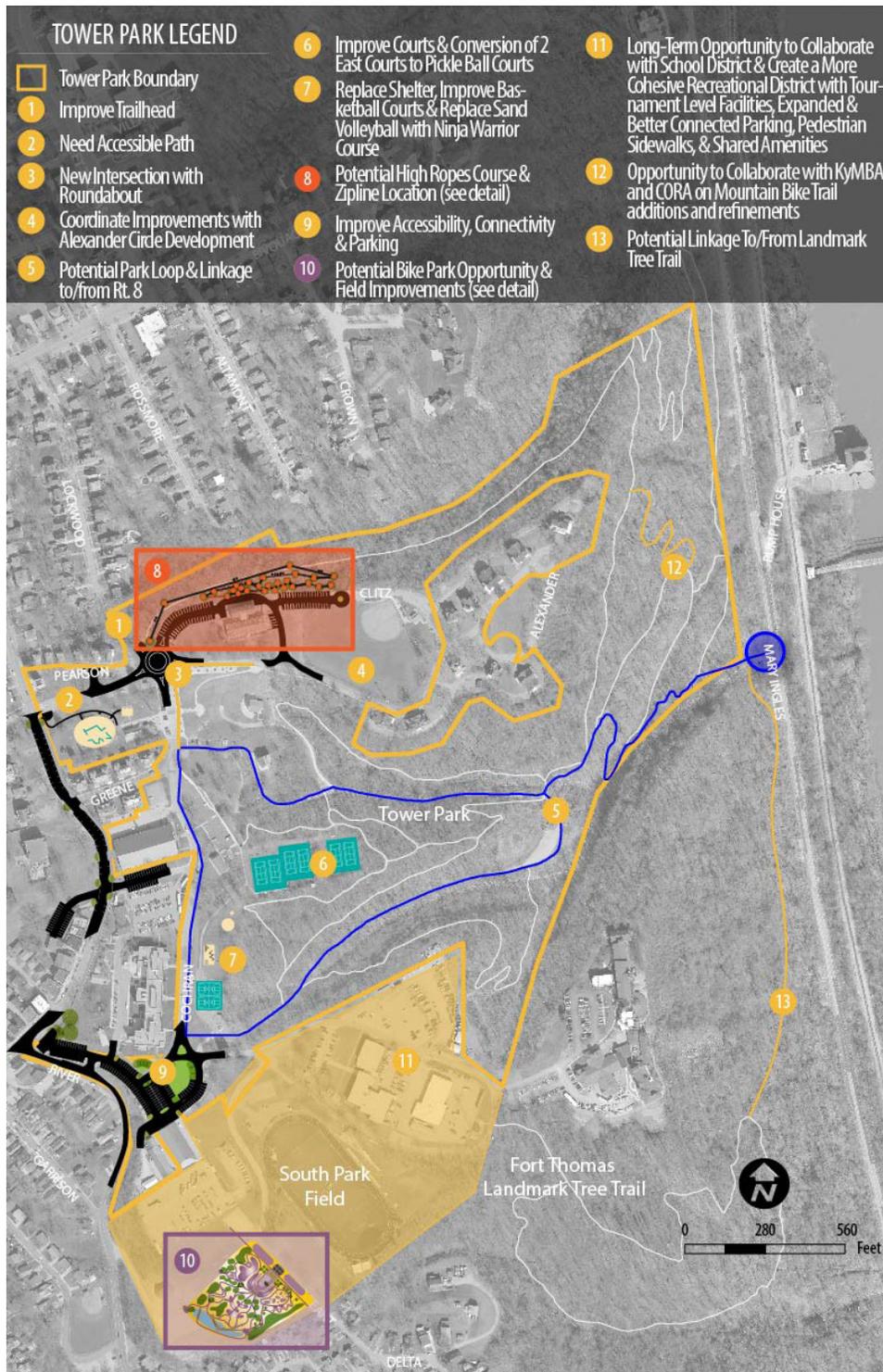


Figure P13. Tower Park Improvements

## CHAPTER 2.3 PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

At 87 acres, Tower Park is the largest park in the city. If the surrounding open space were added to this figure, Tower Park nearly doubles in size making it one of the largest parks in Northern Kentucky. This park, with its history and surrounding facilities, has the potential to become an important recreation destination in Northern Kentucky. Some challenges the park must overcome are poor circulation and an unplanned mix of land uses. The circulation pattern should be better organized where vehicles and pedestrians can safely and easily travel through the park. Better signage that leads people to, around and through the park and clearly identifies parking areas, activity areas, and connections to other recreation assets should be installed. **F**

### P3 Reference List

- T** Chapter 2.2  
Transportation and Connectivity
- U** Chapter 2.4  
Utilities and City Owned Facilities
- R** Chapter 2.5  
Regional Partners
- F** Chapter 2.6  
Focus Area Plans



Figure P14. Zipline/Ropes Course Phase 1 Concept Plan (Tower Park)

### PRIORITY PROJECTS

#### P3.1.1 Zip Lines/Ropes Course

There's an opportunity for a Tower Park zip line/ropes course as an ecologically-sensitive recreation feature by the Mess Hall that multiple generations can enjoy. This opportunity could introduce a new public/private partnership with an organization who could assist with the design/construction/maintenance of a fully immersive canopy obstacle course. It could also offer opportunities to coordinate with local schools/sports teams/businesses/corporations to use the team building space along with the Mess Hall and Midway District businesses as part of their field trip/team building activity. This attraction would require traffic circulation improvements and a new entry/parking configuration around the Mess Hall as shown on the concept plan.

The concept plan represents a first phase zip line/ropes course that fits within the existing site context at a manageable scale. Depending on the third party partner and the success of the first phase, there may be opportunity to expand the zip line course with longer, additional runs.



Figure P15. Zipline/Ropes Course Examples

## CHAPTER 2.3 PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

### P3.1.2 Bike Park

The discussion of a bike park was introduced to address the need for a safe space for youth and adults to learn proper bike techniques and safety before exploring the bike trails that currently exist in Fort Thomas and surrounding communities as well as those that are planned for the future.

A bike park is proposed in Tower Park as a space for multiple generations (starting as young as 2 years old), families and all skill levels to enjoy. Locating this park by the practice fields in Tower Park allows for accessibility and visibility, which is important. If it's designed well and maintained, it could be a local draw for youth and families. There could be an opportunity to partner with the Kentucky Mountain Bike Association (KYMBA) and the Cincinnati Off-Road Alliance (CORA). The nearby stables building could offer space for refreshments and a bike shop.



Figure P16. Bike Park Concept Plan (Tower Park)



Figure P17. Bike Park Examples

### P3.1.3 Pickleball

Consider designating space for pickleball games to address the need for more programming for seniors and the interest in pickleball, a game that is quickly growing in popularity for all age groups.

Pickleball court striping was added to the two lower tennis courts in Tower Park in June 2018 to integrate this amenity and test popularity within the Fort Thomas community. If there is a need and desire, additional space will be scouted for permanently designated courts.

### P3.1.4 Community Center

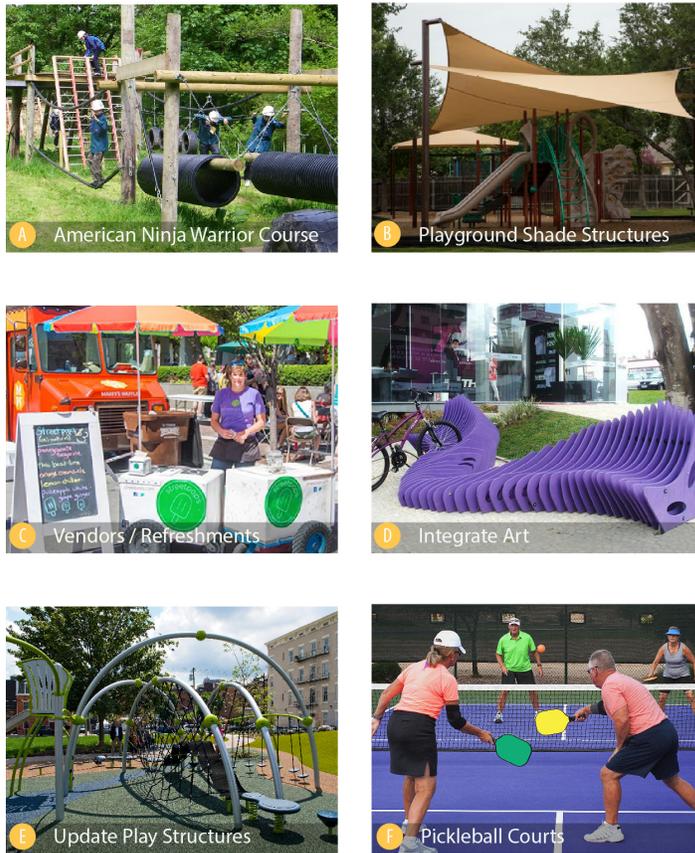
In the absence of a traditional recreation center, Fort Thomas has been blessed with the use of the Armory building. The Armory has served as the community rec center by providing many of the amenities found at traditional recreation centers— indoor basketball courts, open gyms, workout room, programming, and meeting/game rooms. This plan recommends that as the building undergoes architectural upgrades, the facilities within the building (e.g. workout equipment) are upgraded as well to encourage continued and increased use by the community. **U F**

### P3.1.5 Tower Park Recreation District

There could be a long-term opportunity to collaborate with the Army Reserve and the School District to create a more cohesive recreation district with tournament level facilities within Tower Park, building upon the existing soccer stadium and connecting with shared parking for the Midway District. As part of this district, expanded and better-connected parking and pedestrian pathways/sidewalks is an important need throughout Tower Park, especially at the south end as the current network is overcrowded and unsafe for children. **F**

## CHAPTER 2.3 PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

### P3.1.6 Additional Park Features and Improvements.



#### Additional Tower Park Improvements

- G Explore splash pad as part of an expanded playground area
- H Additional Programming/Activities for Seniors
- I Additional Programming at Armory, Mess Hall, etc.
- J Improved Signage/Wayfinding

Figure P18. Examples of Potential Tower Park Improvements

**P3.2** Maximize the city's only ball field that is sized for adult recreation leagues and users, recognizing its function as an important community gathering spot.

The city's only adult-sized ball field resides in Tower Park near the Mess Hall and residents have expressed interest in preserving this amenity as an important recreation/social amenity. Efforts to keep a ball field that is sized for adult leagues should be made.

**P4 Provide for a high-quality parks and recreation system in an efficient manner.**

P4 Reference List

- R** Chapter 2.5 Regional Partners
- F** Chapter 2.6 Focus Area Plans

**P4.1** Maximize opportunities to foster partnerships and share investment to enhance parks, trails, and gateways in a cost effective way.

**P4.1.1** Sargeant Park

There could be opportunity to collaborate with the City of Dayton to create a park master plan to improve access and amenities at Sargeant Park. Both cities and potentially Campbell County could work together toward a shared vision for the park that is mutually beneficial for both communities. **F**

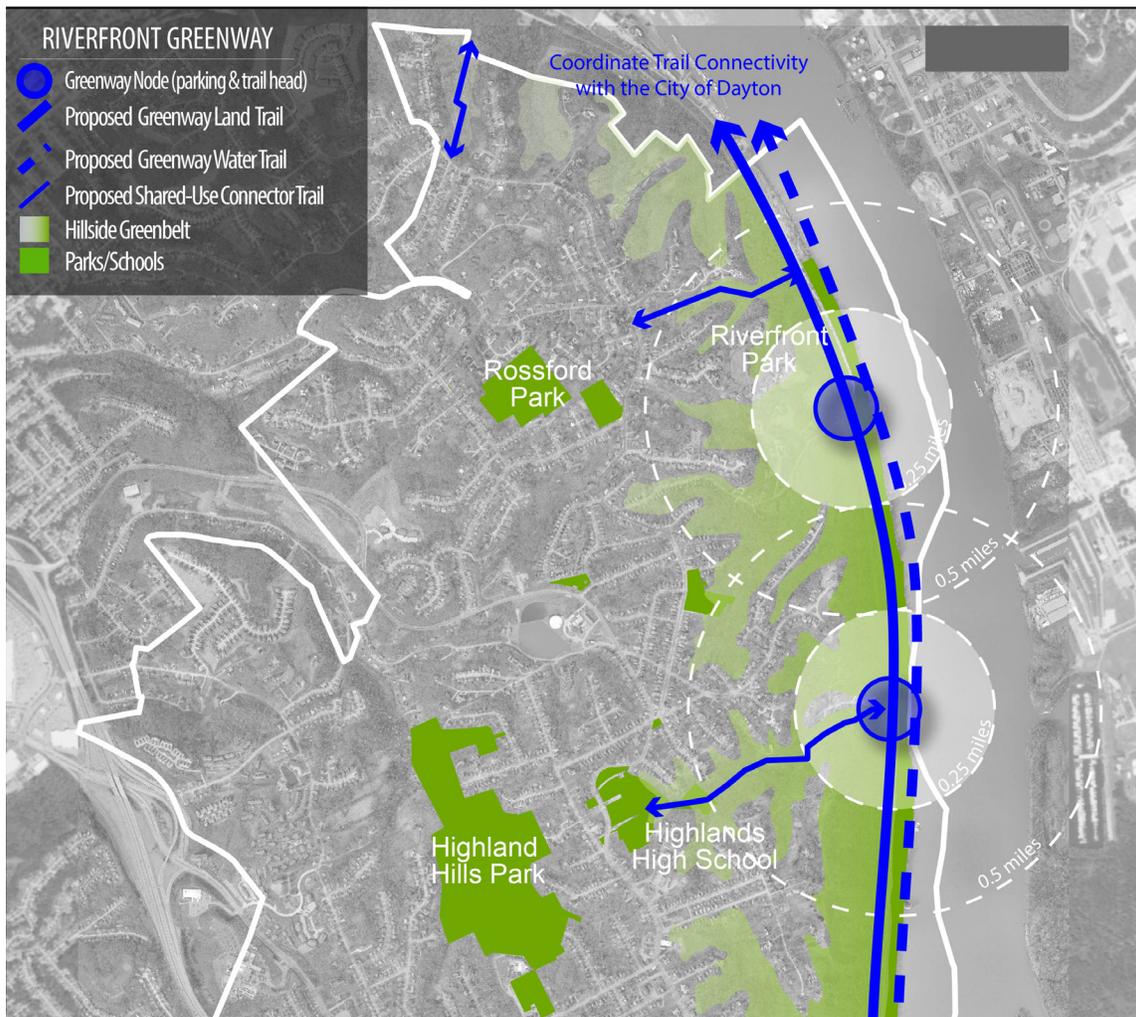


Figure P19. Riverfront Greenway

**P4.1.2** Riverfront Park

The City of Fort Thomas has recently received grant money to construct soft surface trails on the Riverfront Park site and there is an opportunity to expand on this momentum to mold the site into a passive recreation park with a Riverfront Greenway node equipped with amenities such as soft surface trails, river overlooks/view clearing, benches, picnic tables, a canoe/kayak boat launch, car/bike parking, and trailhead.

Part 2

**P4.2** Work collectively with the schools and other groups to provide for recreational opportunities in ways that reduce redundancy.

One example of a way to reduce redundancy is by establishing the Tower Park Recreation District. As previously mentioned, there could be a long-term opportunity to collaborate with the Army Reserve and the School District to create a more cohesive recreation district with tournament level facilities within Tower Park, building upon the existing soccer stadium and connecting with shared parking for the Midway District. As part of this district, expanded and better-connected parking and pedestrian pathways/sidewalks is an important need throughout Tower Park, especially at the south end as the current network is overcrowded and unsafe for children. **R F**

**P4.3** Encourage community stewardship through citizen advisory/volunteer groups and a tool to make it easier to volunteer.

Fort Thomas is blessed with residents who love their community and are willing to volunteer and serve for the greater good. Establishing an organized system to advertise volunteering opportunities (e.g. recreational programming, special events, park cleanup/maintenance, trail maintenance, etc.) and organize/implement volunteer group events (e.g. Friends of Parks Groups, Trails Team, Park Ambassadors) would provide a valuable service to the City.

**P4.4** Encourage budget allocation for capital and operation (including maintenance, staffing, programming, and fundraising for capital projects).

Many partners (e.g. Fort Thomas Parks and Recreation Department, schools, Renaissance Board) are involved in providing classes, sports leagues, and events for the Fort Thomas Community. Continuing to collaborate with these partners as well as exploring collaboration opportunities with new partners (e.g. St. Elizabeth Healthcare, YMCA) would ensure that existing programs continue and expand and new programs are introduced.

There is a high level of interest in more programming/events within the Fort Thomas parks, especially those relating to health and wellness (e.g. exercise classes, sports leagues/camps). There is an opportunity to collaborate with local partners (e.g. St. Elizabeth Healthcare, NKU, YMCA, local gyms/fitness centers) to sponsor events within the parks.

### **P5 Increase residents' use of park/recreation facilities and programs.**

**P5.1** Provide a stronger social media presence to inform residents of assets and events and invite visitors to Fort Thomas.

Acknowledging the important role social media plays in our society, there is an opportunity to embrace social media applications to enable a more accessible, direct and transparent relationship with the Fort Thomas community. Viewed as both a marketing and customer service tool, it would require commitment to interact with and respond to users. Some examples of tools used by other Parks and Recreation Departments include blogging, Facebook, and Instagram, YouTube, and Vimeo.

**P5.2** Enhance online scheduling tools so park assets (fields, shelters, etc.) can be utilized/scheduled/reserved more easily and efficiently.

Embracing digital, online scheduling tools would increase productivity and efficiency within the Parks and Recreation Department, enabling staff to do more with existing resources and provide an accessible service to the community.



## CHAPTER 2.4

# UTILITIES AND CITY OWNED FACILITIES

The focus of the Utilities & City Owned Facilities chapter is to review the major community facilities within the City of Fort Thomas and the utilities that serve the community as whole. Utilities studied in this chapter include electric, water, wastewater, storm water & technology (fiber connectivity). Buildings/facilities addressed include the City Building, Mess Hall (Community Center), Armory Building and the Stables Building, all of which have historical significance and importance to the identity of the community. The City Building, Mess Hall and Armory are currently owned by the City. While the City does not currently own the Stables Building, it is included in this Plan because it too is important to the community and the City may have the ability in the future to acquire it from the US government.

The Utilities and City Owned Facilities subcommittee began meeting in September 2017. The members first established the Goals and Objectives that would go on to become the framework for developing the recommendations presented in this chapter, see page 148.



## UTILITIES & CITY OWNED FACILITIES

### VISION

To maintain a high level of public utilities and community facilities to meet the needs of both residents and businesses within the city, staying abreast of state of the art advances in technology to provide efficient and effective services.

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

#### **U1 Continue to provide and maintain all essential utility services as economically and sustainably as possible.**

**U1.1** Coordinate closely with local utility companies on construction and reconstruction projects in order to minimize costs, which in turn will keep service disruptions to a minimum.

**U1.2** Ensure all new development/ redevelopment is constructed in an environmentally friendly manner that incorporates the natural environment, reduces the need to construct man-made control measures and does not negatively impact utilization.

**U1.3** Maintain and improve stormwater quality and reduce quantity.

#### **U2 Promote technology within our community so that it parallels the needs of our population.**

**U2.1** Work with neighboring communities and other public and private regional entities to form a 5 Year Smart City Plan.

**U2.2** Become best-in-class with technology.

**U1.3** Evaluate existing city regulations associated with the development of future telecommunication facilities and update as needed.

#### **F1 Maximize the utilization of city owned facilities.**

**F1.1** Identify the priority facilities and the unique features of each facility: City Building, Armory, Mess Hall, and Stables Building (which has the potential to be owned by the City).

**F1.2** Develop a vision for each facility based on its location, strengths and opportunities.

**F1.3** Improve and enhance City website.



Figure F1. City Owned\* Buildings Summary Map  
\*includes the Stables Building, which is not currently owned by the City.

SWOT ANALYSIS

As part of the awareness phase of the Community Plan, the committee began reviewing existing information and identifying city owned facilities (or other public facilities that the City may be able to acquire in the future) that represent the highest potential benefit to the residents of the city. The buildings selected for further study in this report included the City Building, Mess Hall (Community Center), Armory Building and the Stables Building.

A Summary of each of the components is below. With the focus areas set, a comprehensive SWOT Analysis was performed for the following:

**U. Utilities**

Electric, Telephone, Gas, Water and Sewer

**T. Technology**

Fiber Optic

**F. The City Owned Facilities**

City Building, Mess Hall (Community Center), Armory Building, Stables Building (which has the potential to become city-owned)

A summary of the analysis can be found below with a complete copy of the SWOT analysis found in Appendix A.



Part 2

### COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

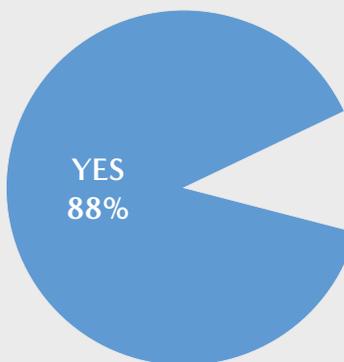
Total Responses: 523 People

Starting in November, 2017, the Community Survey consisting of the six sections outlined earlier was made available to the public. Over 9 months, the Utilities and City Owned Facilities survey received 523 responses. Complete results of the public survey can be found in Appendix B.

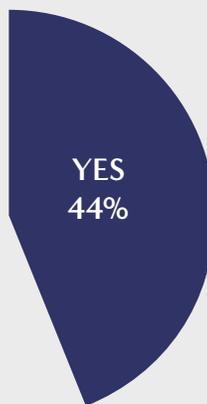
Participants overwhelmingly responded that they thought their residence or business was adequately serviced by utilities (88 percent). Regarding City Owned Facilities, the survey included questions about how often residents used each of the city owned buildings as well as the condition of each. It was found that approximately 75 percent of respondents have been in the Mess Hall within the last year while 65 percent have been in the Armory.

