



# COPLEY TOWNSHIP, OHIO COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

Comprehensive Land Use Plan  
2009-2019

BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
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*RECOMMENDED BY THE STEERING COMMITTEE*

*April 20, 2009*

*ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES*

*September 16, 2009*



*April, 2009*

*Dear Residents:*

*In 2007, a group of residents from all aspects of the community were commissioned by the Board of Trustees to prepare revisions to the Comprehensive Land Use Plan, originally approved in 1999. Ten years of wide-ranging, swift growth in both residential and commercial districts dictate that it would be prudent to look back and assess what was accomplished in the old plan and begin preparing for potential future development.*

*The Steering Committee hoped to build on planning decisions that resulted in a positive impact to the community and learn from those that did not. The committee also hoped to take advantage of new planning and development tools and concepts that were not available in 1999. In the last ten years, a new interest in our environment and conservation has emerged and the committee wanted to raise awareness of these issues in order to make the best decisions possible to make Copley the best community to live, work and play.*

*We all hope that in 2017, community residents will look back at the plan and our work and recommendations and recognize that they did improve the quality of life for all residents.*

*Sincerely,*

*The 2007 Copley Township Comprehensive  
Land Use Steering Committee*



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2007, Copley Township residents began the process to develop a comprehensive land use plan to address smart growth and protect the quality of life for future generations. The purpose of the comprehensive plan is to provide a framework which informed spending and regulatory decisions could be made to determine the future character of the community. Such decisions involve the proper location and nature of future development, the need for public facilities or infrastructure, and a determination of scenic, environmental, and historic resources that should be afforded a measure of protection as development occurs. The leaders of Copley Township have many choices. Township zoning is a tool to control the type and density of future development.

## PLAN OVERVIEW

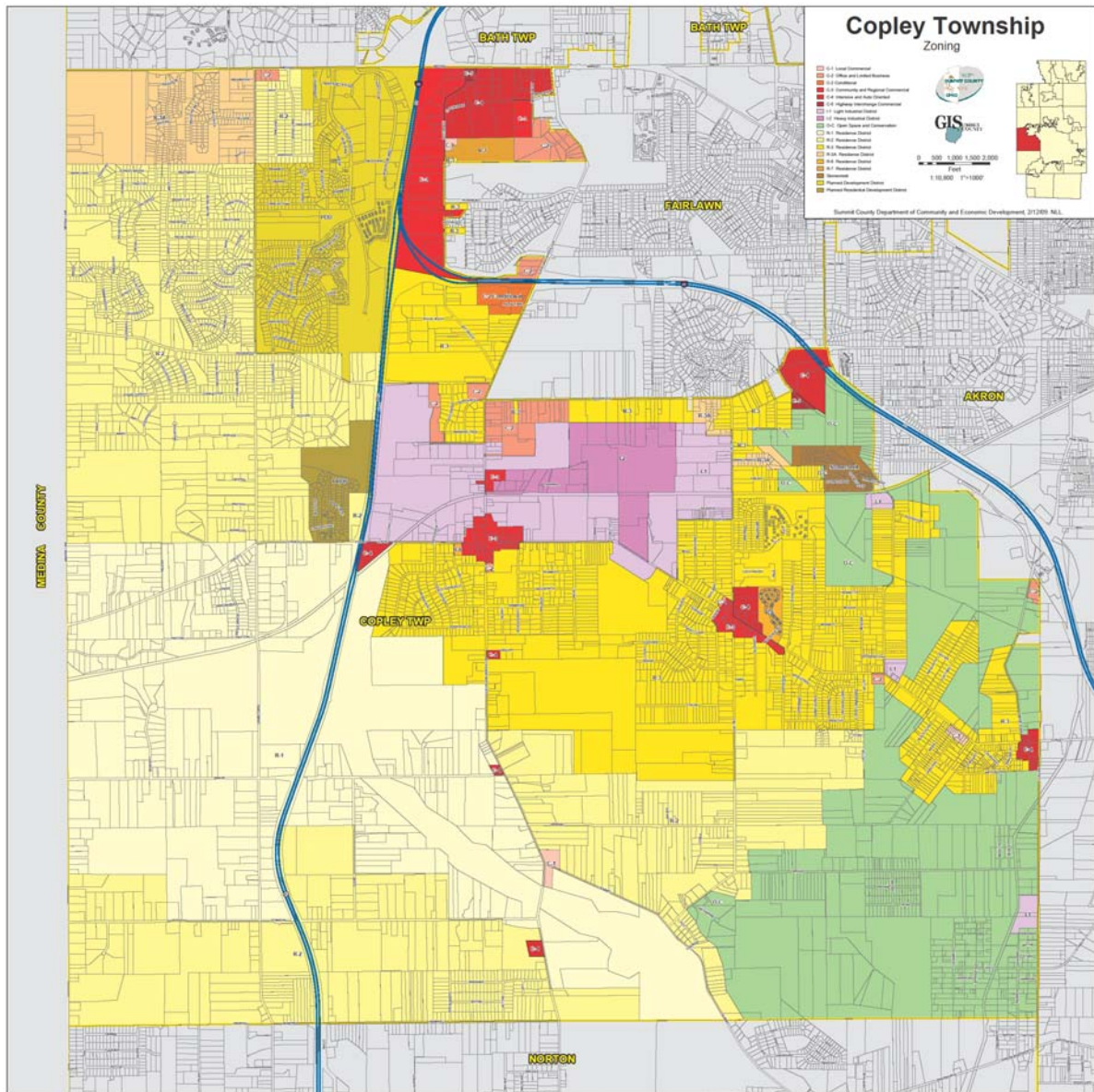
The comprehensive land use plan involved the public via steering and technical committees, community meetings, public workshops and hearings, and a citizen survey. The plan gathered background on the history, cultural resources, demographics, population trends and characteristics, housing characteristics, economic characteristics, regional planning efforts, infrastructure and public services, parks and greenways, land use, and environmental conditions.

