

Report and Recommendations for  
**DEVELOPMENT POLICY PLAN**  
UPDATE

**Westfield Township**  
Medina County, Ohio

24 October 2003

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## Introduction

In the summer of 2000, Westfield Township initiated a project to review and update the Township Development Policy Plan (prepared by Medina County Planning Commission, December 1996) and the Township Zoning Resolution.

Work on the Policy Plan Update proceeded through early 2001, identifying the principal planning issues to be addressed, in part, in the zoning amendments. At that time, a draft Update report was prepared and reviewed. Further development of the Update was suspended as the detailed zoning amendments were undertaken.

Work on the zoning amendments, involving comprehensive review and rewrite of the Resolution, consumed working meetings of the Zoning Commission and the zoning consultant, Northstar Planning and Design, Inc., through late 2002. The Zoning Commission forwarded recommended Zoning Resolution amendments to the Westfield Township Trustees for consideration subsequent to a public hearing on December 10, 2002. The Trustees adopted the amendments, with three changes, in March 2003.

This report transmits the consultant's final report for the Plan Update. The first section of this report summarizes the planning issues reviewed in this project. The second section presents recommendations which may be considered for update of the Township's Development Policy Plan.

## Evaluation Study

### Data Collection

In preparing this report, current conditions in Westfield Township have been evaluated through several means.

The planning consultant drove all roads of the Township and made note of the nature of developed areas, agricultural areas, and other use areas. The pattern of roads and general road conditions were noted. To a limited extent, conditions in surrounding communities which may affect the Township were also examined.

Data sources were contacted in direct interviews, phone conversations, and correspondence. These included, but were not limited to:

- Office of the Medina County Engineer
- Office of the Medina County Sanitary Engineer
- Medina County Planning Commission
- Medina County Building Department
- Office of the Medina County Prosecutor
- Ohio Department of Transportation
- NOACA (Northern Ohio Area Coordinating Agency)
- Village of Westfield Center
- Westfield Township Zoning Inspector

Several documents and reports were reviewed, including but not limited to:

- Westfield Township Zoning Resolution
- Westfield Township Development Policy Plan (1978)
- Westfield Township Development Policy Plan (1996)
- Medina County Community Guide (Vols. I-III, Final Draft July 1998)
- National Wetland Inventory Map (US Dept of the Interior)
- US 224 & Lake Road Access Analysis (ms consultants, inc., July 1998)
- Wayne County Comprehensive Plan (1997)



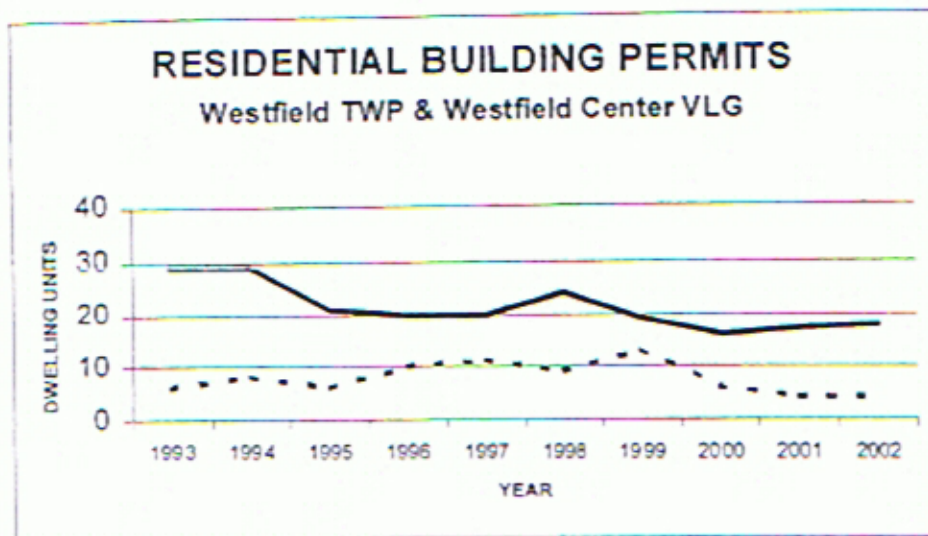
### General Conditions in the Township

The following are the key conditions observed in the Township relevant to updating the Development Policy Plan.

