

# THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP

Lorain County, Ohio  
January, 2010



*Prepared by the Columbia Township Zoning commission  
with the assistance of  
Ohio State University Extension Specialist for Economic Development  
and a group of Township Volunteers*

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# I. INTRODUCTION

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Across this nation, millions of people daily enjoy the benefits bestowed on their communities by the farsighted plans wrought by previous generations of community residents and leaders. Attractive neighborhoods, preserved landscapes, well-designed parks, viable commercial areas, and diverse workplaces are all benefits of ideas and plans worked out and implemented to ensure the quality of life of present and future generations.

This Comprehensive Plan contains several sections:

- I. **Introduction.** A general description of the document, its purpose, and use
- II. **Background and Analyses.** A summary of data collected for preparation of this Plan, together with evaluation of the trends and implications of the data for the future of the community
- III. **Community Goals.** A statement of the anticipated directions and outcomes of the Plan
- IV. **The Columbia Township Plan.** Description and illustration of the various planned features of the community, with special attention given to planned future land use, future transportation facilities, and to high priority planning areas.
- V. **Implementation.** A program of action for accomplishing the Plan

The Columbia Township Comprehensive Plan is an illustration of the desired future of the community, a guide for public and private actions in the use and development of land in a manner intended to create a planned community complete with a healthful natural environment, thoughtfully located land uses, useful and efficient thoroughfares, and attractive community facilities.

The Plan for Columbia Township should be referred to frequently by the Township Zoning Commission, the Township Trustees, the County Planning Commission, and other regional planning and development agencies in making development decisions affecting Columbia Township. Within the Township, use of the Plan will promote consistent local control over maintenance and development matters and the coordination of local resources toward creation of an attractive and viable community. Outside of the Township, respect for and consideration of the Township's Plan as an expression of local objectives will encourage regional decision-making in support of this strong local community which is an important regional asset.

It is the hope of those who have participated in preparation of this plan - residents, public officials, and professional planners - that this work will contribute to the quality of life of many future generations of Columbia Township residents.

In the Fall of 2004 representatives from Columbia Township began working with the Ohio State University Extension Specialist for Economic Development and Land Use at the OSU Extension Center at Wooster to develop a Comprehensive Land Use Plan Update for Columbia Township in Lorain County, Ohio. A group of Township volunteers worked over nine (9) months to study existing conditions, compiling information and making recommendations related to future growth and development. Land use issues related to what the committee wanted to see preserved, what should be changed, and what the committee would like to create in the community over the next thirty years, or until 2036, were studied. The Zoning Commission appreciates all their

work and has incorporated much of their data and many of their recommendations into this document. What follows is:

**THE COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN UPDATE**

**2010-2040**

**FOR COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP, LORAIN COUNTY, OHIO**

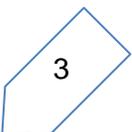
**TOWNSHIP TRUSTEES**

**DICK HEIDECKER  
MIKE MUSTO  
Dale Rundle  
Rita Plata, Fiscal Officer**

**Zoning Commission**

**Martin Antos  
Frank Berg  
Linda Mattern  
Peter Michaelis  
Dennis Ross  
Mark Terlep  
Jeffrey Tolle  
Kathy Jones, Minute Taker**

**Zoning Inspector  
Robert Eichenberg**



## II. BACKGROUND AND ANALYSES

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The Comprehensive Plan for Columbia Township has been prepared after extensive research of past and present conditions and analysis of the trends and implications apparent in that information. This work not only addresses issues within the Township, but looks beyond the Township to the region of which it is a part. The local impacts of regional development trends and decisions have been acknowledged and taken into account in preparing a realistic local plan.

### HISTORY:

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At the request of the Zoning Commission, Mr. Robert Macintyre, a local historian, prepared A Brief Overview of the History of Columbia Township. With the gratitude of the Commission, his text is attached as Appendix A.

From the perspective of community planning and development, the description of Columbia's history is instructive. The earliest plan for the Township, assumed to have been ".....drawn in Connecticut before they knew anything of their land....", contains a lesson in the importance of performing research before making a plan for the future of the community - given that the plan laid out several home sites in the middle of the Rocky River! That early plan did recognize the potential of the elevated land located between the two major watercourses as the site for the center of the community and the highest density of development. (At that time, this "high density" divided the center four "great blocks" into only 25 lots of approximately 25 acres each!)

The founding and original settlement of the Township occurred as a result of families seeking new homes and new land, at that time as part of the westward expansion of the nation. It is interesting to compare that migration to the current trend of southward expansion of the nearby urban/suburban area. The limited transportation technologies of that day resulted in very slow population growth and development. Today, the expansion of high-speed highways in the region is fueling the movement of residences and workplaces out from the urban core into the hinterland areas - which include Columbia Township.

Over time, a variety of economic activities have grown and then declined in the Township, many of them, such as farms, stone quarrying, and greenhouses, based on consumption of local natural resources. The current economic life of Columbia is less connected to the characteristics and resources of the land. The dominant economic resource now appears to be access to various parts of the regional labor market. As accessibility increases, via highway widening and the relocations of job sites outward from the urban core, the attractiveness of Columbia as a place of residence also increases.

### POPULATION:

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Population growth in Columbia Township has varied over the past 30 years, with a rapid increase during the 1970's (756 additional persons or a 13.2% increase) followed by a significantly slower rate of increase during the 1980's (100 additional persons or a 1.5% increase). In the inter-census period since 1990, however, housing construction has surged, indicating that population growth is again on the increase.

It is anticipated that several factors will contribute to continued population increases in Columbia Township through at least the year 2020. First, the pattern of regional sprawl is extending through and past the communities that abut Columbia: Strongsville, Olmsted Falls, and Olmsted Township. These communities experienced high rates of growth in the 1980's that are

continuing in the 1990's. Columbia is thus in a position to experience the effects of sprawl as those communities are "built out" and the suburban pioneers continue to seek less crowded areas for new homes.

Second, the regional highway pattern has been expanded in a manner that accommodates (and/or encourages and supports) the regional sprawl pattern. This has contributed to relocation of job opportunities outward from the urban core into locations more easily accessed from far-flung residential communities, such as Columbia Township, which are even further from the core. Other amenities supportive of and attractive to residential growth are also being developed in close proximity to Columbia, such as the new SouthPark Center, an enclosed regional shopping center in Strongsville.

Columbia Township is located in the eastern part of Lorain County, one of the counties along Lake Erie located immediately to the west of Cleveland that is considered part of the Cleveland Metropolitan Area. Columbia Township could be described as a suburban community with a slow pattern of growth that continues to deal with the typical rural/urban interface issues that are common throughout the urbanizing areas of Ohio<sup>1</sup>. As people continue to move from urban areas to the more rural areas development issues come to the forefront in most local government discussions. Stress and strain on community services such as police, fire and rescue, roads, water, drainage and sewer along with schools, libraries and recreation begin to occur as land continues to develop. The demand for other services increases as people continue to move to more rural areas. There becomes a need to have commercial and other convenient services within close proximity to residents. In efforts to retain and improve upon the economic base of the community industrial areas are identified. Eventually citizens realize the need to develop a plan for action or update old plans to address current issues and to try to assure that development does not occur haphazardly. This is the situation that currently exists in Columbia Township. Having gone through the development of a Comprehensive Land Use Plan in 1999, the community once again in 2006 has gone through a process to update the comprehensive land use plan.

Lorain County was established in 1822. The 492.6 square mile area of land located in the northeastern part of the State of Ohio is named for the French Province of Lorraine. Columbia Township is one of 18 townships that comprise Lorain County. It is located in the eastern part of the county. The 2000 county population was estimated at 284,664. The Columbia Township population in 2000 was 6,912. The estimated population for 2003, which is the latest estimate available from the U.S. Census, has the population for the township at 7,036.<sup>2</sup> The Population in Columbia Township is primarily white with very little measurable diversity.

Columbia Township is currently seventh out of the eighteen townships in terms of population growth. Historically the township population grew rapidly from 1950 to 1960, continued this pattern from 1960 to 1970 but began to slow down from 1970 to 1980. The population in the township continued a slower pace from 1980 to 1990. From 1990 to 2000 the Township population increased by almost 1,000. Because of the lack of sanitary sewer availability in residential zoned areas the rate of growth has slowed somewhat due to the smaller number of homes being built in the community. Based on the population growth pattern that has evolved in the township along with the possibility of numerous housing starts each year the population is expected to grow at a rate of ten percent (10%) over the next decade. Available population projections indicate that the population of the township in 2020 will be 8,446 or 1,410 more people than what are currently estimated to reside in the township.<sup>3</sup>

Table I provides a historical record of population growth for Columbia Township. Table II provides most recent population trends for the Township based on U.S. Census estimates.

