2012 UPDATE
Land Use Plan

Plain Township
New Albany, Ohio
est. 1810

October 31, 2012
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Acknowledgements

2012 Land Use Plan Update

Plain Township Elected Officials

Dave Ferguson          Chair
Dave Olmstead          Vice-Chair
Tom Rybski             Trustee
Bud Zapatelli          Fiscal Officer

Plain Township Zoning Commission

David Halsey           Chair
Sylvia Snabl           Vice-Chair
Rick Wieland           Member
Philip Johnson         Member
Greg Eller             Member

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Executive Summary
Executive Summary

BACKGROUND
The 2012 update to the Plain Township Land Use Plan considers the changes that have occurred in the Township since the last update in 2008, and continues to build upon the principles and strategies adopted through that planning process. Since the last update was adopted in 2008, the Plain Township area has seen some increased growth despite the lengthy economic recession. The City of New Albany and the City of Columbus have continued to annex within the Township and have consumed an additional 1,721 acres of Township land since 2008. In addition the population within the Township boundaries has increased from an estimated 20,470 people in 2005 to a projected population of approximately 24,650 people at the end of 2011. Nearly all of the population growth has occurred in the City of New Albany and the City of Columbus jurisdictions. In fact, as the Townships land area has decreased so has the population of the Township to a small degree. From an economic perspective the New Albany Business Campus has continued to show success in attracting new businesses, contributing to the growth of the area while the Township has also seen an increase in people seeking to locate businesses within the Township, including several inquiries for re-zoning along the U.S. 62 corridor. Most notable of the changes within this time period is the continued development of the proposed Rocky Fork Metro Park facility in the area of the Township north of Walnut Street. The development of this new park was arranged as a part of the Tri-Party Agreement signed and adopted just prior to the creation of the 2008 Land Use Plan. Since the agreement had just recently been adopted and land had not yet been acquired by the Columbus and Franklin County Metropolitan Parks District, or “Metro Parks”, many of the planning decisions for that area in 2008 were deferred until this update. As a result of all of these changes the Township has initiated the process of updating the 2008 Land Use Plan to review the physical and political changes within the Township and to re-fresh the strategies and land use recommendations as needed to accommodate these changes.

PLANNING PROCESS
The Township initiated the process of updating the Land Use Plan early in 2012. This process has built upon the extensive research and analysis process, community engagement, goal setting and land use decision initiatives undertaken in 2008. For this update the process of engaging the community and soliciting feedback included interviews with the zoning commission and trustees. Two public meetings were also held to discuss recommended updates to the plan with the zoning commission and community.

COMMUNITY GOALS
The main goals developed through the community participation process in 2008 were found to be valid still today. The most important goals identified during that process were the preservation of natural resources, maintaining the rural character of the remaining portions of the Township, providing alternate transportation opportunities/eliminating gaps in bike trail connectivity, and working to provide increased traffic safety. In addition to those goals, the Township added the goal of providing more creative options for the development of land around the proposed Rocky Fork Metro Park while preserving the natural resources and enhancing the Metro Park corridor.
LAND USE STRATEGIES

Residential
The lack of public sewer and water still has a very large influence on the future of residential growth in the Township. Without these critical resources the density of development will be limited to that which can be approved by the county for septic and well systems. One other option for increased density lies in the possibility for approval of newer “on site” septic treatment facilities that will serve multiple dwellings. While effective treatment options have not yet become mainstream this type of option can still not be entirely ruled out within the near future. For this reason this plan still carries recommendations for both increased density development and development restricted by septic and well approvals.

The focus of the residential strategy for this plan revolves around maintaining the rural character, preserving the critical natural resources of the Township and maintaining high quality development standards. In addition this plan adds new recommendations to help protect the character of the Township during future development and rural lot splits near and around the pending Rocky Fork Metro Park.

To achieve these goals the focus lies upon three main zoning districts. The newer Planned Residential Conservation Development (PRCD) District is recommended where development character and the preservation of critical natural resources are important to the Township. The Planned Unit Development (PUD) District is recommended where natural resources and open space preservation are not as critical but high quality development that matches the character of its surroundings is still desired. The Suburban Estate Residential is recommended where access to increased density through “on site” treatment systems is not available and the preservation of environmental resources is not a critical issue.

Density, its effect on the rural character of the Township, and its effect on the Plain Local School District, is still a major concern for the community. For that reason this plan limits the residential density in all parts of the Township to a maximum of 1 unit per acre of gross land. These densities would only be permitted where a county approved “on site” treatment facility would be available. For the remainder of residential development in the Township, densities would be limited to 1 unit per 2.5 acres or greater (based upon septic and well approval). The Township may wish to consider allowing smaller lot sizes in an effort to promote the preservation of natural features in specific areas, such as the Metro Park corridor.
Executive Summary

Commercial

The strategy for commercial development in the Township lies in the desire to have the ability for businesses to locate in the Plain Township area. This includes several recent requests to develop the 62 corridor increasing the need to adopt standards that protect this corridor if future development opportunities arise. As was the case in 2008, sufficient retail opportunities already exist in the Plain Township area to serve the future needs of the Township. As such, this plan still recommends that no additional retail land is zoned within the Township. New commercial areas identified in this plan should be reserved for the development of local businesses as described herein.

Open Space / Metro Parks

Open space is a critical resource for any community and adds to the value of the community and the quality of life and health of its residents. The preservation of open space in this plan relies heavily on the Planned Residential Conservation Development District and the future development of the Rocky Fork Metro Park in the northern portion of the planning area. In 2008, when the plan was last updated, the agreement to develop a metro park had just been signed and adopted. As a result there was not sufficient information regarding the location of such a park to allow for the development of land use recommendations within the proposed park corridor. For this purpose land use recommendations were left vague to allow time for the Metro Parks District to approach land owners and acquire the land necessary to develop the park. Currently, the Metro Parks District has acquired approximately 910 acres within the park development area and has nearly completed its land acquisition phase. While the Metro Parks District has identified several other properties as being desirable for acquisition, it appears that the total acquisition will not exceed 1000 acres with current funding. This plan continues where the 2008 plan left off in developing additional recommendations for this area.
Walking / Leisure Trails

The provision for alternative forms of travel such as walking and biking are important to the health, sustainability and desirability of any community. This is evident in the success of the trail systems developed by New Albany and other communities. The residents and Township leaders who participated in the public meetings in 2008 all expressed their desire to have these options available to them and to provide connectivity to the New Albany trail system. This plan recommends various options for the Township to consider that will help bring to reality this important community goal, including strategies and options to connect the new metro park with the Township and surrounding area.

Political Considerations

Within the planning area, several political/planning movements are still active that continue to weigh on future decisions. The two main considerations include the Rocky Fork Blacklick Accord and the Tri-Party Annexation Agreement between the Township, City of New Albany, and the City of Columbus. Each of these continues to influence the future of the Township.

This plan continues to consider each and, although it does not completely mimic either, incorporates many of the same recommendations. It is critical that the Township leaders continue to maintain a high level of investment in each of these planning/political issues to ensure that the Township has a voice and the future of the Township matches what is desired by the community.
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Introduction
Introduction

PURPOSE

Since undertaking the last Master Plan update in 2008, Plain Township has continued to see growth and expansion from both the City of New Albany and the City of Columbus even through the collapse of the housing bubble and national recession. This growth has continued to alter the landscape and boundaries of the Township. This update will reflect upon the changes in the marketplace and the growth that has occurred in the last four years.

It is not the intent of this new plan to replace all of the background information or public input received during the 2008 plan. This plan will update the outdated information and supplement it with new research. The 2012 Land Use Plan Update will utilize that information along with current research to provide guidance for the future of land use in the Township.

STUDY AREA

The Plain Township planning area is defined by the Township’s original political boundaries (Morse Road on the south, Franklin-Licking County line on the east, Franklin-Delaware County line on the north and Hamilton Road and a north-south line connecting Hamilton road and Schott Road on the west). The planning area represents about 16,000 acres or 25 square miles.

PROCESS

This process is based upon the research, analysis and public input developed during the 2008 plan update. In addition this plan updates the annexation and boundaries of the Township along with changes that have occurred since the last update. Without this important background information effective decisions regarding the future of the Township cannot be made.

