

# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## Liberty Township

Licking County, Ohio

September 9, 2024





# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## Liberty Township,

Licking County, Ohio

Adopted by the Liberty Township Board of Trustees

September 9, 2024

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## TRUSTEES

Bill Bogantz, Township lead for  
Comprehensive Plan  
Doug Strait  
Ed Wasem

## STAFF

Melodie Bogantz, Fiscal Officer and Zoning  
Clerk  
Woodrow Fox, Zoning Inspector  
Jeff Irvin, Road Supervisor

## SPECIAL THANKS TO

Johnstown Community Sportsman Club  
Northridge Local Schools

## STEERING COMMITTEE

Kate Creager  
Aaron Jennings  
Andrea Kowalski  
Andy Lynd  
Eddie Madison  
Vicki McKinney  
Jackie Siegel  
Annie Slabaugh  
John Tomich  
Gary Van Deusen  
Beth Warner  
Wendi Zigo

## CONSULTANT

Planning NEXT

# CONTENTS

Introduction	5
Existing Conditions	19
Future Land Use and Character	27
Goals and Actions	39
Implementation	51
Glossary	57

## Appendices

Appendix A: Round 1 Engagement Summary  
Appendix B: Round 2 Engagement Summary

*Note: Appendices appear in seperate document.*



# 1

## Introduction

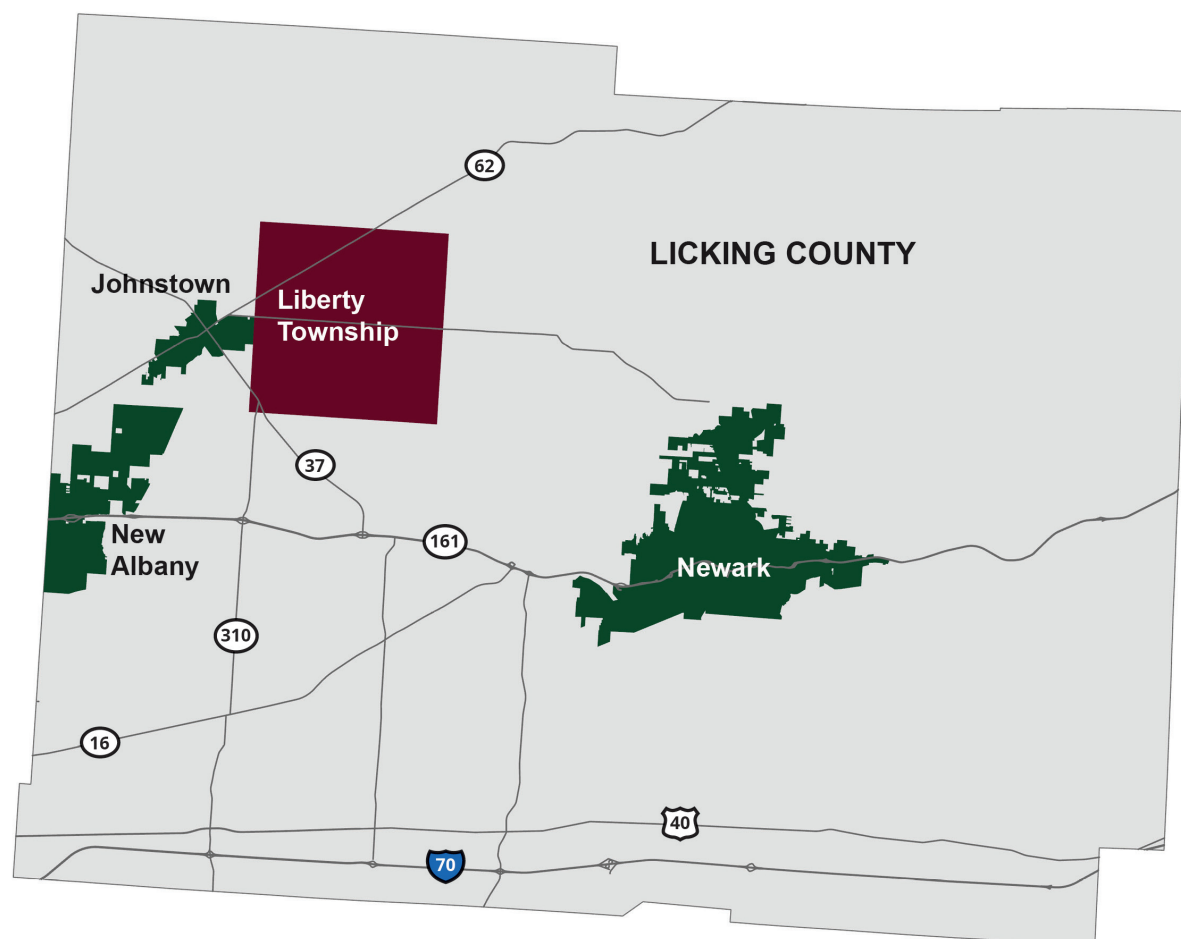
Liberty Township is a rural community with a much valued rural character and significant natural and agricultural assets that is situated in a changing region. The area around the Township is experiencing economic growth and new development. In 2022, Intel announced that it would be making a historic \$20 billion investment in western Licking County, less than 10 minutes from the Township.

Licking County is projected to grow to 236,000 people by 2050, a 30% increase from 2021. The economic and population growth in the county and region will lead to continued pressures on Liberty Township. This comprehensive plan provides a path to effectively managing that change while retaining the core qualities that are important to Township residents.

In 2023, Liberty Township began a process to update its Comprehensive Plan. The previous plan was created in 1993 and updated in 2000. While it served the Township well, it did not reflect the dynamic conditions of today. The new plan recognizes a new moment in time and sets forth a long-term direction for Liberty Township that reflects the community's current values and priorities.

Liberty Township is close to regional employment centers, quality amenities and services, and rich natural assets. As growth and development intensify in the County and region, Liberty Township is uniquely positioned to create a community-led plan that ensures the Township will retain its character and continue to thrive for future generations.

#### LIBERTY TOWNSHIP IN CONTEXT



Located in northwest Licking County, the Township is adjacent to the City of Johnstown and within driving distance of the jobs centers in New Albany and Newark. US 62, a major corridor in the County, goes through the Township, while State Routes 37 and 310 meet in the southwest corner.

## WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

A comprehensive plan is a long-term guide that expresses the values and aspirations of a community. It is the broadest public policy document a community can create for its future physical development considering the input of citizens, businesses, and other stakeholders. The plan is a tool to prepare for change and acts as a guide for decision-makers. The plan is not a legally binding document, but it can serve as a foundation for budgeting decisions, zoning ordinances, land development regulations, and more.

Comprehensive plans also consider what is happening around a jurisdiction's borders, including planning efforts in neighboring communities, the local county, and the region. Working with other Licking County planning efforts was a critical piece of the Liberty Township Comprehensive Plan process.

### Plan Structure

The desired end result of the Liberty Township Comprehensive Planning process was to create clear and compelling actions that align with a community-supported vision and goals. The vision was affirmed and five goals were created through the public process. Building on the vision, the plan's goals articulate desired outcomes for the plan at the highest level.

To achieve the vision and goals, the plan includes specific actions (policies, projects, and programs) and identifies timing and responsibilities for undertaking those actions. The plan includes 28 actions, organized under the goals.

The plan also contains map-based recommendations in a Future Land Use and Character Map that indicate the Township's intent for where and how it will use land resources in the future.



## FRAMEWORK

Liberty Township was a dedicated participant in and funder of FRAMEWORK, an intensive 14-month planning effort. The Township acted as one of fifteen jurisdictions, including the Licking County Commissioners, who chose to work together to ensure continuity between townships, municipalities, and county agencies. The resulting report provides a foundation for the Township's comprehensive planning process and guidance for its future.

## GROWTH IN LICKING COUNTY

In early 2022, Intel announced it would construct two new leading-edge processor factories in Licking County, about 8 miles from Liberty Township. Central Ohio and Licking County had already been growing before the announcement. This announcement, plus associated economic development, represents change with unprecedented magnitude. Intel will be joining global companies who are already established in the county such as Meta, Amazon, Google, AmGen, and more.

## LOCAL LEADERSHIP COLLABORATES ON A SHARED PATH FOR THE FUTURE

Following Intel's announcement, local leaders in Licking County gathered to collaborate and prepare their communities for opportunities, challenges, and change. Liberty Township was among the jurisdictions who joined County leaders and the Thomas J. Evans Foundation to develop a shared approach to shaping the future. Community members from throughout the county were also invited to participate in the process and share their thoughts on their communities' future.

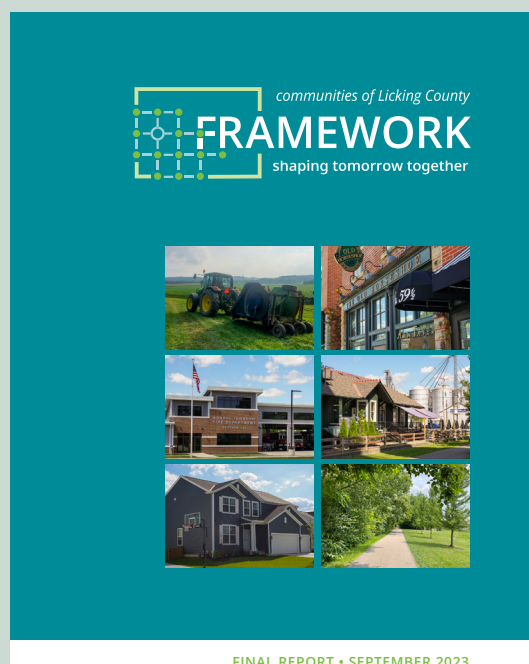
## FRAMEWORK PROVIDES A GUIDE FOR MANAGING FUTURE GROWTH AND CHANGE.

The resulting report, FRAMEWORK, provides participating jurisdictions with tools to help manage change, including a conservation and development map and a set of guiding principles. The fourteen principles were generated using

insight gathered from the public and other stakeholders. The principles serve to define the intent of FRAMEWORK by identifying key expressions which are forward-looking. The FRAMEWORK report also provided best practices and implementation tools that participating jurisdictions could use when updating their own plans.

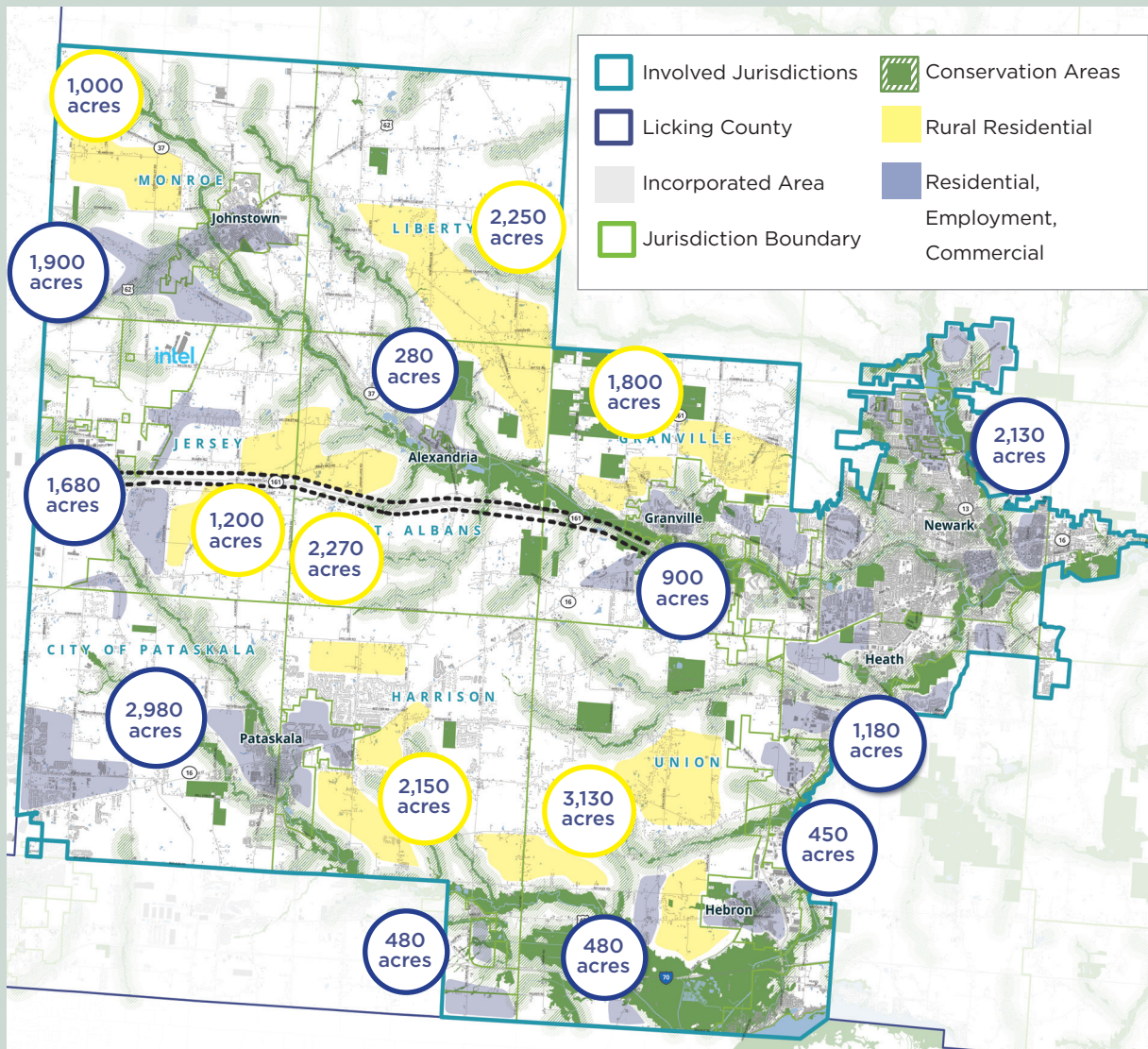
The FRAMEWORK report acted as a guide to Liberty Township throughout this comprehensive planning process. Each of the fourteen principles and the Conservation and Development Map were touchstones for the planning team, Township Trustees, and the Steering Committee members. The following principles played a crucial role in the process:

