

CHAPTER 2: PLANNING VISION

I. Keeping the Vision

Genoa Township no longer contains significant agricultural uses. Over the past 30 years, most farmland has been converted to single family lots and planned residential neighborhoods in response to the demand for more housing in desirable locations surrounding the Columbus metropolitan area. The vision of Genoa Township set forth in this 2016 Comprehensive Plan seeks to retain those attributes of Genoa Township that support the motto “A Nice Place to Live”. Just as important are the attributes that are not desired to be a part of Genoa Township’s future, as expressed by the residents who; participated directly in the Comprehensive Plan review meetings, attended one or more Comprehensive Plan open houses, volunteered their opinion in the 2015 Community Survey, submitted comments to the Development and Zoning office, and/or participated indirectly by attending and speaking at meetings of the Genoa Township Trustees.

II. Livability and Desirability of Genoa Township

The 1999 Plan focused on the preservation of a “rural” look and feel of Genoa Township by emphasizing long, open or uninterrupted vistas and cultivated land with mature forests. What remains of that 1999 vision are the uninterrupted vistas, but most other visual images have changed to reflect the unprecedented growth of residential development. The guidance of the 1999 Plan suggested that structures be screened with natural landscaping from the adjacent street system or be located behind existing wooded areas with the objective of maintaining the native landscape as a dominant feature significantly contributing to the Township's overall rural image. Mature hedge or tree lined roads, woodlands, and ravine areas are all valuable reminders of what was once a prevailing feature throughout the Township. The Zoning Resolution implemented this guidance in the form of standards (for Planned Residential District [PRD] developments) using deep road setbacks and screening. Aggressive retention of old growth trees, overall tree retention in developments, light pollution standards, and grouping of homes set into large park-like preserves of open space have protected the rural image of Genoa Township.

When compared to the results of the 2007 “Visioning” process, the 2015 Community Survey (See Appendix D), revealed that the primary reasons that people have chosen to move to Genoa Township have changed over time. The most cited reason for moving to the Township by residents who have lived in the community 20 years or more was the rural atmosphere followed by housing stock or the fact that this is the community where they grew up. Residents who have lived in the Township less than 20 years, which comprised the bulk of respondents to the Survey, most often cited the school system as the primary reason for living within the community. Housing stock along with proximity to family or jobs also were cited relatively more frequently by the latter group. The changing attitudes of residents in regards to why they have chosen to live here, as indicated in the Community Survey, speaks to the need for future plans and policies to acknowledge and address evolving preferences and desires. A land use planning strategy for Genoa Township which seeks to responsibly balance preservation and protection of the natural environment and rural lands with future development shall be pursued.

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III. Public and Private Park and Recreation Areas

Since 1999, Genoa Township has aggressively created public and private parkland, recreational facilities, and other preserved areas to remain attractive to existing and new residents. In order to supplement the already established recreational areas and public parklands, the Zoning Resolution requires that a minimum of 40 percent of every Planned Residential District (PRD) neighborhood be retained as open space (with both active and passive uses). PRD neighborhoods with Conservation Development Standards and the Planned Rural Residential Conservation District (PRRCD) increase the minimum required open space to 50 percent.

The completion of the Genoa Trail connecting Berkshire Township through Genoa Township into the developed multi-use trail system of Westerville was a substantial fiscal investment and provides a major benefit to residents for recreation and transportation. Since its construction, the trail has been incorporated as part of the Ohio-to-Erie Trail. Commonly known as State Bike Route 1 (SBR 1), the Ohio-to-Erie Trail is an intrastate trail connecting Cincinnati to Cleveland via Columbus.

In addition to connecting Genoa Township to key locations within Ohio, the Genoa Trail, via SBR 1, provides the Township access to a cross-country network of bicycle routes being designated by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) in their United States Bicycle Route System National Corridor Plan. SBR 1 currently intersects with the already established US Bike Route 50 (USBR 50) in Westerville. Presently, USBR 50 connects western Indiana to Steubenville, Ohio; however, long-term plans call for a coast-to-coast route connecting San Francisco to Washington DC. SBR 1 is also currently co-designated as US Bike Route 50A (USBR 50A) which functions as an alternative scenic route to USBR 50 between Westerville and Alexandria, Ohio. From the City of Westerville limits, USBR 50A follows the Genoa Trail north through the Village of Galena and then proceeds south back into the Township via Sunbury Road and Red Bank Road, before turning east onto Center Village Road and proceeding into Harlem Township. AASHTO's National Corridor Plan indicates that SBR 1 will eventually be co-designated as US Bike Route 21 (USBR 21) and will serve as the northernmost leg of said route which will ultimately connect Atlanta to Cleveland.

Access to the Genoa Trail remains a concern of residents, particularly those residents on the west side of State Route 3. Despite the fact that access via crossings are available at the traffic lights at Big Walnut Road, Freeman Road, and Mount Royal Avenue, limited trails and sidewalks provide safe passage to these intersections for residents. Although the most significant park in Genoa Township, McNamara Park, and some other parks embedded in developments on the east side of State Route 3 are accessible from the Genoa Township Bike Trail, most parks within developments or along the east side of State Route 3 are not accessible by safe pedestrian routes. Many partially developed sidewalk routes have been identified for connection, and any new development is required to include sidewalks on both sides of its streets and multi-use paths in its open spaces in anticipation of future opportunities for connection.

