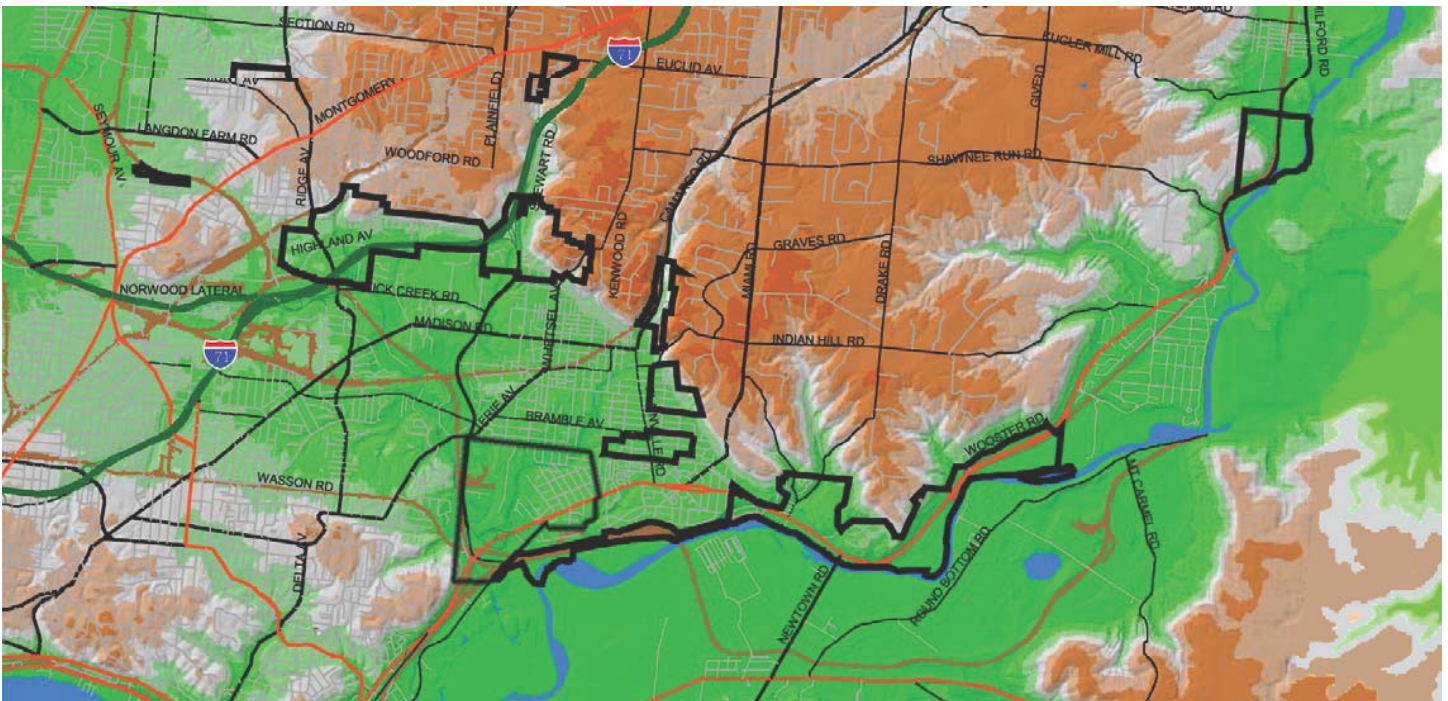


COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP

HAMILTON COUNTY, OHIO

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2005



COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP

Susan Hughes, President

Jane Pirman, Vice-President

Stephen Langenkamp, Trustee

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Meisner + Associates / Land Vision
Balke American
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Columbia Township Comprehensive Plan

May 2005

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	1
LIST OF FIGURES	4
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	5
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
SECTION I. PLANNING AND VISIONING PROCESSES	8
Introduction	8
Comprehensive Planning	8
Study Area.....	9
Application of this Document	10
History of Columbia Township	10
Planning Process.....	11
Coordination with Other Plans and Reports	13
Visioning Process	14
Introduction.....	14
Vision Committee	14
The Visioning Process: Community Members Working Together	15
Educating Citizen Planners	16
General Land Use Planning Principles	16
Vision Committee Questionnaire Summary	17
Issues, Themes and Goals	19
Themes - Goals	20
Initial Input Form – Issues Raised Matrix.....	21
Community Input	22
Focus Group Meeting Summaries	22
ISO Exercise	22
Western Focus Area Conclusions	23
Eastern Focus Area Conclusions.....	24
Zones of Change Summaries	27
Western Focus Area Zones of Change	27
Eastern Focus Area Zones of Change	29
Jurisdictional Meeting.....	32
Public Workshops.....	34
Vision Statement.....	34
Planning Goals and Objectives.....	36
Introduction.....	36
Economic Development.....	36
Transportation and Access	37
Township Identity and Image.....	38

Infrastructure and Public Facilities.....	39
Residential.....	40
Neighborhood Business Districts	41
Parks and Recreation	41
Land Use	42
SECTION II. EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS REPORT	44
Overview.....	44
Introduction	44
Definition of Land Use Plan.....	44
Existing Land Use and Zoning.....	44
Western Focus Area Existing Land Use and Zoning.....	46
Eastern Focus Area Existing Land Use and Zoning	48
Zoning	50
Introduction	50
Residential Districts.....	50
Commercial Districts.....	51
Industrial Districts	51
Special Purpose Districts	51
Special Public Interest Districts.....	52
Demographic Inventory & Analysis.....	52
Introduction	52
Population.....	52
Historical Population Trends	53
Annexation and Population.....	53
Population Projections	54
Population by Age.....	54
Age	55
Household Size.....	56
Population Comparisons	56
Housing	56
Future Outlook and Needs	57
Environmental Inventory and Analysis.....	57
Topography and Slope	57
Soils.....	58
Wetlands and Hydric Soils.....	59
Flood Zone and Aquifer	59
Summary Analysis of Development Constraints	59
Community Facilities	59
Introduction	59
Schools.....	60
Street Services	60
Police, Fire & EMS	60
Parks and Recreation.....	61

Infrastructure and Utility Assessment.....	62
Introduction.....	62
Sanitary Sewer	62
Water.....	62
Electric	63
Natural Gas	63
Township Streets	64
Transportation and Access	64
Introduction.....	64
Previous Transportation Planning Studies	65
Thoroughfare Classification	66
Traffic Volumes	67
Existing Roadways Issues	69
Recommendations	70
Long-Term Transportation Improvements.....	74
Prioritization and Timing.....	75
Means of Implementation	75
Conclusions	76
SECTION III. RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION	77
Future Land Use.....	77
Introduction.....	77
Future Land Use	77
Future Land Use Categories	77
Western Focus Area Land Use Summaries /General Recommendations.....	80
Eastern Focus Area Land Use Summaries / General Recommendations	80
Land Use and Growth	81
Recommended Zones of Change	82
Western Focus Area	82
Eastern Focus Area	83
Implementation	84
Introduction.....	84
Implementation Goals and Objectives.....	84
Implementation Tools	85
Columbia Township's Strategic Redevelopment Opportunities	86
Community Reinvestment Areas	90
Legal Instruments.....	93
Potential Funding Sources	95
Conclusions.....	98

List of Figures

Figures are located at the end of this report.

Figure 1.	Area Context Map
Figure 2.	Columbia Township Jurisdiction Map
Figure 3.	Columbia Township Comprehensive Plan Process Chart
Figure 4.	Visioning Process
Figure 5.	Vision Committee Community Issues Summary
Figure 6.	Zones of Potential Change Western Focus Area
Figure 7.	Zones of Potential Change Eastern Focus Area
Figure 8.	Open House Survey Results
Figure 9.	Columbia Township Zoning
Figure 10A.	Existing Land Uses Western Focus Area
Figure 10B.	Existing Land Uses Eastern Focus Area
Figure 10.1	Existing Zoning and Land Use Norwood Green
Figure 10.2	Existing Zoning and Land Use Ridgewood
Figure 10.3	Existing Zoning and Land Use Stewart Road
Figure 10.4	Existing Zoning and Land Use Ridge-Highland West
Figure 10.5	Existing Zoning and Land Use Ridge-Highland East
Figure 10.6	Existing Zoning and Land Use Camargo Road
Figure 10.7	Existing Zoning and Land Use Madison Place North
Figure 10.8	Existing Zoning and Land Use Madison Place South
Figure 10.9	Existing Zoning and Land Use Wooster Road West
Figure 10.10	Existing Zoning and Land Use Plainville Wooster
Figure 10.11	Existing Zoning and Land Use Wooster Road East
Figure 10.12	Existing Zoning and Land Use Camp Dennison South
Figure 11.	Topography and Elevation
Figure 12.	Soil Analysis
Figure 13.	Hydric Soils and Wetland Areas
Figure 14.	Floodplains and Aquifer
Figure 15.	Parks, Steep Slopes, Floodplains, and Aquifer
Figure 16.1	Future Land Use Western Focus Area
Figure 16.2	Future Land Use Eastern Focus Area
Figure 17.1	Zones of Potential Change Western Focus Area
Figure 17.2	Zones of Potential Change Eastern Focus Area

Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

Beginning in October 2004 and continuing through March 2005, Meisner and Associates / Land Vision, with a team of subconsultants, conducted a Comprehensive Planning Study of Columbia Township at the direction of Township Trustees and Township Administrator. A Township-wide citizen planning committee was created together with focus groups to assist the Township in visioning and setting goals for the Comprehensive Plan. The study was initiated to develop a long term vision of the Township that will help guide official decisions for improvement of the community during the next 20 years.

Columbia Township encompasses an area of 2.67 square miles and is home to 4,600 residents according to 2000 census data. The Township consists of twelve discontinuous areas, a result of numerous annexations by the City of Cincinnati, Village of Fairfax, Indian Hill, Madeira, Mariemont, Norwood, and other surrounding suburban communities over the last 130 years.

The Vision Statement Outline, authored by the Comprehensive Planning Vision Committee, was created to lead this planning effort:

Vision Statement Outline

The vision of Columbia Township is to develop a community that has:

A strong sense of pride

A sense of place

A high quality of life that celebrates its diversity of

Income levels

Race

Religion

Ethnicity

Continued delivery of outstanding Township services that sets the standard for other communities

A safe and secure environment to raise families and conduct business

Enhanced community appearance

Protected property values

Supported and maintained parks and green spaces

A sustainable natural environment

A well-maintained infrastructure

Roadway System

Storm drainage System

Sidewalks

A planned approach to economic development

Business district revitalization

Business retention and marketing Plan

A Plan to strengthen the Township's tax base

Effective governance

A series of analyses were performed to better understand the current conditions of the Township. These analyses included:

- Natural Features
- Cultural Resources
- Existing Land Uses, Zoning, and Current Planning Documents

- Infrastructure, Utilities, and Community Facilities.
- Transportation Systems
- Demographics, Market Context and Trends, and Economics

This information and analyses, along with educational materials about basic planning principles, was presented to the Vision Committee (14 members) and the East and West Focus Groups (24 members). With the aid of these "citizen planners" a group of planning goals and objectives were developed. This exercise led to the identification of critical "Zones of Potential Change," the areas that are most likely to change over the next 20 years.

The "Zones of Potential Change" can be categorized as follows:

- Commercial/Residential Transition Zone at the east side of Ridge and Highland
- Green Space Zone along Wooster Road
- Mixed Use Commercial Zone along Stewart Road, both the north and south sections.
- Residential Zones at Madison Place North and South, Stewart Road, and adjacent to Seven Hills Campus.
- School Campus Zone at Seven Hill's Campus
- Green Space / Stormwater Protection Zone along Camargo Road
- Town Center Zone at Madison Place South, Wooster Road in Plainville, and the Ridge and Highland District.

Recommendations were then made to modify the current zoning and land use maps to reflect the "Zones of Potential Change" and other objectives identified in the Visioning and Comprehensive Plan recommendations.

With the input of citizen planners and public input from public opinion surveys and comments at Township Open House meetings, a series of "Action Items" were developed to focus public and private planning, land use and development efforts.

The Action Items that received the highest prioritization included:

- Provide more parks within neighborhoods and purposeful green spaces.
- Develop Design Overlay Zones (SPI's) with controlled design standards for commercial and business districts.
- Consider a range of funding mechanisms to fund projects.
- Develop streetscape and beautification plans.
- Encourage development that will expand the tax base.
- Improve pedestrian access by upgrading existing sidewalks and building new sidewalks.

The Columbia Township Comprehensive Plan is intended to serve as a guide for growth and change for the next 20 years. The Plan is based on current (2004-2005) conditions, trends, and public participation.

The Comprehensive Plan is divided into three sections:

- Section I provides an overview of the planning and visioning process.
- Section II presents the existing conditions and analysis of the Township.
- Section III presents general and specific recommendations and describes the potential tools that may be used to implement the Columbia Township Comprehensive Plan.

Section I. Planning and Visioning Processes

Introduction

The preparation of this Comprehensive Plan for Columbia Township is the result of proactive efforts by the Columbia Township Trustees and Administrator. The purpose of this document is to guide future land use decisions associated with the growth and development in the Township. Township residents have been actively involved in the preparation of the Plan by means of a Vision Committee. The Committee worked in collaboration with the Consulting team in the development of the plan by assessing data, providing insight on local conditions, and by creating goals for the Township.

Columbia Township occupies 2.67 square miles of land and is home to 4,600 residents. Columbia Township is diverse in terms of its geographic distribution and location across the eastern portion of the Greater Cincinnati area. Columbia Township is one of twelve Townships located in Hamilton County, Ohio. The Township is adjacent to many jurisdictions including the Village of Fairfax, Mariemont, Madeira, Indian Hill, Norwood, and the City of Cincinnati (Figure 1).

Over the past several decades, Columbia Township has experienced economic highs and lows in its core business districts at Ridge and Highland, Plainville Road in Madison Place South, and on Wooster Road. The Township has been subject to annexation to abutting communities, and like many older communities, it has seen a recent trend in growth due to an increase in population after thirty years of decreasing population. Between 1950 and 2000, the Township's population decreased by 47% as a result of annexation. However, between 1980 and 2000 the population increased by nearly 10.6%, as a result of an equal percentage increase in the number of housing units over that period.

To work in an efficient manner and continue to provide the best service for the community, Columbia Township embarked on this comprehensive planning process in an effort to develop a long-term vision of the Township that will help guide officials in making decisions for the betterment of the community.

Beginning in October 2004 and continuing through March 2005, Meisner + Associates/ Land Vision, with a team of subconsultants, assisted staff, trustees, and several citizens' committees in creating a Comprehensive Plan for Columbia Township.

Comprehensive Planning

The concept of comprehensive planning is very much related to the economic prosperity of communities. A comprehensive plan can be used as a tool to plan for the future growth of a local community. Most importantly, it can be used as a tool to address the constant change and evolution of a community. Comprehensive plans are sometimes referred to as land-use plans, because in many cases they are dealing with issues related to the appropriate uses of land. In many cases, comprehensive plans are prepared to address compatibility issues between various uses of land, management and preservation of natural resources, identification and preservation of historically significant lands and structures, and adequate planning for infrastructure needs. In other instances, comprehensive plans are utilized to address issues related to schools, recreation, and housing.

Comprehensive planning is an attempt to establish guidelines for the future growth of a community. The term comprehensive means exactly what it says. It should be a comprehensive or all-inclusive approach at addressing the issue of the future growth of a

community. A comprehensive plan is the document that is the final product from the efforts of this process. The document is official in nature, meaning that some form of local government should adopt it into local law. The document should then be used as a policy guide to decisions about the development of the community.

According to William I. Goodman, a well-known author on comprehensive planning, the key principle of the comprehensive plan is that it is an instrument to be used by those leaders in a community who establish the policies and make the decisions regarding physical development. According to Goodman, there are six basic requirements the plan document should fulfill:

1. The plan should be comprehensive.
2. The plan should be long-range.
3. The plan should be general.
4. The plan should focus on physical development.
5. The plan should relate physical design proposals to community goals and social and economic policies.
6. The plan should be first a policy instrument, and only second a technical instrument.

This Comprehensive Plan is a planning tool that looks at the various elements of the Columbia Township and creates broad policies and implementation strategies to guide future land use decisions regarding the physical, economic and social aspects of the community. Comprehensive plans are general in nature and are purposely long-term, recognizing that some visions cannot be achieved immediately, but take years to accomplish. The plan is designed to provide a vision of the community over the 20-year planning horizon. The Columbia Township Comprehensive Plan serves as a general guide for the use of land. It is intended to encourage positive growth in a manner that will promote economic well-being and enhance community character and quality of life. The Plan provides a commonly accepted guide against which future decisions will be measured. When consistently applied, the Comprehensive Plan has value as a decision-making tool, and provides the foundation for legal basis in protecting the community. The Plan provides a foundation for future zoning and sign ordinances, as well as other local regulations, which govern the use of land.

This land use planning effort serves to coordinate the development and growth of Columbia Township through coordinated land use development and implementation strategies. The Comprehensive Plan process was distinguished by a public consensus building effort, which included a visioning committee, focus groups, and open to the public workshops. The process involved surrounding and abutting jurisdictions and considered their planning efforts and solicited their input regarding issues and changes for Columbia Township.

Study Area

Columbia Township (Figure 2), located in the southeastern quadrant of Hamilton County and east of Cincinnati, has been divided into twelve sub-areas based on geography. The twelve sub-district areas or neighborhoods of Columbia Township are known as: Norwood Green, Ridgewood, Stewart Road, Ridge-Highland East, Ridge-Highland West, Camargo Road,

Madison Place North, Madison Place South, Wooster Road East, Wooster Road West, Plainville -Wooster, and Camp Dennison South.

The twelve sub-areas were geographically divided into two Focus Areas, a Western Focus Area and an Eastern Focus Area. The Western Focus Area includes the following sub areas: Norwood Green, Ridgewood, Ridge-Highland East, Ridge-Highland West, and Stewart Road. The Eastern Focus Area includes the following sub areas: Camargo Road, Madison Place North, Madison Place South, Wooster Road East, Wooster Road West, Plainville –Wooster, and Camp Dennison South.

Analysis and Visioning for the project was conducted for the entire Township and as necessary, data and visioning exercises and results are organized into the twelve sub-area categories and into the Western and Eastern Focus Areas. This approach was done to geographically depict the unique characteristics of each area and to thereby analyze and make recommendations for the distinctive physical, social and economic conditions representing each area.

Application of this Document

This document is intended as a guide for Columbia Township; indicating how to plan and priorities to be reviewed over the next twenty to twenty-five years, based on current conditions, trends, and public participation in 2004 - 2005. The document is divided into three sections. Section I presents an overview of the Comprehensive Planning Process and the Visioning, Vision Statement and the Goals and Objectives. Section II gives the results from the analyses performed during the course of the study. Section III presents the recommendations of the Columbia Township Comprehensive Plan, focusing first on community-wide implementation strategies and then examining each focus area zone of change. This section also describes some of the tools that may be used for implementing parts of the Plan.

The land use map is intended to show what was considered to be the best ultimate use of land, based on current information, for an undetermined time into the future. Social, political, economic, and environmental factors will have an influence on which areas are likely to experience development pressures or changes in land use.

History of Columbia Township

Columbia Township, founded in 1791, was named after Columbia, the first settlement in the Township which was located on the Ohio River in the vicinity of Lunken Airport. Columbia Township was reduced in size in 1803 when Butler County was established to the north. The establishment of Spencer, Symmes, and Sycamore Townships further reduced the Township's size. Madisonville, founded in 1809, was the first significant settlement in the Township. Early development in the Township was encouraged by the construction of Wooster Road and Montgomery Road in the 1820's and by the construction and extension of several railroad lines beginning in the 1840's. The railroad lines also prompted the founding of two commuter communities, Madeira and Terrace Park.

Prior to 1860, much of Columbia Township was sparsely populated with farming as the predominate economic activity. The Civil War saw the founding of Camp Dennison by the U. S. Army. The camp, which covered over 500 acres, was located next to the Little Miami River and adjacent to the railroad. Over 50,000 soldiers passed through the camp during the war.

Madisonville became the first incorporated village in the Township in 1876 and was followed by Norwood (1881), Pleasant Ridge (1891), and Terrace Park (1893). Housing and businesses grew in these areas with the extension of streetcar lines from 1890 and 1910. Between 1911 and 1914 Madisonville, Pleasant Ridge, Oakley, and Kennedy Heights were annexed by Cincinnati.

The rise of widespread private automobile ownership, starting in the 1920's, pushed development further out into the Township and made land on steeper terrain accessible. Large areas of farmland were converted to housing, industry, and commercial development. Mariemont, founded in 1922 as a model community, was one of the first communities designed for the automobile.

Columbia Parkway was completed in 1938, which spurred development in the southwest part of the Township. Indian Hill and Mariemont were incorporated as villages in 1941 as part of a strategy taken by both communities to head off annexation by Cincinnati, which further reduced the size of the Township. Fairfax was incorporated in 1951 for the same reason, but chose to remain part of the Township.

By the early 1950's the area of Columbia Township had been reduced to nearly its current size by annexation by Cincinnati and by the incorporation of numerous suburban communities within its boundaries.

The completion of I-71 in 1974 to downtown Cincinnati marked the beginning of development adjacent to the interchanges within the Township, namely Ridge Road, Red Bank Road, and Stewart Road. This area is now the commercial and business center of the Township.

Planning Process

Planning is the process through which a community defines its future character and quality of life. All future decisions regarding land use, transportation, and community facilities are based on the policies outlined in the comprehensive plan. Without coordination, land development can get ahead of a locality's ability to meet the demand for growth or services. The Planning Process guided us to define Columbia Township's vision statement, goals, objectives, and plans for its future.

The process of developing a Comprehensive Plan for Columbia Township consisted of a series of steps including: developing a scope of work, conducting research and analysis, holding regular vision committee meetings, focus group meetings, public meetings, conducting visioning exercises, surveys with the Vision Committee and focus groups, developing a vision statement, goals and objectives, and development of area issues and solutions leading to the creation of a Comprehensive Plan that will prepare Columbia Township for future growth (Figure 3).

The core forum for community guidance and feedback was the establishment of a Vision Committee by the Columbia Township Trustees that met on a regular basis to discuss and comment on the research, planning and visioning elements of the plan. The committee represented a broad cross-section of the community, with representation from residents, businesses, regional agencies and social and civic institutions. The committee's role was to help organize the broader community input. The committee planning work involved participation in group meetings and analysis and discussion of land use issues, development

controls, economic development, transportation, infrastructure, park and open space, community facilities, housing and other community needs and resources.

Fourteen members were appointed to the Vision Committee by the Columbia Township Board of Trustees. The kick-off meeting was held on October 12, 2004. This was the initial meeting of the Vision Committee and staff to outline the goals and objectives and inventory to conduct for the project. This meeting was followed up with Vision Committee meetings held on October 27, 2004, November 10, 2004, December 16, 2004, and January 6, 2005. Focus Group Meetings were held on November 22, 23, 2004 and December 6 and 8, 2004. A jurisdictional meeting was held on January 6, 2005, and two community open house/workshops were held on January 15, 2005 and February 26, 2005.

The planning process developed to create this Comprehensive Plan began with a substantial effort to gather relevant information about the Township from two areas – data analysis of existing conditions and a Visioning Process. The inventory and analysis of current conditions, trends and projected development included:

- Existing Land Use, Zoning, and Current Planning Documents
- Natural Features
- Economic Conditions of Neighborhood Business Districts
- Cultural Resources, Schools and Community Facilities
- Infrastructure
- Demographics, Market Context and Trends
- Implementation Tools (JEDDs, CEDAs) and related economic development programs
- Zones of Change

The Visioning work became a more creative and engaging process with public visioning sessions, focus group workshops and a jurisdictional input session. In this visioning phase, emphasis was directed toward creative thinking about the most pressing community issues, goals, and required actions to meet expected challenges. The outcome of the Visioning was the development of Issues, Goals, Themes, Ideas, a Vision Statement and a series of recommendations through zones of change identification throughout the community.

Other forums of community input throughout the process included conducting a jurisdictional meeting of representatives and leaders from the surrounding jurisdictions, a visioning workshop and open house at a community center and surveys and input forms to focus the Vision Committee members on issue identification and comments. The community input gathered throughout this process helped provide background information on the Township and helped establish what it is the community wants for their future. This information is one of the major components that led to the development of the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan. The goals and objectives create the building foundation for the rest of the Plan.

List of Meetings

October 12, 2004	Trustees Meeting -- Kick-off
October 27, 2004	Vision Committee Meeting #1
November 10, 2004	Vision Committee Meeting #2
November 22, 2004	West Focus Group Meeting #1
November 23, 2004	East Focus Group Meeting #1
November 30, 2004	Trustees Meeting -- Status Report

December 6, 2004	West Focus Group Meeting #2
December 8, 2004	East Focus Group Meeting #2
December 14, 2004	Trustees Meeting -- Status Report
December 16, 2004	Vision Committee Meeting #3
January 6, 2005	Jurisdictional Input Meeting
January 6, 2005	Vision Committee Pre-Workshop Review
January 15, 2005	Community Visioning Workshop
January 11, 2005	Trustees Meeting -- Status Report
February 26, 2005	Public Open House and Workshop
March 8, 2005	Trustees Meeting -- Pavement Management Plan Submitted
April 12, 2005	Trustees Meeting – Final Submittal Comprehensive Plan

Coordination with Other Plans and Reports

One of the key objectives of this Comprehensive Plan is to coordinate and consolidate the findings and recommendations of a variety of studies and reports prepared by other public and private agencies and organizations. The findings and conclusions of these reports have been integrated into this Comprehensive Plan. Where needed, the data and findings have been updated to reflect current conditions.

The table below lists the local plans that were examined during the Columbia Township Comprehensive Plan Process. These plans, some being more recent than others, were incorporated to the extent that they are relevant in the current context.

Local Planning Documents		
TOWNSHIP / VILLAGE PLANS	DOCUMENT	YEAR
Columbia Township	Wooster Road –Land Use Plan and Special Public Interest (SPI) Overlay Districts	1997
Fairfax Village	The Village of Fairfax Wooster Road Corridor Revitalization Plan	1998
Fairfax Village	Fairfax Revitalization Plan	2000
Fairfax Village	The Village of Fairfax Red Bank Road Corridor Assessment	2000
Fairfax Village	Comprehensive Plan	2003
Indian Hill	Village of Indian Hill Land Use Plan	1986
Anderson Township	Anderson Township Comprehensive Plan	2004
REGIONAL PLANS	DOCUMENT	YEAR
Hamilton County	Thoroughfare Plan	1994
Eastern Corridor	Major Investment Study – Environmental Setting	1996
Eastern Corridor	Major Investment Study – Evaluation of Potential Impacts Of Five Plans Currently Under Consideration	1998
Eastern Corridor	Major Investment Study - 2020 Vision for the Eastern Corridor	2000
Eastern Corridor	Eastern Corridor Land Use Vision Plan	2002
Eastern Corridor	Preliminary Environmental Impact Statement	2004
Eastern Corridor	Green Infrastructure Plane	2005

Visioning Process

Introduction

Preparation of this Comprehensive Plan was conducted within a 6-month time period and has involved community-based citizen input and involvement by a wide variety of community leaders. The 14 members of the Vision Committee included a diverse cross-section of both public and private community leaders who were instrumental in guiding and developing the issues, opportunities and recommendations for the Columbia Township plan.

A formal process and structure was developed to conduct the Visioning Process (Figure 4). Citizens and businesses were encouraged to participate in the Visioning and planning process. The Vision Committee worked with the Columbia Township Consultant Team to develop a Community Vision for Land Use, to identify important issues in the neighborhoods and business centers, and to establish goals and objectives for the Columbia Township Comprehensive Plan.

The existing conditions information, along with educational materials about basic planning principles was presented to the Vision Committee. To facilitate citizen involvement, two (2) Focus Area Groups of 10-15 participants each representing the east and west side of the Township were formed. A series of focus group meetings were held. At each meeting, participants were divided into geographical groups according to their neighborhood or business location.

Participants were then asked to comment on Columbia Township's issues, strengths, and weaknesses and comment on the Comprehensive Plan goals and objectives. With the leadership of these "citizen planners" and the Vision Committee, consensus-building exercises were employed including an Issues, Strengths and Opportunities (ISO) exercise, visioning and issues input surveys, zones of change exercises, and in-depth group discussions. A series of Visioning meetings and consensus-building activities led to the development of a draft vision statement, draft goals, themes and zones of change, a list of Issues, Themes, and Goals, the development of preliminary implementation strategies, and recommendations to bring about positive change in the Township, and preserve existing assets. The meeting comments were then summarized and distributed to the Vision Committee and consultant team. Many of these comments are now reflected in the goals and objectives contained within the various elements of this plan.

Vision Committee

The role of the Vision Committee was to provide a broad and diverse perspective of the Township's many Neighborhoods' and Business Centers' needs and assist in creating a collaborative and balanced vision for the future. The Vision Committee has provided "Big Picture" input into the plan. The Committee has worked with two geographically defined focus groups to develop consensus on key issues of the Township neighborhoods and business districts. Vision Committee members have participated and helped to guide the Focus Group discussions, provided input in preferred plan selection, and provided coordination to public input efforts to be conducted during the Comprehensive Plan Process.

The Vision Committee was charged with:

- Creating a Vision Statement
- Refining preliminary goals and objectives
- Creating strategies to achieve a community sense of place and identity
- Formulating ideas for future land use change
- Identifying the key issues and needs of the community
- Working with the Focus Groups on the neighborhood issues
- Refining a framework for improving community character and aesthetics

The committee planning work involved participation in group meetings and analysis and discussion of land use issues, future growth/changes, development controls, economic development, transportation, infrastructure, park and open space, community facilities, housing and other community needs and resources.

The committee planning work served to develop a framework for the comprehensive plan and implementation strategies. Financial issues and Township revenue sources must be part of the long term planning work.

The Visioning Process: Community Members Working Together

As a community-based planning process, visioning typically follows a series of distinct steps. These often include:

- Profiling the existing community
- Exploring the impact of emerging trends and issues
- Creating a vision for the future
- Developing a strategic action plan to achieve that vision

Each step in the visioning process involves distinct activities and products. The entire process may be scaled up or down, depending on a community's overall goals, needs and resources. The process may be sponsored by local governments, by civic organizations and community groups, by public/private partnerships, or by a combination of the above. The process of visioning is often as important as its products. The best visioning efforts are those that engage entire communities in working together to create a positive vision for their future.

Visioning offers many potential benefits for a community, such as:

- Bringing community members together in a proactive way
- Envisioning new opportunities and possibilities for the future
- Developing goals, strategies and benchmarks for change
- Enriching citizen involvement in local government
- Promoting visionary community leadership
- Providing a broader foundation for planning and decision-making
- Fostering new public/private partnerships for action

Educating Citizen Planners

Educational materials were prepared and distributed to the Vision Committee members to educate and prepare them on the basic planning principles, consensus building and what to expect when participating on a visioning committee. The vision committee members and focus group members were educated on how to participate as a citizen planner. At the beginning of several initial meetings, the Vision Committee was taken through a quick review of the general planning objectives, planning principles, land use, zoning and what a comprehensive plan is. The following describes the General Land Use Planning Principles used for the project. These principles and other educational materials were presented to the committee members and were distributed to members prior to every meeting.

General Land Use Planning Principles

- Enhance existing Townships, neighborhoods and business districts
- Create new business and residential growth with a sense of place and history
 - Neighborhood Centers components to consider:
 - Schools
 - Community center/recreation facilities
 - Pre-school facilities/play-lots
 - Religious institutions
 - Neighborhood services/shopping
 - Library
 - Interconnect greenways with pedestrian pathways
 - Locate industry on the periphery
 - Town Center at the crossroads
- Create residential developments and identifiable neighborhoods with a good relationship to all other activities.
 - ¼ mile home to recreation
 - ¼-¾ mile home to local shops
 - ¼-1 mile home to grade school
 - 1-2½ miles home to high school
 - 1-3½ miles home to church
 - ¾-1 hour home to regional retail
- Residential and other areas should be clustered to preserve natural features and to create a harmonious living environment.
- Create development that is in harmony with the natural and man-made resources of the area.
- Land use should be appropriate for the location, topography and access.
- Avoid a mixture of land uses that are not compatible—e.g. heavy industry and residential.
- Create an organized pattern of roads, open space, paths, land use and activities.
 - Create a hierarchy of roads each with a clearly defined function

- Limited access highway: no development
 - Arterial: no development
 - Service roads/minor streets
 - Collector
 - Local
 - Alleys
- Avoid through traffic in residential areas.

Vision Committee Questionnaire Summary

On October 27 and November 10, 2004, the Vision Committee was engaged in an initial visioning exercise to gather their ideas and thoughts regarding the uniqueness and future for Columbia Township. A Vision Committee Worksheet was developed and distributed to obtain input on the important issues and vision for Columbia Township. Fourteen surveys were returned. The Committee was asked to complete three questions, each of which is listed below with a summary of all comments.

1. What makes Columbia Township unique? Do we offer anything that other places do not?

Respondents revealed that the aspects of Columbia Township that are most unique are its unusual geographic distribution across the eastern portion of Cincinnati and its noncontiguous boundaries. This was viewed as both strength and weakness. It is difficult to have a Township Identity when the geographic boundaries do not give one a sense of place. It is a strength in that it gives diversity to the Township in its many types of residential and commercial establishment.

The other top choices of uniqueness includes the excellent public services the Township offers, the central location and access to the surrounding area and a good mix of opportunities for both business and residential location and development.

Geographically Separated Neighborhoods

- The uniqueness of its island nature as a positive attribute
- Boundaries are not contiguous and the Township is geographically fragmented
- Lack of cohesion is not an asset
- Integrate the islands into more complete neighborhoods
- Strengths of each district - residential, commercial, business district
- Create more connection to surrounding neighborhoods

Township Government

- Excellent public services such as snow removal and leaf collection
- Responsible trustees and administration

Quality of Life

- Nice place to live
- Convenient Locations
- Established neighborhoods
- Diversity
- Good mix of opportunities for residents and businesses

Business Development

- Ridge-Highland West– ideal for business due to east access and visioning
- Many businesses are located on important traffic corridors
- Good customer base for stores.

2. *What do we want to be in twenty years? How would you describe Columbia Township in 2025?*

Respondents had many ideas about what they want Columbia Township to be in 2025. In summary, they desire a strong and stable Township with a strong sense of identity through visual amenities and community events that celebrate the Township's cultural heritage. Participants indicated they desire quality residential and commercial areas with unified streetscape elements, sidewalks and gateways. Preference was also given to better regulatory controls such as design guidelines and zoning laws and an interest in thriving commercial areas at Ridge-Highland, Madison Place South and Plainville-Wooster.

Township Government

- Excellent public services
- Strong and stable Township
- Fiscally sound
- Maintain basic services
- Recreational opportunities
- Provide strong funding to address community needs
- Police and fire department respond quickly to calls
- Improve zoning code and design guidelines for development
- No annexation
- Lower tax burden on property owners

Quality of Life

- Quaint place to live
- Good community for first time homebuyers
- Healthy neighborhoods
- Diverse population
- High quality residential, commercial and recreational areas
- Establish gateways and streetscapes to improve Township identity
- Crime and drugs problem eliminated

Traffic and Congestion

- Eastern Corridor transportation plans implemented
- Public transportation to the doors of business
- Reduce traffic congestion

Business Districts

- Thriving, stable and attractive business districts
- More investment in businesses
- Pedestrian friendly commercial centers with diverse businesses
- Ridge-Highland redeveloped within 20 years

- Ridge-Highland can provide services to surrounding moderate to high income areas

3. *List examples of what you want Columbia Township to achieve or look like:*

Respondents preferred Columbia Township to improve its commercial areas at Ridge and Highland, Plainville/Wooster and to improve the neighborhood business district in Madison Place South. They imagine Columbia Township in the future with connected bike paths, trails and linkages to surrounding communities and business areas. They would like roadway improvements to include sidewalks, and curbs and gutters. Participants would like to integrate the islands into surrounding neighborhoods while creating a unique identity for Columbia Township.

Township Wide

- Plan for the Trustees to follow in the areas of infrastructure, economic development funding, public safety and quality of life
- Good combination of residential business and recreation
- Integrate "islands" into surrounding neighborhoods
- Establish/ retain green space for parks within the Township
- Establish Township identity in all areas of Columbia Township
- Short term goals: gateways and sidewalks
- Long-term goals: office space, better traffic patterns, public safety
- Fewer billboards

Eastern Focus Area

- Madison Place South - thriving neighborhood business district
- Plainville-Wooster explore enterprise zone partnership to improve commercial area
- Plainville-Wooster – mix of retail/office and streetscaping like Montgomery and Mariemont
- Wooster Corridor is to become a successful effort
- Wooster Corridor with bike trail

Western Focus Areas

- Ridge-Highland – redevelop area, moving from emphasis on retail to offices
- Ridge-Highland – retail center with good accessibility for cars

Issues, Themes and Goals

To begin identification of the most pressing and important Township issues, the kick-off meeting initiated the Vision Committee's attention on the key issues and themes of the community. At this session, participants were encouraged to express and formulate their ideas about the Township. There was discussion of existing conditions of the Township and general land use planning principles. At the kick-off meeting and the following two Vision Committee meetings, the group identified and ranked a list of Issues, Themes and Goals that were important to the community.

The key issues of discussion included traffic congestion and speeding at Ridge and Highland, Wooster Road, and in the Ridgewood neighborhood. Economic health and sustainability of the community, and safety issues were also rated as top concerns. Issues are translated into

the main themes of the Township Issues and Themes are translated into Goals of the Community - the desired element of what the Township could become. The main themes of the community were:

- Township Identity,
- Quality of Life,
- Sustainable Neighborhood Economic Development
- Storm Water Control and Protection.

The themes were translated into draft goals which reflect the broad-based desired outcome or the future intention the community wants to achieve.

The main issues developed from the Vision Committee meetings held on October 27, November 10, and December 16 include the following:

Issues

Township Wide

- Decrease congestion and increase traffic safety.
- Buffer negative impacts of new development on adjacent residents
- Increase economic redevelopment
- Keep quality of community services high
- Economic development stability – protect and expand
- Plan long term Township growth and redevelopment in a comprehensive manner
- Clarify and improve Township identity
- Protect community from drugs and crime
- Obtain funding for improvements

Eastern Focus Area

- Renewal of Madison Place South business district
- Economic redevelopment of Plainville-Wooster business district

Western Focus Area

- Ridge Highland needs economic redevelopment plan

Themes - Goals

- Increase safety and reduce crime
- Long range plans for economic redevelopment of neighborhood business districts
- Long range plans to reduce traffic congestion
- Community identity
- Funding and implementation
- Storm and infrastructure plan
- Improve quality of life

Draft Goals

- Develop and implement healthy and sustainable economic development initiatives throughout Township.
- Balance land uses to protect existing development and add value and quality.

- Revitalize and strengthen neighborhood business centers.
- Protect residential neighborhoods from drugs, deterioration and crimes.
- Protect and expand parks and green spaces.
- Provide and improve effective roadway maintenance and vehicular access for health and safety.
- Enhance roadways/street image – control maintenance.
- Develop storm water drainage standards.
- Encourage affordable and balanced housing.

Initial Input Form – Issues Raised Matrix

Another visioning exercise conducted with the Vision Committee was completing an Initial Issues matrix form. A matrix was developed by the Consultant Team in conjunction with the Columbia Township staff that included an initial list of issues raised by community members and citizens prior to the start-up of the Comprehensive Plan process. Using the matrix, participants could indicate how they felt about each issue. Vision Committee members and Township Trustees completed the forms prior to and during the meeting (Figure 5).

Vision Committee Members selected these top six issues:

1. Develop a long range community vision - 12
2. Develop land use priorities and plan - 12
3. Promote economic development for - 11
 - Ridge /Highland Neighborhood Center
 - Plainville /Wooster Neighborhood Center
 - Madison Place South Commercial Area
 - Stewart Road Area
4. Protect Neighborhoods & Business Centers From Drugs & Crime - 11
5. Provide Ongoing Street Improvement & Maintenance Plan – 11
6. Develop Streetscape Plan & Improve Appearance –11

Trustee Survey Summaries

Township Trustees selected these top six issues:

1. Develop a long range community vision
2. Promote economic development for
 - Ridge/Highland Neighborhood Center
 - Plainville/Wooster Neighborhood Center
 - Madison Place South Commercial Area
 - Stewart Road
3. Establish Township logo and identity
4. Protect neighborhoods and business centers from traffic
5. Provide ongoing street improvement and maintenance plan
6. Provide a beautification plan

Both the Vision Committee and the Township Trustee answers on the Input Form conclude that Columbia Township needs to be proactive in its undertaking of a Comprehensive Plan to set a direction for the growth and development of the Township over the next twenty years. Both the Vision Committee and the Township Trustees are also in agreement that one of the highest priorities of the Township is to develop economic development programs for the four business district areas, establish a Township Identity and provide ongoing street Improvements and Maintenance. These responses to the initial input form are similar to the

issues raised in the discussion and to the responses from the Vision Committee Questionnaire Summary, thereby solidifying the conclusive remarks of the visioning exercises.

Community Input

Focus Group Meeting Summaries

Two focus groups were formed by dividing the Township into a West Focus Group and an East Focus Group. These focus groups were formed to participate in the land use visioning for east and west geographic portions of Columbia Township. The Vision Committee members, Township Trustees, and Township Administrator provided names of individuals to participate in the Focus Group meetings who were familiar with issues pertinent to the local area and represented a cross section of residents, neighborhoods and businesses.

Each focus group area committee consisted of ten to twenty individuals representing a variety of interests. The issues, themes, goals and vision statement ideas developed by the Vision Committee were presented to the Focus Group members to be further deliberated in terms of concentrated focus and assessment.

The Consultant Team and the Township conducted several visioning exercises with the Focus Groups including an Issues, Strengths and Opportunities (ISO) exercise, a Zones of Change exercise, group discussions of the Issues, Themes and Goals, and a Visioning Workshop. These in-depth discussions, issues identification and development of a Vision Statement for the Community provided the team with a prioritization of issues and assisted the Consultant Team in developing Zones of Change strategies and focus for each of the twelve sub-areas of the Township.

The East Focus Group Study Area consisted of the communities in Columbia Township known as Camargo Road, Madison Place South, Madison Place North, Plainville-Wooster, Wooster Road East, Wooster Road West and Camp Dennison South. The Focus Group Committee was made up of representatives from the residential and business community and met on November 23, 2004 and December 8, 2004.

The West Focus Group Study Area consisted of the communities in Columbia Township known as Norwood Green, Ridgewood, Stewart Road, and Ridge-Highland East and West. The Focus Group Committee was made up of representatives from the residential and business community and met on November 22, 2004 and December 6, 2004.

ISO Exercise

An ISO (Issues, Strengths and Opportunities) Exercise was developed for the Focus Group Members. This exercise is similar to a SWOT (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) exercise that is traditionally used to gather community input on the top strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to a community. The initial list of issues was used as the base point for the focus group.

Each focus group met twice and participated in the development and ranking of the top Issues, Strengths and Opportunities of Columbia Township. The following summarizes the results of the ISO exercise for the East and West Focus Areas.

Western Focus Area Conclusions

The Western Focus area includes the Ridgewood neighborhood, the Ridge-Highland Business District, the neighborhood adjacent to Seven Hills School Campus, the Hill and Dale neighborhood, and a small neighborhood off Kennedy Avenue.

The Western Focus Group identified the top Zones of Change as the Ridge-Highland Business District including Lucille Drive, the neighborhood adjacent to the Seven Hills School Campus and the Stewart Road Corridor. The top issues included development of Special Public Interest Districts and Design Overlay Districts to provide better controls for design, aesthetics, densities and zoning; developing a plan for the areas of transition such as the neighborhood adjacent to the Seven Hills School Campus; developing a plan for the transition of the Stewart Road corridor from residential to business/office uses; access management for the traffic congestion areas at Ridge--Highland and Stewart Road; an economic development reinvestment plan for Ridge-Highland to establish a coordinated plan of business selection for the sustainability of the Ridge- Highland business community.

Issues

- Establish Special Public Interest Districts to provide more controls for design, aesthetics, densities and zoning
- Identify Zones of Change and a plan to develop those areas
- Identify and buffer residential areas transitioning into commercial areas
- Provide more green space and parks
- Incorporate Eastern Corridor transportation improvements and green space plan
- Create sustainable landscape solutions
- Provide buffering around the Stewart Road Area
- Revitalize retail spaces and provide economic incentives
- Prioritize and identify types of businesses likely to reinvest
- Coordinate land uses, development and transportation plans
- Develop a Township identity throughout the entire Township
- Improve access for redevelopment on Stewart Road and Ridge-Highland areas

The greatest strengths of the Western Focus Area are its central location, accessibility to the interstate, proximity to the surrounding greater Cincinnati area, the neighborhoods, the economic potential of the existing commercial areas and the services of the community.

Strengths

- Accessibility to I-71 & surrounding neighborhoods
- Central location in a Township and eastern Hamilton County
- Population and demographics / Good market demographics
- Neighborhoods
- Public services and infrastructure
- Commercial areas
- Area of growth and job creation
- New income for the Township can be generated
- Access improvements are on the horizon

Opportunities are those potentials the community has or can build upon to develop its core possibilities for redevelopment. The greatest opportunities of the Western Focus area are the ability to attract investment, economic partnering, and the potential to develop an attractive gateway/sidewalk system.

Opportunities

- Attract investment from many sources: the private sector, developers, businesses and the chambers of commerce
- Economic partnering with surrounding communities
- Marketing and promotion of Columbia Township through events, festivals, newsletter to tie the Township together and create a “sense of place”
- Develop coordinated zoning and design guidelines
- Develop attractive gateways, sidewalks, and street trees throughout Township
- Coordinated access management controls at Ridge-Highland and Stewart Road areas
- Eastern Corridor Plan will directly influence growth and quality of life

Eastern Focus Area Conclusions

The Eastern Focus area includes Madison Place North and South, Plainville-Wooster Road Area, Camargo Road, and Camp Dennison South. The main issues include the many transportation issues and business district potentials of the Plainville-Wooster Road area, the business district neglect and residential potential of the Madison Place North and South areas and transition and growth in these neighborhoods. Camp Dennison South and Camargo Road were viewed as relatively stable and non-changing areas.

The Focus Group discussed the desirability of pedestrian-friendly, walkable, mixed business/residential communities. Much concern was expressed about traffic congestion and pedestrian access/safety in the area. Pedestrian safety, in the form of well-defined crosswalks, wide/setback walks, and safer access to bike trails, was stressed. Creating a unique landscaped boulevard, reducing vehicular speed, and minimizing truck hazards was also emphasized. It was commented that ODOT's plan for the Plainville-Wooster area does not yet reinforce these neighborhood business district goals, and is also inconsistent with the Eastern Corridor Land Use Vision Plan (ECLUVP).

Better pedestrian connections between residential areas to the business district and the Little Miami River Trails, as well as future trail connectivity with adjoining Townships were issues. This includes the possibility of a bike path connecting new trails in the Township with Mariemont, Fairfax, Terrace Park, and the larger trail network. Trail connection within the Township's SPI Riparian Buffer along the Little Miami River was also an important issue.

