



# City of Fairfield State Route 4 Business Corridor Study

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## **Acknowledgments**

The Center for Public Management and Regional Affairs at Miami University engages in applied public policy and management research, technical assistance services, training and education, and database development in the areas of public management and capacity building, local government economic development, planning and public program evaluation and policy research. The Center provides assistance to local governments in southwestern Ohio and across the state.

Jennifer A. Patterson, Project Manager for the Center, conducted this study of the City of Fairfield's State Route 4 business corridor with assistance from Lori Libby, Senior Project Manager, and Charlotte Arbuckle, Graduate Assistant, using funds from the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Agency University Center grant program (Award No. 60-66-05054). The conclusions made in this report are those of the Center for Public Management and Regional Affairs staff.

## Executive Summary

The City of Fairfield, Ohio, is a city of approximately 43,000 residents that is located in Butler County, just north of Cincinnati.<sup>1</sup> In early 2006, the City of Fairfield formed a partnership with the Center for Public Management and Regional Affairs at Miami University (CPMRA) to accurately characterize the City's potentially stagnant State Route 4 business corridor and develop potential solutions to any identified challenges.

The CPMRA developed a three-phase market study model designed to better understand existing conditions on State Route 4, identify opportunities and constraints, and develop market-driven strategies. This report is a result of that study and analysis.

The State Route 4 business corridor currently has limited available growth opportunities as a result of relatively low undeveloped land resources and building vacancy rates, limited turnover, and an aging building inventory that has undergone few substantial renovations. The corridor has a predominance of retail-friendly structures; however, several non-retail industry clusters appear to be developing.

Analysis of local and regional demographics indicate that the City of Fairfield and the State Route 4 corridor are competitive within the region in terms of educational attainment, income, employment and housing costs. While there are some opportunities to improve these demographics, these problems appear to be less severe than those facing other local communities.

This combination of land and building challenges and regionally-competitive demographics makes the State Route 4 business corridor an ideal situation for a large-scale suburban business corridor growth and redevelopment effort. The limited readily-available research on comparable projects provides an opportunity for the City of Fairfield's State Route 4 efforts to become a leading example of comprehensive corridor redevelopment.

Based on the results of this market study, the CPMRA suggests that the City establish a partnership with local business leaders, create a vision for the future of Route 4, develop a plan and tools to achieve the vision, and consistently reevaluate these efforts to maximize efficiency.

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<sup>1</sup> "Living in Fairfield." 3 Nov 2006 <[www.fairfield-city.org/Living/](http://www.fairfield-city.org/Living/)>.

# Introduction

The City of Fairfield, Ohio, is a city of approximately 43,000 residents located in Butler County, just north of Cincinnati.<sup>2</sup> Within its 20.5 square miles<sup>3</sup>, Fairfield is home to over 1,200 businesses, some of which are the corporate headquarters of substantial regional companies such as Ohio Casualty Group, Skyline Chili, and Cincinnati Financial Corporation.<sup>4</sup> Eighty-two percent of the City's total land is developed.<sup>5</sup> Commercial and industrial development, including 12 major industrial parks, comprises slightly less than 22% of the developed land.<sup>6</sup>



*Map courtesy of  
City of Fairfield's website*

State Route 4, also known as Dixie Highway, is a multi-lane business corridor that connects with the City of Hamilton at its northern border and the City of Springdale at its southern border. The City of Springdale has recently undertaken efforts to improve the aesthetics and traffic flow of its section of State Route 4; the City of Hamilton's section of State Route 4 is generally perceived as a declining area.

In September 2005, the Center for Public Management and Regional Affairs (CPMRA) contacted the City of Fairfield following a local newspaper article about the prevalence of vacant storefronts throughout Fairfield<sup>7</sup> and offered to assist the City in further exploring this issue. At the same time, various local business and community leaders expressed concern that the Fairfield section of State Route 4 was struggling with building vacancies and becoming a nonviable business district. In early 2006, the CPMRA and the City of Fairfield formed a partnership for the purposes of a conducting a market study to accurately characterize the Fairfield State Route 4 business corridor and developing potential solutions to any identified challenges.

The CPMRA created a business corridor market study model and adapted it to meet the City's specific needs. The model divided the study into three phases with distinct results – understanding existing conditions, identifying opportunities and constraints, and developing market-driven strategies. The model facilitates responsibility-sharing over the course of the project. For this study, the CPMRA was responsible for the majority of the Phase 1 results. While the two groups shared responsibility for Phase 2, Phase 3 was primarily the responsibility of the City of Fairfield.

<sup>2</sup>“Living in Fairfield.” 3 Nov 2006 <[www.fairfield-city.org/Living/](http://www.fairfield-city.org/Living/)>.

<sup>3</sup>“About Fairfield: Geographic Figures.” 3 Nov 2006 <[www.fairfield-city.org/About/location.cfm](http://www.fairfield-city.org/About/location.cfm)>.

<sup>4</sup>“Living in Fairfield.” 3 Nov 2006 <[www.fairfield-city.org/Living/](http://www.fairfield-city.org/Living/)>.

<sup>5</sup>“About Fairfield: Land Use.” 3 Nov 2006 <[www.fairfield-city.org/About/landuse.cfm](http://www.fairfield-city.org/About/landuse.cfm)>.

<sup>6</sup>“About Fairfield: Land Use.” 3 Nov 2006 <[www.fairfield-city.org/About/landuse.cfm](http://www.fairfield-city.org/About/landuse.cfm)>.

<sup>7</sup>Pitman, Michael. “Fairfield Finding Ways to Address Vacant Storefronts.” *JournalNews* 14 Sep 2005.

## Phase 1: Understanding Existing Conditions

Phase 1, Understanding Existing Conditions, addressed the challenge of moving beyond the public perception of a “broken” business corridor and focused on the data-driven realities of State Route 4. Because a complete understanding of an area’s competitive marketplace and business community needs is necessary for local leaders to respond in a proactive manner, accurate and timely data collection was essential to the success of this phase. Since State Route 4 is constantly changing, the information gathered in this phase provides a “snapshot” of the corridor as it existed in April 2006.

The City of Fairfield and the CPMRA set the geographic parameters for this market study as *any building within the municipal boundaries of Fairfield that has frontage on or legal access from State Route 4*. Structures and land parcels falling within those parameters were included in the data collection.<sup>8</sup> Because of the length and business diversity of the corridor, it was divided into three sections at natural breaking points to give a more accurate characterization of State Route 4 (see page 15). The northern section included all properties from the northern corporate line through Nilles Road.<sup>9</sup> The middle section of State Route 4 started at Nilles Road and continued to Seward Road.<sup>10</sup> The southern section including the remaining length of State Route 4 by starting at Seward Road and continuing until the southern corporate line.<sup>11</sup> The data analysis periodically refers to these three sections to illustrate trends in State Route 4’s development.

The Phase 1 data collection process relied heavily on CPMRA staff site visits, City of Fairfield Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data, and internet research primarily conducted from the Butler County Auditor’s land records database. Collected data included physical address, parcel or building owner’s name and address, parcel number, number of stories and total square footage of buildings, type and cost of recent construction or renovation, property valuation, year built, total land acreage, type of commercial structure, year of most recent sale and sale price (if occurring within the last five years), current business name, and NAICS<sup>12</sup> code for the current use (if applicable). Land and building vacancies were also noted, along with the asking price, available square footage, and realtor contact information. The collected data was analyzed and the conclusions were presented to the Fairfield City Council in May 2006.

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<sup>8</sup> CPMRA staff exercised discretion when determining if a structure met these criteria. Residential buildings were excluded from this business corridor analysis.

<sup>9</sup> 3220 Dixie Highway – 5141 Dixie Highway

<sup>10</sup> 5161 Dixie Highway – 6735 Dixie Highway

<sup>11</sup> 6755 Dixie Highway – 7504 Dixie Highway

<sup>12</sup> NAICS codes are standardized North American Industry Classification Codes.

## Phase 1: Understanding Existing Conditions

The Phase 1 data collection and analysis results indicate that **State Route 4 currently has limited development opportunities as a result of relatively low land and building vacancy rates, limited opportunities for purchase of land or buildings due to the prevalence of closely-held property, an aging building population that has undergone few substantial renovations, a predominance of retail-friendly structures, and a wide variety of industries with an emphasis on several industry clusters.** Each of these conclusions and its supporting data is discussed below.

### **A. State Route 4 has limited development and relocation opportunities for incoming businesses as a result of relatively low land and building vacancy rates.**

State Route 4 has limited growth opportunities due to relatively low vacancy rates for both land and buildings. Over 530 acres of land were included in this study. Of that acreage, only 37 acres of land remain undeveloped. Some of this undeveloped acreage is very small or irregularly-shaped parcels. These parcels are usually held by the owner of an adjacent, developed parcel, and while they could be important for future redevelopment, their location, size, or shape are not currently particularly useful in attracting new buildings to State Route 4.