IV. Roads – Creating an Identity and Providing Connectivity

Genoa Township is situated between two major bodies of water, Hoover Reservoir to the east and Alum Creek Reservoir to the west. As a result, a limited number of roadways serve the community and provide opportunities and challenges to residents, visitors, and thru traffic. The current Delaware County Thoroughfare Plan sets forth the future of each of the major county roadways in Genoa Township, including the major east-west arterial, Big Walnut Road. The Ohio Department of Transportation's (ODOT) "2040 Access Ohio Long-Range Transportation Plan" sets forth the future for the most prominent roadway in Genoa Township, State Route 3. The nearly unbroken expanse of tree-lined State Route 3 (from Mount Royal Avenue to Plumb Road) is the scenic gateway of Genoa Township.

The growth of areas to the north (State Route 36/37 corridor), south (Polaris Parkway and Westerville), east (New Albany and Harlem Township), and west (Orange Township, a potential future exit for I-71, and the US 23 corridor) magnify the need for the roads of Genoa Township to serve not only local residents but a growing surrounding population seeking highway access and commercial services. The ability of current roadways to function under current traffic demands was questioned in many meetings. Infrastructure support and overload will be key factors for Genoa Township in the years ahead.

V. A Sense of Neighborhoods and Community

Unlike 1999, when the population of Genoa Township was generally spread widely on large lots with limited residential subdivisions, Genoa Township, today, is dominated by suburban planned residential neighborhoods. This clustering of pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods with good schools, integrated park space, and low crime has created an influx of families (including families with small and school-age children).

Three school districts serve Genoa Township: Big Walnut, Olentangy and Westerville. These school districts have experienced significant growth since 1999 and are consistently identified as one of the primary reasons residents have chosen to move to or stay in the Township. While these districts enhance the appeal of the Township, the fact that there are three separate districts serving residents focuses a sense of community within neighborhoods rather than at the Township level.

Residents continue to indicate an overall sense of safety and a high degree of satisfaction with police and fire/EMS protection, including; citizen block watches, citizen police and fire/EMS academies, and road services. This sense of safety, coupled with low crime rates, enhances the character of Genoa Township neighborhoods. In turn, satisfaction with annual family-oriented Township events like the Easter Egg Hunt, Trick or Treat Village, Movie Nights, Fishing Derby, Center Green Festival, and the Fire Prevention Open House fosters a sense of community. Residents have also expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the Township's Maintenance Department. Bringing together physical and social communities creates a sense of belonging that is vital to a healthy community. The Township shall continue to build and strengthen those elements over which it has control.

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VI. Community and/or Nonresidential Uses

The character of Genoa Township is essentially residential outside of the limited commercial and industrial zones in the southern end of the Township. The numerous public meetings and four open houses that were held, as well as the Township Survey that was conducted in 2015, identified a strong preference for retaining this residential character. In all circumstances, any nonresidential use shall be designed to reflect the rural and residential character of the community. Nonresidential uses shall; be compatible with adjacent uses, consistent with the requirements set forth in this Comprehensive Plan and the Zoning Resolution, and remain in areas already zoned for such uses.

VII. Sustainability

Genoa Township has a proud history of promoting both sustainability and a clean environment and shall strive to continue such initiatives. On multiple occasions, the Ohio Department of Health has recognized Genoa Township with its “Healthy Community” Award, recognizing outstanding achievements in developing and implementing health-related policies and providing healthy community environments. In 2014, the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) awarded Genoa Township the “Green Collaborative Achievement Award” for its collaborative efforts with Orange and Liberty Townships to create a unique waste hauler contract that greatly increased curbside recycling and waste pickup while saving residents millions of dollars. There are a variety of additional measures the Township could explore in the coming years, including, but not limited to:

- Continued transitioning towards electronic documents and online records to curb paper use, including the development of apps for residents and e-newsletters;
- Continued promotion and support of the existing Township Community Gardens, as well as the exploration of additional garden space sites throughout the Township as warranted;
- Working with the Parks Advisory Committee and other Township departments to develop community activities that encourage wellness, including 5K races, bicycle tours, yoga/fitness classes, and other physical activities utilizing Township parks and trail systems;
- Continue the assessment and development of pedestrian trails, identifying opportunities for increased connectivity and expansion;
- Promoting or requiring the planting of native trees within public and private developments;
- Working with the Genoa Township Business Association (GTBA), Genoa Township Citizens Coalition (GTCC), and assorted homeowner associations to promote, encourage, and incentivize clean energy through the use of photovoltaic cells, solar panels, thermal heating, small wind energy, and other green energy measures to produce net metering off investor-owned utilities;
- Evaluating the possibility selecting green energy provider options in any future township utility aggregation programs, if economically practical; and

- In any future facility renovations, or construction of Township buildings or amenities, strive to use sustainable building materials, energy-efficient fixtures, and other environmentally friendly measures, when economically practical to do so.

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