It was observed that 12% of Columbia Township is owned by the Village of Indian Hill. Because this land is part of the Village's greenbelt, there is no doubt that this land will remain undeveloped and will continue to result in a loss of property taxes for the Township. A conservative estimate placed those losses at \$52,000 annually.

Focus Group members stressed that they wish to seek a balance of residential and commercial development in the Madison Place South and North areas and are willing to consider different means of stimulating growth and expansion of the Madison Place South business district. Measures include “squaring off” the zoning of adjacent residential property for managed commercial growth. Zoning overlays (SPIs) and redeveloping old, underutilized properties (such as the old Walgreen's or grocery store) were recommended. Allowing for zoning changes and encouraging parcel aggregation were considered as possible options.

Displacing some residents to provide room for needed commercial expansion may be necessary. The Township values and wishes to protect the residential neighborhoods while stimulating reinvestment.

Neighborhood Business Districts with many individual parcels and small, independent stores are often unstable, especially where there is no cohesive community center. So, in order to create a healthy neighborhood center and encourage reinvestment in the surrounding neighborhood, new incentives are needed with land use and financing. Expanding growth areas for “elbow room” and the use of public funding tools (TIFs, JEDDs, CRAs, etc.) were noted as possible tools in any development efforts.

It was suggested that it would be helpful for the Township to sketch up several development options for this area. It was also recommended that any expansion should have stability and longevity, and create a quality integration of office, retail, and residential spaces. It was expressed that streetscaping and tree planting should be included in any expansion plans, thereby providing a more aesthetically appealing, pedestrian-friendly neighborhood center and a greater sense of place. Future redevelopment considerations could include the Murray Avenue property owned by the Fire District.

The Eastern Focus Group identified the top Zones of Change as the Plainville-Wooster Road area, Madison Place South and North. The top issues included transportation, development of Special Public Interest Districts or design overlays to provide better controls for design, aesthetics, densities and zoning, developing a sense of place, defining the edges of the communities, and providing better linkages to the green space trails and parks.

Issues

Transportation

- Traffic signals in Plainville needed for pedestrian safety
- Lane expansion/widening in Plainville would destroy the “Town Center”
- Safety, access, and connectivity are equally important
- Truck traffic is a safety hazard on Muchmore Hill
- Connect new bike paths to the larger trail network
- Reduce volume of through traffic on US 50 to increase quality of life

Quality of Life

- Create a “sense of place” in Madison Place South and Plainville Business Districts.
- Increase quantity and quality of green space buffers and parks
- Indian Hill owns 12% of land which is green space area –cannot generate tax revenue
- School district tuition rules between jurisdictions are complicated
- Columbia Township is in Cincinnati Public Schools, Mariemont School District, and Indian Hills School District.
- Concerns about quality of schools
- Fire Station locations are key and good emergency access

Housing

- Promote more home ownership instead of rental
- Increase housing options

The greatest strengths of the Eastern Focus are the view shed of the Little Miami River, bike trails and tourism. Other highly ranked strengths are the established commercial areas, the uniqueness of the business districts and the stability of the neighborhoods.

Strengths

- Little Miami River – view sheds, bike trails, tourism.
- Public services and infrastructure are excellent, beauty
- Stable neighborhoods of Ridgewood, Williams Meadows, Ken Oak
- Green space is abundant and visible
- Commercial areas and districts are established
- Mariemont Schools are excellent
- Central location and access to greater Cincinnati area
- Uniqueness of business districts and residential neighborhoods
- Hamilton County Parks Plan provides park services and expansion

Potential recreational and tourism-associated commercial opportunities along the Little Miami River was discussed. Loveland was cited as a positive example. The “river view” is seen as one of the district’s great assets. It was noted that two years ago Hamilton County Parks discouraged connectors to river trails and the potential for “trailside” cafes or related facilities. Also, new sewer investment brings new development to the Plainville area and could help solve current utility problems. Lastly, aquifer river protection is important to the Township and nearby agricultural lands.

Opportunities

- Tourism Opportunities that could benefit Columbia Township
 - bed and breakfast
 - shopping districts
 - restaurants and other business that can benefit from a river view
 - bike livery and other trail services
- Expand Business Districts
 - recruit specific mix of businesses
 - commercial area boundaries could be redefined
- Housing in Madison Place attracts first-time homebuyers
- Develop a balanced blend of residential and commercial uses in Plainville and Madison Place South
- Special Public Interest Districts can provide more design and regulatory control
- Zoning regulations need to support the plan and proposed development

The combined results of the visioning exercises with the Focus Groups and the Vision Committee begin to reveal the key issues of the Township and areas of focus. These exercises lead the Consultant Team in conjunction with the Vision Committee to develop a Vision Statement, the Goals and Objectives for the study and the Implementation Strategies.

Zones of Change Summaries

Within each Focus Area, "zones of potential change" were identified along with a series of strategies suggesting what actions should be taken. How soon change may come to these areas is subject to many factors. The "zones of potential change" within each Focus Area, and the key issues within each zone of change are described below. The zones of change assessment identified in the Eastern Corridor Land Use Vision Plan was useful to visioning future uses within the Township. Columbia Township is part of the Eastern Corridor Study Area. The twelve sub-areas of Columbia Township were reviewed individually and the following zones of change were analyzed:

Western Focus Area Zones of Change

The Focus Committee discussed the zones of change areas including the Ridge-Highland Business District, Kennedy Connector, and the Seven Hills School Area and surrounding neighborhoods (Figure 6). The following highlights the focus group discussion for the zones of change in the Western Focus Area:

- Stewart Road Area Zone of Change -areas of transition along Stewart Road adjacent to the BMW Dealership
- Ridge-Highland Area Zone of Change –Ridge-Highland Business District
- Need for a true Township Center
- Storm water issues and flooding areas
- Traffic congestion, safety, and quality of life issues at Ridge – Highland
- The proposed Kennedy Connector and Eastern Corridor Bypass and Parkway
- Ridgewood – Enhance and protect quality of life
- Pedestrian connection improvements
- The growth and development of the Seven Hills School Campus and the impact on the adjacent neighborhood
- The growth and expansion of the 5/3 Bank complex in the Madisonville Renewal District nearby

Each district summarizes key characteristics and issues of the individual areas of the Western Focus area.

Norwood Green

Norwood Green was identified as a stable area that is owned and operated by the City of Norwood, Ohio. The land use is green space and is developed as a park facility. There were no recommendations for a zone of change for this area.

Stewart Road

The properties along both sides of Stewart Road North are a potential zone of change. Some houses on the road have already been converted to business uses. Buffering around the Stewart Road North area is important to keeping adjacent houses. The high traffic volume on Stewart makes the properties attractive for businesses but not for residents.

Potential improvements to the I-71 interchange could greatly increase traffic in the area. The area could be affected by Eastern Corridor access improvements such as a possible Duck Creek to Stewart Road connector and the many Red Bank Road access improvements.

The desirability to promote office use in the area to increase the Township's tax base was discussed. Along the west side of Stewart Road there is a potential to change the land uses to office and develop higher density housing. Office use is considered compatible with the adjacent residential use providing that adequate landscape buffering is installed. Discussion about types of businesses to locate in this area is important and "small lot" businesses with multiple curb cuts should be avoided. It was discussed that businesses in Silverton on Montgomery Road are directly related to this area and will impact the area. Housing on Ken Arbre Drive and Euclid Avenue should be protected and maintained.

Ridgewood

Ridgewood is a stable residential neighborhood in need of some improvements. The streets are being resurfaced with an OPWC grant. There is a desire to replant shade trees along all the streets. Losantiridge Avenue is in need of sidewalks. Better control of various nuisances (unmowed lawns, cars on concrete blocks, etc.) has been considered. There was discussion related to residents in the area running stop signs and speeding. Traffic studies for the neighborhood concluded that no traffic calming measures would be appropriate.

Ridge-Highland East

The area east of I-71 along Stewart Road South is a potential zone of change. The high volume of traffic on this part of Stewart Road is good for business, but bad for the existing residences, the new Madisonville Recreation Center, John Parker School, Madisonville, and the nearby residential district. It was mentioned that the success of the Silverton business district along Montgomery Road would affect business expansion into this area. There is a need for a Special Public Interest District to provide more controls for design, aesthetics, densities and zoning.

Ridge-Highland West

Ridge-Highland is the central commercial hub of Columbia Township. It is a large commercial area with the focal point located at and around the major intersections of Ridge and Highland and Kennedy Avenue. The area has a mix of commercial and residential land uses, but is primarily a commercial district. The area is experiencing many traffic congestion issues. It is visually cluttered with overhead utilities and has many random curb cuts, large parking lots and a lack of overall uniformity in design and signage. The Eastern Corridor Ridge-Highland Scoping Study and Kennedy Connector concept proposes to connect Kennedy Avenue to Ibsen Avenue to relieve some congestion. Other proposed road improvements in the area include a loop road around the entire intersection and a potential relocation of the existing exit ramp on I-71 southbound to the Lucille Drive vicinity.

The residences in this area, especially those north of Lucille, should be protected. This area has many attributes, including location and convenience with easy access to I-71. Ken-Oak is a stable neighborhood and should be protected. There are approximately 8 acres of undeveloped land southeast of Ken Oak zoned for residential uses. If it is rezoned for commercial, there should be buffering and landscaping requirements and transition areas between land uses. Office uses could be compatible with residential uses. Location of the Township Offices in this area was also discussed. More green space is an issue, as are the eroding hillsides and floodplain areas. The Seven Hills School and Summit County Day School want to work with Columbia Township, neighbors, and Madisonville in their campus plans. Seven Hills School has been buying adjacent residential properties on Buffler, Raywill, and Elmarie streets for many years. In its effort to protect the neighborhood and build the school campus, the Seven Hills School will be a community partner in the redevelopment of the

neighborhood adjacent to the school campus. The Summit Country Day School athletic facility has no plans to expand. Careful consideration of this area as a zone of change is recommended.

Highlights of the Ridge-Highland West Area Zone of Change

- Redevelop Ridge/Highland as a commercial center
- Create a town center feel
- Encourage a mixture of business and office uses
- Create a pedestrian friendly environment with sidewalks, trees and traffic calming.
- Roadway improvements such as additional turning lanes, signalization, reduce the number of curb cuts, and install center medians
- Potential location of the Township offices
- More green space and buffers
- Seven Hills School: protect and buffer adjacent residences from campus expansion

Eastern Focus Area Zones of Change

The focus group discussed community issues and methods for improving community character and aesthetics. The Eastern Focus Area carefully looked at the communities in Columbia Township known as Camargo Road/Stewart Road, Madison Place South, Madison Place North, Plainville-Wooster, Wooster Road East and West and Camp Dennison South (Figure 7). The group developed a list of key Issues and identified zones of change areas for each of the districts located in the Eastern Focus area. The following highlights the focus group discussion for the zones of change in the Eastern Focus Area:

- Create a pedestrian-friendly, walkable, mixed business/residential community –Town Center
- Pedestrian safety, in the form of well-defined crosswalks, wide/setback walks, and safer access to bike trails
- Address traffic congestion
- Reduce vehicular speed
- Improve pedestrian and bike safety with connections between residential and business areas and the Little Miami River Trails
- Stimulate neighborhood center redevelopment in Madison Place South, Plainville, and Stewart Road.
- Provide investment incentives for developers

Plainville-Wooster Road Area

The Plainville-Wooster Road area was identified as a zone of change in the Township. There were many issues involved in this area. The Vision Committee and Focus Groups were concerned with the safety of the Wooster Road Corridor and the pedestrian scale and friendliness of the commercial strip. The group desires a pedestrian-friendly, walkable, mixed business/residential community for the area. Traffic congestion and pedestrian access/safety in the area were of top concern. Pedestrian safety in the form of well-defined crosswalks, wide/setback walks, and safer access to bike trails are important. Creating a unique landscaped boulevard, reducing vehicular speed, and minimizing truck hazards were issues to be addressed. It was noted in the group discussions that ODOT's plan for the Plainville-Wooster area does not yet reinforce these neighborhood business district goals, and is also inconsistent with the Eastern Corridor Land Use Vision Plan (ECLUVF).

Pedestrian connections between residential areas to the business district and the Little Miami River Trails, as well as future trail connectivity with adjoining Townships were an issue. This includes the possibility of a bike path connecting new trails in the Township with Mariemont, Fairfax, Terrace Park, and the larger trail network. Trail connections within the Township's SPI Riparian Buffer along the Little Miami River was also discussed.

Recreational and tourism related commercial development along the Little Miami River is an economic opportunity for the area. The "river view" is seen as one of the district's great assets. It was noted that two years ago Hamilton County Parks discouraged connectors to river trails and the potential for "trailside" cafes or related facilities. It was noted that in general, Hamilton County Parks' planning efforts largely affects the Township's river lands and provides positive management of an important resource. Also, new sewer investment brings new development to the Plainville area and solves utility problems. Aquifer river protection is important to the Township and nearby agricultural lands. Traffic backs up in Mariemont from the lights at the square and there is considerable backup in Columbia Township on Walton Creek and Newtown Road.

Highlights of the Plainville-Wooster Road Area Zone of Change

- Create a pedestrian-friendly mixed use Town Center
- Traffic safety issues: reduce congestion and vehicular speed, minimize number of trucks on steep hillside roads
- Improve pedestrian safety with well-defined crosswalks and wide sidewalks
- Better pedestrian and bike connections between residential areas and local business districts and the Little Miami River Trails
- Potential recreational and tourism development along the Little Miami River
- Control hillside erosion and flooding along Wooster Road at the Newtown Bridge
- The "river view" is seen as one of the district's great assets.
- Potential infill housing along US 50 east
- Hamilton County Parks' planning efforts largely affects the Township's river lands and provides positive management of an important resource.
- Sewer improvements in Plainville would spur new development
- Protection of the Little Miami River aquifer is important to the Township and nearby agricultural lands.

Wooster Road West

The Wooster Road west area is a relatively stable undeveloped area with little zone of change recommendations. This area could be impacted by the extension of State Route 32. The potential new bridge crossing of the Little Miami River would be south of Fairfax and near Red Bank Road.

Wooster Road East

The Wooster Road East area is located between the Williams Meadow subdivision and Willow Run Lane. The area has some erosion and drainage issues along the north side of Wooster west of the Williams Meadow Subdivision. The south side of Wooster Road is mostly public park and includes Indian Hills Green space, Kroger Hills, and Avoca Park. There is potential for a limited amount of infill housing and higher density housing along Wooster Road. There are issues with hillside slippage and erosion.

Madison Place South

This district was identified as a zone of change. The commercial area is a source of income for the Township. There is a desire for businesses in the area to serve the local neighborhood. The area has become a desirable location for young families. The residential areas are stable, but need public improvements. Focus Group members stressed that they wish to seek a balance of residential and commercial development in this area. Members are willing to consider different means of stimulating growth and expansion of the business district. Measures include creating a CRA, "squaring off" the zoning of adjacent residential property for managed commercial growth. Zoning overlays (SPs) and redeveloping old, underutilized properties (such as the old Walgreens or grocery store) were recommended. Allowing for zoning changes and encouraging parcel aggregation were considered.

Trees were removed along Plainville Road in 2001 by Hamilton County. There is a need to plant new street trees and improve pedestrian lighting and sidewalks. The Hamilton County Engineer's office will need to approve the streetscape improvement. There are concerns regarding curbs, sidewalks, and street trees. There is a good building-to-street relationship in the area. The existing second story apartments and retail in the area is a good model for future development. There is potential of expanding the business area and closing some of the side streets leading onto Plainville. The expansion of commercial properties could involve the removal of existing houses. If the area is expanded a buffer zone could be established between the commercial and residential areas to lessen the impact on adjacent residences. The abandoned gas stations in the district are potential brownfield sites and could be cleaned up with state funded programs.

Neighborhood Business Districts with many individual parcels and small, independent stores are often unstable, especially where there is no cohesive community center. So, in order to create a healthy neighborhood center and encourage reinvestment in the surrounding neighborhood, new incentives are needed with land use and financing. Expanding growth areas for "elbow room" and the use of public funding tools (TIFs, JEDDs, CRAs, etc.) were noted as possible tools in any development efforts.

It was suggested that it would be helpful for the Township to sketch up several development options for this area. It was also recommended that any expansion should have stability and longevity, and create a quality integration of office, retail, and residential spaces. It was noted that future redevelopment considerations should include the Murray Avenue property leased from the Township.

The following are the highlights of the focus group discussion for the zones of change in Madison Place South:

- Provide investment and tax incentives for developers
- Bring businesses in to provide neighborhood services for young families
- Infrastructure enhancements and beautification
- Streetscaping and tree planting to increase the sense of place.
- Develop an identity unique to the district, apart from Mariemont
- Create an attractive line of demarcation between Madison Place South and Mariemont
- Bramble School is important to the neighborhood
- Balance residential and commercial development in this area
- Stimulate growth and expansion of the Madison Place South business district

Madison Place North

Madison Place North is a relatively stable area. It has the opportunity for housing rehabilitation of existing homes and is being developed with new condominiums starting at \$450,000. The developer is willing to donate adjoining property to Columbia Township if the Township agrees to keep it as green space. If the Township does not want the land, it may be given to another entity. Ownership of the property could mean some increased operational costs and liability for the Township.

It should be noted that Madison Place North will continue to see increases in property values, due to its proximity to Indian Hill and Madeira. Loan subsidies and other investment stimuli could encourage greater reinvestment into the area. Encouragement should be given for the expansion of Queen of Angels Montessori School. Columbia Township could gain some tax revenues and simultaneously keep adjoining property free of the Indian Hill greenbelt. The following summarizes the issues of Madison Place North:

- Protect and redevelop existing residential neighborhoods while stimulating reinvestment
- Encourage the expansion of Queen of Angels Montessori School

Camargo Road

There are few houses in this area. The Village of Indian Hill has bought much of the land in this area for a green space buffer. It was noted that a Fairfax storm water runoff study concluded that certain low lying "ravine" lands have value for creating storm water detention zones. These are mostly along Camargo Road and existing Little Duck Creek. Hillsides in this area are mostly owned by the Village of Indian Hill. No change will be made to them. The key points to this area are:

- Land next to Little Duck Creek has value as a storm water detention zone
- Hillsides are mostly owned by the Village of Indian Hill and will remain as green space

Camp Dennison South

The Village of Indian Hill owns most of the vacant land in this area. There is minimal land available for development. There is an emphasis on green space and park land and connecting bikeways. Because this land is part of the Village of Indian Hill's greenbelt, this land will remain undeveloped and will continue to result in a loss of property taxes for the Township.

Jurisdictional Meeting

A Jurisdictional Information Meeting was held with the jurisdictions surrounding Columbia Township. The goal of this meeting was to give jurisdictional leaders an overview of the Comprehensive Plan Process for Columbia Township and provide a brief summary of the Vision Committee and Focus Group work completed. The meeting provided an opportunity for leaders of surrounding jurisdictions to express their interest, issues or ideas to the committee. It was also an opportunity to begin discussions between the adjoining communities regarding collaborative efforts for the implementation of the comprehensive plan. The meeting provided an introduction of the Comprehensive Plan Process, the Consultant Team and the Vision Committee and Focus Groups' meeting results.

The consultant provided and reviewed the issues and zones of changes future land use recommendations for the Township as expressed in the Vision Committee and Focus Group meetings. The zones of change information for both the east and west sections of the Township was presented:

Western Focus Areas – Overview to Jurisdictions

The zones of change areas including Ridge Highland, Madison Place South and Wooster Road were discussed. Key focus areas including the Ridge-Highland Business District, Kennedy Connector, the Seven Hills School Area, Stewart Road and surrounding neighborhoods were reviewed.

Issues of Importance – Western Focus Area:

- The areas of transition along Stewart Road south of the BMW Dealership
- The growth and development of the Seven Hills School Campus
- Ridge-Highland Business District redevelopment, traffic and pedestrian safety
- Relocation of Township Center and potential locations
- Storm water issues and flood prone areas
- Kennedy Connector
- Eastern Corridor Improvements including bus, future passenger rail and parkway
- Stewart Road Area Zone of Change
- Ridge-Highland Area Zone of Change
- Ridgewood – enhance and protect the quality of life
- Impact of Seven Hills School expansion on adjacent neighborhood
- Protecting existing residential areas

Eastern Focus Areas – Overview to Jurisdictions

The Camargo Road/Stewart Road, Madison Place South, Madison Place North, Plainville-Wooster, Wooster Road East and Camp Dennison South were discussed. These areas of East Columbia Township were reviewed individually. Discussion revolved around the need for better pedestrian connections between residential areas to the business districts and the Little Miami River Trails, as well as future trail connectivity with adjoining Townships. This includes the possibility of a bike path connecting new trails in the Township with Mariemont, Fairfax, Terrace Park, and the larger trail network. Trail connection within the Township's Riparian Buffer along the Little Miami River was also discussed.

Issues of Importance – Eastern Focus Area

- Closing Bramble School in Madisonville effects Madison Place North and South neighborhoods. Communications to Cincinnati Public Schools to keep this school open have happened.
- Through traffic on Route 50 should decrease once the proposed new Route 32 bypass is completed. Residents support this proposal.
- ODOT's proposal for the Route 50 "5th lane" in Plainville is not pedestrian friendly. It creates a physical barrier to crossing the street and increases the overall road width.
- Traffic backs up in Columbia Township on Walton Creek and Newtown Rd.
- There are concerns about the safety of trucks on the steep part of Muchmore Road.
- Bike Trails and Connectivity are important.
- Residential Developments and neighborhoods are important.

Jurisdictional Discussion

The jurisdictional representatives each had an opportunity to discuss their thoughts and developed a list of important issues. These issues along with those developed by the Vision Committee and Focus Group meetings were used to refine the Comprehensive Plan.

- Neighborhood access and linkage Issues
- Interconnections and efficiency
- Identity "Township" limits
- Commercial centers must be successful
- Spend money on preserving neighborhood and natural resources
- Concern over addition of 5th lane to US 50 and its effect on pedestrians.
- Fairfax, Mariemont, Columbia Township -- characters of three different neighborhood districts
- Bikeway connections improvements are important
- Support of proposed 32 roadway to bypass through traffic
- Fit into Eastern Corridor access improvements is important.
- SPIs potential use and description
- Ridge/Highland access problems need to resolved
- Oakley and Madisonville input key
- Lanes on Ridge/Business Development options
- Walkability and mixed use Town Center - how to implement it.
- Edwards Connector

Public Workshops

The public open house was held at the Village of Fairfax recreation center on January 15, 2005. At this meeting, the maps, zones of change and the existing conditions inventory was presented and displayed for the general public to view and comment on. An executive summary of the plan process to date was handed out to participating respondents.

The second open house was held at the Township offices on February 26, 2005. At this open house the existing conditions inventory, zones of changes and initial recommendations were displayed for the public. Prior to the open house, surveys were distributed to Township residents asking them to rank and evaluate some of the key issues and recommendations for the study. The survey was distributed to all businesses and was available at the open house. A total of 26 survey were returned and tabulated (Figure 8).

Vision Statement

The exercises revealed the key issues of the Township and primary areas of focus. The Consultant Team in conjunction with the Vision Committee developed a vision statement, goals and objectives for the study and implementation strategies based upon this visioning work. Specific recommendations, strategies and ideas were developed for each zone of change district.

Over 50 citizen planners from Columbia Township, including both residents and business representatives, took part in the public involvement process. The input of many sources, including citizen planners, attendees of the public open house meetings, and results from the written surveys informed the Visioning work.

Key concepts were developed and debated in the Vision Committee and Focus Group Meetings as part of the process for developing a final Vision Statement for the Township. Key

ideas included interest regarding commercial development, transportation, quality of life issues, housing, natural resources and economic development.

Vision Statement Outline

The vision of Columbia Township is to develop a community that has:

- A strong sense of pride

- A sense of place

- A high quality of life that celebrates its diversity of

 - Income levels

 - Race

 - Religion

 - Ethnicity

- Continued delivery of outstanding Township services that sets the standard for other communities

- A safe and secure environment to raise families and conduct business

- Enhanced community appearance

- Protected property values

- Supported and maintained parks and green spaces

- A sustainable natural environment

- A well-maintained infrastructure

 - Roadway system

 - Storm drainage system

 - Sidewalks

- A planned approach to economic development

 - Business district revitalization

 - Business retention and marketing plan

- A plan to strengthen the Township's tax base

- Effective governance

Planning Goals and Objectives

Introduction

The results and outcomes of the workshop sessions were translated into a Vision Statement, goals, objectives, and zones of change implementation strategies for the Township. The goals and objectives provide the outline for the plan elements including the proposed land use plan and community strategies. The Vision Statement, goals, and objectives can be defined as follows:

- Vision Statement: An overall guiding statement.
- Goals: Aim and purpose – it is a desired end state or target that if pursued over the long term, will contribute to the attainment of the community vision.
- Objective: A method of achieving an end. A method of action selected to guide and determine present and future decisions.

The following goals and objectives describe the Township's priorities for growth and development over the next 20 years. These items are not presented in priority order and represent inputs derived from Township officials, the community survey, and an evaluation of action priorities conducted by the Committees. The Township should periodically review and measure how well it is meeting these goals, as well as the needs and expectations of its current and future residents. In addition, the Township also needs to establish a framework for cooperative decision making in order to guide development.

Underlying Values:

- Promote growth that is fiscally sound which addresses the entire Township's quality of future growth and land use.
- Protect and enhance neighborhood, residential, and commercial resources.
- Provide for long-term public services and roadway maintenance.
- Create a "sense of place."

Economic Development

Goals: Develop and implement healthy and sustainable economic development initiatives throughout the Township. The Township will have an expanded tax base with a focus on attracting the correct mix of businesses and promoting existing business.

Objectives: See items listed below.

General Guidelines

- Prepare for and guide future development and redevelopment opportunities.
- Revitalize and strengthen neighborhood business centers.
- Improve the quality and variety of retail, commercial and service businesses in the areas.
- Encourage local entrepreneurial efforts.
- Encourage development that will expand tax base.
- Encourage non-residential expansion with surrounding uses and with minimal impact to the traffic congestion issues.

Marketing Strategies

- Develop a marketing and public relations plan for the Township.
- Develop a Strategic Marketing Plan that encourages the proper mix of businesses that will flourish in the commercial areas.
- Promote available land and underutilized buildings to prospective developers.
- Promote the Township's strong neighborhood business districts.
- Market the Township's access and location within the Greater Tri-State area.
- Identify and market tourism opportunities.
- Interact and communicate with local area chambers of commerce, and real estate developers to identify needs and business plans of community.

Specific Actions to Encourage Development

- Work with telecommunication utilities to assure that Columbia Township is able to offer businesses "state of the art" infrastructure telecommunications and information communication facilities.
- Provide an adequate inventory of available buildings and lots in the Township's commercial and neighborhood areas.
- Develop an implementation plan for the Ridge-Highland, Madison Place South, Stewart Road and Plainville Districts.
- Promote and seek new businesses with mixed-use office and commercial uses.
- Promote cooperative economic development initiatives between local governments and businesses for specific projects.
- Identify potential sites for new businesses and redevelopment of underutilized sites based on the HCDC study of the Ridge and Highland Business District Corridor Study, the Plainville, Madison Place South, and Stewart Road Business District Studies. Carefully plan for the type, placement, and location of future growth.

Transportation and Access

Goals: Provide for existing and future transportation needs of the Township. Provide and improve effective roadway maintenance and vehicular access for the health and safety of the community. The transportation systems will efficiently and effectively serve the Township.

Objectives: See items listed below.

General Guidelines

- Maintain a roadway and traffic system that is safe.
- Provide and improve street maintenance for all roadways within the Township.
- Recognize and implement the Eastern Corridor access improvements such as the Ohio 32 bypass, the Duck Creek to Stewart Road connector, Red Bank Road improvements, and the Kennedy Connector.

Quality Roadway and Streetscape Design

- Provide better pedestrian connections between residential areas and the business districts and the Little Miami River Trails.
- Develop streetscaping and tree planting standards to be included in any expansion plans, providing a more aesthetically appealing, pedestrian-friendly neighborhood center and a greater sense of place and coordinate these improvements with the roadway improvements.

- Provide for interconnectivity of new roadways with the current roadway network to decrease congestion.
- Encourage investment in transportation facilities to accommodate regional traffic with the least amount of impact on local residents.
- Minimize impact of traffic. Prepare a traffic impact study for significant roadway intersections: Ridge/Highland, Stewart Road, Wooster Road, and Plainville Road.
- Reevaluate US 50 in Plainville when Ohio 32 bypass is completed.
- Develop Township design standards and require all new development to provide sidewalks or pedestrian/bicycle access paths at the time of permit approval.

Safety

- Develop traffic calming measures to reduce speeding and through traffic.
- Regulate and limit curb cuts, right-turn only lanes, lane management and signalization improvements and management.
- Reduce or eliminate truck traffic on steep hillside roads.
- Discourage pass-through traffic patterns in residential areas.
- Provide and design for pedestrian safety, in the form of well-defined crosswalks, wide/setback walks, and safer access to bike trails. Improve pedestrian crossings that can also serve as a beautification opportunity.

Redevelopment

- Utilize high traffic volumes on Stewart as an opportunity to attract businesses. Coordinate potential improvements to the I-71 interchange with ODOT.
- Coordinate development around roadway Improvements. Provide better access on Stewart Road and Ridge/Highland areas for redevelopment.

Township Identity and Image

Goals: Develop a Township Identity, Image and Vision. The Township will create an image and identity through physical design standards, marketing and cultural events and activities.

Objectives: See items listed below.

Marketing

- Promote Madison Place South, Plainville, Ridge/Highland and Stewart Road commercial areas as neighborhood centers with specialty retail, office and services.
- Define Township Boundaries and Township Theme. Develop a Township Identity, Image and Vision. The Township will create an image or unique identity / theme through physical design standards, marketing / cultural / Township events and activities.
- Market the unique aspects of Columbia Township to create a unique image of the community through branding or themed identifiers.
- Develop a Township Center or Government Complex.
- Develop programs, events, and festivals and opportunities to educate residents and the community on Columbia Township's history and other unique aspects.

Quality Design Standards and Beautification

- Develop a Streetscape, Gateway, and Beautification Plan to improve appearance of the Township.

- Beautify corridors with underground utilities, street trees and landscaping, new streetlights, street furniture, and paving materials.
- Develop a plan for all gateways, major interchanges and key intersections. Reserve key sites for future commercial development.
- Develop and implement the "Design Guidelines" for the entire Township.
- Encourage redevelopment of underutilized and vacant space with a new Township standard for design.
- Develop corridor design guidelines for Ridge-Highland Business District, Madison Place South Business District, Stewart Road North Business District and Wooster Road Business District to reflect their status as entryways into the Township.

Infrastructure and Public Facilities

Goals: Provide efficient public utilities to foster economic development and maintain current levels of service.

Objectives: See items listed below.

General Guidelines

- Explore grants and incentives that can be used to encourage relocating existing and future utilities underground.
- Develop and maintain a current map indicating sidewalks and streets that should be retained and improved.
- Establish Township-level procedures for evaluation and approval/denial of future infrastructure improvements in the Township.
- Assess the impact of proposed infrastructure projects on Township financial resources.
- Consider a range of funding mechanisms including establishing area assessment districts and the use of development impact fees to help fund these projects –Roadway Improvements, sewer service, and stormwater systems.

Sanitary Lines, Stormwater and Flooding

- Improve sanitary lines in Plainville to encourage redevelopment.
- Develop and implement ordinances to require on-site retention and detention of stormwater. Where on-site storage is not feasible, developers could be required to contribute fees to support area-wide basins.
- Prepare a comprehensive stormwater management plan focusing on the eastern portion of the Township.

Other

- Construct a new fire station or collaborate with other jurisdictions on a plan to serve the Ridge-Highland Area.
- Create new Township offices and maintenance facility complex.

Residential

Goals: Conserve and maintain the quality of residential neighborhoods.

Objectives: Protect existing residential districts and provide incentives for their reinvestment.

General Guidelines

- Encourage affordable and balanced housing mix.
- Foster identifiable neighborhoods in the Township based on areas that are serviced by neighborhood parks and schools.
- Protect residential neighborhoods from drugs, deterioration and crimes.
- Develop Special Public Interest (SPI) Districts for neighborhoods to control design aesthetics, including curb cuts, streetscaping, signage, building setbacks, and parking.
- Promote the maintenance and creation of affordable housing.
- Continue to promote home ownership opportunities for low and moderate income households.
- Pursue funding to upgrade the Township's existing owner and rental housing stock, primarily in areas with high concentrations of substandard housing.
- Promote the organization of neighborhood groups to advocate for neighborhood preservation and enhancement.
- Encourage investment in older properties to help maintain their appearance and value.
- Promote established neighborhoods, such as Ridgewood, as attractive places to live.
- Consider CRAs in certain neighborhoods.
- Continue to maintain an adequate inventory of single-family lots.

Zoning and Design Guidelines

- Ensure appropriate zoning controls are established in neighborhoods to help foster the overall goals for each unique area.
- Ensure that the site design for new development in established neighborhoods is compatible with the built fabric of that neighborhood.
- Encourage the use of landscape materials and ornamentation to improve the appearance and functionality of new developments.
- Use development and planning controls to minimize environmental and property damage from flooding and erosion.
- Promote development that residents and visitors recognize as being of high quality and aesthetically pleasing.
- Where an adequate buffer can be established, rezone spot industrially and commercially-zoned parcels in predominantly residential neighborhoods to residential zoning.
- Develop process to review new development applications to consider fiscal impacts on Township resources prior to approval of proposed development.

Multifamily Housing

- Locate apartment projects and other higher-density residential developments in areas serviced by existing collector roads and transit service, and that are accessible to neighborhood commercial services, parks, and schools.
- Adopt landscaping and site design standards for multifamily housing projects as part of the SPI District.

Neighborhood Business Districts

Goals: Promote commercial redevelopment in neighborhood business districts and commercial areas.

Objectives: Encourage renewed and continued coordination and unification of businesses.

General Guidelines

- Develop a continuous sidewalk system for the neighborhood business districts.
- Encourage the upgrading and conversion of vacant and underutilized buildings, and upper floors into residential and other appropriate uses.
- Provide parking areas behind buildings to meet needs of neighborhood businesses.
- Consider development and business incentive mechanisms such as Tax Incremental Financing as an incentive for new neighborhood redevelopment.
- Develop and implement "Design Guidelines" or SPI Districts.
- Continue to develop an image and vision for the neighborhood business districts, and encourage private and public investments to attain a multifunctional community.

Specific Neighborhood Business Districts

- Redevelop the Wooster Road Area with riverfront mixed-use development. Potential uses include a combination of tourist-oriented retail stores, restaurants, office, and residential.
- Redevelop Madison Place South Neighborhood Business District with neighborhood business uses, including service, retail and pedestrian oriented uses.
- Redevelop Stewart Road with office and business uses that are conducive to high volumes of traffic.
- Develop SPI Districts with design standards for:
 - Ridgewood
 - Ridge-Highland
 - Madison Place South
 - Plainville-Wooster Road
 - Stewart Road

Parks and Recreation

Goals: Provide parks and recreational facilities for residents and visitors.

Objectives: Develop new park space, link trails, and enhance existing recreational uses.

General Guidelines

- Create opportunities for active and passive recreational uses.
- Provide more neighborhood parks within safe walking distance of all residential neighborhoods. One-half mile is an acceptable walking distance to a neighborhood park, providing there are no major barriers or constraints to safe pedestrian access.
- Acquire new neighborhood parks in developing areas of the Township through dedications or acquisitions, as the land is platted. As new neighborhoods begin to develop, the Township should develop detailed neighborhood plans identifying sites for future neighborhood parks. Generally parks are located so that land dedications can be received from different property owners as the area is developed.

- Preserve natural resources (including air, water, and land) and environmentally sensitive areas in the community.
- Protect groundwater and surface water sources from flood and storm-related pollution.
- Protect sensitive areas, such as wooded areas, major drainage ways, and areas of topographic relief.
- Aggressively pursue State, Federal, and private grants to acquire and improve parks and recreation facilities.

Little Miami River

- Preserve land along the Little Miami River for parks and conservation.
- Maximize the opportunity for the Township's use and enjoyment of the Little Miami River. Provide trail linkage to existing trails in Columbia Township.
- Develop a system of pathways and trails that connect existing recreational uses.
- Interconnect Plainville Town Center and river edge parks.

Encourage Green Development

- Encourage development patterns that help reduce dependence on automobiles and promote different modes of transportation.
- Promote building construction and site design that incorporates innovative and effective techniques in energy conservation.
- Preserve natural amenities in new development through innovative development regulations and design.
- Encourage development that protects and enhances an area's natural features, such as wooded areas, creeks, and hilly terrain.

Land Use

Goals : Encourage a variety of land uses to meet the needs of a diverse community.

Objectives: Control and manage land uses.

General Guidelines

- Develop SPI Districts for neighborhoods to control design aesthetics, including curb cuts, streetscaping, signage, building setbacks, materials, and parking.
- Promote the design of new neighborhoods that are convenient to proposed transit and to reduce the need to travel long distances to fulfill basic needs.
- Encourage development that offers the efficiencies of density and mixed uses.
- Restrict undesirable land uses such as automobile repair, and heavy industry.

Parks

- Determine opportunities for additional park space in existing and new residential growth areas, and along the Little Miami River, Duck Creek, and Little Duck Creek.

Green Development

- Encourage infill development strategies wherever possible and minimize sprawl whenever possible.

- Promote the integration of landscape buffers in new development plans to separate and buffer between commercial, industrial and residential uses. Coordinate the landscape requirements with the development controls in Hamilton County.
- Conduct research of growth management, development controls and other methods in nearby jurisdictions to analyze the best methods suited to the Township for developing new standards.
- Develop site design standards for multi-family residential development in established neighborhoods to ensure the urban fabric and pattern of established neighborhoods is maintained with new development.

Zoning

- Adopt guidelines, regulations, and/or incentives to encourage cluster or open space development.
- Encourage coordination and cooperation in land use planning in the Columbia Township area with the surrounding jurisdictions and unincorporated areas.
- Construct an inventory map of environmentally sensitive areas within the Township.
- Study zoning and land use along the Plainville Road, Wooster Road, Ridge and Highland and Stewart Road North to determine appropriate future land use designations and appropriate opportunities for adaptive reuse and redevelopment.
- Develop buffer standards between commercial and residential and roadways.
- Implement the projects and strategies listed in the HCDC Economic Development Reports and the recommendations in the Eastern Corridor Land Use Vision Plan.
- Develop a strategic land use and marketing strategy for the Ridge-Highland Business District, Madison Place South Business District, Stewart Road North Business District and Wooster Road Business District that considers the changes in market demands and demographics of the area. Evaluate the possibility of TIF, JEDD, CEDA, CRA, and other economic development programs.
- Develop and facilitate business and industrial "neighborhood groups" to meet regularly for a discussion of ideas and concerns about their area.

Section II. Existing Conditions and Analysis Report

Overview

Introduction

This chapter explains and defines each of the land use designations, or categories, used on the Existing Land Use Plan Map, and provides criteria that describe the characteristics and definition of each land use category. The emphasis in this chapter is on defining the form, function, allowed uses and density of uses for each land use category, as well as providing general criteria for locating and siting these land use elements or their components.

Definition of Land Use Plan

A land use plan presents the policies regarding the extent and intensity of physical development. It typically includes an analysis of existing land patterns by use category, an examination of the amount of vacant land, and the percentage of each land use that makes up the composition of the community. A future land use plan represents the direction of growth and the expected intensity of uses of the land.

The rationale for land use planning includes some variation of the following:

- Accommodate future needs
- Provide for orderly growth
- Provide sound basis for short-range decisions
- Provide an official position that property owners can count on to enable consideration of cumulative and secondary offsite effects of individual development proposals

The adoption of the land use plan as part of a continuous planning process enables a balanced and comprehensive review of incremental zoning amendments. Successful implementation of the goals and objectives of a plan requires regular reevaluation of recommendations. This on-going planning approach is essential to ensure appropriate flexibility since it is impossible to determine the exact location of all land uses in advance of need and development.

While land use plans are recommendations for the use of land, and guide the type of development that should occur on a piece of land, zoning is an actual tool for implementation. Land use plans should guide zoning and not vice versa.

Existing Land Use and Zoning

The Township was divided into twelve sub areas to better represent the detail and development of the community. There is an existing land use map depicting each of the twelve sub-areas of Columbia Township and a narrative describing the general land uses patterns and zoning of each area (Figures 9, 10A, 10B and 10.1 to 10.12).

The land use categories used in this study for Columbia Township are identical to the land use designations and definitions developed for the Eastern Corridor Land Use Vision Plan (ECLUVP). This was adopted by the Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission in 2003. The ECLUVP land use categories were developed as a standard to organize and define the land uses by type of use and density. Detailed categories and definitions were developed that fit into the general land use categories including: Residential, Commercial, Office, Industrial, Agricultural, Green Space, Institutional and Utility Uses.

Green Space

Over 54% of the total land use is green space - open space or conservation areas. These green space areas are located primarily in the eastern portion of the Township along Wooster Road and in Camp Dennison South.

Residential

Residential land use is the second largest land use category in the Township. Twenty (20%) percent of the total land area in the Township is residential. The residential categories are described below.

Rural Estate Residential - 4% of the total residential land area is rural estate residential. Rural estate residential is detached housing at very low densities. This zone is generally associated with the rural environment. This zone limits development to 1 unit on 5 acres or more. This extremely low-density development is found on the eastern portion of the Township near Indian Hill in Camp Dennison South and just north of Wooster Road where some large estate residential development occurs.

Low Density Residential - 8% of the total residential land area is low-density residential. Low density residential is detached housing with a maximum density of 1 unit per acre.

Medium Density - 10% of the total residential land area is medium density residential. A large amount of the residential development is detached housing at moderately low densities from 1 unit per acre to 4.35 units per acre.

Medium High Density, High Density and Multi-Family – 38% of the residential land area is high density residential, which includes multi-family and high density categories. Detached and attached housing ranges in density from 4.35 units per acre to 7.26 units per acre and higher. Detached housing at high densities occur throughout the Township in Madison Place North and South, Ridge-Highland West and East.

Residential Land Use Classification

Land Use Category	Minimum Density (DU/Acre)	Maximum Density (DU/Acre)	Lot Size
Rural Estate Residential	NA	0.2	greater than 5 acres
Low Density Residential	0.2	1	1-5 acres
Medium Low Density Residential	1	2.17	20,000 SF -1 acre
Medium Density Residential	2.17	4.35	10,000-20,000 SF
Medium High Density Residential	4.35	7.26	6,000-10,000 SF
Mobile Home Residential	NA	7	greater than 6,223 SF
High Density Residential	7.26	NA	less than 6,000 SF

Commercial

7.9% of the Township is commercial. Uses include commercial space, vacant or underutilized commercial space and mixed-use developments. Commercial land use consists of retail, office, and industrial uses. These uses are located primarily in concentrated locations at Ridge-Highland, Madison Place South along Plainville Road and along Wooster Road, the corridor known as Plainville. These uses include retail and shopping centers.

Mixed Use

Mixed Use occupies 1% of the Township. The term "Mixed Use" typically refers to one of these two situations:

- Where two or more different uses occur within the same building (e.g., apartments above retail).
- Where two or more different uses occur within the same area (e.g., multi-family housing near office and retail uses). Whether or not an area is considered Mixed Use under this definition depends upon the scale at which an area is being viewed. For instance, the retail shopping areas at Ridge-Highland are Commercial Use, but if the nearby residential uses are included, it would be considered "Mixed Use." Mixed Use designations are used to designate these larger areas on the Existing Land Use Plan in order to give flexibility to determining the most appropriate mix of development.

Agriculture

Less than 1.0% of the Township is agricultural. Examples of agricultural development in urban settings include sod farms along Little Miami River near Newtown. Agricultural activities include crop propagation, dairying, stock animal and raising poultry. These areas in Columbia Township are located primarily along Wooster Road and in Camp Dennison South.

Industrial

1.4% of the Township is industrial. This includes light industrial, heavy industrial and vacant industrial sites.

Educational – Institutional - Public Utilities - Transportation

15.2% of the Township is developed with schools, churches, public utilities and roadways. Roadways account for 367 square acres. 150 acres are developed with school property and facilities. There are 33 acres of institutional uses and 50 acres of public utilities, which includes facilities for utilities.

Western Focus Area Existing Land Use and Zoning

Norwood Green

- Norwood Green is developed as a park and green space.
- Area is surrounded by the City of Cincinnati on the north, west and east side and the City of Norwood on the south.
- Area is zoned G Heavy Industry.

Stewart Road

- The properties along both sides of Stewart Road are single-family detached homes of various densities including low density, low-medium density, medium density, medium-high, and a few high density parcels located along Euclid Avenue and Stewart Road.
- The area is predominantly developed with medium-high density land uses.
- Some houses along Stewart Road have been converted to business uses.
- Silverton Elementary School is located directly to the rear of the single-family dwellings located on the west side of Stewart Road.
- The Stewart Road is surrounded by single-family homes at higher densities to the west and low to medium densities to the east towards Interstate 71.
- Stewart Road North is zoned B Residential with a maximum density of 4.1 units per acre.

Ridgewood

- Ridgewood is a stable residential neighborhood with medium to medium-high density single-family homes. The area is surrounded by single-family subdivisions of similar densities.
- It abuts Amberley Village on the north and east sides, Golf Manor on the west, and Pleasant Ridge, a neighborhood of the City of Cincinnati on the south side.
- Ridgewood is zoned C Residential, which permits 7.26 units per acre and is a medium-high density classification.

Ridge-Highland West

- The Ridge-Highland area is the central commercial hub in Columbia Township and has attracted retail business and development over the past forty years. It is a large commercial area with the focal point located at and around the major intersections of Ridge and Highland and Kennedy Avenue.
- Ridge Avenue is zoned Light Industry on the east side and is zoned Heavy Industry on the west side except for a small lot where Highland intersects Ridge. The land that is currently developed with Wal-Mart is zoned EE Planned Retail District. The area is developed with a mix of retail, service, commercial, and residential land uses, but is primarily a commercial district.
- The area has single-family homes located on Ridge Road south of Highland Avenue, along Donald Street. These single-family residences are incompatible land uses with the surrounding commercial development. They are zoned for E-Retail Business, a commercial uses classification.
- Kennedy Avenue is developed with service uses, commercial retail and highway commercial uses and has many detached single family homes that have been converted into automobile repair uses.
- Lucille Drive there are single-family detached residences. The residential areas are zoned C-Residential. On north Kennedy Avenue, there is a multi-family residential use on View Pointe Drive, which is zoned for Community Unit Plan. There is a high density subdivision located on Monardi Circle and Ken Oak Lane.
- Hill and Dale and East Dogwood Lane are developed with low-density single-family detached homes. These areas are zoned C Residential which is a medium-high density classification. The area is surrounded by residential on the southeast side, the north and east sides. Part of the southern end abuts the Pennsylvania Railroad, industrial and highway related development.

