BROWN TOWNSHIP
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

DRAFT 02/04/2013

Franklin County
Where Government Works

Commissioners
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Paula Brooks
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BROWN TOWNSHIP
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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Brown Township Comprehensive Plan

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ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

Land use planning helps improve communities by empowering residents to collectively envision their future.

The planning process involves identifying current conditions for an area, agreeing on a vision for the future and developing ways to achieve that future.

The Brown Township Comprehensive Plan

The Brown Township Comprehensive Plan focuses on the unincorporated territory within the planning area boundaries depicted in the maps found on pages 4-5. The planning process is divided into three phases: information gathering and visioning, developing policies and writing the plan.

This document: Policy Recommendations

This document contains two sections. The first section provides a summary of the results from the first public meeting. The second includes a set of draft policy recommendations.

The recommendations are divided into three themes, each including a cover page with vision statements for the community's future. Following the cover pages are general goals that will help the community achieve its vision and specific actions to reach each goal.

We developed the draft recommendations based on the community's vision for the future. The community's vision was developed using information gathered from stakeholder interviews and a public meeting held on December 11, 2012. The policy recommendations are the steps to achieve the community's desired future.

Next steps

After the working committee reviews this document, we will conduct another public meeting to gather input on the draft policies.

Once the community endorses the policies, the project team will compile the current conditions, community vision, and the policy recommendation into the draft Brown Township Comprehensive Plan.

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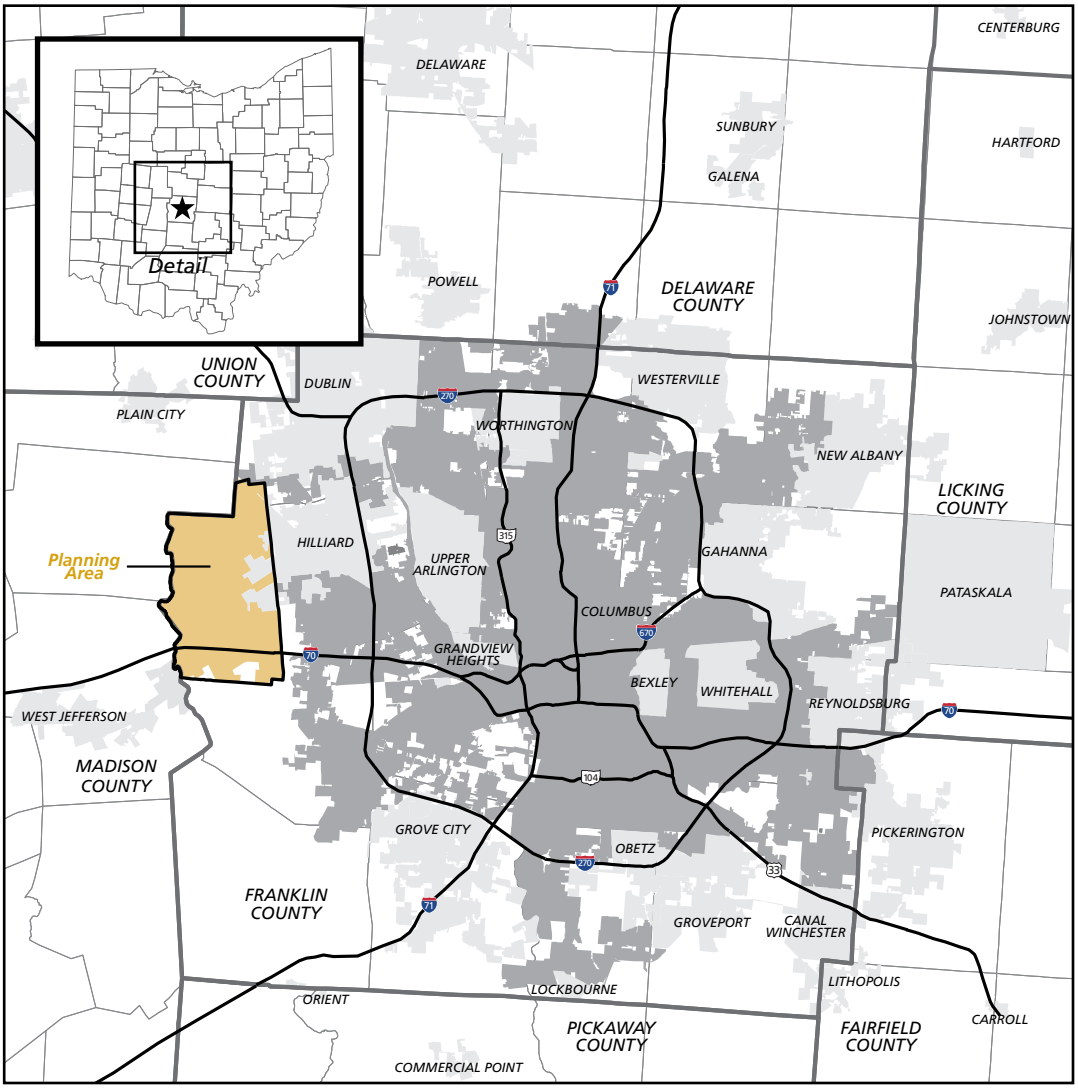
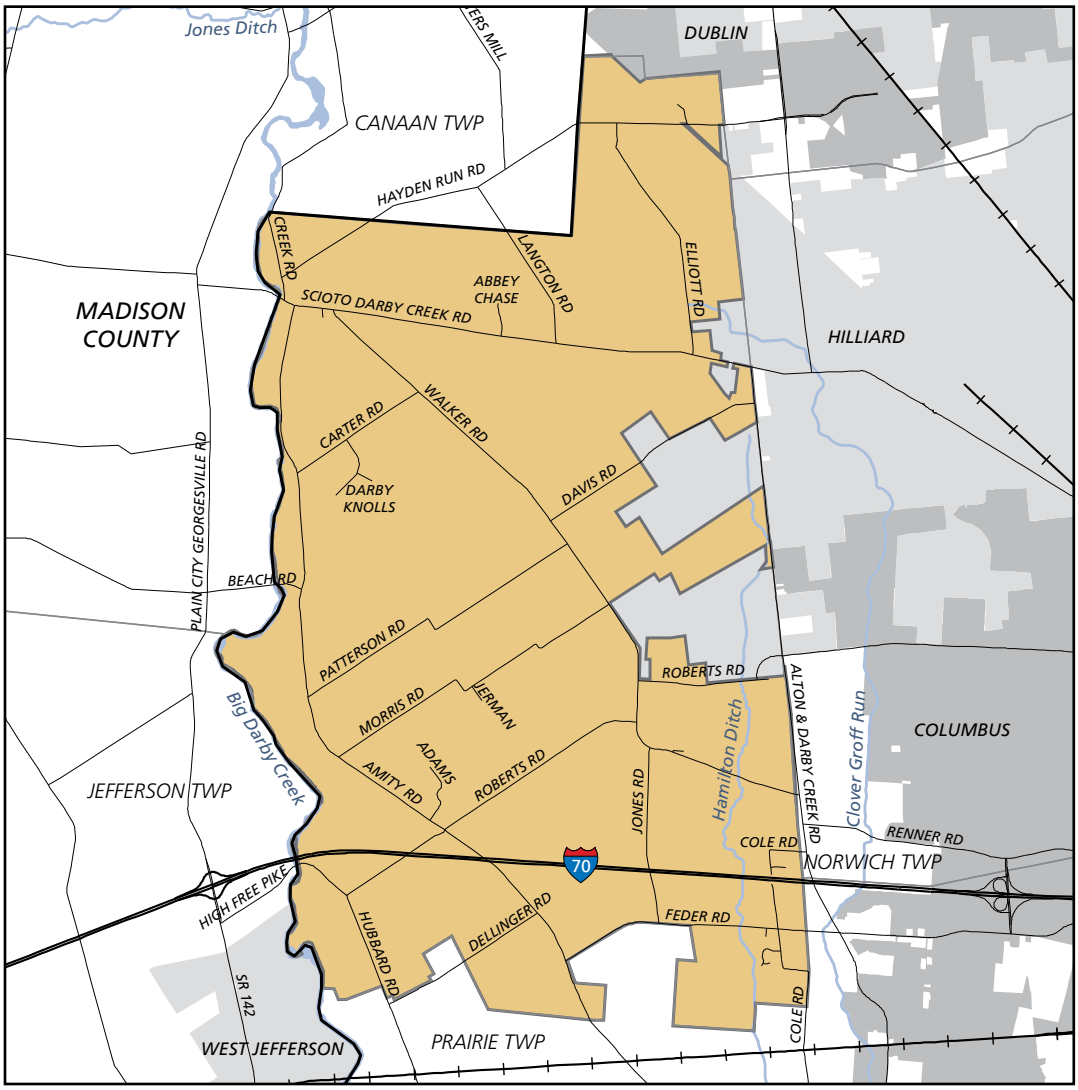
REGIONAL MAP



The Brown Township planning area is shown in brown

PLANNING AREA MAP



Unincorporated Areas

The Brown Township planning area consists of 13,050 acres in western Franklin County, Ohio

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PUBLIC MEETING RESULTS

Public meetings allow community members to provide input on their community's future. For the purposes of the Brown Township Comprehensive Plan, the vision for the future addresses how land is used, how the community looks, and how people get around.