As a result of these irregular parcels, there are actually less than 37 acres of available undeveloped land on State Route 4. In fact, according to Multiple Listing Service (MLS) information and site visit data, there are currently only ten undeveloped sites for sale. The largest two sites, both located in the middle section of State Route 4 near Fairfield Pointe Apartments, are 13.6 acres and 6.459 acres in size. The asking price for these sites is \$1.5 million (\$110,294/acre) and \$819,000 (\$126,780/acre) respectively.<sup>13</sup> These two sites appear to be State Route 4's only readily available options large-scale development. The remaining undeveloped



*Vacant Land – Middle Section of Route 4*

<sup>13</sup> Asking prices for undeveloped land on Route 4 vary tremendously. Available land in the northern section, (next to Humongous Bill's Carpet Outlet) has an asking price of \$205,000/acre. Some land in the middle section of Route 4 (next to The Bird Shoppe) has an asking price upwards of \$300,000/acre.

available land parcels are typically approximately one acre in size and tend to be located in the southern section of State Route 4. The northern end of State Route 4 has very little available undeveloped land. *As a result of this low land vacancy rate, incoming business may be forced to consider using existing building inventory or redevelopment rather than building to suit.*

While available developable land is limited, finding a vacant building may also present a challenge for incoming or relocating businesses. State Route 4's storefront and building vacancy rate is 8%. There are few readily-available statistics regarding the overall vacancy rate of local business corridors with the diverse mix of manufacturing, retail, and office space that State Route 4 has. However, because State Route 4 is heavily retail-oriented, some local statistics provide a benchmark for limited comparison. Despite public perception that State Route 4 has an excessive number of vacancies, State Route 4's 8% vacancy rate is well within the range of local business vacancy rates.



*Space Available - Southern Section of Route 4  
(formerly Mio's Pizzeria)*

For example, Beechmont Avenue has a retail vacancy rate of 5.2%, and the Northgate area has a retail vacancy of 4.06%. However, the Tri-County/West Chester area has a retail vacancy of 10.25%, and the Forest Park area has a retail vacancy of 14.06%<sup>14</sup>. For suburban office buildings, the average national vacancy rate was 17.1% in the fourth quarter of 2005.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, the average national vacancy rate for central business district offices during the fourth quarter of 2005 was 15.6%.<sup>16</sup> Delhi Pike, the only local business corridor with an available overall vacancy rate, has a vacancy rate of 27.4%<sup>17</sup>, well above State Route 4's vacancy rate. *Thus, comparable business corridor studies indicate that State Route 4's vacancy rate is not unusually high nor unusually low for this region.*

<sup>14</sup> The Beechmont Avenue, Northgate area, Tri-County/West Chester area, and Forest Park area retail vacancy information is from the 2005 CB Richard Ellis study of Cincinnati's market.

<sup>15</sup> Property and Portfolio Research (PPR) data; compiled by Reed Construction Data (CanaData)

<sup>16</sup> Property and Portfolio Research (PPR) data; compiled by Reed Construction Data (CanaData)

<sup>17</sup> Delhi Pike statistics are courtesy of Anderson Township.

## Phase 1: Understanding Existing Conditions

### **B. Recent land and building sales analysis indicate a trend of closely-held property that results in limited opportunities for the purchase of land or buildings.**

In addition to low land and building vacancy rates that limit leasing and sale opportunities, these opportunities are also limited by the closely-held nature of property on State Route 4. From 2000 through Spring 2006, there were 115 land or building sales along State Route 4. However, 37% of those sales were actually transfers of ownership for \$0 or \$1. Most of these transfers appear to be estate planning changes or transfers from one version of a holding company to another. Thus, the actual number of land or building sales for profit is considerably less than originally indicated.

The middle section of State Route 4 (Nilles Road to Seward Road) represented the majority of the land/building sales and transfers (42% overall). Thirty-four percent of the land/building sales and transfers were in the northern section, and 24% were in the southern end.



*For Sale or Lease – Middle Section of Route 4*

Tracking the recent sale prices of the developed land and buildings in terms of cost per square foot proved to be difficult due to the low sale volume and variety of end uses. Some types of businesses, such as car dealerships, place a premium on the land size while other businesses, such as retail stores or office buildings, focus on the building's square footage. *Because this variety of end uses is difficult to measure through sale prices, the median cost per square foot of recent developed land and building purchases is not particularly descriptive of the State Route 4 building sales market. Recent undeveloped land purchases along State Route 4 were more predictable with a median sale price of \$6-\$7 per square foot.<sup>18</sup> However, current asking prices for available undeveloped land are much more varied than previous sale prices.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the State Route 4's building and land sales markets are difficult to predict.*

<sup>18</sup> \$261,360 - \$304,920 per acre

<sup>19</sup> See page 5 for information on current asking prices for undeveloped available land.



**COMMERCIAL LAND FOR SALE**

**5901 Dixie Highway, Fairfield, Ohio**

600 Feet of Frontage in the heart of the Route 4 Auto Mile



**A Premier Location on Fairfield's Commercial Highway**

Area Summary

Population:

One Mile ..... **11,288**  
Three Miles ..... **49,515**  
Five Miles ..... **131,729**

Access

- ◆ Less than 3 miles north of I-275
- ◆ Can become full intersection, curb cut will be opposite Production Drive. Service drives like those in front of Jeff Wyler's location will be required.

Near industry, commercial and residential:

- ◆ Convenient to jobs and homes this is a proven location for gas/convenience, automotive, food, marine, or lodging.
- ◆ New Jeff Wyler Nissan, Cadillac, Oldsmobile dealerships just north of site.
- ◆ New Performance Autoplex dealerships across Dixie Highway from Wyler.

Property Summary

Site:

- ◆ Approximately 6 acres available
- ◆ Shared Harvest Food Bank & related land is not included in sale. By relocating Shared Harvest access drive to center line of Production Drive this site will yield two viable lots of approximately 1-1/2 and 3-1/2 acres. Owner will not split.

Zoning:

- ◆ C-3A Commercial - Allows hotels, automotive, restaurants, drive through facilities, day care, etc.

Utilities:

- ◆ Public water, public sewer, gas, electric available.

**For further information contact:**

**John V. Griesmer - REALTOR**  
**RE/MAX Acclaimed—Commercial Division**  
**(513) 860-9027**

*This particular State Route 4 parcel has been for sale for at least 8 years.*

## Phase 1: Understanding Existing Conditions

### C. State Route 4 has an aging building inventory that has undergone few substantial renovations.

State Route 4's existing building inventory is extensive. There are 261 commercial structures included within the parameters of this study. Because some commercial structures, such as strip malls or office buildings, have more than one business site, there are actually 427 commercial locations. However, both the existing commercial structures and the commercial locations present maintenance, growth, and redevelopment challenges.

The majority, 55%, of the commercial structures on State Route 4 were built during the high-growth periods of the 1970s and 1980s (*Figure 1*). Development slowed considerably in the 1990s and again in the early part of the 2000s. While there is an overall majority of 30- and 40-year old buildings along the corridor, each section of State Route 4 has a distinct growth pattern (*Figure 2*). The northern section of State Route 4 experienced growth in the earliest part of corridor's development. Nearly one-fourth of the structures in the northern section of State Route 4 were built in the 1960s; in fact, 65% of the buildings in the northern section were built between 1960 and 1980. In contrast, while the southern section saw a substantial development increase in the 1980s, the middle section of State Route 4 has experienced the most recent building growth with nearly one-fourth of its buildings being built in the 1990s and 2000s.

State Route 4's aging building population presents opportunities for significant investment in renovation or demolition and redevelopment. Unfortunately, the city's records indicate a lack of substantial renovation projects (*Figure 3*). More than two-thirds, 67%, of the permits issued for projects on State Route 4 from 2000 – early 2006 were for change of occupancy permits, permanent signs, and promotional signs. Only 4% of the permits were issued for new building or additions. Exterior remodeling was also a rare occurrence – only 10% of the permits were issued

for exterior remodeling projects. *As a result of limited renovation and redevelopment, the State Route 4 business corridor continues to age while other parts of the region are developing new office buildings, warehouse parks, and retail centers.*



*Substantial Renovation –  
Northern Section of Route 4*

<sup>22</sup> The prevalence of car dealerships in the middle section is clearly reflected in its high number of retail single-occupancy structures.

