

2.1 HISTORY

The evolution of the Mentor we see today began in the early 18th century as part of the Western Reserve. The Western Reserve was a western colony of Connecticut which lay just west of Pennsylvania and east of present day Sandusky. The land was purchased by the Connecticut Land Company in 1795 and divided into tracts five mile square. The land that became Mentor was one of those square tracts. Land was sold in smaller parcels along an old Indian trail which was the main route for the early residents. This trail is now known as Mentor Avenue.

When local government was established, the Mentor area was originally part of Painesville Township. However, by 1895 the increased population warranted the creation of a separate township which was named Mentor Township. In 1840 Mentor Township became part of Lake County when the State of Ohio created the County from portions of Geauga and Trumbull Counties. In 1855 approximately 3,000 acres in the center of the Township was incorporated into Mentor Village. The Township and Village continued in essentially the same configuration until 1924 when the Village of Mentor-on-the-Lake was incorporated out of the northwest corner of the township.

During the mid-1800's, Mentor began to develop into a thriving community. Wealthy Clevelanders were establishing country homes throughout the area. In the 1850's the old Cleveland, Painesville, and Ashtabula Railroad, now Conrail, was built spurring economic development and making Mentor the home of shipping and insurance companies. In the late 1890's the interurban street car line was extended along Mentor Avenue which was known at the time as the Cleveland-Buffalo Road. The street cars allowed Mentorites to live in the "suburb" and hold a job in Painesville or Cleveland.

Mentor's proximity to Cleveland and the Lake Erie shore made it a focus for resort and recreation development. The first resort hotel, Little Mountain House, was established in 1831 and remained popular until the turn of the century. Beginning in the 1870's Mentor experienced the development of private beach clubs. Property was subdivided into small lots on which private cottages were built. Many of the existing subdivisions adjacent to the Lake were influenced by this pattern of development.

Development continued at a gradual rate throughout this entire period. The 1920's were marked by speculative subdividing, however, consuming only a small percentage of land. After the Second World War a primarily rural Mentor experienced substantial residential and commercial development. The completion of State Route 2 in 1962 provided further stimulus for development.

The rapid development in Mentor Township and Village during the 1940's and 50's created the impetus for more local control. In 1953 a combined Village and Rural Board of Education separated from county jurisdiction and established the Mentor Exempted Village School District. At the same time, the Mentor Village Council instituted a Council-Manager form of government. Work began toward consolidation of Mentor Township and Mentor Village. In 1962 the people of Mentor Township voted to annex to the Village. Mentor Village accepted annexation on November 19, 1962. The following year on December 18, 1963 the Township and Village officially joined to become the City of Mentor.

During the 1960's Mentor flourished. Extensive commercial development occurred along Mentor Avenue and the first phases of the Great Lakes Mall were constructed. Residential development continued particularly in areas where sanitary sewers were available. The Tyler Blvd. industrial corridor, which was established between the railroad tracks and State Route 2, began to blossom and continued through the 1990's. Industrial and manufacturing development migrated east along Tyler Boulevard, to Heisley Road, through the 1990's and 2000's. Commercial development continues today along Mentor Avenue and the Heisley Road, area in the extreme eastern portion on the corridor. In 1997, the City purchased, and now operates, the 380-acre Mentor Lagoons Marina & Preserve and acquired 14 acres to expand Garfield Park.

In 2003, the city celebrated the opening of the SR 615 (Center Street) / I-90 interchange. This provided direct freeway access to the 400 acre Newell Creek mixed use development in the northeast quadrant of the interchange. This development represents one of the few remaining large vacant and developing tracts of property within the City's border. In 2005, the City continued to preserve valuable greenspace with the acquisition of the Morton Salt Property and Blackbrook Golf Course. The 18-hole course is located on Lakeshore Blvd. in the northern section of the City,

