



Board of Trustees

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2026-2036 COPLEY TOWNSHIP LAND USE PLAN

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Chapter 1 Introduction

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LETTER TO RESIDENTS

02

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Letter to the Residents

Dear Residents,

*“Think big but always
remember to make the
places where people are to
be, small.”
- Jan Gehl, architect*



The Copley Township Comprehensive Land Use Plan is essential to the success of land use in the Township. The Land Use Plan is utilized to guide residents, decision-makers and administrative staff in the principles of responsible land use.

With the largest population of all Summit County townships, Copley has always managed to make a big place feel small. Much of this has to do with the abundance of small farmers, many carrying on family traditions while more recent residents contribute to the township's farming heritage.

Copley Township has the services and character of a city, while its residents proudly proclaim its historical significance and rural spaces. Consequently, the Zoning Commission carefully considered the balance between development and preservation, the environment and urbanization, and the past and the future in this update of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

The township's first Land Use Plan, adopted in 1999, was updated in 2009 by the Land Use Steering Committee. The Steering Committee recognized the importance of managed and responsible growth. Since that time, Copley's Department of Community and Economic Development and the

Steering Committee's replacement, the Zoning Commission, have partnered with residents, business owners, elected officials, and other stakeholders to update the plan, viewed as a living document. This effort to update the 2020 plan considered the significant events and trends of recent years: a global pandemic, increased housing demands, teleworking, and new retail patterns. With an eye to a sustainable future, while at the same time honoring the past, the Copley Zoning Commission and Department of Community and Economic Development present this 2025 Comprehensive Land Use Plan with the hope that its goals and objectives continue to make a large place feel intimate, friendly, and small.

Sincerely,

*Copley Township Zoning Commission
&
Department of Community & Economic
Development*



