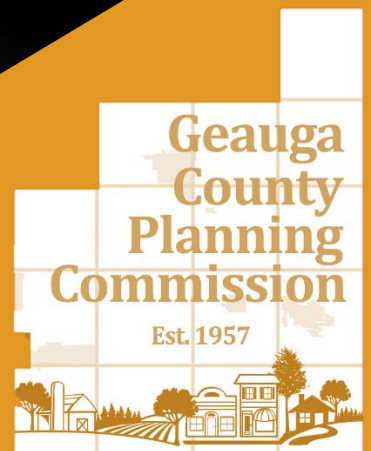


# 2023 YEAR END REPORT



## **Gauga County Planning Commission**

**12611 Ravenwood Dr. Suite #380  
Chardon, Ohio 44024**

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# Geauga County Planning Commission

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Nick Gorris, Vice-Chair

Gary Neola, Jr., Secretary/Treasurer

Dennis John Bergansky

Caterina Cocca-Fulton

Walter (Skip) Claypool

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James Dvorak, County Commissioner

Timothy Lennon, County Commissioner

Ralph Spidalieri, County Commissioner

Prepared by

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February 6, 2024

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## **Part 1: Introduction and Overview of Yearly Activities**

The year 2023 was busy and productive with new projects being commenced. While the amount of zoning assistance and subdivision activity was similar to 2022, the staff increased its overall workload with special projects including the Claridon Township Land Use Plan, draft Standard Operating Procedures Manual, and draft changes to the County Subdivision Regulations.

Per the Commission's request, the staff also began providing a monthly summary of more significant commercial construction activity, to be more aware of the projects throughout the county. The Commission also created a new Compensation Plan and Salary Schedule.

## **Part 2: Comprehensive Planning and Zoning**

### a. General Plan:

October 2023 marked the second year the Geauga County General Plan ("Plan") has been in use. The Plan itself requires an annual review, the purpose of which is to ensure the staff and Commission actively use it, make observations as to how it is used, and discuss potential items to add, delete, correct, or modify during the major five-year update. The staff referred to the Plan forty (40) times during 2023, coincidentally the same amount referenced in 2022.

### b. Model Township Zoning Resolution:

Draft language related to small solar facilities (those under 50MW) was reviewed with further edits planned for 2024 regarding solar.

### c. Land Use Map:

The Commission agreed to changes to the methodology in which the map is prepared. As the nearmap imagery is available for all communities on a three-year basis, it was decided to update the map every three years.

### d. Township Assistance:

The staff assisted the townships approximately eighty-seven (87) times with various questions including informal and formal amendments, zoning amendment process, lot splits/plats, agricultural use, project mapping assistance, zoning/variances, easements, storm water, township land use plan, and demographics.

## **Part 3: Planning Administration**

### a. Subdivision Activity:

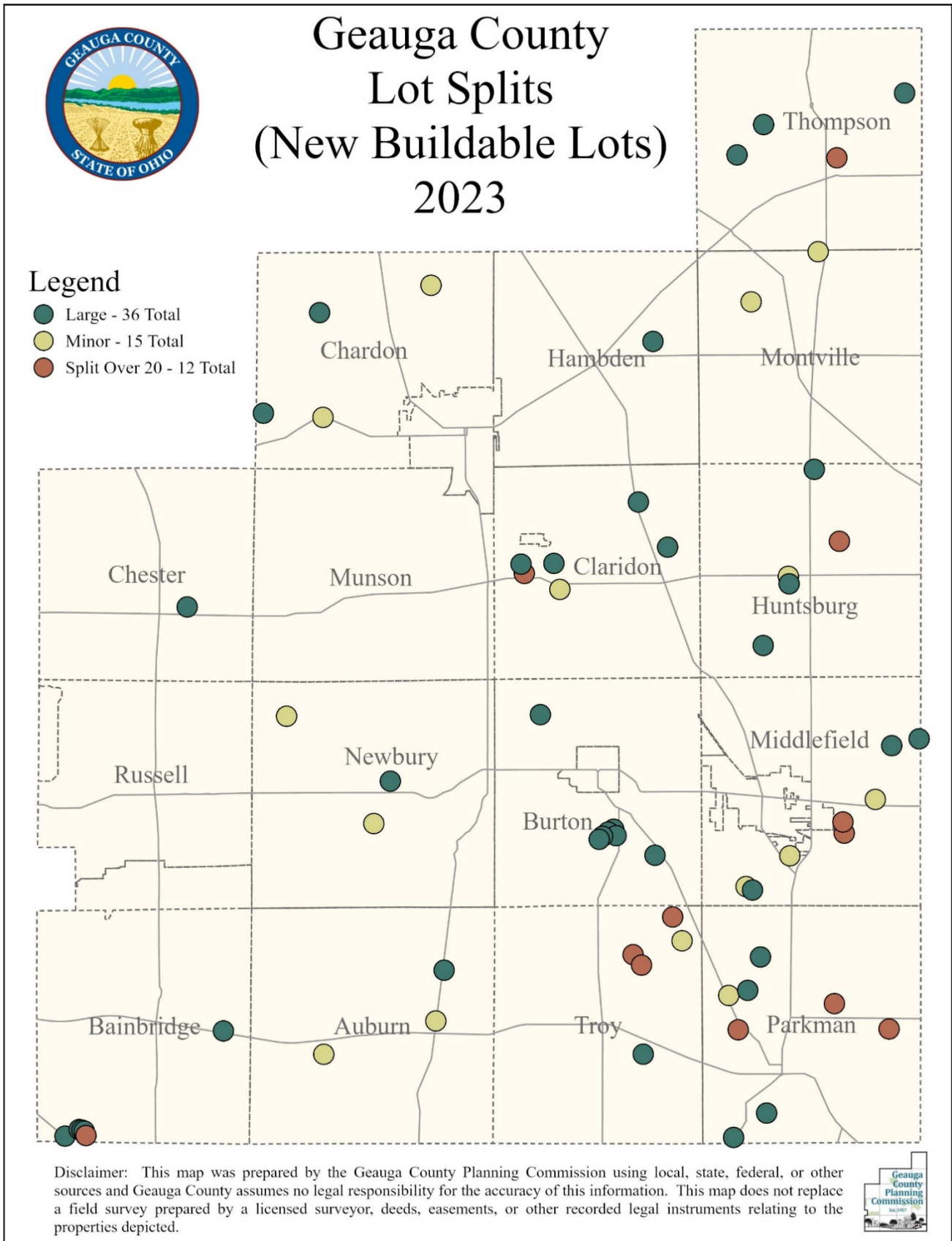
The following chart is a breakdown of the lot splits, easements, and other subdivision activity as well as the number of text/map amendment reviews.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>2022 # Reviewed</b>	<b>2023 # Reviewed</b>
<b>Lot Splits/Subdivisions</b>		
Re-plat	3	5
Major Subdivision	2 (informally)	2
Minor Subdivisions (5 acres and less)	16	15
Large Lot Subdivisions (Between 5-20 acres)	21	36
Exempt Lots (Transfer to Adjacent Owner)	60	62
Exempt Lots (Over 20 acres)	8	12
Lot consolidations	90	75
Total	<b>200</b>	<b>207</b>
<b>Zoning</b>		
Informal text or map amendment reviews	8	7
Formal text or map amendment reviews	19	6
General zoning assistance	95	87
Total	<b>122</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Miscellaneous</b>		
Easements (roadway, septic, utility...) Total	<b>46</b>	<b>80</b>

