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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This comprehensive plan update was prepared under the direction of the Bath Township Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. The members of the steering committee dedicated hours of volunteer time to the research of planning issues, discussion of Bath's future, meetings, and formulation of the policies for the comprehensive plan. In particular, the following Bath citizens served on the steering committee and deserve much praise and appreciation of the community for developing a plan that will guide Bath well into the next 20 years:

2010 Bath Township Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

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C L A R I O N



INTRODUCTION

Bath Township is a unique community. The township offers bucolic views, wooded ravines, rolling meadows, and equestrian trails, all within a few minutes' drive of a complete range of urban services, shopping, and restaurants. Like many other communities, Bath Township is dynamic and while positive things have happened in the township since the 1997 Bath Township Comprehensive Plan, the township continues to face a facing a number of challenging issues. Development pressures along the main corridors have increased the desire to protect the township's sense of place, particularly at major gateways and in the hamlets of Ghent Village and Hammond's Corners. Protection of vital natural resources and the heritage corridors also continue to be a primary goal and challenge for the township. Finally, Bath Township recognizes that they are not a community in a vacuum and that their decisions affect adjacent communities as much as those adjacent communities affect Bath Township. The township continues to strive to find ways to work cooperatively with those adjacent jurisdictions.

In 1997, Bath was prepared to meet these challenges with a well-delineated plan that provided a blueprint for implementation actions, guiding future development in a manner that retained the open space design character of the community, protected the integrity of existing neighborhoods, and encouraged quality improvements in transitional gateway areas of the township. Now, some 13 years later, the township continues this process by providing a forum to evaluate the original plan, adopted in November 2007.

The core elements and goals of the 1997 plan, which were developed through an extensive planning effort, are fundamentally intact. The purposes of this update process include validating the goals and policies of the 1997 plan, revising and enhancing the goals as necessary, and supplementing the plan with an updated list of implementation strategies. With this update, this plan will continue to serve as a guide for the public and the decision-making bodies of Bath Township. In addition to these core purposes, the plan update process also allows the new plan to incorporate planning policies and recommendations for various planning efforts undertaken in the last 13 years. Some of these planning efforts are localized, undertaken by the township itself, while others are regional and involve the township as a player in regional dynamics. This plan allows the township to both recognize the importance of these planning efforts and to take a comprehensive look at the plans as a whole. The following is only a sample list of some of the plans and processes examined during this planning process:

- Bath Township Design Guidelines
- Heritage Corridors of Bath – Management Plan and Addendum
- Joint Economic Development Agreement (with Akron and Fairlawn)
- Erosion and Sediment Control Resolution
- Bath Nature Preserve Master Plan
- Natural Resource Protection Study
- Water and Sewer Planning and Engineering Report
- Summit 18 Corridor Study
- Clean Ohio Fund Application
- Summit County Greenway Plan



- National Register Nomination
- Yellow Creek Watershed Management Plan
- Reports from several Bath Township Committees

These and other plans that have been, or might be adopted by the township in the future are still in effect after the adoption of this comprehensive plan update and should continue to be a reference point for future decisions.

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A comprehensive plan is a planning tool that looks at the various elements of the township and creates a series of broad policies to help guide future decisions about the physical, economic, environmental, and social aspects of the community. Comprehensive plans are general in nature and are purposely long-term, recognizing that some visions cannot be achieved immediately but take years to accomplish. Other than the future land use plan element, this plan does not make recommendations, about the future of specific properties, and even within the future land use element, the plan is designed only to provide a vision of the community over the 20-year planning horizon.

Summary of the Update Process and Public Input

As with the 1997 plan, Bath Township established a Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee to work with McBride Dale Clarion (MDC) to update the comprehensive plan. This committee was designed to include a cross-representation of residents, business owners, and property owners from across the township that could provide feedback on various plan elements. In addition to the steering committee, public input was gathered through postings to the township website and the facilitation of public meetings, the first of which was held in September 2009 and provided an interactive forum where attendees could highlight places they were proud of and places that needed improvement.



Figure <>: Mapping Exercise from the Initial Public Meeting

The combination of the public input and direction provided by the steering committee, along with the updating of maps and data, resulted in the revised goals, objectives, and recommendations presented in this plan.



BASIC INVENTORIES

A key component of any comprehensive planning strategy should be an understanding of how the community has grown and developed into the community that it is and how the community wants to grow in the future. Accomplishing this task means evaluating how the township has grown through an inventory of the existing conditions. This creates a foundation for which the township can base decisions on what policies are adequate and what policies should be refined or changed. The following is a summary of the inventories of existing land uses, natural resources, and infrastructure found in the township today and appropriate comparisons with information from the 1997 plan.

Existing Land Use

An assessment of how the land is currently being used is an important piece of information that must be evaluated in any land use planning effort. Property information and aerial photography, along with input from staff, helped establish an updated existing land use map (Map 1). This map classifies property in Bath Township under one of the following land use categories:

- **Agriculture, Vacant, or Residential Estate** properties are areas of the township that are maintained as farmland, either crops or for the raising of livestock, or are properties that are not currently used for any use listed below. Large residential properties with over five acres also fall within this category due to the potential for future subdivision.
- **Single-Family Residential** uses are those properties with a single detached dwelling unit located on a single parcel.
- **Multi-Family Residential** uses only comprise a small area of the township and are located where there multiple dwelling units, attached to one another, located on a single parcel. This category may include apartment buildings, townhomes, duplexes, two-family homes, and other attached housing.
- **Commercial and Office** uses cover those areas of the township where there primary use is the provision of goods and services to the general public in a commercial setting or where there are establishments that provide executive, management, administrative, medical, dental, or professional services in either small or large-scale office buildings.
- **Parks, Recreation, and Open Space** uses are properties used for public open space and recreational uses such as playgrounds, ball fields, horse trails, open space, and other local or regional park lands. A large portion of the eastern edge of the township is classified as this used because of the presence of the Cuyahoga Valley National Park.
- **Public and Institutional** uses are properties and structures used for the provision of services related to the general public (e.g., township offices, public utilities, or fire stations) or institutions such as schools and churches.

Map 1: Existing Land Use, illustrates existing land uses across the township while *Figure <>: Existing Land Use Distribution*, illustrates the ratio of land uses as a whole.