**Table I**  
**Population Growth By Decade** **1920-2000 Columbia Township**  
**Lorain County, Ohio**

<u>Decade</u>	<u>Population</u>		
<b>1920</b>	<b>988</b>	<b>1930</b>	<b>1141</b>
<b>1940</b>	<b>1574</b>	<b>1950</b>	<b>2561</b>
<b>1960</b>	<b>4474</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>5738</b>
<b>1980</b>	<b>6494</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>6594</b>
<b>2000</b>	<b>6912</b>	<b>2010</b>	*

**Source: U.S.Census Bureau**  
\* This will be updated with 2010 census

**Table II**  
**Population Trends**  
**Columbia Township, Lorain County, Ohio**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Population</u>
<b>2000</b>	<b>6,912</b>
<b>2001</b>	<b>6,926</b>
<b>2002</b>	<b>6,918</b>
<b>2003</b>	<b>7,036</b>

**Source: U. S. Census**

**HOUSING:**

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Columbia Township is a community that consists primarily of single family owner occupied housing. A total of two thousand, five-hundred and sixty two (2562) total housing units currently exist in the township according to Township records. According to the 2000 U.S. Census two hundred and twenty-two (222) or 9.3% of the total occupied housing units in the township were renter occupied. Over ninety-seven percent (97.4%) of the single family dwelling units are owner occupied. The vacancy rate for both owner and renter occupied housing is 2.7%.

A total of 507 new homes were constructed from 1990 to 2003 which averages out to thirty six a year. The new housing starts for 2002 and 2003 were higher than this average. There were sixty-seven (67) homes built in 2002 and fifty-one (51) homes built in 2003.

Table III provides a breakdown by age of the householders in Columbia Township. This table presents a significant point to note. The two age brackets that have the largest number of householders, 35 to 44 years and 45 to 54 years, will obviously be aging. If current national trends continue these aging "baby boomers" will be looking for housing alternatives other than large lot, single family housing in the future.

**Table III**  
**Age of Householders in Columbia Township**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
15 to 24 Years	29	1.2%
25 to 34 Years	252	10.6%
35 to 44 Years	629	26.3%
45 to 54 Years	645	27.0%
55 to 64 Years	389	16.3%
65 and over	444	18.6%

**Source: 2000 U.S. Census**

The residential market activity from January 1, 2004 to March 31, 2004 was reviewed as part of the comprehensive land use planning process. The number of residential properties listed and the average price for these listings were as follows:

**Table IV**  
**Listed Properties and Average Price**  
**Jan 1, 2004-Mar 31, 2004**

<b># Properties</b>	<b>Value</b>
<b>26</b>	<b>\$ 268,624</b>
<b>25</b>	<b>\$ 231,369</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>\$1,200,000</b>

There were twenty five titles transferred during the above time period with the average housing price at \$180,153. The average days on the market for single family housing in the Township is eighty-eight days.

The available housing supply for this same period was also reviewed. The price ranges where a lack of supply of housing exists in the Township are at the \$157,900 to \$218,000 and \$235,000 to \$270,000 range. Price ranges where surpluses exist are between \$102,900 to \$134,900 and \$325,000 to \$345,000. The price range where the highest percentage of average list prices fall are between \$325,000 to \$345,000<sup>4</sup>.

Development pressures from the communities that surround Columbia Township continue to present a climate of housing demand in the community. The township continues to see interest from developers to build in the area. However, with current limitations due to sewerage requirements in the township, no new subdivisions are likely to be developed unless sewer lines are extended. An increase in the number of housing starts other than what is currently occurring in the township is not likely to occur in the immediate future. And finally, as long as current conditions apply, the township will likely continue to see requests for annexations into adjoining communities where sewer is available. Overall, there is a fairly healthy stable housing scenario that currently exists in the Township.

## ECONOMY:

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The local economy is strongly integrated with that of the surrounding region, to the extent that it is difficult to isolate elements which clearly belong to Columbia Township. Census data indicated in 1990 that 3,559 employed persons resided in the Township, an increase of 7% over the 1980 data. 82% of these persons reported that their employment was outside of Lorain County (and obviously outside of Columbia Township). Another 19% reported working within Lorain County (which would include employment both within the Township and, more likely, employment in the larger employment centers in the northerly parts of the County.) It can be assumed from this information that the Township is largely a bedroom community, relying on the region for income-generating jobs. The median income of Township households (\$41,192 in 1990) is significantly higher than for Lorain County as a whole (\$21,371 in 1990).

Evidence of economic activity in the Township is of three types:

- Remnants of formerly predominant agricultural activities, including field crops, some dairy, and several extensive greenhouse operations (still vastly reduced from the previous extent of this industry).
- Several industrial businesses concentrated in the west-central area, including warehousing, light production, and related uses.
- Limited commercial activity, mostly serving the local market, located in small areas along SR 82 and along Sprague Road.

## ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES AND RESOURCES:

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The environmental characteristics of Columbia Township are critical elements of the community's character as evidenced by the statements of residents in the 1995 Zoning Survey. These characteristics are also documented in the various maps and studies of natural resources reviewed in preparation of this document.

*General Landscape Features.* Most areas of the Township presently have an open, rural appearance resulting from: deeply-setback residences on large lots; extensive areas of untended brush and weeds along the frontages and tree lines; undeveloped frontages between areas of developed frontages; extensive undeveloped "backlands" located behind the developed frontages in the interior areas of the existing blocks; extensive wooded areas along the Rocky River, Plum Creek, and their tributaries; evidence of agricultural activity, including crops and livestock, a few barns and other agricultural outbuildings; the narrow, rolling characteristics of the rural roadways; and the typical "township section" roads with ditches, gravel berms, and no curbs.

The overall development pattern is also an important characteristic of the community, i.e.: a "concentration" of public properties and uses in the center of the Township surrounded by sparsely settled residential developments along the frontages of major roads interspersed with agricultural and wooded areas.

## TOPOGRAPHY;

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Columbia Township exhibits several topographic variations which are not only important visual features, but which have significant implications for development and for the impacts of development upon the natural environment.

The Township's highest point is an elevation of approximately 940 feet located in the southeast corner (intersection of Marks and Boston Road). The lowest elevations, approximately 760 feet, occur in the northeastern corner where the Rocky River departs the Township.

The most obvious topographic feature is the West Branch of the Rocky River which flows through the center of the Township from south to north within a broad, flat floodplain varying in width from roughly 600 feet at its narrowest to nearly 4,000 feet at its widest. While its points of entry and exit at the north and south borders of the Township are approximately five miles apart, the West Branch travels nearly 9.5 miles in its flat, circuitous, meandering course. This pattern is the result of the river's very level bottom and slow rate of flow. Almost all of the West Branch tributaries flow to the Branch from the east side and almost none from the west. This pattern results in all of the drainage of the easterly 40% of the Township (plus areas of westerly Strongsville) being collected and drained through this limited waterway.

The West Branch is noted for slow, shallow movement with limited volume during most seasons of the year and quick, high volume flooding during wet periods. The broad and meandering floodplain area is a critical, although limited, resource for the storage and detention of storm water, to the protection and benefit of areas both within and downstream of Columbia, (i.e., City of Olmsted Falls and City of Berea). The Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Cleveland Southwest Planning Area (USEPA, July 1984) reported that the Rocky River exhibits "...pronounced flow extremes due to stream slope, surrounding bedrock, general absence of lakes or wetlands along the stream..." resulting in poor water storage capacity. "The general stream flow pattern is one of high peak discharges during flooded conditions and lower sustained stream flow at other times." It is interesting to note that this report indicated concern, in the Executive Summary, for potential adverse impacts during low flow periods of inter basin transfer of water (i.e., the input of potable water from the local watershed and output of waste water into a foreign watershed via sanitary sewers) from the Rocky River watershed into the Cuyahoga River watershed (where the outfall for NEORSD's Southerly Treatment Plant is located).

The next most obvious topographic feature of the Township is the course of Plum Creek, another very flat and shallow watercourse that also flows through Columbia from south to north and drains nearly 55% of the Township. This creek is accompanied by a wide, flat floodplain varying in width from approximately 250 to 1200 feet. Plum Creek flows through the very flat, poorly drained central and western areas of Columbia.

(Detailed information regarding the topography of the Township was evaluated on the West View, Ohio Quadrangle, photo revised 1985, prepared by the U.S. Geological Survey. The location of the floodplains of the Rocky River and of Plum Creek is designated on the Columbia Township Zoning Map, as adopted April 21, 2009, prepared by the Lorain County Planning Commission.)

## WETLANDS:

Given the relatively level topography, natural drainage is impeded in many areas of the Township, resulting in natural wetland areas. Wetlands of several types occur throughout the Township on both the flat, poorly drained, central areas and on the numerous tributary watercourses. These areas have been identified on maps of the National Wetlands Inventory. (Detailed information regarding the wetlands of the Township was evaluated on the National Wetland Inventory Map, drawn on the West View, Ohio Quadrangle, prepared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.)

There is a large concentration of approximately 250 acres of palustrine-type wetlands in the area located south of SR 82, west of the Rocky River, north of Akins Road, and east of Plum Creek. An extension of this same system of wetlands is located on the north side of SR 82. Both the NWI Map and the 1985 USGS map indicate numerous small bodies of water in this area and a small intermittent stream tributary to Plum Creek.