In addition to the on-line survey, two public meetings were conducted, as outlined in Part 1. At each of the public meetings, the Utilities and City Owned Facilities Committee presented display boards outlining progress to date and asked the public to comment. Copies of these boards, including the public comments, are included in Appendix C.

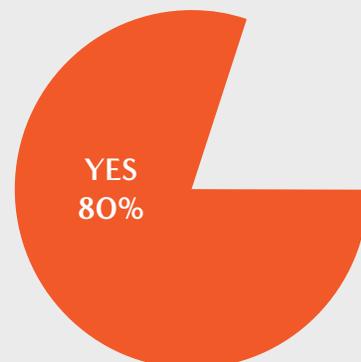
Do you feel that your residence/  
business is adequately serviced by  
utilities?



Do you feel that city wide  
WiFi should be a priority?



Do you feel that city is  
adequately maintaining its  
facilities?



### CITY OWNED FACILITIES

The continued accessibility, maintenance and maximum utilization of our community facilities is critical to creating and maintaining a high standard of living for all residents and workers in the City. A review of current service and facility provisions can help local leaders develop and implement future improvements. The primary focus of the committee's work associated with the City Owned Facilities was looking at each individual facility in detail using the results of the SWOT analysis.

Within the community, the City Building, Armory Building, Mess Hall and Stables Building were chosen for further review. The City Building was reviewed because geographically and functionally it is at the core of the community. The others were chosen based on their historical significance and importance to the identity of the community. The City Building, Armory and Mess Hall are city-owned buildings that currently house vital components and amenities utilized by the community. The committee's decision to include the Stables Building in this study was based on the building's ability to easily meet the above criteria. There was also a sense of stewardship associated with each of these structures and a responsibility of the City to look at ways to connect and reinvest in them.

Upon discussion, each structure was given a key word that captured the essence of the building and surrounding grounds:

City Building – *ENGAGING*

Mess Hall – *GATHERING*

Armory Building – *ACTIVE*

Stables Building – *DYNAMIC*

Each facility was reviewed for the usage types, strengths, limitations and opportunities. The review focused on the facilities as they are today and what they could become in the future. From there, a general layout and full improvement schematic was developed.

### Recommendations:

Upon the collective review of the project ideas and summaries, the preliminary recommendations include:

#### F1 Maximize the utilization of city owned facilities.

**F1.1** Identify the primary facilities and unique features of each facility.

**F1.2** Develop a vision for each facility based on its location, strength and opportunities.

**F1.2.1** For city-owned facilities, develop and use an annually updated Facilities Improvement Plan to assess changing needs and to strategize and prioritize capital projects.

**F1.2.2** Focus the Facilities Improvement Plan on current public facility priorities of:

- » Upgrade City Building Complex (includes Public Works and Storage Building) with facade improvement, space planning for administration, providing public meeting space and 24/7 restroom facilities. **F**
- » Improve programming of City owned facilities.
- » Continue dialogue with the Army National Guard regarding acquisition of the Stables Building and surrounding parcel.
- » Expand event / meeting space at the Mess Hall. **F**
- » Open Armory Building entrance; reconfigure and reuse 1st floor. **F**

**F1.2.3** Coordinate facilities planning with community groups to ensure and encourage co-locating similar functions, sharing infrastructure upgrade projects and / or shared resources where applicable.

**F1.3** Improve and enhance city website.

#### F1 Reference List

**P** Chapter 2.3  
Parks and Open Space

**F** Chapter 2.6  
Focus Area Plans



Artist Rendering of Reconfigured Armory entrance.

## CHAPTER 2.4 UTILITIES & CITY OWNED FACILITIES

### City Building- ENGAGING

Geographically and socially, the City Building is in the center of the community and as such it also plays an important role in serving as the center of activity for the City. The building should engage its residents, local businesses, and staff to promote and support collaboration. An important statement summarizing this idea was to “give the building back to the community” and provide a 3rd home for the residents, by offering a community meeting room and public restrooms that are open 24/7. From this study it is clear that there is a great opportunity to reinvigorate the City Building and create an engaging public space.

Existing Uses	Strengths	Limitations	Opportunities
Public works Police and Fire Administration General services Council chambers Finance	With one exception, all City Departments are housed on a single campus Central location off Fort Thomas Ave.	Imposing facade Limited parking Limited ADA accessibility Not enough restrooms Compartmentalized floor plan Limited number of public entry points from parking Not user friendly Day use only	After hours public access to restrooms Adaptable and flexible community meeting space Renovate exterior entrance to be more welcoming by introducing more natural light, open lobby, public facing General Services / reception desk Mail PO Boxes and drop box available to the public Gallery Public access to Council Chambers during off hours use. Full A/V training space available to Fire and public for classroom training. Information Center (Visitor and Business) Potential for Fire Department building expansion 'Safe Place' of refuge in case of emergency with 'help phone' Efficient space, with departments working closely together Incorporate energy efficient building systems (Electrical, HVAC, Water, etc)



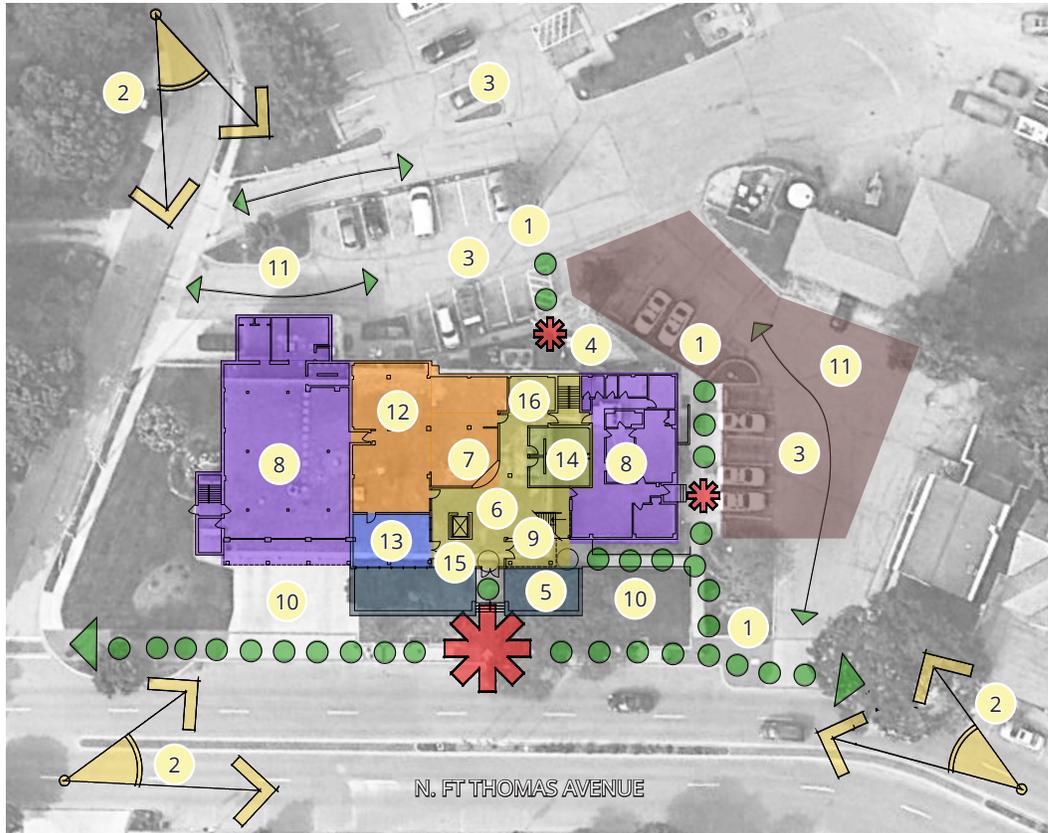


Figure F2. City Building Improvements Schematic

### City Building Schematic and Potential Improvements

1. Primary pedestrian circulation paths
2. Strong view to/from the site
3. Improve visitor parking\*
4. Create opportunities for new public building entrance in rear of building\*
5. Enhance plaza seating and landscaping beds\*
6. Provide a welcoming lobby with gallery space and water feature\*
7. Centralize reception and reconfigure administrative offices\*
8. Existing police/fire. Review and reconfigure fire department space\*
9. Windows for daylighting
10. Facade improvements
11. Separation of public and city vehicular circulation
12. Consolidated offices
13. Create community meeting/flex space with enhanced technology\*
14. Provide 24-hr. public restrooms\*
15. Infill addition/enlarge lobby with 2nd floor access and improved interior site lines\*
16. Self-serve print/mail station

\* potential improvement

## CHAPTER 2.4 UTILITIES & CITY OWNED FACILITIES

### Mess Hall – GATHERING

The existing facility hosted more than 85 events in 2017 and is consistently reserved 12 to 18 months in advance. The Mess Hall has continued to function as a successful event space from its humble beginnings as a military mess hall. As such, the goal moving forward is to further enhance the utilization and program offerings for this facility

Existing Uses	Limitations	Opportunities
Events – weddings, fundraisers, parties	Events within Tower Park	Enhanced wedding party amenities
City sponsored movie nights	Limited storage	Military history display/events
Exercise classes	Lack of a loading dock	Tourism
Concerts	Waste collection	Public/private partnerships
Theatrical production	Access to parking	Use of basement of storage (requires freight elevator)
Funeral / memorial services	Mobility issues	Increased parking
City groups	Ballfield noise and traffic	Small meeting/break-out space
Public meetings	Limited staffing	Co-working space/business center
Exhibit spaces	Daily maintenance	Business fairs
Restrooms	No catering kitchen	Catering or teaching kitchen
Primarily weekend/evening uses	Lack of A/V and flex furnishings at back of house	Outdoor space (patio)



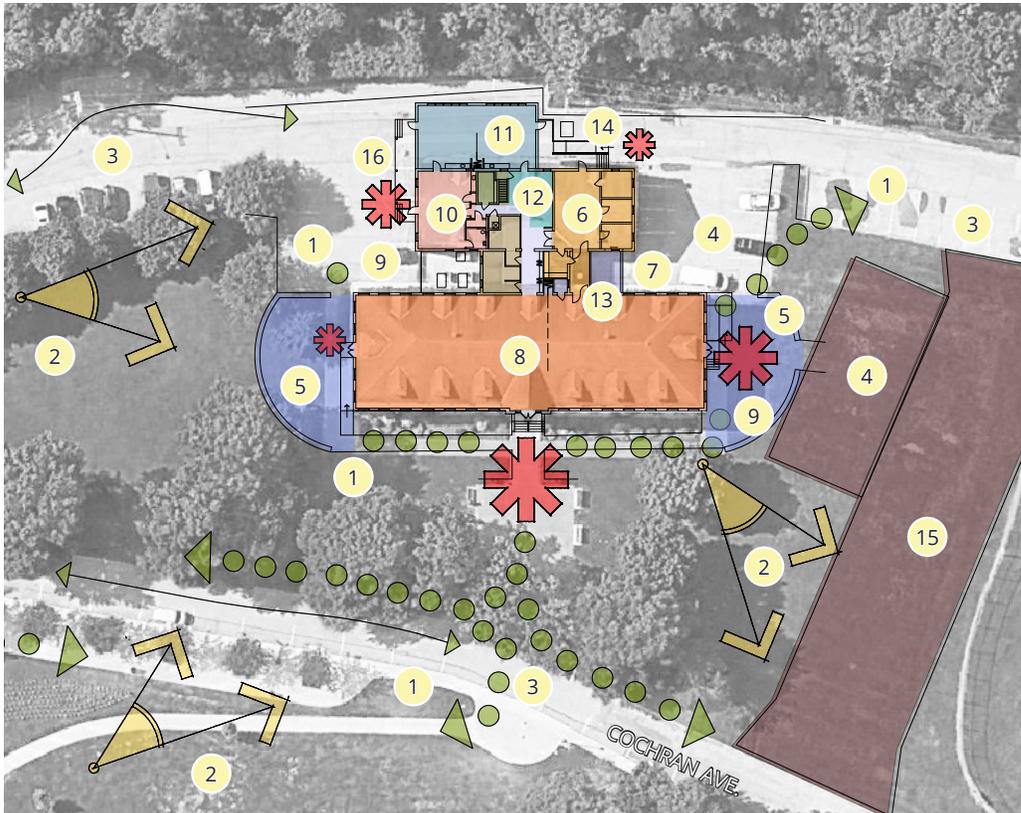


Figure F3. Mess Hall Improvements Schematic

### Mess Hall Schematic and Potential Improvements P F

1. Primary pedestrian circulation paths
  2. Strong views to/from the site
  3. Existing parking
  4. Explore opportunities for additional parking\*
  5. Create terrace outdoor entertaining/dining space\*
  6. Expand catering services\*
  7. In-fill addition
  8. Dividable, enhanced multi-purpose space
  9. Enhance guest entry\*
  10. Flex multi-purpose space/bridal party dressing area
  11. Building addition with dividable meeting space and enhanced technology offerings\*
  12. Informal lounge seating
  13. Formalized table/chair storage\*
  14. Provide new service facilities and entrance\*
  15. Improved vehicular circulation\*
  16. Provide 'back porch' entrance and seating area\*
- \* potential improvement

### Armory Building – ACTIVE

As a single feature, the sheer size of the Armory Building alone makes it one of the highest potential facilities in the community. While the building has been identified as active with programmed events and sports; it is not just about being a ‘gym’. Its history and tradition of being an ongoing social and physical community center is what makes it so important. It was evident from the discussions that the Armory should maintain the active characteristic and use of its gymnasium for sports. While the structure has some of the highest potential, it is faced with many challenges that need to be addressed to realize its full potential. On the first floor, excess noise from activities greatly limits the functionality of the smaller rooms and low headroom and column placement create physical constraints. Since the goal is to maintain the active feel of the facility, the use and function of the meeting spaces becomes secondary. While the small meeting spaces can be utilized as needed, it was agreed that the Mess Hall would be more appropriately utilized as the primary event space, allowing for the Armory to be used as overflow and its meeting space allocated for more active uses. Opportunities include leasable space, school partnerships and food service. Additionally, the facility serves as a registered emergency shelter for the Red Cross Organization. Associated storage, restroom and locker room improvements would directly benefit the community in the event of emergency.

Existing Uses	Strengths	Limitations	Opportunities
Gymnasium	Location linking S Fort	Acoustics	Makerspace/workshop
Fitness classes	Thomas Ave to Tower	Sense of arrival (not family friendly)	Continue gym use
Red Cross shelter	Park	Limited adjacent land/landlocked	Continue Red Cross shelter
Meeting room	Historic property	No central air	Enhance viewer experience for basketball games
After school program	Size	Need for building repair (interior/exterior) of gym floor, water damage, paint	Target programming for Tweens and Seniors
Daycare	City owned	Compartmentalized spaces	Enhanced vending
Teen center/game center	Proven history of desired location for fitness/recreation use	Limited line of sight (security concern)	Sandwich/ice cream shop with connection to exterior/Tower Park
City maintenance Shop and storage		Size/lower level ceiling height	Additional City office space
Special events		Fit & finish of public facing spaces	Enhanced multi-purpose/flex meeting space with full A/V
		Under staffed	Commercial kitchen for rental and to serve special events
		Limited ADA accessibility	Leasable flex space
		Column spacing on lower level	Reconfigure lower level for better efficiency
		Vertical circulation	Improved public entrance (family friendly)
			Continue daycare offering
			Improved City recreation Dept. Offices



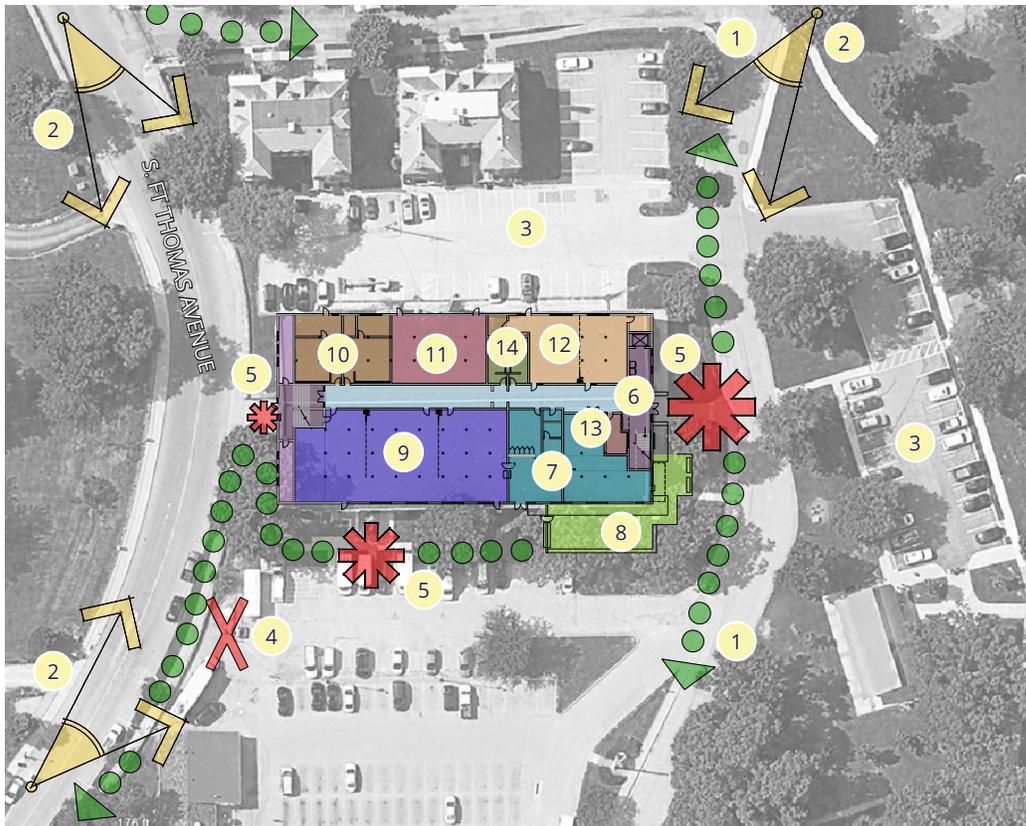


Figure F4. Armory Building Improvements Schematic

### Armory Building Schematic and Potential Improvements

1. Primary pedestrian circulation paths
2. Strong views to/from site
3. Existing parking
4. Opportunities to explore improved vehicular site access
5. Improve entry features, signage and landscaping\*
6. Improve lobby/reception areas by opening entrance to carry light to both stories\*
7. Possible leasable tenant space\*
8. Create outdoor terrace seating\*
9. Create dividable classroom space with enhanced technology\*
10. Improve locker room/ showers and Red Cross emergency shelter support amenities\*
11. Consolidate city services (facilities shop and storage areas)\*
12. Improve dividable meeting space with enhanced technology and kitchenette\*
13. Parks and recreation offices
14. Upgrade public restrooms with after-hours access\*

\* potential improvement



### Stables Building – DYNAMIC

While this structure is not currently owned by the City of Fort Thomas, its prime location, unique interior spaces, and historic significance make it worth investigating. Its location provides a key connection between the Midway Business District and Tower Park.