2.2 GEOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

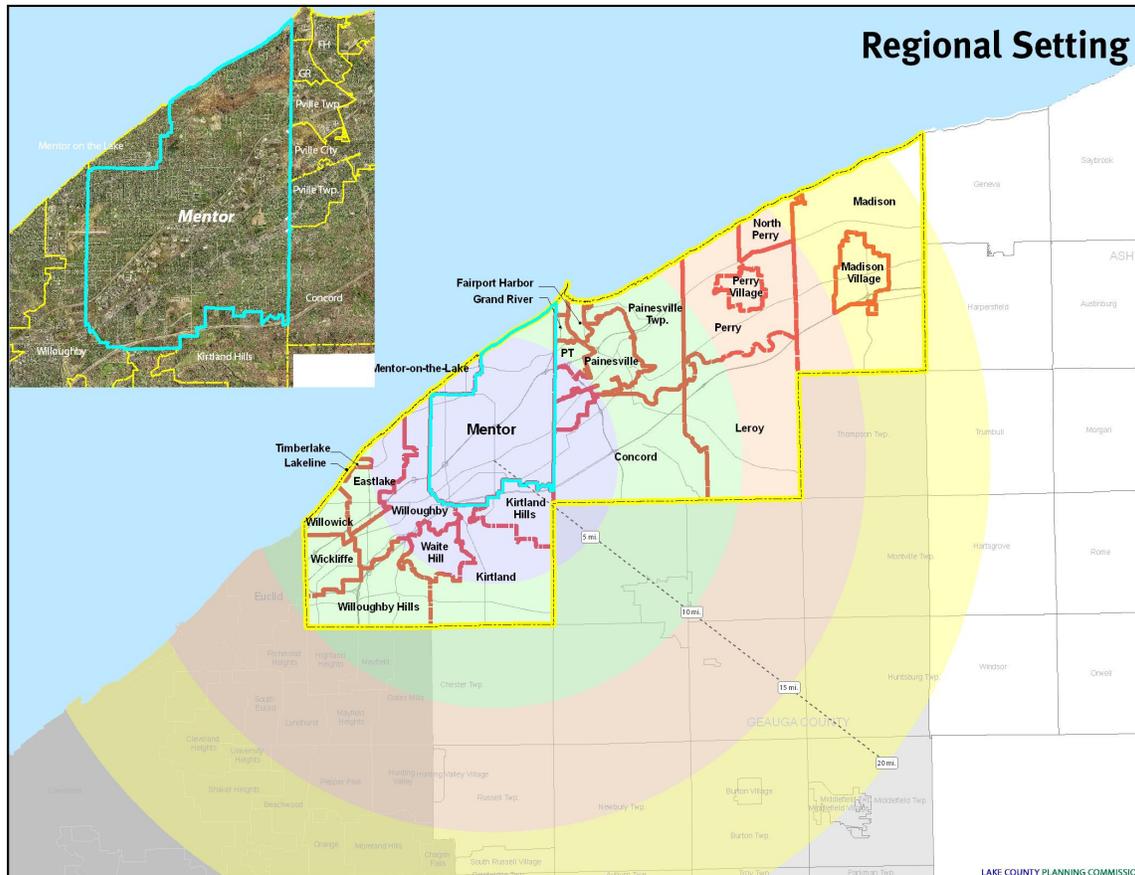
Mentor is a 28.4 square mile city located on the shore of Lake Erie in the central portion of Lake County. Mentor is considered part of the Cleveland-Lorain-Elyria Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area (PMSA), Cleveland-Elyria-Mentor Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) and Cleveland-Akron-Elyria Combined Statistical Area (CSA) by the US Census Bureau. In 2008, Mentor had a population of approximately 51,825 (Ohio Department of Development).

Mentor's northern landscape geography is notably characterized by unique features such as Lake Erie, Mentor Lagoons, Headlands Beach State Park and the nationally recognized Mentor Marsh. The central and southern portions of the City are predominately built out with the exception of neighborhood parks and a few remaining undeveloped parcels.

Interstate 90, US 20 (Mentor Avenue), and State Routes 2 (Lakeland Freeway), 84 (Johnnycake Ridge Rd.) and 283 (Lakeshore Blvd.) are the primary east-west transportation thoroughfares. State Routes 44, 615 (Center St.), 306 (Reynolds Rd.) and Heisley Road provide direct north-south vehicular access.

