

ROOTSTOWN
TOWNSHIP

Comprehensive Land Use
Plan Addendum

As approved by Trustees
July 2004

Prepared for the Rootstown
Township Trustees and
Rootstown Zoning
Commission

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Amended April 2011
(Resolution 2011-072)
Parks & Recreation
Hike & Bikeway Connections
Map 7a

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INTRODUCTION

In February 1997 a comprehensive plan that had been prepared by the Citizens Advisory Committee was adopted and submitted to the Township Trustees for adoption. This plan was the result of the efforts of numerous citizens and was drafted by D.B. Hartt, Inc. This plan reviewed existing conditions and trends; development issues; development policies; and implementation strategies.

In August 1999 in response to these recommendations and as a part of the implementation of the comprehensive plan the Township adopted a new zoning resolution. Since the adoption of this resolution the code has been amended on twelve (12) occasions

In 2004 the Township Trustees charged the Zoning Commission to review this plan. Since 1997 the Township has undergone considerable development pressures, particularly an increasing demand for residential housing units.

The charge to the Zoning Commission included a review of the consistency between the zoning resolution and the comprehensive plan. Further, much of the data in the 1997 comprehensive plan was from the 1990 U.S. Census. This data was 14 years old and the census in 2000 needed to be incorporated in the plan. Finally, the Commission was to examine the strategies and policies in the plan and recommend any changes that should be considered.

The effort was undertaken with the assistance of Dr. Thomas Pascarella who provided technical and professional planning services for the Commission. This document is the result of a series of meeting at which the Commission reviewed the plan and sought to address the above-mentioned issues. A result of this effort is a series of changes recommended in the 1997 plan and in the existing zoning code.

In reviewing the plan it is clear that many items are still relevant and that the following challenges facing the Township in 1997 continue to exist:

1. To make sure that future development occurs in a manner that has the least adverse impact on the existing rural character of the Township; and
2. To ensure that Rootstown attracts the right amount of nonresidential growth to financially support the services desired by the residents.

CURRENT TRENDS AND PATTERNS

Using census data and information gathered from various public agencies, one can ascertain a number of trends and patterns that are emerging. Several of the more significant trends are:

- The population of the Township had increased from 1990 to 2000 from 6,612 to 7,212 for an increase of over 9% (See Appendices Page 1)
- Owner-occupied units comprise over 83% of all households. This is a very slight reduction from previous census counts. (See Appendices Page 2)
- From 1990 to 2000 there was a 16.7% increase in the number of dwelling units. This is above the Portage County average of 14.9% (See Appendices Page 5)
- Over 20% of all of the housing stock that exists in the Township was constructed from 1990 to 2000. (See Appendices Page 8)
- Over the past four years an average of almost 90 new residential building permits is issued each year. (See Appendices Page 9)
- Seventy-five (75) new lots were created during 2003. (See Appendices Page 10)
- Of the comparison communities studied in the D.B Hartt Plan, Brimfield and Rootstown are the most active in terms of new development. This is reflected in the larger number of lots created through new major subdivisions. (See Appendices Page 10)
- The tax rate levied by the Township is the 6th largest of the 13 comparison communities. (See Appendices Page 15)
- The Township is extremely dependent upon automobiles. The low density, the nature of large vehicular commercial development and the “spreading out” of residential development across the Township requires the use of automobiles for most activities from shopping to recreation. This dependency is reflected in the fact that only 28 (1%) of the 2,624 owner-occupied units in the Township have no vehicle, while 1,822 (almost 70%) of the owner-occupied units has 2 or more vehicles. (See Appendices Page 16)
- Many of the households have children. Individuals 18 years of age or younger comprise over 27% of the population. (See Appendices Page 17)