Ridge-Highland East

- The area east of I-71 along Stewart Road is developed with detached single family homes located on the east side of Red Bank Road and to the east of Stewart Avenue north of Madisonville Recreation Center. The subdivision is zoned as C-Residential.
- The Ridge-Highland east area is also developed with a multi-family residential development in the Windridge/Windknoll development and is zoned as a Community Unit Plan.
- The Seven Hills School campus is located on the southwest portion of this district and several of the buildings are located in Columbia Township. The Seven Hills School buildings are zoned C and B Residential.
- A higher density single family detached subdivision is located on Fredicksburg Court and Ehrling Road on the west side of Red Bank Road. This subdivision is zoned as a D-Residential development and has been identified as medium density and medium-high density land use classifications.
- The remaining area of the Ridge-Highland East district is zoned for B Residential classification and is developed with single-family homes.
- Daniel Drake Park abuts the Columbia Township Boundary on the north and heavy Industrial uses abut the district on the southeast.
- The Summit Country Day School Athletic Facility is located north of I-71 adjacent to Ehrling Road and is zoned residential.

Eastern Focus Area Existing Land Use and Zoning

Camargo Road

- The Camargo Road area is primarily vacant land with a few houses.
- Indian Hill has bought much of the land, mostly hillsides, for green space.
- An area along the west side of Camargo Road is vacant commercial land. The balance of the area is zoned A and C Residential.

Madison Place North

- Madison Place North is developed with high density residential uses throughout the neighborhood.
- The Queen of Angels School is located on the west side the Madison Place North District. The area is zoned C Residential, including the school campus.
- At the north end on Indian Hill Avenue, a new condominium development is zoned C Residential.

Madison Place South

- The Madison Place South is located immediately north of the Village of Mariemont along Plainville Road. This area is mostly high density detached single-family housing.
- The neighborhood business district is located along Plainville Road. The district is a source of income for the Township and is developed with retail uses, home improvement stores, automobile repair shops, restaurants and hair salons. It is primarily a service district with a mix of service and retail businesses. The businesses serve the surrounding neighborhoods and Fairfax, Madisonville, and Mariemont.
- The Plainville corridor is zoned E Retail Business and the surrounding neighborhood is zoned C Residential.

Wooster Road West

- The Wooster Road West area follows the Penn Central Railroad line and the Norfolk and Western Railroad. It has many natural riverfront green spaces and is surrounded by high density single family residential areas to the north and industrial uses on the north west side of the boundary.
- The area is surrounded by green space including Miami Bluff Park, Goose Island to the south, Horseshoe Bend Preserve and an abundance of open space areas.
- The Wooster Road West area is primarily zoned Riverfront District.

Plainville-Wooster

- The Plainville Business District area is located immediately east of the Village of Mariemont along US 50. The area includes many commercial parcels that have frontage on Wooster Road between the Village of Mariemont on the west and Newton Road on the east.
- The Plainville Business District area is primarily composed of commercial uses. Large and small retailers are located in both "strip" mall and stand alone building style formats. The businesses include a grocery store, drug store, quick service, restaurants, gasoline stations, hair salons, video rental, and medical and non-medical offices. There are many small vacant parcels in the center of the corridor near Walton Creek. The stretch of the corridor is zoned E Retail Business.
- The shopping center located on the west side of Wooster Road is zoned Industrial, but is used as a commercial shopping center. There are several vacant commercial parcels fronting Wooster Road in the central strip of the corridor.
- The corridor is also zoned High Density Residential along the Mariemont Crossing and Miami Run attached townhouse development.
- Wooster Road East area also has many residential developments including Williams Meadow, Muchmore Close, and the older platted areas on Elm, Orchard, Pear Lane and Beech Street. These developments are zoned A Residential, Community Unit Plans and Planned Multi-Family Residential districts.
- An attached townhouse development is located on the south side of Wooster Road known as Mariemont Crossing off Miami Run. It is located behind the Kroger's shopping mall and in front of the abandoned Pennsylvania Railroad line and Little Miami Riverfront. This area is primarily developed with low and medium density single-family homes.
- There is also a multi-family residential development located on the north side of Wooster Road, directly south of the Indian Hill green space area. The area has many green spaces, including Avoca Park, and Kroger Hill, and is surrounded by low-density residential development and conservation/open space.
- The Wooster Road-Plainville East area is bound by the Little Miami River along its southern edge, which provides a natural setting for many green spaces and parks.

Camp Dennison South

- Camp Dennison South is mostly Indian Hill green space, Camp Ross, and small amounts of residential development.
- The area is zoned H Riverfront on the east side of Glendale –Milford Road and on the west side A Residential and F Light Industrial.
- There is no land currently available for development.

Zoning

Introduction

The existing zoning of Columbia Township is shown for each of the twelve sub-areas (Figures 10.1 to 10.12). The zoning code for Columbia Township, titled *Zoning Resolution for the Unincorporated Territory of Hamilton County, Ohio* (effective February 20, 2004), is administered by the Hamilton County Rural Zoning Commission. The provisions of the Zoning resolution apply to all the unincorporated areas of Hamilton County.

The zoning districts for Columbia Township are: Residential Districts, Commercial Districts, Industrial Districts, Special Purpose Districts, and Special Public Interest (SPI) Districts

Residential Districts

Residential Districts provide a range of housing choices with a variety of housing types and densities. In all Residential Districts, density or number of dwelling units per acre are regulated, as well as lot area and width, building height, yard standards, accessory uses, parking, and redevelopment standards.

Residential Districts:

A Residential: Single family detached dwellings with a maximum net density of 2.17 units per acre

A Community Unit Plan (CUP): Single family detached dwellings with a maximum net density of 2.17 units per acre. CUP allows greater flexibility in development standards.

B Residential: Single family detached dwellings with a maximum net density of 4.1 units per acre.

B Community Unit Plan (CUP): Single family detached dwellings with a maximum net density of 4.1 units per acre. CUP allows greater flexibility in development standards.

C Residential: Single family detached dwellings with a maximum net density of 7.26 units per acre.

Multi-Family Residential: Low to high-density residential development where sufficient infrastructure is available prior to development. This district permits a broad range of housing types including single-family and multi-family dwellings as well as low intensity uses that retain a residential character.

D High Density Residential: Residential single-family, two-family, three-family and townhouse dwellings at a maximum net density of 6,000 square feet of lot area per unit or 7.26 units per acre.

DD Planned Multi Family District: Residential single-family, two-family, three-family and townhouse dwellings at a maximum net density of 6,000 square feet of lot area per unit or 7.26 units per acre. Planned District allows greater flexibility in development standards.

Commercial Districts

Commercial Districts which include the O Office District and the E Retail Business District are intended to provide controlled settings for office development and business/commercial development, to enhance employment opportunities, to encourage the efficient use of land, to enhance property values and tax base, to encourage high quality of design in office and business/commercial developments, and to implement plans adopted by the county. Building height, lot size, yard requirements, setback, and impervious surface ratio are regulated by the zoning code.

Specific Plan District: This districts are to encourage innovative design and efficiency in the use of the land and allow property to be developed and flexible standards based on review and approval of a site plan.

E Retail Business: This district is to provide for general business uses and other uses that tend to locate along highways with relatively high traffic volumes that cater to the general public.

E Community Unit Plan:

EE Planned Retail District: Planned business district to encourage innovative design and land use. It permits property to be developed under flexible standards based on review and approval of the site plan without the need to conform to traditional zoning districts.

Industrial Districts

Industrial Districts are intended to provide appropriate locations for fabricating, processing, packaging, distribution, storage, and other transportation activities contributing to the economic base of the County, to enhance employment opportunities, to encourage the efficient use of land, enhance property values and tax base and improve the design quality of industrial areas.

F Light Industry District: For light manufacturing, processing, storage, wholesaling and distribution operations serving primarily local needs. The standards provide for the establishment and operation of light industrial uses in a manner that minimizes conflict between industrial uses and nearby residential uses.

G Heavy Industry District: For manufacturing, processing, and assembling of parts and products, wholesale warehouses, transportation terminals, and a broad variety of specialized commercial and industrial operations. The standards in this zoning classification provide for separation of the operations from residential districts and compatibility with other districts by natural and man-made buffers.

Special Purpose Districts

Special Purpose Districts are geographic areas of the county that contain land-uses platting patterns or environmental characteristics that do not fit traditional zoning classifications density standards or uniform bulk regulations. Because of the special land uses, special development standards and procedures are necessary to maintain the integrity of these areas, allow for greater flexibility in site design and achieve specialized goals for the area.

H Riverfront District: Designed to protect and enhance water quality, public safety, public recreational opportunities, and residential and non-residential uses along waterways of the County.

Special Public Interest Districts

SPI Districts are overlay districts intended to provide supplemental regulations or standards pertaining to a specific geographic feature or land use. The regulations are in addition to the underlying zoning and are not necessarily more restrictive than the base or underlying zoning. There are four types of SPI Districts:

- Natural Resource
- Neighborhood Quality
- Suburban Center
- Suburban Village

Within Columbia Township, there are currently two SPI Districts:

- Wooster Pike Natural Resource Overlay District used to protect the buffer zone of natural vegetation along the Little Miami River from destruction and development.
- Wooster Pike Suburban Corridor Overlay District used to protect the natural corridor along the Little Miami and to control development.

Demographic Inventory & Analysis

Introduction

Population and demographic trends are primary factors affecting the land use pattern of communities, counties, and regions. The number of people, their age, the living arrangements in which they place themselves, the types of dwellings they choose to live in, and the places available to find employment, all play an important role in how much land is needed to accommodate their choices. This chapter reviews the trends in population and housing growth and the projected population change that is expected to affect Columbia Township and its use of land.

Population

Hamilton County lies at the center of the Cincinnati metropolitan area. The US Census Bureau defines the area as the Cincinnati-Hamilton Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA). The 13 counties that comprise the Cincinnati CMSA are home to almost 2.0 million people, a significant increase from 1.5 million residents in 1960. The regional growth has varied slightly over the last 40 years, growing at almost 1% annually in the 1960s, slowing to 0.3% to 0.5% growth in the 1970s and 1980s, and increasing again to 0.9% on average in the 1990s. Currently the Cincinnati CMSA is the 23rd largest metropolitan area in the US.

A few cities have passed Cincinnati in size over the last forty years, including high-growth areas like Portland, Tampa, Denver, San Diego, and Phoenix. While the Cincinnati area has been outpaced by the growth in these other metropolitan markets, as the following analysis will show, areas within the metro Cincinnati have grown quite rapidly. In fact, the Cincinnati CMSA grew more in actual figures than the State of Ohio as a whole in the 1980s. This means that growth in the Cincinnati area made up for losses in other areas of the state. It should be noted that the Cincinnati CMSA includes parts of Kentucky and Indiana, which account for some of this difference.

The Census 2000 figures are just now becoming available, along with more detailed 1999 estimates, which were published this fall by the US Census Bureau. These recent figures point out some interesting trends, which may be confirmed as more detailed actual Census 2000 figures become available.

- In large part, past projections by State agencies are relatively consistent with recent Census estimates.
- Recently, the highest growth areas have included Butler, Warren, Clermont, and Boone counties, in that order. Boone has consistently led the way in percentage gains.
- Suburbanization has occurred more quickly in Warren and Clermont counties than the State of Ohio anticipated.
- Hamilton County continued to lose population at a greater than the State of Ohio had anticipated.

The population of Columbia Township is considered to be only those individuals who reside within the unincorporated areas of Columbia Township. The Village of Fairfax, an incorporated area, is located within the limits of Columbia Township, but is excluded from Columbia Township population.

Historical Population Trends

As the automobile became a more widespread mode of transportation in the 20th century, highways were improved which allowed people to begin to move outward from the concentrated centers of communities. Since the 1950s, this outward trend has accelerated growth in communities similar to Columbia Township that are located on the edge of large urban centers such as Cincinnati, Ohio. The dispersion has also caused development to encroach into accessible unincorporated areas, such as Columbia Township, that were once exclusively rural. Over time, many of the small villages that were a part of Columbia Township were annexed out of the Township. This accounts for the non-contiguous boundaries of the Township today.

	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Columbia Township	8,702	7,908	7,989	4,179	4,269	4,619
Cincinnati City	503,998	502,550	452,524	385,457	364,114	331,285
Hamilton County	723,952	864,122	924,017	873,224	866,228	845,303

Annexation and Population

Annexation is the absorption of territory by a municipal corporation from an unincorporated area of another jurisdiction. It is a method of adjusting local governmental boundaries as areas urbanize. In 1950, Columbia Township was an unincorporated unit of local governments and had an area of 6.25 square miles. Cincinnati annexed land from Columbia Township in 1914, 1916, 1928 and 1932; Madeira and Indian Hill annexed land between 1950 and 1979; and Silverton annexed land between 1960 and 1969. The availability of unincorporated land enabled Indian Hill, Madeira, Silverton, and Cincinnati to extend their boundaries. Today, approximately 2.67 square miles of unincorporated area remains in Columbia Township.

Census data shows that in 1950, the unincorporated area of Columbia Township had a population of 8,702 and in 1980, had a population of 4,179. This indicates the population decreased by 50% by 1980. They population migrated out and became residents of municipal corporations through annexation.

Population Projections

Columbia Township has had a history that presents certain complications when assessing the population of the past and projecting the increased or decreased growth of the future. The population reached an historic high in the 1940's. The population at the time of the census that year almost reached 11,000 but began to fall in the following years. The largest decreases in population can be attributed to annexation of Township lands to neighboring communities within the City of Cincinnati. The most devastating of these annexations occurred during the 1970's resulting in a decrease of nearly half of the population. From this point until the turn of the century Columbia Township began to regain some of the lost population gaining almost five hundred residents in the twenty years after the 1980 census.

Columbia Township when compared to the City of Cincinnati has shown an increase in population of 2% in the 1980s and 8% in the 1990s, while the city decreased respectively 6% and 9%. Similar to the City, Hamilton County decreased 3% and 2% for the same time period.

The population projection is based on a study in 2003 by the Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission (HCRPC). Their projection is based on a combination of an average population growth factor from 1980, 1990, and 2000. The HCRPC projection included demographic data on sex, age, race, migration, and fertility. The county used the age-sex cohort method and then allocated the county-wide changes throughout the municipalities within. The result was a mixed projection. The population trend of Columbia Township over the past several decades has shown an increase and the projection also shows a slight increase by the year 2010.

	2010	2020	2025	2030
Columbia Township	5,287	5,090	4,871	4,648
Cincinnati City	280,617	246,676	225,428	204,317
Hamilton County	811,548	782,812	769,477	756,142

The Hamilton County projection for Columbia Township shows a negative trend between 2010 and 2030. The combination of these factors and the increased scope of

the Hamilton County data provide a more realistic projection. The population trend is currently positive but because of the small amount of developable land and a maximization of present population, the negative projection seems more realistic. Both the county and the average projections do not include the knowledge of development projects currently in production or future projects.

The population projection for the Township is expected to increase by the year 2010 to 5,287 residents. This follows the same increase as Hamilton County and the City of Cincinnati. As land is developed or redeveloped, the population is projected to taper off in growth and decline in growth as populations migrate out of the Township.

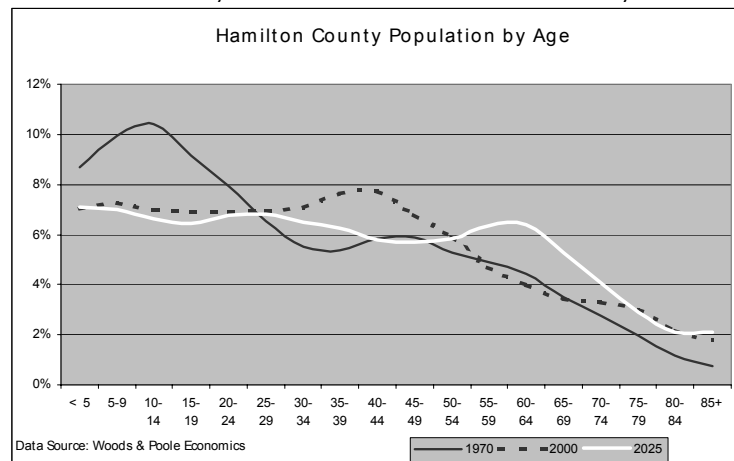
Population by Age

Another trend that is emerging is the general aging of the American population. Generally, Hamilton County population-by-age statistics tracked US and city-wide trends very closely. The following graph displays the population distribution from 1970, 2000, and projected for 2025. (Significant changes in immigration or another "baby boom" could alter these projections.)

These distribution lines clearly show several notable items:

- The peak from the baby boom is very pronounced and over the next 20 years the boomers should be retiring rapidly
- There is generally a downward slope toward the older age categories
- Life expectancy continues to increase

These trends affect several aspects of real estate. For example, currently the Boomers are largely of working age, and there is significant demand for commercial property due to their economic activity. As the Boomers retire, there should be an increase in housing options for older populations. The similarity of Hamilton County's population to national trends is important, in that Hamilton County real estate demand will closely follow national norms.



Age

The average age of the population in Columbia Township (34.6) is similar to that of Hamilton County (35.5) and is slightly above that of the City of Cincinnati (32.1).

In the Township 60% of the population is in the 18-65 category. The senior population is roughly 12% of the total population and the remaining 28% of the population are minors. In comparison to the City and County, Columbia Township has a higher population of minors.

Population in Age Groups 2000						
	Under 18	% of POP	18 to 65	% of POP	65 and older	% of POP
Columbia Township	1,302	28.19%	2766	59.88%	551	11.93%
City of Cincinnati	81,144	24.49%	209,487	63.23%	40,654	12.27%
Hamilton County	218,174	25.81%	513,231	60.72%	113,898	13.47%

Over the past decade Columbia Township has experienced the most growth in two age groups - the 5-9 group and the 45-54 group. The 5-9 age groups grew by 38% between 1990 and the year 2000. The 40-54 year old category grew by 89% in the ten-year period, representing the baby-boomer generation. Residents in the 30-39 year old age category decreased by 26% from 1990 to 2000 and those in the 25-29 year old age group decreased by 20% in the decade between 1990-2000. These decreases may be the result of migration out of the community for professional careers and indicates a movement of first-time homebuyers moving out of the area.

Considerations should be made toward adequate schooling and allocation of students to Cincinnati Public Schools in the area. The fastest growing age group is of school age children and will continue to demand a greater need in the future.

2000	Under 5	5 to 9	10 to 14	15 to 17	18 to 21	22 to 24	25 to 29	30 to 34	35 to 39	40 to 44	45 to 49	50 to 54	55 to 59	60 to 64	65 to 69	70 to 74	75 to 79	80 to 84
Columbia Township	371	413	333	185	204	173	377	329	355	372	356	272	188	140	160	138	114	74
City of Cincinnati	23862	22810	22109	12363	24392	18377	29952	26142	24267	24490	21484	17273	12777	10333	9918	9843	8543	6102
Hamilton County	56548	60719	63822	37085	47389	33454	58201	59493	65260	67713	61066	51106	37992	31557	29685	28617	24325	16137
1990	Under 5	5 to 9	10 to 14	15 to 17	18 to 21	22 to 24	25 to 29	30 to 34	35 to 39	40 to 44	45 to 49	50 to 54	55 to 59	60 to 64	65 to 69	70 to 74	75 to 79	80 to 84
Columbia Township	322	298	306	160	212	149	314	407	382	322	254	183	186	181	167	140	153	84
City of Cincinnati	30595	26275	22233	12249	26200	21025	37287	33338	26659	20585	15318	13100	13603	14847	14196	12029	10616	7655
Hamilton County	67593	65055	58712	33570	51569	39775	75253	75496	66958	56892	44324	38519	37925	39161	36280	28123	22658	15859
Change in Population	Under 5	5 to 9	10 to 14	15 to 17	18 to 21	22 to 24	25 to 29	30 to 34	35 to 39	40 to 44	45 to 49	50 to 54	55 to 59	60 to 64	65 to 69	70 to 74	75 to 79	80 to 84
Columbia Township	49	115	27	25	(8)	24	63	(78)	(27)	50	102	89	2	(41)	(7)	(2)	(39)	(10)
City of Cincinnati	(6,733)	(3,465)	(124)	114	(1,808)	(2,648)	(7,335)	(7,196)	(2,392)	3,905	6,166	4,173	(826)	(4,514)	(4,278)	(2,186)	(2,073)	(1,553)
Hamilton County	(11,045)	(4,336)	5,110	3,515	(4,180)	(6,321)	(17,052)	(16,003)	(1,698)	10,821	16,742	12,587	67	(7,604)	(6,595)	494	1,667	278
% Change 1990-2000	0.15217	0.3859	0.08824	0.15625	-0.0377	0.16107	0.20064	-0.1916	-0.0707	0.15528	0.40157	0.48634	0.01075	-0.22652	-0.04192	-0.01429	-0.2549	-0.11905

Household Size

The average number of people per household has been decreasing since 1940 and is expected to continue to decline. In 1970, there were an average of 3.22 people per household in the Cincinnati CMSA; that figure is now only 2.64.

Factors that contribute to the decreasing household size include: the trend to marry later in life, higher divorce rates, fewer children, and non-traditional family structure. This means that household formation has been occurring at a faster rate than population. These trends are just now showing some signs of reversal, so household size is expected to remain more consistent. Variations in this trend between counties are also important to note, as it impacts development trends. The average household size in Columbia Township is 2.45 in 2000, a - 2.71% decrease since 1990, when it was 2.52 persons per household.

In 1970, the average household size for Hamilton County was 3.11. The county has experienced some of the most rapid decreases in household size and it now has the lowest average at 2.51 people. While the population figures decreased in the 1990s, the number of households has remained relatively constant at just under 340,000. In fact, during the 1980s the number of households *increased* in Hamilton County in spite of the population *decrease* during that time. It is projected that this trend will continue, and that Hamilton County will add up to 10,000 more households over the next 15 years in spite of minimal population gains. Since suburban household size is decreasing as well, this trend also accelerates the household growth in those areas.

Population Comparisons

The table below illustrates the changes in population within Columbia Township and the City of Cincinnati between 1950 and 2000. Although there have been steady decreases over the past 40 years, the largest decrease occurred between 1980 and 1990 with the annexation of land from Columbia Township to Madeira and Mariemont.

Historical Population Growth (1950-2000)																
	Total	1950 - 1960		Total	1960 - 1970		Total	1980 - 1990		Total	1980 - 1990		Total	1990 - 2000		Total
	1950	Change	Percent	1960	Change	Percent	1970	Change	Percent	1980	Change	Percent	1990	Change	Percent	2000
Columbia Twp.	8,702	-194	-9.10%	7,908	81	1.00%	7,989	-3,810	-47.70%	4,179	90	2.20%	4,269	350	8.20%	4,619
Cincinnati	503,998	-1,448	-0.30%	502,550	-50,026	-10.00%	452,524	-67,067	-14.80%	385,457	-21,417	-5.60%	364,040	-32,755	-9.00%	331,285
Hamilton County	723,952	140,170	19.40%	864,122	59,895	6.90%	924,017	-50,793	-5.50%	873,224	-6,996	3.00%	866,228	-20,925	-2.42%	845,303

Housing

Historically the residential land demand for the Township has had one time period when the development was at an abnormal level. From 1940 to 1959 a total of 698 residential buildings were constructed. In contrast with all other decades, this period experienced more residential growth than any single decade. A slight upward trend of development is evident

over the past decade, with limited amount of buildable land. Since 1960 the single largest year of housing development was 1993 with nearly 250 new homes built.

Housing Units Built by Decade												
	Before 1939		1940 to 1959		1960 to 1969		1970 to 1979		1980 to 1989		1990 to 2000	
	Units	%	Units	%	Units	%	Units	%	Units	%	Units	%
Columbia Township	465	23%	698	35%	182	9%	224	11%	175	9%	278	14%

The trend of housing type in Columbia Township is toward more renter occupied dwellings. With an increase of less than half of one percent for home ownership and an increase of almost forty percent renters, the community has made a major shift towards a landlord based community. The total number of households that are owner occupied is 1230 whereas the total renter occupied units is 654. From 1990 to 2004 the development of new housing brought 359 new units to Columbia Township. Of those developments more than 70 % were multi-family housing. With a continuation of the current trend, the projection is for an increase of renter occupied dwellings.

Owner and Renter Occupied						
	Owner Occupied			Renter Occupied		
	1990	2000	Change	1990	2000	Change
Columbia Township	1224	12	0.49%	469	654	39.45%

Future Outlook and Needs

While the Township has experienced an increase in population over the past two decades, the lack of vacant developable land on which to build additional housing will cause the population to plateau. The future land needs will most likely come from re-development of existing properties and will follow the national trend of adaptive reuse. With adaptive reuse, Columbia Township, could see an increase in residential acreage which would result in an increase in the number of dwelling units and an increase in population.

Environmental Inventory and Analysis

Topography and Slope

The topography and slopes of Columbia Township are shown in Figure 11. The Little Miami River and its river plain bisect the Township, running from northeast to southwest. Low elevations are shown in green, while higher elevations are shown in orange. Steep slopes are shown in darker green and shades of red. These steeper slopes are typically found along the edges of the Little Miami and Ohio River Plains, and along other drainage ways. This region has significant problems with landslides, given the amount of rainfall, so it is important to preserve these areas of steep slopes and maintain a vegetative cover. Some of the areas of highest priority for hillside preservation include along the Ohio River and along the river valley of the Little Miami River in Cincinnati, Columbia Township, and Indian Hill. Other critical slopes are found near I-71 and Red Bank in Columbia Township, Silverton, and Madeira. Although some of these areas for preservation are not called out specifically in this section, it is strongly recommended that effective land use measures be established to guide development toward the preservation of these critical areas, and others not specifically mentioned above.

In the descriptions given, flat slopes are between 0-10%, moderate slopes are 10-15%, and severe slopes are 15-40%. Flat slopes are suitable for many types of land uses and building types, moderate slopes limit land uses and restrict building types and site layout, and severe

slopes are unsuitable for most land uses and building types. The slopes within each section of Columbia Township are described in detail below

- Ridgewood has mostly flat slopes with a small area of moderate slopes.
- Stewart Road has flat slopes at the north with moderate slopes at the south.
- Ridge–Highland East has an area of flat slopes around the school and Red Bank Road and I-71 Interchange. Areas with moderate slopes are at the base and top of the hillsides. The hillsides are highly sloped and undevelopable.
- Ridge–Highland West has many areas of flat slopes around the Ridge and Highland Intersection and to the immediate north of I-71. Moderate slopes are present further north of the expressway with some steep slopes along the district's north boundary.
- Camargo Road has areas of moderate slopes along the creek with steep slopes on the adjacent hillsides.
- Madison Place North has mostly flat slopes with a small area of moderate slopes along the east boundary of the district.
- Madison Place South has all flat slopes.
- Wooster Road West has mostly flat slopes with a small area of moderate slopes along the railroad track embankment to the north.
- Plainville–Wooster has mostly flat slopes immediately adjacent to Wooster Road. Further back from Wooster Road the hillsides have moderate slopes at the base and top of slopes with steep slopes in the middle of the hillsides.
- Wooster Road East has all flat slopes.
- Camp Dennison South has mostly flat slopes in the east and far west, with moderate to steep slopes in the west.

Soils

A generalized classification of soils based on building limitations for the Township is shown in Figure 12. Areas shown in brown have greater limitations for building upon, while those shown in yellow have the least limitations. As one can see from the map, there are soils that are indicated as having severe limitation in many places where housing currently exists. Special measures often need to be taken to protect houses built in these areas. The problem with many of these soils is the lack of adequate drainage, so it should be emphasized that minimizing impervious surface cover and allowing adequate retention and infiltration of stormwater is important to the health of this region's watersheds.

Soils with slight limitations are suitable for all building and road types. Soils with moderate limitations are suitable for most building and road types as long as building foundations and road bases are designed for such situations. Soils with severe limitations are suitable for only a few building and road types and special foundation and road base designs are required.

- Ridgewood has soils with moderate limitations.
- Stewart Road has soils with severe limitations.
- Ridge–Highland East has soils with moderate limitations in areas near the Red Bank Road and I-71 interchange. The district has soils with severe limitations along the hillsides in the east and north.
- Ridge–Highland West has mostly soils with severe limitations.
- Camargo Road has soils with moderate limitations along the creek and soils with severe limitations along the adjacent hillsides.
- Madison Place North has soils with moderate limitations and only small areas of soils with severe limitations along the hillsides at the east.
- Madison Place South has mostly soils with severe limitations.
- Wooster Road West has soils with severe limitations.
- Plainville–Wooster has mostly soils with severe limitations.
- Wooster Road East has mostly soils with severe limitations.

- Camp Dennison South has mostly soils with severe limitations with a small area of soils with moderate limitations along the north boundary.

Wetlands and Hydric Soils

The wetlands and related hydric soils of Columbia Township are shown in Figure 13. Wetlands are typically unsuitable for development due to their location in flood plains, soils with severe limitations, and the presence of soils with hydric inclusions. Wetlands are located in just a few sections of Columbia Township and they are described below:

- Wooster Road West has a small area of emergent wetlands along the Little Miami River.
- Plainville–Wooster has an area of forested wetlands along the Little Miami River
- Wooster Road East has an area of forested wetlands along the base of the hillside adjacent to Wooster Road.
- Camp Dennison South has areas of scrub and forested wetlands along the Little Miami River.

The hydric soils indicate the past or current presence of wetlands. Hydric soils are formed under conditions of saturation, flooding, or ponding during the growing season with anaerobic conditions in the upper soil profile. Hydric Inclusions occur in the flood plains and other low lying areas. Non-hydric soils occur in the hillsides.

Flood Zone and Aquifer

The flood zone and aquifer of Columbia Township are shown in Figure 14. The 100 year flood plain of the Little Miami River occurs in the low lying areas in the following districts: Wooster Road West, Wooster Road East, Plainville–Wooster, and Camp Dennison South. Areas within the 100 year flood plain are subject to frequent and severe flooding and are unsuitable for most types of development and land use. Suitable land uses are limited to agriculture, recreation, and parks. The Great Miami Sole Source Aquifer underlies most of Columbia Township. It occurs in the valley of the Little Miami River and the plateau on which Mariemont, Fairfax and Norwood lie. It is important to minimize disturbance to the aquifer to maintain high quality drinking water for several area communities.

Summary Analysis of Development Constraints

A general summary analysis of development constraints was performed for the region, based on various physical characteristics including slope, land cover, soils, flood hazards, and wetlands. Figure 15 shows areas with more development constraints in green, while those with the least amount of constraints for development are shown in gold. The yellow areas show an intermediate level of constraints to development. Urbanized areas are overlain in a gray tone. The areas with the greatest constraints to development are located in the river plains and on steep slopes. The areas with the fewest constraints to development are located above the flood plain on level ground.

Community Facilities

Introduction

Residents note the importance of schools, accessible parks, and conservation of green space and maintenance of Township services to the overall quality of community life. All of these services and facilities fall under the definition of “Community Facility.” They are the

physical elements of the Township that one would point to when identifying a strong quality of life.

In Columbia Township, the community facilities are an important ingredient in the identity of the community. Many of the comments noted the excellent public services of the community and that many residents stay in Columbia Township because of the good services such as leaf and snow removal, trash collection and other public services.

Schools

Schools and educational service in a community are often a major force behind a high quality of life and a strong attraction for residents. Columbia Township is served by three school districts: Cincinnati Public Schools, Indian Hill Schools, and Mariemont City Schools. Because Columbia Township is unincorporated, it does not have a school district of its own.

Within the boundary of Columbia Township there are only a few schools. Summit Country Day has their sports facilities located in Columbia Township, Queen of Angels School is located in Madison Place North, and Seven Hills School Campus is partially located in Columbia Township. The public schools that serve Township residents lie outside of the Township, except for the Fairfax Elementary School.

Street Services

Columbia Township has 83 roads within its boundaries. Of the 83, Hamilton County maintains 12 and the State of Ohio maintains two. Of those remaining, 6 are private lanes and 2 are paper streets. Township workers clean and maintain the other 61 streets. These Township streets receive several types of service that are not provided to the State, County and private streets. Township streets receive street signs, street repairs (such as potholes and maintenance), street sweeping, tree trimming, brush and leaf pick-up and snow removal. County and State-maintained roads are provided with brush and leaf pick-up by the Township workers. Private streets receive street sweeping, brush and leaf pick up and snow removal on a month-to-month basis provided by resolution.

Police, Fire & EMS

Policing in Columbia Township is provided by The Hamilton County Sheriff's Office. Some of the smaller parts of the Township fall within the bounds of the neighboring communities. The Hamilton County Sheriff's Office should be the first contact for all non-emergency reasons. The only major exception is the City of Fairfax, which has its own police department. All emergency communication go directly through 911. Within the Township there are no police stations, sub stations or Sheriff's offices other than the Fairfax police station on Hawthorne Avenue.

The Township has contracts with three fire and emergency medical services. The Township is divided according to the most logical geographical division. Little Miami Joint Fire District, Golf Manor, and Deer Park-Silverton Joint Fire District are the three different groups serving Columbia Township. The bulk of the responsibility lies on the Little Miami Joint Fire District. Each of these groups has responsibilities outside of Columbia Township, therefore a great deal of coordination is required to properly service the entire Township. The geographic divisions are by street and are shown on the Township web site.

Parks and Recreation

Residents of Columbia Township want more green space and parks. The potential size and scope of parks and green spaces varies dramatically by district. Neighborhood vest pocket parks of less than one acre could be located in the built up residential areas of Ridgewood and Madison Place. Urban vest pocket parks could be located in the commercial areas of Ridge-Highland, Madison Place and Wooster Road. Existing parks within and adjacent to Columbia Township lack easy access or have very minimal levels of development for recreation. By coordinating with adjacent municipalities, the Township could provide links to those parks and green spaces.

- **Ridgewood District** has no vacant land. Park space could be created several ways. The Township could purchase and then remove one or two existing homes. A group of homes could be purchased, the homes removed and then the land redeveloped at a higher density with open space left over for a public park.
- **Stewart Road District** has several small parcels of undeveloped land. The sites are located along Stewart Road and Ken Arbore Drive and could potentially become small neighborhood parks. Link the district to Drake Park and Silverton Elementary School with hike/bike trails through coordination with adjacent communities.
- **Ridge-Highland West District** has several open spaces. The park located at the corner of Kennedy Avenue and Hill And Dale is presently underutilized. The park could be linked to the residential areas along Kenoak Lane and Monardi Circle by a hike/bike trail along Kennedy.
- **Ridge-Highland East District** has some vacant or undeveloped land north of Elmarie Drive and east of Stewart Road that could be developed as parkland. The areas are vacant due to steep slopes that would limit the recreation potential to passive recreation with a few hike/bike trails. Connections should be made to parks in adjacent areas. A hike/bike trail along Red Bank Road could link Seven Hills School and the residences on Elmarie and Ehrling with Daniel Drake Park.
- **Camargo Road District** is entirely vacant land. Much of the district is Indian Hill Green space. The balance of vacant land will most likely become part of the Indian Hill Green space. The area could be linked by a hike/bike trail to Madison Place North.
- **Madison Place North District** has no vacant land. Park space could be created several ways. The Township could purchase and then remove one or two existing homes. A group of homes could be purchased, the homes removed and then the land redeveloped at a higher density with open space left over for a public park. The Township could receive a green space donation from Camden Homes. The extensive green space along Camargo Road could be accessed by a hike/bike trail from this district.
- **Madison Place South District** has no vacant land. Park space could be created several ways. The Township could purchase and then remove one or two existing homes. A group of homes could be purchased, the homes removed and then the land redeveloped at a higher density with open space left over for a public park.
- **Wooster Road West District** has vacant land that will most likely be open space in the future. The land is adjacent to the Little Miami River, but a railroad track embankment blocks access. The area would potentially be accessible via a riverside trail system. Horseshoe Bend Preserve is on the opposite shore of the river.
- **Plainville Wooster District** has a variety of existing parks and green spaces. Columbia Township owns a small neighborhood park along Muchmore Road but accessibility is poor. Indian Hill green space occupies about one third of the district but is totally undeveloped for recreation at the present. Trails could be built to open up the green spaces for passive recreation. The west end of Avoca Park along the Little Miami River is

a potential river access point. A hike/bike trail along the Little Miami River is planned for Avoca Park and will extend east along the river.

- **Wooster Road East District** has much green space as well. Indian Hills green space, Hamilton County Park District's Avoca Park, and Kroger Hills occupy over half the district. Kroger Hills Park has 217 acres of old growth forest and is owned by the Hamilton County Park District. The proposed hike/bike trail along the Little Miami River could link Avoca and Kroger Hills Parks. The trail would be a regional and local amenity. Columbia Township could build short trails to links to the river trail for residents
- **Camp Dennison South District** contains much green space. The western half of the district is part of Indian Hills Green space and the balance is part of Camp Ross. Due to the district's remote location to the rest of Columbia Township, little in the way of improvements can be justified.

Infrastructure and Utility Assessment

Introduction

In order to assess the development potential of land in Columbia Township, the existing infrastructure was examined, including the Pavement Management Study, which is a separate report. These five infrastructure systems were examined: sanitary sewer, water, electric, natural gas, and Township streets.

Sanitary Sewer

The Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD) governs the sanitary and combined sewer facilities throughout Columbia Township. The Township is adequately served by existing sanitary facilities except for the Little Miami River Area. This area is located north of the Little Miami River between Terrace Park and Mariemont. Currently individual properties are predominately using cavitette systems.

The following improvements are currently planned by MSD:

- New sewer line beginning at Newtown Road near Valley Lane extending east along Round Bottom Road to Edwards Road, east along the north side Norfolk/Southern Rail Road for a short distance then heading south to SR 32, then along SR 32 to Eight Mile Road and south on Eight Mile Road to Bridle Road. Planned for construction in 2004 at an estimated cost of \$2.2M.
- Upon completion of the above-mentioned system, MSD plans on constructing a new system beginning at a connection at Round Bottom Road continuing along Round Bottom Road to just short of Hamilton/Clermont County line. Planned construction date 2005 at an estimated cost of \$3.5M.

Any additional future expansion or upgrade of service, not mentioned above, would be development driven.

Water

Cincinnati Water Works (CWW) supplies all of the water to the City of Cincinnati as well as the majority of Hamilton County. The water treatment plant at Kellogg Avenue adequately serves future needs within the Township.

Water service is available throughout the Township. The major area which would possibly require additional lateral connections and the upgrading of existing water mains is located between SR 32 and the Little Miami River to the north and from the Hamilton County Line to Newtown Road. At this time existing water mains are present within the above area at the following locations:

- 8 inch high pressure main along SR 32 from Newtown east to Little Dry Run.
- 16 inch main runs along Newtown Road north to SR 32 then east to Round Bottom Road.
- 12 inch main along Round Bottom Road from the 16 inch main in SR 32 to Broadwell Road.
- 12 inch main continues east on Broadwell Road to Mt. Carmel Road and north about halfway to Round Bottom Road.

The CWW is planning on completing a closed loop system for the above-mentioned area within the next 10 years. However, the actual completion timetable is development driven. The following options for completing a closed loop system are:

- Construct a 12 inch water main between the existing in Round Bottom Road near Broadwell Road and the existing main along Wooster Road.
- Construct a 12 inch water main extending west from Eight Mile Road along SR 32 to the bottom of the hill then traverses north within a new easement.

Electric

Cinergy supplies electrical service throughout the Township. Electric service appears to be adequate for those businesses and residences now located in the Township. The dominant electric transmission service ranges from 69,000 volt to 138,000 volt pole mounted and 345,000 volt service on steel towers.

There are no plans for any major changes or new facilities within the next five years. Service improvements would be by above ground electric service extension, the cost of which is typically borne by the utility company. The level of service to each property would be determined by need on a case-by-case basis. The cost of underground service from the street to the facility would be borne by the property owner.

Natural Gas

Cinergy supplies natural gas throughout the Township. Gas transmission and distribution lines are predominant throughout the Township except for the corridor located between S.R. 32, the Little Miami River and Mount Carmel Road. Although transmission lines are located along S.R. 32, Round Bottom Road to Mt. Carmel Road and Broadwell Road to Mt. Carmel, lateral service mains would be required for future development within this area. Costs to extend natural gas services are typically paid by the developer or owner. Future development would determine the extent and timing of future expansion or upgrade of services.

Township Streets

Columbia Township maintains 11.12 linear miles of streets. The streets under Township control are typically asphalt, 25' to 35' in width, with two travel lanes and one or two parking lanes. Some of the streets also have concrete sidewalks, gutters, and aprons.

The focus of the Pavement Management Study was to project ongoing maintenance and replacement costs for Township streets. For the purpose of the study, it was assumed an asphalt overlay would be needed every 10 years and concrete sidewalks, curbs, and aprons would be replaced every 30 years.

Using the data found in the *2004 Annual Township Road Report*, a data base was constructed. Roadway width, length, and condition (rated as poor, fair and good) was given for each street. From this data, typical maintenance and repair costs were projected for the next 30 years. Streets in poor condition would be repaired in the first 10 years (2005-2015), those in fair condition the second 10 years (2015-2025) and those in good condition the third 10 years (2025-2035).

It is recommended that the Township conduct a detailed Phase 2 Pavement Management Study. This study would look at roadway maintenance issues to extend the useful life of the roadways and at ways to reduce costs. The study would also look at specific problems and areas for improvements in the roadway, sidewalk, drainage and curb. The costs of constructing sidewalks on one or both side of the streets could be looked at in detail. Problem areas for drainage and grading could be evaluated in more detail as well.

Transportation and Access

Introduction

The transportation system provides vehicular circulation and access to the built environment. Other modes of access for bus, bikeways, pedestrian walkways, and potential future passenger rail are important and interrelated elements of the transportation system. A network of streets and highways serves Columbia Township. Access to existing developed areas as well as future growth and expansion within Columbia Township are dependent upon an efficient transportation network. Such a network allows goods and services to be moved in and out of the Township for safety, economic health and prosperity. Lack of an adequate transportation network will inhibit reinvestment and diminish property values.

Historically Columbia Township has been well linked with the major modes of transportation with the Little Miami River, with the railroads, and now with highways and local roadway networks. Today, several thoroughfares, highways, and local roads provide access to the Township, as well as links to the rest of the Greater Cincinnati region.

Thoroughfares

The thoroughfare system of a community is in part defined by the circulation patterns for vehicles and pedestrians. It is important that the system is free-flowing and that all components of a system work together. It is designed to meet the needs of future traffic demands and will enable the jurisdiction to realize an efficient street system. Roadways are planned to fit the intended land use patterns for each portion of the community. Traffic flow

is also governed by the natural (Little Miami River and hillsides) and manmade (Interstate 71 and Railroads) barriers within Columbia Township.

The Thoroughfare Plan for Hamilton County (Woolpert, 1993) identifies the classifications of existing roadways as well as proposed roadways. The Thoroughfare Plan, periodically updated and journalized, incorporates all Federal, State, County, and local roads in a long range perspective. While the final location of proposed roadways may not be shown, the need for new roadways is generally identified on the Thoroughfare Plan.

The existing transportation system in Columbia Township is a combination of an interstate highway, federal routes, state routes, county roads, and Township roads which are collectors and local streets. Early elements of the road system followed natural features and drainage ways. The current roadway system was established in the 1950's through the early 1980's with modest improvements since then. One interstate highway serves the area, I-71 along the east side in Hamilton County. US 50 goes through the south portion of the Township, and a section of State Route 562 (Norwood Lateral), a limited access highway, provides east and west access connecting I-71 and I-75.

Previous Transportation Planning Studies

Since 1998, three major transportation planning studies have been completed which impact the Township. The I-71 Major Investment Study (MIS), Eastern Corridor MIS, and the Eastern Corridor PEIS have looked at the long range needs, benefits, and modes of transportation and have set the overall framework for improvements. Those studies are summarized as follows:

I-71 MIS (OKI, 1998). This study looked at the corridor from downtown Cincinnati to Blue Ash and ultimately to Kings Island. This study primarily focused upon the opportunity for passenger light rail lines nearby or parallel to I-71. The lines would connect Downtown, University of Cincinnati, Xavier University, the first ring suburbs, and ultimately the suburban fringe in Warren County. This effort did not include an evaluation of other modes of transportation and was ultimately not supported and endorsed by some of the local jurisdictions. The Eastern Corridor MIS and DEIS Plans, which are described below, overlap with the Columbia Township portion of the I-71 corridor and propose future multi-modal transportation recommendations. The I-71 corridor may be restudied again at an undetermined future date.

Eastern Corridor MIS (OKI, 2000). The study recommended a multi-modal approach to solving the eastern quadrant area's transportation systems problems. The study identifies these four components:

- Transportation System Management Improvements, which focuses on improving the existing transportation network.
- New and Expanded Bus Transit Service, including ten new or expanded bus routes.
- New Passenger Rail Service, includes use of existing little used rail freight corridors. The rail service could use Light Diesel or Electric Multiple Unit transit vehicles.
- Highway Capacity Improvements which focuses on upgrading and relocating Route 32 and the construction of an additional bridge over the Little Miami River near Newtown and several other new access roads.

Eastern Corridor PEIS Tier 1 (Hamilton County Transportation Improvement District 2004). This study continued and expanded the work of the Eastern Corridor MIS. The PEIS examined various transportation alternatives and the effects of highway and rail line construction and

other improvements on the cultural landscape and natural environment. Tier 2 of the work is underway.

Thoroughfare Classification

Thoroughfares are classified according to the function they serve within the overall transportation network. Traffic volumes and intensity, continuity of travel movement, the proportion of through traffic to local traffic, and the number of necessary access points - both to other thoroughfares and to adjacent land - all play key roles in the design of each component of the thoroughfare network. The following describes these classifications:

INTERSTATE AND LIMITED ACCESS HIGHWAYS are controlled access roadways connecting to other similar highways and major population centers. They are devoted to serving high traffic volumes and long distance trips. Interstate Highways are under the control of the ODOT for purposes of design, access, and maintenance. The only such highways in Columbia Township are Interstate 71 and SR 562.

ARTERIAL ROADWAYS are intended to maximize vehicular mobility and link communities and population centers. Arterial Roadways generally have a right-of-way width of 80 feet or more. They can be described as either Major or Minor Arterials.

Major Arterials usually have minimal traffic control devices, limited driveway access and relatively high average speeds. They are expected to carry large volumes of traffic, fed by the network of collector streets. Major Arterials are often state highways, and may be divided, and are under the control of ODOT for purposes of design, access, and maintenance. Major Arterials typically have a pavement width of a minimum of 49 feet and on-street parking is prohibited. They also have minimal traffic control devices, limited driveway access, but will not have high average speeds. On-street parking is usually prohibited. Arterial Roadways located in the Township are US 50, Red Bank Expressway, Ridge Road, and Highland Avenue.

Minor Arterials are often state routes or County Roadways. Minor Arterials link population nodes with the major traffic generators such as employment and shopping centers.

COLLECTOR ROADWAYS are roadways that link arterials and distribute traffic onto local streets. These roadways will have rights-of-way between 60 to 80 feet with at least two (2) lanes of moving traffic. Like the Arterial Roadways, Collector Roadways can be subdivided into Major and Minor categories.

Major Collector Roadways in the urban areas of the community often have three (3) lanes of traffic and/or on-street parking. Major collector roadways often connect neighborhoods with the Arterial Roadways.

Minor Collector Roadways link and distribute traffic between local or neighborhood streets. Local collectors may provide direct access to adjoining properties. Ideally these streets abut neighborhoods or are located within them.

LOCAL STREETS are the most prevalent type of street. These streets with 50 to 70 foot right-of-ways are located in most neighborhoods and carry small amounts of traffic. These streets are owned and operated by the Township. On-street parking is allowed on most local streets as long as width and visibility is not a limiting factor.

