

Columbia Township COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Adopted by the Township Trustees

June 14, 2011

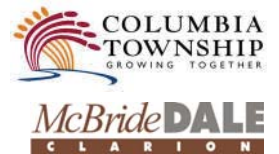


TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Table of Contents.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Introduction.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Existing Conditions.....</i>	<i>4</i>
Demographic Data.....	4
Environmental Inventory and Analysis	5
Community Facilities	5
Infrastructure, Utilities, and Transportation	6
Existing Land Use	7
<i>Goals and Strategies.....</i>	<i>11</i>
Assessment of Existing Goals.....	11
Goals, Strategies, and Implementation Tactics.....	11
Economic Development.....	12
Commercial Business Districts.....	13
Transportation and Mobility.....	15
Infrastructure and Public Facilities.....	16
Image and Identity	17
Neighborhood Preservation	18
Park, Recreation, and Natural Resources	19
<i>Future Land Use.....</i>	<i>20</i>
Future Land Use Categories	20
Focus Areas	23
<i>Implementation</i>	<i>42</i>
Plan Monitoring.....	42
Update Zoning Regulations.....	43
Coordination Efforts	44
Economic Development Tools.....	45
<i>Conclusion</i>	<i>49</i>

INTRODUCTION



Ridgewood Neighborhood

Columbia Township is one of twelve townships in Hamilton County. At one time Columbia Township was one of the largest townships in the region in terms of land area. Due to annexations and incorporations, it has been reduced to nine “islands” of unincorporated land surrounded by municipalities. Columbia Township now encompasses approximately 2.5 square miles, making it one of the smallest townships by land area. The current boundaries of Columbia Township are illustrated on Map 1. These nine islands are surrounded by the following cities: Cincinnati, Norwood, Golf Manor, Amberley Village, Silverton, Madeira, Mariemont, Fairfax, Indian Hill, Terrace Park, and Milford. Sycamore Township, Anderson Township, and Symmes Township also border Columbia Township.

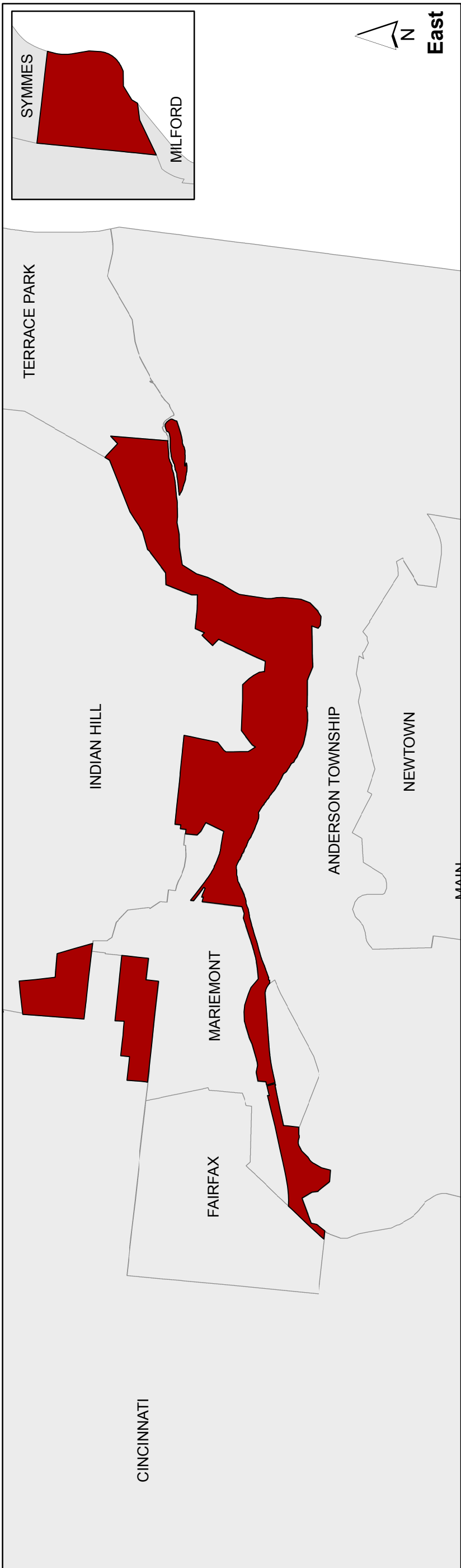
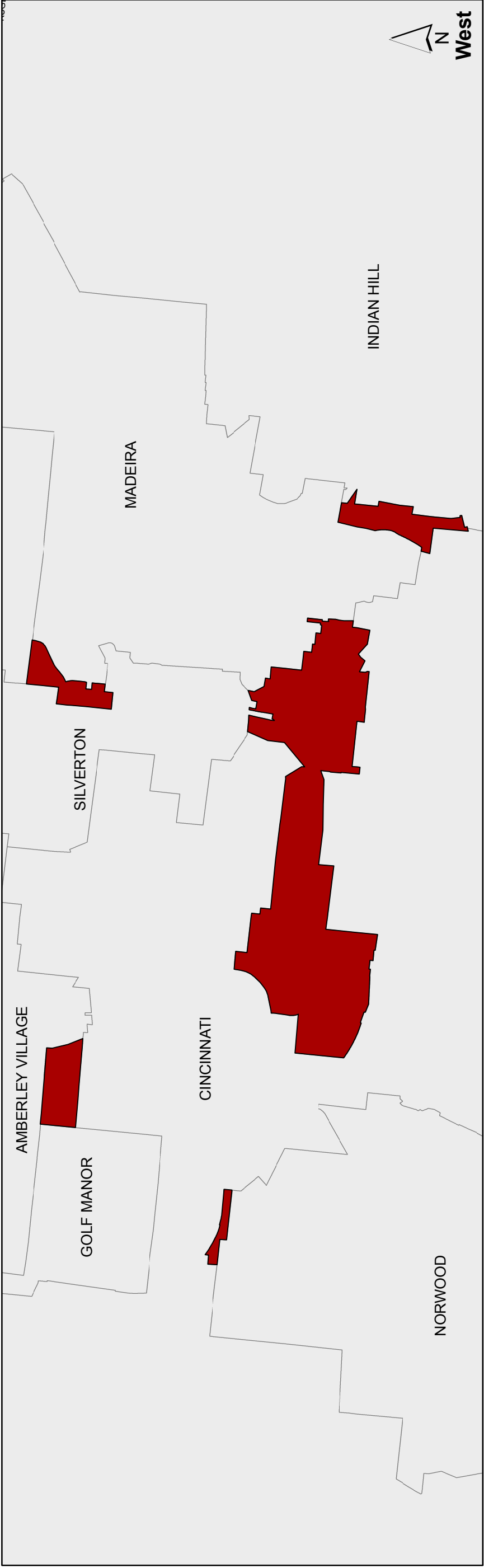
The township adopted a comprehensive plan in 2005. The 2005 plan has served the township well over the past six years. Significant changes have occurred since the adoption of the 2005 plan. The township experienced new development in the business areas, new streetscaping was installed in several key corridors of the township, and existing neighborhoods have generally been maintained and have experienced slow rates of change. Current population data indicates that the township population has declined 2% since 2000.



Plainville Business District

The township has also been impacted by the major downturn in the economy beginning in mid-2007. The township has seen loss of businesses, home foreclosures, and declines in property values, all aspects experienced in varying degree throughout the country. These changes have slowed the pace of development and tightened credit and finance markets. Governments have also experienced a tightening of budgets, and are continually being tasked with doing more with less funding.

This plan is an update to the 2005 Columbia Township Comprehensive Plan. The update of the plan is intended to provide goals and strategies that reflect the township’s priorities in 2011 for the future. The update re-focuses development efforts in the business areas and encourages sustainable development practices for both existing businesses and housing stock. The township has not experienced significant demographic, land use or infrastructure changes since 2005. As such, much of the data from the 2005 plan (i.e. environmental and community facility inventories) remain relevant. This update refreshes the development policies and key strategies to ensure that the township focuses on current needs and opportunities. The plan update references existing maps and data in the 2005 plan where appropriate.



Land use based on Hamilton County Auditor information. Maps prepared by McBride Dale Claron.

McBride DALE
CLARON

Legend

Columbia Township

Hamilton County

0 6,000 Feet

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The 2005 plan is a well-crafted, informational document that has served the township well over the past five years, and provides an extensive evaluation of detailed existing conditions in Columbia Township. The 2005 plan contains a multitude of maps and figures that calculate population trends, housing, occupancy, transportation, traffic count information, utility assessments, and other data. The technical analyses contained in the 2005 plan are incorporated into this update unless otherwise noted.

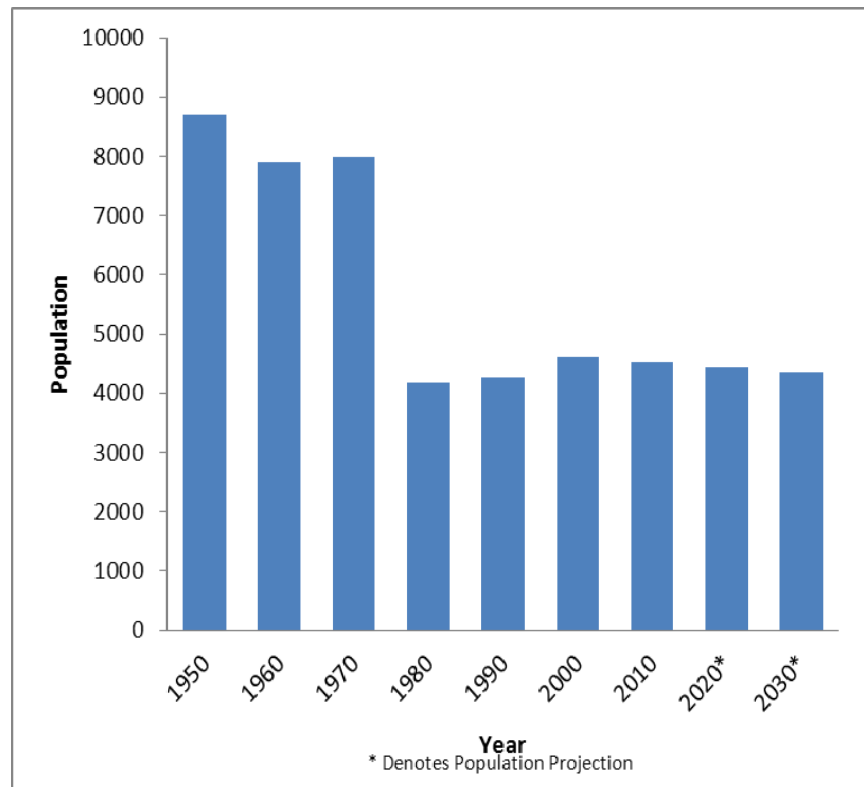
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

The 2005 plan provides a demographic inventory and analysis which addresses current and historical populations, population trends, age, household and housing information, and housing units.

Columbia Township had a population of 8,702 in 1950. Annexation in the next two decades reduced the township's population to 7,908 by 1970. Columbia Township changed significantly from 1970 to 1980 as a result of annexation of large portions of the township into adjacent municipalities. By 1980 the population of Columbia Township decreased 47% to 4,179 residents. Since 1980 the township experienced moderate increases in population as the number of residents grew to 4,269 by 1990 and 4,619 by 2000.

The current population of the township is 4,532 according to the 2010 US Census. The population has decreased 2% since 2000, which is a loss of 85 residents. Significant changes in the township's population are not projected for the long term. It is foreseeable that Columbia Township could continue to see a slow decrease in population resulting from anticipated reductions in average household size and from attrition of aging dwellings removed from the housing stock. It is also foreseeable that the township could experience slow growth in population as a result of the policies of this plan to encourage redevelopment and mixed use projects. The population of Columbia Township is projected to be between 4,300 and 4,800 residents in 2020 and 2030. These estimates are not different from the current population. Figure 1 illustrates the historical population since 1950 including projections to 2030.

Figure 1 – Columbia Township Population 1950 to 2030



The number of housing units has increased from 1,971 units in 2000 to 2,139 units in 2010 or an increase of approximately 9%. Of the 2,139 housing units, 1,966 units are occupied (approximately 92%), while 173 units are vacant (approximately 8%). This is a decrease in occupancy from the year 2000, where approximately 96% of the housing units were occupied.