CURRENT TRENDS AND PATTERNS CONTINUED

- Approximately 59% of workers are employed in Portage County while approximately 41% work outside the county. (See Appendices Page 19)
- One hundred and eight (108) individuals work out of their home while 130 work at a distance of 90 minutes or more. (See Appendices Page 21)
- The rural character of the Township is changing. Only 28 individuals were employed in agriculture in 2000. This is less than 1% of the total number employed. It is anticipated that other individuals participate in agriculture but not as a full time employment. (See Appendices Page 24)
- Family incomes vary widely from 32 families with incomes under \$10,000 to 39 families with incomes over \$200,000. (See Appendices Page 25)
- The median family income in 1999 was \$53,542. (See Appendices Page 26)
- Per capita income in 1999 dollars was \$21,526. (See Appendices Page 28)
- Aggregate income in 1999 dollars was \$155,246,800. (See Appendices Page 29)
- Of the comparison communities studied in the 1997 plan, Rootstown had the most activity in terms of inspections (76) for sewage nuisance complaints by the Portage County Health Department in 2003. (See Appendices Page 30).
- Rootstown is the seventh largest political subdivision in Portage County. (See Appendices Page 31)
- Over 31% of owner-occupied units that were examined had no home mortgage. (See Appendices Page 32).
- The median value of owner-occupied housing units in 2000 was \$130,900. This was slightly lower than Edinburg and Suffield and higher than Randolph and Brimfield. (See Appendices Page 33).
- The median rent in 2000 was \$519. This is slightly lower than Brimfield and Edinburg; equal to Suffield; and slightly higher than Charlestown, Atwater, and Randolph. (See Appendices Page 34)

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES

Numerous capital projects are recommended in the 1997 plan and many of these proposals still are important to the development of the Township's basic infrastructure. However, since 1997 public deliberations have occurred that reflect slight modification and change in several of these items. The Zoning Commission prioritized these projects and recommends the following priority list to the Township Trustees. (The page number and letter, that are noted below, are a reference to the detailed discussion of the improvement in the 1997 plan.). Some projects could not be differentiated in terms of priority and therefore are shown as "ties." For example, there are two project tied for the 5th highest priority.

Rootstown Priority List: In Order of Priority

1. To resolve the problems of older subdivisions such as Lakewood Estates and the storm water problems associated with this development. The authority to resolve such problems rests in part with the Portage County Engineer. Any program should be a coordinated effort between the Portage County Engineer and the Township. (p. 45; F)
2. To purchase a building in the "Village" for a teen center, senior center, community center, library or other public use. (p. 32; 1a3)
3. To purchase land for a new park Any acquisition and development should involve efforts to secure federal and/or state grants, when available (p. 41; D)
4. To address the problems of failing septic systems and obsolete pump stations. Septic systems are under the control of the Portage County Health Department and sanitary sewers are the responsibility of the Portage County Water Resource Department. Any effort in this regard would need to be undertaken through these departments. (p. 45; F)
5. To purchase land for open space preservation to preserve the rural landscape. Any acquisition should involve efforts to secure federal and/or state grants, when available (p. 40; 2b and 2c)
6. To implement minor intersection improvements (p. 43; E3)
7. To consider deceleration lanes for new major subdivisions. This effort involves working with the Portage Regional Planning Commission who controls the subdivision process. (p. 43; E3)

Rootstown Priority List: In Order of Priority Continued

8. To widen roadways in particular Prospect St.; Lynn Rd.; New Milford Rd.; Sandy Lake Rd. (p. 42-43; E1)
9. To facilitate new turning movements at selected areas (p. 43; E2)
10. To establish a local land conservancy for land preservation (p. 40; 2a)
11. To improve the southeast corner of SR 44 and Tallmadge Rd with a landmark or monument to create a focal point. As an alternative purchase the land on the northwest corner of this intersection for green space and a landmark. (p. 34; 2b)
12. To develop bikeways per the plan map that connect the Township with the County Bikeway Plan. (p. 45)

In addition to the prioritization of projects, there are several changes to the strategies related to the implementation of some projects. These changes, when relevant, are discussed in the section of this update titled “Rootstown Township Comprehensive Plan Issues.”

LAND USE POLICY –A SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

There are several areas that need clarification or are the source of potential conflict between the land use policy as expressed in the 1997 plan and the current zoning code. In addition there are several areas that warrant closer examination as a result of the passage of time. The Commission reviewed such cases by examining the background of each item; making a finding; and proposing a policy change. As a result the following changes are recommended in the comprehensive plan:

(A more detailed explanation of each proposal, including a more defined geographic area and map is included in the next section.)