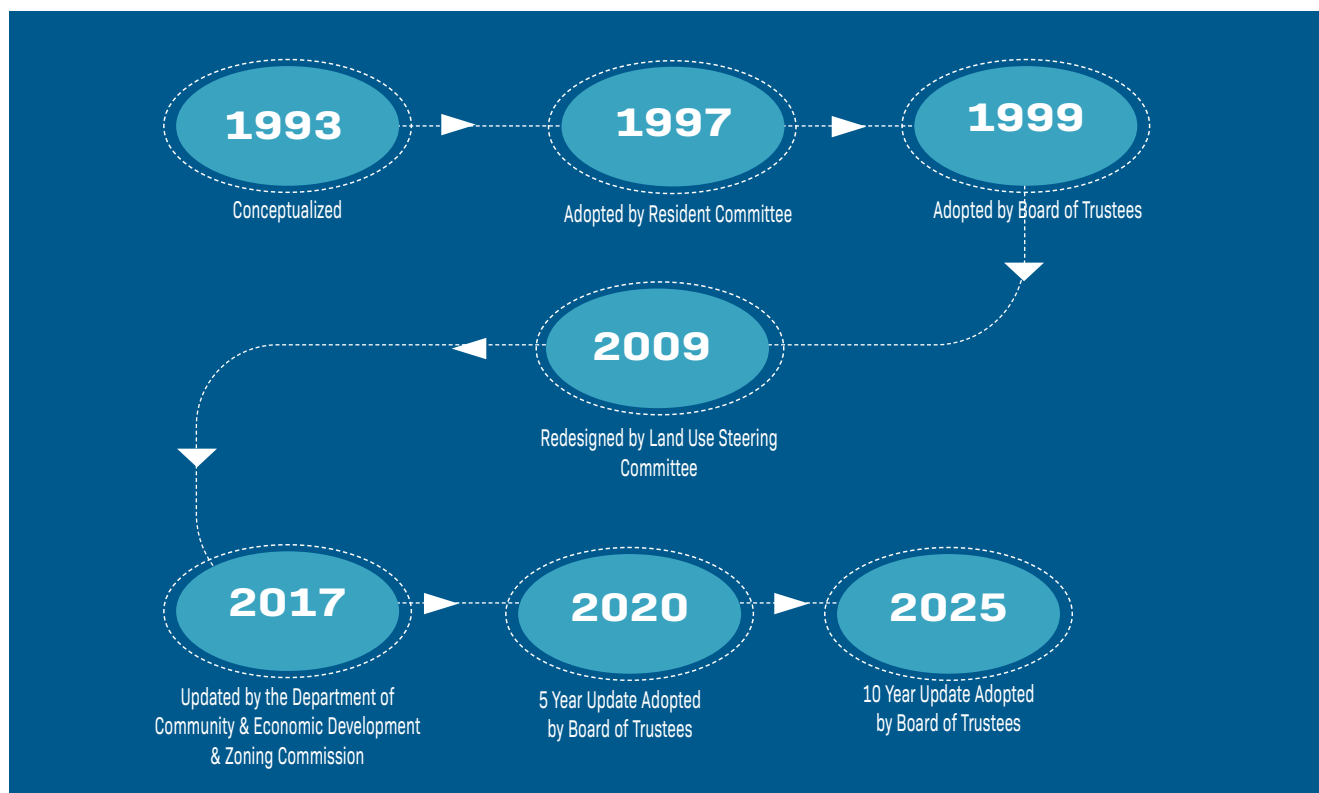
Chapter 1: Introduction

Copley Township's First Land Use Plan

After the adoption of the JEDD in 1993, a group of residents worked for three years on Copley Township's first Comprehensive Land Use Plan. This Plan was adopted in 1997 and served the community for ten years. The goals of that plan were to:

- Implement the Comprehensive Land Use Plan to direct development in the Township;
- Strengthen the Zoning Resolution in its ability to regulate development;
- Preserve the rural/suburban atmosphere of Copley Township;
- Guide the location of development on the basis of natural capabilities and limitations of the land;
- Ensure that new development does not result in public health hazards for the community;
- Guide new growth in an orderly, regulated manner that will minimize stress on services and public infrastructure;
- Guide commercial and industrial growth to provide a sound fiscal base for schools and Township services; and
- Maintain an ordered, balanced community design with the focus on residential and open space/conservation zoning.

This plan served the community well for approximately ten years and helped Township officials make important development and land use decisions.

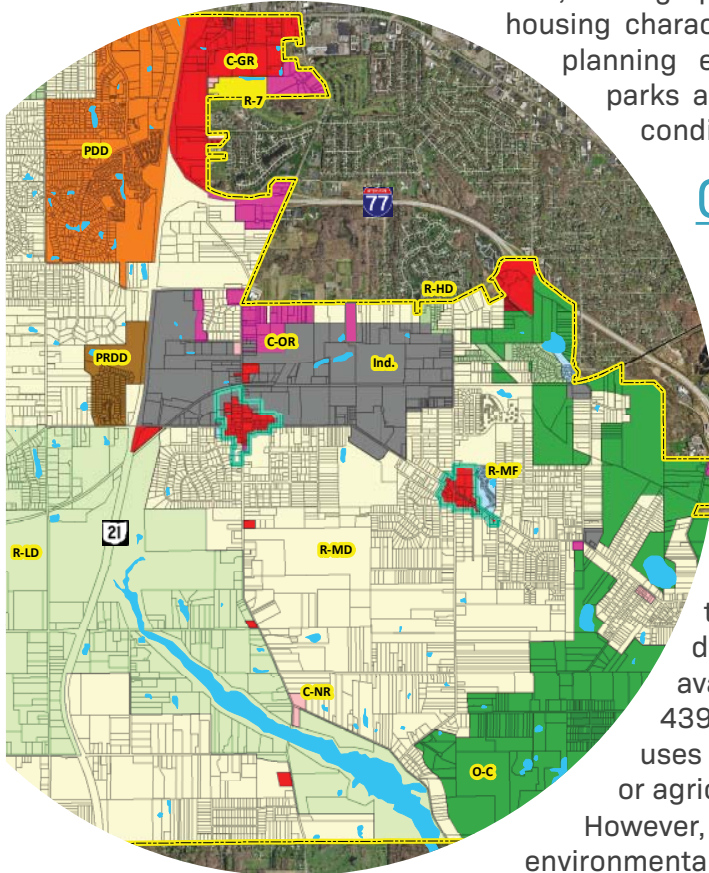


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In 2023, the Copley Township Zoning Commission began the process of updating the Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The Commission wished to address smart growth principles which are aimed to protect and ensure a high quality of life for residents, businesses and landowners of Copley Township for generations to come. The purpose of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan is to provide a framework which informs spending and regulatory decisions to improve the 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.