The Comprehensive Land Use Plan Update of 2001 prepared by the Lorain County Community Development Department went beyond reporting on the existing environmental conditions within Columbia Township and provided information on percentages of types of land use that existed at the time. For example, in 2001 over thirty-seven percent (37.5%) of land within the township was agriculture while over twenty-nine percent (29.3%) was woodland and slightly over eighteen percent (18.1%) was rural residential.<sup>5</sup> Table V below provides a best estimate of current land use for the township.

**Table V**

<b>Types of Land Use</b>	<b><u>Acres</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b>Residential</b>		
High Density Residential	595	
Rural Residential	14100	<b>89%</b>
<b>Total Residential</b>	<b>14695</b>	
<b>Commercial</b>		
Sprague Road	50	
East River/SR	10	
Community Center Commercial	60	
<b>Total Commercial</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Industrial</b>		
West	1000	
<b>Total Industrial</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Parks and Public Uses</b>		
Central Township Park	100	
Metropark	490	
Schools, Parks, Cemetery	95	
<b>Total Parks/Public</b>	<b>685</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>Total Land Area</b>	<b>16500</b>	<b>100%</b>

## REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES:

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Over the past few years, observers of regional development patterns have been increasingly critical of the continued sprawl of housing, commercial areas, offices, industrial complexes, highways, and utilities in the Greater Cleveland and Akron areas. This areal expansion has occurred despite relatively flat regional population trends. Population, housing, jobs, and infrastructure investment are thus spreading outward into formerly rural areas at the expense of the older urban and inner-suburban areas. Numerous problems have resulted from sprawl - in both the communities "sprawled to" and those "sprawled from". In the "sprawled from" communities, these include declining tax bases, increased racial and economic segregation, and underutilized, under-supported infrastructure. In the "sprawled to" communities, these problems include increased demand for services and infrastructure improvements, need for tax increases, loss of community character, and environmental degradation.

Recognition of these impacts has resulted in efforts regionally and locally to investigate the causes and impacts of sprawl and to identify methods for managing future growth and maintenance in all communities to the benefit of the entire region.

Columbia Township is located on the edge of the regional sprawl pattern, with rapidly growing communities located to its east (Strongsville) and to its north (Olmsted Falls). The Township is thus poised to be a community that either contributes to and is impacted by - or deflects and limits - the regional sprawl pattern.

## SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES:

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Recognizing that land use impacts do not respect political boundaries, the plans and zoning maps of abutting communities have been reviewed to identify intended patterns of development and to assess their potential impacts on land use in Columbia Township. The existing and planned developments of these communities have been taken into account in developing Columbia's Plan.

**City of Strongsville:** Strongsville has welcomed or aggressively pursued growth of its residential, commercial, and industrial areas for many years. Notable in the current development milieu is the SouthPark Mall and associated commercial projects now under construction at the intersection of I-71 and SR 82, just 3.5 miles from the east limit of Columbia Township.

New Strongsville developments are also occurring near the boundary with Columbia. On the northern half of this boundary, extensive residential development continues to occur in the Prospect and Marks Road areas. While these developments are residential in nature, they are permitted in Strongsville at nearly twice the density permitted in Columbia. Strongsville's residential zoning extends along the northern third of the border and thus, single family residential development is expected to continue in this area.

Along the southern two thirds of the boundary, industrial projects are underway, primarily in the Foltz Industrial Parkway. The entire area (with the exception of a small area at the southerly corner) is zoned for industrial development, including the frontages on the east

side of Marks Road. These frontages face Columbia Township properties which are currently zoned for residential use.

Developments in the City of Strongsville are constructed with full public water and sanitary sewer improvements. Where such developments abut Columbia, therefore, they create the potential for the extension of sanitary sewers into the Township.

**City of Olmsted Falls:** Review of the Olmsted Falls Zoning Code and Zoning Map indicates a policy of permitting development at relatively high densities (detached single family on 12,000 and 20,000 sq. ft. lots, and attached units with a minimum land area of 8,000 sq. ft. per unit) in the areas south of the Ohio Turnpike, abutting Columbia Township. Given that these areas are isolated from the core of the City, that access to major highways is relatively limited, and that commercial goods and services are relatively distant, the land use logic of this policy is questionable. Of concern in this analysis is the positioning of these significant densities and their impacts along the northerly border of rural Columbia (recognizing that Columbia's Westview Park Allotment, a small area which is among the oldest and most dense subdivisions in the Township, is also located in a portion of this area of Sprague Road).

The only non-residential zoning districts along this border are approximately 10 acres zoned for "convenience commercial" at Fernwood Drive, and roughly 20 acres zoned for "industrial manufacturing" west of Columbia Road. These two areas roughly coincide with "highway business" districts zoned on the south side of Sprague in Columbia Township.

**Olmsted Township:** Olmsted Township made available to the Columbia Zoning Commission a Draft Master Plan, dated March 1994. That plan indicates the intent to maintain relatively low density single family residential development (minimum lot size 40,000 square feet) along the entire area bordering Columbia Township. It also makes several references to the desire for the extension of water and sanitary sewer service in order to promote development. It should be recognized that the City of Olmsted Falls has annexed areas of Olmsted Township in this area and has subsequently zoned them for higher density residential development. Based on these precedents, there is potential for further annexation and density increases north of Sprague Road near Columbia.

**Liverpool Township:** This northerly township of Medina County has zoned most of its northeast quadrant, abutting Columbia, for industry, limited manufacturing, and research. This area also includes some existing residential areas which are zoned for their continuation. Properties along the westerly half of the border are zoned for single family development at densities of minimum 2.0 acres per unit without water and sewer and 1.0 acre with utilities.

**Eaton Township:** Eaton Township abuts the entire westerly border of Columbia. Most of this border area is zoned for single family development (minimum 1.0 acre lots). The exception is the industrial district located between the north side of SR 82 and the railroad right-of-way, contiguous with the westerly edge of Columbia's industrial district.

**Other Relevant Regional Plans:** Several other regional plans address Columbia or abutting areas and are relevant to this local plan.

**Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (NEORS).** This regional sanitary utility provides collection and treatment for most of central and southerly Cuyahoga County and for Richfield in Summit County. Studies undertaken by NEORS in the early 1980's included evaluations of the potential for extending

service to Columbia Township. The "selected plan" in this report illustrates the route of a sanitary sewer along Sprague Road from the Westpark package plant east to Strongsville.

A letter from Columbia Township Trustees, dated January 23, 1984, states: "Columbia Township, Lorain County, respectfully requests that the Township be removed from any consideration to participate or be a party to the west leg of the Southwest Interceptor."

**Lorain County Association of Township Trustees and Clerks:** The Lorain County Rural Wastewater Feasibility Study was prepared in 1996 to evaluate the feasibility of providing sanitary sewer service to the areas of Lorain County without sewers (particularly those more densely populated and potentially economically feasible to serve) via a rural wastewater authority. A principal assumption of this study is that the authority would not be involved in treating wastewater, i.e., it would rely on agreements and connections to other existing sanitary sewers and their treatment facilities. The study illustrates the potential for extending service to all of Columbia Township via interconnection to the NEORSO trunk sewer at SR252 and Sprague Road.

NOACA is currently preparing a feasibility study for commuter rail corridors in northeastern Ohio. An earlier concept (by RTA) identified a preferred corridor utilizing the rail that passes through the southeast corner of the Township.

Various NOACA documents have also included the widening of Marks Road south of SR 82 and the widening of SR 82 from West River Road to the Cuyahoga County line.

**Lorain County Metro Parks:** The County park system presently operates 9 reservations with over 6000 acres. The 1996 Strategic Plan includes the recommendation "To work with the citizens of Columbia Station to meet the long-term goal of acquiring park land for the region."

## UTILITIES:

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As noted in the previous section addressing housing projections, the Lorain County Health Department was maintaining a limited approval of new septic systems. Of greater significance is the nature of the post-moratorium regulations, particularly those which determine the minimum lot size for individual septic systems. At this time the standards are still being reviewed. These standards may have a great impact on the potential development density of the Township without sanitary sewers.

One subdivision in the Township is currently served by package treatment plants:

- Plum Creek Subdivision

Subsequent to the publication of the previously noted Lorain County Rural Wastewater Feasibility Study, Columbia Township was asked to make a decision regarding its participation in a rural sanitary sewer authority. Public reaction was overwhelmingly vocal and negative to the proposal. Over 400 residents attended a public meeting sponsored by the Township Trustees to present and discuss the matter. The Trustees have formally declined to join the proposed authority.

## COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES:

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Columbia is served by several public and semipublic facilities which are primarily located in the central area of the Township. These include the Columbia Schools, a county branch library (located in a structure owned by the Township), Township Hall, Township Garage, Township Cemetery, Township Park, and several churches. The locations of these facilities clustered in the center of the community create an important community social focus.

## EXISTING LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS:

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The existing land use and development patterns of Columbia Township are typical for a traditionally rural area which is slowly becoming a more densely-populated residential community. Existing residential development is essentially of three types: (a) several older, relatively dense residential subdivisions with streets typically in rectilinear grid patterns, accessing major roads; (b) several newer, lower density residential subdivisions platted with new streets in curvilinear patterns with cul-de-sacs; (c) and the dominant development form, that is, frontage lot splits along all major existing roads. Relatively little of the residentially zoned back land has been developed.