Existing Uses	Strengths	Limitations	Opportunities
Stables - storage (Army Reserve) Adjacent on-site building owned by City; leased as childcare Adjacent on-site building owned by City; used as off-season B&G storage	Unique building Prime location Adjacent parking Historic building Gateway connection Size Good exterior condition Proximity to playfields	City does not own the building Building lacks any infrastructure (heat/cool, plumbing etc.) No restrooms Timing – how it fits into master planning/development Relocate temporary City storage. Where? Be sensitive to residents of Sergeant neighborhood.	Open Air Market with anchor retail Community kitchen for start-ups, classes, & catering Brewery/distillery (support B-Line) Self-sustaining Farm to Table food service/aquaponics (sim. W 6th Brewery in Lexington) Café with unique food offerings Soccer/sports field support facility (lockers, showers, training gym, PT, classroom) Adventure center (equipment education/rental; high ropes course; glamping support) Senior classes – active lifestyle Rotating retail/specialty shops with outdoor market B & B / overnight lodging w/ special event space Celebration of high school sports (Highland HS HOF) STEM / STEAM classroom space Theater group/performance space City owned/leased space (multi-purpose/meeting) Improved City Recreation Dept. offices



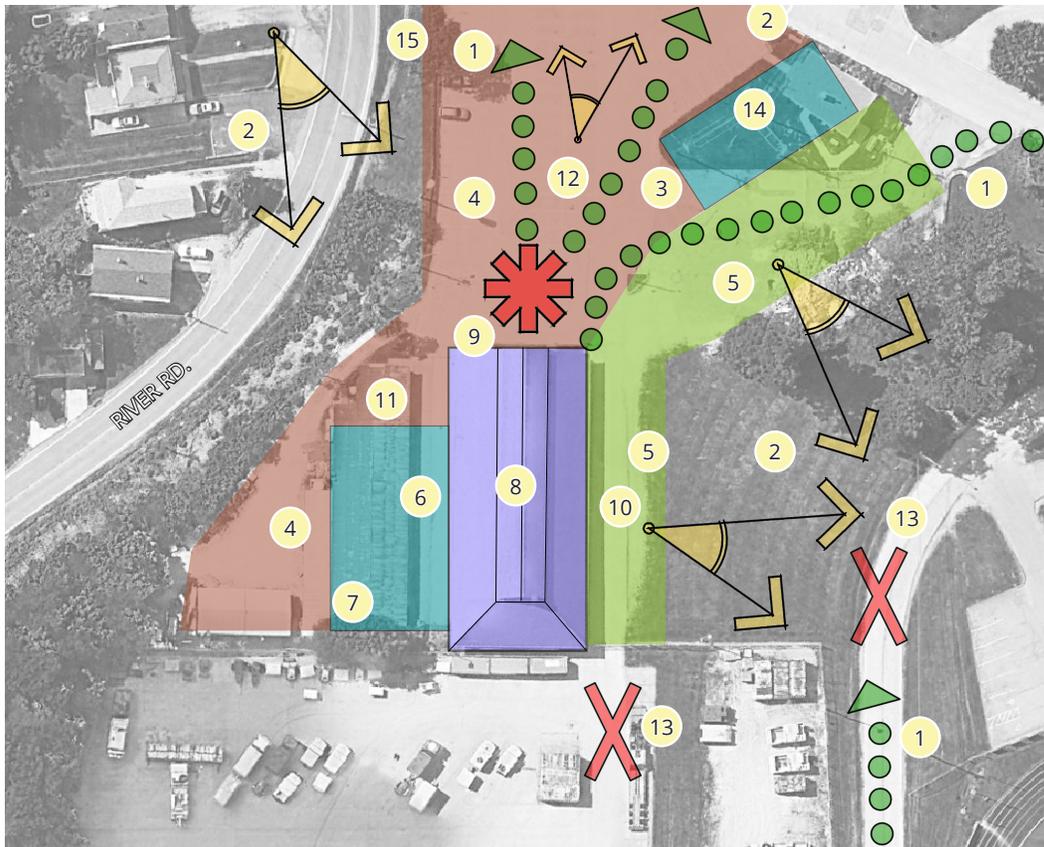


Figure F5. Stables Building Improvements Schematic

### Stables Building Schematic and Potential Improvements

**ACQUISITION** – Continue to communicate with the US Government to look for opportunities to acquire the Stables Building and its surrounding properties\*

1. Primary pedestrian circulation paths
  2. Strong views to/from the site
  3. Existing parking
  4. Opportunities for public parking expansion\*
  5. Opportunity for outdoor entertaining/dining space
  6. Opportunity for building expansion\*
  7. Back of house
  8. Mixed use multi-purpose public space with leasing opportunities\*
  9. Enhance guest entry\*
  10. Provide covered/open air seating to the east with views of sporting fields\*
  11. Relocate existing city services/storage facility\*
  12. Improve streetscape to provide connectivity to Midway and Tower Park\*
  13. Opportunity to explore improved site access
  14. Opportunity for additional event space
  15. Improved connection between park and Midway
- \* potential improvement

### PUBLIC UTILITIES

The City's public utility systems are critical to the overall health and safety of residents, employees and students within the community. The existing fiber network provided by Cincinnati Bell provides residents and businesses with access to high speed internet (up to 1Gbps), cloud computing and other services to help residents and businesses compete in today's market. Homes, businesses, schools and institutions all benefit from the development, operations and maintenance of the City's and Utilities' infrastructure. The goal is to continue to coordinate and provide excellent service for all utilities.

#### The existing utility providers in Fort Thomas include:

- Duke Energy – Electric, Natural Gas
- Northern Kentucky Water District
- Sanitation District No. 1
- Spectrum
- Cincinnati Bell

### Electricity & Renewable Energy

The city is currently serviced by Duke Energy. The current model is evolving as customer engagement and rising costs are creating alternative options. Less energy from the grid as a result of increased energy efficiency and customers, who are increasingly interested in reducing their energy bills through environmental stewardship and/or producing their own electricity, should be encouraged by the City as well as a general practice in City Owned Facilities.

#### Recommendations:

### U1 Continue to provide and maintain all essential utility services as economically and sustainably as possible.

**U1.1** Coordinate closely with local utility companies on construction and reconstruction project. Continue coordination with Duke Energy regarding electricity rates. **R**

**U1.1.1** Convert existing street lighting to LED. Work with Duke Energy or another vendor to explore costs and determine most cost effective solution.

**U1.2** Ensure all new development/redevelopment is constructed in an environmentally friendly manner. Explore options for alternative energy production and energy efficiencies.

**U1.2.1** Within City Owned Facilities, the City should lead by example.

**U1.2.2** Provide incentives for property owners to reduce energy consumption either through improvements or alternative forms of energy production. **L**

#### U1 Reference List

- L** Chapter 2.1  
Land Use
- T** Chapter 2.2  
Transportation and Connectivity
- R** Chapter 2.5  
Regional Partners

### Overhead Lines and Street Design

To relocate all overhead electric services underground would be impractical and an imprudent use of taxpayer money. However, there are opportunities where utility relocation - for purposes of beautification and to increase usable public space - is sensible. Improvements in the approach of overhead utilities can have a positive impact on the appearance of the roadway and other infrastructure and can demonstrate the commitment of the City by investing in economic development opportunity areas, historical areas and/or business districts.

### Water Systems

Our City is currently serviced by the Northern Kentucky Water District (NKWD). NKWD was formed after the merger of the Campbell County Water District and the Kenton County Water District No. 1. NKWD operates two treatment plants in Fort Thomas, one in the southern portion near Midway Business District and another in the northern portion of the City along Memorial Parkway. These plants provide water throughout Campbell and Kenton Counties. Over the past decade, NKWD and other Midwest water utilities have experienced a trend of declining water use per capita. This trend has been attributed to increased water use efficiencies in new appliances (such as toilets, washing machines, shower heads, etc.), public water conservation awareness and decreased use as a result of increasing water / sewer bills. The declining use has more than offset the increases due to population growth. Based on the predicted use patterns and existing infrastructure, future improvements will likely be on maintenance, water treatment upgrades, and expansions into newly developed portions of Campbell and Kenton County.

#### Recommendations:

**U1.2.3** Continue to coordinate with NKWD for aging main replacements to coincide with street programs. Continue to share 5-year proposed street plan.

**U1.2.4** Continue to engage NKWD in conversations to review options for opening up the walking paths around the south reservoirs.

### Wastewater Management

The City of Fort Thomas is currently served by Sanitation District No. 1 for centralized treatment facilities and conveyance systems. Maintenance of the existing system is a priority that must be coordinated with SD1, as a large portion of the existing system is beyond its useful life. Coordination with SD1 and all public utilities is an integral part of public improvements made by the City. Often times, the local utility companies will complete improvements and upgrades to their system as City improvements are occurring.

#### Recommendations:

**U1.2.5** The wastewater collection and treatment methods as provided by Sanitation District No. 1 currently meet the needs of the community. Therefore, the city should continue to coordinate and work with Sanitation District No. 1 on planned asset improvements to replace aging infrastructure in the community. **R**

**U1.2.6** Combined sewer overflows (CSOs) currently exist along the Mary Ingles (KY 8) corridor. As recreational development occurs along the riverfront in this corridor, the city should work with Sanitation District No. 1 to eliminate the CSOs.

### Stormwater

The storm water system in Fort Thomas is operated cooperatively among the City, Sanitation District No. 1, private residents and the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KTC). Structures and piping within public rights-of-way are owned and maintained by KTC. On other public rights-of-way, SDI owns the piping system and the City owns the structures that gather the water off of the roadway. Outside of rights-of-way, the systems are owned by either private property owners or SDI, depending on the origination of the storm water. Prior to 2009, all of the storm system components were owned by the City. At that time, as part of an interlocal agreement, the City transferred its assets, with the exception of the inlets, to SDI to own and maintain.

The purpose of the existing storm drainage system in the City is to deal with excess storm water from paved streets, parking lots, sidewalks, roofs and other impervious surfaces. Projects should be designed to reduce the potential impact of new and existing developments with respect to surface water drainage discharges.

All development proposals must consider downstream impacts. Green infrastructure and low impact development strategies can minimize storm sewer improvement costs to support development. Redevelopment does not typically require the expansion or improvement of the City's existing system from a storm water quantity standpoint; however, it can take advantage of storm water quality opportunities and requirements.

Low impact development, often referred to as Conservation Development, combines a number of design, pollution prevention and treatment Best Management Practices (BMPs) to minimize the amount of untreated storm water runoff leaving a site. Innovative planning can result in a site yielding the same number of houses or buildings but with significantly less impervious area. What results is an area with increased infiltration and decreased storm water runoff.

BMPs like vegetated filter strips, porous pavement, bioretention areas and vegetated rooftops are often included in low impact design. Some additional benefits of low impact design include reduced land clearing and grading costs, a potential reduction in infrastructure costs, increased lot and community marketability and a reduction in impacts to local terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. In short, low impact development allows for the full development of the property with reduced associated costs and provides an effective alternative to those wishing to explore the connection between development and environmentally-conscious design.

In response to proposed storm water rulemaking by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), SDI was identified by local leaders, including the City of Fort Thomas, as the most practical organization to assume regional responsibilities for the operation and maintenance of the storm water collection systems and to assist the cities in complying with upcoming federal storm water regulations. Currently SDI is administering the requirements of the Kentucky Pollution Discharge Elimination System (KPDES) permit for the City of Fort Thomas as required by the EPA and the KY Department for Environmental Protection. This permit regulates the discharge of wastewater and stormwater into a body of water.

### What is Low Impact Development?

A stormwater management approach modeled after nature: managing rainfall at the source using uniformly distributed decentralized micro-scale controls. LID's goal is to mimic a site's predevelopment hydrology by using design techniques that infiltrate, filter, store, evaporate, and detain runoff close to its source. Techniques are based on the premise that stormwater management should not be seen as stormwater disposal. Instead of conveying and managing/treating stormwater in large costly end-of-pipe facilities located at the bottom of drainage areas, LID addresses stormwater through small, cost-effective landscape features located at the lot level. This includes not only open space, but also rooftops, streetscapes, parking lots, sidewalks, and medians. LID is a versatile approach that can be applied equally well to new development, urban retrofits, and redevelopment/revitalization.

## CHAPTER 2.4 UTILITIES & CITY OWNED FACILITIES

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### Recommendations:

**U1.3** Maintain and improve stormwater quality and reduce quantity.

**U1.3.1** Maintain stormwater quantity. Reduce as opportunities present themselves. Develop a list of privately owned detention and retention facilities and water quality features within the community. Coordinate with Sanitation District No. 1 to ensure facilities are maintained.

**U1.3.2** Improve stormwater quality as redevelopment occurs.

**U1.3.3** Work with Sanitation District No. 1 to create an education program to guide property owners on how to reduce stormwater runoff and improve water quality.

**U1.3.4** Brand the City as Sustainable

- » Encourage Low Impact Development Principles in the community. Provide smart growth or LEED® green building program incentives.
- » Consider amendments to the Zoning Code requiring additional site design review for redevelopment beyond the storm water requirements of Sanitation District No. 1.
- » Consider incorporating Low Impact Development standards into special economic development programs that utilize tax abatement incentives.
- » Employ sustainable methods for roadway construction.
- » Invest in projects supporting self-sustainability



**U1.3.5** Align the City's stormwater regulations that are located in the subdivision regulations with Sanitation District No. 1's regulations.

### Fiber & Technology

Internet usage has evolved dramatically in the last decade; changing how we shop, bank, search, share and are entertained via music and movies. Residents and businesses are reliant on the Internet for their daily needs and the expectations for internet performance continue to increase and that trend is expected to accelerate. Cincinnati Bell currently provides fiber throughout the majority of the community. To date, fiber is considered the future proof option for connectivity and internet. This continued dedication and cooperation from Cincinnati Bell to provide fiber throughout the community should be promoted by the City as an economic and development opportunity. Fiber connectivity has proven to be an essential utility to support business operations and educational development.

Fast internet (1 Gbps), at an affordable price has become, and will continue to grow as, an everyday necessity for businesses and residents. Experts at the Fiber to the Home (FTTH) Council say fiber-to-the-home connections are the only technology with enough bandwidth to handle projected consumer demands during the next decade reliably and cost effectively. To remain competitive in attracting and retaining the brightest and best to live and work in our community, the City needs to continue to coordinate with Cincinnati Bell to provide city-wide fiber as well as invest in Smart City initiatives to support the needs of an information society.

### Smart City Approach

The City of Fort Thomas has an opportunity to consider transitioning street lights to LED, with potential electric savings forecasted to be approximately 50 percent of the costs to run the current lights. The cost savings will take time to recuperate the cost for LED installation, but once the costs have been recuperated, the cost savings may be re-invested into technology infrastructure for the City overall. These opportunities will be carefully considered by Council and if recommended, through a public forum to debate the pros and cons to such an approach. Additional approaches to the Smart City initiative include providing public Wi-Fi in the central business districts, parks and high traffic area. Regional collaboration and a Smart Corridor approach will also benefit the greater good in providing a high-tech corridor to contribute to the economic vitality of the area.

### GIGABIT EFFECT

Homes with one Gbps broadband sell for over 7% more than similar homes where only 25 Mbps or less is available.



SOURCE: MOLNAR, G.C SAVAGE, S., & SICKER, D. (2015). REEVALUATING THE BROADBAND BONUS: EVIDENCE FROM NEIGHBORHOOD ACCESS TO FIBER AND UNITED STATES HOUSING PRICES.

## CHAPTER 2.4 UTILITIES & CITY OWNED FACILITIES

### Recommendations:

## U2 Promote technology within our community so that it parallels the needs of our population.

**U2.1** Develop a 5-Year Smart City Plan.

**U2.1.1** Continue to partner with adjoining communities, regional governments and private or public economic engines in close proximity to Fort Thomas. **L R F**

**U2.2** Become best-in-class with technology.

**U2.2.1** Ensure that fiber infrastructure supports economic development and education. Live, Learn, Work and Play in our community.

» View fiber optics in the same light as other public utilities and infrastructure such as electricity and roads.

**U2.3** Evaluate and update existing city regulations regarding telecommunication facilities.

**U2.3.1** Review/Revise Zoning Ordinance Section 9.27 Cellular Telecommunications Facilities to incorporate updated regulations associated with mini towers and other smaller structures.

### U2 Reference List

- L** Chapter 2.1  
Land Use
- R** Chapter 2.5  
Regional Partners
- F** Chapter 2.6  
Focus Area Plans

## SUMMARY

The continued fostering of City Owned Facilities represents a unique opportunity to celebrate the past, present and future of how each has played a pivotal role in the story of Fort Thomas. Furthermore, the findings of this study have provided us with clear direction, one that through the strategic investment and improvements outlined in this chapter, will not only continue to serve the community, but also show that their value to the community can grow even greater. At the core of Fort Thomas' investments sits the City Building. Fort Thomas is a welcoming community that encourages civic engagement and participation. The proposed improvements can become the catalyst for a new level of community engagement.

Maintaining utilities that function in a safe and reliable manner has been, and will continue to be, the goal. The participants' responses and feedback have also shown that investing in future technology is important. In particular, the creation of a Smart City Plan is needed to help guide community investment in technology that provides the greatest impact to residents, schools and business - both today and for future generations.

"Communities are Investing in Broadband Infrastructure to Enable Economic Development and Vitality"

-The Importance of Broadband, Diane Kruse, NEOconnect



## CHAPTER 2.5

### REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

With today's high demand for public resources, many communities attempt to maximize their dollars by partnering with other agencies, municipalities, nonprofit groups, private and semipublic land holders as well as entering into public/private partnerships. The City of Fort Thomas has a diverse set of potential partners and opportunities that are outlined in this chapter.

While Fort Thomas shares a boundary with many jurisdictions, we all share in the responsibility to provide services to our residents and benefit from what a high level of quality of life can provide such as pride and stability in our neighborhoods and the ability to retain and attract new businesses. When a city or unincorporated area of the region is successful, the entire region benefits. Therefore it makes sense for the entities in the region to work together to strive for high quality of life environments to make our region a desirable place to live, work and play.

### COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

Total Responses: 391 People

#### Where do residents want to see collaboration?

58% ... Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8)/Ohio River Road

53% ... Destination Facilities

48% ... Tower Park/Midway

33% ... River Road



## REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

### VISION

To work proactively and collaboratively with our neighboring communities, the County, the State, and other regional partners on areas of shared interest and mutual benefit that improve the quality of life, health, economy, environment and governance of Fort Thomas and the region.

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

#### **R1 Enhance recreational and open space preservation opportunities by working with both public and private sector partners.**

**R1.1** Collaborate with potential partners to create destination recreation activities at Tower Park (e.g. zip lines/ropes course, bike park).

**R1.2** Partner with local schools and possible private partners to provide upgrades to recreational/sports facilities.

**R1.3** Maximize opportunities to foster partnerships and share investment to enhance Sargeant Park.

**R1.4** Collaborate with potential partners to re-open trail loops around the reservoirs.

**R1.5** Collaborate with potential partners to preserve, enhance and properly manage our forested hillside greenbelt.

#### **R2 Improve transportation and access by joining together mutual interest groups.**

**R2.1** Collaborate with potential partners to improve the I-471 & the Grand Avenue corridor.

**R2.2** Collaborate with potential partners to improve the I-471 & the Memorial Parkway corridor.

**R2.3** Work across all levels of government to enhance riverfront connectivity along Mary Engles Highway (KY 8), and support rebirth of the Coney Island Ferry.

#### **R3 Capitalize on gateway improvement projects.**

**R3.1** Collaborate with the County and all of our neighboring communities that share a boundary with Fort Thomas to preserve and enhance our border areas and gateways in ways that benefit each other.

**R3.2** Collaborate with the County on unincorporated areas around the perimeter of the city, such as the end of Crowell Avenue.

#### **R4 Use all necessary resources to develop economic development opportunities.**

**R4.1** Collaborate with potential partners on a Riverfront connection to Tower Park/Midway Historic District.

**R4.2** Connect with potential partners to create a shared vision for the US 27 corridor, with emphasis on economic development and Smart City opportunities.

**R4.3** Collaborate with public and private sector partners (federal, state and local) on our business districts.

**R4.4** Leverage our history and assets to maximize cultural tourism.

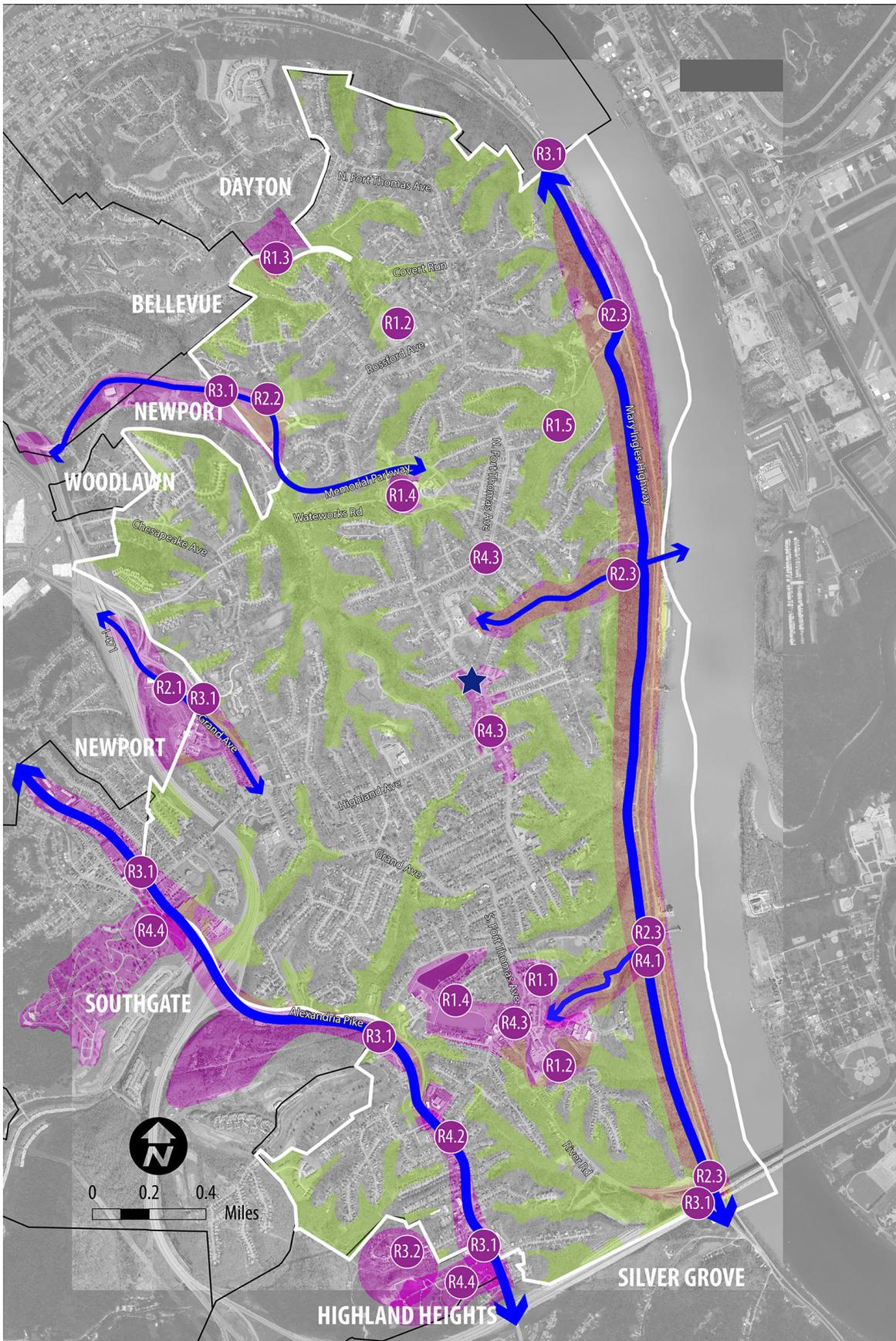


Figure R1. Regional Partnerships Summary Map

SWOT ANALYSIS

During the Awareness Phase, the Regional Partnerships and Collaboration Committee conducted a SWOT analysis to identify the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats the city related to advancing partnerships with other entities. Strengths (S) and Weaknesses (W) are internal factors over which the city has some control, while Opportunities (O) and Threats (T) are external factors and constraints over which the city has little or no control. Conducting a SWOT analysis is a way to focus on our strengths, minimize threats, and take the greatest possible advantage of opportunities.