- ◆ Natural landscape and rural character are prioritized for conservation.
- ◆ Agriculture remains a strong part of the local culture and economy.
- ◆ Development and change are proactively managed.
- ◆ Development and infrastructure are coordinated among jurisdictions.





## FRAMEWORK CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT MAP



The Conservation and Development Map presents a general pattern of conservation and development for the FRAMEWORK study area, including Liberty Township. It is not a land use plan, nor does it replace local comprehensive plans. It presents a shared vision of a future that benefits all jurisdictions.



## WHY DOES LIBERTY TOWNSHIP NEED A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

The existing comprehensive plan was adopted in 1993 and updated in 2000. All communities change with time and Liberty Township has changed since its previous plan was adopted. The community sought to update its comprehensive plan to reflect current trends and priorities while being focused on the future.

### BRIEF HISTORY OF LIBERTY TOWNSHIP

It is known that the Liberty Township area was once inhabited by Moundbuilders, but has comparatively few remnants of prehistoric culture. More recently, Liberty Township was carved off of the eastern half of a then larger Monroe Township and was among the last organized and settled townships in Licking County, formally organized in 1827. This delay is attributed mainly to the lack of major waterways or highways within the township boundary, and access to the area has been a historically important limiting factor.

### EARLY SETTLEMENT

Settlers began coming to the area in 1818, though development was slow due to a few additional factors including dense forests, wild animals, and existing land owners. The first clearing was made in 1821 by Rena Knight, who also built the first cabin. The cleared land quickly proved to be prime farmland for crops such as corn, wheat, and stock, though their staple production was wool. When the township was formally organized in the late 1820s, it consisted of around 22 families.

### CHURCHES AND SCHOOLHOUSES

Over the next 40 years, one-room schools and churches emerged as an important part in the early history of Liberty Township. There were numerous one-room school houses in the township although all schools were not in session every year depending on the number

of school-age children in the area of any given school during any given year. Particularly noteworthy with respect to these was one that was located on one quarter acre of land that had been deeded to the Board of Education some time before 1864. When the era of rural schools ended, this land with its old school house was turned over to the trustees for use as a township house. Thus, it may be the oldest school to be in continuous public service in the county. Today, the Northridge Local School District is located in the township.

The early churches that were established in the township included the Regular Baptist Church built in Concord in 1832; the Freewill Baptist Church built in 1842 also in Concord; the Universalist Church built in New Way in 1843; the Methodist Episcopal Church of Concord built in 1860; and the Liberty Chapel built in 1866.

### MODERN LIBERTY TOWNSHIP

Today, Liberty Township remains mostly rural with no incorporated areas within its boundaries. The population steadily increased in the township until it reached 1,115 in 1840, but by 1880, the population had decreased to 752. Then for almost the next one hundred years, the population remained between 700 and 800 before again increasing. Between 1980 and 2020, Liberty Townships population grew to 2,756, more than tripling in population as nearby job centers grew and it became an attractive location for new housing.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Liberty Township stands as a testament to proactive governance aimed at preserving rural characteristics while managing growth. Liberty Township's achievements underscore its dedication to preserving its rural heritage while embracing responsible growth and development. Through strategic planning, transparent governance, and active community engagement, the Township continues to be a model of effective local governance. Notable Township accomplishments that highlight its commitment to thoughtful development and community integrity include:

### **PROTECTING RURAL CHARACTERISTICS AND MANAGING UNDESIRABLE GROWTH**

Liberty Township actively works to maintain its rural charm and fights against undesirable growth. Efforts include the resistance to businesses such as asphalt and concrete plants, ensuring that the Township remains a desirable place to live.

### **EXCLUSIONARY ZONE FOR LARGE UTILITY SOLAR PROJECTS**

Liberty Township was the first in Licking County to partner with the Licking County Commissioners to designate the entire Township as an exclusionary zone for large utility solar projects over 50 megawatts (MWs). This initiative helps to protect the Township from large-scale industrial solar projects that could alter its rural landscape.

### **PROHIBITION OF SMALL UTILITY SOLAR PROJECTS**

The Township updated its zoning resolution to prohibit small utility solar projects ranging from 5 MWs to 49.99 MWs. This proactive measure ensures that smaller, yet significant, solar projects do not disrupt the community's character.

### **SUPPORT FOR AGRICULTURAL AND RESIDENTIAL SOLAR**

While the Township fought to prohibit utility-scale solar, it remains supportive of agricultural and residential solar installations. This balanced approach promotes sustainable energy solutions that align with the Township's rural environment.

### **FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY**

Liberty Township voluntarily implemented the State of Ohio Transparency Portal and publishes its financial expenditures monthly on the OhioCheckbook Transparency Portal. This commitment to transparency ensures that residents can easily access and review financial data, promoting accountability.

### **INVESTMENT IN ROAD MAINTENANCE**

The Township invests nearly \$200,000 annually in maintaining and improving its roads, boasting some of the best-maintained roads in Licking County. This significant investment underscores the Township's commitment to infrastructure.

### **COMPASSIONATE ZONING ENFORCEMENT**

Liberty Township deals with zoning violations proactively yet compassionately, working with residents to resolve issues while maintaining community standards.

### **NEW TOWNSHIP ADMINISTRATION BUILDING**

Leveraging ARPA State Fiscal Recovery Fund Allocations, Liberty Township has embarked on building a new Township Administration Building in 2024. This new facility will enhance the efficiency of Township operations and provide a central location for community activities.

*Accomplishments continue on following page.*



## **ENHANCED COMMUNICATION CHANNELS**

In 2024, the Township launched a new website to improve communication and information sharing with residents. Additionally, an active Facebook page ensures that critical information is shared promptly with the community.

## **UPDATED ZONING**

Liberty Township has diligently updated its Zoning Resolution and Zoning Map to reflect the community's evolving needs and to manage growth effectively.

## **COLLABORATION WITH OTHER MUNICIPALITIES**

The Township actively collaborates with neighboring townships and municipalities to stay abreast of local issues and opportunities, fostering a cooperative approach to regional development.

## **NICHOLS LANE FLOODING**

Liberty Township Trustees work closely with other county entities to address issues that go beyond the resource capacity of the Township. One clear example of this in 2024 is the Lobdell Creek debris field cleanup initiative.

For many years, dangerous flooding occurred on Nichols Lane, just south of Denunes Road. Liberty Township has partnered with the Licking Soil & Water Conservation District to identify major debris fields in Lobdell Creek that are contributing to the flooding issue. Four major debris fields were identified. Liberty Township will continue to partner with the district to secure grants to aid in the cleanup of these major blockages.

## **WATER & SEWER SERVICE**

Liberty Township has actively participated in meetings with local sewage providers, including discussions with Licking County Commissioners, the Ohio EPA, the Mid Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC), Southwest Licking Community Water & Sewer District (SWLCWSD), and the Johnstown-Alexandria-Granville (JAG) consortium. Liberty Township maintains a clear stance against mandatory assignment to any specific provider. Instead, the Township is committed to partnering with a water and sewer provider only when it aligns with Liberty Township's best interests and proves beneficial.

## **ADVOCACY AGAINST HARMFUL LEGISLATION**

Liberty Township continues to take a proactive stance against new legislation and governmental actions that could negatively impact the community. In 2024, the Township successfully opposed the Ohio EPA permit for fast-tracking sewage package plants and spoke out against Senate Bill 243, which threatened the township's zoning authority.

## **CANNABIS RESOLUTION**

In 2024, Liberty Township Trustees passed a resolution prohibiting the processing and dispensing (i.e., sales) of cannabis in all of Liberty Township.

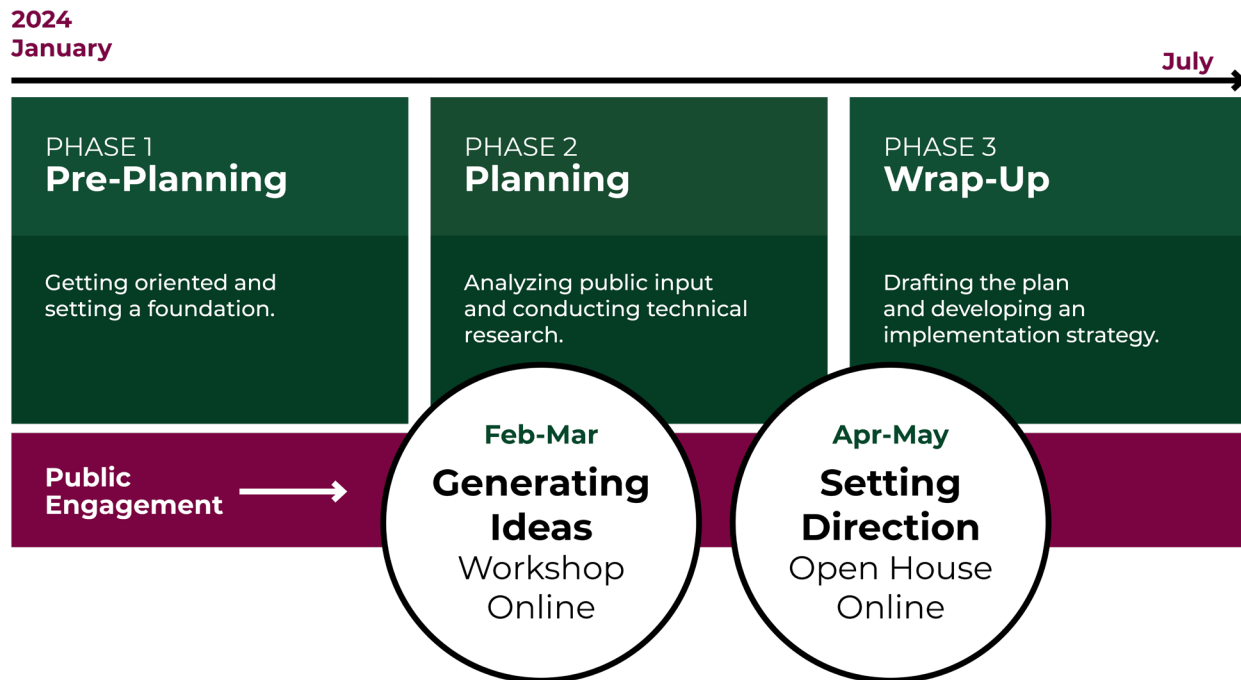
## **FRAMEWORK PARTICIPATION**

Participating in the FRAMEWORK process allowed Township Trustees to strengthen existing relationships and forge new ones with other leaders in the County. The Trustees are committed to continuing collaboration to ensure continued success in the future.



## PROCESS

The Liberty Township Comprehensive Plan was a seven-month process launched in December 2023.