- Rolling topography. The topography is primarily rolling, with steep slopes in the stream areas. The topography is generally not a significant limiting factor for development, except to the extent that it contributes to the wetland and floodplain areas.
- Extensive Wetlands and Floodplains. The Township includes extensive wetlands and floodplains in the northeast and southerly areas. These are significant limiting parameters to development due to the complications of constructing foundations, potential for flood damage, and the potential presence of federally protected wetland habitats.
- Predominantly Rural. Westfield Township is a predominantly rural community. Land uses include low density residential use (+/- 7% of township land area), mixed agricultural uses (+/- 47%), extensive fallow or vacant areas, a high-traffic interchange area (+/- 1%), and an extensive sand/gravel mining area.
- Three Municipal Corporations. Two villages are located within the Township, Westfield Center (central location, 1270 acres) and Gloria Glens Park (north east, 66 acres). A portion of a third village, Creston is located in the southeast corner of the Township (84 acres).
- Road Network. The Township is served by a relatively complete network of state, county, and township roads. Accessibility does not appear to be a problem in any area of the township. The six overpass/underpass bridges have preserved local routes despite the presence of the limited access interstate highway passing through the Township. The most significant shortcoming in the local road pattern is the volume of traffic and congestion in the Lake Road/SR 224 intersection which impedes north-south traffic movement on the east side of the Township.
- Impacts of I-71 and US 224. The Township is heavily impacted by two state and regional highways which pass through the township:
  - I-71, a limited access freeway carries high volumes of traffic between the northern and central areas of the state. An I-71 interchange (at US 224) is located within the township. Another interchange is located near the southwest corner in the abutting Harrisville Township.

- US 224, a limited access highway with four at-grade crossings within the township (Friendsville, Westfield, Leroy, and Lake Roads), another at-grade crossing (Buffham Road) near the west edge of the Township in the abutting Harrisville Township, and an interchange located to the east in the Village of Seville and Guilford Township.
- Residential Construction. Westfield Township has experienced residential construction (past 10 years) of approximately 21 units per year. Taken together with Westfield Center Village, there has been an average of 29 units constructed per year. This rate of construction is lower than in the Guilford/Seville area (44 per year), Montville (128/yr), and Lafayette (41/yr), but higher than Chatham (17/yr) and Harrisville/Lodi (16/yr).

Community	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	10-yr Average
Westfield Twp	29	29	21	20	20	24	19	16	17	18	21
Westfield Center Vlg	6	8	6	10	11	9	13	6	4	4	8
Gloria Glens Vlg	0	2	0	1	3	0	2	0	0	2	1
Chatham Twp	21	19	19	15	13	18	24	15	16	7	17
Guilford Twp	20	26	34	20	19	43	36	24	20	9	25
Harrisville Twp	19	14	10	13	7	7	6	10	13	7	11
Lafayette Twp	41	45	28	15	11	23	33	40	75	96	41
Montville Twp	26	24	49	84	108	155	199	205	233	194	128
Lodi Vlg	2	6	1	6	9	8	10	6	0	2	5
Seville Vlg	26	26	31	41	20	16	14	9	3	5	19





- Sanitary Sewers. Outside of the village areas, sanitary sewer service is only available in the northeast area of the Township where a sewer extends along Lake Road to the interchange area. The capacity of this force main is limited. This sewer is operated by the Medina County Sanitary Engineer.
- The township has no apparent "center" or focal area of business and community activity. As in many rural areas, the Village is the physical center of this area, developed at the crossing of main local roads. It is notable that the Cloverleaf Recreation Center, Middle School, High School, and new Township Hall are all now located on Buffham Road, thereby forming a loose cluster of township community facilities.
- The Township does not have a local commercial/service business area. A local commercial core is commonly found in the central village, but not in this case. There is no industrial area (aside from the recycling plant). The principal commercial area in the Township is the Lake Road commercial area which is completely dedicated to highway travel service uses.

#### **Internal Development Issues**

The following have been identified as trends and issues within the Township which may affect future development.

- The Interchange Area. Continued business growth has increased the tax base value of the interchange area for the Township. Concurrent with that growth, increased highway traffic has resulted in increased impacts of congestion, noise, and lights which are inconsistent with the rural character of the Township. Continuous attention must be given to maintaining the level of service of the SR 224/Lake Road intersection as the traffic impacts increase from development of the vacant or underdeveloped balance of the HC District.
- Village Annexations. The Township hosts all or part of three municipalities which have annexation authority. While continued modest growth of new housing in the villages, particularly Westfield Center, may eventually result in annexations for new subdivisions, it does not appear that such annexations will have a significant impact upon the functions of the Township.
- The Mining Areas. The sand and gravel mining operation(s) in the southwest quadrant (south of Seville Road and west of Westfield Road) have altered and continue to alter the topography of large areas. Issues for the future of the Township include the ultimate extent of the mining and the possible and appropriate re-uses of these properties after mining operations conclude.



- **Local Commercial Zoning.** The Township has two local commercial zoning districts, but has no real local commercial or service development. (The highway commercial district does not provide much in the way of local goods/service, although local residents utilize the restaurants and gas stations.) The districts are not in locations attractive for commercial development. Their shapes will encourage uncoordinated strip development as opposed to coordinated and clustered development.

Local officials and planning professionals have questioned the viability of the locations of these existing local commercial districts to meet the current or future needs of the Township. Concerns have been raised about the potential impacts of businesses in these predominantly residential areas.

