

CHAPTER 1

Introduction and Vision

“THE EARLY settlers were men and women of heroic mold. Though coming simply to find more room, cheaper lands, and to found a home, they met the trying experiences of the new country with a spirit that exhibited such characters as make the world’s heroes...

Slowly and laboriously they toiled through the unbroken wilderness, and here reared their first cabin. Here they dispensed their frugal hospitality, spread around their humble charities, and, with heroic patience and fortitude, endured the stern fate of the pioneer, unknown and unsung of fame.

What is now called Orange Township, was, before the pioneer’s ax disturbed the native quiet of the woods, an unbroken forest of heavy timber...indicating a generous variety of soil. Sloping up, on either hand, from the Alum Creek on the east, and from the Olentangy on the west, the land forms a ridge of some elevation, nearly in the middle of the township, and is now traversed by the track of the Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati & Indianapolis Railway...

Plucked from homes of comfort and rudely transplanted in the wilderness, they drew from nature the comforts and adornments of a home, and decked their firesides with those social and domestic virtues which so often force from these later times a sigh for “the tender grace of a day that is dead.” From the necessities of the situation, the hospitality of the early settlers was as spontaneous as it was generous.”

-- *History of Delaware and Ohio*, O.L. Baskins Co., 1880 (www.heritagepursuit.com)

Image source: Maptech historical USGS maps, combination of Northeast Dublin Quad (1903) and Northwest Westerville Quad (1904)



“Make no small plans; they have no magic to stir men’s blood and probably will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remember that a noble logical diagram once recorded will never die, but long after we are gone will be a living thing, asserting itself with ever growing insistency. Remember that our sons and grandsons are going to do things that would stagger us. Let your watchword be order and your beacon beauty.”

- Daniel Hudson Burnham, Father of the American City Planning Movement

Why Plan?

City and community planning in the United States is a fairly recent effort, with a foundation in the City Beautiful movement at the turn of the 20th Century. At that time, open space was seen as a deliverance from the stuffy, overcrowded and disease-filled tenements of American cities in the late 1800s. The City Beautiful movement used parks and public open spaces as centerpieces of the future city, oases of respite from the typical hustle and bustle. After the First World War, the movement evolved from its landscape architecture revitalization roots to a legal instrument for planning for orderly future growth.

The intent of the city planning movement was to plan for the future. At first this was done by the creation of zones with separate land use regulations attached to each zone. In some communities, there was a plan, which was the basis for the zoning map and resolution. However, in most communities, zoning itself was seen to be the plan. Zoning was tested immediately, and found to be an appropriate legislative power.

Ohio has never taken the additional step to *require* land use planning as a mandatory underpinning of zoning or other land use controls. It is recommended by the American Planning Association, and the American Institute of Certified Planners. It is suggested by the Ohio Revised Code, and it is bolstered by Ohio and United States Supreme Court cases that a comprehensive plan strengthens a community's police power to zone and control its growth.

How Planning Relates to Zoning and the Community Vision

The Orange Township Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee convened on March 5, 2009 to kick-off the process for a 2010 Orange Township Comprehensive Plan.

The comprehensive plan is a set of policies, goals and maps for the future development of the township. However, as a plan, it has no teeth under Ohio law. The township must adopt zoning, which implements these policies and visions. Zoning is the police power that guides and enforces the township's development. It is the intention of the township to adopt a revised comprehensive plan that is descriptive of its vision of the future. After the updated plan is adopted, it will be the township's responsibility to amend its zoning to conform to the plan. This update seeks to:

- 1.) Review the changes in land use, population, utility services, roads, and boundaries that have occurred from 2001 to 2009.
- 2.) Review the changes in economic, legislative, judicial and regulatory conditions that have occurred from 2001 to 2009.
- 3.) Review the goals and policies adopted in 2001; judge whether the goals and policies are still representative of the community's values and visions of its future, and if the goals and policies conform to current federal and state land use legislation and court decisions.
- 4.) Amend the goals and means for growth in the ensuing five to ten years.
- 5.) Create a revised text and map for the recommended land use of each parcel on a site-specific basis to guide future growth of the township.
- 6.) Recommend amendments to local zoning, and the adoption of development policies to assure that the township will be what it has envisioned when it is all built out.