Map 1: Existing Land Use

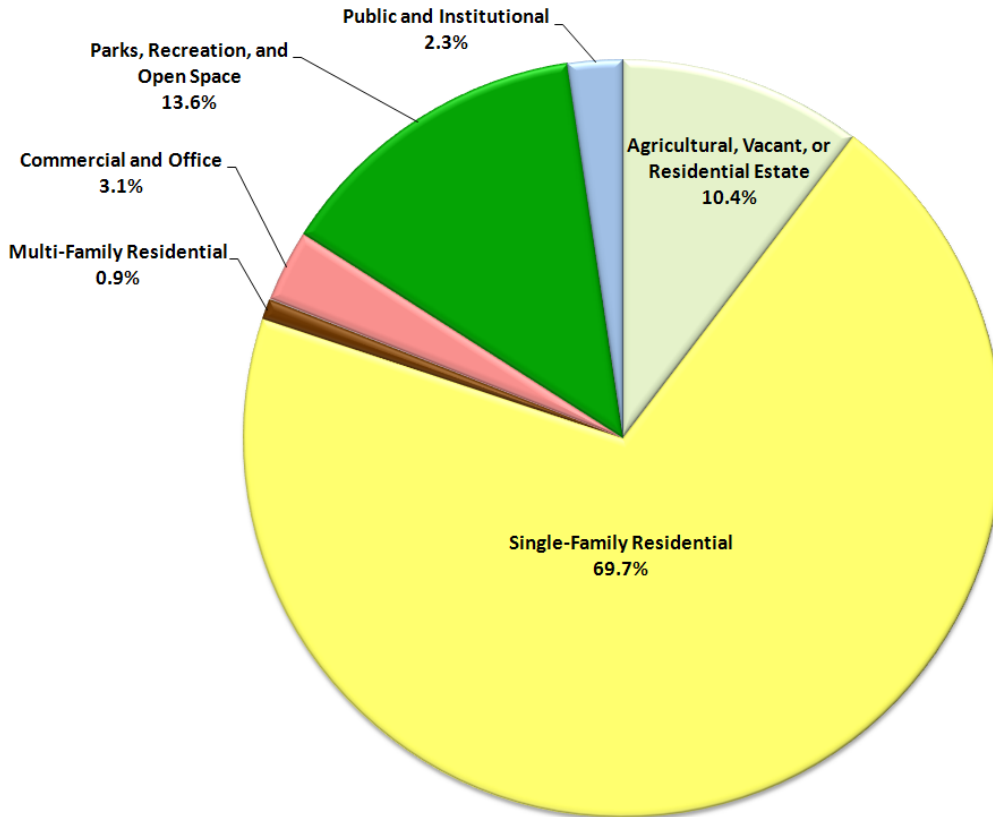


Figure <>: Existing Land Use Distribution

Almost 90% of Bath Township is currently considered developed, with little to no potential for future subdivision. Of that, almost 70% are single-family residential uses and 14% are parks, recreation, and open space uses, all uses that contribute to the township's single-family, rural character. Approximately 1,800 acres of land (10.4% of the township) remains classified as agricultural, vacant, or residential estate. Much of this land is located north of Bath Road and zoned for residential densities of one unit per 2.5 acres. While this 10% of the township may be subject to future development pressures, much of it is constrained by natural features such as wetlands, floodplains, and slopes or are subject, in part, to the township's riparian corridor protection standards. All of these constraints will further limit future development potential in the township to no more than 600 dwelling units.



Natural Resources

The protection of vital natural resources was a key goal in the 1997 plan and continues to be a major theme and goal of this plan.

As part of the 1997 plan, a Natural Features Inventory and Analysis was prepared by ACRT, Inc. Environmental features such as waterways, floodplains, wetlands, hydric soils, non-hydric soils with hydric inclusions, slopes greater than 12%, forest resources, and watersheds were mapped and analyzed. This plan includes updated information on each of these key resources.

Tree Canopy Cover

Bath Township has a significant amount of tree canopy coverage that spreads out across the community and is a major factor that contributes to the community's rural character and to the township's Heritage Corridors (See Figure <>). The benefits of maintaining tree canopy include, but are not limited to, reducing air and noise pollution, providing habitat for birds and mammals, reducing water run-off and soil erosion, enhancing aesthetic and visual qualities of the community, and providing shade.

Heritage Corridors of Bath

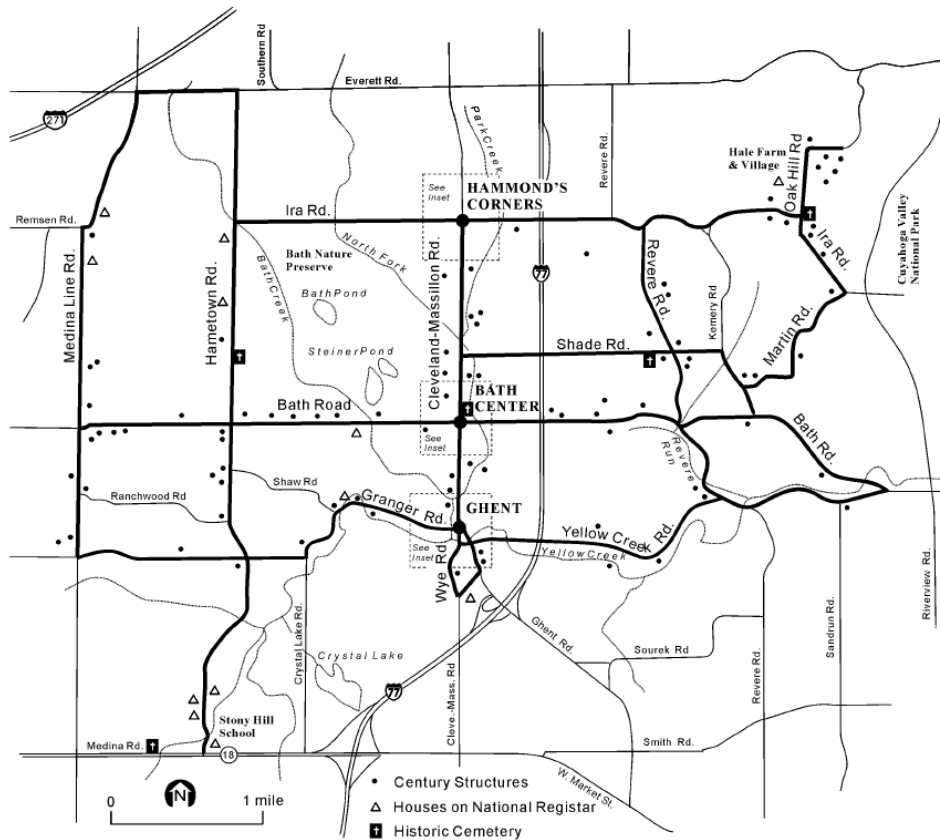


Figure <>: The Heritage Corridors of Bath Township



Map 2: Tree Canopy Coverage



In the 1997 plan, the Natural Resources Inventory showed that approximately 40% of the township was covered by large areas of woods and tree canopy. *Map 2: Tree Canopy Coverage*, shows the updated digital information (in light green) provided by the county showing only 27% of the township covered in tree canopy. Fortunately, upon review of the county's 2000 aerial photographs (also included in Map 2), it is clear that the 1997 information is more representative of the current tree canopy and that the county's digital tree canopy information looks at large tracts of tree canopy that are outside of subdivisions.

