

2019 Land Use Plan Update

In 2019 Symmes Township began an initiative to update the Land Use section of the 2009 Ten-Year Master Plan. Hamilton County Planning + Development was hired to help the Land Use Committee review the 2009 Land Use Plan maps and update data in the 2009 Ten-Year Master Plan when appropriate.

2019 SYMMES TOWNSHIP TRUSTEES

Phil Beck
Jodie Leis
Kenneth N. Bryant

LAND USE COMMITTEE

Phil Beck, Trustee
Kim Lapensee, Administrator
Dima Almeniawi
Byron Fowler
Jack Horvath
Jeff Reichman
Ralph Wolfe

SYMMES TOWNSHIP ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Kimberly A. Lapensee, Township Administrator
Carol Sims, Assistant Fiscal Officer
Luanne Felter, Assistant to the Administrator
Jana Grant, Administrative Assistant

Acknowledgements

This plan is the result of extensive input from Symmes Township residents and business owners as well as the efforts of the Symmes Township Trustees, Master Plan Steering Committee, and administrative staff.

2009 SYMMES TOWNSHIP TRUSTEES

Philip J. Beck
Kenneth N. Bryant
Kathryn P. Wagner

AD HOC MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

John Downlin, Jr.
John Goedde
Gregory Kessler
Ron Salatin
Brad Vigran

SYMMES TOWNSHIP ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Gerald L. Beckman, Township Administrator
Carol Sims, Assistant Fiscal Officer
Luanne Felter, Administrative Assistant
Jana Grant, Office Assistant

CONSULTANT



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Introduction

Overarching Vision

Symmes Township is first and foremost a community. A community of strong neighborhoods intermixed with diverse business areas, parks, open spaces, and community facilities. These aspects of a community are what gives Symmes Township its strong identity and what will be protected and enhanced long into the future.

HISTORY OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

Over the last decade, Symmes Township has experienced the almost complete build out of land within the township’s boundaries. In fact, what little land is available is generally found on vacant lots scattered within the community’s numerous subdivisions or small slivers of land that are constrained by natural constraints such as slopes and floodplains. This, however, has not stopped the township from growing. With the prospect of several major commercial redevelopment projects and plans underway for the improvement of the former Rozzi Firework site, Symmes Township is primed to continue as one of Greater Cincinnati’s most prominent communities with a mix of high quality residential, commercial, and office uses.

In early 2007, the township decided to embark on a master planning process that will “establish priorities for future problem solving and guidance for accomplishing future projects.” This plan is a first for the township because while the community has adopted plans addressing targeted issues (e.g., land use, sidewalks, and parks), the township has never taken a step back to evaluate the overall needs of the community. This plan is intended to be such a policy document; a plan that establishes the broader vision for Symmes Township’s future that will guide future decisions in the township. In addition to serving as a policy document, the planning process also provided a vital opportunity to identify those issues of importance to residents and business owners and examine strategies and tools available to the township to help address those issues.



IDENTIFYING COMMUNITY VALUES

In May 2007, the township held a public kick-off meeting and used the township newsletter to distribute a survey to all its residents and businesses. The meeting and survey were the initial community-wide public forums used to identify what it is that township's citizens value so much about living and working in Symmes Township as well as those issues they felt needed to be addressed. In addition to those forums, the township also created the Symmes Township Ad Hoc Master Plan Steering Committee, comprised of residents, to serve as a sounding board throughout the planning process.

While there were a range of thoughts, comments, and issues put forth during those initial public input forums, several common themes arose that helped provide a picture of the township's community values related to growth and development. While there were a number of issues identified, the most pressing can be summarized as follows, listed in no particular order:

-  Preservation of strong neighborhoods,
-  Improvement of vehicular traffic circulation and congestion,
-  Enhancement of pedestrian connectivity,
-  Expansion of parks, open spaces, and community facilities to serve all residents of the township,
-  Creation of a "community center" and/or identity,
-  Continuation of high levels of services while keeping our taxes low, and
-  Promotion of quality economic growth.

PLANNING THEMES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

For the purposes of the Symmes Township Ten-Year Master Plan, each of the priority issues identified above was grouped into three main planning themes, with related guiding principles. The guiding principles of the plan are intended to be the guiding force behind the plan, direct the creation of the plan, and provide a foundation of ideals that decision-makers can use on a daily basis in the township. This section summarizes the three key themes that arose out of the planning process and the related guiding principles. Each of these themes is discussed in more detail within the individual sections of this plan.

QUALITY OF LIFE

A significant portion of why residents choose to live in Symmes Township relates to the excellent quality of life created by elements such as excellent school systems, strong neighborhoods, large areas of parks and open space, and a close proximity to businesses and the highway system. Maintaining and building on this quality of life will go a long way in furthering the vision of the township's future.

The guiding principles for maintaining a high quality of life in the township are:

-  The township will have an expansive parks and open space system that is accessible to all residents and is designed to create a “community center” desired by the residents.
-  The township will continue to work with agencies including, but not limited to, the school districts, Hamilton County Park District, Symmes Historical Society, and Cincinnati Horticultural Society, to coordinate activities and services that enhance quality of life.
-  The township will balance the costs and benefits of services and community facilities to the residents when considering new improvements to parks, open spaces, community services, and township services.

LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT



When residents were asked what it is that they enjoyed most about living in Symmes Township, the vast majority of respondents made mention of characteristics such as “safe and quiet neighborhoods,” “a beautiful community,” “proximity to shopping and the highway network,” and any number of other similar responses. It is clear that part of the reason that people move to and stay in Symmes Township is the overall quality of development and community character. Residents also voiced the concern that these things were the most at risk in the future if the township did not take a more active role in preserving these qualities. The upside of this is that Symmes Township has the capabilities of preserving and protecting those characteristics that residents hold dear to their hearts and that will be key to the implementation of this plan.

In addition to the residential areas of the township, the business areas of Symmes Township are vital to providing necessary services to local residents and maintaining a broad tax base to minimize the tax burden on residents. At the same time, unlike other communities in the Cincinnati region, the township has almost reached full buildout whereby there is little room for the expansion of these business areas. To ensure the long-term viability of the local economy, Symmes

Township needs to focus on reinvigorating the existing business areas without lowering the standards for high-quality development.

The guiding principles for land use and development in the township are:

-  The township will have high standards for development to enhance and protect the overall community character that residents associate with Symmes Township.
-  The township will play a more direct role in the administration and enforcement of zoning and property maintenance regulations.
-  The township will continue to be comprised of strong, attractive neighborhoods of well-maintained housing.
-  The township will have a strong economic base of nonresidential uses that broadens and diversifies the tax base to the maximum extent possible.
-  The township will utilize all tools available to promote the redevelopment of underutilized properties and to capitalize on what little land is available in the township.
-  The township will continue its efforts to protect historic and archeological sites.

TRANSPORTATION



Next to concerns about the subdivisions and neighborhoods where citizens reside, issues with the overall transportation system were the first to be identified given its impact on everyone’s daily lives. While Symmes Township may only have limited authority over certain elements of the transportation system (e.g., local roads and sidewalks), they do have the power and authority to coordinate and promote those county and regional level activities that will best serve the community at-large. For the township to achieve the goals for enhancing the transportation system, it will have to take on the dual role of actively making improvements where possible and representing the township’s interest for regional transportation projects.

-  The township will continue to expand the sidewalk and trail system in the township where such connections will provide the most impact to residents.
-  The township will have a well-maintained and safe network of local roads that fall under the authority of the township.
-  The township will be an advocate for local interests as it relates to the improvement to the county and regional transportation system including improvements related to mass transit.

Quality of Life

Quality of Life Related Comments

- Extensive parks and greenspace
- High quality schools and services
- Low taxes – no income tax
- Need for the creation of a “community center” or place to gather and interact
- Creation of a community identity
- Scenic beauty and lovely trees

Source: Initial citizen survey and public meetings

INTRODUCTION

A significant portion of why residents choose to live in Symmes Township relates to the excellent quality of life created by aspects such as excellent school systems, strong neighborhoods, large areas of parks and open space, and a close proximity to businesses and the highway system. Certain elements of a great quality of life are easy to quantify. For example, most residents enjoy the low property taxes in Symmes Township and the lack of income tax. This is something the township can easily evaluate and work to maintain (i.e., good services at low property tax rates). Other elements, such as scenic beauty and a sense of place, are things that people may know when they see it but are often less tangible and harder to quantify. Additionally, as with the transportation system, the township has limited authority over some aspects of the resident’s quality of life. While the township can coordinate with the school systems, the county park system, and infrastructure and non-township service providers (e.g., cable, sewer, water, etc.), the township has limited roles in the provision of such services. The master plan focuses on those aspects of quality of life where the township has the most authority with some commentary related to other aspects. The plan also identifies how the township can coordinate with other agencies to continue enhancing the quality of life in Symmes Township.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

During the development of this plan, a significant amount of research was completed to evaluate various aspects of the township’s quality of life. The following is a brief summary of some of this information to help provide a little background on the details of certain items such as taxes, township services, and infrastructure.

