

the Voice

Columbia Township - Fall 2021

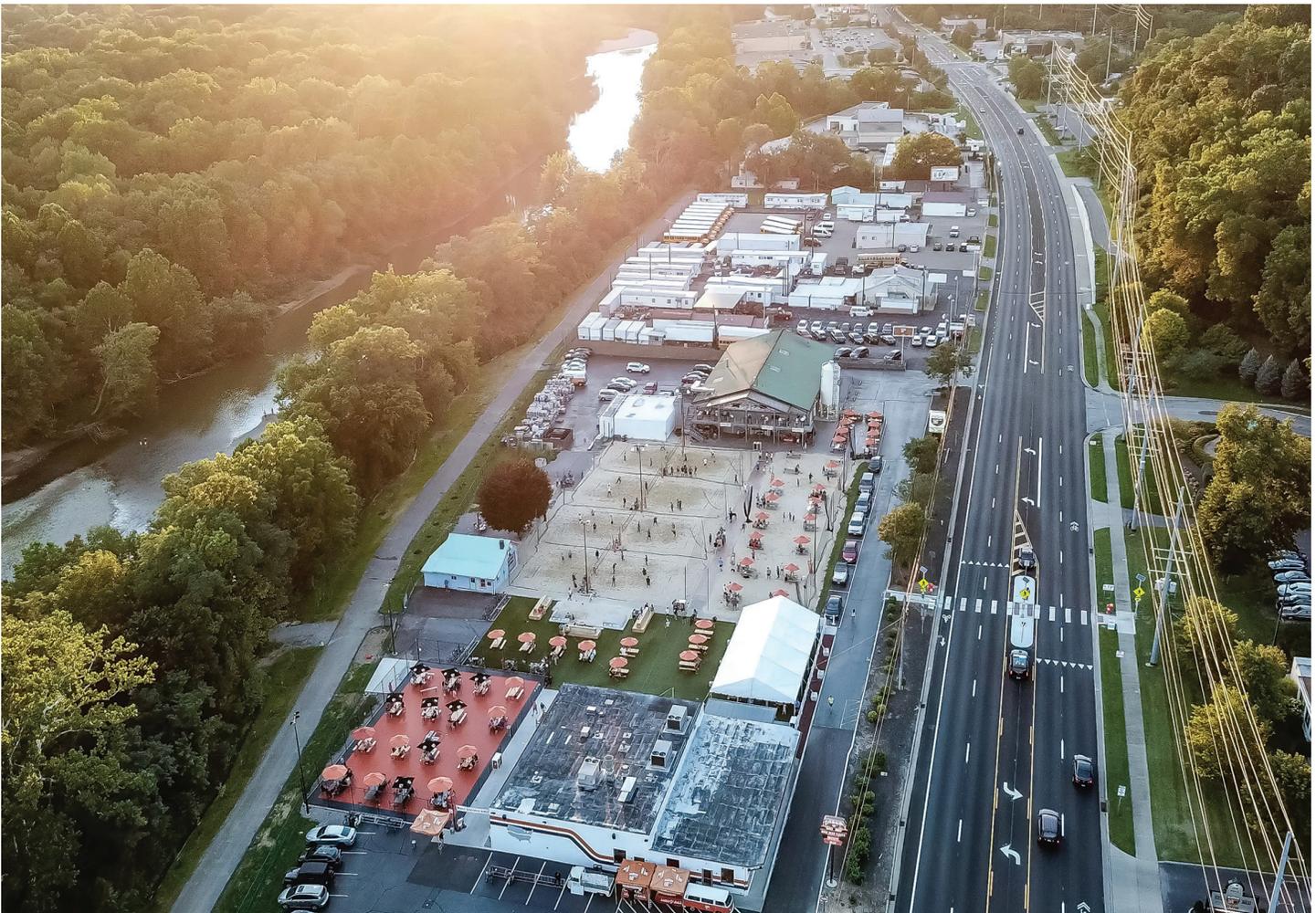
Better Than Ever



Columbia Township is *Better* Than Ever

We're one of the strongest of
Hamilton County's 49 communities.