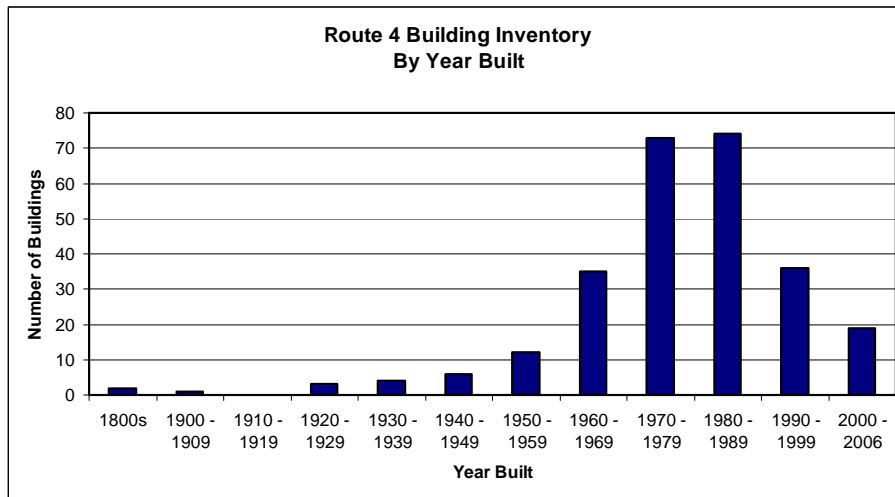


Figure 1

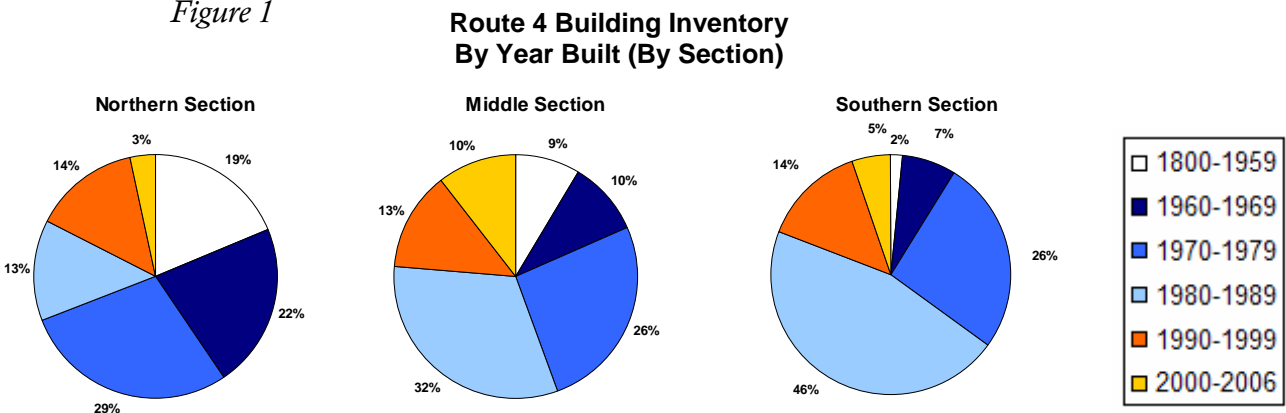


Figure 2

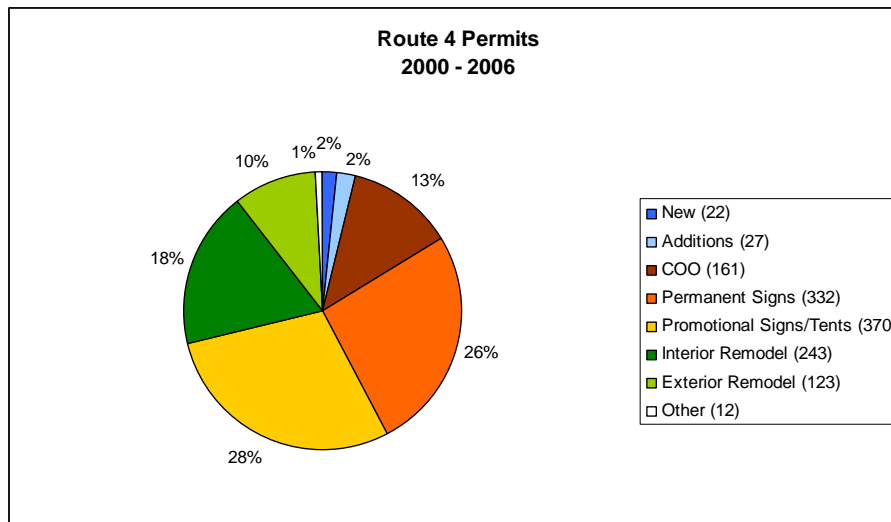


Figure 3

## Phase 1: Understanding Existing Conditions

### **D. State Route 4 has a high percentage of retail-friendly structures, and each section of State Route 4 has a distinct retail style.**

According to the Butler County Auditor's records, nearly 1/3 of State Route 4's 261 commercial structures are classified as retail-single-occupancy, retail-multi-occupancy, or strip-mall/neighborhood shopping center (*Figure 4*). These classifications are generally retail-friendly and may encourage retail-oriented businesses. As a result, the retail industry is a substantial component of the current Route 4 business environment and the prevalence of these structures affects future development.



*Retail multi-occupancy structure – Northern Section of Route 4 (Canines By Design plaza)*

However, as with other aspects of State Route 4, the overall prevalence of retail structures along the business corridor does not sufficiently characterize each section. Each section of State Route 4 has a distinct retail strength (*Figure 5*). The middle section's retail structures are mostly single-occupancy structures.<sup>22</sup> Multi-occupancy retail structures are well-represented in the northern end, which tends to have smaller storefronts (such as the Canines By Design building) rather than the larger strip malls (such as the Woodridge Plaza) that are better represented in the southern end. The retail structures at the southern end of State Route 4 are divided fairly equally between single occupancy and strip malls or neighborhood shopping centers.

Growth and redevelopment may be driven by the types of available structures and a business's willingness to invest in substantial renovation. For example, minor structural alterations may change the dynamic of a shopping area but would not be sufficient to turn a strip mall into a warehouse. *Thus, it is very important to identify appropriate growth and redevelopment goals for State Route 4 by asking if the community is committed to working with the structures that already exist or if a substantial redevelopment plan for a fundamental change in the corridor be a better approach to improving State Route 4.*



### State Route 4 Building Types

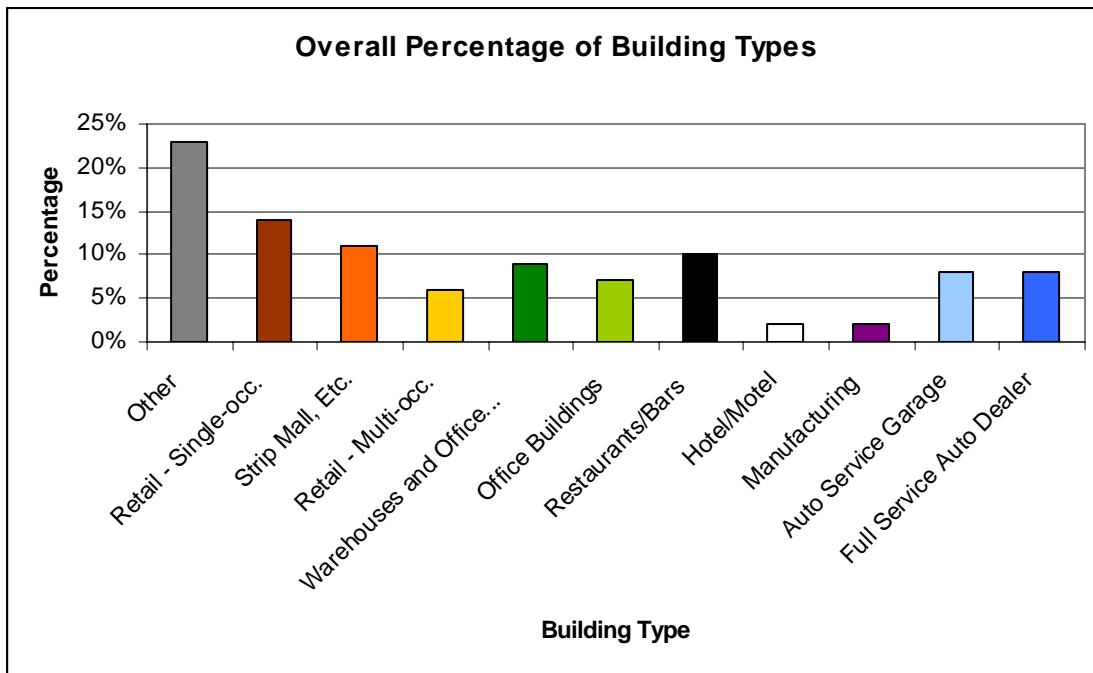


Figure 4

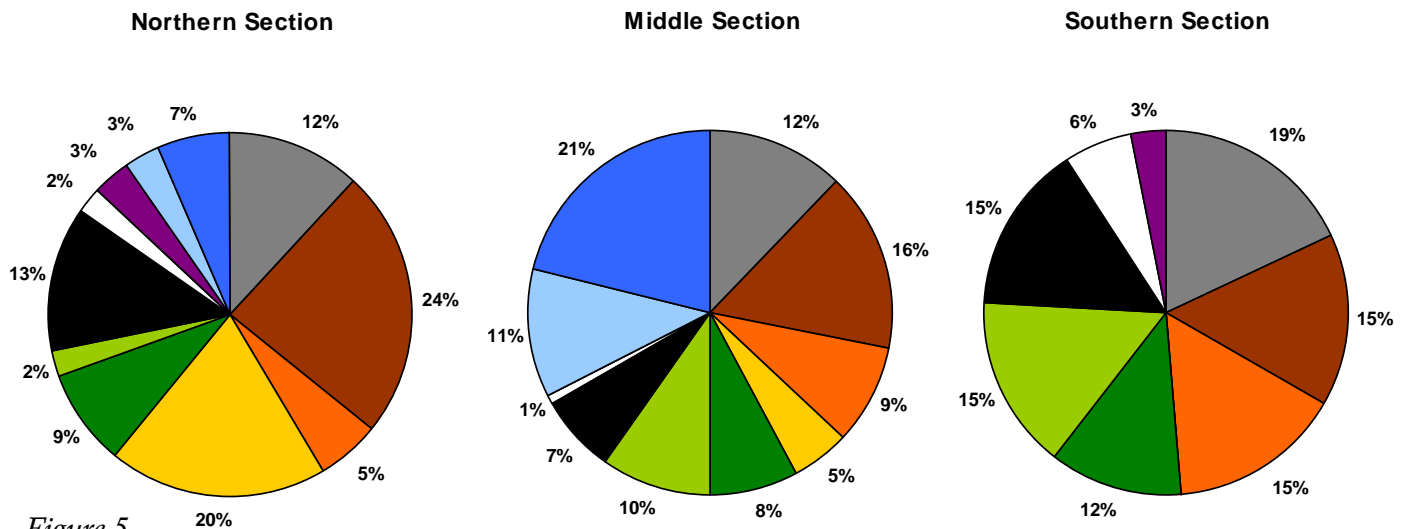


Figure 5

## Phase 1: Understanding Existing Conditions

### **E. There are several identifiable groups of related businesses on Route 4.**

While the types of available structures may influence a business corridor's development, the type of existing industries may also influence development. Clusters are geographic concentrations of competing and collaborating firms that tend to produce innovation and higher average wages.<sup>23</sup> Thus, focusing business recruitment and retention efforts on emerging clusters may enhance other economic development efforts. Although State Route 4 has a variety of businesses, six industries stand out as potential clusters (*Figure 6*). They are:

Auto sales – State Route 4 is known in the region for its high number of new and used car dealerships. These businesses tend to be located in the northern and middle sections of State Route 4 and complement the auto parts and service cluster.

