

## **CHAPTER 2: PLANNING VISION**

### **I. Developing the Vision**

In 2006, after meeting for several months, the Comprehensive Planning Committee determined that a revision of the 1999 Comprehensive Plan would require more factual information, research and input of Genoa Township residents than was in the possession of the Comprehensive Planning Committee members.

Four subgroups were created to gather this information: (1) Town Enhancement – to determine the current amenities and services of Genoa Township and the desires for additional or improved amenities and services; (2) Fiscal Impact – to review the finances, including revenue sources, outlays and budget of Genoa Township; (3) Education/Outreach – to reach out to residents and collect opinions and input from them on the current status and the future of Genoa Township (and once received, communicate the collective input back to the residents); and (4) Document Update – to turn the work of the Comprehensive Planning Committee into a draft version of the Comprehensive Plan for the review of the Comprehensive Planning Committee.

Each subgroup completed numerous key activities in this process. In 2007, the residents of Genoa Township were invited to take part in a visioning process coordinated by the Education/Outreach subgroup. The visioning process consisted of 10 town meetings structured and hosted by two professors from Otterbein College. The visioning process included three main questions: (1) what do residents like about Genoa Township; (2) what would residents change about Genoa Township; and (3) what, if anything, is missing from Genoa Township? Although the visioning process itself received nominal participation, its results were summarized in a report issued by the Otterbein College faculty consultants and has served as a tool for the Comprehensive Planning Committee in the creation of the 2008 Comprehensive Plan (see Appendix).

The Fiscal Impact subgroup met with every Genoa Township department and thoroughly reviewed the history of spending in Genoa Township. They examined the budget process, the revenue sources and the expenditure approval process in detail and summarized their findings in a report to the Comprehensive Planning Committee (see Appendix). This report has also served as a tool for the Comprehensive Planning Committee in the determination of the fiscal impact of many alternative uses for areas in Genoa Township as reflected in this 2008 Comprehensive Plan.

In 2007, Genoa Township no longer contained significant agricultural uses. Most farmland area has been converted to the building of single family homes and condominiums in response to the demand for more housing in desirable locations surrounding the Columbus metropolitan area. The zip codes in Genoa Township experienced some of the highest levels of residential growth and increases in property values in the last seven years of any suburb of Columbus,

Ohio.

The vision of Genoa Township set forth in this 2008 Comprehensive Plan seeks to retain those images of Genoa Township that meet the motto “A Nice Place to Live” while acknowledging those images that have changed or will change in the years to come. Just as important are the images that are not a part of Genoa Township’s future – as dictated by the residents who participated directly in the visioning process and participated indirectly by attending and speaking at meetings of the Genoa Township Trustees, Genoa Township Zoning Commission, Genoa Township Board of Zoning Appeals, Genoa Township Parks Advisory Board and Genoa Township Comprehensive Planning Committee.

As expressed in the visioning process, the reasons people came to live in Genoa Township are basically the same as the reasons people began building homes here over 20 years ago.

## **II. Rural Images are Key to the Livability and Desirability of Genoa Township**

The 1999 Plan focused on the preservation of a “rural” look and feel of Genoa Township by emphasizing the long, open or uninterrupted vistas and cultivated land with mature woodlands. What remains of that 1999 vision are the uninterrupted vistas, but most other visual images have changed to reflect the unprecedented growth of residential development. The guidance of the 1999 Plan suggested that structures are to be screened with natural landscaping, from the adjacent street system or be located behind the existing wooded areas with the objective of maintaining the native landscape as a dominant feature significantly contributing to the Township's overall rural image. Mature hedge or tree lined roads, woodlands, and ravine areas are all valuable reminders of what was once a dominant feature throughout the Township. The Zoning Resolution implemented this guidance in the form of standards (for PD-1 subdivisions) using deep road setbacks and screening. Aggressive retention of old growth trees, overall tree retention in developments, open green space, light pollution standards and grouping of homes set into large park-like preserves of open space have protected the rural image of Genoa Township. In the visioning process, it was interesting to note that both long-time and new residents of Genoa Township cited the rural nature (including interaction with wildlife) despite the very different state of Genoa Township at the time that each respective group moved into the Genoa Township. The visioning process confirmed the desirability of continuing these practices.

## **III. Public and Private Park and Recreation Areas Feature Prominently in the Township**

Since 1999, Genoa Township has aggressively created public and private parkland, recreational facilities and other preserved areas to remain attractive to existing and new residents. In addition to the existing Hoover Reservoir recreation areas and newly dedicated public passive and active parkland, the Zoning Resolution requires that a minimum of 40% of every Planned Residential District (PD-1) neighborhood be retained as open space (with both active and passive uses). PD-1 with Conservation Development Standards and the Planned Rural Residential Conservation District (PRRCD) increase the minimum required open space to 50%. The visioning process confirmed that the emphasis on open space preserved as green space, either naturally or as part of planned development, remains one of the key reasons that long-

time residents have remained in Genoa Township (despite extraordinary housing development levels) and an oft-cited basis for new residents' selection of Genoa Township as their new home. Additionally residential lots of at least two (2) acres were identified as desirable.