The most critical SWOT elements identified are illustrated below, while the complete Regional Partnerships and Collaboration SWOT matrix is included in Appendix A.



Part 2

### Recommendations:

This section identifies a number of strategies for achieving our goals and objectives and in some cases outlines priority projects. Potential collaborators are listed for each strategy.

### R1 Enhance recreational and open space preservation opportunities by working with both public and private sector partners.

**R1.1** Collaborate with potential partners to create destination recreation activities at Tower Park.

There is an opportunity for a Tower Park ropes course/zip line as an ecologically-sensitive recreation feature by the Mess Hall. This opportunity could introduce a new public/private partnership with an organization who could assist with the design/construction/maintenance. It could also offer opportunities to coordinate with local schools/sports teams/businesses/corporations to use the team building space along with the Mess Hall and Midway District businesses as part of their field trip/team building activity.

**Potential Collaborators:** YMCA, 3rd Party Designer/Operator (e.g. GoApe).

**L T P F**

#### Tower Park Bike Park

The discussion of a bike park was introduced to address the need for a safe space for youth and adults to learn proper bike techniques and safety before exploring the bike trails that currently exist in Fort Thomas and surrounding communities as well as those that are planned for the future.

A bike park is proposed in Tower Park as a space for multiple generations (starting as young as two years old), families and all skill levels to enjoy. Locating this park by the practice fields in Tower Park allows for accessibility and visibility, which is important. If it is designed well and maintained, it could be a local draw for youth and families. There could be an opportunity to partner with the Kentucky Mountain Bike Association (KyMBA) and the Cincinnati Off-Road Alliance (CORA). The nearby stables building could offer space for refreshments and a bike shop.

**Potential Collaborators:** CORA, KyMBA, YMCA. **P**

**R1.2** Partner with local schools and possible private partners to provide upgrades to recreational sports facilities.

Collaborating with local schools/private partners on field and facility (e.g. restrooms) maintenance would enable entities to share costs.

**Potential Collaborators:** Fort Thomas Independent School District.

#### R1 Reference List

- L** Chapter 2.1  
Land Use
- T** Chapter 2.2  
Transportation and Connectivity
- P** Chapter 2.3  
Parks and Open Space
- F** Chapter 2.6  
Focus Area Plans

## CHAPTER 2.5 REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

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**R1.3** Maximize opportunities to foster partnerships and share investment to enhance Sargeant Park.

There could be opportunity to collaborate with the City of Dayton on improving access to and amenities available at Sargeant Park by creating a master plan and shared vision for the park that is mutually beneficial for both communities. Both cities along with Campbell County could then work together to fund, implement, and manage the park.

While producing the master plan, a potential partnership with SD1 should be explored in an effort to manage stormwater, reduce erosion, improve water quality, and provide passive recreational opportunities. **P**

**Potential Collaborators:** City of Dayton, Campbell County, SD1

**R1.4** Collaborate with potential partners to re-open trail loops around the reservoirs.

The reservoir trails were once open to the public for daily recreation but have been closed since 2011. Many Fort Thomas residents have expressed interest in reopening these trails so the community can fully celebrate this underused open space asset. **P F**

**Potential Collaborators:** Northern Kentucky Water District

**R1.5** Preserve, enhance and properly manage our forested hillside greenbelt.

The community considers the hillside greenbelt a valuable natural resource that is worth preserving. Collaborating with the Fort Thomas Forest Conservancy and the Hillside Trust would allow the City to preserve the greenbelt and protect it from development by offering conservation easements to private property owners. Once easements are in place, restoration efforts could be focused toward invasive species removal, reforestation and creek/riparian corridor restoration.

Fort Thomas and its neighbors could strengthen capabilities in urban tree management by hiring/consulting an arborist to minimize risks associated with improper pruning, disease (e.g. the Emerald Ash Borer), as well as street trees, landmark trees, and park trees. **P L**

**Potential Collaborators:** Fort Thomas Forest Conservancy, Hillside Trust, Campbell County Conservancy, private property owners, neighboring communities, Northern Kentucky Urban and Community Forestry Council

### R2 Improve transportation and access by joining together mutual interest groups.

**R2.1** Collaborate with potential partners to improve the I-471 & the Grand Avenue corridor.

There is community interest in improving the sense of arrival and pedestrian experience along the Grand Avenue corridor with complete streets and traffic safety measures.

**Potential Collaborators:** KYTC, City of Newport, St. Elizabeth Healthcare.

**R2.2** Collaborate with potential partners to improve the I-471 & the Memorial Parkway corridor. **L T P**

The proposed vision for the Memorial Parkway corridor includes beautification efforts to improve signage, lighting and land cover. The City could consider partnering with the Fort Thomas Forest Conservancy to improve the aesthetics of the corridor by removing dead/diseased Ash trees and reforestation with native species. The parkway was named as a tribute to the military and these improvements would help realize and celebrate this intention.

**Potential Collaborators:** Fort Thomas Forest Conservancy, City of Newport, KYTC

**R2.3** Work across all levels of government to enhance riverfront connectivity along Mary Ingles Highway (KY8), and support rebirth of the Coney Island Ferry.

#### **R.2.3.1** Riverfront Greenspace Connectivity Strategy

Fort Thomas' riverfront is a valuable resource and currently an underutilized asset. The proposed vision for the riverfront recognizes the importance of a continuous ribbon of publicly accessible riverfront. A connected property acquisition/easement strategy would allow the City to create a continuous public riverfront greenbelt that also connects into the community.

**Potential Collaborators:** Private property owners, CSX Railroad, Fort Thomas Forest Conservancy, Northern Kentucky Water District, Southbank Partners

#### R2 Reference List

- L** Chapter 2.1  
Land Use
- T** Chapter 2.2  
Transportation and Connectivity
- P** Chapter 2.3  
Parks and Open Space
- F** Chapter 2.6  
Focus Area Plans

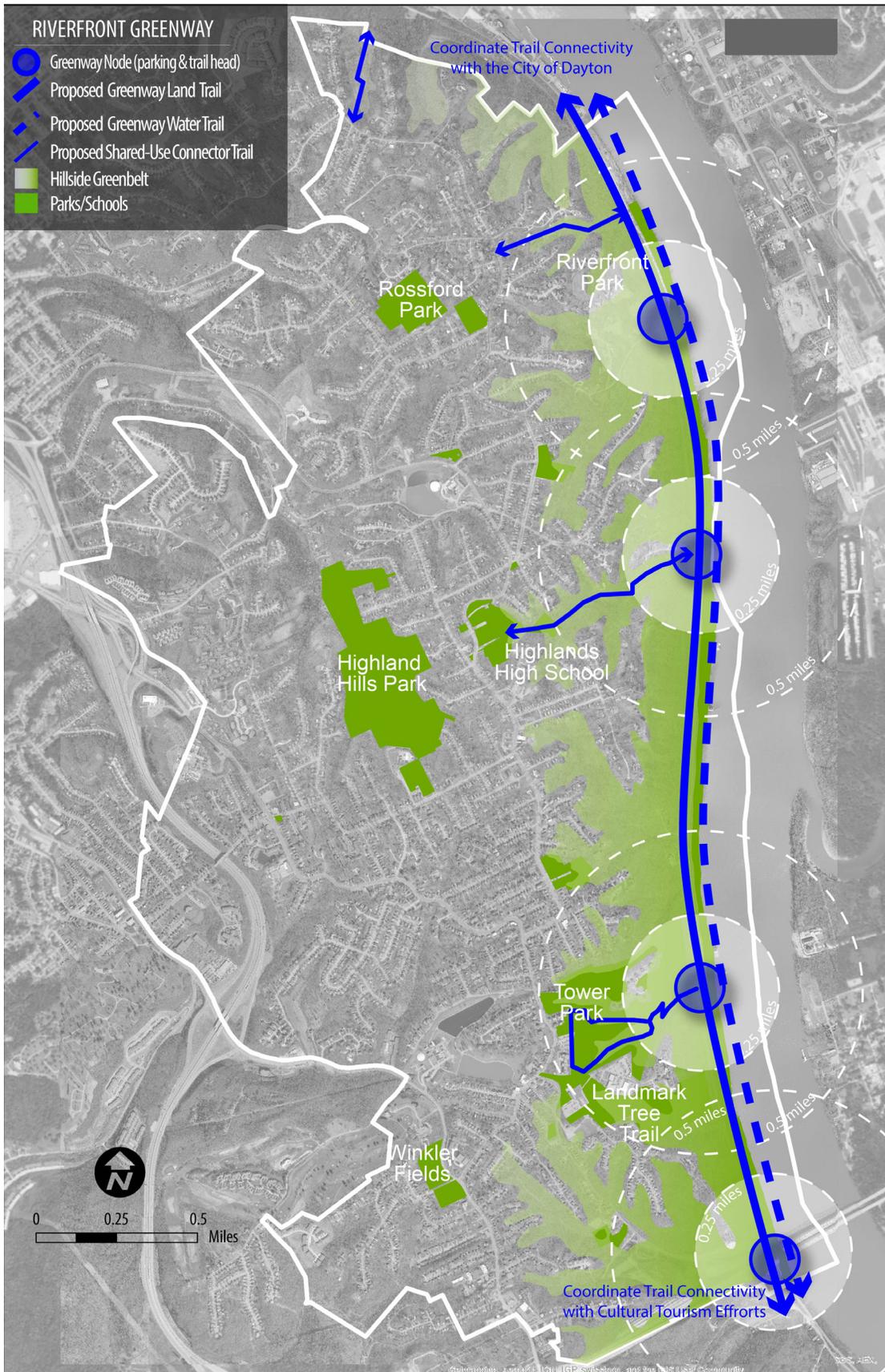


Figure R2. Riverfront Greenway Map

Part 2

### R2.3.2 Riverfront Greenway

The future of the riverfront and Mary Ingles Highway (KY8) is envisioned as a Riverfront Greenway, a continuous passive recreation/greenspace with Mary Ingles Highway (KY8) embodying a local park road with designated stops, pedestrian/cyclist crossings and an adjacent shared-use trail as an extension of the Riverfront Commons network.

This Greenway would incorporate several nodes that will function as small designated parking areas, trailheads, and kayak put-ins/take outs. They will also serve as access points for paved shared-use trails (like the Tower Park Connection) that connect the riverfront to Fort Thomas. Nodes with trailheads are currently proposed along the Mary Ingles Highway (KY8) corridor under the I-275 bridge, at Tower Park, at the Highlands High School/Highlands Middle School greenbelt connection, and the City's Riverfront Park. **P F**

**Potential Collaborators:** KYTC, CSX Railroad, Army Corp of Engineers, private property owners (e.g. Aquaramp), Northern Kentucky Water District, Southbank Partners, Fort Thomas Forest Conservancy

### R2.3.3 Riverfront Recreation Area

Using the Riverfront Greenway for passive recreation opportunities like hiking, biking, picnicking, kayaking/canoeing, and camping/glamping is a way to celebrate this natural amenity. The City owns some riverfront property (Riverfront Park) and there may be opportunity to collaborate with riverfront property owners (e.g. Aquaramp) on the Fort Thomas River Camps camping/glamping opportunity. Glamping, also known as glamorous camping, is a booming trend that offers the ability to experience the remote outdoors without the camping expertise or rustic lodging. Using minimalist structures like raised tents, tree houses, old rail cars, or floating cabins and enhancing them with amenities (e.g. beds with comfortable linens, electricity, WiFi, restroom facilities, etc.) could offer a unique experience for outdoor enthusiasts of all camping abilities to choose from a variety of lodging options (that range from more to less rustic). The opportunity to partner with experienced organizations like Canopy Crew to construct the structures and private residents/businesses to sponsor camp sites could make this dream a reality. **F**

**Potential Collaborators:** CSX Railroad, Army Corp of Engineers, property owners (e.g. Aquaramp), 3rd-party treehouse/glamping organizations (e.g. Canopy Crew)

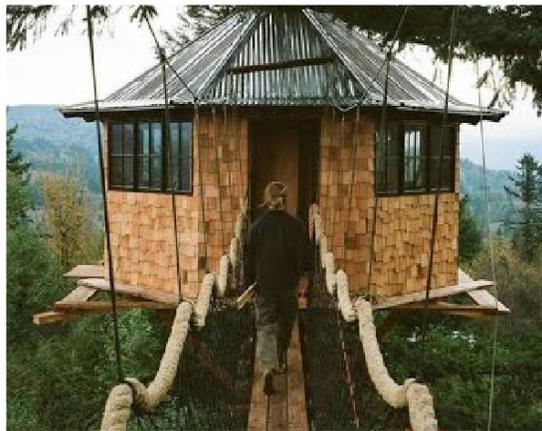
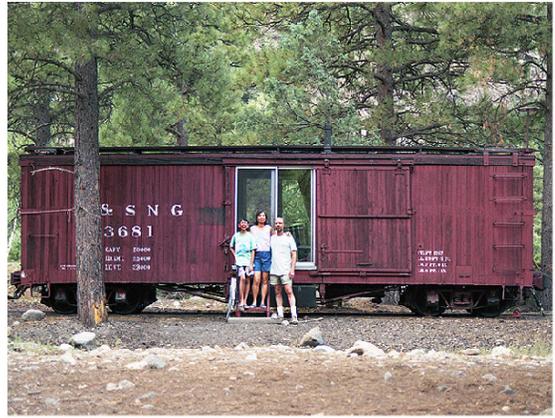


Figure R3. Examples of River Camps

## CHAPTER 2.5 REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

### R2.3.4 Highlands Connection

A proposed trail would link Highland Hills Park, Highlands High School and the riverfront by coordinating with both public and private property owners and following an existing ravine down to the proposed Highlands/Riverfront Greenway node.

**Potential Collaborators:** Fort Thomas Independent Schools, KYTC, private property owners

### R2.3.5 Coney Island Ferry

There is interest from the Fort Thomas community in supporting the rebirth of the Coney Island ferry to strengthen connectivity across the Ohio River and access entertainment destinations. Coordination is needed to support/expedite efforts to re-open the Coney Island ferry.

**Potential Collaborators:** City of Silver Grove, KYTC, Campbell County, private interests

## R3 Capitalize on Gateway Improvement Projects.

**R3.1** Collaborate with the County and all of our neighboring communities that share a boundary with Fort Thomas to preserve and enhance our border areas and gateways in ways that benefit each other.

This recommendation encourages the City of Fort Thomas to continue to collaborate with neighboring communities on the visions of shared gateways, recognizing the mutual benefit of shared investment. Efforts include, but are not limited to:

### Potential Collaborations/Collaborators:

- » City of Highland Heights on a shared vision to fully celebrate greenspace areas like Veteran’s Park and St. Stephen’s Cemetery which lie at the communities’ gateways.
- » City of Southgate on a shared vision to fully celebrate gateway greenspace areas like Evergreen Cemetery.
- » City of Silver Grove on a Riverfront Greenway Node at I-471 Bridge and re-opening the Coney Island Ferry.
- » City of Newport and the City of Bellevue on Memorial Parkway improvements.
- » City of Newport on Grand Avenue improvements.

**L T P U F**

**R3.2** Collaborate with the County on unincorporated areas around the perimeter of the City, such as the end of Crowell Avenue.

There is an opportunity to collaborate with Highland Heights and Campbell County to improve un-incorporated areas along the city’s perimeter.

**Potential Collaborators:** City of Highland Heights, Campbell County

### R3 Reference List

- L** Chapter 2.1  
Land Use
- T** Chapter 2.2  
Transportation and Connectivity
- P** Chapter 2.3  
Parks and Open Space
- U** Chapter 2.4  
Utilities and City Owned Facilities
- F** Chapter 2.6  
Focus Area Plans

### R4 Use all necessary partners to develop economic development opportunities.

**R4.1** Work with potential partners on a riverfront connection to Tower Park/Midway Historic District.

The proposed Riverfront Greenway node at Tower Park serves to connect the Fort Thomas community to the riverfront through Tower Park with a shared-use trail and safe roadway crossing at Mary Ingles Highway (KY8). This will be a multi-modal connection to Fort Thomas for pedestrians, bikes, skates, etc.

The proposed alignment would utilize the stream corridor/access path/current hiking trail and connect to existing assets (e.g. the basketball courts, tennis courts, Armory, playground, amphitheater, and Mess Hall). The stream has recently been restored by NKU and as part of those efforts, a conservation easement was created that overlaps the proposed trail alignment. After meeting with NKU, the conservation easement will allow the City to construct a paved trail along the stream corridor with coordination with NKU. This alternative would use an existing trail corridor and could offer the opportunity to expose and educate the public on NKU's stream restoration efforts.

Southbank Partners has agreed to fund an engineering study to focus on this connection from Tower Park to the Riverfront Commons Trail. This study will allow the City to apply for grant funding for design/construction of the trail.

**L T P F**

**Potential Collaborators:** NKU, KYTC, Southbank Partners

**R4.2** Connect with potential partners to create a shared vision for the US 27 Corridor, with emphasis on economic development and Smart City opportunities.

There is opportunity for collaboration on the vision for the future of the US 27 corridor and several factors will impact this vision:

- » There are commercial development opportunities and an existing TIF District in Highland Heights that suggest commercial development that can help fund improvements proposed for the core of Fort Thomas.
- » Transportation improvements (including a separate shared-use path) and green street improvements (stormwater Best Management Practices [BMPs], street trees) along this corridor are being studied as part of this plan.
- » NKU's Health Innovation Center and their Health Science degree program may drive health/wellness centered development and a vision for this corridor.

#### R4 Reference List

- L** Chapter 2.1  
Land Use
- T** Chapter 2.2  
Transportation and Connectivity
- P** Chapter 2.3  
Parks and Open Space
- U** Chapter 2.4  
Utilities and City Owned Facilities
- F** Chapter 2.6  
Focus Area Plans

## CHAPTER 2.5 REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Representatives from Fort Thomas and the project team met with the County, Southgate and Highland Heights in May 2018 to collaborate on a vision for the US 27 corridor.

Highland Heights is interested in collaborating with Fort Thomas on a coordinated vision for the US 27 corridor that includes: I-275 bridge repairs; a separate off-road shared-use path to connect to NKU; upgrades to Veteran's Park and St. Stephen's Cemetery; and a Smart City strategy. Highland Heights will be updating their Comprehensive Plan in 2019 and would be interested in coordinating with Fort Thomas' efforts.

Southgate is also interested in collaborating with Fort Thomas on a coordinated vision for the US 27 corridor that includes: economic development; a separate off-road shared-use path to connect to Newport; health/wellness/cultural tourism programming of Evergreen Cemetery; and a Smart City strategy.

The Committee was enthusiastic about the opportunities presented and discussed options to integrate health/wellness and cultural/historic tourism programming in the parks and cemeteries, using Spring Grove as a model. The Committee was also excited about consensus from the communities on an off-road shared-use path that separates bikers and pedestrians from road traffic, meeting the 8-80 vision of designing public spaces for ages 8 through 80 years old. The Urban Design Guidelines book will be a valuable resource during future planning/design of this corridor. **L T P U F**

**Potential Collaborators:** City of Highland Heights, City of Southgate, Campbell County, Newport, NKU, St. Elizabeth Healthcare, SDI, KYTC, utility companies

**R4.3** Collaborate with public and private sector partners (federal, state and local) on our business districts.

It is recommended that the City seek collaboration opportunities to enhance the Inverness, Town Center, and Midway business districts. **L F**

**Potential Collaborators:** Campbell County, private developers, property owners, local banks, Northern Kentucky Catalytic Fund

**R4.4** Leverage our history and assets to maximize cultural tourism.

When meeting with the City of Highland Heights and Southgate on a shared vision for the US 27 corridor, representatives were enthusiastic about the opportunities to respectfully integrate health/wellness and cultural/historic tourism programming in the parks and cemeteries (e.g. Veteran's Park, St. Stephen's Cemetery, Evergreen Cemetery), using Cincinnati's Spring Grove cemetery as a model. **P**

**Potential Collaborators:** City of Highland Heights, City of Southgate, City of Silver Grove, Campbell County, Kentucky Tourism Cabinet, Greater Cincinnati Visitors and Convention Bureau, Northern Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, Behringer-Crawford Museum



Figure F1. Focus Area Map



## CHAPTER 2.6

### FOCUS AREA PLANS

The structure of the Community Plan process focused on in-depth analysis and planning for specific topics, which are covered in detail in Part 2 Chapters 1 through 5. This section of the Plan takes these various topical elements and illustrates how the relevant policies and strategies are applied to key locations within Fort Thomas. This plan refers to each key location as a “Focus Area.”

This place-based approach enables us to look at each Focus Area holistically to see the interconnectedness of our objectives and action steps for the various land use, transportation, parks, utilities, public facilities and regional partnership components. Each focus area includes strategies and tactics for achieving the various goals identified for each topic. The four Focus Areas addressed in this plan, shown on Figure F1, include:

**Town Center Area:** This area encompasses the Town Center Business District, anchored by the Fort Thomas City Building, and its surrounding residential neighborhood.

**Midway/Tower Park Area:** This area includes Midway Business District and its surrounding area, such as Tower Park, the VA Hospital, and the Water District Reservoir.

**Alexandria Pike (US 27):** This area encompasses the Alexandria Pike corridor, along the western edge of Fort Thomas, and highlights the multitude of opportunities and enhancements that are possible, especially given the corridor’s connections to the larger Northern Kentucky region.