The map on Page 7 illustrates the general location of the lot splits contained in the table located in 3a above. Sixty-three (63) new building lots located on existing roads were approved in 2023, compared to 45 in 2022, 54 in 2021 and 38 in 2020.

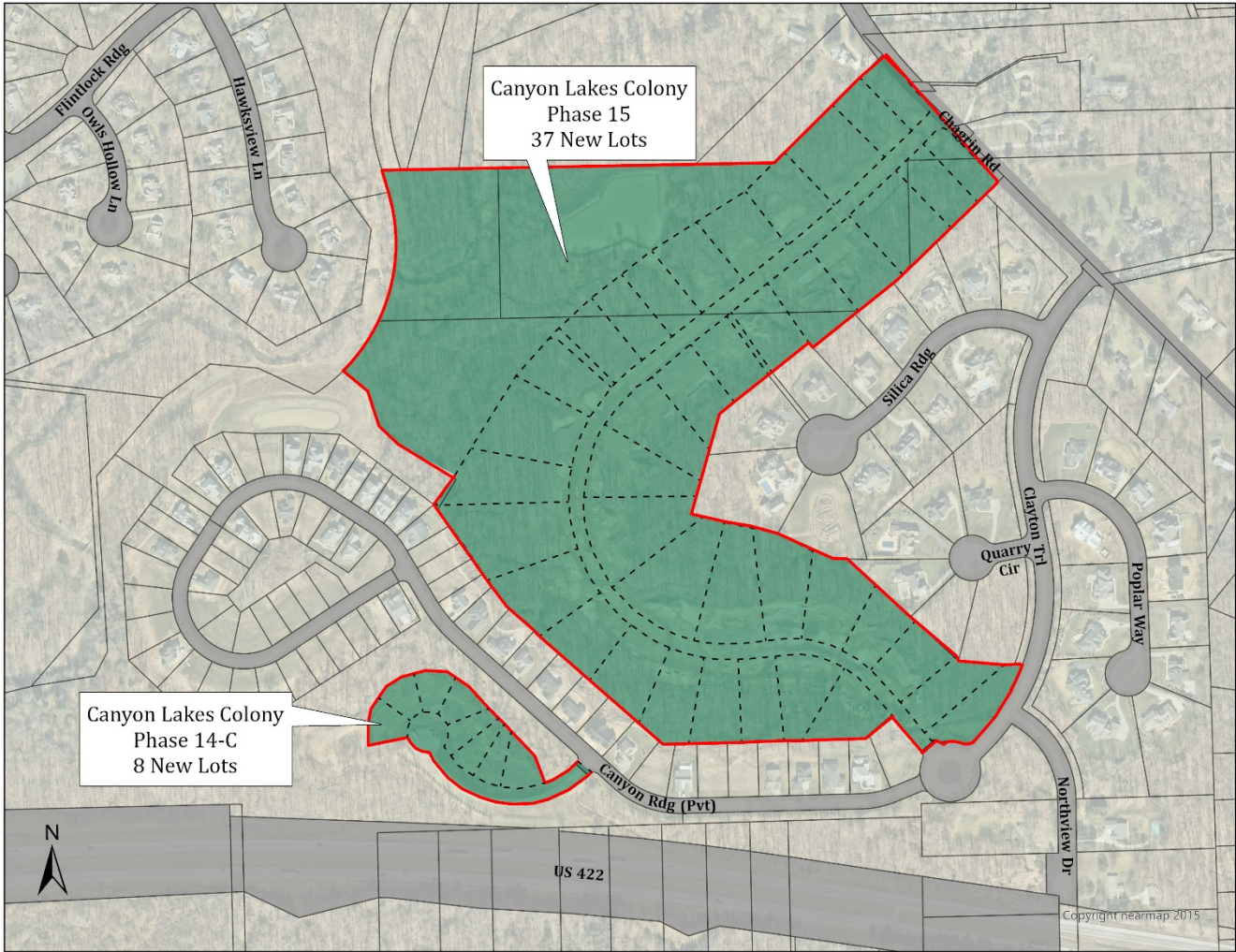
In addition to the lots described above, forty-five (45) sub-lots located in platted subdivisions were approved, all of which were located in either Canyon Lakes Colony Subdivision No. 14-C (8 sub-lots) or Canyon Lakes Colony Subdivision No. 15 (37 sub-lots) located in Bainbridge Township (see map on Page 8) bringing the grand total to 108 new lots.