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- The area along Tallmadge Road, (west of the existing commercial development on the west side of the Township center), that is proposed for rezoning from R-1 to R-2 should develop at a lower density consistent with R-1 zoning. The plan should be amended to reflect this policy
- A review of duplex development reaffirmed that they should be limited to the V-C and R-V zones. These units should be designed to blend into the existing setting in terms of size, bulk, and design.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS CONTINUED

- The area east of the existing school property known as the Sabin/Seifer neighborhood is totally developed and the plan should reflect the current condition by removing this neighborhood from the Village Center of the comprehensive plan. The plan should reflect the existing zoning under which the neighborhood was developed.
- The southern area of the Village Center along State Route 44 and Cook Rd. should be removed from this designation in the comprehensive plan. This area should develop at a density and design as reflected in the current zoning code. Little of the vacant land has frontage. The frontage is largely developed. Further the area abuts the new Harvest Hills development.
- The comprehensive plan targets PRD's to three areas of the Township. The plan should be amended to encourage PRD's in any OC or any residential zoning classification.
- The plan is correct in calling for the expansion of the OC zone in the southwest corner of the Township.
- The plan is correct in designating the area along Lynn Rd., east of State Route 44 for commercial and industrial development.
- The plan should be changed regarding the business/industrial use for the area south of I-76, between Reed Ditch and the lots fronting on the west side of New Milford Rd. This area should develop as presently zoned, R-2.
- The Township should remove the targeting of any new park from the northeast corner of the Township. With the heavy reliance on automobiles and the community nature of such a facility, this park could function on numerous parcels of property inside and outside the designated area.
- Any new park should be a community park with an integration of recreational uses, both active and passive. This park should include areas for organized sports and areas for general community recreation such as picnics, exercise, as well as preservation.
- The comprehensive plan designates the land along State Route 44 as a mixture of residential, commercial, and industrial. Little of this property is attractive for residential development and consideration should be given to developing a major portion of this land as commercial
- The overlay zone in the existing zoning code should be considered for the area from Tallmadge Road to Wilkes Road.

