



Genoa Township Strategic Open Space Plan

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Prepared by: Genoa Township Parks Advisory Board



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Glossary of Common Terminology

The following terms are used throughout this Plan with the following meanings:

- Complete Streets – A national movement to provide for all methods of transportation within a transportation corridor, typically a boulevard with a parallel sidewalk and shared-use trail.
- Legacy Program – A recognition program allowing for memorializing people, places or events.
- Open Space – Includes all public and private parks, trails and passive areas.
 - Park – Land dedicated for public use that contains active recreational amenities.
 - Trail – Asphalt path at least 8-ft. wide that allows for shared use & recreational connectivity.
 - Natural Resource Area – Public or private land containing resources with preservation value.

Introduction

The Strategic Open Space Plan (SOS Plan) takes a systems based approach to advance the Township's core ideal of "A Nice Place to Live." The Trustees identified eight (8) core goals that set the framework for both the SOS Plan and the newly expanded Genoa Township Parks Advisory Board.

The Genoa Township Strategic Open Space Plan is a concerted effort by citizens, business owners, and Township employees to improve the quality of life for Township residents.

Following are the goals of this plan:

1. Accessibility – Develop amenities that are universally accessible, allowing residents the opportunity to use them regardless of age or physical ability.
2. Community Outreach – Engage residents in the ongoing process of developing community open space that represents citizens' goals.
3. Environmental Sustainability – Minimize our environmental impact and ensure lower maintenance costs.
4. Events & Programing – Offer a wide-range of events, activities and programs to maximize opportunities for community involvement.
5. Funding & Partners – Secure alternative funding opportunities to augment Township funding.
6. Natural Resource Areas – Preserve and enhance natural resources and areas more suitable for passive recreation.
7. Recreation Improvements – Ensure recreational needs are met by improving and enhancing playgrounds, ball fields and other active amenities.
8. Trails & Connectivity – Develop a system of trails that provide access and connectivity between open spaces, businesses, schools and neighborhoods.

The Parks Advisory Board has developed short and long-term objectives to help implement these goals.

Background

The planning framework for parks and open space improvements began with the 1999 Genoa Township Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan stated, "the provision of open space for parks and recreation is a key ingredient in the overall development plan for Genoa Township." This statement started the park planning conversation and initiated the conserving of open space within new developments.

In 2004, the Board of Trustees established a Parks Committee to make recommendations for Township park amenities. The Committee recognized that Genoa Township had experienced tremendous growth and population increases during the late 1990s and early 2000s. The Committee established a vision for parks and open spaces and authored a park specific planning document summarizing the Committee's recommendations.

In 2006, the Board of Trustees unanimously approved the formation of the Parks Advisory Board (PAB). The Board's mission was to make recommendations to the Board of Trustees regarding park improvements and placement, bikeway connections and improvements and grant applications.

In 2007, Genoa Township worked with the Department of Communications at Otterbein College to gather community feedback. The goal of the project was to get a sense of the various items that residents would consider "favorite features" of the Township and the amenities that residents would like to see added, changed or improved. Information from Township residents was collected through a survey and public meetings.

In 2009, the PAB stated a need to update the 2004 Park Plan. A number of community residents volunteered to form a Parks Planning Team. The team's core mission was to gain additional citizen participation in the formation of the Strategic Open Space Plan. The Team met with key stakeholders and hosted bus tours of a variety of facilities within Genoa Township and surrounding communities. The Team also conducted a more detailed survey about open space needs and assessed existing park conditions making recommendations for improvements which should be considered in the next 5 to 10 years.

In 2010, the Parks Advisory Board and the Parks Planning Team merged into a group of volunteers with the mission to research, recommend and implement strategies to improve Genoa Township open spaces.

The reorganization efforts outlined the eight goals of this plan. Members were encouraged to actively engage the community in the promotion and implementation of their respective committees' objectives. The resulting product is included within this report.

