

2010

Springfield Township

Comprehensive Land Use Plan Update



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Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Acknowledgements

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All photos are from the existing
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Comprehensive Land Use Plan

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Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Introduction

Introduction

Springfield Township is a growing community located in southeastern Summit County, Ohio. The township, which one might consider a dual-character community due to presence of both suburban and rural areas, has continued to experience development pressures due to the township's ideal regional location with a common border shared with Akron to the northwest and easy access to Interstates 76 and 77. At the same time, Springfield Township has also experienced the impact of the downturn in the nationwide economy with a significant slowing of housing and commercial development. Such changes have affected revenue generation for the township itself and in many cases, altered citizen's priorities in what they need and what from their community. These issues along with the fact that good planning practice suggest re-evaluating planning priorities every five years have influenced the township's decision to embark on an update to the 2002 Springfield Township Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

PURPOSE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

This comprehensive land use plan focuses primarily on identifying Springfield Township's overall approach and strategy for growth in the future. It assesses the impacts of growth and development on community character and future development opportunities. It promotes orderly development throughout the township, and identifies areas where residential, commercial, and industrial growth are most appropriate. The plan also identifies ways to preserve land while balancing development pressure and the need for a more balanced tax base. It is intended that this plan respect basic private property rights and ensure that future regulations will be written in a fair and equitable manner.

The comprehensive land use plan identifies Springfield Township's goals and objectives as well as a comprehensive set of policies and plan recommendations (implementation strategies). It also includes a summary of relevant background information. All of the background information, goals, objectives, and recommendations can be used in the future by the township decision-makers, property owners, business owners, and even regional agencies, to make decisions based on what the township desires to be in the long-term future. This plan does not change any laws or zoning regulations as they apply to the township upon adoption. It does, however, provide guidance for future changes that may be made to township policies, laws, and regulations over the next 20 years.



Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Introduction

THE PLANNING PROCESS

In 2001 and 2002, Springfield Township undertook a massive planning effort to develop the township's first comprehensive land use plan. The development of this plan included extensive public input through public meetings and the use of the Springfield Township Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC). In fall of 2002, the township trustees adopted the plan to serve as its guide for future decisions related to growth and development.

In 2008, the township determined that it was necessary to update the plan in an effort to address ongoing issues with development and to identify and expand on certain priorities including, but not limited to, township identity and economic development. While the intent of this second process is to update the plan, it was not envisioned that the township would completely rewrite the existing plan but would, as the desired alternative, review the plan and undertake strategic updates with enhanced graphics and a higher level of detail. The update process included regular public meetings to keep township officials and the Technical Review Committee (TRC) up to date on the process and allow for key feedback, but it did not include as extensive a public input process as the original plan because a strong foundation of planning goals and objectives had already been developed in the 2002 plan and would serve as the basis for the updated plan.

OVERVIEW OF THE PLAN UPDATE

This plan is divided into five chapters. This *Introduction* and the *Planning Foundation* chapter sets up some of the basic background for the plan and the process. The *Goals and Objectives* chapter sets forth the township's main vision for the future through a series of ten goals and related objectives. This chapter can be used to guide future decisions that arise out of this plan and those that the township may face in the future that were not anticipated in this plan.

Following the goals and objectives is the core component of this plan. The *Comprehensive Land Use Plan* chapter incorporates a series of recommended actions under the following key themes:

- Future Land Use
- Infrastructure Network
- Economic Development
- Quality of Life
- Sustainability

The final chapter outlines an implementation strategy for the township that summarizes the core group of recommendations and a method for continual monitoring of the goals, objectives, and the overall plan.



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A key component of any comprehensive planning strategy should be an understanding of how the township has grown and developed into the community that it is and how the community wants to continue to grow in the future. Accomplishing this task means evaluating how the township has changed historically through an inventory of the existing conditions and trends. This inventory creates a foundation for which the township can use in future decisions related to planning and zoning. This section incorporates general background on the township's population, housing, and economy.

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. The existing land use map, on the following page, was developed through property information and aerial photography available from the Summit County Auditor's Office. This map categorizes properties in Springfield Township within the following land use categories:

Agricultural or Undeveloped

Properties 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 more than five acres also fall within this category due to the potential for future development.

Single-Family Residential

Residential properties where there is a single detached dwelling unit located on a single parcel.

Two- and Three-Family Residential

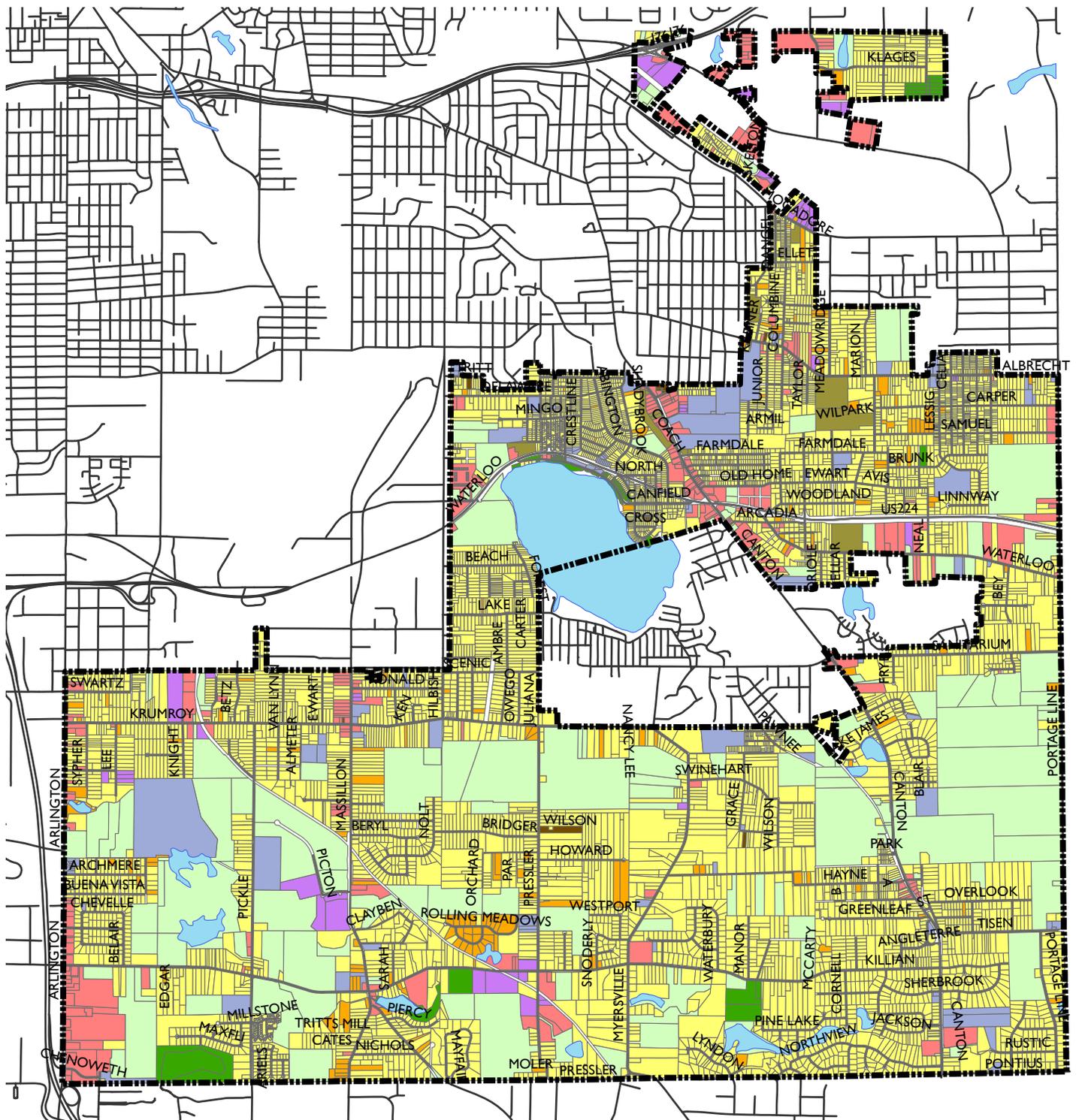
Residential properties where there are two to three dwelling units, in an attached structure, located on a single parcel.

Multi-Family Residential

Residential properties where there are four or more dwelling units, in an attached structure, located on a single parcel. This category may include apartment buildings, townhomes, duplexes, two-family homes, and other attached housing.

Mobile or Manufactured Home Park

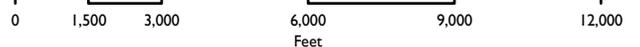
Residential developments where there are multiple mobile or manufactured housing units located on a single parcel, including any associated uses.



Springfield Township - Comprehensive Land Use Plan Update

Existing Land Use

- | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|---|--------------------------|
|  | Agricultural or Undeveloped |  | Commercial and Office |
|  | Single-Family Residential |  | Industrial |
|  | Two- and Three-Family Residential |  | Parks and Recreation |
|  | Multi-Family Residential |  | Public and Institutional |
|  | Mobile or Manufactured Home Park | | |





Comprehensive Land Use Plan

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Commercial and Office

Commercial uses include those establishments where the primary use is the provision of goods and services to the general public in a neighborhood or suburban commercial center. This may include grocery stores, general retail stores, banks, gas stations, restaurants and similar uses.

Office uses include those establishments that provide executive, management, administrative, medical, dental, or professional services in either small or large-scale office buildings.

Industrial

Industrial uses include establishments for the manufacturing and production of goods and/or services with little to no commercial or office use related to the main industrial use.

Public and Institutional

Public and institutional uses are properties and structures used for the provision of services related to the general public or institutions. These uses include religious places of worship, schools, government buildings, and other public uses.

Parks and Recreation

Parks and recreational uses are properties used for public open space and recreational uses such as playgrounds, ball fields, horse trails, and other local or regional parklands.

POPULATION AND HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

In order to understand the development pressures and issues facing Springfield Township, it is important to evaluate trends in population and housing over the past few decades. The following is a brief analysis of population and housing characteristics within Springfield Township.

POPULATION

Springfield Township's population growth rate has remained relatively stable since 1990, with an average, over the last two decades with an average annual growth rate of less than a quarter of a percent a year since 1990. Table 1 illustrates the growth rates of all of the townships in Summit County along with nearby municipalities as a comparison. While Springfield Township's growth rate appears fairly slow, it is in fact growing whereas a number of communities, including Akron, have experienced a decrease in population.