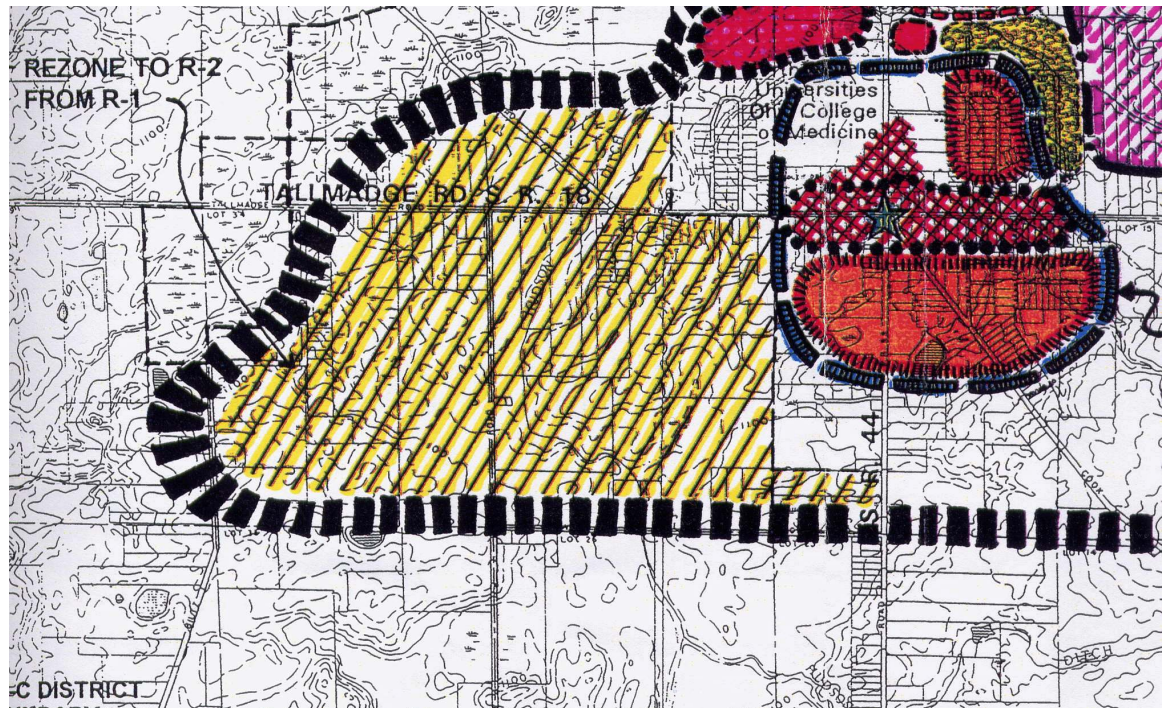
PROPOSED ZONING CHANGES

- Duplexes should be provided as conditional uses in V-C and R-V zones.
- A reduction in the density of PRD's should be examined.
- The maximum density of seven (7) units per acre on any one area of a PRD should be examined and consideration should be given to reducing this maximum density figure.
- The setbacks of PRD's from neighboring properties should be examined with the goal of increasing the setback.
- The area in the southwest quadrant of the Township that is designated in the plan for O-C should be rezoned as proposed in the plan.
- The area along Lynn Road, east of State Route 44 should be considered for commercial/industrial zoning as proposed in the plan.
- The area along State Route 44 north of Lynn Rd should be examined for possible commercial zoning.
- The area along SR 44 between Tallmadge Road and Wilkes Road should be examined for inclusion in the existing overlay zone.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ISSUES

1. **R-1 TO R-2 REZONING:**

Background The 1997 comprehensive plan recommends the rezoning of a large tract of land north and south of Tallmadge Rd., “from the existing C-2 and R-2 boundary west to the existing O-C boundary.” The reason for this zoning change is that the area is in the growth area. (page 36). The boundary is visually displayed below and on Map 5, page 29 of the 1997 plan. The area is presently zoned R-1.



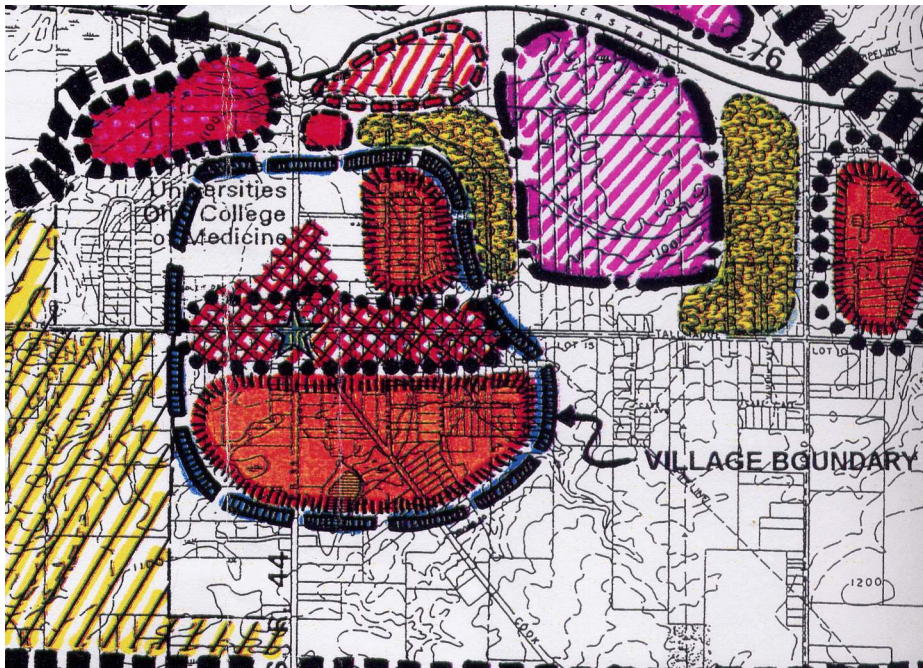
Findings: Portage County has no plans for central sewers in this area but will consider them if future developers wish to extend the lines. The cost of the expansion would be borne by parties such as landowners and/or developers. This approach places future land use policy at the discretion of various developers rather than the public. The Township should take the lead and either work with Portage County to plan for utilities in this area at some future date or should plan for the low density development of the area.