For tree canopy coverage, the precise percentage of coverage is not as important as maintaining as much, if not supplementing, the existing canopy. This goal was important in the 1997 plan and remaining a primary goal of this plan update.

Topography

The eastern portion of Bath Township is comprised of a number of valleys that follow the Yellow Creek, the Cuyahoga River, and their respective tributaries. These valleys have a significant amount of steep slope areas with slopes of 12% or steeper. In the 1997 study, the natural features inventory showed that 16% of the township was covered with slopes of over 12%. The most recent mapping information from Summit County shows that just under 10% of the township is covered by areas with a slope of 12% or greater. Fortunately, very little steep slope areas in the township have actually been disturbed since 1997 and the discrepancy between the 1997 plan and the current findings (See *Map 3: Topography*.) is the availability of better, more detailed mapping.

These steep slope areas are key resources because of their aesthetic qualities and because the protection of steeper slopes helps minimize erosion, surface runoff, and dangers from landslides. There is a desire to maintain steep slope areas and minimize, if not prevent, disturbance of the slopes or the naturally existing vegetation.

Floodplains

Floodplains within Bath Township are mapped by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Floodplains are the areas adjacent to rivers and streams that are subject to frequent or regular flooding, and are classified as either a 100-year floodplain or a 500-year floodplain (See the glossary for further definition.). Due to the chance of flooding, and the potentially dangerous situation this poses to people and property, construction in and adjacent to floodplain areas is highly discouraged, if not prohibited (i.e., in the floodway) both for the safety reasons but also to prevent increased flooding downstream of the development.

The Summit County Building Standards Department currently serves as the Floodplain Administrator for the township, as is typical for most townships, as the minimal standards for floodplain protection are set in the county building codes. Townships do have the authority to enact additional standards that will further minimize the disturbance of land in floodplains. The township should continue to utilize tools such as the riparian corridor setbacks and open space residential developments as a method of keeping development outside of flood prone areas.



Map 3: Floodplains and Topography



Wetlands

As with the other water features and resources found in the township, wetlands are a vital resource that holds a significant environmental value for the township. Wetlands provide habitat for numerous animal species and are important to flood mitigation, stormwater abatement, and ground water recharge. Wetlands essentially function as sponges that absorb water, delaying the downstream release, serving as biological filters of ground water. For the plan update, new information was provided that divides designated wetlands into three categories, emergent wetlands, forested wetlands, and scrub/shrub wetlands, all of which are shown on Map 4: Wetlands and Riparian Corridors, and all of which should be protected from encroachment from future development.

Riparian Corridors

Another method the township uses to protect both surface and ground water quality is the preservation of a riparian corridor along the Yellow Creek and all of its major tributaries. The protection of these areas is accomplished by minimizing and/or prohibiting certain activities such as tree and vegetation removal, stream crossings, and construction. The width of the corridor is based on factors such as the size of the drainage area for the stream, the percentage of slope, and the presence of wetlands. In Bath Township, the riparian corridor for the eastern portion of Yellow Creek is 100 feet wide on each side of the waterway. The riparian corridor for the Yellow Creek's main tributaries, such as the Northwest Fork and the West Fork, are 75 feet wide on each side of the waterways. All other streams and tributaries are protected by a setback of 50 feet on each side of the applicable waterway. The various riparian corridors are illustrated in *Table 4: Wetlands and Riparian Corridors*. Additional information on the specific requirements and regulations for riparian corridors can be found in the Bath Township Zoning Resolution.



Map 4: Wetlands – Riparian Setbacks



Future Capacity for Development

Taking into account all of the existing land use and natural resource/sensitive areas described previously, the potential for new development in the township is fairly limited. There are approximately 1,805 acres of land that have some form of development potential (residential areas larger than five acres or vacant, commercial zoned property). Of that, only about 1,500 acres lies outside of areas designated as natural resources (e.g., floodplain, wetlands, steep slopes, etc.). Applying the current zoning to that land shows that there is only capacity for approximately 523 new homes and 48 acres of commercially zoned land, most of it along the northern areas of Cleveland-Massillon Road. This is summarized below in *Table A: Future Capacity for New Growth*.

Table A: Future Capacity for New Growth			
Zoning	Acreage (Total)	Acreage (Outside of Natural Resource Areas)	Total Potential Buildout
B-1	39	38	38 acres
B-2	11	10	10 acres
R-1	70	34	6 homes
R-2	1,683	1,435	517 homes
TOTAL	1,805	1,518	-----

Infrastructure¹

The presence of centralized infrastructure, such as water and sewer, has generally been a driver for increased development pressures. Many refer to this as “development that follows the pipe.” This pressure goes against many of the primary policies of the 1997 plan and the direction the public sees for the township’s future in this plan update. Fortunately, since the adoption of the last plan, several actions have taken place that will minimize the extension of water, and more specifically, sewer. First, the township has entered into a Joint Economic Development District (JEDD) with the cities of Akron and Fairlawn that 1) established a 2% income tax on all township properties within the JEDD area; and 2) in return, establishes that no annexations will occur over the next 99 years. See *Map 5: Sanitary Sewer and JEDD*. This has essentially eliminated put a halt to unplanned development that would have previously occurred when a property owner requested annexation into one of the cities in order to get the infrastructure and, in theory, a higher price for their land. The area included in the JEDD is already served by sanitary sewer.

¹ We are going to have to modify the sewer map. The sewer line map provided by the county shows fewer sewer lines than those in the 1997 plan. A better guide to the availability of sewer was found in the Water and Sewer Engineering Report. We do not have any digital information on water lines beyond the 1997 plan. This may be because water providers have stopped releasing information about the location of water lines as a safety precaution since September 11, 2001.



The second action, which was a direct result of the 1997 plan, was the establishment of the Bath Township Sewer and Water District. This district sets forth a policy that only wells and septic systems may be used in the Water and Sewer District, which covers all of the areas of the township outside of areas currently served by sewers (See *Map 5: Sanitary Sewer and JEDD.*). As part of this plan update, it is important to understand these dynamics as the implication is that for the foreseeable future, the only major infrastructure improvements that will take place in the township, other than transportation improvements, are those within current service areas. The only exception that the township may consider is the extension of sewer from Richfield, Ohio, if the capacity can be made available and all appropriate agreements are made, into the northern areas of the Cleveland-Massillon corridor. If this occurs, limits should be placed to limit sewer service to properties along Cleveland-Massillon Road south to Hammond's Corner, ending with service to the hamlet.



Map 5: Sanitary Sewer and JEDD

To Be Added



POPULATION AND HOUSING TRENDS ANALYSIS

A key component of any comprehensive planning strategy is an understanding of the demographics of a community and a review of the general trends affecting its future. This type of analysis is useful in answering the following questions, which in turn provide the basis for making decisions during the development of the comprehensive plan.

- How has the township grown in the past?
- What are some of the changing trends, both in the township and across the nation, that might affect our future?
- How might we grow in the future if these trends continue unchanged?

