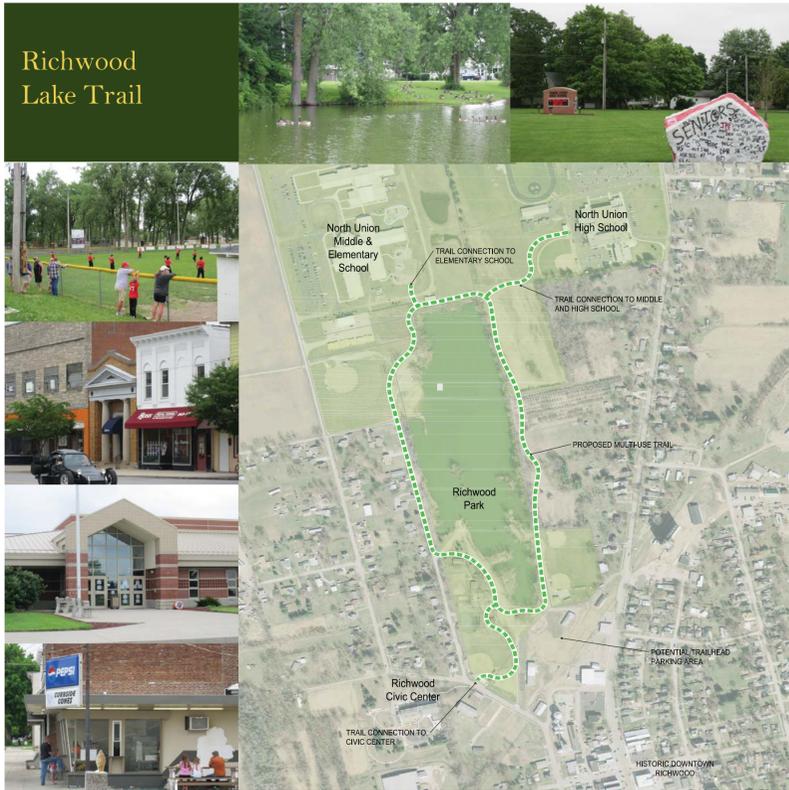




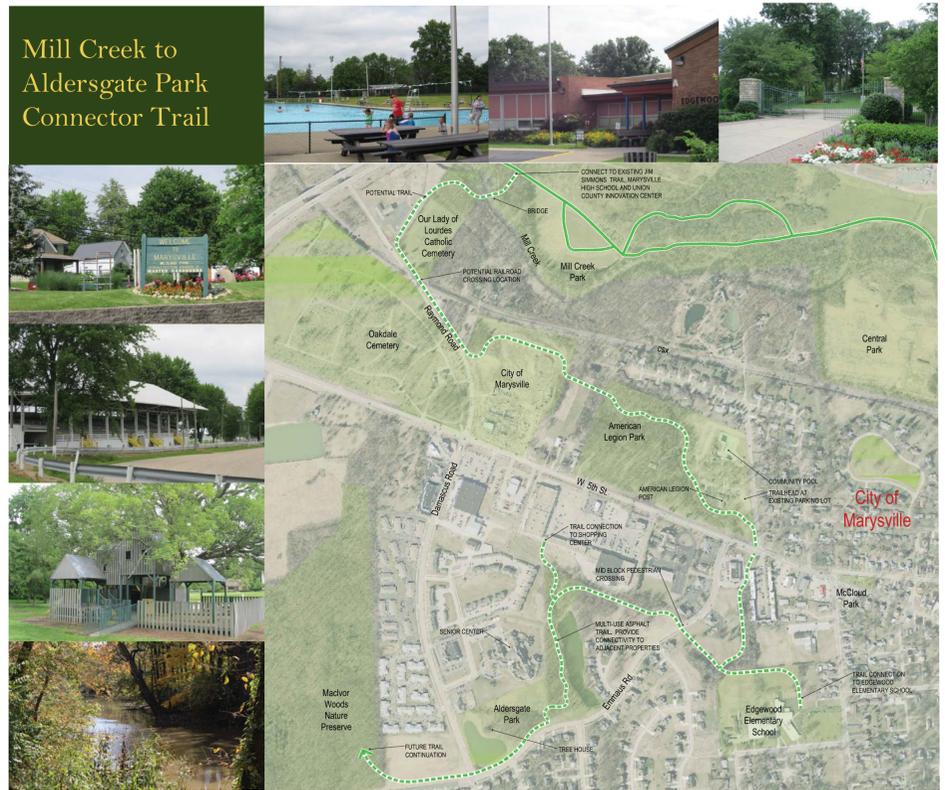
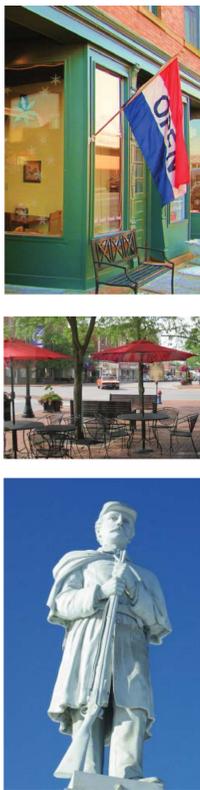
Big Darby Creek Paddle Trail