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Table I: Population Growth Rates

COMMUNITY	1990	2000	1990-2000 AAGR*	2007	2000-2007 AAGR*
Summit County	514,990	542,899	0.53%	543,487	0.02%
City of Akron	223,182	217,074	-0.28%	207,934	-0.61%
Bath Township	8,804	9,635	0.91%	10,190	0.80%
Boston Township	1,892	1,664	-1.28%	2,072	3.18%
Copley Township	11,114	13,641	2.07%	14,042	0.41%
Coventry Township	11,094	10,900	-0.18%	10,869	-0.04%
Franklin Township/ New Franklin	14,910	14,530	-0.26%	14,963	0.42%
City of Green	19,134	22,817	1.78%	23,447	0.39%
Village of Lakemore	2,680	2,561	-0.45%	2,830	1.44%
Village of Mogadore	2,949	2,951	0.01%	2,966	0.07%
Northfield Center Township	3,944	4,931	2.26%	5,015	0.24%
Richfield Township	5,010	5,424	0.80%	6,184	1.89%
Sagamore Hills Township	6,520	9,340	3.66%	9,527	0.28%
Springfield Township	14,787	15,168	0.25%	15,324	0.15%
Twinsburg Township	1,880	2,153	1.37%	2,554	2.47%

* AAGR = Average Annual Growth Rate
 Source: U.S. Census and U.S. Census Estimates

Another aspect of population growth that may lead to lower than expected growth rates is a trend in smaller households that has impacted the population of communities across the nation. In the last few decades, while the overall number of households has continued to increase, the average size of those households has decreased due to an aging population (increased empty-nesters) and smaller family sizes, in some cases. Springfield Township is no exception with a minor decrease in the average household size from 2.63 persons per household in 1990 to 2.53 persons per households in 2000.

Given the information 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 0.15 percent per year, that trend would lead to a total population of approximately 15,572 in 2025, a total growth of just over 400 people in the next 20 years.



HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

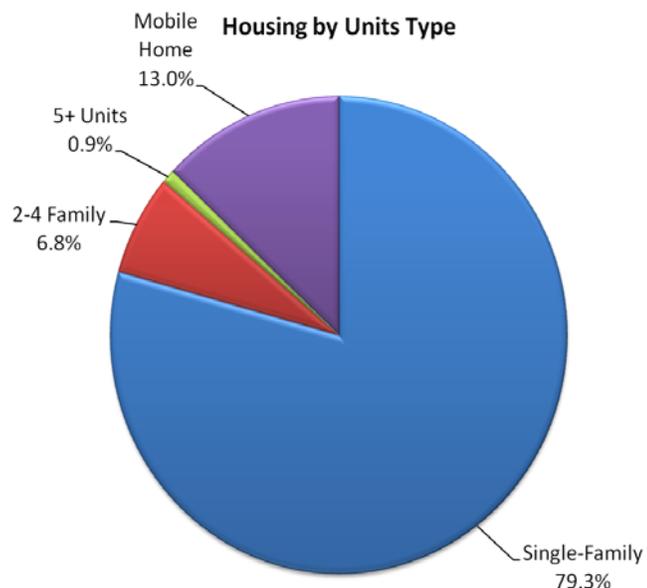
Between 1990 and 2000, the number of dwelling units in Springfield Township increased 6.6%, from 5,857 units to 6,243 units based on U.S. Census data. This is an average of about 38 new units per year. Since 2000, the average number of building permits issued for new units decreased to approximately 26 units per year, with a significant decrease in the last three years due to the declining economy. The township's larger annual increase in dwelling units as compared to population reflects the decreasing household size described in the previous section. Springfield Township's average number of permits for new units is in line with most of the other townships and larger communities in Summit County with the exception of Copley Township and the City of Green, which have both experienced an average of over 120 building permits per year since 2000.

Table 2: Building Permits by Year

YEAR	# OF BUILDING PERMITS FOR NEW UNITS
2000	34
2001	35
2002	23
2003	36
2004	35
2005	32
2006	21
2007	12
2008	6

In addition to understanding the 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, 79% of all housing units in Springfield Township were detached single-family dwellings (See the figure below.). The next greatest concentration of dwelling unit types was mobile homes (13%), typically considered a similar housing unit type as single-family detached housing. This ratio is considerably higher than the county's average of 1% 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, comprises just under 7% of the township's housing while higher-intensity multi-family comprises less than 1% of the township's housing.





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Table 3: Comparison of Housing by Unit Types in 2000

COMMUNITY	SINGLE-FAMILY	2-4 UNITS	5+ UNITS	MOBILE HOMES
Summit County	71.0%	13.5%	14.4%	1.1%
Boston Township	72.5%	3.7%	0.4%	23.4%
Copley Township	70.5%	10.4%	18.9%	0.2%
Coventry Township	80.5%	13.5%	4.8%	1.2%
City of Hudson	87.5%	4.7%	7.5%	0.3%
Village of Lakemore	88.4%	7.2%	1.3%	3.1%
Village of Mogadore	88.2%	3.2%	8.6%	0.0%
Richfield Township	94.6%	4.5%	0.9%	0.0%
Springfield Township	79.3%	6.8%	0.9%	13.0%

Source: U.S. Census

Information on the breakdown of the housing stock based on unit types is important because it can begin to demonstrate where the township may have too much of one type of housing and/or where the township is lacking another type of unit. It is clear from the comparison of Springfield Township to a selection of other communities in the county (See Table 3.) that the Springfield Township has one of the largest percentages of mobile homes, with the exception of Boston Township, but has a much smaller percentage of the traditional multi-family housing types. This information was used in the development of the housing goals for both the previous plan and this plan update.

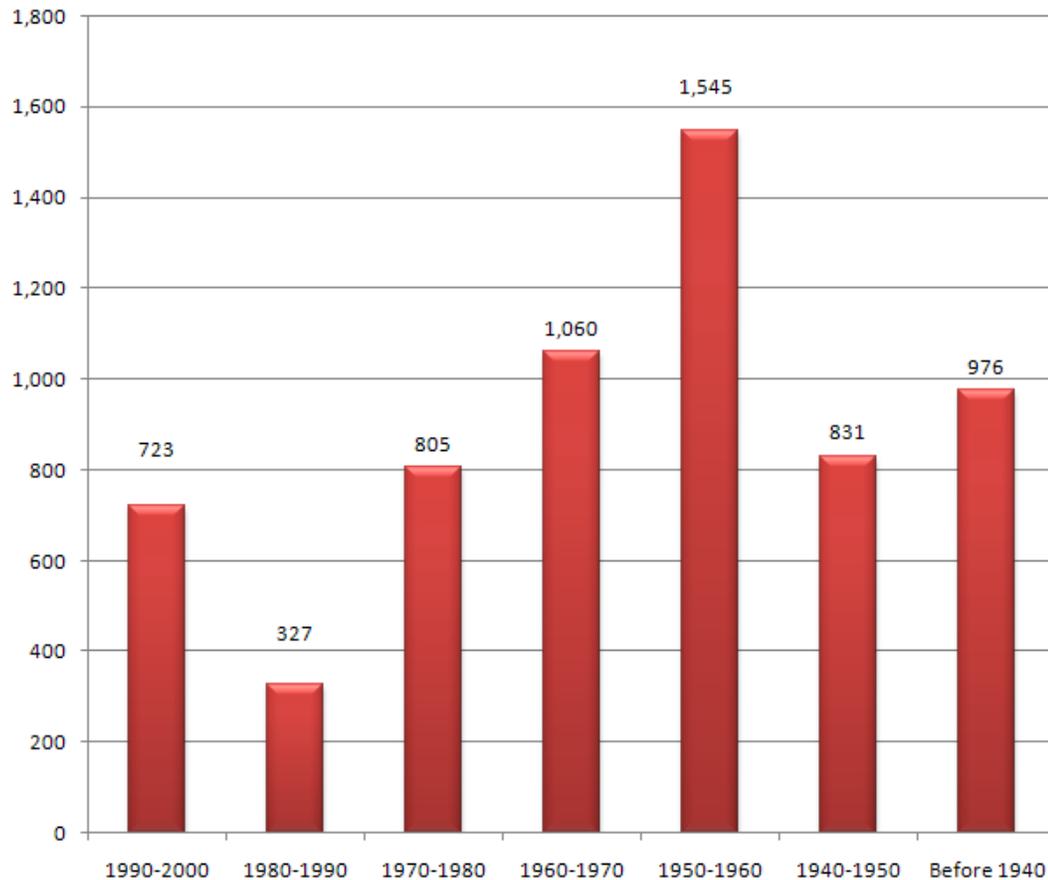




Comprehensive Land Use Plan Planning Foundation

One issue the township will need to be aware of as they progress is the age of the housing stock. The forecasts for the township do not demonstrate significant increases in the number of new dwelling units over the next 20 years so an increasing percentage of the housing stock will continue to age. Over 70% of the township's dwelling units were built before 1970. While this does not mean the housing stock is old, outdated, and deteriorated, it does signal that there could be maintenance issues over the lifespan of this plan. As such, the township needs to continue to monitor and evaluate the condition of the housing stock to ensure long-term neighborhood stability.

Year Structure was Built





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EXISTING PLANNING EFFORTS

In addition to the township's 2002 plan, there are a number of county and regional plans that affect Springfield Township. The following is a brief highlight of several plans that relate to the goals, objectives, and recommended actions in this plan. There are a number of other very detailed plans such as the Summit County Engineers Capital Improvement Plan and the Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study's Transportation Improvement Plan that are not highlighted below but are key to the future of Springfield Township nonetheless.

Summit County, Ohio General Land Use Development Plan

In 2006, the county adopted a general land use development plan that, like this plan, is intended to provide guidance for future development throughout the county. This plan looks at development from a regional perspective with guidance on issues such as cultural/historic resource preservation, demographics, housing, land use, natural resources, utilities and storm water management, economic development, and transportation. The Springfield Township Comprehensive Land Use Plan should be used in concert with the Summit County General Land Use Development Plan as the county's plan provides supplemental information not detailed in this plan (e.g. background information on historic and natural resources) but that were accounted for due to the county's extensive planning efforts. Additionally, the county is an agency that the township should continue to coordinate planning efforts with, particularly related to issues where the township has minimal authority (e.g., subdivision regulations, water, sewer, etc.).

Natural Resources Study, Summit County, Ohio

This study documented and evaluated all of the natural resources in Summit County including wetlands, floodplains, riparian corridors, topography, groundwater, woodlands, and numerous other vital resources. The planning effort resulted in a number of planning recommendations and potential tools available to the county and its local jurisdictions including several tools, such as land acquisition and zoning amendments, that are available to Springfield Township.

Summit County Trail & Greenway Plan

The *Summit County Trail & Greenway Plan*, completed in May 2001, identifies regionally significant trail and greenway opportunities within the county. These corridors will link natural and cultural resources together as a countywide system to meet recreational, educational, environmental and economic development objectives. The plan serves as a framework around which individual communities such as Springfield Township can prepare local recreation plans. This plan, which is shown in map form in Appendix A, identifies a proposed priority greenway along the



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Tuscarawas River that will connect the southern area of Springfield Township to the Ohio and Erie Canal Towpath Trail. Additionally, the county has plans to develop proposed trails along several of the key roadway corridors to improve overall connectivity.

JOINT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT (JEDD)

In 1994, Springfield Township residents voted to enter into a Joint Economic Development District (JEDD) agreement with the City of Akron. The purpose of the JEDD was threefold:

- To create or preserve jobs and employment opportunities;
- To improve the economic welfare of people in the City of Akron, the township, and in the JEDD; and
- To promote regional cooperation.

The JEDD agreement is valid for an initial term of 99 years (until the end of 2093), with the option of two successive 50-year renewal periods. Per this agreement, the City of Akron agreed to construct water feeder mains and trunk sewers per a 5-year schedule. Services are provided according to an agreed upon fee schedule. In addition, a mutual aid agreement for police, fire, and/or EMS services was established.