Research & Analysis – This plan augments and updates the research that was undertaken during the 2008 Master Plan Update. This information has been updated with current research where necessary. Information on the current land use policy of adjacent municipalities and Townships has also been considered as well as changes in demographics, natural features, etc.

Public Input - Land use master planning is very much a public process. In order to have a well-supported and defendable plan for the future, the needs and desires of the Township residents must be considered. As part of this process the Township has hosted several public meetings to gather feedback from residents and verify if the recommendations and principles developed during the 2008 plan process are still valid today.
Existing Conditions and Trends

INTRODUCTION

An important part of the master planning process is to examine all of the influences that may have impact on decisions being made for the future. In order to create sound land use policy, it is necessary to understand all of the elements that may provide opportunities or create constraints.

This chapter carries forth all of the existing conditions and market trends developed in 2008 and updates those conditions where changes have occurred over the last four years. This chapter will not re-evaluate conditions or trends already identified in the 2008 plan that are still valid today.

PLANNING AREA JURISDICTIONS

Within the Plain Township boundary there are three jurisdictions: Plain Township, the City of New Albany, and the City of Columbus. The portion of the planning area occupied by each entity has changed since 2008 and is reflected in the following table and adjacent graphics. According to the Franklin County Engineer’s Office the following table illustrates the trend of annexation by the incorporated areas. This trend indicates that the vast majority of development is annexing into the City of New Albany and City of Columbus where access to utilities is readily available.

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Figure 6: 1996 Corporate Boundaries

Figure 7: 2011 Corporate Boundaries

Figure 8: Change in City and Unincorporated Boundaries
DEMOGRAPHICS

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the planning area remains consistently less dense than neighboring jurisdictions, as well as Franklin County as a whole. Comparing population density (measured as residents per square mile) among several of the jurisdictions within the planning area provides an indication of the development character. As indicated by the chart, the Township has roughly one third the population per square mile as the City of New Albany, and roughly one sixth the population per square mile as the City of Columbus. This indicates that while New Albany and Columbus have grown more suburban in nature, the Township has retained most of its rural density.

The chart also portrays the large increase in population in both the City of New Albany and the City of Columbus over the last 20 years. This again indicates that a large share of the growth has occurred on Township lands that were annexed into New Albany and Columbus to gain access to sewer and water and increased densities. With sewer and water being a primary concern for development and with the signing of the Tri-Party Agreement this trend is likely to continue.

Another noteworthy trend is the increase in the aging population. This trend could foretell changes in the future of the Township. As the Township ages it is possible to see continued turnover in homestead and land ownership leaving more parcels open for development.

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Figure 9: Change in Population & Households
Existing Conditions and Trends

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

Residential Growth

From the mid 1990’s through the early 2000’s the central Ohio area witnessed a tremendous housing boom that caused rapid growth in many areas. The highly desirable northwest and northeast growth corridors received the lion’s share of this growth. The New Albany area in particular far outpaced the growth of the rest of the region by nearly 110%. This growth was fueled by increasing population, high area demand, low housing interest rates, and in large part, by people re-locating from other areas of Central Ohio.

Recently however the region, and most of the country, has seen a collapse in the housing market. Throughout 2011 in the demand for new housing was nearly stagnant and many people lost much of the value that had accrued in their homes. For a time this brought new housing starts to a near stop, a trend which has only recently begun to recover.

The desirability of the area, and the move up nature of the housing stock, has continued to somewhat buffer the New Albany area from the decline and once growth resumes a more sustainable pace it is expected that this area will continue to be a focus for new development.

Commercial Growth

The northeast area has seen rapid growth not only in residential sectors, but, commercial and residential support services as well. The advent of the Easton Town Center project provided the area with a highly desirable shopping and entertainment venue as well as a large variety of corporate office development. This development along with the introduction of the New Albany Business Campus has made the area popular for the introduction or relocation of businesses to the region. This increasing location of new businesses in the area will help to fuel the demand for new housing.

As housing growth increases so does the need for increasing retail services. As a result of the growth in the area retail services have also grown and to some degree has also outpaced the demand in anticipation of continued housing growth.
PLANNING INFLUENCES

Residential Development

The New Albany Company (NACO) has been a major influence over the recent volume of growth within the area. Promoting high quality development with a distinctively Georgian style of architecture and signature white rail fencing NACO has a significant impact on the character of the City of New Albany and the Township. This established character, along with high quality schools, has also spurred demand from various builders and developers leading to the significant residential growth experienced in the area. NACO does not currently own much land in the unincorporated areas of Plain Township but still has a substantial investment in large portions of New Albany. As the largest land owner in the City of New Albany, NACO continues to heavily influence the character of development. NACO has expressed strong support for the Rocky Fork-Blacklick Accord planning document due to its guidelines which help protect the amenities and value of the area.

Commercial, Office, and Light Industrial Development

Regional Retail uses:

The amount of retail uses already established in the area will have a significant impact on the sustainability of future retail zonings. The market needs for additional retail should be examined prior to making recommendations for future retail growth. Regional retail destinations are defined by the Urban Land Institute as retail sites over 50,000 square feet having a service area of approximately a 3-5 mile radius. As indicated in the adjacent graphics a significant amount of regional retail currently exists in the Township. The service areas for these retail centers already cover the vast majority of the Township. In addition a large variety of smaller, service oriented retail exists in the area creating questions regarding the sustainability of additional retail growth.
Existing Conditions and Trends

SR 161 widening, I-270 and SR 161 interchange
Improvements:

The City of Columbus and State of Ohio have recently completed massive roadway projects which will likely have an influence on future development in the region. The most aggressive of these improvements was the reconstruction of the I-270 & S.R. 161 Expressway interchange. This improvement was designed to separate many of the critical on/off points to I-270 as well as remove the merging conflicts from the off ramp of Sunbury Road.

The widening of S.R. 161 to the east of the Township also plays a role in the accessibility of the area. It is likely that more and more commuters will find the outlying areas as attractive options to live and raise a family while working in the business campus or central city. These improvements will make the Business Campus more desirable to corporations and businesses that can now more easily attract employees from outside the immediate area. The future growth of the business campus will also increase growth pressure on the Township.

Institutional

Plain Township is home to one of the region’s most desirable school systems. The success of the Plain Local School District has contributed to the areas residential desirability. This desirability is reflected in the age distribution of the residents, according to the strategic plan update prepared by the City of New Albany in 2006. The percentage of population under the age of 18 is nearly 40% more than that of Franklin County as a whole. This indicates that a majority of people with families are locating in the area. The desirability of the school district will make the development of single family housing desirable in the Township and City of New Albany.
ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES

The region is home to a number of environmental assets that need to be preserved through the planning process. Regional planning efforts have already taken place to protect the Rocky Fork Creek and Blacklick Creek stream corridors, and their tributaries, from the impacts of development. In addition to those natural amenities the area is also characterized by large tree stands and tree rows which add to the rural character of the Township. These assets, if preserved, will greatly increase the quality of life in the Township. The Township should embrace these regional planning efforts and establish their own policies for preservation of these natural amenities. The formation of a new Metro Park (discussed herein) will provide a big leap forward in this effort.

Figure 18: Natural features Map
(Source 2008 Land Use Plan)
Existing Conditions and Trends

TRANSPORTATION CONTEXT

The large amount of growth that the region has experienced since the adoption of the last Master Plan in 1996 has led to a substantial increase in traffic throughout the planning area. This increase in traffic has had a significant impact on the overall feel and character of the Township and has caused several items of concern.

A large amount of traffic is a result of commuters moving from areas above Plain Township, down to the expressway, and on to various parts of the City. These trips are generated mostly in the early morning on the way to work and late afternoon on the return trip home. Some of this traffic distributes to both Walnut and Central College Road by commuters trying to avoid the congestion of the expressway thereby causing an increase in pressure on existing Township roads.

With this increase in traffic one major intersection, has become dangerous for motorists. This is a result of an offset in where each side of Walnut intersects with SR 605. Another major intersection, Central College and U.S. 62, has recently been fixed with the addition of a new traffic light and changes to the access of Kitzmiller Road onto Central College Road.
Existing Conditions and Trends

UTILITY CONTEXT

Public Sewer and Water

The Township does not currently have access to sewer and water services and it is unlikely that sewer and water would become available without the requirement of annexation. Prior to 2000 the City of New Albany and the City of Columbus entered a sewer service agreement whereby the City of Columbus provides sewer and water services for the City of New Albany. The contract also specifies agreed upon boundaries within Plain Township that each municipality may annex for future growth and utility service provision (see adjacent map).