Lots located on un-platted land on existing roads (63 total new lots).





**Lots located in platted subdivisions (45 total new lots)**



**b. Township Zoning Text/Map Amendments:**

The total number of initiated township zoning amendments was low in 2023 at only six (6) compared to 19 in 2022, 17 in 2021, and 15 in 2020. All were text amendments as initiated by the township zoning commission. See the map on Page 9.



# Geauga County Re-Plats & Text Amendments 2023

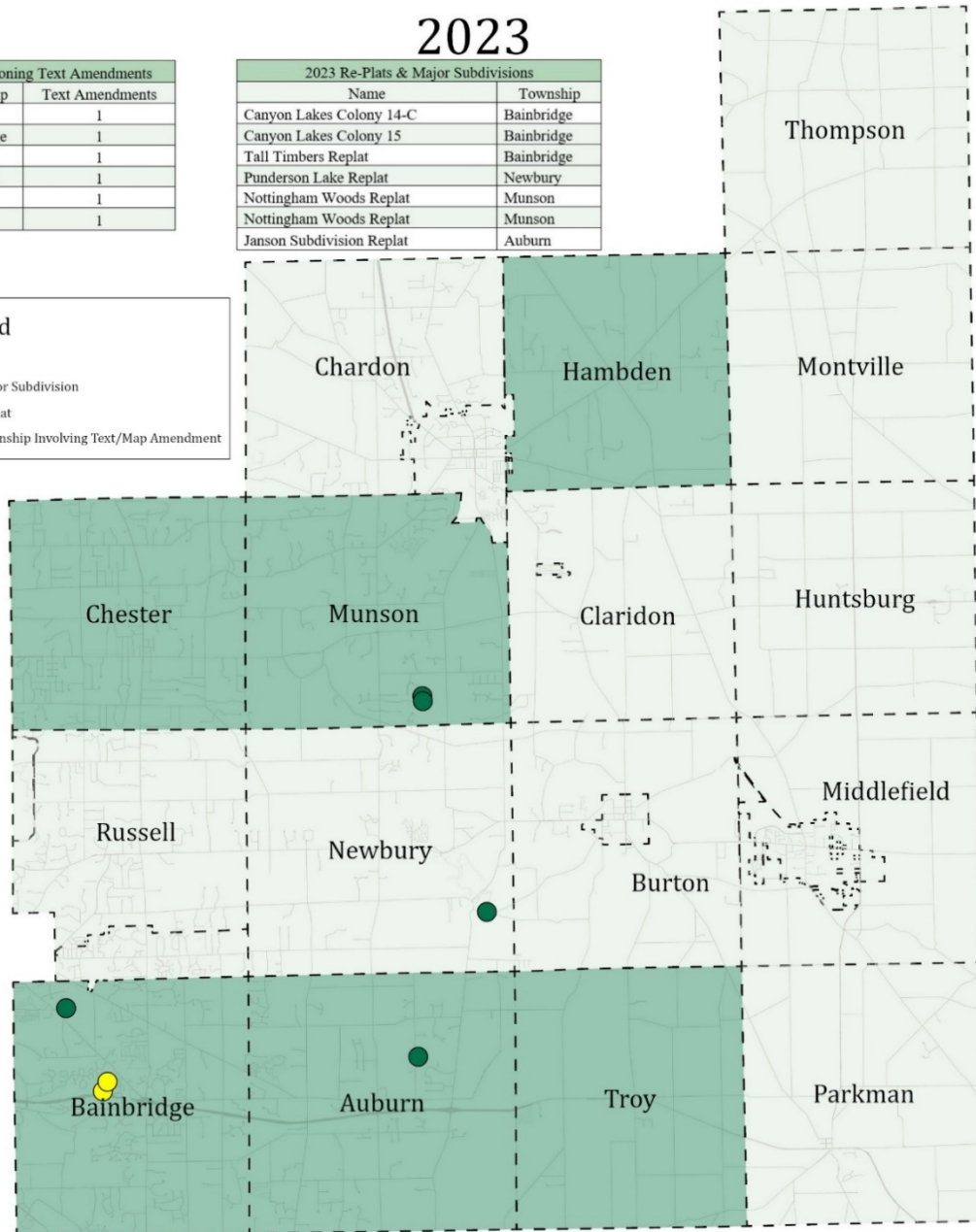
2023 Zoning Text Amendments	
Township	Text Amendments
Auburn	1
Bainbridge	1
Chester	1
Hambden	1
Munson	1
Troy	1

2023 Re-Plats & Major Subdivisions	
Name	Township
Canyon Lakes Colony 14-C	Bainbridge
Canyon Lakes Colony 15	Bainbridge
Tall Timbers Replat	Bainbridge
Punderson Lake Replat	Newbury
Nottingham Woods Replat	Munson
Nottingham Woods Replat	Munson
Janson Subdivision Replat	Auburn

**Legend**

Type

- Major Subdivision
- Replat
- Township Involving Text/Map Amendment



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**c. Easements**

Eighty (80) easements were approved in 2023, which was notably higher than the 46 approved in 2022, but less than the 93 in 2021, and 131 in 2020. Easements are generally for utilities, storm water, conservation, septic systems, or highway purposes.

