

# **RIDGE AND HIGHLAND SUBURBAN CENTER**

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## **SPECIAL PUBLIC INTEREST STRATEGIES PLAN**

**June 2006**

**Columbia Township, Ohio**



**HAMILTON COUNTY  
Regional Planning Commission**



# **RIDGE AND HIGHLAND SUBURBAN CENTER SPECIAL PUBLIC INTEREST STRATEGIES PLAN**

**Columbia Township, Ohio**

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## INTRODUCTION

In July 2005, the Columbia Township Trustees contracted with the Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission to complete a planning study and to produce a Special Public Interest (SPI) Strategy document for the creation of a Special Public Interest District for the Ridge and Highland commercial center located in Columbia Township. An SPI district is a zoning tool contained in the Hamilton County Zoning Resolution that can be used to refine existing zoning regulations and to give local jurisdictions the ability to create standards that address issues or desires for the future of specific areas of the community. The SPI district will eventually become a part of the Hamilton County Zoning Resolution, including a new zoning designation on the official Zoning Map and a new section of text included in the Zoning Resolution.

Reasons for creation of an SPI district include the facilitation and implementation of several goals of the Columbia Township Comprehensive Plan, including revitalization of older commercial areas of the township and creating a cohesive image for the township. The implementation strategies of the Comprehensive Plan recommend creation of SPI districts in certain sections of the township, including the Ridge and Highland area, which would improve the quality of development and redevelopment. Architectural standards, improved pedestrian accessibility, improved streetscape appearance, and traffic congestion mitigation were among the potential standards recommended in the Comprehensive Plan. Therefore, continuing implementation of the Comprehensive Plan and improving the appearance of the Ridge and Highland commercial center are the main objectives of this SPI Strategy Plan.

Justification for this Ridge and Highland Commercial Center SPI Strategies Plan becomes clear after viewing the existing condition of commercial development in the area. While the majority of land in the area is either zoned or used as commercial, there are several large properties that contain vacant big-box type developments. These properties may be redeveloped or reused in the near future. The character of these vacant sites, and other existing big-box sites in the area, includes large expanses of unbroken pavement, very little landscaping, large scale signage, and a general lack of pedestrian amenities, including sidewalks. In addition, development in the area generally does not include landscaping along the street and buildings are generally devoid of any architectural character. The area is generally congested with auto traffic, especially around the intersection of Ridge Avenue and Highland Avenue, and includes many commercial driveways and intersections. Even though the area has many thriving businesses, the factors listed above combine to leave a negative impression on visitors to the area and pose a threat to retention of existing businesses.

The Ridge and Highland area is the largest commercial center in Columbia Township. Township officials, and other county agencies have worked tirelessly over the last several years to improve the area's deficiencies. The township is currently in the process of installing public sidewalks and street trees along Ridge Avenue, Highland Avenue, and Kennedy Avenue to improve pedestrian accessibility and the overall image of the area. The Hamilton County Engineer has recently adopted an Access Management Plan for the county that will help mitigate several of the problem commercial driveways and intersections in the area. However, to address the specific look and design of commercial properties in the area, the township has undertaken this SPI Strategies Plan to allow for the creation of zoning regulations that will reduce signage, improve streetscape, reduce the amount of impervious surfaces, increase parking lot landscaping, improve vehicular and pedestrian circulation, and improve architectural character. With the policies contained in this plan, Columbia Township will greatly improve the character of commercial development in the Ridge and Highland area which will result in a high quality regional shopping destination that the township can be proud of for years to come.



## **1. STUDY AREA**

The SPI Study Area includes the properties in the Ridge and Highland area of Columbia Township. This includes all properties within Columbia Township that are located on either side of Ridge Avenue and Highland Avenue and on either side of Kennedy Avenue south of Hill and Dale Drive and View Point Drive. The study area also includes all properties located on Kenoak Lane, Monardi Circle, Lucille Drive, and Donald Street (see Map 1, Study Area).

## **2. EXISTING CONDITIONS**

### **2.1 Description**

The study area currently contains a mix of commercial, industrial, and residential uses. The residential uses in the corridor include single-family homes located on Donald Street, Lucille Drive, Kenoak Lane, and Monardi Circle. Very few single-family homes remain along the area's main roads, including Ridge, Highland, and Kennedy Avenues. The study area is most easily identified by the big-box developments located along these main roads. Walmart, Home Depot, Lowes, and Value City are located in the study area. In addition, there are two other vacant or underutilized big-box developments in the study area that were former locations of Sam's Club and K-Mart. The industrial uses in the study area are concentrated mainly along Kennedy Avenue, with the exception of a Cintas uniform cleaning operation on Ridge Avenue. In addition to the mentioned uses, the study area also contains a large auto dealership, several fast food and sit-down restaurants, strip retail centers and a hotel. The existing mix of vacant and underutilized sites and small retail and residential properties offers a number of opportunities for redevelopment and reuse of existing development.

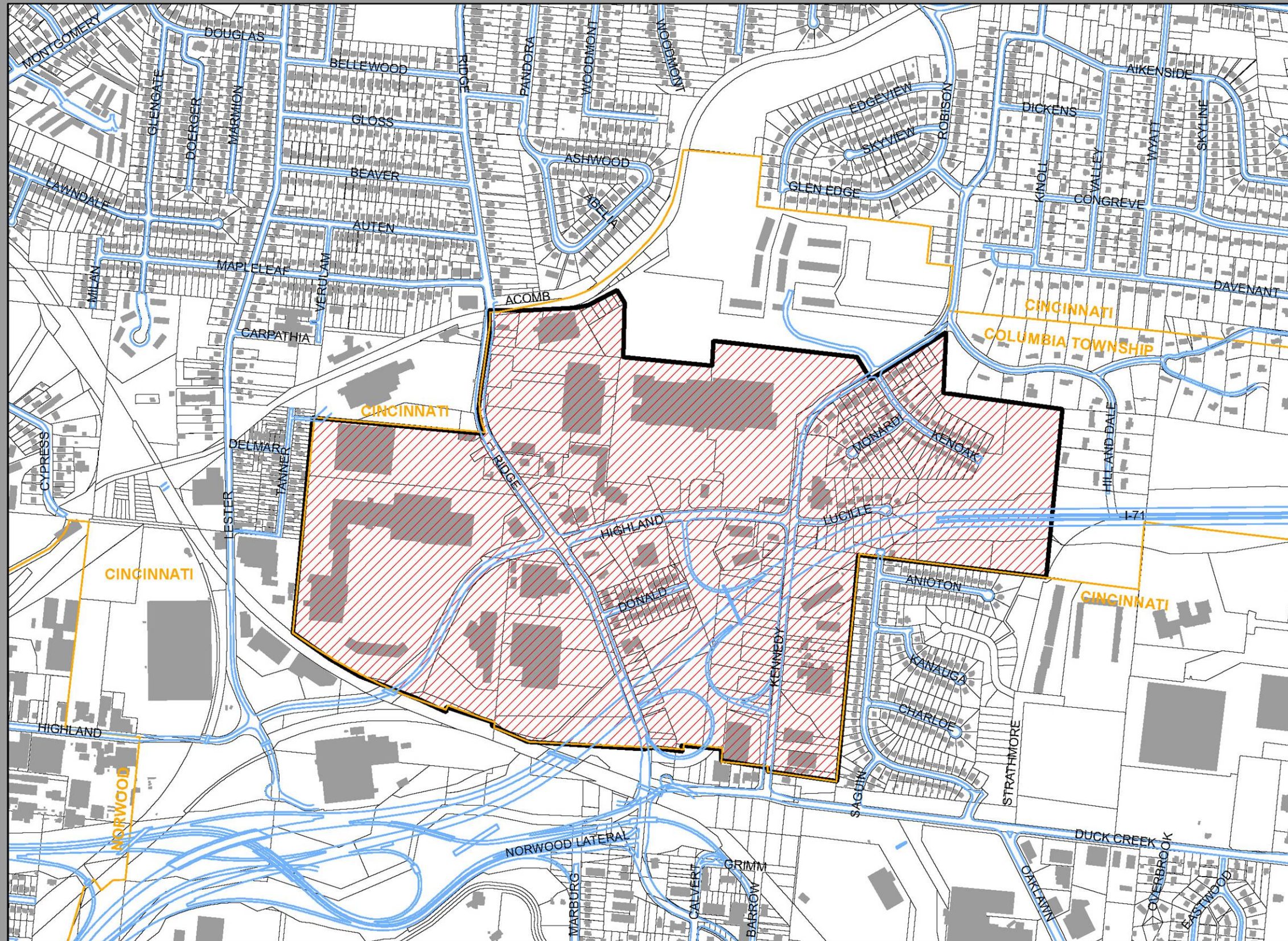
Existing commercial developments in the area were generally constructed with very little landscaping and very few pedestrian amenities, giving the corridor a very auto oriented look and feel. The area has also been negatively impacted by the traffic and congestion that exists along Ridge and Highland Avenues. Township identity has been an issue as most people mistakenly assume that the area is a part of the City of Cincinnati, which completely surrounds the study area, or another nearby jurisdiction. The undesired proliferation of signage and billboards and a lack of public sidewalks have also been identified as issues in the study area. Despite these problems, the area has remained a viable location for regional businesses and the smaller commercial establishments that go along with them.

### **2.2 Topography**

The topography of the study area includes several steep slopes and ravines. A large hill running east to west is located along the northern boundary of the site. The slope separates the existing Walmart/Home Depot building at the bottom of the hill from the large apartment complex (not included in the study area) on the top of the hill. This hill also runs between the vacant K-Mart site along Ridge Avenue and the Cintas development. The hill is broken in one area by a large ravine that runs between the vacant K-Mart site and the Walmart/Home Depot site. This ravine runs through the study area from the northern boundary to the southeastern corner, including culverts under



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## Map 1: Study Area

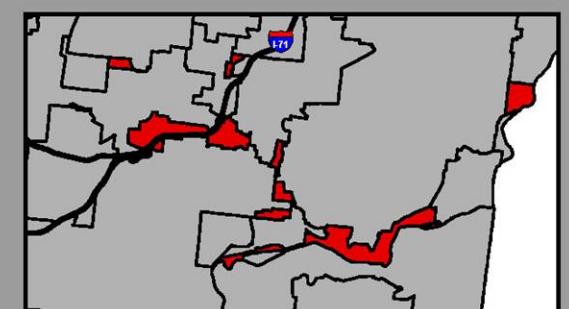
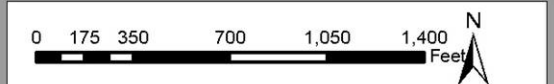
-  Ridge and Highland Study Area  
 Buildings  
 Parcels  
 Pavement  
 Municipalities and Townships

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Highland Avenue, Interstate 71, and Kennedy Avenue. Other steep slope areas are located along both sides of Interstate 71, at the end of Donald Street, and along the Interstate exit ramp to Highland Avenue. The area is not located within the 100-year floodplain (see Map 2, Topography).

