Round 1 Engagement Results Summary

LC FORWARD
Your Voice, Our Future

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Round 1 Engagement Results Summary

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Purpose, Format, and Activities

Engagement Round 1

Purpose

Round 1 Engagement

- Introduce the community to the planning process.
- Share key trends and conditions impacting the County.
- Gather initial insight and ideas that will inform the vision, goals, and high-level topics of the plan.



Format

Round 1 Engagement

1. **Community Conversations**
   Three in-person workshops on June 23 in Newark, June 25 in Hanover, and June 30 in Pataskala.

2. **Online Survey**
   Interactive activities on the LC Forward website from late June to late July.

3. **Pop-Up Events**
   Tabled at 11 community events from May through August.

Communications and Outreach included:

- Press releases and articles in the Newark Advocate and The Reporting Project
- Email newsletters reaching thousands of recipients
- Numerous social media posts by local municipalities and townships
- Tabling at community events

Format

Round 1 Engagement

Pop-Up Events included:

- Newark Strawberry Festival
- Canal Market District
- Hebron Farmer's Market
- Pataskala Farmer's Market
- Granville Farmer's Market
- Johnstown Lifestyle Farmer's Market
- Granville Kiwanis 4th of July Celebration
- Heath's Star Spangled Celebration
- Buckeye Lake for Tomorrow Fundraiser
- Downtown Newark Final Friday
- Hartford Fair

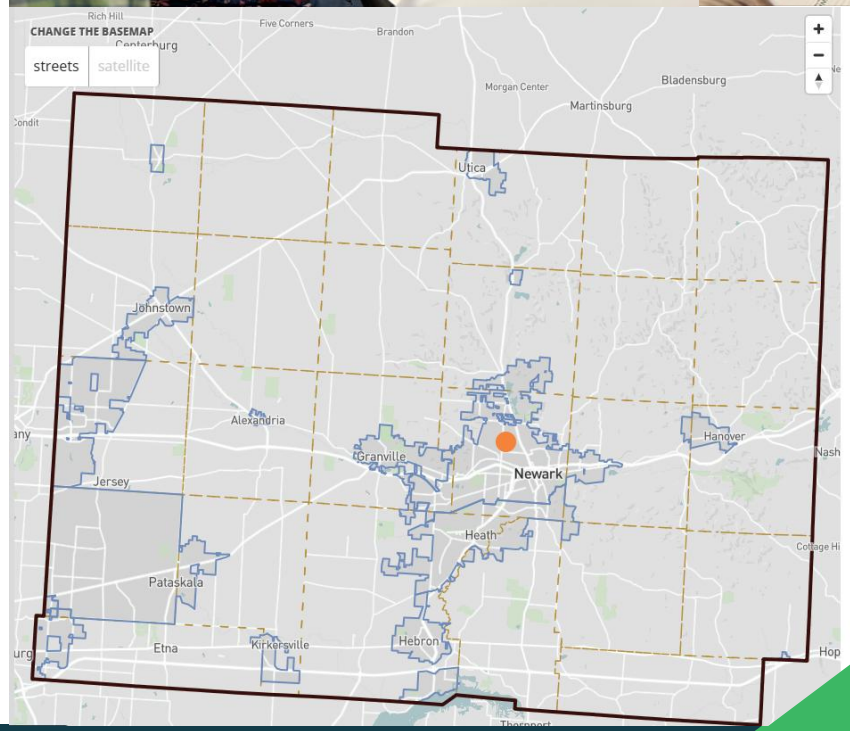
Activities

Workshops and Online

- **Activity 1:** Participants were asked: What do you treasure about Licking County today?
- **Activity 2:** Participants were asked to think about how Licking County could change over the next 10 years. They then marked places on the map where they would like to see No Change, Some Change, or Transformative Change.







Activities

Pop-Up Events

At community events, participants were asked two questions:

- What do you think is needed to move Licking County forward for the best possible future?
- What could prevent Licking County from moving forward for the best possible future?







What We Learned

Treasures

Treasures

Participants were asked:

What do you treasure about Licking County today?

525

Total Treasures Shared



Treasures: Themes

- **Rural Identity.**
  Rural character, open space, and farmland are deeply valued. Protecting this land from sprawl is a top priority across the County.
- **Small Town Feel.**
  Residents consistently value knowing their neighbors, feeling safe, and belonging to a tight-knit community. Many note this is already changing and want it protected.
- **Parks and Trails.**
  Natural spaces such as the T.J. Evans Trail, Dawes Arboretum, and Blackhand Gorge were identified as important to quality of life.

Treasures: Themes (continued)

- **Columbus Proximity.**
  Residents appreciate being 30-45 minutes from a major city while staying rural, and many warn this balance is eroding as sprawl moves east.
- **History and Heritage.**
  The Newark Earthworks (UNESCO World Heritage Site), Blackhand Gorge, and Flint Ridge were named as significant places to local and national history.
- **Community Collaboration.**
  Residents highlight a culture of generosity, volunteerism, and civic investment that feels distinct to Licking County.

What We Learned

Mapping Change

Mapping Change

Participants were asked to think about how Licking County could change over the next 10 years. They then marked places on the map where they would like to see:



No Change

If you were to visit this place in 10 years, you hope it looks, feels, and functions almost exactly as it does today.

Some Change

If you were to visit this place in 10 years, you hope some things look, feel, and/or function differently than they do today while others remain the same.



Transformative Change

If you were to visit this place in 10 years, you hope the look, feel, and/or function of the place would be majorly different.

