

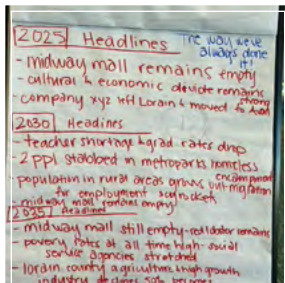


LORAIN COUNTY STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

THINK-TANK REPORT

OHIO, USA

NOVEMBER 2023





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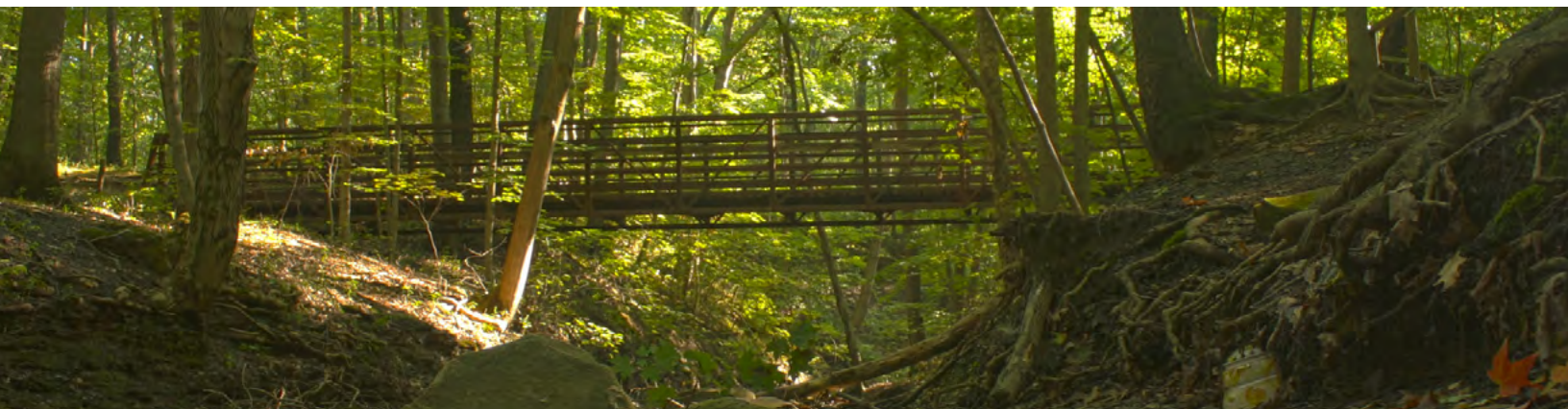
This report summarizes the outcomes of the Lorain County Strategic Action Plan Think-Tank, held on October 30 and 31, 2023. Approximately 100 stakeholders participated in both days of the Think-Tank and developed the scenarios presented in this report. This report has been produced as part of the Lorain County Strategic Action Plan process which aims to create a 10-year Strategic Action Plan for Lorain County.

This report and the associated data analysis are available at:
lab2.future-iq.com/lorain-county-strategic-action-plan-project/

REPORT PREPARED BY:

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Create Future Intelligence[®]

THINK-TANK
HOSTED BY:



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Report Edited: December 15, 2023



OVERVIEW OF THE STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN PROCESS

The Lorain County Strategic Action Plan project is a robust, inclusive, and forward- looking planning process. The project’s objective is to produce the Lorain County Strategic Action Plan, which aims to position Lorain County on a continued path of a diverse, resilient, and vibrant community.

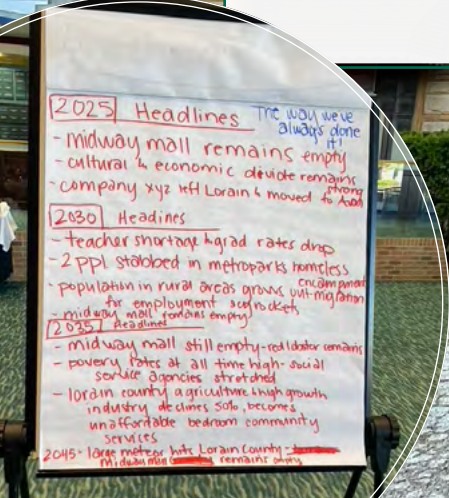
The process also will explore the future strategic positioning of the county and to create an enduring and collaborative roadmap to the future. A fundamental premise is that the world is changing fast, and the county needs decisive thinking to help envision how it will thrive over the coming decade.

What are we doing?

- This initiative is focused on **Strategic Foresight** for the future of the county. It will explore where and how Lorain County can fit into a rapidly changing world.
- We are looking to the future – taking a ‘future view’ and looking out to 2035.
- We want to create the **shared Strategic Action plan**, that will contain an implementation road- map with actions designed to move us toward the shared vision we create for the county.

What is our approach?

- We are designing a **connected, collaborative approach** and want to include voices from across the county. There will be various opportunities to participate, including surveys, Countywide Workshops and Focus Groups.
- We are taking a **bold and ambitious long-term view** and thinking about how Lorain County can thrive in a changing world.





The importance of community engagement and outreach, equity, inclusion, and planning for the future have been highlighted as important to the success of this process.

1.0 | HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

This report lays out the findings from the Think-Tank workshop, and each key step in the process. More details about the overall process may be viewed on the Lorain County Strategic Action Plan project portal at lab2.future-iq.com/lorain-county-strategic-action-plan-project/.

The Lorain County Strategic Action Plan process began with background exploration and analysis, through to building a range of future possible directions for Lorain County. This work represents robust ‘future gazing’ where stakeholders considered possible directions and the impacts and consequences of those directions. The process, and report, then drills down deeper into what people saw as the optimal or preferred future. This understanding helps lay the groundwork for ascertaining ‘how we get there.’ The final Lorain County Strategic Action Plan will be delivered in April 2024, after 9 Countywide Workshops, a second stakeholder survey and focus group workshops.

Steps in the process

- Information gathering on stakeholder concerns and aspirations for the future of Lorain County
- Introduce the Think-Tank process and the goals for the process
- Identify macro trends shaping the future of Lorain County
- Identify key drivers and clusters of drivers shaping the future of Lorain County
- Create plausible future scenarios for Lorain County
- Identify Expected, Least Desired, and Preferred Futures for Lorain County
- Identify potential high-level strategic actions and next steps in the process

Sections of the report

- Stakeholder Survey (Chapter 3)
- Think-Tank Workshops (Chapter 4)
- Forces Shaping the Future - Macro Trends (Chapter 5)
- Key Drivers Identification and Identifying Scenario Shaping Clusters of Drivers; Cluster Map Development (Chapter 6)
- Creating the Scenario Framework (Chapter 7)
- Expected, Least Desired, and Preferred Futures (Chapter 8)
- Potential High-Level Strategic Actions and Next Steps (Chapters 9 & 10)



2.0 | INTRODUCTION

2.1 | LORAIN COUNTY

Lorain County is located in the north-eastern portion of Ohio. As of the 2020 Census, the population was 312,964 with the County seat being Elyria. Agriculture dominates the southern area of the County with a large presence of manufacturing and health care industry in the north. The County is well known for its academic institutions and strong business environment, including corporate headquarters and major facilities of global corporations as well as leading-edge start-ups.

Lorain County is well known for its academic institutions and strong business environment, including corporate headquarters and major facilities of global corporations as well as leading-edge start-ups.

Over the past number of years, amidst a global pandemic, the County has seen economic growth, enormous investment, job creation and retention and dedication to higher educational attainment and businesses being headquartered in Lorain County.

The Lorain County Strategic Action Plan project’s objective is to create a comprehensive and sustainable Strategic Action Plan for Lorain County.

The focus will be extensive research and community engagement that focuses on County services for users, non-users, and stakeholders (including board and staff). This research and engagement will identify the needs and wants, as well as to ways to raise awareness and provide clarification to the community on the scope of services provided by Lorain County Government.

The Community Foundation of Lorain County have been contracted to assist in the community outreach aspect of the project.





The Lorain County Strategic Action Plan Think-Tank workshops allowed community stakeholders to take a 'deep-dive' into strategic visioning and future-thinking through an in-depth scenario-planning process.

2.2 | INTRODUCTION

This scenario-based Think-Tank report summarizes the Think-Tank workshops that took place on October 30 & 31, 2023. The Think-Tank workshops were conducted as an initial step in the project to develop an executable Strategic Action plan that will guide Lorain County over the coming decade. The components of the planning work to date have been comprised of:



STAKEHOLDER SURVEY #1

An extensive survey has been completed by 985 stakeholders. The survey aimed to understand stakeholder perspectives on current conditions in the county, as well as their aspirations for the future.



THINK-TANK WORKSHOP - PART 1

The first part of the Think-Tank was held on October 30, 2023. At this workshop, participants learned about macro trends impacting the county and assessed key drivers of the county.



THINK-TANK WORKSHOP - PART 2

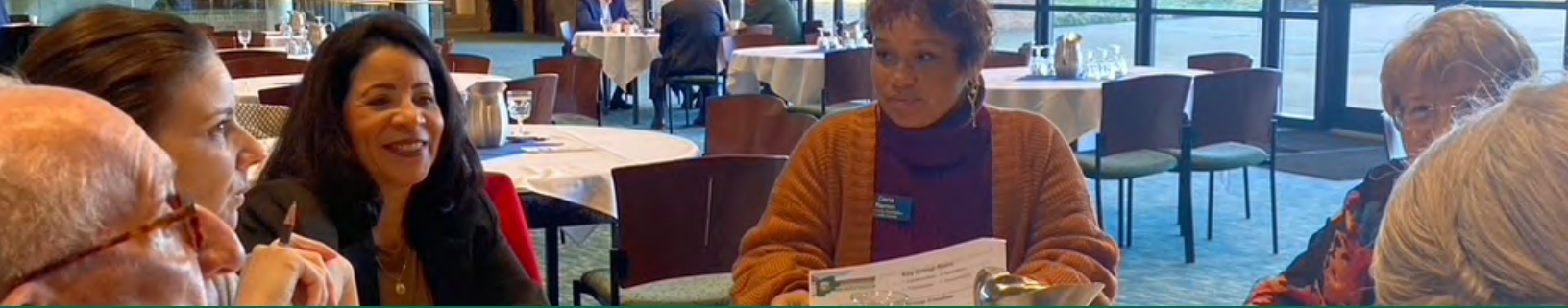
The second part of the Think-Tank was held on October 31, 2023. At this scenario-planning workshop, participants produced four plausible potential futures for the county.