## CURRENT LAND USE

According to the Summit County Fiscal Office land use codes, current land use in Copley Township can be classified as 40% residential; 9% commercial; 2% industrial; and 21% agricultural. If the assumption is made that parcels currently in agriculture and parcels over 20 acres in size are potential development areas, then 3,662 acres could be available for development. In addition, there are 302 acres zoned for industrial and commercial uses that are vacant or being used for residential or agricultural uses. However, nearly half, 49%, of the Township is environmentally constrained by floodplains, wetlands, and land with hydric soils. In addition, about 61% of the entire Township contains environmentally sensitive areas (woodland resources, riparian corridors, and high groundwater resources). Of the remaining potential development areas, 33% is environmentally constrained and 89% is sensitive.

## CURRENT ZONING

In 2007, the Copley Township Zoning Map includes seven (7) residential districts, five (5) commercial districts, two (2) industrial districts, and four (4) planned unit development (PUD) districts.



## COMMUNITY SURVEY

In order to identify issues of importance to residents, Copley Township mailed a survey to 7,100 households. Returned were 485 surveys, reflecting a response rate of nearly seven percent. Throughout the planning process, the survey responses helped to establish the characteristics of the community and define issues, concerns, and preferences. Some recurrent themes included:

### *What Residents Like:*

- Rural Character
- Schools
- Housing Choices

### *Issues Residents Would Like Copley Township to Work on:*

- Limit Amount of New Development
- Improve Traffic and Aesthetics in Montrose area<sup>1</sup>
- Property Maintenance

### *Issues Where There Was Differing Opinions:*

- Location and Amount of Commercial Development
- Future Designs for Copley Circle
- Potential source of Open Space Preservation

## VISIONING WORKSHOP

A public open house was held to gauge community support on various issues and to generate meaningful public discussions. Citizens were asked to visit “work stations” to address issues such as:

- Land Use and Zoning
- Joint Economic Development District (JEDD)
- Transportation, Utilities, and Services
- Economic Development
- Commercial Districts, Retail Development, and Industry
- Residential Development
- Agriculture and Farmland Preservation
- Natural Resources
- Parks, Greenways, and Open Space
- Community Character and Quality of Life

The workshop provided the opportunity for residents to think about the community in which they live in new ways, and offer thoughts on what can be done to make Copley an even better place to live and work. The discussions in the workshops mirrored the comments in the survey and provided a clear vision of community choices for the Steering Committee.

<sup>1</sup> Montrose is considered the area along Route 18 in Bath Township, Copley Township & City of Fairlawn.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### GOALS

After much discussion and debate, the Steering Committee identified the following goals:

#### Community Character

- a) Balance community design with open space conservation.
- b) Protect historic and cultural resources.
- c) Identify ways to maintain historic corridor areas.
- d) Promote and beautify entranceways into the Township.
- e) Expand cultural opportunities.
- f) Encourage citizen and stakeholder participation in the principles of sustainability.
- g) Instill neighborhood pride within residential and business districts.

#### Transportation & Infrastructure

- a) Assess vehicular and pedestrian access in the Township and improve where necessary.
- b) Create *walkable* neighborhoods with sidewalks and trails; encourage pedestrian networks in local business districts. (def. The extent to which the built environment is friendly to the presence of people living, shopping, visiting, enjoying or spending time in an area).
- c) Encourage public transportation into and through the Township's main thoroughfares.
- d) Create scenic byways on county and state rural routes.
- e) Inventory current sewer and water infrastructure and identify future needs.
- f) Identify and work to correct stormwater runoff and flooding within and beyond the Township's borders.
- g) Educate the public on local government authority and how citizens can protect their property rights including, but not limited to cellular towers and oil and gas wells.