- **Industrial Area.** The Township's industrial area hosts the regional waste recycling center and a tire facility. At this time, no manufacturing uses have been established. For the purposes of possible diversified future tax base, however, it may be appropriate to expand the industrial district, or perhaps establish a new district in a new location.

#### **Impacts from Abutting Areas**

Several important trends and sources of impacts from outside of the Township should also be taken into account in planning for the Township.

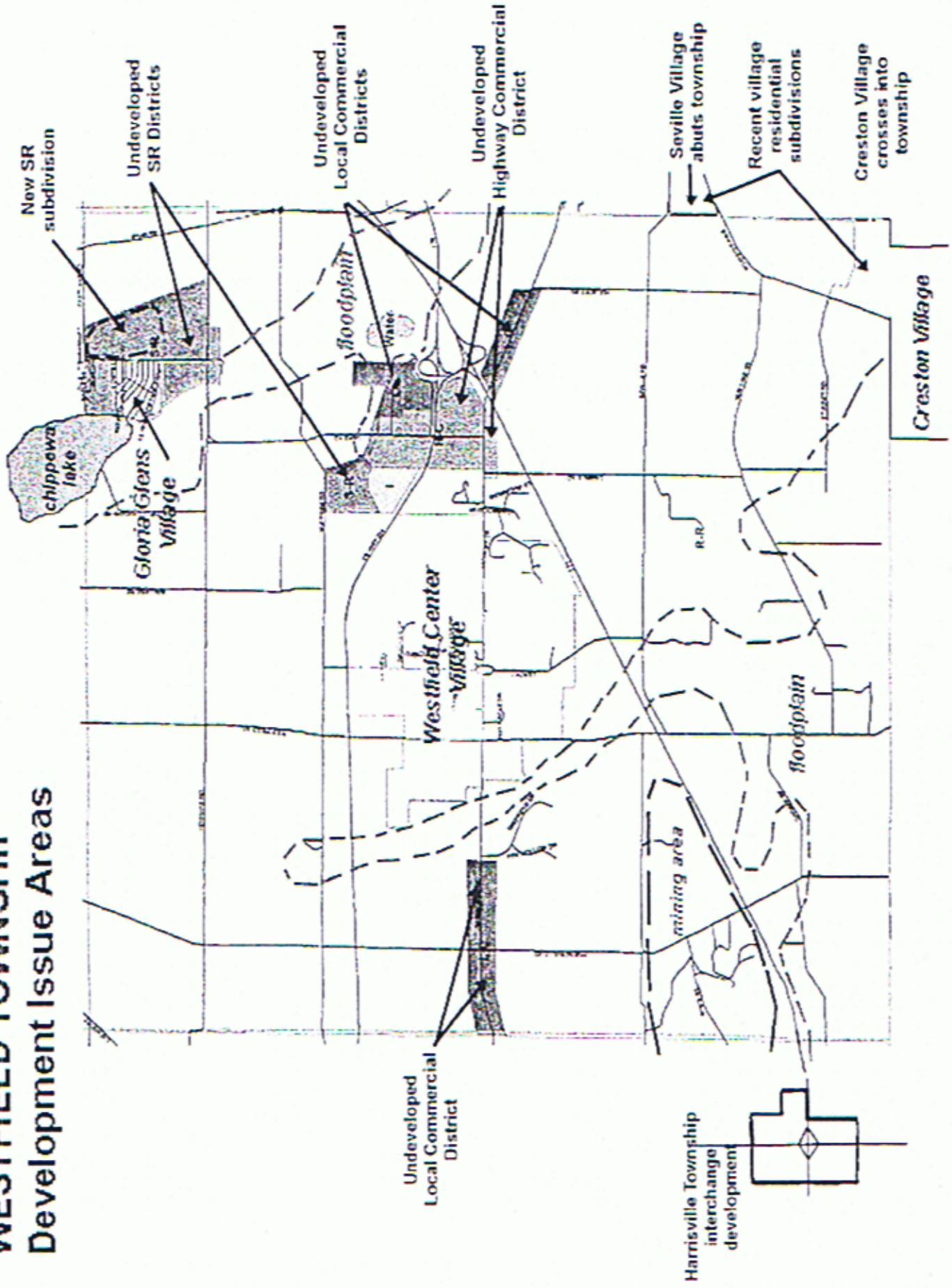
- **Increasing Traffic.** Both regional and local traffic are increasing. Located in the intersection of two major highways, Westfield Township is likely to experience continually increasing traffic, as evidenced by the traffic estimates provided by ODOT. This also appears to be the interchange of choice for commuter traffic from the south central part of Medina County and north central part of Wayne County. Many vehicles are observed using the Lake/Greenwich/Hulbert route to reach SR 3 and head south.

Pressure for development in the interchange area (not only interchange service uses, but other types of commercial use) is likely to increase along with traffic volumes.