Auto parts and service – Auto parts and service includes auto part supply stores, service garages, body shops, accessory retailers/installers such as Audio Connection, and gas stations. This cluster is represented throughout State Route 4.

Recreation – The recreation cluster may not be as easily recognizable as the other clusters are, but there are numerous recreation-related businesses on Route 4. The recreation cluster includes both service-oriented businesses (such as Fairfield Golf Center) and retail outlets (such as Play It Again Sports). This cluster is also located throughout State Route 4.

Home goods stores – Home goods stores is another industry cluster than may not be readily apparent when driving down State Route 4. Home goods stores can be found along the length of State Route 4, and they include Humongous Bill's Carpet Outlet, Hampton Custom Kitchens and Interiors, and MAB Paints.

Healthcare and elderly services – Relatively recent developments along State Route 4 have created a cluster of healthcare and elderly services businesses. This cluster includes various pharmacies, Tri-County Extended Care, and a new dialysis center.

Pet care – Pet care is a potential cluster given the destination-type pet care businesses on State Route 4. There are three veterinary hospitals, as well as several pet grooming facilities and specialty animal shops.

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<sup>23</sup> ICMA, "Cluster-based Economic Development." *IQ Report*. Volume 38, No. 1. 2006.

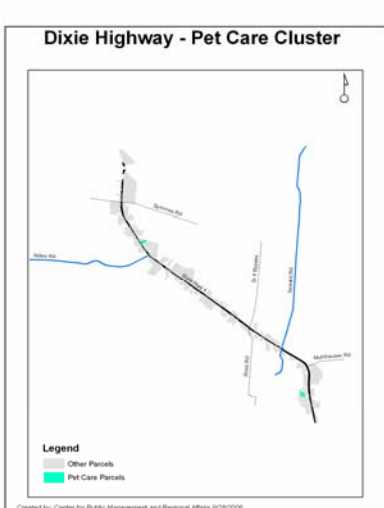
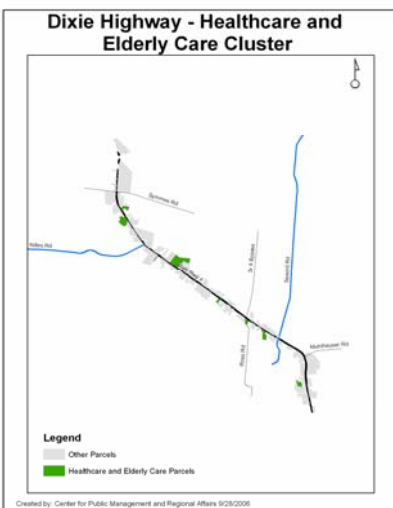
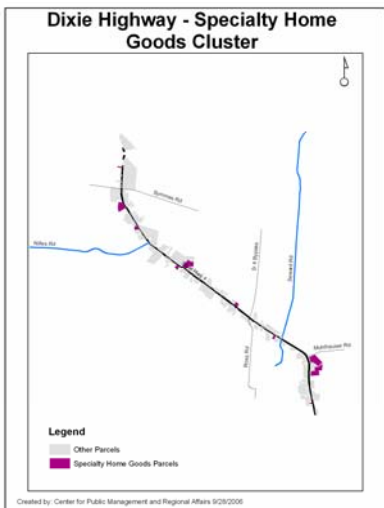
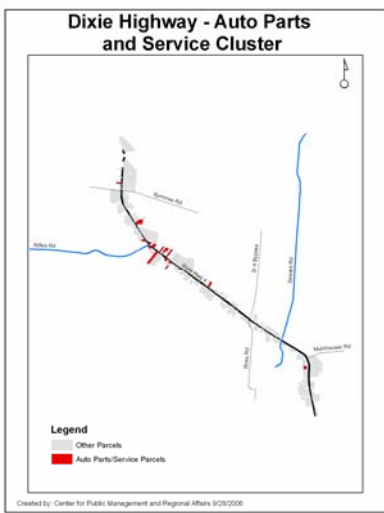