Plan Update Overview

The Comprehensive Land Use Plan Update involved the public utilizing a full Public Engagement Plan. The Plan Update included New Community Survey, Workshops, Public Kiosk, Community Social, Open Office Hours, and a Public Open House. 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 51% residential; 9% commercial; 2% industrial; and 25% agricultural. The remaining land use is comprised of exempt land, mineral and gas rights, and railroad property. Exempt land includes land dedicated to school facilities, government buildings and church property. If the assumption is made that parcels over 20 acres in size are potential development areas, then 2,050 acres could be available for development. In addition, there are 439 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

As of 2024, the Copley Township Zoning Resolution includes six (6) Residential Districts, four (4) Commercial Districts, one (1) Industrial District, four (4) Mixed Use Compact Development Districts, and two (2) Planned Development Districts.

Chapter 1: Introduction

PLANNING TOOLS

The plan recommends that Copley consider the following tools:

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

Form Based Codes

A Form Based Code is a land development regulation that fosters predictable built results and a high-quality public realm by using physical form (rather than separation of uses) as the organizing principle for the code.

Green Infrastructure

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) refers to green infrastructure as a cost-effective, resilient approach to managing wet weather impacts that provides many community benefits. While single-purpose gray stormwater infrastructure—conventional piped drainage and water treatment systems—is designed to move urban stormwater away from the built environment, green infrastructure reduces and treats stormwater at its source while delivering environmental, social, and economic benefits.

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.

Performance Zoning

Performance Zoning establishes minimum criteria to be used when assessing whether a particular project is appropriate for a certain area and 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