Packaged Treatment Facilities

Another option being proposed for development in various areas is on site, or “packaged”, sewer treatment facilities. These treatment options are becoming more sophisticated and affordable. As a result they are being looked at with increasing frequency by developers. These systems may not yet be advanced enough to permit feasible development in Plain Township soil conditions. However, as the technology develops they may soon have an influence on future development.

If these systems become more readily available, and gain the approval of the EPA and health departments, it could open up property for development that previously has been hampered by the lack of adequate sewer and water facilities. These types of systems could make development in the Township more attractive than annexation into the City of Columbus or the City of New Albany just to gain access to utilities.

Water and Sewer Agreement Map

Figure 20: Water and Sewer Agreement Map (Source 2008 Master Plan)
Existing Conditions and Trends

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Schools

The New Albany-Plain Local School District currently has approximately 4,400 students. Each year about 10-15 new students are presently being added from the unincorporated Township. Based upon studies performed by the district it is anticipated that the projected peak of 5,500 students could be reached in about 10-15 years.

The main goal of the New Albany-Plain Local School District is to stay “campus oriented”, by not building any satellite schools. To achieve this goal the New Albany-Plain Local School District cannot accommodate unmitigated growth beyond its projections.

Based upon the annexation agreement properties annexed into the City of Columbus will enroll students into the Columbus City school system. Properties annexed by the City of New Albany will stay in the New Albany-Plain local School District.

Columbus and Franklin County Metropolitan Park District “Metro Parks”

Moving closer to the goal of establishing the Rocky Fork Metro Park, the Columbus and Franklin County Metropolitan Park District, or “Metro Parks”, has already acquired, or is in-contract on, approximately 910 acres of property within the Metro Park Corridor established by the Tri-Party Agreement (Metro Park property indicated in green on the map below). With funding for land acquisition running dry the Metro Parks District has started to focus on improving the land currently under ownership and suspending efforts to negotiate for additional parcels. If no additional land is acquired by the district the park will fall short of the initial goal of 1200 acres. However, the district has indicated a preference for land with significant environmental features, such as, streams, wetlands, tree stands, etc. and land with those features is still available within the corridor. It is possible that, if funding becomes available in the future, the district could expand their current land holdings. It is anticipated that the development of the Rocky Fork Metro Park will impact the desirability of surrounding land for residential uses. This plan will explore those impacts in subsequent chapters.

Figure 21: Rocky Fork Metro Park Property Holdings (map provided by Metro Parks District)
REGIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

City of New Albany

The City of New Albany is located centrally within Plain Township. Both communities have very similar goals for schools, parks, and residential areas. Currently, the residential density within New Albany is 1.17 units per acre. Future growth for the city is dependent on either sewer extension from the south or packaged treatment facilities. Different types of active and passive open space contribute to the character of New Albany and are important to the future development of the city.

Based upon the Strategic Land Use Plan, updated by New Albany in 2006, the focus will be on low density development in the southeastern area of Plain Township. Concentrated residential uses will continue near the city core along with commercial, office, and retail.

Rural Estate District – New Albany

The Rural Estate District encompasses a major part of the Babbitt Road Corridor and consists of many standards including:
- Minimum 1.5 story and maximum 3 story homes.
- Maintain setbacks and leisure trails on all homes fronting primary roadways.
- Homes should front public open space, rather than the back onto parks or roadways.
- Garages should be side or rear loaded.
- Cul-de-sacs are strongly discouraged.
- Conservation development should play a major role.
- Density should be 1du/ac North of S.R. 161 and 1du/10 ac South of S.R. 161.
- Lot width should be 100 feet maximum.
- Single-family lots should be 15,000 sq. ft. minimum
- Any open space should have a 1,200 feet maximum distance.
- Establish an open space hierarchy.
- Create large open spaces near the center of each development.
- Open space should include existing natural features.
- Estate Lots
- 10 acre minimum (Babbitt Road Corridor only)
- Roadways should have rural characteristics
- Leisure trails along all streets & stream corridors.

Figure 22: New Albany Strategic Land Use Plan
Existing Conditions and Trends

Rocky Fork-Blacklick Accord

The Rocky Fork-Blacklick Accord (RFBA) is an initiative of the City of New Albany and the City of Columbus to establish long range planning guidelines to manage growth and development in annexed portions of Plain Township. The purpose of the Accord is to protect, preserve and enhance the quality of life in the participating jurisdictions through clearly defined development and zoning regulations. Preservation of existing natural features, floodplain, and flood ways are key components to the plan. The Rocky Fork Creek and Blacklick Creek floodplain buffer is 300 feet, while the Sugar Run floodplain buffer is 200 feet and a 500 foot no build zone is established along all existing rural roads.

The RFBA goals were established through survey and community forums. The participants felt a concern to protect natural resources, such as, creeks, wooded areas and open space. An adequate balance of residential and commercial development was also necessary. Plans to finance services and schools will help residents continue the high quality schools. A variety of housing types, styles and prices were important to the community members.

The RFBA non-negotiable principles were created to help establish a better land use plan. Some major elements consist of:

- Maintain aesthetic character of the rural roads.
- Use open space as an organizational element.
- Use a compact form of development in the town and village clusters with defined edges such as greenbelts and natural corridors.
- Develop mixed use in town and village centers.
- Assure diversity in housing prices and types.
- Create a center focus that combines civic, cultural and recreational uses.
- Guarantee permanent protection of green belts, streams, creeks, wood- lands, grass lands, wetlands and historical sites.
- Development in town will be located within easy walking or biking distance of other neighborhoods, schools, retail centers and transit stops.
- Development must pay its own way.

Figure 23: Rocky Fork Blacklick Accord Map
RFBA Annexation Agreement

This Tri-Party Agreement is a negotiation between the City of Columbus, The City of New Albany and Plain Township. It will play a major role in the future of the Township and establishes boundaries and procedures for future annexations of Township lands. Lands to be annexed by the City of Columbus must be done so under Type1 Annexation procedures and must be moved into the City of Columbus school district.

With this annexation agreement Plain Township, the City of New Albany, and the City of Columbus each have 3 individual seats on the RFBA panel. This gives the Township some investment into the proceedings of the Accord.

Another important aspect of the RFBA Annexation Agreement is the development of the Rocky Fork Metro Park within the region indicated on the adjacent map as the “Park Zone”. This park is being developed in coordination with the Township, the City of Columbus, and the City of New Albany who have each participated in the funding for land acquisition.

City of Columbus

The City of Columbus corporate area is located west of the City of New Albany in the Township. Both the City of Columbus and the City of New Albany are heavily invested in the Rocky Fork Blacklick Accord, each having taken a large part in that multi-jurisdictional process. The City of Columbus relies heavily on the Rocky Fork-Blacklick Accord as its planning guide for growth in the region. In addition Columbus has adjusted its growth and expansion policies after examining the cost vs. benefit comparison of extending sewers and providing services to outlying areas. Recently, more attention has been focused on establishing re-investment in first and second tier suburbs. As a result, most of the City of Columbus’s financial resources are being directed toward interior redevelopment opportunities.
Existing Conditions and Trends

Harlem Township

Harlem Township updated their comprehensive master plan in 2008. This update allows for slightly higher densities along the southern border. This was done in an effort to protect them from future annexation from the City of Columbus to the south. Lot sizes are to remain at a 2 acre minimum per unit under their Farm Residential zoning district, unless a Conservation Subdivision or Planned Residential District is proposed. Then the net density would be a maximum of 2 units per acre with a substantial amount of required open space.

Natural resource protection, transportation connectivity, smart residential and commercial development are important goals in the Harlem Township Comprehensive Plan.

As a result, low to medium density development should occur along the northern border of Plain Township.

Jefferson Township

Jefferson Township, located south of Plain Township, is a mainly residential community focused on large lot or cluster/conservation development that falls in the 0.8 units per acre density range. More intense development has been occurring south of Havens Corner Road in an effort to block annexation and encroachment by the City of Columbus.