#### Commercial & Retail

- a) Balance commercial/retail development within areas where adequate infrastructure is in place while protecting natural resources and maintaining rural character.
- b) Enhance historic, cultural, and visual qualities of the Township.
- c) Encourage partnerships among the public and private sectors of Copley Township.
- d) Ensure that the development process is fair and predictable.

- e) Apply conservation development and low impact development (LID) principles to all new development.
- f) Parking.

#### **Industrial**

- a) Maintain and expand the tax base and provide employment opportunities.

#### **Natural Resources**

- a) Protect and enhance the environmental integrity of Copley Township.
- b) Protect the watersheds of Copley Township.
- c) Educate the public on the benefits of natural resource preservation.

#### **Parks & Recreation**

- a) Maintain and enhance open spaces and recreational opportunities in the Township.

#### **Residential**

- a) Keep rural character in the undeveloped areas of the Township.
- b) Reduce adverse impacts of development on the community, with regard to:
  - 1) The cost of government services.
  - 2) Any impact on schools.
  - 3) Any impact on the environment.
  - 4) Increasing the potential for flooding.
  - 5) Ground water quality and quantity.
- c) Preserve housing diversity and mixed-use developments.
- d) Enhance the visual quality of the community.
- e) Ensure that the development process is fair and predictable.
- f) Evaluate the type and number of residential zoning classifications.

#### **Agriculture**

- a) Preserve and promote agriculture in the Township.
- b) Support farming as an economically viable use.
- c) Reduce adverse impacts of development on agricultural lands.

#### **Economic**

- a) Promote and protect the economic well being of the community.
- b) Encourage tourism.
- c) Use redevelopment as an economic tool to protect land value and maintain the property tax base.

## TOOLS

The plan recommended that Copley consider the following tools:

- **Compact Development:** A form of development that permits a reduction in lot area requirements, frontage and setbacks to allow development on the most appropriate portions of a parcel of land in return for provision of a compensatory amount of permanently protected open space within the property subject to a development application.
- **Conservation Development (Open Space Subdivision Design):** There are several characteristics which are generally common to conservation development projects:
  - Flexible lot layouts. Within a parcel, the number of homes permitted by zoning are placed on somewhat smaller lots, and the remaining land is set aside as open space.
  - Open space retained is 50% of land area or greater in large, contiguous parcels based on ecological integrity and public health and safety functions of natural areas, or based on retention of rural character preserving views of historic structures and landscapes.
  - Open space retained permanently, in private ownership by a homeowners' association with a conservation easement, which includes legal and financial provisions to ensure longevity of open space, and to secure its management and maintenance.
  - Reduced length and size of roads and utilities, minimizing maintenance and environmental impacts.
  - Provision of trails connecting to adjacent parks and open areas.
- **Development Checklist of Projects:** With a development checklist as part of the Township development process, a clear and predictable outline can be established. This reduces staff time and resources by having to request additional information, boards denying applicants because of lack of information as well as developers better understanding what is to be expected.
- **Design Guidelines:** An element of the Development Regulations describing those standards and regulations which directs the appearance of development and redevelopment projects, site and