Township Service Area

Specific non-JEDD residential areas have been designated as a township service area for potential city water/sewer service. Construction of water and sewer to these non-JEDD areas subject to: (1) petition by 75% of users with township and city approval; and (2) engineering and legal feasibility. Such infrastructure shall be subject to the following:

- Tap-in fee or other capital user fee to be charged to water/sewer users; The city or township shall not require non-petitioners to pay for services.
- Other properties in the township may be added to the township service area if the majority of property owners in an area petition the township trustees.
- Water and sewer facilities to be owned, operated and maintained by city, unless otherwise determined by the city.

Income Tax

Effective January 1, 1995, the City of Akron will administer and collect income tax per the tax agreement with the JEDD Board per the following:

- Pledge revenues, as necessary, within first 6 years to fund the city's share of township water/sewer design, acquisition and construction.
- The Initial tax rate was be 2% until 2005. After 2005, the tax rate is equal to the municipal income tax



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- Revenues from any increase above 2% to be paid with 1/3 of the revenue going to the township and 2/3 of the revenue going to the city.
- All property tax revenues are distributed to the township as they were prior to the JEDD agreement.

Annexation and Zoning

As part of the JEDD agreement, the City of Akron agreed not to annex any land during the life of the contract without consent of township and to support the detachment of certain designated property. In return, Springfield Township agreed:

- To oppose annexation, merger, or consolidation of property without consent of city.
- To maintain the existing level of property zoned for business, commercial or industrial uses within the JEDD district; and
- To oppose establishment of enterprise zones, granting of tax exemptions, and/or use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) without consent of city.

If the township wishes to rezone non-residential property that is not yet within the JEDD, it must notify the city of the proposed change and designate replacement property of the same character, and receive the city's approval.



Goals and Objectives

Goals from the 2002 Plan

- To increase the tax base.
- To expand housing options in selected locations to meet the needs of residents at various life-stages
- To preserve the Township's sense of openness and keep "green areas green"
- To create a positive Township image
- To strengthen Springfield Township's community identity
- To encourage and support the expansion of public water and sewer service, and prioritize critical locations such as schools and older, dense neighborhoods with failing septic systems.
- To create key partnerships to address future growth issues and improve the quality of life in the Township
- To better manage traffic throughout the township.

The purpose of a comprehensive land use plan is to help guide the future development of the community over the next 10-20 years. Central to that guidance are the goals and objectives, which form the foundation of a long-term vision for Springfield Township. The goals and objectives also provide the outline for the other plan elements including the land use plan, transportation plan, community facilities plan, and other elements. The following are general definitions for goals and objectives:

- A **GOAL** is a desired end state or target that, if pursued over the long term, will contribute to the attainment of the community vision.
- An **OBJECTIVE** is a more specific (and often measurable) desired short-term end, or benchmark, that in conjunction with other objectives can cause the achievement of the goal.

The goals and objectives are broad statements of policy that will transcend changes in leadership and are what the township can aim for during the implementation of the various strategies. Specific strategies and action steps that the township can use are included within the various plan elements, and these will be evaluated through the lifespan of this plan.

The goals and objectives on the following pages are based on the goals established in the previous planning effort with revisions as necessary to clarify goals and objectives and expand certain goals to further address issues such as sustainability. These goals and objectives should be read with an understanding that many of the statements are interrelated. For example, improving the overall transportation system or creating a community identity can both contribute to the quality of life in the township. In cases where the township may find a conflict between certain goals (e.g., where a specific transportation project may conflict with the protection of natural resources), the township should not use this plan to choose one goal over another but should use it to find the best balance among the goals in order to achieve the shared vision of the community.

Goal 1: The township will have an expanded, diverse tax base that balances the need to attract and maintain businesses while creating high-quality activity centers within the community.

1. Attract new businesses (commercial, office, and industrial) to the township while continuing to work with local businesses to ensure their long-term viability.
2. Encourage local entrepreneurial efforts.



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Goals and Objectives

3. Open up a continuous dialogue with existing business owners to help identify issues related to business development in the township as well as promoting an overall collaborative approach to economic development.
4. Work with the City of Akron to maximize the benefit of the Joint Economic Development District (JEDD).
5. Concentrate nonresidential economic development in designated areas along major roads and highways where suitable infrastructure is available or is expected to be available at the time of development.
6. Identify potential sites for new businesses and encourage the redevelopment of underutilized sites based on township and regional planning efforts.
7. Find methods of marketing the township that can both help to expand the tax base and promote the identity of the township.
8. Market the township's prime business location within the region with strong highway access and close proximity to major urban areas balanced with more diverse housing opportunities, lower taxes, and a high quality of life.
9. Allow for some transitional areas within the township, particularly along major roadway corridors, where a mixture of uses may be appropriate including higher density attached housing, transitional commercial and office uses, or true mixed-use developments that blend both residential and nonresidential uses together on a single development site.

Goal 2: The township will be a place where individuals and families of different demographic and economic backgrounds can reside throughout their various life-stages.

1. Identify appropriate areas for various types of housing (including attached housing) at a variety of densities based on available infrastructure, natural resource preservation objectives, and the ability to develop the housing within the context of existing development patterns whether through appropriate buffers or mimicking adjacent development densities.
2. Allow for higher residential areas in key areas of the township where infrastructure is available and where such densities may serve as a form of land use transition (e.g., transitioning for commercial uses to lower density residential development).
3. Provide for the flexibility to evaluate new types of housing that may fit the needs of certain groups of the population (e.g. patio homes, townhomes, landminiums, or condominiums) that might be targeted toward the elderly, empty nesters, or young couples without children.

Goal 3: The township will be a community of well-maintained neighborhoods.



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Goals and Objectives

1. Develop tools and programs to encourage and/or require the maintenance and upkeep of housing as the housing stock continues to age.
2. Consider the creation and implementation of a property maintenance code that will work simultaneously with the zoning resolution to ensure the long-term maintenance of neighborhoods and business areas.
3. Continue to plan for parks or greenspace in and around major residential neighborhoods to allow for easy access by local residents.
4. Continue to work cooperatively with township property owner's to resolve issues related to zoning violations.

Goal 4: The township's sense of "openness" and expansive green areas will be protected for future generations.

1. Protect those areas and resources that contribute to the open space character of the township including, but not limited to wetlands, wooded areas, riparian corridors, and other natural resources.
2. Implement applicable portions of the *Summit County Trail and Greenway Plan* including the protection of the greenway along the Tuscarawas River.
3. Support the development of conservation subdivisions that protect the valued resources while also establishing setback requirements to make the housing less visible from roads and adjacent development.

Goal 5: The township will have a strong, unique identity known throughout the region that emphasizes the township's central location, unique qualities, and abundant resources.

1. Develop and expand upon the areas around Springfield Lake that currently serves as a "center" for the community.
2. Encourage the renovation and upgrade of key gateways (entrances) into the township to clearly identify the township to residents and visitors alike.
3. Promoting Springfield Lake as a primary asset of Springfield Township and a gathering place for the community. Identify additional resources and assets that the township can market as part of their overall identity.

Goal 6: The township will be a key partner in facilitating the appropriate expansion of public water and sewer service, and the provision of necessary services.



Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Goals and Objectives

1. New public facilities should be situated in locations that will best serve the population through accessibility and ease of services. As such, the township should identify areas that are in need of sanitary sewer and/or improvements due to increased growth, maintenance issues, or necessity.
2. The township should meet or exceed minimum standards for police, fire, and emergency medical services in staffing and response times.
3. Work with appropriate agencies to identify solutions and planning efforts necessary to improve stormwater runoff and minimize damage from flooding.
4. Promote continued development of state-of-the-art telecommunications systems and other technologies.
5. Collaborate with surrounding local governments on infrastructure improvements to address economies of scale, resource management, and infrastructure utilization for mandated and other services provided to citizens.

Goal 7: Residents will have a high quality of life within the community through the availability of quality schools, entertainment and cultural activities, and a strong parks and recreation system.

1. Work with the school systems to identify potential collaborations with the township that will maintain a high level of education in the community and preserve an excellent school system. This can also serve to help promote a unique identity for the township through the programs that may arise from such collaboration.
2. Create partnerships with local and regional organizations (e.g., neighboring communities and the Springfield Township Senior Center) to create and promote a variety of arts and cultural programs as well as the venues to encourage performances.
3. Utilize economic development programs to attract entertainment and recreation businesses that will provide citizens with “things to do” while simultaneously expanding the local tax base.
4. Look for methods of incorporating community activities and activity areas in new public facilities, such as new park buildings or a new government center (i.e., multi-use buildings).
5. Provide for services and accessibility for people of all ages and with all levels of abilities. In particular, address the special needs of our aging population so that Springfield Township is a positive place to age.
6. Work with area hospital systems to explore building a health and wellness center or other health-related facilities to provide health and wellness services to Springfield Township citizens.

Goal 8: The township will have adequate parks and open space to provide recreation opportunities to the



Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Goals and Objectives

residents and will maintain open spaces to enhance the quality of life in the township.

1. Develop a parks, recreation, and open space plan for the township that will evaluate the current facilities and make strategic recommendations about how to expand and diversify the programming and facilities of the Springfield Township park system.
2. Consider long-term approaches to permanent, public open space and parks such as a greenspace or parks levy to raise funds for the purchase of open space. Such approaches could be explored as part of an overall parks, recreation, and open space plan.
3. Allow for conservation subdivisions that incorporate attached housing that may allow for the preservation of 60-75% open space.

Goal 9: The township transportation system will be a model for other communities, addressing both vehicular and nonvehicular modes of transportation.

1. Develop partnerships with the county and state, along with any regional agencies and task forces, to address the township's transportation needs.
2. Develop methods and incentives to encourage people to utilize alternative modes of transportation.
3. Maintain a high level of maintenance of the local roads to minimize the need for costly repairs.
4. Encourage the connection of new or existing roadways to create improved interconnectivity within the community. Discourage the use of cul-de-sacs as they limited interconnectivity.
5. Ensure that there is adequate access to all properties for emergency vehicles.
6. Develop and implement and township-wide trails and sidewalk plan. Look for avenues to expand sidewalk and bike trail connectivity.
7. Support the engineering and construction of county and regional bike trails and multi-use paths.

Goal 10: The township will have incorporated sustainable practices within the daily functions of township government as well as embracing and encouraging sustainable development practices.



Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Goals and Objectives

1. Evaluate and implement more sustainable practices in the day-to-day operations of the township including, but not limited to, increased recycling efforts, promotion of energy conservation, and encouraging employees to use alternative methods of travel to get to work (e.g., walking, biking, and/or mass transit).
2. Eliminate barriers to 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 or other incentives in exchange for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified buildings and/or developments).
3. Incorporate sustainable development provisions in the zoning resolution that will promote walkability, encourage localized food production and safety, enhance energy conservation methods, and reduce impervious surface coverage, amongst other related sustainable requirements.



