CHAPTER 1 Executive Summary

1.0 The Eastern Lake County Coastal Tributaries Balanced Growth Plan

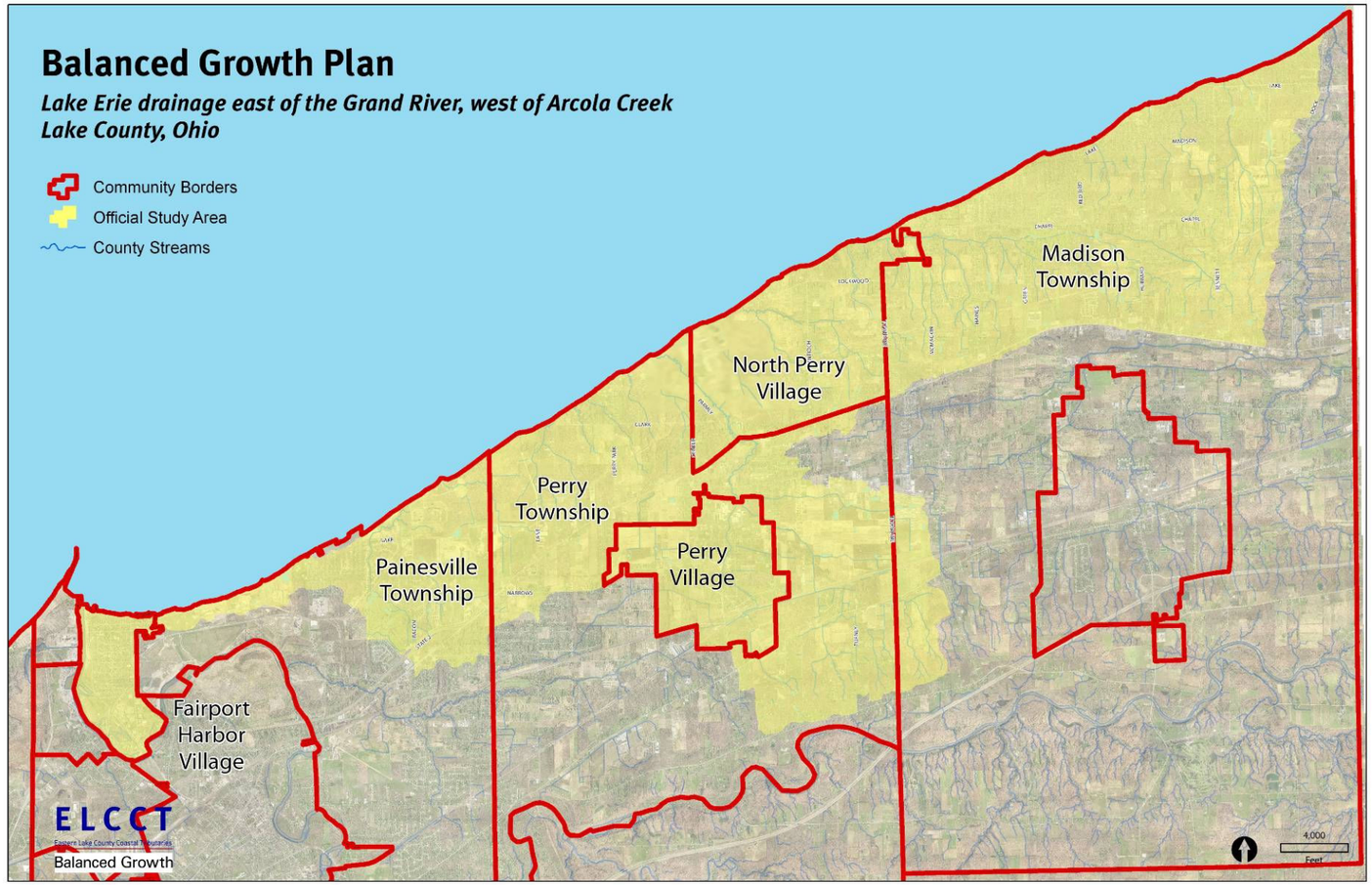
The *Eastern Lake County Coastal Tributaries Balanced Growth Plan* was produced by the Watershed Planning Partnership (WPP) and the member communities from 2010-2011. The document is a series of maps and support narratives that will assist local landowners, decision makers and citizens when faced with difficult land use, zoning, utility and conservation decisions.