THINK-TANK PARTICIPANT HEATMAPS

Think-Tank participants completed heatmaps at the end of the second Think-Tank to express their Least Desired, Expected, and Preferred future scenarios for the county looking out to 2035. The results are examined in this report.





3.0 | SURVEY RESULTS - KEY STAKEHOLDER INPUT

Prior to the Think-Tank workshop, an extensive stakeholder survey was conducted to gather insight into the community's perceptions of trends influencing Lorain County's future, including the most significant opportunities and challenges facing the county. At the time of the Think-Tank, approximately 985 had responded to the survey, which was promoted on the portal, the social media platforms and in the local press. The Community Foundation of Lorain County assisted with outreach and the translation of the survey and promotional materials into Spanish.

Respondent profile information is available on the project portal, and includes information such as age, race, relationship to Lorain County, length of time living and/or working in Lorain County and where residents live. Below are the compiled results of the survey as of the November Think-Tank. The complete stakeholder survey results are posted on the project portal at lab2.future-iq.com/lorain-county-strategic-action-plan-project/stakeholder-survey/.

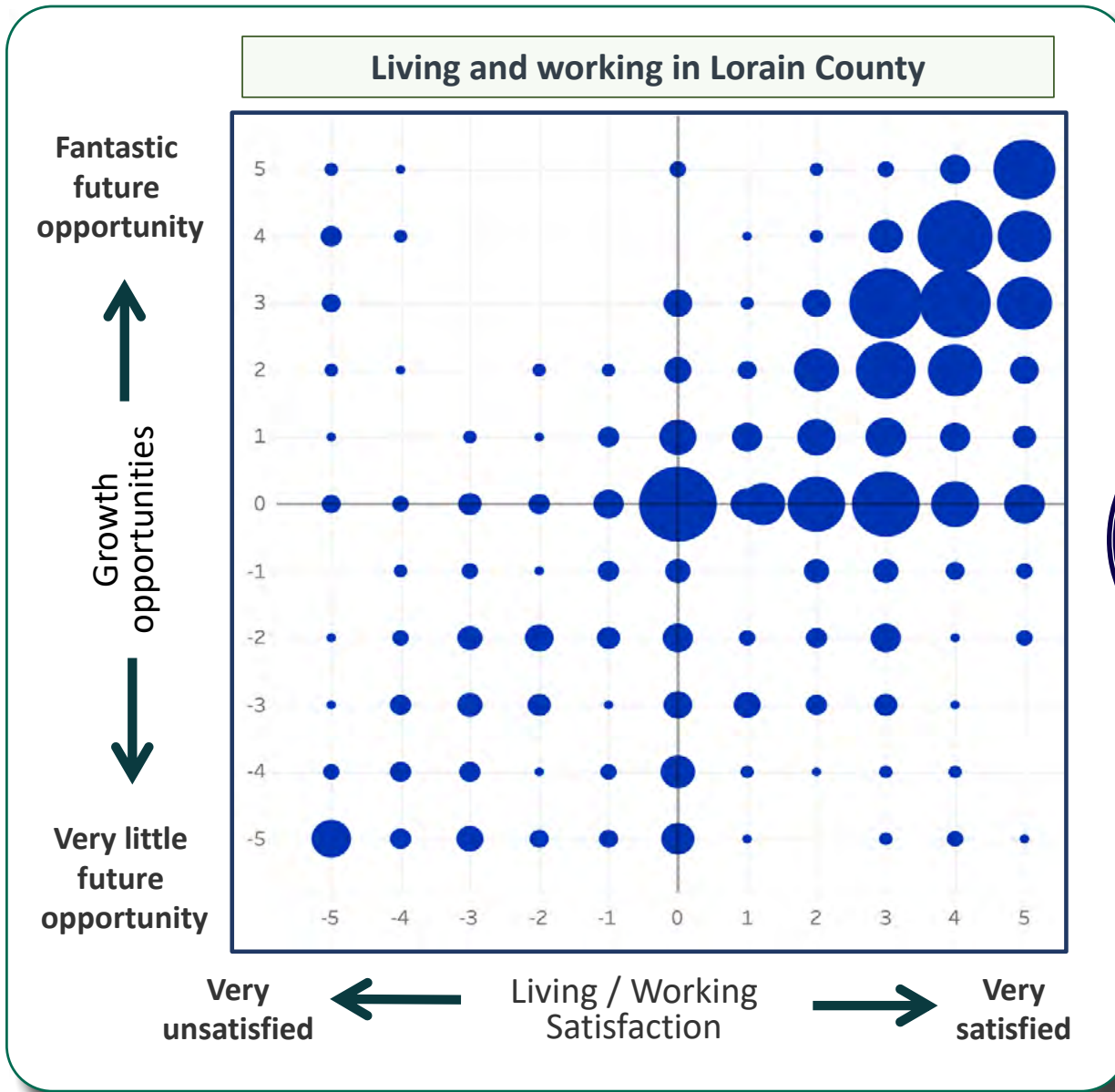
For the purposes of this report, a selection of results will be presented. However, all interactive results can be viewed in real time on the project portal.




3.1 | LIVING AND WORKING IN LORAIN COUNTY

Survey respondents were asked how satisfied they are living and/or working in Lorain County and if they thought the city offers them future opportunities to grow and thrive in their life, interests, businesses and/or career. Respondents were asked the questions below, which were then combined to produce the following chart.

- How satisfied are you about living and/or working in Lorain County?
- Do you think the Lorain County offers you future opportunities to grow and thrive, in your life, interests, business and/or career?



Survey charts reflect the +1,400 survey responses received, as of December 11, 2023



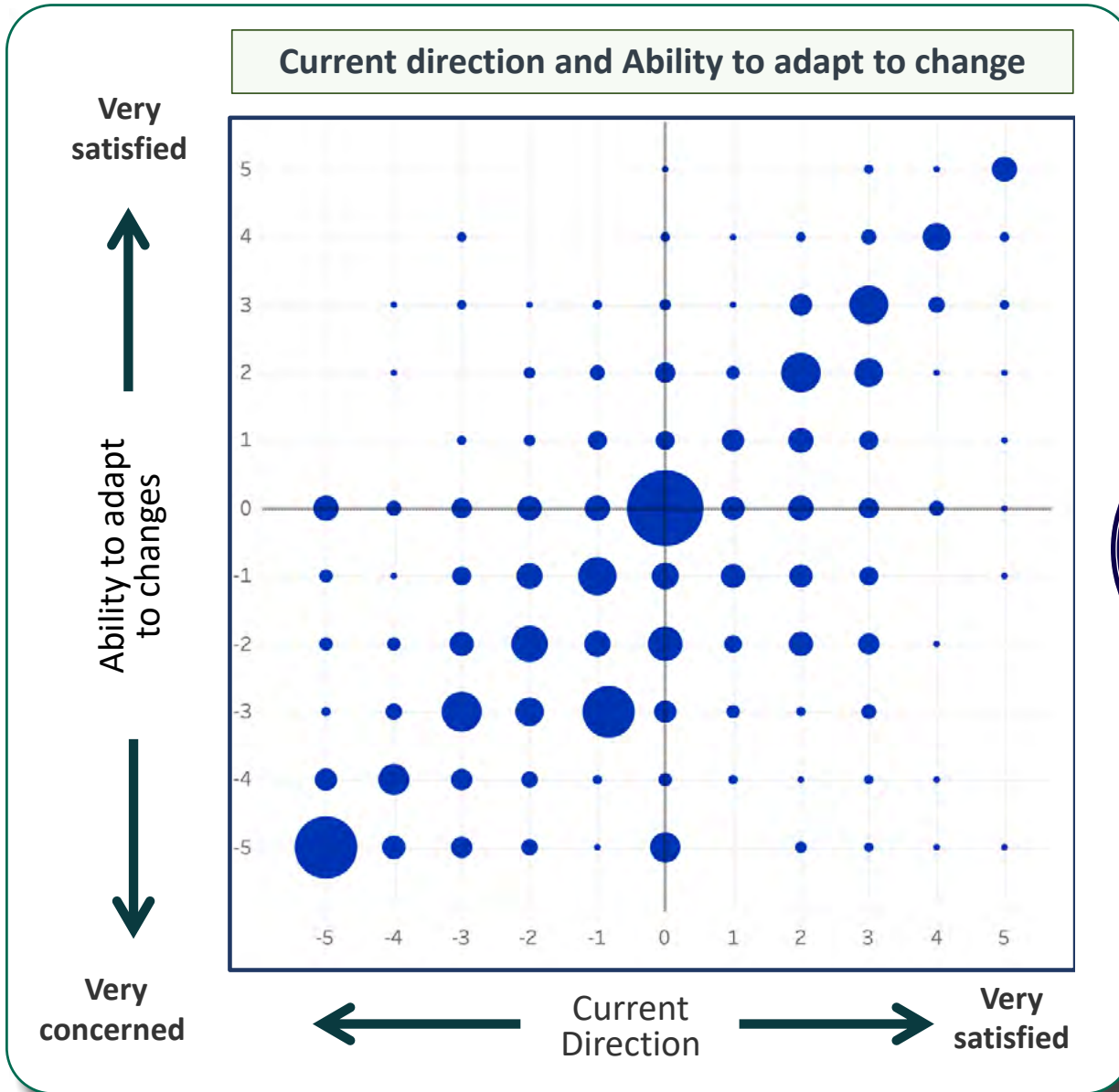
- This chart shows that respondents felt mostly satisfied about living in Lorain County, and that the county offers future opportunities to grow and thrive.
- This is encouraging data for the value proposition and appeal of the county.



3.2 | CURRENT DIRECTION AND ABILITY TO ADAPT

Survey respondents were asked about the current direction of Lorain County and its ability to adapt to changes. Respondents were asked the questions below, which were then combined to produce the following chart.

- How satisfied or concerned are you about the way Lorain County is changing and the overall current direction of Lorain County?
- How satisfied or concerned are you about the ability of Lorain County to adapt to changes?



Survey charts reflect the +1,400 survey responses received, as of December 11, 2023



DataInsight

- There was an interesting spread of responses with a larger number of respondents very concerned about the current direction of Lorain County and its ability to adapt to changes. This is indicated by the size of the circle in the bottom left of the chart and in the midpoint of the chart. The larger the circle denotes the number of respondents.
- This highlights the need for this strategic action planning work, to help refine the county's direction and ability to adapt to changes in the future.