Commercial development is scattered in three or four concentrations along each of Sprague Road and SR 82. Uses in these areas are primarily dependent on the limited local market for convenience goods and services.

Industrial development is located in the west-central area of the Township, primarily with frontage on SR 82 and, to a limited extent, along portions of Station and Root Roads.

## EXISTING TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM:

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Transportation has a critical influence on the nature and rate of development of the community. The locations and conditions of regional highways determine the accessibility of the community to and from other parts of the region and influence the attractiveness of the community for residential use and other types of development. The structure and conditions of the local roadways affect the local quality of life and internal functioning of the community for residential, commercial, and industrial activities.

**Regional Access:** Freeways are the primary collectors and dispersers of traffic in the Greater Cleveland/Akron area. They facilitate suburban residential and commercial development, with freeway interchanges being indicators and precursors of new subdivision activity and of increased traffic on local roads. Given these regional trends, it is appropriate to recognize Columbia Township's location relative to the region's freeways.

The freeway nearest to Columbia Township is the Ohio Turnpike which has relatively little direct impact on the Township because its nearest interchanges are located where it crosses other freeways, i.e., at I-71 north of Strongsville and at I-480/SR10 in North Ridgeville.

Of greater importance are the nearer existing and planned interchanges on I-71, I-480, and SR 10. These include:

- SR 10 and SR 82/SR 57, SR 10 and Grafton Road (Eaton and Carlisle Townships): These existing interchanges are located approximately 6 miles from the west border of the Township and provide a relatively distant but direct connection for SR 82 (the main east-west highway in the Township) to the freeway serving central Lorain County.
- SR 10 and SR 83 (actually Lorain Road/Chestnut Ridge Road in North Ridgeville): This existing interchange (which is located to accommodate future relocation of SR 83), is located less than three miles from the Township line, but due to street patterns requires at least a 4 mile drive to reach the northwest corner of the Township from SR 10.
- I-480 and Stearns Road (in North Olmsted): This interchange, located 3 miles north of the Township, provides relatively direct access to the northwest quadrant, although the current conditions of Stearns Road, Schady Road, and Sharp Road limit the attractiveness of this route. Extension of Stearns south to Sprague is shown in the Olmsted Township Draft Master Plan dated March 1994. This potential connection could have a significant impact on the attractiveness of the northern half of the Township for future residential development.
- I-480 and SR 252 (in North Olmsted at Great Northern Mall): This interchange is located 4 miles north of the Township and provides a direct connection from I-480 (through Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township) for the major north/south route of the Township. The necessity for traffic to pass through Olmsted Falls limits, to a degree, the usefulness of this route for accessing the northern areas of the Township.
- I-71 and SR 42/Sprague Road (in Middleburg Heights): This interchange is presently 4 miles distant from the east Township line via SR 42, Eastland, and Albion Roads in Strongsville. It provides good access from I-71 into the northeast quadrant of the Township. Access would be markedly increased if the more direct proposed Sprague Road extension is ever constructed.
- I-71 and SR 82 (in Strongsville): This interchange has recently undergone massive reconstruction to accommodate anticipated traffic for the SouthPark mall retail development and other anticipated traffic demand in the Strongsville area. It provides the most direct access to Columbia Township from the east at a distance of 3.3 miles from the Township line.
- I-71 and Boston Road (in Strongsville/Brunswick): This proposed interchange, located 3.7 miles east could provide a direct link from I-71 along the southern edge of Strongsville to the southeast corner of Columbia Township via Boston Road.
- I-71 and SR 303 (in Brunswick): This existing interchange is an 8-mile drive from the southerly border of the Township and provides a relatively distant link to the southerly area of the Township.

**Local Transportation:** Within the Township, the existing road system includes:

- the state highways, including SR82 and SR252;

- the county roads, including Co Rd 10 (Sprague Road), Co Rd 135 (Osborne Road), Co Rd 24 (Root Road from Sprague Road to Osborne Road), Co Rd 60 (West River Road), and Co Rd 61 (Station Road); and
- the township roads including Mitchell Road (T-139), Osborne Rd (T-135 from Root to Hawke), Root Road from Osborne Road to Station Road, Joyce Drive, Ann Drive, Anderson Street, Nichols Road (T-136), Folley Road (T-137), Jaquay Road (T-138), Riverview Drive, Plainview Court, Thompson (paper street), Charter (paper street), Burton (paper street), Copopa Trail, Snell Road (T-129), Boone Road (T-130), Forestview Drive, Redfern Road (T-128), west side of Marks Road (T-9), Parkwood, Greenview, Westwood, Glenwood, Valley View, Fremont, Emerson, Dupont, Colfax, Bryant, Aldridge, Janell Drive, Louise Lane, Clarke Road (T-133), Emmons Road (T-131), Squire Road (T-132), Boston Road (T-13), Akins Road (T-134), Briarwood, Churchill, Crocker Road (T-8), Forsythia, Honeysuckle, Lydia, Frederick, Michelle (paper street), Eddie Lane, Plum Creek, Capel Road (T-121), east side of Hawke Road (T-140), West Rim Dr., Heather Lane, Fairway Dr., Lafayette, Mitchell Road, River Glen Road, Eagle Point Court., Saddle Horn Circle, Bridle Path, Trotter Lane, Crosstie Trail, Castlebar Court, Andes Drive, Rolling Brook Lane, Hidden Oaks Drive, Crocker's Landing, Landing Lane, Cobblestone Trail, Sandstone Trail, Glencove Trail, Springfield Circle, and River Glen.

**Traffic Counts:** Twenty-four hour traffic volumes are reported in ODOT Traffic Survey Reports for 1988 and 1992. These evidence the importance of SR 82 as a major east/west sub regional route and of SR252 as a major north/south route. Significantly higher volumes are reported, however, outside of Columbia on sections of these same highways in locations to the east (in Strongsville) and to the north (in Olmsted Falls).

**General Analysis:** Analysis of the foregoing information brings to attention several transportation issues that will be important in the future of Columbia Township:

- the southward extension of Stearns Road or the connection of Sprague to I-71), and the creation of new interchanges (i.e., at I-71 and Boston Road) are likely to increase the accessibility and attractiveness. In terms of regional access, the Township is fortunately located in a quiet spot within the regional freeway traffic pattern. I-480 is a bit far to the north and I-71 is a bit far to the east to have a direct and immediate impact on development in Columbia due to the existing capacities of the roadways providing access from those interchanges. Capacity increases in those connecting roadways (i.e., widening of SR 82 in Strongsville), the construction of new roadway segments which create direct new routes (i.e., of Columbia for additional development. All of these "improvements" are located outside of the Township and are likely to be implemented in response to traffic demands in the abutting communities. The potential impacts on Columbia are not likely to be considered unless Columbia makes them known to the County Commissioners, NOACA, and ODOT.
- The Township is relatively well served by north-south roads and by east-west routes on either side of the Rocky River. The Rocky River, however, presents a formidable obstruction to east-west movement in the center of the Township. Only one crossing is available within the community - on SR 82. The Sprague Road Bridge, on the northern edge of Columbia, is the next nearest crossing. This pattern focuses east-west traffic onto the

two north-south roads on either side of the River and onto the one major crossing. SR 252 and West River Road, together with the SR 82 crossing are therefore not only critical to movement within the community, but to the patterns of development and social cohesion within the community. The inherent limitations of this pattern suggest that every effort should be made to limit the amount of locally-generated traffic in the interest of ensuring the continuing functioning of this crossing. Maintenance and protection of these transportation elements is essential.

- Two rail lines pass through Columbia. Although the existing industrial land use and zoning pattern was devised to accommodate the potential for industrial rail sidings, none have been developed. The rail lines, in fact, today pose more of an obstruction to local traffic movement than a benefit to economic activity.
- Local observation of traffic activity indicates one area of significant concern with regard to congestion and safety. The Sprague Road area, particularly in the vicinity of SR252 and West River, is heavily congested due to its position as a major east/west route and due to continued development of high density housing and traffic generation in areas annexed to the City of Olmsted Falls.
- SR 82/Boone Road Intersection. The intersections of Boone Road north and south of SR 82 are also offset. As the residential areas served by these local collectors increase, the volumes of traffic conflicting in this offset with the high speed state highway traffic will also increase. Acquisition of the needed right-of-way to resolve this misalignment is recommended.

### III. COMMUNITY GOALS

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The Task Force that was appointed to work on this comprehensive land use plan update reviewed the community goals that included in the Comprehensive Plan for Columbia Township in 1999. As part of the goal setting process the task force was also asked to go through what is referred to as a S.W.O.T. Analysis.<sup>6</sup> An S.W.O.T. analysis is a method for assessing the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of a community or organization.