### **2.3 Zoning**

The Hamilton County Zoning Resolution was initially enacted in Columbia Township on November 16, 1949. The area includes a number of residential, commercial, and industrial zoning designations (see Map 3, Zoning). The area was once comprised of industrial uses that took advantage of the area's transportation access. In addition to the interstate access, the area is also served by a major railroad that runs along the southwestern corner of the study area. Over the years, the need for industrial land has decreased and the areas once occupied by industrial uses have generally been redeveloped for commercial uses. However, the industrial zoning classifications have remained. In contrast, the northeastern portion of the study area, which is slightly removed from the interstate and railroad access, is zoned for single family residential and contains two small neighborhoods. This mix of zoning creates a distinctive shift in character within the study area.

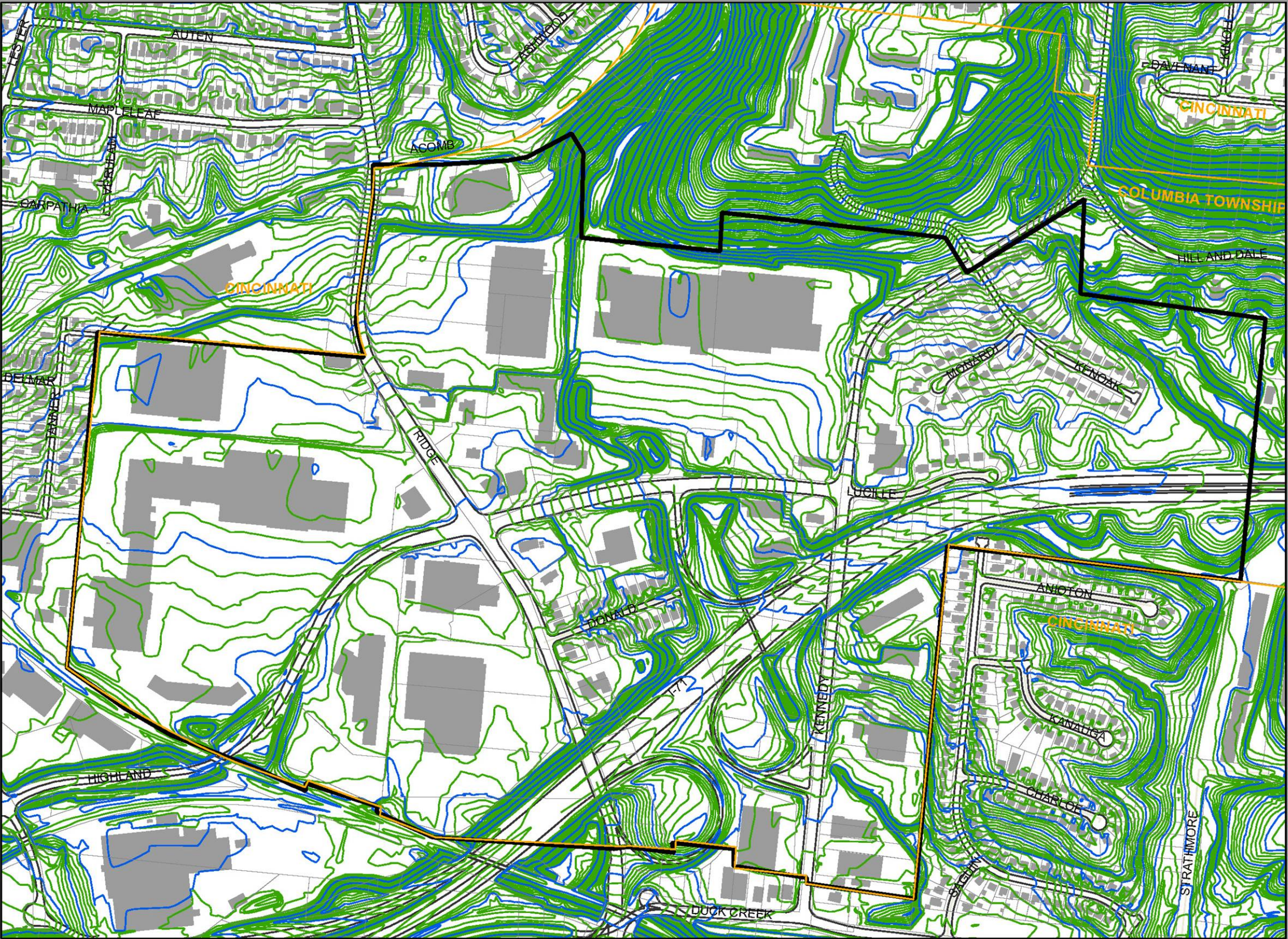
The majority of property in the study area with frontage on Ridge Avenue, the western end of Highland Avenue, and the southern end of Kennedy Avenue are either zoned "G" Heavy Industrial or "F" Light Industrial. The area also contains a large amount of property zoned "E" Retail Business. These properties are located on the northwest corner of Ridge and Highland Avenues, along Donald Street on the east side of Ridge Road, and along both sides of Highland Avenue west of Kennedy Avenue. Commercial businesses are located in these retail zones, with the exception of Donald Street, which contains a number of single-family homes. Several homes along Ridge Avenue have been converted to commercial use but the homes along Donald Street itself remain occupied as residences. A large section of the northeastern corner of the study area is zoned "C" Residence, which allows high density detached single-family residences and does not permit attached condominiums or apartments. This area includes properties on Lucille Drive, Kenoak Lane, and Monardi Circle.

The area also contains several planned commercial developments. The large Home Depot/Walmart development on the north side of Highland Avenue and the medical office development on the northeast corner of Kennedy Avenue and Lucille Drive are zoned "EE" Planned Retail. Double letter zoning districts are districts that were approved with a specific plan that governs development of the site. A large medical office building was recently approved for construction at the end of Lucille Drive and is currently zoned "OO" Planned Office. No construction has begun on the development. One other planned development is located in the study area encompassing the Lowe's development center on the north side of Highland Avenue. The property is currently zoned "G PUD" Heavy Industrial – Planned Unit Development. The PUD standards contained in the Zoning Resolution allow for the innovative development of a site where the proposed use is permitted in the existing zoning district. No zone change is required for approval of a PUD. These planned developments typically contain more landscaping and better site design than other unplanned developments in the area.

In October 1996, the Hamilton County Zoning Resolution was revised and new standards were adopted. Among those most beneficial to the visual appearance of commercial and



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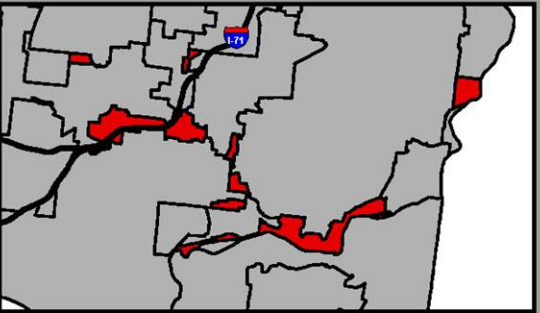


## Map 2: Topography

- 2' Contours
- 10' Contours
- Ridge and Highland Study Area
- Buildings
- Parcels
- Municipalities and Townships

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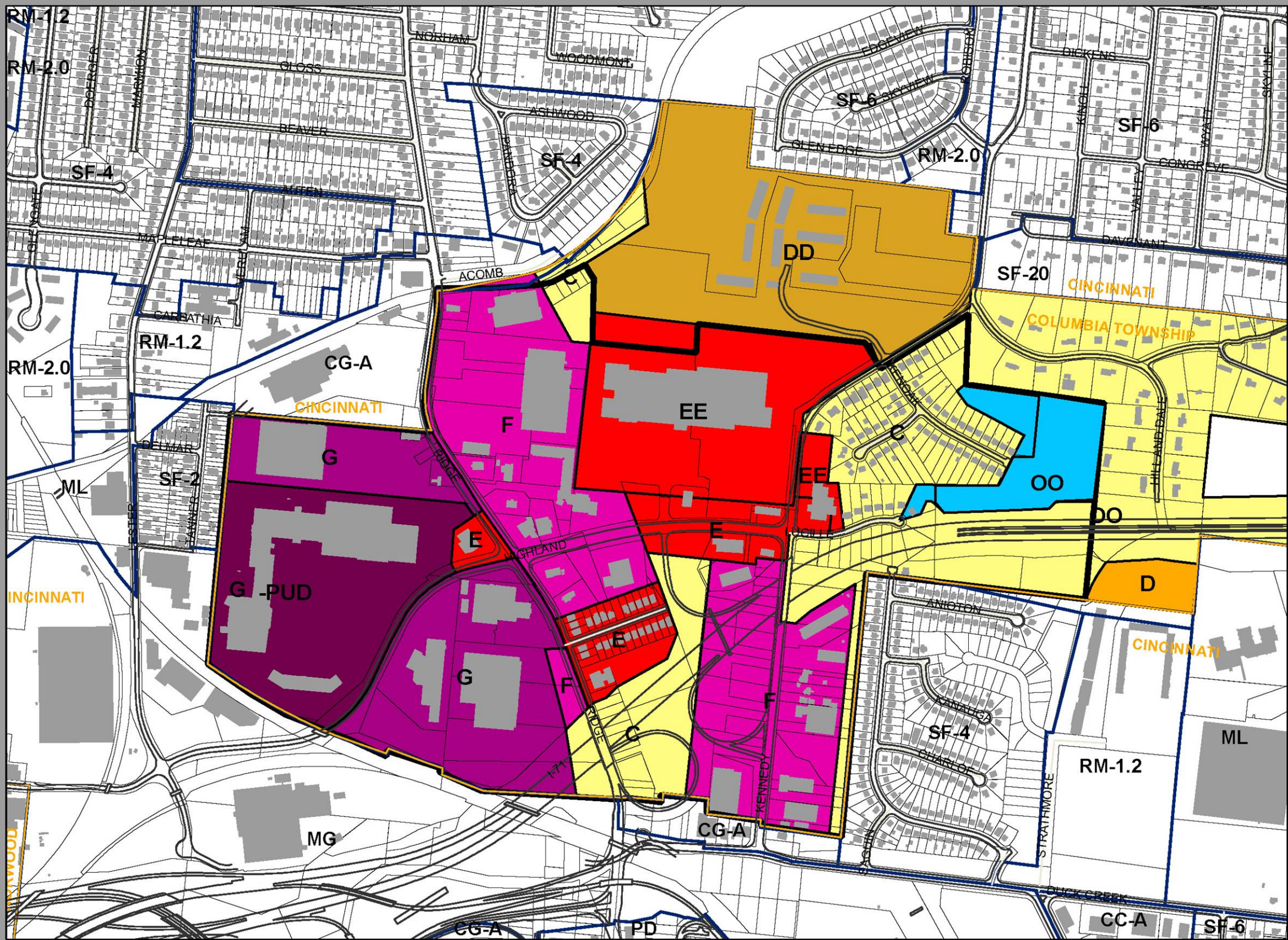
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## Map 3: Zoning