Traffic Volumes

There is a significant amount of traffic that moves through Columbia Township, primarily utilizing I-71, Ridge Road, Highland Avenue, Kennedy Avenue, US 50-Wooster Road, Red Bank Road, Stewart Road, and SR 32. A significant portion of the traffic on I-71 is through traffic while US 50 and SR 32 serve as local trips and through trips.

Wooster Road is a main transportation route within the Township. It serves multiple purposes, providing vehicular access to business and shopping areas, is a major bus route, and is a commuter route for through traffic. According to the Hamilton County Engineer's Office, traffic counts on Wooster Road at the intersection of Walton Creek Road have been increasing. Traffic counts at this intersection have increased from 22,500 vehicles per day in 1997 to 28,000 in 2004. This is a net increase of 24%. Traffic counts on Wooster Road at the intersection of Newtown Road have been fairly constant with 29,634 in 1998 and 29,950 in 2004. Wooster Road is a four lane road within the study area, the street has an inconsistent pattern of sidewalks, with sidewalks existing in front of newer businesses and missing in front of older businesses. Congestion problems between Newtown Road and Walton Creek Road occur where vehicles attempting to turn left cause cars to back up and impede the flow of traffic. These problems, especially at the intersection of Walton Creek Road cause safety concerns during peak hours.

Other congested areas with between 5,000 to 50,000 ADT within the Township include the Ridge and Highland intersection. Both roads serve multiple roles, providing access to businesses and shopping areas within the Township and provide access to I-71 and State Route 562 via the Ridge Avenue interchange. Traffic volumes in the Ridge and Highland area have been constant over the past few years. According to the Hamilton County Engineer's office, in the year 2000, Ridge Avenue had 35,700 vehicles per day south of Highland Avenue and 30,276 north of Highland Avenue. Traffic counts for Highland Avenue in 2000 were 24,916 east of Ridge Avenue and 16,832 west of Ridge Avenue. The total vehicles per day that traveled through the intersection of Ridge and Highland was 53,862 vehicles in 2000. The traffic counts had very little change between 1998 and 2000. The total vehicles per day at the intersection of Highland Avenue, Lucille Drive and Kennedy Avenues increased 18% from 17,406 in 1998 to 20,688 in 2000. Ridge and Highland are four lane roads with left turn lanes near the intersection of Ridge and Highland. However, both roads narrow to three or even two lanes near the perimeter of the study area. There is an inconsistent pattern of sidewalks along Ridge Avenue and Highland Avenue with sidewalks existing in front of newer businesses and missing in front of older businesses. There are also sidewalks along portions of Kennedy Avenue.

The design capacity of Ridge Avenue and Highland Avenue does not match the current demands for travel. Congestion problems occur in areas where left turn lanes and stacking traffic conflict with adjacent curb cuts. These problems occur near the intersection of Ridge and Highland. The existing capacity and traffic conflicts impact the safe travel of vehicles and inhibits the accessibility to businesses.

According to ODOT, Interstate I-71 had a traffic volume of up to 130,900 vehicles per day at the Ridge Avenue intersection in 2002. Ridge Avenue provides a connection for commuters to and from Interstate 71 from adjacent neighborhoods such as Pleasant Ridge, Hyde Park, Oakley, Kennedy Heights, Amberley Village, and others.

At peak hours traffic on Ridge Avenue is congested. The plan also notes that additional redevelopment in the area and expansion of existing development will add more traffic to

area roadways, unless the new uses have less intensive traffic patterns. Without turn lanes, left turning traffic on Ridge causes problems with traffic existing adjacent businesses.

The volume of traffic at the Ridge and Highland intersection exceeds capacity causing congestion and safety issues. This intersection is one of the top five accident-prone intersections in Hamilton County.

Pedestrian Systems

With renewed emphasis on fitness, more people are walking, biking, and skating. Recognizing this increase in pedestrian traffic, the Township is improving the pedestrian walkways in the Ridgewood neighborhood and has embarked on a sidewalk repair program throughout the Township. This program is aimed at improving sidewalk safety by eliminating hazards caused by raised or sunken sidewalks. Improved sidewalks are provided along most of the local streets, and within subdivisions. Future phases of the sidewalk repair program will include installing sidewalks in those neighborhoods where there are missing gaps of sidewalk. Each of the town centers of Ridge-Highland West, Madison Place South, and Plainville have been noted as pedestrian improvement areas. This new program will eventually provide safe pedestrian circulation throughout the Township.

Recreational Trails

The Little Miami River State Park and Scenic Trail is a paved trail corridor that follows an abandoned railroad right-of-way along the Little Miami River valley through four counties in southwest Ohio, extending from Milford in Clermont County north for 50 miles to near Spring Valley in Green County, Ohio. This park and trail facility, operated by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) provides biking, cross-country skiing, rollerblading, backpacking, and horseback riding opportunities as well as canoeing access to the Little Miami River. There are plans by ODNR and the Hamilton County Park District to extend the Scenic Trail from Milford south through Terrace Park to Avoca Park in Columbia Township through the Hamilton County Park District Golf Center in Newtown and eventually connect to existing bike trails in the Lunken Airport vicinity. Portions of the planned Little Miami River Scenic Trail extension, which are included in the OKI 2001 Version of the 1993 Regional Bike Plan, cross throughout the Township and are included in the Eastern Corridor multi-modal plan. The bikeway plan for the Eastern Corridor Study area includes dedicated planned bikeways/trails and alternative bike links under consideration as described in the OKI Regional Bike plan and the Eastern Corridor Land Use Vision Plan

Lunken Airport

Lunken Airport is a general aviation airport owned and operated by the City of Cincinnati. It is located between Kellogg and Beechmont Avenues, about five miles from Downtown Cincinnati and about one mile from old Wooster Road in Columbia Township. Lunken was formerly the commercial airport for the Cincinnati area, but has been replaced by the Cincinnati-Northern Kentucky International Airport (CVG) located in Covington, Kentucky. Lunken Airfield currently provides general aviation, private charter airlines, corporate air services, houses 60 businesses at the airport and supports nearly 2,000 regional jobs.

Existing Roadways Issues

Ridge and Highland Intersection

The peak hourly traffic volumes on Ridge Avenue exceed the reasonable capacity of the roadway. Additional developments in the area and expansions of existing developments will add more traffic to the area roadways. Since most traffic in and out of the area must use Ridge Avenue, the congestion on Ridge will continue to increase.

Capacity on Ridge Avenue is restricted by a number of factors. The number of through lanes is not consistent; in particular, there are not enough lanes north of Duck Creek Road. A lane is necessary to accommodate the ramp from northbound I-71 to northbound Ridge Avenue, and a turn lane from Ridge Avenue to the Value City site is lacking. This situation is somewhat confused by the fact that the Duck Creek intersection is offset from the intersection of the Northbound I-71 / Eastbound SR 562 (Norwood Lateral) ramps. Ramp traffic desiring to travel to Duck Creek Road must turn left then right, and some traffic weaving results. The addition of lanes in this area is made difficult and expensive since it requires the widening of the bridge carrying Ridge Avenue over I-71.

In addition, the lack of turn lanes at a number of locations causes through traffic to be restricted by turning traffic. Particularly severe is the effect of left turning traffic at Value City, which must stop in a through lane awaiting gaps in oncoming traffic. Numerous access points on Ridge Avenue throughout the area cause many conflicts and lane changes that severely inhibit the flow of traffic on Ridge Avenue.

I-71 and Norwood Lateral Interchange

The geometry of the ramps connecting I-71 and the Norwood Lateral to each other and to the local road system at Ridge, Kennedy, and Highland is not conducive to smooth traffic flow and safety with the current high volumes of traffic. The geometry of the interchange also creates a great deal of confusion on the part of visitors, particularly first-time or infrequent visitors to the area. Reasons for the confusion include:

- There are several merges and diverges going each way on the ramps west of Ridge Avenue.
- Approaching Ridge Avenue from the west, there is a considerable amount of weaving traffic due to drivers on the ramps needing to choose between turning north or south on Ridge Avenue.
- Southbound on Ridge Avenue, there are closely spaced turns for drivers to choose between I-71 and the Norwood Lateral.
- While all traffic to and from the Norwood Lateral and South I-71 access these freeways from Ridge Avenue, traffic from the North (southbound) on I-71 exits to Highland Avenue, and traffic to northbound I-71 enters from Kennedy Avenue. Thus many drivers must re-enter the freeways from different locations than where they exited.

These factors affect the ease of access to the newly redeveloping properties and existing commercial and industrial properties in the area.

Highland and Kennedy Intersection

All traffic from the southbound I-71 ramp desiring to get to Duck Creek Road must use Highland Avenue to Kennedy Avenue to Duck Creek. In addition, most traffic from Duck

Creek Road to southbound I-71 or westbound Norwood Lateral uses Kennedy Avenue to Highland Avenue to Ridge Avenue. The heavy existing and future traffic volumes on Kennedy Avenue, combined with the heavy existing and future traffic volumes on Highland Avenue, cause this to be a key intersection.

Duck Creek and Red Bank Expressway

The other access point between Duck Creek Road and I-71 is through the intersection of Duck Creek Road and Red Bank Expressway. The heavy traffic volumes, including a high percentage of truck traffic, using Duck Creek Road, combined with heavy traffic volumes and truck percentage on Red Bank Expressway, cause congestion at this intersection during peak traffic periods. The planned expansion of the Fifth Third Bank operations will increase congestion. Since Red Bank Expressway forms part of the roadway alternative for the Eastern Corridor, it is desirable to minimize or eliminate this congestion to improve the functioning of Red Bank Expressway. In addition, an alternate means of accessing I-71 is a frequently expressed concern of the area businesses.

Wooster Road / Plainville

Wooster Road / US 50 in the Plainville area is experiencing high traffic volumes and congestion. ODOT has committed to upgrading the section of Wooster Road between Mariemont and the Newtown Bridge to better accommodate increased traffic while the route 32 bypass is constructed. The roadway would be widened from four lanes to five lanes to accommodate a shared turning lane.

There is a fair amount of community opposition to this proposal. Area residents contend the additional lane will make the business area even less pedestrian friendly and will make left turns onto Wooster Road more hazardous.

Recommendations

A number of transportation improvements are proposed to directly address the issues that have been discussed above. Many of these have previously been in some stage of development by the affected local governments, other agencies, or development interests. Others are newly proposed initiatives to help improve safety and traffic flow. The recommended improvements are described below.

Kennedy Avenue Connector

A connector is proposed extending Kennedy Avenue southward from its current terminus at Duck Creek Road, then turning westward and connecting to Ridge Avenue opposite Ibsen Drive. It would also have an intersection connecting to the remaining stub of Ibsen to Madison Road. Realignment of Barrow at Ridge and complete widening of Ibsen from Marburg to Ridge would also be needed. The specific alignment will be determined through further study, and will depend upon factors such as property impacts.

While there may be some advantage to connecting to Ridge Avenue opposite Alamo instead of Ibsen, there are also several severe disadvantages that rule this option out. The most severe is that there is already the intersection of Barrow Avenue opposite Alamo, and Barrow is the access to the ramp to the Norwood Lateral and southbound I-71. The second is that geometric constraints resulting from a grade separation at the railroad crossing and horizontal curvature coming into the intersection with Ridge Avenue are much more severe.

There are several constraints to this connector. One is a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project to improve Duck Creek by enclosing it in a large culvert. Kennedy Avenue needs to be raised in grade in order to pass over the top of this culvert. Another constraint is the crossing of the railroad. The City of Cincinnati is currently refining this plan with these considerations.

Ridge Avenue Access Management

An access management plan needs to be developed and implemented for the entire section of Ridge Avenue between Madison Road and Montgomery Road. This plan would address ways to combine driveways, limit some driveways to right-in/right-out operation, provide alternate access to properties, such as service and connector roads, and aligning driveway access on opposite sides of the road.

Ridge-Highland Intersection Connector Roads

Closely related to the access control plan for Ridge Avenue, it is recommended that connector roads be implemented in each of the quadrants around the Ridge Avenue and Highland Avenue intersection. These would generally combine to form a circle around the intersection, but locations have yet to be defined, and the alignment may not really be a true circle. Exact locations should be studied, and the final locations may evolve as the area redevelops. These roads would provide access to the properties in these quadrants from behind rather than from Ridge Avenue or Highland Avenue. This will remove access points from both roads and aid in the access management efforts, which will reduce conflicts. These roads will also reduce trips on both Ridge Avenue and Highland Avenue, because some trips can be made between locations using the connector roads.

Left turn control at signals, as well as, traffic signal spacing and/or coordination are major factors in the location of these roads. In addition, Columbia Township desires to create "campus" style or "town center" style developments in this area, and these roads will help to create that atmosphere. They will also make these areas more amenable to pedestrian movements and facilities.

Ridge-Highland Sidewalk Improvements

There is little or no provision for pedestrian circulation throughout much of the Township area. Lack of pedestrian facilities is witnessed by dirt paths worn into grass areas along Ridge Avenue north of Duck Creek Road, and in the area of Ridge Avenue and Highland Avenue. Many of the traffic signals also have little or no provision for pedestrian movements.

Columbia Township has expressed the desire for this area to become a more pedestrian-friendly town center development. With the existing and planned retail nearby at Rookwood at I-71 and Edwards Avenue, and Center of Cincinnati/The Millworks, located south of the interchange at I-71 and Ridge Avenue, it is desirable that the uses in this area be complementary rather than competitive with these developments. This intersection has consistently been rated as one of the top five most dangerous intersections, especially to pedestrians, in Hamilton County over the past nine years. Improved local accessibility and circulation would greatly enhance development in Ridge-Highland West, as the area currently experiences significant congestion.

A number of other intersections in the Ridge-Highland area also should be studied for improvements as to number of lanes, geometry, or signalization. These include Ridge Avenue and Madison Road, Ridge Avenue and K-Mart and Biggs drives, Kennedy Avenue

and Duck Creek Road, Oaklawn Drive and Duck Creek Road, and Oaklawn Drive and Madison Road.

Oakley Transit Hub Plan

A plan should be developed for the transit hub proposed for the Oakley area, most likely in the vicinity of Ridge Avenue and Madison Road. This plan may include precise location and a precise site plan. It should also include land use planning around the hub to encourage transit-oriented development, as well as a plan for pedestrian movements to and from the hub and a plan for passenger vehicle movements in and out of the hub site.

Duck Creek Road Widening

Duck Creek Road should be widened to provide a minimum of three lanes throughout (one through lane in each direction and a center two-way left turn lane) with shoulders and/or curbs. This will provide for safer and more efficient movement of this traffic, considering the heavy truck volumes. It will allow left turns to be made without interfering with through traffic movement.

Ridge Avenue Added Lanes Where Needed

Consideration should be given to adding a northbound lane on Ridge Avenue between Duck Creek Road and Highland Avenue. The constriction in width is created by the need to have a lane to accommodate the ramp from northbound I-71 and a turn lane for Value City. Addition of lanes in this area requires the widening of the Ridge Avenue bridge over I-71. The bridge needs to be widened to six lanes to provide two through lanes in each direction on this section of Ridge Avenue.

Duck Creek and Red Bank Grade Separation

The project would create a grade-separated overpass of Duck Creek Road over Red Bank Expressway with a simplified at-grade intersection. There are a number of factors supporting the need for improvements to Duck Creek Road and Red Bank Expressway, including a grade separation. In addition, this may be coupled with a potential connection to Stewart Road. These factors include the following:

- The need to maximize capacity on Red Bank Expressway and the impact on this capacity due to the Duck Creek Road intersection
- The need for a grade separated interchange at Red Bank Expressway and Madison Road combined with the close spacing of Duck Creek Road to Madison Road
- The desire to better connect the southern areas of Silverton to areas in Cincinnati, west of the Red Bank Expressway
- The desire to better connect the southern areas of Silverton to northbound I-71

Red Bank and Madison Road Interchange

Due to heavy traffic volumes on Red Bank Expressway and Madison Road, and even heavier volumes in the future, a grade-separated interchange is proposed at Red Bank Expressway and Madison Road. This interchange will provide safer and more efficient traffic flow on both Red Bank Expressway and Madison Road than is provided by the current at-grade interchange. It will also provide safer and more efficient turning movements.

Wooster Road / Plainville

Due to heavy traffic volumes on Wooster Pike expected during the construction of the Route 32 Bypass, there will be a necessity for a fifth lane. The turning lane will make the area less pedestrian friendly. It is recommended to design for a fifth lane with the idea that in the future, Wooster Road will be streetscaped and the fifth lane will become a series of landscape islands.

Route 32 Bypass

Improvement to Route 32, including a new crossing over the Little Miami River, are at the center of the Eastern Corridor Improvements. The limited access, four lane parkway, would help alleviate congestion on Wooster Road, Eastern Avenue, Beechmont Avenue, and many other adjacent roads.

Transportation System Management Improvements

There are currently 187 recommended Transportation System Management (TSM) Improvements for the Eastern Corridor. Of the preliminary list of TSM improvements, 55 have been designated as core projects and will be implemented during the construction of the Eastern Corridor. A selection of those improvements is given below:

Intersection / Signal Improvements (15 total)

- Madison and Plainville Road
- Brotherton, Erie and Murray
- Clough Pike at SR 32
- Edwards, Madison, and Wasson Road
- Columbia Parkway at Delta, Tusculum, and Stanley

Roadway Corridor Improvements including lighting, safety improvements, turn lanes, and signal timing coordination (34 total)

- Ridge Avenue from Madison to Highland
- US 50 in Fairfax and Terrace Park
- Safety Improvements on US 50 between Walton Creek and Newtown Road

More Frequent Bus Service (2 total)

- US 50
- SR 125

Park and Ride Facilities (2 total)

- Newtown Road and US 50
- I-275 at SR 125

Interchange Improvements (2 total)

- Beechmont Avenue, Wilmer, and Wooster
- Beechmont and US 50

Long-Term Transportation Improvements

Three additional transportation improvements were identified. They are listed separately below because they are longer-term solutions. The reasons they are longer term are partly cost, but more importantly they have significant impacts on I-71. While these impacts are generally positive, they still require significant state and federal approval processes prior to implementation.

Ridge Avenue Lane Widening

Ridge Avenue has narrow lanes (approximately 10 feet wide,) no shoulders, and little side buffer throughout the study area. The narrow lanes negatively impact safety and the ability to carry traffic throughout the study area. This is particularly severe between Alamo Avenue and Duck Creek Road, where there is also severe horizontal and vertical curvature.

Ridge Avenue should be widened throughout to provide for 5 lanes of traffic, a minimum 4 foot tree lawns and 6 foot sidewalks. In addition, a center left-turn lane should be added wherever possible, especially at intersections, and continuously in any areas where frequent drives are to remain. These improvements will also contribute significantly to the ease and safety of pedestrian movements. Improving these pedestrian movements and providing landscaping will also contribute to the development quality that is desired by the Township and the City.

New Southbound I-71 Off-Ramp

The southbound I-71 off-ramp has a sharp curve that impacts its capacity. In addition, it creates an additional major intersection along Highland Avenue. It also occupies land that would be ideal for a connector road and additional prime development land in the southeast quadrant of the Ridge-Highland development area. This ramp could be replaced with a ramp that aligns directly with Highland Avenue and intersects with Highland Avenue at Kennedy Avenue. Part of this ramp would occupy land that is currently Lucille Drive. An additional benefit to this ramp relocation would be that it would create greater spacing between this off-ramp and the Norwood Lateral off-ramp.

This project will involve a substantial change to I-71. Therefore, it will need state and federal approval, which will be a lengthy process. In addition, it will be a fairly expensive project and will require acquisition of private property and residences. Therefore, while it is a worthwhile project and should be pursued, it should be considered a long-term solution.

Realignment of I-71 / Norwood Lateral / Ridge / Duck Creek Interchange

All freeway access to the Ridge-Highland area is via the ramps connecting I-71 and Norwood Lateral to Ridge Avenue. Two movements are exceptions to this – the southbound I-71 off-ramp and the northbound I-71 on-ramp. Duck Creek Road intersects with Ridge just north of the intersection of the ramps, forming an offset intersection. Much of the traffic coming off of the ramps turns left on Ridge Avenue, then immediately right onto Duck Creek Road. Duck Creek Road is one-way eastbound at Ridge Avenue, so westbound traffic on Duck Creek Road cannot access Ridge Avenue directly and must use a circuitous route to return to the ramps. There are a number of merging movements on the ramps that cause confusion, thereby creating safety and congestion problems.

Many of these problems could be improved or eliminated by a project to align Duck Creek Road with the ramps, at a single large, but more conventional, intersection. This work has

several major constraints, as it would require a new, larger crossing underneath the railroad tracks and also pass over Duck Creek. In addition, it involves changes to part of the Interstate highway, and would require state and federal approvals.

This is a very complex and expensive project (possibly as high as \$100M.) It will also require a lengthy study and approval process. For these reasons, although it would be a beneficial project that should be pursued eventually, it is a long-term solution.

Prioritization and Timing

All of the transportation improvements have been ranked according to priority and according to timing. Priority was determined primarily based upon the importance of a project in addressing the identified issues. However, consideration was also given to such things as windows of opportunity that may be available, funding, and ease of implementation. Timing was identified primarily based upon funding level required and ease of implementation. Priority transportation improvements are listed below:

Ridge-Highland Area

1. Kennedy Avenue Connector including Ibsen.
2. Improvement of Ridge and Highland intersection.
3. Connector roads around the Ridge/Highland intersection.
4. Improved traffic signal control throughout the entire study area.
5. Red Bank and Duck Creek.
6. Additional lanes on Ridge Avenue where needed.
7. Access management on Ridge Avenue.
8. Pedestrian Circulation Master Plan.
9. Transit Hub Plan.
10. Duck Creek and Red Bank grade separation.
11. Edwards Road Connector.
12. Widening of Duck Creek Road.
13. New southbound I-71 off ramp.
14. Realignment of I-71/Norwood Lateral ramps/Ridge/Duck Creek.
15. Widening of Ridge Avenue throughout.

Red Bank and US 50 Area

1. US 50 add turning lane between Walton Creek and Newtown Road.
2. Red Bank Road improvement between US 50 and I-71.
3. TSM Improvements.

Means of Implementation

In order to make best use of all of the available funding sources, several means are available to leverage funds and permit jurisdictions, agencies, and/or private entities to collaborate for the common good. These include the following:

- Joint Economic Development Districts (JEDD); this is a vehicle for two or more jurisdictions to join together to make improvements, jointly attract development, and share in the various resulting tax revenues.
- Hamilton County Transportation Improvement District (TID); the TID is established under Ohio law and has broad authority to implement funding for transportation improvements including all Eastern Corridor recommendations.

- Port of Greater Cincinnati Development Authority may have the ability to assist in some of the projects using brownfields funding to help clean up some of the required right-of-way.

Perhaps the best opportunity to bring together all of the necessary resources and maximize the opportunities in the I-71 and Ridge Avenue sub-area is through the Hamilton County TID. The broad authority of the TID could enable many of the above funding opportunities to be brought together and leverage as much funding as possible to implement as many of the improvements as feasible.

Conclusions

The Eastern Corridor has illustrated how short and long-term transportation system improvements can be staged to facilitate long-term community development and economic goals. Many roads within the Township are managed by ODOT, Hamilton County and jointly with other jurisdictions. Most of the Township collector and local streets are in need of a management plan. A separate Pavement Management Plan provides an additional overview of the conditions and needs of Township roads. Emphasis has been to update existing vehicular roadway system, improve unsafe intersections and areas, and better establish a safe and effective pedestrian circulation system.

Section III. Recommendations and Implementation

Future Land Use

Introduction

This section considers the findings, goals and objectives of the previous chapters, and synthesizes them into specific land use policies for the planning areas. These policies are expressed in the Future Land Use Map and in specific land use category statements for each of the twelve sub-areas.

The Future Land Use Map (Figures 16.1 and 16.2) graphically describes Columbia Township in terms of future land use. It depicts where growth could be managed, land use is balanced, and community character and economic development is encouraged. This vision of the future is one of a more connected community, with neighborhood town centers that maintain the green space and unique character of the Township. Most of the growth will occur in Ridge-Highland West, Madison Place South, Wooster Road-Plainville area and along Stewart Road North. In addition to providing a balance of commercial, residential and open space uses, the Future Land Use Plan retains approximately the same ratio of land to population as exists in 2005.

Future Land Use

Land use categories are general in nature and represent a grouping of similar land uses. These categories establish a guideline and policy direction to be used when considering zoning, subdivision, and other regulatory controls. They do not regulate a particular use to be developed on a particular parcel.

The Future Land Use Map is a graphic representation of the intended land uses within the planning area in 2025. This map is a policy statement to guide future planning and land use decisions. The future land uses reflect the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan.

To give further direction to the Future Land Use Map, specific definitions of future land use categories are given below. Each category is described and portrayed graphically with the new land use categories and the new land use designations.

Future Land Use Categories

Green Space/Stormwater Management

This proposed land use would permit the preservation and protection of green space to protect wildlife habitat, and to reduce stormwater runoff.

Example: Plainville-Wooster

Educational

This proposed land use would permit education institutions and provide buffering to surrounding residential uses.

Example: Seven Hills School

Institutional

This proposed land use would permit institutional uses and provide buffering to surrounding land uses.

Public Utility

This proposed land use would permit roadways, railroad lines, and other public utilities.

Example: Railroads along the Little Miami River

Medium Density Residential

This proposed land use would permit single family, detached dwellings at a maximum net density of 2.17 to 4.35 units per acre.

Example: Williams Meadows

Medium-High Density Residential

This proposed land use would permit single family, detached dwellings at a maximum net density of 4.35 to 7.26 units per acre.

Example: Ridgewood

High Density Residential

This proposed land use would permit single family, two-family, three-family, and townhouse residential dwellings at a maximum net density of 6,000 square feet of lot area per unit.

Multi-Family Residential

This proposed land use would permit apartments and other residential buildings where units are next to or stacked on top of one another.

Example: Apartments in Madison Place South.

Mixed-Use Residential and Office

This proposed land use would permit office and residential development. Office use would be low rise buildings of 2 to 4 floors. Residential use would be at medium densities, ranging from 4 to 8 dwelling units per acre, with related compatible uses.

Example: Stewart Road North and South

Mixed-Use Neighborhood Commercial Center

This proposed land use would permit neighborhood oriented retail and service uses. It would allow retail, service residential, and office uses. Typically one or two story structures with a scale, massing, intensity, layout and specifications compatible with site constraints and character of surrounding residential developments. The total retail area of the zone typically

ranges from 30,000 – 100,000 square feet. Residential use could be medium to high density, ranging from 8 to 12 dwelling units per acre, with related compatible uses.

Example: Madison Place South

Mixed-Use Commercial Corridor

This proposed land use would permit low and high intensity uses along a commercial corridor. Commercial strips are typically of medium intensity with community and regionally oriented retail, services, and office uses. The total retail area of the proposed zone could typically range from 200,000 – 500,000 square feet. Residential use would be high density, ranging from 10 to 20 dwelling units per acre, with related compatible uses.

Example: Wooster Road-Plainville

Mixed-Use Regional Commercial Center

This proposed land use would permit regional retail with office, service and residential uses. High intensity regionally oriented retail and service uses and a mix of office and residential uses could be permitted. The total retail area of the zone would typically range from 300,000 – 1,000,000 square feet. Residential use would be high density, ranging from 10 to 20 dwelling units per acre, with related compatible uses.

Example: Ridge-Highland West

Land Use Balance

Change is inevitable: the purpose of comprehensive planning is to give direction to that change. For Columbia Township, the direction is to sustain economic vitality and to retain its unique neighborhoods and neighborhood business districts.

The key to maintaining Columbia Township's vitality and character is to retain the current balance of residential, commercial, industrial and public land uses. Maintaining this balance will minimize the impact of change and growth.

The Future Land Use Vision seeks to:

- Preserve and enhance residential areas;
- Establish identifiable boundaries for commercial areas;
- Provide logical locations to develop Township Identity;
- Identify open space areas to be preserved;
- Encourage mixed-use zones for neighborhood development.

The Comprehensive Plan intends to preserve the character and sense of place of the Township. Open space is woven through the community and is used to define the community's edge. Conflicts between incompatible land uses are minimized. Focusing on "neighborhoods" also supports the sense of place.

There are instances where the recommended land uses differ from what the property is actually zoned. The Land Use Plan represents the Township's desired use for the property and provides direction in the event there is an opportunity for a zoning change. In some unique circumstances, the Township may consider initiating a rezoning in order to achieve other goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan. However, in most cases, the

recommended land use will be used to inform property owners and developers of the Township's land use planning objectives and to encourage them to petition to rezone their property in accordance with the recommendations of the Plan.

Western Focus Area Land Use Summaries /General Recommendations

Norwood Green

The recommended future land use for Norwood Green is Green Space/Stormwater Management.

Ridgewood

The recommended future land use for Ridgewood is Medium Density Residential.

Stewart Road

Recommended future land uses for Stewart Road are Mixed-Use Residential and Office and Medium Density Residential.

Ridge-Highland West

Recommended future land uses for Ridge-Highland West are: Mixed-Use Regional Commercial Center, Medium Density Residential, High Density Residential, Multi-Family Residential, Green Space/Stormwater Management, Educational, and Public Utilities.

Ridge-Highland East

Recommended future land uses for Ridge-Highland East are: Mixed-Use Residential and Office, Medium Density Residential, Multi-Family Residential, Educational, and Public Utilities.

Eastern Focus Area Land Use Summaries / General Recommendations

Camargo Road

The recommended future land use for Camargo Road is Green Space/Stormwater Management.

Madison Place North

The recommended future land uses for Madison Place North are: High Density Residential, and Educational.

Madison Place South

The recommended future land uses for Madison Place South are: Mixed-Use Neighborhood Commercial Center, High Density Residential, and Multi-Family Residential.

Wooster Road West

The recommended future land uses for Wooster Road West are Green Space/Stormwater Management, and Public Utilities.

Plainville-Wooster Road

The recommended future land uses for Plainville-Wooster Road are: Mixed-Use Commercial Corridor, Medium Density Residential, Medium-High Density Residential, High Density Residential, Multi-Family Residential, Institutional, and Green Space/Stormwater Management

Wooster Road East

The recommended future land uses for Wooster Road East are: Multi-Family Residential, Institutional, and Green Space/Stormwater Management

Camp Dennison South

The recommended future land use for Camp Denison South is Green Space/Stormwater Management.

Land Use and Growth

Existing Housing

The Township has significant areas of residential land use. Older neighborhoods, with modest sized houses in good condition, are found in Ridgewood, Stewart Road, Madison Place North and Madison Place South. There are small areas of older neighborhoods in Ridge-Highland West and East, along Walton Creek in Plainville-Wooster and Wooster Road East. There are several areas of new infill housing in Plainville Wooster, Steward Road and Madison Place North. There are several large multi-family developments in the Township as well.

Potential New Housing

There is a desire to increase home ownership and housing options, but there is little vacant land in the Township. There are a few green field sites, but they are difficult to access and surrounded by steep hillsides that could potentially be developed as high end clustered housing. There are some areas adjacent to the flood plain of the Little Miami River that could be developed as well.

The area east of Stewart Road and several sites along Wooster Road have development potential. Individual older houses on large lots could be redeveloped with higher density units as well. Another option for developers would be to purchase several existing houses and redevelop the site for a high density clustered development with the balance of open space becoming a public park. There are also scattered individual vacant lots in several residential areas that could be developed as single-family residences.

Existing Commercial Development

Columbia Township's economic center lies within the Ridge-Highland West District. The area has a mixture of retail, fast food, and a small amount of various other businesses. There are several big box retailers in the area. The area has seen a decline for the last three years due to the opening of Center of Cincinnati in adjacent north Oakley and the ongoing vacancy of the Kmart site. Traffic congestion is bad in the district as well; sidewalks and street trees in the area are nonexistent. The commercial district along Plainville Road in Madison Place South has seen a decline over the last several years as well including the closure of a neighborhood grocery store. Several buildings in the area are underutilized and there are no

street trees. The commercial district along Wooster Road has seen significant new construction within the last five years. New development has included single structures and small strip centers. There are some older buildings in need of renewal and some vacant lots for redevelopment. Like the other commercial areas there are no street trees and the sidewalks are too narrow, non-existent or are in need of repair.

Potential Commercial Development

New commercial development could occur in several areas of Columbia Township. Ridge-Highland West has several vacant lots and underutilized buildings that could accommodate new retail, commercial or office. The business area in Madison Place South could be redeveloped and enlarged as a neighborhood commercial center. Several side streets off of Plainville Road could be closed to reduce traffic within the adjacent neighborhood while providing additional space for parking and commercial buildings.

The Stewart Road district south of Ken Arbre Drive is a potential area that could be redeveloped as office. In Ridge-Highland East, the residential land to the east of Stewart Road could be redeveloped as office. In both areas office use would be compatible with the adjacent housing as long as sufficient buffering is installed.

Wooster Road has several vacant lots and older buildings in need of redevelopment. The roadways and sidewalks of the new commercial and retail infill developments need to be closely integrated with the surrounding developments to increase connectivity within the area.

In all redevelopment areas, adequate buffering needs to be installed to protect existing residential areas. During redevelopment, streetscapes with street trees and ornamental plantings, and vest pocket parks should be designed and coordinated with the Township and commercial developers. Care should be taken to address site specific traffic problems as well.

Recommended Zones of Change

Within each of the Focus Areas, "zones of potential change" were identified, and in this section a series of strategies suggest what actions should be taken. The "zones of potential change" within each Focus Area, and the key issues within each zone of change are described below.

Western Focus Area

There are eight zones of change in the Western Focus Area (Figure 17.1):

Ridge-Highland was identified as a Town Center Zone and a Mixed-Use Commercial Zone. The intent is to expand economic development and provide incentives to create a mixed-use pedestrian friendly Town Center.

The residential areas on Donald Street, Monardi Circle, and Kenoak Lane were identified as Commercial/Residential Transition Zones. These residential areas need special buffering from adjacent land uses.

The Stewart Road North and the Stewart Road South were identified as Mixed-Use Residential and Office. The areas are currently transitioning from residential to business uses.

Ridgewood, the residential area on Stewart Road North, and the subdivision located near the Seven Hills School Campus were identified as Residential Zones. They are to be protected in terms of housing, buffering, and green space to accommodate changes in adjacent land uses.

The Seven Hill's Campus was identified as a School Campus Zone. The school is planning to expand and this will provide appropriate buffering to the adjacent residential areas.

Eastern Focus Area

There are eight zones of change in the Eastern Focus Area (Figure 17.2):

Plainville Road in Madison Place South and Wooster Road-Plainville were designated as Town Center Zones. These areas are encouraged to expand the existing commercial and mixed-use districts. In Plainville on Wooster Road this area is intended to expand and especially to improve safety for the mixed-use pedestrian friendly "Town Center".

There were several Residential Zones identified. These areas are to be protected as residential areas and developments should occur that enhance and contribute to the residential character of these areas. The Residential Zones of Change are Madison Place North and Madison Place South. They are designated as Residential Zones of Change to stimulate new housing construction, rehabilitation through economic incentives, and redevelopment of the Town Center District. The Williams Meadows Subdivision is an existing residential neighborhood. Several small neighborhood areas along Wooster Road need protection from encroaching commercial development with buffering from commercial and other noncompatible land uses.

There are two Green Space/Stormwater Management Zones of Change areas. They are located along the Little Miami River and along Little Duck Creek at Camargo Road.

Implementation

Introduction

The planning, input and creative processes of the Columbia Township Comprehensive Plan process have resulted in clearly identified preferences and priorities. This is the link between the visioning, planning, and implementation. The purpose of this section is to provide an overview and examples of how these preferences and priorities can actually be implemented.

Many of the implementation tools described in this section can be used to achieve the plan. The tools provide the Township and local stakeholders a means to carry out the vision. Both the Township government and local stakeholders are important vehicles for advancing a project or vision as evidenced by plan adoption, zoning code revisions, financing, and stakeholder and citizen input. The application of the implementation tools needs to be adapted to the local context, practices and economic needs.

Looking towards the future, implementation efforts should encourage economic development in suitable areas, equitably distribute the benefits of development, create pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods and corridors, preserve green space, and enhance the quality of life.

Implementation Goals and Objectives

General Guidelines

- Encourage the best use of the limited land and resources available.
- Generate sufficient revenue to support and sustain development and public services.
- Involve surrounding jurisdictions in intergovernmental planning efforts.
- Understand that economic development projects can be measured in cost-benefit terms and that all types of benefits, some intangible, need to be factored into the use of land and resources.
- Recognize that economic development and implementation are two goals among many.
- Factor other goals, such as quality of life, into the project and decision-making process.
- Coordinate transportation planning between jurisdictions.

Economic Development Benefits

- Increase cooperation and reduce competition between neighboring jurisdictions to attract and retain employers and other economic development attractions.
- Realize that economic development is not a zero-sum game, but rather one in which the sharing of vision, planning, and results can have a beneficial effect as projects are accomplished.
- Ensure fair revenue to local jurisdictions that pays for the cost of providing services (transportation, sewer, water, school capacity, etc.) to new development.
- Guide development toward most suitable areas while preserving other areas where development might not be as appropriate.

Facilitate Desirable Development

- Encourage mixed-use and pedestrian-friendly design, where appropriate.

- Encourage mixed-use zoning and land uses.
- Designate land for public purposes (e.g., open space, public buildings, etc.) to add value to private land and development opportunities.
- Redevelop vacant and underutilized commercial sites that have the potential for reuse and recycling as part of the economic mainstream.

Partnerships to Identify and Leverage Resources

- Layer Special Economic Districts and other multi-jurisdictional agreements, where appropriate, to create a synergistic impact.
- Create public-private partnerships, which may avail themselves of some of the implementation tools.
- Identification of sources of matching funds and programs.
- Appreciate that infrastructure development creates value as well as economic development potential and that some of that value may need to be captured to create opportunities.
- Use infrastructure funding as an opportunity to create additional economic development opportunities.
- Understand and appreciate that school districts, as recipients of substantial property tax revenue, face challenges that can not always be realized through declining or stable revenue sources; school districts have a considerable stake in improving land values (e.g. through more intense development) and need to be partners during the planning and implementation phases.
- Pursue economic development opportunities from a variety of paths as long as the development is compatible with the planning vision. Use a combination of governments, neighborhood associations, private developers, the Chamber of Commerce or State of Ohio, to initiate a project.

Implementation Tools

A wide variety of implementation tools are available to Columbia Township. Most of the State of Ohio's implementation tools have a planning requirement and/or minimum conditions that must be met. To have the greatest chances of success, the Township should be prepared and have the following:

1. A plan in process or in place
2. Resources identified or created that can implement the plan
3. Capacity to negotiate and execute agreements
4. Staff capacity to oversee implementation
5. A tracking/reporting requirement that meets minimum state standards
6. A commitment to implement contracts, projects and agreements

The following is a list of selected economic development and legal tools for implementing development and land use changes in Columbia Township. Using a number of these tools in concert with each other can be an effective way to leverage resources. This list is an overview of some of the implementation tools, and is meant to encourage innovative thinking of the involved parties to create opportunities to improve the Township through cooperative efforts in planning and implementation.

Columbia Township's Strategic Redevelopment Opportunities

Economic Development and Legal Tools

Legal Instruments

- Zoning
- Special Public and Overlay Zone Districts
- Incentive Zoning
- Environmental review and regulation
- Parking and traffic regulatory issues
- Design Guidelines
- Criteria for evaluating proposals for development

Special Economic Districts

- Joint Economic Districts (JEDDs) – between municipalities, Townships and/or unincorporated areas that can include counties later
- Cooperative Economic Development Districts (CEDAs) – between municipalities and Townships that can include counties, state, or state agencies
- Tax Increment Financing (TIFs) – can be used by municipalities, Townships, counties
- Tax Incentive Districts using TIF – available to municipalities, Townships and counties
- Community Reinvestment Areas - CRAs
- Community Urban Redevelopment Corporations -CURCs
- Community Improvement Corporations - CICs
- Enterprise Zones/Empowerment Zones
- Historic Preservation Tax Credits and other incentives
- Special Assessment Districts (e.g. Business Improvement Districts)

Public / Private Partnerships

- Conservation Easements (Donation, Transfer, Purchase)
- Development Agreements that may use infrastructure funding, special economic development district resources, joint planning, etc., to accomplish multiple goals
- State and Federal Programs
- Ohio Issue 1 (Clean Ohio Funds)

Other Development Tools

- Tax Exempt Financing (e.g. Industrial Revenue Bonds, loan programs, etc.)

Special Economic Districts - Details

Within the State of Ohio, there are several special economic districts that can be implemented to generate revenue for project development or to facilitate the equitable sharing of tax revenues and the provision of services. Four of those special economic districts will be examined in detail:

- Joint Economic Development Districts (JEDDs)
- Cooperative Economic Development Agreements (CEDAs),

- Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and Incentive Districts
- Community Reinvestment Areas (CRAs).

Joint Economic Development Districts (JEDDs)

A Joint Economic Development District (JEDD) is an agreement between municipalities with or without Townships and unincorporated areas to facilitate economic development. JEDDs have the following characteristics:

- Areas are generally contiguous to one other, but do not have to be.
- Residential use of funds generated is not primary.
- County and other jurisdictions can enter into agreement with the JEDD, once it has been created, regarding the provision of services and/or revenues within the JEDD

JEDD Powers

- Income Tax: Can levy an income tax. The level of income tax cannot exceed the highest rate of any one of the JEDD parties
- Zoning and Land Use: Can determine the substance and administration of zoning and other land-use regulations.
- Annexation: Can limit and control annexation of unincorporated territory within the JEDD.
- Tax Abatements: Can limit property tax abatements and other tax incentives within the JEDD.
- Other powers as are described in the Contract.

JEDD Process

- Public inspection of the JEDD Contract and Plan
 - Schedule of the new, expanded, or additional services, facilities or improvements.
 - Schedule for the collection of any JEDD-levied income tax.
 - Description of the area to be included within the JEDD, including a map.
- Public hearing.
- Adoption of legislation by each Township, municipality and/or county.
- Signing of the contract.
 Filings with the Board of County Commissioners Passage of a resolution by each county's board of commissioners approving or disapproving the creation of the JEDD.
 If county commissioners approve JEDD, a vote of the Township electors proposed to be in the JEDD.

JEDD Governance

- Municipalities: one person representing all municipalities that are contracting parties
- Townships: one person representing all Townships that are contracting parties
- Business Owners: one person representing the business owners located within the JEDD
- Employees: one person representing all persons working within the JEDD
- One additional person, selected by the four people previously selected, shall serve as chairperson

Cooperative Economic Development Agreements (CEDAs)

Cooperative Development Agreements are another means by which jurisdictions can undertake mutually beneficial development. Cooperative Economic Development Agreements (CEDAs) are somewhat similar to JEDDs, with the following exceptions:

- State or State Agency can join a CEDA
- CEDA is one contiguous area
- CEDA has no income taxing ability
- CEDAs do allow service payments
- CEDAs do have bonding capacity

CEDA - Powers

- Provision of joint services and permanent improvements anywhere within the territory covered by the CEDA;
- Provision of services and improvements by a municipal corporation in the unincorporated portion of a Township;
- Provision of services and improvements by a county or Township within the territory of a municipal corporation;
- Payment of service fees to a municipal corporation by a Township or county;
- Issuance of bonds and notes by a municipal corporation, county, or Township for public purposes authorized by the CEDA and provision for the allocation of the debt service payments and other costs related to the issuance and servicing of the debt;
- Issuance of industrial development bonds (O.R.C. 165), and debt of a municipal corporation to finance projects located outside the municipal corporation and provision for the allocation of the debt service payments and other costs related to the issuance and servicing of the debt;
- Limitations on annexation of unincorporated property that is part of the CEDA;
- Agreements among a municipal corporation, a Township or county, and landowners or developers of land that is to be annexed concerning the provision of public services, facilities, and permanent improvements;
- Limitations on the use of tax abatements within the CEDA territory;
- Changes in Township boundaries to exclude annexed territory from the original Township, and provision of services to that territory;
- Earmarking by a municipal corporation for its general revenue fund of a portion of the utility charges it collects in territory located outside the municipal corporation, but only if the CEDA does not cover any matters relating to annexation;
- Payments in lieu of taxes to be paid by a municipal corporation to a Township, which may be in addition to any other payments required by law;
- Any other matter pertaining to the annexation or development of territory subject of the CEDA.

CEDA - Process

- Public Hearing: Jointly hold a public hearing concerning the CEDA.
- Notice: Each of the parties must provide at least thirty days notice to residents of the territory affected by the CEDA of the time and place of the public hearing.

- Public Inspection: During that thirty day notice period, each of the local jurisdictions proposing to enter into the CEDA must make a copy of the agreement available for public inspection.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and Tax Incentive Districts

Tax Increment Finance techniques and districts have been in existence for over thirty years and are in use, in one form or another, in over thirty (30) states. Ohio has one of the more limited forms of TIF, although the potential use of TIF Districts was extended in December, 2001. The concept of a TIF project is that in many ways, the project assists in its own development by capturing a portion of the increased value – in Ohio through increased real estate valuation – to cause the project to be able to advance. In some states, income taxes, utility taxes and sales taxes can be part of the taxes that are captured as part of the “increment”. In Ohio, Tax Increment Finance (TIF) has the following uses and characteristics:

- Finance public infrastructure, improvements, land acquisition, brownfield remediation, site preparation, residential and other public purposes
- Has to have a public purpose. Economic development and job creation/retention activities can be such a public purpose as could be the use of TIF funds for creating public open space within the tax incentive districts
- Has been used on a project-by-project basis wherein the new project helped pay for some of the development costs or activities through the use of payments-in-lieu-of-taxes for a specified period (usually the term of the bond)
- Redirect new (e.g. the increment) real property tax revenues from new projects
- Target new incremental tax revenues to debt retirement fund and/or residential loan pools under the new TIF law
- Creation authority for Tax Incentive Districts “sunsets” June 30, 2007 New Law (Am. Sub. HB 405)
- Permits “Incentive Districts” in addition to project-by-project TIFs – applies to municipalities, Townships and counties
- Districts can be up to 300 acres with a continuous boundary (a circle of ¼ mile radius, an area considered to be reasonable walking distance from a centrally located transit station, is approximately equal to 125 acres)
- Importance of district boundaries, what is included and what is eligible for fund expenditure are key planning considerations
- District life can be from 10 to 30 years depending upon certain criteria (e.g. school board endorsement, percentage of taxes abated, etc.)
- District has to meet one of seven criteria:
 - At least 51% of residents have incomes less than 80% of area
 - Unemployment for 12 months has been 150% of the State
 - At least 20% of residents are below poverty level
 - The area is blighted
 - District is “situationally distressed”
 - Public infrastructure is inadequate to meet development needs
 - District is comprised entirely of unimproved land in a distress area.
- Residential use of TIF funds can be used for loans, grants, deferred loans, etc.
- Note that tax increment finance and tax abatement tend not to work together since tax abatement through a CRA, Enterprise Zone or some other device reduces or eliminates the tax increment that would be generated in the first place. Hence, thoughtful planning and negotiations are essential to balance the use of TIF and tax abatement as development tools and/or incentives.