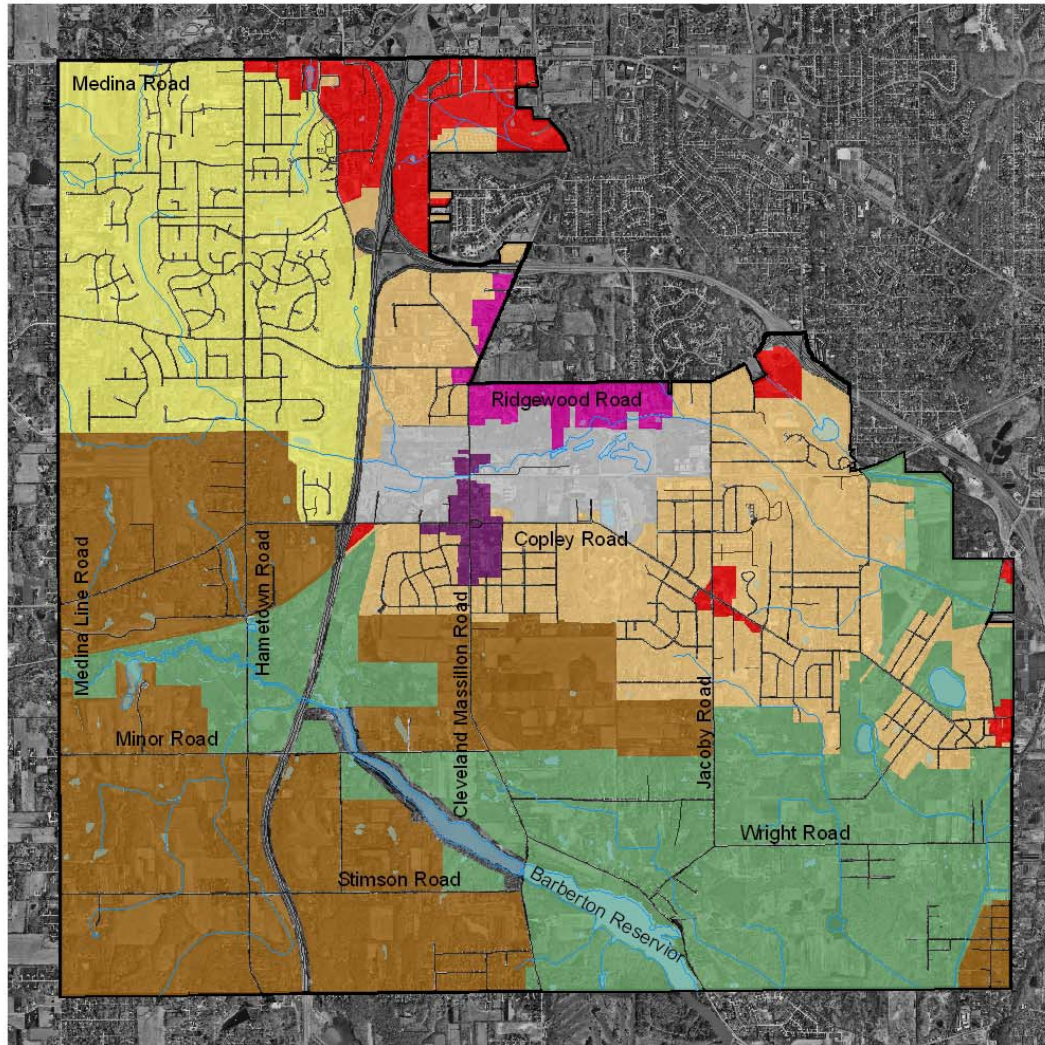
street design and seeks to preserve and/or enhance the aesthetic qualities of an area.

- **Downzoning:** Rezoning of a tract of land to less-dense or intensified uses. Downzoning is used to curb sprawl and direct growth to designated areas.
- **Environmental Zoning:** Protecting public health and safety functions that natural resources provide to the community. Examples of these include:
  - Riparian Overlay Districts and Riparian Corridor Setback Requirements
  - Wetland Setback Requirements
  - Groundwater Regulations
- **Impact Fees:** Development impact fees are one-time charges applied to offset the additional public-service costs of new development. They are essentially user fees levied in anticipation of use, expanding the capacity of existing services to handle additional demand.
- **Low Impact Design (LID) Guidelines:** An effective LID approach to land use regulation provides flexible performance-based goals and design criteria while promoting opportunities for using innovative management practices and site planning techniques that can be incorporated to compensate for development disturbance. Innovative techniques related to planning and design for stormwater management; grading, natural resource protection, and site layout are commonly integrated in low impact development approaches.
- **Mixed Use Development:** A project that integrates more than one land use that may include residential, commercial or office uses.
- **Performance Zoning:** Performance zoning establishes minimum criteria to be used when assessing whether a particular project is appropriate for a certain area; ensures that the end result adheres to an acceptable level of performance or compatibility. This type of zoning provides flexibility with the well-defined goals and rules found in conventional zoning. Whereas traditional land use zoning specifies how land can be used within specified districts, performance zoning specifies the intensity of land use that is acceptable. In other words, it deals not with the use of a parcel, but the performance of a parcel and how it impacts surrounding areas.

- **Transfer of Development Rights:** The conveyance of development rights by deed, easement, or other legal instrument authorized by local law to another parcel of land and the recording of that conveyance. It may cause the creation of sender zones for development credits and receiver zones for these additional credits. This effectively reduces the density in the sender zones and increases the density in the receiver zones. (Note: TDR is currently not available to Townships at the writing of the document.)

## FUTURE LAND USE MAP

The Steering Committee recommended the following future land use Map:



Future Land Use

Source: Copley Township Zoning  
Projection: State Plane Ohio North NAD83

- Commercial
- Conservation Area
- Mixed Use/Historical District
- Industrial
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- Professional Office
- Rural Residential