ENVIRONMENTAL INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

The environmental information related to topography and slope, soils, wetlands and hydric soils, and flood zones and aquifers from the 2005 plan has not changed and is incorporated into this report by reference. The information and data presented in the 2005 environmental inventory and analyses were considered in the preparation of the goals and strategies of the plan update.



Columbia Township building

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

There have not been major changes in the community facility data presented in the 2005 plan related to schools, street services, police, fire, emergency medical service (EMS), and parks and recreation. The

information presented in the 2005 plan on this topic is incorporated into this report by reference, and was considered in the preparation of the goals and strategies of the plan update.

INFRASTRUCTURE, UTILITIES, AND TRANSPORTATION

There have not been major changes in Columbia Township in the condition or network of utility infrastructure data as presented in the 2005 plan, which includes sanitary sewer, water, electric, and natural gas. Based on existing data there is generally enough capacity to service the township from the local utility providers: Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD), Cincinnati Water Works (CWW), and Duke Energy.

Maintenance and replacement of aging infrastructure will be important challenges for the township, and will require coordination with utility service providers and property owners. Aging utility infrastructure can have a detrimental impact on residential and business properties if investments in capital replacement and maintenance are not achieved.

There are areas of the township where utility services are lacking or need improvement. The “Old Plainville” portion of the Wooster Pike Corridor - the properties north of Wooster Pike surrounded by Orchard Street, Elm Street, Spring Street, and Walton Creek Road - do not have sanitary sewer or natural gas service. Commercial or office redevelopment in this area will require upgrades and adequate connections to these utilities.

A detailed transportation infrastructure inventory is included in the 2005 plan. The roadway network in Columbia Township is maintained by three different agencies. Interstates and state routes are controlled by the Ohio Department of Transportation. The Hamilton County Engineer maintains major arterial roads in the township – such as Ridge and Highland Avenues. The township is responsible for the maintenance of township roads, which represent approximately 10.41 miles of streets. The roads in Columbia Township are therefore subject to a variety of transportation agency plans. There have been no significant new transportation planning initiatives since the 2005 plan, and so the thoroughfare classification system contained in the 2005 plan is incorporated into this plan by reference.

Traffic Counts

Several of the main transportation corridors in Columbia Township experience high traffic volumes. High volumes can be both a benefit – businesses are attracted to corridors with high volumes of vehicles – and a detriment – too much traffic results in congestion and reduces quality of life for residents and businesses. The following are average daily traffic counts available for major transportation routes in the township:

- US 50 at the intersection of Walton Creek Road – 23,090 (ODOT 2009)



Traffic along Ridge Avenue

- US 50 at the intersection of Newtown Road – 32,711 (Ham. Co. 2007)
- Plainville Road just north of Cambridge Avenue – 10,268 (Ham. Co. 2009)
- Ridge Avenue at the intersection of Burlington Coats Driveway/Speedway SuperAmerica Driveway – 35,901 (Ham. Co. 2009)
- The intersection of Highland Avenue, Kennedy Avenue, and Lucile Drive – 18,258 (Ham. Co. 2007)
- The intersection of Ridge Avenue at Highland Avenue – 48,136 (Ham. Co. 2007)
- Interstate 71 at Ridge Avenue – 137,290 (ODOT 2009)
- Interstate 71 at Red Bank Road – 155,370 (ODOT 2009)

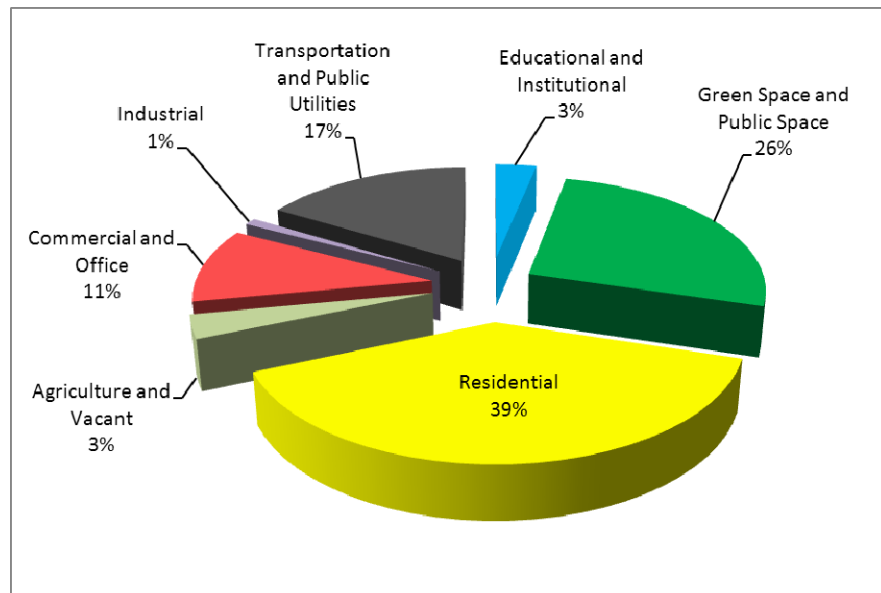
EXISTING LAND USE

A key component of any comprehensive plan should be an understanding of how the community has grown and developed and how the community will continue to grow in the future. Accomplishing this task means evaluating the existing land use conditions and providing a strategy to address any possible problems.

Map 2 illustrates the existing land use of each parcel within Columbia Township. The existing land use map was created using data from the Hamilton County Auditor, Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission, and the previous plan. There are nine land use categories. The map is parcel specific and shows the current use of all properties.

Figure 2 illustrates the existing land use composition of the township.

Figure 2 – Existing Land Use Composition



Examples of residential neighborhoods

The Existing Land Use Map indicates that the township is primarily built out. Due to the lack of vacant land available for development, the township will not see large new greenfield developments. Instead the township needs to plan for infill development, targeting reuse of areas for residential, office, commercial or industrial development. Such reuse activity will boost economic development and the overall tax base of the community. The largest proportion of Columbia Township is currently used for green space and public space. This reflects the fact that large portions of Columbia Township along the Little Miami River are owned by the Hamilton County Park District. In addition, the Village of Indian Hill owns approximately 400 acres that are designated as “greenbelt”.

Approximately 39% of the township is designated for residential use. The township contains a variety of housing types, including a mix of single-family detached neighborhoods of varying ages and densities, high intensity multi-family developments, and medium density condominium-type residences. Some examples of the variety of residential neighborhoods include Ridgewood, the residential areas behind the Plainville Road corridor, the Williams Meadow Subdivision, and newer residential developments in the Mariemont Landing, Muchmore Place, and Indian Hill Place.

Commercial development in the township is centered on three areas - the Ridge Avenue and Highland Avenue intersection, the Plainville Road Corridor, and the Wooster Pike Corridor. These areas are primarily service commercial uses and provide a mix of uses from grocery stores and hardware outlets to small scale restaurants, boutique shops, and banks. These areas provide a majority of the economic base for the township. The Ridge-Highland area is a regional commercial center for the eastern



Cincinnati region, while the Plainville Road and Wooster Road corridors primarily service the eastern portion of the township and adjacent communities. One trend being experienced is the increase in medical office and laboratory uses in the Ridge-Highland area.

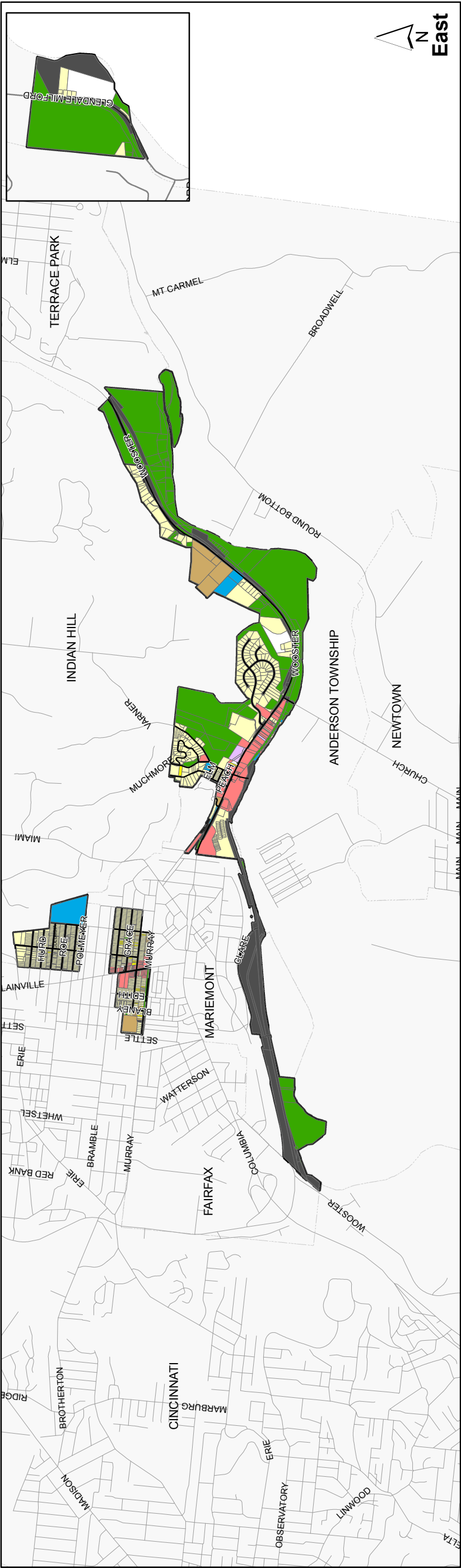
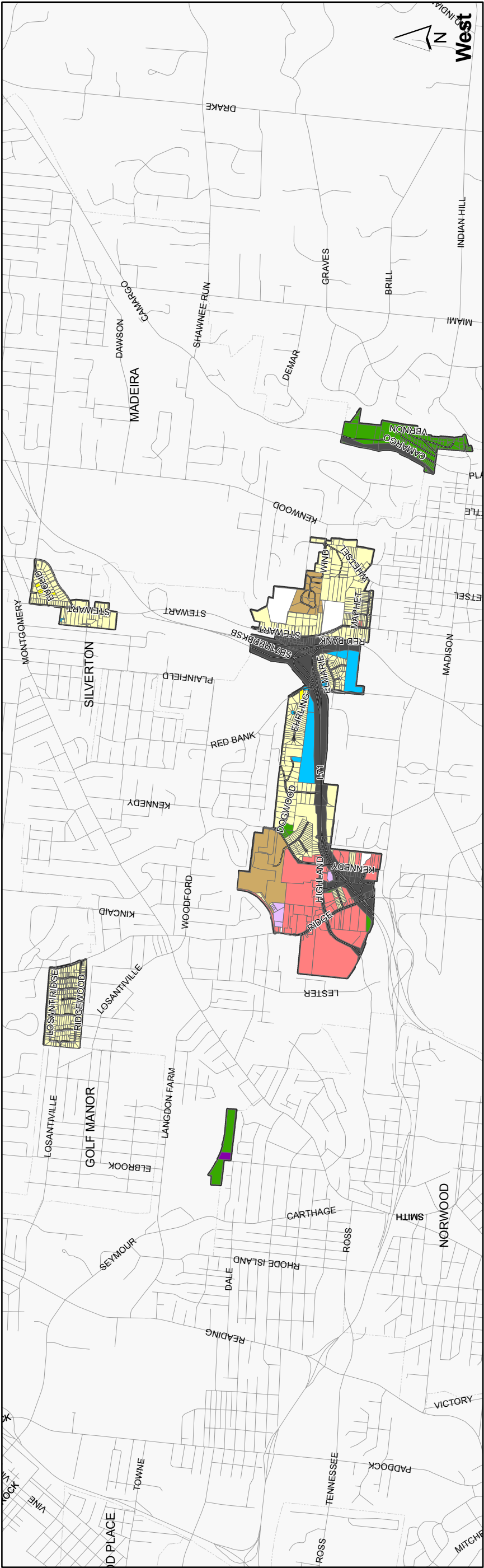
Industrial uses represent 1% of the township's existing land use. The industrial uses are intermixed into the commercial areas.