The document was prepared with the understanding by the WPP and member communities that the designation of areas as Priority Conservation Areas, Priority Development Areas or Priority Agricultural Areas does not require the community to change zoning classifications and they do not have any impact of individual property rights. Rather, the document serves as a guidance document and allows local communities to be eligible for various incentives available through the State of Ohio.

The information in the Plan supports the goals and objectives of the Lake Erie Balanced Growth Plan, Lake Erie Protection and Restoration Plan, and the Lake County Coastal Development Plan while supporting the long-term vision noted in the member communities' Comprehensive Plans.

Throughout the planning process, four overriding themes were prevalent:

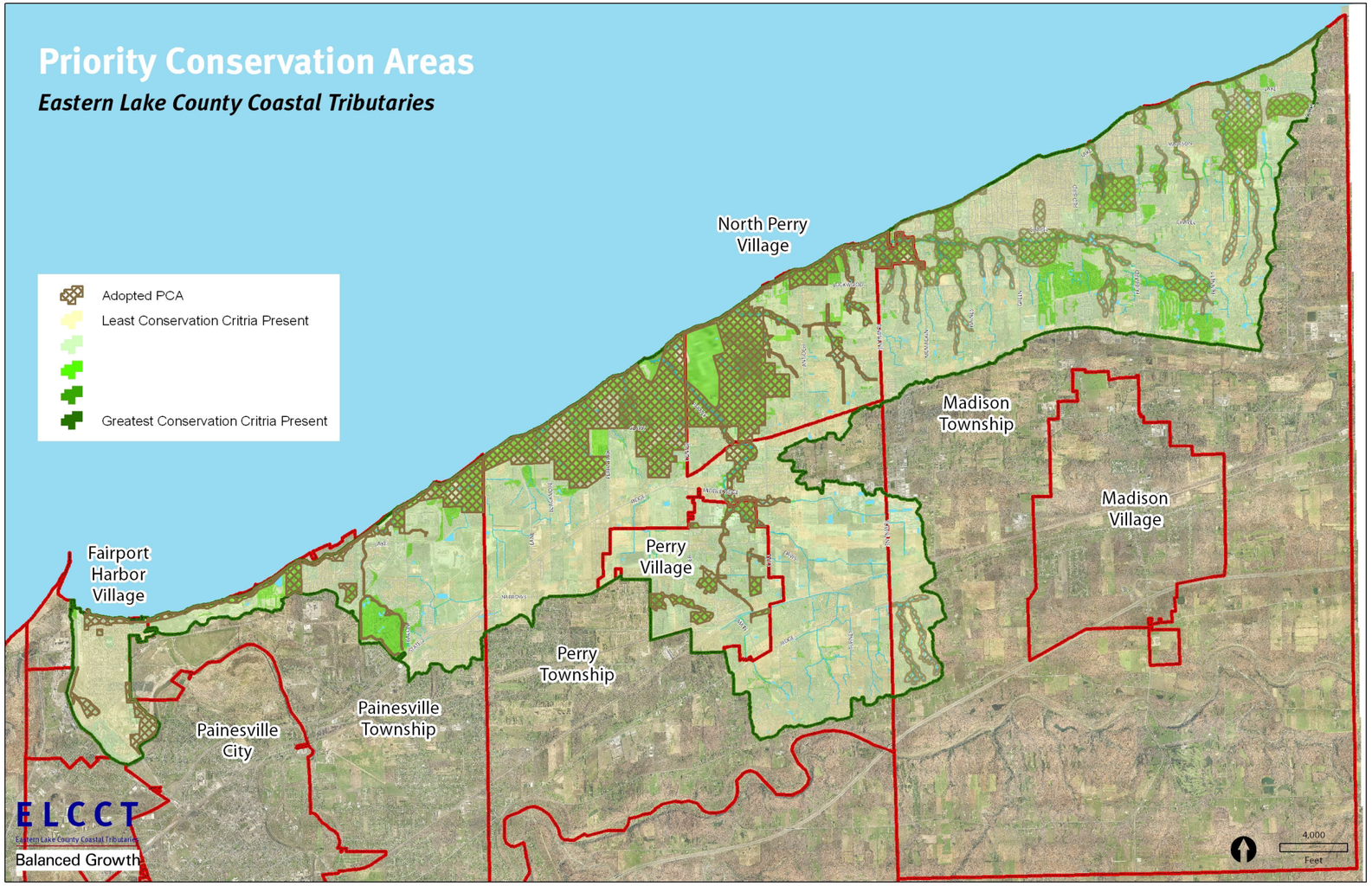
1. Agriculture (nursery stock) continues to be a vital resource to the community.
2. A balance of well planned, mixed uses is desired throughout the watershed.
3. Development should be concentrated in areas where appropriate services, utilities and demand exist.
4. The Lake Erie shoreline, while important from a conservation standpoint, can be used as an economic development driver.