**We arrived in this amazing place
by design—not by accident.**



“This beautiful late-summer sunset drone footage shows why Fifty West Brewing is such a great example of a community asset that makes Columbia Township ‘Better Than Ever.’ Fifty West attracts thousands of visitors from across the multi-state region which helps promote tourism and economic development. Though visitors may not know where exactly Columbia Township is, they always know Fifty West. The owners have invested millions in developing the family-friendly campus and are frequent sponsors of community charities and Columbia events.”

Decades ago, there were times

when former Township leaders served their personal agendas instead of the community. But no more—and never again. We now have ethical and professional trustees and staff who've worked hard to transform Columbia into one of the region's most desirable communities—and one of the strongest financially.

Better Leadership **Than Ever**

Columbia's Board of Trustees is experienced and gets along well. While other community officials may bicker over personal agendas, our leaders are focused on integrity and serving you.

More Professional **Than Ever**

Columbia employees are professional, experienced and work hard to support you with excellence in service delivery. We're here every workday to help when you have an interest or concern.

Better Planning **Than Ever**

Our Comprehensive Plan was put into place in 2005 as the blueprint to transform our business districts and enhance neighborhoods. Thanks to this community-wide planning, **business revenues now pay for the majority of costs for our services.**

Financially Stronger **Than Ever**

We're one of the financially strongest communities in the county. Our Reserve Fund is at the highest level ever. This means we have a safety net even if economic conditions change. We continually seek grants - in 2020 we won the **largest one-year grants total in history - \$765,000!**



More New Roads **Than Ever**

Great News! **73% of our roads are in Good to Fair condition thanks to more than \$7.2 million invested** the past 15 years. Plus we have a new prioritized road rebuild/repair list and new funding sources to fix roads faster.

Safer **Than Ever**

We enjoy a safe community thanks to a **\$1.2 million contract with the Hamilton County Sheriff.** We have highly visible patrol officers working across all neighborhoods and commercial districts and expert crime analysis and investigative services.

Keep reading to learn how Columbia Township is

Financially Stronger
Than Ever (pages 2-3)

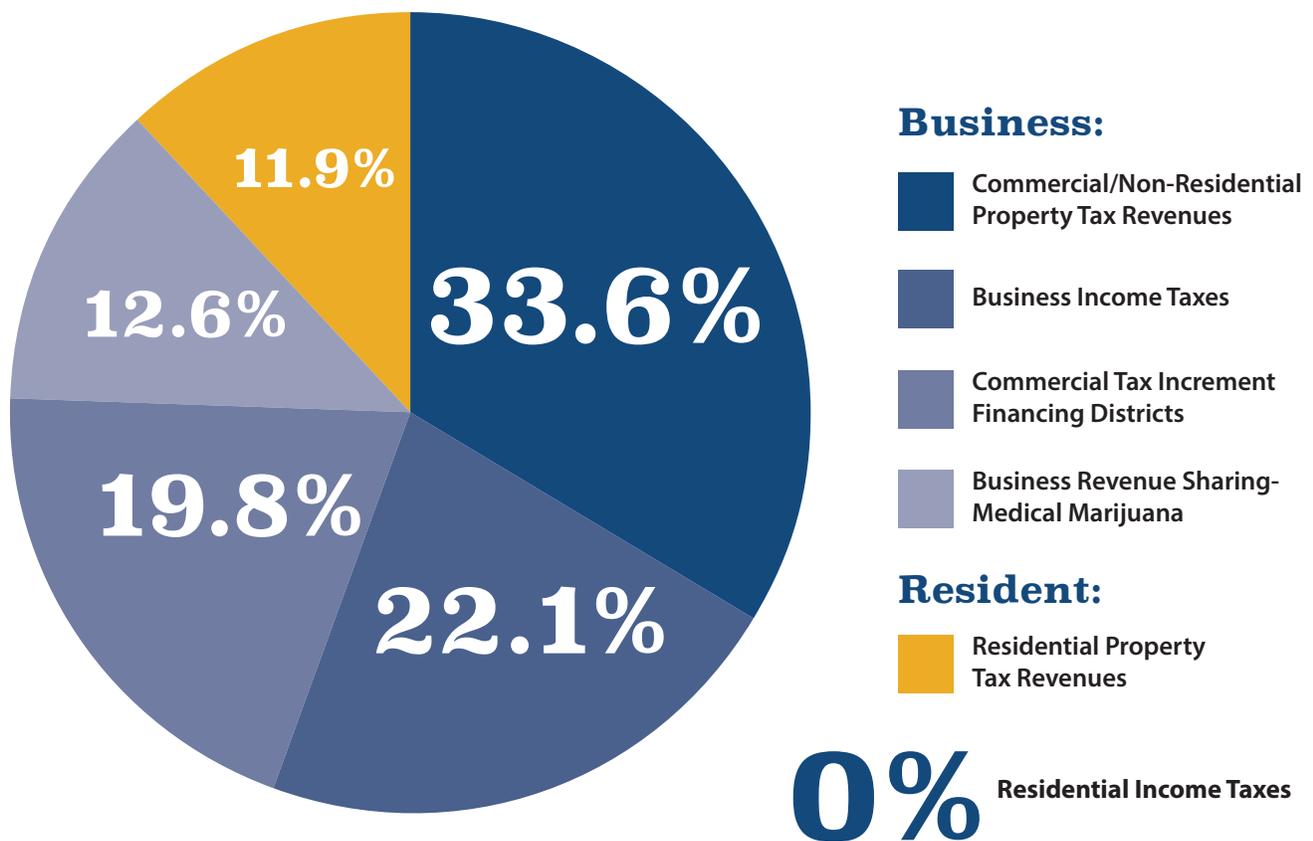
More Beautiful
Than Ever (pages 6-7)