Figure 6

# State Route 4 Sections (Phase 1)

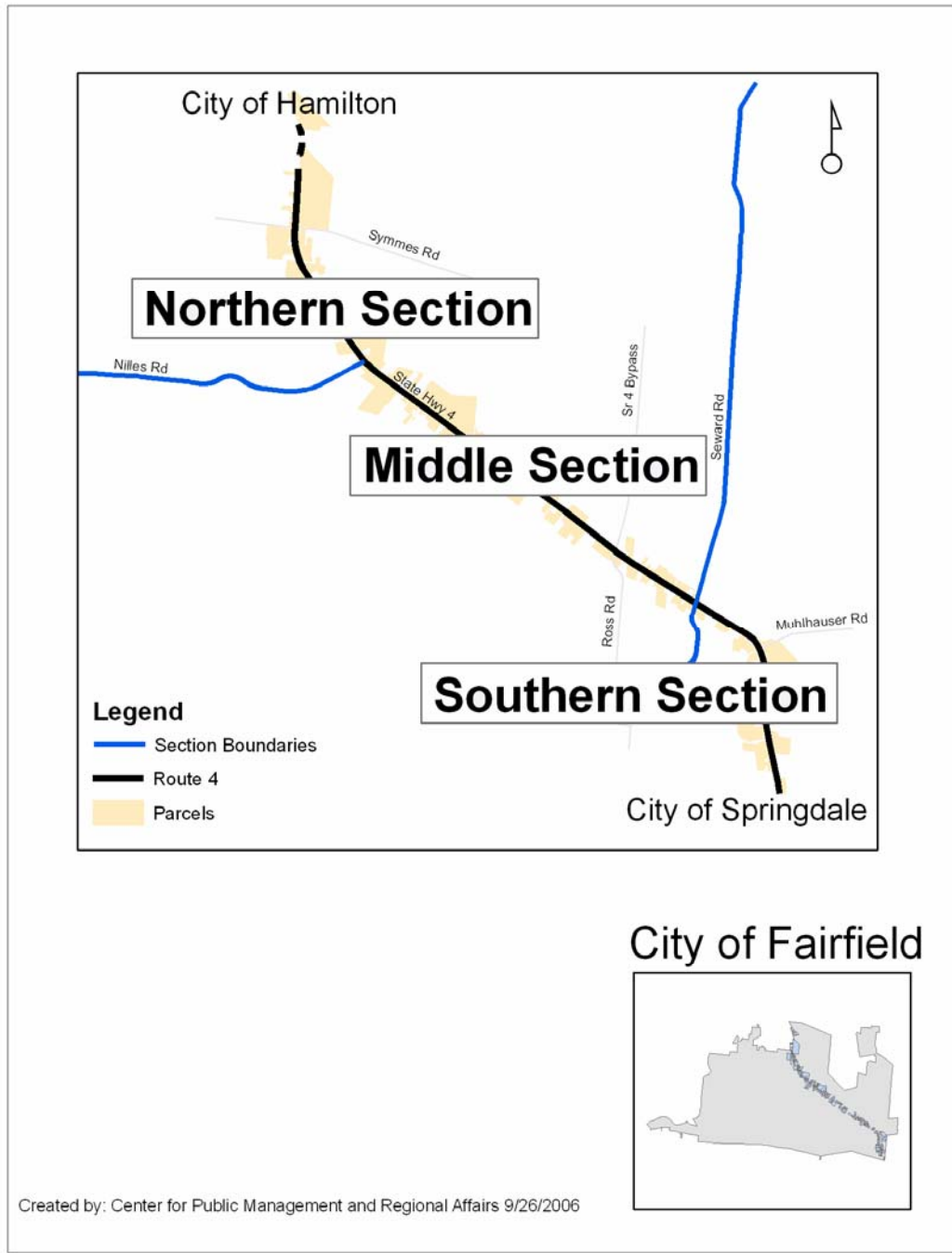


Figure 7

## State Route 4 Demographics (Phase 2)

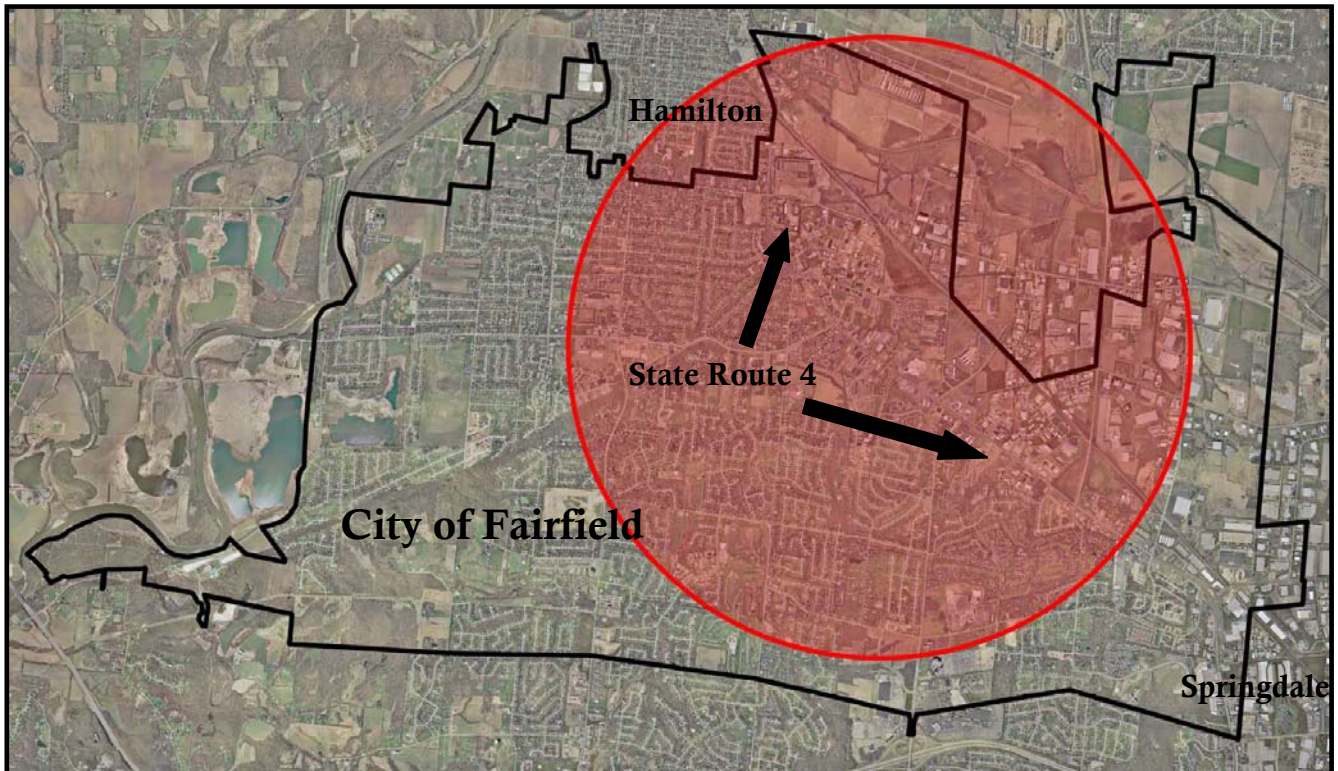


Figure 8



Indicates area included in demographic information from 2 mile radius around 5300 Dixie Highway (State Route 4) (See Phase 2)



City of Fairfield's corporate limits

## Phase 2: Identifying Opportunities and Constraints

Phase 2, Identifying Opportunities and Constraints, expanded upon Phase 1's data collection to further characterize State Route 4. Because demographics and lifestyles affect growth and development in a region, the CPMRA's Phase 2 responsibilities focused primarily on providing information on educational attainment, income levels, commuter patterns, employment, and housing in the vicinity of State Route 4.

The CPMRA also provided the city's administration with information on best practices for suburban redevelopment. These best practices may provide useful guidelines as the City develops a plan for the future of State Route 4.

### A. Demographic information

Demographics and lifestyle information was collected from a one, two, five, and fifteen mile radius around the approximate center of State Route 4 (5300 Dixie Highway).<sup>25</sup> While the one mile radius data provides a very narrow perspective on the demographics around the middle of State Route 4, it does not provide sufficient information about the northern and southern ends of State Route 4, which are nearly 6 miles apart. Thus, the two mile radius gives a better understanding of the corridor (see page 16). Because people and structures in the five mile radius are within a ten minute drive to State Route 4, the five mile radius information is also relevant to identifying State Route 4's opportunities and constraints and is included in the charts and analysis.<sup>26</sup>

Additionally, city-wide demographics were compared to the demographics of neighboring communities (City of Hamilton and City of Springdale) as well as city-identified potentially-competing areas (Colerain Township, West Chester Township, City of Forest Park, and Fairfield Township).<sup>27</sup>

Education: Educational attainment influences economic development in two ways. First, higher levels of education are often associated with increased income or earning potential, which increases local buying power. Second, potential employers may require a workforce that has achieved a certain level of education, such as a bachelor's degree or master's degree. The demographic data shows that the highest level of education attained by the majority of people age 25 or older living within a two and five mile radius of the center of State Route 4 was a high school education while only approximately one-third of the entire group has a college degree (Figure 9). *When the City of Fairfield's educational attainment is compared to that of local jurisdictions, the City of Fairfield is competitive with most of the surrounding areas (Figure 10).*

<sup>24</sup> Using GeoLytics software, which catalogs U.S. Census Bureau data from Census 2000

<sup>25</sup> Certain demographic information, such as labor pool statistics, cannot be accurately captured by a two or five mile radius. The data indicates radius size where appropriate.

<sup>26</sup> Using Census 2000 data from the U.S. Census Bureau

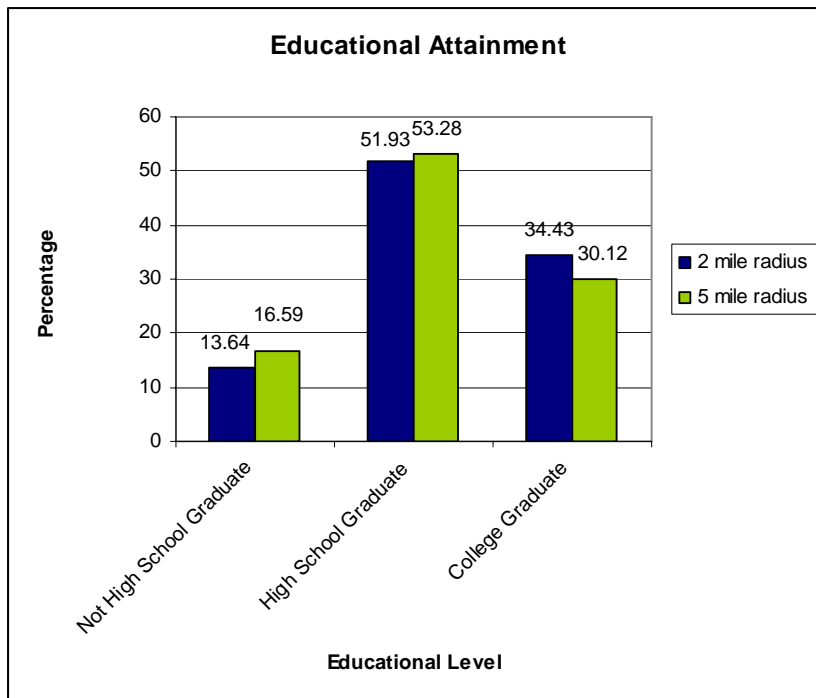


Figure 9

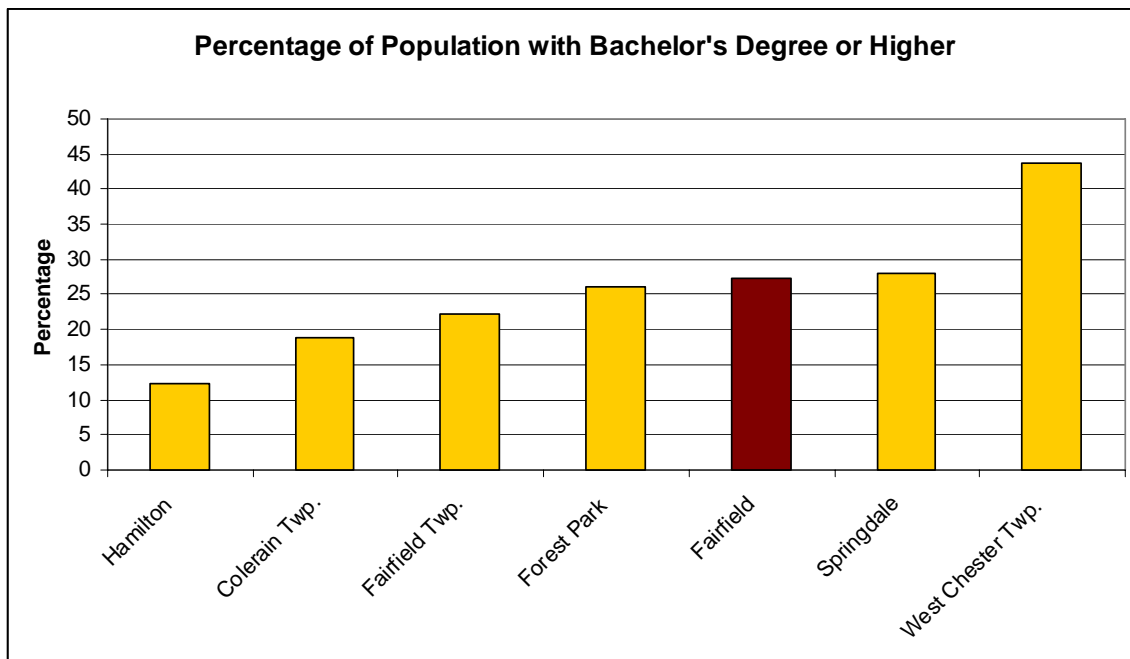


Figure 10

## Phase 2: Identifying Opportunities and Constraints

Income: Household income is a good indicator of spending power of residents<sup>27</sup> because it positively correlates with retail expenditures in many product categories.<sup>28</sup> Slightly more than 23% of the households within a two mile radius of 5300 Dixie Highway had a household income of less than \$30,000. If the radius is enlarged to five miles, that percentage increases to slightly more than 27%. While the five mile radius has a higher percentage of lower income households than the two mile radius, the two mile radius has a higher percentage of households with an income between \$30,000 and \$49,999 (29.15% compared to 25.5%). The percentage of households with incomes from \$50,000 to \$150,000 remains relatively consistent between the two mile radius and five mile radius. (Figure 11) This comparison indicates pockets of low household income within the five mile radius that may have systemic challenges that the City could address in order to increase income and thus increase consumer buying power for the State Route 4 corridor.

If the two mile radius and the overall City of Fairfield median household income and 1999 per capita income are compared to other communities, the area once again proves to be comparable with other areas (Figures 12 and 13).