1.1 Priority Conservation Areas (PCA)

In addition to the State of Ohio definition of PCAs, the WPP provided the following characteristics of suitable areas:

- The ecological value of the area, as determined by the biological and physical components of the environmental system, is of substantial watershed or basin-wide significance.
- The ecological functions provided by the area such as flood control, surface water supply, and groundwater recharge are of substantial watershed or basin-wide significance.
- The area is susceptible to significant natural hazards including, but not limited to, floods, earthquakes, landslides, erosion, and droughts that would affect existing or planned development within it.
- The area contains a plant or animal species designated as federally threatened or endangered, or designated critical habitat for such species or other species of special state concern.
- The area contains a unique, ecologically sensitive, or valuable ecosystem or combination of ecosystems with plant and animal communities whose loss or decline would negatively affect biodiversity at the watershed, state, or national scale.
- The area offers significant local recreational or quality of life benefits while also contributing to ecological objectives including urban parkland and other urban green space.
- The area offers opportunities for ecological restoration in urban areas.



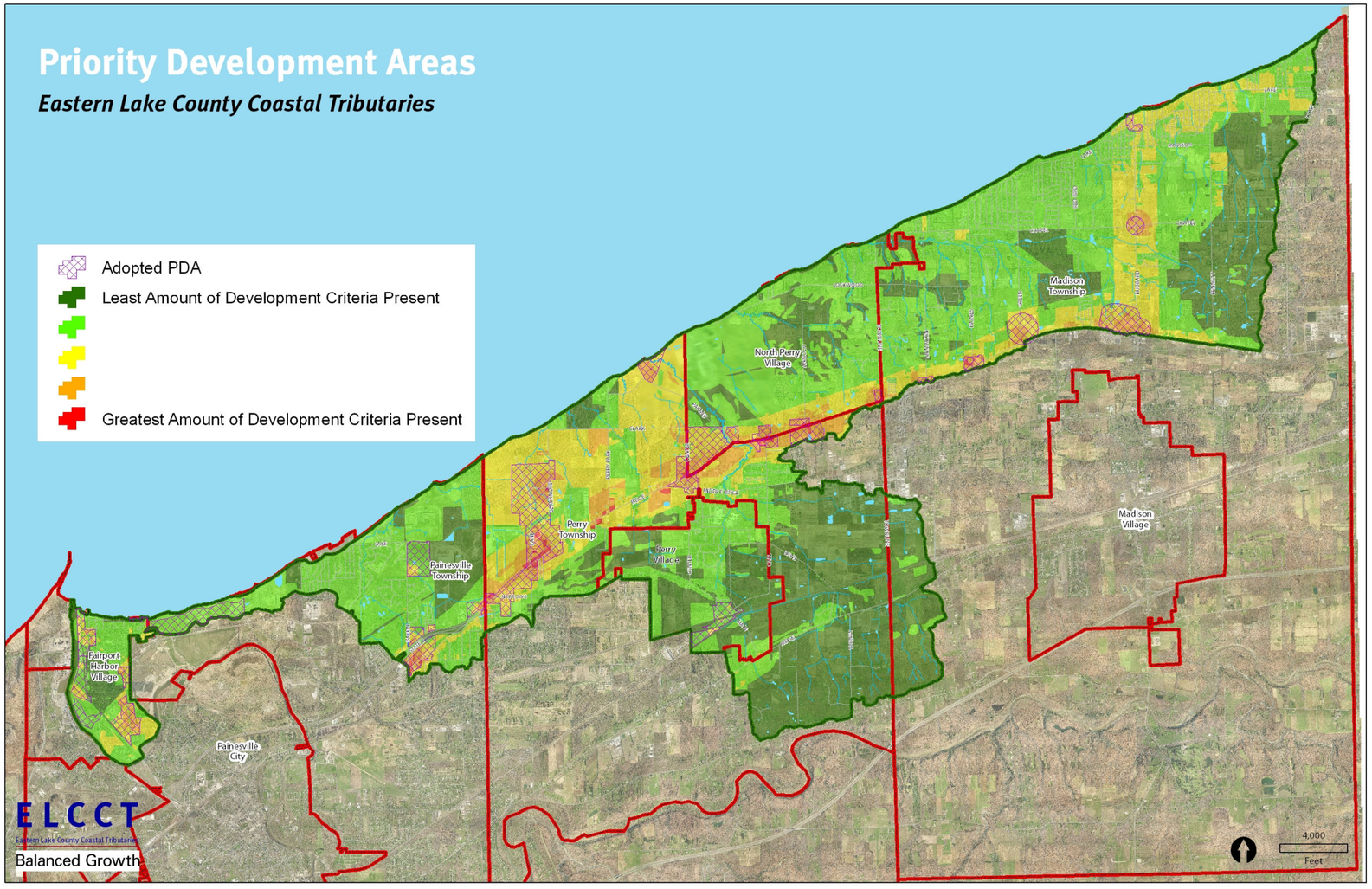
Approximately 3,931 acres are classified as PCA in the plan.