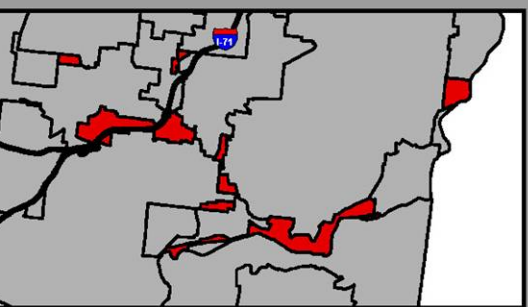
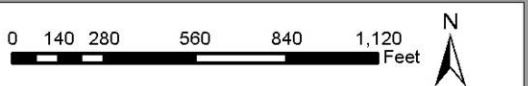
- Ridge and Highland Study Area
- Buildings
- Parcels
- Cincinnati Zoning
- Municipalities and Townships

### RZC Zoning

- C-Single Family
- D-Multi Family
- DD-Planned Multi Family
- E-Retail
- EE-Planned Retail
- F-Light Industrial
- G-Heavy Industrial
- G-PUD
- OO-Planned Office

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industrial areas are standards for streetscape landscaping, interior parking lot landscaping, and signage control. Current zoning requirements in the “E” Retail, “F” Light Industrial, and “G” Heavy Industrial districts include 20,000 square-foot minimum lot size, 10-foot landscape buffers along all public streets, maximum intensity (impervious surface ratio) of 60% lot coverage, 10 to 60-foot wide landscape buffers along all property lines that abut a single-family lot, interior parking lot landscaping, and a restriction on the number and size of freestanding signs permitted for each lot. However, most of the developments in the area were constructed prior to adoption of the updated standards and are not required to comply with the new standards unless the properties are redeveloped.

The large amount of unplanned industrial zoning in the area creates the potential for future unplanned commercial development and redevelopment. Under the existing zoning, there is improved control over landscaping, signage, and general parking lot appearance. However, there is no control over pedestrian circulation, vehicular movement, or building aesthetics. Large amounts of unrestricted “E” Retail, “F” Light Industrial, and “G” Heavy Industrial could allow incremental development of parcels with little coordination among adjacent developments and no control over building character. Such unplanned development may be detrimental to the area and Columbia Township as a whole

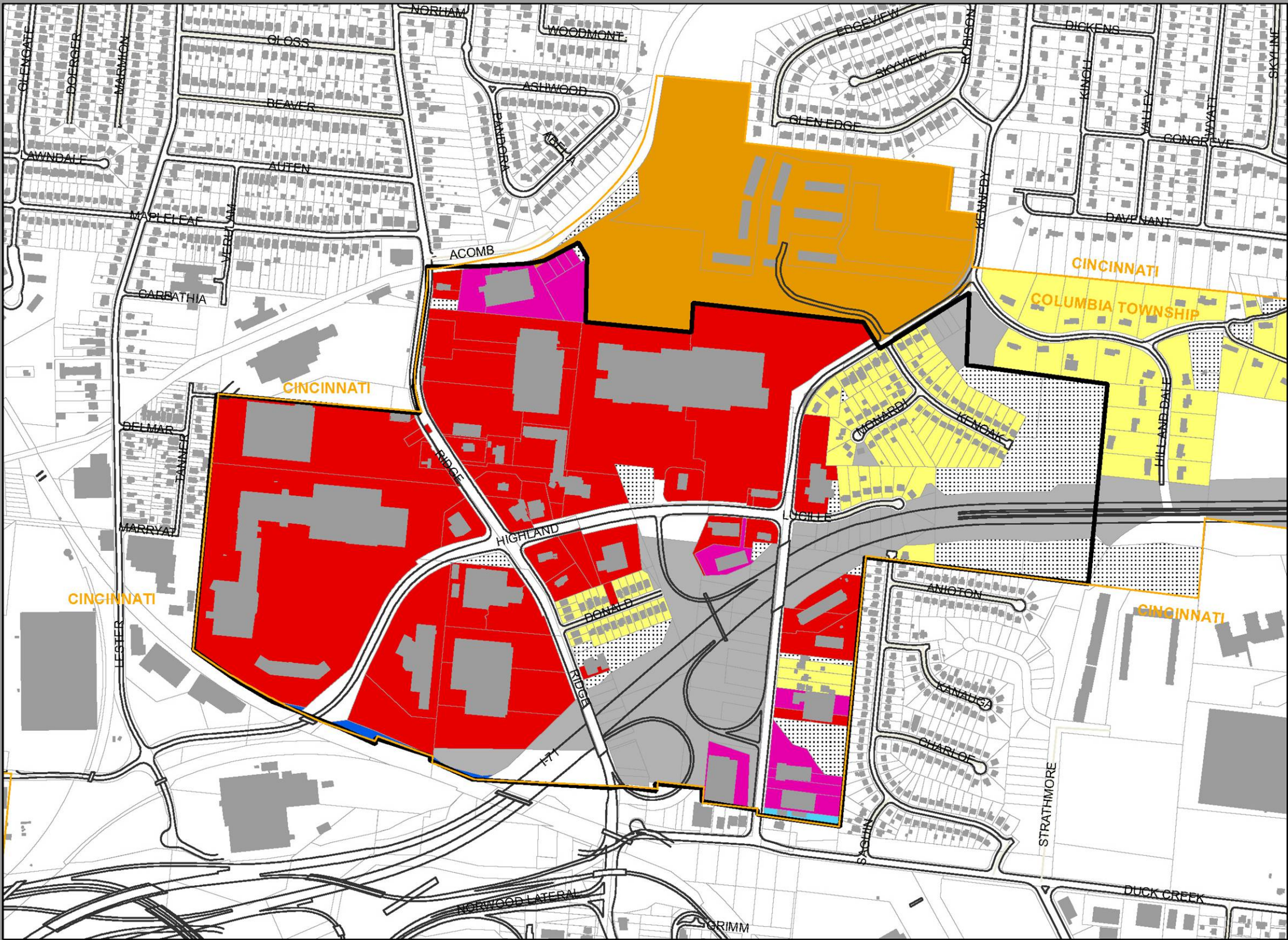
The Zoning Resolution does contain a tool to change the zoning requirements for a specific area without changing the zoning requirements for the entire county. The Special Public Interest (SPI) district offers the opportunity to strengthen or relax any provision of the Zoning Resolution. This Ridge and Highland Commercial Center SPI Strategies Plan is the first step in the creation of an SPI zoning district. The SPI district is a tool that can be used to create an alternate set of regulations for the Ridge and Highland area that could improve the appearance and the vehicular and pedestrian connectivity of developments in the area.

## **2.4 Land Use**

The Ridge and Highland area of Columbia Township can generally be described as a commercial center, although there is a small mix of other uses as well. The Hamilton County Auditor’s office has an existing land use classification for each parcel in the study area (see Map 4, Existing Land Use). Of the approximately 219 acres included in the study area, approximately 55% of the acreage is classified as Commercial. A total of 17% of the study area is classified as Public/Semi Public and 8% is classified as Single Family. The average parcel size within the study area is approximately 0.82 acres. The area includes 257 parcels of land, the majority of which are classified as Single Family (87 of the 257 parcels; or 34%). The next largest categories are the Public/Semi Public classification (67 of 257 parcels, or 26%) and the Commercial classification (56 of 257 parcels, or 22%). There are only 14 parcels classified as Light Industrial and zero parcels classified as Heavy Industrial. Vacant land includes only 17 parcels (8% of the 257 total parcels) which accounts for only 7% of the total acreage in the study area. The Study Area as a whole contains many small parcels of land that are mostly used for residential while the majority of the larger parcels in the corridor are used for commercial purposes. Table A provides the detailed parcel analysis data for the entire study area.