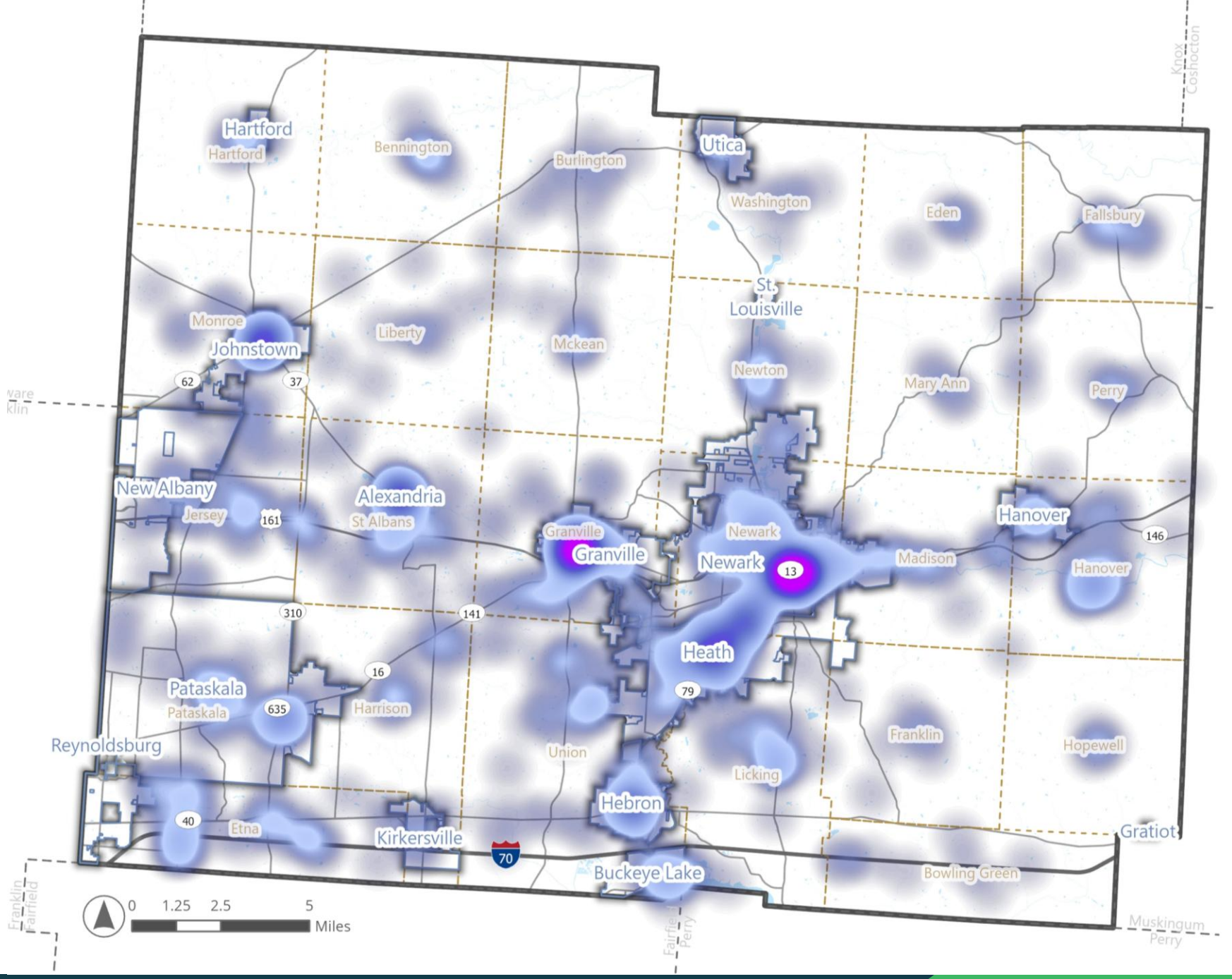
All Place Types

644 Places Marked

Heat Map

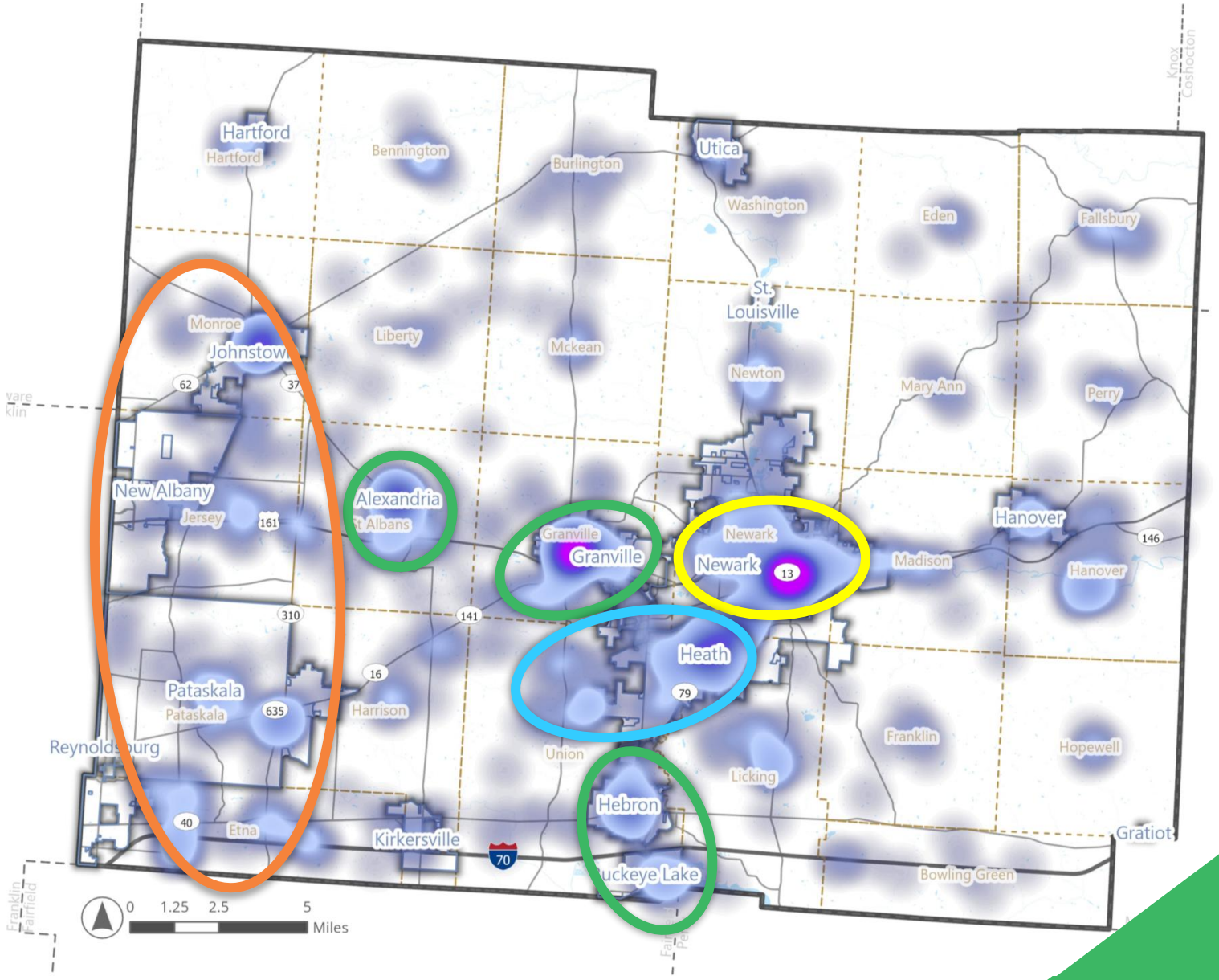
Sparse

Dense



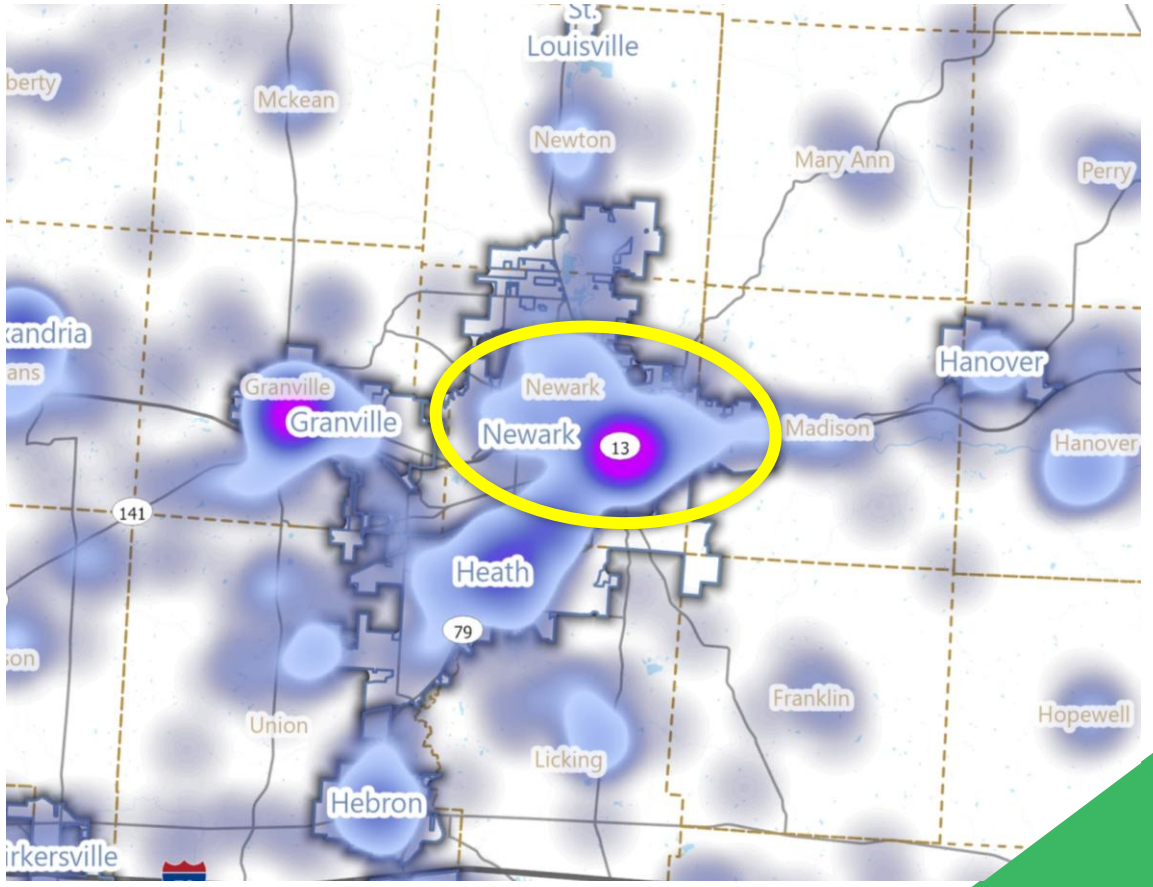
Area Themes

A. Newark
B. Heath/Union Twp Area
C. Western Edge
D. Central Villages
E. Rural Areas (uncircled)