The Township relies heavily on the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Map for all new development and is referred to as “Zoning Neutral.” Preservation of open space is one of Jefferson Township’s goals. Presently, they require 35% open space within each new development, and the preservation of the Townships natural resources becomes the focus of that open space.

Low density development (one unit per 3-5 acres) will continue to be the theme for development along the southern border of Plain Township.
Jersey Township

Jersey Township, located east of Plain Township, does not expect any radical increase in growth due to its lack of water and sewer access. Rural residential is the zoning classification adjacent to the eastern border, with one unit per 2-5 acres. The City of New Albany has annexed into Jersey Township along S.R. 161 and is currently developing industrial and warehouse space along Beech Road. This new development, and the newly constructed Beech Road Interchange has had an impact on traffic in both Jersey Township and Plain township. The Township’s zoning currently does not require any dedicated open space, but surveys of the populous resulted in a consensus to protect sensitive natural features and farm land and the zoning code is currently being updated.

According to the expectations of Jersey Township, low density residential development along Plain Township’s eastern border will likely occur along with business growth surrounding the City of New Albany property. It is likely that the City of New Albany expansion and development will continue along the S.R. 161 corridor.

Monroe Township

Monroe Township, located north-east of Plain Township, will control a significant portion of U.S. 62 heading towards Johnstown. A strong commercial corridor exists along U.S. 62, situated just south of the business district. Plans have been established to extend Beech Road to S.R. 37, containing an additional commercial and industrial corridor. There will be medium density residential buffering the corridor, with lower density on the outskirts.

Monroe Township has influence upon Plain Township due to their commercial corridor along U.S. 62 and their variety of residential types buffering this area.
Blendon Township

Blendon Township, located on the western border of Plain Township, recently completed an update to their community plan in 2010. With a significant portion of the Township already annexed to both the City of Westerville and the City of Columbus, the Blendon Township community plan is focused on promoting sustainability, preserving natural resources, and “growing smart” in the remainder of the unincorporated areas. This includes creating a well-connected system of sidewalks and bikeways to promote regional pedestrian and bicycle connections.

The area of Blendon Township having the most influence on Plain Township is the area between Hoover Reservoir and the Townships eastern border. This area is directly adjacent to the Metro Park Corridor in the Plain Township Land Use Plan and is designated for Low and Medium Density Residential Development. Low Density Residential allows for a maximum of one unit per acre and Medium Density Residential allows for between two and eight units per acre. In addition many of the proposed bikeway connections in the Blendon Community Plan provide an opportunity to connect with the pathway network described herein.

City Of Gahanna

City of Gahanna is located south-west of Plain Township. The “Triangle North” Development includes multi-family residential, and neighborhood residential, along with medical office uses. The remaining development along the northern border of the city is single family residential.

The City of Gahanna will influence commercial development along the southern border of Plain Township.
INTRODUCTION

Public involvement in the master planning process is critical in order to build an informed constituency and to make educated decisions that account for the goals and desires of the entire community. Many residents differ in their opinions regarding various issues such as growth, community character, taxes, etc. Public involvement allows individual members of the community to express their concerns regarding the future of the Township and to help develop a consensus regarding the best solutions for moving forward. Recognizing this, the Township leaders expressed a desire to make sure that the community had an opportunity to participate in this update of the Land Use Master Plan.

The process for this update included an initial kick off meeting with the Township Zoning Commission and Trustees. The purpose of this meeting was to gather input on various growth and fiscal concerns. Once these meetings were completed a conceptual update to the Land Use Master Plan was developed and presented to the Zoning Commission and Trustees during public meetings for review and feedback. These meetings were designed to inform the public on the issues facing the Township and to solicit public opinion regarding the future of the Township. In addition this Update carries forth the input developed during the 2008 Land Use Process which is described as follows.

Initial Township Meeting

During the initial kick off meeting many of the issues that inspired the need for this update were discussed. One of the major issues driving the need for the update was the change in the marketplace, change in Township boundaries, and increased requests for commercial development in the Township. Another major factor in the need to update the Land Use Plan was the pending development of the Rocky Fork Metro Park now that a majority of the land for the park has been acquired.

The largest concerns raised by the Township leaders continue to be how best to maintain a rural character throughout the remaining portions of the Township and protect the natural features that remain. This concern is based not only on the desires of the individual members of the zoning commission and trustees but also feedback that had been received from various members of the community.

2008 LAND USE PLAN – COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND VISIONING

During the Township public input process undertaken during the 2008 Land Use Plan update, which consisted of two open houses and a follow up public meeting, a total of 66 participants from various areas of the Township and City of New Albany contributed their thoughts on a variety of subjects. Discussions consisted of the residents opinions on goals and their desires for the future of the Township. During the two public open houses the discussion was based upon the participants brainstorming questions on broad based subjects, such as character, growth, transportation, and land uses. Each community member then ranked the results based on their belief of the order of importance. The results were typically very unanimous and usually very predictable.

Based upon this feedback the community and Township officials then came together for a third meeting to review the results and to participate in developing the Guiding Principles contained herein.
Public Open House Meetings

The main focus of these meetings in 2008 was to gather the input of various community members on various topics and to establish discussion regarding the future of the Township. In these meetings a variety of questions were brainstormed by the group and then answers to each question were ranked by each community member. The results of those sessions are listed below:

**Question 1 - What Are the Qualities of The Township That You Would Most Like To Maintain.**

Almost all respondents were evenly split between keeping a “rural” character and reducing the tax burden on the individual taxpayer. “Rural” was defined by the respondents as farm land, 2 lane roads, forests, streams, barns, sense of community, and freedom from light pollution.

Other qualities receiving a few stray votes include: connectivity, lower traffic volumes, less large commercial uses, further set-backs, and tree preservation.

**Question 2 - What Qualities Would You Like To See Disappear?**

Most respondents were evenly split between increasing traffic concerns and gaps in connectivity, such as, bike trails. A few votes were recorded for: litter, land consumption, construction traffic, and white fences (1 vote).

**Question 3 - What Are The Most Important Issues Facing The Township Today?**

Most people voted tax burden on the residential taxpayer as the number one issue in the Township. A few other issues receiving votes included: urban / suburban sprawl, annexation, traffic, and choice as it relates to utilities.

**Question 4 - What Is The Character You Would Most Like To See For The Township?**

Most respondents overwhelmingly voted for a rural character with a distant second being a clean, aesthetically pleasing place to live. Third place in this category went to a pedestrian and bike friendly community.

**Question 5 - What Are The Most Important Transportation Issues?**

A majority of participant ranked alternative transportation routes as their number one preference with specific intersection management being number two on the list. Third place in this category was traffic management /control.

**Question 5 - What Are The Most Preferred Land Uses?**

This survey was based on the preferred land uses of the participants. Open space and farmland were voted a solid number one with conservation design being number two. A strong third place was land trust (tax incentives).
ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

Based upon the data gathered during the research process and the input from the community another public meeting was held to determine the most important issues facing the Township within the next 10 years. These issues were discussed and solidified by the residents of the community and several community leaders. These issues have been identified as needing to be addressed with the update of the master plan and are the driving force behind the Defining Principles developed in the next chapter. The issues are categorized as follows:

1. Rural/Growth
2. Transportation
3. Fiscal/Taxation Issue
4. Location of Commercial Uses
5. Location of Metro Parks/Acquisition of Land

Rural Growth Issues

The Rural/Growth issues are based upon the residents and Township leader’s desires to maintain the rural heritage of the Township. There was a strong feeling amongst all of the participants that the Townships rural character and natural features are a major contributor to the desirable quality of life in the Township. Issues to be addressed are as follows:

- Maintenance of existing natural areas, particularly the protection of natural features from destruction by future growth.
- Prevention of uncontrolled growth
- Maintain the Rural feel of roads
- Preventing the loss of open space and agriculture

Transportation Issues

The transportation issues are based upon the communities desire to maintain the rural character of the Township, provide alternate methods of travel, and to return a level of safety to the current road network. Issues to be addressed are as follows:

- Maintain rural feel of roadways
- Increasing traffic burden on Township roads
- Safety and congestion of key intersections
- Connectivity of bike trails and paths

Township Fiscal / Taxation Issues

The Township Fiscal/Taxation issues are based upon the communities concerns over the rising property tax burden on the individual taxpayer. The concerns expressed by the community are as follows:

- Increasing burden on residential tax payer
- Property tax is 2.31% of the market value of a home for the Township and City of New Albany land in the Plain-Local School District (highest in Franklin County with the exception of Blendon Township).
- Tax burden from additional development (roads, and infrastructure)
Community Involvement & Visioning

-Life safety provisions (Fire, EMS & Police Protection)
(It should be noted here that the largest portion of property taxes in the Township are distributed to the school district. As a result, there is little impact that the land use update can have in this regard.)