TIF District - Operations

- Current real estate tax base is established.
- Public purposes and goals are defined through a planning and public input process
- Additional real estate taxes due to development can be set aside as service payments, or Payment In Lieu Of Taxes (PILOT)
- Bonds can be issued based on anticipated incremental revenue from the service payments.
- Needs a plan in place for public purpose
- Provides that service Payments made In Lieu Of Taxes (PILOT) in an incentive district be used to finance public improvements that benefit or serve parcels in the district, instead of financing only improvements directly benefiting the single parcel for which payment is made as under ongoing TIF law.
- Requires school board approval, as under ongoing TIF law, if the tax exemption is for more than ten years or if the percentage of taxes exempted is more than 75%.
- Requires additional information to be included in the annual report that all local governmental authorities must submit to the Director of Development when they establish any form of TIF.
- Authorizes Townships to spend Payments made In Lieu Of Taxes (PILOT) received under a traditional TIF on infrastructure not originally designated.
- Establishes a separate fund for payments
- Housing – may use TIF payments for housing renovation as long as certain other provisions are met. Uses can include loans, deferred loans, and grants.
- Authorizes bonds and other financing techniques to be repaid from TIF proceeds

Community Reinvestment Areas

Community Reinvestment Areas are areas of land in which property owners can receive tax incentives for investing in real property improvements. The Community Reinvestment Area (CRA) Program is a direct incentive tax exemption program benefiting property owners who renovate existing or construct new buildings. This program permits municipalities or counties to designate areas, where investment has been previously discouraged, as a CRA to encourage revitalization of the existing housing stock and the development of new structures.

The Ohio CRA Program should not be confused with the federal Community Reinvestment Act, which requires lending institutions to lend within their service area. Ohio's CRA Program was created to promote the revitalization of areas where investment has been discouraged by offering property tax exemptions for any increased property valuation that would result from renovation of existing structures or new construction activities within the area. The program can be used to encourage historic preservation, residential rehabilitation or new residential construction and/or as an economic development tool to encourage commercial and industrial renovation or expansion and new construction.

The CRA Program was created in 1977. The program underwent major revisions in 1994. In fact, there are two types of CRAs in Ohio - those created prior to July 1, 1994 and those after. Because there are no CRAs created prior to 1994 in Columbia Township, only regulations pertaining to post July 1, 1994 CRAs will be given.

The regulations governing each type vary considerably. In each case however, the local legislative authority with jurisdiction over the designated area determines the size, the number of areas as well as the term and extent of the real property exemptions.

A municipality or county must undertake a Housing Survey of the structures within the area proposed as a CRA. The results of the survey must support the finding that the area is one in which housing facilities are located and that new construction and renovation is discouraged. The local legislation creating the CRA must contain a statement of finding that the area included in the description is one in which "housing facilities or structures of historical significance are located and new housing construction and repair of existing facilities or structures are discouraged."

All property owners meeting the requirements set forth in the local legislation and planning to undertake a real property improvement can apply to the housing officer designated by the local legislative authority. CRA residential applications are filed at construction completion, but projects involving commercial or industrial facilities must apply before the project begins. Residential projects in CRAs receive the percentage and term of the exemption specified within the authorizing legislation. In all commercial and industrial projects in CRAs the exemption percentage and term are to be negotiated between the property owner and the local legislative authority. An agreement meeting the standards set forth in Ohio Revised Code Section 3735.671 must be finalized prior to the commercial or industrial project going forward.

Local municipalities or counties can determine the type of development to be supported by the CRA Program by specifying the eligibility of residential, commercial and/or industrial projects. The CRA Program is a permanent tax exemption incentive program which does not have a sunset provision. Local legislative authorities may wish to include an annual review or renewal clause to ensure the program is meeting expectations. The local legislative authority must designate a Housing Officer to review applications and to serve as the program lead. In addition, the local legislative authority must create a Tax Incentive Review Council to review performance on all agreements and projects.

CRA Program Benefits	Limits
EXEMPTION LEVELS:	
Real Property	Up to 100% **
Personal Property	None
Inventory	
TERM EXEMPTIONS:	
Residential Remodeling (2 units or less; minimum \$2500)	Up to 10 Years
Residential (more than 2 units), Commercial and Industrial (minimum \$5000)	Up to 12 Years
New Construction Residential, Commercial and Industrial	Up to 15 Years

** The exemption percentage and term for commercial and industrial projects are to be negotiated on a project specific basis. Note that all commercial and industrial CRA agreements must ensure that at least 50% of the amount of the taxes estimated that would

have been charged on the improvements if the exemption had not taken place are made up by other taxes or payments available to the school district. Upon notice of a project which does not meet this standard, the board of education may approve the project even though the new revenues do not equal at least 50% of the projected taxes prior to the exemption.

While the CRA Program is primarily a housing oriented incentive, it does have considerable value as an economic development tool. It is extremely important for both property owners and local governments to realize the significance of the local authorization date. CRAs must receive confirmation from the Director of the Ohio Department of Development prior to formally granting a real property tax incentive.

In a municipality which has a local income tax, any project which will generate a new annual payroll of one million dollars or more, the municipality and the board of education must negotiate a revenue sharing agreement. If no agreement is reached, then the income tax revenues generated by the new employees will be split 50/50 between the municipality and board of education.

Establishing A Community Reinvestment Area

1. Determine the physical boundaries of the proposed CRA. It must contain a minimum of two structures, and one must be a residence.
2. Conduct a housing survey of the area. The area must include evidence of disinvestment in the structures located there. Write a brief narrative about the conditions of housing in the area and include photographs which show the condition of the structures in need of repair.
3. The local legislative body must pass legislation to create the CRA. City or Village Councils can do this within their corporate limits, and County Commissioners must do it for areas in Townships. If the CRA wants to offer an exemption for residential projects, the incentive rate and incentive term must be specifically spelled out in the legislation.
4. The enabling legislation must then be published in a newspaper of general circulation once a week for two consecutive weeks per the requirements of the Ohio Revised Code.
5. After the legislation is passed and published, the CRA Petition for Confirmation must be filled out.
6. Submit the petition and all supporting documentation to the Ohio Department of Development (ODOD).
7. Once this information has been received by ODOD it will be reviewed for compliance with the legal requirements of the program.
8. After the Director of ODOD has confirmed the area, then the local jurisdiction can begin offering tax incentives to projects.

Development Implementation And Overlays

As indicated previously, a single development tool may not be sufficient to cause a project to be developed. To illustrate the complexities and necessities of creative approaches, the following theoretical model was prepared. It uses estimates that are illustrative of development projects and demonstrates how the public purpose requirements used to

cause private investment and job creation/retention can also have a broader public benefit beyond jobs and income taxes.

Example

1. An area targeted for development needs land acquired and infrastructure added, but it is not in the current capital programming budget of any of the jurisdictions.
2. \$10,000,000 would be invested in a site that currently is valued at \$700,000 and has no employment or other development on site. It is a former industrial site that could need some brownfield assistance.
3. Neighboring jurisdictions could negotiate and form a JEDD that would permit an income tax to be levied on the development parcel. If Cincinnati were one of the partners in the JEDD, the maximum rate would be 2.1% since that is Cincinnati's income tax rate.
4. Concurrently, a Tax Incentive District could be formed in cooperation with the JEDD jurisdictions and the local school district that would permit up to thirty year financing of any revenue bonds that might be issued to finance a portion of the project.
5. Necessary and essential brownfield remediation and infrastructure costs are estimated at \$2.5 million.
6. About 500 new office jobs, averaging \$50,000, would be created.
7. To create the project, public participation is needed.
8. Since the project would help create 500 new jobs, there could be income taxes generated from the project. The table below provides an estimate of the taxes that could be generated. Note that no assignment between participating jurisdictions of the JEDD is made since that would need to be negotiated. However, under the JEDD involvement, the additional income tax revenue could be used to support the project development or debt service on a bond.

JEDD Income Tax Example	
Building size	100,000
Estimated number of employees	500
Average wage	\$50,000
Total wages	\$25,000,000
JEDD income tax rate	1.5%
JEDD-generated income tax	\$375,000

As the example implies, there are many complex negotiations that would be necessary to make the project occur; yet the cooperation between the private developer, the JEDD and TIF participating jurisdictions, and the State could create a viable project. Note also that the traffic, parkway and bikeway improvements, funded in part by TIF and JEDD income taxes, could have a broader public purpose and benefit and could be used to leverage other funds and resources.

Legal Instruments

Zoning Regulations

Once a collective vision has been established for the future of a region, land use tools such as zoning code updates and Special Public Interest (SPI) Districts must uphold the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan to allow the types of uses desired. Additional considerations for creating updated zoning regulations and SPI Districts include the following:

- Mix land uses, where appropriate
- Take advantage of compact building design
- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
- Create walkable communities
- Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
- Preserve open space, natural beauty, and environmental areas
- Strengthen and direct development toward existing communities and infrastructure
- Link transportation roadways and access
- Make development decisions predictable, timely, fair, and cost effective
- Ensure that the benefits and costs of development are equitably distributed
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions

Where the future land use envisioned is different from current land use, a simple zone change may be sufficient to accomplish this, if the desired land use fits one of the current zoning classifications. For future land uses that do not necessarily fall into existing categories, it may be necessary to revise the zoning code. This may be the case where it is desirable to have a mix of land uses in an area. Higher market values for land and the need for higher density of activities could lead to the need for more flexibility in development plans, so that they may effectively meet the needs of the local jurisdictional entities and the community as a whole. One possible strategy for modifying zoning codes would be to set ranges of desired percentages for each land use (e.g., 20-50% employment, 20-40% residential, 20-40% retail/entertainment). Design criteria, development guidelines, and incentives can be used to further ensure that future development is guided toward having the character desired by the community.

Special Public Interest (SPI) Overlay Districts

The Hamilton County Zoning Resolution (2004) contains provisions to create SPI Overlay Districts. An SPI District is a geographic area that exhibits, or is planned to contain "special and distinctive characteristics that are of significant value or importance to the public." There are four categories of SPI Overlay Districts:

- Natural Resource Overlay Districts to conserve natural resources such as scenic views, hillsides and rivers by limiting the extent and intensity of development near these sensitive resources.
- Neighborhood Quality Overlay District to promote neighborhood quality of life by providing buffering to adjacent non-residential land uses such as schools, hospitals and other public and private institutions.
- Suburban Center / Corridor Overlay Districts promote the integration of quality suburban commercial centers with surrounding residential land uses by the use of buffers, streetscaping, design guidelines, and signage control.
- Suburban Village Overlay Districts promote the sensitive development and conservation of existing villages and hamlets by promoting mixed-use development, accommodating pedestrian and bike traffic, and design guidelines.

The creation of SPI Overlay Districts in Columbia Township could provide a framework on which to address many of the Township's land use and economic development issues. With overlay districts, the Township could improve the quality of infill and redevelopment projects by controlling architectural character, providing buffering, and addressing traffic congestion.

- The Suburban Center / Corridor Overlay District designation could be used to steer high quality redevelopment in the commercial districts of Stewart Road, Ridge-

Highland East and West, Madison Place South, Plainville – Wooster, and Wooster Road East. These six areas face a similar set of challenges such as providing buffer zones around existing residential areas, establishment of architectural standards to ensure a high quality built environment, well designed streetscape, signage, parking, and vehicular access.

- The neighborhoods of all the areas could be designated as Neighborhood Quality Overlay Districts to ensure adequate buffering to reduce noise, glare, and congestion from adjacent non residential land uses.
- Additional Natural Resource Overlay Districts could be established to foster the preservation of wooded hillside north of Wooster Road in the Plainville-Wooster and Wooster Road East areas and along the Little Duck Creek in the Camargo Road areas. The Wooster Road Natural Resource Overlay District was established in 1998 to provide protection to the Little Miami River by maintaining a natural buffer area and limiting land uses to recreational and residential.

Development Guidelines, Design Criteria, and Incentive Zoning

In addition to zoning and special public interest overlay districts, detailed guidelines can be established by which to evaluate development proposals. Incentives can be granted that give bonuses such as increases in Floor to Area Ratios (FARs) or number of units built, for meeting or exceeding these standards. These guidelines and criteria can (1) help to create development that has a coherent and aesthetically pleasing theme throughout a community, (2) evaluate a development proposals ability to meet the goals of the community (e.g., reduction of erosion and stormwater runoff, creation of public open space, using environmentally-friendly construction materials, etc.), and (3) create incentives for meeting or exceeding these criteria.

Potential Locations

There are many other potential locations for the use of implementation tools and public private partnerships for implementing recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan in the future. This list, which is by no means exhaustive of the possibilities in the region, includes:

- Ridge-Highland West Business District
- Wooster Road through Columbia Township
- Little Miami Riverfront
- Madison Place South Neighborhood Business District
- Stewart Road

Potential Funding Sources

Clean Ohio Fund – H.B. 3 (Issue 1) - Signed by Governor Taft July 26, 2001

The Clean Ohio Fund program has the following characteristics:

- \$400 million of state bonds may be issued.
- \$200 million in revenue bonds to the Clean Ohio Revitalization Fund (created under law) and Clean Ohio Assistance line item (created under law)
- \$200 million in general obligation bonds to the Clean Ohio Conservation Fund (created under law)

No more than \$50 million of bond obligations may be issued for each fund within a single fiscal year (\$100 million total). \$10 million of the annual monies within the Clean Ohio Revitalization Fund can be transferred to the Clean Ohio Assistance line item.

Fund Details and Grant Limitations

Clean Ohio Revitalization Fund (\$50 million per fiscal year minus transfers to the Clean Ohio Assistance line item)

- Used to make grants for brownfields revitalization projects
- Brownfields are defined as abandoned, idle, or under-used industrial or commercial properties where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by a known or potential contamination by a hazardous substance or petroleum
- Eligible grant applicants include counties, Townships, municipal corporations, port authorities, conservancy or park districts, similar park authorities, non-profit organizations, and for-profit organizations working in conjunction with one of these entities
- Reserved for applicants in "eligible areas" which include certain counties and municipal corporations that qualify as distressed areas, inner city areas, labor surplus areas, and situational distressed areas
- Grant awards are not to exceed 75 percent of the estimated cost of any revitalization project
- Individual grants not to exceed \$3 million

Clean Ohio Conservation Fund (\$50 million per fiscal year)

- 75 percent used to make grants for open space acquisition and related development (\$37,500,000 per fiscal year)
- Eligible projects include acquisition of land or land rights for parks, forests, wetlands, endangered plant or animal habitat, and connecting corridors for natural areas; projects for construction or enhancement of facilities that are necessary to make open space areas accessible to the public; projects that protect or enhance riparian corridors and watersheds; and projects which construct or enhance recreational trails
- Eligible grant applicants include counties, Townships, municipal corporations, park districts, similar park authorities, conservancy districts, soil and water conservation districts, joint recreation districts, and non-profit organizations
- Grant awards are not to exceed 75 percent of the estimated cost of any conservation project
- Base allocation to Natural Resources Assistance Councils of \$109,375 per county, plus per capita allocations

Clean Ohio Trail Fund (part of Clean Ohio Conservation Fund)

- 12 ½ percent used by Department of Natural Resources to provide matching grants for purchasing land or interests in land for recreational trails and for the construction of recreational trails (\$6,250,000 per fiscal year)
- Eligible grant applicants include counties, Townships, municipal corporations, and charitable organizations
- Grant awards are not to exceed 25 percent of the value of the project

Fund Administration

Clean Ohio Revitalization Fund

- Clean Ohio Council (created under law) approves and disapproves all grant applications

- No more than six (6) grant applications may be submitted from each Public Works District (19 districts in state) to the Clean Ohio Council

Clean Ohio Conservation Fund

- Natural Resources Assistance Council approves and disapproves all grant applications
- A Natural Resources Assistance Council will be appointed in each of the 19 Public Works Districts
- Director of the Department of Agriculture makes grants for agricultural easement purchases; Farmland Preservation Advisory Board provides advice regarding the design and implementation of an agricultural easement purchase program
- Director of the Department of Natural Resources makes grants for recreational trail land purchase and development; Clean Ohio Trail Advisory Board provides advice regarding the selection of applications that will be awarded matching grants

Conclusions

The Columbia Township Comprehensive Plan is intended to serve as a guide for growth and change for the next 20 years. The Plan is based on current conditions, trends, and public participation and addresses a wide range of issues. The purpose of the planning effort was summarized in a Vision Statement authored by citizen planners. Eastern and Western Focus Groups, comprised of citizens and local business owners, along with the Township Trustees, Township staff and Administrator, and consultants evaluated each area of the Township.

With input from the Focus Groups, Zones of Potential Change were identified. These zones were the areas where redevelopment and new construction are most likely to occur, and just as importantly, they are areas where growth is desired by the Township's citizens, business owners and Township staff and Trustees.

The Action Items that received the highest prioritization included:

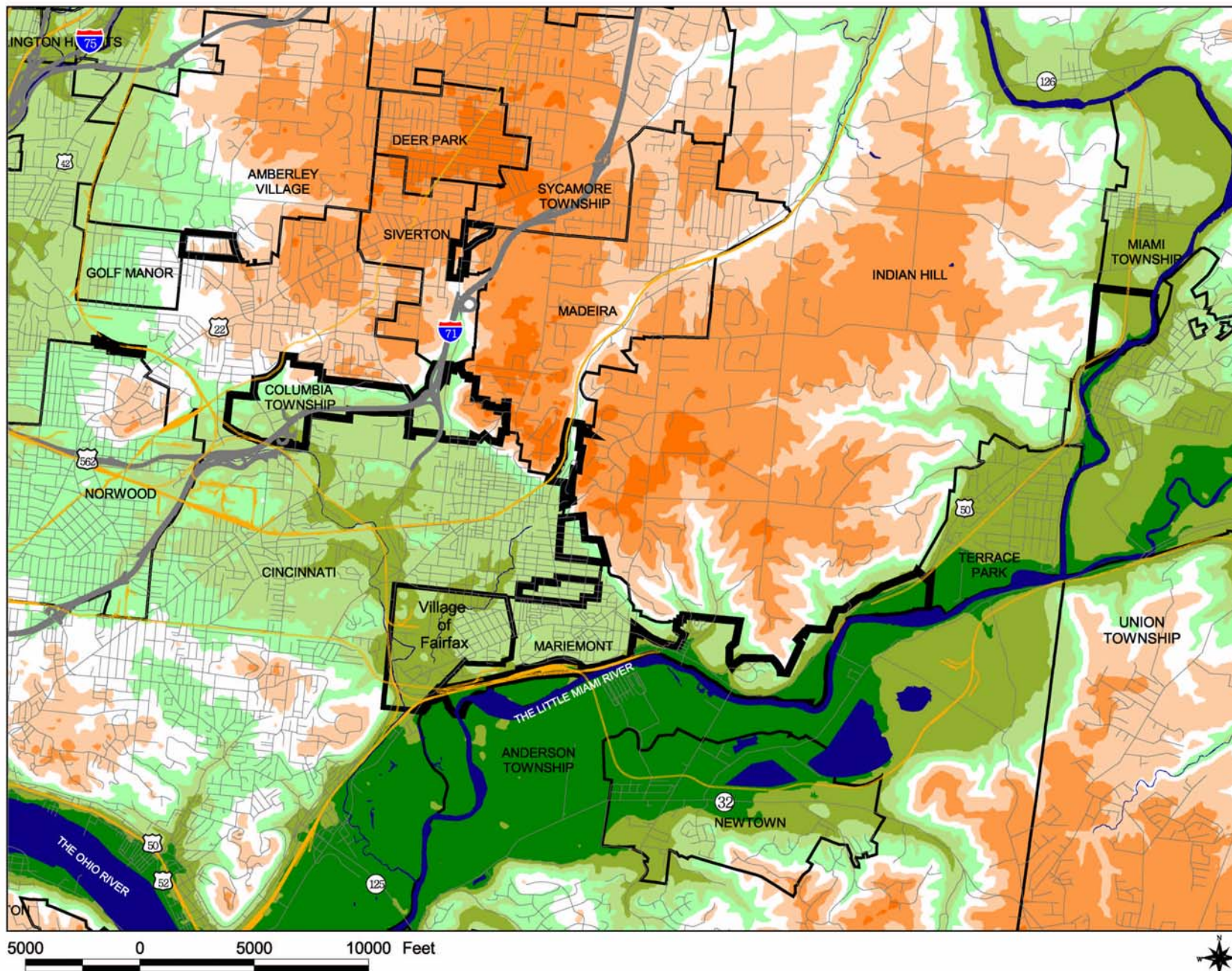
- Provide more parks and purposeful green spaces within residential neighborhoods.
- Develop Design Overlay Zones to control design standards for commercial and business districts.
- Consider a range of funding mechanisms to fund projects.
- Develop streetscape and beautification plans.
- Encourage develop that will expand the tax base.
- Improve pedestrian access by upgrading existing sidewalks and building new sidewalks.

Next Steps

Following the adoption of this Comprehensive Plan by Township Trustees, the Hamilton County Planning Commission and Commissioners, the Township intends to begin implementing key elements including:

- Creation of Town Center Plans for Ridge-Highland, Plainville-Wooster, and Madison Place South.
- Evaluation of implementation and funding tools to carry out new improvements.
- Project the potential revenue from implementation of new development.
- Creation of Special Public Interest Overlay Districts to guide the planning and development in key areas within the Township.

The Township is enthusiastically looking ahead to a bright future that protects building livability in residential neighborhoods, rebuilds communities, stimulates Town Center growth, and encourages reinvestment through time for all its diverse neighborhoods.



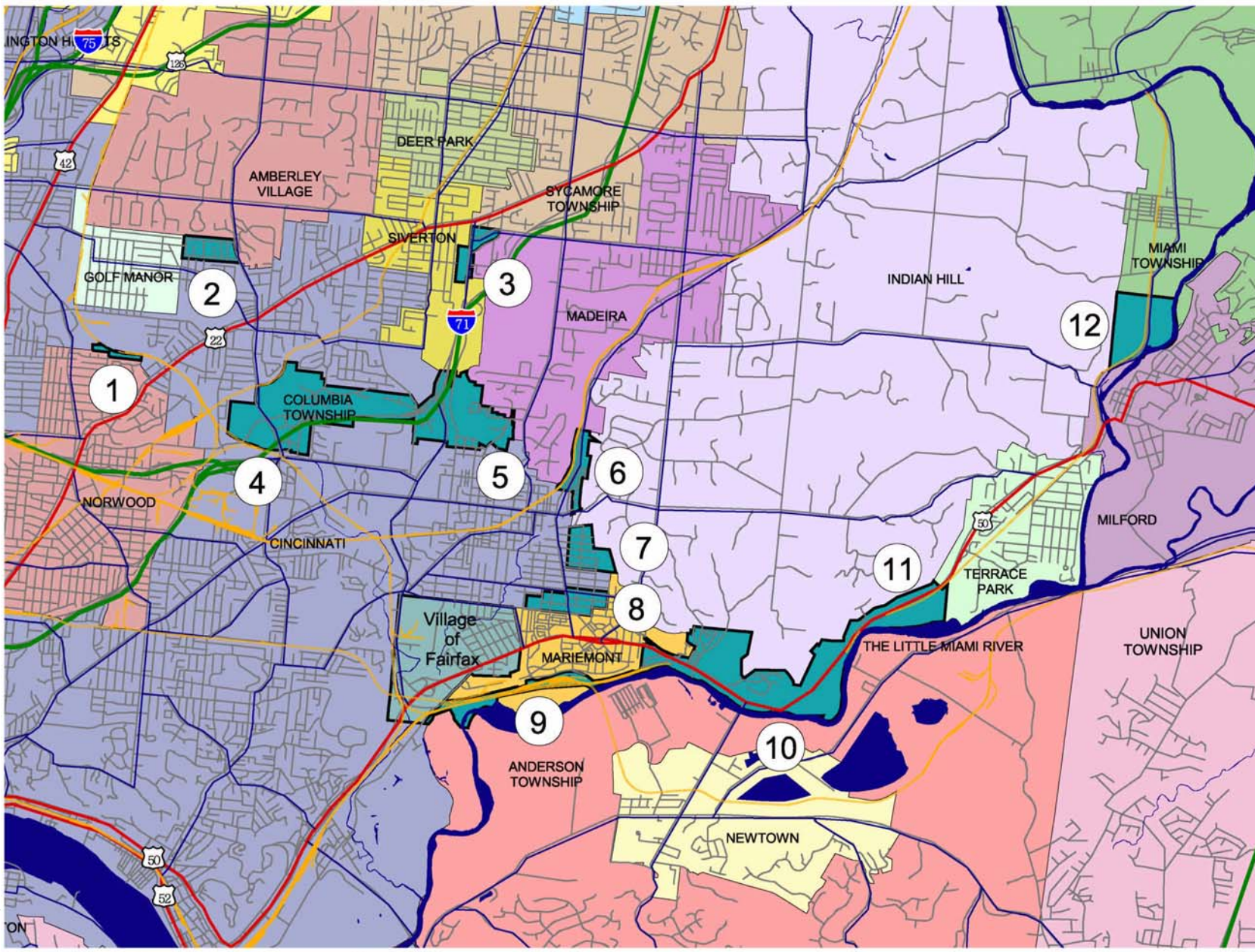
**COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
HAMILTON COUNTY, OHIO**

AREA CONTEXT MAP

- Railway Lines
- Primary Roads
- Columbia Township
- The Ohio River
- Elevation Model**
- 934.678 - 995.069
- 874.287 - 934.678
- 813.896 - 874.287
- 753.505 - 813.896
- 693.114 - 753.505
- 632.723 - 693.114
- 572.332 - 632.723
- 511.941 - 572.332
- 451.55 - 511.941



Figure 1.



**COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**
HAMILTON COUNTY, OHIO

**COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP
JURISDICTION MAP**

- 1 Norwood Green
- 2 Ridgewood
- 3 Stewart Road
- 4 Ridge - Highland West
- 5 Ridge - Highland East
- 6 Camargo Road
- 7 Madison Place North
- 8 Madison Place South
- 9 Wooster Road West
- 10 Plainville - Wooster
- 11 Wooster Road East
- 12 Camp Dennison South

- Railway Lines
- Primary Roads
- Columbia Township
- The Ohio River



Figure 2.

COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PROCESS CHART

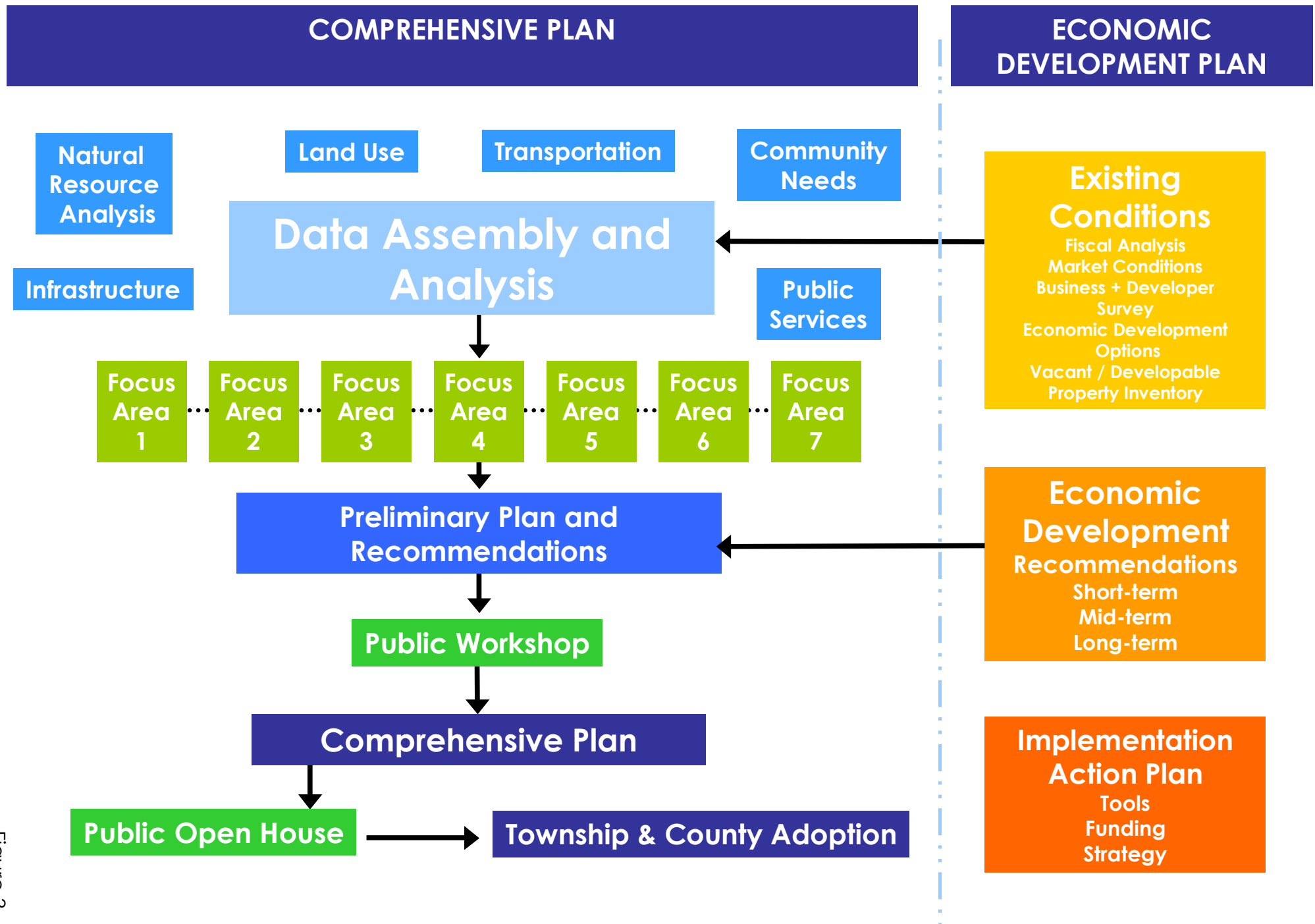


Figure 3.

VISIONING PROCESS

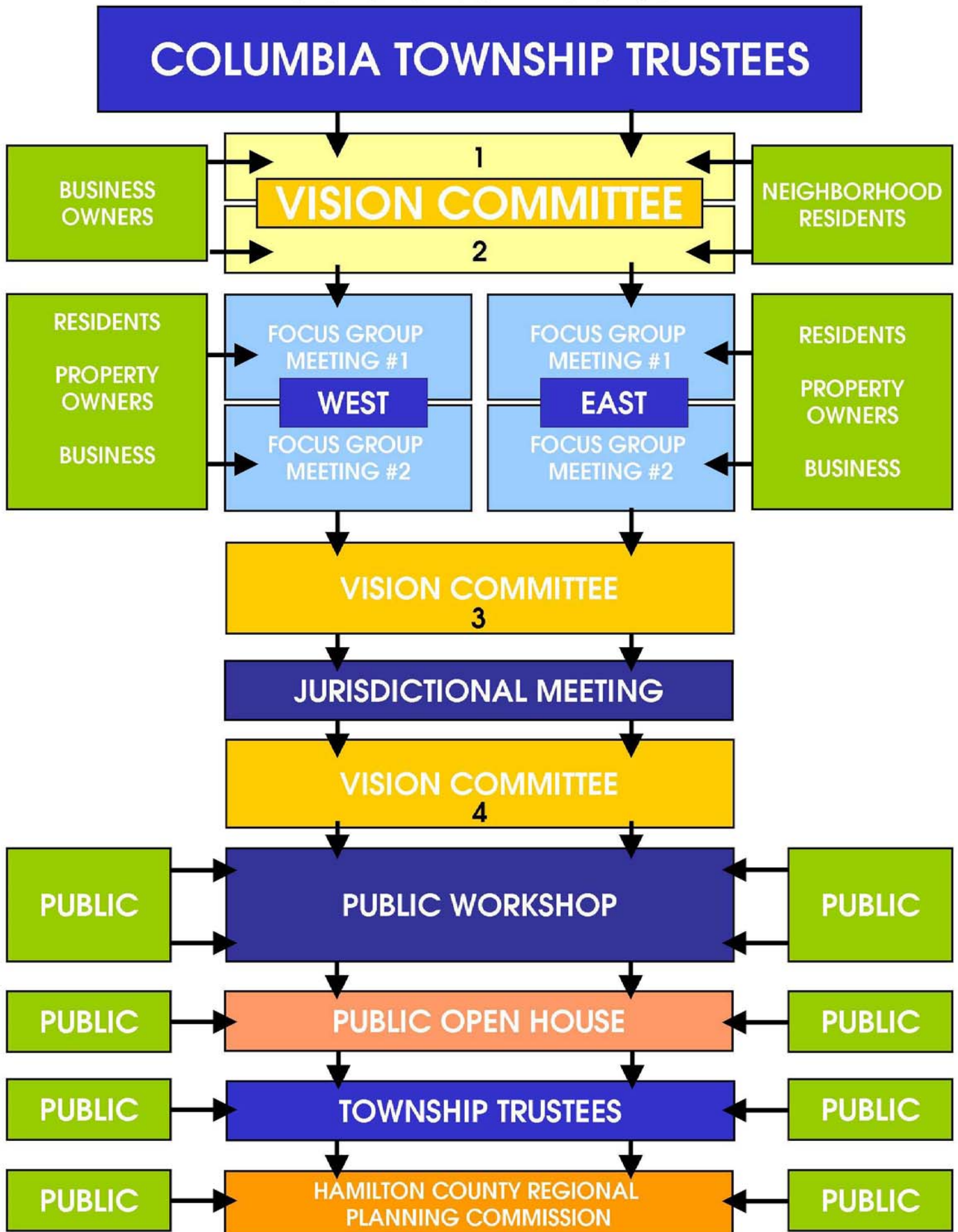


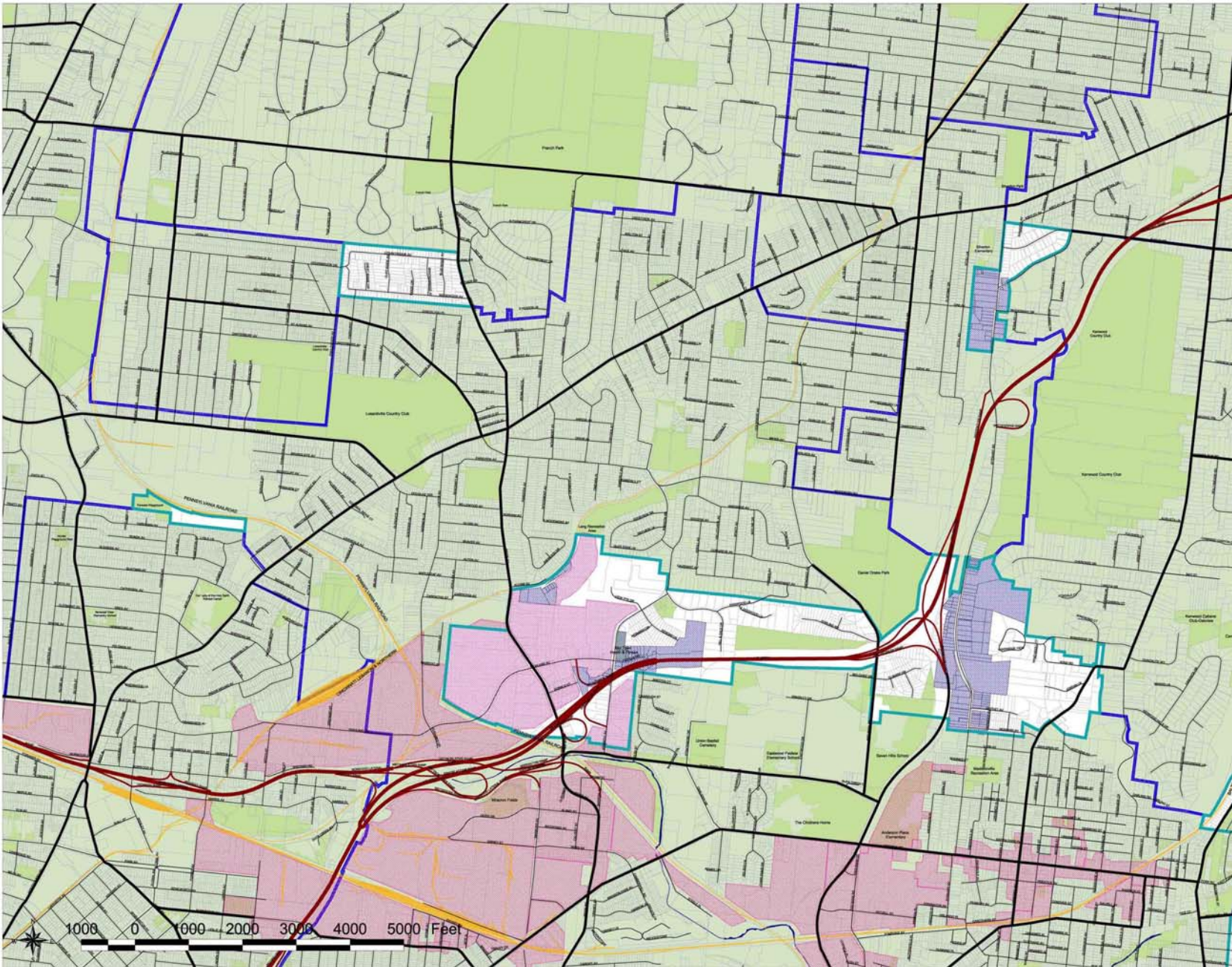
Figure 4.

VISION COMMITTEE COMMUNITY ISSUES SUMMARY

ISSUES RAISED	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEED MORE INFO	DISAGREE	WHERE
DEVELOP A LONG RANGE COMMUNITY VISION	9	3			
DEVELOP LAND USE PRIORITIES & A PLAN	7	4	1		1
ESTABLISH A TOWNSHIP LOGO & IDENTITY	3	4	3	1	1
DEVELOP ZONING / OVERLAY DISTRICT CONTROLS	3	4	5		1
PROVIDE MORE GREEN SPACE & PARKS	2	6	2	1	1
IMPROVE STORM WATER MANAGEMENT	3	4	4		
ADDRESS FLOODING ISSUES	3	2	5		
PROMOTE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOR:	9	2	2		
RIDGE /HIGHLAND NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER					
PLAINVILLE /WOOSTER NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER					
MADISON PLACE SOUTH COMMERCIAL AREA					
STEWART ROAD AREA	7	4	1		
PROTECT NEIGHBORHOODS & BUSINESS CENTERS FROM DRUGS & CRIME					
PROVIDE ONGOING STREET IMPROVEMENT & MAINTENANCE PLAN – (SURFACING, ROAD REPAIR)					
PROTECT NEIGHBORHOODS FROM NUISANCES – NOISE, TRAFFIC, ETC.					
PROVIDE BETTER FIRE & EMERGENCY MGT. / RESPONSE	2	3	4		
LOCATE & CLEAN UP BROWN SPACES (CLOSED GAS STATIONS, VACANT BUILDINGS, EMPTY LOTS)	5	4	3		1
PROTECT NEIGHBORHOODS FROM TRAFFIC	3	5	2		1
PROVIDE BEAUTIFICATION PLAN (TREE PROGRAM, LANDSCAPING, FLOWER BOXES, GATEWAYS)	4	5	1		1
RELOCATE TOWNSHIP GOVERNMENT CENTER – WHERE?	4	1	2	2	2
IN TOWNSHIP?	3				
DEVELOP STREETScape PLAN & IMPROVE APPEARANCE	3	8	1		1
IMPROVE EXISTING SIDEWALKS & BUILD NEW SIDEWALKS	4	6	1		

Figure 5.

COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



ZONES OF POTENTIAL CHANGE WESTERN FOCUS AREA



 Columbia Township
 Railway Lines
 Columbia Township Zones of Change
 ZONES OF CHANGE - ECLUPP
 Hamilton Parcels
 Parks


MEISNER
 ASSOCIATES
 LAND VISION

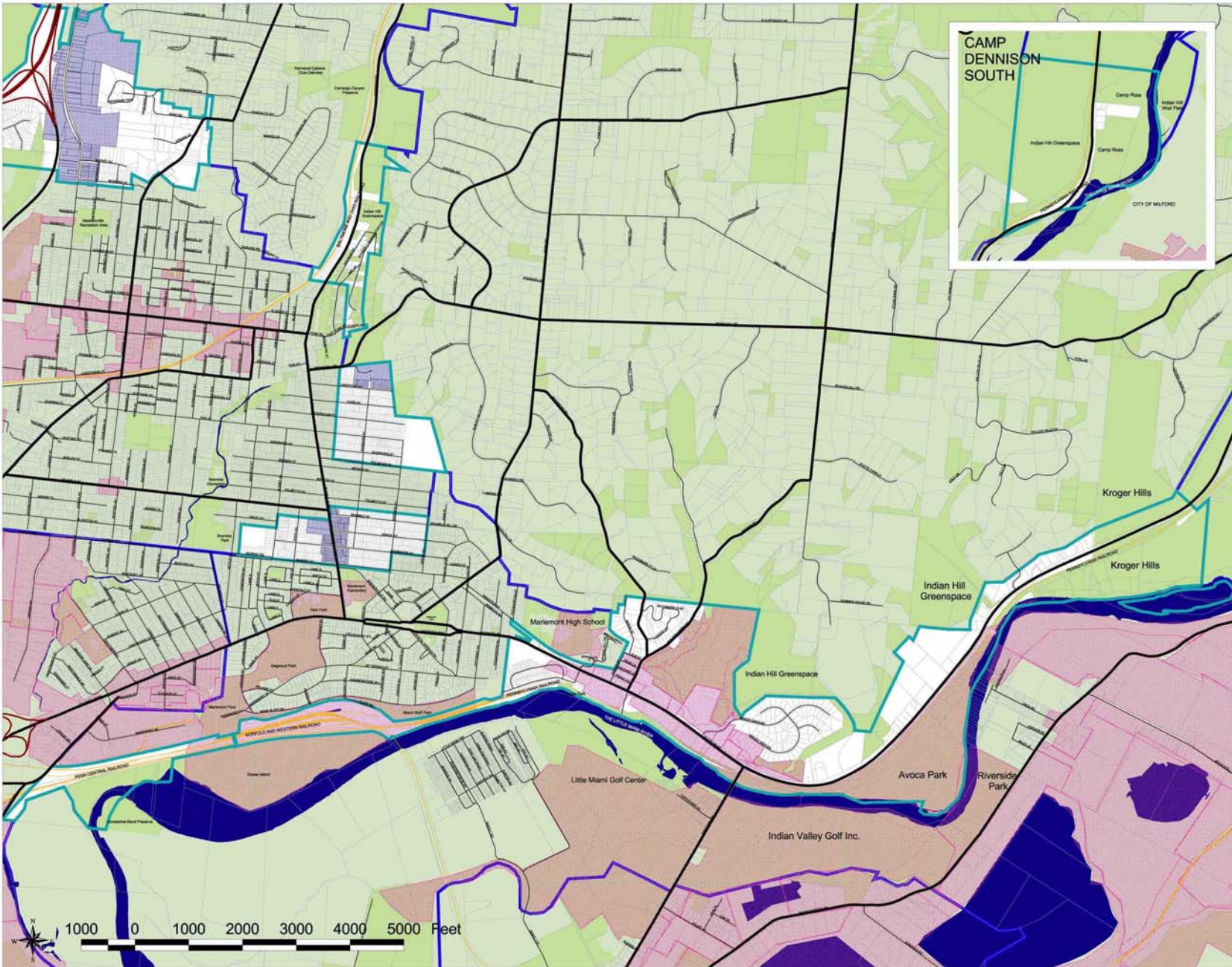
PLANNING
 URBAN DESIGN
 LAND PLANNING
 LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

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 **BALKE AMERICAN**

Figure 6.

COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



ZONES OF
POTENTIAL CHANGE
EASTERN
FOCUS AREA



 Columbia Township
 Railway Lines
 Columbia Township Zones of Change
 ZONES OF CHANGE - ECLUPV
 Hamilton Parcels
 Parks


 PLANNING
 URBAN DESIGN
 LAND PLANNING
 LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

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Figure 7.