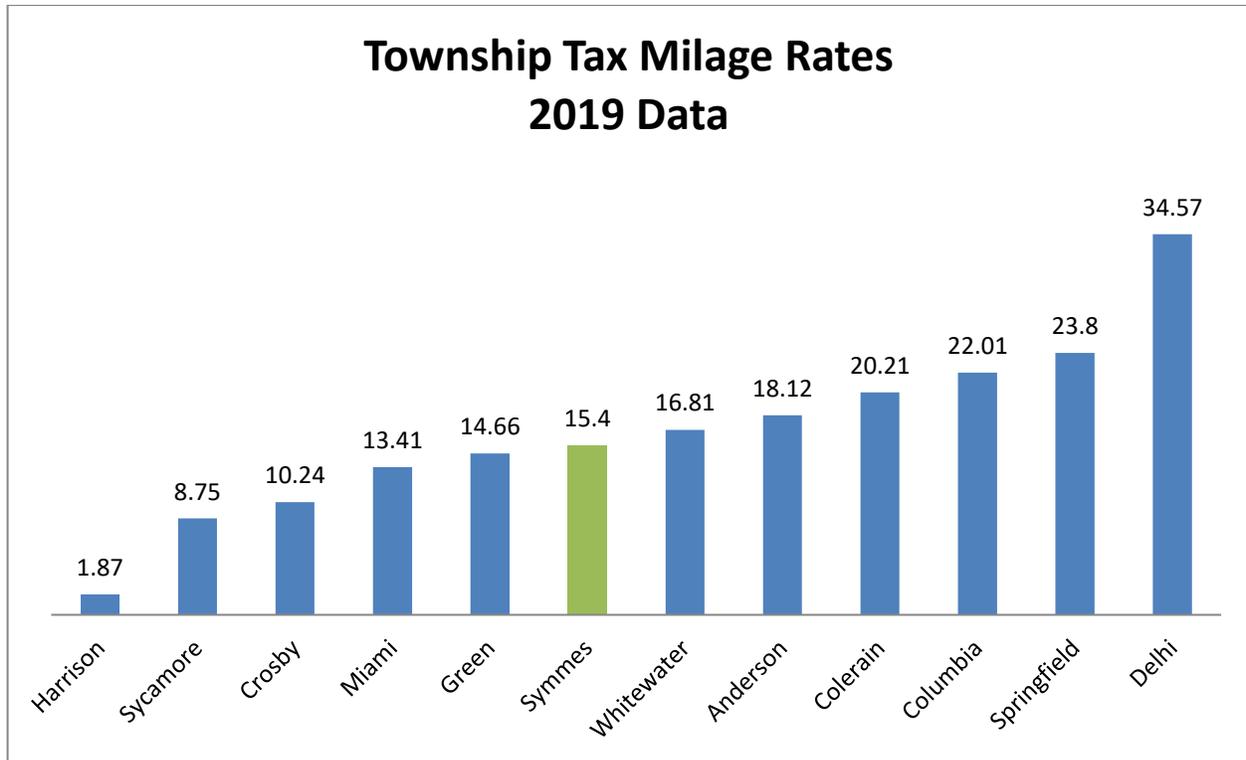
PROPERTY TAXES

Historically, the township has functioned very efficiently, providing a number of services to the residents and businesses on a minimal tax rate. One of the things that most residents mentioned during this planning process is that part of the attractiveness of living in Symmes Township is the low property taxes and the lack of income tax.

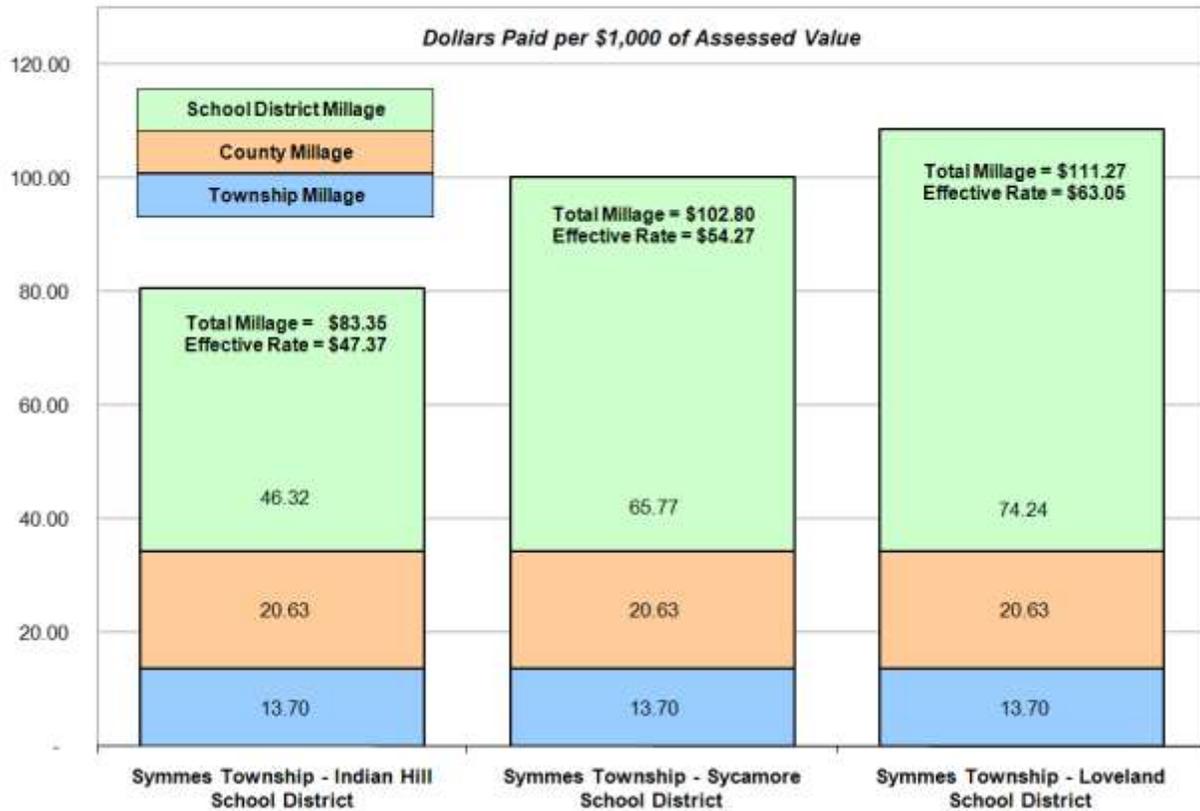
The chart on the following page shows the 2007 population (latest estimate available for townships) and township tax millage (2009) for each of the townships in Hamilton County. It illustrates that the township tax in Symmes is right in the middle of township tax rates in Hamilton County. The township taxes shown in the chart do not include countywide taxes or school district taxes (that vary widely based on the applicable school district).