The 2010 Comprehensive Land Use Plan is intended to be site-specific, with land use and/or density classification attached to each parcel, and viewed from an environmental standpoint with policies to protect critical resource areas.

DALIS – How Digital Information Affects the Township’s Ability to Plan

The Delaware County Auditor has developed a Geographic Information System (GIS) for the primary purpose of accurately mapping tax parcels. DALIS stands for Delaware Area Land Information System. It is a very accurate, computer mapping system which offers both tabular and graphic real estate data about each of more than 80,000 tax parcels. This mapping system has a cadastral (property line) layer and topography layer. In addition, the Auditor has also created soil maps and digital ortho photos with structures.

Maps may be created with accuracy to a scale of 1” =100’ for Orange Township. Planners may view each parcel individually at any scale. This allows the DCRPC to make a Comprehensive Land Use Plan that is site-specific. The DALIS mapping is used as the base map for the 2010 Orange Township Comprehensive Plan. The software used is ArcInfo and ArcView, by ESRI.

Summary of Previous Township and County Planning Efforts

The 1991 Orange Township comprehensive plan (Frank Elmer) was a generalized plan. It was “not the intent of the Land Use Plan to positively identify the actual future use of every individual parcel or tract of land within the township.”

The 1991 Elmer Plan and the work of the steering committee in 1996 determined that they wished to preserve the “rural character” of the township while allowing appropriate growth. The “Essence of Orange Township” (according to the consensus of the steering committee) was:

- Rural feel as characterized by:
 - Open Spaces
 - Space between developments
 - Ravines
 - Access to Alum Creek, Olentangy River
 - Upscale bedroom community, with large, open entrances that are well landscaped
 - Mature trees on scenic roads
 - Agricultural areas
 - Wildlife corridors
- Different/diverse housing;
- Mix of land uses (residential, commercial, industrial, institutional) for a balanced tax base;
- City of Orange in 2020?
- Pitched roofs, not flat roofs (even for most commercial/office uses);
- Height limits of 2 1/2 stories for most structures, 50’ maximum in non-residential areas;
- Green spaces along commercial corridors;
- Ground signs, not pole signs;
- Low level lighting, downward cast for commercial uses;
- Effective landscape buffers between commercial and residential uses;
- Ideally, not to be totally auto-dependent, by designing connecting paths between developments;
- A center, or heart of the township, perhaps at Lewis Center;
- Parks in neighborhoods;
- Greenbelts/bike paths that connect neighborhoods;

Based upon the expression of what is worth preserving or striving for as the essence of Orange Township, the Steering Committee established a vision for the future.

When Orange Township is all built out, we would like it to be a community with a diversity of housing, commercial and industrial uses, with attractive landscaping in commercial corridors and at entrances to neighborhoods, with useable green spaces throughout the community. We would like to retain some agricultural areas as long as possible. We would like to preserve unique scenic views and our critical natural resources such as ravines, floodplains, wetlands and forests.

In 1993, the Regional Planning Commission completed a process to create county-wide Comprehensive Plan. This plan was also general in nature, was not site-specific, and did not meet the needs of individual townships. Although adopted by the RPC, it was not endorsed by individual townships. Over the years it has had limited use in situations where there was no other township-initiated plan.

The 2001 Comprehensive Plan was intended to be site-specific and generally used the format within the pages of this plan. Land use and/or density classification was attached to each parcel. The advent of the Delaware County Auditor's Geographic Information System for property tax maps (DALIS) has made this possible via a much more detailed set of topographic and property line maps. This chapter describes in detail how the 2001 Comprehensive Plan was revised to become the 2010 plan.