4.0 | SCENARIO-BASED THINK-TANK WORKSHOP

The Lorain County Strategic Action Plan Think-Tank workshops were conducted on October 30 and 31, 2023, at Lorain County Community College (LCCC). The workshops explored how Lorain County could evolve by 2035 and consisted of:

- A review of global trends and the impact of these trends on Lorain County.
- Assessment of the county's strengths and weaknesses.
- Formulation of the different plausible scenario 'spaces' and development of detailed narratives and descriptions of each scenario.
- Examination of the impact and consequences of each scenario on various aspects of community and economic development in Lorain County.
- Identification of the preferred future and critical action steps to achieve the preferred future.

Scenario planning provides a way to explore various plausible futures. This adds a richness and depth to the discussions about the preferred future, and a consideration of the intended and unintended consequences.

The Think-Tank began with an in-depth presentation on future trends and global conditions before moving on to conduct scenario planning for Lorain County. Future iQ's scenario planning process provides a methodology from which to explore plausible futures and takes into consideration the implications of various future scenarios. The process aimed to:

- Deepen the understanding and examination of how external events and local conditions could shape decision-making.
- Identify and understand the key influences, trends, and dynamics that will shape Lorain County looking out to 2035.
- Create and describe four plausible long-term scenarios for the county.
- Begin exploring alignment around a shared future vision for the county.

The scenarios developed during the Think-Tank workshop and outlined in this report are important to provide a framework to discuss future possible outcomes and implications for Lorain County. Workshop deliberations can assist in identifying key actions for the county and how various groups might best contribute to future developments.





5.0 | FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS – KEY THEMES SHAPING THE FUTURE

Think-Tank participants explored the forces of change shaping the future of Lorain County, including three key areas of emerging macro trends and forces of change. Perceptions around the nature of impact of these trends, both in terms of size and timing of impact, were explored to gauge how important participants consider the trends. Participants discussed the emerging trends on global, regional, and local scales, and related them directly to Lorain County in terms of how well prepared they considered the county.

Specifically, the key trend areas included:

- Demographics, population and mass urbanization
- Energy, food, water and climate change
- Technology and the speed of change

Of relevance to the discussion on trends is the speed and scale of change occurring. Newly developed innovations are being implemented globally and locally at all scales, thereby changing the face of industries and society in a rapid and profound way. Velocity and trajectory are key elements that often create resistance to change and require clear communication and outreach to promote trust around the purpose of change.

In the face of accelerating speed of change, the key to long-term resiliency for Lorain County is the ability to anticipate change, adapt, and remain agile in response to emerging trends.





6.0 | KEY DRIVERS IDENTIFICATION

With the background of external trends, Think-Tank participants produced drivers that they considered most likely to shape the future of Lorain County. The drivers had been discussed at a group level and then at the wider workshop level. The scope of each driver was clarified, and any similar drivers were grouped, and new drivers added, until a list of twenty unique key drivers were identified.

Drivers are events, trends, developments, catalysts, or forces that actively influence or cause change. The top 22 drivers for Lorain County are seen to shape the future of the county.

6.1 | DRIVER DESCRIPTIONS

Key drivers shaping the future of Lorain County as identified and developed in small working groups by the Think-Tank participants:

(Please note that these drivers are not in any particular order.)

Key drivers shaping the future of Lorain County as identified and developed in small working groups by the Think-Tank participants:

- | | | |
|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Industry and Business make-up | 9. Community collaboration | 17. Transportation infrastructure |
| 2. Co-ordination of services | 10. Access to community resources | 18. Safe and affordable housing |
| 3. School readiness | 11. Impact of LCCC | 19. Incentives to attract businesses |
| 4. Waterfront redevelopment | 12. Empowering youth | 20. Aging demographics |
| 5. Auto industry investment and expansion | 13. Innovative public policy | 21. Silicon technologies |
| 6. Education level of residents | 14. Protection of natural resources | 22. Functioning County government |
| 7. Impact of climate change | 15. Creating diverse and educated workforce | |
| 8. Electrification of the world | 16. Infrastructure conflict | |

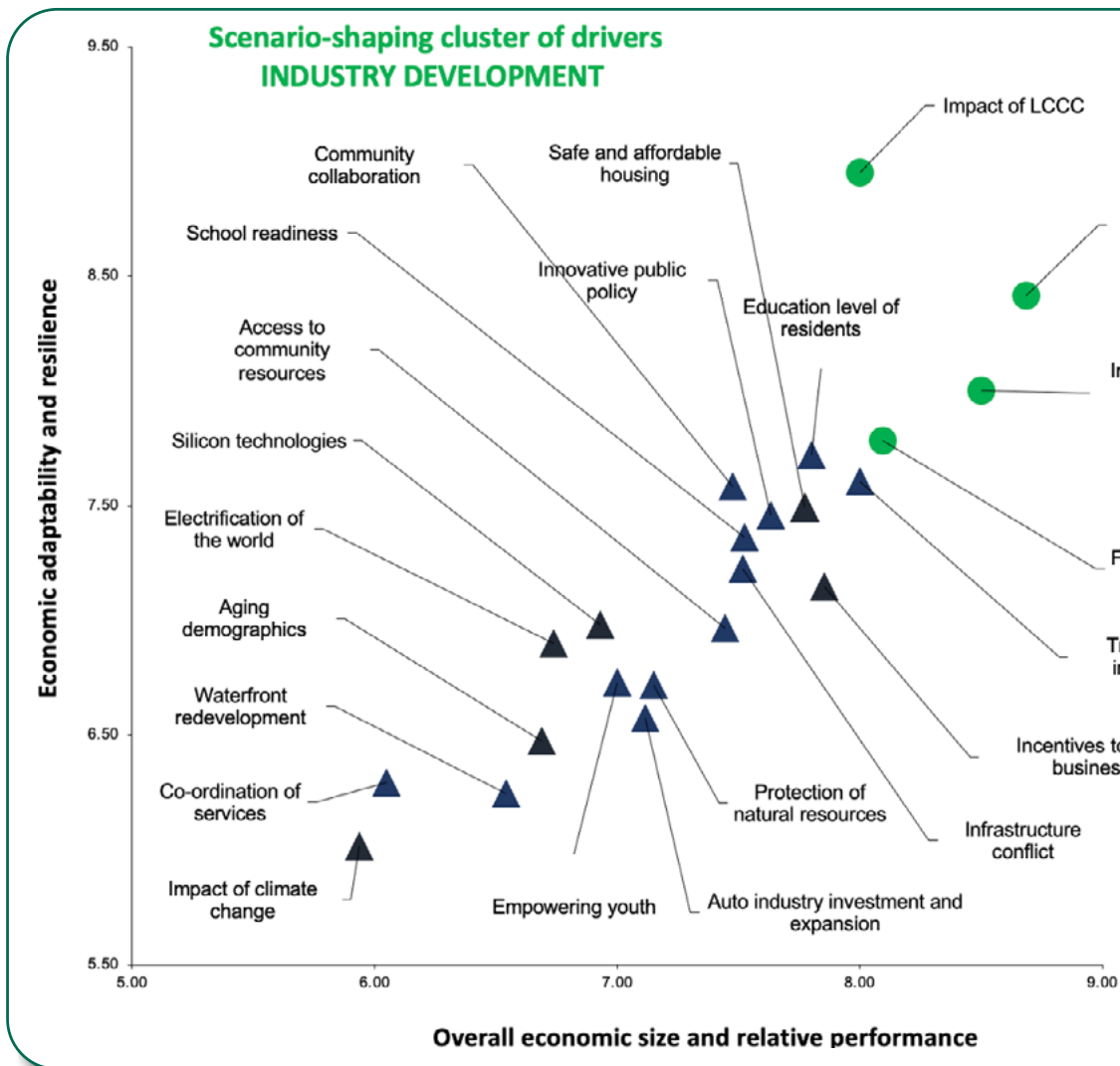


6.2 | IDENTIFYING SCENARIO SHAPING CLUSTERS OF DRIVERS

After agreement on the drivers, Think-Tank participants rated each of the twenty-two key drivers in terms of the size of impact on the future of Lorain County. The scale used was 1 - 10 (1 = low relative future impact; 10 = very high relative future impact). The size of impact refers to how significant the participant considers the driver will be in shaping the future of Lorain County. The individual ratings by each participant were pooled and averaged, providing an overall rating for each driver by the entire group of participants. Then, two scatter diagrams of the drivers, based on size of impact were developed. The two diagrams represent the driver assessment in terms of **industry development** and **community direction**.

This scatter diagram identifies the clusters of drivers considered most critical in shaping the industry development future of Lorain County looking out to 2035.