Comprehensive Land Use Plan

This section outlines the key planning themes that incorporate the goals and objectives stated in the previous chapter and includes recommendations for the various physical and geographic components of the Springfield Township Comprehensive Land Use Plan. This chapter provides guidance on where and how the township will address growth and development over the coming years including the provision and location of various amenities essentially providing the policy for growth management in the township. This chapter works in concert with the *Goals and Objectives* chapter, and the *Implementation* chapter to establish the vision for the township for the next 20 years. The key themes of this plan include:

- Future Land Use
- Infrastructure Network
- Economic Development
- Quality of Life
- Sustainability

The goals related to each theme are included in each section along with recommended actions applicable to the subject theme. The recommended actions included in this draft of the plan does not represent an exhaustive list of actions that the township can implement through the lifetime of this plan. The list represents an initial attempt at summarizing key actions that will allow the township to implement the goals and objectives of this plan in the most efficient manner. This plan also acknowledges that new planning tools, resources, and ideas will arise over time and this plan needs to be flexible enough to accommodate new ideas and actions. As these new ideas and actions are presented to the township, the decision makers should utilize the goals and objectives as well as the plan monitoring process (See the *Implementation* chapter) to determine how to incorporate and/or address the new action.



Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Goals Related to Future Land Use

- **Goal 1:** The township will have an expanded, diverse tax base that balances the need to attract and maintain businesses while creating high-quality activity centers within the community.
- **Goals 2:** The township will be a place where individuals and families of different demographic and economic backgrounds can reside throughout their various life-stages.
- **Goal 3:** The township will be a community of well-maintained neighborhoods.
- **Goal 4:** The township's sense of "openness" and expansive green areas will be protected for future generations.
- **Goal 7:** Residents will have a high quality of life within the community through the availability of quality schools, entertainment and cultural activities, and a strong parks and recreation system.
- **Goal 8:** The township will have adequate parks and open space to provide recreation opportunities to the residents and will maintain open spaces to enhance the quality of life in the township.
- **Goal 10:** The township will have incorporated sustainable practices within the daily functions of township government as well as embracing and encourage sustainable development practices.

FUTURE LAND USE

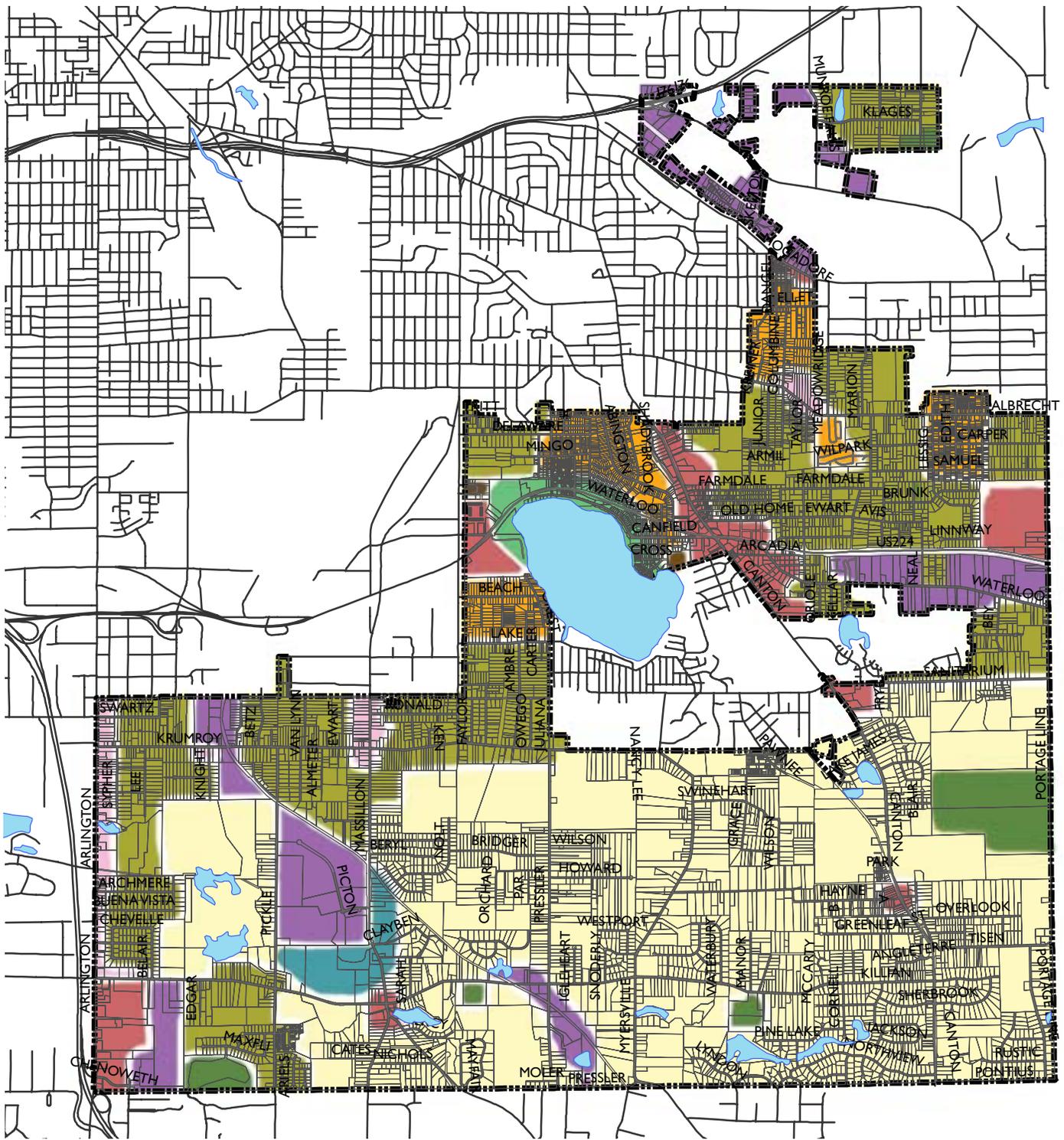
The purpose of the future land use element is to promote the community's values and to further the goals and objectives updated as part of this planning process. The Future Land Use Map takes into consideration the land use related recommendations of the previous plan while also recognizing the influences of major developments and trends in the community. For example, the potential redevelopment of portions of the Goodyear site in Akron is in close proximity to the township and could increase the demand for housing for young professionals.

The land use element is the basis for physical planning in the township. The future land use categories and accompanying map are the basic building blocks for this comprehensive land use plan. They provide the geographic representation of the kind of growth and development that is appropriate in various locations, as well as defining the preferred intensity for development. The future land use categories also include information on the quality of development that is preferred, providing references through images and the definitions of the expectations of the township in terms of quantity and quality of development.

LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS

The future land use categories and the Future Land Use Plan Map are the principal tools the township has in making zoning decisions; however, the land use should not be interpreted to be the same as zoning. The land use plan serves as the long-term vision for physical development and creates expectations for what should occur, while zoning is the legislative tool that regulates future development. It is important that the township's land use plan and zoning regulations be compatible so the township can use zoning to implement the land use plan.

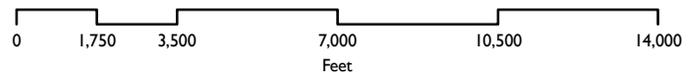
The Future Land Use Plan Map on the following page is intended to be general in nature; land use boundaries are not specific. This plan is intended as a flexible and general guideline; it is not intended as a zoning map. Future land uses are shown in the categories described on the pages following the Future Land Use Map.



Springfield Township - Comprehensive Land Use Plan Update

Future Land Use

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
|  | Open Space Residential |  | Transitional Commercial/Office |
|  | Traditional Residential |  | General Commercial |
|  | Neighborhood Residential |  | Industrial |
|  | Attached Housing |  | Office and Research |
|  | Lake Development |  | Parks, Recreation, and Civic |

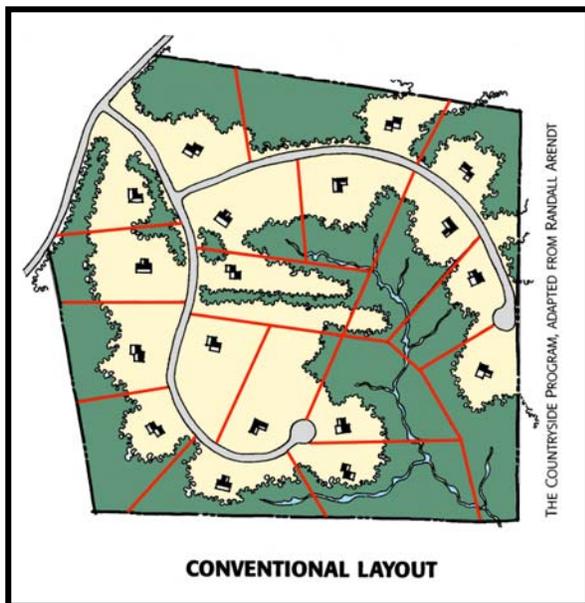




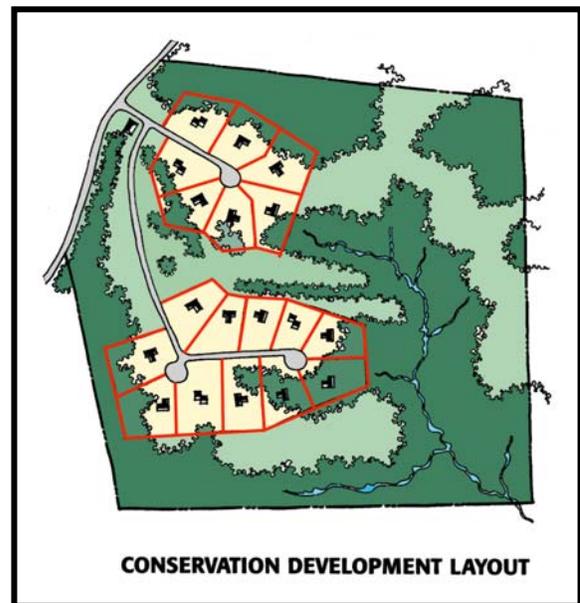
LAND USE CATEGORIES

Open Space Residential

Open space residential reflects the openness and rural character of the southern areas of the township that have yet to experience the higher density developments seen to the north. New development in this area should reflect the large lot developments that make up some of the existing subdivision patterns or should be designed as a conservation subdivision as illustrated in the figure below.



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



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



Photo Source: McBride Dale Clarion

Conservation subdivisions should reflect the same overall gross densities as a conventional subdivision but should be designed in a manner to cluster the housing away from existing developments and streets while also using existing natural resources (e.g. tree stands and topography) to “hide” development and therefore, maintain a feel of openness in this area of the township.

Development in the open space residential areas should be primarily single-family detached residential at a density of one unit per acre where sewer is available and one unit per five acres where centralized sewer service is not available. Attached housing may be appropriate in this land use category under the following conditions:

- The minimum open space should be at least 65% of the total site area;



Comprehensive Land Use Plan

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- The maximum number of units per structure should be four dwelling units;
- The structures should be designed to have the appearance of large single-family structures rather than townhomes or rowhouses. Attached patio homes are also appropriate;
- Each unit shall have a separate exterior entrance and shall only share common walls with other units. Stacked apartments should not be permitted; and
- To the maximum extent possible, attached housing should be situated away from adjacent development and away from roads to buffer the appearance of the development.

Open spaces should be designed to protect the most vulnerable natural resources as a priority including, but not limited to, floodways, floodplains, riparian corridors, wetlands, and large trees or tree stands.

Traditional Residential

Traditional residential represents the majority of the existing development in the northern areas of the township and is an appropriate future land use in locations in close proximity to existing suburban single-family. Common characteristics of this land use designation are moderate sized lots with detached single-family homes with limited access to public open space beyond local parks. Appropriate densities in these areas are two units per acre provided sanitary sewer service available. Where such service is not available, the maximum density shall be determined by the lot area requirements established for on-site sewer treatment.