Mill Creek to McCarthy Park Connector Trail



Richwood Lake Trail



Mill Creek to Aldersgate Park Connector Trail



Introduction & Vision:

In 2013, the Union County Comprehensive Plan recommended a county-wide trail corridor plan be prepared. This led to a collaboration of local governments, regional planning organizations, private interest groups, businesses and the public coming together to complete this Union County Trail and Greenway Master Plan. Together, these partners have developed a bold vision for future trail development and greenway preservation in the community. In addition, this plan showcases the natural, cultural and recreational resources in the County and illustrates how a linked network of trails and greenways can lead to an improved quality of life for residents and visitors. This Master Plan recommends policies and procedures that foster the development of trail and greenway systems; provides descriptions of theme based trail system that tells the story of Union County's unique character and charm; and identifies early action projects that can be developed to begin the process of connecting the County's many resources.

Recreation is an important aspect of the Master Plan but it's not the only purpose of trails and greenways. The development of trail and greenways also promote healthier lifestyles through increased active living, help reduce obesity in adults and children, and improve mental health and psychological well being. Economically, trails and greenways play an important role by boosting property values, revitalizing neighborhoods, increasing tourism, attracting businesses and providing more livable communities. Environmentally, they often preserve sensitive open space, reduce traffic by providing alternative modes of transportation and offer opportunities for citizens to commute to work using alternatives to their automobiles.

The Plan
 Union County's trail system comprises a variety of trail types, providing continuous connections throughout the community. These trails utilize parkland, waterways, utility corridors, sidewalks, multi-use trails, right-of-ways and roads. These lands are both public and private. Generally, trails will accommodate a variety of uses including walking, running, hiking, biking, roller blade skating and nature observation. In some cases, trails are designed for specific uses like horseback riding or kayaking on paddle trails. "Greenway" refers to linear routes along man-made or natural features like streams, abandoned railroads, utility corridors, and road right-of-ways that are set aside for trails and other recreational activities. Together, trails and greenways form the backbone of the community and offer residents and visitors the opportunity to safely and easily access neighborhoods, parks, schools, commercial centers, and other points of interest.

This plan includes over 60 miles of off-road/multi-use trails; 140 miles of roads improved for bicycles; seven miles of paddle trail; and a five mile bridle trail. These existing and future routes offer visitors the opportunity to explore Union County's rich heritage and see features such as the observation tower at Glacier Ridge Metro Park; covered bridges along the Big Darby Plains Scenic Byway; historic town centers in Marysville, Richwood, and Plain City; view the state and national scenic Big Darby Creek, one of the Midwest's most biologically diverse waterways; learn about the Battle of Fallen Timbers and the Greenville Treaty line; and enjoy scenic farms along the County's numerous country roads.

Master Plan Recommendation:

- Adopt an open space dedication policy that requires setbacks and/or easements for trail development along major greenways. Require that developers whose projects fall within these greenways dedicate a portion of the land for public use for parks, trails or open space. Work with builders and developers to make sure these linear greenways or natural areas are suitable for trail development and provide for continuous trail connectivity.
- Adopt zoning regulations that require developers to include access points and construct trails that link parks, schools, shopping centers, neighborhoods, employment centers, hospital campuses, destinations and regional trails. As one of many examples, in the City of Marysville a connection from Eljer Park to Memorial Health Hospital to the Uptown area would connect a park to a hospital to an entertainment area. Local governments should consider the implementation of multi-use trails over sidewalks along major transportation corridors and greenways to encourage cycling and other non-motorized transportation users.
- Adopt complete street policies that accommodate pedestrians and cyclists on roadway projects. Implementing these policies help transportation planners and engineers design the entire roadway for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists. When implemented, complete streets build a transportation network that is safer, more livable and welcoming to everyone.
- Establish a county-wide Trail and Greenway Manager. This could be accomplished by increasing the Union County Joint Recreation District's role or by establishing a Union County Park District, County Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator or Friends of the Trail non-profit organization. Key tasks of the organization would be to build and maintain partnerships with municipalities, townships, school districts, agricultural community, Union County Chamber of Commerce, private partners and sports clubs. Develop a funding plan that supports the organization and identifies the timing and cost of potential trail projects. Investigate and coordinate public and private partnerships, potential funding sources and a strategy for implementation.
- Implement on-road bicycle facility improvements by taking an opportunistic approach. Incorporate appropriate roadway improvements such as share the road signage, bike symbol pavement striping, paved shoulder and/or bike lanes as roadway projects are completed.
- Discuss with private property owners the desire to acquire land or easements for the development of trail corridors along abandoned railroad lines, waterways and utility corridors. Work with each land owner to eliminate issues or concerns they might have.
- Build on Union County's reputation of a bike friendly community by installing bike parking facilities at key destinations. This includes elements such as bike racks, covered shelters, drinking fountains and benches. Consider implementing a bike skills park or pump track at a community park.
- Promote bicycling by holding educational and encouragement events that teach safe bicycling skills, educate motorists on their rights and responsibilities and build on the excitement for bicycling and other modes of active transportation.

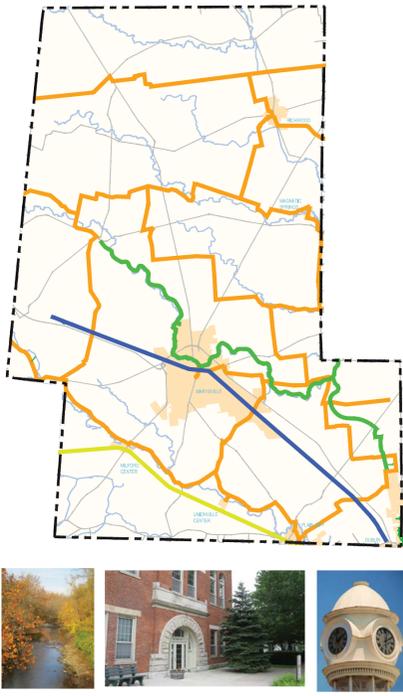
Early Action Projects

The success of this Trail and Greenway Master Plan is founded on the continued collaboration and support from all levels of government, general public and private organizations. Working in partnership with cities, townships, villages, businesses, non-profit organizations and the public, the necessary resources to implement projects in this plan's vision can be obtained. Below are several projects that would have a significant positive impact on the community and would begin to link some of the County's tremendous resources.