The following sections provide a summary analysis of the demographic profile of Bath Township and the general analysis of trends. These analyses are important to the plan because current trends may bring more or less growth than what the community wants in its future. The purpose of these analysis is to provide a foundation of knowledge of how much growth the township may anticipate in the future if current trends and development policies continue and is not reflective of any recommendations proposed as part of this plan. These analyses also allow the township to tailor planning tools that will guide any new growth toward the community's vision of Bath Township for the next 10 to 20 years.

Population

Bath Township has had a relatively stable growth rate since 1970 that ranged from an average growth rate of 0.5% a year up to just over 1% annual growth in population. The township's major growth surge occurred prior to 1970 when the township nearly doubled in population between 1960 and 1970. Even with the recent economic downturn, the township has continued to see moderate growth since the 2000 Census. For comparison purposes, *Table B: Historic Population Growth in Bath Township*, illustrates the growth rates of Bath Township, Summit County, the City of Akron, and the adjacent Copley and Granger Townships. While the adjacent townships have grown at a slightly higher rate than Bath Township, both Summit County and the City of Akron have experienced a decline in population as residents have moved out to the outlying neighborhoods such as Bath Township or to other areas outside of the region.



Table B: Historic Population Growth in Bath Township

	Summit County	City of Akron	Bath Township	Copley Township	Granger Township [1]
1960	513,569	290,351	4,613	9,656	1,663
1970	553,371	275,425	7,552	14,735	2,142
% Annual Growth [2]	0.75%	-0.53%	5.05%	4.32%	2.56%
1980	524,472	237,177	8,476	15,910	2,660
% Annual Growth [2]	-0.53%	-1.48%	1.16%	0.77%	2.19%
1990	514,990	223,019	9,015	11,130	2,932
% Annual Growth [2]	-0.18%	-0.61%	0.62%	-3.51%	0.98%
2000	542,899	217,074	9,635	13,641	3,928
% Annual Growth [2]	0.53%	-0.27%	0.67%	2.06%	2.97%
2008 [3]	542,562	207,510	10,188	14,021	4,692
% Annual Growth [2]	-0.01%	-0.56%	0.70%	0.34%	2.25%

Notes:

Source: U.S. Census and McBride Dale Clarion (calculations)

[1] All of the communities are located in Summit County except for Granger Township, which is located in the adjacent Medina County.

[2] The annual growth rate is the compound average annual growth rate between each census date or census estimate.

[3] U.S. Census estimate

One aspect of the population that was considered during this plan update process is the aging of the community and the desire to allow people to “age in place,” whereby there are housing options available for residents of all ages. This concern is well founded since the fastest growing population in Bath Township is those aged 65 years old and older. In 1990, only 10.1% (910 residents) of the township population was 65 years old or older. Ten years later, the population of older residents has almost doubled to 1,648 residents (17.1%) while the population of residents 18 years or younger has begun to decrease. While the aging of our population is a national trend due to longer life spans and increased ability to live independently, the rate of increase was far higher in Bath Township than in many other areas across the state. With this aging population, there will be more demands for alternative housing options and services to meet the needs of a varied population.



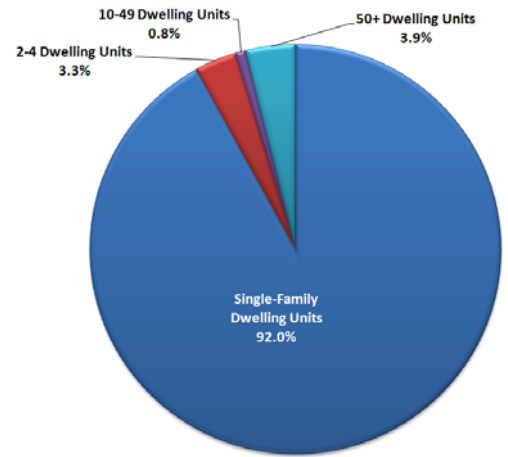
Housing

Given the population trends presented above, it is possible to forecast the potential future population of the township if it is assumed that the township will continue to grow in a manner similar to historic trends. Assuming that the township will continue to see an average annual growth rate of approximately 0.5% per year, that trend would lead to a total population of approximately 11,090 in 2025, a total growth of just over 900 people in the next 15 years. If you further assume 2.8 persons per dwelling unit, then the township might see the construction of 321 new dwelling units, or an average of 21 units per year. This growth trend is reflected in recent building trends as documented in *Table C: Building Permits by Year*, which summarizes building permit data from Summit County from 2000 to 2008.

Year	# of Permits for New Units
2000	33
2001	44
2002	55
2003	45
2004	37
2005	41
2006	27
2007	14
2008	17

In addition to understanding the general trends in the number of dwelling units, it is also important to have a better understanding of the characteristics of the housing stock as it can demonstrate a deficiency in a particular type of housing as well as identify where the township may start to see long-term maintenance issues.

In 2000, 92% of all housing units in Bath Township were detached, single-family dwellings (See the Figure <> below.). This ratio is considerably higher than the county's average of 71% of all county dwelling units. On the other hand, the number of multi-family dwelling units in the township is considerably lower than the county and other similar communities. Small-scale multi-family uses, with two to four units per structure, comprise approximately 3.3% of the township's housing units while higher-intensity multi-family uses comprise approximately 3.9% of the township's housing and can be accounted for in the two major long-term residential care options of Arden Courts and Karrington of Bath. The remaining housing units fall in between the two extremes with less than one percent of the total housing units.



Another aspect of the housing stock to consider is the age of dwellings. Evaluation of the 2000 U.S. Census shows that a large percentage of the township's housing units are relatively modern with almost a third having been built since 1980 and almost 88% having been built since 1950. This can be compared to the county-wide numbers that show only 20% of homes built since 1980 and 67% built since 1950. This is easily attributed to the fact that housing for the City of Akron is included in the county-wide figures and includes some of the oldest homes in the county. That being said, 442 homes (12.1%) in the township were built prior to 1950, many of which are part of the historic fabric that the township would like to maintain. As the housing stock continues to age, priorities will likely continue to shift toward enhanced property maintenance requirements.



GOALS/MAJOR THEMES

The purpose of a comprehensive plan is to help guide the future development of the community over the next 10-20 years. Central to that guidance are the vision, goals, and objectives, which form the foundation of the plan for Bath Township.