Neighborhood Residential

Neighborhood residential represent the highest density residential neighborhoods in Springfield Township. The majority of the neighborhoods are single-family detached residential with some two- to four-family homes located within these established neighborhoods. It is anticipated that these areas will continue to exist with similar densities. Appropriate densities in these areas are three units per acre provided sanitary sewer service available.

Attached Housing

This use category includes moderate-density detached or attached housing that provide common facilities (e.g., recreational areas, clubhouses, and open space). For Springfield Township, these uses 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 is six units per acre with a maximum of six attached units per a single structure. These uses are only appropriate where adequate water and sewer services are provided. Additionally, the goal behind the provision of these uses is to allow for more intense housing density in strategic areas of the township where a higher density is appropriate including the area near the Springfield Township Civic Center and adjacent to large general commercial areas.



Photo Source: McBride Dale Clarion



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The township desires a more diverse housing mix in the future, with a balance of single-family detached and attached housing. While the township does want additional attached housing options, the maximum percentage of the total housing units the township wants to allow to be attached is 10%.

Small-scale commercial uses may also be appropriate in areas designated as attached housing along the shore of Springfield Lake where such uses will provide services to the park and lake users. Appropriate uses include restaurants, coffee shops, boat or bike rental, and other commercial

Transitional Commercial/Office

Transitional commercial/office uses are low-intensity office and commercial (non-retail) uses that are found on small lots and in small structures that typically reflect the size and scale of adjacent residential development. Common uses within this category include professional offices, personal services (e.g., beauty parlor), and medical or dental offices. These uses are often along major roadways between two nodes of more intense commercial uses. These uses may also be appropriate as a land use buffer between a general commercial area and nearby residential uses.

General Commercial

The general commercial category covers areas of the township that would be appropriate for commercial retail, office, and service uses that cater to both the local and regional market. The areas typically lie along major road corridors or at key intersections where there are high volumes of traffic. General commercial uses are the primary shopping locations for the community and include, but are not limited to, grocery stores, wholesale clubs, large-scale general retail, discount department stores, specialty retail, restaurants, banks and gas stations. The heavy retail focus of these areas makes them primarily auto oriented; however, opportunities to tie in pedestrian access between buildings and surrounding residential development is strongly encouraged.

A key strategy for these areas is the enhancement of the overall quality of development as they areas are the most visible areas of the township and often set the tone for the township identity. This plan includes recommendations for enhanced development standards for signage, parking and access, architectural standards, lighting, and landscaping.

In addition to the traditional nonresidential uses commonly found in general commercial areas, this plan envisions the potential for mixed-use development in and around general commercial areas that would incorporate a residential component to the area. Providing for residential uses in close proximity to commercial uses provides an increased number of "rooftops" within the market area of the businesses, thus supporting the viability of township businesses. The residential uses also typically provide different types of housing options beyond single-family detached homes (e.g., townhomes, low-density apartments, etc.) which in turn can provide attractive housing alternatives for young professionals and empty-nesters.



Photo Source: McBride Dale Clarion



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Within the concept of mixed-use developments are a number of variations including a general mixture of uses (e.g., retail, office, and residential) on a single site or an alternative that is often referred to as vertical mixed-use (e.g., office or residential uses over retail or office uses on the first floor). The following are general descriptions and illustrations of these variations of mixed-use development.

General Mixed-Use

General mixed-use developments incorporate multiple uses on a single site. What separates these types of developments from the construction of individual (separated) uses is that they are typically designed with a unified theme, integrated connections between the uses, and often include uses that build off of one another (e.g., residential uses that provide homes for office and retail workers). Important considerations for any mixed-use site are:



- Scale, to ensure that one use does not overpower the other uses;
- Unified theme to tie the development together;
- Connectivity at both the pedestrian and vehicular levels;
- Strong architectural and landscaping standards both to create a unified theme but also to provide for high-quality design; and
- Flexibility to address issues such as parking and circulation that are different from typical suburban style development.



Photo Source: McBride Dale Clarion

Vertical Mixed-Use

Similar in nature to general mixed-use developments, vertical mixed-use emphasizes walkability, pedestrian scale, connectivity for pedestrians and vehicles, and a cohesive design. While common in downtown areas, vertical mixed-use developments are also showing up as redevelopment alternatives on suburban commercial corridors.



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Industrial

Industrial uses include establishments for the manufacturing and production of goods and/or services. These uses may have some accessory commercial and/or offices uses. Future industrial development should be focused on clean industries that largely operate within enclosed structures. Outdoor storage and activities may occur with appropriate buffers from adjacent properties.



Office and Research

The office and research areas of Springfield Township provide for an area where office or research and development facilities may be located in a business park setting. These uses may be of varied scale from a small medical office to large, multi-floor office buildings and may include some commercial accessory uses. Beyond general research and development activities, the large-scale manufacturing or distribution of goods should not occur in the office and research area.

Photo Source: McBride Dale Clarion

Parks, Recreation, and Civic

These properties represent key existing parks, recreation, and civic uses within the township that are unlikely to be redeveloped as different uses. These uses should be preserved and enhanced in accordance with the rest of this plan.

Lake Development

As one of Springfield Township's major assets, Springfield Lake provides an opportunity for a mixture of land use opportunities that focus around civic and recreational uses. Development in areas designated for lake development should primarily be outdoor recreational (e.g., parks, trails, shelters, playgrounds, and civic gathering spots) and civic (e.g., township buildings). Uses on privately held lands in this area may be used for attached townhomes and limited commercial uses that serve users of the lake and recreational facilities as well as the greater township. These commercial uses may include canoe or boat rental, bike rental, restaurants, or small-scale convenience stores.



Photo Source: McBride Dale Clarion



Photo Source: McBride Dale Clarion





Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Comprehensive Land Use Plan

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1) *Monitor and continue to update this comprehensive land use plan.*

The goals and objectives of all communities evolve over time given changing elected officials, changing economies, and involvement from new residents and businesses. To address the changing environment, the township should continue to evaluate its various planning efforts on a regular basis. Much as the township is doing with this update process, this land use plan should be reviewed at least every five years to determine if there is a change in priorities or a need to address certain issues in more detail.

2) *Prepare and adopt a property maintenance code.*

The township should pursue the development of a property maintenance code, in accordance with the provisions of the Ohio Revised Code (Section 505.73), to regulate the maintenance of structures and premises of both residential and nonresidential properties within the township. Property maintenance and general upkeep is a recurring issue within Springfield Township but it is also an additional set of requirements that requires both staff and funding resources. The current system of regulating the upkeep of properties relates specifically to “public nuisances” that are defined under state law. Public nuisances are very difficult to establish and require a lengthy process of notification and response before the township can step in to clean up a property leaving many residents and property owners frustrated with enforcement. The adoption and use of a property maintenance code would give the township increased powers in enforcing property upkeep and can be tailored to fit the available resources at the time the code is adopted.

3) *Revise the zoning regulations to enhance the design standards and requirements for all uses.*

Relatively recent changes to the Ohio Revised Code (ORC), related to township zoning, now allow townships to establish architectural standards and more intense landscaping requirements for nonresidential uses and many residential uses. While the township is not authorized to establish requirements for building materials, the ORC provisions increase the township’s ability to require higher quality design in the built environment. By revising the zoning regulations to include these standards, the township can “raise the bar” for development and redevelopment, further enhancing the curb appeal of Springfield Township.

Another area of zoning that the township may want to consider updating is the regulations pertaining specifically to nonconforming lots and nonconforming structures. As stated earlier, Springfield Township has both a rural character to the south and a urban/suburban character to the north. In the more developed areas of the township, there will constantly be issues with developing on vacant lots within established neighborhoods (this is especially true in Sawyerwood) and/or addressing

Design Standards

Design standards that the township might consider updating include:

- Architectural Standards (excluding building materials)
- Building Location and Orientation
- Landscaping, Buffering, and Screening
- Off-Street Parking and Loading
- Pedestrian Connections
- General Site Circulation
- Signage Standards
- Infill and Nonconformity Standards



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areas where a large number of buildings do not meet the various development standards in the current zoning resolution (i.e., nonconforming structures). While updating the zoning resolution, the township should consider changes that will first and foremost, minimize the number of nonconforming lots and structures and, where they cannot be eliminated, ensure that there are standards in place that will allow for infill development without detracting from the character of the existing neighborhood.

Major changes to the zoning district structure (number and type of districts) are not anticipated. However, some changes will have to be made to existing zoning to ensure that use categories such as attached housing and conservation subdivisions are allowed with a set of related regulations.

4) *Develop special area plans and targeted planning strategies for each of the township's business areas.*

One of the primary issues raised in the development of the original plan and in this update is the importance of having viable business areas within the township to promote a strong tax base and to promote a self-sufficient community. The township currently has distinct business areas (commercial, office, and industrial) along Canton Road, Arlington Road, Massillon Road, U.S. Route 224 (Waterloo Road), and the northern industrial parks near Interstate 76. Each of these business areas is unique in its scale, character, and issues that cannot be individually addressed within this planning effort. The township should develop, over time, individual special area plans for each of the business areas. While each of the special area plans can be designed to address the specific issues within each of the business areas, typical elements of a special area planning effort may include the following components:

- Market study;
- Detailed evaluation of existing sites with special attention given to vacant sites;
- The desired vision for the area (both in land use and appearance);
- Streetscaping, landscaping, and design guidelines; and
- Recommendations related to future land uses, approaches to development and redevelopment, and specific implementation strategies to undertake the recommendations.

5) *Consider the creation of a mixed-use zoning district to provide more opportunities for the redevelopment of underutilized properties.*

The township already has zoning as a major tool for controlling land use and development. To supplement this tool, the township should consider incorporating a mixed-use zoning district that could be applied in certain strategic areas of the township. This recommendation serves two purposes. First, mixed-use zoning can provide more flexibility in the types of uses that can occupy a site which can be a valuable redevelopment option in areas of high commercial vacancy. Second, the



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development of higher density housing within close proximity to commercial and office uses can be beneficial to both the residents and business as the residents can provide a constant customer base to the commercial uses and having commercial uses nearby is more convenient for residents. Another benefit of having a mixed-use zoning district is that it provides the flexibility to allow for a creative development, with multiple uses, without having to go through an extensive planned development district process.

In general, mixed-use districts tend to encourage a more compact development of residential uses such as townhomes or similar small lot residential uses, situated in close proximity to commercial and/or office uses. This compact development, in turn, helps minimize urban sprawl while providing benefits such a more diverse housing stock and increased tax base. The mixed-use district in combination with stronger commercial development standards could open up new opportunities for redevelopment fitting within the goals of this plan.

6) *Coordinate planning and development efforts with other local and regional efforts.*

As with other elements of this comprehensive land use plan, coordination and cooperation with county and regional agencies may create more opportunities for the township. Cooperation with the county's planning efforts ensures that Springfield Township's activities are in harmony with the surrounding region. Coordinating business attraction and retention efforts within the Akron/Springfield Township Joint Economic Development District (JEDD) can help both communities enhance the business community and provide additional revenue to both the township and city through increased property and income taxes. Additional coordination with the local and regional chambers of commerce, as well as the port authority, supports businesses by providing multiple avenues for attracting new businesses to the area. The township should continue to look for opportunities to coordinate and participate in county and regional planning and development efforts.