Approximately 3% of the township is used for education and institutional uses. There is one school, three school related facilities (i.e. athletic fields or transportation facilities), and three religious institutions within Columbia Township.



Approximately 17% of the township is used for transportation and public utilities. These areas are used for road rights-of-way, interstate rights-of-way, and railroad right-of-way. In addition to these uses, this category also takes into consideration public utility dedications such as easements and other areas used for public utilities, such as power distribution stations, water distribution facilities, and wastewater treatment areas.

Examples of community facilities



GOALS AND STRATEGIES

ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING GOALS

In the 2005 plan, a large portion of the document focuses on the vision for the community. The plan identifies the process used for creating the vision, survey questions used for the vision, descriptions of the work by the visioning committee, and responses from meetings regarding the vision. The current plan also identifies focus areas and zones of change that list improvements to the different areas in the township. The plan identifies goals and objectives that resulted from the workshop sessions to create an overall vision. The plan update recognizes the breadth of public input involved in the 2005 plan by utilizing the goals as a foundation of the plan update.

Preparation of the proposed goals and strategies for the plan update involved a detailed review and assessment of the vision, goals, community input, and objectives contained in the 2005 plan. This evaluation also involved review of planning documents and studies prepared by the township since 2005. Some of these documents include:

- Columbia Township Comprehensive Plan: Plainville, Madison Place South, and Stewart Road Business Studies – January 2005 (HCDC);
- Columbia Township: Plainville Road Corridor Special Public Interest Strategy Plan – December 2005 (HCRPC);
- Ridge and Highland Suburban Center Special Public Interest Strategies Plan – June 2006 (HCRPC);
- Columbia Township Branding Equity Guide – November 2006;
- Urban Design Plan for Columbia Township, focused on the Plainville Road Corridor – July 2008 (Community Design Assistance Group (CDAG));
- Resolution 09-19 Establishing a Columbia Township Community Reinvestment Area – August 2009; and
- The Columbia Township Exterior Property Maintenance Code – June 2010.

GOALS, STRATEGIES, AND IMPLEMENTATION TACTICS

There are seven themes for the plan update:

- Economic development;
- Commercial business districts;

- Transportation and mobility;
- Infrastructure and public facilities;
- Image and identity;
- Neighborhood preservation; and
- Parks, recreation, and natural resources.

For each theme we have identified a goal, strategy and implementation tactic. These terms are defined below.

- Goal - An end state or target that the township will try to achieve over the long term.
- Strategy - How the community wants to address an issue to achieve a desired goal.
- Implementation tactic - Recommended actions to achieve the strategy. The implementation tactics should be used as tools to achieve the proposed goals and strategies. (Implementation tactics will be defined in this section and more detail will be provided in subsequent sections of the plan.)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goal: Healthy and sustainable economic development initiatives will be created to attract a mix of business that expands the tax base for the township.

Strategies:

- Prepare for and guide future development and redevelopment opportunities.

Implementation Tactics

- Market available land, underutilized buildings, and township qualities to prospective developers and businesses.
- Develop a strategic marketing plan for the township that encourages local entrepreneurship that will flourish in commercial areas.
- Provide an inventory of available buildings and lots in the township's commercial and neighborhood areas to identify sites for new business and redevelopment of underutilized properties.
- Improve communication between township and businesses/local stakeholders.
- Work with telecommunication service providers to assure that the township is able to offer businesses "state of the art" telecommunication infrastructure.
- Use the township website as an economic development tool.



The former K-Mart site

- Revitalize and strengthen neighborhood business centers to define the type, placement, and location of future growth in the Future Land Use Plan.

Implementation Tactics

- Use economic incentives to attract new businesses that adhere to the comprehensive plan.
- Foster transit oriented development based on the Eastern Corridor Plan and other transportation improvement plans.



The former Wal-Mart site

- Promote cooperative economic development incentives between local governments and businesses for specific projects.

Implementation Tactics

- Develop a strategic marketing plan for the township which encourages local entrepreneurship that will flourish in commercial areas.
- Provide zoning and tax incentives for LEED/sustainable development designs.
- Look for opportunities for joint funding and/or support for development projects that have multi-jurisdictional impact.
- Continue to find ways to share services and equipment with other governmental agencies to reduce overall costs of improvements or projects.



Plainville Business District

COMMERCIAL BUSINESS DISTRICTS

Goal: Commercial redevelopment will be promoted in existing commercial districts.

Strategies:

- Encourage public and private investments in commercial districts.

Implementation Tactics

- Improve or create non-vehicular access by developing a continuous path system for the commercial areas.
- Use development and business incentive mechanisms, such as Tax Incremental Financing (TIF), to fund streetscape, roadway, pedestrian, and other infrastructure improvements as a catalyst for business redevelopment.
- Work with the Greater Cincinnati Port Authority and Hamilton County Development Company (HCDC) to determine development/redevelopment opportunities within the township.
- Investigate funding opportunities from the federal government, state, or local sources for demolition, clean up, and/or remediation of vacant properties.

What are SPI Districts?

According to Chapter 8 of the Hamilton County Zoning Resolution, Special Public Interest (SPI) Districts are intended to provide supplemental regulations or standards pertaining to specific geographic features or land uses, wherever these are located, in addition to the "base" zoning district regulations applicable within a designated area.

- Develop a recognizable image and vision for each neighborhood business district. The requirements of the Special Public Interest (SPI) Districts should be taken into consideration.

Implementation Tactics

- Improve SPI Districts with design standards for the following areas: Ridge and Highland, Plainville Road/Madison Place South, Wooster

Design factors addressed by existing SPI Districts:

Ridge and Highland Suburban Center District Principles: SPI- SC 2006-08:

- Increased intensity of lot area, bulk, and yard requirements.
- Pervious pavement allowance.
- Interior landscape requirements for vehicular use areas.
- Vehicular connections.
- Increased sign regulations.
- Billboard spacing requirements.
- Streetscape requirements.
- Sidewalk modifications.
- Architectural requirements for buildings and roofs.

Wooster Pike Suburban Corridor District Principles: SPI-SC 98-1:

- Spacing of billboards and other off premise signs along Wooster Pike.

Plainville Road Suburban Corridor District Principles: SPI- SC 2006-03:

- Apartments and attached condominiums permitted in retail business district.
- Increased intensity of lot area, bulk, and yard requirements.
- Reduced off-street parking requirements.
- Vehicular connections.
- Reduced sign regulations.
- Additional bufferyard requirements.
- Increased sign regulations.
- Streetscape requirements.
- Architectural requirements for buildings and roofs.

Pike, and Stewart Road. The existing SPI Districts currently address or can be adapted to address many of the design recommendations.

- Encourage redevelopment opportunities in the Ridge and Highland – Regional Commercial Area.
 - Preferred uses include retail, office, medical, service, and mixed use developments.
 - Use JEDD, TIF, special assessment, or special improvement district for upkeep and enhancement of area.
 - Encourage more mixed use within the area, with focus on retail and office space.
 - Encourage high quality retail uses.
 - Create a medical cluster consisting of businesses oriented to medical imaging, laboratory testing, and diagnostic services.
- Strengthen the Wooster Pike – Commercial Corridor with mixed use development.
 - Potential uses include a combination of retail stores, restaurants, office, and residential.
 - Install a median and streetscaping along Wooster Pike to denote the business area.
 - Increase the amount of office uses and/or office parks in the area.
 - Redevelop vacant and underutilized properties with potential uses listed above.
 - Work with ODOT and the Hamilton County Engineers Office (HCEO) to manage access throughout the corridor.
- Revitalize the Plainville Road/Madison Place South - Neighborhood Business District.
 - Potential uses include service, retail, restaurant and other pedestrian oriented uses.
 - Create a “lifestyle” community, consisting of a combination of live, work, and play aspects.
 - Allow mixed use developments with retail, office, and residential.
 - Adopt regulations to require high-quality development within the area.
 - Create incentives to assist local businesses and entrepreneurs to locate to the district.
 - Use surrounding communities as a market attraction.
- Redevelop Stewart Road.
 - Potential uses include office campus and retail/service uses that are conducive to high volumes of traffic.
 - Work with the City of Silverton to collaborate development potential and efforts.
- Encourage investment and increased density in business districts.

Implementation Tactics

 - Identify re-use alternatives for vacant and underutilized properties.
 - Provide parking areas behind buildings to meet needs of neighborhood businesses.



Development along Wooster Pike

- Restrict undesirable land uses such as automobile repair and heavy industry.
- Work with property owners of vacant and underutilized properties to determine if the township can partner to improve development opportunities.
- Update SPI Districts to allow an increase in density/floor area, modification of setback/build-to lines, taller buildings, and reduction in the maximum parking requirement.

- Encourage coordination and cooperation in land use planning in the Columbia Township area with the surrounding jurisdictions and unincorporated areas.

Implementation Tactic

- Interact and communicate with local area chambers of commerce and real estate developers to identify needs and business plans of the community.

TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

Goal: An effective multimodal transportation system will be provided and maintained to ensure healthy, safe, and efficient movement through the township.



Pedestrian improvements along Plainville Road

Strategies:

- Encourage investment in transportation facilities to accommodate regional traffic.

Implementation Tactics

- 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.
- Reevaluate US 50 in Plainville when Ohio 32 bypass is completed.
- Research locations for transit/transportation hub to encourage job creation.
- Take a proactive approach to transportation planning.

- Prioritize pedestrian and non-vehicular access safety throughout the township.

Implementation Tactics

- Adopt a complete streets policy that defines requirements for crosswalks, wide/setback walks, and safer access to bike trails.
- Build sidewalks and paths in areas where they are not currently available and where pedestrian or bicycle access is desirable.
- Improve pedestrian crossings that can also serve as beautification opportunities.
- Provide better pedestrian and non-vehicular connections between residential areas and the business districts and the Little Miami River Trails.

- Create township design standards requiring all new development to provide sidewalks or pedestrian/bicycle access paths at the time of permit approval.
- Establish assessment districts to help fund improvements.
- Encourage development patterns that reduce dependence on automobiles and promote different modes of transportation.

Implementation Tactics

- Allow a mixture of residential, commercial, office, and institutional uses within commercial business areas.
- Evaluate proposed design based on pedestrian and bicycle access, and not just vehicular access.
- Require new development to provide pedestrian path connections from buildings to the public sidewalk system.
- Identify areas and incentives for potential transit oriented development.
- Encourage pedestrian and vehicular connections between properties and parking facilities.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC FACILITIES

Goal: Public utility, infrastructure, and associated services will be provided at a sustainable level of service to foster economic development and maintain or improve the quality of life of residents.

Strategies:

- Create a township policy that requires full improvement to roads (and other infrastructure) when repairs and/or upgrades are needed, avoiding piecemeal, incremental, and ongoing construction activities.

Implementation Tactics

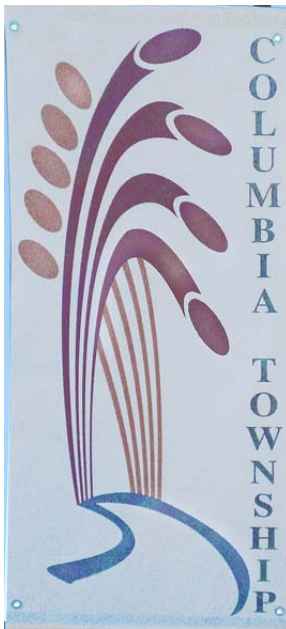
- Obtain grants and incentives to be used to relocate existing and future utilities underground and reinforce the image of the township when possible.
- Assess the impact of proposed infrastructure projects on township financial resources.
- Work with utility providers (i.e. Duke, MSD, CWW) to upgrade metering hardware and other technologies to improve energy efficiency.
- Develop and maintain a current map indicating sidewalks and streets that should be repaired and improved.
- Complete street resurfacing projects with proper pavement extenders.
- Install new curbing where needed to alleviate flooding problems and manage stormwater in a sustainable manner.
- Promote sustainability in the design and maintenance of utilities, infrastructure, and services provided by the township.

Implementation Tactics

- Require roadway projects which include bike lanes, complete streets, roundabouts, or other sustainable/environmentally conscious design.
 - Pursue incentives for the use of alternative fuel vehicles for township, police cruisers, and/or fire and EMS vehicles.
 - Work with local utility providers or other community agencies (i.e. Greater Cincinnati Energy Alliance) to identify ways to improve energy efficiency in homes, businesses, and institutional uses throughout the township.
- Identify funding opportunities for infrastructure, utility, and township service projects.