Existing Conditions

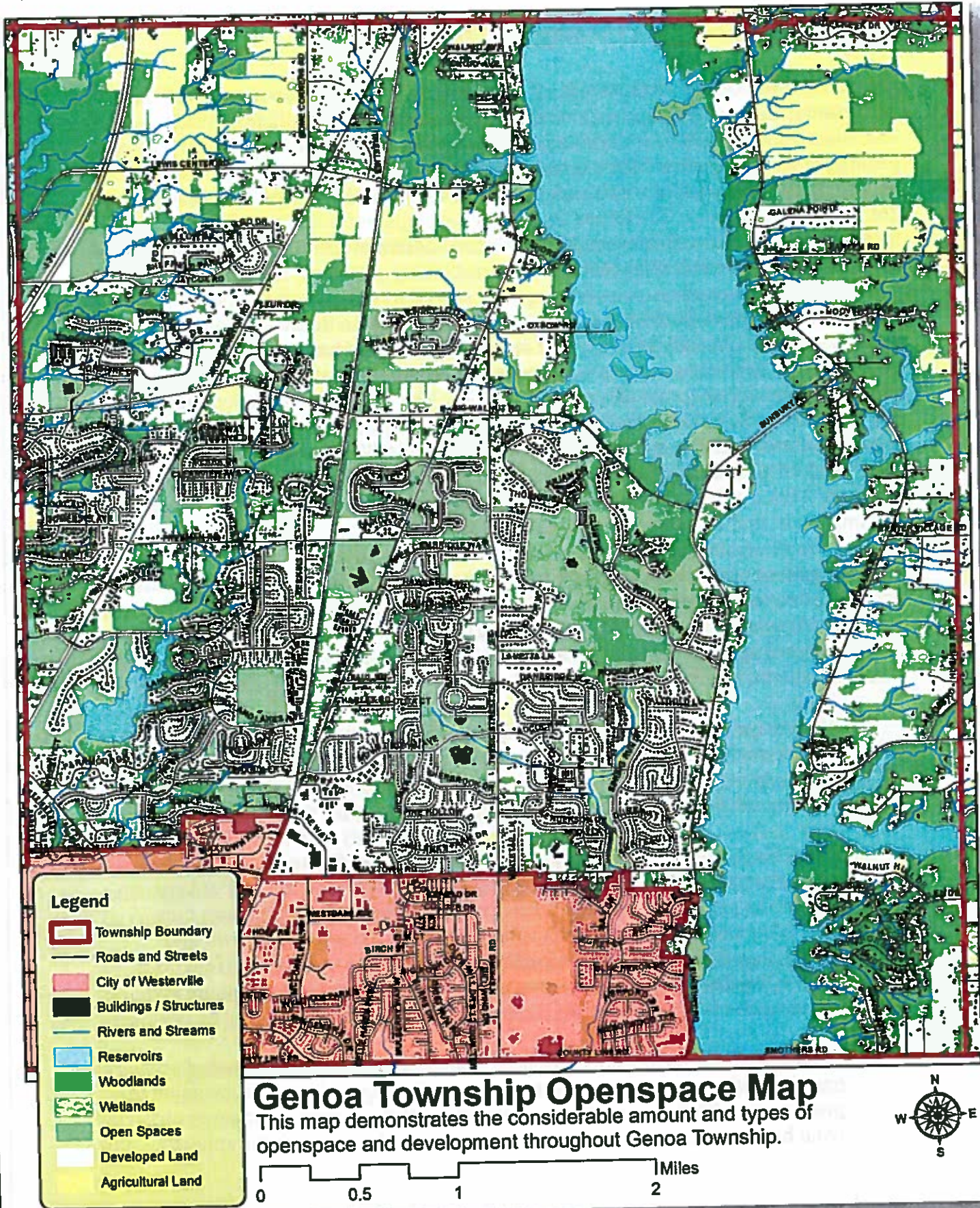
According to the Delaware County Regional Planning Commission, at the end of 2010, Genoa Township has an estimated population of more than 22,000 residents. The Township has seen considerable population growth since the late 1990s peaking in 2001 with over 700 new homes being constructed in one year. According to current growth patterns, Genoa Township will likely grow by 220 to 260 residents per year. The Genoa Township Development & Zoning Office forecasts that the Township can only grow by an additional 5,000 residents before it reaches maximum residential development by 2030.