**Riverfront Greenway:** This area focuses on the 3.7 miles of river frontage along the eastern edge of the city.

The Town Center, Midway and Alexandria Pike areas are key locations with the potential for infill development and future redevelopment opportunities. These focus areas are important components of the Community Plan because Fort Thomas is mostly “built out” relative to the small amount of available land for new or greenfield development opportunities. Although a handful of greenfield sites exists for new development, most of the City’s long term economic development strategies are based on redevelopment efforts that rely on a combination of private market driven projects, public-private partnership scenarios and public investment, including community facilities and roadway/ infrastructure improvements.

The Riverfront Greenway encompasses a combination of recreation improvements, environmental protection, and roadway improvements.



### TOWN CENTER-Focus Area #1

**VISION:** To be a compact, thriving and family friendly city center with a critical mass of restaurants, convenient goods, services (e.g. small grocery and pharmacy) and other uses that meet the everyday needs of nearby residents, area employees and visitors, as well as a welcoming gathering place for families to go after games and other school events; with housing integrated in the district above first floor commercial and as compatible free-standing buildings that contribute to a compact, walkable and bikeable district.

**OVERVIEW:** The area at the intersection of N and S Fort Thomas Avenue and Highland Avenue was the suburban equivalent of a downtown for Fort Thomas, developed to provide goods and services to the surrounding neighborhoods and as a center for local government. Residences in this area are mainly low- to medium-density single family.

The Town Center Business District generally refers to the boundaries of the current zoning - Central Business District (CBD). The commercial zoning district applies to properties that front on N Fort Thomas Avenue between Montvale Court and Forest Avenue. It also includes some residential properties along Lumley Avenue and Miller Lane west of Hagedorn Lane, and four properties along the south side of Highland Avenue. The southern boundary of the business district is anchored by the Post Office and Christ Church, United Church of Christ. The business district is almost entirely surrounded by the R-1C Single-Family District, with only a small number of parcels at the south end of the CBD fronting on S Fort Thomas Avenue zoned R-3.

#### Key Components of the Area

**Town Center:** The Town Center includes an eclectic mix of buildings: older residential buildings, older traditional main street commercial buildings and newer more suburban style freestanding commercial (mostly banks) with on-site parking lots and drive-thru facilities. The district is an easy walking distance from the high school and is nestled in the center of the city.

**City Building:** The City Building located at 130 N Fort Thomas Avenue, is a vital anchor to the district. Constructed in 1968, on the same site as the first City Building built in 1885, renovations and improvements to the mostly 2-story building and site are being considered as part of the Community Plan by the Utilities and City Owned Facilities Committee (See Chapter 2.4) in order to make the building more welcoming, with public access to limited amenities (e.g. restrooms) and improved parking/site circulation.

*The antidote to the disruptive effects of big change is gradual change.*

-Daniel Herriges,  
[www.strongtowns.org](http://www.strongtowns.org)

## CHAPTER 2.6 FOCUS AREA PLANS

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**Commercial Core, East Side of Fort Thomas Avenue:** The east side of N Fort Thomas between Highland Avenue and the City Building includes retail and office buildings. Many of the buildings are older – built between 1900 and 1925 - and are located close to the sidewalk in the traditional main-street type form. The one newer building in this section of the Town Center District is the Fort Thomas Independent Schools building, built in 1987 and located at the sidewalk along N Fort Thomas Avenue.

**Commercial Core, West Side of Fort Thomas Avenue:** Many of the buildings on the west side of N Fort Thomas Avenue, north of Highland Avenue, are large three story houses built in the early 1900s with notable architectural details, and located between 20 feet and 40 feet from the sidewalk. Some of them also sit on a hill. Most of the houses have been converted to retail, offices or restaurant uses, though a few at the northern end are still used as residences. The large lawn areas are heavily used during the popular 4th of July parade and can accommodate three and four rows of chairs. The trees in the front yards provide significant shade. There is a newer commercial building at the northern end of the row of houses along N Fort Thomas Avenue across from the City Building, which blurs the boundaries of the mixed-use business district.

**Suburban Style Construction:** A few one-story commercial/office buildings were constructed between 1950 and 1990 and are generally located at the north and south ends of the district, 30 or more feet from the sidewalk. Most of them are banks with drive-thru facilities. These buildings are generally out of character with the traditional main street storefronts. There is a small suburban style retail strip center located east of N Fort Thomas Avenue on Miller Lane, with a parking lot in front of the building, which extends eastward to Hagedorn Lane.

**Central Plaza:** As recommended in the 2005 Comprehensive Plan, a central plaza was created on the southeast corner of N Fort Thomas Avenue and Lumley Avenue to create a pedestrian gathering space for residents and visitors. The plaza was constructed under a development agreement between the property owner and the city. However, there are no storefronts or building entrances that look out over the plaza. Instead, the multi-tenant strip retail center located east of the plaza faces Miller Lane. More could be done to enhance the plaza and connect it to the surrounding buildings.

## CHAPTER 2.6 FOCUS AREA PLANS

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**Circulation and Parking:** Circulation around the district and parking can be challenging:

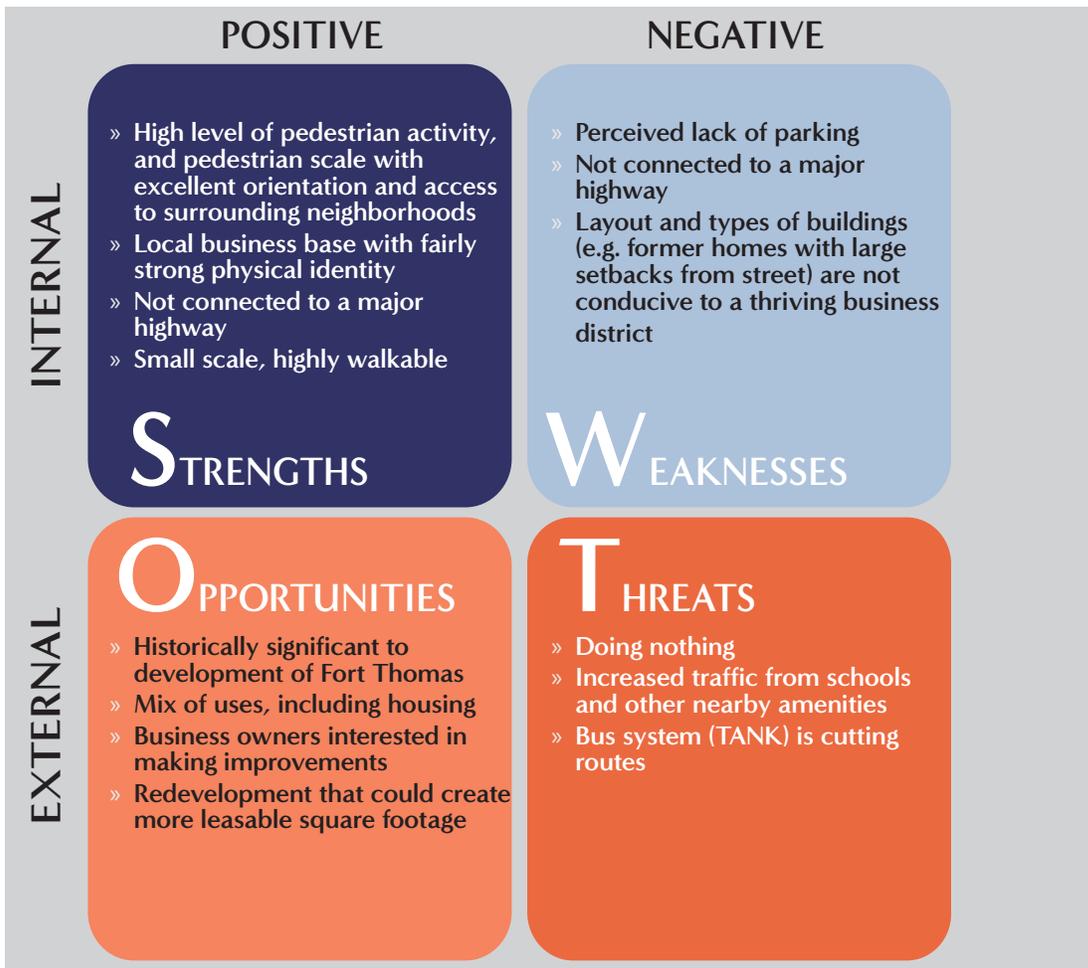
- » Lumley Avenue and Miller Lane are a pair of one-way streets that provide access to the tenants in the strip center and can be confusing to people visiting the district for the first time. The parking lot behind 18 N Fort Thomas is not visible from the street and the one public walkway providing access to the parking lot from N Fort Thomas Avenue has no signage.
- » On-street parking is available throughout the district, and additional parking is provided behind some of the older buildings, but is generally not visible from the street, and in some cases not easily accessible because of topography.
- » There is a large (10 acre) city-owned open space located behind the storefronts and parking lot between Montvale Court and Miller Lane. The area is a deep depression and surrounded by mature trees. The adjacent parking lot offers views out across the open space.

**Design Guidelines:** In 2002, the City adopted design guidelines that apply to renovations and new construction in the Town Center (the design guidelines also apply to Midway and Inverness business districts). The design guidelines and review procedures address sign design, exterior renovation of existing buildings and to insure that new construction is in character with the surrounding area. No new building construction has taken place since they were adopted.

**Surrounding Residential:**

- » The retail strip center on Miller Lane is flanked by six single-family houses along Miller Lane and seven along Lumley Avenue, some of which are in the CBD zoning district and others in the R-1C single-family district. Most of the houses were built before 1930.
- » There are approximately 22 very small lots sandwiched between Lumley Avenue and Miller Lane east of Hagedorn Lane, measuring between 45 and 50 feet wide and typically 75 feet deep for a lot size of between 3,300 and 3,800 square feet, occupied by generally well maintained single-family homes. Some of the houses are separated by less than 10 feet and most have less than 20 feet of rear yard. The area is zoned R-1C, which requires a minimum area of 7,000 square feet, side yard of 8 feet and a rear yard of 30 feet, making all of these lots nonconforming. Any type of major renovation or redevelopment to these homes will be difficult to achieve under the existing zoning.
- » The houses along Woodland Place abut the Town Center to the west. While most of the houses at the north end of Woodland Place are well buffered from the commercial lots because they are more than 200 feet deep, three of the houses at the southern end of the street are less than 100 feet from the existing commercial parking lot.

SWOT ANALYSIS



TC TOWN CENTER AREA STRATEGIES

**TC1 Preserve and enhance the existing traditional main street character with primarily two to three story buildings close to the sidewalk, storefronts with housing and/or offices on the upper floors; encourage façade improvements and appropriate rehabilitation efforts where needed. L**

**TC1.1** New construction and upgrades to existing structures should strive for a cohesive aesthetic environment, and should fit in with and embody an “older” feel rather than a modern appearance.

**TC1.2** Revise the zoning to create form-based regulations that: require new development to be located near the street; with 2-3 story buildings and maximum building setbacks, taking into consideration the need for space along the sidewalk to accommodate crowds for big events such as the 4th of July parade.

TC Reference List

- L** Chapter 2.1 Land Use
- T** Chapter 2.2 Transportation and Connectivity
- P** Chapter 2.3 Parks and Open Space



- PRIORITY OBJECTIVES**
1. Preserve/enhance existing traditional main street character **TC1**
  2. Increase critical mass of retail/mixed uses and housing **TC2**
  3. Enhance circulation and access to development sites and existing parking **TC4**
  4. Protect existing neighborhoods from impacts of new development **TC5**
  5. Encourage property owners to update/ improve existing houses **TC6**
  6. Enhance the City Building to be a welcoming community hub **TC7**
  7. Strengthen identity of district by creating a cohesive image **TC9**

Figure F2. Town Center Priorities Map

Part 2

### TC2 Increase critical mass of retail/mixed-uses and housing.

**TC2.1** Redevelop existing buildings that do not meet contemporary business needs.

**TC2.2** Encourage use of upper stories for offices and housing.

**TC2.3** Encourage new housing development in strategic locations at the edges of the business district to attract empty nesters and young professionals; use Hagedorn Lane as the demarcation line for redevelopment/new development, and identify intersections as entries into the residential district.

**TC2.4** Ensure all rehabs and new construction are compatible with and contribute to the traditional main street character: adopt form-based code that addresses maximum setbacks and other form-type requirements; review design guidelines and revise as needed to ensure quality and compatible additions and new construction.

### TC3 Provide adequate, accessible and attractive parking appropriately distributed in the district with sufficient wayfinding signage throughout the Town Center District to support expanded businesses and housing.

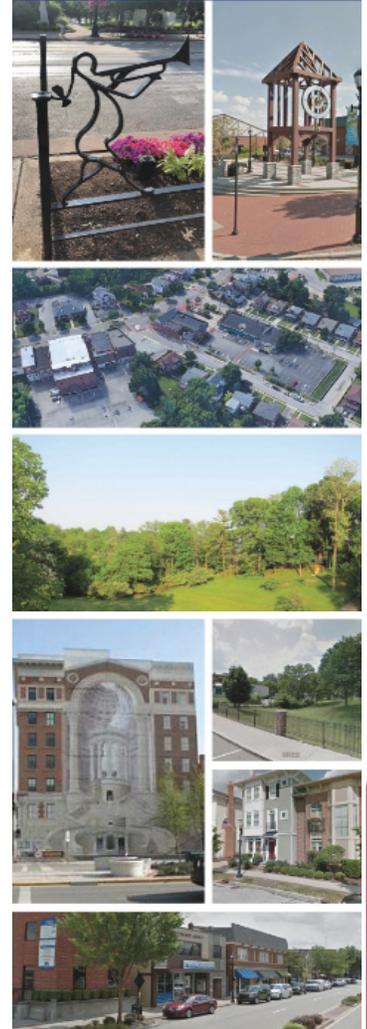
**TC3.1** Evaluate the adequacy, location and connections of existing parking spaces on a district wide basis and determine need for more parking based on goals for future development in the district. Public parking spaces need to be easy to find so that visitors to the area can find a place to park.

**TC3.2** Encourage shared parking behind buildings or along secondary streets rather than fronting on N Fort Thomas Avenue.

**TC3.3** Install well-designed signage appropriately placed throughout the District to direct people to public parking areas.

**TC3.4** Improve landscaping around and within parking lots.

**TC3.5** Provide wayfinding signage to identify public parking areas visible from N Fort Thomas Avenue, as well as signs indicating pedestrian access to parking lots located behind buildings.



### **TC4 Enhance circulation and access to existing parking and potential development sites.**

**TC4.1** Consider providing access from Montvale Court to parking behind buildings. The City has already acquired a parcel on Montvale Court to help provide the needed access.

**TC4.2** Consider extending Highland Avenue east of N Fort Thomas Avenue to create developable area, access to parking and to take advantage of views of the city-owned green space.

### **TC5 Protect existing residential neighborhoods from impacts of new business district development.**

**TC5.1** Provide sufficient screening and buffering by preserving existing trees, installing additional landscaping, limiting building height based on elevation and requiring sufficient rear building setbacks.

**TC5.2** Require each side of a building visible from an adjacent residential property to have the same or similar architectural treatment as the front of the building.

**TC5.3** Ensure sufficient, easily accessible and well-marked parking in the business district to accommodate new development in order to protect residential streets from on-street parking by business patrons.

### **TC6 Encourage property owners to update and improve existing houses by revising the zoning regulations to more closely match the existing lot sizes and setbacks, thereby reducing the need for variances.**

This is an area for further study by the Planning Commission to determine the best way to achieve the goals for the District without resulting in unintended consequences. **L**

### **TC7 Enhance the City Building to be a welcoming community hub with amenities available to the public 24/7. **U****

### **TC8 Improve multi-modal connections from residential areas and other community facilities to the Town Center Business District. T**

TC8.1 Install new bike racks in the Town Center Business District.

TC8.2 Explore public/private partnership to provide bicycle rentals at a strategic location in the District.

TC8.3 Work with surrounding communities to create a regional sidewalk network to provide connection along N Fort Thomas Avenue.

TC8.4 Beautify/improve the streetscape along Fort Thomas Avenue between the Town Center District and the Midway District, consider installing street lighting, pedestrian rest area amenities, landscaping, and sidewalk with brick pavers.

### **TC9 Strengthen the identity of the district by creating a cohesive image: maintain mature trees, use banners, public art and distinctive gateway treatments at entries into the district to brand the district.**

TC9.1 Create distinct gateways into the district. L T P

TC9.2 Provide wayfinding signage at the Highland Avenue and Fort Thomas Avenue intersection. T

TC9.3 Use public art and other amenities to enhance the streetscape but be sure the design is respectful and reflective of the character of the area.

TC9.4 Continue to plant trees in front yards to maintain and enhance the City's tree canopy. Identify specific streets where a coordinated tree planting program can be focused.

### **TC10 Continue to host major events that bring neighbors together, create community pride, and strength our ties to the city.**

### MIDWAY AREA / TOWER PARK - Focus Area #2

**VISION:** To be a fun entertainment/recreation destination for both residents and visitors. This acknowledges that there are already a number of businesses, community facilities (e.g. VA Hospital), recreation attractions and special events/programming that draw people to the area, more so than any other area of the city. It is also a good location to attract visitors because it is located closer to the edge of the city and more easily accessible via the highway (I-471 and I-275) than the Town Center and therefore will have less impact on the city as a whole.

**OVERVIEW:** The Midway Area, which includes the Midway Business District includes the area surrounding the Veteran's Administration (VA) Hospital, Tower Park and the adjacent residential areas. The Midway Business District came about in direct response to the Fort Thomas army base. By the 1960s, the federal government started downsizing the army base and the Fort was parceled out. Most of it remains under the control of the City, part is still under federal ownership, and a very small area is under private ownership. In recent years, there has been considerable efforts taken to preserve many of the older historic residential structures related to the fort, and develop Tower Park into a destination recreation facility. The Veteran's Administration Hospital has become a specialized facility to treat veterans and military personal for PTSD.

SWOT ANALYSIS



### MW MIDWAY AREA & TOWER PARK STRATEGIES

#### **MW1 Preserve the historic character and integrity of the area, and incorporate the area's history in the design and renovations of new and existing structures. L**

The area has a lot of character and is a significant part of the city's history. The City and property owners should continue to preserve and enhance this area.

**MW1.1** Preserve the history of Fort Thomas with renovations and upgrades to remaining historic structures.

**MW1.2** Encourage façade renovations and upgrades to create a more cohesive, consistent and historically accurate appearance along the retail district. Work with property owners to beautify the buildings, and remove additions and awnings, etc. that are incompatible and detract from the beauty of the original architecture.

**MW1.3** Continue preservation efforts of the grand architecturally significant homes.

#### **MW2 Preserve and enhance the existing traditional main street character with primarily 2-3 story buildings close to the sidewalk, storefronts with housing and/or offices on the upper floors. L**

#### **MW3 Increase critical mass of retail/mixed-uses and housing. L**

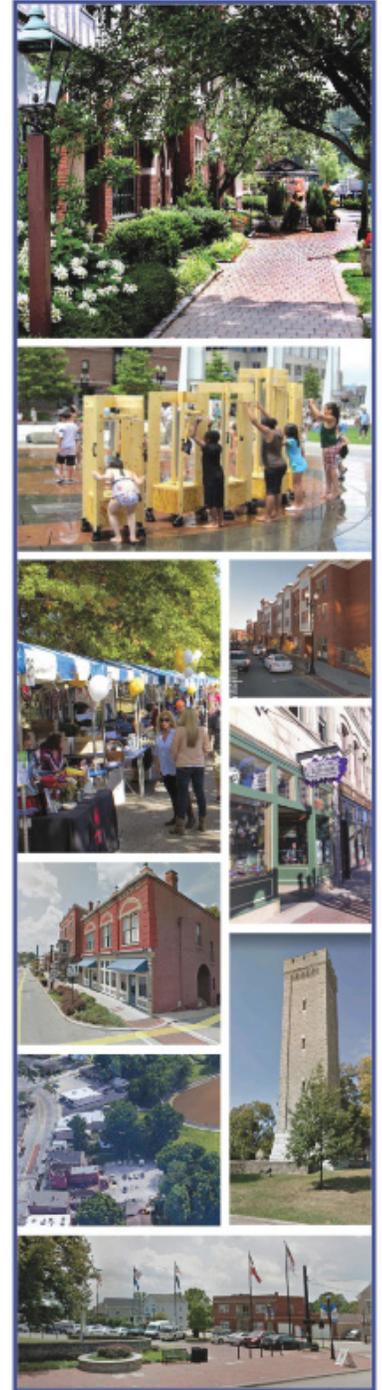
**MW3.1** Work with existing nonconforming uses to relocate to more suitable locations in Fort Thomas and reoccupy space with conforming uses.

**MW3.2** Fill empty storefronts and encourage use of upper stories for offices and housing.

**MW3.3** Rehab existing buildings that do not meet contemporary business needs.

**MW3.4** Encourage new construction in strategic locations to fill gaps in buildings along S Fort Thomas Avenue and redevelop noncontributing buildings.

**MW3.5** Ensure all renovations and new construction are compatible with and contribute to the traditional main street character: adopt form-based code that addresses maximum setbacks and other form-type requirements; review design guidelines and revise as needed to ensure quality and compatible additions and new construction.