Implementation Tactics

- Investigate a range of funding mechanisms including establishing area assessment fees and taxing districts to help fund infrastructure projects, such as roadway improvements, sewer service, and stormwater systems.
- Pursue grants to obtain funding for roadway improvements.
- Partner with regional organizations that share common goals for improved efficiency and sustainability, to create programs or incentives that improve the quality of life.



Columbia Township banner

IMAGE AND IDENTITY

Goal: The township image, brand, and identity will be used to promote the quality of life offered in the community.

Strategies:

- Strengthen the township identity, image and vision through physical design standards, marketing, and cultural events and activities.

Implementation Tactics

- Define township boundaries with new signage or stone monuments (obelisks).
- Utilize gateway features to promote the township.
- Build a township center or government complex within the Ridge and Highland business area.
- Beautify corridors with underground utilities, street trees and landscaping, new streetlights, street furniture, and paving materials.
- Support neighborhood based outings and activities.

- Market the unique aspects of the township to create an image of the community through branding or themed identifiers.

Implementation Tactics

- Design a marketing plan and brochure for prospective businesses and developers highlighting the positive aspects of the township, such as: high customer base, socially and economically diverse community, and availability of land.
- Install a wayfinding system for the township.
- Update the website so it can be used as a tool for economic development.



Entrance sign to Ridgewood Neighborhood

NEIGHBORHOOD PRESERVATION

Goal: The quality of residential neighborhoods will be maintained, improved, and protected as desirable places to live.

Strategies:

- Protect existing residential neighborhoods and districts.

Implementation Tactics

- Organization of neighborhood groups to advocate for neighborhood preservation, enhancement, and safety.
- Adopt regulations to ensure site design for new development in established neighborhoods is compatible with the existing fabric of the neighborhood.

- Provide incentives for neighborhood reinvestment.

Implementation Tactics

- Fund home improvement assistance to upgrade existing owner and rental housing stock.
- Establish incentives for infill development.
- Create a fund to obtain foreclosed properties for potential future rehabilitation or sale.
- Create or partner with other agencies for a program to assist residents to obtain assistance with foreclosed properties.
- Establish funding/assessment districts for energy efficiency upgrades for current homeowners.
- Work with “green initiative” and sustainability organizations to obtain “test site” status for the township to test local and national sustainability projects.

- Recognize mixed use districts which are an attractive and viable neighborhood component that can provide quality housing alternatives.

Implementation Tactics

- Allow a mix of retail, office and residential in designated community business corridors.
- Define locations on the future land use map where mixed use development is appropriate.
- Create an urban living lifestyle by encouraging urban parks and gardens, walkability, and transportation options.
- Work with the Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission to ensure that a mixture of uses is permitted within designated business districts.
- Allow an increased residential density in mixed use areas.
- Adopt design standards to identify the desirable pattern for mixed use business districts.
- Design new mixed use neighborhoods that are convenient to proposed transit and reduce the need to travel long distances to fulfill basic needs.



Existing Madison Place North
Neighborhood



Existing Williams Meadow
Subdivision



Mariemont Landing



Entrance to Avoca Trailhead

**Wooster Pike Natural
Resource District Principles:
SPI-NR-98-2:**

- Maintain a natural buffer strip.
- Publicly owned facilities and recreational uses are permitted in the natural buffer strip.
- All privately owned facilities which are permitted in the "A" District are permitted in the natural buffer strip with a conditional use permit.
- Privately owned facilities permitted in the "A" District may have access via a roadway across the buffer strip.



Mural Dedicated to Columbia Township in Muchmore Park

PARK, RECREATION, AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Goal: Natural resources will be protected and opportunities for quality parks and recreation facilities will be provided for township residents and visitors.

Strategies:

- Develop new parks, link trails, and enhance existing recreational uses.
 - Implementation Tactics**
 - Pursue state, federal, and private grants to acquire and improve parks and recreation facilities.
 - Create opportunities for active and passive recreational uses.
 - Develop detailed plans identifying sites for future neighborhood parks.
- Provide more recreational opportunities within safe walking distance of all residential neighborhoods.
 - Implementation Tactics**
 - Provide trail linkage to existing trails in the township.
 - Develop a system of pathways and trails that connect existing recreational uses to neighborhoods and commercial centers.
 - Interconnect Plainville "town center" and river edge parks.
- Preserve natural resources (including air, water, and land) and environmentally sensitive areas in the community.
 - Implementation Tactics**
 - Protect natural amenities such as wooded areas, creeks, and hilly terrain in new development through innovative development regulations and design.
 - Encourage sensitive development that protects and enhances an area's natural features.
 - Establish zoning or other development regulations to protect groundwater and surface water sources from flood and storm-related pollution.
 - Establish zoning or other development regulations to protect sensitive areas, such as wooded areas, major drainage ways, and areas of steep topographic relief.
- Establish neighborhood parks within ¼ to ½ mile from neighborhoods.
 - Implementation Tactics**
 - Create programs that provide the township with funding to obtain foreclosed or abandoned properties for the creation of neighborhood parks.
 - Encourage pocket park developments.
 - Encourage connection to existing bike paths.

FUTURE LAND USE

Whereas the Existing Land Use Map records how property is currently being used, the Future Land Use Plan (map 3) indicates how the community desires properties to be used. Existing conditions (i.e. use, topography, utility service, transportation access) play an important role in future use, but future development policies are also important. The Future Land Use Plan indicates how Columbia Township wants to grow, and when compared to the Existing Land Use Map, where change is recommended.

The Future Land Use Plan is also important because it is the principal tool the Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission (HCRPC) and the Hamilton County Commissioners will use in order to evaluate land use proposals and zone map amendments for the community. Zoning in Columbia Township is administered by Hamilton County, which uses the Future Land Use Plan and the Comprehensive Plan as a guide for making decisions on zoning changes and proposed development. The Future Land Use Plan is Columbia Township's way to define how the community should develop.

FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORIES

Land uses should not be interpreted to be the same as zoning. The land use plan serves as the long range vision for the development of the community, while zoning is the legislative ordinance that is used to regulate future development. It is important that the categories for the Future Land Use Plan reflect the desired development pattern of Columbia Township, so that the map can be used to implement zoning that reflects the land use plan.

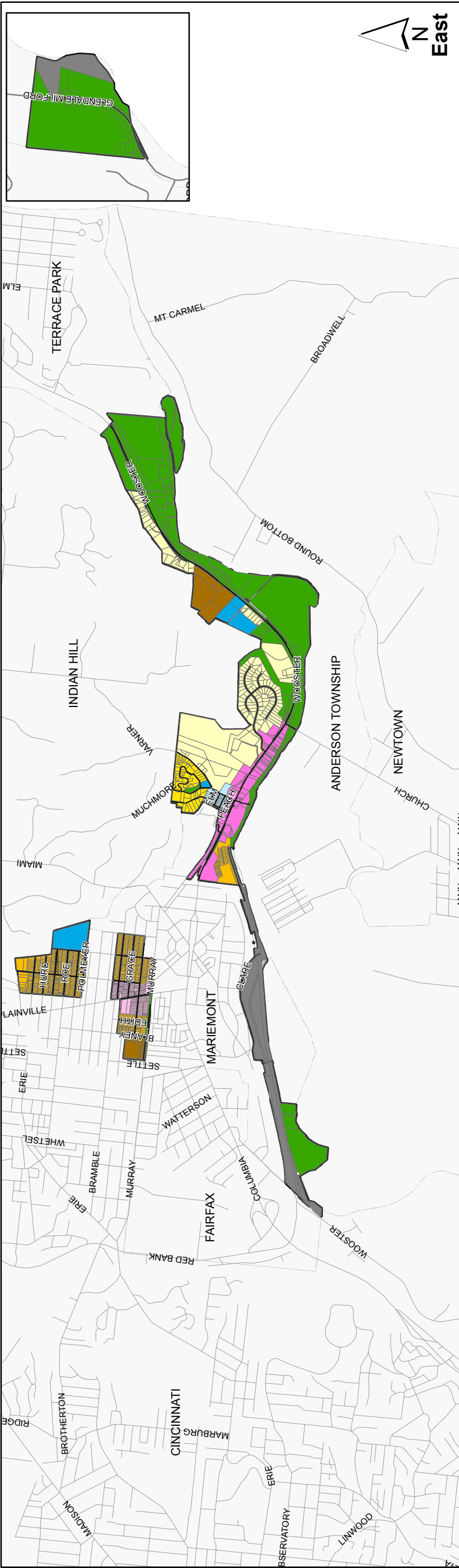
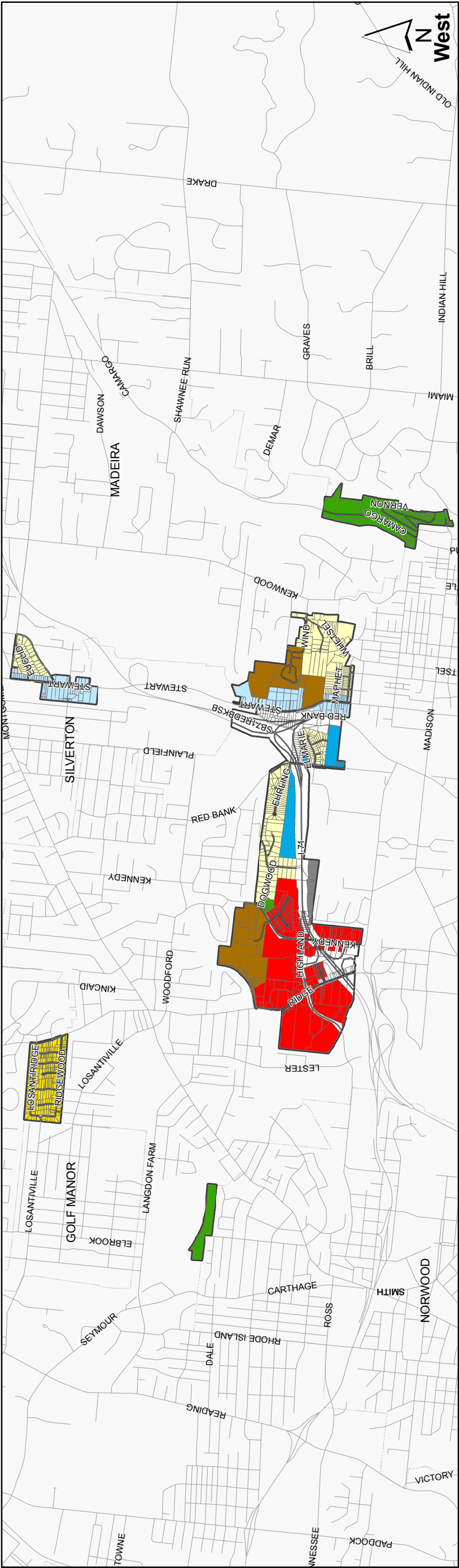
Eleven categories are illustrated on the Future Land Use Plan, and are described as follows:

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. This land use includes parks and recreational areas.

Educational and Institutional

This proposed land use would permit educational and institutional uses, including religious places of worship. These uses generally provide buffering to surrounding residential and sensitive areas.



Public Utility

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



Moderate Density Detached Residential

Moderate Density Detached 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.

Medium 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.

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.



Office-Residential Use

Office – Residential Corridor

This proposed land use would permit office and residential mixed use development. Office uses would be in the form of low rise buildings - 2 to 4 floors. Residential uses would be at medium density, up to 4 to 8 dwelling units per acre, with related compatible uses.

Neighborhood Business Center

This proposed land use would permit neighborhood oriented mixed use retail, service, office, and residential uses. These buildings should be 1 to 4 story structures with a scale, massing, intensity, layout and specifications compatible with site constraints and character of the neighborhood. Residential uses could have densities, up to 8 to 12 dwelling units per acre, with related compatible uses. See the Plainville Focus Area for more detail.

Commercial Corridor

This proposed land use would permit a mixture of uses with low to high intensities along a commercial corridor. Commercial strips typically contain community and regionally oriented retail, service, and office uses. These uses should be primarily oriented to service the needs of the surrounding neighborhood and the vehicles traveling through the corridor. Residential uses may be appropriate at densities up to 8 to 20 dwelling units per acre. See the Wooster Pike Focus Area for more detail.