- **Reconstruction of the I-71/SR 224 interchange** has been discussed in past years. Such an improvement may improve traffic flow and safety in the interchange and may or may not involve US 224. If the project includes the US 224/Lake Road intersection, it may affect accessibility for some land uses in the area and may afford an opportunity to realign or create one or more local roads.
- **Potential for Village annexations.** As noted in the table, "Residential Units Constructed", Seville Village experienced significant residential growth in the early and mid 1990's. One of its newest residential subdivisions is located in the southwest corner of the Village



# WESTFIELD TOWNSHIP Development Issue Areas



between Seville Road and Wooster Pike and abutting Westfield Township. The northwest corner of the village also abuts Westfield Township. This contiguity creates potential for the Village to annex properties from Westfield Township and extend utilities.

A portion of the Village of Creston is already within the original Westfield Township limits. A new subdivision was recently constructed on the north side of the village. This contiguity also creates potential for future annexations.

It is fortunate that both Villages are located on the edges of the Township where annexations, if any, may have modest impacts.

#### **Conditions in the Highway Interchange Area**

- **Location.** The highway interchange area is located in the east-central part of the Township at the intersection of I-71, I-76, and SR 224. As the juncture of several major highways, the location is attractive for regional truck and auto travel services. Its location on the east side of the Township minimizes its impact on most parts of the community although traffic impacts are dispersed.
- **Zoning.** The HC- Highway Commercial District comprises roughly 200 acres. All properties within the district have frontage on Lake Road with the exception of four small lots on Speedway Drive and several properties on Greenwich Road (at the south end of the district)..

An additional 75 abutting acres are zoned LC - Local Commercial. This district has no frontage on any public road. Access is via private roads extending from the east side of Lake Road.

- **Land Use.** Less than half of the HC zoning district is developed with permitted uses, primarily on the west side of Lake Road, north and south of SR 224. Sizable vacant properties and vacant buildings are located on the east side of Lake, both north and south of SR 224. Vacant parcels range in size from 1.0 acre to approximately 30 acres. The south end of the district, including all properties abutting the intersection of Lake Road and Greenwich Road, is undeveloped or in non-conforming uses.

The LC district is primarily developed with recreation facilities, including indoor and outdoor soccer fields.



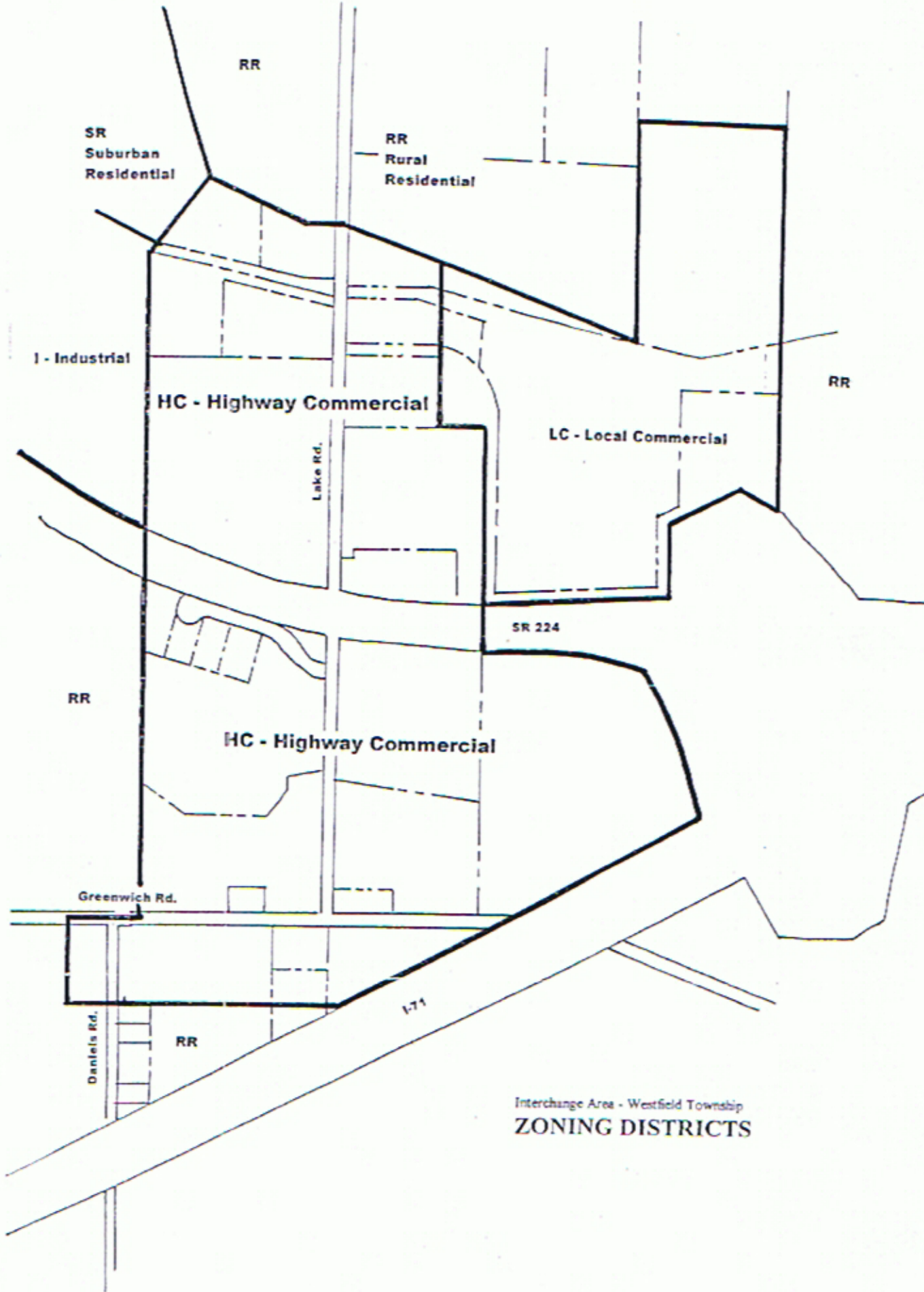
- Roads and Traffic. Because SR 224 is a restricted access highway, all access into the highway commercial district is through Lake Road frontages. This necessitates turning movements in the districts single intersection for all autos and trucks. Once trucks and other large vehicles have departed the SR 224 right-of-way onto either north or south Lake Road, turning can only be accomplished on private properties. There are no looped public roads which return to the state highway.