There were four (4) conservation easements depicted in the map below:



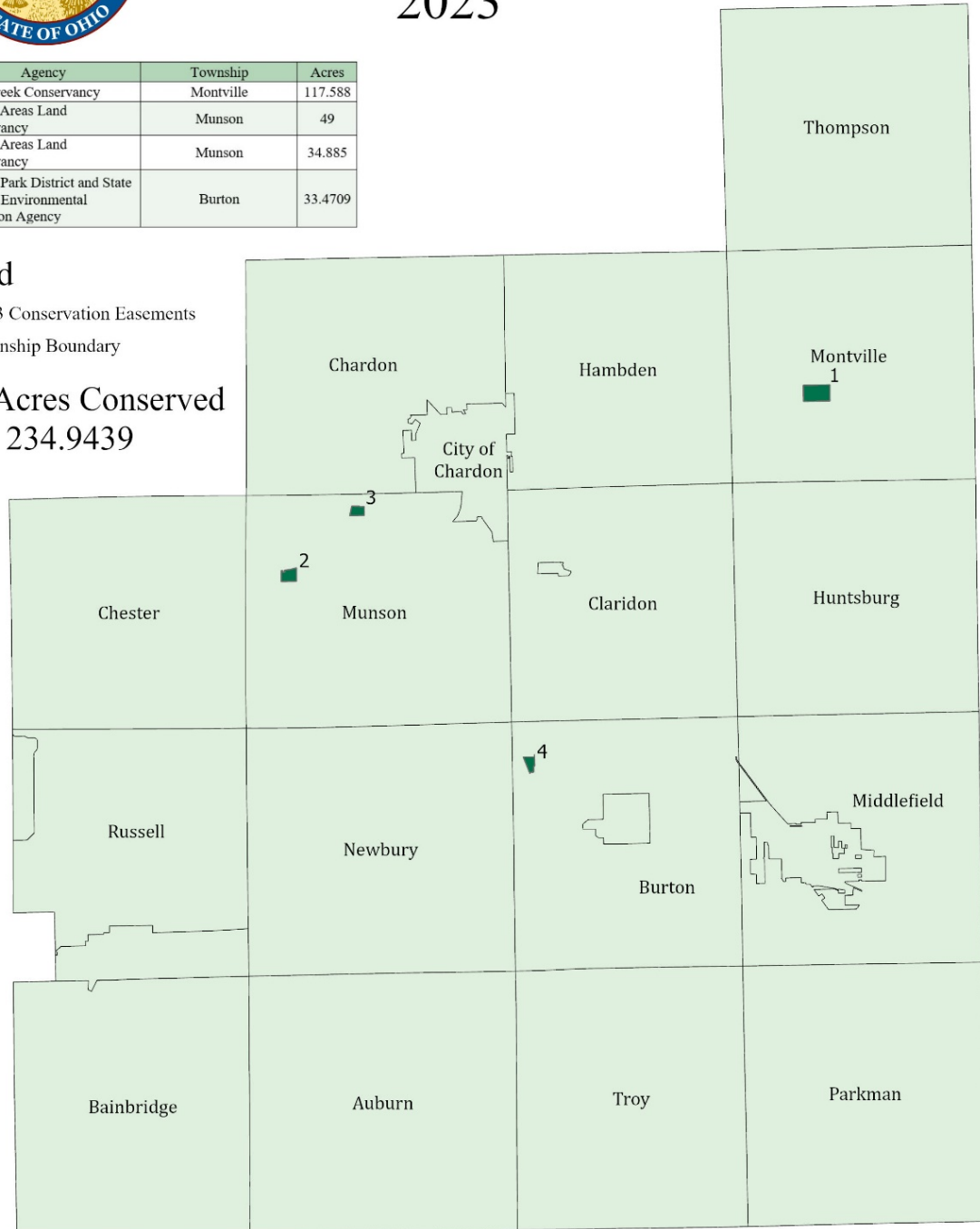
# Geauga County Conservation Easements 2023

No.	Agency	Township	Acres
1	West Creek Conservancy	Montville	117.588
2	Natural Areas Land Conservancy	Munson	49
3	Natural Areas Land Conservancy	Munson	34.885
4	Geauga Park District and State of Ohio Environmental Protection Agency	Burton	33.4709

### Legend

- 2023 Conservation Easements
- Township Boundary

**Total Acres Conserved**  
**234.9439**



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## **Part 4: GIS**

- a. **Mapping Projects:** Many maps serving various purposes were created including the following: Generalized Zoning January 2023, Cleveland Urbanized Area (2010 Census), Land Cover (1994 Data), Solar Eclipse Totality Path, 2023 New Housing Starts, 2023 New Commercial Builds, County map for the Geauga County Township Association, the Thoroughfare Plan Map 2023, draft park district maps for Chester Township, and road/address maps for the Russell Township Police Department.

A story map of the upcoming total solar eclipse was also posted to both the Planning Commission's website and Lakeland Community College's (per their request). The online mapping dashboard for the lot split activity was updated and one was also created for Geauga Public Health related to the salt dome contamination results in Parkman.

- b. **Networking:** The staff kept in contact with local GIS professionals via the Women in GIS event, coordinated by Lakeland Community College, to share knowledge and ideas. Several county GIS User Group meetings were held as well, and Ms. Kobus, Planner II, spoke at one regarding the use of ArgGIS Hub.

## **Part 5: Special Projects**

- a. **County Subdivision Regulations Update:**  
Potential changes to Article I (General Provisions), Article II (Definitions), and Article III (Procedure for Subdivision Review) were reviewed, and the update of the Thoroughfare Plan map is of note as it was last reviewed in 1989. It is now two pages to include additional features including buggy lanes, wide shoulders, gravel roads, the Maple Highlands Trail, Buckeye Trail, and various township, County Engineer, and ODOT road maintenance garages, all of which make it a more dynamic map.
- b. **Claridon Township Land Use Plan Assistance**  
The staff assisted Claridon Township with their land use plan update spending approximately 106 hours of time through various meetings, data analysis, and mapping.
- c. **Standard Operating Procedures Manual**  
Significant work was performed to expand the draft Standard Operating Procedures Manual that delves more into the step-by-step details of how to perform the various office processes and tasks.
- d. **Compensation Plan and Salary Schedule**  
The Commission updated the Geauga County Planning Commission Personnel Policy and Procedure Manual regarding Section 4 Compensation that also references a new Appendix A Classification and Salary Schedule.

e. Draft Guide to Updating a Township Land Use Plan

The staff enjoys assisting townships with their land use efforts and a draft *Guide to Updating a Township Land Use Plan* was created to demystify the process. The staff will continue to assist townships with their land use efforts and the Guide is meant to provide the townships with more specific guidance should they want to update their plan themselves instead of hiring a consultant.