In addition to coordination planning efforts, the township should continue to look for ways to coordinate services and planning efforts with the villages of Lakemore and Mogadore. Given that these two villages almost lie exclusively within the township (with the exception of Mogadore that extends into Portage County), the three communities are far more compatible in scale and services than compared with the City of Akron. Springfield Township should continue to look for ways to open dialogues with the villages about how they can help each other out to grow as a community and cut costs through economies of scale. Each of these three communities has a lot to offer and can achieve each of their own goals faster through better coordination and cooperation.



Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Comprehensive Land Use Plan

INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORK

Goals Related to Infrastructure

- **Goal 3:** The township will be a community of well-maintained neighborhoods.
- **Goal 6:** The township will be a key partner in facilitating the appropriate expansion of public water and sewer service, and the provision of necessary services.
- **Goal 7:** Residents will have a high quality of life within the community through the availability of quality schools, entertainment and cultural activities, and a strong parks and recreation system.
- **Goal 9:** The township transportation system will be a model for other communities, addressing both vehicular and non-vehicular modes of transportation.
- **Goal 10:** The township will have incorporated sustainable practices within the daily functions of township government as well as embracing and encourage sustainable development practices.

OVERVIEW

The infrastructure network (e.g., transportation, sewer, water, gas, electric, etc.) is the lifeblood of any community. The phrase “development follows the pipe” describes that where infrastructure is available, development will typically follow. This is the reason why the areas of the township that have water, sewer, and an extensive transportation network are the most dense while the areas with few streets and no sewer service remain rural with low-density development. The impact of the infrastructure network on the daily lives of citizens and business owners is often felt when the network does not keep up with the needs of the users as is often the case with transportation when, for example, there is an excessive problem with traffic congestion signaling a problem with the existing transportation system and road capacity.

To better understand the issues related to the infrastructure network, one must first understand the issues and limitations of planning for infrastructure improvements. Beyond the regional growth impacts on the infrastructure network, one must also understand that Springfield Township is one of several agencies involved in planning and paying for improvements to the infrastructure network. Key agencies in transportation and infrastructure planning include:

Transportation

- **U.S. Department of Transportation:** The federal government maintains authority over the interstate system, including Interstates 76 and 77. The Ohio Department of Transportation maintains and manages the system for the federal government.
- **Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT):** ODOT maintains authority over the state highway systems, typically identified by numbered highway signs. In Springfield Township, these include roads such as Canton Road (SR 91) and Massillon Road (SR 241).
- **Summit County Engineer's Office:** The County Engineer is responsible for county roads, which are the major arterial and connector roads that are not state highways. In Springfield Township, these include roads such as Arlington Road, Krumroy Road, Triplett Boulevard, Killian Road, and similar roads.
- **Springfield Township:** The township is primarily responsible for local roads, which are typically the residential streets that are part of subdivisions, or other low-capacity roads.
- **Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS):** In addition to these agencies, the AMATS also plays an important role in regional transportation planning although they, as an agency, are not responsible for maintaining roads. They are typically involved in multi-jurisdictional planning efforts surrounding the major corridors.



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- **METRO Regional Transit Authority:** The METRO is responsible for regional bus transportation that provides bus service throughout the county.

Under the multi-jurisdictional system described above, the township is typically the first to receive citizen complaints about traffic issues while in reality, they have the least ability of all agencies involved to solely and directly remedy the situation. Therefore, one key strategy for more efficient transportation planning is for Springfield Township to increase coordination and cooperative efforts with other agencies as they have done in recent years.

Trails and sidewalks are another component of the transportation network that is addressed more fully in the section on quality of life.

Other Infrastructure

The provision of other infrastructure is equally as multi-jurisdictional as the transportation network. Residents and businesses of Springfield Township receive water, sewer, electric, gas, and other services from numerous public agencies (particularly the City of Akron) and private companies outside of the township. The township itself does not own or operate such infrastructure but participates in agreements, such as the JEDD agreement, to provide services to the township.

As with the transportation network, the township's best strategy for infrastructure is to participate cooperatively with the various agencies that provide services to ensure that the interests of the township are well represented and are considered a priority to the outside agencies.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

7) *Coordinate and participate in county and regional transportation planning efforts.*

While the township may not have direct authority, or the funding, to support large-scale changes to the infrastructure network, they can be proactive in their efforts to work with other appropriate agencies as a representative of township residents and businesses. The township should continue to look for opportunities to coordinate and participate in county and regional transportation and infrastructure planning efforts.

8) *Develop specific access management plans for the major commercial corridors.*

AMATS and ODOT have established guidelines for access management that are intended to improve traffic flow through the consolidation and elimination of curb cuts. The township should develop access management strategies for the major commercial business corridors including U.S. Route 224, Canton Road, and Arlington Road that the township can use in negotiations with property owners.

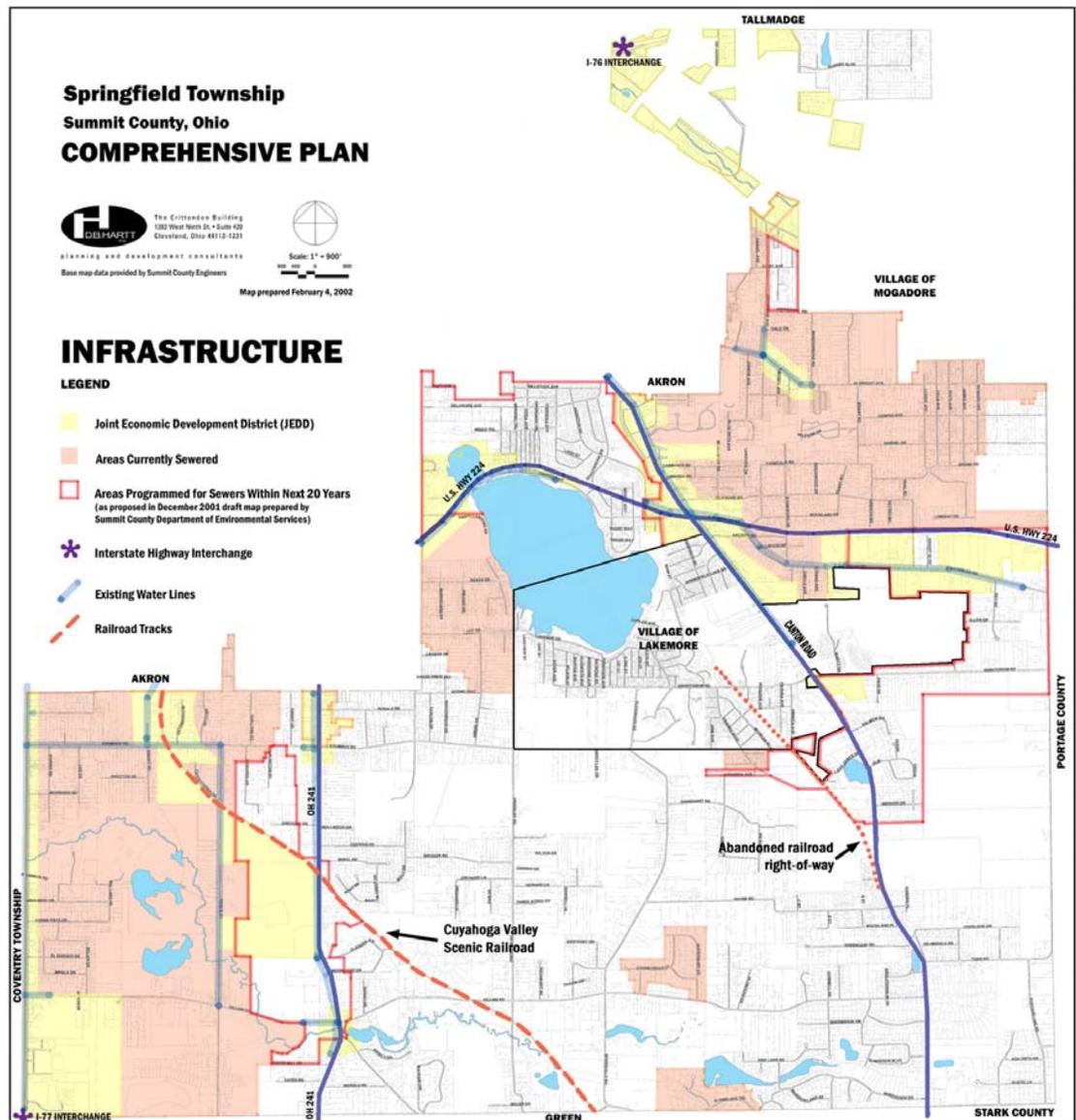


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9) **Continue to work with the City of Akron to implement the various infrastructure improvements related to the JEDD agreement.**

A core component of the JEDD agreement between the City of Akron and Springfield Township is the proposed expansion of infrastructure (particularly sanitary sewer) over the next 20 years. The infrastructure map from the 2002 plan illustrates the location of the JEDD district along with areas where the city has committed to extending sewer lines. The township should continue to work with the city to ensure that these improvements are made in as timely a manner as possible and, if necessary, renegotiate the agreement to further prioritize those improvements that will be the most beneficial in meeting the township's and city's economic development goals.





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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goals Related to Economic Development

- **Goal 1:** The township will have an expanded, diverse tax base that balances the need to attract and maintain businesses while creating high-quality activity centers within the community.
- **Goal 5:** The township will have a strong, unique identity known throughout the region that emphasizes the township's central location, unique qualities, and abundant resources.

OVERVIEW

Economic development, which involves attracting new high quality, non-residential development to Springfield Township and supporting the expansion of existing township businesses, is necessary to increase the tax base and minimize the future tax burden on residential property owners. It is important that this new development occur in appropriate locations where sewer and water services are available or expected to be available and also where it will impact adjacent uses the least. The most appropriate locations for nonresidential growth are shown in the Future Land Use Map.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- 10) Team with the new Springfield Township Area Chamber of Commerce to promote and market the township as a whole.**

The township, and many local business owners, have recently organized the Springfield Township Area Chamber of Commerce to benefit businesses in Springfield Township and the vicinity. A chamber of commerce is an excellent tool that allows for targeted marketing and enhanced promotion of the township as a whole. In the absence of a township staff member serving as an economic development coordinator, a local chamber of commerce can also serve as a representative of the township in regional marketing efforts that may help attract larger industries' attention to growth and redevelopment areas within the township.

- 11) Continue to work with the City of Akron to maximize the benefits of the JEDD for both communities.**

The current JEDD is not only a formal agreement between the City of Akron and Springfield Township that outlines issues related to sewer service, tax resources, and annexation in the designated areas, it is also a tool that provides for continued cooperation between the two communities. Springfield Township should continue to work with the City of Akron to ensure that improvements are made in accordance with the agreement and that both communities are marketing the commercial and industrial areas within the JEDD to maximize development opportunities which will be mutually beneficial to both communities.

- 12) Consider the use of Community Reinvestment Areas (CRAs) along targeted corridors.**



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Summit County, with the consent of the township, could establish a Community Reinvestment Area (CRA) over certain areas of the township to encourage redevelopment and business expansion. A CRA allows for a tax abatement on real estate taxes incurred from new construction or the rehabilitation of existing structures for a specified amount of time. This means that a property owner would be exempt from paying the additional real estate taxes that are required because of the improvements made to the property (anything from rehabilitation to new construction).

