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## **Commissioners Announce Expansion of Fairfield County 2023 Comprehensive Plan Development Process**

**LANCASTER, OH** — In response to increased interest and engagement in the public input process for the Fairfield County 2023 Comprehensive Plan, Fairfield County Commissioners announced today that the process for the plan will be expanded to allow for more time and discussion prior to finalizing it.

Over the coming weeks, trustees, mayors and other local leaders will be invited to additional meetings with Planning NEXT, the professional community planning company engaged to develop the plan. These leaders will be encouraged to participate in a working session for their specific community to help solidify the plan that will be shared with residents at a later date.

“When we started on this journey a year ago, it was with the hope that it would be used as a guide to manage the development that is coming,” said Commissioner Jeff Fix. “That is still our goal: to manage development, so it utilizes our utilities, land, and infrastructure in ways that limit disruption to farmland and natural space. We’ve learned a lot in this process, and we’ve listened to the input we received, which is why we have determined we need to expand the process by funding and facilitating further discussion and collaboration.”

The Comprehensive Plan is now tentatively scheduled to be presented to the Regional Planning Commission (RPC) at a public hearing on December 5<sup>th</sup>. At that meeting, the RPC will vote on recommending the Comprehensive Plan to the Fairfield County Commissioners for their consideration. If approved, it will then be sent to the Fairfield County Commissioners to consider in a public meeting on December 19, 2023.

The Comprehensive Plan is intended to be Fairfield County’s plan to manage growth, land use, and development, and is being developed to serve as a basis for considering a variety of growth- and service-related policies, programs, regulations, and capital expenditures. The plan is a resource for local jurisdictions (townships, villages, cities) to use in managing growth and investments in their own communities. The plan is not a mandate and does not replace local zoning, but it can serve as a resource to consider code and zoning map amendments to further guide development in each community. The

plan has been funded and administered by the Fairfield County Commissioners at the request of local trustees, mayors and other leaders.

The plan development process started almost a year ago in October of 2022. A steering committee made up of 36 community leaders was engaged and the county hired Planning NEXT. Planning NEXT conducted a series of more than 30 stakeholder interviews that included township trustees of every township in the county, leaders of villages and cities and other community leaders and hosted a public meeting at the beginning of the process. The county and Planning NEXT attended a Liberty Township Town Hall to discuss planning and the direction of the comprehensive plan. The findings from these public opportunities were used to prepare the draft plan that was presented to the community for input. In August, the county hosted both in-person feedback opportunities at the courthouse and an online feedback form to review the draft plan. The county issued press releases and did paid social media advertising to inform the community about the opportunity for input.

If adopted, the 2023 Comprehensive Plan will replace all previously adopted comprehensive plans for Fairfield County and can be adopted by local jurisdictions to serve as their policy document for making future zoning and service decisions based on what their communities want and need.

*Founded in 1800 (three years before Ohio became a State), Fairfield County was the 8th county formed in the Northwest Territory. Today, more than 900 employees serve, connect, and protect the more than 158,000 citizens of Fairfield County, providing high quality services and outstanding customer service at exceptional value to taxpayers. Fairfield County fosters economic and fiscal sustainability and works to enhance the County's reputation as a high performing, learning, and caring organization. For more information about the county, its services and employment opportunities, please visit <https://www.co.fairfield.oh.us/>*

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