### Steering Committee

Township Trustees appointed a 13-member Steering Committee to serve as community advocates, provide guidance on plan substance, and act as stewards of the Comprehensive Plan. Steering Committee members helped spread the word about the plan process and encouraged their families, neighbors, and friends to participate in the engagement opportunities. The Committee also worked closely with Township Trustees and the consultant team to integrate the community's insight with technical analysis. Over the project, the Steering Committee members held four meetings and participated in both rounds of engagement.

### Stakeholders

Stakeholder interviews were conducted at the beginning of the process to understand challenges and opportunities facing the Township. Residents, landowners, business owners, and others shared their thoughts and perspectives. The interviews offered the participants the opportunity to speak candidly about their experience in the Township and their desires for the Township's future.

## Community Engagement

The planning process included two multifaceted rounds of community engagement. Each round of engagement helped shape the direction of the plan and its actions. To promote the opportunities to get involved, a postcard for each round of engagement was mailed to every residential address in the Township. Steering Committee members and Township Trustees also encouraged their networks to take part in the engagement opportunities.

### GENERATING IDEAS

The first round of community engagement took place in Spring 2024 and focused on orienting community members to the planning process and soliciting initial ideas to guide the work. There were two options for getting involved: an in-person workshop and an online survey. Participants shared their thoughts on the future of Liberty Township through a series of questions and a mapping activity. More than 120 people attended the workshop and more than 270 people participated online. Some prevalent themes heard during the first round of engagement included rural preservation, responsible growth, collaboration with neighboring jurisdictions, and enhancing open spaces. Input received during the first round of engagement was used in tandem with technical analysis to prepare draft content for the comprehensive plan.

### SETTING DIRECTION

The second round of community engagement took place in Summer 2024 and focused on sharing updates in the planning process and allowing community members to comment on the direction of the comprehensive plan. There were two options for getting involved: an in-person open house and an online activity. In both engagement formats, participants could share their level of support and comment on draft plan content, including draft goals and actions for the plan. Participants also shared their feedback on potential land uses and the way they look and feel for the future of Liberty Township, including agriculture, commercial, residential, and more. Approximately 80 community members attended the open house and over 140 people participated online.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



**200+**  
IN-PERSON  
PARTICIPANTS



**400+**  
ONLINE  
RESPONSES

**7,500+**  
UNIQUE PIECES OF INPUT



## VISION

Reinforce the rural landscape and natural environment of Liberty Township while carefully managing change and capitalizing upon new opportunities.

## GOALS

- A. Rural Conservation.** The value of the rural landscape and agricultural heritage in Liberty Township is recognized.
- B. Housing.** High quality housing is attainable and supports individuals and families throughout their lifetimes.
- C. Collaboration and Communication.** Coordination with adjacent communities and communication about Township operations and policymaking is improved.
- D. Livability.** Amenities, services, and social and recreational opportunities are made accessible.
- E. Land Use and Character.** The future needs of Liberty Township are anticipated by establishing appropriate land uses that protect and enhance the environment, economic value, and quality of place.



## Plan Structure

In addition to chapter 1, which presents an introduction to the plan, chapters 2-5 of the plan include the key information to set the long-term direction for the Township.

### 2

#### EXISTING CONDITIONS

This chapter contains background information on people, prosperity, and the built environment in the Township. This data helped to inform the recommendations for the plan.

### 3

#### FUTURE LAND USE AND CHARACTER MAP

This chapter provides guidance for decisions regarding important areas for preservation, as well as where and how new development and changes to the physical environment should take place; developed in consideration of a range of factors including desires for rural and open space conservation, regional and potential local development pressure, and the desires and values expressed by community members through this planning process.

### 4

#### GOALS AND ACTIONS

Each of the five goals is supported by actions detailed in this section. These 28 actions are in the form of programs, policies, and projects that the Township can implement to achieve the vision. Information on how to achieve these actions is available in the Implementation chapter.

### 5

#### IMPLEMENTATION

The five objectives and 28 actions that make up the plan will require sustained commitment and involvement from a range of entities with a variety of focus areas, organizational structures and operations. The plan serves as a general guide for the future that must be carefully coordinated with current planning efforts. The implementation chapter provides a strategy to ensuring that actions are pursued over the short and long terms.







# 2

## Existing Conditions

The following chapter provides contextual analysis about Liberty Township that has guided the planning work. The analysis was performed to understand current characteristics of the Township. This chapter is organized into three topics: People, Prosperity, and Place.

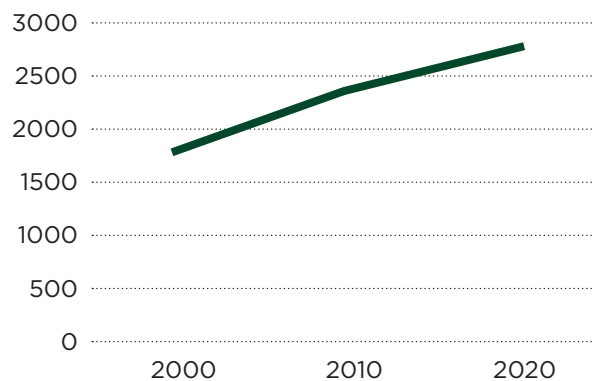
## PEOPLE

Demographic conditions and trends related to population, household makeup, age, and diversity.

### Liberty Township is growing steadily.

The population of Liberty Township grew 17% between 2010 and 2020, from approximately 2,360 to 2,756. This trend is slightly higher than the growth rate of neighboring townships such as Monroe Township (11%) and St. Alban's Township (10%), indicating that Liberty Township is a desirable place to live. Liberty Township is also growing at a faster rate than Licking County, which only experienced a 7% increase in population from 2010 to 2020. Population growth creates higher demand on existing services and drives demand for additional services and development.

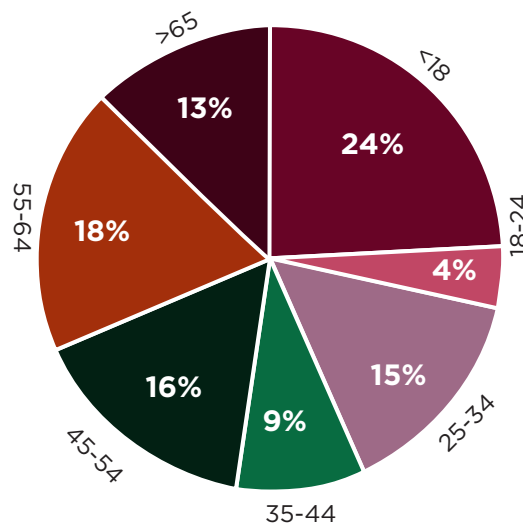
POPULATION CHANGE



### Liberty Township is diverse in age.

In 2020, the 55-to-64-year age group made up the highest percentage of the adult population in the Township (18%). However, that was followed closely by the 45-to-54-year age group (16%) and the 25-to-34-year age group (15%), both prime working age demographics. From 2010 to 2020, the 55-to-64-year age group increased the most, followed by the 25-to-34-year age group. Diverse age groups require a multitude of services, including accessibility, housing, public services, and more.

AGE



### Families account for much of the population.

80% of the households in the Township in 2020 were family households, higher than the County. Children under the age of 18 make up approximately a quarter of the population. This age group also experienced a 20% increase since 2010, while family households increased 17%. These growth rates emphasize the need to maintain the quality of amenities for families and children.



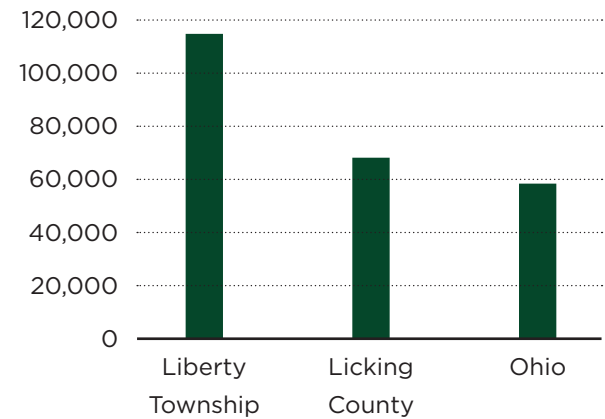
## PROSPERITY

A summary of economic vitality, housing, and employment.

### Median household income is high.

The median household income in Liberty Township is higher than both the County and State, at \$114,112. From 2010 to 2020, the median household income increased 16%. The high median household income indicates residents of Liberty Township hold a high standard of living and economic well-being.

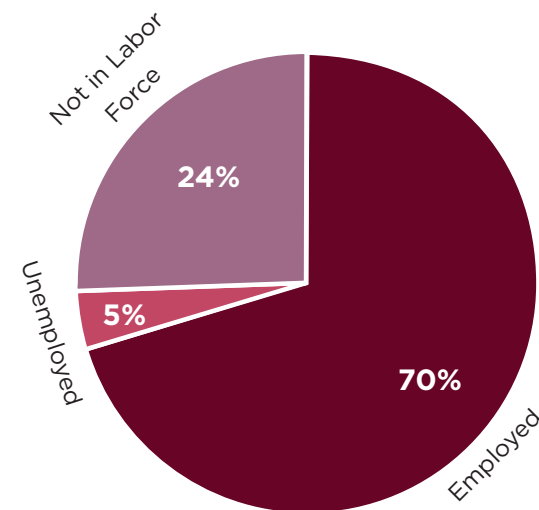
**MEDIAN INCOME**



### Employment rates are high.

Of the population aged 16 years and over, 70% were employed in 2020, compared to 62% employed in Licking County. Approximately a third of the population works in the educational services, healthcare, and social assistance field. High employment rates point to higher purchasing power for Township residents, stimulating economic development. The average travel time to work for residents of Liberty Township is 29 minutes, showing that residents drive outside the Township for work, which can place a strain on infrastructure and create congestion.

**EMPLOYMENT**



### Housing supply has remained steady.

The housing supply in the Township has remained steady, with a 4% increase in housing units from 2010 to 2020. There were approximately 840 units in 2020, up from 806 units in 2010. This rate is similar to that of Licking County, in which average housing permits between 2011 and 2020 were 41% below the historic average. While the population of the Township increases, the housing supply is not keeping up, leading to an increased demand for residential development.

## PLACE

Characteristics of the physical environment.

### **Current land use is predominantly agriculture and rural residential.**

90% of Liberty Township is comprised of agricultural land and rural residential uses. Rural residential and residential uses consist of large, single-family homes on large lot parcels, interspersed with open space and working farms.

The Existing Land Use Map depicts current land uses in the township. There are six existing uses represented on the map that have been identified using Geographic Information System (GIS) data that is maintained by the township (GIS is a computer system that analyzes and displays geographically referenced information). The accuracy of the land use locations was confirmed through Township Trustee and staff feedback.

### **EXISTING LAND USE DESCRIPTIONS**



#### **RECREATION/OPEN SPACE**

Land that is not intensively developed for residential, commercial, industrial, or institutional use. Open space includes agricultural land, forest land, public parks, and nature preserves, among other uses.



#### **RURAL RESIDENTIAL/AGRICULTURAL**

These are the areas of scattered residential development, usually on lots of 2.75 or more acres. These areas also include farming residences and agricultural uses including crops and animal husbandry.



#### **RESIDENTIAL**

These are areas of clustered residential development usually on lots of 2 or more acres. These areas also include farming residences and agricultural uses including crops, and animal husbandry.



#### **MULTI-FAMILY**

This area includes duplexes or apartments.