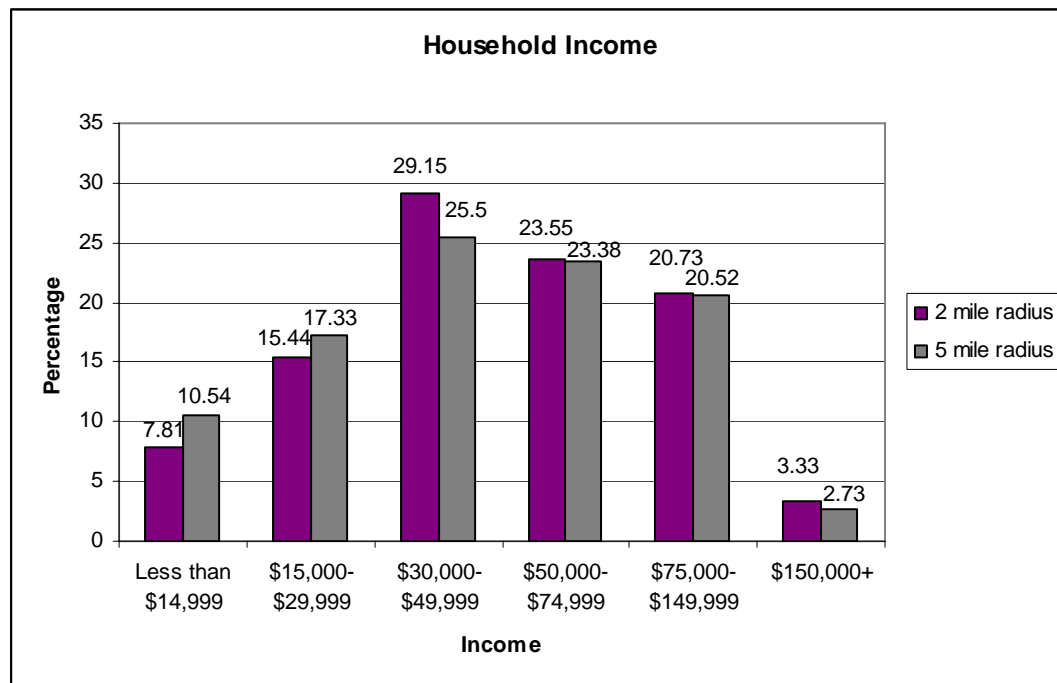


Figure 11

<sup>27</sup> "Downtown and Business District Market Analysis." Downtown and Business District Market Analysis – Using Market Data and Geographic Information Systems to Identify Economic Opportunities in Small Cities. 30 May 2006. University of Wisconsin Extension. 3 Nov 2006.

<<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cced/dma/index.html>>.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

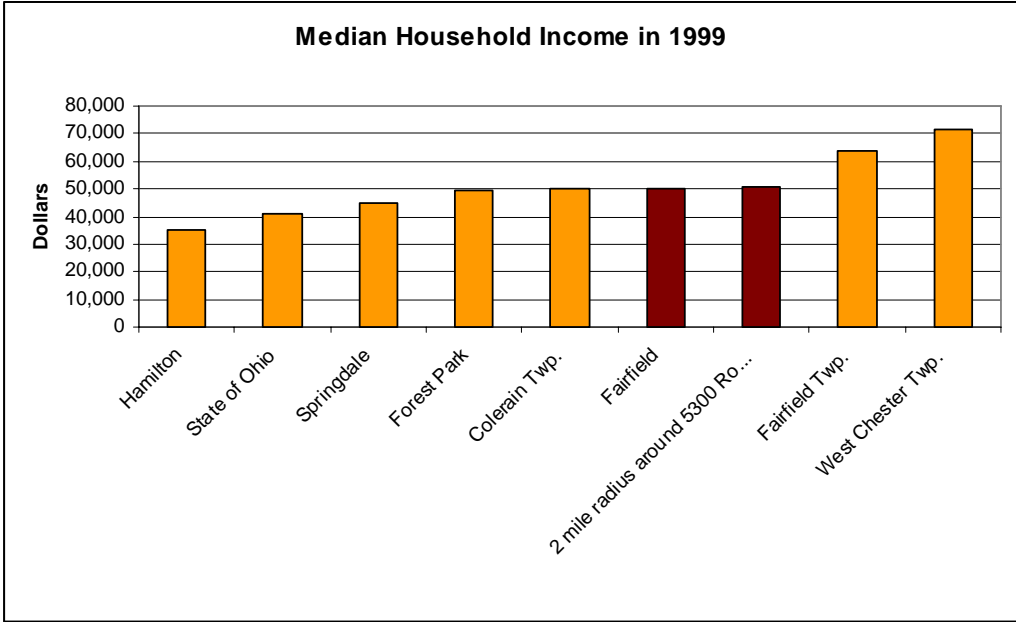


Figure 12

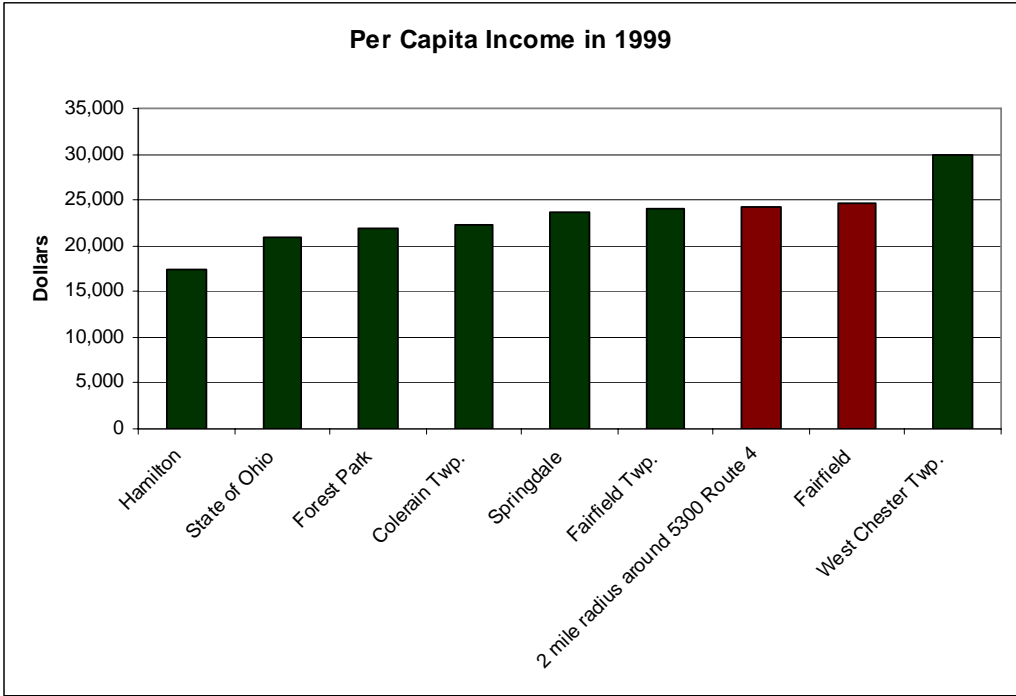


Figure 13

## Phase 2: Identifying Opportunities and Constraints

Workforce-specific demographics: Education and income are not the only factors that affect an area's opportunities and constraints. Workforce-specific demographics are an important consideration as well. Because the average commute time in Butler County is 23 minutes<sup>29</sup> and only 23.2% of Fairfield's working population also live in Fairfield<sup>30</sup>, a two or five mile radius does not accurately capture State Route 4's potential workforce. Thus, the workforce information includes a two, five, and fifteen mile radius.

At least 80% of the workers age 16 and over living within the two, five, and fifteen mile radii of State Route 4 drive alone to work. Particularly given the number of people working on State Route 4 or living in direct proximity to State Route 4, this tendency to drive alone could be a factor in the corridor's traffic congestion. The percentages of those carpooling and working from home in each data set are relatively consistent with each other (9-10% and 2-3%, respectively). Walking or bicycling and using public transportation increase substantially (*Figure 14*) as the radius increases. Slightly more than 4% of workers within a fifteen mile radius of State Route 4 use public transportation to commute to work (compared to 1.67% of workers within the two mile radius) while 2.32% of the same group walk or bike to work (compared to .63% of workers within the two mile radius). *Having a pedestrian- or bike-friendly design for State Route 4 and increasing the accessibility and utility of the current bus system could clearly benefit future development by facilitating workforce accessibility.*

Because the general workforce appears to be willing to commute for employment opportunities, future State Route 4 development should take into consideration the available workforce's skills and abilities. For people age 16+ that are in the workforce and live within a 15 mile radius of State Route 4, the manufacturing, retail trade, and healthcare (an identified potential cluster on State Route 4) industries have the highest percentage of workers. The financial, insurance and real estate industry and the professional, scientific, and technical industry are also strongly represented (*Figure 15*). *Businesses in these fields may find that an established workforce makes Fairfield and State Route 4 attractive sites for relocation.*

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<sup>29</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Fact Sheet for Butler County, Ohio

<sup>30</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, PHC-T-40 (Estimated Daytime Population and Employment-Residence Ratios: 2000)