First public meeting

We held the first of three public meetings for the Brown Township Comprehensive Plan on December 11, 2012 at the Brown Township Hall, 2491 Walker Road.

Over 100 residents, property owners, business representatives, and other interested individuals attended the meeting.

Gathering input

After a brief presentation by the project team, meeting attendees were asked to fill out a feedback form to give input on what they like about the community and what they would change.

The project team led attendees through a series of activities to gather input in the following three areas.

Public Preferences: Attendees were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with statements related to their community. These statements were used to gain insight into residents' vision for the future.

Vision Maps: Staff presented attendees with draft maps based on a compilation of existing plans for the area. We asked attendees if they agreed with the types and locations of land uses, bikeways, and road improvements shown on the maps, and if not, what they would change about the maps to match their preferences.

Likes/Dislikes: The final activity enabled attendees to reflect on their favorite ("likes") and least favorite ("dislikes") characteristics of the community in an open-ended fashion. This information helps determine what aspects of the township should be maintained and protected as well as those things that should be changed.

Other input opportunities

Those who were unable to attend the public meeting could complete a survey that was mailed to all households in the township and made available online. The survey questions reflected those used at the public meeting. We received 224 total responses from the public meeting, mailed survey, and online survey.

Using the results

We used the results from the public meeting and the survey to establish the community's vision for the future, as presented in the Recommendations section. This vision provides the foundation for creating the plan's goals and actions. A summary of the public meeting results are presented on the following pages.

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LAND USE

Note: The open-ended multiple-choice questions allowed respondents to choose as many options as they felt were applicable. Respondents could only choose one response for the Agree/ Disagree questions.

Land Use Comments

Respondents are concerned with development pressures from Hilliard.

Respondents prefer large-lot, low density housing. They generally do not want to see more conventional subdivisions.

Most respondents feel that the commercial uses and services in Hilliard are close enough to meet their needs.

MY PRIMARY CONCERN IS...

Category	Responses
Preserving the rural character of Brown Township	191
Protecting the health of the Big Darby Watershed	144
Other	23

Other responses include: development pressure, preserving property rights, speeding, and maintaining safety

"RURAL" TO ME MEANS...

Category	Responses
Agricultural fields and animal pastures	215
Natural areas and open space	200
Barns, stables, grain silos and split rail fences	199
Scattered residences on large-lots	181
Agriculture-related businesses	164
A mix of home sizes, styles and values	106
A few small businesses that serve everyday needs	54
Other	16
Industrial land uses	2
Conventional subdivisions	0
Road-side billboards	0
"Strip" style commercial development	0

Other responses include: slower traffic, narrow roads, quiet atmosphere, no high density housing, and wildlife

NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SHOULD...

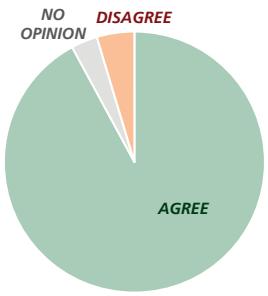
Category	Responses
Preserve scenic views and historic/cultural resources	177
Use design elements that reflect the surroundings	110
Group homes together in order to preserve large tracts of open space	47
Other	26

Other responses include: maintain low density, require minimum lot acreage, and have deep setbacks

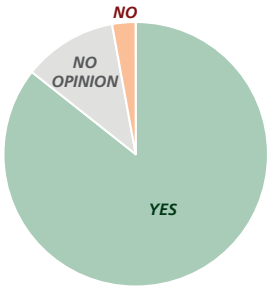
NEW COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT SHOULD...

Category	Responses
Be limited in size and in types of goods/services offered	117
Use design elements that reflect the surroundings	107
Locate near existing and future civic and residential clusters	81
Be safely and conveniently accessible by walking, biking or driving	61
Other	6

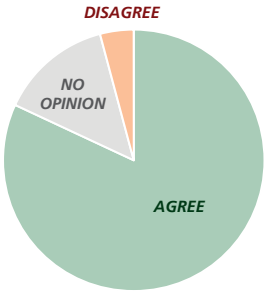
Other responses include: have specific development requirements, pay for roadways, and complement existing plans



All new development should preserve floodplains, wetlands, woodlands, and highly erodible land.



Should agricultural uses protect the environment?



Consuming fresh, locally-grown food is important to me and my family.

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COMMUNITY

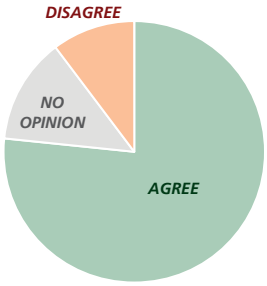
Community Comments

Most respondents view Brown Township's identity as a rural, agricultural, tight-knit community with generous open space.

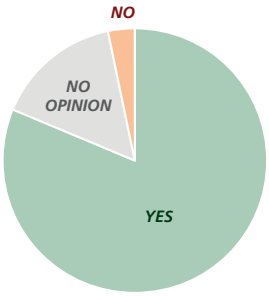
Most respondents feel existing parks are adequate to meet their needs. Many also believe that new parks and open space are needed if the population grows.

Many respondents would like to see more paths for horse riding and areas for dogs.

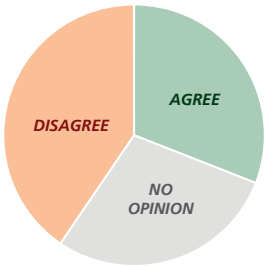
Most respondents desire to stay in the township. However, many believe that increasing costs will make this difficult.



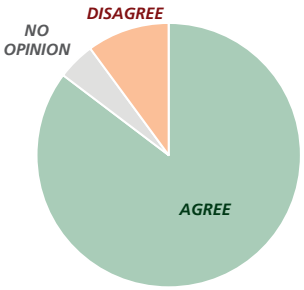
Brown Township has a distinct community identity.



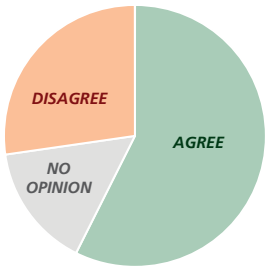
Are you proud of that identity?



Brown Township should encourage new development in neighboring jurisdictions to complement the township.



I am satisfied with the amount and types of parks and open space in/around the township.

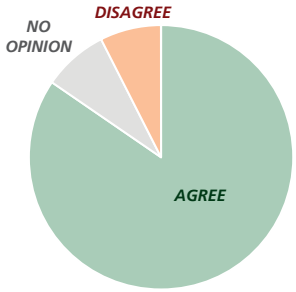


New parks and open space should be added as the population grows.

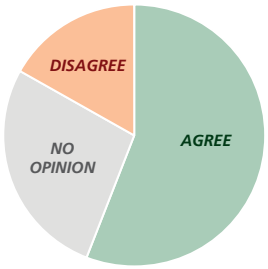
FUTURE PARKS AND OPEN SPACE SHOULD INCLUDE...

Category	Responses
Passive recreation areas	165
Informal, naturally-vegetated landscapes	125
Community gathering spaces or structures	98
Large, community-serving parks	74
Small open space areas that serve individual developments	51
Active recreation	38
Formal, professionally-designed landscaping	18
Other	15

Other responses include: bridle paths, hunting areas, low-maintenance features, community gardens, accessibility features, and community centers



Staying in the township is important to me and my family as we get older.



All new development should include basic features to make them accessible to everyone – old and young, disabled and able.

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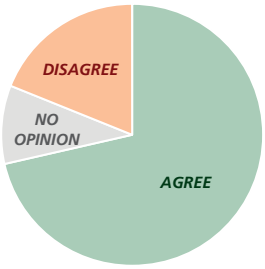
TRANSPORTATION

Transportation Comments

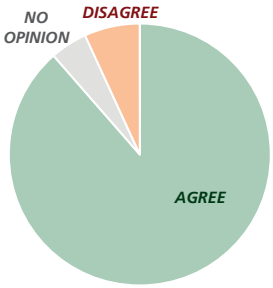
Most respondents are satisfied with the condition of roads in Brown Township.

Respondents are concerned with high speed limits and inadequate traffic enforcement.

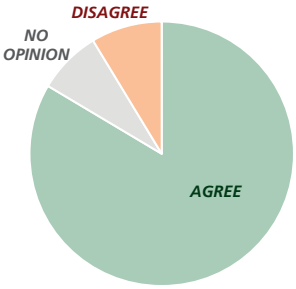
Although there is general support for a bicycle network in the township, there is also considerable concern regarding the associated cost, potential road widening, and lack of local demand for such facilities.



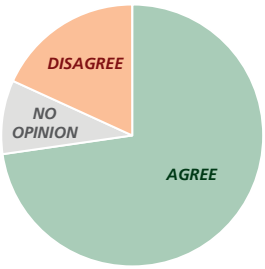
I am concerned by the traffic speeds and volumes experienced in the township.



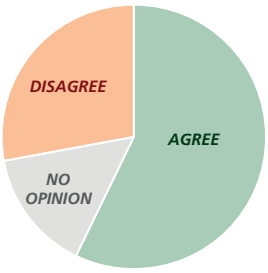
I am satisfied with the quality and maintenance of roadways in the township.