#### **PUBLIC/INSTITUTIONAL**

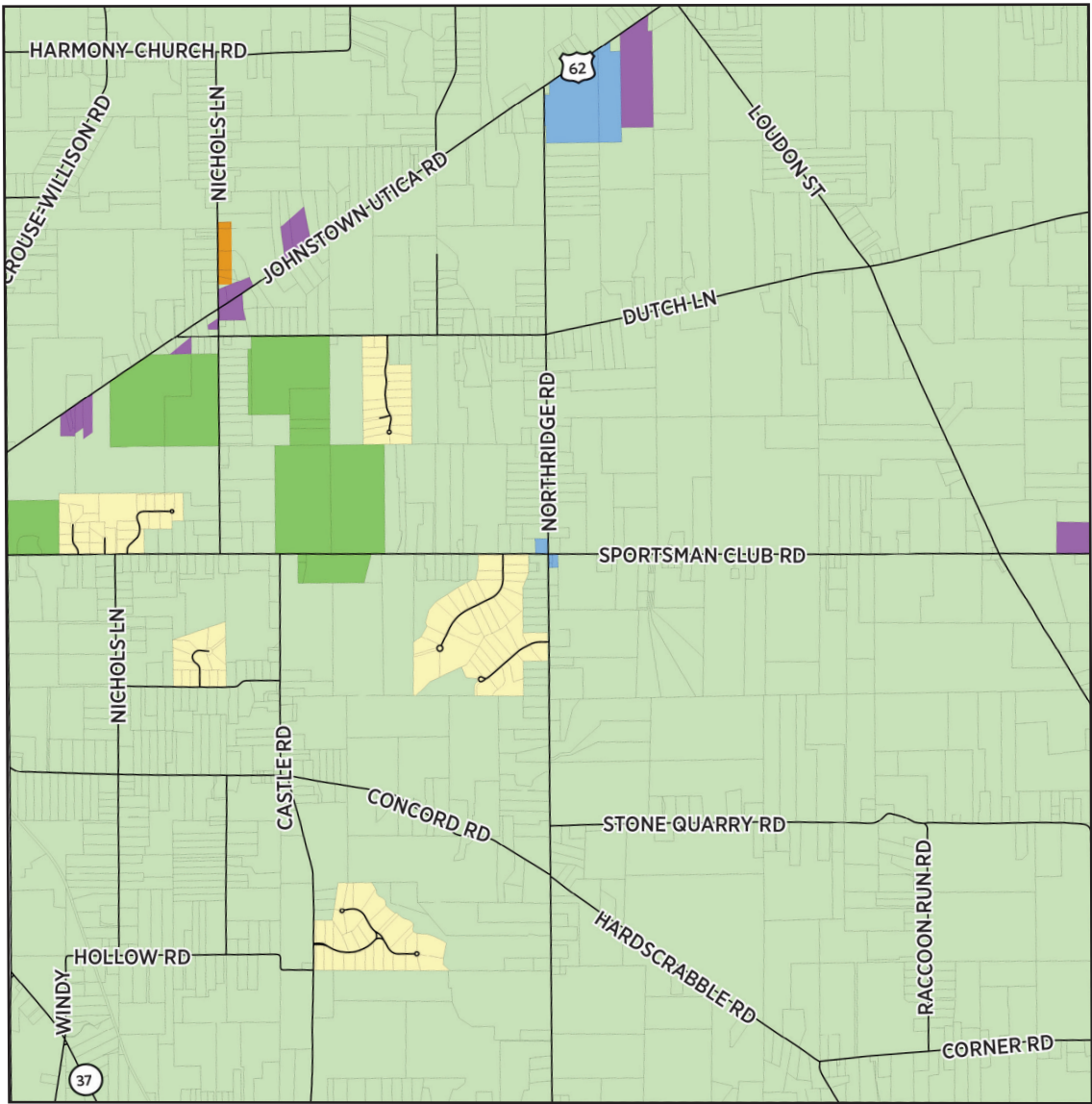
Public uses include utilities, municipal offices, and schools.









#### **COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL**

This broad category includes both commercial and industrial uses. It was combined due to the lack of specifically commercial or industrial uses. Some of the common uses in this category would be manufacturing, trades, and processing. These areas also include auto repair shops, auto salvage, and retail establishments.

EXISTING LAND USE MAP

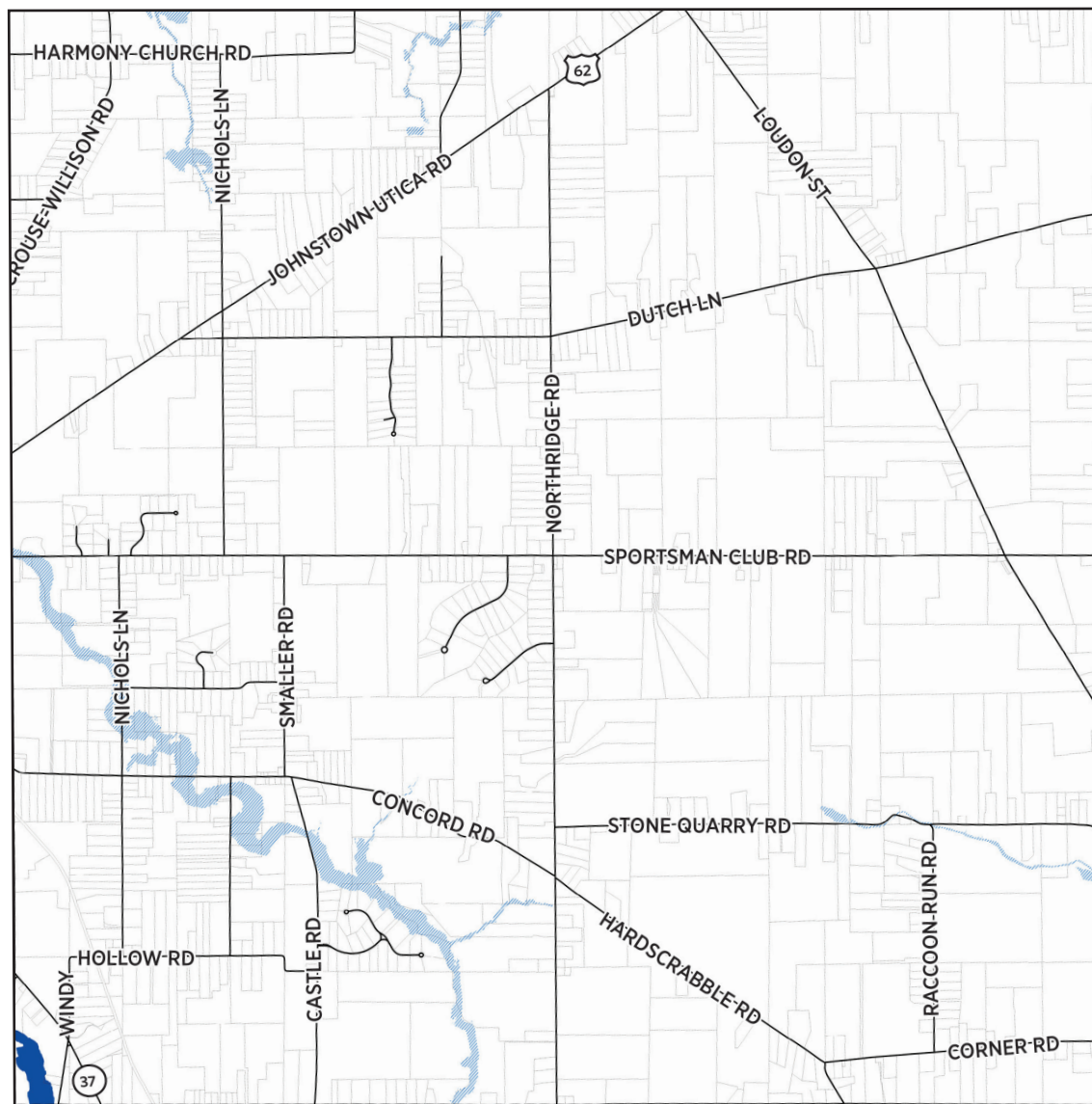


- |   |   |
|---|---|
|  Recreation/Open Space         |  Multi-Family          |
|  Rural Residential/Agriculture |  Commercial/Industrial |
|  Residential                   |  Public/Institutional  |

## The Township is largely not flood prone.

21% of the land in the Township is located in a floodplain, much of that being located in the southwest quadrant. Areas in the base floodplain are areas of moderate flood hazard, with a 3% annual chance of flooding. Areas in the 100-year floodplain have, on average, a 1% annual chance of flooding. Floodplains may expand in the future and flood events could be more frequent and intensive.

### FLOODPLAIN MAP



 Base Floodplain

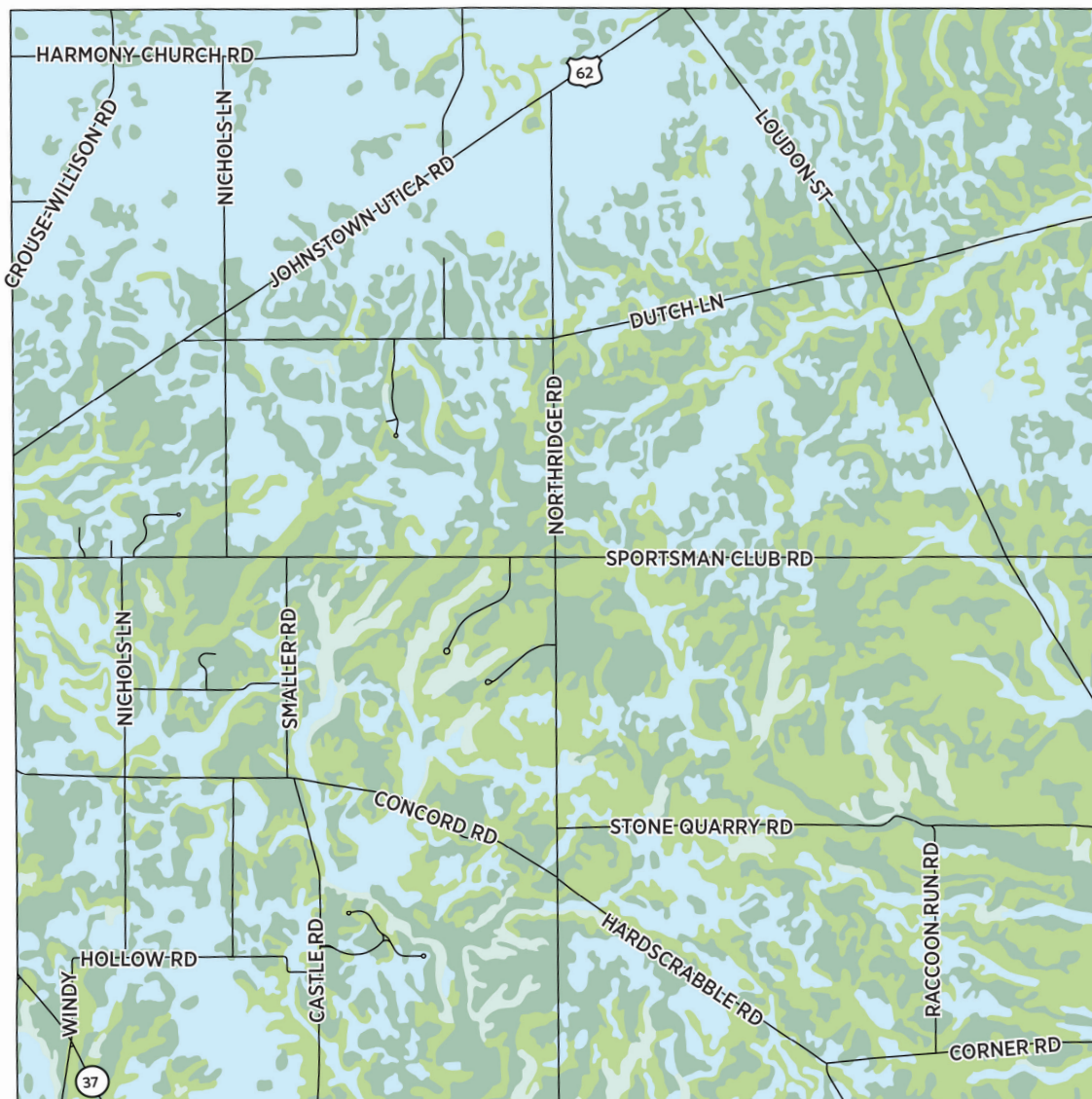
 100-Year Floodplain



## The Township's farmland is mostly considered prime if drained.

While the Township has rich agricultural land, much of the land is considered prime if drained. Prime if drained land means the soils meet all the criteria for prime agricultural land except for depth to the seasonal high water table, and are suitable for drainage. The seasonal high water table is the elevation to which the ground or surface water can be expected to rise due to a normal wet season. Prime agricultural soils can inform where some uses should be encouraged or discouraged in the Township with an emphasis on preserving agricultural uses in prime farm areas.

### PRIME SOILS MAP











# 3

## Future Land Use and Character

The Future Land Use and Character chapter provides guidance for decisions regarding important areas for preservation, as well as where and how new development and changes to the physical environment should take place.

The Future Land Use and Character chapter has been developed in consideration of a range of factors including desires for rural and open space conservation, regional and potential local development pressure, and the values expressed by community members through this planning process. It has been informed by community input and should be considered in combination with existing plans and studies to ensure consistency.