Lake Road, in addition to providing the primary access for this district, is the primary north-south route in the eastern half of the Township. This local north-south movement is impeded by the congestion in the interchange.

- Analysis of the Highway Interchange Area. Several issues are apparent in the existing HC District relating to access, zoning, and future development.
  1. A primary concern is the future of the south end of the District at the intersection of Lake Road at Greenwich Road. Presently, the district fades off into a more rural environment in this area which is an appropriate transition off into the other roads in the township. If the properties within this south end of the HC District are developed as permitted, however, this transition area will be very different, hosting heavier traffic and larger commercial buildings. The impacts of this additional development may be a concern.

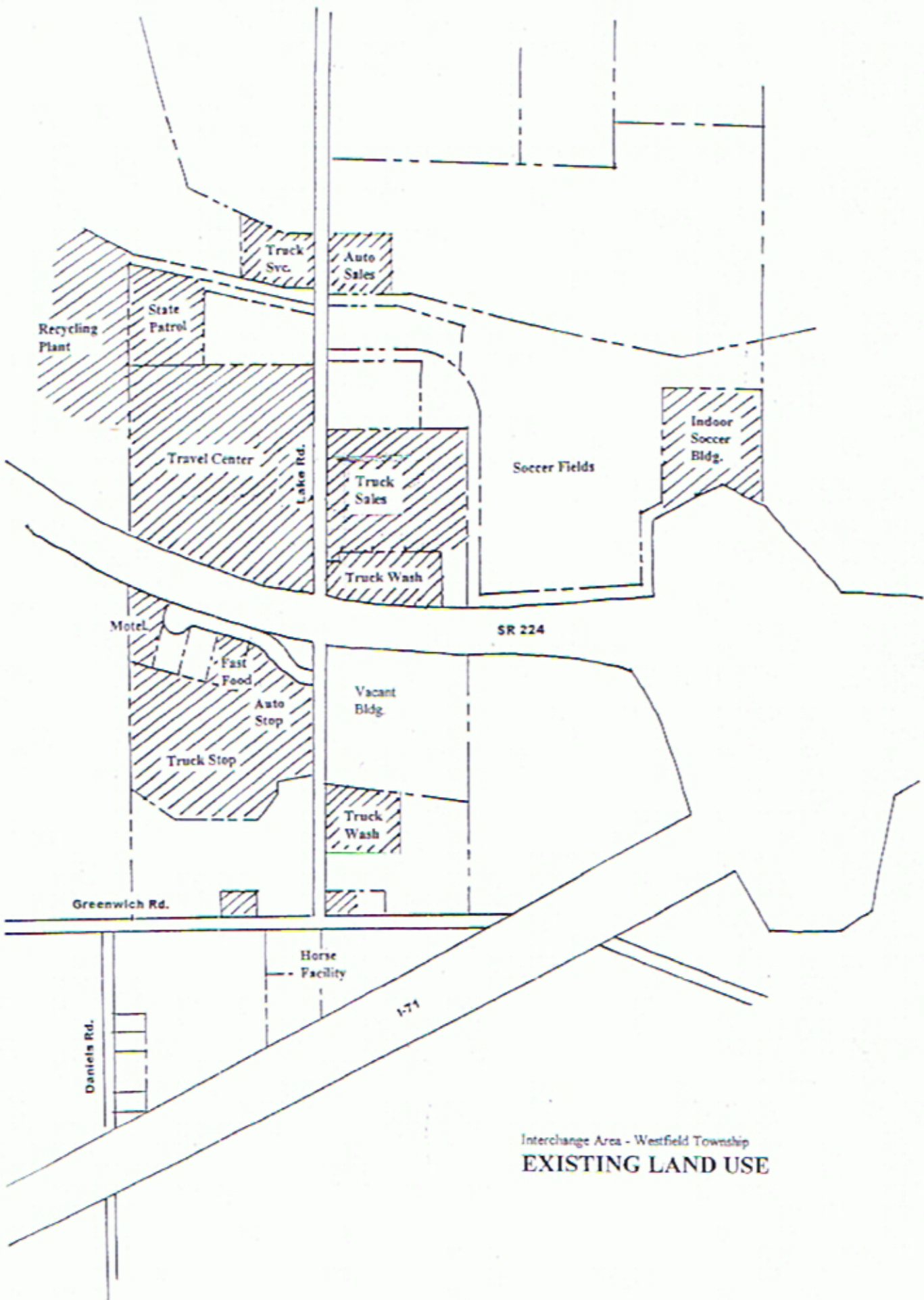
The intersection of Lake and Greenwich is clearly inadequate to handle interstate type traffic, particularly any significant number of large trucks.