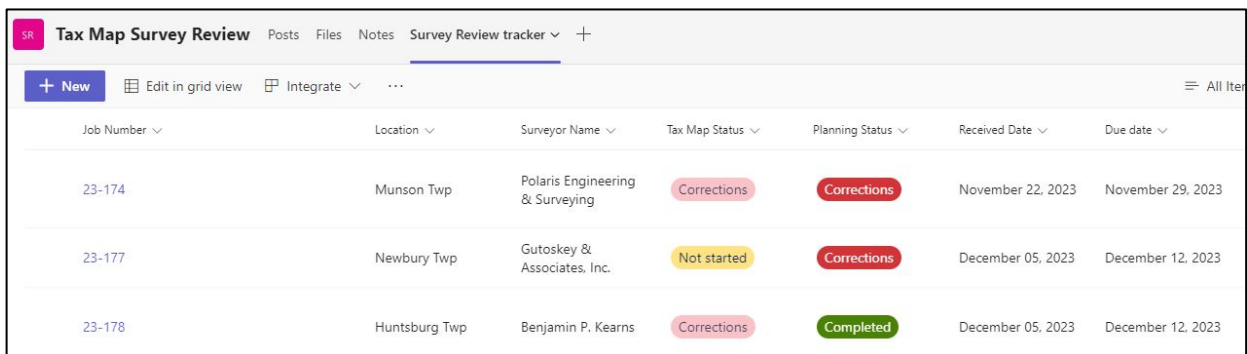
## **Part 6: Miscellaneous**

a. Info Sheet Series

Final versions of the “*How Do I Split My Property?*”, “*What Permits Do I Need for a New Home?*” and “*How Do I File A Zoning Amendment*” info sheets were approved by the Commission, distributed to the townships and posted on the website.

b. Interoffice Collaboration or Assistance

The staff worked with the County Tax Map Department to implement a new lot split review procedure using Microsoft Teams. This was done so one final map is approved that contains the Tax Map approval stamp as well as all zoning information required by Planning. A screenshot of the interface is provided below:



Job Number	Location	Surveyor Name	Tax Map Status	Planning Status	Received Date	Due date
23-174	Munson Twp	Polaris Engineering & Surveying	Corrections	Corrections	November 22, 2023	November 29, 2023
23-177	Newbury Twp	Gutoskey & Associates, Inc.	Not started	Corrections	December 05, 2023	December 12, 2023
23-178	Huntsburg Twp	Benjamin P. Kearns	Corrections	Completed	December 05, 2023	December 12, 2023

The staff also assisted the Department on Aging with researching the viability of updating their 2011 Growth Study of Senior Housing Needs in Geauga County. The staff provided several tables, charts, and maps related to the senior population using the census data. The staff advised the Department on Aging that population projections at the township/municipal level would need to be pursued by them through the Ohio Department of Development, a consultant, or university.

See Part 5: GIS for the maps produced by staff to assist other county or township offices

c. Website updates: The overall County website was decommissioned in early 2023 and the staff worked with the County’s ADP department for various adjustments to the Planning Commission’s new website.

d. Directory of Public Officials:

Updates were made as needed to the Directory of Public Officials to account for new officials, retirements, etc. The Directory is used often, and the staff refers residents to it whenever possible.

e. Temporary Suspension of Enforcement of Large Lot Septic Evaluations

As part of the update to the County Subdivision Regulations, resolution #23-039 was passed by the County Commissioners to temporarily suspend enforcement of requiring large lot septic evaluations. The draft Regulations to reflect this change were presented in December 2023.

f. Northeast Ohio Planning and Zoning Workshop

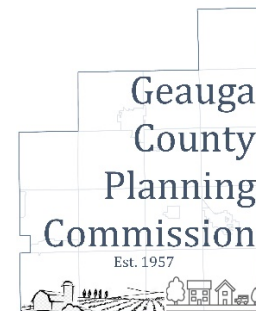
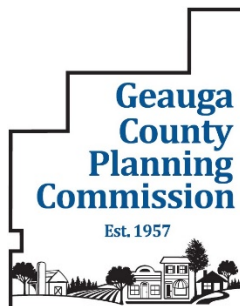
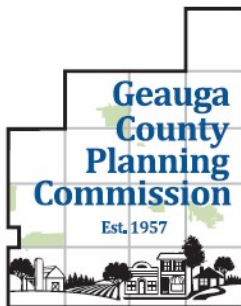
The staff participated in a meeting with various local zoning officials early in the year to suggest topics for the workshop and later assisted with the actual workshop itself by providing a projector, laptop, and ensuring speakers presentations remained on time. Portage County Regional Planning Commission hosted the event, which was held in Kent in June.

g. Age and Housing Data

The Census Bureau released age and housing data which the staff prepared various tables, charts, and maps for reference.

h. New Logo

After numerous years a new logo in various forms was created to highlight the rural and small-town atmosphere of the County as well as when the Planning Commission was established. It is used in all correspondence, including emails.



i. General Plan Annual Review

The General Plan was referenced 40 times in 2023 and the Commission was provided a list of the chapters referenced and the reason to demonstrate the use of the Plan.

j. Geauga Growth Partnership Collaboration

Preliminary discussions began with the Commission, staff, and members of Geauga Growth Partnership about collaborating to create a zoning video series geared toward helping businesses understand zoning.



k. County’s Loss Prevention Safety Team

The County’s Loss Prevention Safety Team began meeting in 2023 and held two meetings of which a staff member attended. The Team meets to ensure measures are in place for a safe and hazard-free workplace and works to provide resources on a variety of topics (fire safety, etc.) and trainings, such as CPR.

l. Senate Select Committee on Housing

The Senate Select Committee on Housing began meeting in August 2023 and held regional public hearings meant to gain input on barriers to housing affordability and potential solutions. Staff will continue to follow any legislation that may arise from these efforts.

m. Single-Family Housing Starts:

Housing starts in 2023 totaled 144, lower compared to 160 in 2022 and 189 in 2021. See the table below for data on current and previous single-family housing starts. The 2021-2023 three-year average is 164.