Understanding Genoa Township's demographics is critical to the success of the objectives of this plan. Parks, trails and open space are key factors that influence quality of life. Residents desire a wide variety of recreational amenities. Needs should be considered across all ages and abilities. The Township is predominately single-family households at an overwhelming 88%. This number is higher than other jurisdictions in Central Ohio. Of these households, 83% are married-couple family and 46% have children. Equally important, is the +65 age group that is currently 14%, but is expected to increase significantly. As population shifts occur, it is important that changing needs are considered.

As development occurs it is necessary to understand Genoa Township's existing natural resources. Genoa Township land use is primarily single-family residential with an additional 33% of the Township being open space; Hoover Reservoir (17%), dedicated open space (10%) and agriculture (6%). In addition, the following resources should be given priority for protection:

1. **Waterways - Ravines and topography provide for natural drainage and wildlife corridors.** Their preservation is important to preserve clean surface water, retain the natural landscape, prevent erosion, sedimentation, and retain rural character.
2. **Wetlands & Floodplains - Wetland soils are generally defined as soils that support a predominance of wetland vegetation, or are under water at least two weeks per year.** They are natural storm water detention systems that trap, filter and break down surface runoff. Floodplains along Hoover and Alum Creek Reservoirs and their tributary streams provide critical functions, such as flood storage and conveyance, control of sedimentation/runoff, and breeding/feeding grounds for a multitude of wildlife species.
3. **Wooded Areas - As development occurred much of the natural wooded areas have been cleared.** It is important to protect the wooded areas that remain to promote wildlife habitat and rural character. Trees provide for cleaner air, wind breaks, erosion control, sound barriers, shade and aesthetic appeal.

The following map depicts the existing conditions of Genoa Township's natural resources, specifically those areas that are critical to the character of the Township.



Current Parks

The Township currently owns 174.2 acres of parkland and maintains 7.0 miles of trails. The following is a listing and description of the individual parks that are the subject of this plan's goals.

1. McNamara Park:

- **Location:** 7049 Big Walnut Road, Westerville, OH 43082
- **Size:** 29.8 acres
- **Length of Trails:** 3,500 feet
- **Current Use:** On-site parking, a shelter house, restrooms, playground and open field

2. Community Hall & Park:

- **Location:** 5111 S. Old 3C Hwy., Westerville, OH 43082
- **Size:** 5.3 acres
- **Length of Trails:** n/a
- **Current Use:** On-site parking, Township Hall & Administration Offices, playground and basketball courts

3. Worthington / Fleur Park:

- **Location:** 4539 Worthington Road, Westerville, OH 43082
- **Size:** 45.9 acres
- **Length of Trails:** n/a
- **Current Use:** On-site parking, community gardens, open field, wetland and wooded area

4. Jaycox Park:

- **Location:** Intersection of Jaycox Road and Sheffield Park Drive
- **Size:** 26.1 acres
- **Length of Trails:** n/a
- **Current Use:** Open field

5. Grand Oak Park:

- **Location:** Intersection of Big Walnut Road and Grand Oak Boulevard.
- **Size:** 11.5 acres
- **Length of Trails:** 1,500 feet (gravel)
- **Current Use:** Open field and pond

6. Center Green Park

- **Location:** 7846 Center Green Drive, Westerville, Ohio 43082
- **Size:** 29.2 acres
- **Length of Trails:** 4,000 feet
- **Current Use:** On-site parking, gazebo, playground, green space and pond