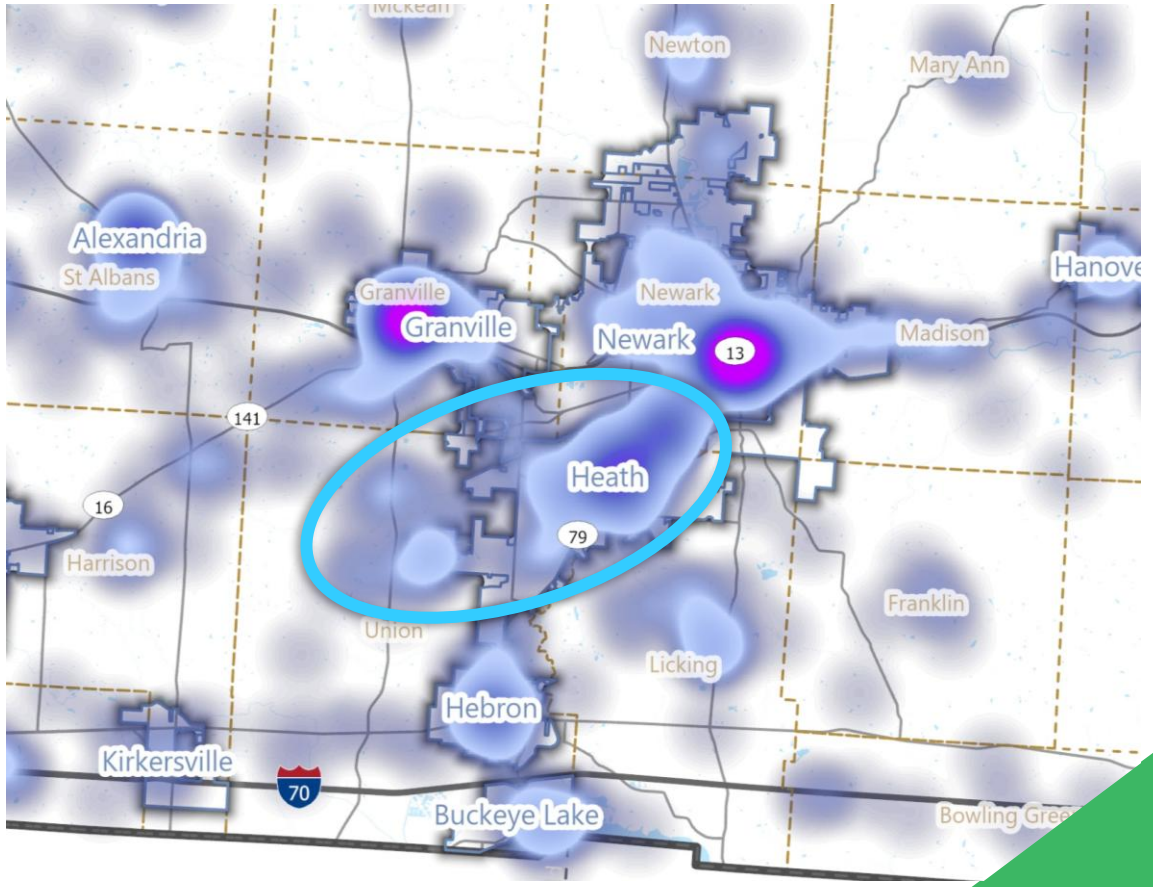
Newark: Themes

- Concern about homelessness and lack of affordable housing.
- Interest in expanded multi-modal transportation options, including walking, biking, and public transit.
- Desire to protect and further enhance downtown.



