COMMUNITY IMAGE

Overview
Community image encompasses physical and intangible elements that build the character of a place, setting it apart from its neighbors, enhancing pride, facilitating connectivity, and leaving a lasting impression on visitors. It inspires people to call a place “home” while also actively engaging its citizens from all age groups and walks of life. Orange Township is unique, and this chapter will help identify and embrace elements that play a key role in representing the Township’s image.

Main themes and locations in Orange Township that have potential features to help distinguish the community include:

- Public facilities such as the library, hospital, pool, Olentangy School District, Orange Township Hall, public art at the library, and parks.

- Private facilities such as the Nationwide Hotel & Conference Center, Sky Zone Trampoline Park, the OhioHealth Chiller North ice-skating rink, Little Bear Golf Club, Gooding House and Tavern, Ohio Bicentennial Barn, and many more.

- Commercial areas at Lewis Center, US-23 corridor, upcoming Evans Farm Town Center,

- Proximity to Alum Creek State Park and High Banks Metro Park.

This assessment categorizes this chapter into four themes: Branding, Gateways, Wayfinding, and Governance and Collaboration.

Branding
Branding is a tool to build community identity. Community elements are marketed and the activities it engages in create a sense of place.

Previous efforts have been made in The Township to build new, and promote existing, elements. The Township has a unique logo, natural green spaces, a Facebook page, and some privately managed websites. There are more opportunities the Township can explore to enhance its brand. For example, signage is sparse and inconsistent, landscaping is limited, and the Township lacks a distinct gathering space and/or a downtown area.

Gateways
Gateways are one of the first physical interactions visitors will have with the Township and should represent the warm and inviting nature of the community.

In Orange Township, one prominent gateway feature is located at Orange Bridge Park on US-23. The bridge connects the library, a school, nearby clinics, the pool, households west of US-23, Mt. Carmel hospital, a fitness center, and the park’s seating area on to the east of US-23. The letters installed on the bridge are of the same color as the bridge making it difficult to read, particularly in low light conditions. Another gateway feature is located at the intersection of South Old State Road and East Orange Road, where the Township Hall Park, Fire Station, and the original Township Hall is located. This feature is temporarily obscured by construction activity.
Wayfinding

Wayfinding systems indicate the presence of facilities and activities happening in a place. It should effectively direct citizens and visitors to their destinations such as city center, public facilities, parks and trails, monuments, businesses, etc. It must be available from the entry to a place all the way to the exit. A well-defined wayfinding program can enhance community pride and image.

In Orange Township, wayfinding signage is placed along the major corridors, US-23 and I-71. Within the Township, apart from street name signs, wayfinding signage is sparsely available. The Township has several parks, trails, and notable locations that lack identification and/or wayfinding signs.

Governance and Collaboration

Governance and collaboration are vital to maintain an honorable image of the Township. Orange Township has experienced significant population growth and development. This calls for clear communication with surrounding jurisdictions as well as within Township's entities and citizens. Unlike incorporated cities, townships have public responsibilities distributed between the Township and the county, further highlighting the importance of efficient coordination for successful management and leadership.

Present composition of Orange Township's governance is traditional, and comprised of the Township Administrator, Maintenance and Park Director, Human Resources & Communications Manager, Planning & Zoning Director, three Township Trustees, and a Fiscal Officer. All must come together to make a cohesive work environment in the township. Through observation and conversations, it was noted that cooperation and collaboration within the government entities can be improved. This will also serve to strengthen the Township's presence with decision-makers in policy discussions and decision-making processes.
Public Meeting 9/12: SWOT Analysis

Strengths
Participants recognized the desirable neighborhoods, and appreciated the location of the Township. They also appreciated the inclusion of public opinion in the planning process.

Weaknesses
Participants highlighted that the concept of “township” is vague, signage is sparse, no gathering place or community center exists, no dedicated police department exists, and communication platforms can be improved.

Opportunities
Comments for opportunities were mostly regarding creating a gathering place and/or downtown-like area for community events, and for enhancing the identity of the community.

Threats
Participants are primarily concerned about not knowing what a Township status really means.

It was observed that the community is concerned that the efforts to improve identity will lead to growth and increased migration. Keeping this in mind, the goals and strategies are designed to not only address physical criteria but also consider activities and involvement strategies to bring the community together.

Refer to Appendix C.1 for 9/12 Meeting Results

Public Meeting 10/5: Poster Presentations

In the second public meeting, specific recommendations were proposed and participants ranked their preferred option. Participants indicated the potential locations for new gateway features in the Township. The dots below represent the votes on recommendations proposed.