1.2 Priority Development Areas (PDA)

In addition to the State of Ohio definition of PDAs, the WPP provided the following characteristics of suitable areas:

- Land areas that are already characterized by urban growth and that have adequate existing urban services.
- Existing urban areas that can be redeveloped.
- Land areas primarily characterized by urban growth that are or will be served adequately by a combination of existing and future urban services provided by public or private entities.
- Other areas where growth will be encouraged and that can be served by future urban services in an efficient manner.
- The co-location of activities that is complementary to quality of life, such as proximity to natural areas, the interconnection of recreational corridors, and alternative transportation systems (i.e. public transportation).
- Supports existing community infrastructure investments.
- Specifically noted in a community's comprehensive plan.
- Will continue to provide stewardship of key natural resources on a development footprint.
- Meets local economic development desires.

Approximately 1,374 acres are designated as PDA. 37% of the total is located within Perry Township. It is important to note, the WPP viewed "development" with an emphasis on economic development. Therefore, the majority of the PDAs are industrial, commercial and business in nature.



1.3 Priority Agricultural Areas (PAA)

Agricultural land is a nonrenewable resource. Once public and private decisions are made that result in the conversion of agricultural land and/or water to nonagricultural purposes, this vital resource is almost always irretrievably lost. A healthy agricultural economy must be maintained in Lake County so agricultural uses and lands are preserved and expanded.