Policy: This area should be removed from the growth area of the comprehensive plan and remain with its R-1 zoning. This area should be developed as low density residential.

2. VILLAGE CONCEPT:

Background: The 1997 plan recommends the establishment of a residential village. The current zoning code, section 310, created a new district R-V, Residential Village district and a new V-C district, Village Center, Section 350. However, the zoning has several differences from the plan as well as some internal inconsistency.

- a. Planning Versus Zoning Issues: The 1997 plan states that both single-family and two-family dwellings should be permitted with “Small lots with houses close to the street; with a density of approximately 2.5 to 3 dwelling units per acre. (pg. 33)
However, the zoning code does not allow two-family units in the V-C zone (section 350.03).
- b. Zoning Code Internal Issues: The R-V district does conditionally permit two-family units in section 310.03 but section 310.04D of the zoning code states that: “There shall not be more than one dwelling constructed on a lot...” Further, section 310.04F has no lot requirements for a two-family unit. Section 310 of the zoning code appears to be internally inconsistent.



Findings: It was the intention of the plan to place duplexes within the village center. This concept is still valid. The important factor in the provision of any duplex is the size, bulk and design of such duplexes. Larger buildings that are out of character with existing structures would not be acceptable. Care should be taken to insure that the buildings are substantially in character with existing buildings.

There is a need to provide for the construction of duplexes and they should be concentrated in the village center. Single-family zones should be maintained as single family.

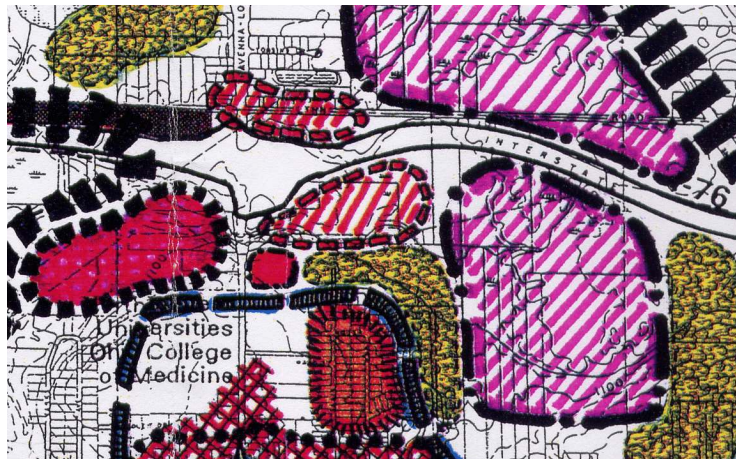
Policy:

- (a) The comprehensive plan is valid in providing for duplexes in the V-C and R-V zones. These duplexes should “blend” into the existing setting in terms of size, bulk, and design.
- (b) The zoning resolution should be amended to allow for such duplexes as conditional uses. The density, setbacks and other zoning provisions should be addressed as a part of the zoning resolution amendment process. Duplexes should be limited to the R-V and V-C zoning
- (c) districts. There should be no provision for duplexes outside these two zoning districts.

3. VILLAGE CONCEPT

Background: Map 5 of the 1997 plan, which is partially presented below, designates five areas to promote village development.