7. Hilmar Park:

- **Location:** 6533 Hilmar Drive, Westerville, Ohio 43082
- **Size:** 15.3 acres
- **Length of Trails:** 1,200 feet
- **Current Use:** Off-site parking, shelter house, playground, basketball court, green space and pond

8. Alberta Park:

- **Location:** At the end of Alberta Place
- **Size:** 3.8 acres
- **Length of Trails:** n/a
- **Current Use:** wetland and wooded area

9. Mount Royal Park:

- **Location:** Intersection of State Route 3 and Mount Royal Avenue
- **Size:** 1.0 acres
- **Length of Trails:** n/a, adjacent to the Genoa Trail
- **Current Use:** wetland and wooded area

10. Freeman Road Park:

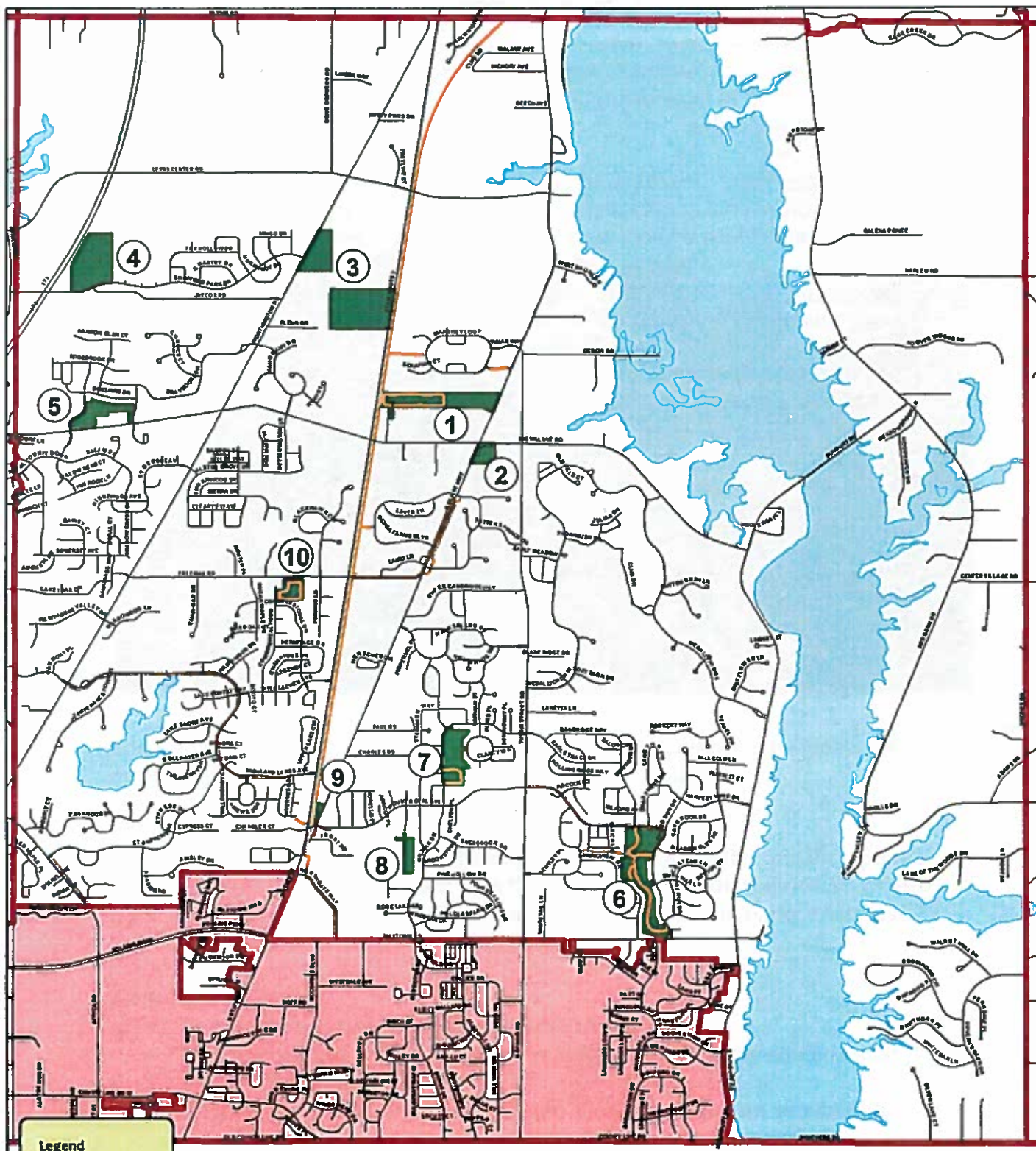
- **Location:** 6460 Freeman Road, Westerville, Ohio 43082
- **Size:** 6.3 acres
- **Length of Trails:** 1,800 feet
- **Current Use:** On-site parking, shelter house, playground, basketball courts and open field.