6.2.1 | INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT



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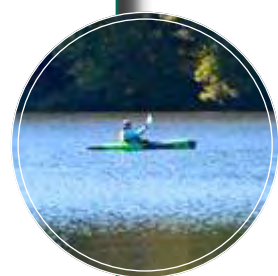
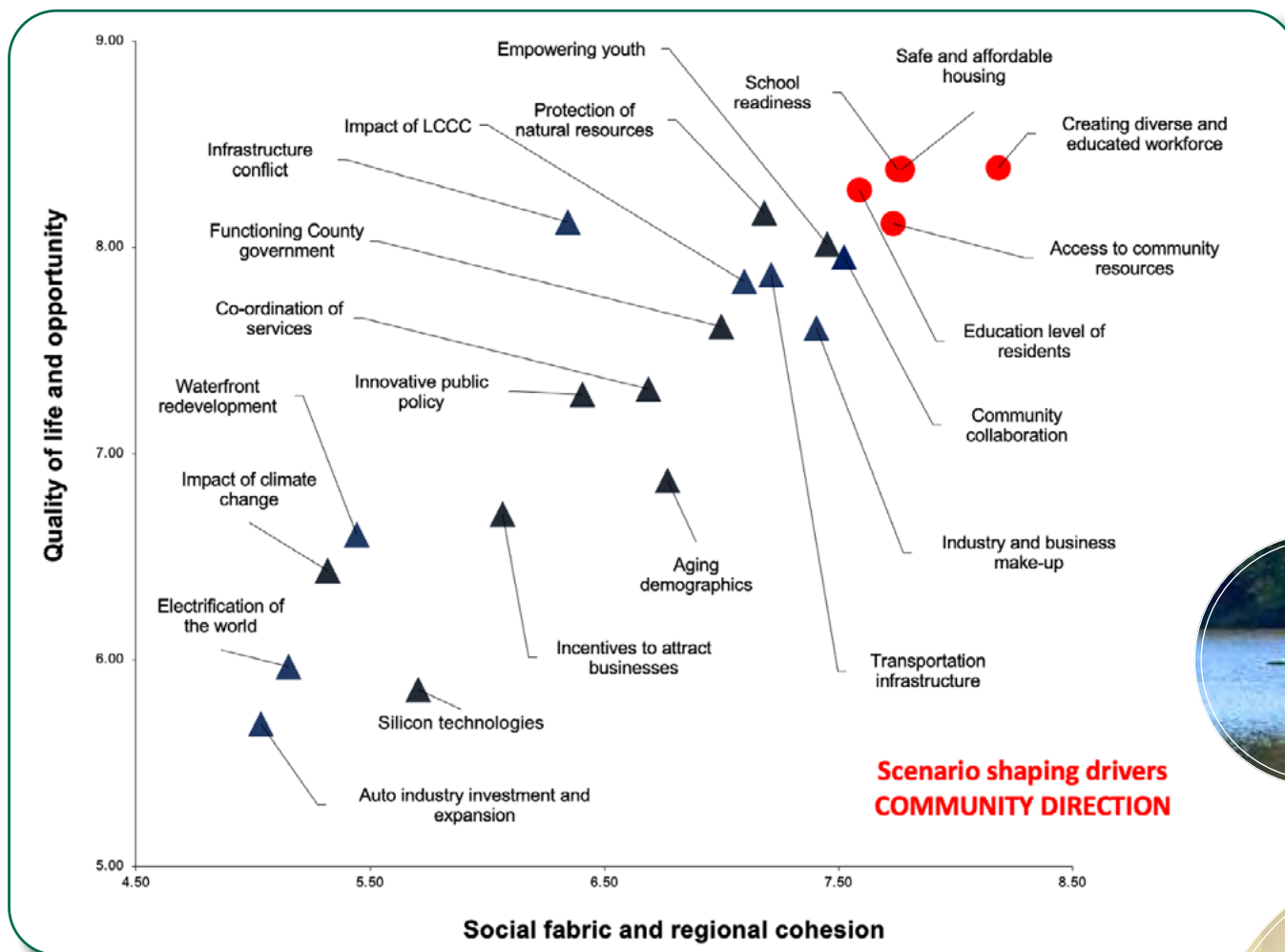
- The identified drivers for the industry development analysis were clustered around the dimensions of economic adaptability and resilience, and overall economic size and relative performance of the county.
- The drivers identified as having the greatest impact on both economic adaptability and resilience and overall economic size and relative performance were the impact of LCCC, creating diverse and educated workforce, industry and business makeup and a functioning county government.



6.2.2 | COMMUNITY DIRECTION

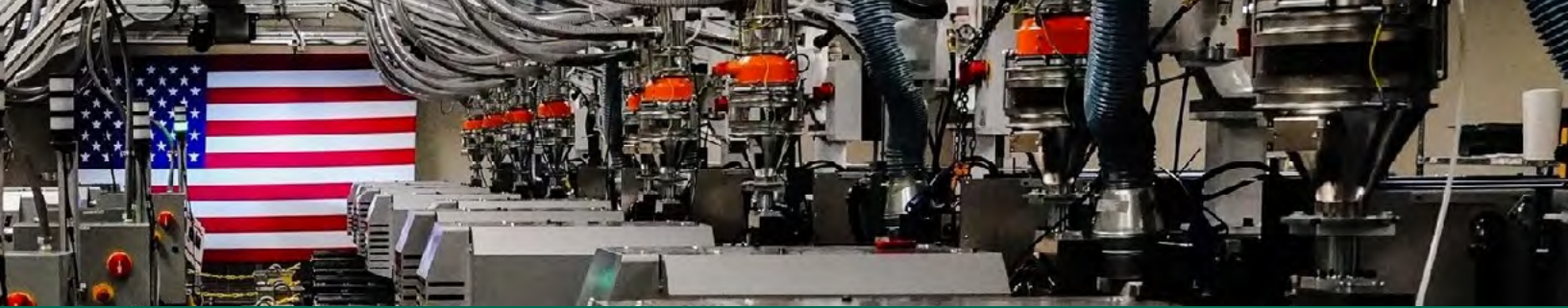
This scatter diagram identifies the clusters of drivers considered most critical in shaping the future community direction of Lorain County looking out to 2035.

The scatter diagram allows the identification of clusters which are relatively high in impact. The process illustrated below show the clusters of drivers that were seen as most critical in shaping the future for **community direction** - these clusters are termed 'Scenario-Shaping Clusters of Drivers.'



DataInsight

- The identified drivers for community direction were clustered around the dimensions of quality of life and opportunity and social fabric and county cohesion.
- The drivers identified as having the greatest impact on both quality of life and opportunity and social fabric and regional cohesion were created diverse and educated workforce, safe and affordable housing, access to community resources, school readiness and educational levels of residents.



6.3 | CLUSTER MAP DEVELOPMENT AND SCENARIO AXIS

Grouping similar drivers into two categories, clusters of drivers were identified by adding a thematic name linking the drivers in the clusters. These themes became the basis for the two axes on the scenario matrix that define the four scenario 'spaces', with quadrants either towards or away for each driver cluster. These quadrants were used to formulate four plausible scenarios. The two axes were defined as 'Industry Development and 'Community Direction'.

The two axes of the scenario matrix were developed through the thematic clustering of the key drivers identified by Think-Tank participants.

FUTURE-SPLITTING THEMES BASED ON CLUSTERS OF DRIVERS

Industry Development

- Impact of LCCC
- Creating diverse and educated workforce
- Industry and business make-up
- Functioning County government

Community Direction

- Creating diverse and educated workforce
- Safe and affordable housing
- Access to community resources
- School readiness
- Education level of residents



7.0 | CREATING THE SCENARIO FRAMEWORK

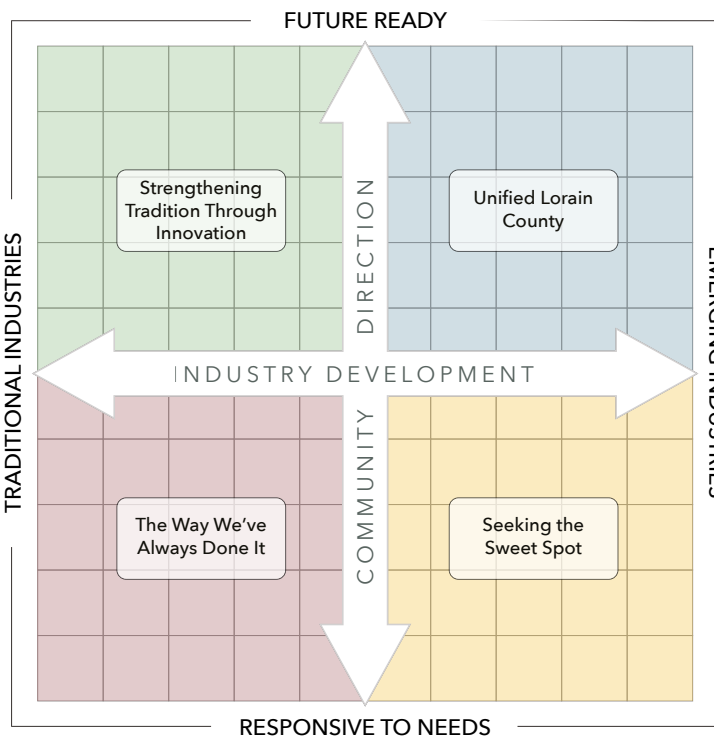
Think-Tank workshop participants were presented with the scenario matrix, defined by the two major axes, 'Industry Development and 'Community Direction'. Brief descriptions were also attached to the end points of each driver axes. Participants were divided into four groups to develop a narrative for each scenario. Each group was asked to describe the characteristics of Lorain County in 2035 under the conditions of the scenario quadrant that they had been given.

After the characteristics were established, Think-Tank participants were asked to devise major events or headlines of how the scenario occurred using the years 2025, 2030 and 2035, and to give their scenario a descriptive name. The name is intended to represent the description of the scenario in the form of a short title. Narratives, descriptions, and names of each scenario as developed by the workshop participants are included in the following sections.

There is intentional (and significant) investment in creating a 'future ready' community that focuses on youth, workforce and resident education. There is a focus on equity and community adaptability, with efforts to deliberately foster new ideas and innovation. There is a county-wide coordinated approach to partnerships and investment, that aims to elevate amenities such as transportation, safe and affordable housing, and education.

There is a focus on pursuing more tried and tested approaches to industry and economic development. Public Investment and policy is targeted towards more familiar industrial sectors, with each municipality and institution working on its own priorities. Community infrastructure focuses on 'suburban style growth model', and transit is predominately car oriented. Skills training is reactive to industry needs and direction.

There is a strong focus on emerging future-orientated industries. This builds on existing industries in creative ways; but also invests in emerging sectors such as technology, water and energy-based sectors, and food industries. There is a very collaborative and coordinated county-wide approach, with a focus on investment in creating a highly skilled workforce. There are high levels of institutional collaboration and policies that drive investment in critical infrastructure.



Community infrastructure, such as housing and transport, are market driven and respond to demands and needs. Land-use policy and community investment is driven by the priorities of individual communities. Approaches are institutionally driven; with a focus on existing services, and workplace-based training models. Communities are service driven, aiming to support traditional family structures.