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## Map 4: Existing Land Use

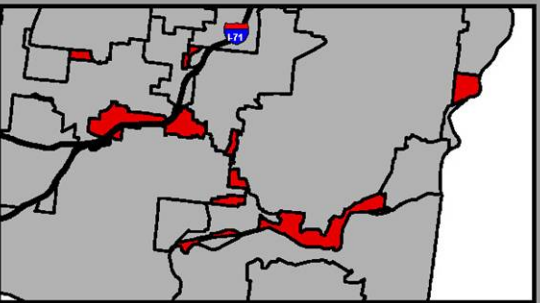
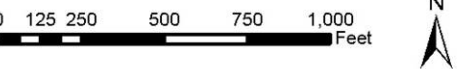
- Ridge and Highland Study Area
- Municipalities & Townships
- Buildings
- Parcels
- Pavement

### Land Use Categories

- Single Family
- Commercial
- Light Industrial
- Multi Family
- N/A
- Office
- Public/Semi Public
- Public Utilities
- Vacant

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**Table A: Parcel Analysis**

<b>EXISTING LAND USE</b>	<b>ACRES</b>	<b>NUMBER OF PARCELS</b>	<b>% of TOTAL LAND AREA</b>	<b>% of TOTAL PARCELS</b>
<b>Commercial</b>	117.03	56	55.59%	21.79%
<b>Light Industrial</b>	11.02	14	5.23%	5.45%
<b>N/A</b>	10.64	14	5.05%	5.45%
<b>Office</b>	0.49	1	0.23%	0.38%
<b>Public/Semi Public</b>	36.22	67	17.20%	26.07%
<b>Public Utilities</b>	< 0.01	1	< 0.01%	0.38%
<b>Single Family</b>	17.72	87	8.42%	33.85%
<b>Vacant</b>	17.41	17	8.27%	6.61%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>210.53</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>Average Parcel Size 0.82 acres</b>	

The data provided in this section may be slightly misleading given the inherent errors in using the Auditor's land use data for detailed analysis. The following clarifications provide more insight into the existing land uses in the study area:

- 61 of the 67 parcels identified as Public/Semi Public are part of public street right-of-ways. That leaves six parcels of usable land designated as Public/Semi Public. Of these six parcels, five are owned by Columbia Township for stormwater control and one is owned by the Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority and contains a single family home. This significantly impacts the parcel analysis provided above.
- Several large parcels of land designated as Commercial are currently vacant. This includes the four parcels occupied by the former K-Mart development on Ridge Avenue and three parcels occupied by the former Frank's Nursery development on Highland Avenue. Taking this into account greatly increases the amount of vacant land actually located in the study area.
- Other small discrepancies include properties along Ridge Avenue listed as Single Family that have been converted to commercial use and properties along Ridge Avenue and Lucille Drive listed as vacant that actually include portions of surrounding commercial and industrial uses. However, these discrepancies are very small and would not likely have a significant impact on the parcel analysis.

Taking these facts into consideration provides a different picture of the land use in the study area. The number of vacant parcels in the area increases from 17 to 22 parcels (8% of the parcels to 11%) and the amount of vacant land area increases from 6% to 15% including a revised total of approximately 28 acres. The Public/Semi Public category is reduced to 4% of the parcels and 0.88% of the acreage in the study area. Commercial use remains the highest category of land area and Single Family remains the highest category in terms of the number of parcels in the study area. Therefore, though the majority of the area is used for commercial businesses, there is a significant amount of vacant land that may be redeveloped in the future.



## 2.5 Traffic

Traffic in the study area is concentrated mostly around the intersection of Ridge and Highland Avenues, with the major transportation corridor located along Ridge Avenue. Secondary traffic is heaviest on Highland and Kennedy Avenues. The reason for this traffic concentration is that Interstate 71 and the Norwood Lateral have several ramps that exit and enter the expressways at various locations throughout the Ridge and Highland area. Exit and entrance ramps to these two expressways are spread out across Ridge, Highland, and Kennedy Avenues, creating a high amount of traffic movement throughout the corridor as motorists maneuver to access these ramps. The Hamilton County Thoroughfare Plan accordingly designates Ridge Avenue as a Minor Arterial and Highland and Kennedy Avenues as Collector Roads. Other roads within the Study Area include Donald Street, Lucille Drive, Kenoak Lane, and Monardi Circle, all of which are township maintained local roads.

Manual traffic counts taken at various times between 1998 and 2005 indicate that the intersection of Ridge and Highland Avenues is the busiest intersection in Columbia Township. The Average Daily Traffic (ADT) through this intersection was 48,336 in 2005. This number has steadily decreased since 2000, when the intersection saw an ADT of 53,917. This decrease may be partially due to the closures of the K-Mart and Sam's Club developments on Ridge Avenue. However, Ridge Avenue is a major north-south corridor for this region and provides a connection between I-71 and the Ronald Reagan Cross County Highway, serving as a through road for residents of the Cincinnati neighborhoods of Hyde Park and Pleasant Ridge and the surrounding jurisdictions of Golf Manor and Amberley Village. Traffic counts at other intersections in the study area show the use of Highland and Kennedy Avenue interstate ramps to access I-71. Traffic through intersections on Ridge Avenue just north and just south of Highland Avenue have an ADT 14,000 to 24,000 vehicles less than the Ridge and Highland Intersection. Intersections on Highland Avenue east of the I-71 southbound off ramp and west of Ridge Avenue had ADT counts between 14,553 and 18,258 in 2004 and 2005. The concentration of traffic in the study area clearly seems to be concentrated along Ridge Avenue and the section of Highland Avenue between the I-71 southbound off ramp and Ridge Avenue.

The large amount of traffic in the Ridge and Highland area is also reflected in the total number of intersection accidents. Between 2000 and 2005, the intersection of Ridge and Highland Avenues had a total of 175 accidents and was listed as one of the top ten accident intersections in Hamilton County townships 4 of the 6 years. In addition, the intersection of Ridge Avenue and the signalized access to Value City and Speedway (south of Highland Avenue) had the third most accidents in Columbia Township between 2000 and 2005 with 47 total accidents.<sup>1</sup> The correlation between the high number of cars and the high accident totals is evident at these two intersections. Based on the traffic and accident information, there appears to be a need for improved access management and curb-cut reductions in the study area. The Hamilton County Engineer has recently adopted a set of access management regulations that will help reduce the number of curb cuts in the future and has also completed intersection improvements in the study area. However, a reduction in the permitted number of curb-cuts and the creation of cross access easements and service roads between businesses could further improve traffic conditions in the area.

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<sup>1</sup> All traffic count and intersection accident data can be found in the "Traffic" section of the Hamilton County Engineer website at: <http://www.hamiltoncountyohio.gov/Engineer/>



## **2.6 Public Investment in Improvements**

The Columbia Township Trustees have made a significant investment in improving the Ridge and Highland Commercial Center. Several planning studies have recently been completed for Columbia Township. Of these studies, the Columbia Township Comprehensive Plan is the most significant. The scope of the plan includes all of Columbia Township and is meant to serve as a guide for the next 20 years. This plan was completed by Meisner + Associates, a planning/consulting firm, in March 2005, approved by the Columbia Township Trustees in May 2005, and adopted by the Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission in June 2005. The plan includes goals and recommendations for every section of Columbia Township, including the Ridge and Highland area. Through the planning efforts recently completed, and the undertaking of this SPI Strategy Plan, the Township Trustees have shown a dedication to investing in improvements to the study area.

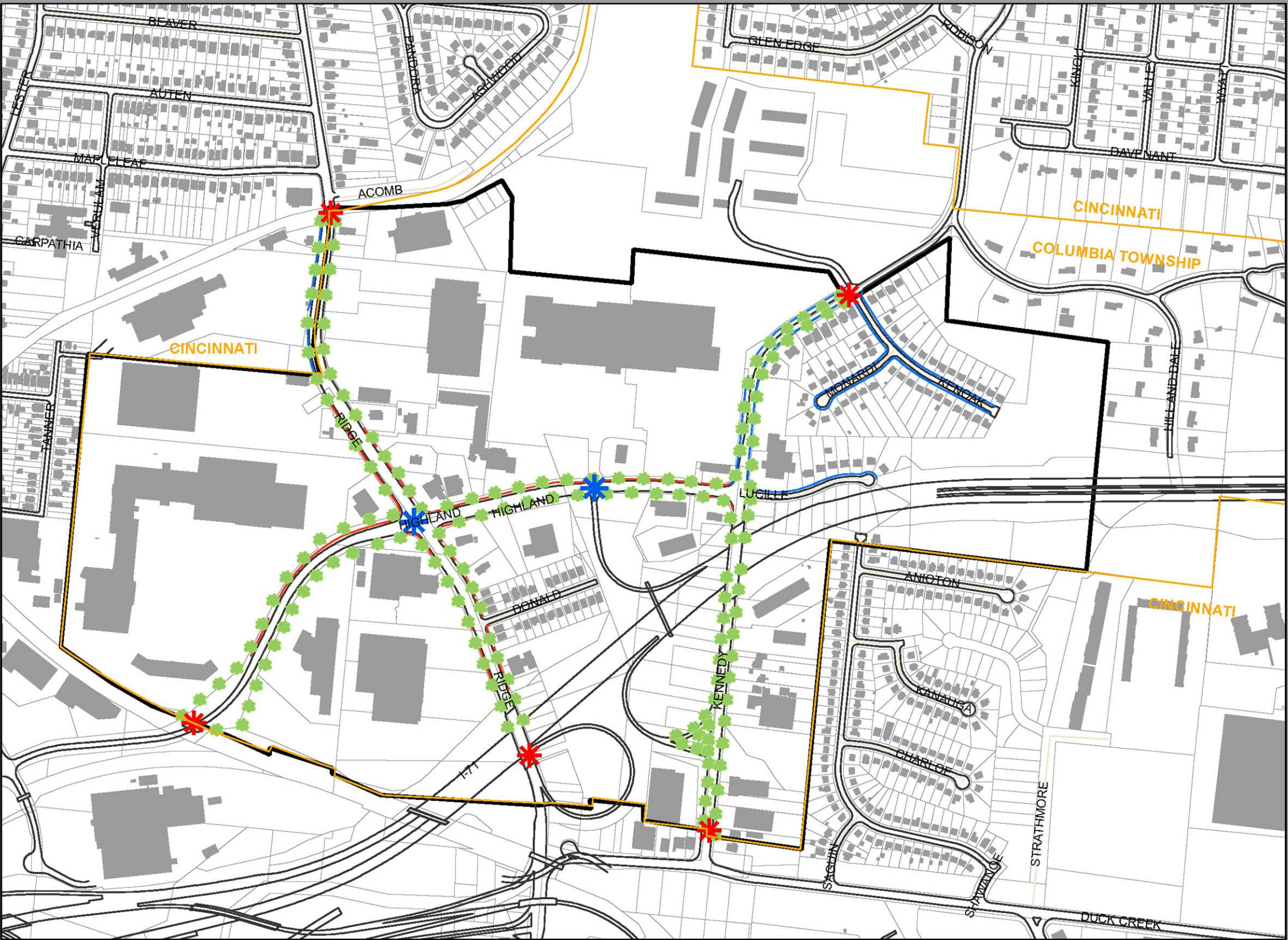
In addition, the township has invested in several other important public improvements in the study area. The township hired the Hamilton County Development Company to complete a Corridor Study for the Ridge and Highland Business District in September 2004. Construction of new public sidewalks on the majority of Ridge Avenue and Highland Avenue has begun and will be completed later this year. The township is planning to plant street trees along both of these roads and enhance gateways and accent major intersections in the area as well (see Map 5, Streetscape Improvements). The township has also hired a consultant to begin a branding and marketing study that will, among other things, create a unique identity for the Ridge and Highland area and produce a new township logo. The township is also analyzing the possibility of creating a Joint Economic Development District (JEDD) for the Ridge and Highland area to help fund public improvements in the area. It is clear that public improvement of the study area is a high priority for Columbia Township and this SPI Strategies Plan will help provide the framework for private improvement through new aesthetic regulations and improved development controls.