Regional Commercial Center

This proposed land use would permit regional retail, office, service and residential uses. Uses in this category attract customers and employees from the region. High intensity, regionally oriented retail and service uses and a mix of office and residential uses should be permitted. Medical services, laboratories, and technological uses will be encouraged in this area. Residential uses should be well planned to be integrated with the other uses in this area, with densities up to 10 to 20 dwelling units per acre, with related compatible uses. Low impact industry uses, similar to those existing in the areas, should be encouraged to continue and expand in a manner that controls the potential impacts on the area and adjacent properties.

FOCUS AREAS

As a complement to the future land use plan, three focus areas are identified for a detailed level of planning analysis and recommendation. These areas address the three business districts in Columbia Township: Ridge and Highland, Plainville Road, and Wooster Pike. Specific recommendations and redevelopment plans are presented for each focus area to identify the development patterns to be encouraged. The fact that Columbia Township has evolved into nine “islands” of land area intensifies the need for a solid, balanced tax base. Columbia Township recognizes that every property is important and has a role to play in the community. The purpose of the focus area plans is to encourage use and developmental improvement of key property assets, to achieve incurred community benefit.

Each focus area identifies three concepts that should be addressed for redevelopment. These concepts are as follows:

- **Potential Redevelopment Areas** - Potential redevelopment areas identify portions of the focus area that are suitable for changes in land use or intensity. These areas may be low density, underutilized areas that are suitable for a higher intensity use and areas that have vacant buildings that should be redeveloped. Specific recommendations for redevelopment areas are provided on the maps and described in the text. The zoning of the property determines the allowable uses. The uses identified in the potential redevelopment areas should be viewed as uses to be encouraged by the township to accomplish the goals of this plan.
- **Access and Transportation** – Accessibility is a key component of determining the level of use and intensity of an area. Key access and transportation issues are shown on the focus area maps to identify improvements to the vehicular and non-vehicular circulation patterns. Improvements include access management, streetscaping, right-of-way enlargement, bicycle/pedestrian path installation, and transit facility improvements. Specific recommendations for access and transportation will be provided on the maps and described in the text.

- **Image** – Image refers to the perception or impression that one has of an area. Image is important because perception of an area is a strong determining factor in development decisions and significantly contributes to the character of a community. Image improvements are recommended to help identify the boundaries of the township in each focus area. These recommendations are intended to hold the current branding efforts by the township. Examples of image improvements include: gateway features, focal points, community art, wayfinding systems, and non-vehicular trail connections. Specific image recommendations are provided on the maps and described in the text.



**Ridge and Highland Focus Area
from Interstate 71**

Ridge-Highland Focus Area

The non-residential properties near the intersection of Ridge Avenue and Highland Avenue are a “melting pot” for regional commercial activity. This area draws patrons from surrounding neighborhoods to Columbia Township. Over the years, this area has been in transition and is experiencing increased levels of commercial vacancy rates. Some of these changes can be attributed to the changing climate of the regional and national economy, the development of competing centers, and the migration of population to suburban areas. The relocation of Wal-Mart and Home Emporium to locations outside of Columbia Township and the closing of K-Mart and John Nolan Ford have left holes in the commercial fabric of the area. Some of the gaps have been filled by small scale service and retail uses, but these uses do not make up for the tax base loss of larger developments. Many of the buildings and properties in the focus area are underutilized.



**Medical/Office use in the Ridge
and Highland Focus Area**

The Ridge and Highland focus area has attributes that make it attractive for new and redevelopment. There is excellent highway visibility and access from Interstate 71. In addition, there are three major roadways that bisect the focus area and lead to connections with the State Route 562 (Norwood Lateral) and other major arterials. Even though there are some vacancies to the retail core, there are still quality commercial anchors such as Lowe’s, Home Depot, and Remke bigg’s to attract a regional base of customers. There is close proximity to employment centers, industrial areas, and business parks located in the adjacent communities of Norwood and Cincinnati. A proposal to redevelop the K-Mart property into a medical office/laboratory for medical research and testing is in the planning phase. There is a proposal to construct Green Ridge Office Park, which is a 75,000 square foot medical-office building located off of Lucile Drive. The proposed projects will bring jobs to the township that may support the existing retail and support services in the area.

Focus Area Recommendations

The Ridge and Highland Focus Area is a valuable resource for the township. It supplies Columbia Township with a solid tax base and attracts people from all over the Cincinnati region. The following concepts should be used to encourage the redevelopment process.



Vacant Land in Area "B"

POTENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT AREAS

There are five potential redevelopment areas identified within the Ridge and Highland Focus Area. The following describes the uses that are encouraged or preferred. The uses identified on the Future Land Use Map are appropriate and developments consistent with these designations are encouraged.

The following focus area recommendations are meant to serve as a guide or vision for the area. Developments are encouraged to be consistent with the Future Land Use category definitions and are encouraged to consider the following recommendations. Areas not identified as a redevelopment area should comply with the underlying future land use plan designations.



Mixed Use Example

- **Area "A" – Medical/Office Campus:** Area "A" is located around the intersection of Highland Avenue, Kennedy Avenue, and Lucille Drive. Medical/office uses and campuses should be encouraged in this area. Expansion of the existing medical facilities should be encouraged, including patient care facilities.
- **Area "B" – Mixed Use/Transitional Retail:** Area "B" surrounds Kenoak Lane and Monardi Circle. Currently this is a residential neighborhood. As land use changes occur in the surrounding area, pressure for redevelopment will increase on this area. Area "B" is appropriate for transitional mixed use. Buildings should be 1 to 3 stories in height and should be encouraged to have retail/services on the first floor and offices or residential apartments or condominiums on the upper stories. Retail or service uses that support proposed medical uses or campuses should be encouraged.
- **Area "C" – Retail Core:** Area "C" is located on the western half of the focus area and encompasses the Ridgewater Plaza, a portion of the John Nolan site, the former Home Emporium site, and Gold Circle Mall Shopping Center. The retail areas should be of a regional appeal. Regional retail uses are appropriate in Area "C" and should be encouraged. The township should support revitalization and improvements to existing retail properties, perhaps assisting in demolition and site clearing efforts where needed.
- **Area "D" – Job/Employment Center:** Area "D" is located near the northern end of the focus area. Job creation opportunities should be the focus of this area. Existing retail should be maintained and revitalized as needed. New businesses should be



Properties in Area "C"



Example of Job/Employment
Center



Intersection of Ridge and Highland
Avenues

encouraged to develop in a campus-like setting, conducive to attracting employees. Additionally, this area should also look for job incubation opportunities. (See implementation section for additional details.)

- **Area “TC” – Town Center:** Area “TC” is located around the intersection of Ridge Avenue and Highland Avenue. This area should be the focal point of the focus area. Intensive scale development should be encouraged to create a town center. Multi-story buildings should be built to define the street. Mixed use projects should be encouraged that will create day and evening activity. Pedestrian scale is important, but parking should be integrated into the town center recognizing that the intersection has sizable traffic counts which should be viewed as an attribute. A traffic circle may be pursued at the intersection. This circle may alleviate some of the congestion problems throughout the focus area and help spur redevelopment.



Example of Town Center

ACCESS AND TRANSPORTATION

Vehicular and non-vehicular improvements should be made to the three major roadways in the township. Along Ridge Avenue, streetscaping improvements and new traffic signals have been installed. Some streetscaping and other enhancements have been made along Highland Avenue between the intersection with Ridge Avenue and the entrance to Ridgewater Plaza. The following improvements are recommended:

- Improve pedestrian access – Install or complete the sidewalk system along both sides of Ridge Avenue. This should be focused on the eastern side of Ridge Avenue, Highland Avenue, and Kennedy Avenue. Pedestrian crosswalks and signalization should also be upgraded. Connections should be made from the building to the sidewalk.
- Complete the streetscape – Install or complete installation of the streetscaping along Ridge Avenue, Highland Avenue, and Kennedy Avenue. A portion of the streetscaping has been completed along the western side of Ridge Avenue north of the intersection with Highland Avenue. Streetscaping should consist of street trees and other attractive landscaping.
- Install bike path or bike lane – In an effort to promote a sustainable community, bike lanes and/or paths should be installed along Ridge Avenue, Highland Avenue, and Kennedy Avenue, where feasible for connections with other areas of the township and neighboring communities.
- Transit facility upgrades – Columbia Township should work with Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority (SORTA) to upgrade public transit facilities along Ridge Avenue, Highland Avenue, and Kennedy Avenue. Upgrades should include bus pull-off areas, updated shelters at stops, and better definition of public transit



Example of Streetscape



Example of Pedestrian Access
(mid-block crosswalk)



Example of Efficiency Parking



Example of Wayfinding

stops. Select stations should be designed to be multi-modal for any possible rail/BRT (bus rapid transit) planning.

- Introduce and/or continue access management principles – Access management controls have been part of the long term planning for this area for many years and should continue. Important access management improvements include limitations or consolidation of access points to private developments, use of access roadways or shared driveways, and shared parking areas with cross access easements between properties.
- Manage or eliminate visual clutter – Changes to the SPI zoning districts should be made to reduce sign clutter in and throughout the focus area. Accessory structures such as dumpster enclosures and on-site utilities should be screened. Overhead utility lines should be located underground where feasible.

Overall Improvements

- A bypass around the main intersection of Ridge Avenue and Highland Avenue should be explored to help alleviate traffic congestion.
- Traffic circles or roundabouts should be explored, if feasible, to replace traditional intersection configurations. Roundabouts can be used to improve traffic flow, create sustainable design, and spur economic development.
- Electric vehicle charging stations and parking for fuel efficient automobiles should be encouraged in the corridor, and should be placed in large parking areas in an effort to make development more sustainable.

IMAGE

- Obelisks gateway markers should be installed at major entrances into the focus area and township. The obelisks should be designed similar to the markers identified in the “CDAG Urban Design Plan for Columbia Township”. The proposed markers should be large enough to catch the eye of a driver or pedestrian.
- A wayfinding sign system should be installed in the focus area. This system should include indicators that direct visitors to key properties in the focus area and key areas in the township. It is important that the wayfinding signage continue the Columbia Township logo and images established in earlier studies.