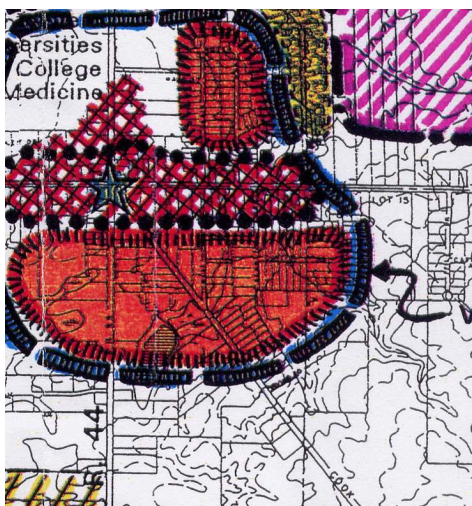
- i. The Hattrick Rd./ New Milford Rd. area is designated in the plan and is currently zoned R-V.
- ii. The area south of the Sandy Lake Rd/ S.R. 44 intersection is designated in the plan and is currently zoned R-V.
- iii. The intersection of Tallmadge Rd. and S.R. 44 is designated in the plan for mixed-use and is currently zoned V-C.
- iv. The area east of the school property is designated in the plan but remains zoned R-2.
- v. The area south of the V-C zone along S.R. 44 and Cook Rd. is designated in the plan but remains zoned R-2.



Findings: The area known as the Sabin/Seifer neighborhood has been developed for a number of years. The existing subdivision results in a viable and healthy neighborhood in which properties are maintained and home values are increasing. The existing neighborhood is an asset to the community.

Policy: The comprehensive plan should be amended and the Sabin/Seifer area should be removed from the village center of the comprehensive plan. The existing zoning should remain as presently designated.

VILLAGE CONCEPT CONTINUED



Findings: The area on the south edge of the V-C zone along State Route 44 and Cook Road is surrounded by existing developments to the north and the new Harvest Hills development to the south. The only areas available for development would be pockets of back land. These areas are very limited in size and nature and therefore should be consistent with the surrounding land use patterns

Policy: The comprehensive plan should be amended and this area should be removed from the village center of the comprehensive plan. The existing zoning should remain as presently designated.

4. **PLANNED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT:**

Background: Map 5 of the 1997 plan which is partially shown below designates three areas for PRD: a) an area east of Muzzy Lake, b) an area east and north of the Sabin/Sefer development, and c) an area west of New Milford Rd. from I-76 to Tallmadge Rd.

However, the zoning resolution provides for PRD's in any OC, R-1, R-2 or R-V zone.



Findings: The PDR concept requires larger parcels of property and should not be limited to these three areas. The PDR concept could work on a case-by-case basis in other portions of the Township.

Policy: The comprehensive plan should be amended to permit PRD's in any OC or any residential zone.

PLANNED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS CONTINUED

Background: The 1997 plan encourages a PRD density "at approximately 2.3 dwelling units per acre." In addition "the density is no greater than that permitted by standard development."

However, the zoning resolution authorizes 3.25 units per acre in R-2 and 4.5 units per acre in R-V. Both zones authorize 7 units on any one acre.

In addition the density is calculated on the total area. As a result streets, wetlands et cetera are utilized in the density calculation thereby further increasing the density beyond a standard development.

Policy: The density of PRD's needs to be examined and possibly amended in the zoning code. Densities, while not equal to, should be compatible with existing neighborhood patterns.

The zoning code should be examined and possibly amended to insure that future PRD's that are approved provide useable open space.

The maximum density of 7 dwelling units on any one area should be examined and possibly amended in the zoning resolution. Such maximum density, while not equal to, should be compatible with existing neighborhood patterns.

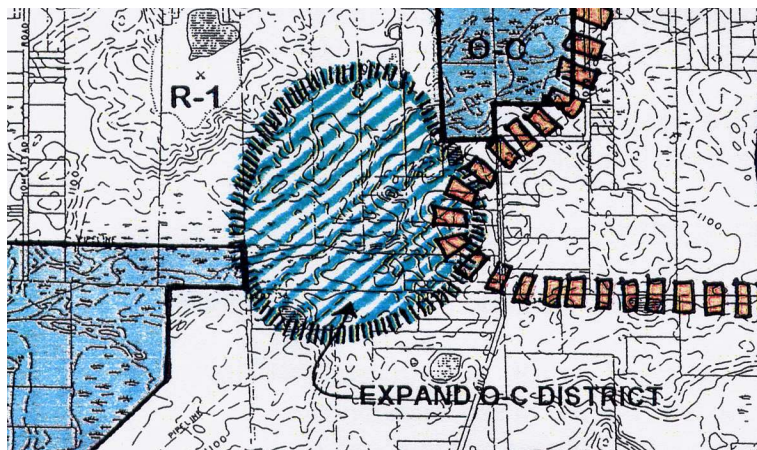
PLANNED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS CONTINUED

Background: PRD setback requirements are established in Schedule 320.06 of the zoning resolution. The setbacks for buildings within the project can be greater than setbacks from existing neighboring single-family dwellings (sfd) that adjoin the PRD.