More Environmentally-Friendly
Than Ever (pages 8-9)

More Community-Oriented
Than Ever (pages 10-13)

Columbia Township is
Financially Stronger **Than Ever**

Business Revenues Now Pay for Majority of Columbia Services



Columbia Township is one of the financially strongest communities in Hamilton County.

We've been putting the right local economic development tools into place to ensure Columbia will be great for many decades. These tools have been so successful that businesses now cover the majority of services in Columbia Township instead of residential property taxes.

In other words, this means your property taxes for Columbia Township-provided services are not being raised as costs of services continue to increase.

In fact, on Nov. 2nd you have the chance to vote for a lesser tax rate on the Township's Waste & Recycling District. Check out the full story on pages 8-9.

Highest Reserve Fund **Ever**

This provides us with a strong safety net to continue to provide all essential services without interruption even if economic conditions change.

Better for your Wallet **Than Ever**

What's happening to your property taxes? Going up? Not your Columbia Township taxes! Of 19 agencies in Hamilton County that levy property taxes on Columbia owners, only three are Columbia special revenue levies:

Police/EMS	no levy increase since 1993 & 2003 (2 funds)
Roads & Bridges	no levy increase since 2011
Waste & Recycling	32% tax rate CUT proposed on Nov. 2 ballot

More Grants **Than Ever**

Our leadership and staff have long-term relationships with numerous grant funders. Grantors give us funding because they know we'll use grants properly and to great benefit.

\$765,000
Largest one-year GRANT TOTAL in Township history (2020)

\$7,200,000
Road Funding

Road grants leveraged in past 15 years

Most of our roads are now in Good to Fair condition thanks to more than \$7.2 million invested. We've been able to achieve a 2:1 leverage of grants to Roads Levy funds.

Columbia Township is
More Beautiful **Than Ever**



Beauty is in the Eye of the Beholder

New \$500,000 neighborhood beautification program will be “Residents’ Choice”

Trustees Decide to Do “Something Big” with New \$500,000 Business Fund

Since beauty is in the eye of the beholder, your Board of Trustees is sponsoring a \$500,000 neighborhood beauty contest of sorts. This fall, the Township is offering **residents the chance to vote for one of two beautification projects they want for their neighborhood.**

The Trustees decided to give the first-year revenues from a new funding source to the neighborhoods by doing something big that the Township could not have afforded before this year. The new enhancement program, dubbed “NED” for Neighborhood Economic Development, is being offered to all of Columbia’s 15 neighborhood areas.

NED will be entirely paid for out of Columbia’s new revenue sharing agreement with its two successful medical marijuana dispensaries in the Ridge Rd. & Highland Ave. district.

“We’re turning medical marijuana into gold,” says Trustee President David Kubicki. “Or actually into street trees and architectural street signs across our entire community.”

Columbia is the only community in Hamilton County – and possibly Ohio - with this valuable revenue sharing economic development tool. Columbia will invest any future year revenues from the dispensaries to address other important needs in the Township.