Wooster Pike looking east



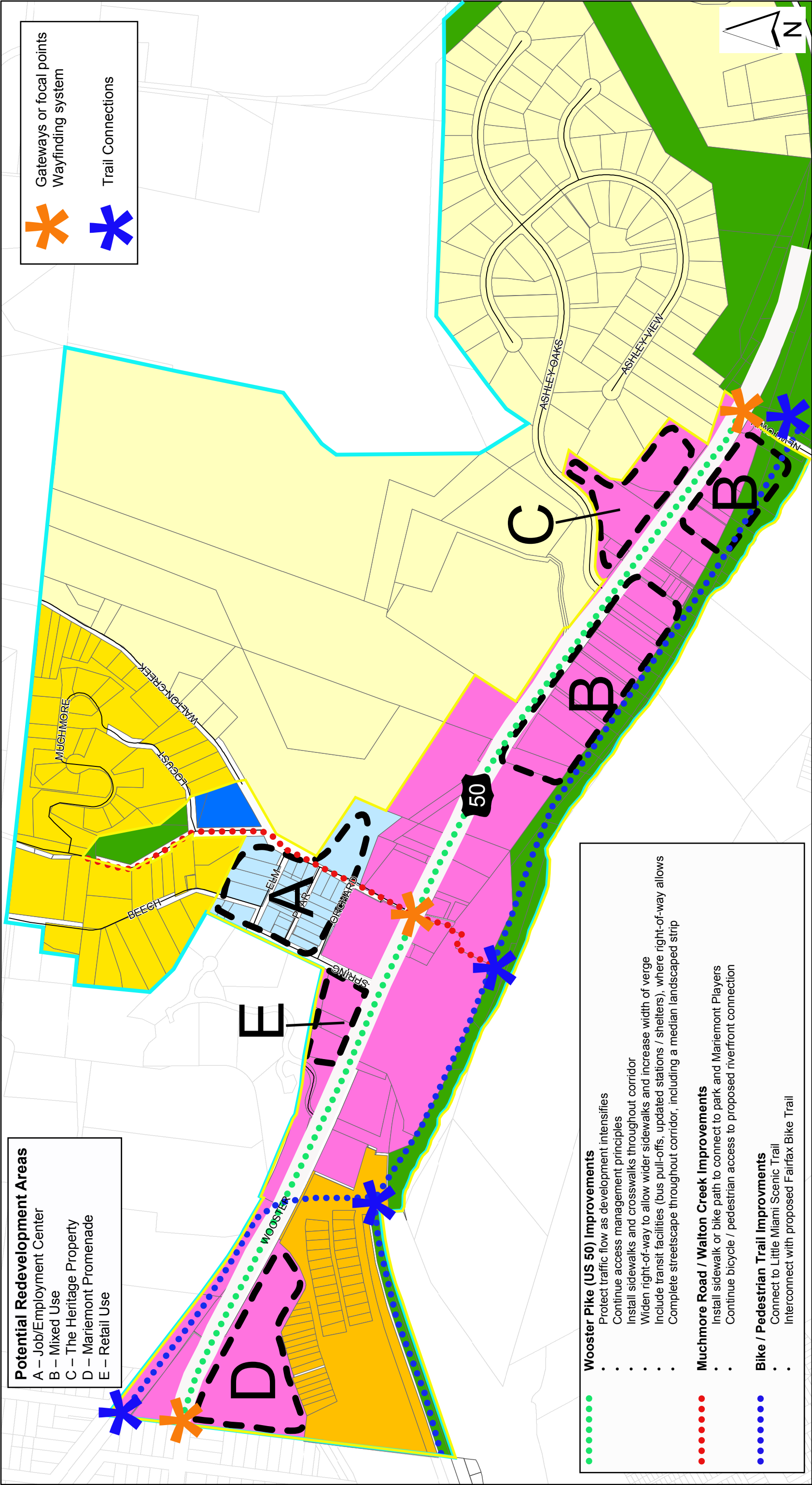
Wooster Pike looking west

Wooster Pike Corridor Focus Area

The Wooster Pike focus area contains the properties along the Wooster Pike (US 50) corridor. The study area includes properties north of Wooster Pike that have access to Elm, Pear, Orchard, and Spring Streets, and also encompasses the Mariemont Players' property and Muchmore Park. The primary function of Wooster Pike is a transportation corridor linking several communities along the eastern side of Hamilton County. This transportation route attracted commercial development and public/quasi-public uses. The uses in the focus area primarily serve the communities of Mariemont, Fairfax, Indian Hill, Newtown, and Terrace Park. Wooster Pike also provides access to the Little Miami River and Scenic Trail.

The area generally lacks a cohesive character as individual commercial uses have developed independently and without design guidelines. The western edge of the corridor has a shopping center and housing development, while the eastern edge is primarily made up of automobile affiliated and small scale commercial uses. The "Old Plainville" area north of Walgreens was at one time an unincorporated village in the township. This area does not have sanitary sewer or natural gas service, despite the existing homes that have been built here. There are no sidewalks along the south side of Wooster Pike along the eastern edge of the study area.

There has been some new development and redevelopment over the past decade. Examples of new development are Mariemont Landing (2001-2002); Walton Creek Retail Center (2003); Walgreens and retail parcel (2004); Marathon Rebuild (2004); Froggy's Car Wash (2006); PNC Bank (2006); Kroger Store Remodel (2010); and Hahana Beach (2010). The range of development/redevelopment exemplifies the market strength of this corridor. The relatively high average household incomes of the communities surrounding the Wooster Pike corridor are a positive asset. The township should market this asset to attract "new to market" and unique retail and office uses.



Focus Area Recommendations

The Wooster Pike Corridor is showing positive signs of change as a retail corridor, as evidenced by the new retail development in recent years. However, there are properties that are underutilized and should be targeted for redevelopment along the eastern edge of the corridor.



Example of Employment Center

POTENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT AREAS

There are five potential redevelopment areas within the Wooster Pike Focus Area. The following describes the uses that are encouraged or preferred. The uses identified on the Future Land Use Map are appropriate and developments consistent with these designations are encouraged.

The following focus area recommendations are meant to serve as a guide or vision for the area. Developments are encouraged to be consistent with the Future Land Use category definitions and are encouraged to consider the following recommendations. Areas not identified as a redevelopment area should comply with the underlying future land use plan designations.



Properties within Area "B"



Heritage Property



Mariemont Promenade Shopping Center

- Area "A" – Job/Employment Center:** Area "A" is located on the northern end of the focus area and encompasses properties which have frontage on Elm, Pear, Orchard, and Spring Streets. This area should focus on job creation opportunities and should be a place to provide business incubation or single office developments such as new businesses, entrepreneurial ventures, or home based businesses that are entering the market place. Sanitary sewer and natural gas service will need to be provided to the area for redevelopment to occur. This will likely require financial participation by the township.
- Area "B" – Mixed Use:** Area "B" is located along Wooster Pike near the eastern end of the focus area. These areas along the south side of Wooster Pike should be focused on small scale retail developments. Mixed use retail/office/residential buildings should be pursued in this area. This area should use the household income levels of the surrounding neighborhoods to attract "new to market" retail and office space to bolster the tax base. Buildings should be three to six stories in height and provide river views.
- Area "C" – The Heritage Property:** Area "C" is made up of the former Heritage Restaurant and surrounding non-residentially zoned property. The current property owner is pursuing innovative ideas and has set up a website dedicated to the collection of ideas for reuse of the building and property. If possible the building should be maintained for historical value.
- Area "D" – Mariemont Promenade Shopping Center:** The Mariemont Promenade Shopping Center comprises Area "D". This property has been subject to soil stabilization problems, which has led to the high vacancy rate. This property will need to be stabilized prior to any redevelopment efforts. This property is located



Former Hollywood Video

between residential neighborhoods of Mariemont and retail areas of the corridor. The township supports continued use of the center for retail/services if the stabilization issues can be addressed. Another use for this area, if the center were to be redeveloped, would be for apartments or condominiums to act as a transitional use from the Mariemont residential area to the northwest to the commercial areas to the east.

- **Area “E” – Retail Use:** Area “E” is the former Hollywood Video. The property should be redeveloped into a retail use to complement the surrounding retail and service developments.

ACCESS AND TRANSPORTATION

Vehicular and non-vehicular improvements should be made to Wooster Pike and Muchmore/Walton Creek Roads. Along Wooster Pike, streetscaping improvements and traffic signals have been recently installed. The roadway was widened by the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) to five lanes, which provided two travel lanes in both directions and a center turn lane, including sidewalks in some areas. The following improvements are recommended:

Along Wooster Pike:

- Maintain traffic flow as development intensifies – The capability of Wooster Pike to function as a major arterial in the regional transportation network is important and should not be diminished. However, this does not mean that widenings should continue at the sacrifice of the community character. Pedestrian access and streetscape appearance are important elements within the corridor. Further right-of-way acquisition could have negative impacts on the development capability of adjacent properties. Traffic improvements shall take into consideration the proposed improvements for the Eastern Corridor and proposed I-74 alignment.
- Introduce and/or continue access management principles – Access management controls have been part of the long term planning for this area for many years and should continue to be a primary focus. Important access management improvements include limitations or consolidation of access points to private developments, use of access roadways or shared driveways, and shared parking areas with cross access easements between properties.
- Install or complete sidewalk system – The sidewalk system along Wooster Pike should be completed throughout the focus area. Sidewalk construction should be focused on the southern side of Wooster Pike, east of the Walton Creek intersection. Pedestrian connections should be made from buildings to the sidewalk. Pedestrian crosswalks and signalization should also be upgraded. Mid-block crosswalks should be explored in strategic areas.



Example of sidewalk/path



Examples of pedestrian amenities

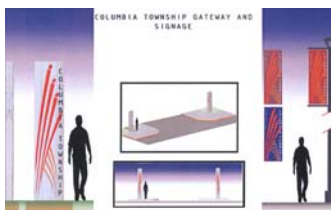
- Install a bike path or bike lane – In an effort to promote a sustainable community, opportunities for construction of a bike lane and/or paths within the corridor should be investigated to provide connections with other areas of the township and neighboring communities.
- Transit facility upgrades – Columbia Township should work with Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority (SORTA) to upgrade public transit facilities along Wooster Pike in strategic areas. Upgrades may include bus pull-off areas, updated shelters at stops, and better definition of public transit stops. In addition, select stations should be designed to be multi-modal for any possible rail/BRT transit planning. Improvements should take into consideration the Eastern Corridor plan and the I-74 alignment, and transit stations.
- Complete the streetscape – Install or complete installation of streetscaping along Wooster Pike. A portion of the streetscaping has been completed in the corridor, and should consist of street trees and other attractive landscaping. The addition of a median should be investigated; however, further widening of Wooster Pike should be carefully evaluated to weigh any negative impact that widening could have on adjacent properties.



Example of trail connection

Along Walton Creek Road/Muchmore Road:

- Install or complete sidewalk system – Install a sidewalk system along Walton Creek Road and Muchmore Road. The sidewalk should start at the intersection with Wooster Pike and continue north on Walton Creek Road. The sidewalk should follow Muchmore Road and terminate at Muchmore Park, to provide pedestrian access from the corridor to the park and the Mariemont Players' building.
- Connect to regional trail systems - The Little Miami Scenic trail should be extended and a connection point from Wooster Pike to the trail should be made. A bike and pedestrian path should be made connecting the corridor to the Little Miami Scenic Trail. The connection should cross Newtown Road and proceed westerly and terminate at the Mariemont Landing housing development. This will allow users to access the trail from Wooster Pike. In addition the proposed path should extend northerly to the Columbia Township/Mariemont border. The township should work with the Village of Mariemont to provide connections through Mariemont to the Fairfax Bike Trail.



Columbia Township Signage
Courtesy CDAG Urban Design Plan

IMAGE

- Obelisk gateway markers should be installed at major entrances into the focus area and township. The obelisks should be designed similar to the markers identified in the "CDAG Urban Design Plan for Columbia Township". The proposed markers should be large



Example of wayfinding system

enough to catch the eye of a driver or pedestrian, and should be a consistent theme that portrays the identity of Columbia Township.

- A wayfinding sign system should be installed in the focus area. This system should include indicators that direct visitors to key properties in the focus area and key areas in the township. It is important that the wayfinding signage continue the Columbia Township logo and images established in earlier studies. Trailhead connection points should be strategically located to allow users to access the trail.

Plainville Road Focus Area



Plainville Road corridor looking south

The Plainville Road focus area consists of the portion of the township referred to as Madison Place South. The core of the focus area consists of properties with direct frontage on Plainville Road. The area has natural “Main Street” character and a mix of buildings and uses are located within the core area. The residential areas surrounding the core are older homes in a variety of styles. The density of the homes surrounding the business core, as well as the neighborhoods that are in the vicinity in other jurisdictions, could support additional neighborhood retail.

There are two distinct building styles within the focus area. The northern end of the focus area along the eastern side of Plainville Road maintains a traditional main street feel with buildings constructed to the street line and parking either on the side or to the rear. The southern end of the corridor is automobile oriented with buildings placed in the middle of a lot and parking surrounding all sides of the buildings. For example, the intersection of Cambridge Avenue and Plainville Road is dominated by three former fuel stations which have been converted to vehicle service and repair uses. Properties along the north side of Murray Avenue between the intersections of Plainville Road and Berwick Avenue provide a mixture of uses, including offices, a fire station, and apartment complexes.