In Ohio, townships cannot institute income taxes. However, school districts can levy income taxes and if you work in a city such as Cincinnati, you may be subject to income taxes where you work. This means that while Symmes Township cannot levy an income tax, residents still may be subject to such taxes.

The range in township tax levels are attributed to a number of things ranging from miles of local roads the township maintains to the amount of parks. They also may vary based on the commercial base of a particular township so, for example, Green and Sycamore Townships may have higher populations than Symmes, but they also have large areas of commercial development to help offset some of the tax burden.



Another key aspect of taxes that must be taken into consideration is that a large portion of a resident’s tax bill is dedicated to school districts. Depending on where a person lives in Symmes Township, they reside in one of three public school districts that each has its own tax millage. The chart and table on the following page shows that those residents who live in the Loveland School District pay significantly more taxes than those in the Indian Hill School District.



Tax Example

Market Value*		\$200,000
Assessed Value (35% of Market Value)		\$70,000
Taxes (Effective Tax Rate x 70**)	Indian Hill Schools	\$3,316
	Sycamore Schools	\$3,799
	Loveland Schools	\$4,414
* As determined by the Hamilton County Auditor		
** The effective rate is multiplied against each \$1,000 of assessed value, which in this example is \$70,000.		

In the above example, total millage is the total number of mills based on approved levies and the “effective tax rate” is the tax rate that you see on your tax bill and which takes into account various tax rollbacks and reductions.

TOWNSHIP SERVICES

Symmes Township, like other townships in Ohio, can provide a number of services to its residents and business owners. These services are, to some degree, limited by the Ohio Revised Code (e.g., the Ohio Revised Code defines to what extent the township can regulate development through zoning and prohibits township's from adopting and administering subdivision regulations). The core services that Symmes Township provides are:

-  Maintenance of township roads,
-  Police protection through the Hamilton County Sheriff's office,
-  Fire protection and emergency medical services through a contract with the Loveland-Symmes Fire Department,
-  Parks and recreation (see discussion in other sections of this plan),
-  Township zoning with enforcement undertaken through a contract with the Hamilton County Rural Zoning Commission staff,
-  Maintenance of township cemeteries, and
-  Public health services provided by the Hamilton County Health District.

According to the Ohio Township Association, in addition to the above services, the township can (and does in some cases) have the responsibility for drainage ditches, drains, and other surface waters; line fences between adjacent properties; and the control of weeds and brush. Trustees also have permissive authority to erect monuments to commemorate those who died in the service of their country and a board of township trustees may contract for artificial lighting when it is determined that public safety requires such lighting.

TOWNSHIP PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

It is clear that one of the main draws of Symmes Township is the extensive amount of parks and open space available within the township as well as within other communities that are in close proximity to most residents. The township and county parks are both categorized as "parks" in the existing land use map (See page 16.) and are identified below. As is identified in the recommendations, the continued improvement and expansion of this park system is a key role the township can play in the enhancement of the quality of life.



- 

The **Camp Dennison Nature Trail** is a 12-acre park with a one-half mile hiking trail located in the Camp Dennison neighborhood.
- 

The 8.3-acre **Seven Gables Park** incorporates tennis and basketball courts, a picnic shelter, walking trail, and playground.
- 

The township owns and maintains a five-acre greenspace, called the **Harper's Station Greenspace**, that is currently maintained in a natural state. The greenspace is located between the commercial properties of Harper's Station and adjacent residential uses. Future plans for this site include the construction of a walking trail.
- 

Stonebridge Park is a five-acre neighborhood parking that features a baseball and soccer field along with a playground area.
- 

Symmes Township Park is a 61-acre park on Lebanon Road that offers walking trails, dog run, bird sanctuary, basketball and volleyball courts, playgrounds, picnic shelters, and a number of other facilities to meet the needs of residents. This park was also host to the 2009 Cincinnati Flower Show.
- 

The **Rozzi Property** is a future 50+ acre park located across Lebanon Road from the Symmes Township Park that the township acquired after passing a special parks levy for the specific purpose of acquiring the former Rozzi fireworks site. The township is currently developing the improvement plans for this park.
- 

Hopewell Meadows Park is a 16-acre neighborhood park that has a playground, tennis courts, picnic shelters, and walking trails that are designed for multi-use (e.g., pedestrian, bicycles, skates).
- 

The **Meade Property** is a 27-acre park with a 1900's Victorian style house located on the property. This park is located across Union Cemetery Road from the Rozzi Property. Walking trails are being developed. A small portion of this property has been leased to the Symmes Township Historical Society for the reconstruction of an 1830's log house for use as a museum. Additionally, the township trustees are working on a lease agreement with the Cincinnati Horticultural Society to turn seven acres of land into a world-class horticultural center.
- 

The **Blong Memorial Park** is a small park located at East Kemper and Montgomery Roads. It is currently the location of a small memorial wall that depicts the history of the township.