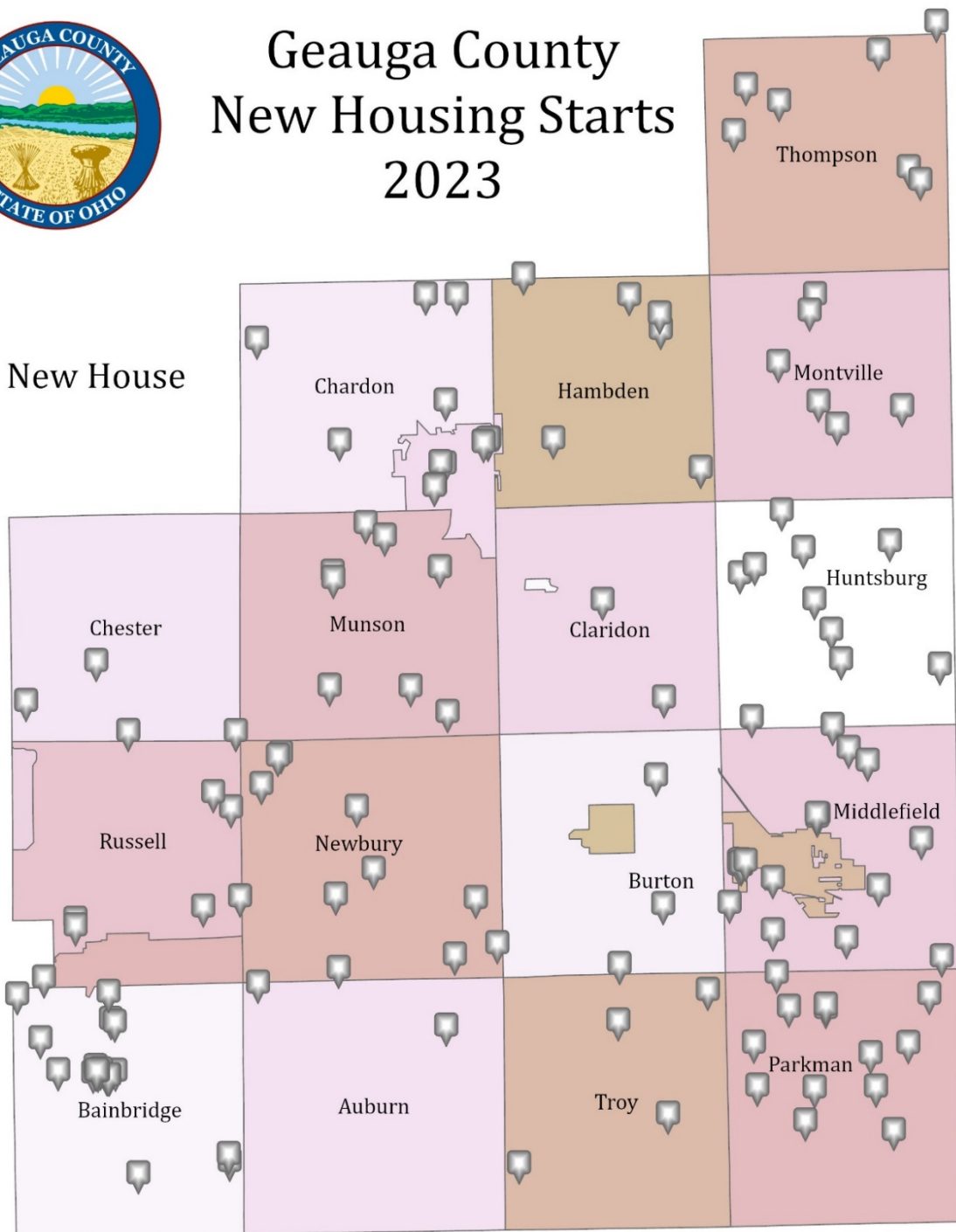
Geauga County New Single-Family Housing Starts								
2016-2023								
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Aquilla Village	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Auburn Twp.	18	10	11	10	10	18	17	3
Bainbridge Twp.	26	33	33	23	26	31	22	20
Burton Twp.	5	0	6	6	3	5	6	2
Burton Village	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
Chardon City	8	9	8	4	2	11	11	11
Chardon Twp.	6	8	1	8	6	5	5	5
Chester Twp.	5	5	8	12	6	9	9	2
Claridon Twp.	0	6	10	9	1	9	3	2
Hambden Twp.	11	13	6	9	7	13	11	6
Huntsburg Twp.	10	9	4	6	3	7	6	9
Middlefield Twp.	5	5	3	4	9	8	10	10
Middlefield Village	3	3	7	5	7	11	6	17
Montville Twp.	2	3	5	3	3	2	2	6
Munson Twp.	13	13	11	11	17	15	20	8
Newbury Twp.	3	12	6	8	5	10	14	9
Parkman Twp.	13	12	7	12	8	13	9	14
Russell Twp.	6	6	10	14	9	9	3	8
Thompson Twp.	2	5	5	5	5	6	2	7
Troy Twp.	4	2	4	4	4	6	4	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>144</b>
* Data not available for South Russell Village or Hunting Valley Village								

The map on Page 15 illustrates that new housing starts were, in general, spread out across the entire County. The top 3 townships were Bainbridge (20), Middlefield Village (17), and Parkman (14).

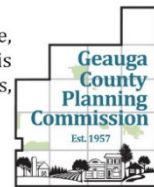


# Geauga County New Housing Starts 2023

 New House



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n. Commercial Construction Activity

Per the Commission’s request, the staff began providing a monthly summary of commercial construction activity. See the table below for the more significant projects, the data of which was taken from the monthly County Building Dept report. A map is provided on Page 17 for the general location.