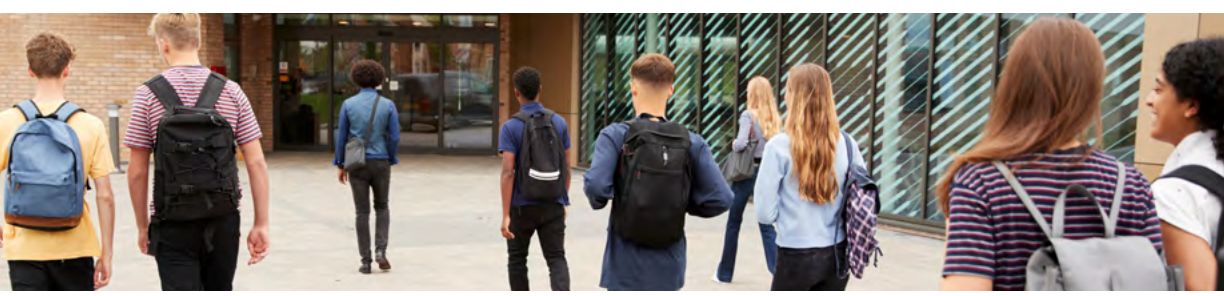
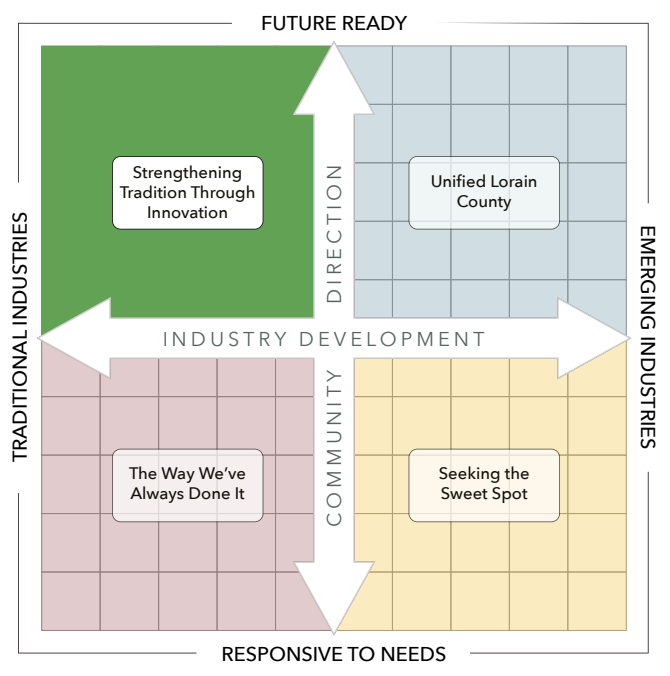
The 'Strengthening Tradition through Innovation' scenario conveys a future where there is a contrast between a focus on traditional industry development at the same time as aiming for a 'future ready' and vital community direction.

7.1 | SCENARIO A: STRENGTHENING TRADITION THROUGH INNOVATION

This scenario forecasts a future where Lorain County focuses on a more traditional approach to industry development.

Public investment and policy are directed to tried and tested traditional industry, rather than new and emerging industry. Municipalities work on their own instead of taking a regional and collaborative approach. The community infrastructure focuses on a 'suburban style growth model' which is car orientated. However, the community direction is 'future ready' and there is intentional investment in creating this type of community with a focus on equity, adaptability and innovation and attention to youth, workforce, and resident education. While focused on traditional industries, the community direction is more future orientated and there is an aim to elevate amenities such as transportation, safe and affordable housing, and education. The mix of traditional industry and economic development and future ready community direction could produce a tension in the future as the traditional businesses may not be able to keep up with the rise in automation and subsequent retraining for jobs. With the focus on youth education and retraining, there may not be the opportunities in Lorain County to retain youth.

- ### SCENARIO SNAPSHOT
- A traditional approach to industry and economic development
 - Investment and Policy aimed at traditional rather than emerging industry
 - Focus on creating future ready community and associated education, housing, and transportation
 - Engaged and contented community but pressure to retain youth



SCENARIO A CHARACTERISTICS: ' STRENGTHENING TRADITION THROUGH INNOVATION ' - 2035

The characteristics of this scenario convey a future that combines the focus on traditional industry and economic development, while investing in creating a 'future ready' community which focuses on youth, workforce, and resident education. There is a focus on community equity and adaptability, however the economic model is very traditional. Businesses may suffer due to the automation of industry and the necessary training and reskilling and seek to invest in retaining youth.

In the 'Strengthening Tradition through Innovation' scenario, the county may find challenges in retaining its youth as the economic model is traditional in approach.



ECONOMY AND INDUSTRY CHARACTERISTICS

Innovative and traditional businesses but these suffer due to automation and retraining for jobs.

- Warm neighborhoods with current redevelopments and improvements.
- Regional leadership policies accentuate unique county characteristics.
- Housing blend but suburban/urban tension.
- Transit is predominantly car orientated.



COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL FABRIC CHARACTERISTICS

There are equitable and inclusive educational opportunities in the County.

- The community is future ready, healthy, and vital.
- There is a focus on youth regarding education and opportunities.
- Community connectivity and diversity creates a positive impact on Lorain County.
- Equitable aspects are encouraged regarding housing, transportation, and education for all.



BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

There is sustainable use and protection of resources.

- A collaborative and transparent government.
- There is a balance of industry, jobs, and livable space for residents.

2025 Headline News
 "LORAIN COUNTY REZONES BROWN FIELD RESTORATION AND HISTORICAL REDEVELOPMENT"



2035 Headline News
 "THIRD ANNUAL COUNTY CULTURAL FAIR IS HELD AT FAIR GROUPS"





The 'Unified Lorain County' scenario conveys a future collaborative and regional approach that welcomes emerging and future orientated industry.

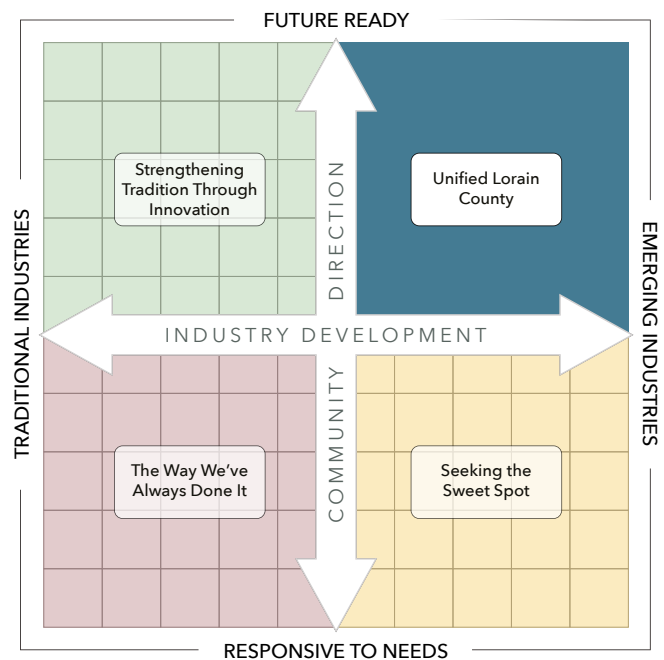
7.2 | SCENARIO B: UNIFIED LORAIN COUNTY

This scenario forecasts a future where Lorain County is focused on emerging and future-orientated industries and builds on existing industries in innovative ways.

Attention is also given in this economic approach to environmental sectors including water, energy, and food. Critical infrastructure receives investment through high levels of institutional collaboration and forward-thinking policies. Lorain County adopts a regional and collaborative approach. While industry and economic development is vital and forward thinking, the community direction of Lorain County is also being intentionally created to be adaptive and 'future ready'. There is an intentional focus on equity, inclusion, and elevating amenities such as transportation, safe and affordable housing, and education. To meet the future demands of the community, there is work carried out to create infrastructure needs for electric vehicles, create opportunities for regenerative agriculture and sustainable food production. The community of Lorain County are strong and united, rather than siloed in municipalities. There is a strong emphasis on youth, the encouragement of youth-led initiatives and the retention and attraction of youth. The cities of Elyria and Lorain invest in new amenities and businesses to attract young people who wish to move to these cities.

SCENARIO SNAPSHOT

- Embracing emerging industries through building on to existing traditional industries.
- Strong environmental focus
- Future ready Community Direction with intentional investment in youth, workforce, and resident education
- Diverse community with elevated amenities including transportation, safe and affordable housing, and education
- Significant change in this scenario, which might bring challenges and tensions



SCENARIO B CHARACTERISTICS: 'UNIFIED LORAIN COUNTY' - 2035

In the 'Unified Lorain County' scenario, communities in the county collaborate and work together on sustainable and environmentally sympathetic practices.

The characteristics of this scenario convey a future where Lorain County is proud of its emerging and future-orientated industry, strong environmental practices, and strong regional community. There is a concern about climate change and mitigating the impact of climate change through environmental practices, self-sufficiency, and economic viability. Water is protected as more businesses move to Lorain County. All communities grow as a region with strong community values and ethos.



ECONOMY AND INDUSTRY CHARACTERISTICS

There is a predominant focus on water with industries that rely on water supplied with technology.

- Infrastructure for electric vehicles.
- Increased food production technology.
- Regenerative agriculture and reuse of brownfields.
- Development of recycling industry.
- Multimodal transport – air, rail, and interstate.



COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL FABRIC CHARACTERISTICS

All communities will continue to grow with strong underlying community values and ethos.

- Diverse ethnic groups and continued equity focus supporting diverse cultures.
- Youth are encouraged to train for construction and technology jobs, beyond a four-year college education.
- Lorain amenities/attractions improve to meet the needs of a younger working population moving to the county.
- There is a strong focus on youth and the encouragement of youth led initiatives.
- Population will increase with new residents and workforce.



BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

There is multi-family and diverse housing that includes green space and access to recreation.

- As more businesses set up in Lorain County, there is protected water treatment .
- There is a strong concern around climate change and mitigating the impact of climate change.
- Food is grown locally for local consumption. Self-sufficiency and economic viability are valued.
- Recycling is encouraged and becomes the normal manner of handling waste.
- There will be more green space for residents.

2025 Headline News
"COUNTY ANNOUNCES VISION FOR UNIFIED LORAIN COUNTY"



2030 Headline News
"RFP ACCEPTED FOR DEEP WATER PORT"



2035 Headline News
"RIBBON CUTTING FOR FOOD PRODUCTION FACILITY"





The 'Seeking the Sweetspot' scenario conveys a future where the workforce cannot keep up with the new emerging industries in Lorain County and the ensuing skills gap.

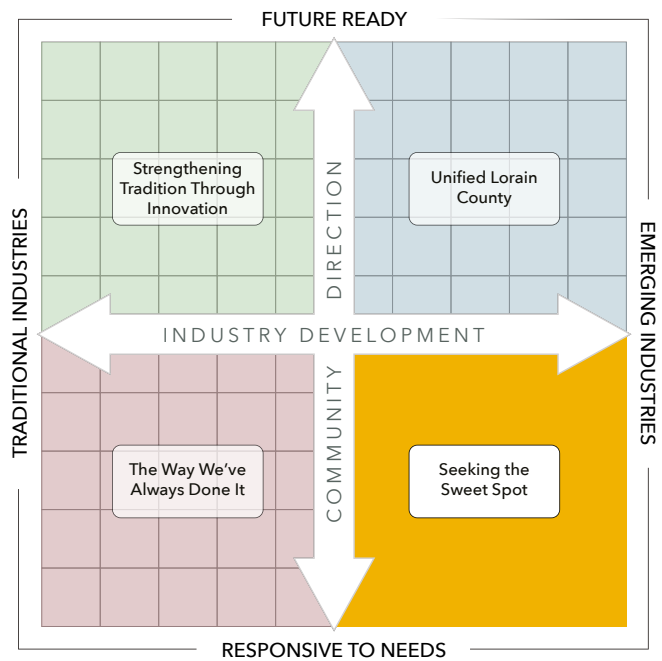
7.3 | SCENARIO C: SEEKING THE SWEETSPOT

This scenario forecasts a future where Lorain County focuses on emerging and future-orientated industries and builds on existing and traditional industries creatively.