A 20 mile radius around the Center Street/Mentor Avenue intersection encompasses the densely populated (both people and businesses) I-271 and SR 2 (Lakeland Freeway) corridors and the central business district of Cleveland making Mentor an attractive location for work and living (Map 2.1).

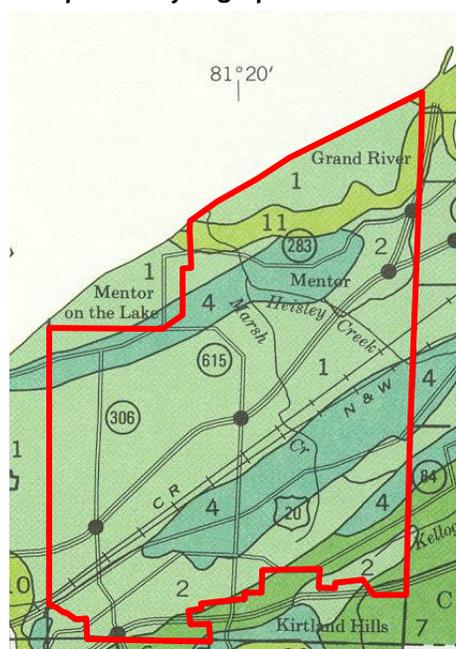
Map 2.1: Regional Location



Mentor is in the Lake Plain physiographic region of Ohio. The greatest geological influence on the area is the former post-glacial Lake Erie. This area was highly glaciated during the last ice age and has resulted in a relatively flat topographical profile (1.0% slope from south to north) characterized by four basic soil types (Map 2.2):

1. Conneaut-Painesville: nearly level and gently sloping, poorly drained soils that formed in silty glacial till or loamy material over silty glacial till, on the lake plain. *(Shown as 1 on map)*
2. Red Hook: Nearly level, somewhat poorly drained soils that formed in loamy outwash deposits underlain by stratified material; on lake plain and offshore bars. *(Shown as 2 on map)*
3. Tyner-Otisville: Nearly level to sloping, well drained and excessively well drained soils that formed in water-sorted sediment; most on beach ridges *(Shown as 4 on map...Mentor Ave., Johnnycake and Lakeshore Blvd.)*
4. Carlise: Level, poorly drained soils that formed in accumulated organic material; in marshes. *(Shown as 11 on map. This is the Mentor Marsh area which was the post glacial drainage channel of the Grand River)*

Map 2.2: Physiographic Profile



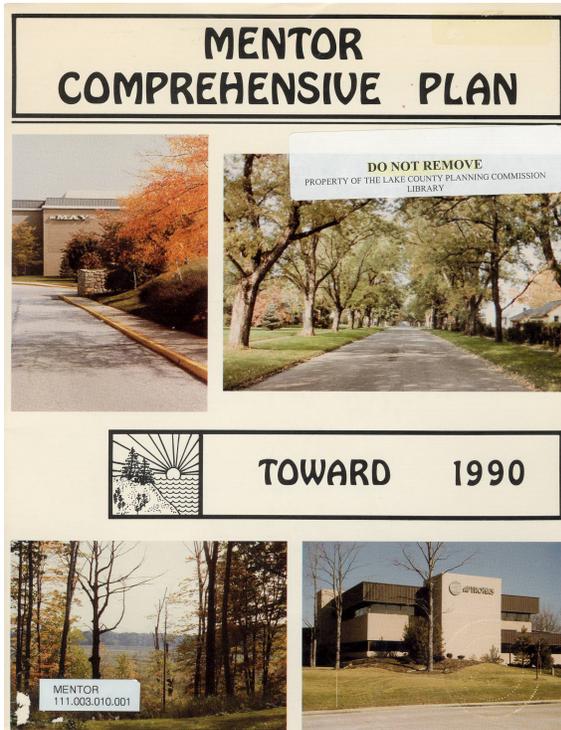
The elevation ranges from 890' in the southeast to 572' above sea level along the Lake Erie shoreline. Mentor Ave. (US 20) and Johnnycake Ridge Rd. are located on beach ridges left by the last prehistoric lakes.