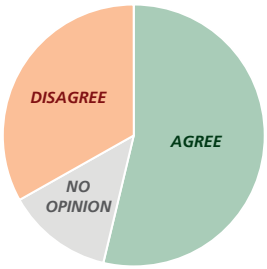
Narrow, winding roads contribute to the rural character of the township and should be preserved.



Township roads are not safe for bicyclists and pedestrians, particularly children.



There should be a bicycle network in the township that provides safe connections to destinations like parks and schools.



I would walk or bike more if roads were safer for such activities.

LIKES AND DISLIKES

RESIDENTS' LIKES AND DISLIKES

What residents like

- Open space, large lot sizes
- Rural character, farms
- Green space, parks, wildlife, woodlands
- Secluded but close to everyday needs
- Peaceful, quiet atmosphere
- Knowing neighbors, friendly people

What residents dislike

- Development pressures
- Speeding
- Lack of appropriate traffic control
- High taxes
- Lack of cable/internet
- Crime

VISION MAPS

Future Land Use Map

Respondents do not want to see uncontrolled commercial development. Most support limited commercial uses with strict design guidance.

Respondents would like a transitional development buffer around the Hilliard Growth Area to soften the rural-suburban boundary.

Bikeways Map

The majority of respondents do not want more bikeways.

If bikeways are installed, they should be separate from the roads.

Roadway Improvements Map

Generally, respondents do not want any roads widened and want speed limits reduced on most roads.

The intersection of Davis Road and Alton & Darby Creek Road is a safety concern to many respondents.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

The Recommendations section includes:

- The community's vision for the future
- Goals to help achieve that vision
- Actions to reach each specific goal

How they were developed: We combined the data in the Current Conditions analysis with the results from the first public meeting. Public meeting attendees told us what they want the community's future to look like. These recommendations will help to achieve that vision over the next 10 to 20 years.

How they are used: Citizens can use the recommendations to improve their community. Government officials and others will use the recommendations when making decisions on land use proposals and capital improvements, all directed at realizing a unified community vision.

The recommendations are divided into three themes: *Land Use*, *Community* and *Transportation*.

Land Use, p. 17

These recommendations address future development and conservation in the township. The actions will help the community retain its rural character and protect a sensitive environment.

Community, p. 29

Recommendations in the *Community* chapter address community identity, farmland preservation, local foods and interjurisdictional cooperation. The actions help promote the township's unique characteristics, maintain a thriving agricultural community and local food system, and encourage collaborative planning efforts.

Transportation, p. 35

These recommendations will ensure a safe, interconnected road system that reflects the community's rural character. It also addresses the accessibility of local trails and destinations for pedestrians and bicyclists.

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LAND USE

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

A "rural-residential" landscape and lifestyle

Limited, attractive businesses that serve residents and boost tax revenue

Preserved open spaces that enhance environmental quality

Achieve this vision by

- Maintaining residential and rural character
- Guiding and managing commercial development
- Protecting the natural environment

How to use this section:

The visions outlined above are divided into achievable goals and individual action steps to accomplish those goals.

Goals *Broad objectives that achieve the community's vision* →

Actions *Individual action items that will help accomplish each goal* →

Description of Actions *Explains the action, including how it should be accomplished and who should do it* →

Goal A

Maintain residential and rural character

Action 1

Follow the Future Land Use map

The Future Land Use map shows the range of land uses the community would like to see in specific areas.

Goal A

Maintain residential and rural character

Brown Township's value lies in its rural character. As such, preserving the community's value is dependent on preserving this character. This requires balancing current homeowners' desires for limited growth with landowners' rights to develop their property.

Action 1

Follow the Future Land Use Map

The Future Land Use map shows the range of land uses the community would like to see in specific areas.

Franklin County Economic Development and Planning staff will refer to the Future Land Use map when any new development or redevelopment is proposed. A rezoning or variance for a property should only be granted when the proposed use is consistent with the Future Land Use map and land use category descriptions on pages 24-25.

Action 2

Revise subdivision regulations to reduce conflicts between new residents and farmers

In rural areas, conflicts often arise between new residents and existing farmers over agricultural activities that result in unwelcome noises, smells and dust. To limit conflicts, new residential subdivisions should be separated a minimum of 75 feet from existing agricultural uses.

In addition, new residential subdivision plats should contain a note warning future residents of such potential factors associated with living near agricultural uses. This will increase awareness of these issues and reduce conflicts between new residents and farmers.

Franklin County should revise subdivision regulations to require this buffer and plat note whenever a subdivision proposal is adjacent to agricultural land.

Action 3

Adopt conservation development regulations to preserve rural character and environmental resources

Rural areas are defined by very low density housing, agricultural uses and natural areas. Preserving this rural character will maintain the community's identity. One technique to preserve rural character is conservation development, which groups homes together and blends them into the landscape with natural features.

More information on conservation development is provided on page 19. Franklin County will work closely with Brown Township and other stakeholders to develop criteria and regulations to preserve rural character and environmental resources.

Action 4

Develop lighting regulations to prevent light pollution in rural areas

While a certain amount of exterior lighting is required for public safety purposes, it often results in extensive, continuous over-lit areas. This can result in glare and light pollution. All of this wasted light increases the sky glow effect easily seen in urban areas, reduces the view of stars, wastes energy, and impacts rural character.

Franklin County should adopt lighting regulations that regulate the level of brightness based on the type of place being lit, ranging from rural (mostly dark) to urban (well-lit). Lighting should be encouraged to illuminate potential vehicle-pedestrian conflict zones, building facades, and wayfinding elements.

Action 5

Discourage any new interchanges along Interstate 70 in Brown Township

The accessibility of land to the transportation network is one of the primary determinants of development pressure in an area. One of the

reasons Brown Township has maintained its rural character is the lack of an interchange providing easy access to and from Interstate 70, which bisects the township.

Brown Township and Franklin County should work with the Ohio Department of Transportation to prevent future interchanges in the township.

Goal B

Guide and manage commercial development to preserve rural character

Limiting commercial development to designated areas helps to preserve rural character. If commercial development spreads haphazardly throughout the township, it damages the sense

CONSERVATION DEVELOPMENT

Conservation development preserves land and increases property values. Below is a comparison of conventional versus conservation development.

Pre-Development site *(top image)*

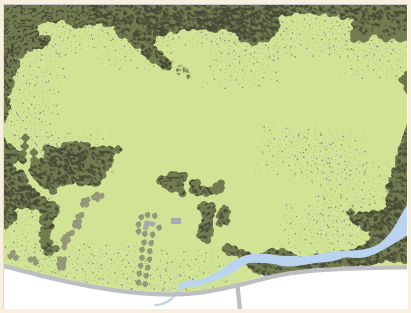
A site prior to development may contain large amounts of farmland and environmentally sensitive features. These areas can provide land for food production, wildlife and aquatic species habitats, and open space.

Conventional Development *(center image)*

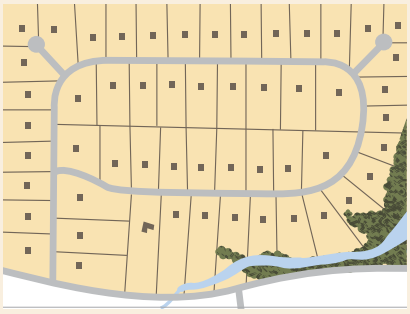
In a conventional development, land is divided into lots without considering farmland and environmental preservation. This practice results in losing farmland, wildlife habitats and open space.

Conservation Development *(bottom image)*

In a conservation development, farmland and environmentally sensitive areas are set aside before land is divided into lots. Setting these areas aside before dividing the land preserves farmland, wildlife habitats and open space. Studies show homes in developments with protected open space sell for higher prices and better retain their value. Each lot is slightly smaller than in a conventional development, allowing the total number of lots to remain the same.



Pre-Development



Conventional Development

Conservation Development

All images: landchoices.org

of rural tranquility. Designating specific areas for commercial development allows businesses that provide essential goods and services and also contribute to the township's revenue base.

Action 6
Limit commercial development to areas designated on Future Land Use Map

To preserve rural character, commercial development should be contained. Encroachment of commercial businesses into the rural landscape negatively impacts rural character by inviting traffic, creating noise and adding large buildings. To ensure that commercial uses are contained, no commercial rezonings should be permitted outside the boundaries shown on the Future Land Use Map.

These rural commercial centers are not intended to *stimulate* growth in the township, but rather to *capture* growth that would otherwise occur haphazardly. These areas provide locations for compact growth patterns as a substitute for scattered, low-density development that consumes large amounts of land and creates conflicts with agricultural and residential uses. Only development that is compatible with the traditional character and small scale of the surrounding community, and which is feasible to support with rural infrastructure, should be permitted in these areas.

Action 7
Apply design guidelines for rural commercial centers

Development regulations and standards highly influence a community's character. Where commercial development is permitted, it should be configured to fit in with the rural landscape and the agricultural character of Brown Township.

We have developed design guidelines for rural commercial centers, which can be found on page 21. These guidelines focus on providing a compact, unified layout, as opposed to linear strip commercial layout. In order to ensure these guidelines are applied in the site design process, only planned zoning districts should be considered for commercial rezonings.