One of the charges of this plan update process was to assess the 1997 plan and its implementation success and then to “validate” the underlying policies. In 1997, the plan was focused around 12 different plan policy statements that included:

1. Promote and reinforce an open space preservation, single-family community character;
2. Protect environmentally sensitive areas from degradation;
3. Promote quality public services supporting the planned character of the community;
4. Develop and maintain a transportation system that provides adequate circulation and safety for the planned population while maintaining the rural streetscape;
5. Protect residential areas from commercial encroachment by land use designation and streetscape buffering standards;
6. Encourage small-scale neighborhood type retail in certain select areas;
7. Carefully manage the development of the remaining large parcels of land through the use of special zoning districts designed to retail the open space character of the community;
8. Plan for the Bath Water and Sewer District to become a viable organization in terms of deciding appropriate locations for new central water and sewer service in the township;
9. Develop and provide a township-wide system of open space and conservation greenways, with a trails system to connect parks and neighborhoods;
10. Work cooperatively with adjacent communities to establish long-term joint zoning approaches to deter additional annexations;
11. Promote the contiguity of open space and agricultural/equestrian uses in the northwest area of the township by adopting provisions for an agricultural preservation zone district; and
12. Preserve the history of Bath by conserving the design and improving the value of property within designated historic and cultural conservation district.

As a result of the validation process, which included close coordination with the elected trustees, the plan steering committee, and the first public meeting, as described in the first section of this plan, it is clear that the basic township planning values have remained stable. They do not reflect a substantial change in direction; rather they represent a focusing of the township’s vision to set the stage for updated tools and strategies for the township to use in implementing its planning values.

In validating the policies of the 1997 plan, several major themes arose that encompassed the major policies of the 1997 plan while also emphasizing certain issues, such as the high quality corridors, that were not addressed in the previous plan’s policy statements. The following nine themes serve as the framework for this plan update and help drive the recommendations in the land use plan and implementation sections:



1. Rural single-family character;
2. Protected natural resources
3. Open space, greenways, and trails
4. Preserve and enhance hamlets
5. High quality corridors
6. Sustain neighborhood values
7. Public facilities that reinforce overall growth management goals
8. Multi-jurisdiction cooperative planning
9. Sustainability

All of this information was translated into a single vision for the township and a series of goals for each of the nine major themes as presented in this section of the plan.

2010 Bath Township Comprehensive Plan Vision

Bath Township will continue to value a preserved rural single-family character, natural resource protection, preserved open space, enhanced historic hamlets, high quality travel corridors, coordinated growth management, and compatible businesses in carefully planned locations. The township's public services and facilities will be provided in a fiscally sustainable manner in coordination with its land use planning.

In summary, Bath Township will continue to be a quality community for family living.

2010 Bath Township Goals and Objectives²

The following are the goals for each of the nine major themes. Specific objectives are identified as implementation tasks in the Implementation Strategies section of this plan.

1. Rural, Single-Family Character

Goal: Low-density, single-family land use will continue to be the prevailing pattern in Bath Township, other than in the existing business or hamlet portions of the township.

2. Protected Natural Resources

Goal: The valued natural resources of Bath Township, such as water resources, floodplains, riparian corridors, wetlands, soils, slopes, and tree canopies will be preserved, enhanced, and mitigated from potential negative impacts of existing and future development.

3. Open Space, Greenways, and Trails

Goal: Bath Township will have a connected system of preserved open spaces, greenways, and trails.

² Most of the objectives were very actionable so they have been moved to the implementation section.



4. Preserve and Enhance Hamlets³

Goal: The hamlets of Ghent and Hammond’s Corners will be preserved, enhanced, and developed to have a vibrant historic hamlet atmosphere.

5. High Quality Corridors

Goal: State Route 18, the Cleveland-Massillon Road, and the township’s Heritage Corridors will reflect high design quality in both the public and private realm.

6. Sustain Neighborhood Values

Goal: The residential neighborhoods, including those abutting Route 18 along the southern portion of the township, will remain stable and attractive residential environments for families.

7. Public Facilities that Reinforce Overall Growth Management Goals

Goal: Public facilities will be provided in a fiscally responsible manner with adequate levels of service and will be coordinated with land use planning and development decisions.

8. Multi-jurisdiction Cooperative Planning

Goal: Land use planning and public facilities planning will be reviewed with adjacent and relevant jurisdictions and agencies, especially near township borders to support complementary zoning.

9. Sustainability

Goal: The township will act as a role model incorporating sustainable practices within the township as well as embracing, educating, and encouraging sustainable development practices throughout the community.

³ Note that we have removed Bath Center from this area as the proposed use is for public uses or residential uses rather than the mix of uses typically found in hamlets and most certainly found in Ghent and Hammonds Corner.



FUTURE LAND USE PLAN⁴

The Bath Township Future Land Use Plan establishes the desired future land use types for properties throughout the township based on existing land uses, environmental conditions, natural resources, and general development patterns of the surrounding area. The plan is a graphic representation of the vision, goals, and objectives identified in the previous section. This plan will help guide the decisions of the Bath Township Trustees, Bath Township Zoning Commission, Bath Township Board of Zoning Appeals, the numerous subcommittees of the township, and regional agencies, regarding a variety of issues such as rezonings, conditional uses, extension of property improvements, conversion of buildings to different uses, and other planning related issues.

The Bath Township Future Land Use Plan Map on the following page is intended to serve as a guide for continued development and redevelopment in the township. The map is not a zoning map and only serves as a general basis for the decision-making bodies of the township. The following is a brief description of the proposed land uses.

Park and Conservation Use

The majority of the area designated for park and conservation uses are part of the Cuyahoga National Recreation Area, the O'Neil Woods Metropark, and the Riding Sun Metropark. The remaining properties are largely residential with some public and institutional uses in the form of the Old Trail School and Hale Farm. The future land uses for this area should continue to be primarily parks and recreation with allowances for the residential use of any remaining private properties at a maximum density of one unit per five acres.

Rural Estate Residential Use

The rural estate residential areas of the township reflect the predominant use of Bath Township, which is agriculture and single-family detached residential uses on large lots. Currently, the only exception to the large lot development example is the residential development on the Firestone estate that was developed under the concept of an open space residential development, which allows for the clustering of homes on smaller lots with the remaining land maintained as open space by the homeowners association. The vision of the rural estate residential use areas continues to be for agricultural uses, single-family detached uses on large lots, and open space residential developments, all at a maximum density of one unit per 2.5 acres.

Parks and recreational uses, as well as public or institutional uses, are also appropriate for these areas of the township but should be located along arterial roads that are best suited for the impacts of these more intense, nonresidential uses.

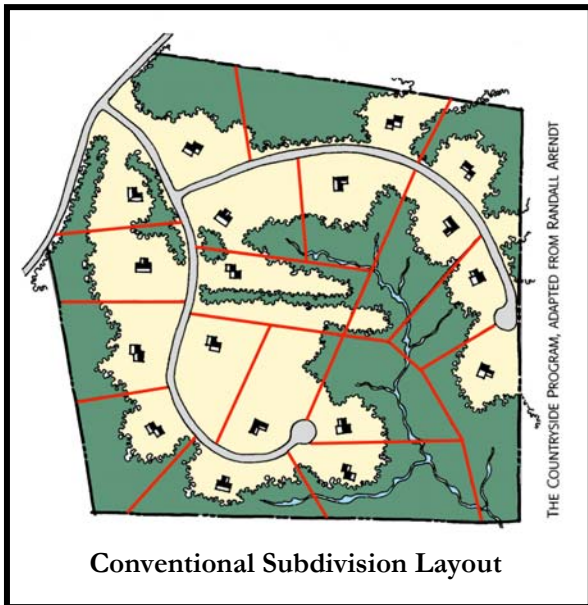
⁴ We will be adding photos for each of these uses.