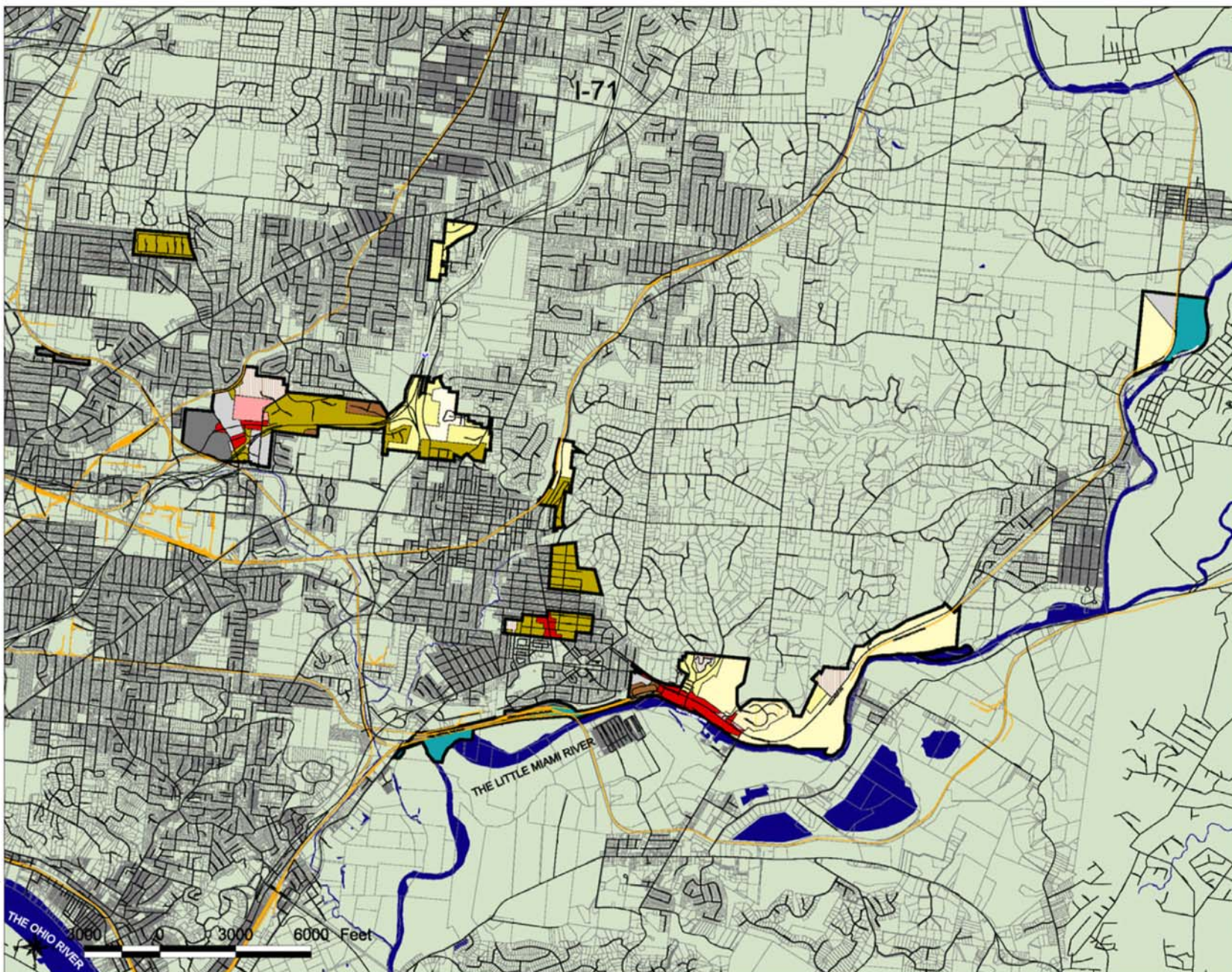
OPEN HOUSE SURVEY RESULTS

Issues/Recommendations	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Need More Info
ESTABLISH A TOWNSHIP LOGO & IDENTITY	8	10	6	2
DEVELOP ZONING / OVERLAY DISTRICT REGULATIONS	11	6	2	6
PROVIDE MORE GREEN SPACE & PARKS	11	2	6	4
IMPROVE STORM WATER MANAGEMENT/ FLOODING ISSUES	7	8	1	8
DEVELOP ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM WITH NEIGHBORING JURISDICTION, SUCH AS A JOINT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT	10	12		4
PRIORITIZE ROAD IMPROVEMENTS BY STREET/ NEIGHBORHOOD	12	9		2
RELOCATE TOWNSHIP GOVERNMENT CENTER WHERE? Ridge Rd, Wooster Pike, Madison Place	3		7	13
DEVELOP STREETScape PLAN TO IMPROVE APPEARANCE	17	6	1	2
IMPROVE EXISTING SIDEWALKS & BUILD NEW SIDEWALKS Ridge & Highland	17	5		3

Listed are a few recommendations developed by the Township Vision Committee:

- **Create a pedestrian-friendly, walkable, mixed business/residential community.**
- **Provide investment incentives for developers**
- **Minimizing traffic congestion**
- **Township could create development options for the following areas - any expansion should have stability and longevity, and create a quality integration of office, retail, and residential spaces for:**
 - 1. RIDGE/HIGHLAND BUSINESS DISTRICT**
 - 2. STEWART ROAD AREA**
 - 3. PLAINVILLE/WOOSTER**
 - 4. MADISON PLACE SOUTH/NORTH**

COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP ZONING

LOCATION MAP



MAP DATA SOURCE: GMR

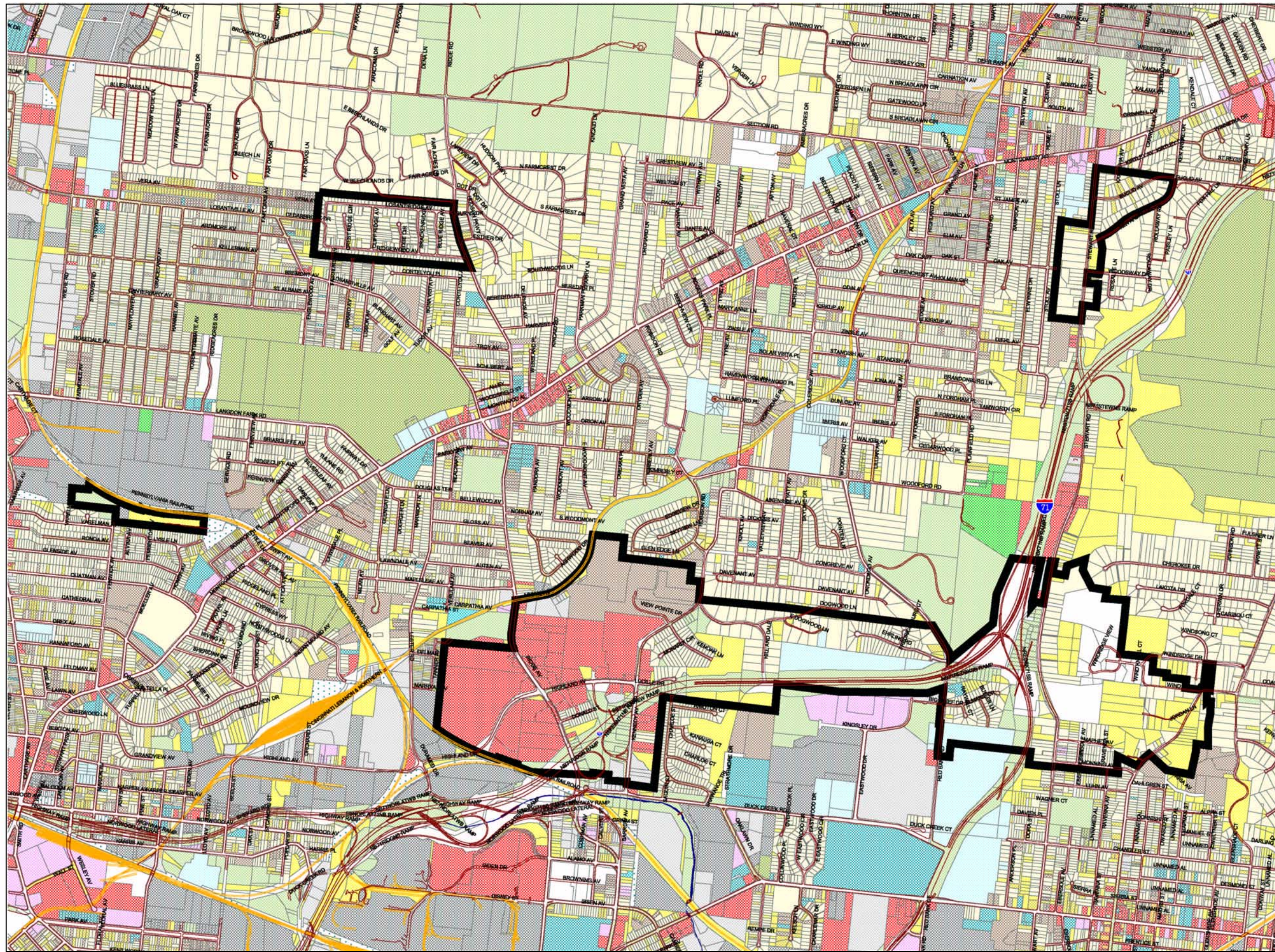
- Railway Lines
- Columbia Township
- Zoning**
- A - Residential
- A - Community Unit Plan
- B - Residential
- B - Community Unit Plan
- C - Residential
- D - High Density Residential
- DD - Planned Multi Family District
- E - Retail Business
- E - Community Unit Plan
- EE - Planned Retail District
- F - Light Industry
- G - Heavy Industry
- H - Riverfront
- Hamilton Parcels

PLANNING
URBAN DESIGN
LAND PLANNING
LANDSCAPE
ARCHITECTURE



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Fax (513) 521-3605

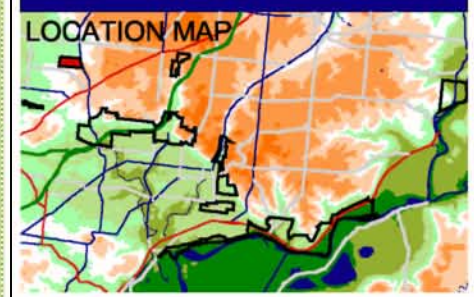




**COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
HAMILTON COUNTY, OHIO**

EXISTING LAND USE

**WESTERN
FOCUS AREA**

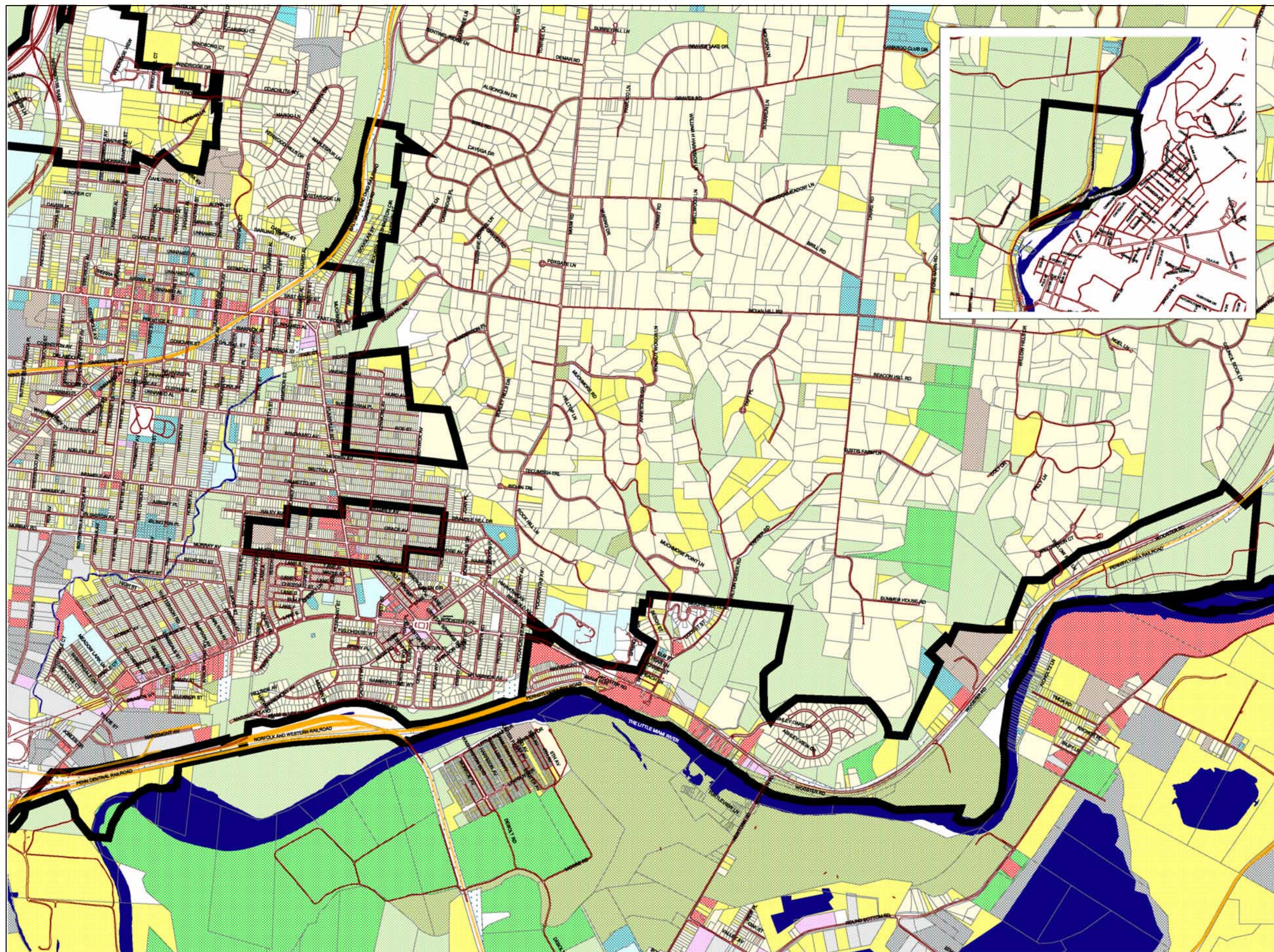


- Railway Lines
- Columbia Township
- Hamilton Parcels
- Surrounding Land Use**
- Agriculture
- Green Space
- Public Space
- Education
- Institutional
- Institutional - Church
- Public Utilities
- Vacant
- Single Family Residential
- Two-Family Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Manufactured Housing
- Mixed Use
- Commercial
- Office
- Light Industry
- Heavy Industry

1000 0 1000 2000 3000 Feet



Figure 10A



**COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
HAMILTON COUNTY, OHIO**

EXISTING LAND USE

**EASTERN
FOCUS AREA**



- Railway Lines
- Columbia Township
- Hamilton Parcels
- Surrounding Land Use**
- Agriculture
- Green Space
- Public Space
- Education
- Institutional
- Institutional - Church
- Public Utilities
- Vacant
- Single Family Residential
- Two-Family Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Manufactured Housing
- Mixed Use
- Commercial
- Office
- Light Industry
- Heavy Industry

1000 0 1000 2000 3000 Feet



Figure 10B

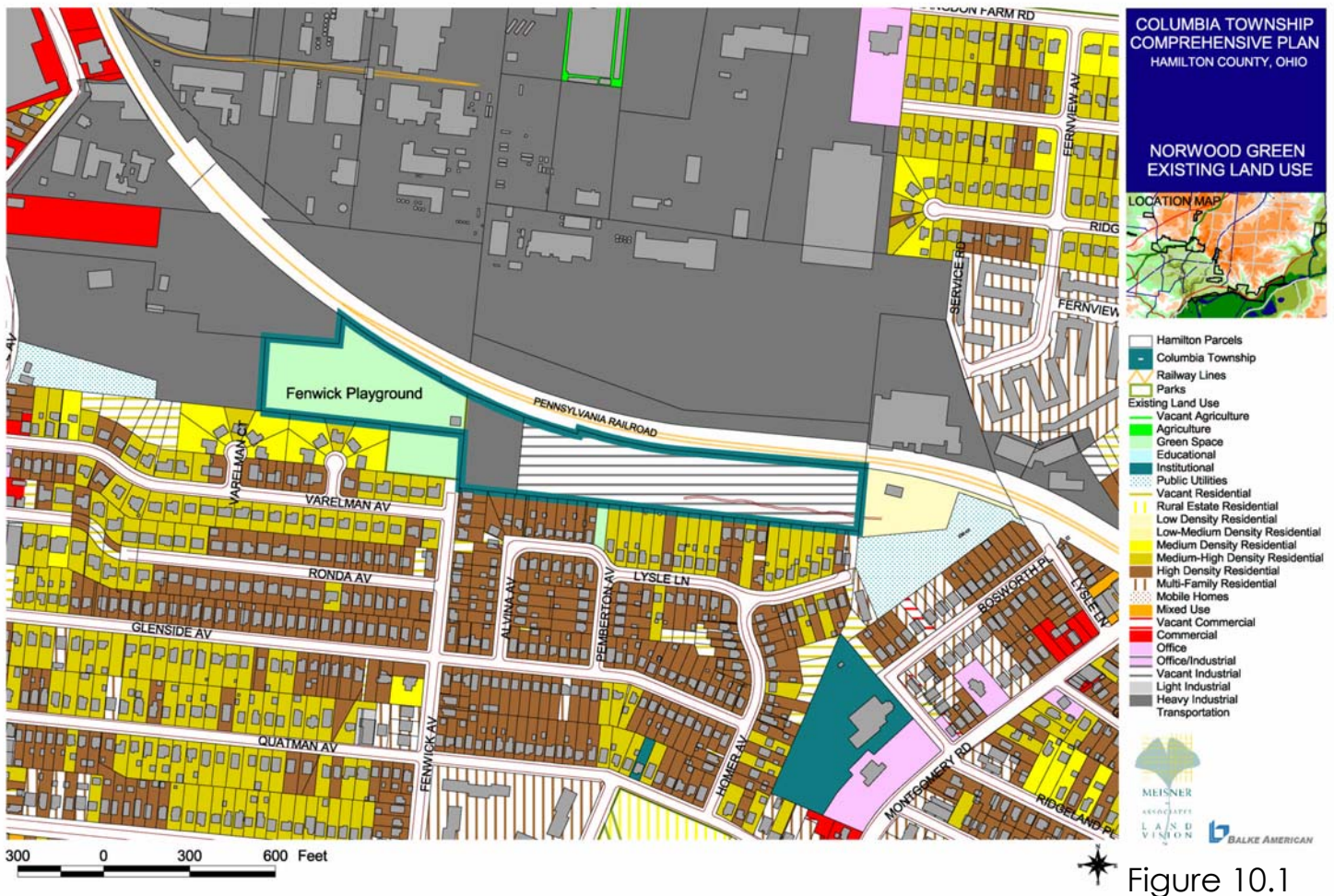
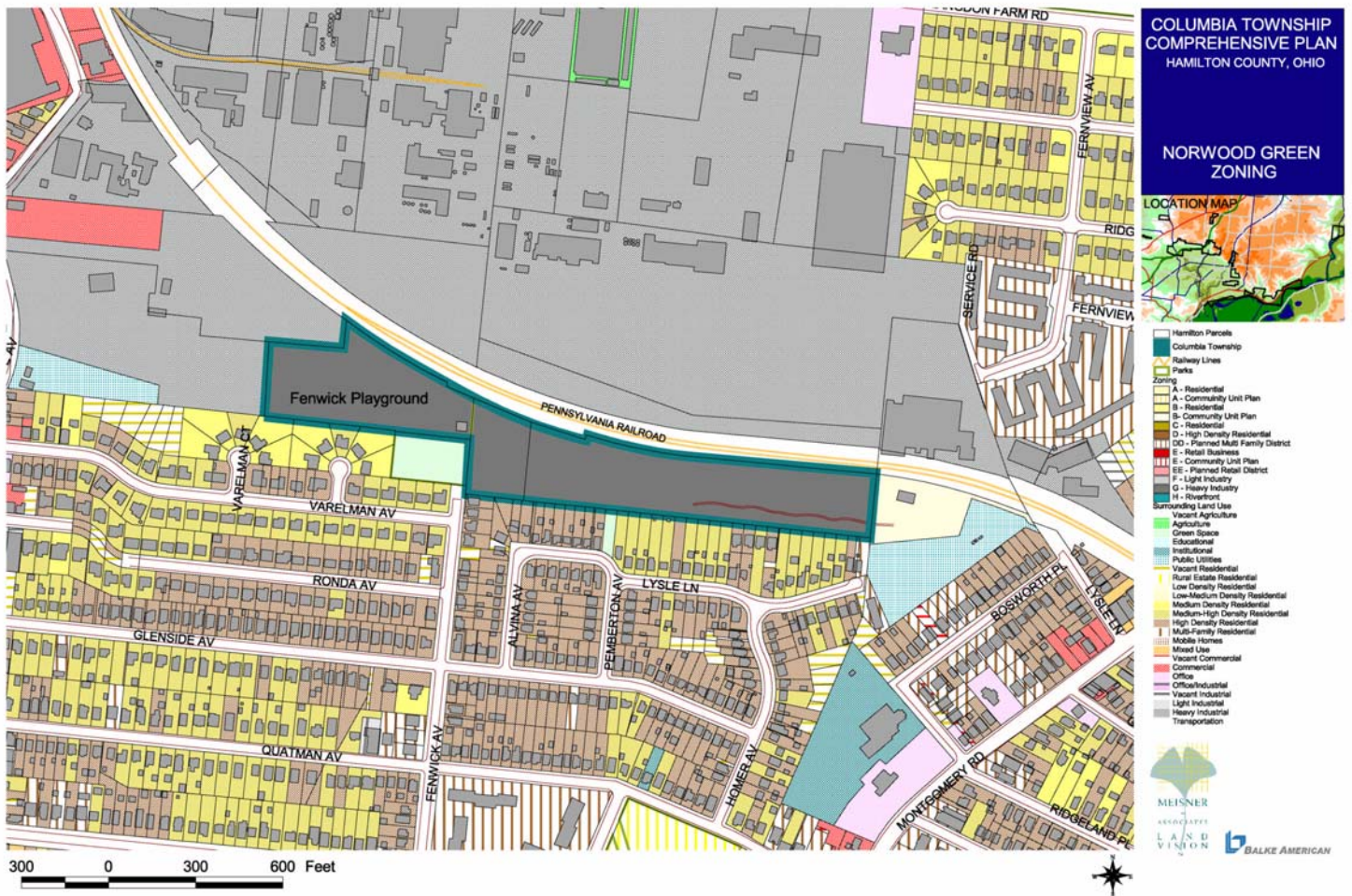
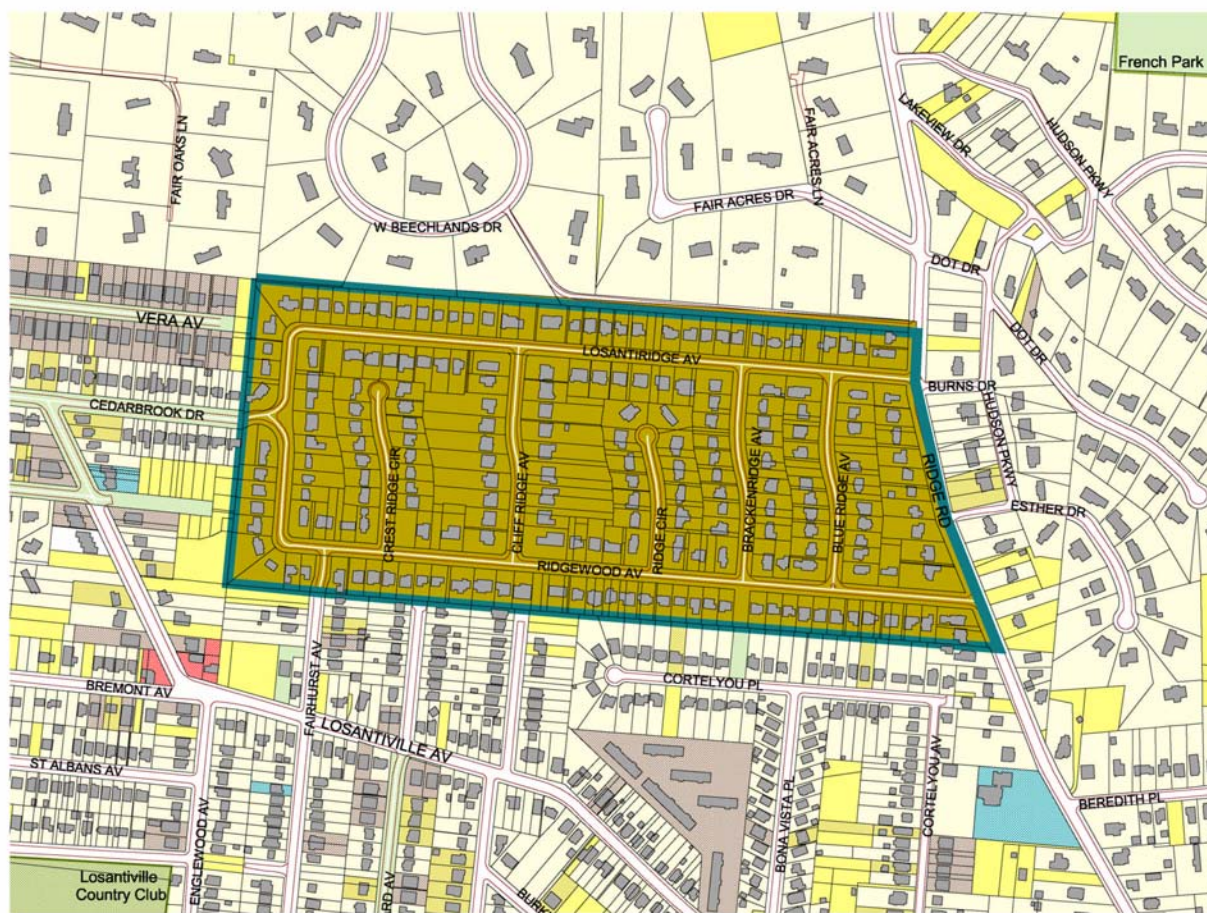


Figure 10.1

RIDGEWOOD ZONING



- Hamilton Parcels
- Columbia Township
- Railway Lines
- Parks
- Zoning
 - A - Residential
 - B - Residential
 - C - Residential
 - D - High Density Residential
 - DD - Planned Multi Family District
 - E - Retail Business
 - EE - Community Unit Plan
 - FF - Planned Retail District
 - G - Light Industry
 - H - Heavy Industry
 - I - Riverfront
- Surrounding Land Use
 - Agriculture
 - Green Space
 - Public Space
 - Education
 - Institutional - Church
 - Public Utilities
 - Vacant
 - Single Family Residential
 - Two-Family Residential
 - Multi-Family Residential
 - Manufactured Housing
 - Mixed Use
 - Commercial
 - Office
 - Light Industry
 - Heavy Industry



RIDGEWOOD
EXISTING LAND USE



- Hamilton Parcels
- Columbia Township
- Railway Lines
- Parks
- Existing Land Use
 - Agriculture
 - Green Space
 - Public Space
 - Education
 - Institutional - Church
 - Public Utilities
 - Vacant
 - Single Family Residential
 - Two-Family Residential
 - Multi-Family Residential
 - Manufactured Housing
 - Mixed Use
 - Commercial
 - Office
 - Light Industry
 - Heavy Industry

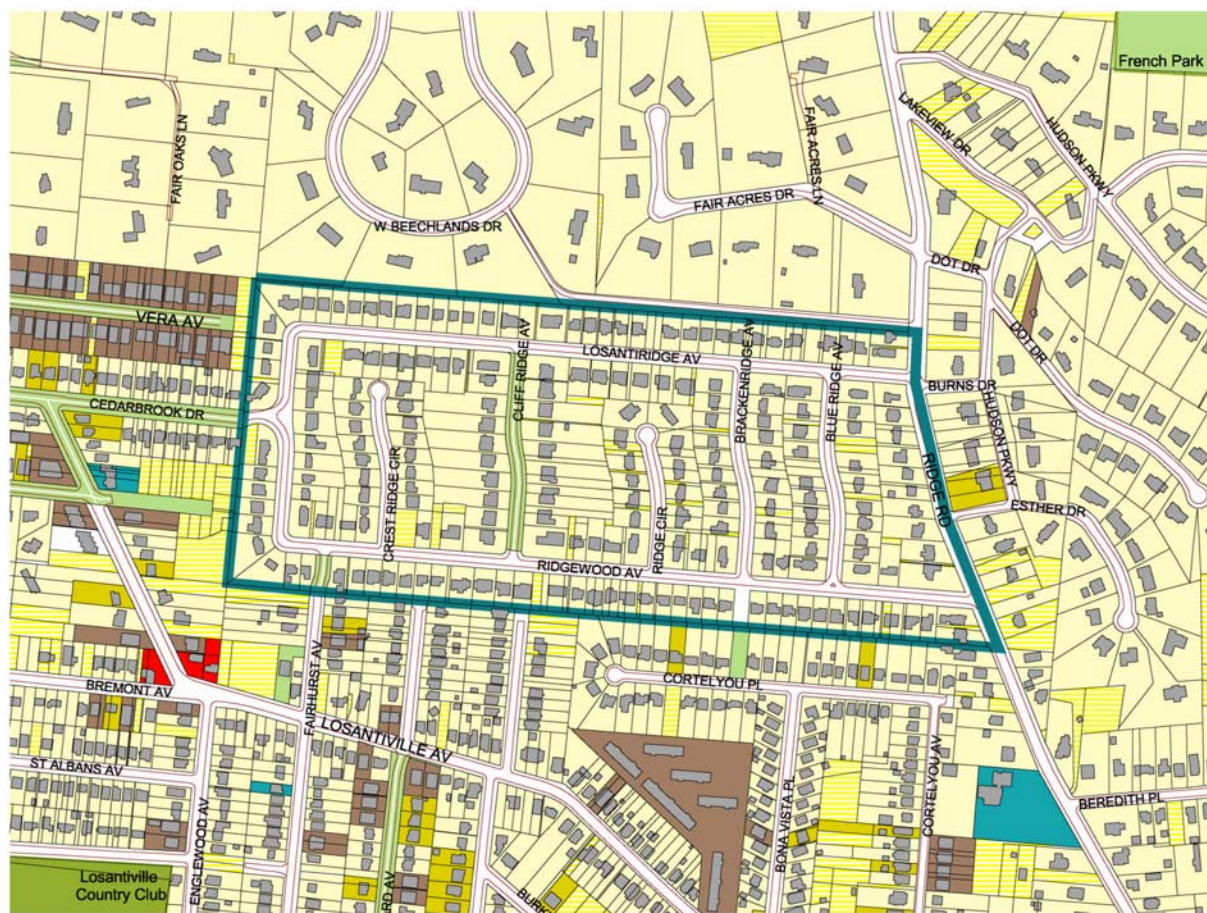


Figure 10.2

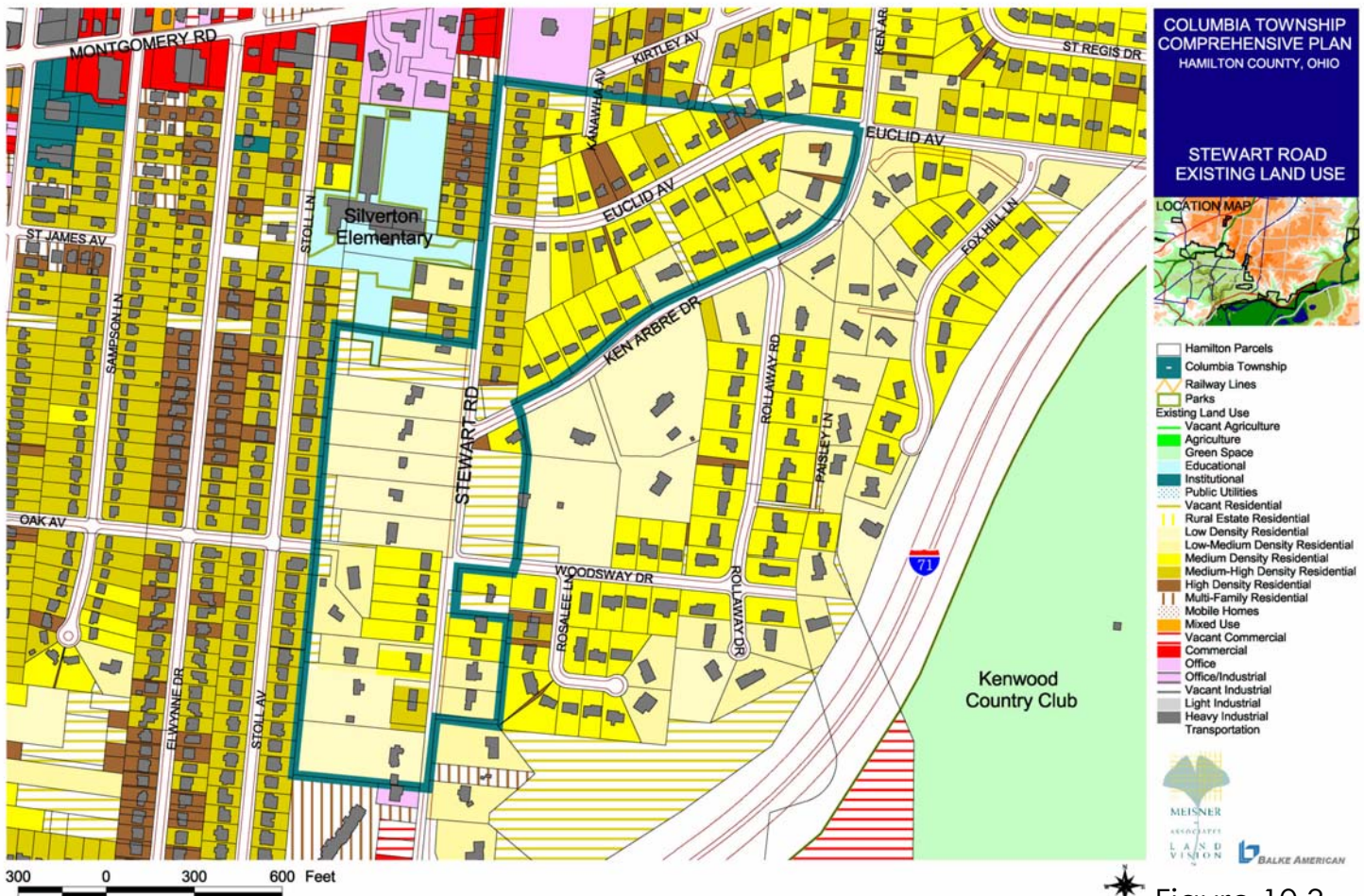
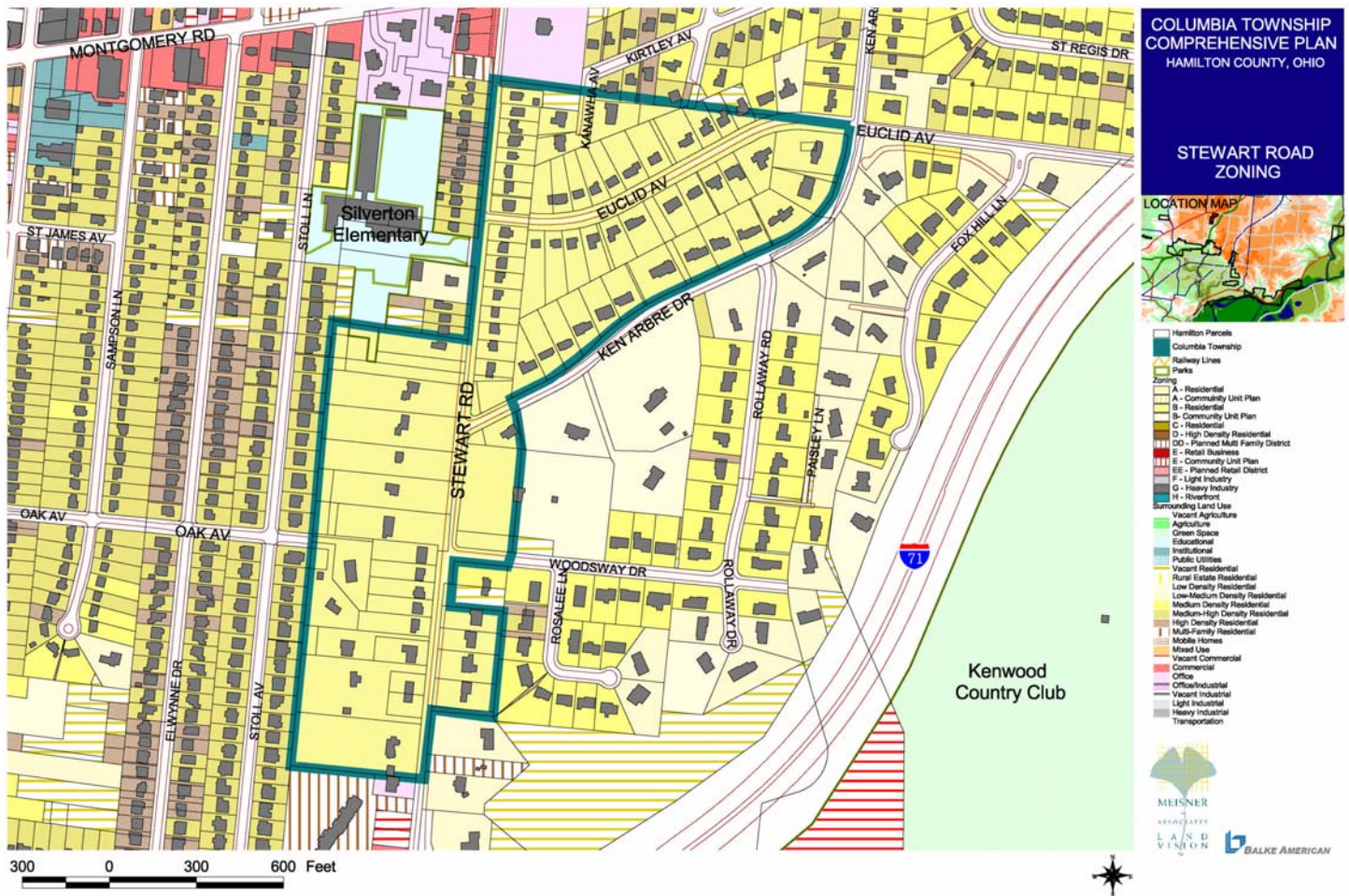


Figure 10.3

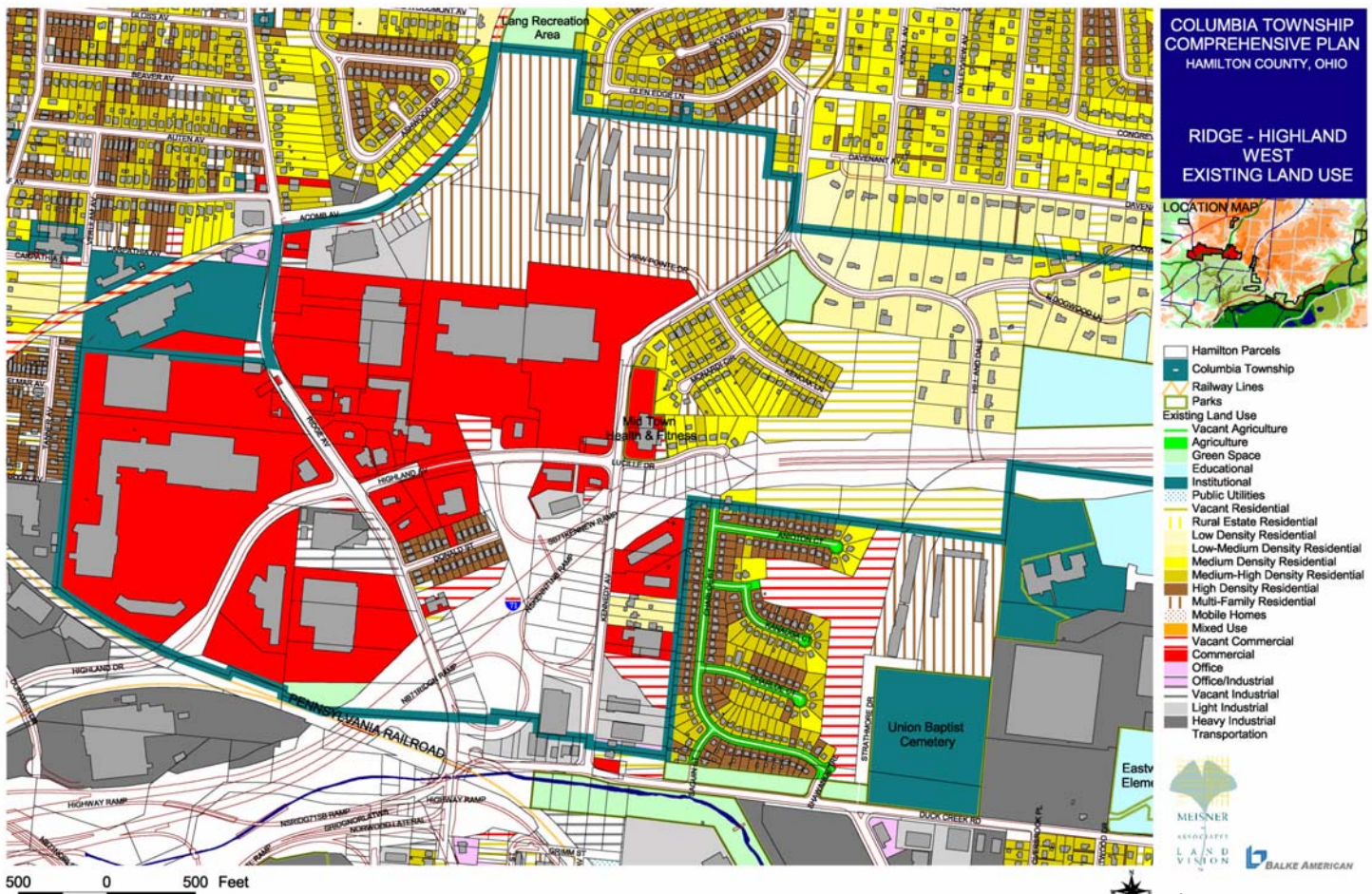
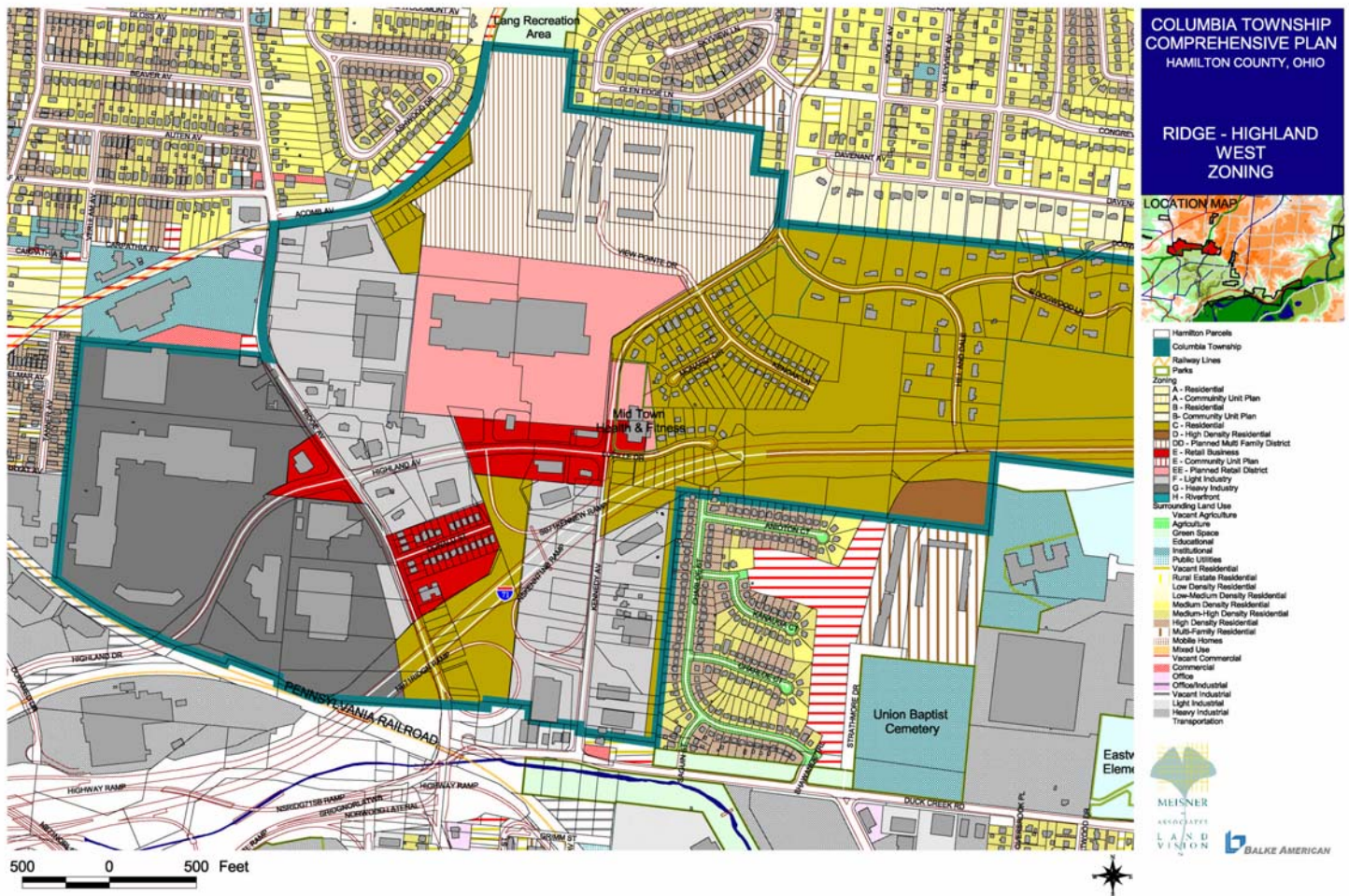
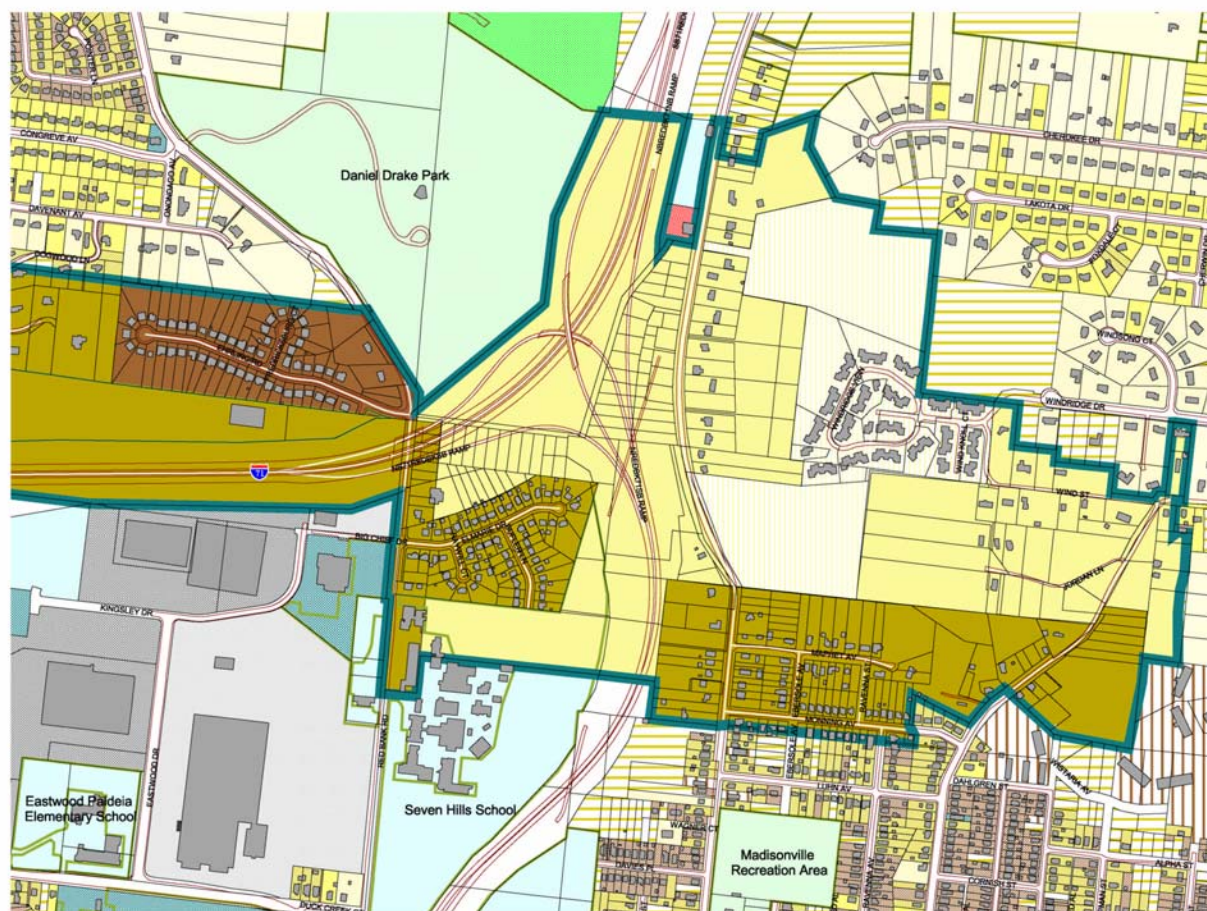


Figure 10.4

EDGE - HIGHLAND
EAST
ZONING



- Hamilton Parcels
- Columbia Township
- Railway Lines
- Parks
- Zoning
 - A - Residential
 - A - Community Unit Plan
 - B - Residential
 - B - Community Unit Plan
 - C - Residential
 - D - High Density Residential
 - DD - Planned Multi-Family District
 - E - Retail Business
 - E - Community Unit Plan
 - ES - Planned Retail District
 - F - Light Industry
 - G - Heavy Industry
 - H - Riverfront
- Surrounding Land Use
 - Vacant Agriculture
 - Agriculture
 - Green Space
 - Educational
 - Institutional
 - Public Utilities
 - Vacant Residential
 - Rural Estate Residential
 - Low Density Residential
 - Low-Medium Density Residential
 - Medium Density Residential
 - Medium-High Density Residential
 - High Density Residential
 - Multi-Family Residential
 - Mobile Homes
 - Mixed Use
 - Vacant Commercial
 - Commercial
 - Office
 - Office/Industrial
 - Vacant Industrial
 - Light Industrial
 - Heavy Industrial
 - Transportation