Commercial Uses
The issues regarding Commercial Uses in the Township are related to the desire to provide opportunities for businesses to locate in the Township that would serve the needs of the community and be sensitive to the rural surroundings. The issues discussed are as follows:

-What is the Township’s need for additional economic development?
-Service (retail, food, services) vs. economic development (businesses, industry)
-Overburden of regional retail development
-Centers of retail are over 50,000 S.F., serving a 3-5 mile radius
-Includes grocery, home improvement, mega retailers
-Substantial availability of land for business use in the area (but not located in the Township)

Metro Parks & Park Zone Planning
The location of the Metro Parks & Park Zone planning issues revolve around the agreement between the City of Columbus, City of New Albany, Plain Township and the Metro Parks District for the creation of the Rocky Fork Metro Park in the northern portion of the Township. Community concerns revolve around the feasibility of the necessary land acquisition and potential for development of land that does not get acquired by the Park District. Issues discussed include:

-Creation of 1,200 acre Metro Park
-Preserve ground still suitable for the expansion of the Metro Park based upon parcel size, ownership and existing natural features
-Use of ground outside of the Metro Parks
-Land Trusts, Donations, & Tax incentives
Guiding Principles
GUIDING PRINCIPLES

This section of the Land Use Master Plan is critical in the development of land use policies that will guide the Township into the future. Although the site plan will provide guidance for the location of various land uses it is critical that the plan maintain some flexibility in regards to the exact boundaries for those land uses. It is, however, the Guiding Principles established in this section that should provide the guidance for all future land use decisions. For this reason gathering the input of the Zoning Commission, Township Trustees and Township residents has been an important part of developing these principles.

As parcels come in for development it may be necessary to make land use decisions that vary from those shown on the plan. This could be as a result of changes in the marketplace, sizes of various parcels as they are brought into the development cycle or suitability of land for various uses. However, each application for re-zoning should be weighed against the principles developed in this chapter to verify that it is in conformance with the desires of the Township.

These Guiding Principles have been developed in large part as a response to the issues identified during the community participation sessions in 2008 and updated here to reflect the input of the Zoning Commission and Trustees. To promote a better understanding each of the issues will be repeated along with the Defining Principles relating to those issues.

Principles to Address Rural Growth Issues

The Rural/Growth issues are based upon the residents and Township leader’s desires to maintain the rural heritage of the Township. There was a strong feeling amongst all of the participants that the areas rural character and natural features are a major contributor to the desirable quality of life in the Township. Issues to be addressed are as follows:

- Maintenance of existing natural areas, particularly the protection of natural features from destruction by future growth.
- Prevention of uncontrolled growth
- Maintain the rural feel of roads
- Preventing the loss of open space and agriculture

Principle 1

This plan and future development approvals will guarantee the preservation of streams, creeks, wetlands, greenbelts, tree stands, and other significant natural features through the use of setbacks, easements or conservation design.

Principle 2

To maintain the rural feel on existing Township roads promote the establishment of large setbacks and preservation of existing road character.
Guiding Principles

Principles to Address Transportation Issues

The transportation issues are based upon the communities desire to maintain the rural character of the Township, provide alternate methods of travel, and to return a level of safety to the current road network. Issues to be addressed are as follows:

- Maintain rural feel of roadways
- Increasing traffic burden on Township roads
- Safety and congestion of key intersections
- Connectivity of bike trails and paths

Principle 1
Establish new road connections to more effectively move traffic through the Township while reducing the burden on existing street networks.

Principle 2
Identify and deal with problem intersections to promote safe and efficient traffic movement.

Principle 3
Provide for better pedestrian and bicycle connectivity through the Township and between the Township and surrounding communities.

Principles to Address Township Fiscal / Taxation Issues

The Township Fiscal/Taxation issues are based upon the communities concerns over the rising property tax burden on the individual taxpayer. The concerns expressed by the community are as follows:

- Increasing burden on residential tax payer
- Property tax is 2.31% of the market value of a home in the Township and City of New Albany within the Plain-Local School District (highest in Franklin County with the exception of Blendon Township).
- Tax burden from additional development (roads, and infrastructure)
- Life safety provisions (Fire, EMS & Police Protection)

(It should be noted here that the largest portion of property taxes in the Township are distributed to the school district. As a result, there is little impact that the land use update can have in this regard.)

Principle 1
Promote the establishment of community authority or special assessment districts to ensure that new development pays for its share of the additional burden.
Guiding Principles

Principles to Address Commercial Issues

The issues regarding Commercial Uses in the Township are related to the desire to provide opportunities for businesses to locate in the Township that would serve the needs of the community and be sensitive to the rural surroundings. The issues discussed are as follows:

- What is the Township’s need for additional economic development?
- Service (retail, food, services) vs. economic development (businesses, industry)
- Overburden of regional retail development
- Centers of retail are over 50,000 S.F. serving a 3-5 mile radius
- Includes grocery, home improvement, mega retailers
- Substantial availability of land for business use in the area (but not located in the Township)

**Principle 1**

Create opportunities for strategic economic development while being sensitive to the sustainability of existing businesses.

Principles to Address the Metro Park & Park Zone Planning Issues

The location of the Metro Park & Park Zone planning issues revolve around the pending agreement between the City of Columbus, City of New Albany, Plain Township and the Metro Parks District for the creation of a 1,200 acre Metro Park in the northern portion of the Township. Community concerns revolve around the feasibility of the necessary land acquisition and potential for development of land that does not get acquired by the Park District. Issues discussed include:

- Creation of 1,200 acre Metro Park/ feasibility
- Find ground most suitable for location of Metro Park based upon parcel size, ownership and existing natural features
- Use of ground outside of the Metro Park

**Principle 1**

In the Park Zone, promote the protection of the Rocky Fork Creek and its tributaries, where possible, by encouraging establishment of a park on lands within and around the streams while promoting conservation design adjacent to the park to add to the parks boundaries.
INTRODUCTION

Future land use decisions made by the Township will play a large part in the quality of life of the community. Many of the areas still available for development within the Township are located in high visibility areas and as such need to be treated with extra care and forethought. The purpose of this plan is to aid the Township in making those critical decisions. Development within the Township must continue to balance the desires of the residents, the needs of the Township, and the environmental impacts as well as help to create a sustainable and desirable future for the community.

The availability of suitable utility services will continue to have a large impact on the development of the remaining Township land. It is very unlikely that utility services will be extended to land within the Township without the requirement of annexation. If land is annexed it will fall under the jurisdiction of the annexing body and will not be developed under these regulations. It is possible however that, in the future, suitable on site or “packaged” sewer treatment options may become available. This would increase the feasibility for a higher level of development to occur within the Township. For this reason the plan will provide base recommendations for development in each land use area as well as explore options for development with county “approved” treatment options.

The map shown on the following page is intended to serve as a guide for Township leaders. Future rezoning applications should be compared against this map to determine if the proposed land uses are consistent with the recommendations made herein. Since this map depicts very broad areas of land use the lines between land use designations do not always follow individual property lines. These district lines should not be interpreted literally and can be adjusted to avoid splitting property or creating complex re-zoning issues. It is more critical that the Township weigh the goals and guide principles against future applications to determine the suitability for approval.
Figure 30: Future Land Use Plan
Future Land Use

PLANNED RESIDENTIAL CONSERVATION DISTRICT (PRCD)

Purpose

The purpose of the Planned Residential Conservation District (PRCD) is to provide creative options for the preservation of large portions of open space and significant natural resources while still permitting residential development to occur. The PRCD should be used by the Township as a means to ensure the preservation of the rural and environmental amenities of the Township and to ensure that residential development matches the needs and character of the community.