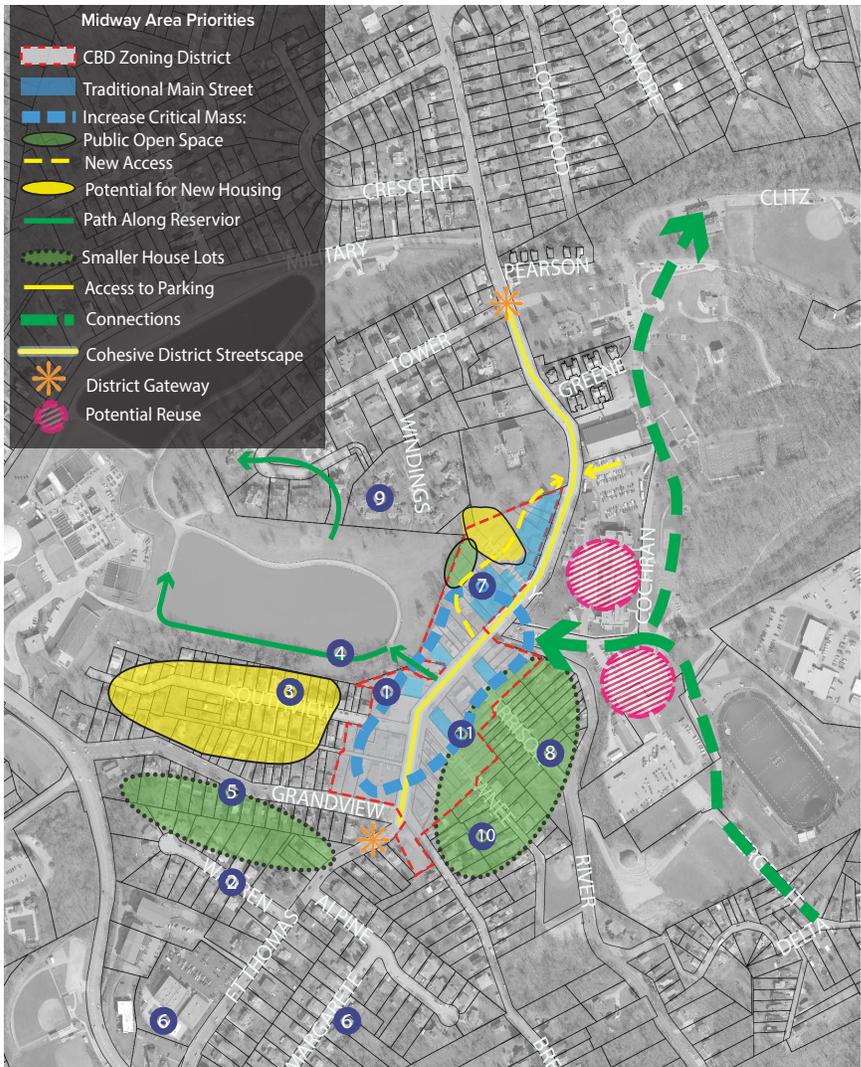


Figure F3. Midway Area Priorities Map

## PRIORITY OBJECTIVES

1. Preserve/enhance existing traditional main street character  
**MW1**
2. Increase critical mass of retail/mixed uses and housing  
**MW3**
3. Promote new development overlooking reservoir: provide access behind buildings  
**MW5**
4. Encourage new housing designed with views of reservoir  
**MW7**
5. Work with Water District to periodically open walkway around reservoir  
**MW8**
6. Encourage property owners to update/improve houses  
**MW9**
7. Increase access to parking between VA Hospital and Armory  
**MW9.7**
8. Improve connections between neighborhoods and business district  
**MW10**
9. Strengthen identity of district: create cohesive image  
**MW11**
10. Encourage reuse of Stables building  
**MW13**
11. Encourage reuse of VA Hospital for housing, redesign front lawn for public gathering space  
**MW14**

### MW4 Provide adequate and accessible parking with sufficient wayfinding signage throughout the Midway District and adjacent recreation area to support expanded businesses and housing.

**MW4.1** Evaluate the adequacy, location and connections of existing parking spaces on a district wide basis and determine need for more parking based on goals for future development in the district. The committee is concerned that parking needs to be better distributed, and easier to find so that visitors to the area can find a place to park. **P**

**MW4.2** Maximize on-street parking by striping the spots that are already available for parking.

**MW4.3** Encourage shared parking behind buildings or along secondary streets rather than fronting on S Fort Thomas Avenue.

**MW4.4** Consider increasing the parking area behind businesses at the northern end of the district (1011 and 1013 S Fort Thomas Avenue). There is some potential to acquire some land from the adjacent property owned by Cincinnati Bell (less than 1/3 of the 2.86 acre parcel is actually devoted to the Bell building, parking and driveway). Increasing the parking area would require building a retaining wall due to the topography. Any new parking will need to be designed to ensure the retail buildings are still serviceable from the backs of the structures.

**MW4.5** Install well-designed signage appropriately placed throughout the District to direct people to public parking areas. **L T**

**MW4.6** Coordinate the need for parking in the retail/mixed-use district with the parking needs for the nearby amenities. Redesign as needed to make existing parking areas more visible, accessible and attractive with landscaping, and therefore acceptable for use by retail/restaurant patrons. **L**

**MW4.7** Consider adding a driveway between the VA Hospital and the Amory to improve access to the parking lot between the VA Hospital and the Armory to make it more accessible to district patrons (if it were to be made available for public parking). Coordinate the location of a new entrance with driveway for the retail building situated directly across the street. (1011 and 1013 S Fort Thomas Avenue). This will take continued coordination and collaboration with the VA Hospital.

### **MW5 Provide access to the rear of the buildings to open up the area for outdoor dining patio space / public plaza to provide a safe seating and gathering place for families:**

**MW5.1** Construct a new common drive/access way behind the buildings along the west side of S Fort Thomas Avenue to provide access to rear of buildings, with entrances at the north and south end of the district.

**MW5.2** Eliminate Midway Court and driveways between buildings and convert the space to pedestrian ways. Once a continuous common accessway is provided behind the buildings, Midway Court and the other driveways to private parking lots will no longer be needed. Currently, there is limited visibility for drivers exiting onto S Fort Thomas Avenue, which creates a safety hazard for pedestrians and cyclists.

#### MW Reference List

- L** Chapter 2.1  
Land Use
- T** Chapter 2.2  
Transportation and Connectivity
- P** Chapter 2.3  
Parks and Open Space
- R** Chapter 2.5  
Regional Partners

### **MW6 Create a public plaza behind the retail buildings along the west side of S Fort Thomas Avenue with views of the reservoir.**

Create attractive pedestrian connections to S Fort Thomas Avenue, designed in a way to maximize views of the reservoir and connections to the rest of the District so that the space is truly an amenity that fits with the larger area. This location would also provide a safe place away from the street, which would be desirable for families with children. Creating such public space will need to be coordinated with improved vehicular access to the backs of the building and appropriate signage so people can find the open space.

### **MW7 Encourage new housing development along Southview Avenue and Midway Court.**

Redevelopment of this area should be designated to take advantage of views of the reservoir, with new housing targeted to empty nesters and young professionals. Such housing (known as the missing middle) will need to be done as a planned development to ensure a cohesive neighborhood is created. **L**

### **MW8 Better incorporate the reservoir into the Midway District and make it more of a focal point.**

**MW8.1** Work with the Northern Kentucky Water District to restore limited ability of Midway District patrons to walk around the reservoir. For example, allow entry only from the S Fort Thomas Avenue entrance during limited days and times and/or limited to special events. **P R**

**MW8.2** Redevelop areas to take advantage of views of the reservoir, examples include providing public open space behind restaurants along S Fort Thomas and new housing along Southview Avenue.

### **MW9 Encourage property owners to update and improve existing houses.**

Revise the zoning regulations to more closely match the existing lot sizes and setbacks in order to reduce the need for variances, which are now often required whenever new additions are proposed. **L**

### **MW10 Improve pedestrian and bike connections within, throughout the area, and from residential areas and other key destinations to the business district to encourage/entice people to visit the district more frequently.**

**MW10.1** Install new bike racks in the Midway Business District.

**MW10.2** Explore public/private partnership to provide bicycle rentals at a strategic location in the District.

**MW10.3** Install a shared-use path to connect Tower Park to the riverfront. **P R**

**MW10.4** Provide improved connection between Sergeant Avenue and the Midway District, install sidewalks along Sergeant Avenue to eliminate the gap in this neighborhood's sidewalk network.

**MW10.5** Provide sharrows (share the road) pavement markings or bike lanes on established bicycle routes in the area to make motorists aware that they are driving on a preferred bike route.

### **MW11 Strengthen the identity of the district and the overall area by creating a cohesive image: incorporate more trees and walls that mimic the historic fort walls and use banners, public art and distinctive gateway treatments at entries into the district to brand the district.**

**MW11.1** Create distinct gateways into the district. **T**

**MW11.2** Provide wayfinding signage at the intersection of River Road and Fort Thomas Avenue. **T**

**MW11.3** Indicate key destinations on wayfinding signs, including directions to public parking, Tower Park, etc. **T**

**MW11.4** Use landscaping along the sidewalks to improve appearance of parking lots (especially parking in front of buildings).

**MW11.5** Replicate the look of the wall around the VA Hospital to enhance the streetscape, especially within the Midway Business District. At a minimum, new walls should be of a similar gray color, rather than red brick.

**MW11.6** Beautify/improve the streetscape along Fort Thomas Avenue between the Town Center District and the Midway District (approximately 1 mile length), consider installing street lighting, pedestrian rest area amenities, landscaping, and sidewalk with brick pavers. **T**

#### MW Reference List

- T** Chapter 2.2  
Transportation and Connectivity
- P** Chapter 2.3  
Parks and Open Space
- U** Chapter 2.4  
Utilities and City Owned Facilities
- R** Chapter 2.5  
Regional Partners

## CHAPTER 2.6 FOCUS AREA PLANS

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**MW11.7** Use public art and other amenities to enhance the streetscape but be sure the design is respectful and reflective of the historic character of the area. Avoid trendy art/street furniture and other styles that are not complimentary to the existing character.

**MW11.8** Continue to plant trees in front yards to maintain and enhance the City's tree canopy. Identify specific streets where a coordinated tree planting program can be focused.

### **MW12 Expand and improve surrounding recreation and community facilities to further enhance this area of the city as a destination, which will increase the overall attractiveness of the area as a whole.**

**MW12.1** Continue to make improvements to Tower Park. Collaborate with the Army Reserve and the School District to create a more cohesive recreation district with tournament level facilities within Tower Park, building upon the existing soccer stadium and connecting with shared parking for the Midway District. **P**

**MW12.2** Upgrade the Mess Hall as a prime event space and expand parking. **U**

**MW12.3** Upgrade the Armory Building with improved entry features, signage, landscaping and improved indoor facilities. **U P**

### **MW13 Encourage reoccupancy of the Stables building (in the event it becomes available from the Federal Government).**

Consider use(s) that are complimentary to and reinforce the Midway Business District as well as meeting the needs of visitors to Tower Park and other area amenities.

### **MW14 In the event the VA Hospital leaves, encourage adaptive reuse for housing.**

Redesign the front lawn along S Fort Thomas Avenue to be a town-square public gathering space as another location to encourage visitors to linger in the district.

### **MW15 Continue to host major events that bring neighbors together, create community pride, and strengthen ties to the city.**

### ALEXANDRIA PIKE (US 27) - FOCUS AREA #3

**VISION:** To be an attractive corridor with concentrated nodes of mixed-use development at key intersections that serves as a welcoming gateway into the city. With good building and site design, attractive streetscape that contributes to and reflects the overall high quality built environment that Fort Thomas is known for.

Alexandria Pike (US 27) is located along Fort Thomas' western edge and is a major north south connector between Cincinnati and the surrounding counties. Over the last one hundred years, this road has been developed with a mix of small-lot single-family homes, medium- to high-density residential, office and highway retail/service land uses. Business activity catered to the commuting traffic. Most of the physically restrictive areas were left undeveloped.

With the completion of I-471 and I-275, traffic along the corridor has lessened with most commuters relying on these highways. The transition and change in businesses on Alexandria Pike reflect this shift. As a result, this corridor has experienced a gradual shift away from auto-centric, retail businesses and instead toward office type uses, including the redevelopment of a large parcel that formerly housed an independent grocery and hardware store into prime office space. This area has the greatest potential for new economic development/ redevelopment due to its proximity to I-471, I-275, Northern Kentucky University and other nearby employment centers. Some development pressure remains in terms of potential for redevelopment of underutilized property.

This corridor provides direct access between I-471 and the Midway District and is one area of the city where major new economic development should be encouraged. The Regional Collaboration committee explored the potential to make this a "Smart" corridor (as in "Smart City") as a way to attract new economic development, especially given its proximity to I-275 and Northern Kentucky University. Preferred new development is high-value and high-wage jobs in order to maximize this area for the city's tax base (and not uses that have few employees and low-wage jobs).

**OVERVIEW:** Currently, there are 4 areas along the two mile stretch of Alexandria Pike in Fort Thomas where non-single-family zoning is concentrated, with a mixture of Professional Office (PO), General Commercial (GC), Highway Commercial (HC), Light Industrial Park (IP) and Mixed Residential (R-3) which permits multi-family development:

1. Fort Thomas Plaza northwest of I-471 (zoned GC)
2. Just south/east of I-471 where areas of highway commercial (HC), industrial (IP), and R-3 zoning exist
3. Between Marsh Building Products and S Fort Thomas Ave (zoned PO and R-3)
4. Between the Sonsrena Apartments and the city's southern boundary (zoned R-3, PO and GC); referred to by some as the South Gateway Business District.

## CHAPTER 2.6 FOCUS AREA PLANS

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In between these nodes, the remainder of the area is zoned for single-family (R-1C). There are a number of community facilities along the southern portion of the corridor, including Woodfill Elementary School, Winkler Fields, YMCA, and St. Stephens Cemetery.

There are a number of issues and challenges to be addressed regarding the future of this important corridor:

- » The corridor's role/function has changed with the construction of I-471. The area is not conducive to traditional main-street type retail because of this change, and boutique type pedestrian-oriented retail should be encouraged to locate in the existing established business districts. Yet considering economic prospects in adjoining communities, there is potential for redevelopment, especially of the older, outdated commercial buildings.
- » This roadway is a major gateway into the city via S Fort Thomas Avenue, but the area lacks an identity and needs to be improved so that properties look inviting. For example, there are areas of the corridor lacking appropriate screening of outdoor storage, poor driveway definition and lacking front yard landscaping.
- » The scattered pattern of various types of nonresidential, multi-family and single-family zoning makes it difficult to achieve the desired high-quality image needed to maximize this area's economic development potential

Considering the prospects for redevelopment opportunities along Alexandria Pike, new development should include the following desired characteristics:

- » Buildings should be well-designed (primarily office, multi-family, and supporting uses such as restaurants) with landscaped front yards, rather than commercial buildings with parking lots in front along the street. The use is less important than the setback and form of buildings, but the uses should be clean, low-impact. Consider creating a new district that permits offices, multi-family and similar compatible uses so there is flexibility to meet market demand.
- » Because this corridor is our "front door", which contributes to the image and reputation of Fort Thomas, the visual appearance of the corridor is important. New development should be held to high aesthetic standards for signs, landscaping, and buffering from residential neighborhoods:

SWOT ANALYSIS



### AP ALEXANDRIA PIKE (US 27) CORRIDOR STRATEGIES

**AP1 Foster new economic development along Alexandria Pike (US 27) that takes advantage of access to the interstate, potential for “Smart City” investments and proximity to major employers such as Northern Kentucky University and St Elizabeth Healthcare.**

**AP1.1** Coordinate with neighboring communities (KYTC, Southgate, Highland Heights, and NKU) to maximize regional economic development potential of Alexandria Pike.

This is a prime gateway to the City. The goal is to attract high-quality construction (attractive multi-story buildings, landscaped front yard, parking to the side or rear of buildings) and high wage jobs to increase tax base. **R**

**AP1.2** Target the corridor as a regional “Smart” high-tech corridor.

Continue to coordinate with Cincinnati Bell and other regional partners to provide the fiber optics infrastructure needed to support the type of regional economic development envisioned for the corridor. **U**

**AP1.3** Create a more coherent economic development/jobs focused corridor.

**AP1.3.1** Undertake a master plan study of the overall corridor. More clearly develop strategies that allow for complimentary uses, improve the image of the corridor, and provide appropriate transition areas to the adjoining single-family neighborhoods along the corridor and behind the businesses. For example, consider creating a new mixed-use zoning district that provides flexibility in permitted uses (focusing more on building form than use) while ensuring that the adjacent neighborhoods are adequately buffered. While this concept requires further study by the Planning Commission, a new mixed-use zoning district is envisioned to combine elements of the existing R-3 Multi-family, PO Professional Office, and GC General Commercial districts to permit the range of uses noted in the analysis above. This new district would be applied to the areas currently zoned R-3, PO, and GC.

**AP3.1.2** Require buffering between multi-family and nonresidential uses and the existing single-family neighborhoods. Work with existing property owners where the buffering is lacking to find ways to improve the buffering.

**AP1.4** Continue to strengthen Fort Thomas Plaza; promote and attract new businesses to create a more vibrant plaza.

#### API Reference List

- L** Chapter 2.1  
Land Use
- U** Chapter 2.4  
Utilities and City Owned Facilities
- R** Chapter 2.5  
Regional Partners

### AP2 Maintain and enhance the appearance of and along the corridor.

**AP2.1** Develop design guidelines for new construction and major renovations.

**AP2.1.1** Require existing and new development to have well-designed signs.

**AP2.1.2** Enhance landscaping in the front yards of commercial properties. Work with existing property owners to install landscaping along the front to screen parking areas (which could also create better defined access drives).

**AP2.1.3** For new construction, require a minimum parking setback along the corridor and a minimum amount of trees, shrubs, etc. **L**

**AP2.2** Continue to plant trees in front yards to maintain and enhance the City's tree canopy.

There are a number of mature trees that line the corridor between the I-471 interchange and the city's southern boundary. However most of the trees are located in the front yards of residential lots. In contrast, the existing commercial buildings and parking lots do not have as many trees in between them and the sidewalk. Work with the Fort Thomas Tree Commission and existing commercial property owners to plant more trees.

**AP2.3** Prohibit outdoor storage visible from the street.

### AP3 Enhance mobility along the corridor and embrace "complete street" concept; multi-use paths, enhanced crosswalks, and connections with neighborhoods so residents can safely walk and bike to local destinations.

**AP3.1** Develop an access management plan and associated regulations for the corridor.

Access management regulations address the number, width and spacing of driveways, signals, and medians. Such regulations help reduce vehicle/pedestrian and vehicle/bicycle conflicts and help maintain the capacity of the roadway to support efficient traffic flow.

**AP3.1.1** Consider access management regulations that limit the number, size and spacing of curb cuts for new development in order to improve pedestrian safety for all (e.g. there are a number of children who walk to Woodfill Elementary School and the YMCA).

**AP3.1.2** Work with existing commercial property owners to provide well defined access drives. This is especially important for commercial sites that currently have a continuous curb cut and parking lots that extend all the way to the sidewalk.

## CHAPTER 2.6 FOCUS AREA PLANS

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**AP3.3** Install new bike racks in appropriate locations such as the YMCA.

**AP3.4** Conduct further investigations to identify ways to make the corridor more pedestrian and bicycle-friendly. **P R**

### **AP4 Strengthen the identity of the district and the overall area by creating a cohesive image: incorporate more trees and use banners, public art and distinctive gateway treatments at entries into the district to brand the district.**

**AP4.1** Create distinct gateways into the district

**AP4.2** Provide wayfinding signage at intersections such as Highland Avenue, Grand Avenue and S Fort Thomas Avenue directing people to destinations within Fort Thomas.

**AP4.3** Beautify/improve the streetscape along Alexandria Pike (US 27), consider installing street lighting, pedestrian rest area amenities, landscaping, and sidewalk with brick pavers.

**AP4.4** Use public art and other amenities to enhance the streetscape.

RIVERFRONT GREENWAY-Focus Area #4

The Ohio riverfront corridor is an under-utilized resource in Fort Thomas. Of the 3.7 miles of river frontage along the eastern edge of the city, the majority is undeveloped with the exception of a small marina (Aquaramp) and the Northern Kentucky Water District. While residents have long enjoyed the spectacular views of the Ohio River corridor and the Cincinnati skyline from the ridge top, they have been deprived of physical access to the river and the riparian corridor. The topography, traffic along Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8) and the rail corridor all serve as barriers to the river.