2. The west and northern edges of the HC District abut RR Rural Residential Districts. The setback/buffer requirements for these areas should be increased in the Zoning Resolution in order to ensure that these abutting properties are adequately protected.
3. The intersection of Speedway Drive and Lake Road appears to be too close to the intersection of SR 224 and Speedway to permit northbound turning movements from Speedway, particularly given the volume and type of traffic now using this part of Lake Road. This problem will worsen as traffic increases on Lake and Speedway with additional development.
4. Multiple properties with small frontages or flag lots can result in multiple curb cuts and points of conflict in the north end of the District on Lake Road.

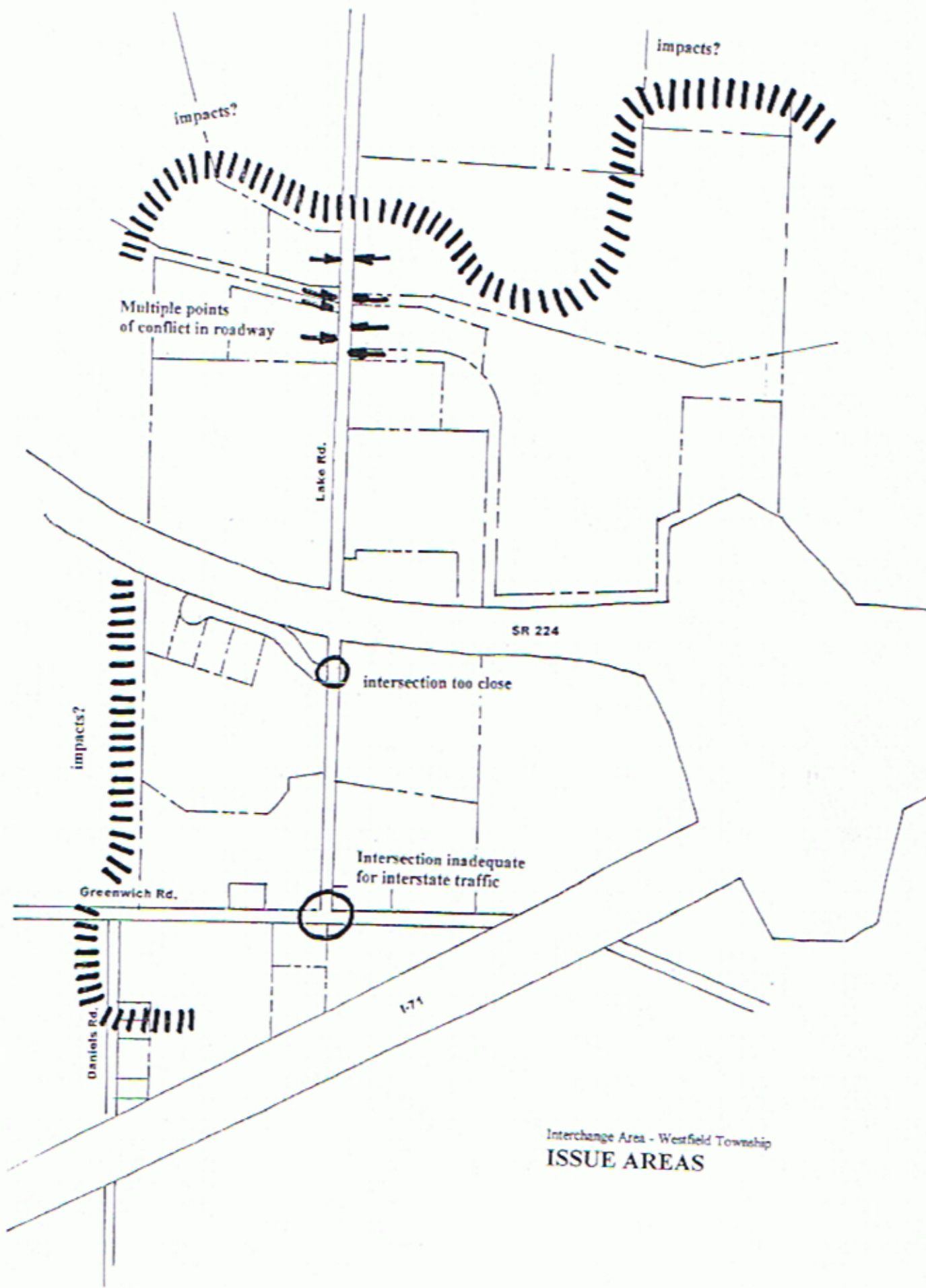


Interchange Area - Westfield Township  
**ZONING DISTRICTS**





Interchange Area - Westfield Township  
**EXISTING LAND USE**



impacts?

impacts?

Multiple points  
of conflict in roadway

Lake Rd.

SR 224

intersection too close

impacts?

Intersection inadequate  
for interstate traffic

Greenwich Rd.

Dantels Rd.

I-75

Interchange Area - Westfield Township  
**ISSUE AREAS**



5. Within the District, deeper setbacks from Lake Road and specific landscape requirements for all frontages could significantly improve the value and appearance of the District and contribute to improved access conditions.
6. The LC District on the east side of the HC District is developed with recreation uses which may be appropriate for the location but are not truly the type of development anticipated for local commercial areas.

### **Conditions on the Village Perimeters**

The probability of annexation of township area by a municipality is a function of many factors including the demand for and availability of vacant land within the municipality for various uses, the needs of the municipality for control or construction of certain locations and facilities, the availability of utilities, the need or desire for expanded municipal tax base, and the interest of abutting property owners for annexations (typically for purposes of access to utilities and development). While an inexact art, it is possible to identify properties or areas which have greatest potential for annexation.

Review of the boundaries of the Villages which are within and abutting Westfield Township does not suggest that rapid annexation is an issue in any of these areas. The Township should always be alert to any change in village administration in any of the communities which might be more aggressive with regard to annexation, particularly if the expense of operating utility systems causes them to seek new customers.