The following is a listing of hard-surfaced trails that have been developed throughout Genoa Township to provide off-road recreational opportunities for pedestrians and bicyclists alike:

- **Center Green** – 3,800 feet
- **Covington Meadows** – 2,000 feet
- **Freeman Road** – 1,600 feet
- **Genoa Farms** – 2,200 feet
- **Genoa Trail** – 2,400 feet
- **Harvest Wind** – 1,000 feet
- **Highland Lakes Ave.** – 8,350 feet
- **Mount Royal Connector** – 700 feet
- **Vinmar Farms** – 1,500 feet
- **Worthington Road** – 1,500 feet

Additional park land in Genoa Township is owned and maintained by individual homeowners' associations, the Genoa Township Land Conservation Association, Preservation Parks of Delaware County, City of Columbus, City of Westerville, U.S. Army Corps, local school districts and churches. Public access is managed by the property owner.

The following map indicates the location and boundaries of Genoa Township's parks and trails as referenced in this plan.



Genoa Township Park & Trail Map

This map demonstrates the parks that are owned by Genoa Township and hard surface trails that allow for off-road bicycle access.

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

Objectives

Guided by the 8 core goals, Genoa Township identified comprehensive objectives that will guide the PAB in implementing the SOS Plan. Each of the following items identifies strategic objectives:

1. Park Management - Establish administrative leadership to keep a permanent focus on the overall quality of parks, trails and open spaces. Assess needs and recommend fiscal allocations.
2. Township Policy - Recommend policies that align with both the Comprehensive Plan and the SOS Plan.
3. Collaboration with Other Jurisdictions - Work with other government jurisdictions to effectively advance the SOS Plan.

With these major objectives each committee will have short and long-term objectives that will help accomplish their individual goals. Short-term objectives are those which can be accomplished within 1 or 3 years. Long-term objectives are those that will likely take longer than 3 years. Though objectives may take a long period to implement, the objective should be periodically measured to ensure they can be properly implemented.

Accessibility



Goal – Develop amenities that are universally accessible, allowing residents the opportunity to use them regardless of age or physical ability.

Short-Term Objectives

- Ensure that new park amenities are universally accessible and incorporate features that are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Inventory accessibility-related deficiencies in Township parks, trails and facilities.

Long-Term Objectives

- Ensure parking and facilities and are ADA compliant.
- Install accessible surfacing and universally accessible play equipment at township playgrounds.
- All trails/sidewalk connections should allow for maximum accessibility.

Community Outreach



Goal – Engage residents in the ongoing process of developing community open space that represents citizens' goals.

Short-Term Objectives

- Promote the Genoa Township Parks Advisory Board meetings as one of the many platforms to encourage participation.
- Issue press releases to local papers regularly to promote PAB projects, events and programs. Notify local media of events for potential news coverage and photo opportunities.
- Integrate a community calendar into online resources and local papers with a comprehensive events listing with date, time and location. Ensure the Genoa Township website and Facebook page are current and include all upcoming events.
- Provide articles for the Township's newsletter to update residents on current projects underway and potential projects upcoming.