Map 6: Future Land Use

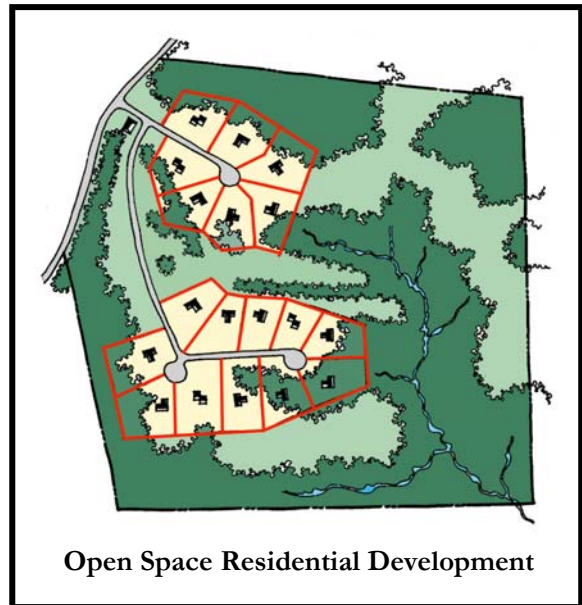
Open space residential developments continue to be encouraged as an effective development method for allowing residential development while protecting key natural and environmental resources. Any new open space residential development should maintain a maximum density of one unit per 2.5 acres while, to the maximum extent feasible, also incorporating the following principles into the subdivision layout:

- Locate lots to the rear of the development site, away from any designated Heritage Corridor, to protect the rural roadway corridors and maintain large areas of woodlands and open spaces along these roads;
- Locate lots in areas that are least likely to block any scenic views of hills, valleys, roadway corridors, waterway natural areas, wetlands, woodlands, or historic sites;
- Use the natural resources to buffer the visibility of homes by maintaining the tree canopy between the proposed development area and any roads; and
- Group lots into several clusters of homes within a single development to break up the concentration of housing into any one single area of the development.



Conventional Subdivision Layout

Area: 36 acres
 Lots: 18 lots
 Open Space: None
 Road Length: 3,808 feet



Open Space Residential Development

Area: 36 acres
 Lots: 18 lots
 Open Space: 53%
 Road Length: 2,072 feet



Suburban Residential Use

The suburban residential use area represents a compact area of moderate density residential development in Bath Township. The land, currently zoned as R-3 and R-4 residential, includes the Crystal Lake Village area and similar developments that, unlike the traditional neighborhood areas, is focused around open spaces and waterways with development along largely cul-de-sac roads. The future vision of this area is the continuation and maintenance of single-family residential uses at similar densities and layouts as the existing development.

Parks and recreational uses, as well as public or institutional uses, are also appropriate for these areas of the township but should be located along arterial roads that are best suited for the impacts of these more intense, nonresidential uses.

Traditional Neighborhood Use

Traditional neighborhood uses represent the highest density residential neighborhoods in Bath Township. The majority of the neighborhoods are comprised of single-family detached homes located in close proximity to Akron and Fairlawn. The future vision for these areas is the continuation and maintenance of single-family residential uses at a maximum density of four units per acre.

Parks and recreational uses, as well as public or institutional uses, are also appropriate for these areas of the township but should be located along arterial roads that are best suited for the impacts of these more intense, nonresidential uses.

Transitional Residential Use

The corner of the township designated as transitional residential use is one that has the most pressure for intense development due to the proximity to the State Route 18 corridor. The township continues to envision this as a residential area with no expansion of any nonresidential uses west of Hametown Road. In keeping with the vision for this area, the following are the two future land-use options for development in this area:

- Single-family, detached residential development at a maximum density of one unit per 2.5 acres; or
- Detached or attached residential uses under a planned residential overlay district with a maximum density of four units per acre and a minimum of 50% open space. The township should develop the planned residential overlay district to address the following issues, at a minimum:
 - Open space standards (e.g., what counts, what does not);
 - Natural and environmental resource protection standards;
 - Access standards, with a preference of avoiding access from SR 18 and, where access from SR 18 is necessary, consolidating access points;
 - Housing type or housing mix standards;
 - Buffering requirements to protect the views of the main corridors and views from adjacent development; and
 - Architectural standards.



General Office Use

The general office use area in Bath Township is located along S.R. 18, east of Hametown Road, through the Montrose area where it comprises the predominant use along Springside Drive. The future vision for these areas is the continuation of non-retail, non-industrial commerce activities including, but not limited to, professional offices, health and medical offices, research and development, and financial institutions.

Hotels are acceptable use in the office area with associated food retail.

General Commercial Use

The general commercial use area in Bath Township is concentrated along State Route 18 around the intersection of S.R. 18 and Cleveland-Massillon Road. This area continues to be an appropriate location for commercial retail, office, and service uses that cater to both the local and regional market. This area will continue to be predominately oriented to auto-oriented uses but should encourage safe pedestrian access, particularly between adjacent residential areas and the commercial areas.

Hamlet Mixed Use

Along the Cleveland-Massillon Corridor are two very distinct hamlets, or crossroad centers, that are comprised of a mixture of residential, commercial, and office uses. Both Hammond's Corners and Ghent Village stand out from similar uses in other areas of the township based on the historic character of the development (e.g., built closer to the road in a more compact development form). The future vision of both of these areas is the continuation of this historic, hamlet style development with an emphasis on protecting the overall form of the hamlet including the:

- Scale and massing of buildings;
- Height of buildings;
- Setback of buildings from the road;
- Location of parking to the rear of the site; and
- To the maximum extent feasible, the architectural character of buildings.

Cleveland-Massillon Mixed Use

The two main gateways into Bath Township along Cleveland-Massillon Road have seen a significant amount of transition over time. The vision for the future of the two areas designated as transitional mixed use continues to be to serve as a gateway entrance, with high-quality design, but may incorporate a mixture of small-scale uses including the following:

- **Attached Housing**

Attached housing is a needed housing type in Bath Township to allow for options in both housing types and housing values that might attract young professionals or empty nesters. Attached housing may include rowhouses, townhomes, and attached patio homes where the units may share common walls but each unit has a separate exterior entrance. The maximum density of attached housing shall be eight units per acre with a maximum of eight attached units per a single structure.



The maximum finished floor area in each unit shall not exceed 2,000 square feet in order to encourage smaller scale housing and to reduce the overall costs of this housing type.