The completion of the Genoa Township Bike Trail connecting Berkshire Township through Genoa Township into the developed multi-use trail system of Westerville (and The Ohio to Erie Trail) was a substantial fiscal investment of Genoa Township and provides a major benefit to the residents for recreation and transportation. Access to the Genoa Township Bike Trail remains a concern of residents, particularly those residents on the west side of State Route 3. Although crossing access is available at the traffic light at Big Walnut Road, there are no sidewalks along Big Walnut Road to provide safe passage to the intersection for residents. The crossing light at Mount Royal is available to residents of the Highland Lakes development to the south, but is approximately 1.7 miles from the Big Walnut Road intersection. Although the most significant park in Genoa Township, McNamara Park, and some other parks embedded in developments on the East side of State Route 3 are accessible from the Genoa Township Bike Trail, most parks within developments or along the East side of State Route 3 are not accessible by safe pedestrian routes. Many partially developed sidewalk routes have been identified for connection, and any new development is required to include sidewalks on both sides of the streets and multi-use paths in the open space in anticipation of future opportunities for connection.

#### **IV. Township, County and State Roads Create Our Township Identity and Closely Link Us to Neighboring Areas**

Genoa Township's roads are molded around two major bodies of water, Hoover Reservoir to the East and Alum Creek to the West. As a result, a limited number of roadways serve Genoa Township and provide opportunities and challenges to residents, visitors and other traffic entering and leaving. The Delaware County Thoroughfare Plan approved in 2001 sets forth the future of each of the major county roadways in Genoa Township, including the major arterial Big Walnut Road. The Ohio Department of Transportation's 2030 Plan sets forth the future for the most prominent roadway in Genoa Township – the 4-mile stretch of Ohio State Route 3. The nearly unbroken expanse of tree-lined State Route 3 (from Mount Royal Avenue to Plumb Road) is the scenic gateway to Genoa Township and many residents have suggested an appropriate "entrance feature" on the Genoa Township-owned triangle-shaped parkland at the confluence of Mount Royal Avenue, State Route 3, Old 3C Highway and the Genoa Township Bike Trail beyond the solitary "Welcome to Genoa Township" signpost. For purposes of the 2008 Comprehensive Plan, it is important to note that no widening or substantial improvement is planned for either of these two most heavily-traveled corridors in Genoa Township until beyond 2012. Limited improvement is scheduled for Worthington Road and Sunbury Road as North-South corridors with minor arterial status.

The growth of areas to the North (State Route 36/37 corridor), South (Polaris Parkway and Westerville), East (New Albany and Harlem Township) and West (Orange Township and a potential future exit for I-71) magnify the need for the roads of Genoa Township to serve not only local residents but a growing surrounding population seeking highway access and

commercial services that are located primarily to the North and South. The ability of the roadways to function under current traffic demands was questioned in many visioning sessions, and infrastructure support and overload will be key concerns for continuing growth anywhere in Genoa Township.

#### **V. A Sense of Neighborhoods and Community**

Unlike the 1999 population of Genoa Township that was spread widely on large lots with limited residential subdivisions, today Genoa Township is dominated by the suburban subdivision. This clustering of pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods with good schools, integrated park space, and low crime has created an influx of families (including families with small and school-age children).

Three school districts serve Genoa Township: Big Walnut, Olentangy and Westerville. These school districts have experienced significant growth since 1999 and this offers further proof that families of school-age children and other residents value this asset. While these districts enhance the appeal of the Township the fact that there are 3 separate districts focuses a sense of community within the physical neighborhoods rather than at the township level.

In the visioning process residents indicated an overall sense of safety and a high degree of satisfaction with police and fire protection. This sense of safety coupled with low crime enhances the character of the physical neighborhoods. In turn, satisfaction with family-oriented Township annual events like the Easter Egg Hunt, the Genoa Trail Festival, Trick or Treat Village and Fire Prevention Open House fosters the sense of the social community.

Bringing together the physical and social community creates a sense of belonging that is vital to a healthy community. The Township should continue to build and strengthen those elements over which it has control.

#### **VI. Development of Community and/or Neighborhood Scale Nonresidential Uses**

The character of Genoa Township is essentially residential outside of the limited commercial and industrial zones in the southern end. The visioning process identified a strong preference for retaining this residential character but with an open mind to neighborhood scale retail services and other community services primarily serving the residents of Genoa Township where permitted. The visioning process clearly indicated that “big box” commercial development is opposed by residents along with any other uses that create a regional draw. In all circumstances, any nonresidential use should be designed to reflect the rural and residential character of the community. Nonresidential uses must be consistent and compatible with adjacent uses and other requirements set forth in this Comprehensive Plan and the Zoning Resolution.