## **2.7 Distinctive Characteristics**

The Ridge and Highland Commercial Center area is unique in Columbia Township in that it contains the township's only regional business district. Other commercial areas in Columbia Township include the Plainville Road and Wooster Pike corridor commercial districts. The Plainville Road corridor contains a number of small businesses on small lots and is generally a more pedestrian oriented business district. The Wooster Pike corridor is undergoing significant redevelopment and is different from the Plainville Road Corridor in that Wooster Pike is a larger road and the properties have a much greater depth. However, the area is a linear corridor with very few parcels that are as large as the former industrial properties in the Ridge and Highland area. The Wooster Pike corridor also does not have the interstate access and traffic volumes seen in the Ridge and Highland area. Therefore, the majority of the traffic and pedestrian issues associated with the Ridge and Highland area do not apply to other commercial areas in the township. In addition, the Ridge and Highland area has big-box developments with large parking lots that are not found in the other two township business districts. Therefore, the Ridge and Highland area presents a unique set of conditions within Columbia Township and the character of this area distinguishes itself from any other area in the township.



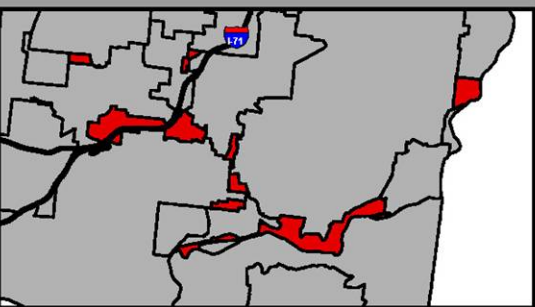
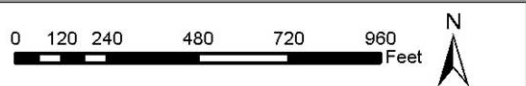
# COLUMBIA SPECIAL PUBLIC INTEREST STRATEGY



## Map 5: Streetscape Improvements

- Ridge and Highland Study Area
- Buildings
- Parcels
- Existing Sidewalks
- New Sidewalks
- Accent Intersection
- Gateways
- Street Trees
- Municipalities and Townships

## RIDGE AND HIGHLAND SPI STRATEGY



**IPC** HAMILTON COUNTY  
Regional Planning Commission  
JUNE 2006



### 3. CRITERIA COMPLIANCE

The Ridge and Highland Commercial Center contains or is planned to contain all the characteristics required for designation as a Special Public Interest – Suburban Center District, as identified below.

*Criteria (a): A concentration of retail and service oriented commercial establishments serving as a principal business activity center for a sociogeographic neighborhood, community, or region.*

The Ridge and Highland Commercial Center contains a concentration of commercial establishments that serve all portions of Columbia Township as well as providing a regional commercial center that has attracted patrons from all of Hamilton County and other surrounding counties in Ohio and Kentucky. Commercial activity in the corridor is highly concentrated around the intersection of Ridge and Highland Avenues, as evidenced by the high traffic volumes and large amounts of land dedicated to commercial use around this main intersection.

*Criteria (b): An area that has received or been approved for substantial public investment.*

The Columbia Township Trustees have made a substantial investment in the area, as evidenced by the many projects that have been undertaken or are planned for the area. These include the construction of sidewalks, planting street trees, creation of a branding and marketing study, completion of a Comprehensive Plan and Business District Corridor Study, and potential implementation of a JEDD district. The creation of this SPI Strategies Plan for the Ridge and Highland area would help implement many of these efforts by requiring sidewalks and streetscape landscaping, encouraging the use of the township logo and other branding elements, and improving the aesthetics and pedestrian accessibility of the area which may result in the improved viability of the business district as a whole.

*Criteria (c): An area that is planned for unusual intensity or density of development.*

The study area currently contains a high concentration of commercial development. The Columbia Township Comprehensive Plan identifies this area for improvements and potential expansion of the commercial district. The future land use recommendation of the plan is to maintain the area as a major commercial destination in the county and has designated the majority of the study area as “Mixed-Use Regional Commercial Center” (see Map 6, Land Use Plan). This designation encourages future uses that include “high intensity regionally oriented retail and service uses and a mix of office and residential uses” with residential uses encouraged to include high density developments. Therefore, the area currently contains an unusually high concentration of regional commercial businesses and is planned to contain additional high intensity regional commercial development and may also contain high density residential uses.



# COLUMBIA SPECIAL PUBLIC INTEREST STRATEGY



## Map 6: Land Use Plan

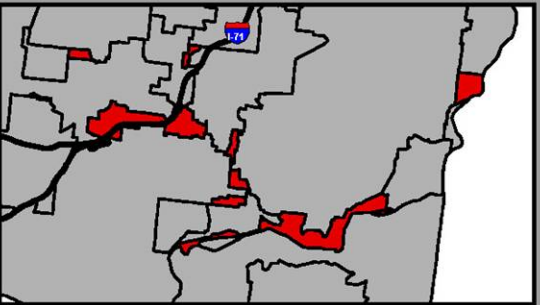
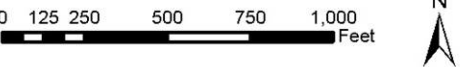
- Ridge and Highland Study Area
- Buildings
- Parcels
- Municipalities and Townships

### Land Use Recommendations

- Medium Density Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- High Density Residential
- Mixed-Use Regional Commercial Center
- Greenspace / Stormwater
- Public Utility
- Municipalities and Townships

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## RIDGE AND HIGHLAND SPI STRATEGY



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Regional Planning Commission  
JUNE 2006



## **4. PUBLIC INTEREST ISSUES**

The Columbia Township Comprehensive Plan includes a vision and set of goals for the Ridge and Highland area and implementation recommendations for the improvement of the area. Issues identified for the Ridge and Highland area include the need to provide better development controls for design and aesthetics, attract sustainable economic development to the area, improve access management control, buffer residential uses from commercial development in transition areas, and develop an identity throughout the township. One of the tools identified in the Comprehensive Plan for the implementation of goals for the Ridge and Highland area was the creation of a Special Public Interest district to create zoning regulations that support the implementation of the plan. The Columbia Township Trustees have invested in the creation of this SPI Strategies plan, in part, to refine the goals and improve the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.

Improvement of the appearance and functionality of the Ridge and Highland area will improve the community image of this portion of Columbia Township. The lack of aesthetic and architectural standards for buildings and pedestrian connectivity requirements could continue the existing pattern of big-box style developments without the institution of new development guidelines aimed at addressing these issues. Additionally, the landscaping and parking standards in the current Zoning Resolution may not be sufficient to promote the improved streetscape appearance that the township desires for this area. This SPI Strategy is aimed at providing an alternative set of zoning regulations that will improve streetscape and building appearance, pedestrian circulation, access management, and will allow alternative parking lot materials and designs aimed at reducing impervious surfaces and discouraging the overbuilding of parking spaces beyond what the Zoning Resolution requires. These new standards will provide a development framework that will greatly improve the design and character of the Ridge and Highland Commercial Center.



## 5. GOALS

The goals of this SPI Strategies Plan are oriented towards facilitating the implementation of the Columbia Township Comprehensive Plan. The overall goals and recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan include expanding the tax base, revitalizing existing neighborhood business districts, and developing commercial design standards to create a theme and common image for Columbia Township. The specific goal for the Neighborhood Business Districts section of the plan is to: “Promote commercial redevelopment in neighborhood business districts and commercial areas.” Some of the related objectives include:

- Develop a continuous sidewalk system
- Encourage the upgrading and conversion of vacant and underutilized buildings
- Develop and implement “Design Guidelines” or SPI districts
- Continue to develop an image and vision for the neighborhood business districts and encourage private and public investments to attain a multifunctional community

Through the Special Public Interest district, the appearance and functionality of the Ridge and Highland area can be enhanced. Columbia Township would benefit by encouraging improved development and redevelopment, creating new architectural design requirements, improving access management and pedestrian connectivity, and improving the streetscape and parking lot landscaping within the corridor. Through the implementation of these goals, and the corresponding policies, a more attractive and viable commercial center can be created.

The specific development policies, and the rationale linking them to the goals of this section, are listed in Section 6. The purpose of these policies is that they be included in the Hamilton County Zoning Resolution. Further recommendations related to the goals of the SPI Plan, which are intended as advisory recommendations rather than included as zoning text, are located in Section 7. Appendix A contains a table that illustrates policies and further recommendations of Sections 6 and 7 with examples of the current condition or standard and the proposed change.



## 6. RIDGE AND HIGHLAND COMMERCIAL CENTER POLICIES

### 6.1 Create Unified Building Setbacks

To make building setback requirements consistent between the “O” Office, “E” Retail, “F” Light Industrial, and “G” Heavy Industrial districts, the setbacks for all non-residential structures should be modified to provide a 30-foot front yard setback, 10-foot side yard setback, and 20-foot rear yard setback.

**Rationale:** The existing standards require a 40-foot front yard for the “O” Office, “F” Light Industrial, and “G” Heavy Industrial districts and a 30-foot setback for the “E” Retail district. The Industrial districts are permitted to have a 0-foot side yard and 10-foot rear yard while commercial districts require a 10-foot side yard and 20-foot rear yard. Existing regulations separate commercial from industrial districts and provide different standards. Originally the industrial standards were meant to apply to industrial parks or large expanses of industrial uses where there would be no benefit from requiring setbacks between properties. The proposed new standard would provide a more uniform set of setback requirements for development in an area that has shifted from industrial to retail in nature.

### 6.2 Increase Billboard Spacing

To reduce the amount of outdoor advertising signs (billboards), and the associated visual clutter in the study area, no outdoor advertising sign should be constructed within 2,000 feet of any other outdoor advertising sign.