#### GENERAL GOALS:

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- Retain and protect the rural character and high quality of life enjoyed by Township residents, including the physical attributes of open space, long views from highways, natural vegetation such as large wooded areas, access to natural areas, historic features, rolling and twisting roads, lack of traffic and noise.
- Recognize the position and role of the Township within the regional development pattern together with the local impacts of regional decisions and the regional impacts of local decisions. Contributing towards maintaining the Township as an area of viable, mixed density, attractive rural hinterlands.
- Preserve the integrity of the historical boundaries of the community.

#### HOUSING:

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- Promote high level maintenance of existing single family properties in order to maintain property values throughout the Township and to support the tax base.
- Encourage predominantly moderate to low density single family housing development consistent with the character of the community.
- Create locations for limited higher density development - which may include clustered single family and attached single family units - to serve the needs of elderly and others.

#### ECONOMY:

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- Ensure a sound tax base for the future community identifying areas for industrial development.
- Encourage the development of small, local service businesses in viable, attractive commercial districts.
- Promote attractive business and industrial areas with controlled signs, noise, lighting, parking, landscaping and high quality maintenance of sites and structures.
- Promote Ohio Route 82 as the civic, service, commercial corridor of the Township.

### LAND USE:

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- Retain predominantly single family, low density residential areas with higher density areas along Township boundaries.
- Promote clustered single family housing where appropriate to reduce the visual and environmental impacts of housing development and to protect open space and natural resources.
- Create a Community Center area as a focus for services and facilities serving the entire community.
- Preserve the historical elements of the Township within the Ohio Route 82 Corridor.
- Establish viable industrial areas for clean uses compatible with the character of the community in support of the tax base.

### TRANSPORTATION:

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- Where new local roads are constructed, encourage design which facilitates the interconnection of local roads for the purposes of travel efficiency and safety.
- Promote the development of a Township-wide system of bikeway/walkways which facilitate access to the community center area.

## COMMUNITY FACILITIES:

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- Encourage the construction of modest but attractive public facilities in the Community Center area consistent with the character, needs and tax resources of the community.
- Encourage the Columbia School Board to continue its policy of focusing facilities in the where they can be most accessible to the greatest number of residents, best take advantage of other community facilities, and contribute to the overall plan of the community.
- Promote the development of local parks in key locations to serve the residents of the community and to preserve critical environmental resources. Promote the expansion and improvement of the existing township park as the central park for community activities and active sports.
- Promote the interconnection of open spaces, parks and public properties wherever possible.

## UTILITIES:

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- Encourage township residents to operate, maintain, and replace private
- septic systems in order to protect their families, neighbors, and the environment from impacts of improperly treated waste and to reduce the likelihood of mandated sanitary sewer installation and its costs. Encourage the Lorain County Health Department to establish mandatory
- inspections and enforcement of septic system operating rules.
- Encourage the Lorain County Health Department and the Ohio EPA to identify and approve methods and design for septic treatments which are feasible for a variety of housing density.
- Encourage the extension of sanitary sewer facilities in limited areas of the Township as a means for promoting and supporting industry, commercial and moderate density housing and public facilities.

## ENVIRONMENT:

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- Promote development which respects the nature and capabilities of the land and natural resources, especially the limitations of:
- depth to bedrock, which affects runoff, function of septic systems, pollution of watercourses
- soil types, which affect septic systems and storm runoff

- rates of storm runoff, which contribute to flooding which may result in safety hazards and property damage
- siltation, which decreases the carrying capacity of drainage ways, impacts water quality and degrades wildlife habitat
- flat grades which cause ponding, obstruct runoff, contribute to flooding, difficulty in design and maintenance of drainage facilities
- pollution of the Rocky River and its tributaries which decreases water quality for man and wildlife and creates health hazards
- wetlands which are essential as valuable plant and wildlife habitat, natural stormwater retention, filters sediment and pollutants
- floodplains which provide natural storm water retention, important plant and wildlife habitat

## IV. COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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The Columbia Township Comprehensive Plan is described and illustrated in the following text and on the attached Comprehensive Plan Map.

### A GUIDE TO DEVELOPMENT:

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The Township Plan has been designed to guide the pattern of the community's development over the next thirty years. The primary objective is to put into place the land uses, transportation facilities, community facilities, infrastructure, and amenities necessary to ensure that Columbia meets the needs of its residents and other property owners as a place to live, work, play, and otherwise participate in the activities of life in the community. A further intent is to preserve and enhance many of the characteristics and amenities of the Township which its residents value.

- The Land Use Plan for Columbia Township is designed:
- To promote the preservation and development of community amenities which
- contribute to the quality of life;
- To acknowledge the likelihood of continued development in the Township and to manage its impacts;
- To minimize, to the extent possible, the impacts of development such as heavy traffic, storm water runoff, and increased demand on public infrastructure and facilities; and
- To preserve, to the greatest possible extent, the existing character of the community in terms of open space, natural resources, and elements of rural character.

To this effect, the Land Use Plan is designed upon and reflects the locations and nature of the existing floodplains, wetlands, watercourses (the Rocky River, Plum Creek, Baker Creek, and their tributaries), the conditions of soils (particularly as they relate to permeability, erodibility, and suitability for septic systems), the existence of quality woodlands, the community's historic development pattern, and other integral features of the community. Where the Land Use Plan identifies such resources, or such resources are identified subsequent to the making of the Plan, it is anticipated that all efforts will be made to ensure that any development of such properties will be designed in a manner which protects or enhances the resources.

The Land Use Plan is also designed with regard for existing local and regional development patterns and roadways. These established man-made elements will have a significant influence on the shape of the future community.

### KEY CONCEPT:

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A key concept of this Plan is the structuring of land uses and other facilities into a traditional pattern consisting of a more active and intensely developed community center serving the needs of less active and moderately developed residential and agricultural surrounding areas.

This pattern has occurred naturally in many communities that developed their core areas much earlier in their histories than Columbia Township. The value of this pattern is associated with "traditional American values" of community and family because of the benefits of community

focus, identity, interaction, and efficiency, which it tends to create. It occurred less strongly in the early history of Columbia Township due to its position among more competitive communities and, in its more recent history, due to its location on the edge of the developing urban area.

Creating or reinforcing the Columbia Township development concept may be complicated by several trends and regional forces which tend to obstruct these community development values. Urban sprawl, that is, the continuing expansion of developed areas out from the urban core into the hinterland, tends to occur in incremental, unstructured fashion. Columbia Township is located directly in the path of this sprawl as evidenced by the densities and congestion existing in neighboring communities to the north and east and by the residential subdivisions under construction in the northeast quadrant of the Township itself. Fortunately, the Ohio Turnpike to the north, the Strongsville industrial park to the east, and the Township's own existing and planned industrial areas on the northwest and southeast represent appropriate limits for these communities.

Associated with sprawl are road improvements that increase access to undeveloped areas. Roads for which it is not responsible and over which it has little control cross the Township, including two state highways and several county roads. Future improvements to these roads may increase pressures for development in densities and locations inconsistent with the local Plan.

Perhaps the most serious threats to shaping the future Township are the limitations of township government within the parameters of the Ohio Revised Code. Within the scheme of the ORC, townships are a limited and lower form of government granted significantly less control over affairs of territorial integrity, land use, subdivision, revenue-raising and other critical powers of community self-determination. Given the aggressive growth of the Township's north and east neighbors, it is only a matter of fortunate geographic and political circumstance that annexations and higher density developments have not yet tattered the fabric of the community's northern and eastern edges. Ensuring the integrity of the community over the next 5-10 years will be a difficult but necessary task to ensure the community of the future envisioned in this Plan.

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN THEMES:

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The Columbia Township Comprehensive Plan incorporates several logical, traditional themes proven to promote a viable, healthy community:

- The Plan promotes a cohesive community, coordinated in development pattern, density, access, and availability of facilities and services.
- Residential densities are planned to accommodate, to a reasonable and compatible extent, the anticipated need for new housing in a variety of forms and densities, in a pattern which contributes to the overall community development concept.
- Commercial developments are planned to meet the convenience retail and service needs of the semi-rural community without duplicating the abundant retail opportunities available via short trips into neighboring communities to larger commercial centers which are designed to serve regional markets.
- Industrial areas are planned as extensions of existing industrial areas to ensure the opportunity for a sound tax base and job opportunities.
- Public open spaces and parks are located near the center of the community where they will provide appropriate settings for public facilities and community activities, be accessible to the entire community.

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**RESIDENTIAL AREAS:**

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Three residential land use areas are provided for, distinguished by densities and locations, with alternative densities available through approved planned developments. Taken together, these areas are proposed for 84% of the community land area.

**Rural Residential Developments:**

The Comprehensive Plan identifies an estimated 12294 acres or 73% of the Township for rural residential development. Within the Rural Residential areas, property owners will be encouraged to develop planned or clustered residential developments with permitted densities of up to one unit per acre however a higher density may be permitted in areas immediately abutting an incorporated municipality subject to approval of a development plan which provides for the preservation of open spaces and other features of value to the community.

Outside of planned developments, standard platting will be permitted at a maximum density of one unit per two acres. Without the local controls and opportunities afforded by a planned development, this density of development is deemed most appropriate.