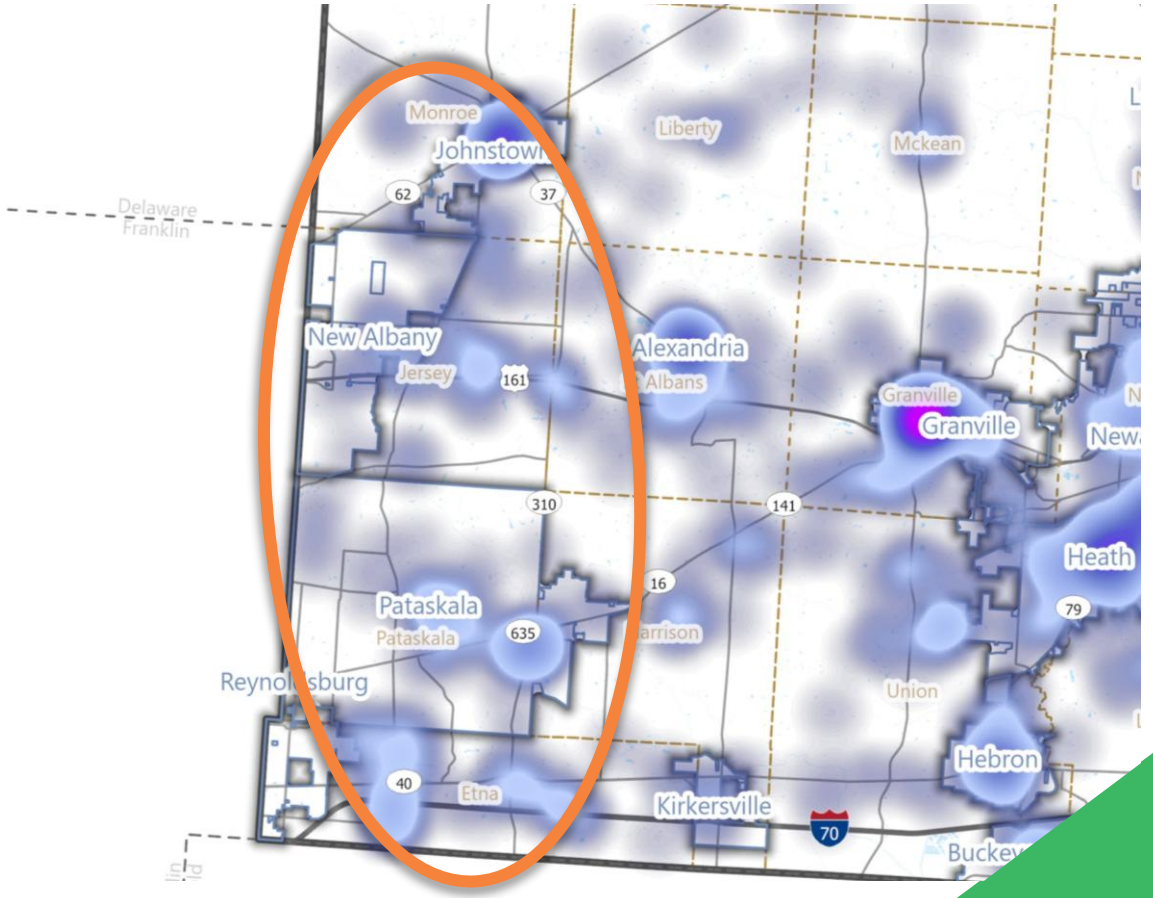
Heath/Union Twp Area: Themes

- Concern about potential new industrial and dense residential development.
- Interest in seeing the Indian Mound Mall area revitalized.
- Desire for more community-serving spaces like the potential new city center.