## **BENEFITS OF A CHARACTER-BASED APPROACH TO FUTURE LAND USE PLANNING**

This plan takes a character-based approach to shaping the future development of the Township. A traditional approach to land use plans focuses primarily on the use of land and less on how people experience their surroundings. The Future Land Use and Character Map conveys quite a bit more about the built form experience that is desired in each area. There are a number of advantages to this enhanced approach, including the following:

- ◆ It describes the overall intent for the area, which helps decision-makers understand whether a particular proposed development is in the spirit of the purpose of the area;
- ◆ It helps to provide clearer expectations about the physical characteristics and form of development in an easy-to-understand format;
- ◆ It indicates the key infrastructure (such as sidewalks, streetlights, signage, and landscaping) that would be beneficial or expected in a particular area;
- ◆ It allows for more flexibility in how land is used while also maintaining the intended character, look, and feel of an area; and
- ◆ It provides a strong foundation for zoning updates and other regulations because it includes a range of information that can be incorporated if desired.



## RELATIONSHIP TO ZONING

The Future Land Use and Character Map depicts the general pattern, character, and uses appropriate in the future. This element of the Liberty Township Comprehensive Plan will be partially implemented through the Township's Zoning Resolution.

The Zoning Map and Zoning Resolution are legal documents that define the land uses and the development attributes allowed on a specific property within the Township today. The Zoning Resolution regulates land use, including types of structures that may be built and how they may be used. Each property in the Township is assigned to a zoning district. According to the Ohio Revised Code, changes to the Zoning Resolution should be made in accordance with a township's comprehensive land use plan. Land uses should meet the intent of the character type they are located within.

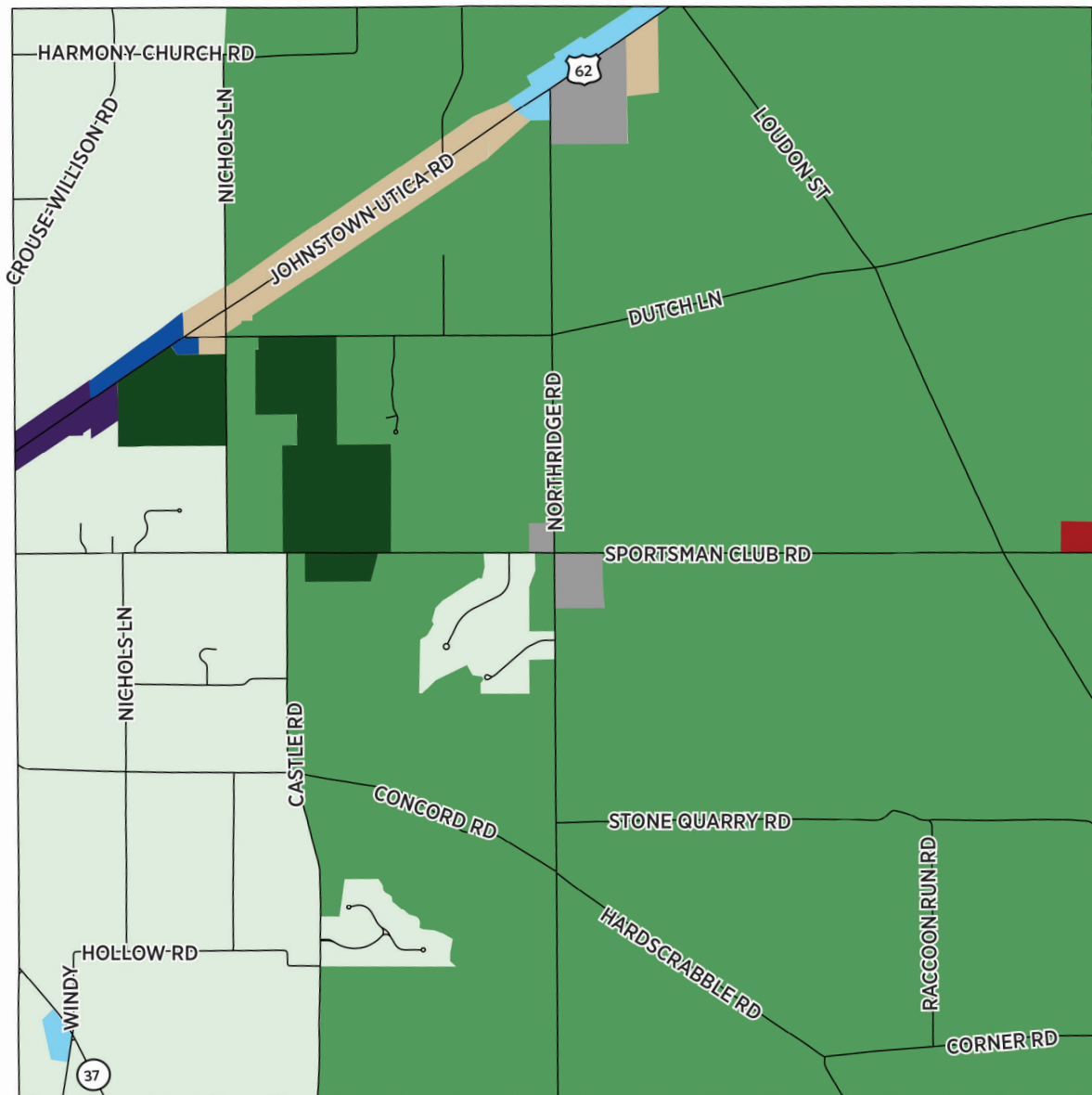
The Future Land Use and Character map will also be implemented over time through many distinct public and private decisions as the table below distinguishes between the role of the Future Land Use and Character Map and the zoning code.

<b>FUTURE LAND USE AND CHARACTER MAP</b>	<b>ZONING RESOLUTION</b>
Describes intended future land use and development characteristics	Defines land uses and development characteristics allowed on a piece of land today
Defines land uses and development characteristics generally (a policy guide)	More specific and detailed than the plan
Future Land Use and Character Map is not parcel specific	Zoning map is parcel specific
Not legally binding, but zoning changes should be "in accordance with" the plan	Zoning resolutions are local laws that regulate how land is used and developed. Departure from the zoning resolution requires either a rezoning (legislative process) or a variance (a quasi-judicial process)

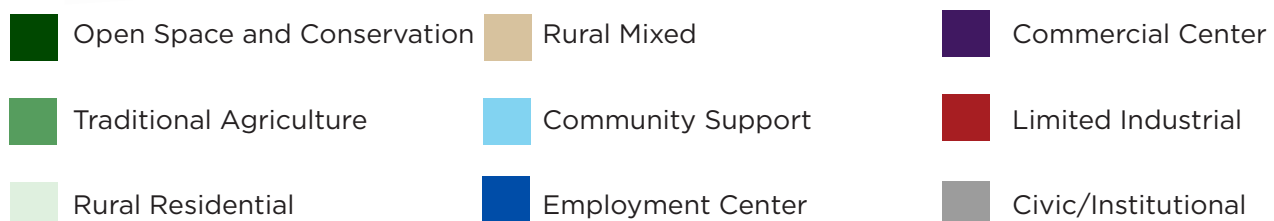


## FUTURE LAND USE AND CHARACTER

The Future Land Use and Character Map and Character Area descriptions express the intent for how Liberty Township should use its land resources in the future. The map identifies Character Areas, which are types of places that share attributes of urban and rural form and function, as well as land uses or types of development. The seven Character Area Types are defined in the pages that follow.



**Future Land Use and Character Map**





## OPEN SPACE AND CONSERVATION

Open spaces that highlight the natural features of Liberty Township. Areas intended for recreation or land that is permanently maintained as a natural area. These areas are protected from extensive development and may be improved based on community desire. These areas conserve existing green space and shield and enhance natural scenic areas.

### Intent

- ◆ Preserve existing green space and natural resources.
- ◆ Protect and enhance natural areas.

### Land Use Mix

Parks and open spaces

Nature and environment (preserve, protect, enhance)

Agriculture

### Example Character



## TRADITIONAL AGRICULTURE

Areas that are primarily in agricultural use and may also include single-family residential, agriculture-related buildings, and specific small-scale retail. Small-scale retail amenities may be featured alongside agricultural uses in these areas. Buildings are generally set far back from the roadway on large lots (over five acres). Traditional agriculture aesthetic is maintained.

### Intent

- ◆ Preserve existing agricultural land and limit development.
- ◆ Support transition in scale between denser character areas and Traditional Agriculture to preserve the rural character.

### Land Use Mix

Agriculture  
Single-family residential

### Example Pattern



### Example Character





## RURAL RESIDENTIAL

Single-family homes arranged along wide, curvilinear streets, integrated with agricultural uses. Curvilinear streets have few intersections, and limited connectivity between neighborhoods and other non-residential areas. Land will either 'front' or be adjacent to shared natural areas. Buildings and lots may range in size and density.

### Intent

- ◆ Allow for residential development while conserving agricultural land and open spaces.
- ◆ Provide housing options that accommodate a range of family size and preferences.
- ◆ Respect the natural resources of each parcel and incorporate them into site design (example: avoid clear cutting, protect streams and stream corridors, etc.).

### Land Use Mix

Single-family residential  
Agriculture  
Civic/Institutional  
Parks and open space

### Example Pattern



### Example Character



## RURAL MIXED

Blend of agricultural land, residential, and commercial development. These areas are largely agricultural in character but may see more large lot subdivisions, lot splits, and very limited suburban style patterns in the rural setting. Buildings setbacks and lot size may vary more widely than in Traditional Agriculture.

### Intent

- ◆ Provide areas for limited residential growth and commercial while maintaining agricultural use.
- ◆ Provide opportunities for agriculture-related commercial activities such as commercial nurseries and farm supply stores.
- ◆ Encourage flexible design that maximizes preservation of agricultural land and open space.
- ◆ Maintain rural aesthetic.

### Land Use Mix

Single-family residential

Commercial (agriculture related, small-scale)

Agriculture

Food production

Parks and open spaces

Multi-family

### Example Pattern



### Example Character





## COMMUNITY SUPPORT

A mix of small-scale, commercial, office, and residential uses sensitively situated to retain natural resources. Small-scale business should serve residents in surrounding neighborhoods and supply day-to-day goods and services while maintaining compatibility with adjacent uses. Existing patterns should evolve to become more walkable with shorter blocks, buildings closer to streets, shared parking, and connections between residential and commercial areas.

### Intent

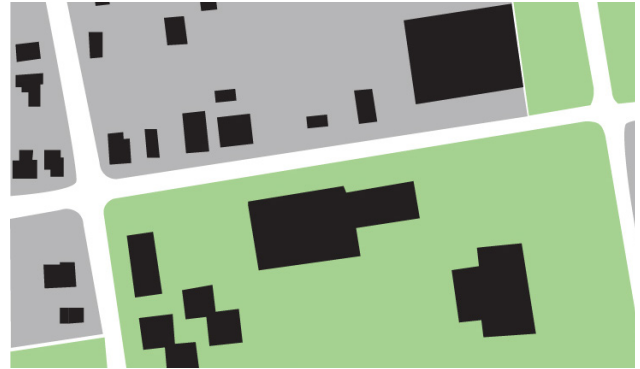
- ◆ Accommodate small-scale commercial uses such as locally-owned businesses.
- ◆ Protect environmental resources and encourage sensitive development in and around floodplains.
- ◆ Coordinate any new development with infrastructure improvements to promote safety.
- ◆ Provide connectivity to surrounding neighborhoods and civic uses.
- ◆ Disincentivize property owners at the Township edges from filing for annexation.

### Land Use Mix

Commercial (locally serving, small-scale)

Agriculture

### Example Pattern



### Example Character





## EMPLOYMENT CENTER

Employment-oriented uses characterized by office and low impact development. Large footprint structures offering flexible space to accommodate market demand for various users. Buildings are oriented to the street and can be adapted to support different uses such as light manufacturing, high-tech industries, and research and development. Buildings are set far back from the roadway and landscaping and buffering are used to minimize impacts on surrounding areas.

### Intent

- ◆ Provide flexible space to support a variety of low impact industrial and office activities.
- ◆ Provide buffering through landscaping and building placement when adjacent to neighborhoods.
- ◆ Encourage physical connections to adjacent areas.