**Rationale:** A proliferation of outdoor advertising signs would have a negative impact on the visual theme created by other policies of this plan. This potential is extremely high in the study area, where there are a number of existing billboards and where many properties have visibility from Interstate 71. By providing a billboard spacing requirement of 2,000 feet from any other billboard, the negative impact of these signs on the aesthetics of the area would be reduced over time.

### 6.3 Reduce Signage Height and Area Requirements

To reduce the amount of visual clutter associated with the existing overabundance of freestanding and building signage in the area, the maximum height for all freestanding signs should be limited to 12 feet and the maximum area should be limited to 50 square feet per side. Building signage should be reduced from 1.5 square feet of sign area per linear foot of building length on the main façade and 0.75 square feet per linear foot of building on any secondary façade to 1 square foot per linear foot of main building façade and 0.5 square feet per linear foot of secondary building façade.

**Rationale:** The corridor is currently characterized by, among other things, an undesired proliferation of large scale signage. New regulations limiting the permitted size of signs will, over time, begin to reduce the negative impact of these large signs as properties redevelop and more businesses come into compliance with the reduced signage standards. Establishing uniformity and improving the aesthetics of signage in the area is supported by the Columbia Township Comprehensive Plan.



#### **6.4 Modify Streetscape Buffer Requirements**

To improve the aesthetics of buildings and parking areas in the corridor, the amount of landscaping in a required streetscape buffer area should be doubled from 1.5 trees and 20 shrubs per 100 linear feet of frontage, as currently required by the Zoning Resolution, to 3 trees and 40 shrubs per 100 linear feet of frontage, except where such streetscape areas are located adjacent to an area where street trees are currently provided within the right-of-way. Where street trees are located within a public street right-of-way, the standard requirements for streetscape buffers contained in the Zoning Resolution would apply. However, to ensure the health of all street trees and streetscape trees, no new tree should be planted within 20 feet of an existing street tree in the right-of-way. Required canopy trees and shrubs in the streetscape buffer area should also comply with the Street Tree Plan – Tree and Shrub Palette provided to the Township by Meisner + Associates (see Appendix B)

**Rationale:** The study area currently includes very little greenspace or landscaping adjacent to the right-of-way. As a result, large expanses of parking lot pavement are open to public view and the aesthetics of the corridor is negatively impacted. The new standard would improve screening of parking areas and large developments from the road while recognizing that areas with public street trees will not require as much additional landscaping to provide the desired screening effect.

#### **6.5 Modify Parking Standards**

To reduce the amount of impervious surface in the area, with associated benefits including reduced stormwater runoff and improved aesthetics, pervious parking surfaces should be permitted up to 25% of the required number of parking spaces. Pervious surfaces would include pervious pavers, pervious concrete or asphalt, interlocking grass pavers, etc. These pervious spaces would only be permitted to the side or rear of the building and would not be permitted for loading areas or access drives. Pervious parking spaces would not be included in the calculation for determining the required vehicular use area landscaping materials but would have to meet all other vehicular use area landscaping standards of the Zoning Resolution.

**Rationale:** The current Zoning Resolution standards for commercial parking lots does not permit pervious pavement. Allowing the use of pervious surfaces in parking areas could reduce the impact of large open paved surfaces. Stormwater runoff could be reduced and aesthetics of the parking lot could be improved. Removing the area from the parking lot landscape calculations may provide an incentive to use pervious pavers to reduce the amount of required landscaping in the parking lot. Another incentive would be the reduced impervious surface ratio (ISR) of the development site which could reduce the size of any required boundary buffer areas. This requirement would reduce the impact of large expanses of paved surface, including the heat island effect, increased stormwater runoff, and negative aesthetic value.

#### **6.6 Modify Vehicular Use Area Landscaping Requirements**

To discourage the construction of more than the required number of parking spaces in commercial parking lots and improve the appearance of parking lots that are constructed with more than the required spaces, a percentage-based formula should be created to determine the required number of canopy trees for vehicular use areas. Parking lots providing between 100% and 110% of the required number of spaces should provide the



number of canopy trees required by the current standards of the Zoning Resolution. Parking lots constructed with greater than 110% of the required number of spaces should be required to multiply the number of canopy trees currently required by 1.5, thus providing 50% more canopy trees. Three shrubs are currently required per canopy tree, which would remain the same. In addition, to reduce long rows of parking spaces with no landscaping, no more than 20 parking spaces should be located in a linear row without separation by a landscaped island or peninsula to contain a minimum of one canopy tree and three shrubs each. The required trees and shrubs in these islands would count toward the total required number of vehicular use landscape materials. Required canopy trees in the vehicular use area should also comply with the Parking Lot Landscaping Palette provided to the Township by Meisner + Associates (see Appendix C).

**Rationale:** The Ridge and Highland area includes a large amount of existing and vacant big-box retail developments that include large seas of parking spaces and very few landscaped areas. The existing requirements of the Zoning Resolution require the same amount of landscape materials no matter how many parking spaces are provided. To offset the negative impact of providing parking areas that greatly exceed the required amount of spaces, a new percentage based formula would be included to require more landscaping for areas that provide more than the required amount of parking spaces. In addition, long rows of parking spaces without landscaping create voids in the canopy cover intended by the vehicular use landscaping standards. Like pervious paving surfaces, these additional landscaping requirements would also reduce the negative impact of large expanses of paved surfaces by reducing the heat island effect and improving aesthetics of parking lots in the area.

## **6.7 Improve Vehicular Connections**

To promote better access management practices and reduce the potential safety hazard related to numerous, unconnected parking areas, all non residential uses should provide access easements and construct access drives for future connection of vehicular use areas between adjacent uses.

**Rationale:** The cumulative effect of allowing individual uses to have separate parking lots that do not connect to adjacent parking areas can be easily seen along many older commercial corridors in the county, including some locations within the study area. Requiring access easements and the construction of access drives between adjacent parking areas would effectively limit the need for cars to access Ridge, Highland, and Kennedy Avenues to get between adjacent uses.

## **6.8 Reduce Driveway Curb Cuts**

To reduce the number of driveways from small parcels onto main roadways in the study area, developments with less than 100 feet of frontage on a public street should only be permitted to have one full movement access point along that frontage unless further restricted by the Hamilton County Access Management regulations..

**Rationale:** Small parcels with more than one driveway onto public streets may have a detrimental effect on traffic safety in an area, especially when such uses are located on adjoining lots. More curb cuts mean more turning movements and more traffic crossings both of which reduce safety. Even those uses that typically have an entrance and exit drive where each drive is one way create conflicting traffic patterns and reduce safety.



This policy attempts to reduce the potential for small uses or outlot developments from constructing needless driveways.

## **6.9 Improve Pedestrian Circulation**

To improve the ability of pedestrians to move throughout the corridor and to access commercial buildings, as well as to insulate pedestrians from vehicular traffic within parking lots, the following sidewalk standards should be required:

- Sidewalks designed to meet the sidewalk standards of the Hamilton County Engineer should be required along all public and private streets.
- Pedestrian connection sidewalks should be required to connect the main entrance of all buildings with any existing or required sidewalk along public and private streets. Such pedestrian connection should be designed as follows:
  - Sidewalks should be a minimum of 4 feet in width.
  - Sidewalks should have a minimum 5-foot wide landscape area on any side adjacent to parking spaces or drive aisles (any such landscape area may count toward the required vehicular use landscape area).
  - Any landscape area required adjacent to a pedestrian connection sidewalk should include a minimum of 3.3 canopy trees and 10 shrubs per 100 linear feet of sidewalk (such trees and shrubs may count toward the required number of vehicular use landscaping materials).
- In addition to the required pedestrian connection sidewalk, interior parking lot sidewalks should be provided and designed as follows:
  - Sidewalks should be required between parking spaces and parallel to drive aisles where more than 2 parallel parking aisles more than 20 spaces in length are located side-by-side (a required pedestrian connection sidewalk may count toward this requirement).
  - Sidewalks should be a minimum of 4 feet in width.
  - Sidewalks should run the entire length of the drive aisle to which they are parallel.
  - Sidewalks should be designed to provide two or fewer points where pedestrians must cross vehicular traffic to gain access to the main building entrance.
- Additional 4-foot wide sidewalks should be required to connect to adjacent commercial developments and designed to meet any existing walk on adjacent property or constructed to the property line to allow future connection.
- Where any required sidewalk crosses a drive aisle, the pedestrian crossing should be clearly marked with pavement striping or by use of alternate paving material, color, or pavement treatment.

**Rationale:** The Ridge and Highland area includes a large amount of pedestrian traffic but, for the most part, does not include many sidewalks. In addition, developments in the area do not provide sidewalks through parking lots. This requires pedestrians to walk through drive aisles and in grass and landscaped areas, increasing the amount of vehicle/pedestrian conflict and reducing the perceived safety and walkability of the area. The township has begun to construct public sidewalks along the majority of the public street frontages in the area. However, the current Zoning Resolution does not require new developments or redevelopment to provide separate pedestrian connections to public sidewalks. In addition, large parking lots are not required to include sidewalks providing insulation for pedestrians making their way from their cars to the entrance. These



standards would increase pedestrian safety and also improve the aesthetics of the area by breaking up large parking areas with additional landscaped areas.

#### **6.10 Improve Architectural Character**

To improve the aesthetics of large non-residential buildings in the area, the following standards should be required:

- **Façade changes:** building facades greater than 100 feet in length should provide wall offsets, color changes, or other architectural features that effectively break up the appearance of one long solid façade. These features should be designed as follows:
  - One façade change should be provided for each 50 feet of building façade.
  - Wall offsets should be defined as recesses or projections no less than one foot in depth and 10 feet in width.
- **Roof Line Changes:** buildings greater than 100 feet in length with flat roofs should provide a parapet that complies with the following:
  - The parapet should be a minimum of 2 feet in height measured from the roof line of the building.
  - One roof line change should be provided for each 50 feet of building façade.
  - Each roof line change should be a minimum of 2 feet in height and 10 feet in width.
  - Each parapet change should correspond with the required façade change (the roof height change occurs at the same place on the building façade as the façade change).

**Rationale:** The area contains a number of big-box style developments, some of which have very little character. Facades typically contain one color with no variation in depth and little or no architectural significance. These long flat blank walls detract from the aesthetics of the area. The proposed requirements would provide a set of regulations that would control the design of new and expanded big-box developments. Wall offsets, parapets, and roof line changes would prohibit the plain architecture prevalent in big-box type buildings. This would improve the overall appearance of buildings in the corridor without imposing controls over types of architecture or color palates. Stores would be able to keep their unique identities while providing a building style that would be more aesthetically pleasing.