▪ **Live/Work Units**

Live/work units are a mixed-use type development that essentially allows for a commercial or office type use with a residential component for the business owner or employee. These units can be two-stories in nature (similar to a rowhouse) where the commercial or office use is on the first floor and the residential dwelling is on the upper floor(s) or may have the residential unit located to the rear of the nonresidential use. Live/work units should be designed similar to attached housing with no more than eight units per acre and all units shall have separate exterior entrances.



▪ **Small-Scale Commercial and Office Uses**

Both commercial and office uses are appropriate in this transitional area but should be small in scale with no strip centers that have multiple uses. Any new commercial or office use in these areas should be single tenant spaces (i.e., designed for only one user) with a maximum square footage of 15,000 square feet. The buildings should be oriented toward the street with only one row of parking between the building and the road to encourage development closer to the streets and to help create more of a gateway entrance.



▪ **Small-Scale Flexible Space (Northern Cleveland-Massillon Road Only)**

The northern area of Bath Township along Cleveland-Massillon Road is comprised of a mix of commercial, office, and even some industrial uses due to close proximity to larger trucking related activities to the north. The Transitional Mixed Use area in the northern area of the township may include some future small-scale flexible space that has a building frontage that appears to be retail or office in nature but has some small warehouse space in the rear for a number of uses ranging from commercial to light industrial. In no case shall there be any industrial uses that require outdoor storage or operations. As with the commercial and office uses in this area, all new buildings shall be designed for a single tenant with a maximum square footage of 15,000 square feet. The warehouse portion of the building shall not occupy more than 50% of the total building space. Additionally, the buildings should be oriented toward the street with only one row of parking between the building and the road to encourage development closer to the streets and to help create more of a gateway entrance.



IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The only way the goals and objectives of this plan update can be reached is if Bath Township takes certain actions to implement the plan recommendations. This section of the plan outlines both general tools available to the township for the furtherance of this plan and specific implementation tasks related to the major themes and goals of the plan.

General Tools

Monitoring the Comprehensive Development Plan

A comprehensive plan is a long-term visionary document that looks at a planning horizon of 20 years or more. This does not mean that the township should wait 20 years before reviewing and/or updating the plan. In fact, it is highly recommended that the township review the plan, in moderate detail, at least every 5 to 10 years due to the fact that major changes in infrastructure, the transportation system, development methods, and even changes in elected officials, state law, or other regulations can have a significant impact on the recommendations of this plan. It may not be necessary to go through a long and intensive review process, but the township should take steps to involve the public in this review process to ensure that the goals and objectives are still relevant. The review should also identify major changes in infrastructure, transportation and trends that may change the recommendations of this plan.

Involve the Public

Bath Township should consistently involve the public in every affair of the township whether it is input for this comprehensive plan or guidance on the design of new public buildings. Elected and appointed officials of the township, as well as hired staff, are held responsible by the public and public input helps assure that decisions are made in the best interest of those citizens. As the township continues to grow, public input will be a key ingredient in the process.

Committees

The township has consistently used the benefits of citizen committees for any number of issues from updating this plan, to evaluating architecture, to protecting natural resources such as the Yellow Creek. These committees, which are often short term and serve a particular purpose are very useful at involving as many of the residents as possible in township government. For Bath Township, the best resource is to incorporate the use of committees wherever a special need or purpose arises that cannot be addressed by zoning alone.

Coordination and Communication

This plan recognizes that agencies outside of the township regulate many elements of the community including sewers, water, transportation, and stormwater. In fact, the township is restricted in its participation in the subdivision review (not zoning) process, which is under the purview of the Summit County Regional Planning Commission. With so many agencies working in Bath Township, the township has the ability to serve as a coordinator and identify ways to make improvements in the community that will be more efficient and benefit the entire region. One of the simplest strategies for implementing many of the recommendations is to communicate with the appropriate agencies, inside and outside of the township, and inform them of township policy and the needs of the community.



Specific Implementation Tasks

In addition to utilizing the variety of general tools listed above, there are specific tasks that the township should undertake to work toward the established goals and objectives.⁵

Table D: Specific Implementation Tasks			
Implementation Task	Ongoing	Short Term	Long Term
Major Theme – Rural, Single-Family Character			
Maintain the current gross density of one unit per 5 acres in the park and conservation use areas on the future land use map.			
Maintain the current gross density of one unit per 2.5 acres for the rural estate residential use areas on the future land use map.			
Maintain the existing boundaries of the R-1 and R-2 Residential Zoning Districts except where uses <i>other</i> than park and conservation uses and rural estate residential uses are allowed on the future land use map.			
Update the Bath Township Zoning Resolution to enhance the standards for open space residential development to ensure that the regulations best achieve the goals of this plan, especially as they relate to rural design, open space preservation, and natural resource protection.			
Major Theme – Protected Natural Resources			
Continue to support and pursue implementation of the Yellow Creek Watershed Action Plan.			
Review and strengthen, as appropriate, the natural resource protection standards in the township zoning resolution.			
Develop a strategy, including pursuing grants and other funding opportunities, to preserve and protect environmentally sensitive resources.			
Develop a protocol for prioritizing those environmentally sensitive resource areas of the township that should be protected by the township, or another entity (e.g., if faced with limited funding, what resources should the township target first, what are the ones that are most at risk?)			
Identify unnamed headwater streams and evaluate protection opportunities.			
Explore solutions to minimize impacts of storm water on the community such as enforcement, education, enhanced regulations, and general stormwater improvements.			

⁵ This is the list of tasks requested by the steering committee. Some are pulled from the original draft of the plan objectives and others have been added based on our recommendations. The committee needs to consider whether we establish priorities as part of this draft plan (e.g., short term versus long-term) or if we leave the priority setting to the township for review during an annual review process. Another question is whether we identify the agency or staff member responsible for each action.



Table D: Specific Implementation Tasks

Implementation Task	Ongoing	Short Term	Long Term
Update the township’s zoning regulations to incorporate better standards for the mitigation of stormwater, including, but not limited to, the encouraged use of pervious pavement, rain gardens, and rain barrels.			
Identify outside agencies that the township can work with to purchase, dedicate, or otherwise protect the natural resources (e.g., the Western Reserve Land Conservancy).			
Explore protection of well water/ground water as well as septic system controls.			
Provide community education strategies and partnerships on potential environmental concerns (e.g., water testing, radon testing, etc.).			
Major Theme – Open Space, Greenways, and Trails			
Prepare an open space conservation plan that identifies and prioritizes open space in the community.			
Coordinate with other agencies to update and implement the Bath Township Trails and Greenway Plan			
Incorporate public access trails within greenways (that may just be connected areas of tree canopy and natural areas without public access), where feasible.			
Create or form an alliance with other partners to promote acquisitions, conservation easements, or other protection strategies (e.g., Friends of Yellow Creek, the Western Reserve Land Conservancy, and the Nature Conservancy).			
Coordinate trails planning with an overall corridors and hamlet preservation strategy.			
Coordinate local bike trail planning with transportation plans and improvements completed by the county, state, and AMATS.			
Explore cooperation of adjacent jurisdictions in the development of trails.			
Explore funding strategies for future projects.			
Major Theme – Preserve and Enhance Hamlets			
Prepare small area land use and design plans for the hamlets.			
Pursue conservation zoning overlay based on the focus area plans for the hamlets that identify appropriate setbacks (from roads and adjacent buildings), architectural styles, if appropriate, building heights, parking location, signage, buffers, landscaping, and similar requirements based on the small area plan and an evaluation of what defines each of the hamlets as a “place.”			