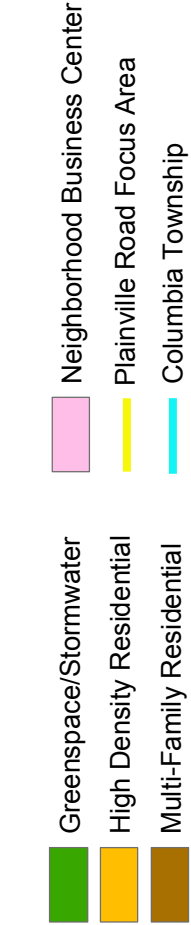
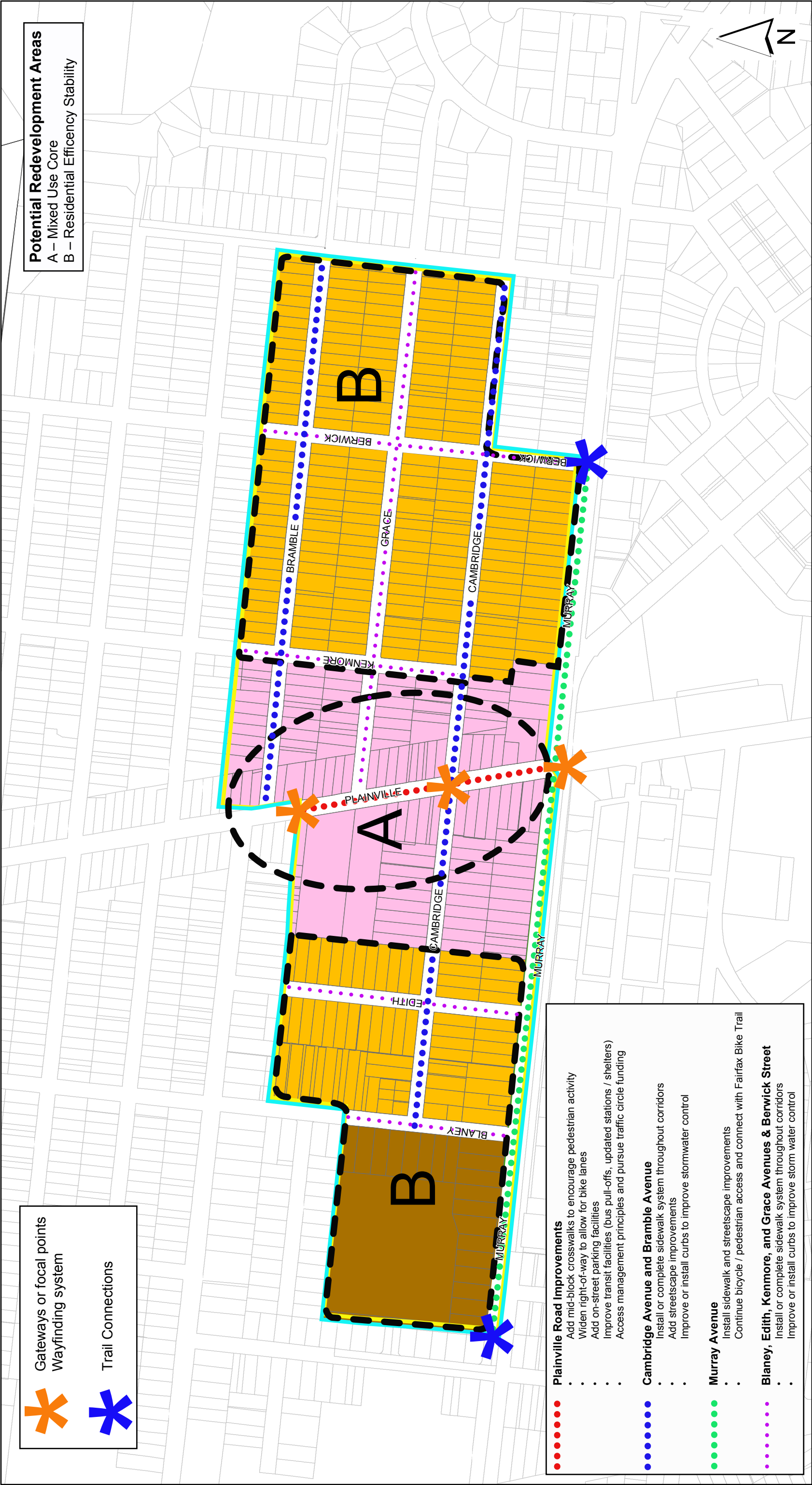
Example of housing in the Plainville focus area

An analysis conducted as part of the Madison Place South Business District study in January 2005 determined that the Plainville Neighborhood Business District, which occupies approximately 12 acres of land, had an average property tax per acre rate that was approximately 57% higher than the property tax per acre rate of the Ridge and Highland Area. The study points out the density levels in the Plainville Corridor and the lack of vacant land in the area. This analysis supports the need for increased density in this neighborhood business district, and the importance of efforts to strengthen the neighborhood business district.

The housing stock in this area is older, while the cottage/bungalow style is predominate throughout the focus area. The homes were predominately built between 1930 and 1950. There are some apartment complexes and buildings and two-family homes within the study area. Property maintenance repairs and energy efficiency upgrades are examples of the types of projects that would benefit the dwelling units in the focus area. Such projects would improve the quality of housing and potentially improve property values in the area. Several streets in this area lack curbing and lane striping. Infrastructure improvements such as curbing can improve the storm water control and provide aesthetic benefits. There are some perceptions about crime in this area that need to be corrected.

The area has experienced new investments in recent years. New developments include a high end automobile dealership and a Dollar General store. While these two uses demonstrate the wide market range of this focus area, and Columbia Township as a whole, both uses bring customers and businesses to the area and should be viewed as a positive for the corridor. The township also initiated a streetscaping effort along

Plainville Road, including new street amenities such as lighting, street signs, and planters, wider sidewalks, ADA markers, trees and landscaping, underground utilities, and pedestrian amenities such as benches and trash receptacles.



Focus Area Recommendations

The Plainville Road Corridor is a “Main Street” type neighborhood retail area that should focus redevelopment efforts to attract denser development, to include retail services that support the needs of the surrounding market and business start-ups and entrepreneurial efforts. New mixed use development should be focused on the Plainville Road corridor and adjacent areas. Maintenance, repair, and energy efficient upgrades should be targeted for the existing housing stock. Programs supported by the township and other agencies may be needed to encourage investment in this area.



Example of Mixed Use

POTENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT AREAS

There are two potential redevelopment areas identified within the Plainville Road focus area. The following describes the uses that are encouraged or preferred. The uses identified on the Future Land Use Map are appropriate and developments consistent with these designations are encouraged.

The following focus area recommendations are meant to serve as a guide or vision for the area. Developments are encouraged to be consistent with the Future Land Use category definitions and are encouraged to consider the following recommendations. Areas not identified as a redevelopment area should comply with the underlying future land use plan designations.



Example of outdoor seating



Example of existing housing stock

- **Area “A” – Mixed Use Core:** Area “A” should focus on the redevelopment of Plainville Road and properties adjacent to the core. New construction should be encouraged to be multiple stories, and mixed uses should be encouraged. Mixed uses should consist of retail and/or service uses on the first and second floors while residential apartments or condominiums are provided on the other stories. Buildings should reinforce the streetline and should frame the corner of intersections. Outdoor patios and other activity areas should be encouraged. If buildings are single story, they should be pushed to the street. Parking facilities need to be located to the side or rear of buildings or in a parking structure. The township should utilize previous market studies for the Plainville area to attract business that can fill existing market voids. The existing business niches should be encouraged to expand and strengthen. The automobile and home improvement businesses have a solid niche and should be expanded.
- **Area “B” – Residential Efficiency Stability:** Area “B” focuses on the residential areas of the focus area. Upgrades that will improve the quality, efficiency, and sustainability of the aging housing stock are encouraged. The existing density of the area and the opportunities that the current housing provides in terms of first-time home buyers and affordable detached housing options, are elements that should be marketed for single person households or households downsizing from larger properties. The township should investigate the use of a nonprofit redevelopment



Example of on-street parking
with bump-outs



End of Fairfax bike trail



Examples of bike racks

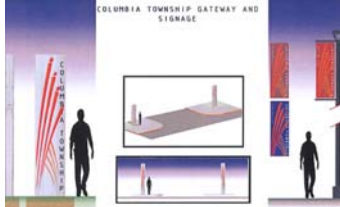
corporation to aid the revitalization of residential properties. Such organization can purchase vacant or foreclosed homes, for example, and repair and rehabilitate such properties for sale to home owners. The proceeds of the sale could be used to fix up other distressed properties. Other communities have found that by focusing on “fixing a bad house on a good street” such efforts can stabilize an area and reduce blighting impacts that vacant and deteriorating homes and properties can have. Such efforts also improve property values for an area, allowing the township to sustain funding for necessary government services.

ACCESS AND TRANSPORTATION

Vehicular and non-vehicular improvements should be made to the roadway network in the focus area. Improvements range from new curbing and sidewalks to adopting a complete street approach to the major thoroughfares. Additionally, the Fairfax Bike Trail should be extended along Murray Avenue. The following improvements are recommended:

- Mid-block crosswalks – Mid-block crosswalks should be installed in key areas of the Plainville Road corridor to encourage a walkable community atmosphere. Coupled with the streetscape improvements installed recently, these changes should encourage pedestrian activity.
- Increase bicycle accessibility in the area – In an effort to promote a sustainable community, opportunities for installation of bike lanes and/or paths along Plainville Road should be investigated to provide connections with other areas of adjacent neighboring communities.
- Create additional parking facilities – Parking in this area can be difficult at times. We recommend installing on-street parking for existing and proposed development. On-street parking will provide additional parking for businesses that have small or no parking lots on the property. On-street parking can be used as a traffic calming device. Also, on-street parking should be metered as another vehicle to increase revenue. Also, public charging stations for electric vehicles and spaces for environmentally friendly vehicles should be pursued.
- Transit facility upgrades – Columbia Township should work with Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority (SORTA) to upgrade public transit facilities along Plainville Road in strategic areas, considering the limited availability of public right-of-way. Upgrades may include bus pull-off areas, updated shelters at stops, and better definition of public transit stops. In addition, select stations should be designed to be multi-modal for any possible rail/BRT transit planning. Improvements should take into consideration the Eastern Corridor plan.

- Continue access management principles – Access management improvements appropriate for this area should include limitations or consolidation of access points to private developments, use of access roadways or shared driveways, and shared parking areas. Funding should be pursued and agreements should be made with neighboring communities for traffic circles at key intersections in the township.



Columbia Township Signage
Courtesy CDAG Urban Design Plan

IMAGE

- Obelisk gateway markers should be installed at major entrances into the focus area and township. The obelisks should be designed similar to the markers identified in the “CDAG Urban Design Plan for Columbia Township”. The proposed markers should be large enough to catch the eye of a driver or pedestrian, and should be a consistent theme that portrays the identity of Columbia Township.
- A wayfinding sign system should be installed in the focus area. This system should include indicators that direct visitors to key properties in the focus area and key areas in the township. It is important that the wayfinding signage continue the Columbia Township logo and images established in earlier studies. Trailhead connection points from the business district to the Fairfax Bike Trail should be strategically located to allow users to access the trail.



Example of wayfinding system

IMPLEMENTATION

The plan recognizes that each of the implementation tactics identified in the Goals and Strategies section requires some level of commitment of resources from the township, whether that is monetary, staffing, or a combination of both. Since the level of resources changes from year-to-year, this plan does not establish a priority or timing for the completion of various tactics. Instead the township should evaluate the list of implementation tactics on an annual basis and establish a list of actions that will be undertaken in the following year based on the availability of resources. Each section of this plan identifies strategies, tactics, or recommendations for what the township wants to achieve over the next 20 years. This section provides an outline of techniques that should be used to guide implementation and action.

PLAN MONITORING

A comprehensive plan is a long-term visionary document that looks at a planning horizon of 20 years. However, this does not mean that the township should wait 20 years before reviewing and/or updating the comprehensive plan. It is highly recommended that the township review the plan on a continuous basis in light of changing conditions that may impact the recommendations. The following is a recommended schedule for review and discussion of the comprehensive plan to help monitor the recommendations of the plan and identify when the township achieves various goals and objectives.

Yearly

The Goals and Strategies section of this plan create an effective checklist for monitoring the plan on an annual basis. Each year, the plan should be reviewed so that specific strategies and implementation tactics can be identified. This will allow the township to determine priorities based on public interest and available resources. At the same time, the township can look back over the previous year and evaluate what the community accomplished and where there is a need for improvement. This review allows for flexibility in determining the tasks the township should undertake based on budgetary constraints and/or community input.

This annual review can also be used to create specific, quantitative targets for various goals. Since benchmarks are quantitative, they allow the township the ability to monitor specific accomplishments. Developing benchmarks on an annual or semi-annual basis allows the community to consider various factors such as community priorities, budgets, and available staff and resources. The annual review should be undertaken by the Township Administrator and the Township Trustees.