And that, too, is a thing of beauty.

“So many of our residents and businesses do such a wonderful job keeping their properties looking great that we were inspired to enhance the beauty of the entire Township,” said Susan Hughes, Columbia Township Trustee.

Watch your mailbox and social media in October for a unique invitation to vote for one of these neighborhood enhancements:

• **Designer Street Signs:** There’s no reason why the trusty ol’ plain street sign can’t be attractive while standing there doing its thing. Imagine good-looking, designer-styled poles with a handsome frame around the sign and decorative finial on top.



• **Neighborhood Street Trees:** It’s hard to beat the stately beauty of trees, and studies prove that house values are higher on streets lined with trees. There’s just something idyllic and soothing about tree-lined streets that make them even more enjoyable to drive, walk—and live—on.

The majority of votes in each neighborhood will determine which of these beautification projects the Township will install.

For neighborhoods that choose designer street signs, Columbia will contract for the sign upgrades.

For neighborhoods that choose street trees, a professional arborist will meet with resident groups in each neighborhood to coordinate the best type of tree, locations and timing.

Columbia Township is
More Environmentally-Friendly **Than Ever**

Less Hassle
Lower Cost



Say NO to plastic bags!
The frequent collection of yard debris
and leaves **keeps it out of**
plastic garbage bags going
to the landfill.

In 2020, Columbia Township's crew picked-up almost 60 truckloads - about 295 TONS of leaves. This huge leaf stockpile is now turning into compost in our Ridge Ave. yard. The Township's maintenance team walked about 165 miles making their way through the entire community seven times during fall leaf season.

One of the great things
about living in Columbia Township
is that **we take the hassle of
year-round yard waste off your
to-do list.**

It's no surprise that Columbia Township's Waste & Recycling program continues to be a resident favorite.

“Residents in other communities tell us they’re envious that Columbia Township provides this service,” says **Brian Lamar, Trustee Vice President.**

And now Columbia Township's program is more *environmentally-friendly* **than ever.**

This two-for-one program has you covered to recycle from your house and your yard.

Yard Waste

Residents rave because the program takes away the hassle of dealing with constant piles of yard debris and seasonal waste like leaves and Christmas trees.

The frequent collection of yard debris and leaves keeps it out of plastic garbage bags going to the dump. We're proud to help residents say NO to plastic bags. Instead, Columbia Township takes it to recycle and return as compost or wood chips.

Household Waste & Recycling

Another resident hassle we take care of is household garbage collection. Your weekly garbage and recycling collection is at a much lower cost than if you had a direct customer account with Rumpke. (We bid and manage 1600+ households under one Township account).

Each year, Columbia Township residents are proud to divert 25% of household waste from the landfill into recycling.

Would You Like to Vote for Lower Taxes?

Nov. 2nd is your chance!
Waste & Recycling District Tax Rate Cut

Yes, you read that right – a LOWER tax rate for a FAVORITE service.

Columbia’s Board of Trustees asks voters to cut the Waste & Recycling levy tax rate by 32%.

The Waste & Recycling District levy is a “voters’ choice” program – meaning it’s the only one of Columbia’s public services that residents vote to renew.

The current levy rate of 5.1 mills will be cut to 3.5 mills if voters pass the proposed levy. A \$200,000 market-value house would pay \$245 annually – this is less than what many residents in other communities pay just for household garbage collection.

And that’s a stat residents can get behind!

Curious

how we save you the hassle and high cost of managing your household and yard waste?

Year-Round Yard Brush Collection

We collect yard brush starting all year long so you’ll never have a messy yard.

Fall Leaf Pickup

We help you clean up your yard for winter by picking up your leaves each fall.

Christmas Tree Collection & Recycling

After the holidays, we collect and recycle your live trees.

Compost and Wood Chip Delivery

A local major landscaping company charges nearly \$50 per cubic yard of compost - plus delivery fee! We’ll deliver compost and wood chips to your yard free (while supplies last each season).

Columbia Township is
More Community-Oriented **Than Ever**



**Firehouse ‘Extreme Makeover’ Will Bring Back
Favorite Community Gathering Place**

Vacant 1950s Madison Place firehouse will again become a community space where neighbors – and neighborhoods – mix and become friends

Columbia Township is going “Back To The Future” to bring alive again a once-favorite place where generations of residents gathered for their most important celebrations.