EDGE - HIGHLAND
EAST
EXISTING LAND USE



- Hamilton Parcels
- Columbia Township
- Railway Lines
- Parks
- Existing Land Use
 - Vacant Agriculture
 - Agriculture
 - Green Space
 - Educational
 - Institutional
 - Public Utilities
 - Vacant Residential
 - Rural Estate Residential
 - Low Density Residential
 - Low-Medium Density Residential
 - Medium Density Residential
 - Medium-High Density Residential
 - High Density Residential
 - Multi-Family Residential
 - Mobile Homes
 - Mixed Use
 - Vacant Commercial
 - Commercial
 - Office
 - Office/Industrial
 - Vacant Industrial
 - Light Industrial
 - Heavy Industrial
 - Transportation

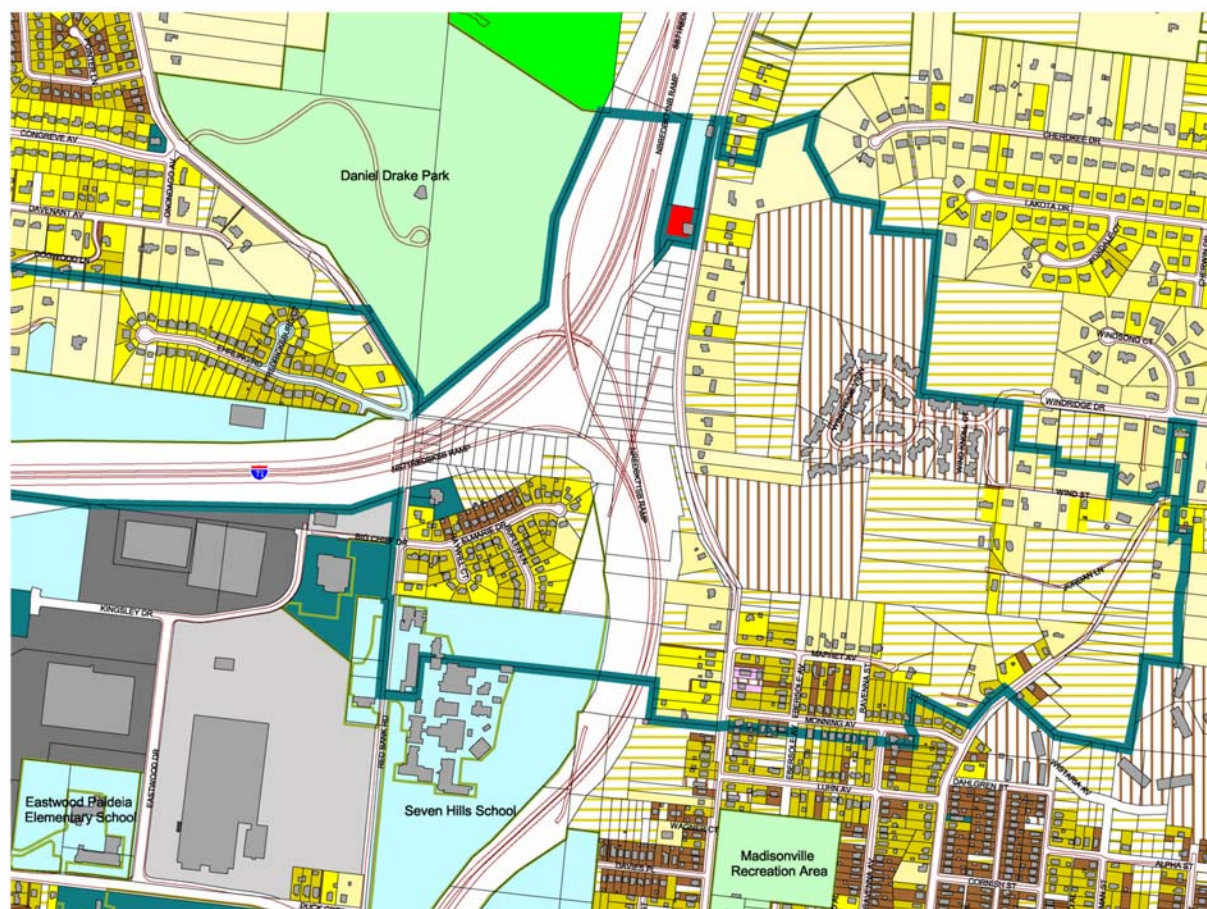


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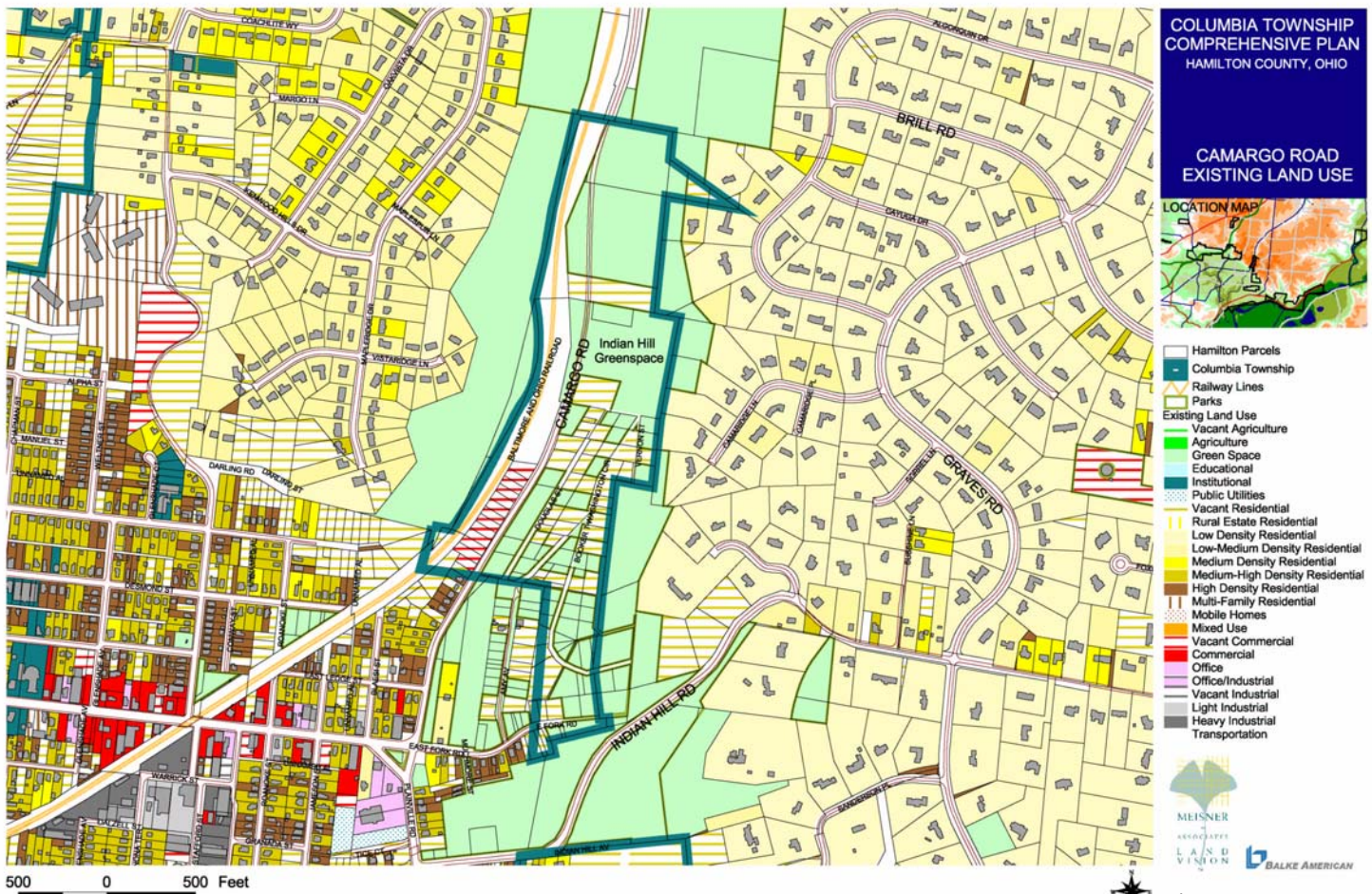
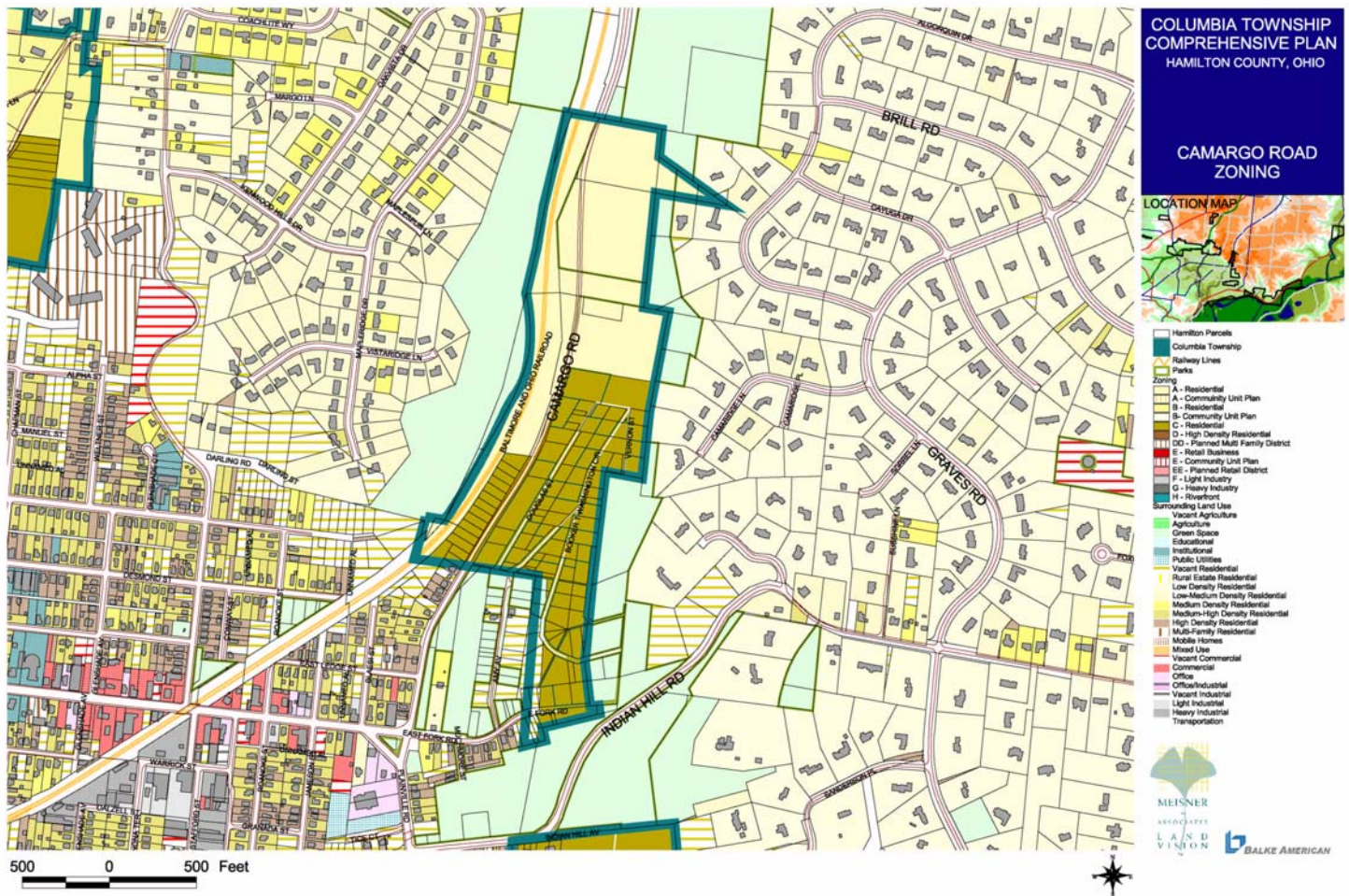


Figure 10.6

MADISON PLACE
NORTH
ZONING



- Hamilton Parcels
- Columbia Township
- Railway Lines
- Parks
- Zoning
 - A - Residential
 - A - Community Unit Plan
 - B - Residential
 - B - Community Unit Plan
 - C - Residential
 - D - High Density Residential
 - DD - Planned Multi-Family District
 - E - Retail Business
 - E - Community Unit Plan
 - ES - Planned Retail District
 - F - Light Industry
 - G - Heavy Industry
 - H - Riverfront
- Surrounding Land Use
 - Vacant Agriculture
 - Agriculture
 - Green Space
 - Educational
 - Institutional
 - Public Utilities
 - Vacant Residential
 - Rural Estate Residential
 - Low Density Residential
 - Low-Medium Density Residential
 - Medium Density Residential
 - Medium-High Density Residential
 - High Density Residential
 - Multi-Family Residential
 - Mobile Homes
 - Mixed Use
 - Vacant Commercial
 - Commercial
 - Office
 - Office/Industrial
 - Vacant Industrial
 - Light Industrial
 - Heavy Industrial
 - Transportation



300 0 300 600 Feet



MADISON PLACE
NORTH
EXISTING LAND USE



- Hamilton Parcels
- Columbia Township
- Railway Lines
- Parks
- Existing Land Use
 - Vacant Agriculture
 - Agriculture
 - Green Space
 - Educational
 - Institutional
 - Public Utilities
 - Vacant Residential
 - Rural Estate Residential
 - Low Density Residential
 - Low-Medium Density Residential
 - Medium Density Residential
 - Medium-High Density Residential
 - High Density Residential
 - Multi-Family Residential
 - Mobile Homes
 - Mixed Use
 - Vacant Commercial
 - Commercial
 - Office
 - Office/Industrial
 - Vacant Industrial
 - Light Industrial
 - Heavy Industrial
 - Transportation



300 0 300 600 Feet



Figure 10.7

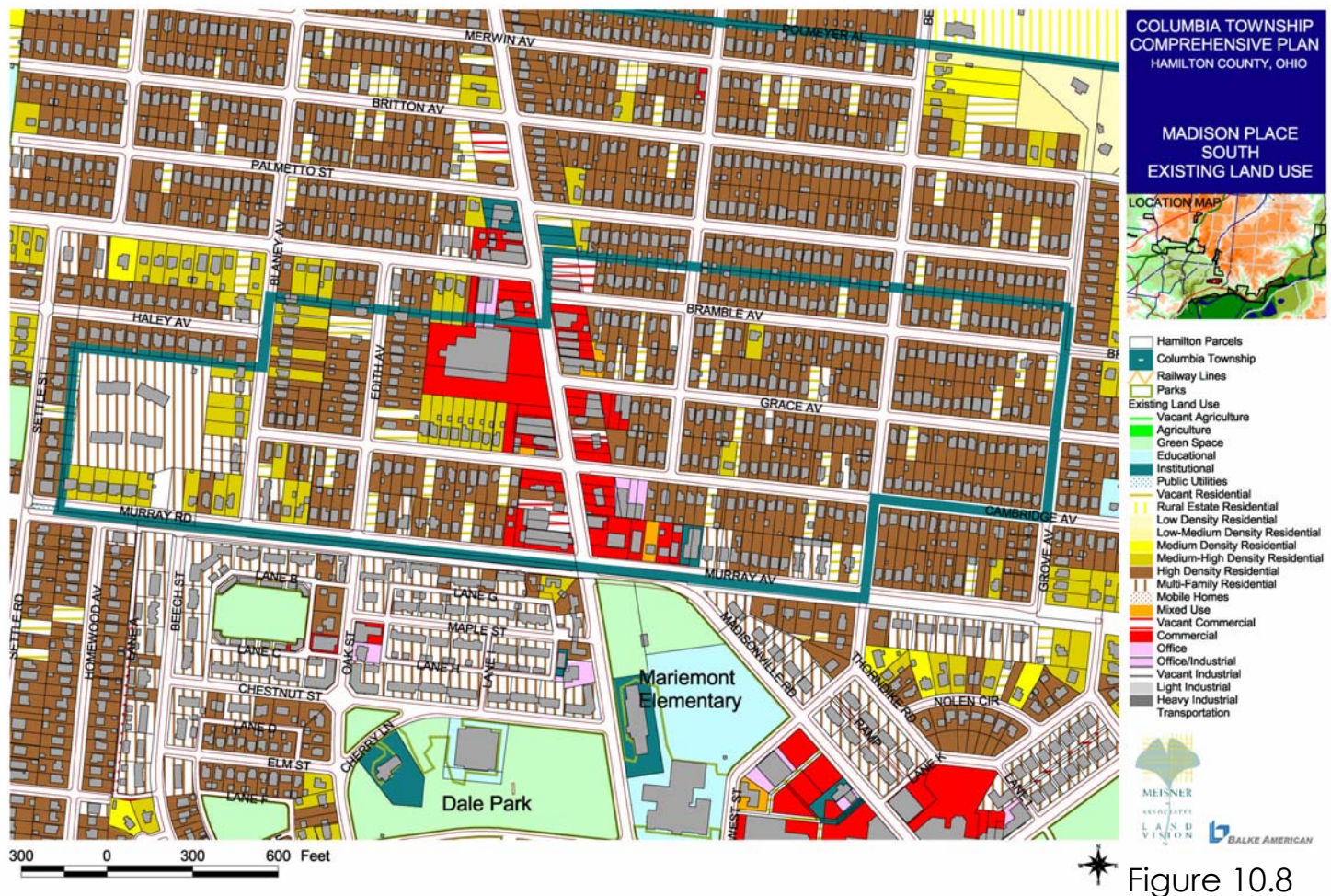
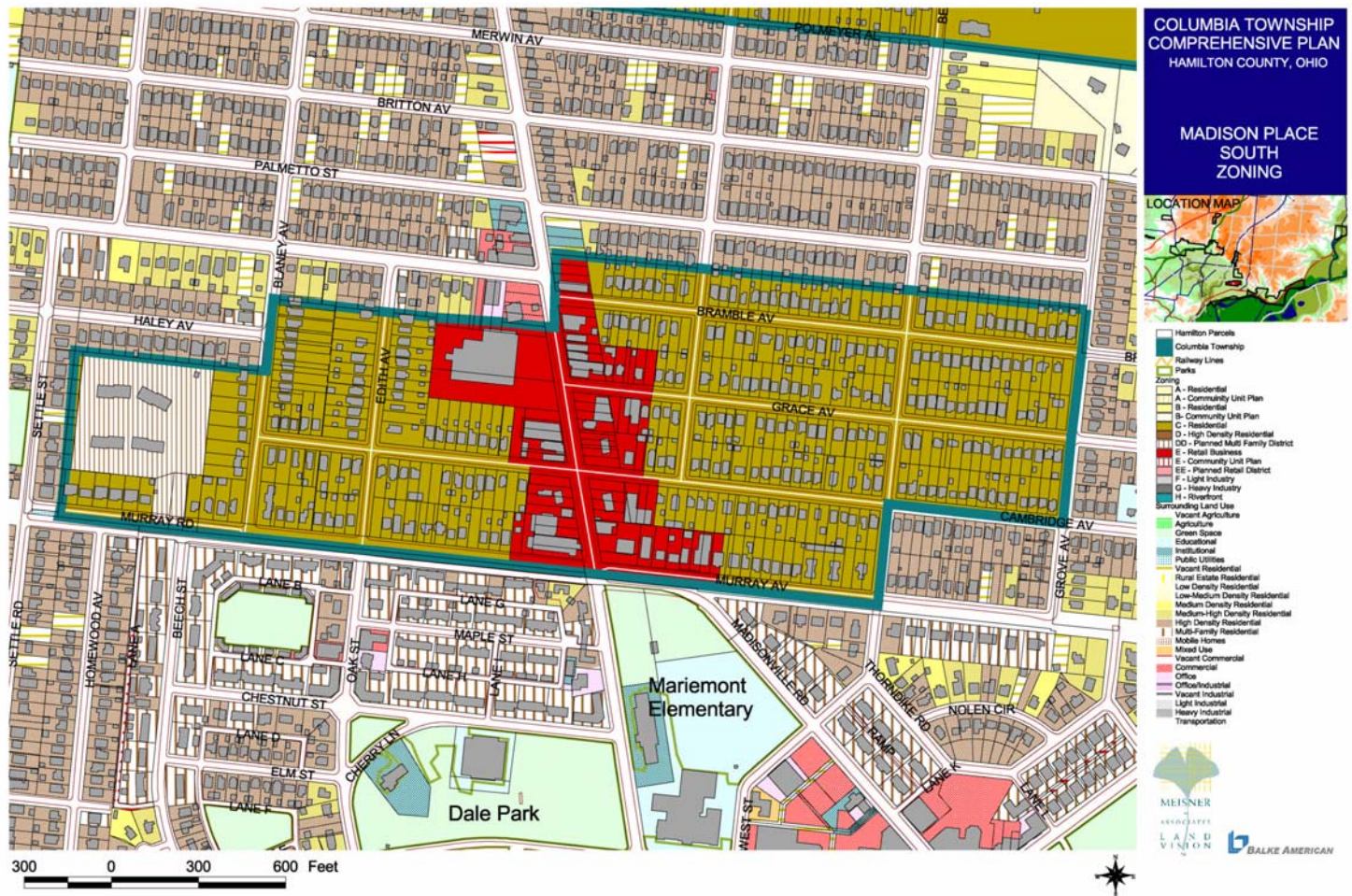


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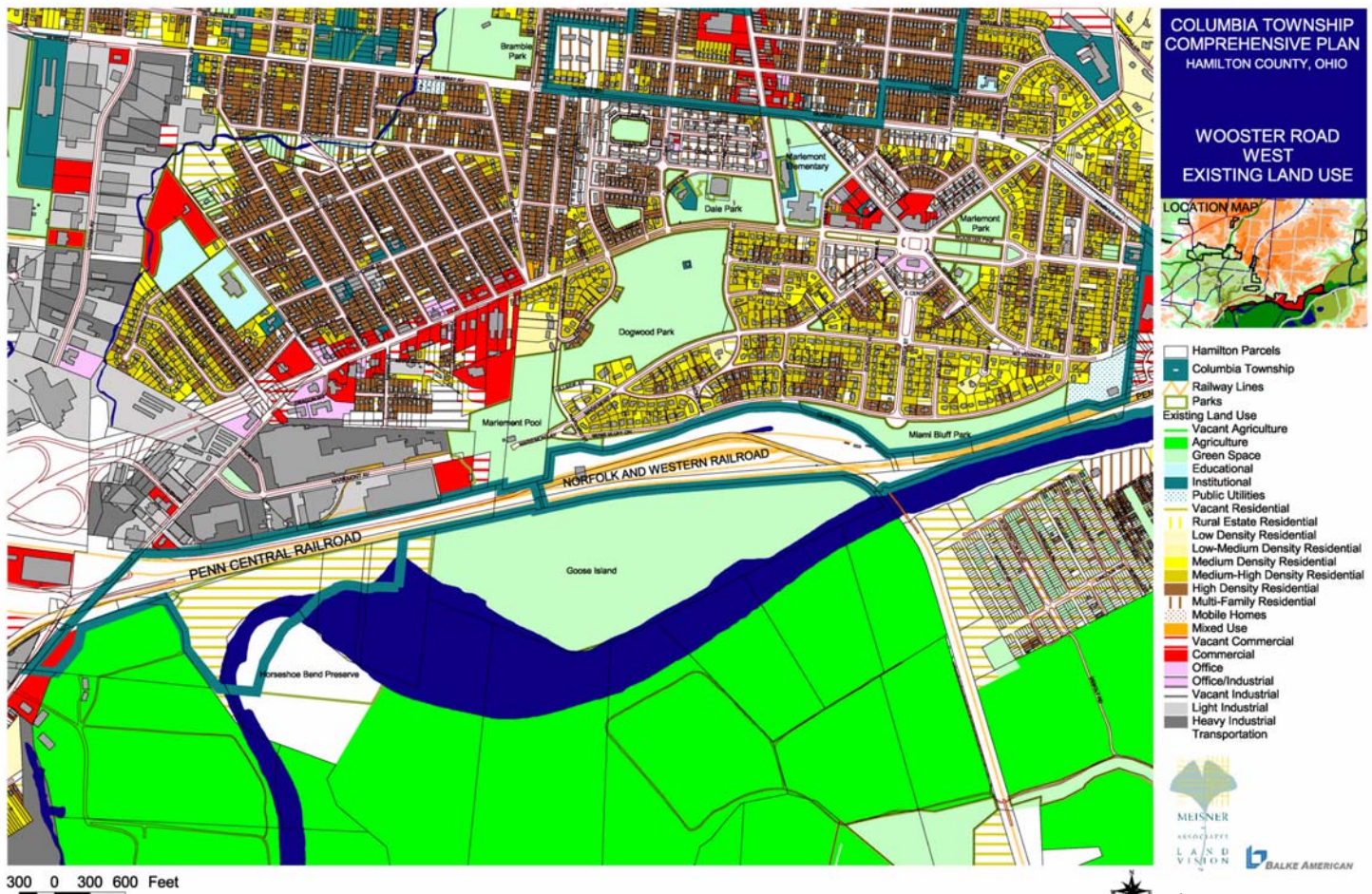
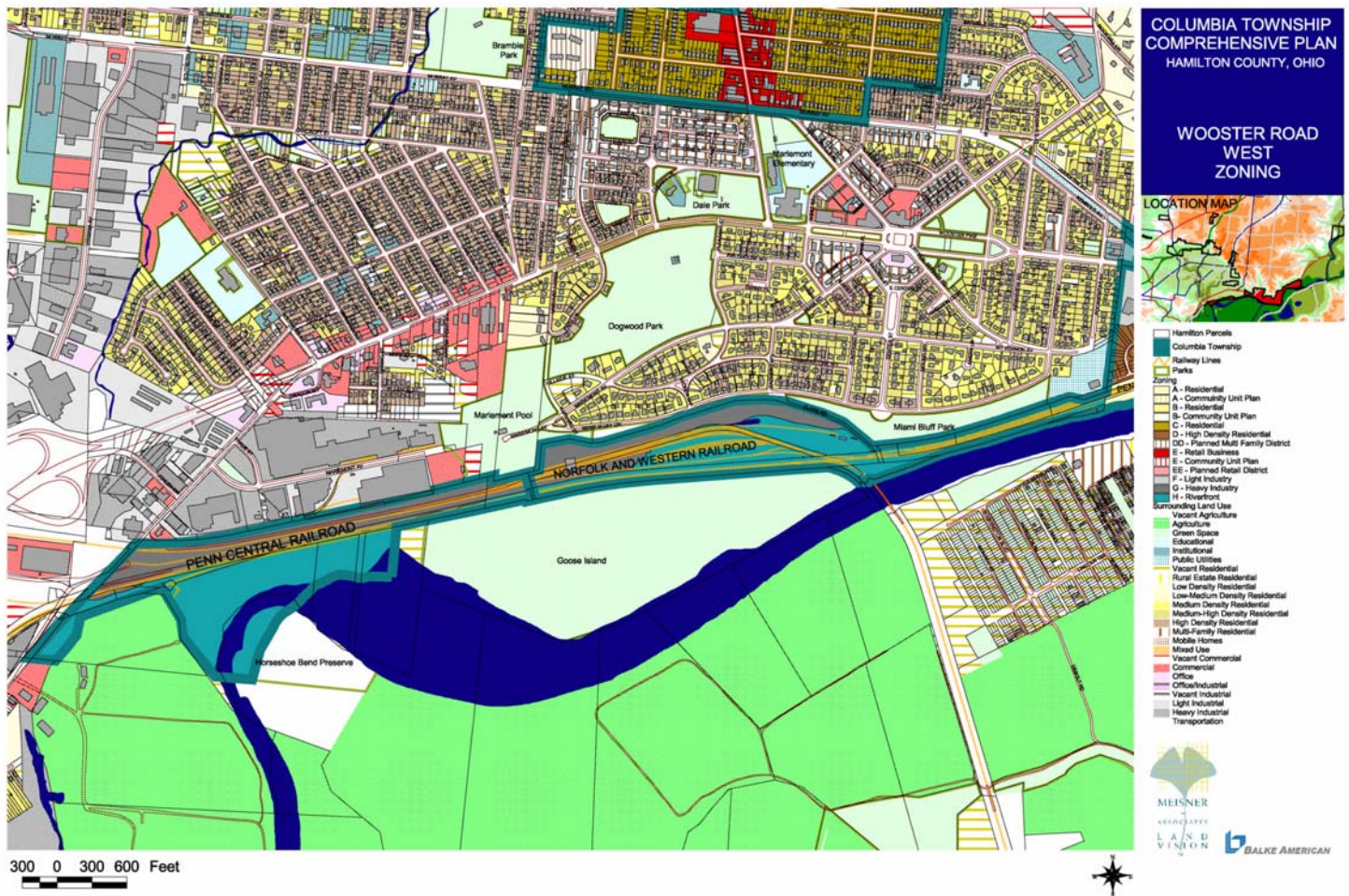


Figure 10.9

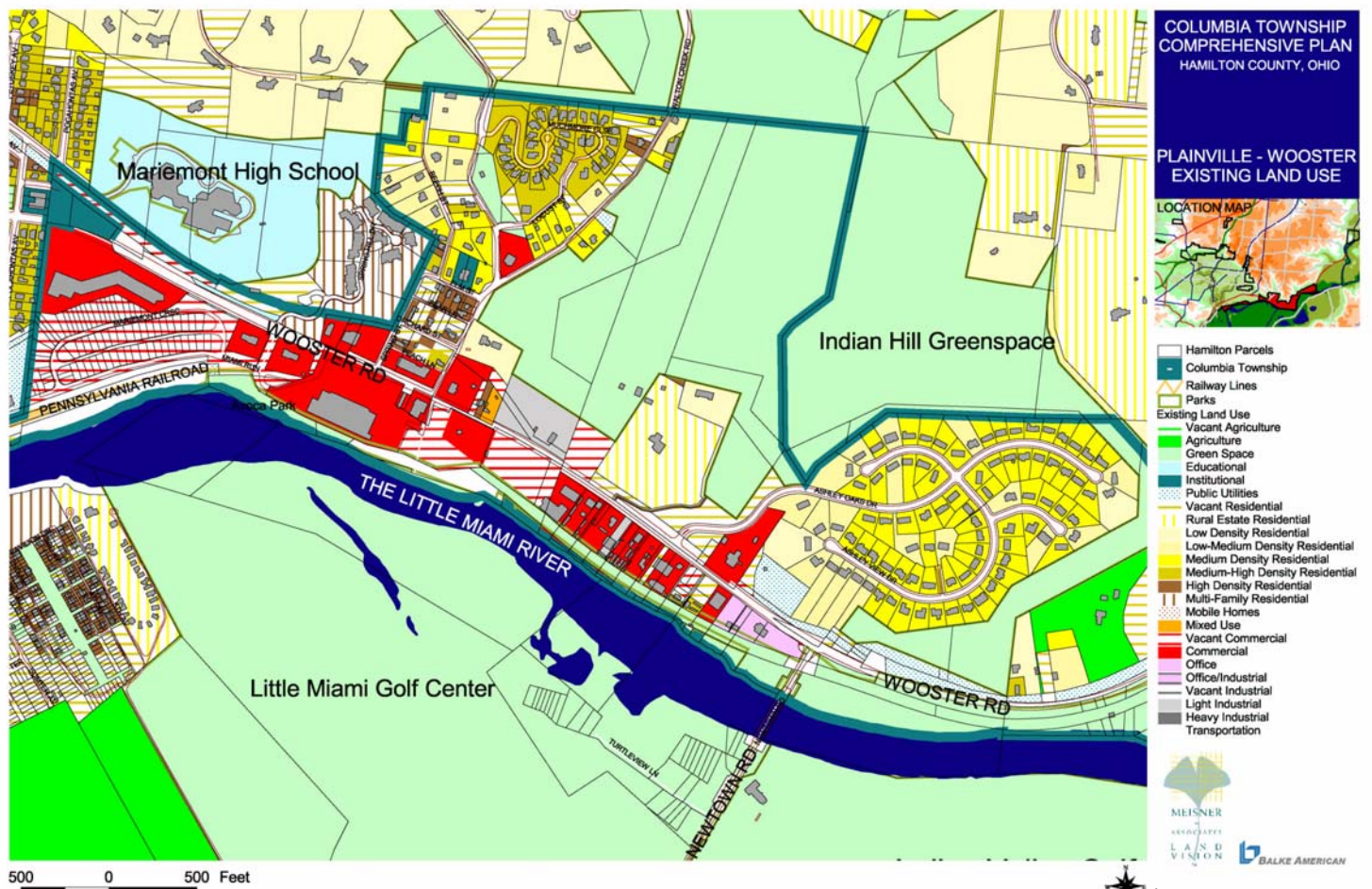
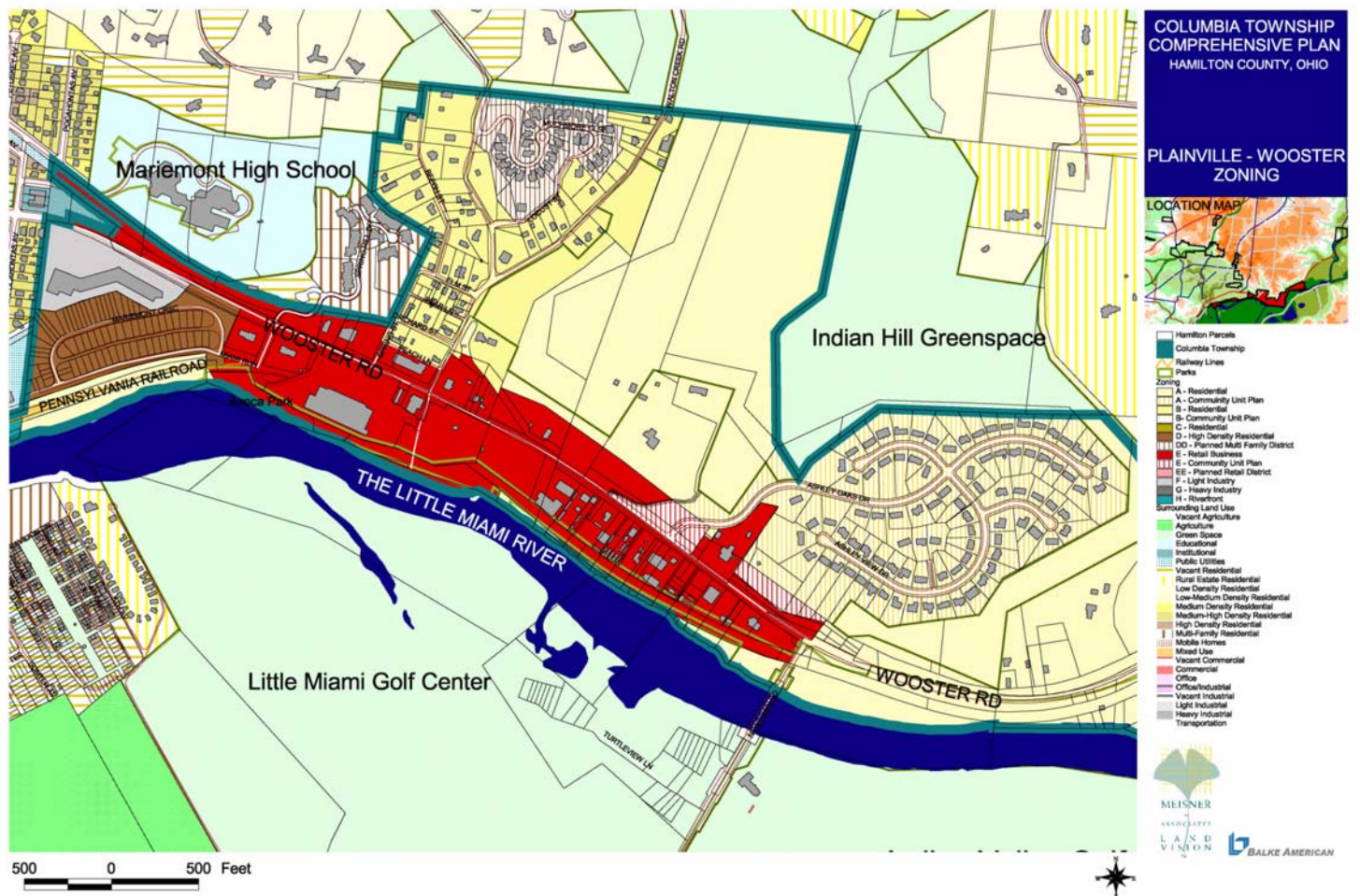


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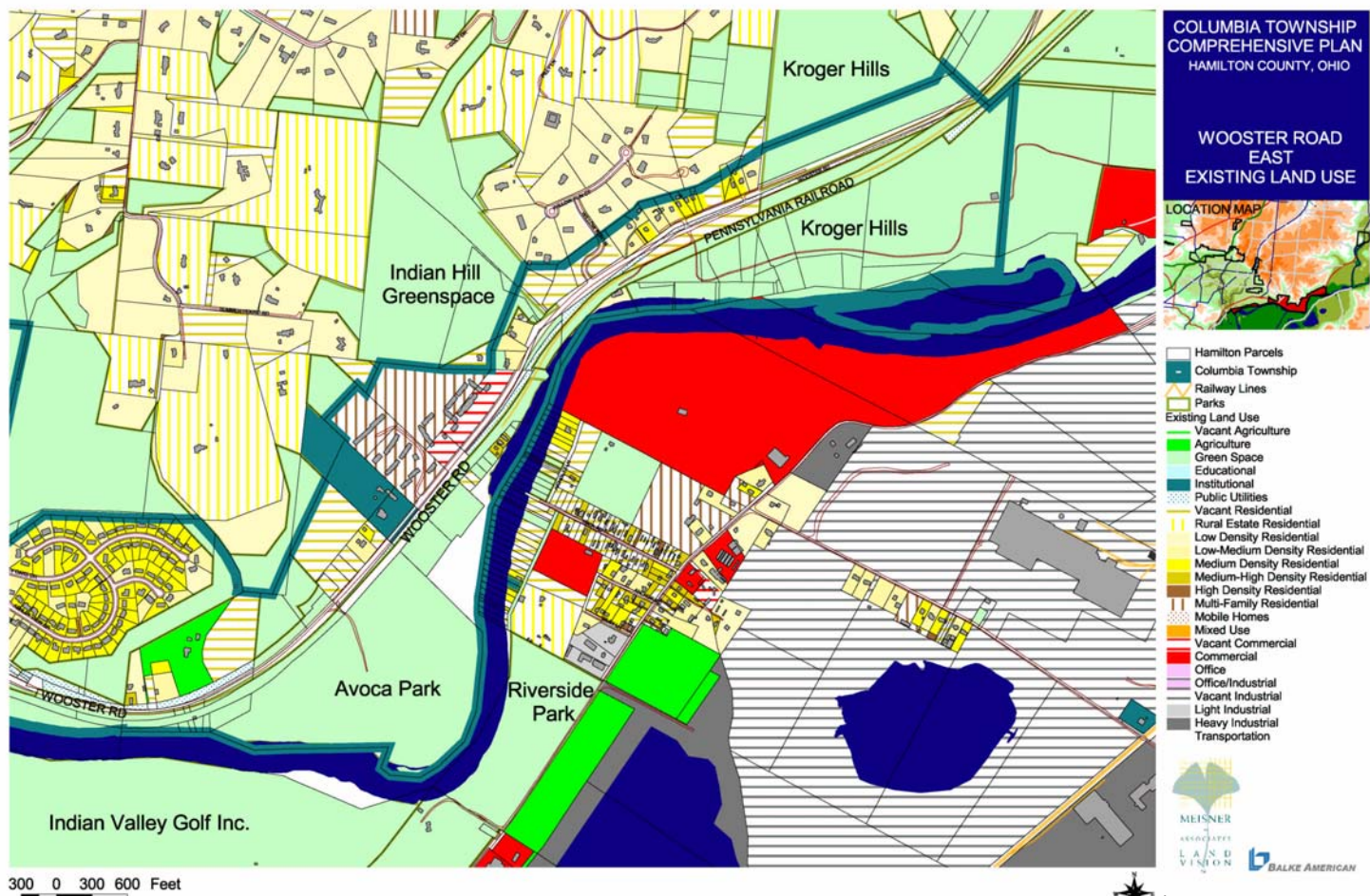
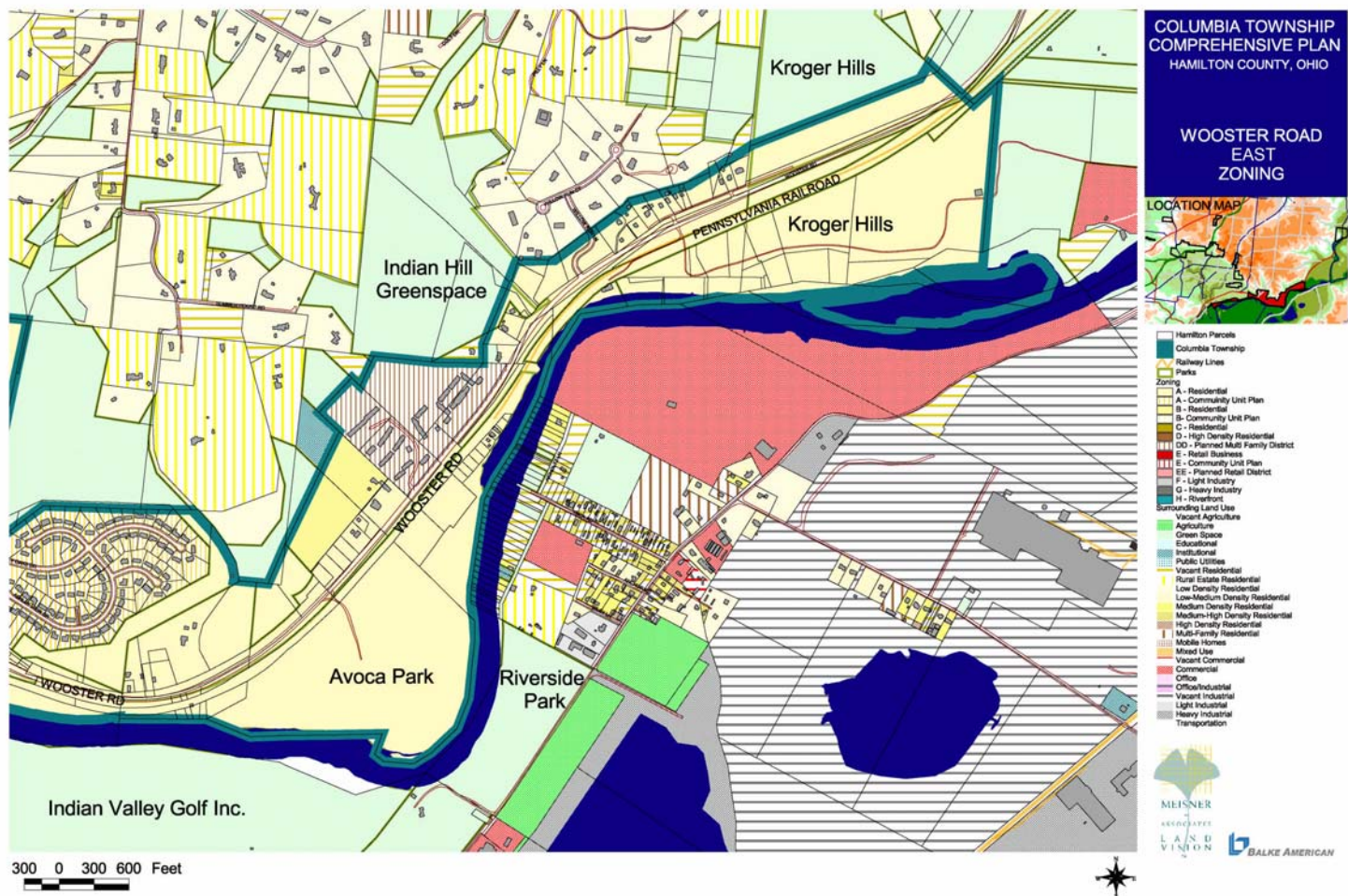
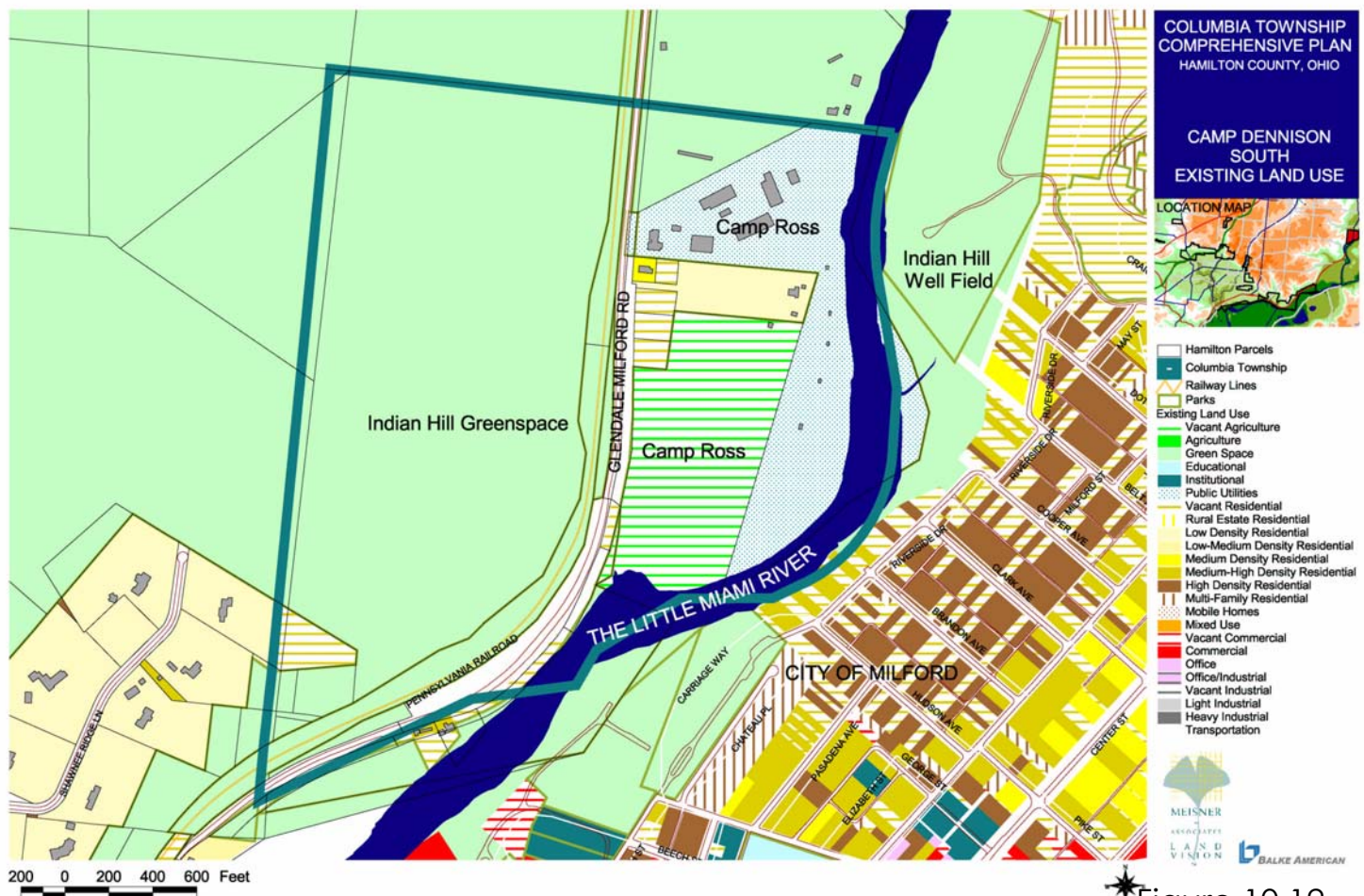
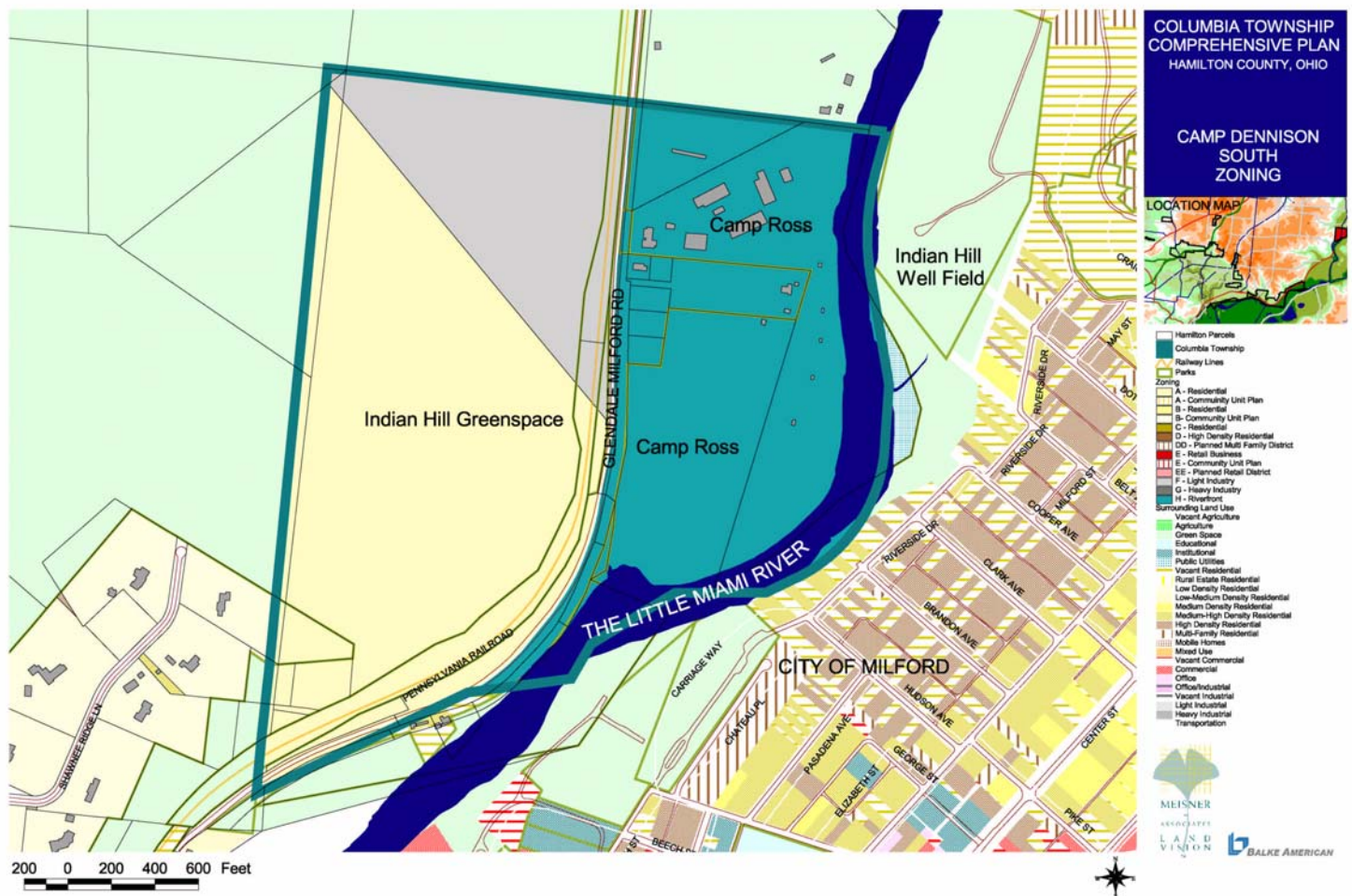