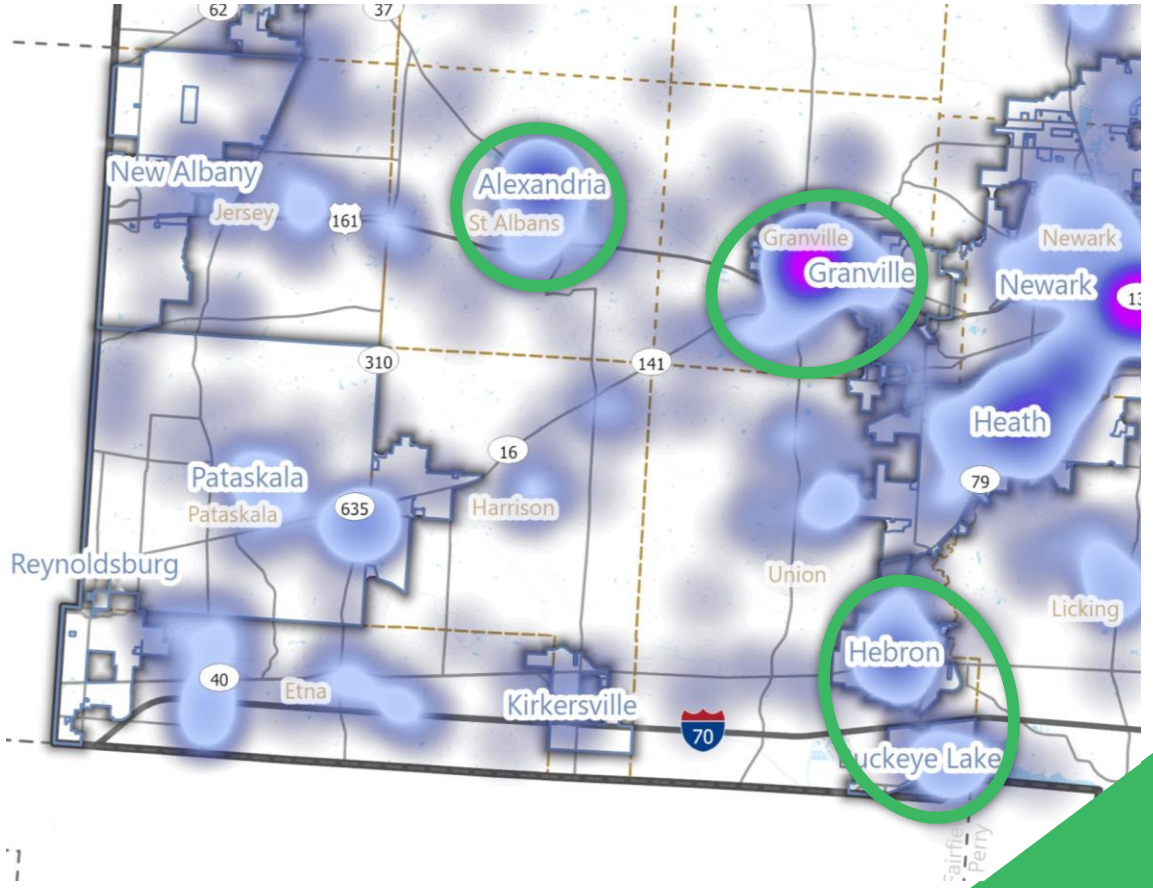
Western Edge: Themes

- Concern about development sprawl, including data centers.
- Interest in enhancing existing population centers in Pataskala, Johnstown, and Etna Twp.
- Desire for transportation improvements along major roads and interstates.