Trustees decided to give an extreme makeover to the long-vacant firehouse in our historic Madison Place neighborhood. The firehouse housed the original all-volunteer Madison Place Fire Department formed in 1941. Soon residents will again be gathering and celebrating at the 10,000 square-foot building which is being converted into a multi-purpose venue that will stand again for decades to come.

“We contemplated selling the property, but, at the end of the day, we seized on the chance to transform this beloved place into something really remarkable,” said David Kubicki, President of Columbia’s Board of Trustees. ***“This restoration will strengthen our community in countless ways.”***

The venue is designed to host a wide range of activities, from casual social events with family and friends to non-profit fundraisers to business functions. The renovated firehouse will also become home to Columbia’s administrative offices and Town Hall which are currently in Madeira.

The use of the new venue will be established by residents, businesses and community groups through a collaborative process with Columbia Township.

The large, open venue will offer a “historic modern” vibe at its enviable “Main Street” location between Madison Place and Mariemont along the newly extended Murray Path. The revamped firehouse will help build the Madison Place brand regionally and attract more businesses to the growing Plainville Road corridor.

“Virtually any community in the entire country would love to have an asset as spectacular as the Columbia Township firehouse,” said Kevin Wright, Principal of Yard & Company, a national urban placemaking team that worked on the firehouse project. ***“There’s not much a facility like this won’t be able to do whether for serious or fun purposes.”***

This remarkable firehouse transformation is being funded by four grants worth more than \$500,000 plus proceeds from a special fund Tax Increment Financing (TIF) fund paid by new commercial property taxes.

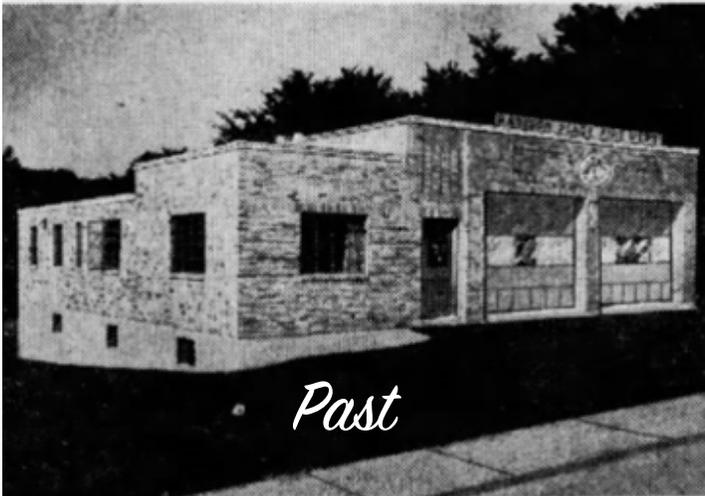
Pandemic impacts on contractor schedules and materials have delayed the start of construction to late this year. Columbia Township will host a “hard hat” event for the entire community at the firehouse before the contractor starts work.

For the full story with details and pictures about how wonderful the new venue will be, check out our website at ColumbiaTwp.org and click on:

“Former Firehouse Extreme Makeover Will Bring Back Favorite Community Gathering Place”

And watch for a “Firehouse” special edition of The Voice in your mailbox later this year!

Columbia Township is
More Community-Oriented Than Ever
(cont.)



Columbia Township engaged residents and stakeholders over the past year to help plan for the firehouse vision. Here's a sampling of what we've heard:

"It's an understatement to say I'm so totally impressed and blown away by the exciting plans for the fire station. Columbia Township is so VERY, VERY fortunate to have such great leadership." - Peggy

"Don't think anyone will do anything but love this. It's such a great idea, everyone will be flabbergasted that we could do this. We want a community place where neighbors and neighborhoods can mix and become friends." - Mike

"Love it! Exciting! Brilliant! A nice gift to the community to end this difficult year." - Liz

"You've thought of everything and more than anyone could have. Love that we're keeping it for the community. There are plenty of established programs out there—this lets us partner with them in a great space." - Michael

"[It's] a great playbook to ask the community what we'd like to see the firehouse become. Real engagement is not just talking about something but getting to participate in its creation." - Tom



Susan's Story

My brother Jim Gratsch was 16 when he became a volunteer fireman at the Madison Place Fire Department. The original firefighters were all volunteers. Our family grew up on Britton Avenue in Madison Place. The plectron (emergency radio) would go off at our house, and "257" meant Madison Place.