**Existing Higher Density Developments:**

The Land Use Plan acknowledges the existence of several existing older areas of residential development that were developed at higher densities than acceptable for contemporary development in the Township. These neighborhoods are important elements of the community. It is anticipated that these areas will continue to be used and maintained at the current developed densities.

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**COMMERCIAL AREAS:**

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Three distinct commercial areas are provided for in the Comprehensive Plan. These areas are located to provide convenience goods and services to the community and to through-traffic on the major highways. Altogether, these commercial areas constitute approximately 198 acres or 1% of the area of the community.

The orientations of these proposed commercial land use areas are appropriate for the nature of the anticipated local market. The relatively shallow depths and long frontage have the potential to encourage unattractive and uncoordinated strip-type development if not carefully controlled. The importance of attractive commercial areas, as a critical element of the community's image must be emphasized in developing local zoning guidelines in the implementation of this Plan. Features such as low planter signs, frontage landscaping, deep setbacks and interconnecting parking lots and service alleys, for example, will help to foster coordinated development which minimizes traffic conflict, promotes business activity, and creates an attractive district.

**Route 82 Commercial:**

The primary concentration of commercial use is proposed along SR 82 to a depth of approximately 1000 feet North or South from the road right of way. This area along a primary state highway will provide for local shopping and service needs, supplementing the major shopping facilities available in abutting communities. The intended mix of

uses will include restaurants, gas stations, convenience foods or small grocery stores, auto repair, personal services and similar.

### **Sprague Road Commercial:**

Two commercial areas are indicated along Sprague Road, generally consistent with areas already in commercial use. These areas serve the Sprague Road traffic and meet the local shopping needs of the north end of the Township and the developing areas of the City of Olmsted Falls.

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### **INDUSTRIAL AREAS:**

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The existing industrial area located on the west end of the Township has been configured to provide a direct orientation to SR 82 and to minimize the areas in which industrial uses will impact abutting residential development.

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### **PARKS AND PUBLIC FACILITIES:**

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Approximately 4% of the area of the Township (approximately 715 acres) is identified for parks and public uses. These uses are located in and around the Community Center where they will be most accessible to the planned higher concentrations of residences and centrally located for the entire community. These locations will also be compatible with and supportive of the other community uses (schools, churches, township hall, township recreation) located in this area.

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### **PUBLIC SCHOOL FACILITIES:**

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The Columbia Schools have established a core of facilities at SR 82 and West River Road. This site is centrally located and is an important element of the community's image and social life. The location is also ideal for access to the present and planned Township and County Parks, to the library, and to other community facilities. The School Board has indicated its intent to continue to maintain centralized facilities in this location.

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### **POTENTIAL SITES FOR LORAIN COUNTY METROPARK OR TOWNSHIP PARKS:**

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Subsequent to creation of the core of the River Park, the acquisition of additional areas within the Rocky River flood plain could expand this access. All land areas that become available along the Rocky River should be considered for acquisition for park development within the Lorain County Metroparks. The objective should be to preserve for public use all undeveloped areas of the river valley which is a critical feature of the community and its history.

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### **FUTURE LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS:**

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The Task Force reviewed the current zoning map for Columbia Township and made recommendations for future land use based on all of the information that was discussed and reviewed during the planning process. The Columbia Township Zoning Map numerically identified lots in 2400' Square increments. Starting with Lot 1 in the Northeast corner of the township each of these lots were reviewed and a recommendation as to future land use was made. **(BOLD)** The Columbia Township Zoning Map and the Future Land Use Map for the Township are provided as attachments to this comprehensive land use plan update.

Lot 1	<b>PRDD-1</b> – HBD
Lot 2	<b>PRDD-2</b> - PRDD-1
Lot 3	<b>PRDD-2</b> - R-1
Lot 4	<b>PRDD-2</b> - R-1 – REC
Lot 5	<b>HBD</b> - REC - R-3
Lot 6	<b>HBD</b> - <b>PRDD-2</b> - PRDD-1
Lot 7	PRDD-1 - REC - R-3
Lot 8	R-3
Lot 9	<b>HBD</b>
Lot 10	<b>HBD</b>
Lot 11	<b>HBD</b>
Lot 12	R-3
Lot 13	R-3
Lot 14	R-3 – REC
Lot 15	<b>HBD</b> - REC – PRDD-1 – R-3
Lot 16	<b>HBD</b> - R-3
Lot 17	R-3 – REC
Lot 18	R-3 – REC
Lot 19	R-3 - PRDD-1
Lot 20	<b>PRDD-1</b> – NBD
Lot 21	<b>PRDD-1</b> – NBD
Lot 22	PRDD1 - PRDD-2 - R-3
Lot 23	PRDD-1 – R-3
Lot 24	R-3
Lot 25	<b>HBD</b> - R-3 – REC
Lot 26	<b>HBD</b> - REC – NBD
Lot 27	R-3
Lot 28	R-3
Lot 29	R-3
Lot 30	R-3
Lot 31	R-3
Lot 32	R-3
Lot 33	R-3 – REC
Lot 34	R-3 – REC
Lot 35	<b>HBD</b> - R-3 – HBD
Lot 36	<b>HBD</b> - R-3
Lot 37	R-3
Lot 38	R-3 - PRDD-2
Lot 39	R-3 - PRDD-2
Lot 40	R-3 - HBD - NBD – LI
Lot 41	HBD - LI - HI
Lot 42	R-3 - LI – HI
Lot 43	R-3
Lot 44	R-3
Lot 45	R-3 – NBD
Lot 46	R-3 – NBD
Lot 47	R-3 – REC
Lot 48	R-3 – REC
Lot 49	R-3
Lot 50	R-3
Lot 51	R-3
Lot 52	R-3
Lot 53	R-3

Lot 54	R-3
Lot 55	R-3 - R-2
Lot 56	R-3 - R-2
Lot 57	R-3
Lot 58	R-3 – LI
Lot 59	R-3 - LI – HI
Lot 60	R-3 – HI
Lot 61	R-3
Lot 62	R-3 – HI
Lot 63	LI - HI - R-3
Lot 64	R-3
Lot 65	R-3 - R-2
Lot 66	R-2
Lot 67	R-3
Lot 68	R-3
Lot 69	R-3
Lot 70	R-3
Lot 71	R-3
Lot 72	R-3
Lot 73	R-3
Lot 74	R-3
Lot 75	R-3 - R-2 - HBD – NBD
Lot 76	R-3 - R-2 - HBD – LI
Lot 77	R-3 - LI – HI
Lot 78	R-3 - LI – HI
Lot 79	R-3
Lot 80	R-3
Lot 81	R-3 – HBD
Lot 82	R-3
Lot 83	R-3 – HI
Lot 84	R-3 - LI – HI
Lot 85	LI – HI
Lot 86	LI
Lot 87	R-3
Lot 88	R-3
Lot 89	R-3 – REC
Lot 90	R-3
Lot 91	R-3
Lot 92	R-3 – REC
Lot 93	R-3 – REC
Lot 94	R-3
Lot 95	LI – HI
Lot 96	HI
Lot 97	R-3 - LI – HI
Lot 98	R-3
Lot 99	R-3
Lot 100	<b>PRDD-2</b>

## THOROUGHFARE PLAN:

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Due to generally level topography and the formerly extensive farms, a relatively complete grid of widely spaced roads serves Columbia. It is anticipated that this road pattern will continue to effectively serve the community and support the anticipated land uses satisfactorily over the next 20 years.

Given the extent of the undeveloped areas of the Township, the significant distances between existing roads, and the variety of alternative road patterns that may be created within each large block, the Plan does not present recommendations for all future roads. Recommendations are made, however, for sound planning practices that will enable the Township and the County to ensure that additions to Columbia's road network are properly developed.

This Transportation Plan identifies several specific problem areas which should, however, be addressed during the planning period. It also discusses several policies to which the Township, and the County Planning Commission, should be attentive as the interior areas of the existing large blocks of land are developed.

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### PROBLEM AREAS:

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Several problem areas have been identified in the current transportation system.

**SR 82/Boone Road Intersection:** The intersections of Boone Road north and south of SR 82 are also offset. As the residential areas served by these local collectors increase, the volumes of traffic conflicting in this offset with the high speed state highway traffic will also increase. Acquisition of the needed right-of-way to resolve this misalignment is recommended.

**Private Roads:** Two existing private roads, Andees Drive and Cayuga Drive, have been identified. While private roads are acceptable where established with sufficient legal provisions to ensure safe, continuous operation, maintenance and replacement, many older private roads do not have such controls in place. These roads can become significant problems for the township if they are not adequately maintained by the property owner's dependent upon them for access or if additional development is permitted with frontage on them. Conversion to public roads may be appropriate solutions to these problems if arrangements can be made for improvement consistent with Township road standards..

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### INTERIOR ROADWAY DEVELOPMENT POLICIES:

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As noted in the data and analysis sections of this Plan, most of the Township's development has occurred along the frontages of existing roads. As development pressure increases, it is anticipated that the majority of new development will occur in subdivisions of new streets platted in the interiors of existing blocks. As the development pattern moves into this new mode, it is essential that attention be given to ensuring adequate public access into the interior of these blocks, especially for safety and service vehicles.