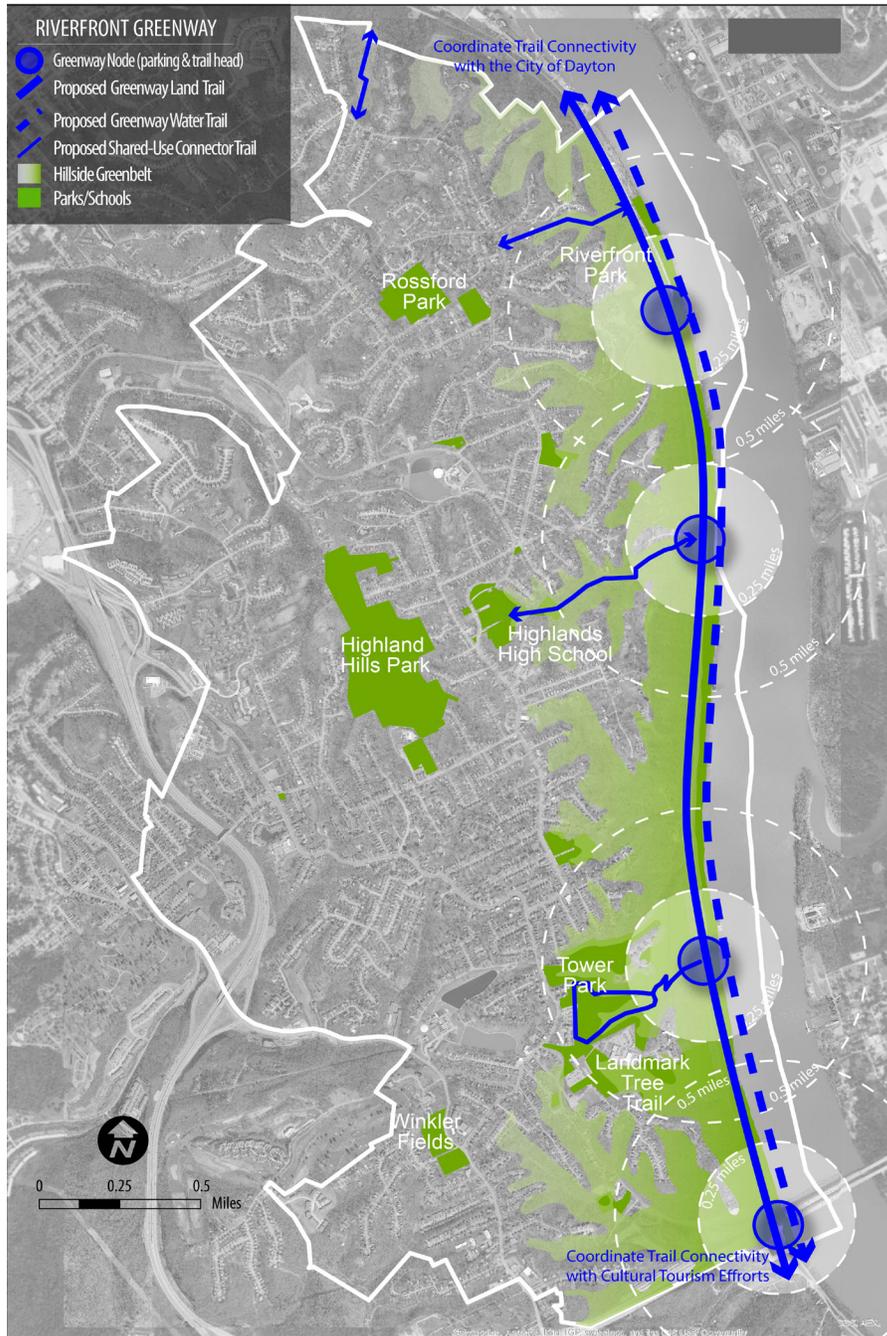


Figure F4. Riverfront Greenway Map

Part 2

### Existing Conditions

Currently, vehicular access from the city to Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8) is provided by Tower Hill Road and River Road (KY 445). Tower Hill Road starts at N Fort Thomas Avenue and works its way toward Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8). The western section of the road is approximately 24 feet wide with curb and sidewalk on both sides. As it continues to descend the hillside, it becomes a winding, narrow road (17 feet wide in some areas) with no sidewalks or pedestrian facilities. Along the southern edge of the narrower portion, the ground slopes down steeply toward a creek bed and some portion of the roadway have had to be stabilized with concrete pier walls. Conversely, the ground on the northern end slopes up steeply. Due to the complexity of the existing topography, adding pedestrian and dedicated cycling amenities within the right-of-way will require the City to seek significant funding assistance. Until such time as this can be accomplished, the use of this road for pedestrian amenities will not be possible and alternate access routes should be considered.

River Road (KY 445) is a state route that starts at S Fort Thomas Avenue (at the Midway District) and works its way down to Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8). The roadway provides 11 feet wide lanes in each direction. There is an approximately 400 feet stretch of sidewalk on one side of road on the section closest to the Midway District. This road can be dangerous due to the grade curves, and the number and steepness of driveways on both sides. Similar to Tower Hill Road, the ground on both sides of road is steeply sloped, which puts challenges on providing pedestrian amenities on this road. As this roadway is owned by the State, any improvements would be subject to approval by the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC).

Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8) runs along the Ohio River from Kentucky State Route 237 near Francisville, KY to US 62 in Maysville, KY. Within the city, the road follows along the west side of the CSX railroad tracks from the southern city limit to Tower Hill Road, where it crosses under the railroad and follows along the east side of the railroad north toward Dayton. The road is currently classified a major collector roadway. However, recent traffic counts have indicated that only 600 to 700 trips are made on the section between River Road and Tower Hill Road. This section of roadway has also been plagued with pavement and embankment slope failures as the roadway continually slides toward the river. While KYTC continues to repair damage, they have conducted a study to seek alternatives to the expensive on-going maintenance needs and provide a permanent solution to the underlying geotechnical issues. The study explored three options: continue maintenance as needed, reconstruct the roadway at an extremely high cost, or close the roadway to through traffic and reroute traffic to other existing roadways that can handle the traffic volume. Closing Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8) to through traffic and rerouting to other state routes is the least expensive option. KYTC also recognizes the interest from OKI and bicycle advocacy groups in maintaining a shared-use facility along the Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8) corridor, should it be closed to vehicular traffic, though they indicate that the construction and on-going and long-term maintenance of such a facility would be the responsibility of an agency other than KYTC.

### RG RIVERFRONT GREENWAY STRATEGIES

#### **RG1 Work with the State to reclassify Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8) and reduce the speed limit to 35 mph with designated stops, crossings, parking areas and trailheads to create a park road that is safe for pedestrians and cyclists.**

The future of the riverfront and Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8) is envisioned as a Riverfront Greenway, a continuous passive recreation/greenspace with Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8) embodying a local park road. Since Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8) is a State owned route, any changes would be subject to approval/coordination by KYTC. As the traffic counts on this section no longer correlate with the current road classification, it would be advantageous for the City to work with the State to change the classification of this section of the road and slow traffic by reducing the speed limit to 35 mph to better accommodate low-impact park and recreational amenities along the riverfront corridor (e.g. hike/bike trails, canoeing/kayaking, camping/glamping). Once in place, the local road could be temporarily closed for races, events and festivals.

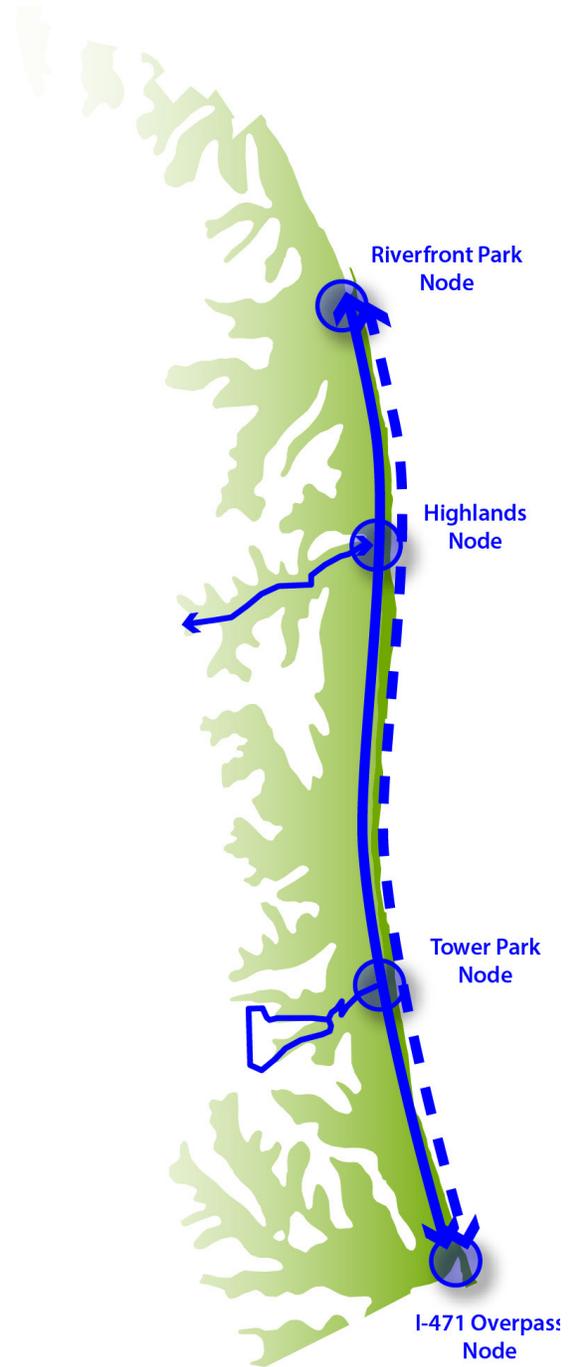
This plan encourages collaborating with many potential partners on the Riverfront Greenway including: KYTC, CSX Railroad, Army Corp of Engineers, private property owners (e.g. Aquaramp), Northern Kentucky Water District, Southbank Partners, and the Fort Thomas Forest Conservancy.

#### **RG2 Develop a multi-use path along the Riverfront, Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8), and the CSX railroad that connects to a regional trail network.**

As part of the Riverfront Greenway, this plan recommends that the City prioritize the connection of the Fort Thomas community to the riverfront through the use of a trail system and providing destinations along the riverfront for pedestrians, bikes and vehicle owners. Destinations like riverfront parks should be connected via a Riverfront Greenway/Commons trail system to other riverfront parks, city parks, business districts and neighborhoods.

Collaborating with surrounding communities, private property owners, the railroad, Fort Thomas Forest Conservancy, Northern Kentucky Water District, and Southbank Partners to create a regional network is recommended.

# CHAPTER 2.6 FOCUS AREA PLANS



Riverfront Nodes

Part 2

Figure F5. Riverfront Greenway Nodes

**RG3 Create water trail for kayaking and canoeing. The Greenway's 3.7 mile stretch would provide an opportunity to incorporate an off-road trail circuit of both land and water trails where walkers/bikers/kayakers/canoes/etc. can recreate along the river.**

**RG3.1** Public/private partnerships for equipment rentals.

**RG3.2** Provide areas to park, launch and retrieve boats at key nodes/access points along the corridor.

**RG3.3** Work with the Army Corp of Engineers and surrounding communities to create regional network.

**RG4 Add amenities (parking, trailheads, bike racks, canoe/kayak put in/take outs) at four Greenway Nodes along Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8) to accommodate the needs from the proposed park amenities.**

This Riverfront Greenway would also incorporate several nodes that will function as small designated parking areas, trailheads, bike racks, and kayak put-ins/take-outs. They will also serve as access points for paved shared-use trails connecting the riverfront to Fort Thomas.

Incorporating water transportation connections (e.g. ferries, taxis) would allow connectivity to/from the opposite bank of the Ohio River, where large recreational and entertainment destinations (e.g. Coney Island) are located.

Nodes/ trailheads are currently proposed along the Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8) corridor under the I-275 bridge, at Tower Park, at the Highlands High School/ Middle School greenbelt connection, and the City's Riverfront Park.

Collaborating with potential partners like KYTC, CSX Railroad, Army Corp of Engineers, private property owners, Southbank Partners, and Silver Grove is encouraged.

**RG5 Develop new off-road pedestrian/cycling paths and trails from Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8).**

As part of the Riverfront Greenway, this plan recommends that the City prioritize the connection of the Fort Thomas community to the riverfront through the use of a trail system. Trails connecting the Fort Thomas community down to the riverfront should follow the drainage basins and allow pedestrians to access new riverfront parks for the passive enjoyment of the riverfront. Several off-road community trails have been identified for further study: paved multi-use path from Tower Park; trail from Highlands High Schools; trail from the Intersection of Lincoln Road and N Fort Thomas Avenue; and trail from N Fort Thomas Avenue just to the south of Barrett Drive



Figure F7. Riverfront Park Map

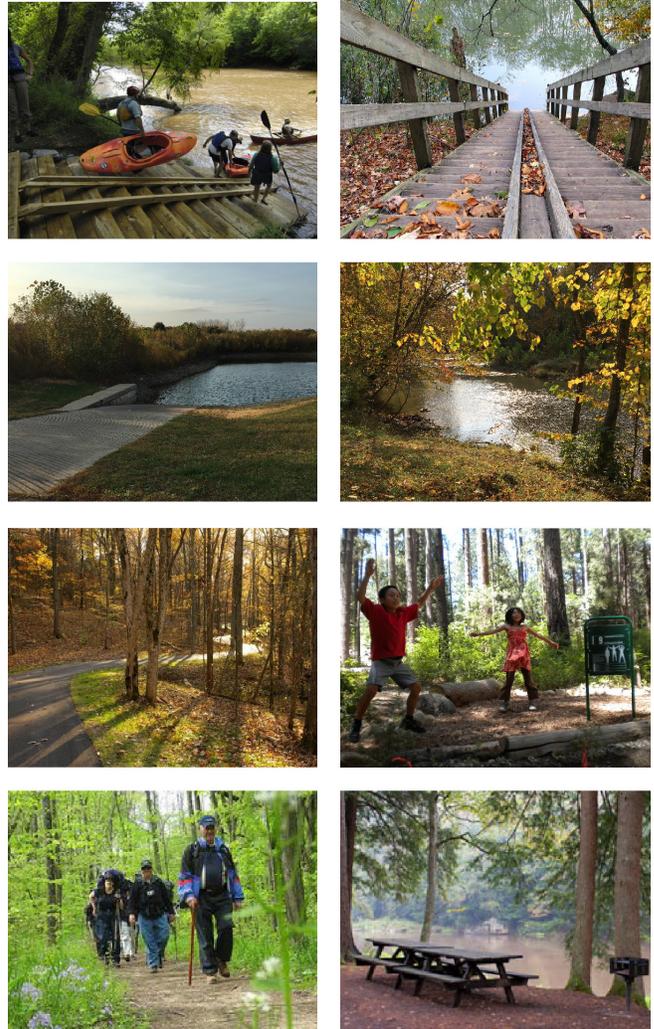


Figure F6. Examples of Riverfront Recreation

### **RG6 Incorporate opportunities for Riverfront recreation.**

The Riverfront/Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8) opportunity also allows the city to celebrate the river and enjoy the natural amenity. Southbank Partners has been working with the Army Corp of Engineers and the NKY River Cities to restore the banks of the Ohio River. Their study proposes examples of restoration methods that cities can use and a natural restoration approach has been proposed for Fort Thomas. This study has informed the decision to celebrate Fort Thomas's riverfront as a connected greenspace.

Using the Riverfront Greenway for passive recreation opportunities like hiking, biking, picnicking, kayaking/canoeing, and camping/glamping is a way to celebrate this natural amenity. The City owns some riverfront property (Riverfront Park) and there may be opportunity to collaborate with riverfront property owners (e.g. Aquaramp) on the Fort Thomas River Camps camping/glamping opportunity. Glamping, also known as glamorous camping, is a booming trend that offers the ability to experience the remote outdoors without the camping expertise or rustic lodging. Using minimalist structures like raised tents, tree houses, old rail cars, or floating cabins and enhancing them with amenities (e.g. beds with comfortable linens, electricity, wifi, restroom facilities, etc.) could offer a unique experience for outdoor enthusiasts of all camping abilities to choose from a variety of lodging options (that range from more to less rustic). The opportunity partner with experienced organizations like Canopy Crew to construct the structures and private residents/businesses to sponsor camp sites could make this dream a reality.

### **RG7 Explore possibilities of extending water main down Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8) to serve existing and future needs.**

Access to potable water along the riverfront is currently a need that will only increase as the Riverfront Greenway brings more recreation users to the corridor. Exploring the option to tie into the City of Dayton's water main on Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8) and extend the line parallel to Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8) through Fort Thomas would offer water access to existing and future users of the Riverfront Greenway (e.g. Aquaramp, camping/glamping, trail users). Corridor clearing and excavation for the Riverfront Greenway/Riverfront Commons trail would allow the water main to avoid the CSX railroad and lie directly beneath the constructed trail. The trail could also be used as a maintenance access path for the water main. The alternative of connecting to a Fort Thomas water main on Tower Hill Road was considered though the costs of tunneling under Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8) and the railroad make the Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8) alignment alternative more realistic.

There is a possibility to collaborate with the City of Dayton to tie into their existing line on Mary Ingles Highway (KY 8).

## CHAPTER 2.6 FOCUS AREA PLANS



Figure F8. Potential Campsite Examples



# PART 3: ACHIEVING THE VISION- FUNDING & IMPLEMENTATION

Now that we have identified our vision for the future, along with policies and strategies we will pursue to accomplish our goals, we must create a concrete action plan to hold ourselves and our committed partners accountable. Indeed, the success of this Community Plan will be measured by how well we abide by the policies and carry out the recommended strategies as prioritized through our public engagement processes. In this chapter, the Funding and Implementation Committee summarizes the recommendations and components from the Plan's Chapters in Part 2 into a prioritized list of action steps and provides a list of potential funding sources.

**Land Use & Zoning** focuses on the types of development and redevelopment that are acceptable for Fort Thomas, the preservation of trees and hillside areas, the current economy and future economic development.

**Transportation & Connectivity Plan** focuses on the condition and safety of existing streets, pedestrian walkways, and bicycle facilities, Transit Authority of Northern Kentucky bus route plans, future Kentucky Transportation Cabinet corridor plans, and additional connectivity needs for parks, schools, and the river.

**Parks & Open Space Plan** focuses on the existing parks, seeking community input for improvements, researching trends and best practices, and exploring opportunities to improve connectivity between community assets.

**Public Utilities & City Owned Facilities Plan** focuses on promoting all essential utility services economically, evaluating the development of future telecommunication facilities, providing technology that parallels the needs of the community, and determining if existing City owned buildings meet the needs of the City.

**Regional Partnerships & Collaboration Plan** focuses on inter-local agreements for development, Northern Kentucky bike trail with other educational/recreational amenities, archaeological sites, and sustainability initiatives.



### IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

This Community Plan is prepared with the understanding that the City is responsible for the overall health of our community. At the same time, there are multiple agencies/entities, such as Southbank Partners, KYTC, property owners and neighboring communities who play a role and have a vested interest in the future of Fort Thomas. As a result, achieving our goals requires a cooperative effort. In addition, it will take resources – funding from a variety of sources to carry out many of our strategies.

The following section highlights the variety of implementation tools available.

#### **REGULATORY TOOLS: ZONING, SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS, DESIGN GUIDELINES**

The City's land development ordinances, including the zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations, property maintenance codes, and design guidelines, are important tools the City has to implement the land use policies in the plan. These regulations and design guidelines ensure private property investment is in compliance with the City's land development goals.

During the course of this planning process, a number of potential zoning amendments (both text and map), updates to the subdivision regulations and expansion of the design guidelines were discussed. However, these recommendations need to be thoroughly reviewed and evaluated by the Fort Thomas Planning Commission as part of a more extensive study. Furthermore, any amendments to the Fort Thomas Codified Ordinances are governed by the amendment procedures spelled out in the ordinances. For example, the Zoning Code includes specific procedures for public review and hearings by the City Planning Commission and City Council, a process that is separate from the completion of this Community Plan.

#### **PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS**

Fort Thomas, like all communities, has been built through both private and public investments. Our collective public infrastructure, including roads, bridges, sidewalks, bikeways, water and sewer lines, stormwater management and fiber, are essential building blocks of our community's framework, our neighborhoods and economy. Having modern, connected and reliable infrastructure is a critical element of plan implementation. This underscores the need to not only maintain the City's current infrastructure, but also to continue to make capital improvements by investing in upgrading, replacing and where needed, expanding infrastructure. Examples of capital improvement projects recommended by this Community Plan include: road improvements; sidewalk and bikepath/bike trail improvements; stormwater management; and streetscape improvements.

#### **CITY DEPARTMENT WORK PLANS**

This Community Plan includes key action steps that fall under the purview of various City departments. As such, city departments should use the community plan as a guide when developing their capital improvement plan, work plans and budgets. For example, the Plan identifies a variety of new or enhanced recreation programs desired by residents, as well as different

educational materials that could be provided to help property owners make wise decisions related to home improvements. In addition, coordinating across city departments can help reduce redundant tasks and save money. In particular, close coordination between the Recreation and General Services Departments is important so that wherever possible, improvements such as walking and biking facilities can be made at the same time as larger infrastructure investments.

### **PARTNERSHIPS**

As noted throughout this Plan, collaborative partnerships between the City, other municipalities and agencies, non-profits and community groups is critical to plan implementation. While the City is responsible for a large share of the implementation strategies, there are a number of physical elements within the City that are owned/controlled by other public entities. Other partnerships are essential in addressing initiatives that extend beyond city limits, such as water quality and stormwater management, transportation planning and economic development.

In such cases, it is important to forge and maintain supportive partnerships with those who do have the control. In addition, with declining resources, it is becoming more important than ever to engage firms, institutions, and citizens in the work of government. The City already has a variety of partnerships that are critical for providing services to the residents.

In addition, partnering with the private sector is important in encouraging necessary redevelopment, which tends to be more expensive and complex than developing greenfield sites. According to the Urban Land Institute, public/private partnerships are “the most effective means to intervene in an uncertain market.” From an economic development perspective, partnerships share the financial risks between public and private entities. Research shows that communities that invest in strategic projects not only benefit in the long run from increased tax revenues from the specific development, but more importantly, strategic projects are a catalyst for more development, which leads to even higher tax revenues.

### **FUNDING**

While all of the above implementation tools are important, nothing will be accomplished without the necessary resources. There are a number of ways funding is provided, some of which are highlighted below and referred to in Table 3.1.

#### **A. Local - General Funds**

The City budget funds for Capital Improvements within the City. Increasing the amount of funding would be something that must be approved by the City Board of Council with the improvements competing against the many needs of the city. Sources of funding include real estate taxes, payroll (income) taxes, and user fees.

#### **B. Bonding**

Fort Thomas has the ability to issue a municipal bond to finance public projects such as roads and other large-scale infrastructure projects. Municipal bonds can have lengthy repayment periods (e.g. 20 years) in order to fund expensive capital projects that cannot be paid for immediately with funds on hand.