Policy: The method of calculation of the setback from neighboring dwelling units should be examined in greater detail in the zoning resolution.

5. OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION:

Background: The 1997 plan on page 39 encourages the expansion of the O-C district “to create a continuous connection along the creek/stream on the west side of the Township...” Map 6 of the 1997 plan is partially presented below. This area is zoned R-1 in the zoning code.

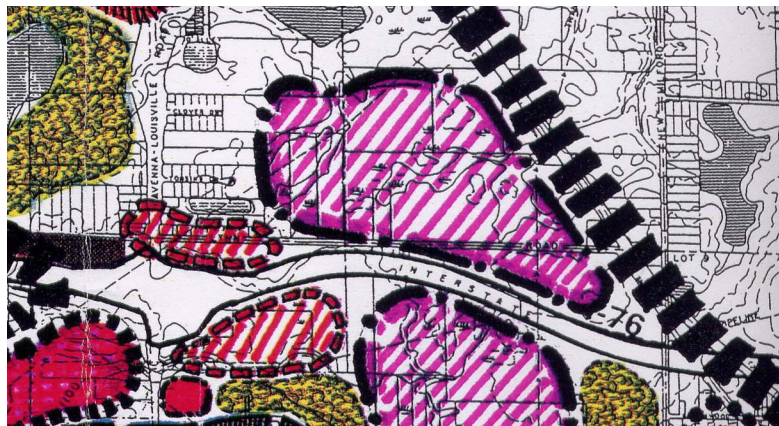


Findings: The rezoning from R-1 to O-C would provide a continuous barrier of O-C zoning classification on a diagonal through a major portion of the Township. The exact boundaries of this district should be defined in a zoning amendment. The basis of this boundary delineation should examine variable such as natural resource constraints and land ownership patterns.

Policy: This comprehensive plan is correct in calling for the expansion of the O-C zone. The rezoning of this area from R-1 to O-C should be addressed in the zoning resolution.

6. BUSINESS/INDUSTRIAL ZONING/ Lynn Road

Background: The 1997 plan recommends business/light industrial use for the area “along Lynn Rd., east of SR 44 to the railroad tracks; extending north to the mobile home park, west to approximately the end of Tonsing Dr., and south to I-76.” The area is displayed on Map 5 of the plan and is partially presented below. The zoning of this land is R-2 and R-3 north of Lynn Rd. The area is zoned L-1 south of Lynn Rd.

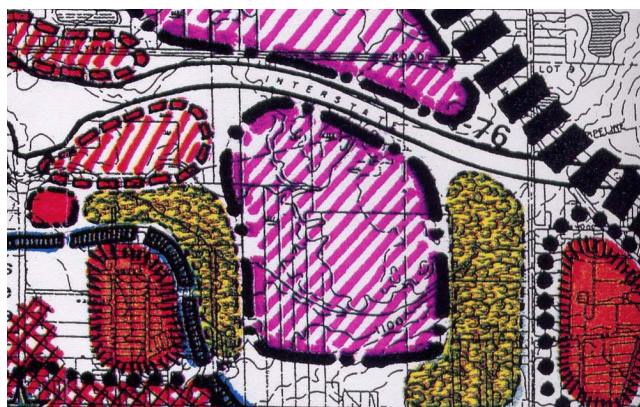


Findings: There are central utilities in the general location that can be easily expanded. The area along Lynn Rd. is attractive for nonresidential uses, particularly non-retail business ventures. The northern portion of this area may be less attractive for such nonresidential uses.