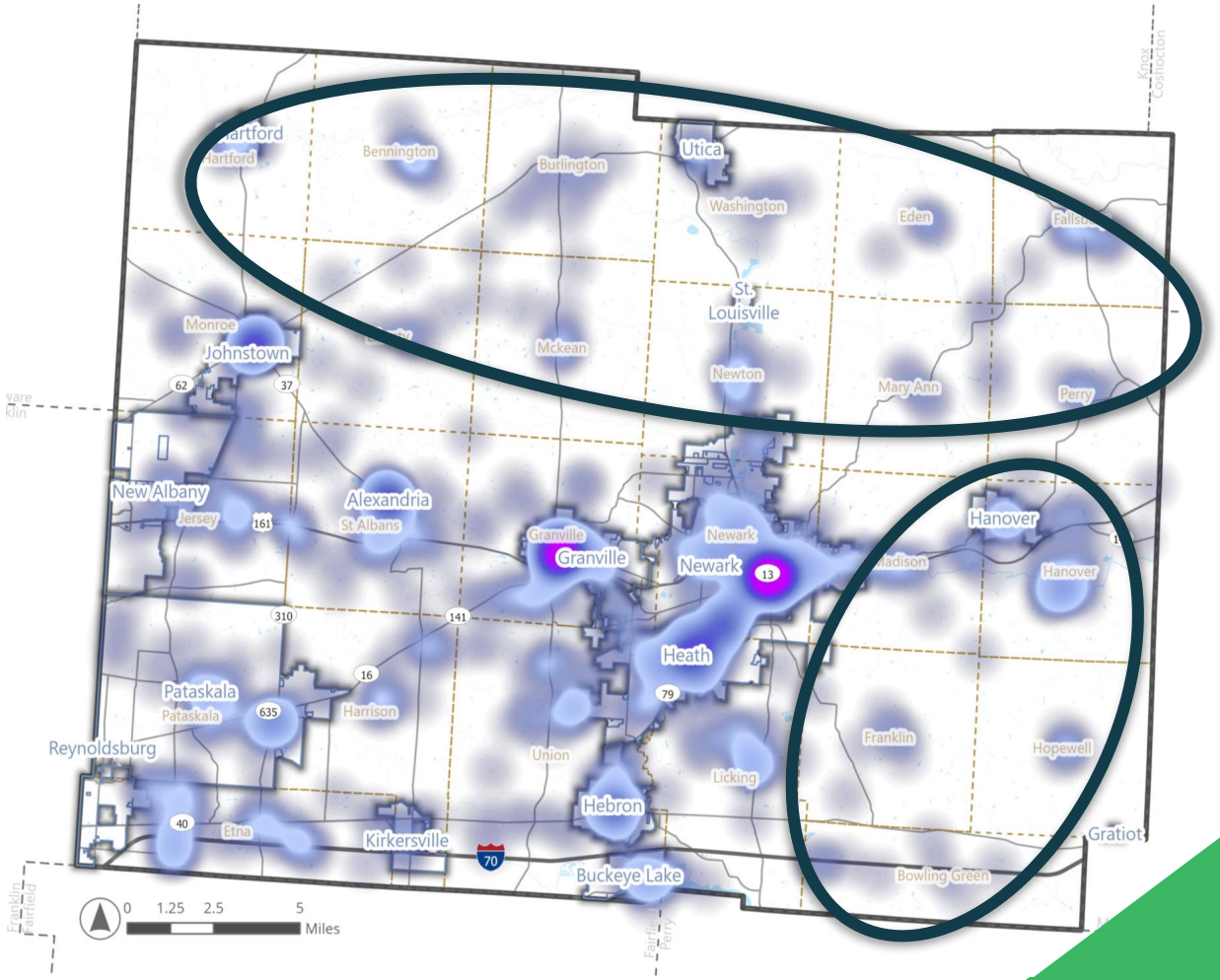
Central Villages: Themes

- Concern about how growth pressures could create suburban sprawl.
- Interest in villages focusing growth on strengthening existing centers.
- Desire to protect small-town feel, historic places, and natural amenities.



Rural Areas: Themes

- Concern about sprawling industrial and residential land uses into rural areas.
- Interest in preserving agricultural and natural areas.
- Desire for transportation improvements along major roads and intersections.



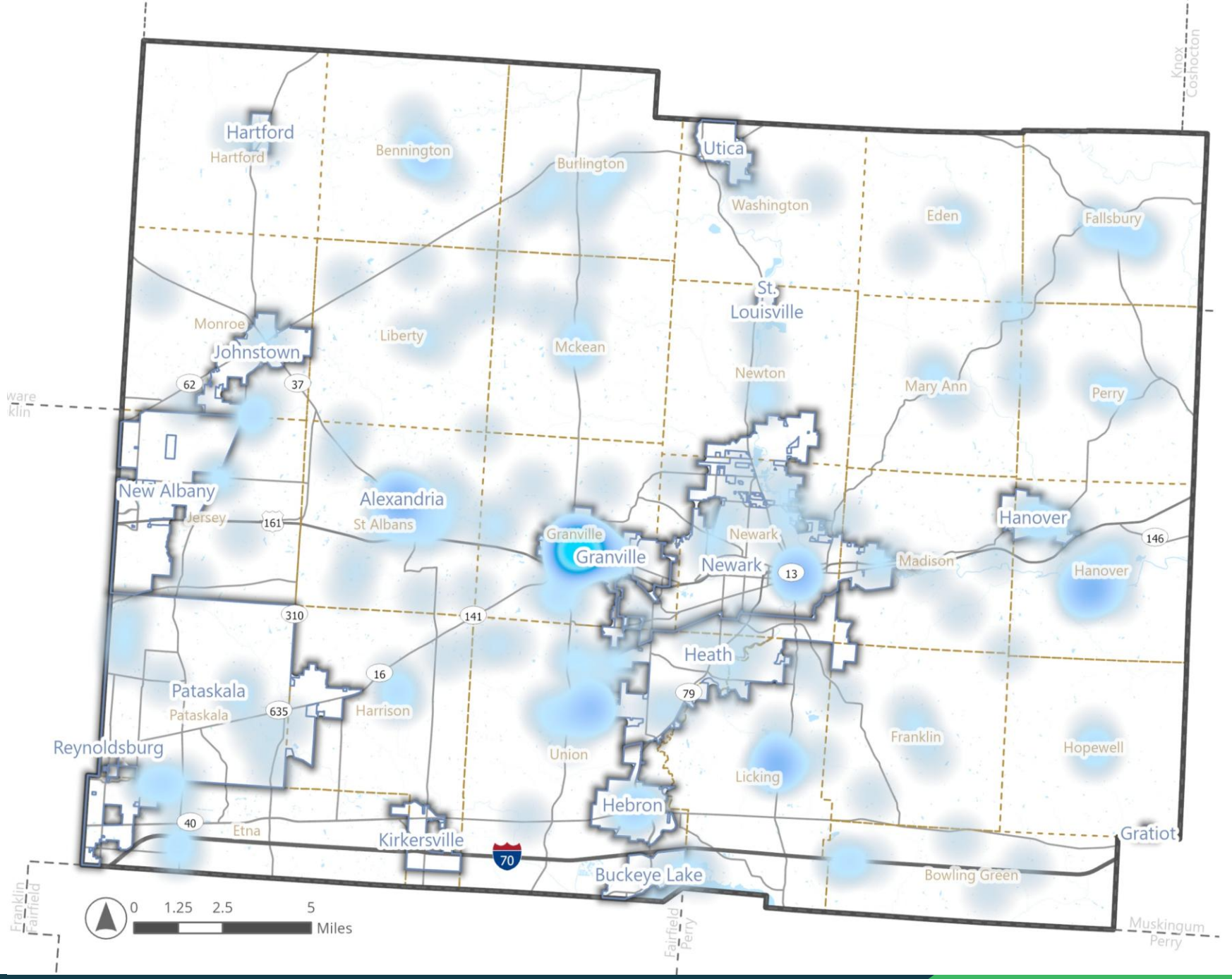
No Change

238 Places Marked (37%)

Heat Map

Sparse

Dense



No Change: Themes

- **Farmland and rural character must be protected.** Rural areas, especially in eastern Licking County, need to be shielded from development sprawl.
- **Data centers are a major worry.** Significant opposition expressed. People have concern especially in the western part of the County.
- **Granville's charm is greatly valued.** Residents fear sprawling, industrial growth and want the Village's feel to be protected at all costs.
- **Parks and natural areas must be prioritized.** Places like Dawes Arboretum, Blackhand Gorge, Infirmary Mound, and the T.J. Evans Trail should be permanently protected and expanded.
- **Natural resources need protection.** People expressed concern about the impacts of development near Buckeye Lake and the Licking River watershed.