INFRASTRUCTURE

When it comes to infrastructure and related services, transportation tends to be the main element that comes to mind. However, there is an extensive infrastructure network of water mains, sewer lines, gas lines, telephone, cable, and other services that criss-cross the township providing residents and businesses with day-to-day services that are often taken for granted. All of these non-transportation oriented infrastructure systems are operated by service providers outside of the township. Sewer is provided by the Hamilton County Metropolitan Sewer District, water is provided by the Greater Cincinnati Water Works, Loveland Water, Indian Hill Water Works, and Warren County, gas (where available) and electric are provided by Duke Energy, and telephone and other digital services are provided by a number of local and regional providers. For the most part, all residents and businesses have access to these services with only minor exceptions related to sewer service where some properties still utilize on-site septic systems.

As the community continues to mature, the township's best position related to infrastructure is to continue to coordinate improvement efforts to ensure that the township has an understanding of where these infrastructure systems exist and how they can assist the outside agencies in ensuring the best services for its residents and citizens.

CURRENT PLANNING EFFORTS AND ISSUES

The two elements of the township's quality of life where the township plays a direct role include the park and open space system and the provision of township services. For parks and open spaces, the township has played a very active role in acquiring properties including the recent efforts in acquiring the Rozzi Fireworks site. In the case of the Rozzi site, the township was able to appeal to township residents to support a park levy that allowed for the purchase of the site and plans to improve the site to create a large park that will be a gem in the township's overall system. In addition to the parks, the township has worked hard at providing services such as a public works, police protection (through the Hamilton County Sheriff's office), fire and emergency services (through the Loveland-Symmes Fire Department), zoning, and general township administration at very low costs to residents and businesses.

While the township does not currently have formal plans in place for parks or other facilities (with the exception of the road and sidewalk plan described in the transportation section) or for the provision of services (outside of the individual department), the township does continue to coordinate and plan for activities internally. This has been an effective approach for the township and, for the most part, has continued to ensure that there is a high quality of life.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR QUALITY OF LIFE

When considering planning efforts or improvements related to quality of life, the township will utilize the following guiding principles in making those decisions:

-  The township will have an expansive parks and open space system that is accessible to all residents.
-  The township will have an area of the community that is designed to create a “community center” as desired by the residents.
-  The township will continue to work with agencies including, but not limited to, the school districts, the Hamilton County Park District, Symmes Historical Society, and the Cincinnati Horticultural Society to coordinate activities and services that enhance quality of life.
-  The township will balance the costs and benefits of services and community facilities to the residents when considering new improvements to parks, open spaces, community services, and township services.
-  The township will strive for self-sufficiency when it comes to township services (i.e., where possible, the township will provide the services residents and business owners need, independent of other agencies) provided such self-sufficiency does not increase the tax burden on property owners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Acquire additional park land and open spaces as land and funding becomes available.

Symmes Township is in a position where there are few large parcels of land available that are not planned for development or are not occupied by other land uses. In this situation, the township should continue to evaluate the purchase of new properties for park and open space as the land becomes available. In some cases, land may be dedicated to the township with little to no upfront costs while in other cases, the township will have to purchase the land. In both cases, the township should evaluate the purchase based on the following criteria (in no particular order):

-  The township has, or can reasonably obtain, funding to purchase the property,
-  The property protects a historic or natural resource in the township,
-  The property preserves the community character as described within this plan,



The acquisition will enhance quality of life for residents, or



The property can help create a “sense of place” in the township.

Recommendation 2: Develop a parks and open space plan.

The township does not currently have an overall plan for all the parks and open spaces within the township. Each time the township acquires new land, the township will form a committee to determine how to best use the property. While this can be an effective approach, it does not necessarily take into consideration the needs of the overall population. For example, such a plan could evaluate the need for a community center, whether that center needs to be a physical building or if it just needs to be a spot for township gathering, and what services should be available at the community center.

At a minimum, a parks and open space plan should include:



An inventory of existing facilities and services for both the township and county parks and open spaces (within the township),



A needs assessment that evaluates the demographics of the township residents to determine the services and improvements that will best serve township residents (e.g., walkways, ball fields, or passive areas),



Citizen participation by way of an ad hoc committee and input from the general public,



Goals and objectives for the long-term expansion and maintenance of the park and open space system, and



Specific tools and strategies available to the township to meet those goals.

Recommendation 3: Coordinate planning and development efforts with other local and regional efforts.