The northern boundary of the City at about 572 feet above sea level, is defined by one of the City's greatest resources, Lake Erie. Its positive features include serving as a backdrop to the community, giving the City a distinctive identity that similar inland communities lack, providing recreational opportunities to residents, and providing potable water. Lake Erie is a young, living body of water, and constantly in a state of flux. Until recently, water levels have been above normal, accelerating the rate of erosion along the coastal bluffs fronting Lake Erie in the region.

2.3 PREVIOUS PLANS

By the mid-1960's the newly created city realized a guide was needed for the continued development of Mentor. In 1967, a Comprehensive Development Plan for the City of Mentor was produced. On April 2, 1968 the plan was officially adopted by Mentor City Council.

The Comprehensive Development Plan guided the development in Mentor for almost 15 years. During the years following the adoption of the Comprehensive Development Plan, the city realized that periodic review of the plan was necessary. In 1973 a Comprehensive Plan Review Committee was established to examine and recommend changes to the Comprehensive Plan adopted in 1967. The Committee suggested 24 changes to the plan primarily dealing with land use. The Committee felt that these changes would upgrade and update the plan to guide the City for the next five years.



As the City continued to develop and change during the late 1970's it once again became evident that a review and update of the Comprehensive Development Plan was necessary. It had been almost 15 years since the adoption of the original plan. It was time to review the basic premise on which the original plan was based and determine whether the city was still on the course it originally set or whether that course ought to be adjusted to reflect changing circumstances.

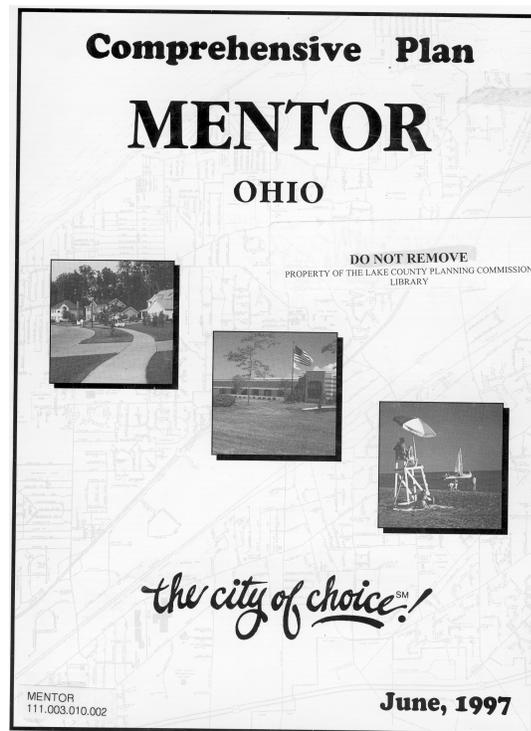
In 1984, the City prepared the "Mentor Comprehensive Plan, Toward 1990." This document examined all aspects of the physical, social and natural environments in the City. Four general goals were established to lay the ground work for more specific goals to be achieved in the 1990's:

1. General community-wide goals which describe elements to be taken into account in all types of development due to their impact of the character and health of the whole community;
2. Residential development goals which stress the safety, aesthetics, and maintenance necessary for attractive single family, duplex and apartment areas;
3. Commercial development goals for the district where retail and service businesses are clustered; and
4. Industrial development goals intended to ensure that the city's industrial sector continues to grow and develop.

In June 1997, the city adopted the "Comprehensive Plan, Mentor, Ohio." This document had a planning horizon to 2015. Using the 1984 plan as the base, the City added two additional general goals from the four listed above:

5. Recreational goals for enhancing the opportunities to all residents of Mentor.
6. Transportation goals which encourage easier movement and services for all modes of public and private transportation.