Norb Nerl, Paul Burger and Chief Vance were some of the original firefighters. Many men served for years and are still around.

Jim's going away party to the U.S. Navy was held at the firehouse. He passed away in 2006.

Meetings and parties were held downstairs - when I was young, I was a Brownie and we met in the downstairs. I remember my 8th grade party in the same room - we played spin the bottle and danced. Of course, our teacher chaperoned!

At Halloween the fire department gave away chips and soda. They would set up a coffin there and a fireman would pop out to scare people!

Susan Hughes
Columbia Township Trustee



Share Your Firehouse Memories

So many residents have interesting stories and memorabilia connected to the former firehouse. Some of you recall community meetings and social events, others have family members who worked there as first responders.

Have memories to share? Email: FirehouseMemories@ColumbiaTWP.org with firehouse in subject line or call Lauren at 513-272-0000. We'll also post an invitation on the Township's website for you to record your stories to share later through an audio experience at the new venue.

Columbia Township has *Better Leadership* Than Ever



David Kubicki

PRESIDENT

Williams Meadow (East)

I've lived in Columbia Township 30 years, raised five kids here and served as Trustee for 10 years. *I'm always working to bring more revenue into our community so we can shift taxes off residents and grow better every year.* In my day job as a commercial developer, I bring businesses to other communities - those residents get to enjoy better services and nicer neighborhoods thanks to business taxes. We deserve that better quality of life here, too. *People tell me how happy they are that Columbia is finally thriving – and to keep up the great work.*

dkubicki@columbiatwp.org



Brian Lamar

VICE PRESIDENT

Madison Place (East)

I'm in the community talking to residents literally every day to better understand each neighborhood's unique strengths and needs. *Lots of people are moving here because we have safe, attractive, walkable neighborhoods that are close to restaurants, trails and jobs.* While I represent the entire Township, I particularly love representing Madison Place, a neighborhood I've lived in for over 15 years. The diversity and unique challenges it brings, inspires me to work hard for the community. I've been a Trustee for a year and proud to work with such an amazing team to serve the Township. We've accomplished so much, and I'm very excited to continue to help our community grow and prosper.

blamar@columbiatwp.org



Susan Hughes

TRUSTEE

[Erhling/Stewart Road \(Central\)](#)

*There is no "I" in the word Board – as trustees, we're not here to do our own personal thing. We're here to serve the people. I've lived in the Township my entire life. I grew up in Madison Place, attended Cure of Ares school - St. John Vianney Parish that today is Good Shepherd Montessori. I've been a trustee 24 years and have a passion for making this the best place possible for our residents. I'm so proud of this park in my childhood neighborhood (pictured) – we worked with state representative Tom Brinkman and the school to win a grant for this park that's open to students and, after school, to all residents. This past year we won more grants than ever in the Township's history. *Columbia Township is the best it's ever been- and the best is yet to come.**

shughes@columbiatwp.org



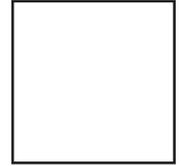
Caroline Heekin

FISCAL OFFICER

[Ridgewood \(West\)](#)

*I've lived in the Ridgewood neighborhood for nearly 25 years and am so grateful that this is where we chose to raise our kids. Until becoming Fiscal Officer in 2017, I didn't realize how much impact our Trustees have on the quality of life we all enjoy. *Together with our unsurpassed Administrator, our board works to find fiscally sound and forward-thinking solutions to sometimes incredibly complex issues.* We must ensure that all decisions comply with Township laws and regulations and assure that we offer public collaboration and transparency. It's my honor and privilege to maintain the records of these decisions. I'm so excited to see all of our plans put into action for this Township I love so much.*

cheekin@columbiatwp.org



Fresher Than Ever

Given all the fabulous things happening in our community, we're giving this newsletter a fresh look, one more reflective of the fact that we're on the move—in a *big* way.

Happy reading! And don't forget to visit the Township website often for the latest news and updates: **ColumbiaTWP.org**.



Columbia Township
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