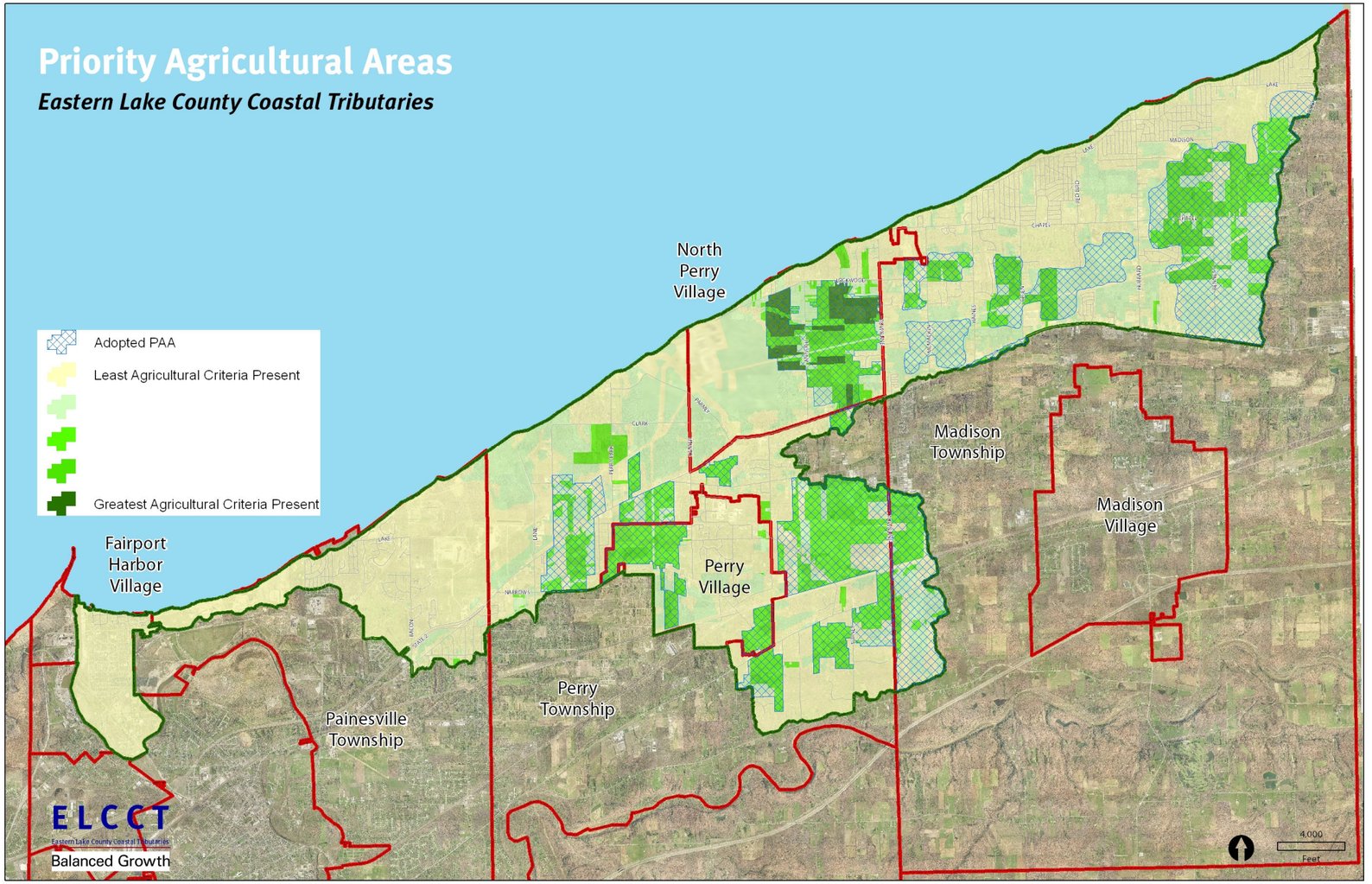
While the State of Ohio does not require the inclusion of PAAs, the WPP clearly understands the importance of the nursery industry in the watershed and included them in our analysis.

Characteristics of suitable PAAs include:

- Prime soils
- Presence of Agricultural Districts / CAUVs
- Existing Farmland Preservation easements
- Large tracts of active farmland

The value of agriculture was noted by Interviews from local boards and commissions, the presence of agricultural protection strategies in all planning documents and the Cost of Community Service Studies.

Developed by the American Farmland Trust in 1990, cost of community service studies are being completed by communities throughout Ohio. These studies allow community leaders to evaluate how their revenues compare with their expenditures.



The outcome is a ratio of the amount of money needed to provide public services (fire, police, education, community centers, and so on) for every dollar collected in property taxes. The results of these studies support the claims presented by smart growth advocates, farmland preservation taskforces, and local citizens that conventional suburban residential development requires higher financial resources in the long term to provide public services compared to the tax revenue generated by these developments.

In 2006, for every dollar in property taxes paid by residential property owners in Madison Village, $1.16 in services is required. Services provided to residents are subsidized by commercial and industrial property owners; for every dollar paid in commercial and industrial property taxes, only 32 cents are required in services. For agricultural uses, only 30 cents are required for services for every dollar paid in taxes. Approximately 6,445 acres of PAA were designated in the plan. 80% of this land is located in Perry Township and Madison Township.