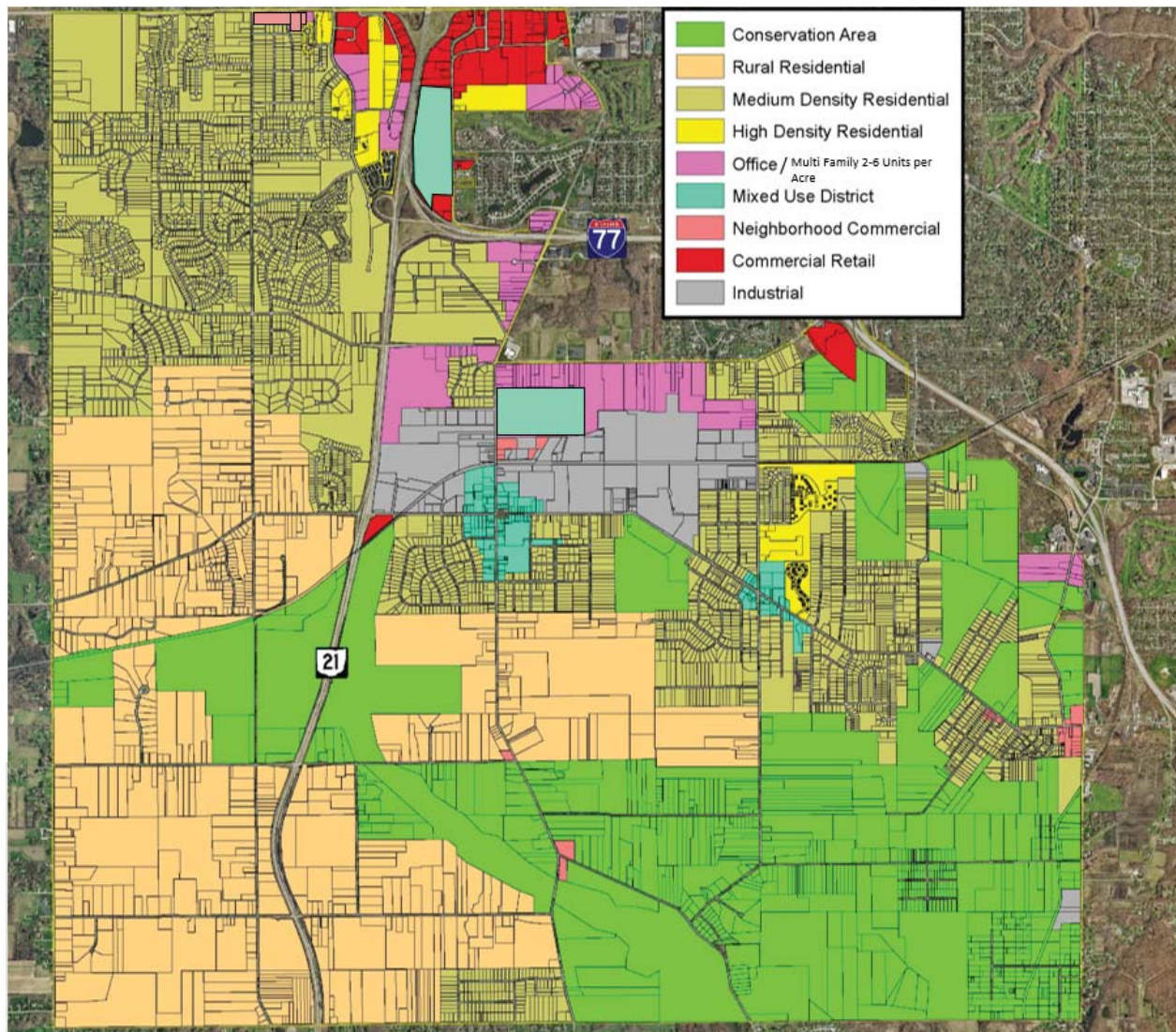
TDR tools were designed to encourage conservation of high value, natural, agricultural, and culturally significant open space while allowing for higher density residential and commercial development in the targeted development corridors or concept areas. TDR tools encourage developers to relocate development density, reduce densities in environmentally sensitive areas or reduce density in other areas desired for low density.

Since 2009, Copley Township has been interested in Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) as a tool to help shift density from high priority open space to areas where growth is encouraged. Current development methods tend to involve landowners in a process that is not effective in controlling sprawl. TDR can be a key tool used in shifting density from one parcel to another. Currently, townships cannot approve the transfer of development rights. As a charter county, Summit County could have the ability to adopt TDR and the Townships would not have to wait for authorization from the State. Copley Township could be a pilot TDR program for the County. In addition, many townships have approved non-contiguous subdivisions as a methodology of transferring development densities.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Department of Community & Economic Development recommended the following updates to the Future Land Use Map based on public engagement, inter-department and external agency feedback:

Future Land Use Map



Primary updates include the following; addition of low density multifamily residential (2-6 units per acre) as an option in the Office Use category and the addition of proposed mixed use areas along S. Cleveland Massillon Road and Copley Road.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Goals & Objectives Overview



Economic Development

- a. Support initiatives which foster an increased tax base.
- b. Retain and assist small businesses as they thrive in the community.
- c. Be a leader in attracting new businesses.



Community + Opportunity + Quality of Place

- a. Encourage access to safe and welcoming public spaces and places for all residents.
- b. Support various modes of transportation which increase accessibility for individuals.
- c. Ensure that all people have an opportunity to live and thrive in Copley by offering a diverse range of housing.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Goals & Objectives Overview



Built Environment

- a. Encourage the protection and preservation of valuable historic and cultural resources.
- b. Expand awareness of community resources.
- c. Promote the upkeep and maintenance of the existing residential and commercial properties.



Sustainability + Resiliency

- a. Encourage low design impact principles in areas of residential and commercial development.
- b. Support efforts to conserve and protect natural resources and wildlife.
- c. Promote efforts of private landowners to preserve and expand farmland.