1. What kind of branding initiative would you like to see?
   - Historic Plaques
   - Sign Consistency
   - Logo on all signs
   - Natural Identity
   - Community Center
   - Township Handbook
   - Social Media
   - Alum Creek for Rec
   - Community Events
   - Microbrewery

2. What would you consider as the points of arrival into the Township from all major travel paths? (See “recommended gateways” on map)

3. What kind of wayfinding signage would you like to see?
   - Identification
   - Directional
   - Bikeway
   - Trail Maps
   - Event banners
   - Pedestrian/Info kiosks

Refer to Appendix C.2 for 10/5 Meeting Results
Online Survey Results

Community Image was ranked as a primary concern by 47 respondents, second priority by 30 respondents, and third priority by 40 respondents. Some specific comments from respondents reflect that the community lacks a unique identity, gathering spaces, and other concerns. From the results of the online survey, we can conclude that Community Image is one of the top 5 concerns in the Township.

Furthermore, response to question 7 (refer to Appendix C.3.2) reflects that the community is interested in addressing issues in the Township but is either unaware of them and / or does not have / know about the right platform for engagement (refer to Figure 8 on Page 25). This result is important as it indicated the lack of public communications and involvement which diminishes togetherness in the community.

“The “arch” over 23 is interesting and certainly provides some identity. Where does it go?”

“The Township would benefit from a more robust identity. Other - we need more law enforcement and a better agreement with Delaware County Sheriff for more patrolman given the size of our township and its growth”

“And No community center. It’s embarrassing that an area the size of Orange Township cant even get it together to have a community center. “

“Orange Township has a lot of wonderful individuals. It would be great if there was a community gathering area.”

“There aren’t any unique characteristics of Orange Township.”
COMMUNITY IMAGE

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Goal CI-1: Encourage a Strong Sense of Place that Identifies Orange Township’s Individuality

Strategy CI-1.1: Review signage to be clear and consistent, and include the Township’s logo on all new and old signs.

Strategy CI-1.2: Consider upgrading existing public feature (for example, fire hydrants or utility boxes) in Orange Township by painting it in orange color or other representative design.

Strategy CI-1.3: Encourage improvements on existing platforms and introduce new elements to strengthen the Township’s social media and web presence.

Responsible Parties: Orange Township Planning and Zoning Department, Township Trustees, Maintenance and Road Department, Communications and Human Resources Department and Utility Providers.

Goal CI-2: Celebrated Gateway Features to Enhance Orange Township’s Image as an Inviting Community

Strategy CI-2.1: Consider reworking the existing bridge aesthetics by including light and/or color enhancements. (Refer to Figure 35 for a rendering of this strategy).

Strategy CI-2.2: Consider new and appropriately-sized gateway features along all major roads entering and exiting Orange Township.

Responsible Parties: Ohio Department of Transportation, and Orange Township Boards and Staff.

Rendering of bridge in low-light conditions

Rendering of bridge with halo lighting in low light conditions

Fig. 35
Goal CI-3: Provide Consistent Wayfinding Signage that Clearly Directs and Identifies Orange Township’s Prime Locations and Promotes Connectivity

Strategy CI-3.1: Consider installation of information kiosks including complete area maps at key locations in the Township.

Strategy CI-3.2: Consider trail maps and other significant pathway signage.

Strategy CI-3.3: Maintain identification and directional signage as new developments are introduced.

Responsible Parties: Orange Township Planning and Zoning Department, and the Maintenance and Road Department.

Refer to Appendix B.5 for a map of Points of Interest in Orange Township

Goal CI-4: Promote Cooperation and Collaboration between Existing Governmental Groups and Improve Communications Within the Community

Strategy CI-4.1: Recruit a Public Relations Assistant or Intern and interested and knowledgeable citizens in the outreach committee to develop a platform for the public to get involved in Township activities.

Strategy CI-4.2: Organize regular gatherings to foster interdepartmental dialogue within the Township and with surrounding jurisdictions.

Strategy CI-4.3: Consider membership in the Mid - Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC).

Strategy CI-4.4: Explore creation of a Police Department for Orange Township or request additional coverage by the Sheriff.

Responsible Parties: Township Trustees, Communications and Human Resources Department, Delaware County Sheriff’s Office, Delaware Regional Planning Commission, Majority Vote from Township Residents, and Planning and Zoning Department.