Goal C
Protect the natural environment

Poor stormwater management, untreated wastewater and development within environmentally sensitive areas can lead to the destruction of important natural features. Identifying methods to reduce negative impacts can help to preserve these features.

Action 8
Follow the Conservation Strategy Map

When new development is proposed, developers and decision-making bodies should use the Conservation Strategy Map on page 27 as a guide for environmental protection. The map prioritizes areas for protection based on environmental sensitivity and identifies significant opportunities for other open space protection. Presence of environmentally sensitive features should be field-verified using the Conservation Strategy Map as a guide.

Action 9
Facilitate the use of alternative wastewater treatment systems for conservation developments

Public sewer service is not available outside of the Hilliard Growth Area, and the smaller lots in conservation developments make household sewage treatment systems difficult or impossible to implement. Small community or regional wastewater treatment systems are necessary in order to properly serve such development.

The Franklin County Sanitary Engineer and the development community should work together to determine the feasibility of these and other emerging technologies, and find ways to facilitate the use of the most suitable systems in conservation development areas.

RURAL COMMERCIAL CENTERS

Even in rural areas, the need exists for community-serving amenities, resources, and retail – particularly as the population grows. These rural commercial centers should be designed to respect, reflect and enhance rural character. In order to achieve this, the following design guidelines are recommended.

- Buildings should be one or two stories, small or moderately sized, and agricultural or residential in character.
- Buildings should be grouped around a central court which can be used as a flexible gathering space.
- The primary orientation of the buildings should be toward the road; the secondary orientation may be to the side or rear.
- Parking and loading areas should be located behind the buildings, screened with landscaping with landscaped islands throughout.
- Parking minimums should be reduced to approximately 75 percent of what is currently required.
- At least 40 percent of the site should be preserved as open space.
- Lighting should be limited to down-cast, full-cutoff fixtures.
- Internally-illuminated signs should be prohibited.
- Split-rail fencing should extend along the full frontage of the site.

Franklin County's existing commercial zoning districts would not produce this type of development. To ensure commercial development follows these recommendations, any commercial rezonings should be to a planned district.

Planned zoning districts allow a combined rezoning–site design process that gives the community more input on the final development product. The community's preferences—as stated above and graphically depicted to the right—will form the basis for any approved commercial development in the township.

The three images at right show a typical rural road before development, after conventional strip development, and planned with the recommended design guidelines. The same amount of floor space is depicted in both development scenarios, but considerable land is conserved and rural character is preserved by grouping the buildings closer together and placing parking in the rear.

Before development

Strip development

Planned rural development

All images: Dodson Associates

Action 10

Adopt a stormwater utility fee to improve failing drainage infrastructure

A number of stormwater flooding issues exist in Brown Township. Specific problem areas include Carter, Davis, Langton, Morris, Patterson and Walker Roads, as well as the Franklin County Drainage Engineer's petition ditches. Additional funding is needed to complete the maintenance and improvements needed to address these issues.

The Drainage Engineer has concluded that a stormwater utility fee is the most practical funding source. This fee would be assessed to all property owners in unincorporated areas of Franklin County and be based on the amount of impervious surface on each property. The Drainage Engineer should continue its efforts to adopt a stormwater utility fee in Franklin County.

Action 11

Encourage the use of Low Impact Development techniques

Low Impact Development (LID) is an approach to stormwater management that reduces the negative impacts of development by treating stormwater as a resource rather than a waste product. LID promotes the natural movement of water by preserving or recreating natural landscape features and minimizing impervious areas. LID involves a range of tools and can be applied to new development, redevelopment, or as retrofits to existing development.

The Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District should promote the use of LID techniques in Brown Township. Such techniques include the following:

- Bioswales and rain gardens: Planted areas that accept stormwater, helping recharge ground water and preventing pollutants from rushing off paved areas and into streams
- Native landscaping: Using native plants that are well-adapted to the central Ohio climate, drought-tolerant and resistant to invasive species

Action 12

Continue stream restoration efforts along Hamilton Run

Hamilton and Clover Groff Runs are degraded stream channels that negatively affect the health of the Big Darby Creek. The Big Darby Accord Watershed Master Plan indicates a priority stream restoration zone for the entirety of the Clover Groff and Hamilton Runs. Significant restoration activities have ensued in past years, and such activities should continue.

Franklin County, the City of Hilliard, Brown Township, and the Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District should identify restoration opportunities in conjunction with development activities as they occur within the smaller watershed areas. Because of the small nature of these tributary channels, restoration should focus on channel stability to account for the changing watershed hydrology that may result from development activities.

Action 13

Encourage farmers to enroll in conservation programs administered by the United States Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency

The Farm Service Agency administers voluntary conservation programs that protect soil and water resources while benefiting farmers. Eligible properties can enroll in these programs and farmers receive payment for the land they enroll. The programs include the Conservation Reserve Program, Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, Farmable Wetlands Program, and the Source Water Protection Program.

The Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District and Ohio Farm Bureau should encourage land owner enrollment in these programs and provide support through the application process.

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LAND USE CATEGORY DESCRIPTIONS

Conservation Development: Rural Density

Allowed land uses: Single-family homes

Density: Maximum of 0.2 units per acre

Conservation Development: Low Density

Allowed land uses: Single-family homes

Density: Maximum of 1 unit per acre

Medium Density Residential

Allowed land uses: Single-family homes

Density: Maximum of 2 units per acre

Commercial: Limited range + Multi-unit

Allowed land uses: Limited range of retail uses, mostly neighborhood-scale, plus offices and multi-unit housing and townhomes.

Density: Maximum residential density of 8 units per acre

Parks/Open Space

Intended for nature or recreation with minimal buildings

Farmland Preservation Overlay

Intended for agricultural production with limited development and agricultural support businesses

CORRESPONDING ZONING DISTRICTS

Land Use Category	Zoning Districts: Residential					Commercial	
	Rural	R-1	R-2	R-4	R-8	SO	NC
Conservation Development: Rural Density	●						
Conservation Development: Low Density		●					
Medium Density Residential		●	●				
Commercial: Limited range + Multi-unit				●	●	●	●

● Any use listed in this zoning district is permitted in the land use category

CORRESPONDING ZONING DISTRICTS TABLE

What it is: The Brown Township Comprehensive Plan's future land use map categories are matched to existing zoning districts in the corresponding zoning district table.

The Future Land Use map shows the community's desired future land uses. The zoning district regulations govern which uses are permitted.

Why we need it: When evaluating a development proposal, public officials use the table to determine whether a development proposal's desired zoning district matches the Future Land Use map. Since the map represents the community's desires for the future, following the map ensures the community's wishes are followed.

KEY TO ZONING DISTRICTS

Residential

Rural: Rural
R-2: Limited suburban residential
R-4: Suburban residential
R-8: Restricted urban residential

Commercial

SO: Suburban Office
NC: Neighborhood Commercial
Note: The commercial zoning districts presented here are meant to provide a suitable range of uses for the areas designated on the Future Land Use Map. Any commercial rezonings should be to a planned zoning district.

FUTURE LAND USE MAP

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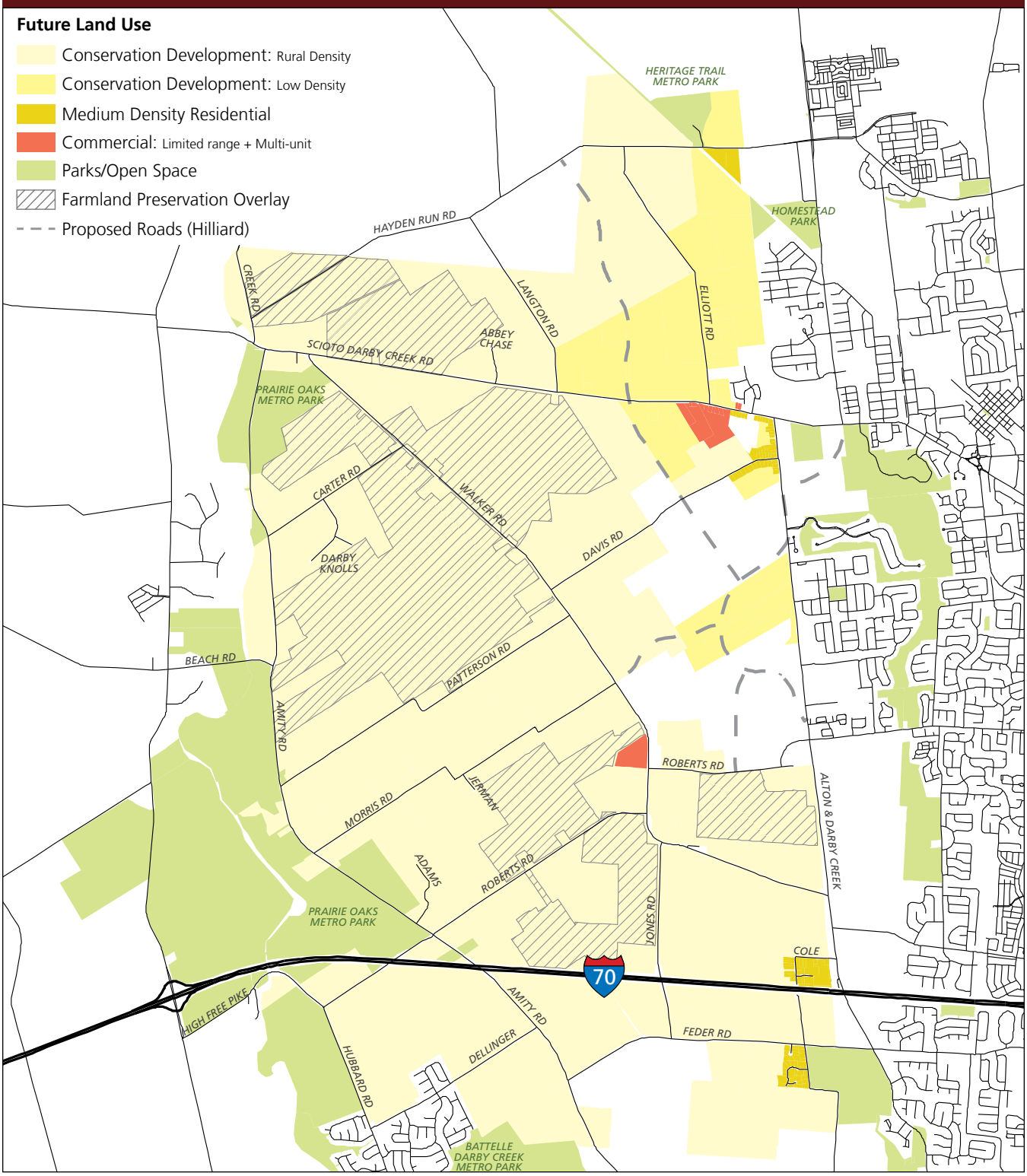