Metro Park Corridor

The area north of Walnut Street and west of U.S. 62, commonly identified as the Metro Park Corridor, is characterized by large tree stands, tree rows and large areas of agricultural land. This area is also home to several stream corridors including the Rocky Fork Creek, Bevelhymer Run and Sugar Run. During the 2008 planning process the agreement to establish a Metro Park in this area had just been signed by the Township, City of New Albany, and City of Columbus. Since that time, the Metro Parks District has nearly completed its land acquisition and has begun to plan for the establishment and improvement of the new “Rocky Fork Metro Park” as shown below. With the park now established it is believed that the surrounding area will become more desirable for future residential development adjacent to the new park. The abundance of natural features in this area, the concerns over increased frontage development, and the establishment of a new Metro Park this plan suggests that a more creative approach be taken regarding future development and lot splits in this corridor.
Metro Parks Corridor Recommendations:

While the Metro Parks District has met their current allowance for land acquisition in this area several parcels remain which have significant natural features that would make excellent additions to the holdings of the Metro Park (indicated as the darker green on the map above). The Metro Parks could provide an attractive mechanism for the preservation of these features and the character of the Township. For these areas, to the extent possible, the Township should encourage landowners wanting to develop land surrounding the Rocky Fork Metro Park or with significant natural features to work with the Metro Parks District to preserve these natural features. This could occur through partnership with the Park District on creative purchase programs, or encouragement of land set asides through development for tax benefits, or it could occur through donation of open space set aside during the development of land for residential uses.

Within this area, and especially within the parcels identified on the diagram above, the Township should work with landowners to provide creative development options to meet the increased demand for residential development surrounding the park while preserving natural features and discouraging strip or “frontage” development.
Future Land Use

Land in this area having access to a county approved “on site” septic treatment facility should develop under the PRCD District and have a maximum density of 1 unit per gross acre and provide a minimum of 50% open space. For land developed under this district the Township should encourage aggregation of the open space in order to preserve significant natural features that adjoin the Metro Park. In this scenario open space adjoining the Metro Park could potentially be deeded to the Metro Park. This would provide the developer with a tax deduction, eliminate the burden on the Homeowners Association of the maintenance of that open space, and help increase the holdings of the Metro Park. Homes developed under this scenario would immediately have an increased value due to the adjacency of the Metro Park.

To address the challenges and loss of character and resources associated with frontage lot splits’ using “on-site” sewage treatment, this plan recommends the Township enact zoning incentives that would promote more creative options, or discourage simple frontage lot splits. Most of this area is still zoned under the “Rural” (R) zoning district. Under this district a landowner may subdivide an existing property into a total of 5 lots provided that the original lot maintains an area of 5 acres or more after the split. This scenario could result in 4 new driveway curb cuts, 4 new culverts, and an additional 800 feet or more of new suburban lawn on existing rural roads (figure 36). One option for the Township to consider would be to increase the required lot frontage or the required minimum lot size for lot splits on existing frontage. To then promote more conservation oriented development the Township could work with landowners and the county to develop lots at the minimum size necessary to support septic and well systems provided new lots access a new public road, private road, or common access drive rather than an existing public road (figure 37). In addition these small subdivisions should provide additional dedicated open space or the preservation of significant natural features.
East of US Route 62

The land east of U.S. 62 and to the north of Central College Road is designated for future development as PRCD to protect this areas rich environmental diversity. This recommendation has not changed from the 2008 Land Use Plan. The character of this area is established by a variety of tree stands, tree lines, ponds and a section of Blacklick Creek. For future development in this area this plan continues to make the following recommendations:

- In this area the Blacklick Creek corridor and its floodplain should be protected from future development. For this reason, and because of the limited depth available between the stream and U.S. 62, this plan does not recommend any future development occur between the stream and U.S. 62. Where existing single family lots exist they should be preserved and not developed or subdivided further.

- In other areas land having access to a county approved “on site” septic treatment facility should be developed under the PRCD District. The maximum density allowed in this area should be 1 unit per gross acre with a minimum of 50% open space required. Open space should be aggregated to preserve existing environmental features.

- Land without significant natural features, and access to a county approved “on site” septic treatment facility, should be developed under the Suburban Estate Residential (SER) District standards with lot sizes sufficient to meet County Health Department regulations for septic and well, but, not be less than 2.5 acres. To aid in maintaining the rural feel it is recommended that lots developed under these regulations provide a minimum 200 foot frontage on a public road. Lots splits in this area could be treated with the same strategies as those recommended in the Metro Parks corridor.
Babbitt Road Corridor

The land shown as “PRCD” along the Babbitt Road corridor is also characterized by large tree stands, tree lines and various other environmental features along with a section of the Blacklick Creek corridor. This section of land also contains two golf courses, “The Golf Club”, a private course between Kitzmiller Road and Babbitt Road, and the “East Club” (formerly Winding Hollow and Tartan East) between Babbitt Road and the County line. It is unlikely that either of these two courses will become available for development in the near future but, given their rich environmental features, each should be developed under this district if such development were to occur. In this area the following recommendations still apply:

- Land having access to a county approved “on site” septic treatment facility should be developed under the PRCD District code. The maximum density allowed in this area should be 1 unit per gross acre with a minimum of 50% open space required. Open space should be aggregated to preserve existing environmental features.

- In this area the Blacklick Creek corridor and its floodplain should be protected from development through the use of a 200 foot stream setback.

- Land without significant natural features, and access to a county approved “on site” septic treatment facility, should be developed under the Suburban Estate Residential (SER) District standards with lot sizes sufficient to meet the County Health Departments regulations for septic and well, but, not be less than 2.5 acres. To aid in maintaining the rural feel it is recommended that lots developed under these regulations provide a minimum 200 foot frontage on a public road. Lots splits in this area could be treated with the same strategies as those recommended in the Metro Parks corridor.
SELECT COMMERCIAL PLANNED DISTRICT (SCPD)

Purpose

Throughout the process of developing the 2008 Land Use Plan the Township expressed interest in providing opportunities for businesses to develop locally. Recently the Township has seen increased inquiries from people desiring to establish a business in various areas. The Township has expressed concern that some of these requests have not met the expectations of the Township. The desire to establish additional recommendations and improved strategies for dealing with this type of development in the future is one of the drivers in undertaking this update. In response, the 2012 Land Use Plan updates the SCPD commercial areas, provides new locations where businesses might locate, and recommendations for increased standards in this area. To provide these opportunities this plan still identifies U.S. 62 as an appropriate location for business provided the appropriate controls are established to protect the rural character of the corridor, control access and traffic, and buffer adjacent residential uses. With those controls in place this corridor provides the opportunity and visibility to develop sustainable businesses.

The use of the SCPD district for this type of development is important since it allows for creative development of office and business opportunities and still provides the Township with additional control over the quality and design of proposed development. SCPD should be used exclusively by the Township to ensure that new development matches the character and intent of this master plan.
Future Land Use

U.S. 62 Corridor

Due to the recent growth of Johnstown and the surrounding area as an “exurb” of Columbus, and the resulting volume of commuter traffic, the busy U.S. 62 corridor has the highest traffic counts of any of the existing roads within the Township. This traffic is highly likely to increase in the future and has already arguably diminished the “rural” feel of this corridor. Conversely this traffic also provides visibility and makes the U.S. 62 corridor the most logical location to create sustainable business opportunities. In addition, intersection improvements to Central College and road widening of U.S. 62 between Central College and Smiths Mill Road have changed the character of 62 and prepared that section of the roadway for the development of commercial uses on the east side of U.S. 62. These improvements will help reduce the traffic backup in the corridor and make the current intersection safer for all motorists. Negatively, however, it will also further reduce the rural character of the corridor.