## 7. FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

### 7.1 Public and Private Streetscape Enhancements

To complement the improved streetscape regulations contained in the above policies and to create a unified streetscape image for the corridor, the township should be encouraged to install, where possible, street trees, benches, banners, decorative lighting, etc. along public streets and developers should be encouraged to provide the same along any private streets or access drives.

**Rationale:** The area is not pedestrian friendly and does not contain any public amenities that improve the character of the area. Entrances into the township are not well identified. The township is currently addressing these issues and they are mentioned here as emphasis to the importance of completing these improvements and to encourage any private developments to include similar amenities along any new private streets or access drives that are constructed in the future.

### 7.2 Branding Elements

To improve recognition of the area as a part of Columbia Township and to help create a unique identity for this specific portion of Columbia Township, developments are encouraged to incorporate the township logo and other branding elements identified by the Township into signage and building design to the greatest extent possible.

**Rationale:** The existing area does not have a clear image identifying it with Columbia Township. Many visitors to the area assume it is part of the City of Cincinnati or some other surrounding jurisdiction. Columbia Township has recently initiated a branding study for the entire township. The branding study will include recommendations for a new township logo, banner styles, and other unifying elements. Development and redevelopment in the area should be encouraged to utilize the township logo and other elements in the design of new signs and buildings or building additions. The creation of a unique identity for Columbia Township and Ridge and Highland area would improve recognition of the township and enhance the desirability of the area for prospective businesses.

### 7.3 Underground Utilities

In order to complement the aesthetic recommendations of this plan and to reduce the amount of visual clutter in the area, future developers and property owners should, to the greatest extent possible, be encouraged to work with utility companies to provide underground utilities both on the interior of the property and along the entire public street frontage of the development parcel.

**Rationale:** Underground utilities have an amazingly positive effect on the appearance of a public roadway. Eliminating the clutter that overhead power, phone, and cable lines create would be a dramatic step towards improving the Ridge and Highland Commercial Center. Utilities are exempt from zoning control in Columbia Township. However, to the greatest extent possible, developers in the area should be encouraged to discuss the feasibility of providing underground utilities when new development or redevelopment is proposed.



#### **7.4 Proposed Access Roads**



To reduce traffic and congestion in the study area and to encourage implementation of township plans, space should be provided for future loop roads around the Ridge & Highland intersection as part of any new development or redevelopment of properties identified for such roads in the Ridge & Highland Concept Master Plan.

**Rationale:** Traffic congestion is one of the main concerns for this portion of Columbia Township. The township is currently discussing the creation of loop roads that bypass the Ridge & Highland intersection to alleviate some of the congestion. These loop roads have been identified as part of several plans, including the Eastern Corridor Sub Area Scoping Study of I-71 and Ridge Area, the Ridge and Highland Business District Corridor Study, and most recently the Ridge & Highland Concept Master Plan. The Hamilton County Engineer is also currently reviewing the proposed roads for inclusion in the Hamilton County Thoroughfare Plan. New developments should be designed with these roads in mind, providing space for future public street right-of-way or private easements and including an appropriate site configuration and orientation.

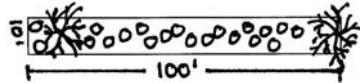
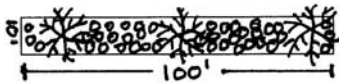




## APPENDIX A: EXAMPLES OF STANDARDS

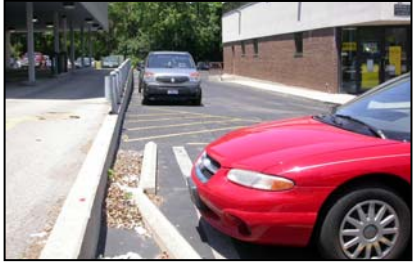
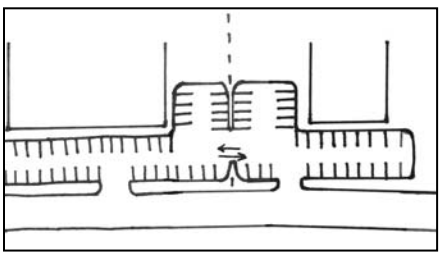


### EXISTING STANDARDS AND PROPOSED POLICIES:

	Possible Standards	Existing Standards	New Standard	Example of Existing Standards	Example of Proposed Standards
1	Location of buildings (setback and yard requirements)	<p><i>E Retail District:</i> Front = 30' min. Side = 10' min. Rear = 20' min.</p> <p><i>F &amp; G Industrial:</i> Front = 40' min. Side = 0' min. Rear = 10' min.</p>	<p><i>For E, F, &amp; G Districts:</i> Front = 30' min. Side = 10' min. Rear = 20' min.</p>		
2	Signage	<p><i>Freestanding Signs:</i> 28' high max. sign with max. area up to 150 sq. ft. (based on length of frontage, lots with less than 50' frontage not permitted a sign)</p> <p><i>Building Signs:</i> 1.5 sq.ft. per linear foot of building on main façade, 0.75 sq.ft. per foot on secondary façade(s)</p> <p><i>Billboard Spacing:</i> 500' on Minor Arterials &amp; Collectors for Poster Signs &amp; Junior Panels</p>	<p><i>Freestanding Signs:</i> Restrict signs to a 12' high maximum height and 50 sq. ft. maximum area per side (lots with less than 50' of frontage still not permitted a sign)</p> <p><i>Building Signs:</i> Restrict building signage to 1 sq. ft. of building sign per linear foot of building length on main façade and 0.5 sq. ft. per linear foot on secondary façade(s)</p> <p><i>Billboard Spacing:</i> 2000' between Poster Signs and Junior Panels on Minor Arterials and Collector Roads</p>		





	Possible Standards	Existing Standards	New Standard	Example of Existing Standards	Example of Proposed Standards
3	Streetscape	Required along all streets with a min. width of 10' and landscaping to include 1.5 canopy trees & 20 shrubs for every 100 linear feet of frontage	<p>1) Not modified in areas adjacent to street trees in the public R/W, however, no trees should be planted within a 20' radius of an existing street tree in the public R/W</p> <p>2) All other areas (including areas adjacent to interior access easements) require twice as much landscaping in the streetscape area (3 trees and 40 shrubs per 100' of frontage)</p> <p>3) Include list of trees (Appendix B).</p>		
4	Parking	<p><i>Parking Spaces:</i> Determined by Table 12-9, minimum must be provided, no maximum</p> <p><i>Interior Landscaping:</i> 1 canopy tree required per 10 spaces, 3 shrubs per tree</p>	<p><i>Parking Spaces:</i></p> <p>1) Up to 25% of required spaces may be paved with a pervious surface (i.e. pervious pavers, pervious concrete or asphalt, or interlocking grass pavers) when located to the side or rear of the main building.</p> <p>2) Pervious parking areas should not include loading areas or access drives providing circulation around bldg.</p> <p>3) Pervious parking spaces should not be included for purpose of determining the # of required int. landscaping materials, will still have to meet all other requirements</p> <p><i>Interior Landscaping:</i></p> <p>1) 100-110%=existing standard, &gt;110%=1.5 times required trees</p> <p>2) In no case should &gt;20 parking spaces be located in a linear row without separation by a landscape island or peninsula to include a minimum of 1 canopy tree and 3 shrubs (requirements may count toward required interior landscaping materials)</p>		





	Possible Standards	Existing Standards	New Standard	Example of Existing Standards	Example of Proposed Standards
5	Vehicular Circulation	None	Require easements for future parking lot connectivity where parking areas abut each other as part of development or redevelopment; limit any property with less than 100 feet of frontage on a public street to one full movement access drive per frontage.		
6	Pedestrian Circulation	Sidewalks may be required along public streets by Township	<p>1) Require sidewalks along all public R/W and private streets (comply with HCE standards).</p> <p>2) Require sidewalk connecting the main entrance to building with any existing or required sidewalk along the public or private street. Such pedestrian connection should be designed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Sidewalks should be a minimum of 4' in width.</li> <li>(b) Sidewalks should have a min. 5' landscape area on any side adjacent to parking spaces or drive aisles; any such landscape area may count toward the required interior parking lot landscape area.</li> <li>(c) Any landscape area required adjacent to a pedestrian connection sidewalk should include a minimum of 3.3 canopy trees and 10 shrubs per 100 linear feet of sidewalk; such landscaping may count toward the required # of interior landscaping materials.</li> </ul>		





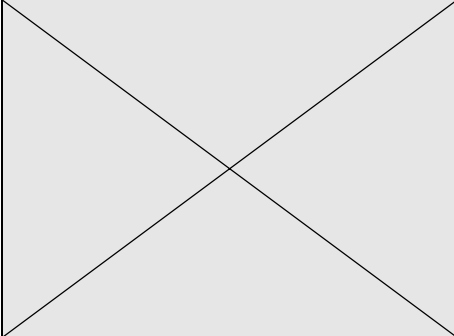



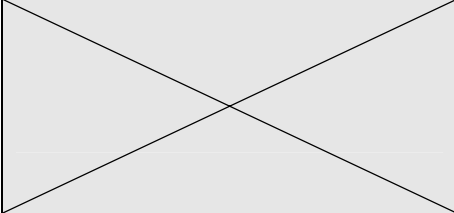
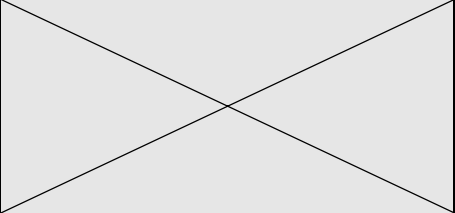
	Possible Standards	Existing Standards	New Standard	Example of Existing Standards	Example of Proposed Standards
			<p>3) In addition to the required pedestrian connection sidewalk, interior parking lot sidewalks should be provided and designed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Sidewalks should be required between parking spaces and parallel to drive aisles where more than 2 parallel parking aisles of more than 20 spaces are located side-by-side (a required pedestrian connection sidewalk may count toward this requirement).</li> <li>(b) Sidewalks should be a minimum of 4' in width.</li> <li>(c) Sidewalks should run the entire length of the drive aisle to which they are parallel.</li> <li>(d) Sidewalks should be designed to provide two or fewer points where pedestrians must cross vehicular traffic to gain access to the main building entrance.</li> </ul> <p>4) Additional 4' sidewalks should be required to connect to adjacent commercial developments; designed to meet any existing walk on adjacent property or constructed to property line to allow future connection.</p> <p>5) Where any required sidewalk crosses a drive aisle, the pedestrian crossing should be clearly marked with pavement striping or by use of alternate paving material, color, or pavement treatment.</p>		