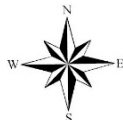
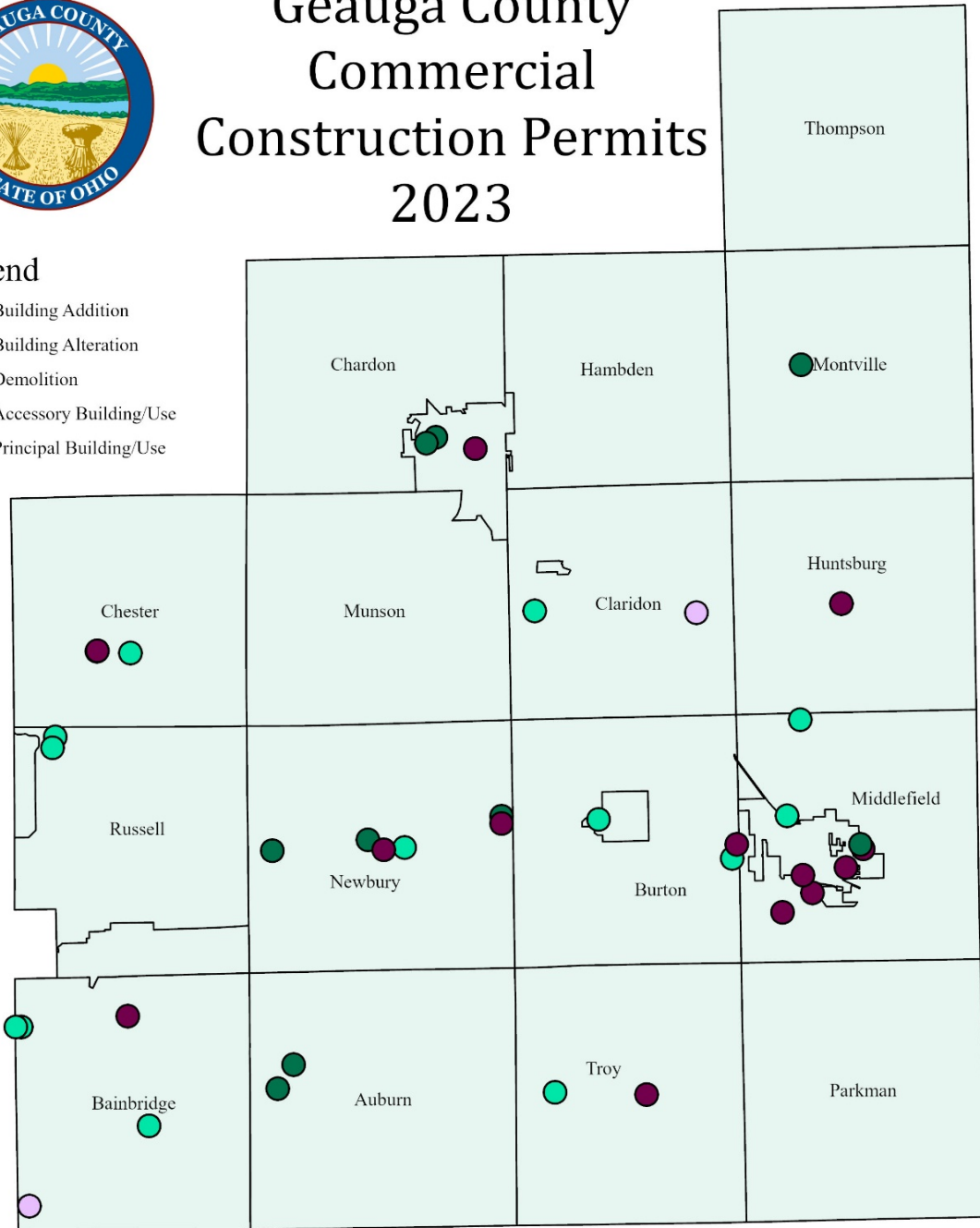
Construction Type	Owner or Business	Community	Square Feet
<b>Principal Building/Use</b>			
Auto body repair	Collins Land	Auburn	7,540
Bank services (Chase Bank)	Premier Forbes	City of Chardon	3,334
Alignment Shop	Preston	Burton	4,000
Retail (Pop Shelf)	Fund III Outlots LLC	City of Chardon	10,640
Retail (Dollar General)	9939 Kinsman Rd. LLC	Newbury	10,675
Veterinarian (Trinity Vet Hospital)	Robert Schwartz	Montville	10,074
Storage (Conrad's)	J. Carpenter	Middlefield	9,000
Industrial	RBJ Dev. LLC	Auburn	6,893
<b>Accessory Building/Use</b>			
Storage building	Tomsic Prop.	Newbury	11,976
Maintenance Building	Laurel School	Russell	Not listed
Pavilion	Laurel School	Russell	Not listed
Hollbrook Hollow Restrooms	Geauga Parks	Bainbridge	205
Hollbrook Hollow Shelter	Geauga Parks	Bainbridge	670
Warehouse	Miller Tech	Middlefield	11,460
Storage building	H&B Storage	Troy	6,000
Coffee/Donut shop (includes demolition)	J. Carpenter	Middlefield	3,025
Pavilion	Cornerstone Bible Church	Burton	1,536
Monument Sign	Empire Real Estate	Claridon	n/a
<b>Building Addition</b>			
Covered patio for bakery/coffee shop	Kilt, LLC	Chester	982
Warehouse use	Chem Technologies	Middlefield	Not listed
Fire Station use	Troy Township	Troy	Not listed
Retail space for Claridon Market Express	White Road LLC	Claridon	Not listed
Warehouse use	Trilube, LTD	Bainbridge	22,520
Fire station use	Newbury	Newbury	6,136
Retail sales	O'Reilly Equipment	Newbury	14,956
Warehouse for pallets	BTE Properties	Middlefield	Not listed
Church space	Huntsburg Hungarian Baptist	Huntsburg	Not listed
(Use not known)	Molten Metal Equipment	Middlefield	19,208
Covered Pavilion	Operties Inc.	Newbury	768
Pavilion	Lord of Life Church	Bainbridge	Not listed
Retail (grocery)	Southside Salvage	Middlefield	4,875
Emergency services	Middlefield Trustees	Middlefield	Not listed
Shell addition only (at Perrino Furniture building)	P&C Property Holdings LLC	Chester	9,000
Warehouse	15332 Old State Road Properties Inc	Middlefield Village	47,480
Fabrication and Warehouse	V&S Schuler Eng	Burton	67,415
Courthouse	County Commissioners	City of Chardon	30,757