62 Corridor Recommendations:

Because of the importance of this corridor as a front door to the Township, however, the Township should not settle for “second tier” uses. Uses most suitable for this corridor are uses similar to those outlined in the “Suburban Office” district of the Plain Township Zoning Code. However, it is strongly recommended that, if land is to be re-zoned to allow these types of uses, the Township should require they be developed under the SCPD to give the Township greater control and flexibility to work with the developer to ensure that the character is protected and traffic is not unduly impacted. If the Township does not receive good development proposals for this corridor it should re-visit the Master Plan to determine if a change of recommended use would be more suitable. In this corridor the Township should be very selective regarding proposals to re-zone property into the SCPD. Given the abundance
and proximity of retail development in the area it is not recommended that the Township approve any applications for retail development. Additional retail development in this corridor would only weaken the sustainability of existing retail development in the area and create additional traffic and access problems for U.S. 62. If legally the Township cannot turn away retail uses under the SCPD then another zoning district should be developed that will achieve the Townships goals.

It is recommended that the Township use the Select Commercial Planned District (SCPD) as a tool to establish a higher degree of design standards for development along this corridor. To establish these standards the Township should consider implementing design guidelines such as increased setbacks, road frontage landscape treatment, access management, and architectural standards as a means to maintain some of the rural heritage and establish an image for those traveling through this corridor. Another good reason to maintain increased setbacks along this corridor would be the potential for future procurement of additional right-of-way if necessary.

In addition the Township should develop an overlay district that would cover the U.S. 62 corridor and establish additional zoning requirements to address setbacks, buffering, landscaping, lighting, driveway access, and spacing in order to protect adjacent residents and keep rural character.

The Township must also be sensitive to the type of development being proposed and the relationship to adjacent, existing or proposed, residential development. Any development proposed must provide an appropriate transition between the residential areas and the busy U.S. 62 corridor.
Future Land Use

Walnut Street & S.R. 605 / Hamilton Road & Central College

The State Route 605 intersection is adjacent to the New Albany business campus and would be a suitable location to provide transitional office or commercial services to support the business campus uses. The existing Remax offices on the north-east corner of the intersection has been identified by the Township as being characteristic of the type and quality of development they would seek to approve for new businesses in the Township. Uses approved at this location should be controlled architecturally to maintain a character consistent with these offices. Sensitivity in this area should also be displayed toward the existing single family residential uses to the west with increased setbacks or buffering requirements.

The intersection at Central College and the Hamilton Road extension is another location identified by the Township as being appropriate for this type of development. There are still a few remaining parcels in this area that are located in the Township. Should these parcels move into the development cycle and stay within the Township the recommendations noted above should apply here as well.

Development in all areas will most likely be limited to business or office development that can operate without the benefit of public water and sewer. This will limit the size and density of any proposed development as well as limit businesses with high customer volume. It is recommended that the Township review all proposals carefully to ensure that they meet county sanitary requirements and can be developed in a way that is compatible with the character of the surrounding area.
RESIDENTIAL PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT (PUD)

Purpose

The purpose of the Planned Unit Development (PUD) district is to allow for greater flexibility to provide innovative and creative residential opportunities. The Planned Unit Development district also gives the Township greater control (vs. standard zoning districts) over the permitted type, density and design of proposed developments. This district should be used by the Township to ensure that proposed residential development matches the needs of the community and the character of surrounding development and also meets the intent of this master plan.

Walnut Street Corridor / West of U.S. 62

Land left in the Township along the Walnut Street corridor west of U.S. 62 is primarily land that has been developed into single family lots or larger homesteads with few larger agricultural parcels remaining. While having some scattered natural features most of these parcels are either not large enough or do not have enough prime natural features to support conservation style development. Also, the development occurring in the City of Columbus and City of New Albany portions are rapidly changing the feel of this area from rural / agricultural to more suburban in nature.

With the proximity of public sewer and water to these parcels it is not likely that a developer will undergo the expense of a package treatment plant to support increased development capacity. It is more likely that a buyer or developer of these parcels will annex to the nearby City of Columbus or New Albany to gain access to public utilities. In the event, however, that these parcels do come into the Township for development it is the recommendation of this plan that these parcels be zoned under the Planned Unit Development (PUD) portion of the code with the following guidelines:

- Land in this district having access to a county approved “on site” septic treatment facility should develop under the Planned Unit Development District. Parcels in this district could be developed with more creativity and with varying densities taking into account the nature of the surrounding development. The Township should examine the surrounding development patterns to make informed decisions regarding the compatibility of proposed development in this district. Development in these areas should at a minimum match, if not improve upon, the character of its surroundings from a land use and a development/ architectural design perspective.

- In this area, land without access to a county approved “on site” septic treatment facility should be developed under the Suburban Estate Residential (SER) standards with lot sizes sufficient to meet the County Health departments regulations for septic and well, but, not be less than 2.5 acres. Given the increased suburbanization of this area lots could develop with varying frontages at the discretion of the Township. The Township should consider the character of existing development in proximity to what is being proposed prior to making those decisions.
Future Land Use

East of Kitzmiller Road / South of Central College Road & Babbitt Road area

The land designated as Residential PUD on the future land use map located east of Kitzmiller Road and south of Central College Road, and in the Babbitt Road area, is characterized by mainly open farmland, scattered tree rows, and a few single family and larger lot developments. Due to the mostly open nature, this land could be developed in a more conventional manner instead of using the development patterns required by the conservation district. Land developed in this area should be developed under the Planned Unit Development District under the following guidelines:

- Land in this district developing within the Township and having access to a county approved “on site” septic treatment facility should develop under the Planned Unit Development District. Parcels in this district could be developed with more creativity and with varying densities given the nature of the surrounding development. The Township should examine the surrounding development patterns to make informed decisions regarding the compatibility of proposed development in this district. In this area the Township should, through proper planning, enforce the preservation of existing tree rows and the Blacklick Creek corridor. One strategy for accomplishing this would be to work with developers and their planners to preserve existing tree rows and allow them to drive the geometry of the proposed plan. This will help to preserve a small portion of the rural heritage of the area and enhance the quality of development.

- In this area, land without access to a county approved “on site” septic treatment facility should be developed under the SER District standards with lot sizes sufficient to meet County Health Department regulations for septic and well but should not be less than 2.5 acres. Lots in this area could develop with varying frontages at the discretion of the Township. The Township should consider the character of existing development in proximity to what is being proposed prior to making those decisions.
EXISTING RESIDENTIAL

Purpose

The properties indicated on the Proposed Land Use map as “Existing Residential” are expected to remain residential in nature. These properties are currently zoned in the Township under the Rural or, in some instances, the R2 zoning category. These properties are either in or adjacent to residential areas and are not located in areas suitable for other uses. For these reasons it is the recommendation of this plan that these areas remain in their existing land use and zoning category.

Figure 50: Existing Residential
RECOMMENDED VEHICULAR TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS:

Many of the problems that residents are experiencing regarding the increase in traffic over the past 10 years is a result of commuters moving through the Township to get back and forth to the SR 161 / New Albany Expressway. Many of these commuters are coming from Harlem Township and further north and are using the Township roads on their commute to and from work. Many of these commuters are also taking Walnut Street and Central College Roads in an attempt to get to Sunbury Road and bypass much of the SR 161/ New Albany Expressway traffic. This results in increased pressure on those two roads as well. The Franklin County 2020 Thoroughfare Plan suggests some improvements that will help to alleviate these problems and are the basis for our recommendations here.

![Figure 51: Recommended Roadway Improvements (Source: 2008 Land Use Plan)](image-url)
Suggested improvements are as follows:

**Improving East/West Connections**

The Township should work with Harlem Township to Provide for the extension of Smothers Road to Bevelhymer Road and the extension of Bevelhymer Road to U.S. 62. This will provide another east-west connector and another access to Sunbury Road helping to relieve pressure on Walnut Street and Central College Road. This could be done by working in conjunction with Harlem Township to acquire the necessary right-of-way or ensuring that, as land is developed, the appropriate right-of-way is set aside for this purpose. The extension of these two roads should be studied by an engineer to gauge costs, approximate alignment and right-of-way needs.

**Interconnectivity**

For all future development proposals in each district the Township needs to ensure that adequate connection is provided between various parcels of land to reduce the need for auto related traffic to access the existing Township roads for the purpose of driving between developments. This can be accomplished by making sure that adequate roadway stubs are provided to adjacent parcels of land for all new developments and making sure new developments connect to existing stubs wherever possible.

Encourage extension of Walnut Street to Beech Road to the East. This will provide another access to Beech Road and the proposed commercial development and reduce the pressure on U.S. 62 and Central College Road. This will require some partnership or coordination with Jersey Township.