### Land Use Mix

Office

Light industrial (excluding warehousing, distribution, data centers, fulfillment)

Commercial (locally serving, small-scale)

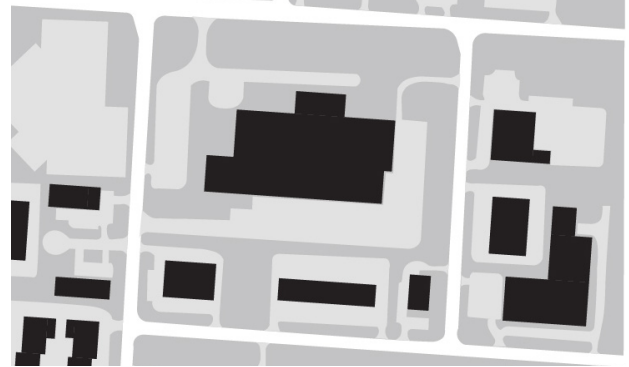
Flex-office

Vertical mixed use (commercial first floor, residential or office above)

Agriculture

Civic/Institutional

### Example Pattern



### Example Character



## COMMERCIAL CENTER

Commercial and retail development that is characterized by buildings on or along major roadway corridors, serves a regional market, and may be anchored by a large commercial use or employer. Surface parking lots accommodate customers and should include efforts to provide landscape features and amenities that improve the aesthetics of the architecture in surrounding areas.

### Intent

- ◆ Provide retail and office space that serves a regional market.
- ◆ Provide connectivity to adjacent uses.
- ◆ Reduce and consolidate surface parking.
- ◆ Reduce access points into development for pedestrian and vehicular safety.
- ◆ Concentrate future commercial development at major intersections or in nodes.

### Land Use Mix

Regional-scale commercial

Mixed-use (not warehousing, distribution, data centers, fulfillment)

Office

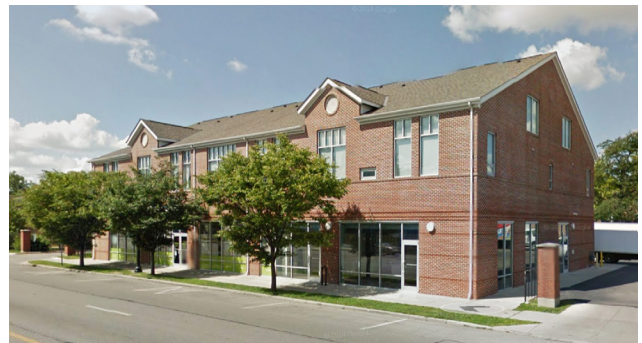
Agriculture

Civic/Institutional

### Example Pattern



### Example Character



## LIMITED INDUSTRIAL

Large or intense industrial operations specifically for mining materials from the ground. Large footprint buildings are supported by outdoor assembly, storage, and loading areas.

### Intent

- ◆ Utilize natural or man-made buffers to separate industry from other uses.
- ◆ Encourage site design practices that reduce environmental impacts.

### Land Use Mix

Surface mining as defined in ORC 1514

Agriculture

Civic/Institutional

### Example Character



## CIVIC/INSTITUTIONAL

Areas of existing or future schools, government sites, and large semi-public facilities. These areas often have a development pattern that is unique to each area and may differ significantly from their surroundings.

### Land Use Mix

Civic/Institutional

Agriculture

### Example Character



# 4

## Goals and Actions

This chapter contains the plan’s goals and actions. The five goals represent the highest level outcomes about the future of the Township, provide the overarching structure, and support the vision. The goals and 28 supporting actions reflect important priorities from community input.

GOAL	# ACTIONS
<b>A Rural Conservation.</b> <i>The value of the rural landscape and agricultural heritage in Liberty Township is recognized.</i>	8
<b>B Housing.</b> <i>High quality housing is attainable and supports individuals and families throughout their lifetimes.</i>	5
<b>C Collaboration and Communication.</b> <i>Coordination with adjacent communities and communication about Township operations and policymaking is improved.</i>	5
<b>D Livability.</b> <i>Amenities, services, and social and recreational opportunities are made accessible.</i>	5
<b>E Land Use and Character.</b> <i>The future needs of Liberty Township are anticipated by establishing appropriate land uses that protect and enhance the environment, economic value, and quality of place.</i>	5



## GOALS AND ACTIONS

**Goal A: Rural Conservation.** *The value of the rural landscape and agricultural heritage in Liberty Township are recognized.*

- A.1 Establish priority preservation areas and discourage growth in those areas.** Establish Priority Preservation Areas as locations designated for protection. Consider adopting a conservation overlay zoning district that prioritizes conservation of natural resources and prime agricultural soils and discourages development (e.g., such as by increasing minimum lot sizes). Limit public utility expansions and access in those areas to discourage development by establishing an official township policy. Consider adopting clustering provisions in the zoning resolution to encourage open space preservation in residential developments that protect agriculture and open space.
- A.2 Explore opportunities to create a locally funded conservation easement program.** Agriculture will continue to be an important cultural and community asset in Liberty Township. To preserve existing farmland, a locally funded conservation easement program similar to Granville Township, which is funded with a taxpayer-approved property levy, should be explored. Other programs provided under local, state, and federal law such as Current Agricultural Use Value (CAUV) and Agricultural Security Areas (ASA) could be explored as complementary actions.
- A.3 Review and update the zoning resolution to prioritize agricultural preservation.** Undertaking zoning and regulatory measures can aid the Township in protecting farmlands from encroachment (see A.1.). Encourage conscious building and infrastructure construction practices within the zoning resolution to preserve and support prime agricultural lands. Consider adopting clustering provisions in the zoning resolution to encourage open space preservation in residential developments that protect agriculture and open space in the Rural Mixed and Community Support areas along US 62.

### CONSERVATION EASEMENT

A voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or government entity that limits uses of land to protect its conservation values. Landowners continue to own and manage their land and retain the right to sell or entrust the land.

### AGRICULTURAL SECURITY AREAS (ASA)

Provide certain benefits to farmers, including protection from non-agricultural development, land to help keep farming viable, and possible tax abatement on new real property and other uses of the land that are incompatible with farming. ASAs require one or more landowners of at least 500 acres of contiguous farmland to request from the Township Trustees and County Commissioners to enroll for a 10-year period.

- A.4 Support and encourage Liberty Township as an area for specialty agriculture.** Promote specialty agriculture and crops as a possibility for new agricultural enterprises. Develop policies and zoning regulations that encourage and support agri-business such as farmers markets, organic farming, vineyards, pasture raised livestock, and stables. Work with the Licking County Farm Bureau to make Liberty Township a welcoming location for specialty agriculture.
- A.5 Protect and enhance scenic natural areas using preservation techniques such as buffering and greenbelts, as well as the protection of water resources.** Natural and scenic lands play an essential role in the environmental and social well-being of Liberty Township residents. Identify and protect these areas to continue enjoying the benefits they provide. Greenbelts are open tracts of land that create a scenic buffer between developed areas and the surrounding rural landscape. A greenbelt ordinance would allow agricultural and recreation activities on land within the greenbelt. Use of buffering techniques, such as physical separation of uses through transitional areas, open space, and/or professional landscaped planting areas can be required to mitigate or eliminate potential impacts on existing neighborhood and agricultural uses. The extent of these requirements should be determined by the degree of incompatibility between the existing or expected uses and should be detailed within the provisions of the Zoning Resolution. Likewise, water resource conservation should be a priority; a permit should be required for test wells.
- A.6 Support private conservation efforts, including land trusts and other non-profits that conserve natural areas, outstanding natural assets, and farmland.** Farms and agricultural uses require sufficient acreage for continued viability. Undeveloped properties also provide assets to the community in the form of clean air and water, fresh food, and scenic beauty. A land trust or land conservancy is a community-based, non-profit organization that partners with private landowners to permanently conserve land (e.g., Licking Land Trust). Consider exploring a county-wide land trust, working with Licking County, Soil and Water District, and Cooperative Extension.

#### OPEN SPACE

Land that is not intensively developed for residential, commercial, industrial, or institutional use. It provides many uses to the community, whether it is publicly or privately owned. Open space includes agricultural land, forest land, public parks, and nature preserves, among other uses.

#### CLUSTERING PROVISIONS

Provisions that encourage Conservation Development (see definition on page 44).

#### SPECIALTY AGRICULTURE

Farming that focuses on producing a small number of high-value crops or animals. It will include the agricultural aspects of greenhouse production, hydroponics, precision farming, community gardens, and specialty crop production.

**A.7 Continue to evaluate the potential need for centralized water and sewer utility services in accordance with the comprehensive plan FLU districts with consideration for the Township's rural character.** Though there are currently no public water and sewer services within the Township, members of the community may see a need for those utilities over time. The Township may also decide to use these utilities to discourage annexation. Evaluate the need for water and sewer services on a regular and ongoing basis cognizant of the higher densities that are needed to economically support such services. Maintain open dialogue with utility providers to understand the services available for the Township. This is especially important in areas where new development might take place at the Township's edge.

**A.8 Prohibit Utility Scale Solar Farms.** While the Township is not seeking to prevent small-scale solar (example: single-family homes), the Township has taken action against utility-scale solar farms. The Township is designated as an Exclusionary Zone for large utility solar (more than 50MWs). In addition, the Township has also updated the Zoning Resolution to prohibit small utility solar (5-49.999MWs). The Township should remain vigilant to stay abreast of any new legislation being introduced with respect to solar and other forms of utility power and power storage. The Township should also consider prohibiting large scale battery storage or other types of utility/power storage.

#### **BUFFERING**

An area of land that serves as a barrier between two or more properties, providing a barrier between potentially incompatible uses.

#### **LAND TRUST**

A legal entity that takes ownership of, or authority over, a piece of property at the request of the property owner. Land trusts are living trusts that allow for the management of property while the owner is alive.

**Goal B: Housing.** *High quality housing is attainable and supports individuals and families throughout their lifetimes.*

**B.1 Consider design standards for new housing.** Liberty Township is a place where people care about their homes, neighbors, and community. To continue being a place where people and families choose to live, new construction should match the character of the existing housing stock within the Township. Consider adopting and implementing design standards for new construction.



- B.2 Create and incorporate design guidelines for residential subdivisions in the Township.** Design guidelines help to ensure future development is consistent with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan. These guidelines address the design of new subdivisions, provide flexibility to protect open spaces, and reduce impacts on adjacent properties (e.g., entry features, buffering, setbacks, and perimeter landscaping).
- B.3 Where new housing is proposed and desired by the Township, encourage a range of housing products, especially targeting entry level and empty nester homes.** Young families, young professionals, and empty nesters often seek the same housing products (e.g., smaller square footage, smaller lots, less maintenance, community facilities such as pickle ball courts and pools). The zoning resolution should be updated in places where this type of development is desired. While the Township is not encouraging central utilities (water and sewer), in certain locations if utilities exist or would be provided these developments would be more feasible. They would not be developed in locations with on-lot utilities.
- B.4 Consider conservation development as a method of maintaining and enhancing existing rural areas.** Liberty Township will experience residential development pressure as the region undergoes growth and change. Using techniques like conservation development for new residential development can preserve open space and protect the Township's rural landscape. The Township should not require conservation development, but should consider it as something to recommend in certain locations where important natural areas, viewshed, or agricultural land is desired to be preserved. Given permitting requirements for on-lot well and septic, this approach would only be appropriate if in the future the Township was to support utilities in certain locations, such as along US 62. In most locations in the Township public utilities are not encouraged.

#### DESIGN GUIDELINES

Design guidelines provide a coordinated and consistent description of the design quality expected of future improvements to the built environment and a review process. Guidelines may be applied only to certain defined areas and may cover topics such as the physical form of buildings, the scale and types of streets, and more.

### CONSERVATION DEVELOPMENT ILLUSTRATION

Conservation development is residential development that prioritizes preserving some of the land. These subdivisions typically set aside 50% or more of a development aside as permanent open space that can be farmed, used as recreational space, or set aside as a natural area. In Liberty Township, conservation development is one tool that the Township could consider in certain locations.

### COMPARING ALTERNATIVES

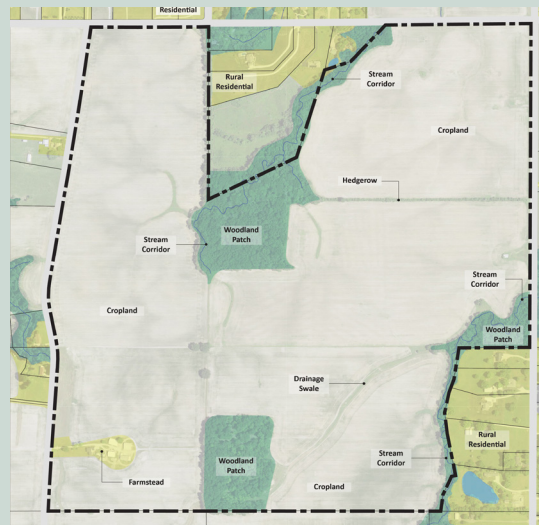
To demonstrate the benefits of conservation development, the following two scenarios are presented based upon a 300-acre site. The first layout is a more typical two-acre rural residential subdivision. The second layout applies conservation development principles, preserving open space and clustering the development on one-acre lots.