A Parks Trails and Greenways Master Plan was created in 2003 and recently updated involving significant public input. The result was a number of proposals and implementation which will be incorporated into the Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

The 2010 Comprehensive Plan augments, modifies, and supercedes any previous land use plan.



Other Survey and Vision Efforts

Over the last several years, various opinion surveys have been produced within the township and throughout the larger community area. Some of these were part of the Comprehensive Planning process and others were part of a study initiated by the health district or the Building Industry Association. The 2010 Plan attempts to assemble the various results from previous studies and surveys and allow the current working group to judge whether those values are still accurate.

In June 1998, the **Building Industry Association (BIA)** conducted a survey in Delaware County to gauge sentiments about the effects of growth. A total of 400 likely voters were canvassed for 18 minutes apiece about various growth concerns. The data was county-wide, not divided into townships. It was divided into school districts. Since Orange Township is 100% within Olentangy School district, some observations may be made. (23% of those surveyed resided in the Olentangy school district.)

- *Development/ loss of land, growth planning, and traffic/ roads were most important issues facing the community today (#2, #4 and #6).*
- *40.8% of all surveyed said we are doing a poor/ not so good job of managing growth and development.*
- *55.8% said we are doing poorly to reduce traffic congestion.*
- *Amenities/ access were the top vote getter (20.2%) in the positive aspects of growth.*
- *18.9% said there was nothing positive about growth.*
- *Only 3% said there were positive aspects to well-planned growth.*
- *42.8% said that traffic was the most unfavorable aspect of growth.*
- *53.9% said they want growth to continue, but the pace is too fast.*
- *19.8% said they wanted no more growth.*
- *49.4% said government should encourage planned growth.*
- *56% of those favoring planned growth were from Olentangy.*
- *#1 and #2 priorities on managing growth were keeping up with school construction and protecting the environment and open spaces.*
- *63% of Olentangy voters ranked traffic conditions C-F on a scale of A-F.*

A second detailed survey was performed in Delaware County in 1998 relative to the Environmental Health of the county. This became known as the PACE survey. Unlike the BIA survey, which asked questions related to growth, this survey asked questions relating to the community's perception of its environmental health. This survey was performed in person and by mail. Trained volunteers surveyed 500 students in five local high schools and 200 county fair attendees. In addition, the survey questions were mailed to 40,000 households.

The top five environmental concerns were:

- *Need for more parks, green space, wildlife habitats (733 responses)*
- *County development, zoning, annexation out of control (721)*
- *Surface water pollution from sewage systems (686)*
- *Surface water pollution from factories, agriculture (685)*
- *Environmental education (660)*

It may be observed that in the high growth townships of Delaware County, such as Orange, there was a growing opinion that growth was having many negative attributes:

- *too much traffic,*
- *unplanned neighborhoods,*
- *lack of environmental and open space protection,*
- *inadequate new school construction, and too rapid pace of growth.*

Updating the 2001 Goals

To be reflective of the values and goals of a community, the comprehensive plan must be representative. During the process that led to the 2001 plan, the Steering Committee refined the essence of Orange Township into goals for the future land use of the township. For the 2010 updated plan, the current Zoning Commission and BZA were asked to assign numbers for each item based on whether the respondent thought that item was still relevant and to what extent. While not

intended to be a scientific survey, it is intended to generally honor the goals of the 2001 plan while updating them to meet the needs of today. A score of 50 would indicate that all respondents thought the issue was a top priority. A score of 10 would indicate that everyone disagreed with the issue.

