

Future Land Use Map

The future land use map is an important tool used by staff, the planning commission, and town council to help make informed land use decisions. When properties are proposed for rezoning, the future land use map helps decision makers by showing where preferred uses are best located. It shows the “highest and best” uses for a property.

The current comprehensive plan utilized population projections to prepare a preferred overall land use mix. A desired “level of service” acreage was generated for each typical land use type, and that total was subtracted from existing acreage of the same type. The various areas were then laid over a map of Washington Township, resulting in the overall future land use map.

What has resulted over the past twenty years is that the vast majority of Avon’s land area is currently dedicated to single family residential uses. There is very little commercial development and what exists is mainly relegated to the US 36 corridor. These two facts result in a couple of things...

1. An overabundance of detached single-family residences distributed throughout town. SFR is a difficult land use to support, municipally speaking, because it tends to be wide spread instead of concentrated resulting in excessive costs to provide municipal services like police, fire, road maintenance, and new roads. Also residential development tends to use more services than they pay for through property tax revenue. This is especially true since there is currently a 1% property tax cap in place for residential development.
2. An oversupply in single family detached development also usually results in less efficient commercial, employment, and workforce availability. That means folks have to drive a little farther than they would otherwise, if residential development were more dense and concentrated. And more roads need to be built and maintained over time to help people get where they need to go.

For this future land use map update, steering committee members decided a cluster-type development goal would work best to determine the optimum growth areas and types. The committee was working with the overall goal of creating a vibrant community to attract and retain a variety of residents, jobs, and leisure opportunities instead of trying to achieve a particular level of service for each land use.

Clusters are simply geographic concentrations of specific or interrelated types of development. Retailers typically cluster in the same general location, as do some industries and institutions. Clustering allows developers to achieve some economies of scale with supplies, employee pools, and access to public goods. Clusters can result in enhanced productivity, better innovation, and the formation of new businesses.

Having determined to use land use clusters, the committee next chose general areas to place the uses. These are areas where new development and redevelopment should occur over the next 5 to 20 years. US Highway 36 is already a major commercial corridor and employment center in Avon, so it was reasonable to place clusters along that arterial. Similarly, Ronald Reagan Parkway is a recently completed north-south arterial poised to become an important economic driver for the town, so that corridor became another focus area for future development. The remaining clusters were carefully sited according to their relationship to existing residential development, major road intersections, and expected residential growth.

The specific clusters are:

- Agriculture
- Specialty Housing
- Town Center
- Regional Retail
- Innovation
- Neighborhood Retail
- Light Industrial
- Wellness

Cluster Types

Agriculture. Agriculture plays a large role in Avon's history and farm operations continue today. Committee members felt it important that some areas of Town should be available to agricultural and/or large lot residential development. Additionally, highlighting areas as agriculture in nature will serve to eliminate or at least slow growth in those sectors. The Agricultural Clusters are located in the northwest and southwest sections of Washington Township.

Row crops and animal husbandry are expected uses for this cluster. Large lot residential (minimum of 5 acres and no public facilities) and schools would also be an acceptable use. Other related uses that could occur here include agro-tourism, plant nurseries, winery/distillery/brewery with tours and tastings. Related restaurant uses, Living History, agricultural breeding and research.

Specialty Housing. As noted earlier, Avon enjoys well established single family housing options. In the last five years or so, apartments have become more popular housing choices and Avon has a number of apartment communities. What is missing in our community's housing choice is diversity. It is well established that both the Baby Boomer and Millennial generations want more housing options. Both want walkable more "urban" development even in the suburbs. With that in mind, the committee created a specialty housing category to offer a range of multi-unit or clustered housing types compatible in scale with single family homes. Town residents do not want a continuation of large subdivision developments that all look alike. Mixed use neighborhoods, carriage houses, and pocket neighborhoods are expected uses for this cluster. "Granny flats", separate living quarters above garages or behind the primary

residence will be encouraged here. These clusters are more centrally located within Avon, both north and south of US 36.

Town Center. A lively town center is a crucial and desirable element to a vibrant community. This central gathering spot will be the place to shop, play, work, socialize, and live. A wide variety of uses will be encouraged to locate in this cluster. Specialty shops/restaurants, maker spaces, vertical mixed use (residential over retail), active and passive play spaces, arts and theater are all necessary elements to a successful town center. The Town Center cluster is located west of Town Hall Park and town offices, along White Lick Creek and adjacent to US 36.

Regional Retail. Retail is a desirable use to have in any community. As noted earlier, however, much of Avon's retail development is stretched along the entire US 36 corridor. This results in an overcrowded primary arterial, traffic snarls, and a plethora of traffic signals. With the cluster idea in mind, we expect retail with a regional draw (shoppers from outside of Avon) to locate at and near specific intersections along US 36 and Ronald Reagan Parkway. The ultimate goal is to eliminate traffic signals on these arterials except for a few key locations. Some expected uses here are general commercial, larger shopping centers, hotels, and Class A office developments.

Innovation. Part of a vibrant community includes taking advantage of entrepreneurial ideas and business start-ups. Avon wants to nurture our small businesses, helping them grow and seed additional companies. We also recognize that education is an important part of innovation and would encourage those developments within our Innovation Clusters. These areas are generally located along US 36 and Ronald Reagan Parkway as well as smaller areas near established residential sites and Avon High School. Expected Innovation uses include trade and technical schools, small business incubators, technology, research and development, medical technology and life sciences, specialty maker spaces, and Class A office.

Neighborhood Retail. These sites are proposed for smaller commercial nodes with convenience retail. They are logically placed near existing and future residential neighborhoods and connected to housing and schools for walkability. Typical uses to locate here include smaller grocers, specialty restaurants, pharmacy, boutique shops, and limited personal services.

Light Industrial. Industry is a vital component of any community's economic well-being. It is important to have a sound industrial base to foster and help grow the community and provide employment centers for residents. There is currently one large industrial site in Town, south of US 36 near the CSX rail yard. Additional industrial areas are suggested along the Reagan corridor to help expand our industrial base. "Industrial" encompasses a wide range of uses, but the ones desired for Avon include light manufacturing, assembly, research and development, and data processing. Large warehousing and distribution centers are generally undesirable and would not be encouraged. In general, the majority of work would be conducted inside a building with limited outdoor storage and encompass around 250,000 to 400,000 square feet.

Wellness. Another noteworthy presence in Avon is health care. Both IU Health Center and Hendricks Regional are major hospitals located in town. Avon also has a number of medical office buildings, skilled care facilities, and even a micro hospital. These areas are significant employment centers for residents and these and new wellness businesses should be encouraged. These clusters are suggested near residential and commercial areas along major thoroughfares in town. Anticipated uses include emergency clinics, short-term rehabilitation, long-term care, hospitals, medical office buildings, skilled care/assisted living, senior living, and hospice facilities.

Interpreting the Future Land Use Map

The proposed development clusters are purposely nebulous in nature. It is not the intent of the committee (or map) to depict specific parcels to be included or excluded from future land use areas. This is to allow decision makers to use their best judgement when determining a highest and best use for parcels. If a proposed use falls outside a specific cluster, it may or may not make sense to include that use on a particular parcel. That decision should be made during the rezone process. Likewise, the future land use map does not rezone property - it merely establishes the most desirable use should the property be developed. Where existing zoning districts are established and not overlaid with a new cluster, the underlying zoning district denotes the desired land use.