CONSERVATION STRATEGY

The Big Darby Accord created a conservation strategy that prioritizes areas for protection throughout the watershed. The Conservation Strategy is presented here in a system of environmental conservation zones identified as Tiers. Protection and conservation of all land within the Tiers is encouraged, but this structure should guide the prioritization of protection through land acquisition and other programs.

Existing Parks and Easements

The Prairie Oaks and Heritage Trail Metro Parks encompass and protect 1,314 acres within the planning area. Prairie Oaks, located along the Big Darby Creek, includes significant riparian zones, forests and open space, and represents the single largest contiguous tract of land currently in conservation within the planning area. Metro Parks is an integral partner in implementing the Conservation Strategy through its work with habitat restoration areas, community restoration areas, community open space and the Central Ohio Greenways trail system.

The Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District (FSWCD) has easements on 13 acres of land within the planning area. The FSWCD mission is to "promote responsible land use decisions for the conservation, protection and improvement of soil and water resources by providing assistance through effective partnering and technical guidance in Franklin County". Their services include education, public information, construction and post construction review and inspection, backyard conservation, conservation implementation on private lands, county drainage mapping, and conservation easements.

New development in the planning area will require additional parkland and facilities. The Conservation Strategy map has identified general areas for future facilities (see Tier 3). Generally, the location of facilities should maximize access and be centrally located near neighborhood centers.

Protected Zone

Franklin County's Big Darby Creek Watershed Riparian Setback regulations protects about 1,446 acres of land in the planning area. These areas are shown as protected on the Conservation Strategy Map.

Conservation Tiers

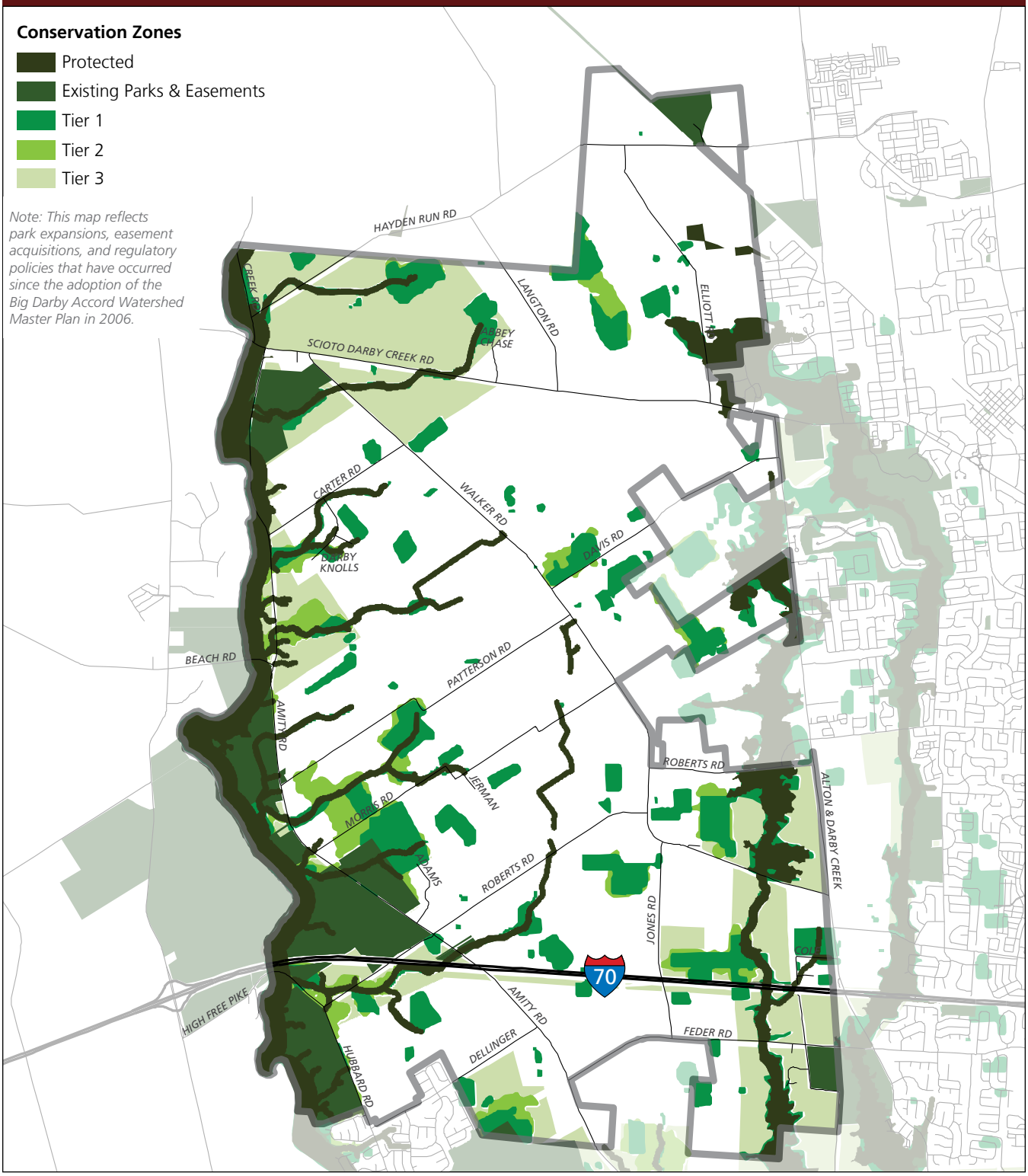
These areas should be conserved through permanent conservation easements, conservation development subdivisions, and other suitable mechanisms.

Tier 1: Land within Tier 1 is considered the primary priority for protection. Tier 1 areas include: the 100-year floodplain, riparian corridors, wetlands, and critical groundwater recharge and pollution potential zones. The protection of these elements provides a buffer for sensitive aquatic habitats and is critical to the health of the watershed.

Tier 2: Land within Tier 2 is considered a secondary priority for protection. Areas within Tier 2 include highly erodible soils and contiguous wooded areas that are greater than three acres in size.

Tier 3: Land within Tier 3 is considered a tertiary priority for protection. Preservatoin of Tier 3 land will provide an integral piece of the open space network. These areas can provide habitat connectivity and buffer areas. Passive recreation and sensitively designed active recreation is suitable for Tier 3 areas.

CONSERVATION STRATEGY MAP



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COMMUNITY

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

A strong community identity

A prominent and economically viable agricultural community

Well-established partnerships with neighboring jurisdictions

Achieve this vision by

- Promoting the township's unique characteristics
- Keeping agriculture viable and maintaining sufficient farmland
- Supporting a sustainable local food system
- Encouraging cooperative and complementary development

How to use this section:

The visions outlined above are divided into achievable goals and individual action steps to accomplish those goals.

Goals — *Broad objectives that achieve the community's vision* →

Actions — *Individual action items that will help accomplish each goal* →

Description of Actions — *Explains the action, including how it should be accomplished and who should do it* →

Goal A

Maintain residential and rural character

Action 1

Follow the Future Land Use map

The Future Land Use map shows the range of land uses the community would like to see in specific areas.

Goal A

Promote the township's unique characteristics

Visual cues such as scenic corridors and historic structures compose the unique attributes that distinguish one community from another. Establishing visual cues helps to build community pride and a sense of ownership among township residents.

Action 1

Seek scenic roadway designation

Scenic byways are roads recognized for their archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities. The Ohio Scenic Byways Program provides funding to support the protection of outstanding roads and landscapes. Designation as a scenic byway requires protection efforts aimed at preserving important resources and encouraging voluntary participation by landowners along the byway.