Emerging sectors such as technology, water and energy are invested in helping mitigate climate change and improve environmental standards across the county. At the same time Lorain County opts for a more 'responsive to needs' community direction where community infrastructure such as housing and transport are market driven and land use policies and community investment are not standardized across the county but depend on individual communities. The emerging and new industries put a strain on the Lorain County infrastructure and transportation. There is also a work skills gap, and the new industries find it challenging to meet their workforce needs. As a result, there is a focus on training and upskilling to retain and attract the workforce. With young people and families moving to Lorain County for work, there is a need to update the existing amenities to appeal to new residents. There is also a need for a stronger education system to support new families. Concurrently, environmental practices improve and land allocation is reviewed for use of waterfront, agriculture, and greenhouse outcomes. Ecological and environmental impacts are monitored for a healthy community in relation to water, sewerage, and waste.

SCENARIO SNAPSHOT

- Focus on emerging industries and a 'more responsive to needs' community direction
- Market driven community infrastructure
- Work Skills gap experienced by new industries and challenge in finding new workforce
- More young people move to Lorain County and so amenities and activities are enhanced to meet their needs



SCENARIO C CHARACTERISTICS: 'SEEKING THE SWEETSPOT' - 2035

In the 'Seeking the Sweetspot' scenario, the county moves ahead with new industries but cannot support its workforce demands and may not adapt quickly enough with a ready workforce.

The characteristics of this scenario paint a future where Lorain County pivots to focus on emerging future-orientated industries however struggles to initially provide the workforce needed for these industries. The economy is strengthened by this new industrial development and Lorain County seeks to retrain and reskill workers. Young people move to Lorain County due to the new job opportunities and the county updates its amenities to appeal to the younger cohort moving to the county. There is a strong focus on environmental practices and updated infrastructure in relation to meeting the needs of an increased population. The community's social fabric is strained as the community direction is responsive to needs, rather than creating a 'future ready' community that is focused on new ideas, innovation and the elevation of amenities including transportation, housing, and education.



ECONOMY AND INDUSTRY CHARACTERISTICS

New emerging industry focus strains the current transportation model and need new options to get people to their jobs.

- Higher educational institutes provide training to retain and retrain population.
- Economy is strengthened by new industry but struggles to find the ideal workforce.
- Businesses increase tax base to pay for infrastructure.
- Retraining of people in emerging industries.



COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL FABRIC CHARACTERISTICS

Young people move to the county due to new and emerging industry. A need is created for stronger education, career planning and youth empowerment.

- The need for services for the aging population increases.
- The social fabric is strained as the community infrastructure is market driven.
- Communities are traditional and support traditional family structures.
- New amenities and activities occur due to the young workers moving to the area.



BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

There is a review of city and neighborhood structures for access to essential needs. Land allocation is reviewed for use of waterfront, agriculture, and greenhouse outcomes.

- Ecological and environmental impacts are monitored for a healthy community in relation to water, sewerage, and waste.
- Entrepreneurial growth with 50-100 emerging new businesses.
- There is a healthier Environmental aspect - the Metro Park is a continued gem.
- There are sewer expansion in areas such as South Amherst and Brownhelm. There are new industries to handle waste.

2025 Headline News
"EMERGING INDUSTRIES SPUR POLICY CHANGES"



2030 Headline News
"EDUCATIONAL SERVICE CENTER AWARDED FOR COLLABORATIVE APPROACH"



2035 Headline News
"LORAIN COUNTY SELECTED AS THE FUTURE SITE OF AI CENTER"





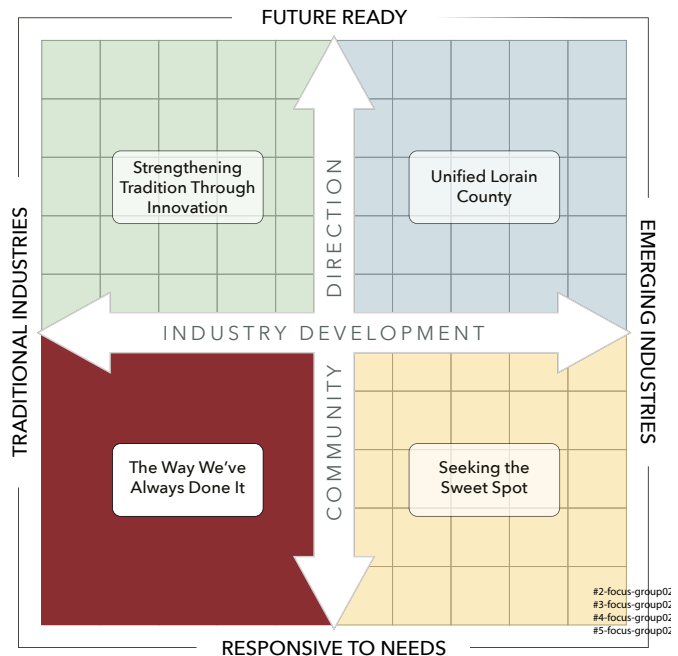
'The Way We've Always Done It' scenario conveys a future where there are declining opportunities for Lorain County residents which leads to continued and increased poverty and many people moving out of the county.

7.4 | SCENARIO D: THE WAY WE'VE ALWAYS DONE IT

This scenario forecasts a future where Lorain County focuses on a more 'tried and tested' traditional approach to industry development.

Public investment and policies are targeted to the current industrial sectors with each municipality working on their own priorities. Concurrently, the community direction of Lorain County is responsive to needs, rather than being proactive and creating a future ready community focused on youth, workforce, and education. The community direction of Lorain County responds to current needs and the priorities of each municipality rather than take an ambitious step to be future ready and forward thinking. The county does not take a regional collaborative approach. The social fabric of the Lorain County community deteriorates with a declining population in struggling communities and a lack of sense of community. Lorain County becomes a bedroom community for those seeking work elsewhere if they haven't moved in the meantime. There is a continued and increased level of poverty and an ensuing pressure on the social service network as well as an increase in crime and substance abuse. There is a lack of affordable housing and fragmented transportation.

- ### SCENARIO SNAPSHOT
- The focus is on traditional industry development and 'responsive to needs' community direction
 - There is a lack of a regional and collaborative approach
 - Workforce becomes an issue across the county
 - Poverty remains or increases and people leave Lorain County for a better lifestyle and work opportunities
 - Crime and substance abuse increases
 - There is a lack of affordable housing and a fragmented transportation system



SCENARIO D CHARACTERISTICS: 'THE WAY WE'VE ALWAYS DONE IT' - 2035

In 'The Way We've Always Done It' scenario, the future of Lorain County is looking fragile with many residents leaving and many existing residents living in poverty.

The characteristics of this scenario paint a future where the future is unappealing. Continuing with traditional approaches to community, infrastructure, and economic development will isolate Lorain County and cause increasing hardship for residents and stakeholders.



ECONOMY AND INDUSTRY CHARACTERISTICS

Focus on traditional industry rather than emerging new industry.

- Lorain County becomes a bedroom community.
- There are increased taxes with an aging infrastructure.
- Companies are leaving to relocate to other counties.
- There are empty buildings as companies leave Lorain County.



COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL FABRIC CHARACTERISTICS

Population declines in struggling communities and there is a lack of neighborhood support system/sense of community.

- Increased drug, substance abuse and crime.
- Divisive society (Rural vs Urban vs Suburban).
- Commuting patterns of people leaving the cities.
- Continued and increased level of poverty and pressure on social service network.



BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

Increased housing for those with better income. There is a need for affordable housing with diverse population.

- Urban cities are hollowed out.
- Transportation is fragmented.
- Some cities have grown but most remain the same or decline.

2025 Headline News

"AGING POPULATION STRAINS HEALTHCARE SYSTEM"



2030 Headline News

"LCCC GRADUATES LARGEST CLASS EVER - 75% TAKE JOBS IN COLUMBUS"



2035 Headline News

"BEDROOM COMMUNITY LC PLACES EXCESS PRESSURE ON COMMUNITY SERVICES"