As with other elements of this master plan, coordination and cooperation with the infrastructure providers may help create more opportunities for the township. Cooperation with the various infrastructure providers ensures that Symmes Township’s activities are in harmony with the surrounding region. The township should continue to look for opportunities to coordinate its efforts with those of infrastructure and service providers.

Land Use and Development

Population Growth

Year	Hamilton County	Symmes Township
1970	925,944	3,764
1980	873,224	5,861
1970-1980 % Change	-5.40%	54.50%
1990	866,228	11,599
1980-1990 % Change	-0.80%	97.90%
2000	845,303	14,771
1990-2000 % Change	-2.40%	27.30%
2007	853,928	15,798
2000-2007 % Change	1.00%	7.00%
2010	802,374	15,502
2017	808,703	14,809
2007-2017 % Change	-5.30%	-6.26%

Source: US Census

Source: Initial citizen survey and public meetings

INTRODUCTION

The land use and physical development of Symmes Township has a significant impact on a person's perception of the community. Many of the residents commented early on in the process that they enjoyed living in the township because the neighborhoods are attractive and safe while simultaneously located in close proximity to commercial areas and highways. Residents are also concerned about maintaining the high quality of development through better property maintenance measures and improved control over development.

LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

To understand the state of land use and development in Symmes Township today, it helps to have an understanding of how the township has historically developed and where the township stands today.

LAND AREA

The most notable historic change beyond the growth of the township is the overall reduction in the township's total land area. When the township was originally established, the township had a total land area of almost 21 square miles. Over the last few decades, the cities of Loveland, Montgomery, and Village of Indian Hill have annexed large areas of Symmes Township until the point that the township is now divided into two "islands" with a total land area of just under nine square miles.

Historic 1869 map of Symmes Township illustrates the original boundaries of Symmes Township prior to annexation by Loveland, Montgomery, and Indian Hill.

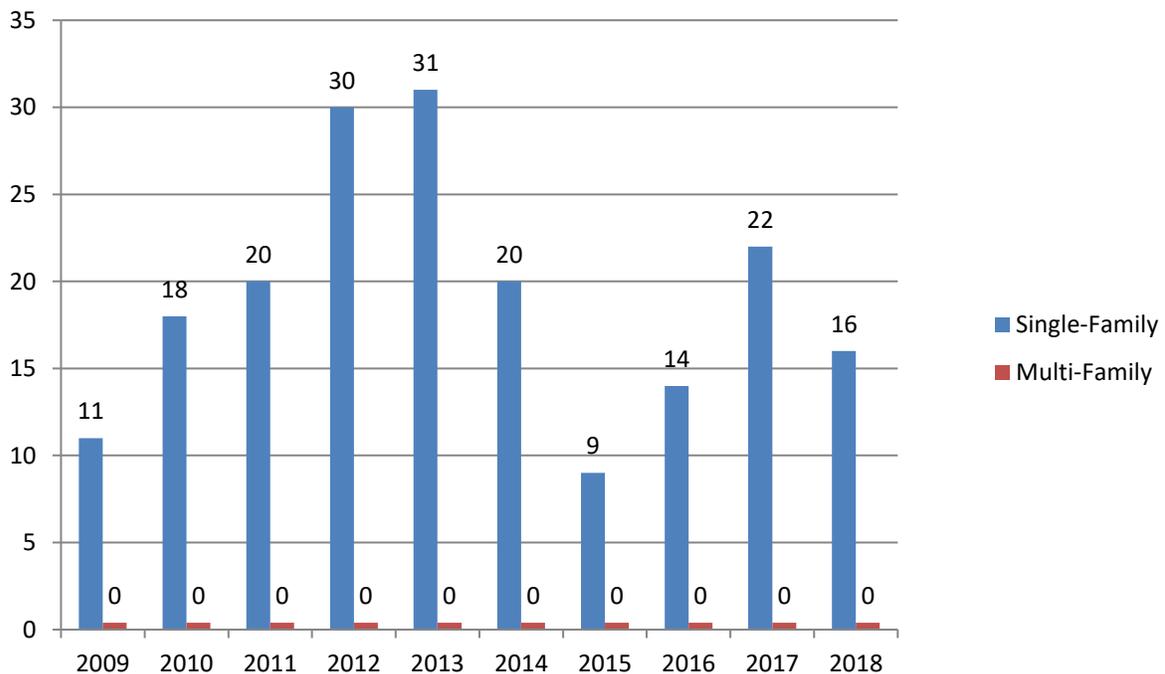
Source: Cartography Associates – Rumsey Collection