Long-Term Objectives

- Create program guides to distribute at public venues.
- Implement programs that encourage residents to learn more about the Township open space and opportunities for community involvement.
- Provide surveys to participants of Township events and programs to gather feedback in order to make improvements and determine future interests of residents.
- Incorporate information kiosks in parks and along trails.
- Continue to work with citizens to determine what improvements are desired in the Township's parks, trails and lands.

Environmental Sustainability



Goal – Minimize our environmental impact and ensure lower maintenance costs.

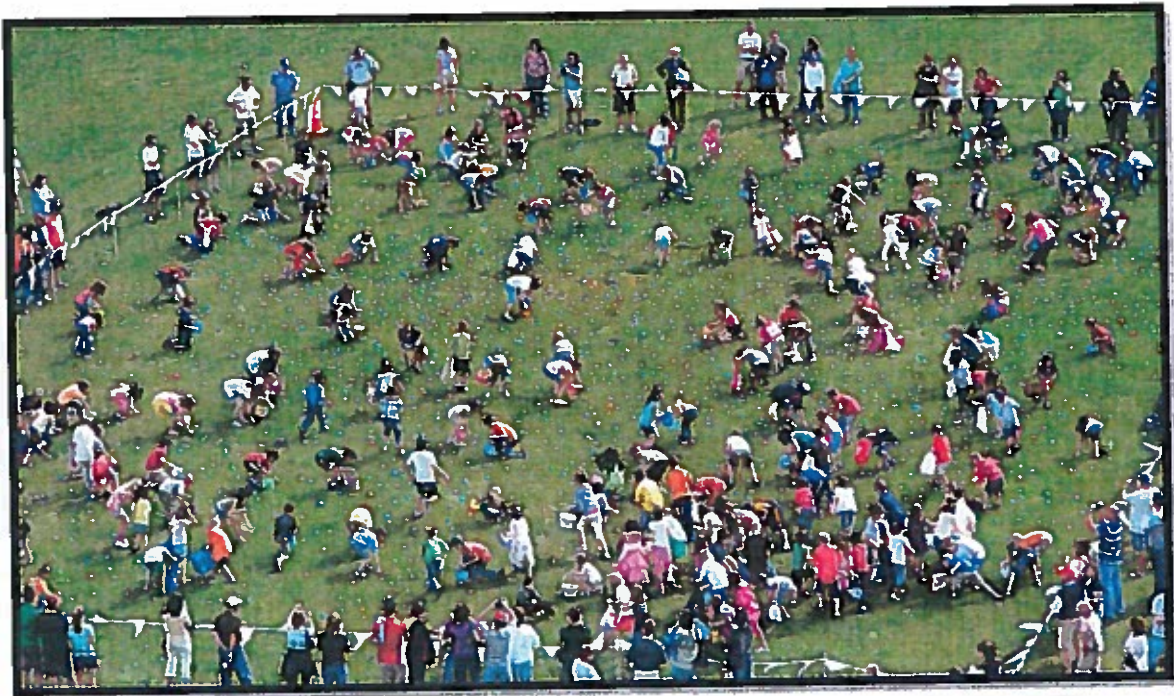
Short-Term Objectives

- Review current maintenance practices relating to use of pesticides, herbicides, insecticides, and other chemicals.
- Conduct a Township facilities energy audit.
- Continue to expand the Township's Community Gardens to include additional plots and educational programs.
- Explore a composting program in conjunction with the Community Gardens.

Long-Term Objectives

- Coordinate with trash removal contractor (Rumpke) to provide recycling receptacles at certain parks.
- Implement a comprehensive inventory and analysis of ponds and surface water. Promote pond management techniques discouraging the usage of hazardous chemicals and address nuisance and invasive plants and animals.
- Participate in the design process of capital improvement projects to evaluate the use of environmentally sustainable products and procedures.
- Engage the PAB in activities that will promote sustainability.