#### Westfield Center Village.

Given that Westfield Center is the core of the Township, annexations to that village would have the greatest impact on the Township. It is anticipated, however, based on past growth rates, that future annexations by Westfield Center will be modest and infrequent.

The rural character of the Township (except for the highway district) is a very attractive setting for Westfield Center Village. The Village could lose a great deal if the Township's development policies changed to promote more intense development. There could be benefits to both communities from cooperative planning of the ultimate extent of Village limits and agreement on the nature of future development in the surrounds.

#### Gloria Glens Village.

The likelihood of annexation to Gloria Glens Park does not seem great, although the new SR development might more appropriately fit the village than the township.

#### Seville Village, Creston Village.

Future annexations to Creston and Seville are possible, although their impact should be minimal due to their location on the southeast corner of the Township.

### Conditions Relating to Thoroughfares

Field examination of all the roads of the Township resulted in few "planning scale" issues. The road system is relatively complete and well interconnected. Continued attention to the basic principles of street planning set forth in the 1996 Plan will serve the Township well. The following areas are highlighted.

- The biggest traffic issue area is the Lake/SR 224 interchange. While increasing traffic in this area is a sign of growing business activity, it also presents increasing challenges for the traffic engineers seeking to maintain safety and levels of service. As in the TA redevelopment project, the design of access drives, coordinated with lane and signal adjustments, are likely to be necessary for each major new development or redevelopment. Redevelopment of the southeast quadrant is likely to pose the next large traffic management challenge.
- The crossing of Friendsville Road at SR 224 appeared as a potential problem in the field, particularly with the proximity of the schools and recreation center. The County Engineer confirmed that the accident rate is a concern which is under study. The intersection does not meet ODOT warrants for signalization.



## Recommended Amendments to the Westfield Township Development Policy Plan

### Overview

The Westfield Township Development Policy Plan (dated December 1996) has been reviewed in light of the foregoing data and analyses and discussions with the Township Zoning Commission. It is recommended that the following modest changes be made to the text of the Plan. These are in part intended to ensure consistency with and support for the amended Zoning Resolution.