**Large Block Thoroughfare Plans:** It is recommended that each major subdivision be required to present a future road concept plan for the large block in which it is being platted. This "large block thoroughfare plan" will establish the basis for approval of the

subdivision's street pattern and the locations of planned stub streets and cul-de-sacs, as well as the locations of future streets interconnecting with or in close proximity to the subject subdivision. Over time, these block plans will contribute to the comprehensive street plan for the Township and County.

**Future Cul-de-sacs:** Limiting the number and length of cul-de-sacs is another important recommended policy. In selected cases, cul-de-sacs can contribute to the design of attractive, private neighborhoods and be effective tools in routing traffic. They are appropriate on certain properties where topography or limited access into abutting developed properties makes interconnection infeasible. They can also, however, inappropriately limit traffic movement, slow safety response, limit neighborhood interaction, create isolation, and increase service and maintenance costs. Thoughtful interconnection of streets is recommended to ensure efficient access, safety, and attractive, functional residential areas.

**Industrial Roads:** In the west industrial area, cul-de-sacs with wide rights-of-way and looping roads will be appropriate to provide access to the interior properties for efficient development.

**SR 82/Akins Road Block:** The block bound by SR 82, West River Road, Akins Road, and Station Road is likely to require an additional east west through road. It will provide local alternate east-west access south of SR 82 and it will provide access into and through the planned residential developments and park areas.

## V. IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

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With completion of the Comprehensive Plan, the real work begins - implementation activities which will make the elements of the Plan a reality.

The following chapter outlines recommended actions. These include many actions which can be taken locally, several which require outreach and cooperation with other communities or regional agencies, and several which will require cooperative or negotiated efforts with landowners and developers of property.

It should be recognized that, while many of the recommended actions can be implemented immediately, others will require time - and certain changes - before they are fully feasible. In this regard, the Plan looks beyond the circumstances of the present and envisions future circumstances which will make possible development in accord with this Plan. It provides for appropriate development and land use in the interim while anticipating and preserving the community's options for the future.

Over the coming years, additional or alternative methods beyond those identified here will be found for implementing this Plan. These innovations should be assessed relative to the objectives of the Plan, adopted as part of the Plan, and implemented. In this way, the Plan and its implementation program will continue to improve and change over time and continue to be a statement of and guide for the community's intended future.

The implementation recommendations are grouped into five categories:

- **Local Legislative Actions** - actions such as adoption of the Plan and of zoning amendments which can be accomplished by the Township.
- **Development Review Practices** - ongoing implementation and administrative activities which can be utilized in the review of developments to ensure their compatibility with the community standards and consistency with this Plan.
- **Infrastructure and Facility Development** - land acquisition and physical improvements necessary to implement the land use and thoroughfare recommendations.
- **Building Local and Regional Support** - promoting resident participation in implementing the Plan, as well as promoting awareness, coordination, and assistance among abutting communities, Lorain County, and regional agencies whose actions may affect the success of Columbia's Plan.
- **Continuous Planning** - continued local reassessment and improvement of planning for the community's land use and thoroughfares.

## LOCAL LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS

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### ADOPT THE PLAN:

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The first; most immediate; and most important implementation action will be adoption of the Comprehensive Plan by both the Zoning Commission and the Township Trustees. This step is critical evidence of acceptance of the Plan as the Township's policy regarding future development.

### PREPARE AND ADOPT AMENDMENTS TO THE ZONING RESOLUTION:

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Subsequent to adoption of the Plan, a number of important amendments to the Zoning Resolution are necessary. Preparation of these amendments, which include additions or changes to both the district regulations and to the Zoning Map itself, should be the top priority for the Zoning Commission.

The following are general recommendations for amendments. It will be the task of the Zoning Commission and Township Trustees to craft the specific details of the amendments appropriate to implement the Plan.

#### **Residential Districts:**

Establish new district regulations to implement the proposed residential densities. These include the "Rural Residential" land use (encouraging developments at project densities of up to one unit per acre or one unit per half acre in areas that immediately abut adjoining incorporated communities), 2 acre lots for standard plats, and a district (such as the current R1) applied to existing, older residential subdivisions with higher than standard densities (with the intent of minimizing the burden of variances upon owners of properties in these areas).

Establish standards for planned developments which require project designs consistent with the objectives of this Plan, including creative and attractive design of housing, preservation of critical environmental resources, control of runoff impacts, preservation and improvement of roadside views, interconnection of walkways and open spaces, efficient roadway layouts, etc. Approval of planned developments at higher densities than for standard platting should be an incentive to provide the community benefits not typically afforded in standard platting.

### COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS:

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Upgrade district regulations for commercial developments to establish standards for signs, landscaping, setbacks, coordinated parking and loading facilities, and other elements of site design which contribute to creating functional, safe, and attractive commercial areas consistent with the objectives of this Plan.

Attention should also be given to standards which encourage gradual improvement in the quality and appearance of the existing commercial areas. The Township should consistently encourage incremental improvements in the conditions of parking lots and access drives, replacement of outdated signs, installation of landscaping, and other changes.

## INDUSTRIAL DISTRICTS:

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Upgrade the district regulations for industrial areas, recognizing that the nature of these areas is anticipated to change over time as demand for these industrial areas increases and the potential for high-value; job-generating industrial uses also increases. Provision of sanitary sewers will radically change the value and potential uses in this area.

Suggested changes include:

- Prohibiting or more strictly controlling uses that have significant environmental impacts and/or open-air operations or storage. Consider establishing Performance Standards for industry.
- Re-evaluating the Heavy Industrial regulations to control the environmental impacts discussed above. Alternatively, consider deleting this district and applying the Light Industrial regulations to all industrial areas.
- Amend the regulations to require site plan review of industrial developments to ensure efficient development, compatibility site-to-site, effective buffering along the edges of the district (particularly abutting residential), and attractive signs and landscaping.

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### AMEND THE ZONING MAP:

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In coordination with the recommended text changes, it will be appropriate for the Township to amend the Zoning Map to more closely coincide with the Land Use element of this Plan and to put into effect the new provisions of the Zoning Resolution.

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### REQUIRE SITE PLAN REVIEW:

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As a means of ensuring development of non-residential properties in a manner consistent with the provisions of the Plan and with the standards of the Zoning Resolution, the Zoning Resolution should be amended to include requirements for the submittal to and review by either the Zoning Inspector or the Zoning Commission, or both, of detailed site plans which delineate the locations and nature of construction of buildings, signs, parking areas and drives, landscaping, buffering, areas of natural vegetation to be preserved, and drainage (including on-site retention).

It is also appropriate to amend the Resolution to provide the opportunity for the Zoning Commission to engage the services of professional planners, engineers, or other appropriate advisors as needed to assist in the review of site plans and rezoning proposals.

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## DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PRACTICES

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Preparation and adoption of the Plan and the recommended changes to the Zoning Resolution and Map establish the expectation and potential for quality development consistent with the Plan. Another necessary ingredient of implementation is the ability to effectively exercise these tools on a project-by-project basis. The following recommendations address the personnel, expertise,

and selected practices effective in meeting these objectives. Continuous upgrading of the Township's capacity to review and negotiate quality development plans will become increasingly necessary as development pressures increase in the coming years.

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## STRENGTHEN ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

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As land values and pressures increase for residential development, applicants/developers will be better prepared with deep pockets and expert assistance, including lawyers and land planners, to ensure that their case prevails. It is important that the Township also carefully prepare its case by carrying out professional review and evaluation of the significant site plans presented to it. This can be accomplished through two related policies:

- Provide continuous training and current resource materials for the Zoning Inspectors, for the Zoning Commission, and for the Township Trustees in matters of township planning and zoning practice in order to ensure their ability to effectively administer, enforce, and update the township's planning and zoning activities.
- Engage the services of planning and zoning professionals, on either a case-by-case or retainer basis, to assist in the review of projects and to make recommendations for their improvement or amendment.

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## SUBDIVISION REVIEWS

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While Ohio law assigns subdivision approval authority to county planning commissions, townships may exercise such review as is necessary to ensure compliance with their zoning regulations. Some Ohio townships have successfully legislated and sustained a limited form of subdivision review within their zoning authority.

The Township should take advantage of the opportunities afforded by the County Subdivision Regulations to review and forward comments regarding subdivision plats. Comments should address compliance with zoning, with this Plan, and with any other concerns relevant to the impact of the proposal upon the community. It should be recognized that, despite the best intent of the County Planning Commission, its ability to be knowledgeable about all areas of a large county are limited, and its review efforts are most effective when assisted by local review and comments.

Given that the County does not have an up to date thoroughfare plan, the Township's comments with regard to street layout and interconnections are especially important. The Township will "inherit" responsibility for maintaining almost all future roads and roadside ditches resulting from subdivisions. The Township should encourage subdivision planning within the "large block thoroughfare plans" discussed in this Plan and encourage the County Planning Commission to consider the "fit" of each additional subdivision within these plans.