To establish a CRA, a community must survey the conditions of all the structures within the proposed CRA boundaries. The survey must establish that due to blight or other influences, the construction and rehabilitation of structures is being discouraged. The Ohio Department of Development (ODOD) reviews the survey, the findings, and a map of the CRA boundary and decides whether to formalize the CRA. As part of that approval, ODOD must find that any new construction or rehabilitation of existing structures complies with existing zoning.

Once approved, a property owner may apply for tax exemptions. The tax abatements may occur from 10 to 15 years depending on the type and cost of rehabilitation or construction.

A CRA can be an issue for school districts and agencies that are dependent on real estate taxes. Another issue is that property owners must pay a one-time application fee (\$750 in 2004) that does not always outweigh the tax exemption, so some property owners may not participate. However, this might help to discourage those property owners from only making minor improvements. Theoretically, with increasing improvements in the area, the property values will increase and in turn, this will increase the eventual tax base for the township and county.

13) Encourage the development of Special Improvement Districts (SIDs) by local business owners.

A Special Improvement District (SID) is a district where an assessment is made on each property and the money is used for business recruitment/retention, marketing, special events, maintenance, landscaping, streetscaping, parking, security and other improvements that will benefit the established district.

A SID can be created by the petition of:

- The owners of at least 60% of the front footage (e.g. along Canton Road); or
- The owners of at least 75% of the total property located within the proposed district.

All property owners within the SID are included in the assessment, other than churches and properties owned by the township, county, or other political subdivisions (they can be included if they request inclusion in writing). The law excludes all properties owned by the state or federal government from being part of a SID. All of the properties are then



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assessed a certain amount of money based on the front footage, assessed valuation, a proportion of the benefits resulting from the district, or a combination of all three. The assessment is then used for improvements and programs that will benefit the entire district as mentioned earlier. A non-profit board of trustees governs the SID with a minimum of five members including one member from the township.

The major issue that needs to be considered when discussing the potential for a SID is the impact and assessment on residential properties that are included in the SID boundary. Will residential properties be assessed the same amount as nonresidential properties and/or will the SID discourage future development of additional residential uses?

SIDs are a tool that can allow for joint improvement ventures between the township and a designated district. For example, the township and a group of property owners who are part of a SID can jointly fund streetscape improvements so both groups can benefit without either one having to fund the improvements in its entirety.

14) Utilize other economic tools available for townships to encourage new economic development and redevelopment.

In addition to JEDDs, CRAs, and SIDs, there are a number of other economic tools available to the community that the township should evaluate and consider as appropriate. These tools are summarized below:

Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is becoming a popular way to fund public improvements in areas where new development and redevelopment is occurring. The real estate taxes created by the new tax "increment" (the increase in real estate value made by the improvements) generated by new development in a defined area can be "captured" for reinvestment (i.e., sidewalks, roads, etc.) in a designated area around the development.

As much as 100% of the new real estate taxes for a period of up to 30 years can be captured for the improvements. However, permission is required from the affected school district if the tax exemption is greater than 75% or the time period exceeds 10 years.

The developer is required to pay an annual service payment in an amount of up to 100% of the tax savings that is then placed into a Township Tax Increment Equivalent Fund. These funds can be used to make necessary public improvements such as repairing and expanding roads, extending public utilities, streetscaping, and other improvements associated with the development.

Commercial and industrial projects are the only type of project that can benefit from TIF by-right. Residential projects are exempt from the benefits of TIF unless the project is within a blighted area of an impacted city. However, if the township establishes, by resolution, that housing



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renovations are a necessary public improvement in a TIF district, then money from the TIF fund can be applied to housing renovations.

Community Improvement Corporation (CIC)

The township could establish a Community Improvement Corporation (CIC) to help encourage economic and civic development within the community. CICs have the ability to borrow money, acquire, sell, and lease properties, personal property, stocks, corporations, etc. CICs may also make loans to individuals and businesses that have been refused conventional financing.

The CIC must prepare a plan for the area that will be used for commercial, industrial, and research development. The plan must also define the role the CIC will have in implementing the plan. Once complete, the township trustees must adopt the final plan.

Cooperative Economic Development Agreements (CEDA)

As with the JEDDs, Cooperative Economic Development Agreements (CEDAs) allow municipalities and townships to enter into formal agreements governing development in specified areas. Unlike JEDDs, the CEDA is more along the lines of a contract where the parties involved agree upon the provision of services, improvements to be made by each jurisdiction, payment of service fees, issuance of any debt instruments, annexation, payment of taxes, and other development related issues.



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QUALITY OF LIFE

Goals Related to Quality of Life

- **Goals 2:** The township will be a place where individuals and families of different demographic and economic backgrounds can reside throughout their various life-stages.
- **Goal 3:** The township will be a community of well-maintained neighborhoods.
- **Goal 4:** The township's sense of "openness" and expansive green areas will be protected for future generations.
- **Goal 7:** Residents will have a high quality of life within the community through the availability of quality schools, entertainment and cultural activities, and a strong parks and recreation system.
- **Goal 8:** The township will have adequate parks and open space to provide recreation opportunities to the residents and will maintain open spaces to enhance the quality of life in the township.

OVERVIEW

A significant portion of why residents choose to live in Springfield Township relates to the excellent quality of life created by aspects such as the school system, strong neighborhoods, large areas of parks and open space, and a close proximity to businesses and the highway system. Certain elements of a great quality of life are easy to quantify. For example, most residents enjoy the availability of parks and open space. This is something the township can easily evaluate (based on acres of park per resident) and work to expand. Other elements, such as scenic beauty and a sense of place, are things that people may know when they see it but are often less tangible and harder to quantify. Additionally, as with the transportation system, the township has limited authority over some aspects of the resident's quality of life. While the township can coordinate with the school systems, the county park system, and non-township service providers (e.g., cable, electric, etc.), the township has limited roles in the provision of such services. The comprehensive land use plan focuses on those aspects of quality of life where the township has the most authority with some commentary related to other aspects. The plan also identifies how the township can coordinate with other agencies to continue enhancing the quality of life in Springfield Township.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

15) *Develop a sidewalk and trails plan.*

As described earlier, there is a regional plan for trails and greenways that addresses some of the township's major corridors. What the county's plan does not address is the need for increased pedestrian and bike connectivity within the township, in areas away from the major county corridors. To supplement the county plan, the township should develop a long-term sidewalk and trails plan that could accomplish the following:

- The plan should identify where the township wants to develop a network of paths both within and outside of existing rights-of-way, designed to accommodate both pedestrians and bicyclists.
- The plan should be strategic in that it prioritizes connections based on the ability to connect neighborhoods to key destinations, including stores, schools, and parks.
- The township should not include recommendations in the plan that would provide sidewalks and paths within new developments. These types of trails and paths should be required for new development by zoning and/or as part of the county's subdivision regulations.



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- The plan should address maintenance for any sidewalks the township may provide. Traditionally a property owner is responsible for the upkeep of sidewalks in front of their property but some township's pay to maintain sidewalks that the township installs.
- The plan should consider all types of trails (paved, unpaved, hike/bike, and sidewalks) as well as making sure that all trails are accessible to all citizens of the township including the disabled.
- Paths that extend or link existing paths at destination locations (e.g., schools, libraries, and parks) should be prioritized.
- Path easements and construction should be coordinated with the proposed roadway projects.

Public Township Parks and Recreational Areas

- Springfield Lake
- Lakefront Park (north side of Springfield Lake)
- Fraley Park (located on Brunk Road)
- Lower Park (located at Klages Boulevard/Fenn Road)
- Lauer Farm Wildlife Area (2756 Killian Road)
- Killian Road Wildlife Areas (west of Pressler Road)
- New Metro Parks site along Portage Line Road

16) *Develop a parks and open space plan.*

The township does not currently have an overall plan for all the parks and open spaces within the township. Each time the township acquires new land, the township needs to determine how to best use the property. While this can be an effective approach, it does not necessarily take into consideration the needs of the overall population. For example, such a plan could evaluate the need for a community center or civic gather space, whether that center needs to be a physical building or if it just needs to be a spot for township gathering, and what services should be available at the community center.

At a minimum, a parks and open space plan should include:

- An inventory of existing facilities and services for both the township and county parks and open spaces (within the township),
- A needs assessment that evaluates the demographics of the township residents to determine the services and improvements that will best serve township residents (e.g., walkways, ball fields, or passive areas),
- Citizen participation by way of an ad hoc committee and input from the general public,
- Goals and objectives for the long-term expansion and maintenance of the park and open space system, and
- Specific tools and strategies available to the township to meet those goals.



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17) *Acquire additional park land and open spaces as land and funding becomes available.*

Springfield Township should ensure that there is a process for considering the purchase of additional park land and open space. In some cases, land may be dedicated to the township with little to no upfront costs while in other cases, the township will have to purchase the land. In both cases, the township should evaluate the purchase based on the following criteria (in no particular order):

- The township has, or can reasonably obtain, funding to purchase the property,
- The property protects a historic or natural resource in the township,
- The property preserves the community character as described within this plan,
- The acquisition will enhance quality of life for residents, or
- The property can help create a “sense of place” in the township.

18) *Coordinate planning and development efforts with other local and regional efforts to enhance the township’s overall quality of life.*

As with other elements of this comprehensive land use plan, coordination and cooperation with the county and regional agencies may help create more opportunities for the township. In particular, cooperation with Summit County will ensure that improvements to paths, parks, open space, and other related elements ensures that Springfield Township’s activities are in harmony with the surrounding region. The township should continue to look for opportunities to coordinate its efforts with those of county and regional agencies when there are cost benefits to all agencies.

19) *Enhance the township’s identity and “sense of place.”*

In addition to the recommended actions that will enhance the overall quality of Springfield Township, which will in turn improve the community’s identity, the township should also consider the undertaking the following projects to preserve and enhance the township’s identity and its sense of place.

- Efforts should be made to maintain and preserve any facilities, structures, or areas in which historical and/or community significance is known. This can be accomplished, in part, through improved development standards in the planned development districts and conservation subdivision regulations in the zoning resolution.
- Work with private partners to protect and enhance landmarks through considerate design, restoration, and preservation efforts.



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- Lobby ODOT to post signs along the interstates and major highway corridors to identify gateways into Springfield Township in addition to any of the township's installed signage.
- The township should identify major gateways that can be enhanced within improved signage, landscaping, recognizable monuments, structures, landscaping and/or built features, fountains, public furniture, and other design elements to introduce the township at key entry points.
- Use the other planning efforts recommended in this plan (e.g., the parks and recreation plan) to determine how best to develop a "community center" that may not be a physical building but will provide a central gather area for township citizens and can be a place to host township wide events.

SUSTAINABILITY

Goal Related to Sustainability

- **Goal 10:** The township will have incorporated sustainable practices within the daily functions of township government as well as embracing and encourage sustainable development practices.

OVERVIEW

The concept of "sustainability" involves the ability of a community to meet the needs of the present population while ensuring that future generations have the same or better opportunities. This is vital in this day and age due to increasing concerns that as a culture, we are consuming resources at a faster rate than we are replenishing those same resources.