**1. Rural Residential Layout: Two Acre Lots.** The first approach is based on the typical rural residential lot layout style where each lot is at least two acres in size, consistent with the existing Township zoning for platted developments. This layout maximizes the number of two-acre lots (minimum 87,120 square feet) that can be placed on the site (108 lots on 261 acres). The result is a layout with less open space, disrupted wildlife corridors, and a loss of working cropland resulting in a wholly changed character for the 300-acre site.

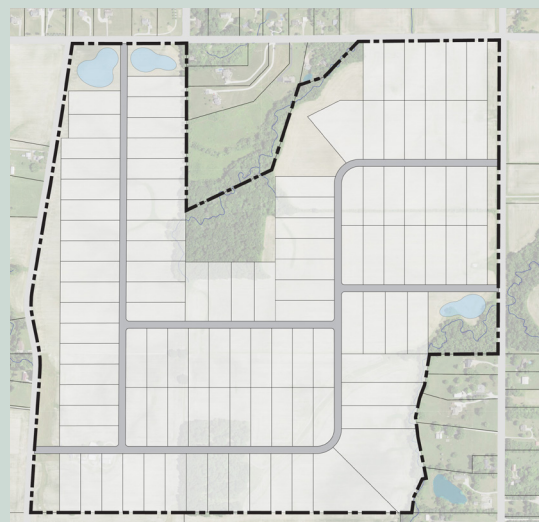
#### 2. Conservation Development: One-Acre Lots.

The second approach illustrates a layout for a conservation residential development. The standard lot size is one-acre (minimum 43,560 square feet). This clustered layout results in more protected open space and cropland (145 acres) and a slightly smaller number of lots on less space (104 lots on 164 acres). The smaller lot layout also offers greater flexibility in the lot layout design as the layout has room to change without losing lots, depending on the specific goals of any given site. This layout preserves some of the rural character endemic to Liberty Township, without substantially reducing property owners development opportunities.

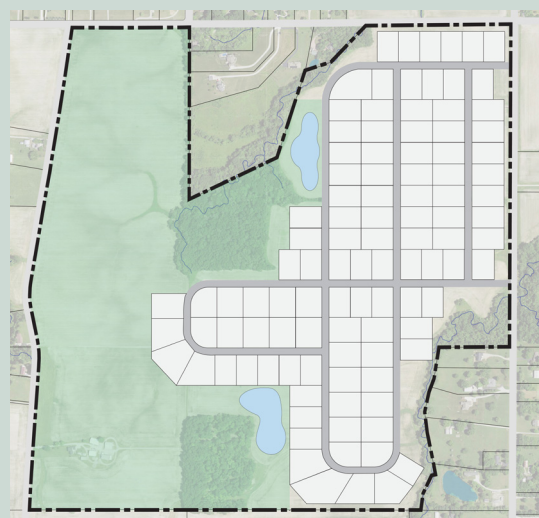
### EXISTING CONDITIONS



### RURAL DEVELOPMENT



### CONSERVATION DEVELOPMENT



- B.5 Coordinate Township zoning regulations and review processes with County subdivision regulations and processes.** To facilitate consistent review and approvals on natural features and support conservation development, work closely with Licking County to update township zoning resolutions in coordination with County subdivision regulations to support conservation development and other practices that minimize impacts of development on natural features. Establish a joint review process as an incentive to developers, coordinating township development plans and County preliminary plat approvals.

## **C: Collaboration and Communication.**

*Coordination with adjacent communities and broad communication about Township operations and policymaking is improved.*

- C.1 Establish and maintain effective communication with area governments.** A community that plans together and talks across municipal lines is more efficient and productive. Resolve to strive for better communication among multiple jurisdictions, up and down hierarchies, through formal and informal contexts such as annual or bi-annual coordination meetings. This should include development updates regarding proposed projects and others that are under discussion but haven't entered the development review process. Through these informal conversations, Township leaders will have a better understanding of the dynamics of the region.
- C.2 Continue to participate in regional planning and coordination efforts.** Following the FRAMEWORK process, establish a continued commitment to work alongside other communities and organizations in the region. Collaboration can lead to more efficient solutions and a stronger, more unified region overall.



**C.3 Develop a communication strategy to share information regarding operations, projects, and decisions in the Township with residents.**

It is important to keep residents informed regarding decisions and events happening in the Township and in surrounding communities. To generate widespread public participation, develop and implement a communication strategy that involves clear messages to maintain public trust in Township operations and decision-making. The strategy should build off of the Township's efforts to publicize public meetings, which are the most effective way for community members to engage in key discussions about the future of the Township. With a revamped website, and multiple ways to reach out to Township leadership incorporated into that site, the Township is better positioned to continue to build upon its communication efforts. The website should be reviewed periodically and updated as needed.

**C.4 Promote a variety of communication techniques to encourage engagement from the community.**

Growth and change in the Township and the region has led to an increased need for clear communication to keep community members up to date on events and decisions. Make Township communications available in a variety of formats to make engagement easy and accessible. Residents who feel welcome to share their thoughts and feel that their input matters are more likely to remain engaged in the community.

**C.5 Increase the administrative capacity of the Township by hiring additional staff.**

Growth in the region has stretched the administrative capacity of jurisdictions throughout the County. To ensure that the Township continues to be present in important conversations and maintain the high quality of service to residents, the Township should increase the administrative capacity beyond that of the Trustees. This can be achieved by hiring a township administrator, as prescribed in the Ohio Revised Code, or other administrative staff positions pending the availability of funding. Consider options to share an administrator position, or other positions, with another nearby township.

**TOWNSHIP  
ADMINISTRATOR**

The Township Administrator is the Chief Administrative Officer and manages the daily operations of the township for which they serve. The Board of Trustees appoints an administrator, who is under the direct supervision of the board. The Administrator helps plan, coordinate, and implement township goals and they act as the direct supervisor for other department heads and administrative staff, including finance, human resources, information technology, and public service.

**Goal D: Livability.** *Amenities, services, and social and recreational opportunities are made accessible.*

- D.1 Identify opportunities to create and expand parks and recreation facilities.** Focus on stream corridors, wetlands, and mature woodlands for new park and recreation opportunities. By incorporating these valuable ecosystems into park design, Liberty Township can protect the environment while creating new places for people to enjoy outdoor and recreation activities and connect with nature.
- D.2 Identify and support youth and older adult recreational activities.** Find and promote programs that keep the youth and older adults engaged and healthy. By ensuring a variety of options are available and accessible, Liberty Township can foster a culture of well-being for all ages.
- D.3 Identify potential sources of funding and partnerships for park, recreation, and open space development.** Opportunities for recreation and gathering are essential to a community's well-being. Establish partnerships with Licking County, Licking Park District, the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, and others who will help coordinate, plan, and fund park and open space development within the Township.
- D.4 Support small-scale, independent commercial and retail development in selected locations as identified in the Future Land Use and Character Map.** Currently, demand for commercial and retail services is limited. However, as the area develops, there may be a growing need for neighborhood services and small-scale, independent development in multiple locations. The Future Land Use and Character Map identifies locations appropriate for future limited commercial and retail development. Commercial and retail uses in these areas should be small-scale and primarily serve local needs (including restaurants and personal services) and utilize high quality architectural design and materials consistent with the rural character of Liberty Township. Allowing a small amount of commercial development at the edge of the Township may also help to disincentivize property owners from filing for annexation.

**GENERAL MILES LAND TRUST**

When General Miles passed away in the early 1960's, he provided for this perpetual land trust in his will. The approximately 176 acres that he owned between Nichols Lane and US 62 in the northwest section of the Township is to be permanently set aside for "religious, educational, and recreational good and benefit" of the citizens of Liberty Township, Johnstown, and surrounding communities. The trust provides an opportunity for recreational activities in collaboration with surrounding communities.

- D.5 Explore models for the provision of public safety services to the community, including Fire and EMS services.** Liberty Township currently contracts with the Licking County Sheriff's Office, the St. Alban's Township Fire Department, and the Monroe Township Fire Department for public safety services. Growth and change in the Township may require additional or evolving public safety services. Establish a dialogue with public safety professionals to continually assess the level of current services and evaluate options for expanding those services, including exploring other models for providing service. Identify potential locations for new public safety facilities and explore opportunities for shared facilities, where practical.

**E: Land Use and Character.** *The future needs of Liberty Township are anticipated by establishing appropriate land uses that protect and enhance the environment, economic value, and quality of place.*

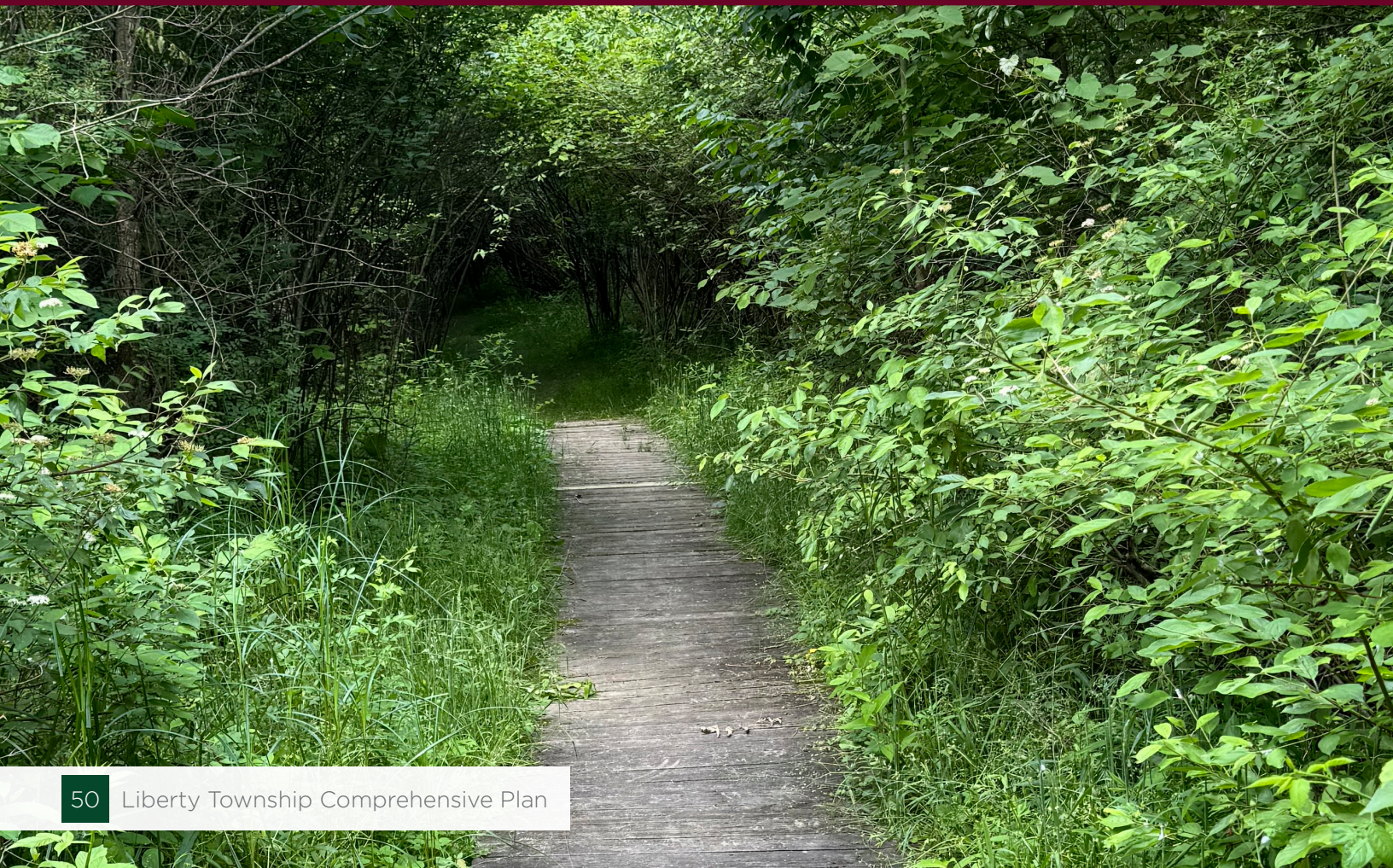
- E.1 Update zoning regulations to ensure new non-residential development remains compatible with existing scale, rural character, and intensity of use in the Township.** The Township's zoning resolution is one of the primary tools that can be used to protect and maintain the existing character of the built environment. Update the zoning resolution to consider standards for new buildings that take their context into consideration (e.g. similar heights, setbacks, etc.) to ensure these structures fit the character of the surrounding neighborhood.
- E.2 Support development that aligns with the Comprehensive Plan and character area development guidelines.** The Liberty Township Comprehensive Plan sets the direction for future growth and development and should serve as a guide for decision makers. Any future development decisions should consider the appropriateness of the development regarding the contents of this comprehensive plan and the character area development guidelines.