In the south planning area, provide an additional connection from Babbit Road going east to Beech Road. This will also provide another access to the proposed commercial development and reduce the pressure on Babbit Road and Morse Road.

**Realignment of Walnut Street and SR 605**

This recommended improvement also becomes increasingly important as more commuters utilize SR 605 to get back and forth to the Expressway and more people utilize Walnut Street to work their way over to the Sunbury Road area. Again, collaboration with ODOT will be an important factor in making the necessary improvements possible. If development should be proposed on the northwest corner of Walnut Street and S.R. 605 the Township should take steps to ensure that appropriate R.O.W. is secured to allow the realignment of this intersection.
RECOMMENDED ALTERNATE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS:

Providing for pedestrian and bike oriented transportation can contribute substantially to the overall sustainability of the community as well as the quality of life and health of its residents. This could easily be accomplished through connecting to and adding on to the existing leisure trail system begun by New Albany.

As the Township considers future development proposals the inclusion of leisure trails and a connecting leisure path system should be at the forefront of the discussion. These trails should provide connectivity between the Township and New Albany as well as connect various developments to the proposed park systems. Leisure trails can be provided within the R.O.W., in easements located adjacent to the R.O.W and, in stream and open space corridors.

The following are recommendations for the development of pedestrian/bike routes within the Township:

- All new single family developments, lot splits and commercial development should include sidewalks (internally) and leisure trails along all major Township road-ways.

- Leisure trails should provide interconnection between developments, connection to the future Metro Parks and connection to Bevelhymer Park.

- Leisure trails should be a minimum 8 foot wide to provide for adequate room to support both pedestrian and bicycle traffic.

- Leisure trails can be paid for through private development or, where critical connections cannot be made through private development, public participation.

- Leisure trails can be paved surfaces, such as asphalt, where appropriate. Where greater sensitivity is required, such as stream corridors, leisure trails can also be a permeable walking surface such as crushed and compacted gravel. These types of surfaces are cheaper to construct, however, require a higher degree of maintenance to keep in usable condition.
Figure 54: 2006 New Albany Trails Map
Figure 55: Future Trail Network
INTRODUCTION

Successful implementation is the key to the long term viability of any Land Use Plan document. It will be up to the Trustees, Zoning Commission, staff, and residents to insure that the plan is implemented successfully over time. The defining principles, land use recommendations, and transportation recommendations outlined in this plan define implementation strategies to be undertaken through enforcement of this document and cooperation with surrounding communities, government agencies, landowners, and developers.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

General Strategies

1. The Township should promote the continued acquisition of land for, and the development of, the Rocky Fork Metro Park. This can be achieved through:
   a. Education of the community on the goals for establishing the Metro Park and benefits to the community.
   b. Creative bargaining with developers and landowners on making privately held land available to the Metro Parks District.
   c. In the Conservation District the Township should promote the establishment of open space on lands having significant natural features adjacent to the Rocky Fork Metro Park and promote donation of that land to the Metro Park District.

2. Promote the preservation of natural features that define the rural character of the Township. Steps to protect these elements should occur not only in the planning process but should follow through into the implementation phases of development. The Township should establish procedures to ensure that developers and contractors follow through with required tree and stream protection. Where these protections are violated the Township should have in place mechanisms to levy penalties against the developer. This would help to ensure that policies set forth in planning are carried through into the built environment and the Townships critical resources are protected.

Residential Strategies

1. For areas where a developer has access to a county approved “on site” septic treatment system the Township should take advantage of the use of planned districts for residential development. More dense development patterns should occur under either the Planned Residential Conservation Development (PRCD) District or under the Planned Unit Development (PUD) District. Planned districts allow flexibility for the developer and Township to establish creative development standards that meet the unique needs of each site. Given the important nature of land left within the Township, it is not recommended that the Township re-zone land into a straight zoning classification. The PRCD and PUD District should also be used to allow the Township design review and approval of:
   a. Architectural styles and materials.
   b. Site planning standards such as setbacks, street layout, building and garage placement, etc.
Implementation

c. landscaping and tree protection

2. The Township should also take care to be fair and consistent with developers in regards to the standards applied to each development.

3. The Township should encourage developers to explore creative development options regarding the protection of natural resources and rural character as well as architectural quality. Proposals for development should meet the goals and principles developed in this plan and should be sensitive to the context in which they are proposed.

4. The Township should not permit residential densities above 1 unit per gross acre in any future development regardless of sewer and water or county approved “on site” septic treatment availability. Higher residential densities would further erode the open character of the Township and place an additional burden on the school system exceeding the current enrollment projections.

Commercial Development Strategies

1. The Township should not allow retail to be developed in the areas designated on the plan as Select Planned Commercial District (SCPD). Approval of retail in this area would serve only to weaken the sustainability of existing retail in the region as well as increase traffic and access concerns along the U.S. 62 corridor. This district should be used to permit the development of local offices and businesses that would support the community and provide an appropriate transition between the U.S. 62 corridor and existing and proposed residential.

2. The Township should take advantage of the Select Planned Commercial District (SCPD) to promote high quality development and establish design review and approval over proposed development. If the existing Township staff is not sufficient to provide review expertise the Township should work with independent consultants to provide qualified architectural, landscape, or engineering review of important proposals.

3. The Township should adopt a U.S. 62 Corridor Overlay District that would provide additional control over land uses, building design and placement, landscaping and buffering, setbacks, access management, lighting, and signage. This type of overlay would help the Township protect the integrity and character of the U.S. 62 corridor as the front door to the Township.

Transportation Strategies

1. The Township should work aggressively with developers, Columbus, New Albany and ODOT to fix problem intersections that compromise the safety of its residents. Possible Township involvement could include:
   a. Working with developers and landowners to ensure that appropriate right-of-way is allocated for future improvements.
   b. Working with the Department of Transportation to identify potential improvements, timing, and R.O.W. needs.
   c. Providing funding for design phases of improvements or allocating resources towards specific improvements.
Implementation

2. The Township should work with developers to promote road connections between development parcels to help reduce automobile traffic on existing Township roads.

3. The Township should actively promote the development of leisure trails to connect to the New Albany trail system and to provide connection between all areas of the Township and the proposed park system.

Environmental Strategies

1. Provide for the protection of wetlands, stream corridors, tree stands, and tree lines through design regulations, the pursuit of conservation easements or the establishment of increased zoning setbacks.

2. Encourage developers to aggregate open space for the protection of these natural resources.

3. Create development standards to restrict development in environmentally sensitive areas such as floodways, floodplains, and wetlands.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Due to the importance of the U.S. 62 corridor the Township should prepare development or “overlay” design standards for the Select Planned Commercial District areas along U.S. 62. This would insure that development in this district maintains a degree of the rural character, establishes a good “front door” for the Township, and provides consistency throughout the district. Design standards for this area should include things like:
   a. Architectural styles and materials
   b. Landscaping standards
   c. Access management requirements

2. The Township should investigate implementing thoroughfare standards to aid in the preservation of the rural feel of the existing Township roads. Standards could include things like:
   a. Setback requirements
   b. Frontage landscape treatments
   c. Access management

3. The Township should adopt a tree removal and protection code that would establish procedures for the preservation of existing trees and penalties for the unapproved removal of these critical natural resources. This code should be simple for the Township to review and enforce and should establish the following:
Implementation

a. Minimum sizes of trees to be protected from removal.
b. Procedures for protection of trees during construction.
c. Tree removal and replacement policies
d. Penalties for the unauthorized removal of protected trees.

4. The Township should work with the Township Attorney to determine the feasibility of establishing a Community Authority District within various parcels to help reduce the burden of new development on existing taxpayers.
References

2008 Plain Township Land Use Plan

Harlem Township, Delaware County, Ohio, Comprehensive Plan, 2010, Prepared by Delaware County Regional Planning Commission.

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New Albany-Plain Local Schools, District Map, Web Site, Win-Win Agreement.


Land Use Plan, Plain Township, Franklin County, Ohio, Karlsberger Planning Inc., May 1, 1996.


Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission- TIP plan, 2030 plan, traffic counts

Ohio Department of Transportation - traffic counts

Franklin County Treasurer - property information

US Census Bureau - Population statistics

Rural by Design, Randall Arendt