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## INFRASTRUCTURE AND FACILITY DEVELOPMENT

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It goes without saying that a major role of the Township is maintaining the community's infrastructure of roads, roadside drainage, and certain public

facilities. The planning, development, and/or acceptance of future infrastructure and facilities is critical to the manner and quality with which the community moves into the future.

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## SANITARY WASTE DISPOSAL

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Safe disposal of human waste is critical to maintaining every community and becomes increasingly troublesome as densities of habitation and commercial and industrial activity increase. Approved technologies in the State of Ohio include on-site septic fields for individual residences, limited on-site fields or treatment facilities for certain non-residential activities, and disposal into publicly managed sanitary sewer and treatment systems. In growing higher density areas, sanitary sewers are the only accepted option.

The majority of homes in Columbia Township rely upon on-site septic fields. Proposals for sanitary sewer service in Columbia Township have not met with the approval of the residents and township trustees. Concerns have been raised about the costs and development impacts of such service, including the loss of local control over the density of development.

Sanitary sewers are not likely to be necessary to support the planned densities in the "rural residential" areas of this plan other than those densities less than two acres, assuming attention to effective maintenance, repair, and occasional replacement of on-site septic systems. This implies individual responsibility for protecting the environment and neighbors from poorly operating systems. The Township should encourage homeowners to properly maintain their septic systems through brochures explaining the necessary operation and repairs and other methods which assist or promote proper operation.

Sanitary sewers are likely to be required for in support of quality industrial development, improved commercial areas (particularly local restaurants), and for moderate density residential uses. Access to a treatment facility will be an extension of existing systems such as Medina Waste Treatment facility in Liverpool Township or NEORSD. Local control of such extensions will be a concern, possibly managed through a local sewer board.

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## RECREATION FACILITIES AND PRESERVES

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Preservation of open spaces and future recreational opportunities has been a key issue in development of this Plan. Several existing locations for such uses have been identified on the Comprehensive Plan. Preservation of these spaces - and others which may be identified as valuable in later amendments to this Plan - will rely on a variety of resources including: Township levies for parkland acquisition and development; limited state and federal grant resources; and the Lorain County Metroparks.

More extensive efforts to preserve open spaces and critical natural areas could occur through a local or regional land trust organization. Land trusts are non-profit organizations which have the resources to acquire land and easements for permanent preservation. Such an organization could be an effective partner to the Township in implementing the preservation recommendations of this Plan.

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## TOWNSHIP FACILITIES

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Prior to the preparation of this Plan, several needs had been identified in the Township for new or improved facilities to better serve the community. These include a new township hall and township garage. A property which may serve as site for some or all of these needs has been acquired on the south side of SR82, approximately halfway between Station Road and West River Road.

The Columbia School Board should be encouraged to continue to maintain and expand its centralized school facilities - within the Community Center area - as long as such facilities are efficient locations for service to the community. They are important focuses of community activity.

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### IMPROVING/MAINTAINING PRIVATE PROPERTIES

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While public and semi-public properties and infrastructure are important features in a community, the overwhelming majority of properties and buildings are privately owned. The character and condition of these properties dominate the image of the community. The Township should encourage residents and businesses to improve and maintain their properties in a manner which contributes to the image and value of the community as a whole. Where possible, the Township should encourage joint planning of commercial and industrial properties to ensure efficient land use and attractive, coordinated design. Public acclamation of high quality development or redevelopments, especially in the highly visible commercial frontages, should encourage other to make similar investments in the quality of their properties.

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### BUILDING LOCAL AND REGIONAL SUPPORT

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The Township will require assistance to implement this Plan.

The Township should publicize the adoption of this Plan and encourage continued public participation in any amendment or additions to it. Public participation in Township planning meetings has been excellent.

The Township should also advise all abutting communities about the adoption of its Plan. It may be appropriate to distribute copies to them.

Copies of the Plan should also be distributed to several important area agencies, including but not limited to:

- Columbia School Board Lorain County Commissioners
- Lorain County Planning Commission
- Lorain Metroparks
- Lorain Library Board
- NOACA
- ODOT
- NEORS

It may be in the interest of the Township to make personal presentations of the Plan to one or more of these organizations.

The Township may also consider forwarding its plan to one or more of the regional groups which are investigating the impacts of regional sprawl.

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## CONTINUOUS PLANNING

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Many references have been made in this document to the probability of continued change and the need for continued planning and thinking in order to manage Columbia Township's future. This section summarizes several of those activities of "continuous planning" as well as recommends additions and expansions to this Plan.

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### ANNUAL PLAN REVIEW AND PERIODIC UPDATE

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It is recommended that the Zoning Commission establish the annual practice (i.e., at its first or last meeting of every year) of briefly reviewing the development changes in the community, the progress or lack of progress on the Plan, and the events of the past year which were consistent or inconsistent with the Plan. In this meeting, the Commission may determine to proceed with an update or expansion of one or more elements of the Plan. After a few years, it may be determined to proceed with a complete revision. The annual review, and periodic amendments, will ensure that the Plan continues to be a useful and current document.

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### RECOMMENDED ADDITIONS TO THE PLAN

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A wide range of important community issues and resources are addressed in this Plan. Each has been investigated to the extent necessary for decision-making in the current process. Each deserves further attention, however, as development continues and the impacts on the community increase. Additional documentation will be helpful in maintaining and amending this Plan in the following areas:

- historic resources
- critical viewsheds and open space
- critical woodlands and other vegetation
- soil problem areas
- critical stormwater areas

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### SMALL AREA PLANS AND SPECIAL PROJECTS

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Focus should also be given to detailing and refining plans for small areas and special plan elements. These "sub-plans" can be incrementally adopted and appended to the Comprehensive Plan. Possible subjects for this attention include:

- potential walkway systems and open space interconnections
- detailed planning for commercial areas
- detailed planning for industrial areas
- additional planning for the Community Center area
- investigation of sanitary sewer routing alternatives

- park planning

Work sessions on these sub-plans may be ideal opportunities to involve residents and property owners in discussion about their future plans and ways in which the Township can work with them to facilitate the planned developments.

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### MONITORING AREA DEVELOPMENTS

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Members of the Zoning Commission should continuously monitor events in surrounding communities and in the region which may impact Columbia and bring these to the attention of the Zoning Commission and Township Trustees. These "events" may include newspaper reports of planned road widening, interchange construction, sewer extensions and plant expansions, new subdivisions, regional park or bikeway plans, county-wide plans and policies, etc. This monitoring will help to keep the community aware of and prepared for potential impacts.

## VI. REFERENCES:

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- A. Brief Overview of the History of Columbia Township, Lorain County, Ohio, prepared by Robert MacIntyre, 1996.
- B. Additional references consulted in preparation of this Comprehensive Plan.
- Field Survey of existing land uses, performed and mapped by Linda Mattern, member of Zoning Commission, summer 1996.
  - West View Quadrangle topographic map, U.S. Department of the Interior, Geological Survey, 1963, photo revision 1985
  - Various land use maps prepared by Northern Ohio Data and Information Services of The Urban Center, Cleveland State University, February 1996.
  - Traffic Survey Reports, Ohio Department of Transportation, 1998 and 1992
  - Summary of the zoning requirements of Lorain County townships, compiled by the Lorain County Planning Commission, January 1995
  - Zoning Map of the City of Strongsville, Ohio
  - Development Policy Plan of Liverpool Township, April 1980
  - Special Visions, Places for the Future, report of the Lorain County MetroPark, undated.
  - Zoning Resolution of Eaton Township
  - Biological and Water Quality Studies of the Rocky River and Selected Tributaries, Ohio EPA technical report EAS/1993-8-3, August 16, 1993.
  - Lorain County Subdivision Regulations, June 1992, Lorain County Planning Commission
  - Long Range Plan Update, the Year 2010 Transportation System, NOACA, October 1993.
  - Sewer System Map, Northern Ohio Regional Sewer District
  - Final Environmental Impact Statement, Cleveland Southwest Planning Area, USEPA, July 1984.
  - Lorain County Rural Wastewater Feasibility Study, Lorain County Association of Township Trustees and Clerks, July 1996.
  - Zoning Survey Results, Columbia Township, February 1995

## VII. FOOTNOTES:

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<sup>1</sup> OSU Extension Exurban Change Program

<sup>2</sup> Ohio Department of Development, Office of Strategic Research, Ohio County Profiles Series, Ashland County Profile, January 2001

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Northern Ohio Regional Multiple Listing Service and the Lorain County Auditor

<sup>5</sup> Columbia Township Land Use Plan, Lorain County, Ohio Lorain County Community Development Department, January, 2001.

<sup>6</sup> Hill, T. and Westbrook, R. (1997) "SWOT Analysis: It's time for a product recall", Long Range Planning, volume 30, no 1, 1997.

<sup>7</sup> Columbia Township Land Use Plan, Lorain County, Ohio Lorain County Community Development Department, January, 2001

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. pp 32-34

**OSU Extension Columbia**

**Township, Lorain County, Ohio Comprehensive Land Use Plan Update 2010-2040**