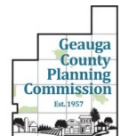
# Geauga County Commercial Construction Permits 2023

## Legend

- Building Addition
- Building Alteration
- Demolition
- Accessory Building/Use
- Principal Building/Use



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o. CEDS

In October the Commission sent another letter to the County Commissioners in regard to not participating in the CEDS (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy) nor the Climate Action Plan led by NOACA.

p. Legislative Updates: Several pieces of legislation either passed or remained in one of the House or Senate Committees:

1. Sub. HB 23 (Aggregate Mining, Effective 7-1-23)

Require zoning to provide for activities permitted under Chapter 1514 as a permitted or conditional use related to surface mining activities when added to an existing permit issued by 1514 (ODNR)

2. HB 33 (Operating Appropriations for 2024-2025, Effective 10-3-23)

Included grants for hazard mitigation, modified language in 519.12(H) to increase zoning referendum signature percentage from 8% to 15%; added Section 519.26 regarding res judicata; averaging of CAUV values over three years, expanded permitted uses for county credit cards

3. HB 64 (Eminent domain, introduced 2-21-23)

Remains in the House (Civil Justice Committee)

4. Am HB 86 (Marijuana, introduced 2-28-23 under liquor control and marijuana was added later)

Passed Senate on 12-6-23 but has not gone to the Governor. Per the Ohio Township Association, Issue 2 as written on the ballot is current law.

5. HB 197 (Community Solar Projects, introduced 6-6-23)

Allows for community solar projects (10 MW or 20 when located on distressed properties.) Remains in the House (Public Utilities Committee)

6. HB 211 (Public Comment, introduced 6-3-23)

Amend 121.22(F) requiring public bodies to permit members of public to comment on matters of public concern at meetings of that public body. Set reasonable methods to comment and restrictions including time limits. Remains in the House (State and Local Government Committee)

7. HB 257 (Virtual Meetings, introduced 8-22-23)

Allow certain public bodies to meet virtually and have their attendance and vote count. Remains in the Senate (Government Oversight Committee)

8. HB 315 (Township Omnibus, introduced 11/2/2023)

Contains eight provisions related to townships, some related to planning and



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zoning (notice requirements, zoning fees, and grant funding to regulations and processes tied to local zoning efforts). Remains in the House (State and Local Government Committee)

9. HB 341 (Revise Adult Use Marijuana, introduced 12-6-23)

Proposed revisions to marijuana use. Remains in the House (Finance Committee)

## **Part 7: Staff Related/Training**

Staff participated in thirty-two (32) educational webinars or meetings (up from 24 in 2022) as listed below, organized by general topic.

### **Planning and Zoning**

1) Northeast Ohio Planning and Zoning Workshop (June); 2) Four Geauga County Township Association meetings; 3) GEL Breakfast with Destination Geauga; 4) Overlay district; 5) Farm Bureau Beginning Farmers Tax Credit; 6) Geauga Growth Partnership's State of Geauga; 7) Noise resolutions; 8) Affordable Housing; 9) Ohio EPA Brownfield Funding Sources; 10) Signs; 11) GEL Breakfast with the Geauga County Farm Bureau

### **GIS**

1) ArcPro Basics; 2) Going Places with Spatial Analysis; 3) Solar eclipse webinar, 4) Women in GIS; 5) GIS Pro Conference; 6) four County GIS User Group meetings; 7) URISA census webinar

### **Employee Training**

1) CORSA's Defensive Driving, 2) CORSA EAP management training; 3) Cybersecurity training (in-person); 4) Cybersecurity training (online); 5) Ethics training; 6) CORSA personnel training; 7) Servant leadership

### **Miscellaneous**

1) Soil and Water Conservation District Annual Meeting; 2) State of Education; 3) Security walk-through of Planning/Economic Development, and Building; 4) Cross training with Auditor's Office on paying bills; 5) Storm water Task Force meeting; 6) Email management; 7) FEMA Recovery from Disaster: Local Community Roles.

## **Part 8: Fiscal**

The Planning Commission's 2023 budget was \$212,550.00 and \$208,162.92 was spent, an overall usage of 97.94%, compared to 95.9% in 2022.

In terms of revenues received through the collection of lot split and platting fees, the 2023 total of \$22,770.00 was the highest amount since 2020. The chart below provides the last six years of revenue. Fluctuations can largely be attributed to major subdivisions and replats, which have the highest review fees.

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Year	Total Revenues
2018	\$25,932.50
2019	\$7,950.00
2020	\$23,200.00
2021	\$19,800.00
2022	\$7,380.00
2023	\$22,770.00

## **Part 9: Conclusion**

The Planning Commission and its staff began interesting new endeavors this past year, including updating its Compensation Plan as well as assisting with the Claridon Township Land Use Plan Update. That project will continue into 2024 as well as completion of the County Subdivision Regulations update, ongoing review of the County Model Township Zoning Resolution, expansion of the Standard Operating Procedures, completion of the Guide To Updating A Township Land Use Plan, and production of more topics in the Info Sheet Series.