Brown Township and Franklin County should work with the Ohio Department of Transportation to designate Amity Road, and possibly Walker Road, as scenic byways. Other roads should be considered for designation based on community input.

Action 2

Highlight and protect historic and cultural resources

Brown Township is home to a number of historical sites. Drawing attention to these sites enhances their value to their owners, residents and visitors. These sites are also in need of protection, as evidenced by the recent destruction of a historic home for the construction of Hilliard Bradley High School. Brown Township should work with the Ohio Historical Society to identify and designate historic sites and structures in the township.

Action 3

Encourage agricultural barn preservation

Old agricultural barns are prominent landscape features in rural areas and play an integral role in defining rural character. In central Ohio and across the country the consolidation of family farms into larger farming operations has contributed to a loss of old agricultural barns and subsequently to a loss of rural character.

The Ohio Farm Bureau should work with the Ohio Historical Society to encourage local farmers to preserve and restore old agricultural barns. They should also provide information on the economic benefits of using existing barns and the methods available to preserve and restore them.

Franklin County should require new residential subdivisions to incorporate existing agricultural barns into their design. These buildings can be used as a gathering space for subdivision residents or put to other beneficial uses. Preserving barns will help preserve rural character and add to the aesthetic value of the subdivision.

Goal B

Keep agriculture viable by maintaining sufficient farmland

Farmland protection activities preserve scenic views and rural character, benefit our environment and sustain the agricultural economy.

Action 4

Direct small business programs and loans to new farmers and farming operations

Franklin County administers programs that provide grants and loans to small businesses. Some of these grants and loans should be directed at businesses in the township, especially ones dealing with preparing food for local consumption. If existing programs cannot address this need, new programs should be developed with this purpose.

Action 5

Support changes to land use laws to allow the transfer of development rights

Transfer of development rights (TDR) benefits farmers, developers and the public by allowing the number of houses permitted on one property to be transferred to another property. This type of program preserves farmland and encourages development in appropriate areas, while remaining density-neutral overall.

Under such a program, the total number of homes built on two properties remains the same, but those homes are built on just one property, allowing farming to continue on the second property. More information on transfer of development rights is provided below.

Ohio land use laws do not allow counties and townships the transfer of development rights. Franklin County supports the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission's efforts to change these laws.

Action 6

Create a transfer of development rights program

Franklin County should work with Big Darby Accord jurisdictions to develop a transfer of

TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS

Transferring development rights helps to efficiently use land by directing development out of prime farmland and into more appropriate areas.

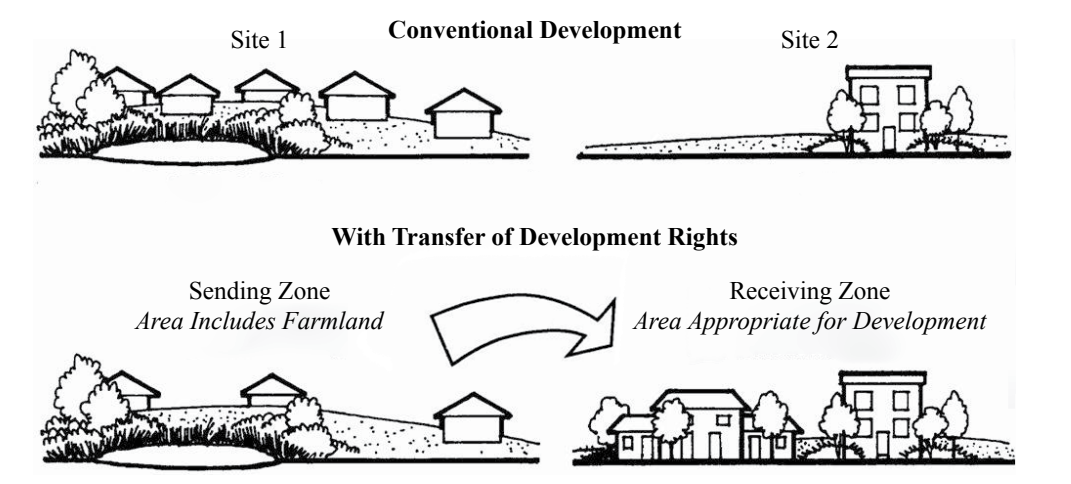
Example

A farmer and a developer each own one property. Each owner could build five housing units. The developer wants to build more than the five homes permitted on her property. The farmer wants to continue farming and build no homes on his property. Transferring development rights allows the developer to build all 10 of the allowed units, but on just one property.

Benefits

Farmers benefit financially by selling a permitted number of housing units while still maintaining the ability to farm, and developers benefit by building denser developments. Communities benefit by preserving open space, maintaining rural character and reducing demand for new infrastructure.

All images: hrwc.org



development rights program. Transferring development rights could help protect farmland in the Farmland Preservation Overlay area, shown on the Future Land Use map on page 25, by designating it as a "sending zone."

These development rights could be purchased by developers, after which agricultural and conservation easements would be placed on the property. In order to preserve the projected Darby Accord revenue stream, developers would also need to pay the development contributions for the rights that are purchased. The development rights could then be transferred to appropriate "receiving zone" areas such as the Hilliard Growth Area and Big Darby Town Center Area.

Action 7

Encourage farmers to enroll in Ohio Department of Agriculture farmland preservation programs

The Ohio Department of Agriculture administers three programs that preserve farmland. Two programs permanently protect farmland from development by placing an easement on the land. These programs compensate landowners for their property's development potential or make them eligible for tax deductions while allowing them to continue farming.

The third program is a voluntary agreement by landowners to only conduct agriculture-related activities on their land for a 10-year period. This program gives landowners confidence that their area will remain agricultural for that period of time.

The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission and the Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District should encourage land owner enrollment in these programs and provide support through the application process.

Action 8

Revise zoning regulations to maintain and encourage farming

Farming requires a sufficient amount of land area to remain viable. Current regulations encourage land divisions that reduce the land

ABOUT THE FARMLAND PRESERVATION OVERLAY

The Farmland Preservation Overlay is intended to identify prime agricultural land and prioritize it for protection and continued production.

Why we need it

Agriculture supports rural economies, provides access to fresh local food, and contributes to the overall rural character of Brown Township. Well-managed agricultural land also helps control flooding, absorbs and filters stormwater, allows groundwater recharge, and has the potential to produce renewable energy.

Because this land tends to be flat, well-drained, and open, it is ripe for development. As development encroaches on farmland, it increases the costs and risks of production and drives up land values beyond the reach of agricultural producers.

How it was made

The overlay area was defined by identifying parcels of land within the planning area that meet all of the following criteria:

- Composed of the most productive soils
- Enrolled in the Franklin County Auditor's Current Agricultural Use Value program
- Comprised of at least 50 acres in size
- Located outside Hilliard Growth Area and Big Darby Town Center Area
- Contiguous to at least one other parcel that meets the above criteria

How it is used

The overlay will be referenced when:

- Revising zoning regulations to maintain and encourage farming (above, Action 8)
- Revising zoning regulations to allow agricultural support businesses (page 33, Action 10)
- Designating "sending areas" for a transfer of development rights program (page 31, Action 5 and Action 6)

area available for farming and convert farmland to non-farm related uses.

Current regulations allow an original parcel to be divided from its 1966 configuration as follows:

- Four parcels, 2.5 acres each
- Any number of additional parcels, 5-acre minimum property size

The 5-acre minimum creates properties with large yards requiring extensive maintenance that are too small for farming purposes. This practice results in the loss of valuable farmland.

Regulations should be revised to protect farmland and ensure sufficient land area exists for farming. The regulation should allow an original parcel to be divided from its 1966 configuration as follows:

- Four parcels, 2.5 acres each
- Any number of additional parcels, 20-acre minimum property size

Franklin County should work closely with Brown Township and property owners to revise the zoning requirements in the Farmland Preservation Overlay areas shown on the Future Land Use map on page 25 to reflect this recommended minimum property size.

Goal C

Support a sustainable local food system

A local food system is a network of farmers, consumers and communities that partner to create a more locally-based, self-reliant food system. A complete local food system provides healthy food choices and economic growth in agricultural areas.

Action 9

Provide information to connect producers and consumers of local food

Many consumers are increasingly interested in local food for its taste, nutrition and environmental benefits. Locally-grown food can be a challenge to find; it's often only available at farmers markets. Connecting local producers and consumers will both increase access to locally-grown foods and increase the economic vitality of local farming initiatives. The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission's Local Food Information Hub and the Ohio Department of Agriculture's "Ohio Proud" marketing program are two examples that make this vital connection.

Action 10

Revise zoning regulations to allow agricultural support businesses

Farming and livestock production require support services to remain viable. Support services include food processors, seed and fertilizer providers, and veterinarians.

These types of uses are not allowed under current regulations. Franklin County should work closely with Brown Township and property owners to revise the zoning requirements in the Farmland Preservation Overlay areas to allow these types of uses.

Action 11

Facilitate the development of agricultural support businesses

Having agricultural support services located nearby helps keep agricultural production costs low and creates jobs.

Franklin County will work with the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, the Ohio Farm Bureau, and local farmers to identify the area's existing and lacking support services.

