



## **Comprehensive Land Use Plan**

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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.



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### 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

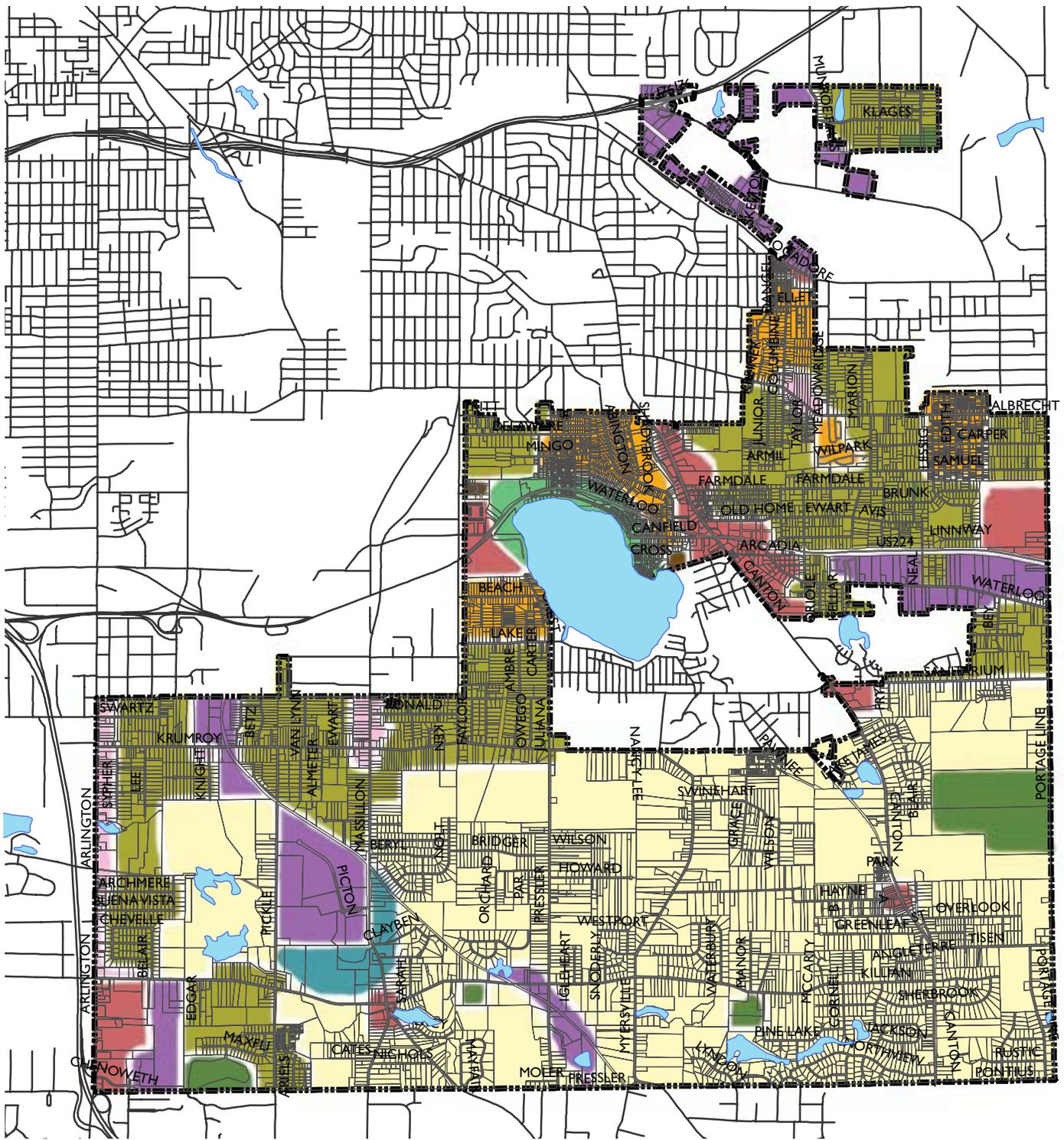
The purpose of the future land use element is to promote the community's values and to further the goals and objectives updated as part of this planning process. The Future Land Use Map takes into consideration the land use related recommendations of the previous plan while also recognizing the influences 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.

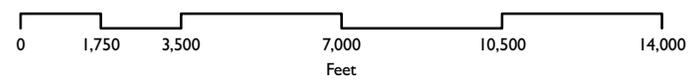
The Future Land Use Plan Map on the following page is intended to be general in nature; land use boundaries are not specific. This plan is intended as a flexible and general guideline; it is not intended as a zoning map. Future land uses are shown in the categories described on the pages following the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