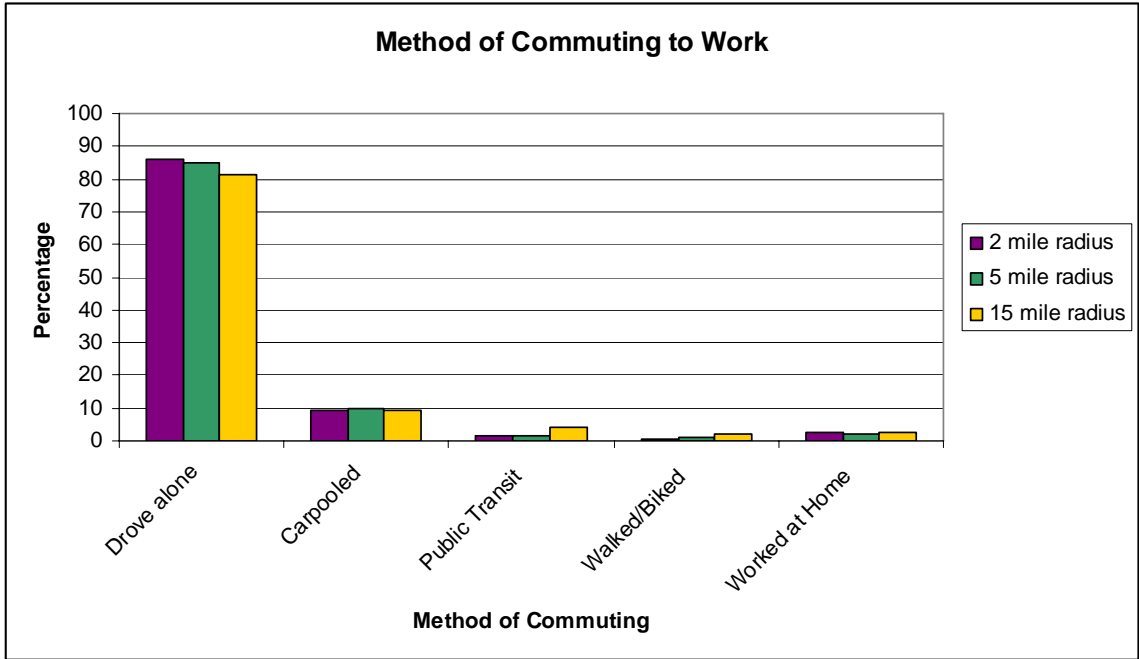


Figure 14

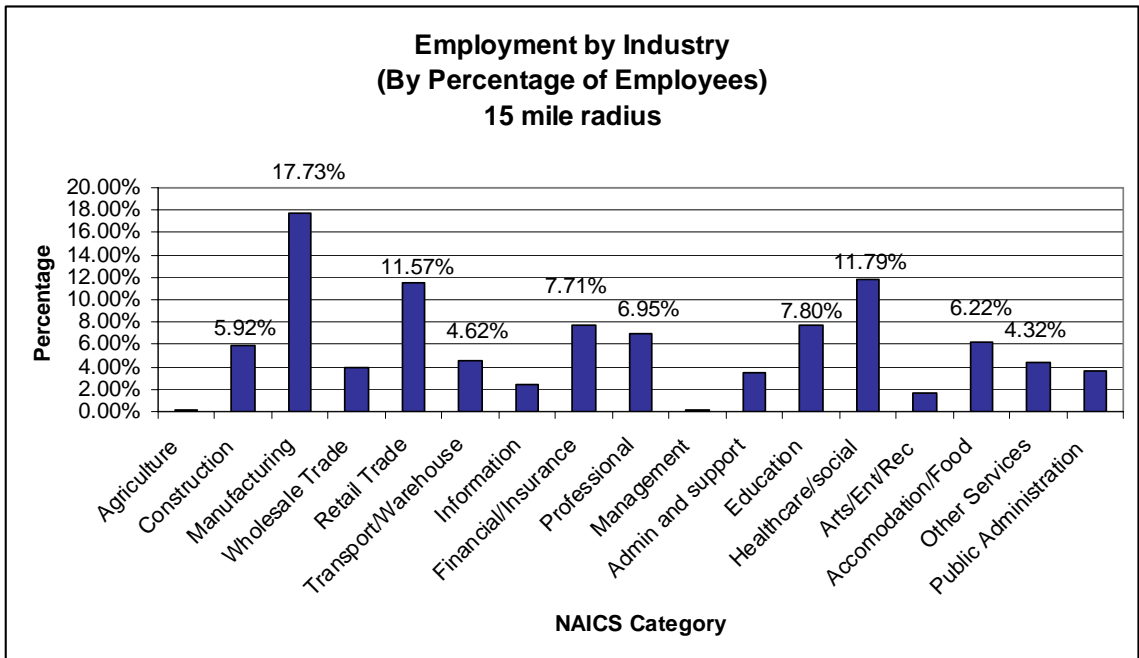


Figure 15

## Phase 2: Identifying Opportunities and Constraints

**Housing:** Home-ownership also affects a region's economic development. Home-ownership directly correlates with expenditures for home furnishings and home equipment,<sup>31</sup> which is an identified potential business cluster on State Route 4. The housing trends for the two mile radius and five mile radius are very similar. In each situation, owner-occupied housing accounts for slightly less than two thirds of the available housing, while renter-occupied housing accounts for slightly more than one third of the available housing. Vacant housing accounts for 4.19% of housing within the two mile radius and 4.98% of housing within the five mile radius. However, the respective costs of the rental and owner-occupied housing illustrate differences between the two mile and five mile radii.

The cost of available rental housing varies between the two mile and the five mile radii (*Figure 16*). A larger majority of contractual rent charges fall within the \$450 - \$649 range within the two mile radius than the five mile radius (58.95% compared to 43.5%). Likewise, the two mile radius has a slightly higher percentage of rents falling within the \$650 - \$799 range than the five mile radius does. The immediate market area surrounding State Route 4 appears to accept mid-level rent costs. The five mile radius showed a higher percentage of low-end rents than the two mile radius did (30.58% of rents were within \$1 - \$449 in the five mile radius compared to 10.99% in the two mile radius). Thus, low-end rents are more likely to be found further out from the center of Fairfield's section of State Route 4. *These low-end rent areas may provide opportunities for redevelopment or targeted assistance as a way to improve the demographic profile of the State Route 4 business corridor.*

The value of owner-occupied housing (*Figure 17*) follows a similar trend to that of the contractual rent charges as the median value of owner-occupied housing in the two mile radius was greater than the comparable value for the five mile radius (\$117,005 compared to \$107,932). Likewise, the two mile radius has a higher relative percentage of mid-level homes, while the five mile radius has a higher relative percentage of lower-level homes. *As with the rental housing market, while programs aimed at increasing property values could be applied throughout the two mile radius, the five mile radius area may provide more opportunities for substantial increases.*

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<sup>31</sup> "Downtown and Business District Market Analysis." Downtown and Business District Market Analysis - Using Market Data and Geographic Information Systems to Identify Economic Opportunities in Small Cities. 30 May 2006. University of Wisconsin Extension. 3 Nov 2006. <<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cced/dma/index.html>>.