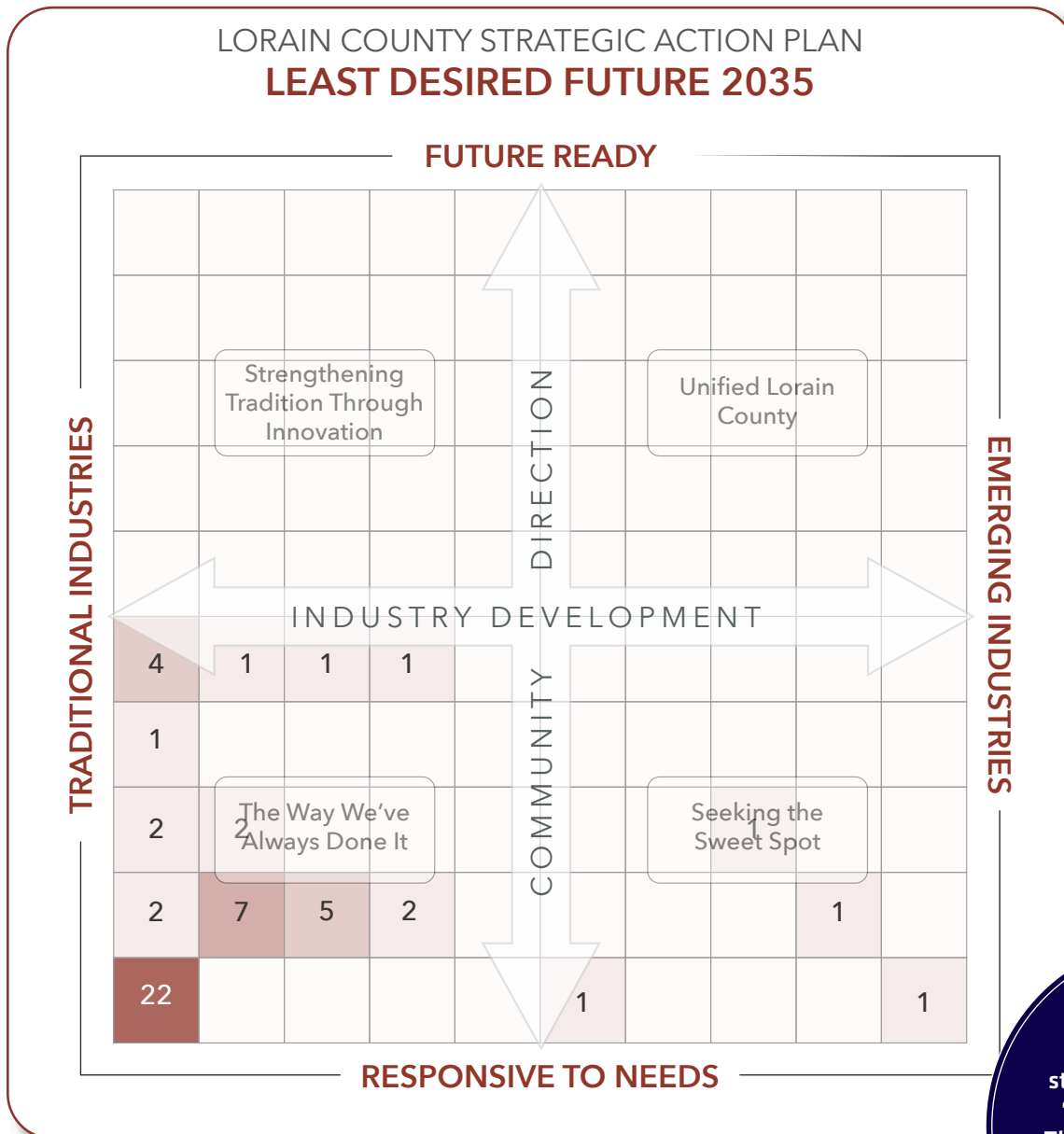


CLOSING DOWN EVERYTHING MUST GO!!!

8.0 | LEAST DESIRED, EXPECTED, AND PREFERRED FUTURES

8.1 | LEAST DESIRED FUTURE

The Least Desired Future is defined as ‘the future that you think will be the most undesirable for the future of Lorain County. Think-Tank participants most definitely considered Scenario D, ‘The Way We’ve Always Done It’ to be the Least Desired scenario for Lorain County.



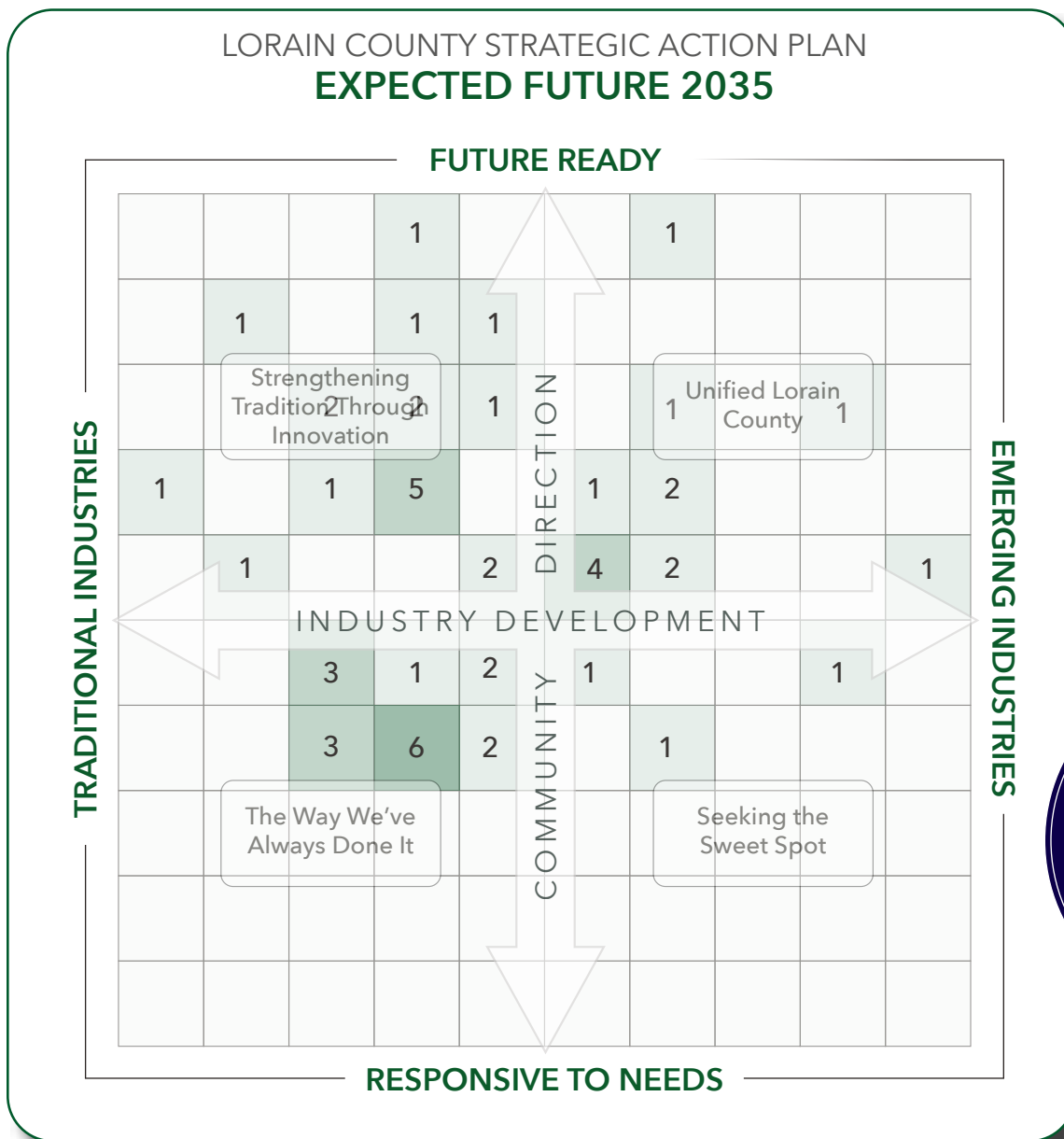
The least desired future is one where stakeholders have said, ‘We don’t want that.’ This provides leadership a mandate to change the trajectory of the county to avoid this scenario.

FutureInsight

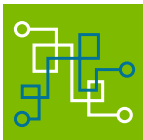
- The intensity of color in the bottom left corner of the scenario matrix indicates that Think-Tank participants have a shared view of the least desirable future.
- The corners of the scenario matrix quadrants indicate the extreme versions of the scenarios.

8.2 | EXPECTED FUTURE

The expected future is one deemed most likely to happen if there is no change in the current trajectory of Lorain County. Most Think-Tank participants indicated that the expected future is somewhat split between all scenarios but especially between Scenario A and Scenario D. A number believed that scenario D, “The Way We’ve Always Done It”, is the scenario that represented the expected future of Lorain County. An equal number of participants also thought scenario A, “Strengthening Tradition through Innovation” could also be a possible expected future.



The Expected Future represents the future that is most likely to happen if the community does nothing to change direction or trajectory.

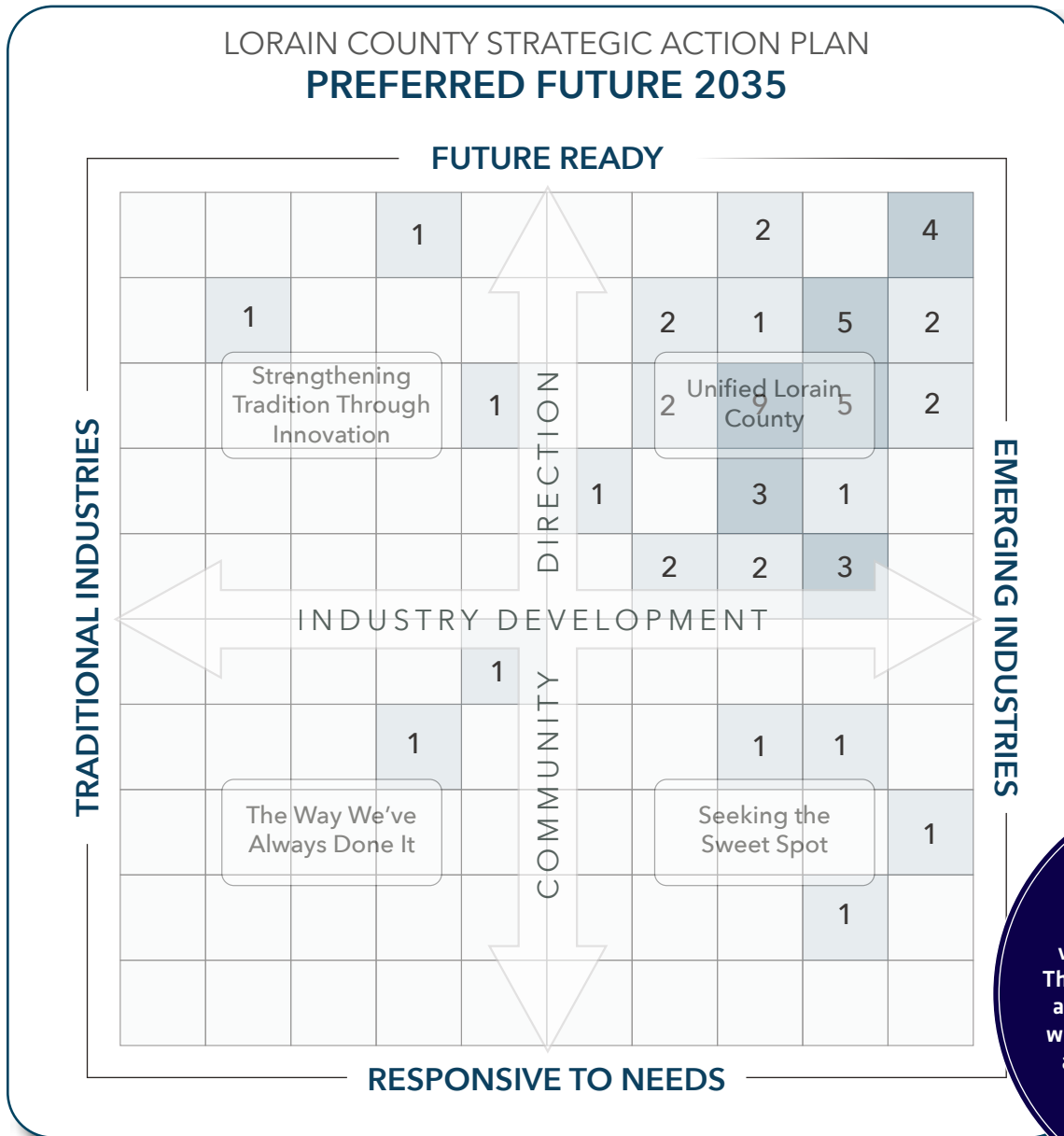


FutureInsight

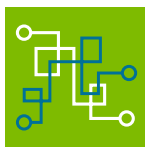
- The responses are clustered at the top of Scenario D and almost at the bottom of Scenario A.
- The expected future represents a future where the Community Direction is responsive to needs and industry development is focused on traditional industries.