- Discourage over-development or premature development. **48.9**
- Relate land use and density to land suitability, utility availability, adjacent existing land uses and the carrying capacity of the infrastructure. **46.7**
- Preserve the rural and natural character and beauty of Orange Township as expressed in its open spaces, green areas, farms, natural resources (floodplains, wetlands, slopes >20%, ravines, creeks and rivers) as it changes from a rural to a suburban community. **46.7**
- Enforce zoning regulations. **46.7**
- Encourage commercial and light industrial development in planned districts to broaden the jobs and tax base, and to prevent property taxes from rising faster than the growth in the township tax base. **45.6**
- Protect local real estate values. **45.6**
- Determine and implement an appropriate land use mix. **45.0**
- Implement and maintain the land use plan. **45.0**
- Avoid traffic congestion on local, county and state roads. **44.4**
- Retain wildlife cover and corridors where feasible. **43.3**
- Expand township services at a rate to ensure public health and safety. **43.0**
- Provide for dense landscape buffering between incompatible land uses. **42.2**
- Conserve surface and ground water quality around Alum Creek reservoir. **42.2**
- Preserve scenic views. **42.2**
- Link developments with green spaces and paths. **41.1**
- Preserve the rural “look” along township roads via fencing and landscaping, especially at entrances to new subdivisions. **40.0**
- Retain a primarily single family residential housing mix, but permit a diversity of housing types. **40.0**
- Provide passive and active recreational areas as the township grows. **38.9**
- Retain historic and agricultural structures. **37.8**
- Create a “heart” of the township at Lewis Center with mixed uses. **37.8**
- Provide for a variety of residential housing districts, with an overall (township-wide) density not to exceed 2 units per acre where centralized sanitary sewer exists or can be provided. **37.5**
- Acquire suitable land for the township and future school needs. **34.8**
- Provide an opportunity for vestiges of agriculture to continue. **31.1**

Respondents were also asked to make any additional comments and raise any other issues. These were discussed and are listed here, arranged into loose categories. Comments submitted by the general public are also included here:

Sidewalks/trails

- Sidewalks extended to allow for less traffic and better access. Even an asphalt bike trail would help;
- Bike paths network to/from all Alum Creek parking areas. Bike lanes. Park is huge asset. Consider hard core bikers and families. They will tend to shop/eat in area;
- We need more trails so it is important to provide for trail right-of-way.

Transportation

- Raised areas (made of brick) on streets in subdivisions in which excessive speed is an issue. Other communities have these to slow traffic;
- Complete relocation and extension of Home Road;
- Complete I-71 and Big Walnut interchange;
- Better understanding of the impact of planning and land use on traffic congestion and the county road/transportation access plan, including mass transit.

Land Use

- Encourage land use and/or construction to reduce vehicle travel with appropriate and contiguous residential and business uses;
- Establish land use policy for the intersection of South Old State Road and Lewis Center Road;
- Continued careful crafting of zoning so that intent of ordinance is clear and exceptions, when necessary, do not violate that intent;
- Identify the “distinct elements” that compose the scenic views and rural character which the township is trying to preserve and make those areas a priority. It is not realistic to try to preserve everything, but to have planned preservation and planned growth;
- The township needs realistic planned growth for a variety of uses, including residential and commercial;
- The township needs a variety of residential development, not just single family homes, but townhomes, condos, and apartments in suitable areas;
- Township needs a way to identify historic structures and farms, and then determine the best method to preserve them, be it zoning regulations, easements, etc. Again, it is not realistic to save all historic structures and farms, but to have planned preservation;
- Kerbler property – the Planned Communities plan continues to be a viable opportunity into the future if an agreement could come back together;
- Old Lewis Center could still become a well-done commercial center with architectural regulations – the future rail overpass will directly affect this development;
- Acreage north of Lewis Center Road and east of tracks should be 2 houses per gross acre with development of park and school sites.

Image/other

- Sense of identity/point of focus that we are Lewis Center/Orange Township, not just a collection of developments in same geographic vicinity;
- Concern about future annexation creeping by City of Columbus into county and township;
- A perspective of sustainability of use, construction, etc. as the CLUP is updated;
- Allowance for uses for alternate energy production (solar panels/farms, wind power, etc.);
- Fiber-optic loop similar to Dublin to attract high-tech/IT businesses;
- We need a rec center;
- To preserve farmland/wetlands make it easy to donate development rights and get tax deduction for donation.