Events & Programs



Goal – Offer a wide-range of events, activities and programs to maximize opportunities for community involvement.

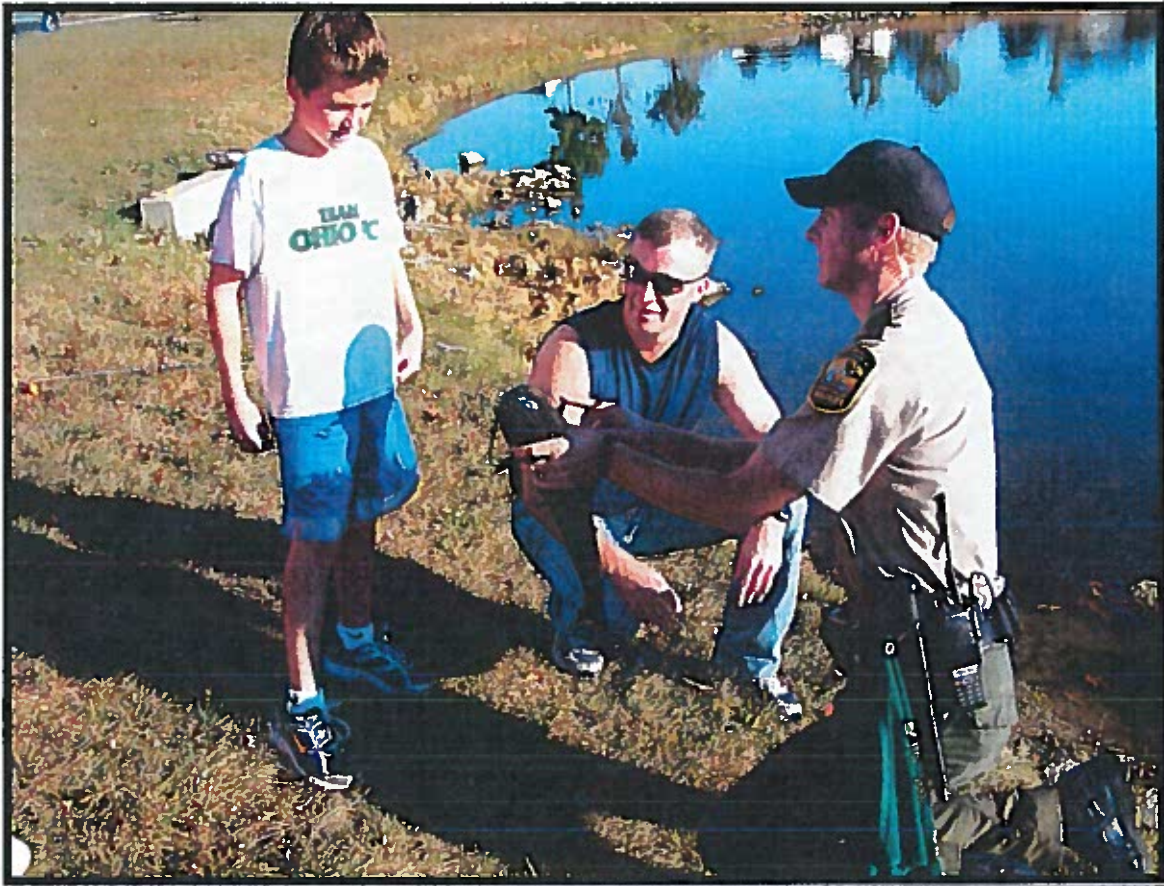
Short-Term Objectives

- Provide educational programs with potential topics including wildlife, geology, plants, ecology, gardening, photography, etc.
- Encourage community participation in events through collaboration with local businesses, agencies, and special interest groups.
- Increase participation in existing parks and open space events.
- Expand volunteer opportunities.
- Partner with other entities providing local programs and events.
- Promote the Legacy Program.