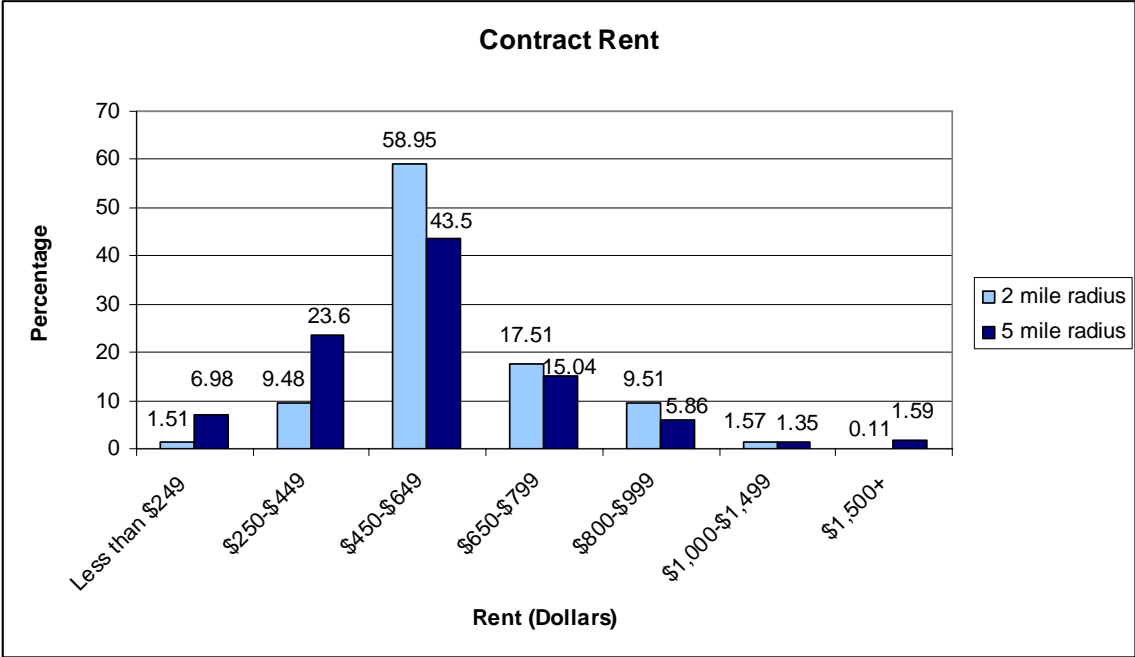


Figure 16

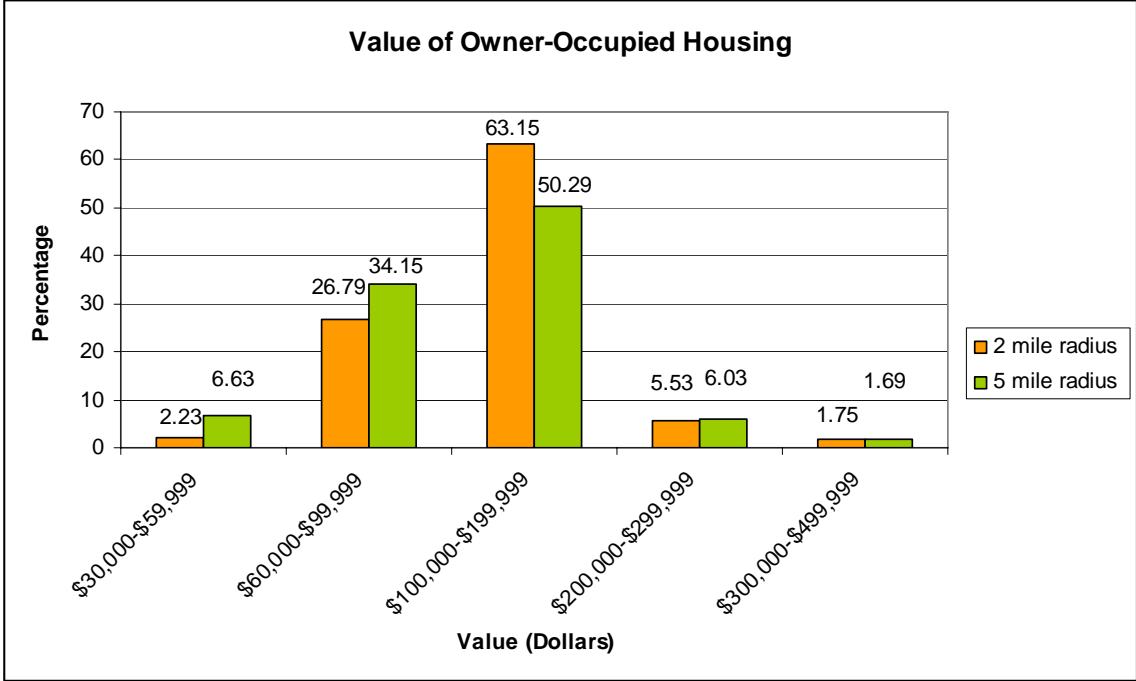


Figure 17

## Phase 2: Identifying Opportunities and Constraints

### B. Best Practices

There is limited research available on the best practices for suburban business corridor development that would be applicable to State Route 4. Most of the available research focuses on projects within a very confined area such as a Central Business District, strip mall development, intersection redevelopment, or brownfield revitalization project. There are few examples of large-scale comprehensive redevelopment projects that could benefit the entire corridor. The relevant redevelopment best practices research is consistent in its emphasis on fostering mixed-use development, using community visioning exercises, and creating a pedestrian-friendly environment. Two examples of this research are noted below:

From *Downtown Development: Key Trends & Practices*<sup>32</sup>

- Emphasis on multi-functional uses
- Enhancement of sense of place
  - o Pedestrian friendly, enhanced downtown space, improved aesthetics
- Development of a community vision
- Use of Private/Public partnerships
- Application of the Main Street Approach
  - o 4 elements: organization, aesthetics, promotion/marketing, economic restructuring/recruitment
- Attention to promotional activities
- Creation of new suburban downtowns


From *Ten Principles for Reinventing America's Suburban Business Districts*<sup>33</sup>

- Understand your position in the market
- Build community support
- Develop a vision and a plan
- Stress results over regulation
- Optimize connectivity
- Embrace mixed-use
- Be pedestrian-friendly
- Think transit – think density
- Creative public/private partnership
- Share and manage parking

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<sup>32</sup> Robertson, Kent. "Downtown Development: Key Trends & Practices ." Public Policy Research Center, University of Missouri - St. Louis, Public Policy Brief 8 June 2001 3 Nov 2006. <[http://www.cdtoolbox.net/mainstreet\\_downtown\\_revitalization/000213.html](http://www.cdtoolbox.net/mainstreet_downtown_revitalization/000213.html)>.

<sup>33</sup> Urban Land Institute, Ten Principles for Reinventing America's Suburban Business Districts. 2001.



Additionally, a relatively recent Planning Commissioner's Journal article addresses the issues associated with controlling strip development.<sup>34</sup> The article indicates that strip development is contrary to the basic elements of good planning: it consumes open space and depletes natural resources, impedes pedestrian and non-motorized traffic, grows outward from the limits of existing development and ruins any sense of place.<sup>35</sup> The article recommends using zoning to prevent future linear strips, adopting architectural standards, using plantings to soften the view, restricting signage, dealing with traffic congestion and pedestrian access, and considering a comprehensive ordinance for the corridor.

While not all of these best practices and policies may be feasible for the City of Fairfield to undertake, this information provides a balance of short-term and long-term programs that could be considered in planning State Route 4's future development and redevelopment.

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<sup>34</sup> Moldoff, Ross. "Controlling Strip Development." Planning Commissioner's Journal Winter 2004: 3-7.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

## Phase 3: Developing Market-Driven Strategies

Phase 3, Developing Market-Driven Strategies, is primarily the responsibility of the City of Fairfield's administration with assistance from the CPMRA. Using the data and analysis from Phases 1 and 2, Phase 3's goal is to provide a roadmap for State Route 4's future development. The City of Fairfield is currently working with a committee of State Route 4 business leaders and the Fairfield Chamber of Commerce. The challenge for this committee is to identify projects and policies for future development and redevelopment.

Based upon the data and analysis from Phases 1 and 2, the CPMRA recommends that the City of Fairfield take the following steps to improve the State Route 4 business corridor as part of Phase 3's efforts:

1. Create a public/private partnership with an emphasis on collaboration and joint responsibility for the future of State Route 4. Engaging the private sector is a long-term effort to spur permanent revitalization.<sup>36</sup> Finding the right balance between interests of property owners and interests of the community is both a political and a practical challenge.<sup>37</sup>
2. Structure an inclusive visioning process and consider the successes and failures of similar corridors to develop an overall goal for State Route 4.
3. Develop an objective plan for achieving the vision; the plan should include discreet phases and goals that allow for adjustment as necessary. The plan should also contain measurable and attainable criteria that can be used to evaluate success and efficiency.
4. Develop both public and private programs as tools for implementing the State Route 4 plan. These programs should consider alternative funding sources, such as state or federal grants, state economic development funding mechanisms, and capital investment programs.
5. Reevaluate the plan and tools consistently to maximize effectiveness. Using the results of the evaluation, adjust the State Route 4 vision, tools, and plan as necessary.

In order to assist the city in developing these strategies and programs, the CPMRA has agreed to provide additional data analysis, conduct presentations and workshops, and assist the city in the post-implementation evaluation of any programs or policies enacted as a result of this business corridor market study.

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<sup>36</sup> Vacant Properties Revitalization Strategies. ICMA IQ Report 34 (2002).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

## State Route 4 – April 2006



*Substantial renovation of an industrial park*



*Space available in multi-storefront structure*



*Substantial development at the Jungle Jim's complex*



*New store using a portion of a former grocery store*

# Appendix: Market Study Model

## APPROACH TO STATE ROUTE 4/DIXIE HIGHWAY PROPERTY & MARKET ANALYSIS *CITY OF FAIRFIELD*

### **PURPOSE:**

The Center for Public Management and Regional Affairs (Miami University) will assist the City of Fairfield in conducting a thorough analysis of the State Route 4/Dixie Highway corridor from the Springdale city limit to the Hamilton city limit. This approach recommends an analysis of the existing situation (with some recent historical data), identification of opportunities and constraints (by sector), and development of market-driven strategies (based upon existing market trends).

### **PROJECT TEAM/PARTNERS:**

The roles and responsibilities of the various partners is expected to vary through out the process of this study; the extent of the participation of each party will be determined by the project team. Generally, the CPMRA will perform the data collection phase; information will be collected from multiple sources, including city permits, county tax records, city geographic information systems (GIS), market data, and Center staff activities. The analysis and resulting conclusions will be the responsibility of the entire project team. If necessary, the project team may seek outside assistance from relevant professionals to provide feedback regarding the analysis. The recommendations and/or suggested strategies will be the ultimate responsibility of appointed staff and elected officials of the City of Fairfield.

The Center for Public Management and Regional Affairs will provide the services of one Senior Project Manager (Lori B. Libby), one Project Manager (Jennifer A. Patterson), and one graduate-level student (Charlotte Arbuckle) through a grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce - Economic Development Administration - University Center program.

The City will be responsible for securing workspace for the Center staff, production of reports, mileage reimbursement, and the purchase of data/market materials or specialized expertise deemed necessary or helpful by the Center and the City which are not expected to exceed \$5,000.

The City of Fairfield will provide project guidance from the Development Services Director (Tim Bachman) and Economic Development Manager (Greg Kathman), and data support from various city departments, such as Information Technology/GIS and Building & Zoning.

The Mayor, Council, and Manager of Fairfield will be kept current with the status of the project through City staff updates.

Other potential stakeholders may be included in this process, such as the Chamber of Commerce, Board of Realtors, and local business leaders and consumers.



## MARKET STUDY

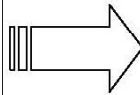
### Fairfield - State Route 4

#### The PROCESS

#### The OUTCOMES

##### 1) Understand Existing Conditions

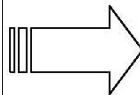
- Inventory, Total Square Footage
- Breakdown of Uses (by sector)
- Vacancy/Turnover Rates
- Lease Rates/Sales Prices
- Property Valuations/Trends
- Building Permits, Conversions



- Enables Better Understanding of Local Competitive Marketplace;
- Contributes to Understanding of Business Community Needs;
- Enables Local Leaders to Respond in a Pro-Active Manner.

##### 2) Identify Opportunities & Constraints

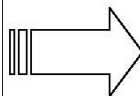
- Customer Demographics & Lifestyles
- Business Operator Needs
- Consumer Attitudes
- Under-Developed/Under-Utilized



- Contributes to Understanding of Consumer Demands;
- Provides Ability to Compare with Other Similar/Regional Markets/Locations;
- Provides Ability to Make Conclusions that are Relevant.

##### 3) Develop Market-Driven Strategies

- Niche Markets
- Industry Clusters
- Retention, Recruitment, Expansion



- Strategies are the Result of Market Analysis;
- Based on Historical Trends and Market Realities;
- Provides a Roadmap for Future Development Efforts.



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