Policy: The comprehensive plan is correct in calling for business and light industry in this area. The rezoning of this area should be considered in the zoning resolution. The exact boundary of the district should be determined during the zoning amendment process.

7. BUSINESS INDUSTRIAL ZONING/South of I-76

Background: The plan recommends business/light industrial use for the area: “South of I-76, between Reed Ditch, and the lots fronting on the west side of New Milford Rd., south to the backs of the residential lots which front on the north side of Tallmadge Rd.” This area is displayed on Map 5 of the 1997 plan and is partially presented below. The zoning of this land is R-2.



Finding: This area has a sanitary sewer that transgresses the land in an east/west direction. There is a portion of the property that has physical limitations for business or industrial development. With the exception of the interstate to the north, the surrounding areas are existing residential. There are residential homes fronting on New Milford Rd and on the north side of Tallmadge Rd. These existing residential homes would abut new industrial uses.

Policy: The comprehensive plan should be amended and this area should not be designated for business/industrial use. The area should be developed residential as it is presently zoned.

8. PARKS AND PUBLIC OPEN SPACE/Location

Background: The 1997 plan targets an area in the northwest portion of the Township for a new park, see map 6. This location is selected due to the increased density and population in this area. However, recent discussions by Township officials have included the examination of land outside this area such as parcels adjoining Gracie Park.



Findings: The purchase of an additional park will require an effort by the Township to find the correct parcel at the correct price. Some discussions with landowners may include creative financing such as naming of the park as partial consideration. By limiting the park purchase to the defined area, the Township limits its opportunities. Given existing land use and transportation patterns such a community park will not be pedestrian friendly whether inside or outside the designated area. Since the Township residents are automobile dependent, driving to a park in the designated area versus driving to another area of the Township is a minor consideration.

Policy: The comprehensive plan should be amended by removing the park land designation to a particular area. Any area in the Township should be considered for a new park.

9. PARKS AND OPEN SPACE/Use

Finding: It would difficult for the Township to afford two different community parks: one park for organized sports and a second park for general community use. The new park must provide for the needs of both organized sports and the general population. To be successful the needs of both groups must be balanced. This goal can only be accomplished if one or the other group does not dominate the new park.

Policy: Active and passive recreation should be integrated into one park. These issues are site specific and any new park site plan should take these questions into consideration. This view should be noted in the comprehensive plan.

10. COMMERCIAL USE ALONG STATE ROUTE 44

Background: The comprehensive plan designates the land along SR 44 and Prospect Street as a mixture of residential, commercial, and industrial uses. Little of this property is attractive for residential development and the area on the west side of SR 44 and Prospect Street from Lynn Rd north to the existing industrial zone should be considered for rezoning to commercial.

Policy: On the east side of Prospect Street, commercial zoning should be considered from the bypass north. On the west side of SR 44 and along Prospect Street commercial zoning should be considered from Lynn Rd. north to the existing industrial zone. The rezoning of narrow parcels of land that have frontage of SR 44 runs the risk of strip commercial with numerous curb strips and congestion. Therefore the zone should be a minimum depth of 400 feet and should be undertaken with the development of an access road that is parallel to SR 44 or Prospect Street with limited connection to these streets. Such a road presently exists for a short distance on the west side of SR 44, north of Lynn Rd. Smaller developments in this zone should be discouraged by requiring a large minimum lot size of 5-10 acres.

11. OVERLAY ZONE

Background: For the past several years Township officials have discussed the potential for limited nonresidential development along SR 44 from Tallmadge Road to Wilkes Road. The goal is to provide for planned and orderly commercial developments that are compatible with the surrounding uses and suitable with the general area.

Policy: The comprehensive plan and the zoning resolution should be amended to provide for a Planned Commercial Overlay District along SR 44 from Tallmadge Rd. to Wilkes Rd. This district should allow business and services that are designed to be in harmony with the bulk, size, and character of the underlying zone. Such non-residential uses should be designed to be in general compatibility with neighboring environment and be designed to assure a high-quality of development including the provision of aesthetic amenities.