5 Year Improvements

Major changes can occur in a very short time. Changes in economic conditions, employment, population, infrastructure, the transportation system, development methods, and even changes in elected officials, state law or other regulations can have a significant impact on the recommendations of this plan. Therefore, it will be necessary to periodically review the document to see if substantive changes are necessary. It may not be necessary to go through a long and intensive review process, but the township should take steps to involve the public in this review process to ensure that the vision and goals are still relevant. The review should also identify major changes in infrastructure, transportation and trends that may change the recommendations of this plan. This review should also be undertaken by the Township Trustees.



New development in the
Ridge & Highland focus
area

10-20 Year Improvements

This plan is a long term visioning document that, while clear on the long-term vision, is intended to be a dynamic document. As time progresses, the township will continue to work toward the overall goals of this plan and in 10 to 20 years will have accomplished many of the specific strategies and tactics outlined in this plan. For this reason, the township should go through an extensive comprehensive planning process every 10 to 15 years.



Example of proposed
development in the Ridge
& Highland focus area

UPDATE ZONING REGULATIONS

Zoning is the primary tool that controls use and designs of properties. Zoning for Columbia Township is controlled by Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission (HCRPC) staff. The township should continue to work with HCRPC to ensure that the zoning patterns and regulations in Columbia Township will result in the desired type of development. The following updates should be completed to enhance the township and satisfy the goals, strategies, and implementation tactics discussed in the plan.

Update SPI Districts

The Specific Public Interest (SPI) districts are designed to apply supplemental regulations, standards pertaining to specific geographic features or land uses. These additional regulations, wherever these are located, are considered to be in addition to, but not necessarily more restrictive than, the "base" zoning district regulations applicable within a designated area. The SPI Districts in and around the focus areas should be updated to reflect the recommendations listed for each section. Updates are needed to allow the mixed use, building sizes, lot layouts, site elements, landscaping, and streetscaping elements for each focus area. Additionally, signage should be addressed in these regulations.



New development in the
Wooster Pike Corridor focus
area

General Improvements

Zoning updates should be focused on allowing incentives for different types of development. For example, density bonuses could be used as an



Example of design guidelines



Example of new
streetscaping in the
Plainville Road focus area



Public transportation near a
TOD

incentive in exchange for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) designed buildings and sites, multi-story buildings, mixed use, parking to sides and rear of lots, plazas and public gathering spaces, and other desired development pattern.

Improve Design Quality

Design standards for parking, signs, and landscaping should be evaluated to determine if adjustments are necessary to carry out the recommendations in the plan including those intended to enhance the township identity. The township should consider incorporating building and site design guidelines for the SPI districts to achieve the design character described for each focus area. Use of form-based codes should also be considered as a zoning tool to control and encourage development that reflects the goals of the plan. A form-based code could be created for the Plainville Business District, for example, to define the building and site patterns required for the focus areas.

Natural Resource Protection

Existing green areas and natural resources should be protected and conserved from development from future development. Zoning text should be updated to provide protection of these areas. The Little Miami River and other open space areas should consider special buffering requirements, while allowing passive activities such as trails in these areas.

Transit Oriented Development

Transit Oriented Development (TOD) refers to pedestrian friendly land development activities that are built within easy walking distance of a major transit station. In many ways TODs are very similar to mixed use centers and generally include a compact mix of different land uses that are oriented toward public walkways to promote pedestrian activity. Some specific characteristics of TODs include a range of commercial services, housing options, jobs, and recreational opportunities within easy access of transit services. TOD neighborhoods typically have a diameter of one-quarter mile to one-half mile, which represents pedestrian-scale distances. Multiple transit stops are recommended as part of the eastern corridor transportation project. The township should consider use of TODs to achieve high density development near such stations to capitalize on the public investment of such transportation project.

COORDINATION EFFORTS

Given the fragmented nature of Columbia Township's jurisdictional boundaries, coordination of planning and development efforts with other municipalities and governmental agencies is vital. Coordination and cooperation with the county, adjacent municipalities, and regional agencies may create more opportunities for the township. Cooperation with the county's planning and engineering efforts ensures the township's efforts are

in harmony with the surrounding region. Coordination with local governments and with chambers of commerce can result in supporting businesses and attracting new business to the area. The township should continue to look for opportunities to coordinate and participate in county, regional, and other local planning and development efforts.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TOOLS

There are several economic development tools and funding resources available to townships. These resources are intended to generate revenue for project development, facilitate equitable sharing of tax revenues, and help support improvements to infrastructure that may be associated with new developments. There are also resources to assist communities with small businesses and prevention of foreclosures.

Special Tax and Assessment Districts

- **Joint Economic Development District (JEDD)** – A JEDD is an agreement between a municipality and unincorporated areas to facilitate economic development. A JEDD agreement has the power to levy income tax within a designated boundary and allows sharing of such taxes between the jurisdictions. Within a JEDD, the involved jurisdictions agree by contract to share the costs of improvements in a designated area and at the same time share the benefits of any development. Ohio Revised Code (ORC) Section 715.691 sets forth the requirement to establish a JEDD. The purpose is to minimize or eliminate competition between jurisdictions and provide for better cooperation that can result in an improved economy.
- **Tax Increment Financing (TIF)** – Tax Increment Financing is a way to fund public improvements in areas where new development and redevelopment is occurring. The real estate taxes created by the new tax “increment” (the increase in real estate value made by the improvements) generated by new development in a defined area can be “captured” for reinvestment (i.e., sidewalks, roads, etc.) in a designated area around the development. As much as 100% of the new real estate taxes for a period of up to 30 years can be captured for the improvements. However, permission is required from the affected school district if the tax exemption is greater than 75% or the time period exceeds 10 years. The developer is required to pay an annual service payment in an amount of up to 100% of the tax savings that is then placed into a Township Tax Increment Equivalent Fund. These funds can be used to make necessary public improvements such as repairing and expanding roads, extending public utilities, streetscaping, and other improvements associated with the development. Commercial and industrial projects are the only type of project than can benefit from TIF by-right. Residential projects are exempt from the benefits of TIF unless the project is within a blighted area of an

impacted city. However, if the township establishes, by resolution, that housing renovations are a necessary public improvement in a TIF district, then money from the TIF fund can be applied to housing renovations.

- **Special Improvement Districts (SID)** – A Special Improvement District is a district where an assessment is made on each property and the money is used for business recruitment/retention, marketing, special events, maintenance, landscaping, streetscaping, parking, security and other public improvements that will benefit the established district. A SID can be created by the petition of:
 - The owners of at least 60% of the front footage; or
 - The owners of at least 75% of the total property located within the proposed district.

All property owners within the SID are included in the assessment, other than churches and properties owned by the township, county, or other political subdivisions (they can be included if they request inclusion in writing). The law excludes all properties owned by the state or federal government from being part of a SID. All of the properties are then assessed a certain amount of money based on the front footage, assessed valuation, a proportion of the benefits resulting from the district, or a combination of all three. The assessment is then used for improvements and programs that will benefit the entire district as mentioned earlier. A non-profit board of trustees governs the SID with a minimum of five members including one member from the township.

- **Community Improvement Corporation (CIC)** – The township could establish a Community Improvement Corporation to help encourage economic and civic development within the community. CICs have the ability to borrow money, acquire, sell, and lease properties, personal property, stocks, corporations, etc. CICs may also make loans to individuals and businesses that have been refused conventional financing. The CIC must prepare a plan for the area that will be used for commercial, industrial, and research development. The plan must also define the role the CIC will have in implementing the plan. Once complete, the Township Trustees must adopt the final plan.
- **Community Reinvestment Areas (CRA)** – Community Reinvestment Areas is an economic development tool administered by municipal and county governments that provides real property tax exemptions to businesses making investments in Ohio. The entire township is a CRA and the benefits of this designation should be used to help attract new development and job creation activities.
- **Cooperative Economic Development Agreements (CEDA)** – A CEDA is an agreement between a municipal corporation and an

unincorporated area of a township. CEDAs are similar to a JEDD agreement; however, CEDA does not have the ability to control annexation, zoning and land use, or taxing ability. A CEDA can issue development bonds for proceeds which are collected to help finance development projects within the area. CEDAs are formed following a public hearing process.

Entrepreneurial/Local Business

Investing in local business and entrepreneurialism in Columbia Township is an economic development strategy supported by this plan. In order to bolster the amount of entrepreneurial efforts and local businesses in the township, some basic concepts will need to be used. The concepts are outlined below from the article “Growing Entrepreneurs from the Ground Up: A Community-based Approach to Growing Your Own Business”.

- **Physical Infrastructure:** The township should take an inventory of available office space, traffic flows, and utility connections in the community. The township should work with businesses to figure out what types of internet infrastructure is adequate to meet their needs. Additionally, the municipality should create a business incubator or multi-tenant space building to encourage entrepreneurial growth.
- **Commercial and Professional Infrastructure:** The township should contact and market themselves to local chambers of commerce and provide business listings of available services within Columbia Township. The township should work with existing businesses to identify what support businesses are needed.
- **Financial Resources:** The township should contact area banks and lenders to create a list of available financing tools for small businesses/entrepreneurs. Some consideration should also be given to local Angel investors or seed/venture capitalists.
- **Community Environment and Design:** Identify unique natural and manmade assets of the community. Create an environment where people can gather and share ideas in an informal setting. Create and develop design guidelines for the community.
- **Human Resources:** Identify local organizations that teach/train individuals on skilled labor and business skills. Identify what small businesses look for in new employees and establish distance learning resources. Other opportunities involve a scholarship fund, mentoring program, monthly seminars, and small business programs.
- **Government and Institutions:** Advertise the community and have elected officials get involved with local programs for small businesses. Use a local coordinator to work with existing or potential small businesses or entrepreneurs for opportunities of expansion or to fulfill needs of existing organizations.

- **Markets:** Conduct a survey with local residents and businesses to find out where goods and services are provided and where the employees and customers shop. Identify possible marketing firms which cater to small businesses and/or entrepreneurs.
- **Networking:** Create opportunities for small businesses and/or entrepreneurs to network and exchange ideas. Encourage chamber of commerce events and host business after hour events, highlighting some of the uses and services in the area.
- **Quality of Life:** Identify places where groups and individuals can meet. Also inventory affordable housing opportunities and recreational spaces in the community. Conduct a study on the types and levels of health care available for the community. Form a community betterment association.
- **Community Beliefs and Attitudes:** Create a community wide campaign to increase the awareness of the value that small businesses provide. Create incentives such as a small business of the month award to outstanding small businesses in the community. Host public forums to discuss community beliefs.

CONCLUSION

This plan is an update to the 2005 Columbia Township Comprehensive Plan, which is intended to provide goals and strategies that refocus development efforts in the business areas and encourage sustainable development practices for both existing businesses and housing stock. The township has not experienced significant demographic, land use or infrastructure changes since 2005. The plan preceding this update still has valuable information in regards to the overall vision of how the township will improve over the next 20 years and important information on demographics. This document should be used in conjunction with the previous plan.

The Comprehensive Plan Update is intended to be used as a guide by community leaders, property owners, residents, and developers to shape future development in Columbia Township. As a guide, the plan update should be used by the community to evaluate proposed development and to consider and plan for public improvement projects. The plan update is not a substitute for the legislative processes established to change zoning designations of a property, nor is it a substitute for decisions that are to be made based on informed community debate and discussions that occur through public hearings. Simply put, the plan update is intended to represent the official policy starting point for more detailed analysis that is required for decisions related to individual properties.

The plan update contains goals, strategies, and implementation tactics to help guide new development and redevelopment efforts. For example, the goals, strategies, and implementation tactics related to economic development state that the township should attract new businesses and provide incentives for small businesses and entrepreneurs to locate to the township. Even though the plan update focuses heavily on improvements to the commercial sector, there are goals, strategies, and implementation tactics which address neighborhood improvements, transportation and infrastructure improvements, and improving the image and identity of the township.

This plan also identifies the desire for sustainability improvements in the residential neighborhoods and business districts. The need for pedestrian and trail linkages are encouraged to help relieve congestion and provide residents and workers with transportation alternatives.