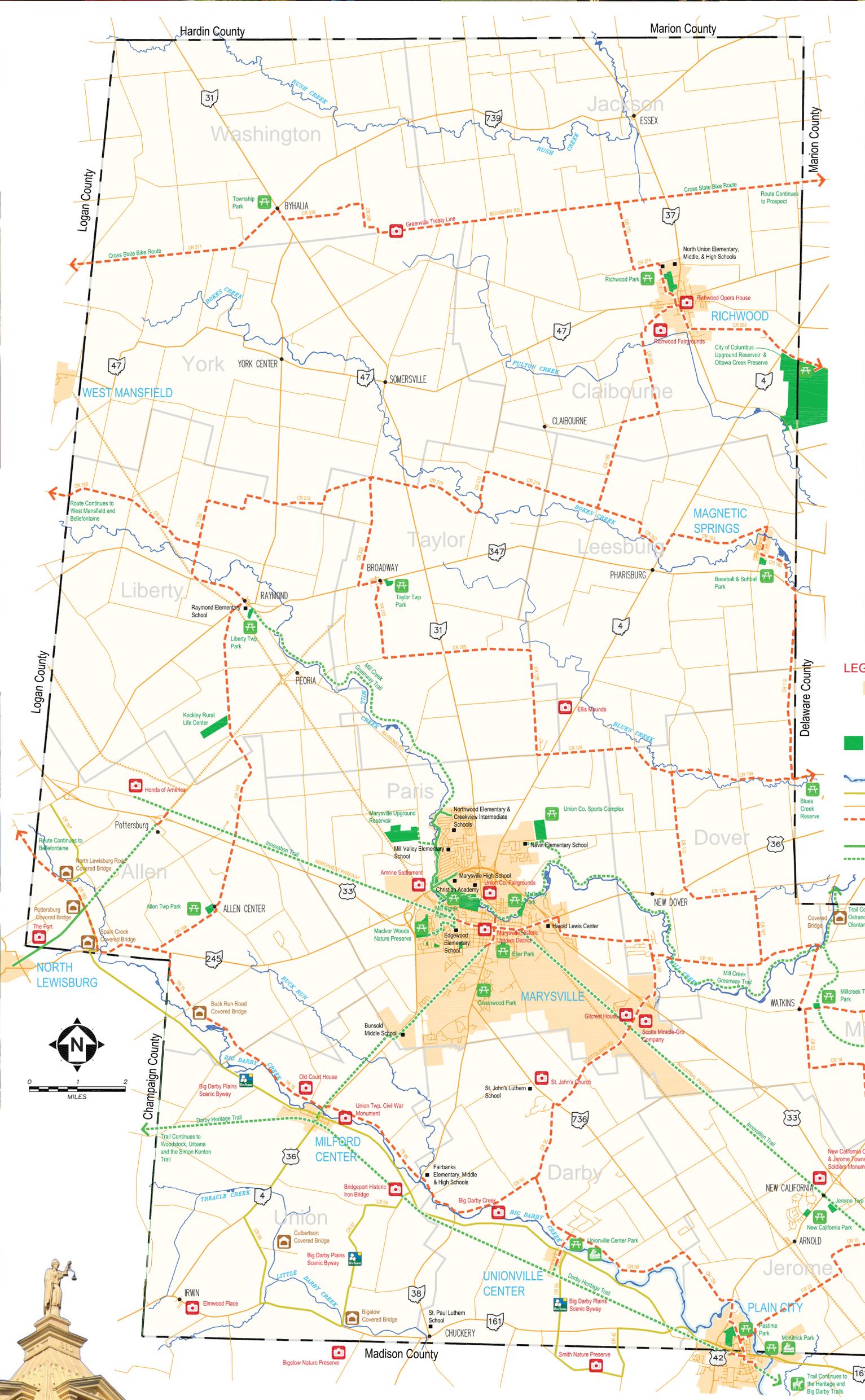
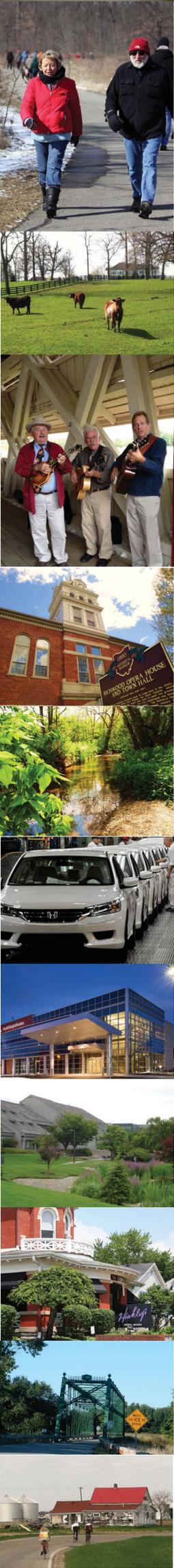
- **Richwood Lake Trail-** Richwood Lake Park is a focal point in northeast Union County. Located just north of historic downtown Richwood it offers numerous amenities like fishing, boating, youth athletics, picnicking and nature observation. To improve connection to the Village and within the park, a multi-use trail is planned that links the numerous park facilities and also provides connection to downtown Richwood, the Civic Center, and Richwood school sites. When completed, this one mile trail will expand the areas recreational resources, increase opportunities to access the lake and provide places to enjoy for both the young and old.
- **Mill Creek/McCarthy Park Connector Trail-** Mill Creek is an important greenway in the community. Flowing west to east, this scenic greenway connects numerous townships, villages and cities. Within Marysville, it is the backbone of their recreational facilities and offers the three mile Jim Simmons trail that currently runs from Silver Spur Lane to North Maple Street. The vision is to link two major parks, Mill Creek and McCarthy Park, thus providing greater connectivity to Marysville High School, Union County Innovation Center, County Fairgrounds and historic uptown Marysville.
- **Mill Creek to Aldersgate Park Trail-** This two mile trail system links the recreation facilities at Mill Creek Park to Aldersgate Park and beyond. Highlights of this trail include a pedestrian bridge over Mill Creek that would allow residents and visitors safe and easy access to American Legion Park and its community pool. South of the pool the trail system would continue to the shopping center on West 5th Avenue, Edgewood Elementary School, Aldersgate Park, MacIvor Woods Nature Preserve and numerous surrounding neighborhoods.
- **Big Darby Creek Paddle Trail-** The Big Darby Creek Paddle Trail starts in Unionville Center and flows southeast to McKittrick Park in Plain City and beyond. This picturesque seven mile section of paddle trail in Union County offers many opportunities to view abundant wildlife, remnant prairie wildflowers and numerous aquatic life. Located on one of Ohio's most valued natural resources, the Big Darby Creek, this paddle trail is a must float for those who are looking to see Union County from a secluded setting. Please be aware that this section of the creek can be challenging so advanced maneuvering skills may be necessary to negotiate the tight twisty turns, fallen trees, varying water levels and dangerous strainers. To expand this recreational facility and improve the river's ecosystem, a lowhead dam in Milford Center should be considered for removal.