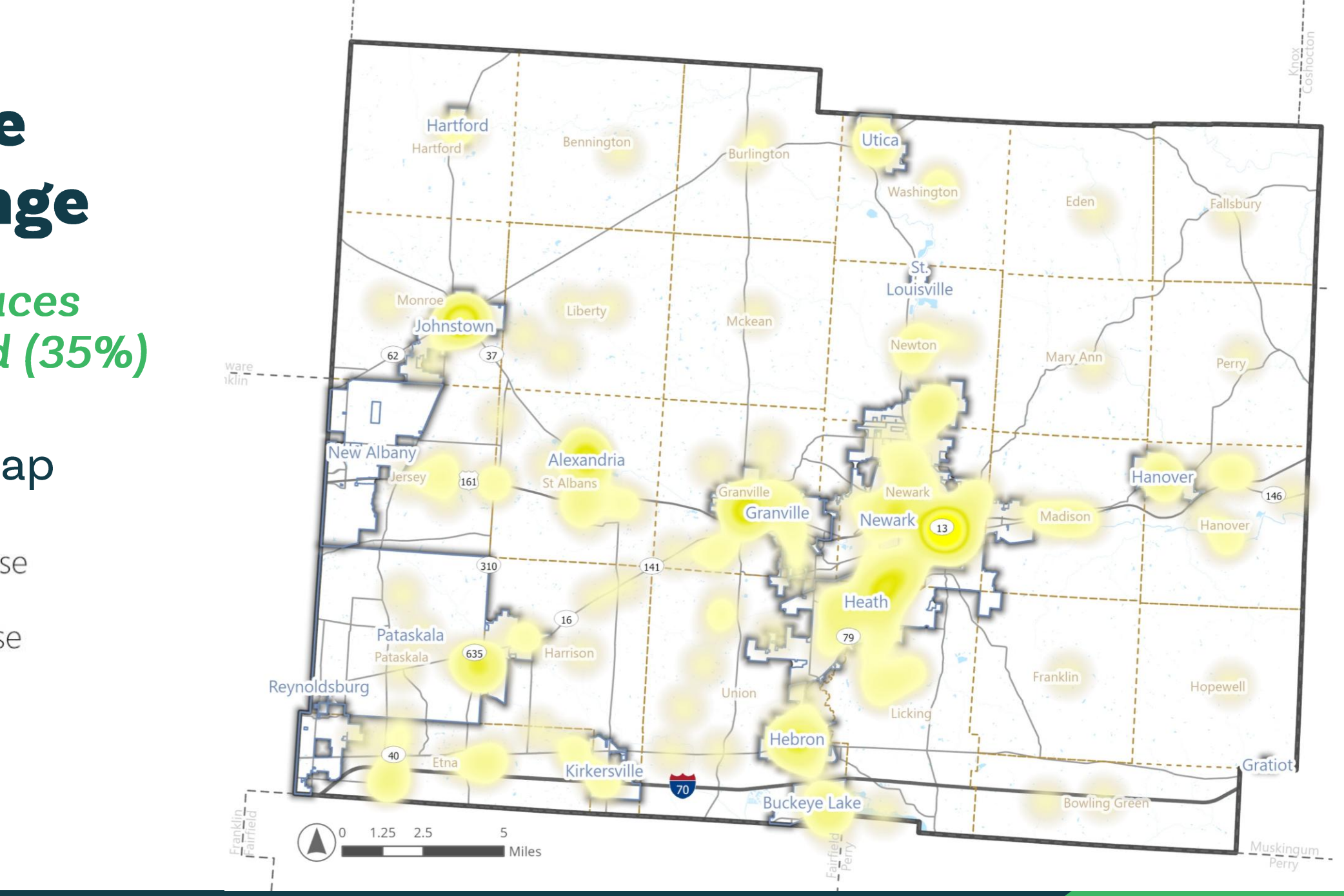
Some Change

225 Places Marked (35%)

Heat Map

Sparse

Dense



Some Change: Themes

- **Direct growth to corridors, protect farmland.** Support for targeted growth along I-70, SR 16, and SR 79, while protecting farmland elsewhere.
- **Continue Downtown investment momentum.** People would like to see continued progress towards enhancing and strengthening Downtown Newark and Heath.
- **Address pedestrian and bike infrastructure gap.** 30th Street, 21st Street, and Hebron Road were repeatedly flagged as dangerous for non-drivers.
- **Allow small towns to grow without losing their character.** Villages like Utica, Alexandria, and Hebron could absorb thoughtful growth.
- **Take action on housing affordability and homelessness.** Residents tied housing instability directly to community safety, particularly in Newark.