Once they are identified, Franklin County and partner agencies should provide funding and technical, educational, and marketing support to encourage these businesses to expand or locate within the Farmland Preservation Overlay.

Action 12

Support farming by providing information on the economic benefits and markets available for specialty crops

A limited number of the planning area's farms produce specialty crops, livestock and poultry. Specialty crops include fruits, vegetables and nuts. Central Ohio's large population provides a market for these products.

To encourage specialty crop, livestock and poultry production, MORPC should provide information to farmers on the economic benefits and markets available for these products.

Action 13

Create incentives for farmers to convert to specialty crops

Converting from row crop to specialty crop production requires different equipment and methods of farming. The conversion may include high up-front costs that can prevent farmers from converting to specialty crop production.

Franklin County and its partners should provide incentives from existing small business programs to help area farmers cover these farming expenses.

Goal D

Encourage cooperative and complementary development in the Hilliard Growth Area

The Hilliard Growth Area has become a point of contention between Brown Township and the City of Hilliard. Although Hilliard has exclusive rights to provide utility services to this area with annexation, much of the area is still within Brown Township. The way in which the area develops will have a significant impact on the township's character. Actions within this goal are meant to ensure that this impact will be a positive one.

Action 14

Adopt an Annexation Agreement for the Hilliard Growth Area

A cooperative annexation agreement provides a valuable asset in helping townships maintain a role in all issues related to planning and development, especially in the portions of the township with the highest probability for development. Such agreements help facilitate cooperation between local governments regarding issues like economic development, joint provision of public services, and mutually beneficial planning and land use. This type of agreement helps to ensure that any future growth by Hilliard into Brown Township is mutually agreed upon, protects residents' property rights, and provides adequate public services for the area.

The process of formulating a Hilliard-Brown Township Annexation Agreement would consist of regular discussions by officials of the involved jurisdictions (Hilliard, Brown Township, Franklin County and Columbus) over multiple months. These discussions would explore the essential components of the agreement, including the geographic area, provision of services, and the sharing of both the responsibilities and the benefits of the agreement.

TRANSPORTATION

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

A well-maintained road system that enhances safety and preserves rural character

A bicycle network that provides connections to nearby trails and destinations

Achieve this vision by

- Improving pedestrian accessibility in areas with high demand
- Creating a bicycle network that provides connectivity and enhances safety
- Improving the safety of the road network
- Ensuring that roadways reinforce the rural character of the township

How to use this section:

The visions outlined above are divided into achievable goals and individual action steps to accomplish those goals.

Goals — *Broad objectives that achieve the community's vision* →

Actions — *Individual action items that will help accomplish each goal* →

Description of Actions — *Explains the action, including how it should be accomplished and who should do it* →

Goal A

Maintain residential and rural character

Action 1

Follow the Future Land Use map

The Future Land Use map shows the range of land uses the community would like to see in specific areas.

Goal A

Improve the safety of the road network

The road network in the township is mostly composed of two-lane roadways with 55 mph speed limits. Accident data shows a number of high-accident roads and intersections. Community feedback reflects these findings, but also expresses a preference for an approach that maintains rural character.

Action 1

Maintain existing narrow roads for slower traffic

Many township roads are narrow compared to county- and state-maintained roads. Studies show that narrow lanes cause drivers to reduce speed. All users – motorized and non-motorized alike – experience increased safety when vehicle speeds are reduced. The best way to decrease speeds and the detrimental effects of traffic is to retain the existing features of rural roads that tend to slow traffic speeds. These features, including narrow traffic lanes and curves, are the same features that give rural roads their charm and rural character. Where possible, the travel lanes should maintain their narrow width.

Action 2

Encourage safety improvements on high-accident roads

Accident data shows crashes along several Brown Township roads. The data is supported by resident reports of excessive speed and unsafe conditions. Safety improvements should be sensitive to the rural context and could include "curve ahead" warning signs, speed limit reductions, and low-cost traffic calming treatments such as pavement markings. These improvements should focus on Alton & Darby Creek, Amity, Feder, and Walker Roads.

Action 3

Encourage safety improvements at high-accident intersections

Accident data and community input also shows several intersections in need of safety improvements. The Franklin County Engineer's Office should consider safety improvements at the following locations:

- Amity Road (all)
- Walker Road at Jones Road
- Hubbard Road at Roberts Road
- Scioto & Darby Creek Road at Walker and Amity Roads

Goal B

Ensure that roadways reinforce the rural character of the township

Because rural roads are an integral part of the rural landscape, their design will either improve or degrade rural character. In addition to the positive safety effects of narrow rural roads described in Action 1, rural character also creates economic value for the residents and property owners in Brown Township.

Action 4

Adopt rural road design guidelines

Conventional road design and performance standards are primarily concerned with system performance issues such as maintaining automobile traffic speed and accommodating future automobile traffic volumes. This approach often widens, flattens, and straightens roads in order to accommodate speeding, impaired driving, and traffic volumes estimated at least 20 years in the future. In effect, this approach removes any unique character that a road contributes to

its surroundings – particularly in rural areas with narrow, winding, and undulating roads.

Federal transportation policies have increasingly encouraged road designs which focus on quality of life and community rather than on automobile speed and convenience. The Franklin County Engineer's Office should adopt a more flexible design standard for use on rural collectors and local roads. The Engineer's Office should also consider its use on arterial reconstruction projects passing through rural areas. See page 37 for more information on rural road design guidelines.

Action 5

Design roads with resident input

Residents often view major road projects as a change in their community that they feel will threaten their safety, decrease their property value, or degrade their quality of life. In addition, they feel as though they have little influence on such matters.

Residents bring valuable information to the table regarding the historical, environmental, scenic, economic and social implications of a proposed project. Using this information to guide project design will ensure a smoother process and an outcome that meets community needs.

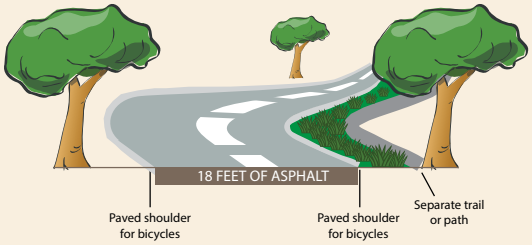
RURAL ROAD DESIGN GUIDELINES

Some of the techniques that may be used to maximize the "fit" between the road and rural landscapes are:

- Maintain natural and cultural roadside features, such as rock outcroppings, stone walls, and rows of trees;
- Minimize road width, except for roads with significant use by trucks and farm machinery;
- Limit grading and clearing to the minimum extent possible, based on traffic volumes and visibility at curves;
- Align roads to complement the natural topography;
- Avoid bisecting open fields, agricultural lands, critical natural habitats and wetlands by aligning the road to fringe areas;
- Avoid the placement of guardrails that block extensive views and vistas;
- Use of wooden or box beam guide rails, where appropriate, rather than standard corrugated models;
- Use of landscape features to blend roadways and bridges into the natural setting;
- Use of locally available materials (stone and plant materials) to blend colors and textures into the setting;
- Protect, create, and enhance vegetative buffers along waterways and adjacent to wetlands and important natural habitats.

Existing Rural Road

Conventional Improvement



Recommended Improvement

The Franklin County Engineer's Office should consider a road design process that brings citizens into the process early, before design alternatives are developed, and keeps them involved throughout the design process.

Goal C

Create a roadway network that allows for orderly development and traffic management

Streets in developing areas are planned on a piecemeal basis by land developers and then turned over to the local government. Street layout and design is typically site-based, addressing the interests of the landowner, and do not consider the negative consequences of a discontinuous roadway network. The result is that major roadways become overwhelmed with traffic. Roadway systems should be planned before development progresses.

Action 6

Update the Franklin County Thoroughfare Plan

Thoroughfare planning provides a long term vision of the road network needed to meet future travel needs. A thoroughfare plan classifies roads by right-of-way width, access to adjacent land, mobility for through traffic, and context, and may include proposed new roadways.

Thoroughfare planning must balance travel and land use impacts of the street network to meet community objectives. This requires coordination with comprehen plans for the future of the study area. Franklin County should work with MORPC to update the Franklin County Thoroughfare Plan to reflect the future land use recommendations of the Big Darby Accord Watershed Master Plan, Big Darby Town Center Master Plan, and Accord-member jurisdictions' comprehensive plans.

Goal D

Improve pedestrian accessibility in areas with high demand

Although the township is largely rural, and travel by automobile is the most popular mode of transportation, certain areas have higher volumes of pedestrians—primarily near schools. Pedestrian safety can be greatly increased through improvements in these areas.

Action 7

Complete a Safe Routes to School Travel Plan

The Safe Routes to School program encourages children to walk or bicycle to school and makes walking and bicycling to school safer for children. This can enhance children's health, ease traffic congestion and improve the quality of life in a community. See page 39 for more information on Safe Routes to School.

A Safe Routes to School Travel Plan studies routes that lead to and from schools, identifies dangerous intersections and proposes solutions. Franklin County should partner with Hilliard City Schools, the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission and the Ohio Department of Transportation to complete a Safe Routes to School Travel Plan for Brown Elementary School and Hilliard Bradley High School.