These concerns have led to an increasing number of communities incorporating recommendations for sustainable practices within their comprehensive plans and land use regulations. For example, communities such as Springfield Township are taking a proactive approach to renewable energy by making provisions for the use of solar panels and wind turbines throughout the community. However, one of the challenges to this approach is that many issues tied to sustainability are more global in nature – air quality, biodiversity, ozone depletion, climate change, food production, and others – and it is often difficult to identify how local planning policies can address these issues. A second challenge is that some actions can be controversial in nature (e.g., the allowance for wind turbines in residential neighborhoods). These difficult policy decisions require a proactive stance by the township that includes a transparent process in the development of regulations with a strong educational component that minimizes false information from circulating about how the township will address the issue and any impacts within the regulations.

That being said, there are a number tasks the township can undertake that will allow the township to think globally while acting locally and to contribute to the improvement of our greater society.



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RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

20) Incorporate regulations for sustainable practices at the local township zoning level.

Incorporate regulations within the township's zoning resolution that allow for solar panels, wind turbines (with appropriate standards), community gardens, and related uses that allow for sustainable practices by local residents and business owners without an excessive amount of standards and "red tape."

21) Encourage public and private efforts to reduce the volume of solid waste.

In addition to promoting residential and business recycling efforts, the township can also take a proactive stance in recycling as part of its daily operations. This include incorporating the use of products made of recycled materials in all projects from small projects such as the purchase of recycled paper products to larger projects such as the use of recycled building materials in any new township building. Addition efforts can be made by allowing for the placement of recycle bins or dumpsters at strategic locations that will provide for convenient drop-off points when curbside recycling is not available.

22) Provide for higher intensity and density of uses in appropriate areas.

It has been the trend of many suburban communities to reduce the density and intensity of uses permitted within their jurisdictions. This reduction in density has led to what many refer to urban sprawl. This increases our dependency on the automobile and in many cases, wastes valuable land space. While the township does not have to provide for urban densities that might be found in places such as downtown Akron, the township should allow for higher density uses in targeted locations, such as along Route 224 and Canton Road, where added density of housing units can support commercial development, all within a compact form. See also the discussion about mixed-use zoning under the Land Use and Development theme.



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Comprehensive Land Use Plan **Implementation and Plan Monitoring**

Implementation and Plan Monitoring

Each element of this plan identifies specific recommendations for future efforts to further the goals and objectives of this plan. Some of the recommendations, such as those related to property maintenance, are recommendations where the township can take the lead role in a project while other recommendations, such as those related to transportation and infrastructure, are recommendations where the township should serve more in a supporting role because the system is managed by other agencies.

This plan recognizes that each of the recommendations found throughout this document and summarized below requires some level of commitment of resources from the township, whether that is monetary, staffing, or a combination of both. Because these resources can change significantly from year-to-year, just as priorities can, this plan does not establish a priority for completion of the various recommendations. Instead, the township should evaluate the list of recommendations on an annual basis and establish a list of actions that will be undertaken in the following year based on the availability of resources (See also the following section on plan monitoring.).

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

The following is a summary list of the 22 recommended actions found within the Springfield Township Comprehensive Land Use Plan. As stated earlier in this document, this is not intended to be an exhaustive list of actions that can implement the goals and objectives of this plan. As opportunities and new ideas for action arise, the township should consider whether or not a new action should be undertaken based on how well it implements the goals and objectives.

1. Monitor and continue to update this comprehensive land use plan.
2. Prepare and adopt a property maintenance code.
3. Revise the zoning regulations to enhance the design standards and requirements for nonresidential uses.
4. Develop special area plans and targeted planning strategies for each of the township's business areas.
5. Consider the creation of a mixed-use zoning district to provide more opportunities for the redevelopment of underutilized properties.
6. Coordinate planning and development efforts with other local and regional efforts.
7. Coordinate and participate in county and regional transportation planning efforts.
8. Develop specific access management plans for the major commercial corridors.



Comprehensive Land Use Plan **Implementation and Plan Monitoring**

9. Continue to work with the City of Akron to implement the various infrastructure improvements related to the JEDD agreement.
10. Team with the new Springfield Township Area Chamber of Commerce to promote and market the township as a whole.
11. Continue to work with the City of Akron to maximize the benefits of the JEDD for both communities.
12. Consider the use of Community Reinvestment Areas (CRAs) along targeted corridors.
13. Encourage the development of Special Improvement Districts (SIDs) by local business owners.
14. Utilize other economic tools available for townships to encourage new economic development and redevelopment.
15. Develop a sidewalk and trails plan.
16. Develop a parks and open space plan.
17. Acquire additional park land and open spaces as land and funding becomes available.
18. Coordinate planning and development efforts with other local and regional efforts to enhance the township's overall quality of life.
19. Enhance the township's identity and "sense of place."
20. Incorporate regulations for sustainable practices at the local township zoning level.
21. Encourage public and private efforts to reduce the volume of solid waste.
22. Provide for higher intensity and density of uses in appropriate areas.

PLAN MONITORING

A comprehensive land use plan is a long-term visionary document that looks at a planning horizon of 20 years. 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 five years. The following is a recommended schedule for review and discussion of the comprehensive land use plan to help monitor the recommendations of the plan and identify when the township meets or exceeds this plan's goals and objectives.

ANNUAL REVIEW AND PRIORITIZATION

The goals and objectives of this plan create an effective checklist for monitoring this plan. Each year, the township decision-makers and staff should meet to determine which recommendations they will work on over the upcoming year or two. At the same time, the township can look back over the previous year and evaluate what the community accomplished and where there is a need for improvement. This review allows for flexibility in determining the tasks the township should undertake based on budgetary constraints and/or community input.



Comprehensive Land Use Plan **Implementation and Plan Monitoring**

This annual review can also be used to create specific, quantitative goals for various objectives. For example, if one priority objective is to increase the amount of township park land in the community, the township might develop a specific benchmark for the year that would state that the township and other agencies will work together to increase the amount of park land by 5%, by the end of the year. Because the benchmarks are quantitative, they allow the township the ability to monitor annual accomplishments. Developing the benchmarks on an annual basis allows the community to consider various factors such as community priorities, budgets, and available staff and resources.

FIVE-YEAR REVIEW

Major changes can occur in a very short time. Because changes in infrastructure, the transportation system, economy, development methods and tools, and even changes in elected officials, state law, or other regulations can have a significant impact of the recommendations of this plan, it is necessary to periodically review the document for substantive changes. 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.

This version of the comprehensive land use plan update (2009) is the five-year review of the previous planning effort.

LONG-TERM REVIEW

This plan is a 10- to 20-year visioning document that, while clear on the long-term vision, is intended to be a dynamic document. As time progresses, the township will continue to work toward the overall guiding principles of this master plan and by 2029, will have accomplished many of the specific recommendations outlined in this plan. For this reason, the township should go through an extensive planning process every 10 to 20 years, similar to the one that led to the development of the original plan.



Comprehensive Land Use Plan Implementation and Plan Monitoring

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Comprehensive Land Use Plan
Appendix A: Summit County Trails and Greenway Plan

**Appendix A: Summit County
Trails and Greenway Plan**

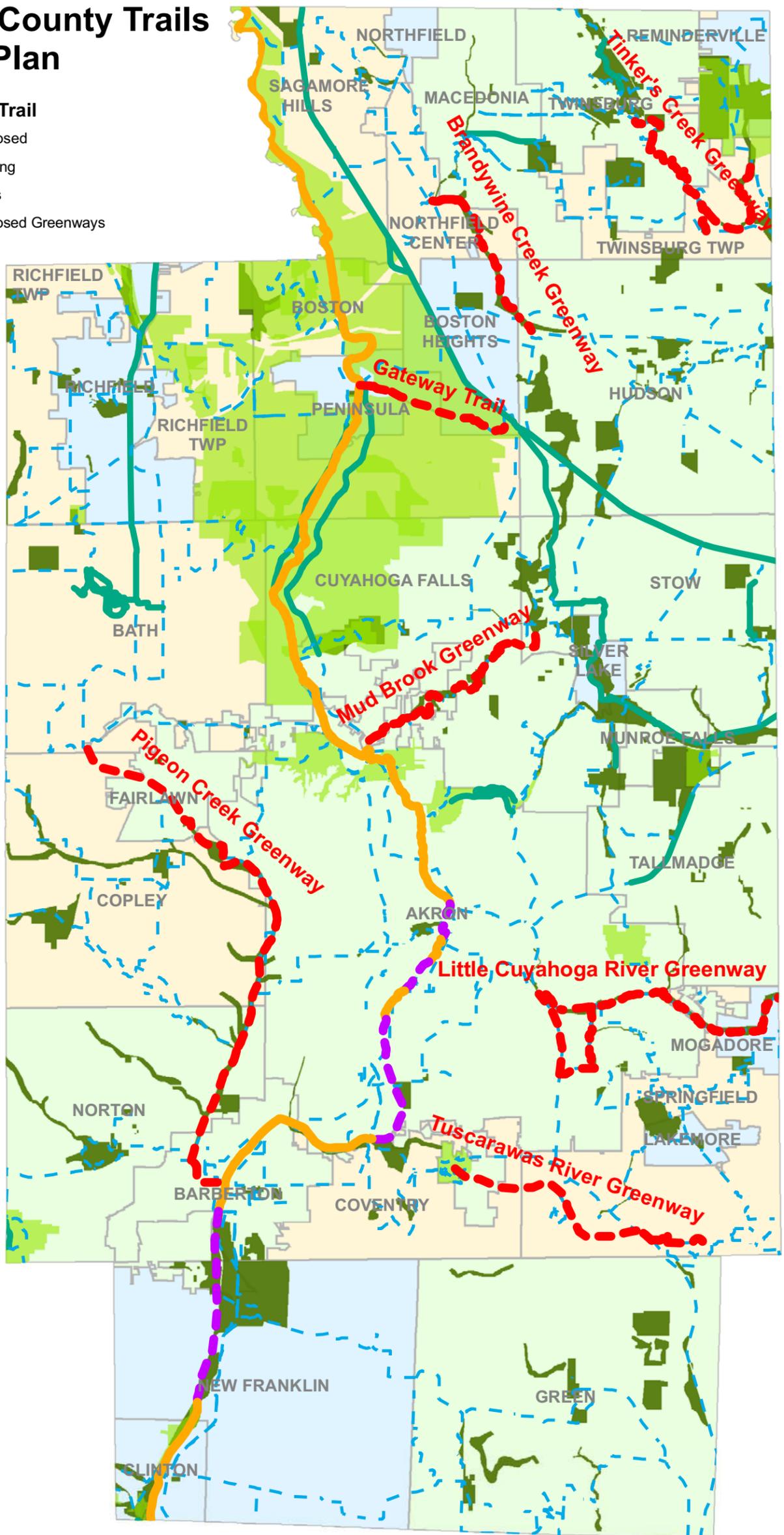
Map 7.1 Summit County Trails and Greenways Plan

Trails & Greenways

- | | |
|--|--|
|  Existing |  Proposed |
|  Future |  Existing |
| Priority Greenways |  Parks |
|  |  Proposed Greenways |



1 inch equals 3 miles



Source:
Summit County Trail and Greenway Plan
Summit Metro Parks