	Possible Standards	Existing Standards	New Standard	Example of Existing Standards	Example of Proposed Standards
7	Architectural Character	None	<p>1) Façade changes: building façades greater than 100 feet in length should provide wall offsets, color changes, or other architectural features that effectively break up the appearance of one long solid façade. These should be designed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) One façade change should be provided for each 50 feet of building façade.</li> <li>(b) Wall offsets should be defined as recesses or projections no less than one foot in depth and 10 feet in width.</li> <li>(c) When using color changes to meet the requirements of this section, colored portions of the façade should be a minimum of 20 feet in width.</li> </ul> <p>2) Roof Line Changes: building greater than 100 feet in length with flat roofs should provide a parapet that complies with the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) The parapet should be a minimum of 2' in height above the roof line of the bldg.</li> <li>(b) One roof line change should be provided for each 50 feet of building façade.</li> <li>(c) Each roof line change should be a minimum of 2 feet in height and 10 feet in width.</li> <li>(d) Each parapet change should correspond with the required façade change (the roof height change occurs at the same place on the building façade as the façade change).</li> </ul>		



# EXISTING STANDARDS AND FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS:

	Possible Standards	Existing Standards	New Standard	Example (Undesirable)	Example (Desirable)s
1	Unifying elements	None	Encourage installation of street trees, entrance signs/features, lighting, banners, etc. that can provide a common image and theme for the corridor.		
2	Unifying elements	None	Encourage the use of Columbia Township logo and/or other branding elements created by the township as part of new freestanding signs.		
2	Utility Plans	None	Encourage new developments to install underground utilities		
3	Proposed Access Roads	Regulated by County Engineer	Encourage provision of space for future loop roads around the Ridge & Highland intersection as part of any new development or redevelopment (see Ridge & Highland Concept Master Plan).		

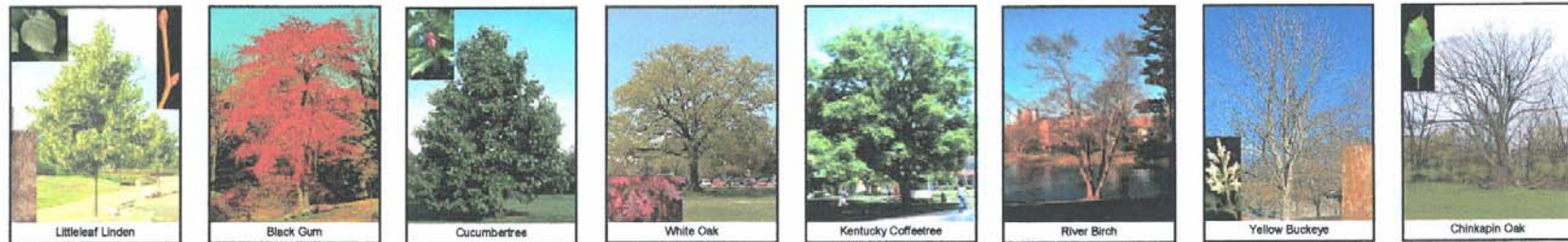


## APPENDIX B: STREET TREE PLAN – TREE AND SHRUB PALETTE

### Recommended Canopy Trees:

# Ridge – Highland Town Center Street Tree Plan

## Native Plant Palette -- Large & Medium Shade Trees



Bald Cypress

Shingle Oak is tolerant of drought, urban conditions and slightly alkaline soil, and it is easy to transplant. Early settlers in North America used this tree to make shingles, hence the common name of shingle oak.

Considered the classic North American savanna tree, Bur Oak is a very adaptable tree. In Kentucky, bur oak was once common in the Bluegrass region and some stately trees remain standing. The national champion bur oak (96 feet tall, 103-foot spread) is in Paris, Ky.

The wood of Chinkapin Oak is noted historically for its role in fueling steamships along the Ohio River. When farms in Kentucky, Ohio and Indiana fell by the way, the wooden fences made from this tree were collected from the farms and placed on the river bank to sell to passing engineers.

Unique among the oaks because of its rounded habit and fine foliage, Willow Oak is very adaptable and easily transplanted. Plans to grow more of this fine Kentucky native in Kentucky nurseries is currently underway.

Bald Cypress can grow in standing water, but is equally at home under normal garden conditions. The number of mature bald cypress trees is declining because of the slow rate of reproduction compared to the rate of harvest and because of the draining of its swampland habitats.

Yellowwood is thought to be Kentucky's best medium-sized, native flowering tree. Its white, fragrant, pea-like flowers hang in 15-inch-long clusters in spring, and, in some years, the tree offers attractive yellow fall foliage. Yellowwood also has a beautiful framework of branches that provides winter interest.

Sugar Hackberry is a tough tree that withstands urban stress and dry, compacted soils. It thrives in moist soils, especially the clay soils of river flood plains and streams where it is native; will tolerate a variety of soil conditions.

At one time Kentucky Coffeetree was Kentucky's state tree. It is extremely urban tolerant and adaptable to a wide range of soils and climates.

Pioneer families used Sweetgum resin for healing wounds, chewing, incense and perfumery. It is an excellent urban tolerant tree with unique fall color.

Tuliptree is Kentucky's state tree, tallest of the native American hardwoods, reaching heights of 200' with a trunk diameter of 8'-10'. Of ancient lineage, Tuliptree was one of the largest trees in the primeval forest.

Magnolias were among the first flowering plants to appear on earth. Their range once included many parts of Europe, Canada, Siberia and Greenland, but they are now limited to eastern Asia, eastern North America and the Himalayas.

Black Gum adapts to extreme climates, tolerates wet conditions and is resistant to drought. A tree with great ornamental value – waxy spring foliage, brilliant fall color and beautiful winter form, Black Gum is striking throughout the year, and very adaptable.






APPENDIX B: STREET TREE PLAN – TREE AND SHRUB PALETTE (continued)


Recommended Shrubs:

Ridge – Highland Town Center Street Tree  
Plan


Native Plant Palette "Shrubs"



Mapleleaf Viburnum



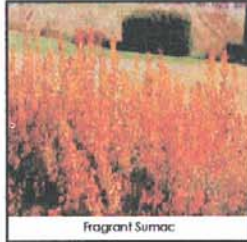
Blackhaw Viburnum



Coralberry




Flame Azalea



Fragrant Sumac



Smooth Sumac




Black Chokeberry



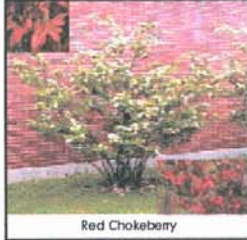
Nannyberry Viburnum



Winterberry



Elderberry



Red Chokeberry

One of the best shrubs for brilliant fall color, **Red Chokeberry** has leaves that are intense, shiny, raspberry to crimson, with purplish highlights. The red fruit is ornamental into December. Its tuckering habit helps control erosion.

A plant that's well adapted to wet conditions, **Winterberry** produces red fruits that look outstanding, especially when framed by snow.

**Fragrant Sumac** is a spreading plant that provides fast cover and helps prevent erosion. It's very tolerant of dry, infertile soils and develops orange-red-purple fall foliage.

Along with its display of attractive spring flowers and fall foliage, **Blackhaw Viburnum** also produces palatable fruits that have been enjoyed by birds and humans alike.

Referred to by some as the monarch of the prairie grasses, **Big Bluestem** was the most prevalent tall grass. Growing 5-8 feet tall, it's a long-lived grass that is adapted to a wide range of soil and moisture conditions.

Rarely noticed in summer, the tawny-orange winter color of **Broom-sedge** is highly recognizable in winter and is frequently found in vast sweeps across old fields and pastures.

Native throughout North America, **Side-oats Grass** tolerates a wide range of soils and prolonged drought.

**Switch Grass** is a long-lived, warm-season grower that keeps its upright, sturdy habit throughout winter.

Originally one of the most characteristic grasses of the American tallgrass prairie, **Little Bluestem** is tolerant of moisture conditions ranging from average to extremely dry, and is tolerant of both acid and alkaline soils.

Native to freshwater marshes and wet prairies throughout the northern United States, **Prostrate Cord Grass** spreads rapidly by rhizomes and is an important soil builder and stabilizer.

Second in prevalence only to Big Bluestem in the once vast tallgrass prairie, **Indian Grass** has a wide native range – prairies, dry slopes and open woodlands.



## APPENDIX C: PARKING LOT LANDSCAPING PALETTE

### Recommended Plant List for Interior Parking Lots SPI Overlay Districts Columbia Township

June 9, 2006

#### Intent

Growing conditions of Interior Parking Lot planting islands are harsh with dry soils, excessive glare, wind, contaminants, and shallow depth and volume of soils all combine to limit the types of plants that will survive such harsh conditions. These standards provide a recommendation for both trees and shrubs in parking lot areas within the SPI.

The plants listed below have proven to be reliable in the Cincinnati area.

#### Recommended Canopy Trees

*Betula nigra* / River Birch

*Ginkgo biloba* / Ginkgo

*Gleditsia triacanthos intermis* / Thornless Honeylocust

*Koelreuteria paniculata* / Goldenrain tree

*Quercus rubra* / Red Oak

*Tilia cordata* / Little Leaf Linden

*Ulmus parvifolia* / Lacebark Elm

#### Recommended Shrubs

Some shrubs may need regular pruning.

*Berberis thunbergii atropurpurea* 'Crimson Pygmy' / Crimson Pygmy Barberry

*Eunonymus alatus* 'compacta' / Compact Burning Bush

*Juniperus chinensis* 'Sea Green' / Sea Green Juniper

*Rhus aromatica* 'Gro-low' / Gro-low Sumac

*Rosa* 'Knock Out' / Knock Out Rose

*Spiraea bumalda* 'Anthony Waterer' / Anthony Waterer Spiraea

*Taxus densiformis* / Dense Yew

*Weigelia* 'Alexandra' / Alexandra Weigela