While the document covered the traditional planning issues (land use, demographics, housing), additional emphasis was placed on recreation in this plan. Needs assessments, facility planning standards, current program analysis, trends and recreational finances were discussed in greater detail in the 1997 plan.



In addition, four major development areas were identified and discussed:

1. Mentor Lagoons and Headlands west
2. I-90/Center Street
3. The Old Village Commercial Corridor
4. Mentor Avenue (north) mixed use zone.

The 1997 plan was the baseline document used for the preparation for this project.

2.4 FUTURE CHALLENGES

At the time this plan was written, the United States was in the middle of an economic recession. As with all units of local government, the City of Mentor will enter the coming decade with the difficult responsibility of maintaining the level and quality of city services to which residents and businesses are accustomed. This challenge comes at a time of potentially flat revenue and decreasing population growth rates.

Specific land use and planning challenges include:

1. Maintaining and increasing the retail vibrancy of the Mentor Avenue corridor.
 - Preliminary vacancy rate data for 2009 indicates an increase from 2008 in multi-tenant retail centers.
 - While Mentor is still considered the retail center of Lake County, local, regional and national chain stores are expanding their markets to more semi-rural areas, thus reducing the potential for customers from areas beyond the city boundary.
2. Ensuring the long-term stability of Great Lakes Mall as a closed air venue or a hybrid design.
 - New regional shopping areas are oriented as “destination/entertainment” type facilities with a focus on the traditional shopping, along with the addition of restaurants, and residential land uses. Venues such as Legacy Village (Beachwood), Crocker Park (Westlake) and First and Main (Hudson) were developed in a traditional town layout pattern following New Urbanism design features.
3. Establishing the ‘historic central business district’ of the City.
 - Maintaining, if not expanding, the historic district of the center is an important component to a City’s identity and character. In Mentor, efforts to revitalize the US 20 corridor from Lawnfield to Jackson Street are encouraged, but will be difficult due to the high traffic volume (deterrent to pedestrian activity) and the proximity/convenience of multiple shopping and dining activities in nearby areas.
4. Changing demographic profile
 - The aging of Mentor’s population is evidenced by the increase in median age from 25 in 1970 to more than 38.9 in 2000.
 - The percentage of Lake County residents older than 65 has been increasing since the 1970s. In Mentor, the population more than 55 years of age increased from 10% in 1960 to 22% of the total population in 2000. Older residents may want to remain in the city where they lived for so many years, but cannot maintain a large house on a large lot. With no other options available for them, many senior citizens are forced to find suitable housing elsewhere that is more conducive to their lifestyle and closer to medical facilities.

- In 1970, about 44% of all households in the US had children, and only 17% of them were single-person households. In 2006, only about 35% of all households in the US have children, while another 26% are single-person households. By 2040, the US Census Bureau predicts that about 27% of households will have children, and single-person households will remain at about 26%. In Mentor approximately 21% of the households are single family.

2.5 PLAN GOALS

Before any community can effectively plan for its future, it is first essential to develop a consensus about the desires and aspirations of the city. These goals and a well thought out plan will guide the community toward the shared image of the future. It is important to note that not all the goals are attainable within the planning period (approximately 10 years), but the groundwork should be established and short term goals pursued.

The following statements are a combination of relevant existing goals from the City's 1997 plan and new goals established for this document.

1. Maintain and expand the manufacturing sector of the local economy with a renewed emphasis on bio-medical and alternative energy industries.
2. Promote a strong, stable diversified economy which meets the needs of the community for employment, consumable goods and services, and provides a growing tax base.
3. Maintain existing park facilities, while seeking opportunities to expand and enhance the current range of facilities and recreational programs.
4. Create a transportation system which allows the mobility of people and goods by providing a variety of transportation options (multi-modal).
5. Protect and preserve environmentally sensitive areas and sustain a healthy natural environment.
6. Identify, protect and preserve the City's historic resources, and enhance the identity of those areas and neighborhoods in which they exist.
7. Capitalize on the City's position as a regional commercial center.
8. Provide a wider range of housing styles.
9. Maintain the City's housing stock.