POPULATION GROWTH

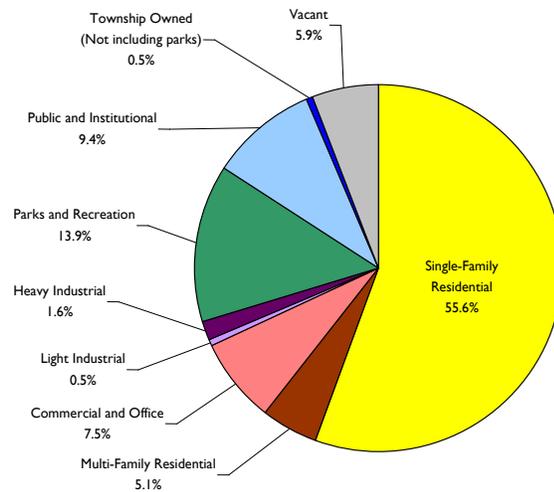
In 1990, when the township prepared the *Symmes Township Land Use and Thoroughfare Plan*, the township was in the midst of rapid growth with the township being one of the fastest growing communities in a county that was losing population (see sidebar). The township continued to grow, but at more moderate pace, until the late 1990s when growth slowed and stabilized. This stabilization in growth is largely due to the fact that the township is near buildout with few properties left for new development and no ability to expand the township’s boundaries. From this point forward, there could be some slight decline in the population, following the general trend in smaller household sizes that is being experienced across the nation that includes a growing older population that have no dependents (empty-nesters). The township is already witnessing a slowing of growth as reflected in the trend of building permits issued annually. The last surge in building permits occurred between 2000 and 2003 when some properties were rebuilding following the 1999 tornado.

**Residential Building Permits (Dwelling Units) Issued in Symmes Township
2009-2018**



EXISTING LAND USE

How land in the township is being used is also a good indicator of how much new development may occur and what mix of development currently exists. An existing land use map was assembled using data from the Hamilton County Auditor, aerial photos, and field surveys. In 2008, more than half (55.6%) of the township is dedicated to single-family residential uses and almost 10% of the township is dedicated to commercial, office, or industrial uses. While the 2008 numbers show that 5.9% of the township remains vacant, in reality, much of this land is part of designated rights-of-way or is constrained by natural features holding little development potential.



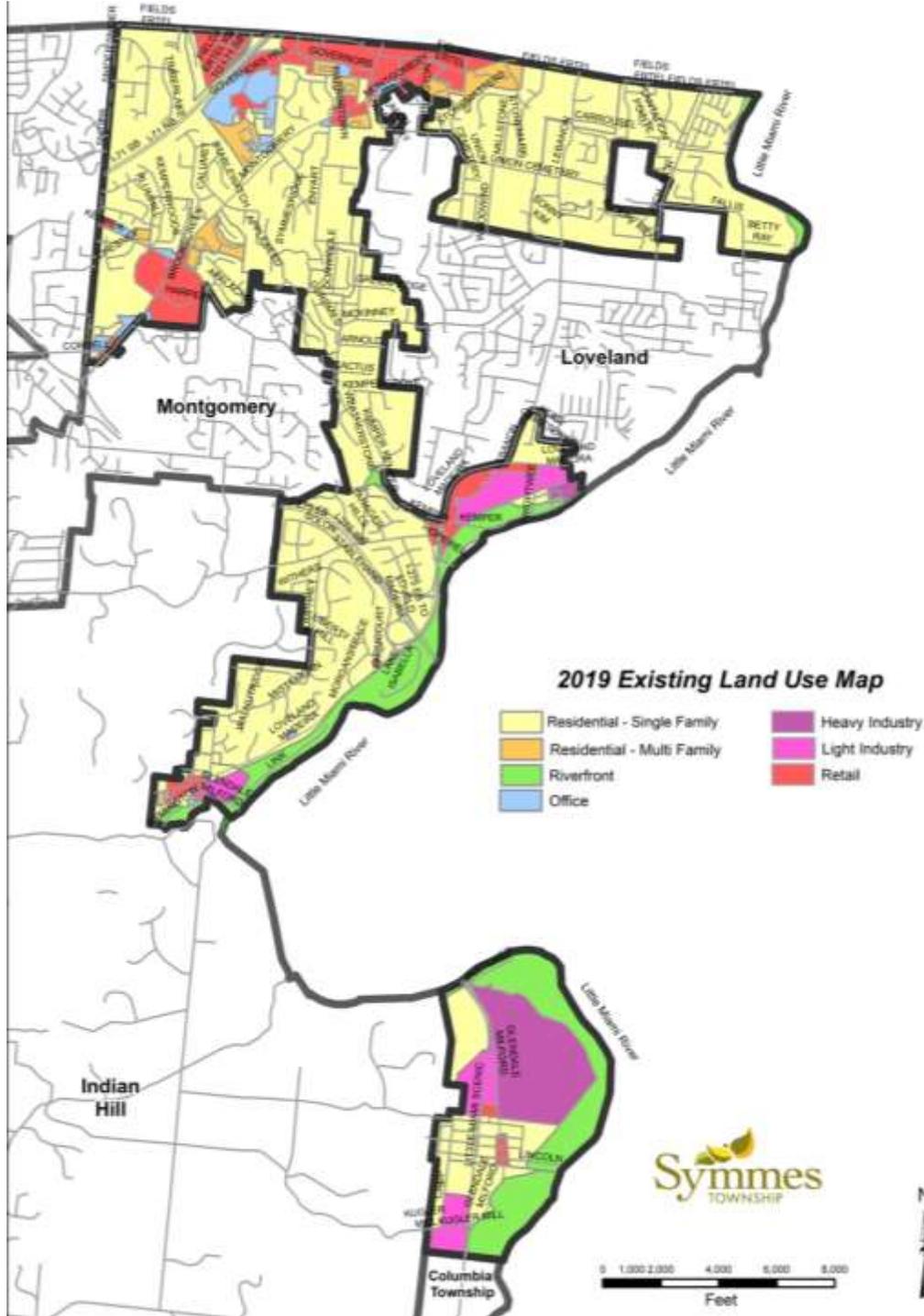
2008 Existing Land Use
(Source: Hamilton County Auditor Information and McBride Dale Clarion)