- E.3 Implement corridor standards for major corridors that dictate setbacks, landscaping, buffering, lighting, and other measures to protect the Township's rural character.** As growth and development occurs, create corridor standards to manage the safety of major corridors and preserve the rural character of Liberty Township. Require any new uses to develop adjacent to similar uses. Adopt an access management plan to improve the traffic safety of major corridors and cut down on entrances and exits. Consider implementing landscape buffers, downlighting, and other measures to decrease the impact of development on the surrounding areas. The extent of these requirements should be determined by the intensity of use along a given corridor (density and the amount of activity they generate, including traffic) as well as the degree of incompatibility between adjacent uses.
- E.4 Continue to invest in infrastructure improvements with emphasis placed on the safety and comfort of the road network and intersections.** Invest in infrastructure improvements to address constraints and support future needs, working with local partners such as the Licking County Engineer's Office. Coordinate with County, regional, state, and federal entities to guide planning and leveraging of funding for road and intersection improvements. Strengthen working relationship between the Township and the County Engineer's Office to improve coordination regarding improvements, connectivity, and access management for the road network.
- E.5 Consider future strategies to cooperatively work with surrounding municipalities to achieve the outcomes expressed in this Comprehensive Plan.** As prescribed in the Ohio Revised Code, property owners have the right to file for annexation into a surrounding municipality. Given this, it may be beneficial for Liberty Township to maintain ongoing discussions with the City of Johnstown and other municipalities to explore avenues for maintaining the integrity of the Township and identify future opportunities. Annexation agreements, Joint Economic Development Districts, and Cooperative Economic Development Agreements are all tools that could be implemented.



- E.6 Update the Zoning Resolution and development requirements to preserve natural resources.** To provide a means of ensuring that natural resources are taken into consideration when development projects are designed and proposed to the Township for rezoning or zoning clearance (as part of a building permit), applicants should inventory and map natural conditions of their properties. This should include stream networks, floodplains, wetlands, woodlands, and species habitat. This inventory should be submitted as part of the application package submitted to the Township for review and comment. When development is proposed on a property that contains a natural resource that should be conserved (e.g. floodplain, wetland, major woodland, species habitat, etc.), the design of the site should provide an appropriate buffer adjacent to the resource, with a minimum depth of 50 feet.





# 5

## Implementation

The Liberty Township Comprehensive Plan is a long-term policy guide and action agenda that will serve the community for the next 10 years. The Comprehensive Plan is intended to be used on a day-to-day basis to guide the work of the Liberty Township trustees, boards, and commissions. The plan document will be ever evolving and require monitoring of actions which are completed or progressed. Integration into the Township's annual processes, tracking progress, and periodically updating will ensure the longevity of the plan's vision.

This chapter includes guidance on managing and using the plan along with a matrix that provides timeframes and potential relevant parties that may have some responsibility for implementation for each of the plan's actions. Short term actions may be implemented within 0-4 years, mid-term actions may be implemented within 5-10 years, and long-term actions may take more than 10 years to implement. The matrix can be used to guide and track implementation progress over time.



ACTION		TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT
<b>A Rural Conservation</b>		<i>The value of the rural landscape and agricultural heritage in Liberty Township is recognized.</i>		
A.1	Establish priority preservation areas and discourage growth in those areas.	Mid-term	Trustees	Licking County Planning Commission
A.2	Explore opportunities to create a locally funded conservation easement program.	Long-term	Trustees	Licking County Commissioners
A.3	Review and update the zoning resolution to prioritize agricultural preservation.	Short-term	Zoning Inspector, Zoning Commission	Trustees
A.4	Support and encourage Liberty Township as an area for specialty agriculture.	Long-term	Trustees	
A.5	Protect and enhance scenic natural areas using preservation techniques such as buffering and greenbelts, as well as the protection of water resources.	Mid-term	Trustees	Licking Soil and Water Conservation District
A.6	Support private conservation efforts, including land trusts and other non-profits that conserve natural areas, outstanding natural assets, and farmland.	Long-term	Trustees	Licking County Commissioners, Licking Land Trust
A.7	Continue to evaluate the potential need for centralized water and sewer utility services in accordance with the comprehensive plan FLU districts with consideration for the Township's rural character.	Ongoing	Trustees	Licking County Commissioners
A.8	Prohibit Utility Scale Solar Farms.	Ongoing	Trustees	Licking County Commissioners

ACTION		TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT
<b>B Housing</b>		<i>High quality housing is attainable and supports individuals and families throughout their lifetimes.</i>		
B.1	Consider design standards for new housing.	Short-term	Zoning Commission	Trustees
B.2	Create and incorporate design guidelines for residential subdivisions in the Township.	Short-term	Zoning Commission	Trustees
B.3	Where new housing is proposed and desired by the Township, encourage range of housing products, especially targeting entry level and empty nester homes.	Mid-term	Zoning Commission	Trustees
B.4	Consider conservation development as a method of maintaining and enhancing existing rural areas.	Mid-term	Trustees, Zoning Commission	
B.5	Coordinate Township zoning regulations and review processes with County subdivision regulations and processes.	Short-term	Trustees, Zoning Commission	Licking County Planning Commission, Licking County Commissioners

ACTION		TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT
<b>C</b>	<b>Collaboration and Communication</b>	<i>Coordination with adjacent communities and communication about Township operations and policymaking is improved.</i>		
C.1	Establish and maintain effective communication with area governments.	Ongoing	Trustees	
C.2	Continue to participate in regional planning and coordination efforts.	Ongoing	Trustees	
C.3	Develop a communication strategy to share information regarding operations, projects, and decisions in the Township with residents.	Short-term	Trustees	
C.4	Promote a variety of communication techniques to encourage engagement from the community.	Mid-term	Trustees	
C.5	Increase the administrative capacity of the Township by hiring additional staff.	Mid-term	Trustees	



ACTION		TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT
<b>D Livability</b>		<i>Amenities, services, and social and recreational opportunities are made accessible.</i>		
D.1	Identify opportunities to create and expand parks and recreation facilities.	Mid-term	Trustees	Licking Parks District
D.2	Identify and support youth and senior recreational activities.	Long-term	Trustees	
D.3	Identify potential sources of funding and partnerships for park, recreation, and open space development.	Ongoing	Trustees	
D.4	Support small-scale, independent commercial and retail development in selected locations as identified in the Future Land Use and Character Map.	Mid-term	Trustees	Zoning Commission
D.5	Explore models for the provision of public safety services to the community, including Fire and EMS services.	Mid-term	Trustees	

ACTION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT
<b>E Land Use and Character</b>		<i>The future needs of Liberty Township are anticipated by establishing appropriate land uses that protect and enhance the environment, economic value, and quality of place.</i>	
E.1 Update zoning regulations to ensure new non-residential development remains compatible with existing scale, rural character, and intensity of use in the Township.	Short-term	Zoning Commission	Trustees, Licking County Planning Commission
E.2 Support development that aligns with the Comprehensive Plan and character area development guidelines.	Ongoing	Trustees, Zoning Commission	
E.3 Implement corridor standards for major corridors that manage setbacks, landscaping, buffering, lighting, and other measures to protect the Township's rural character.	Mid-term	Zoning Commission	Trustees, Road Supervisor, Licking County Engineer's Office
E.4 Continue to invest in infrastructure improvements with emphasis placed on the safety and comfort of the road network and intersections.	Ongoing	Trustees	Road Supervisor
E.5 Consider future strategies to cooperatively work with surrounding municipalities to achieve the outcomes expressed in this Comprehensive Plan.	Short-term	Trustees	Licking County Commissioners
E.6 Update the Zoning Resolution and development requirements to preserve natural resources.	Short-term	Zoning Commission	Trustees, Licking County Planning Commission

# 6

## Glossary

### **Agricultural conservation easement**

---

A voluntary deed restriction placed by landowners on their property to protect resources such as productive agricultural land, ground and surface water, wildlife habitat, historic sites, or scenic views. Agricultural Conservation Easements (ACEs) are drafted to keep land available for agriculture and limit subdivision, nonfarm development and other uses of the land that are incompatible with farming.

### **Agricultural Security Areas (ASA)**

---

A program authorizes one or more landowners of at least 500 acres of contiguous farmland to request from the Township Trustees and County Commissioners to enroll into an Agricultural Security Area for a 10-year period. It provides certain benefits to farmers, including protection from non-agricultural development, a critical mass of land to help keep farming viable, and possible tax abatement on new real property.

### **Buffering**

---

An area of land that serves as a barrier between two or more properties, providing a barrier between potentially incompatible uses.

### **Civic and institutional Uses**

---

Property used for government purposes or the erection and maintenance of schools, hospitals, or other public buildings. These uses could include police stations, fire stations, and other Township related service buildings and structures.

### **Conservation development (Conservation subdivision)**

---

A residential development that prioritizes preserving some of the land, these subdivisions typically set aside 50% or more of a development site as permanent open space that can be farmed, used as recreational space, or set aside as a natural area.

### **Conservation easement**

---

A voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or government entity that permanently limits uses of land to protect its conservation values. Landowners continue to own and manage their land and retain the right to sell the land or pass it on to future generations.



### **Current Agricultural Use Value (CAUV)**

---

Farmland devoted exclusively to commercial agriculture may be valued according to its current use rather than at its "highest and best" potential use for property tax purposes. By permitting values to be set well below true market values, the CAUV normally results in a substantially lower tax bill for working farmers. To qualify for the CAUV, the property must be ten or more acres or produce an average yearly gross income of at least \$2,500 and must be devoted exclusively to commercial agricultural use.

### **Design guidelines**

---

Provide a coordinated and consistent description of the design quality expected of future improvements to the built environment and a review process. Guidelines may be applied only to certain defined areas and may cover topics such as the physical form of buildings, the scale and types of streets, and more.

### **Food production**

---

The carrying out of one, several, or all of the activities of cultivation, husbandry, harvesting, extraction, catching, primary processing, packaging, and preservation in order to make food.

### **Land acquisition**

---

The process whereby the government acquires the land of a private owner. Land acquisition may be used for conservation purposes.

### **Land trust**

---

A legal entity that takes ownership of, or authority over, a piece of property at the request of the property owner. Land trusts are living trusts that allow for the management of property while the owner is alive.

### **Local serving, small scale commercial**

---

Retail and services that serve the needs of the surrounding community, businesses may be locally and independently owned and are not intended to serve a regional market. Examples of local serving, small scale commercial stores include restaurants and cafes with a local presence (may be more than one location but not on a regional scale) and independent owned clothing, home goods, and other retail goods.

### **Mixed Use**

---

Land uses may be classified as mixed use if they provide multiple uses or purposes within a shared building or development area.

### **Node**

---

A place where people and transportation routes converge or congregate, a centralized space that could be the focal point of an area.

### **Open space**

---

Land that is not intensively developed for residential, commercial, industrial, or institutional use. It provides many uses to the community, whether it is publicly or privately owned. Open space includes agricultural land, forest land, public parks, and nature preserves, among other uses.

### **Regional-scale commercial**

---

Large scale retailers or very large stand-alone merchandisers drawing from a customer market base larger than the community itself. Examples of regional-scale commercial stores include Kroger and Walmart.

### **Specialty agriculture**

---

Farming that focuses on producing a small number of high-value crops or animals. It will include the agricultural aspects of greenhouse production, hydroponics, precision farming, community gardens, and specialty crop production. Examples of specialty agriculture include wineries and apple orchards.

### **Township administrator**

---

The Chief Administrative Officer of the township for which they serve, manages daily operations. The Board of Trustees appoints an administrator, who is under the direct supervision of the board. The Administrator helps plan, coordinate, and implement township goals and they act as the direct supervisor for other department heads and administrative staff, including finance, human resources, information technology, and public service.



**Liberty Township  
2024**