8.3 | PREFERRED FUTURE

Think-Tank participants expressed an overwhelming preference for Scenario B, 'Unified Lorain County' as the Preferred Future for Lorain County in 2035. Think-Tank participants discussed the consequences of inaction and the need to take decisive action now to redirect the county's trajectory over the next 10 years.



Getting to the preferred future requires collaboration, alignment of vision and strong leadership. Think-Tank participants showed a clear desire for change and a willingness to work together to achieve the preferred future for economic development in Lorain County.



FutureInsight

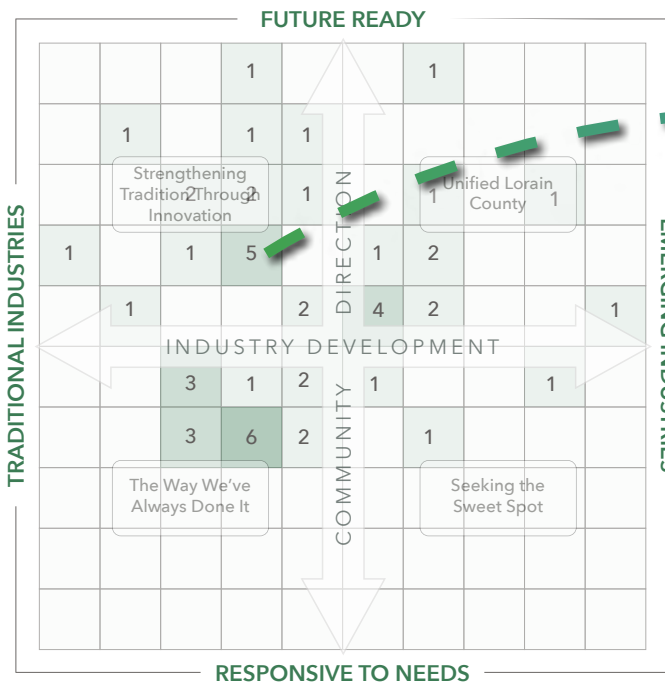
- The concentration of color in Scenario B, 'Unified Lorain County', indicates a close alignment of thinking among Think-Tank participants, and a significant appetite for future ready community direction and emerging industries in industry development.
- Arriving at a point of consensus among stakeholders about the preferred future is very important to the strategic action planning process as it provides a sense of cohesion, agreement, and balanced solutions going forward.



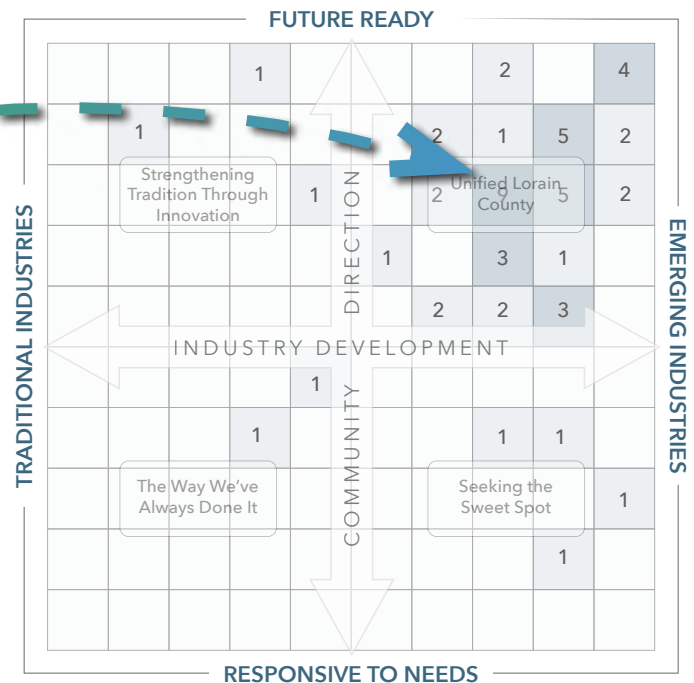
8.4 | GETTING TO THE PREFERRED FUTURE

Think-Tank participants discussed the ramifications and implications of failing to achieve the preferred future. While there was strong alignment among Think-Tank participants that Scenario B, 'Unified Lorain County,' represented the preferred scenario, it was also recognized that reorienting the current trajectory will require significant community engagement, communication, and leadership in the county.

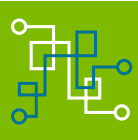
LORAIN COUNTY STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN
EXPECTED FUTURE 2035



LORAIN COUNTY STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN
PREFERRED FUTURE 2035



Because of the long-term nature of Scenario Planning methodology, stakeholders often see the 'distant future vision (2035)' as unattainable and unrealistic. However, this underestimates the progress that can be made during the intervening years, and the cumulative positive impacts of change.

- 

The Think-Tank scenario planning process is a significant step in the county's planning process to define collectively how Lorain County will strategically plan to achieve its preferred future.
- Telling the story of why Lorain County needs to pivot in its trajectory will be an important part of how change will be made.



Please stay connected to the Lorain County Strategic Action Plan process at lab2.future-iq.com/lorain-county-strategic-action-plan-project/.

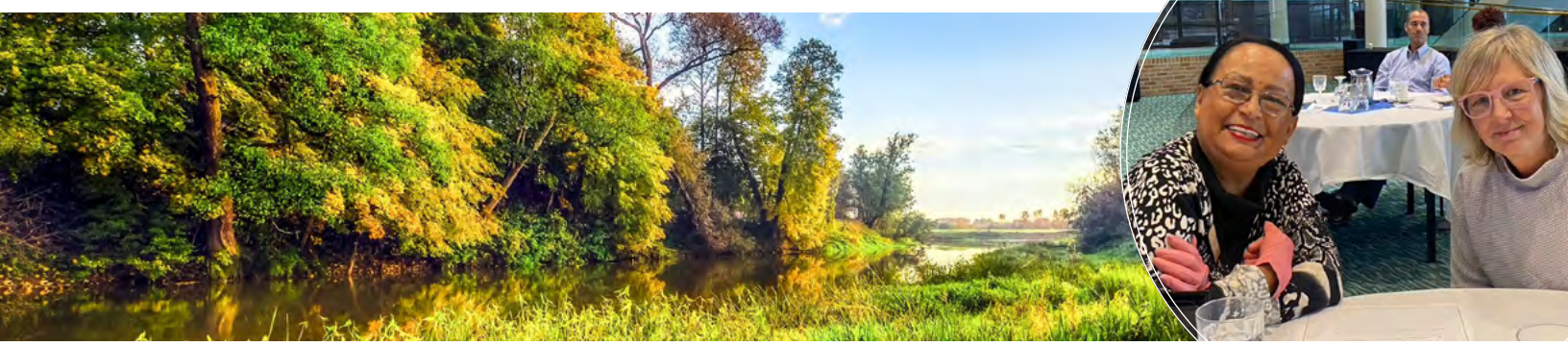
9.0 | NEXT STEPS IN THE STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN PROCESS

Following the Think-Tank, this Think-Tank Report was written and published for distribution. The project will then move into the 'Strategic Positioning and Validating' phase of the planning process.

Project Stages & Opportunities to Engage



- December 4-6. 2023 – 9 Countywide Workshops
- February 6-9, 2024 - Focus Group sessions
- February 2024 –Survey #2
- April 2024 – Presentation of Lorain County Strategic Action Plan to Council and to community at Future Summit





10.0 | ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A Strategic Engagement Committee was formed to help guide this project. We would like to acknowledge the Strategic Engagement Committee members.



STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

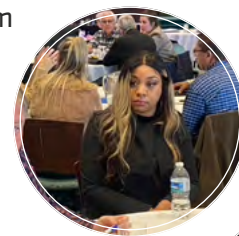
Tom Demaline	Eric Flynn	Mark Costilow
Mary Felton	John Ciarrone	Jack Bradley
Barb Tamas	Dave Blevins	Jeff Riddell (Lorain County Commissioner)
Sean Brady	Tracy Green	
Ben Norton	Marcia Ballinger	
Neil Lynch	Bryan Jensen	

Community members and stakeholders have engaged in this strategic action planning process with great enthusiasm and commitment. Their passion and interest have ensured discussions are open, thoughtful, and reflective of the myriad of perspectives that exist within Lorain County. This dedication is also reflective of the deep commitment participants have to the future of Lorain County.

Additionally, appreciation is extended to Dave Greenspan (Special Projects Coordinator/Manager), John Gall (Administrative Assistant to County Commissioner Jeff Riddell) and Chris Kish (Executive Assistant to Administrator) at Lorain County Government who provide the local expertise that helps guide this project. Their time and dedication are greatly appreciated. In particular Dave Greenspan has worked on a weekly basis with Future iQ regarding the entire organization, coordination and progression of the Lorain County Strategic Action Plan process.

Appreciation is also extended to Cynthia Andrews (President and CEO) and the team at the Community Foundation of Lorain County for their outreach to the Lorain County community for this important process. We would also like to extend our appreciation to Victor Leandry of El Centro for translation and outreach services.

We would also like to thank Tracy Green, Vice President, Strategic and Institutional Development and the team at Lorain County Community College for providing a fantastic venue for the Think-Tank.





»»»» 11.0 | FOR MORE INFORMATION

This initiative is focused on planning for the future of Lorain County. It is exploring where and how the county can fit into a rapidly changing world, looking out to 2035. The result will be a shared Strategic Action plan, that will contain an initial implementation roadmap looking out to 2035 – with actions – to move toward the shared vision for the county.

For more information on the Lorain County Strategic Action Plan project please contact:

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Please stay connected to the collaborative regional planning initiative at:
lab2.future-iq.com/lorain-county-strategic-action-plan-project/





LORAIN COUNTY STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN
THINK-TANK REPORT
OHIO, USA
NOVEMBER 2023