# Springfield Township - Comprehensive Land Use Plan Update

## Future Land Use

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

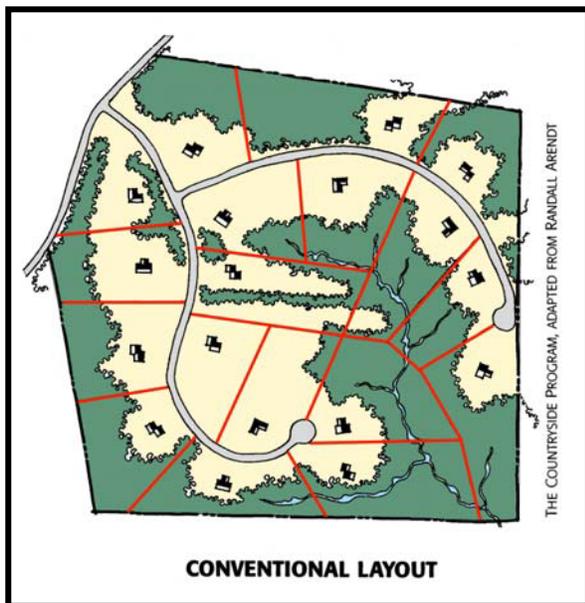




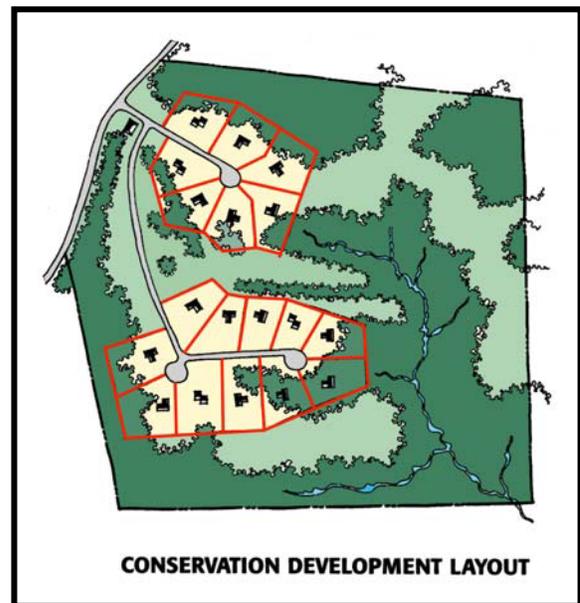
**LAND USE CATEGORIES**

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.



<b>Area</b>	<b>36 acres</b>
<b>Lots</b>	<b>18 lots</b>
<b>Open Space</b>	<b>none</b>
<b>Road Length</b>	<b>3,808 feet</b>



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



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;



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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.



Photo Source: McBride Dale Clarion

### 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.



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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





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### **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.



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### 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.

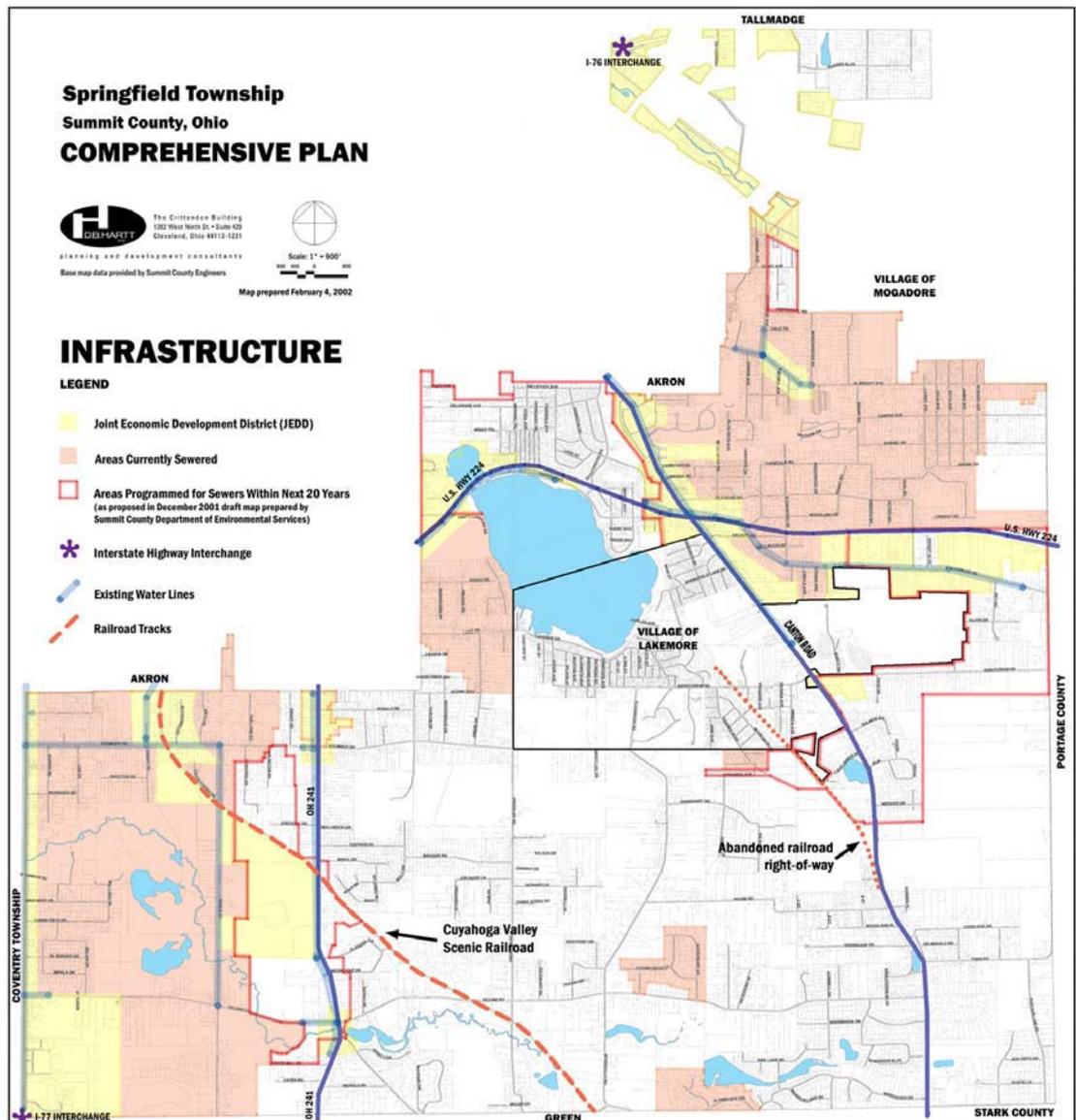


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9) **Continue to work with the City of Akron to implement the various infrastructure improvements related to the JEDD agreement.**

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

#### 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.

#### 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.

#### 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.