Figure 10.11



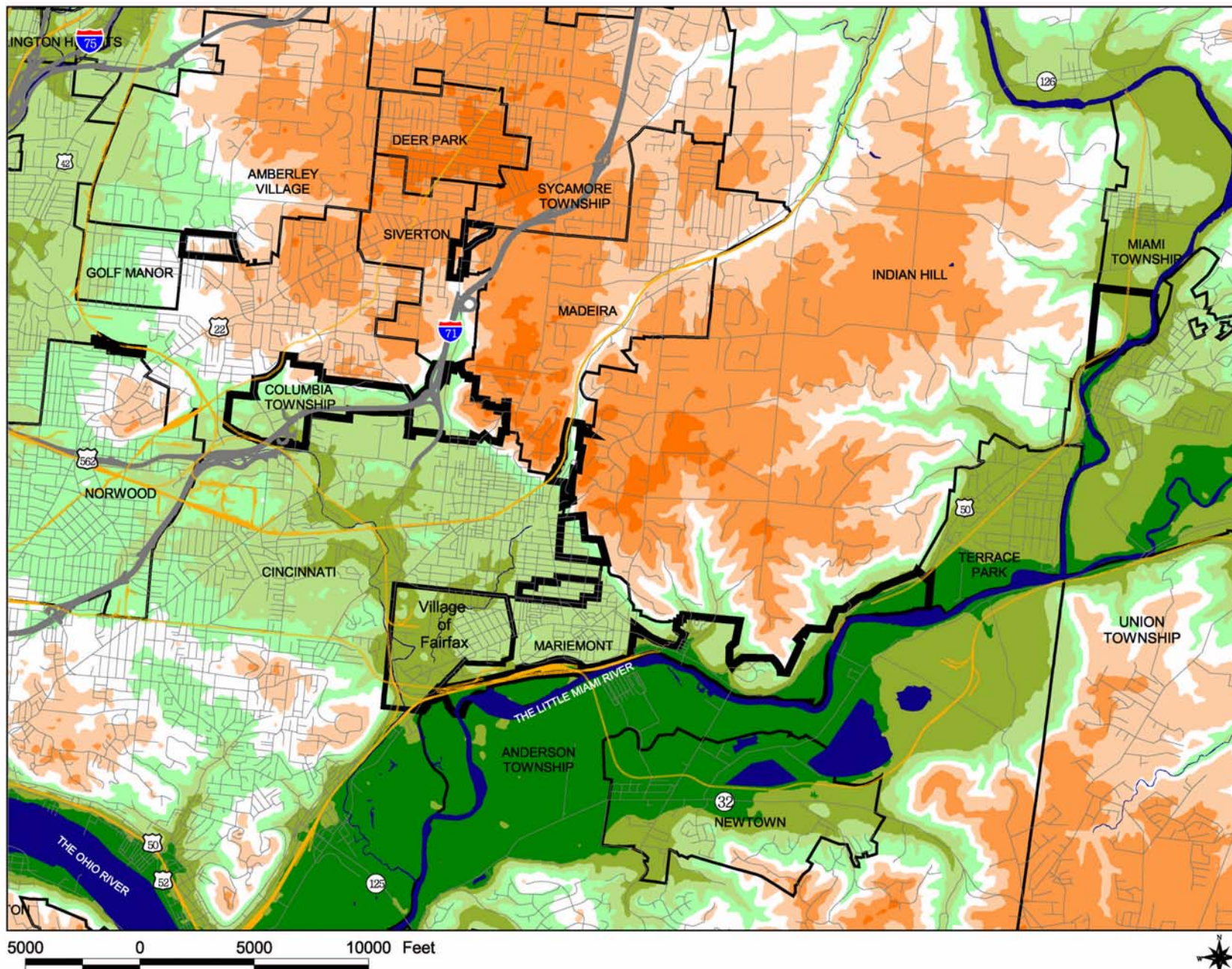
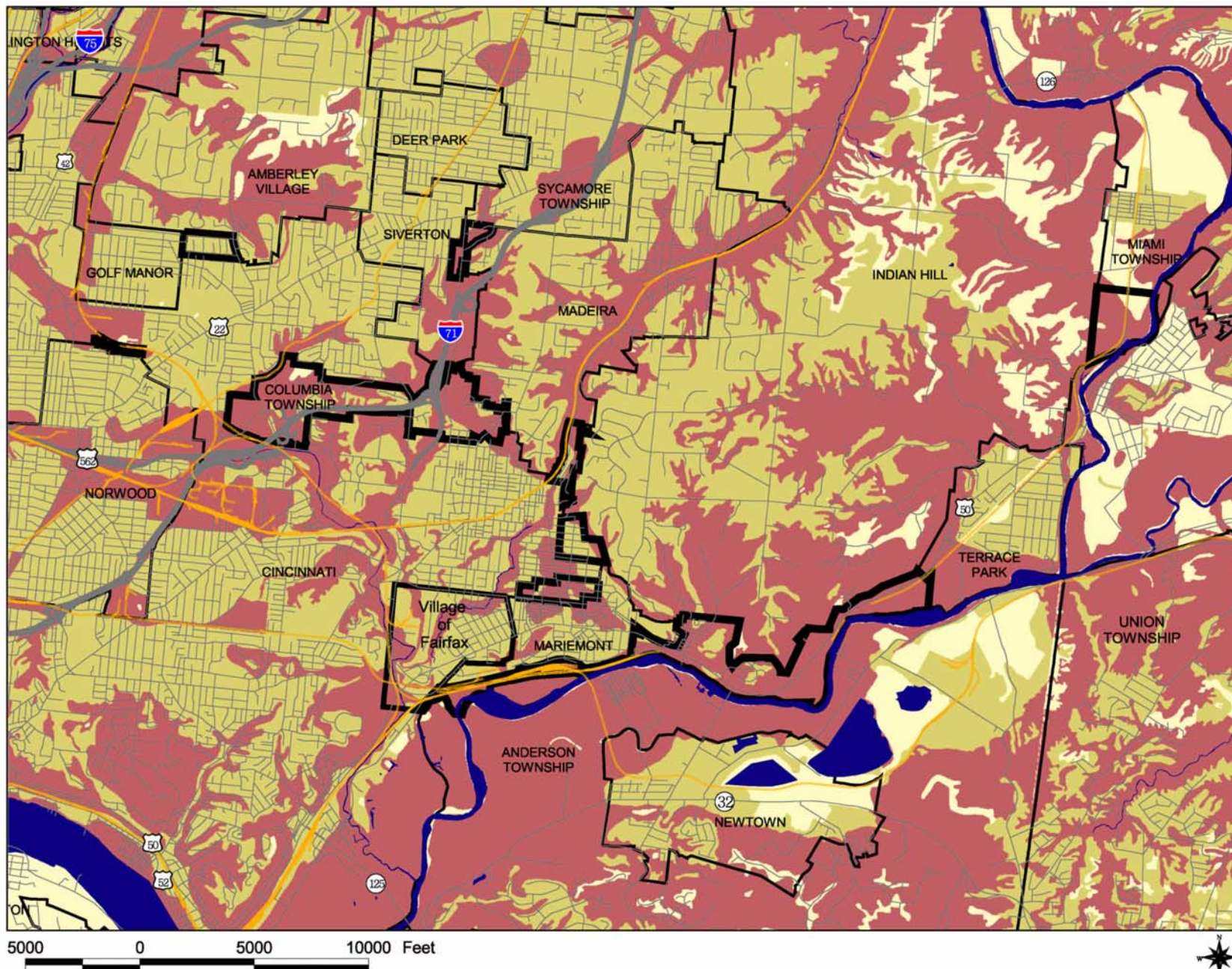


Figure 11.



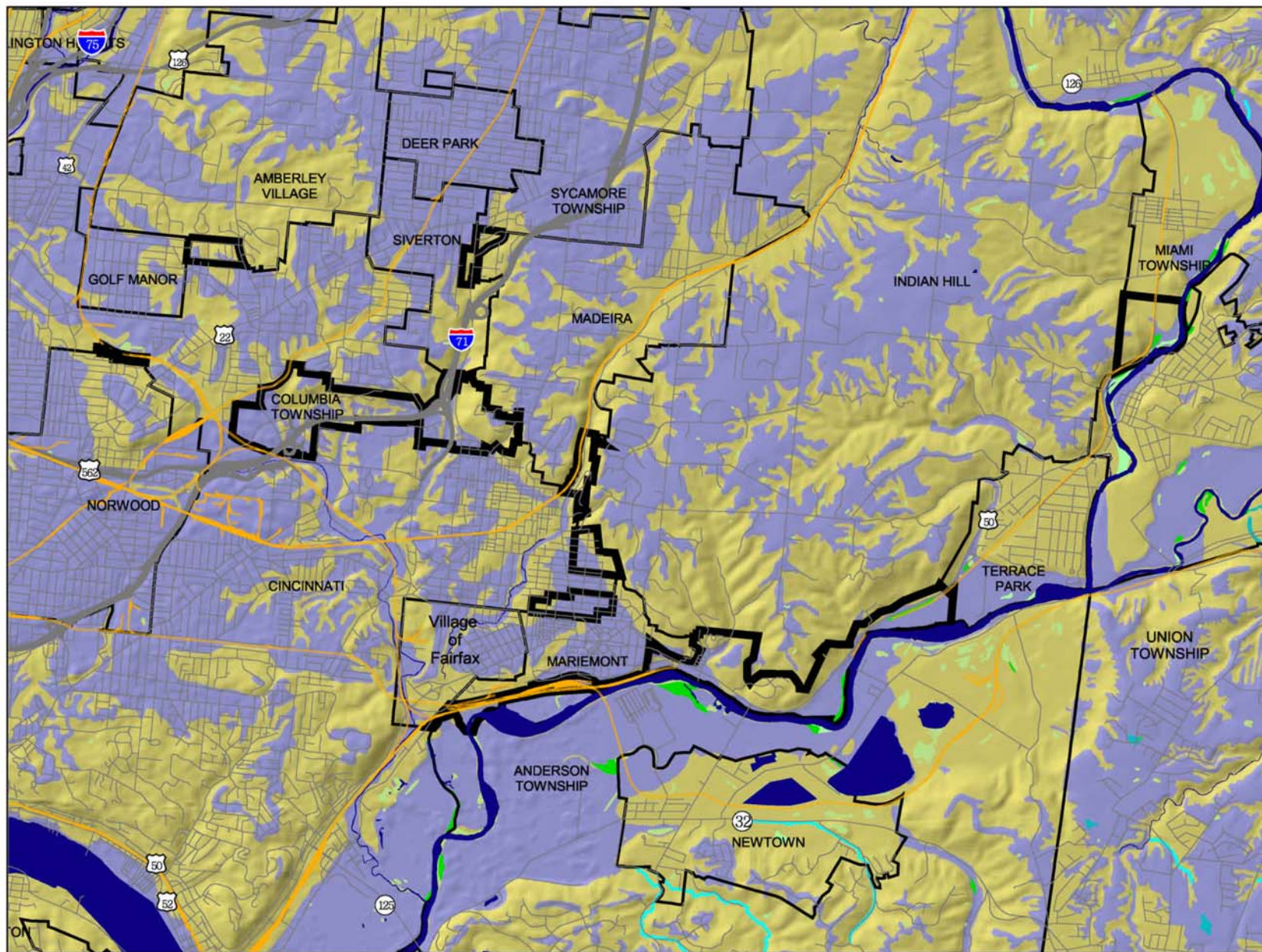
COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
HAMILTON COUNTY, OHIO

COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP
SOIL ANALYSIS

- Railway Lines
- Primary Roads
- Columbia Township
- The Ohio River
- Soil Limitations**
 - Slight Limitations
 - Moderate Limitations
 - Severe Limitations



Figure 12.



**COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
HAMILTON COUNTY, OHIO**

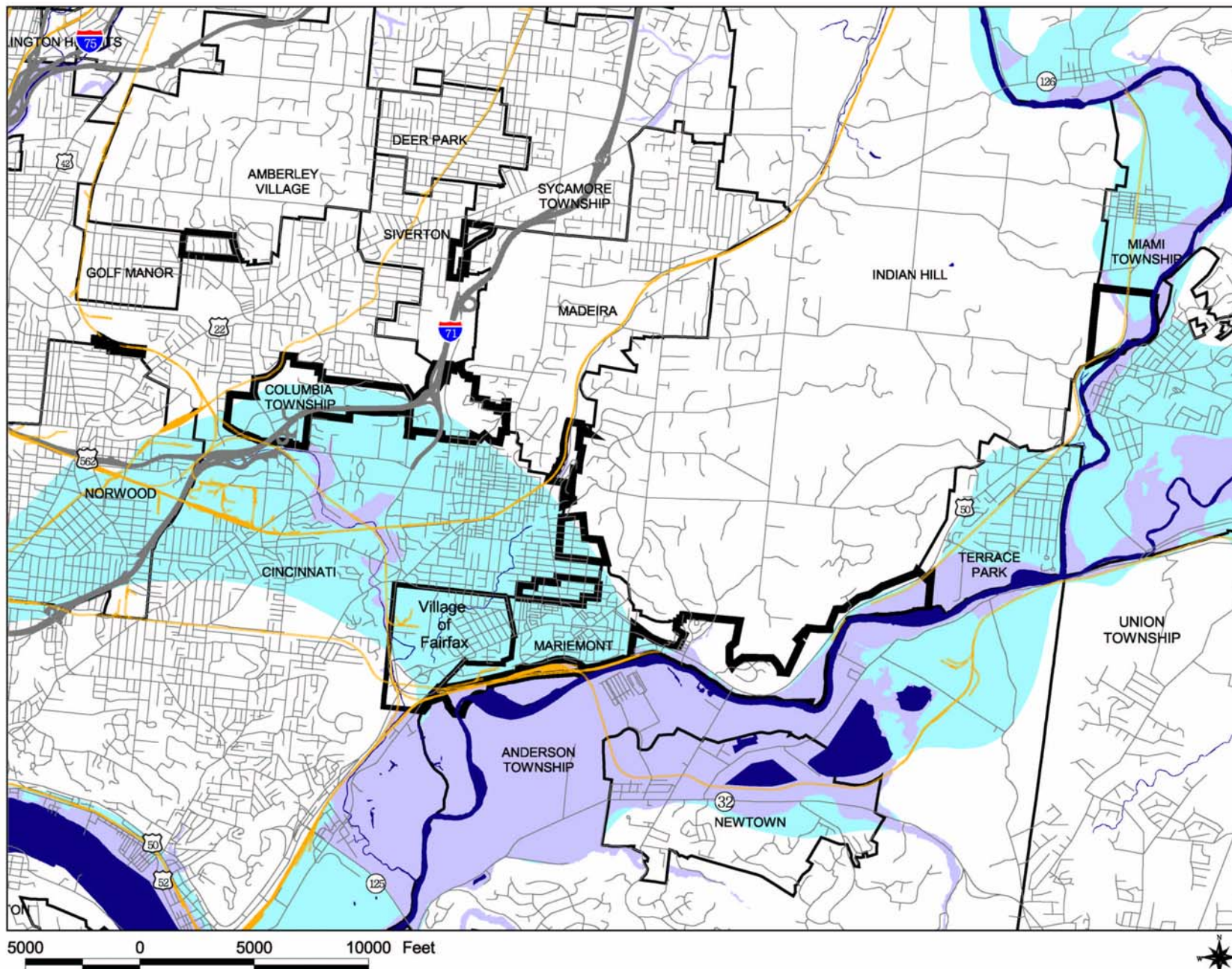
**COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP
HYDRIC SOILS
& WETLAND AREAS**

- Railway Lines
- Primary Roads
- Columbia Township
- The Ohio River
- Wetlands**
 - SCRUB-SHRUB
 - FORESTED
 - EMERGENT
- Hydric Soils**
 - Non-Hydric Soils
 - Hydric Inclusions
 - Hydric Soils



5000 0 5000 10000 Feet

Figure 13.



**COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
HAMILTON COUNTY, OHIO**

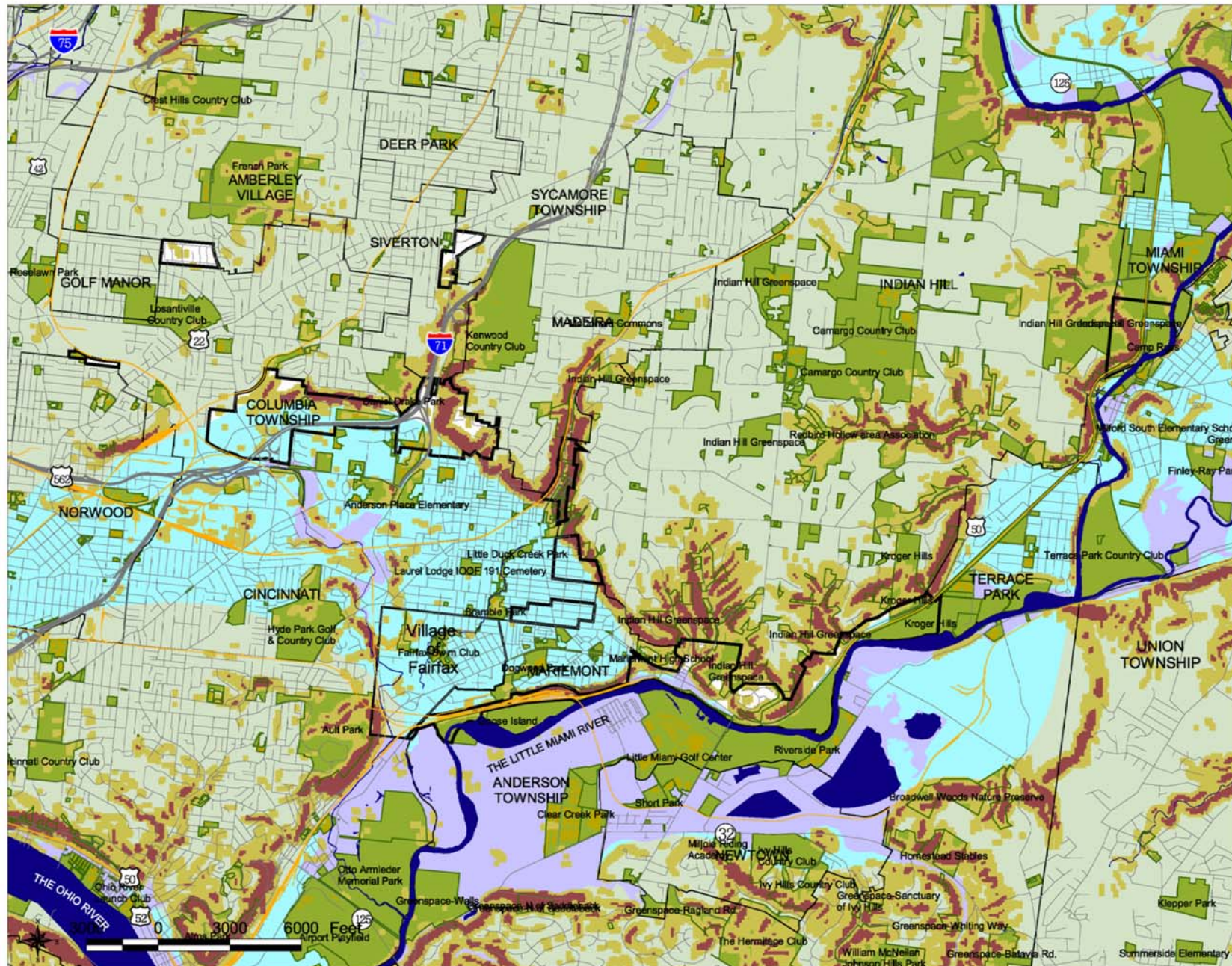
**COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP
FLOODPLAIN & AQUIFER**

- Railway Lines
- Primary Roads
- Columbia Township
- The Ohio River
- Flood Zone
- 100 Year Floodplain
- Great Miami Sole Source Aquifer



Figure 14.

COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



PARKS,
STEEP SLOPES,
FLOODPLAIN &
AQUIFER

LOCATION MAP



MAP DATA SOURCE: GMR
DRAWING LAND AND WATER CORRIDOR FIGURE WORK

- Railway Lines
- Primary Roads
- Columbia Township
- The Ohio River
- Parks
- Topographical Slope 0-10 Percent
- Topographical Slope 10-15 Percent
- Topographical Slope 15-40 Percent
- Park Facilities
- Parks
- Flood Zone 100 Year Floodplain
- Great Miami Sole Source Aquifer

PLANNING
URBAN DESIGN
LAND PLANNING
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

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ASSOCIATES
LAND
VISION

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Cincinnati, Ohio 45208
(513) 821-2796
Fax (513) 821-8605

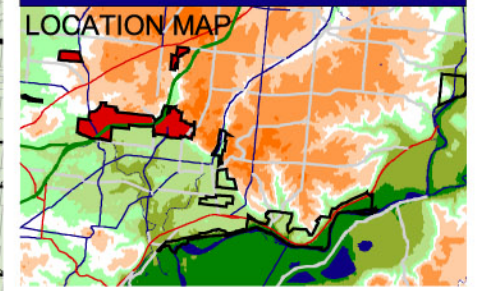
BALKE AMERICAN

Figure 15.

COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
HAMILTON COUNTY, OHIO

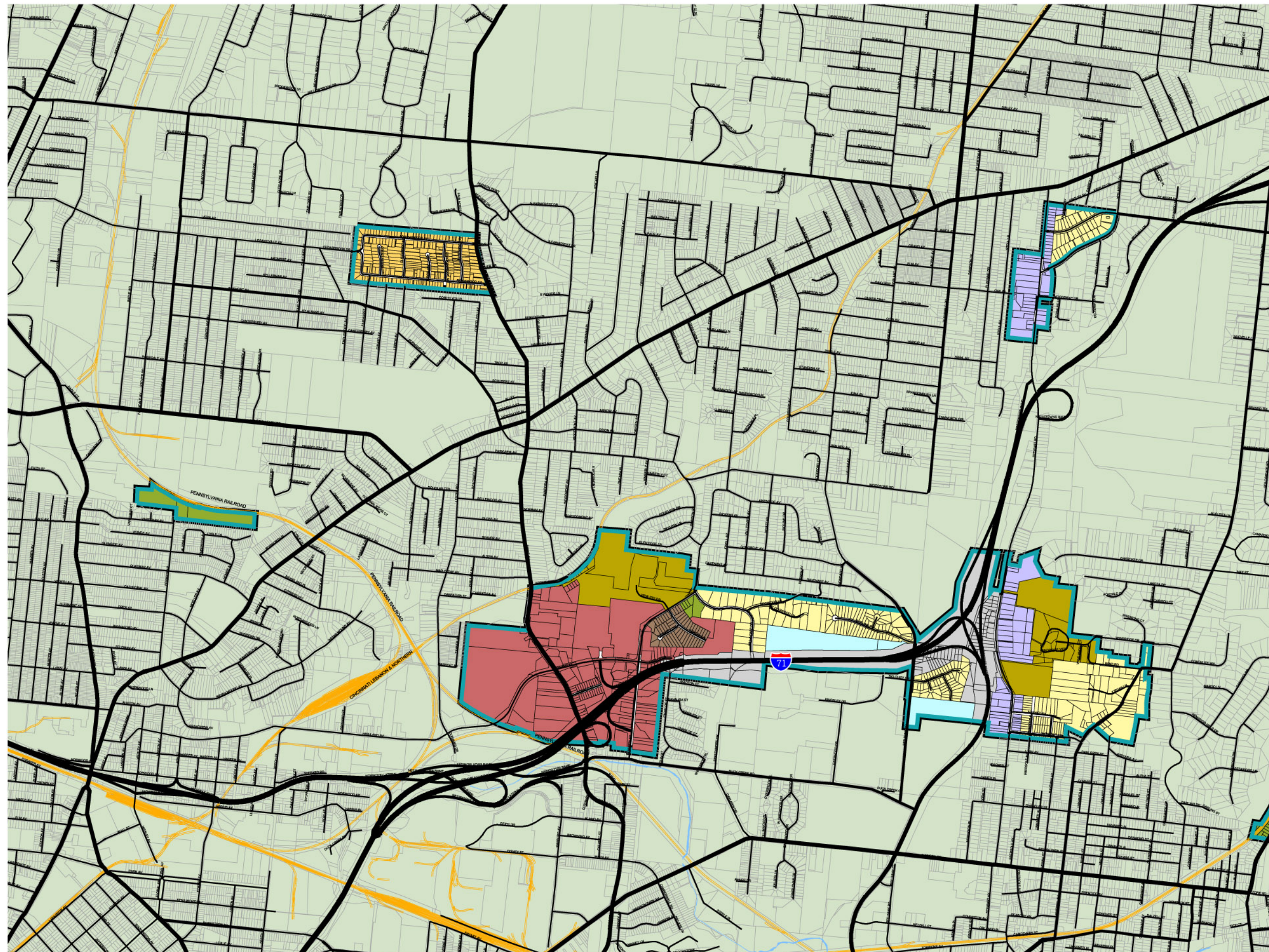
WESTERN
FOCUS AREA

FUTURE LAND USE



MAY 2005

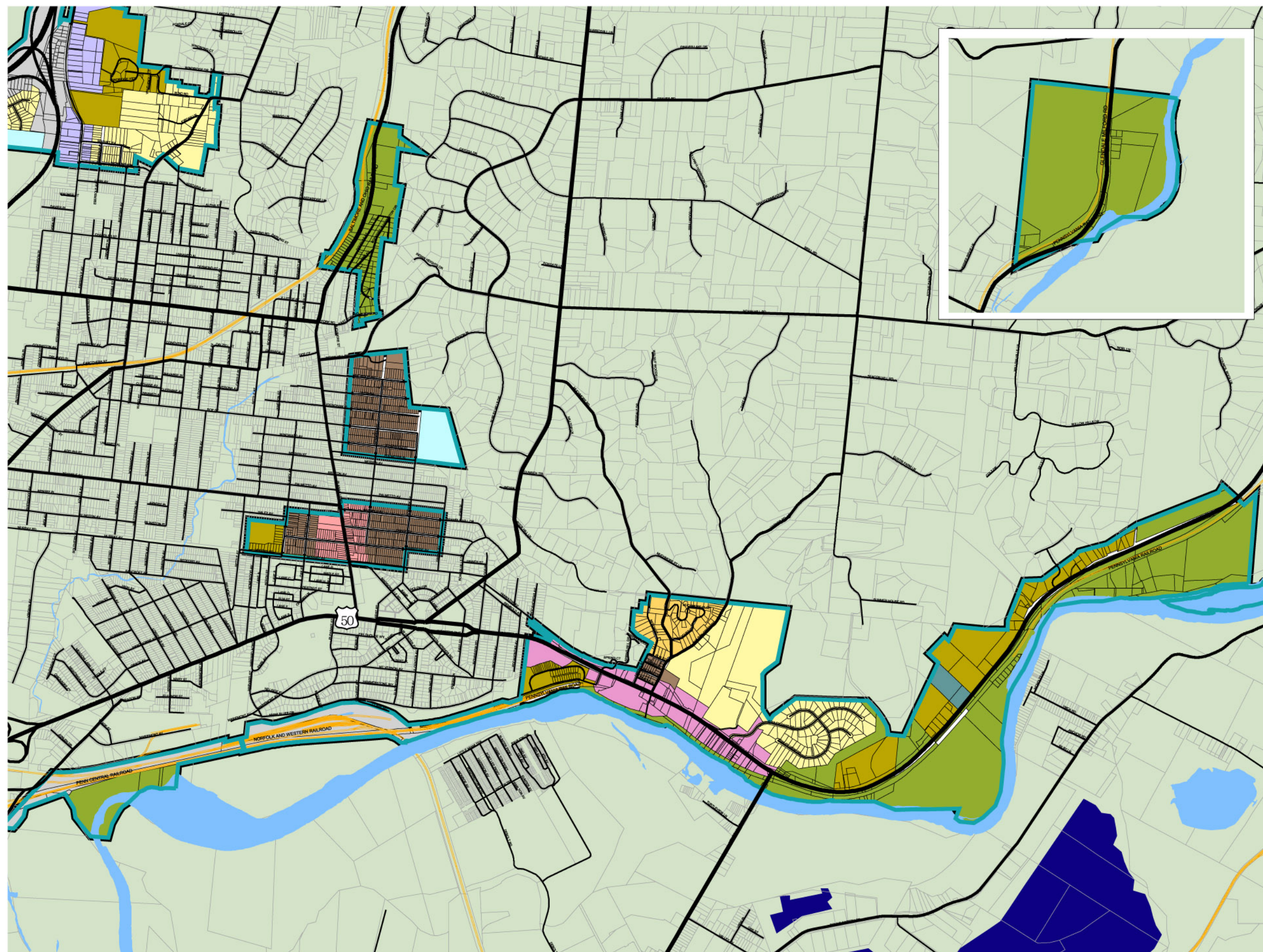
- Future Land Use
- Greenspace / Stormwater Management
 - Educational
 - Institutional
 - Public Utility
 - Medium Density Residential
 - Medium-High Density Residential
 - High Density Residential
 - Multi-Family Residential
 - Mixed-Use Residential & Office
 - Mixed-Use Neighborhood Commercial Center
 - Mixed-Use Commercial Corridor
 - Mixed-Use Regional Commercial Center
 - Columbia Township



1000 0 1000 2000 3000 Feet



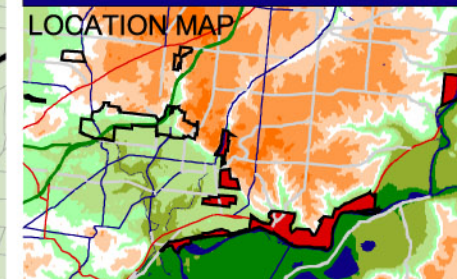
Figure 16.1



COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
HAMILTON COUNTY, OHIO

EASTERN FOCUS AREA

FUTURE LAND USE



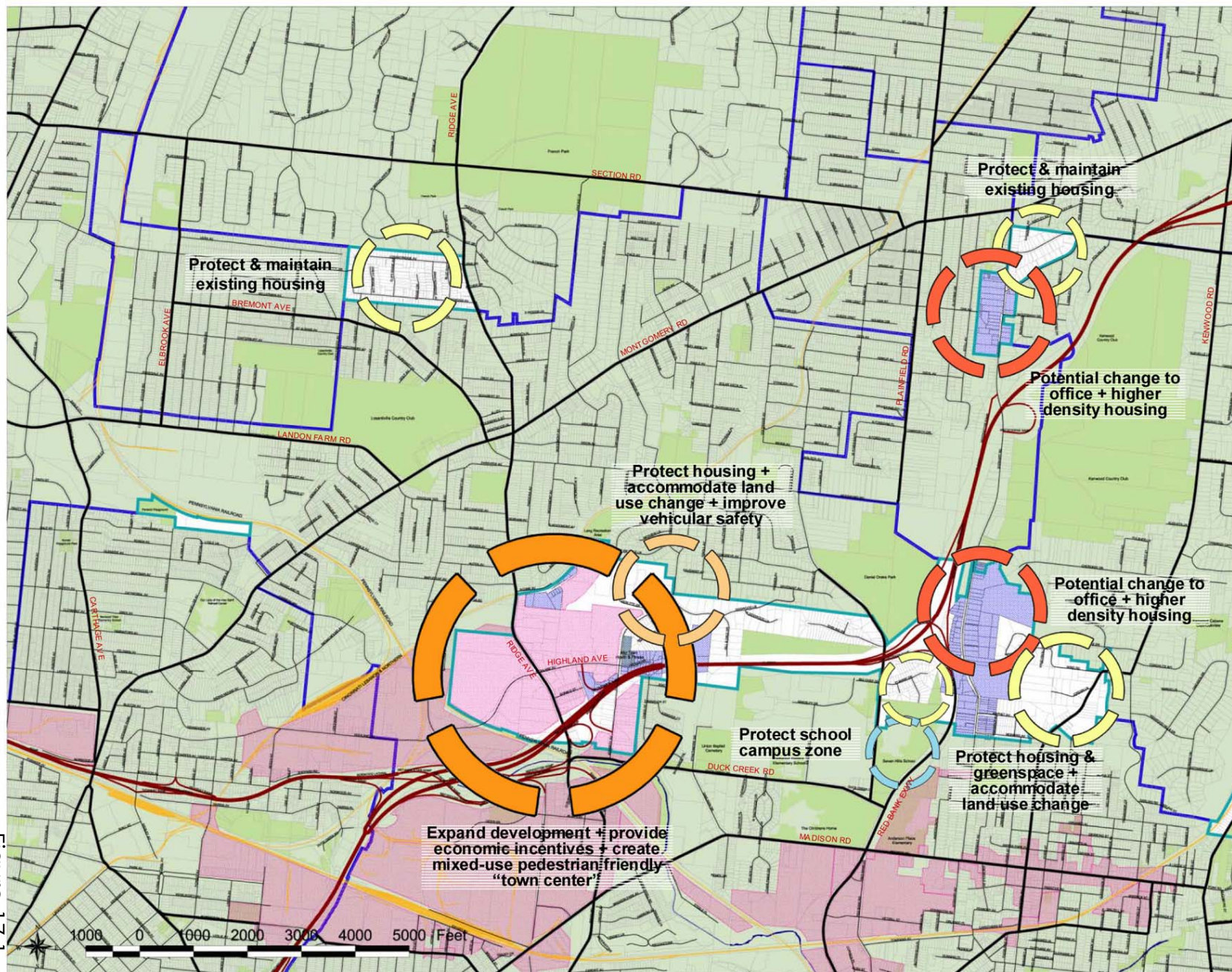
MAY 2005

- Future Land Use
- Greenspace / Stormwater Management
 - Educational
 - Institutional
 - Public Utility
 - Medium Density Residential
 - Medium-High Density Residential
 - High Density Residential
 - Multi-Family Residential
 - Mixed-Use Residential & Office
 - Mixed-Use Neighborhood Commercial Center
 - Mixed-Use Commercial Corridor
 - Mixed-Use Regional Commercial Center
 - Columbia Township



Figure 16.2

COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



WESTERN FOCUS AREA

ZONES OF
POTENTIAL CHANGE



LAND USE ZONES OF CHANGE DESIGNATION

- TOWN CENTER ZONE
- MIXED-USE COMMERCIAL ZONE
- COMMERCIAL / RESIDENTIAL TRANSITION ZONE
- RESIDENTIAL ZONE
- SCHOOL CAMPUS ZONE

GIS DATA SOURCE: CINCINNATI AREA GIS
ZONES OF CHANGE SOURCE: THE EASTERN CORRIDOR PROJECT

- Columbia Township
- Railway Lines
- Columbia Township Zones of Change
- ZONES OF CHANGE - ECLUPP
- Hamilton Parcels
- Parks

PLANNING
URBAN DESIGN
LAND PLANNING
LANDSCAPE
ARCHITECTURE

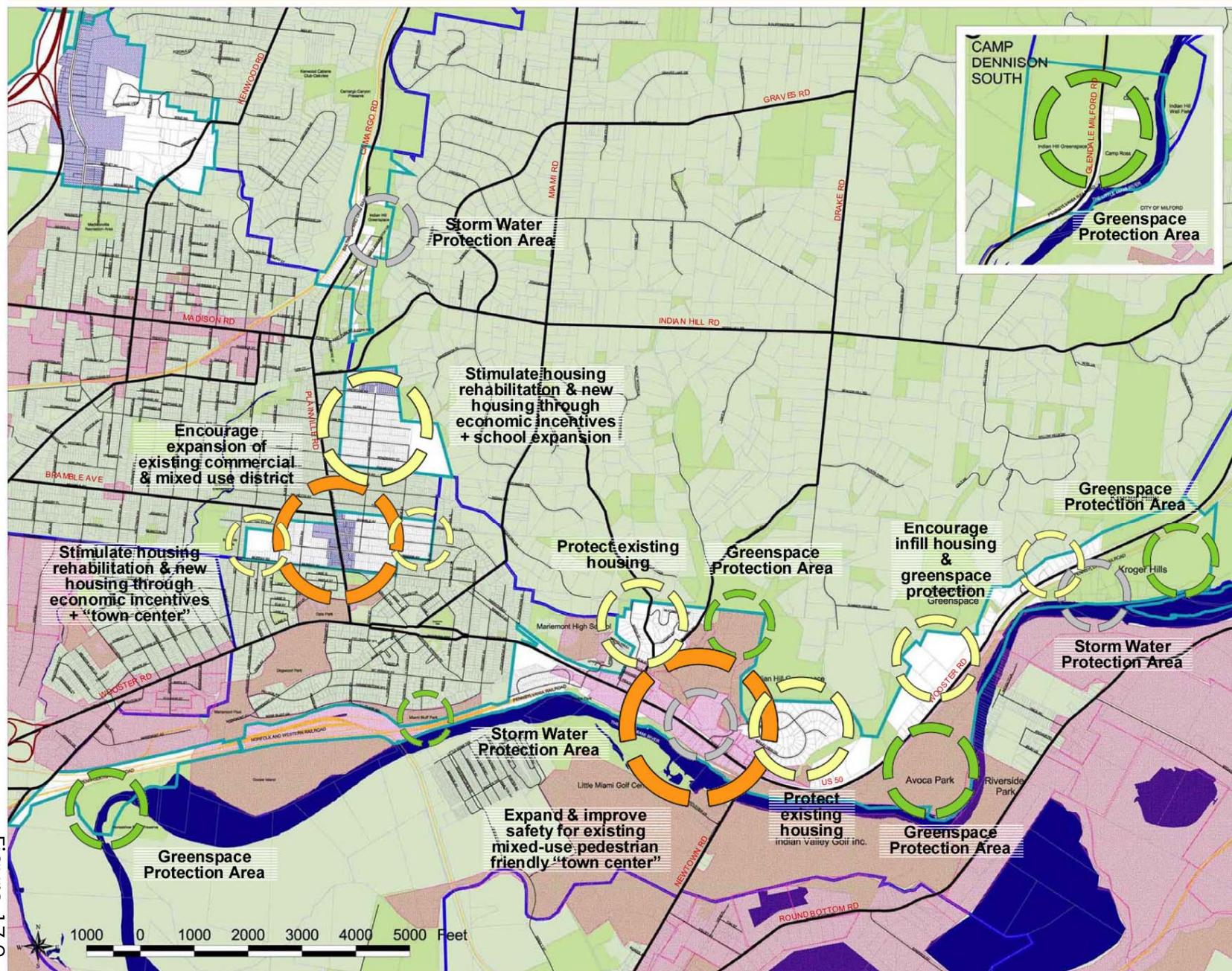
MEISNER
ASSOCIATES
LAND
VISION

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Cincinnati
Ohio 45208
(513) 321-2796
Fax (513) 321-3605

BALKE AMERICAN

Figure 17.1

COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



EASTERN FOCUS AREA

ZONES OF POTENTIAL CHANGE



LAND USE ZONES OF CHANGE DESIGNATION

- TOWN CENTER ZONE
- RESIDENTIAL ZONE
- STORM WATER PROTECTION ZONE
- GREENSPACE PROTECTION AREA

GIS DATA SOURCE: CINCINNATI AREA GIS
ZONES OF CHANGE SOURCE: THE EASTERN CORRIDOR PROJECT

Columbia Township
 Railway Lines
 Columbia Township Zones of Change
 ZONES OF CHANGE - ECLUPV
 Hamilton Parcels
 Parks

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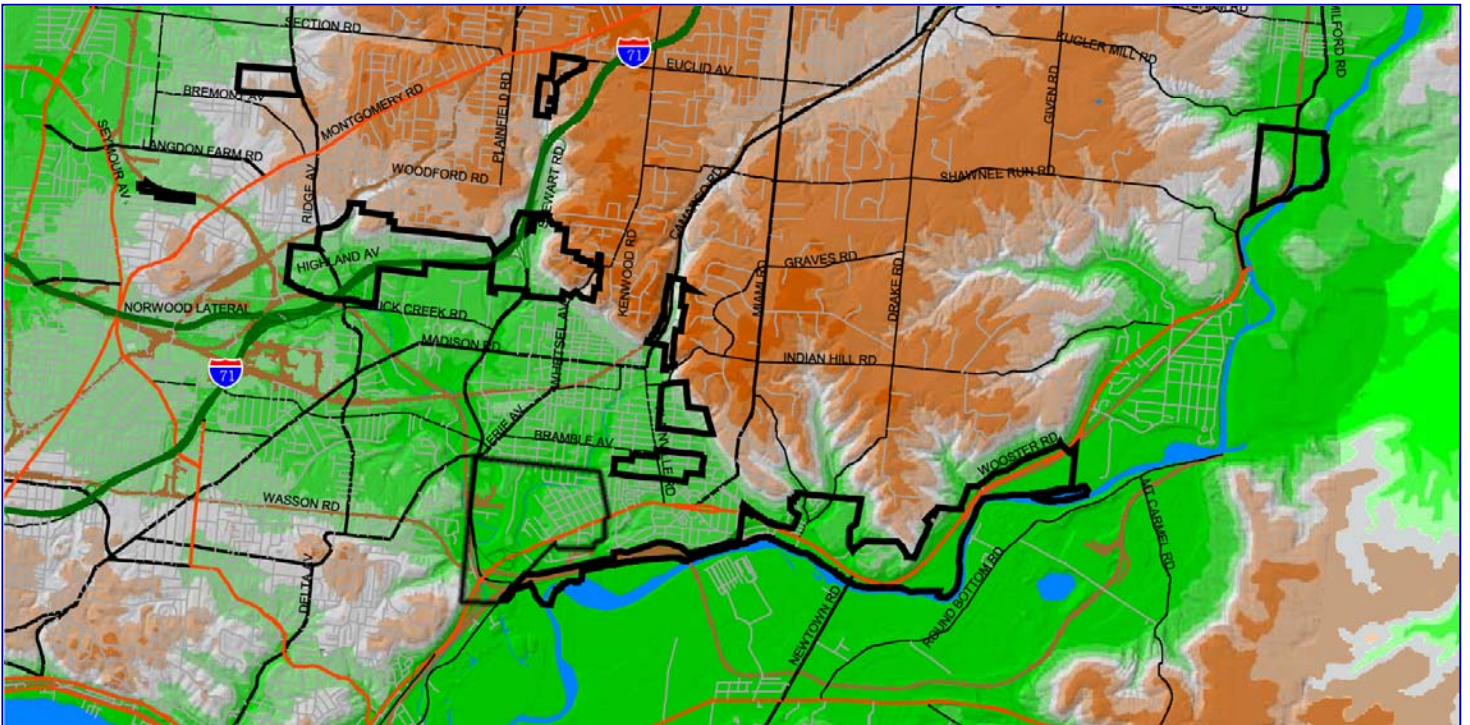
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Figure 17.2

COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP

HAMILTON COUNTY, OHIO

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2005



COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP

Susan Hughes, President
Jane Pirman, Vice-President
Stephen Langencamp, Trustee
George Leet, Clerk
Michael Lemon, Administrator



Meisner + Associates / Land Vision
Balke American
Hamilton County Development Company