Unifying Theme

- **Darby Heritage Trail-** View Union County's railroad heritage and the transformation of several communities from rail towns to trail towns along the Darby Heritage Trail. Long views of the railroad corridor and highly diverse flora and fauna along the Big Darby Creek are just a few of this trail's highlights. Just a short distance from this future trail are numerous covered bridges that are a must see as well. This future eleven mile trail in Union County will connect Plain City, Unionville Center and Milford Center and provide residents and visitors easy access to central Ohio's numerous greenway trails. In addition, this trail is planned to extend west to Champaign County, Urbana and the Simon Kenton Trail, opening up many more miles of trails that extend from Bellefontaine to southwest Ohio's Miami Valley Trails.
- **Mill Creek Greenway Trail-** Scenic Mill Creek meanders through Union County with a wide floodplain, stands of mature trees and diverse wildlife habitat. In Marysville, this great resource has been used to its fullest. Much of the floodplain in the City has been set aside as parkland with picnic areas, ball fields, wildlife habitat and the Jim Simmons Trail. This greenway trail is a pride in the community and links numerous neighborhoods, commercial areas and historic uptown Marysville. As development continues and the riparian floodplain is preserved, the trail system will be developed that, like the creek, meanders from Raymond to Marysville and on to Ostrander. Planned developments in Millcreek and Jerome Townships will incorporate multi-use trails that extend a connector trail south to scenic Glacier Ridge Metro Park and the City of Dublin's fantastic trail system.
- **Innovation Trail-** Union County is home to some of the largest manufacturers in the United States. This includes Honda of America Manufacturing, Inc and The Scotts Miracle-Gro Company. These giants in their respective industries and many other local businesses encourage and promote active lifestyles for their employees and their families. Providing a trail system that serves commuters is where this trail stands out. When completed, the trail along Industrial Parkway and Northwest Parkway will offer a tremendous opportunity for workers to park their cars, save some gas money and commute to work.
- **Scenic Road Routes-** Agriculture and farming heritage is at the foundation of Union County. This can be seen along many of the rural township and county roads. Century farms, massive silos, and herds of livestock are commonplace. In addition to being scenic rural roads, these routes link numerous small communities with quaint restaurants, great shopping and ever popular ice cream shops. Keep your eyes open while riding these narrow country roads. You may come across a horse and buggy, see hot air balloons floating high above or notice a herd of deer grazing in a field.



Union County Trail & Greenway Master Plan



- LEGEND**
- Urban Areas
 - Point of Interest
 - Covered Bridge
 - Park/Public Land
 - Bridle Trail
 - Paddle Trail
 - Ohio Scenic Byway
 - Roads
 - Proposed Road Improvements for Bicycles
 - Existing Off-Road Trails
 - Proposed Off-Road Trail



Union County

Trail & Greenway Master Plan