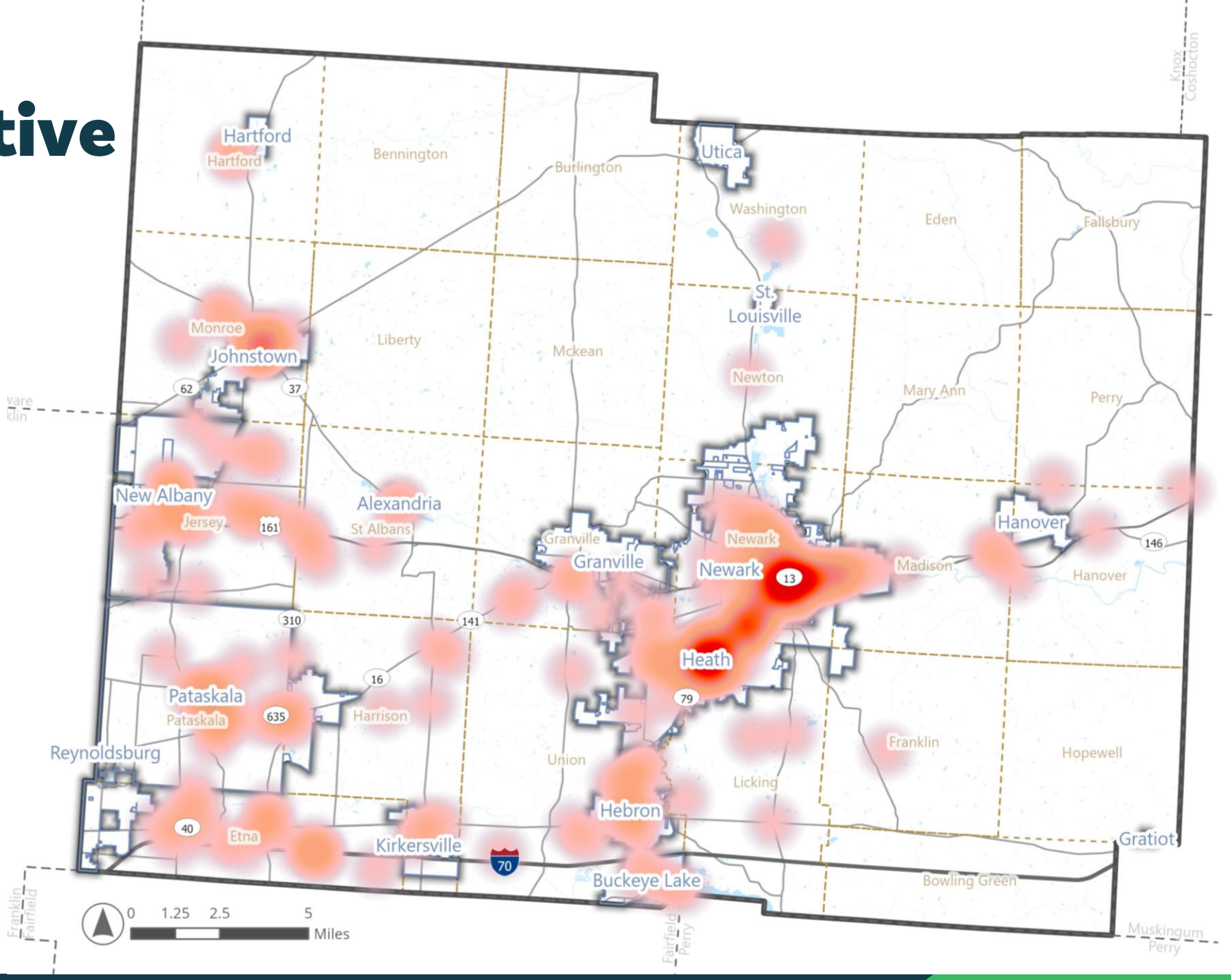
Transformative Change

181 Places Marked (28%)

Heat Map

Sparse

Dense



Transformative Change: Themes

- **Mitigate traffic and congestion.** Congestion along I-70, SR 16 / 37 / 161 / 310, and 21st Street (among others) is a top concern.
- **Capitalize on the opportunity of underutilized sites.** Sites like the Indian Mound Mall are seen as high-priority redevelopment targets.
- **Focus on housing affordability.** People expressed concerns about working families, teachers, and first responders being priced out of their own communities.
- **Promote downtown vibrancy and walkability.** Residents want walkable, mixed-use downtowns and see recent projects in Newark and Heath as a foundation.
- **Address data centers and warehouses.** Residents calling for change shared concerns about industrial sprawl into rural areas, including its impacts on natural resources and uncertainty in its benefits or job creation.

What We Learned

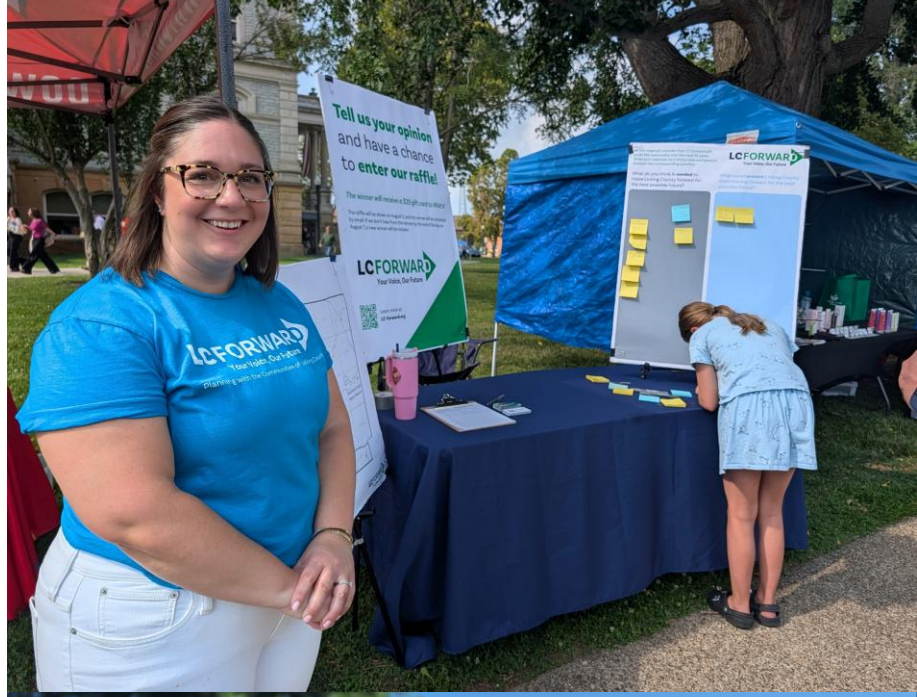
Pop-Up Engagement

Pop-Up Engagement

Participants were asked:

1. *What do you think is needed to move Licking County forward for the best possible future?*

2. *What could prevent Licking County from moving forward for the best possible future?*





What is needed? : Themes

Participants desire:

- More parks, trails, recreation spaces, and connected green space.
- Proactive measures to address data centers.
- Protection of water and farmland before development makes loss permanent.
- Improved public transit and infrastructure for walking and biking.
- More community-serving places such as locally-owned businesses, affordable housing, and accessible healthcare.

What could prevent? : Themes

Participants identified threats including:

- Unregulated data center expansion.
- Development sprawl and farmland loss.
- Water depletion and environmental neglect.
- Fragmented planning and competition between local governments.
- Rising taxes and housing costs.