### **C. Public/Private Partnerships**

These are typically utilized when the public and private sectors cooperate toward a common goal and utilize public and private monies to meet this goal. For example, the City may have land that it could allow a group to develop a facility such as a Splash Park or other privately run facility or partner with a group such as the YMCA, athletic organizations, the Housing Authority or others toward the development of facilities on City land.

### **D. Tax Increment Financing (TIF)**

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is an economic development tool used by public agencies to finance needed infrastructure improvements for a project (e.g., streets, sewers, parking lots, etc.) in areas where (for various reasons) private development would not otherwise occur. The TIF captures the increase in tax revenues associated with new investment and uses those revenues to pay for the infrastructure improvements. Programs requirements are spelled out in Kentucky Revised Statutes (KRS) Chapters 65 and 154.30.

### **E. Special Taxing Districts**

A special taxing district is a mechanism to enable persons within a defined district to assess themselves with an additional tax (or levy) in order to fund projects within the district's boundaries. A common example is a Business Improvement District (BID) wherein businesses within the district agree to pay an additional assessment to provide services that they are not already receiving from the local jurisdiction. Local property owners and businesses create a BID to improve the sense of place in their district, which could give them a competitive advantage. Over 1,200 BIDs have been created in the US to pay for a variety of services such as cleaning sidewalks, adding street lights, marketing the business district to shoppers and tourists, attracting businesses, improving public spaces and rebuilding streetscapes. The City can foster the creation of one or more BIDs by working with local property and business owners to build support for the district.

### **F. Intergovernmental Federal and State Funding Programs**

Intergovernmental revenue consists of monies obtained from other governments and can include grants, shared taxes, and contingent loans and advances. Funding can flow from the federal government to state and local governments, and from the state to local governments.

### Examples of Intergovernmental Funding Programs

Federal Surface Transportation Program (STP): Historically, this program is one of the largest single programs and is the most flexible of all the highway programs. These Federal funds may be used by states and metropolitan regions for highway, bridge, transit, and pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure projects. STP can cover 80% of the total cost of the project, with the rest covered by states or localities.

Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP): The federal Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) provides funding for surface transportation projects such as on and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, infrastructure projects for improving non-driver access to public transportation and enhanced mobility, community improvement activities, and environmental mitigation; safe routes to school projects; and projects for planning, designing, or constructing boulevards and other roadways largely in the right-of-way of former Interstate System routes or other divided highways.

Funding for this program is authorized as a set-aside of the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) funding program under the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, which authorizes federal transportation funding from Fiscal Year 2016-2020.

Corps of Engineer's Grants: They fully support the 'Infrastructure Initiative' changes that will result in the delivery of our Nation's infrastructure needs. The 'Infrastructure Initiative' is an opportunity for the Corps of Engineers to apply new financing approaches and business processes that will allow current and future change of the Nation.

KYTC Maintenance Funds (FEOI Funding): The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) believes in the importance of managing pavement using asset management principles. KYTC has elected to develop a Pavement Management Plan (PMP) that will evaluate existing pavement strategies. The PMP will also outline a process to consider the full cycle of funding decisions. KYTC maintains all state routes within the City.

#### G. Private Grant Programs

Grant programs are special projects or certain types of applications that are funded by government agencies and private groups. Funds that are awarded for a grant program are dispersed for projects that meet certain criteria or scopes of interest. Grant programs can be very competitive and may change considerably from one year to the next, so they are typically used for one-time projects.

### Examples of Grants for Bike / Trail Projects and “Smart” Infrastructure

**People For Bikes Community Grant:** They support bicycle infrastructure projects and targeted advocacy initiatives that make it safer and easier for people of all ages and abilities to ride. People for Bikes focuses most grant funds on bicycle infrastructure projects such as bike racks, parking, storage, paths, lanes, trails, bridges, etc. They also fund some advocacy projects, such as programs that transform city streets or campaigns to increase the investment in bicycle infrastructure.

**American Trails Grants:** American Trails is a national, non-profit organization who works on behalf of all trail interests, including hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, etc. They strengthen communities by supporting trails that enhance economic development. American Trails support local, regional, and long-distance trails and greenways, whether they are in rural or urban areas.

**Bikes Belong Grants:** This grant program wishes to put more people on bicycles more often. They do this by funding important and influential projects that leverage federal funding and build momentum for bicycling communities. These projects include BMX facilities, large-scale bicycle advocacy initiatives, mountain bike trails, bike paths, and rail trails.

**QBP Community Grant:** Quality Bicycle Products is founded on the belief that getting more people to ride bikes is crucial for the health of our communities. The grant is made up of donations from bike industry brands and are matched dollar-for-dollar by the QBP Fund. They support bicycle infrastructure, educational programs, youth ridership, and increasing ridership among diverse and/or underserved populations.

**Smart City Council Grants:** Each year, the Smart Cities Council donates coaching, workshops, products, services and more free benefits to five communities in North America. The innovative, interactive application helps applicants build and refine their vision. The 2018 grant program was expanded to include all levels of government, from states and provinces to cities and regional authorities. The grants help American cities apply smart technologies to improve urban livability, workability, and sustainability.

### PRIORITIZED ACTION STEPS

This plan identifies a number of strategies that can be taken to ensure Fort Thomas remains the desirable vibrant community we envision. Yet, we recognize that we cannot do everything at once. To this end, the Funding and Implementation Committee obtained input from the public during the plan preparation regarding which elements of the plan (projects) were of high importance. This was accomplished by allowing the public to rank the projects listed on a large display board matrix, using a selection process, at the Public Meeting held on June 25, 2018. Based on this exercise, and feedback from the Committees of the Part 2 Chapters, projects with strong community desire become clear. From this information, the Funding and Implementation Committee established a prioritized list of action steps that should be undertaken over the next 10+ years. This list is highlighted in Table 3.1. We have also identified potential champions, partners and funding sources.

TABLE 3.1 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN									
Goal Reference / Chapter	Goals / Recommendations	Implementation Timeline					Potential Champion/Partner(s)	Potential Funding Sources	
		Immediate	1-5 Years	6-10 Years	10 Years +	On-going		Public	Private
L1.2, L2.2, L3.4, L4.3	Update the Zoning Code and Zoning Map - evaluate and revise as needed, add form-based provisions		X				Planning Commission		
L1.2, L2.3, L3.4	Update and expand the Design Guidelines		X				Design Review Board (DRB)		
L1.3	Develop a local historic preservation plan; conduct Historic preservation study to determine potential for local or national historic districts/landmarks designations; Consider becoming a certified local government			X			Design Review Board (DRB) / City Council	L - Tax Abatement S - Tax Credits F - Historic property tax credits	
L1.3, L2.2	Develop and provide resource materials to guide home improvements, preservation and rehabilitation efforts			X			Design Review Board (DRB), Volunteers		
L1.4	Enhance City's tree planting program		X				Tree Commission		
L2.1	Strengthen and continue to enforce property maintenance code	X				X	City Staff		
L2.3	Encourage new housing construction			X			City / Private Developers		
L3.1.1, TC	Create Master Plan for Town Center and facilitate redevelopment		X				City	L - City Taxes (Real, Business)	Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Development Corporations Business Improvement Districts (BID)
L3.1.2, MW	Create Master Plan for Midway District and facilitate redevelopment		X				City / Private Developers	L - City Taxes (Real, Business)	Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Development Corporations Business Improvement Districts (BID) Enterprise Zones
L3.2, P1.2.4, R4.2, AP	Create Alexandria Pike (US 27) Corridor Plan and facilitate redevelopment			X			City, Regional Communities Group	L - City Taxes (Real, Business) L - Interlocal Government L - Bonds L - Tax Revenue Sharing S - Economic Development Grants	Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Development Corporations Business Improvement Districts (BID)
L3.3	Continue/enhance business attraction and retention efforts					X	Economic Development Director		
L3.3.2	Conduct market study		X				City		
L3.3.3	Create Incentive program for Façade renovations	X					Renaissance Board / City Council	L - City Income Revenue Funds - Lease Income	
L3.3.4	Conduct a parking study and evaluate potential for creating parking districts		X				Fort Thomas Business Association / City		
L3.5	Branding campaign to establish specific identify for each business district		X				Renaissance Board		
L3.5.2, T2.2, TC, MW	Install wayfinding signs for parking		X				Fort Thomas Business Association / Renaissance Board / City Staff	S - Municipal Road Aid	
L4.1, P1.1, R1.5	Protect hillsides and tree canopy	X					City, Fort Thomas Forest Conservancy		
L4.2, L4.3.2	Develop educational materials to promote sustainability: green infrastructure, energy reduction, etc.			X			City		

Chapter 1: Land Use & Zoning

TABLE 3.1 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN										
Goal Reference / Chapter	Goals / Recommendations	Implementation Timeline					Potential Champion/Partner(s)	Potential Funding Sources		
		Immediate	1-5 Years	6-10 Years	10 Years +	On-going		Public		Private
T1, T1.1, T1.5	Improve and maintain our infrastructure so residents of all ages can move safely throughout Fort Thomas. Ensure that all sidewalks within the city are ADA compliant. Continue systematic maintenance of infrastructure.	X					Public Works Committee of Council / City Staff	L - Street Assessments L - City Taxes (Real, Business) F - Federal STP Funds F - Transportation Alternatives (TA) Funds S - Municipal Road Aid S - State Grant Funding	Franchise Fees (Duke, Cinti Bell)	
T1.2	Provide safe and highly visible pedestrian and automobile access at all schools and parks in the City.		X				City Staff	L - City Taxes (Real Business) F - Federal STP Funds F - TA Funds S - KYTC Maintenance Funds		
T1.2.1, T1.2.2, P2.1.4, P2.1.5	Improve the intersection of James Avenue and Highland Avenue. Connect James Avenue to Highland Hills Park.		X				City Staff / City Council	L - City Capital Road Rehab Program		
T2, T2.1	Make it easy and enticing to move about Fort Thomas. Create distinctive gateways at key entries into the city.		X				City Green Team	L - City Taxes (Real Business)		
T2.2	Provide signage throughout the city to indicate directions, distances, destinations and parking.		X				Renaissance Board / City Staff			
T2.3, R2, R4.2	Beautify major corridors/routes in the city and create a cohesive feel between districts. Including, street lighting, pedestrian rest area amenities, landscaping, sidewalk improvements and special attention around schools.		X				Renaissance Board / City Staff			
T3, T3.2	Create a complete sidewalk network in the city that provides connection within and between all neighborhoods.		X				Public Works Committee of Council	F - TA Funds		
T3.3, T3.5	Create a "Bike Friendly City" by providing cycling accommodations/routes throughout the city.  Evaluate key roadways for road diet/multi-use path/bike lane opportunities. (Grand Avenue Road Diet & South Fort Thomas Avenue Road Diet)		X				City Staff / KYTC	L - City Taxes (Real Business) F - Federal STP Funds F - TA Funds S - KYTC Maintenance Funds		
T4, P1.2.1, R2.3.2, RG	Improve Mary Ingles Highway/KY 8 and increase access to river frontage along the corridor.		X				City Staff / KYTC	S - KYTC Highway Plan		

TABLE 3.1 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN										
Goal Reference / Chapter	Goals / Recommendations	Implementation Timeline					Potential Champion/Partner(s)	Potential Funding Sources		
		Immediate	1-5 Years	6-10 Years	10 Years +	On-going		Public	Private	
P1.1, L4.1, R1.5	Preserve and enhance the hillside greenbelt and urban canopy (Conservation Easements, Restoration, Reforestation, Professional Arborist)						X	Parks Committee / Fort Thomas Forest Conservancy / Hillside Trust / Campbell County Conservancy	Conservation Easements	
P1.2.1, T4, R2.3.2, RG	Riverfront Greenway / Riverfront Commons (KY 8)			X				City / Southbank Partners	S - Canoe/Kayak Launch Grants S - KYTC F - Corps of Engineers - OKI Transportation Alternatives Grant	
P1.2.2, RG	Tower Park Shared-Use Connector Trail & Riverfront Node		X					Parks Committee / Southbank Partners	F - OKI Transportation Alternatives Grant	
P1.2.3, RG	Highlands High School Shared-Use Connector Trail & Riverfront Node			X				Parks Committee / Fort Thomas Schools / Southbank Partners	L - Ft. Thomas Ind. Schools F - OKI Transportation Alternatives Grant	
P1.2.4, L3.2, U2.1, AP	Alexandria Pike (US 27) Shared-Use Path			X				Parks Committee / KYTC	F - OKI Transportation Alternatives Grant	
P1.2.5, R2.2	Memorial Parkway (KY 1120) Scenic Corridor				X			Parks Committee / Fort Thomas Forest Conservancy / KYTC / City of Newport	F - OKI Transportation Alternatives Grant	
P1.2.6	Landmark Tree Trail - Pedestrian Connection to Riverfront Greenway			X				Parks Committee / Carmel Manor / Fort Thomas Forest Conservancy	F - OKI Transportation Alternatives Grant	
P1.2.7	Rossford Park Pedestrian Connection			X				Parks Committee	F - OKI Transportation Alternatives Grant	
P1.2.8, RG	Riverfront Park & Covert Run Pedestrian Connection			X				Parks Committee /	F - OKI Transportation Alternatives Grant	
P1.2.9, R1.4, MW	Reservoir Trails		X					Parks Committee / Northern Kentucky Water District	F - OKI Transportation Alternatives Grant	
P2.1	Identify and enhance the unique role each park plays in the total experience of Fort Thomas through Improvements to existing parks. Establish Parks Advisory Committee to consider City Parks Upgrades		X					Citizens / City Council	Sponsors Partnerships with Corporate Health/Wellness Organizations, Hospitals, American Cancer Society	
P2.1.4, T1.2.1, T1.2.2	James Avenue Improvements		X					City Staff / City Council	L - City Capital Road Rehab Program	
P2.1.5	Mayfield Avenue Improvements		X					City Staff / City Council		
P2.1.6	Highland Hills Park Splash Park			X				Parks Committee / City Council	Partnership with Swim Club User Fees	
P2.2	Invest in the enhancement and maintenance of existing assets (park infrastructure, structures, etc.) system wide		X					City Staff	Sponsors Donations	
P2.3	Install community gardens						X	City Green Team	Sponsors Donations	

Chapter 3: Parks & Open Space

TABLE 3.1 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN										
Goal Reference / Chapter	Goals / Recommendations	Implementation Timeline					Potential Champion/Partner(s)	Potential Funding Sources		
		Immediate	1-5 Years	6-10 Years	10 Years +	On-going		Public	Private	
Chapter 3: Parks & Open Space	P3.1, R1.1, MW	Take advantage of Tower Park's numerous great assets and leverage its potential as a hub of activity (I.e., Midway Connectivity & Parking Improvements)	X					City Staff / City Council		
	P3.1.1, R1.1	Tower Park Zip Lines/Ropes Course		X				Parks Committee / City Council	S- Tourism grants (Mary Bodan- 800-225-8747)	GoApe, Ozone Zip Lines, Zip City, Dagaz (Construction & Operation) User Fees (Operation) Partnerships with Corporate Health/Wellness Organizations
	P3.1.2, R1.1	Tower Park Bike Park		X				Parks Committee / City Council	F - People For Bikes Community Grant F - American Trails Grants F - Bikes Belong Grants	Sponsors User Fees/Membership CORA/KyMBA partnership
	P3.1.4, F1.2.2e, MW	Tower Park Community Center/Armory			X			City Staff / Parks Committee	F - QBP Community Grant	Partnerships with Corporate Health/Wellness Organizations
	P4.1, R1.3	Maximize opportunities to foster partnerships and share investment to enhance parks, trails, and gateways in a cost effective way (e.g., Riverfront Park, Sargeant Park).			X			City Council	L - City Taxes (Real, Business) L - School Contributions L - Sell piece of Highland Park for residential development (2 parcels) S - State Grant Funding S - Trail Town Designation	Sponsors Donations
	P4.1.2, RG	Riverfront Park Trails & Greenway Node		X				City / Southbank Partners	S - Canoe/Kayak Launch Grants S - KYTC F - Corps of Engineers F - OKI Transportation Alternatives Grant	Partnerships with Corporate Health/Wellness Organizations Sponsors
	P4.3	Encourage community stewardship through citizen advisory/volunteer groups and a tool to make it easier to volunteer	X					City Staff / City Council		
	P5.1	Provide a stronger social media presence to inform residents of assets and events and invite visitors to Fort Thomas		X				City Staff		
	P5.2	Enhance online scheduling tools so park assets can be utilized/scheduled/reserved more easily and efficiently		X				City Staff		
Chapter 4: Utilities & City Owned Facilities	U1	Continue to provide and maintain all essential utility services as economically and sustainably as possible.					X	City Staff		
	U2, U2.1, R4.2	Promote technology within our community so that it parallels the needs of our population. Work with neighboring communities and other public and private regional entities to form a 5 Year Smart City Plan.	X					City Staff / City Council	L - City Taxes (Real, Business) F - OKI Technology Grants	Partnership with Corporate Sponsors
	F1.2.2a	Upgrade City Building Complex (Includes Public Works and Storage Buildings). Façade Improvement, space planning for administration, providing public meeting space and 24/7 restroom facilities.		X				City Council	L - City Taxes (Real, Business)	
	F1.2.2c, MW	Continue dialogue with the Army National Guard regarding acquisition of the Stables Building and surrounding parcel.		X				City Staff / City Council		Partnership with Corporate Sponsors
	F1.2.2e, P3.1.4, MW	Open Armory Building entrance. Re-vision and reuse of 1st floor space.			X			City Staff / Parks Committee	L - City Taxes (Real, Business)	
	F1.2.2d	Expand event/meeting space at the Mess Hall.		X				City Staff	L - City Taxes (Real, Business)	
	F1.3	Improve and enhance City website		X				City Staff		

TABLE 3.1 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN									
Goal Reference / Chapter	Goals / Recommendations	Implementation Timeline					Potential Champion/Partner(s)	Potential Funding Sources	
		Immediate	1-5 Years	6-10 Years	10 Years +	On-going		Public	Private
R1.1, P3.1	Collaborate with potential partners to create destination recreation activities at Tower Park		X				City Staff / City Council		Sponsors User Fees/Membership CORA KyMBA Partnership Organizations
R1.3, P4.1	Maximize opportunities to foster partnerships and share investment to enhance Sargeant Park (Dayton)		X				City / Campbell County / City of Dayton		
R1.4, P1.2.9, MW	Collaborate with potential partners to re-open trail loops around the reservoirs.		X				City Staff / Northern Kentucky Water District Parks Committee / Fort Thomas Forest Conservancy / Hillside Trust / Campbell County Conservancy		
R1.5, P1.1	Preserve, enhance and properly manage our forested hillside greenbelt					X			Conservation Easements Donations
R2.1	Collaborate with potential partners to improve the I-471 & Grand Avenue corridor (e.g., complete streets)		X				City / City of Newport / KYTC Economic Development Director / Campbell County / Forest Conservancy / City of Newport / KYTC		
R2.2, P1.2.5	Collaborate with potential partners to improve the I-471 & Memorial Parkway corridor (e.g., beautification, reforestation)				X				Private Property Owners
R2.3.1	Riverfront Greenspace Connectivity Strategy			X			City Staff / City Council		Private Property Owners
R2.3.2, P1.2.1, T4, RG	KY 8/Riverfront Greenway (& Nodes)		X				City / Southbank Partners / Corps of Engineers / City of Silver Grove	S - Canoe/Kayak Launch Grants S - KYTC F - OKI Transportation Alternatives Grant F - Corps of Engineers	Sponsors Conservation Easements
R2.3.3, RG	Riverfront Recreation Area (Including Ft. Thomas River Camps/Glamping)			X			Parks Committee / Corps of Engineers / C.S.X. Railroad		Canopy Crew / Treehouse Masters Show (Construction) Partner with Aquaramp (Construction & Operation) Private Airbnb; VBRO (Construction & Operation) User fees (Operation)
R2.3.4, P1.2.3	Highlands High School Connection			X			Fort Thomas Schools / Southbank Partners	F - OKI Transportation Alternatives Grant	Partnerships with Corporate Health/Wellness Organizations
R2.3.5	Coney Island Ferry		X				City of Silver Grove		Private Property Owners
R3.1	Collaborate with the County and all of our neighboring communities that share a boundary with Fort Thomas to preserve and enhance our border areas and gateways in ways that benefit each other (Veteran's Park, St. Stephen's Cemetery, Evergreen Cemetery, I-471 Bridge Greenway Node, Memorial Parkway, Grand Avenue, Beverly Hills Site Redevelopment)			X			City / Mayor / Regional Communities Group / City of Highland Heights / City of Southgate / City of Silver Grove / City of Bellevue / City of Newport		
R4.1, P1.2.3, RG	Work with potential partners on a riverfront connection to Tower Park/Midway Historic District		X				Parks Committee / Southbank Partners	F - OKI Transportation Alternatives Grant	Sponsors Partnerships with Corporate Health/Wellness Organizations
R4.2, U2.1, L3.2, AP	Connect with potential partners to create a shared vision for the US 27 Corridor, with emphasis on economic development and Smart City opportunities			X			City / Mayor / Regional Partnerships Group	F - OKI Transportation Alternatives Grant F - Smart City Grant	
R4.3	Collaborate with public and private sector partners (federal, state and local) on our business districts		X				City Staff		
R4.4	Leverage our history and assets to develop cultural tourism (i.e., Veteran's Park, St. Stephen's Cemetery, Evergreen Cemetery)			X			City / Mayor / Regional Communities Group / City of Highland Heights / City of Southgate		

Chapter 5: Regional Partnerships & Collaboration