### Westfield Township Development Policy Plan December 1996

#### Chapter 3: Future Land Use in Westfield Township

##### 3.1 Residential Land Use

##### 3.1.2 R-R Rural Residential District

The recommendations of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> paragraphs were acted upon when the Zoning Resolution was amended in November 1997. Those two paragraphs may be deleted and replaced with the following:

**“As Recommended in the 1996 Plan, the Township has amended the Zoning Resolution to require a minimum lot size of 3 acres and a minimum lot width of 250 feet. These standards should be maintained with the intent of preventing groundwater contamination from septic fields and to maintain the low density residential atmosphere.”**

##### 3.1.3 S-R Suburban Residential District

The recommendations of the last sentence of the 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph, were acted upon when the Zoning Resolution was amended in March 2000. That sentence may be deleted and replaced with the following:

**“As recommended in the 1996 Plan the Township has amended the Zoning Resolution to require a minimum lot size of 1 acre and a minimum lot width of 100 feet. These standards are intended to encourage development with dimensions compatible with the rural and low density residential atmosphere of the Township.**

### 3.1.4 L-C Local Commercial District

The 1996 Plan recommended removal of this District from the Zoning Resolution and Map. The future of the LC areas was again extensively discussed by the Zoning Commission in this most recent review of the Zoning Resolution and Plan.

There was a recommendation from the planning consultant – and at least some agreement among members of the Zoning Commission – that the LC areas are not appropriate as currently configured and regulated. Issues include the locations relative to potential markets and the likely impacts of future businesses on these predominantly residential areas. The preferred recommendation is deletion of the districts to discourage future strip development of marginal businesses and to discourage impacts on residential areas. Alternative recommendations included more stringent standards for future businesses in order to protect existing residential uses and to increase compatibility.

Extensive public comment during these reviews, predominantly comment from owners of property within the LC Districts, discouraged changes. As a result, it was determined to not alter the Districts.

If the Township determines to retain the LC Districts, the 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph of this section of the 1996 Plan should be deleted.

### 3.1.5 H-C Highway Service Commercial District

The high level of commercial and traffic activity in the HC District is incongruous with a predominantly rural and residential community like Westfield Township. It is, nonetheless, part of the Township and efforts should be made to accommodate the District while protecting the sensitive areas of the Township from impacts.

Recent changes to the Zoning Resolution have placed certain uses of the HC District into conditional use status. The changes have also increased buffer area requirements. Both changes will help to mitigate impacts.

It is recommended that the 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph of this section be deleted because it was written in anticipation of deletion of the LC Districts. The following additional text should be considered:

**“It is anticipated that new developments and redevelopment in the HC Districts will continue as regional highway traffic increases. The tax value of the district will also continue to increase, a benefit to the Township and school district.**



Primary planning concerns in the district will be control and management of the impacts of uses. Recent amendments to the Zoning Resolution have placed certain uses within the conditional use category. This will enable the Township to more closely evaluate the impacts of proposed uses and to require the applicants to develop sites with features which fit well within the District and community. Recent amendments also increased the requirements for buffering between HC uses and residential areas.

### 3.1.7 Thoroughfares

As noted in the foregoing section, the Township should continue to focus attention on ensuring that the traffic infrastructure in the Lake Road/US 224 area meets the needs of Township residents as well as serving the many vehicular visitors which it attracts. Another area which should continue to receive attention is the Friendsville Road/US 224 intersection.

It is recommended that the text of the Plan be amended by adding the following:

**“Increasing traffic will affect movement within the HC District and in the eastern half of the Township. Lake Road and its intersection with US 224 are essential to north-south movement in the Township. The Township should continue to involve the County Engineer and ODOT in planning and coordinating traffic facilities in this area and in requiring new developments to participate in constructing vehicular facilities necessary to support their traffic impacts.”**

**“Continued attention should also be given to the Friendsville Road/US 224 intersection. Increasing traffic in this area, and particularly the type of traffic generated by the school facilities, may justify safety improvements.”**

## Chapter 4: Statement of Goals, Objective, and Policies

The following minor amendments should be made to reflect the amended zoning requirements.

Policy IA.2 Agriculture shall be encouraged to remain and prosper in the Township through ~~the establishment of~~ **maintaining** large lot zoning in areas where there is a low probability of centralized water and sewer services.

Policy IB.3 ~~Increase~~ **Maintain** the minimum lot size and road frontage requirements in rural-residential areas and suburban residential areas.

Chapter 5: Plan Implementation

5.3 Update Zoning Resolution

All three paragraphs of this section should be deleted and replaced with the following:

**“In 2002, the Township Zoning Commission and trustees completed a comprehensive review and amendment of the Zoning Resolution. After public notice and hearings, the amended Resolution was adopted. A similar process may be considered again in ten to fifteen years, depending on the number of amendments made in the interim and the rate and character of development in the Township.**

**Periodic minor amendments and additions should be anticipated each year. These minor changes will be in response to changes in state law, legal precedent, changing local development needs, and issues which arise from administration and enforcement of the Resolution.”**