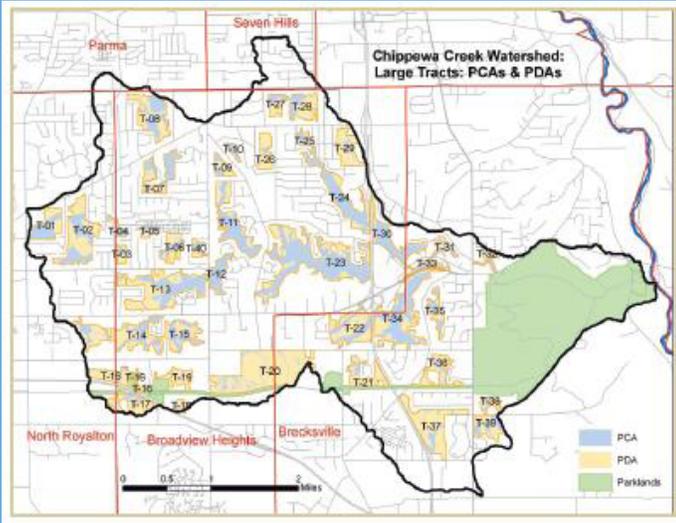


# Ohio Balanced Growth Program

## Frequently Asked Questions

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[balancedgrowth.ohio.gov](http://balancedgrowth.ohio.gov)



### What is Balanced Growth?

Water quality improvement and habitat protection in Ohio's rivers, streams, and watersheds are directly tied to the location of development and how we use the land. Balanced Growth is a strategy to protect and restore Ohio's watersheds to assure long-term economic competitiveness, ecological health, and quality of life.

We need solutions that are unique to Ohio and respect our traditions. Defining areas where state and local governments want to support development and areas where state and local governments want to support conservation will help Ohio achieve these goals.

### Why is it important to plan using watersheds?

A watershed is an area of land from which surface water drains into a common outlet such as a river or lake. Watersheds are naturally functioning units that drain large areas and can be used as a logical region containing multiple units of local governments.

### What types of recommendations are included?

There are two components to the Ohio Balanced Growth Program: a Strategy (planning framework), and Best Local Land Use Practices.

The Strategy calls for Watershed Balanced Growth Plans to be developed by Watershed Planning Partnerships that include representatives of the local governments in the watershed.

The Best Local Land Use Practices can be used by local governments to guide the location of development and improve its design, and can be implemented independent of a balanced growth plan. The Practices also contain recommendations for comprehensive plans.

### Who designates Priority Conservation Areas and Priority Development Areas?

The designations will be made by Watershed Planning Partnerships, which are local entities that can be organized in flexible ways to respond to local conditions, existing planning structures, and available resources. The partnerships can be composed of representatives of local governments, planning agencies, councils of government, special purpose authorities (such as metropolitan planning organizations, sewer districts, or transit authorities), or non-governmental organizations (such as watershed organizations, chambers of commerce, or land trusts).

### Who can participate in the development of Watershed Balanced Growth Plans?

All stakeholders in the community can participate. Watershed Planning Partnership work must be open, inclusive, and focused on consensus-building. Public education and involvement are important parts of the process.

### Don't we already have programs to deal with flooding, erosion, and water quality?

Yes, but they deal with correcting past problems. Balanced Growth is intended to prevent future problems by encouraging local governments to plan for the location of (re)development and for areas that should be conserved so that local quality of life is maintained.

### What happens to land if it is in a Priority Conservation Area (PCA)?

A PCA consists of locally designated areas for protection and restoration that may be critically important as ecological, recreational, heritage, agricultural, and public access areas, significant for their contribution to water quality and general quality of life. Optionally, agricultural areas may be designated as Priority Agricultural Areas (PAA).