Goal E

Create a bicycle network that provides connectivity and enhances safety

People bike in the township largely for recreational purposes. Scenic vistas, open spaces and the Franklin County Metro Parks attract cyclists to the area. The road network does not accommodate bicycles well. Many thoroughfares have long straightaways which contribute to high vehicle speed. Measures should be taken to improve safety for cyclists.

Action 8

Provide connections to existing parks and bikeways

The planning area contains extensive parkland and bikeways that are not easily or safely accessible. Connections to these existing facilities should be provided in order to increase the utilization of these amenities and the physical activity opportunities available in the area.

The Bikeways Map on page 41 shows proposed bike paths, including trails that provide access to parks. This map should be used when roads are reconstructed and when planning future bikeways.

Action 9

Require new development to provide and reserve bikeway links

The design and construction of greenways and trails should be a required improvement for all development plans that are near a regional trail and considered for smaller site developments. The network of greenways and trails throughout the planning area should link neighborhoods with one another, with schools, parks, and other natural areas. New developments should also provide connections to adjacent undeveloped property for future connectivity.

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

The Safe Routes to School program encourages children to walk or bicycle to school. It makes walking and bicycling to school safer and more appealing.

Successful projects have included:

- Improvements to crosswalks, sidewalks, bikeways, bicycle parking and traffic-calming features around schools
- Teaching children and parents about transportation choices and pedestrian and bicycle safety
- Community crossing guard programs and increased enforcement of speed limits and other traffic laws around schools
- Participation in *Walk to School Day*
- Maintaining a school car pool list for those who cannot walk or bicycle to school

Since 2005, communities across the state have received millions of dollars for Safe Routes to School projects. To be eligible for this funding, a school needs a Safe Routes to School Travel Plan. Plans can focus on a single school, multiple schools or an entire school district.

Montana NAPA

TYPES OF PROPOSED BIKEWAYS

Bikeways map

What it is: The Bikeways map shows locations of existing and proposed bikeways. The proposals support a bikeway network for transportation and recreation.

Why we need it: Since bikeways allow people to cover wide distances, communities plan for bikeways on a regional basis. This ensures we connect destinations for people living in the planning area and throughout central Ohio.

A path for bicycles and pedestrians, separate from a road. Generally 10 to 14 feet wide. Appropriate along high-speed, high-volume roads where on-street facilities are not safe or feasible.

On-street, striped lane for bicycles, 4 to 6 feet wide, usually next to the outermost travel lanes. Appropriate for high-speed, low-volume roads.

A paved area beyond outside travel lanes, 4 feet wide. Common on narrow rural roads. Appropriate for high-speed, low-volume roads.

Standard road with a combination of traffic calming, signage and "sharrows" (shown at right), or a high-volume road with 14-foot or wider outside lanes. Appropriate on low-speed, high-volume roads.

All images: pedbikeimages.org

In addition to Brown Township Comprehensive Plan bikeways recommendations, the map contains information from these sources: Columbus Bicentennial Bikeways Plan, MORPC Regional Bikeways Plan, Metro Parks, and the Hilliard Comprehensive Plan.

BIKEWAYS MAP

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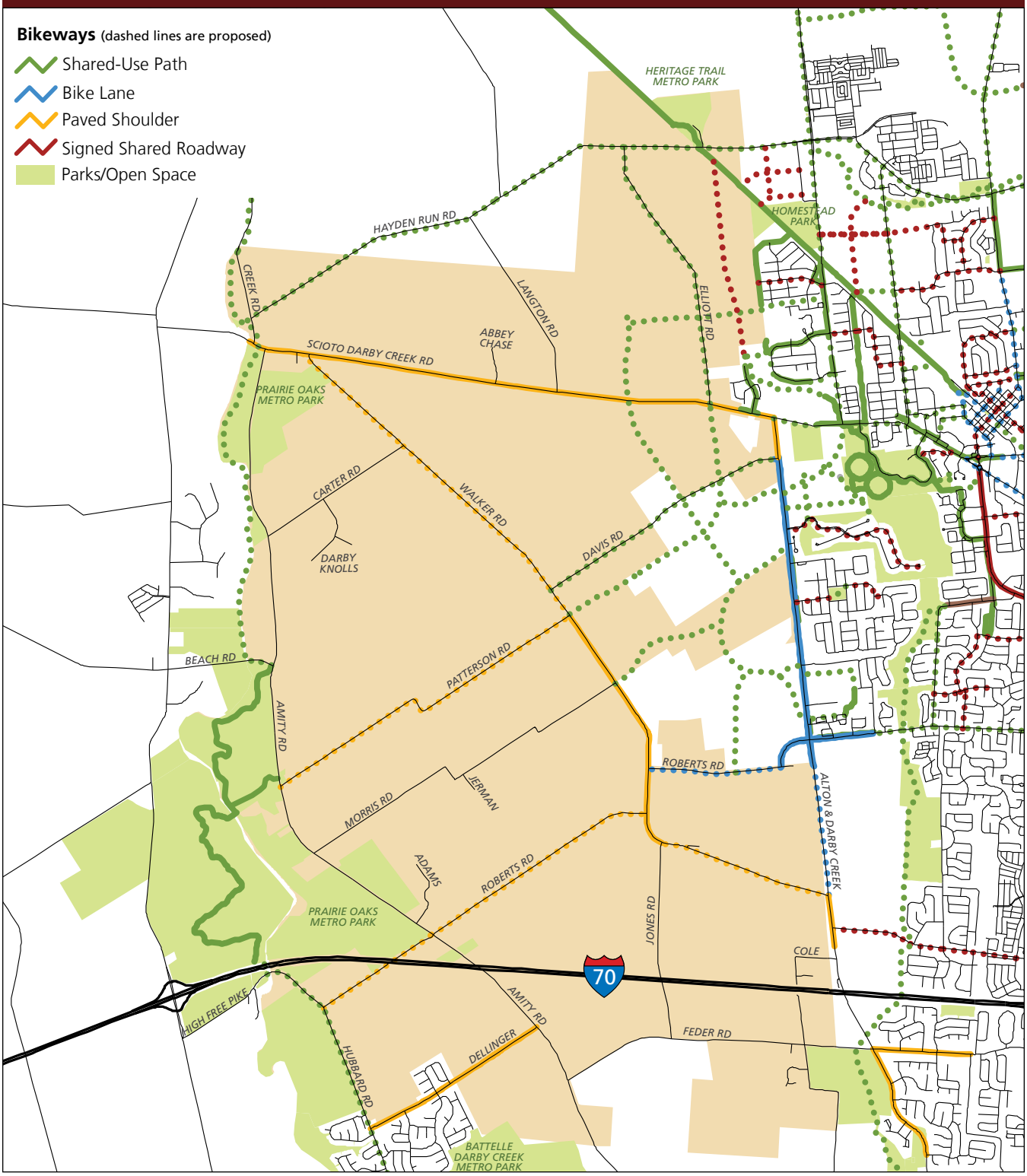

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project team thanks the following individuals and groups for input, technical advice and assistance overall with the Brown Township Comprehensive Plan:

Lana Ahlum, *Brown Township Working Committee*
Ann Aubrey, *Columbus Department of Public Utilities*
Charles Broschart, *Franklin County Public Health*
Sgt. Charley Brown, *Franklin County Sheriff's Office*
Amelia Costanzo, *Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission*
Beth Clark, *Brown Township*
Gary Dever, *Brown Township Trustee*
Josh Garver, *Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District*
Martha Gilson, *Franklin Soil and Water Conservation Dist.*
Tim Hamilton, *Hilliard City Schools*
Mike Harrold, *Brown Township Working Committee*
Dep. Jesse Hatfield, *Franklin County Sheriff's Office*
Tracy Hatmaker, *Prairie Township*
Ed Hinton, *Brown Township Working Committee*
Barbara Hoover, *Brown Township Working Committee*
David Hughes, *Madison County Building and Zoning Dept.*
Brady Koehler, *Franklin County Drainage Engineer*
Paul Lambert, *Brown Township Working Committee*
Maureen Lorenz, *Columbus Recreation and Parks Dept.*
Doug Lowery, *Hilliard City Schools*
Kim Lux, *Brown Township Working Committee*
Doug Maggied, *Brown Township Working Committee*
Eric Manske, *Norwich Township Fire Department*
Joe Martin, *Brown Township Working Committee*
George Nemeth, *Brown Township Working Committee*
Malcolm Porter, *Building Industry Association*
Jim Ramsey, *Franklin County Drainage Engineer*
Stephen Renner, *Franklin County Sanitary Engineer*
Dave Reutter, *Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District*
Nancy Rhynard, *Brown Township Working Committee*
Cornell Robertson, *Franklin County Engineer's Office*
Pam Sayre, *Brown Township Trustee*
Clyde Seidle, *Hilliard Public Service Department*
David Stewart, *Hilliard City Schools*
Jamie Stout, *Franklin County Emergency Management*
Steve Studenmund, *Metro Parks*
John Tetzloff, *Darby Creek Association*
John Tholen, *Brown Township Working Committee*
Neall Weber, *Brown Township Working Committee*
Bob Weisenberger, *Washington Township*
Brent Welch, *Franklin County Engineer's Office*
Kevin Wheeler, *Columbus Department of Development*
Ron Williams, *Brown Township Trustee*
Kyle Wilson, *Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District*
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