Long-Term Objectives

- Make events and programs more financially and environmentally sustainable.
- Invest in infrastructure such as sound systems, tents and other items that make event coordination better.

Funding & Partners



Goal – Secure alternative funding opportunities to augment Township funding.

Short-Term Objectives

- Identify potential public and private sector partners.
- Develop a schedule for utilizing partnerships and funding opportunities to distribute funding requests.
- Seek funding and donations from state, federal and private entities.
- Organize fundraising efforts for the Genoa Township Park Improvement Fund with the Community Foundation of Delaware County.
- Work with the Administration Office to establish annual budget request.
- Encourage developers to incorporate open space in development plans.

Long-Term Objectives

- Establish a campaign and acknowledgement program to reward individuals and businesses for dedicating funds and services to the open space.
- Seek additional dedicated funding sources.

Natural Resource Areas



Goal – Preserve and enhance natural resources and areas more suitable for passive recreation.

Short-Term Objectives

- Continue stocking Township ponds with fish.
- Promote plantings that attract butterflies and hummingbirds.
- Incorporate native species, including prairie grass, wildflowers and natural succession areas where feasible.
- Plant and protect trees to improve air quality and provide wildlife habitat.
- Implement a plan to eradicate invasive plant species.
- Incorporate nesting boxes in parks and open spaces.
- Encourage outdoor education through cooperation with local schools.
- Collaborate with other entities to mitigate wildlife nuisance, including the over-population of Canada Geese.

Long-Term Objectives

- Working with private property owners to encourage the protection of significant natural resources.

Recreation Improvements



Goal – Ensure recreational needs are met by improving and enhancing playgrounds, ball fields and other active amenities.

Short-Term Objectives

- Create and maintain an amenity wish list and an implementation plan for each park based on township priorities.
- Create a policy for the use of park space by organized sports providers.
- Conduct regular on-site audits of park facilities to ensure they are fully benefiting the community.
- Design open space improvements to be low-maintenance with an emphasis on self-sustaining systems.
- Ensure facilities are properly maintained.

Long-Term Objectives

- Continue on-going evaluation of residents' opinions relating to recreational and community facilities.
- Ensure accessible open space is within a 20 minute walk, 10 minute run or a 5 minute bike ride from all Township neighborhoods.

Trails & Connectivity



Goal – Develop a system of trails that provide access and connectivity between open spaces, businesses, schools and neighborhoods.

Short-Term Objectives

- Identify locations where immediate safety concerns exist for bicyclists and/or pedestrians and take necessary precautions.
- Finalize and adopt the Safe Routes to Schools Travel Plan and seek funds annually.
- Gain support for priority trail connections from property owners.
- Ensure proper trail connectivity is incorporated with all development projects.
- Advocate for Complete Streets in all road improvement projects.

Long-Term Objectives

- Implement all the recommendations of the Safe Routes to School Travel Plan.
- Connect all Township parks and amenities with an 8-foot wide trail.
- Ensure residents have safe and reliable access to the trail network.

Conclusion

In order to implement the objectives of this plan, the Genoa Township Parks Advisory Board (PAB) will create an annual implementation schedule prioritizing recommended steps and procedures.

The annual implementation schedule will include:

- A listing of potential projects, along with itemized steps.
- Individual staff and committee responsibilities.
- An estimated cost of the project, including ongoing maintenance.
- Timeframe required for implementation, including future phases of the project.
- A listing of potential resources that may be utilized, such as funding, labor, materials, etc.

The schedule will be developed as a joint effort between staff and the PAB leadership. The proposed schedule will be presented during the regular October PAB meeting, followed by a formal recommendation by the PAB no later than the first week of November. The PAB recommendation will then be presented to the Township Administrator to be incorporated into the annual budget proposal.