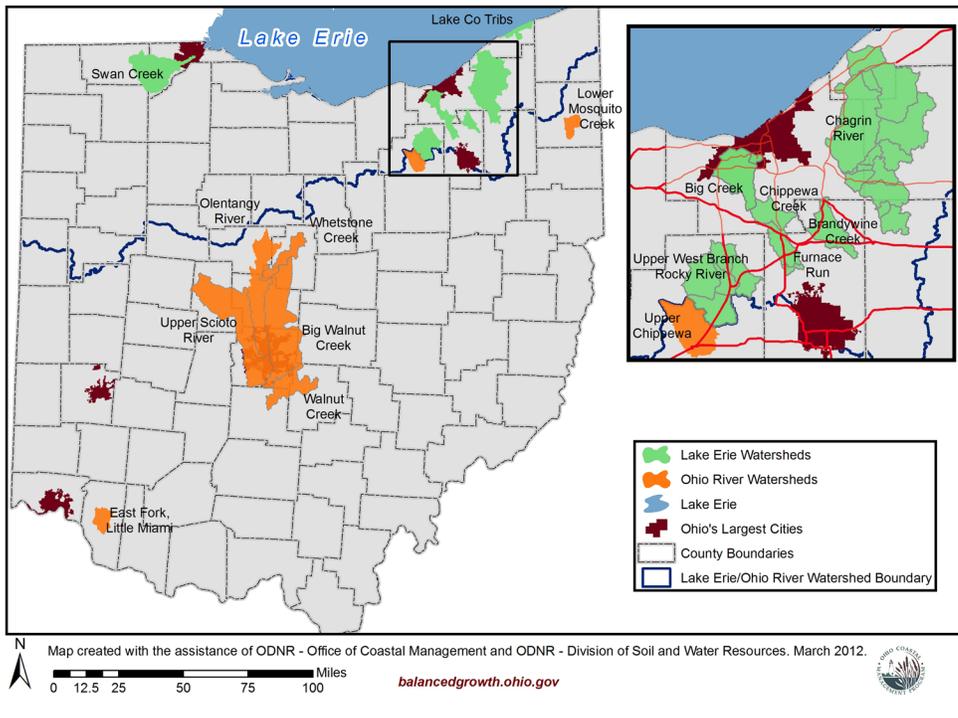
There is no change in the owner's property rights and the property is still subject to local land-use regulation. The land may be eligible for state incentives to support and encourage its use as a desirable area for conservation. State public policy decisions recognize the potential for conservation use, and the state would not encourage or provide funding for development within the area.

### What happens to land if it is in a Priority Development Area (PDA)?

A PDA consists of locally designated areas where growth and/or redevelopment is to be especially encouraged to maximize development potential, increase the efficient use of infrastructure, promote the revitalization of existing cities and towns, and contribute to the restoration of Ohio's waters.

The land may be eligible for state policy and funding incentives to support and encourage its use as a desirable area for development. A PDA is not like an urban growth boundary because development can occur outside of the PDA; such development, however, would not be encouraged through state investments.

## Balanced Growth Planning Partnership Watersheds



### How many local governments have participated in Balanced Growth planning?

So far, 269 local communities with a combined population of over 2 million Ohioans across the state have participated (including counties). Of those, 131 communities have passed resolutions of support for Balanced Growth Plans that have been completed and endorsed by the state for use in guiding state and local activities.

### Which watersheds have state endorsed Balanced Growth Plans?

Watersheds with state endorsed plans include: Swan Creek, Upper West Branch Rocky River, Chippewa Creek, Big Creek, Chagrin River, Eastern Lake County Coastal Tribes, Lower Mosquito Creek, Middle East Fork, Upper Chippewa Creek, and Olentangy River.

### Why not just let local governments take care of this problem?

Local officials recognize that some of their most pressing issues (economic development, housing supply, transportation, environmental quality) often have a larger regional dimension. By collaborating at a broader geographic scale, more effective local solutions can be realized. Balanced Growth allows and encourages local governments to work together to guide the influence of state activities on local land use.

### Does this program create unfunded mandates?

No. While local government representatives will be asked to attend meetings and participate in the planning, the program is both voluntary and locally driven and will only occur where local governments decide to participate. The state provides incentives—both technical and financial help—to develop the plans.

### Why should local developers and builders support this effort?

Local governments will be able to provide better predictability for areas where development should occur and where proposed development will run into physical and regulatory hurdles. Uniformity is promoted as local governments in the watershed begin to adopt a similar approach to plan for development and conservation. Greater predictability and uniformity will lower developer and builder costs.

### How does Balanced Growth save tax dollars?

State financial incentives support the priority areas that offer efficient use of tax dollars for public works and infrastructure to support development. Watershed based planning and implementation of Best Local Land Use Practices reduces redundant expenditures for infrastructure and encourages redevelopment in areas where infrastructure investment already exists. Costs are also reduced by maintaining “green” infrastructure such as forests for filtering rain water and floodplains for mitigating flood hazards.

### How will Balanced Growth help redevelop cities?

Areas with existing infrastructure may be locally designated as Priority Development Areas, and development or redevelopment would be encouraged through state incentives.

### What will happen to farmland under this program?

The program provides planning resources to support local efforts and plans to conserve farmland. Watershed Planning Partnerships may, at their discretion, establish Priority Agricultural Areas to further facilitate agricultural protection.

### Does the Balanced Growth Program take private property?

No. There are no regulatory changes as a result of the designation of priority areas.



**Water Resources Council  
Lake Erie Commission**

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