Table D: Specific Implementation Tasks

Implementation Task	Ongoing	Short Term	Long Term
Recognize Ghent and Hammond’s Corners as historical community focal points of activities with a mixture of land uses that are compatible with their historic character and scale.			
Encourage the focusing of activities in the hamlets by permitting higher intensity development and a mix of residential, nonresidential, and public uses that helps keep the hamlets vibrant.			
Connect the hamlets with pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure as part of a township and regional-wide system.			
Establish an economic development strategy for each of the hamlets.			
Major Theme – High Quality Corridors (Rt. 19 and the Cleveland-Massillon Corridor)			
Update the Bath Township Zoning Resolution to establish special rural corridor development standards the Heritage Corridors of Bath Township to require that any new development be compatible with the scenic character goals of the Heritage Corridors of Bath Management Plan.			
Explore redevelopment opportunities for the northern portions of Cleveland-Massillon Rd. This may include rezoning and/or developing and implementing design guidelines for the B-1 zoned area at the north end of the Cleveland-Massillon Road corridor that promotes appropriate commercial design related to site layout, building configuration, materials, massing, shape, height, landscaping, signage, parking and vehicular design, lighting, and others. Such design guidelines should be related to the uses proposed for the area in this plan.			
Preserve the Cleveland-Massillon Road corridor between Ghent and Bath Center, and between Bath Center and Hammond’s Corners, as a rural residential area.			
Explore solutions to facilitate the enhancement of the gateways in the township through the development of a gateways plan or strategy.			
Develop and implement design guidelines for the Route 18 corridor (Montrose area) that promotes appropriate commercial design related to site layout, building configuration, materials, massing, shape, height, landscaping, signage, parking and vehicular design, lighting, and others.			
Collaborate with stakeholders of the Montrose business area to ensure long-term economic stability, such as improvement districts.			
Develop a Planned Residential Overlay District that allows for increased density of residential uses on the western area of the SR 18 corridor under the conditions outlined in this plan.			
Major Theme – Sustain Neighborhood Values			



Table D: Specific Implementation Tasks

Implementation Task	Ongoing	Short Term	Long Term
Monitor conditions in township neighborhoods that effect housing stock values. This may include establishing a database and/or map of zoning complaints, police or emergency service calls, and similar issues to better document the condition of a neighborhood.			
Investigate tools for sustaining quality neighborhoods such as property maintenance codes and alternate methods to control nuisance properties.			
Inventory and evaluate nonconforming uses and nonconforming structure (i.e., the structure does not meet height, setback, or similar requirements but the use is permitted) in the township.			
Explore tools to enable the township to control or influence incompatible land uses throughout the township.			
Major Theme - Public Facilities that Reinforce Overall Growth Management Goals			
Work to meet or exceed baseline level of service standards for township services, including police, fire, parks, and maintenance of township roads and other facilities.			
Coordinate with the Bath Township Water and Sewer District on future planning for sewer and water services to foster rural land use patterns and planned densities of the township. The effort should specifically look at areas of potential chance such as SR 18 and the northern areas of Cleveland-Massillon Road.			
Explore the community need for a future community center facility with other stakeholders that may include other local or county government agencies or non-profit organizations.			
Major Theme – Multi-jurisdiction Cooperative Planning			
Coordinate complimentary zoning with Granger, Sharon, and Copley Townships for the areas along the southwestern borders of Bath Township.			
Prepare common design guidelines for the Route 18 corridor in collaboration with Copley Township, and the City of Fairlawn.			
Collaborate and promote the values of regionalism with local governments on mutual goals and improvements.			
Work with the school system to identify ways in which the schools and township can collaborate to mutually reinforce common interests.			



Table D: Specific Implementation Tasks

Implementation Task	Ongoing	Short Term	Long Term
Work with Richfield Township and Village of Richfield to develop a small area plan, or similar strategy, for areas that border the northern end of the township, and specifically the Cleveland Massillon Corridor. Such effort should address issues such as infrastructure provision, access, land uses, and the joint use of funding and resources, if applicable.			
Major Theme - Sustainability			
Update the Bath Township Zoning Resolution to address sustainable development practices that may include a range of strategies from the easy (e.g., clearly allow for solar panels, green roofs, and rain gardens) to the more complex (providing for higher densities in focused areas or other incentives in exchange for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified buildings and/or developments).			
Update the Bath Township Zoning Resolution to incorporate sustainable development provisions that will promote walkability, enhance energy conservation methods, and reduce impervious surface coverage, amongst other related sustainable requirements.			



GLOSSARY

The following are definitions of certain technical terms used in this plan.

- **100-Year Floodplain** – A 100-year floodplain is the land adjacent to a stream, river, or waterway that experiences occasional or periodic flooding. The 100-year floodplain is calculated as the level of water expected to be equaled or exceeded every 100 years, on average. Annually, there is a 1.0% chance of a 100-year flood occurrence.
- **500-Year Floodplain** – A 500-year floodplain is the land adjacent to a stream, river, or waterway that experiences occasional or periodic flooding. The 500-year floodplain is calculated as the level of water expected to be equaled or exceeded every 500 years, on average. Annually, there is a 0.2% chance of a 500-year flood occurrence.
- **Buildout** – The amount of housing units or commercial acreage that could be development if all major areas of vacant, agricultural, or similar lands were to develop for non-agricultural purposes.
- **Goal** – A goal is a desired end state that, if achieved over the long term, will contribute to the attainment of the community vision.
- **Hamlet** – A hamlet is a small community, with a mixture of residential, nonresidential, and public uses, that are typically not large enough to be an incorporated village or city, and are often found at the crossroads of two major roadways. For the purposes of this plan, the two identified hamlets are Ghent and Hammond's Corners.
- **Riparian Corridor** – A riparian corridor is the land and vegetation located immediately adjacent to a stream. Riparian corridors may or may not include areas designated by FEMA as a floodplain.
- **Vision** – A vision is the overarching statement of the aspiration for the community.
- **Wetlands** – Wetlands are those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil condition. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas.
 - Emergent - Wetlands that are characterized by plants growing with their roots underwater and leaves extending above the water.
 - Forested – Wetlands that are characterized as having a significant component of woody vegetation.
 - Scrub/Shrub – Wetlands that are dominated by woody vegetation less than 20 feet tall.