For a township the size of Symmes Township, the above distinction between residential and nonresidential land uses is important because a large portion of township revenue is based on property taxes. Generally speaking, nonresidential land uses generate the most taxes with the least demand on services whereas residential uses place the highest demand on services that may not be paid for by the taxes paid on one individual residential property. As a point of comparison, the following table illustrates the ratio of residential to nonresidential tax valuation for various townships in Hamilton County.

2008 Ratio of Tax Valuation		
	% of Residential Tax Valuation	% of Nonresidential Tax Valuation
Symmes Township	77.0%	23.0%
Anderson Township	91.2%	8.8%
Columbia Township	69.1%	30.9%
Springfield Township	90.1%	9.9%
Sycamore Township	68.1%	31.9%

Source: Hamilton County Auditor

EXISTING LAND USE MAP



Housing Resale Values

In 2004, existing homes in Symmes Township had an average sale price of \$406,050. Of the 103 neighborhoods where data was collected, only Indian Hill, Mt. Adams, Terrace Park, and Amberley Village had higher values.

Source: Board of Realtors

As stated earlier, many residents feel that Symmes Township is a community of safe and attractive neighborhoods. Many of the residents commented that it will be important to maintain these assets while supplementing the overall quality of life through the expansion of parks, recreation, and township services (discussed in other sections). It is quite evident from available information that the housing stock in Symmes Township is comprised of some of the newest and highest value homes in the county (see table and sidebar).

Age of Housing Units

	Hamilton County	Symmes Township
Total # of housing units (2017)	378,156	5,883
% Built before 2000	92.20%	91.70%
% Built between 2000-2004	3.40%	6.50%
% Built 2005 or later	1.40%	2.80%

Source: US Census

With the township near buildout, the housing stock will begin to age with fewer new homes in the future. As such, it will be vital for the township to ensure that residents and businesses are maintaining their properties to maintain the high quality of development the township maintains today.

BUSINESS ACTIVITY CENTERS

The township is fortunate to have several business activity centers (See the Business Area Map on page 20.) that are generally in good condition compared to many commercial, office, and industrial areas within the Interstate 275 loop. Each of these areas has a distinct character with unique issues that must be addressed in the future.

The primary business activity centers in Symmes Township include:



The Fields-Ertel Road Corridor



The Fields-Ertel Road Corridor is one of the township’s newest business areas with most development having occurred in the last 20 years. With direct, albeit congested, access to Interstate 71, the development in this area is characterized as auto-oriented and regional in nature including a number of large office spaces, large retailers (e.g., Kohls and J.C. Pennys), and smaller businesses such as banks, general office space, and restaurants. Most of the township’s multi-family residential uses are also located in or near this corridor.

For the most part, Fields-Ertel Road serves as the jurisdictional boundary between Hamilton and Warren counties and also between Symmes Township and Deerfield Township (Warren

County). This has been identified as an issue during the planning process due to the fact that Symmes Township cannot control what occurs (e.g., permitted uses, signage, landscaping, and other development standards) in Deerfield Township just as Deerfield Township cannot control what occurs in Symmes Township. The recommendations for enhanced development standards will help improve the overall appearance of this corridor over the long-term but the township should also work with Deerfield Township to ensure there is a coordinated vision and plan of action for development and redevelopment along with the primary business corridor.



The Montgomery Road Corridor



The Symmes Township portion of the Montgomery Road corridor starts around the intersection of Montgomery and Cornell roads and continues north until it intersects with the Fields-Ertel corridor. However, unlike the Fields-Ertel corridor that has more regional uses, the Montgomery Road corridor offers a broader mixture of uses with local retail uses (targeted toward residents of nearby neighborhoods), small office spaces, and multi-family housing.

Of all the areas discussed as part of the master planning projects, this corridor, and in particular the area around the Kemper Road intersection, is the most likely to see significant redevelopment in the future. Additionally, this area is easily accessed by many residents and poses the best chance of helping establish an identity for Symmes Township. For this reason, a special conceptual planning process was undertaken for this corridor as part of the master plan process. This concept plan is presented in Appendix A.



The Loveland-Madeira Road Corridor



The southeastern portions of the Loveland-Madeira Road corridor from Interstate 275 north past Twilightwee Road is located in Symmes Township. This business area includes the retail and industrial uses on Loveland-Madeira Road and the old Totes factory site on Kemper/Riverside Drive. The uses will likely continue to be a mixture of retail, industrial, and residential (near the Little Miami River) in the future. Special attention will need to be paid to property maintenance and redevelopment standards in this area to ensure that a high-quality appearance is maintained and to keep this corridor from deteriorating.



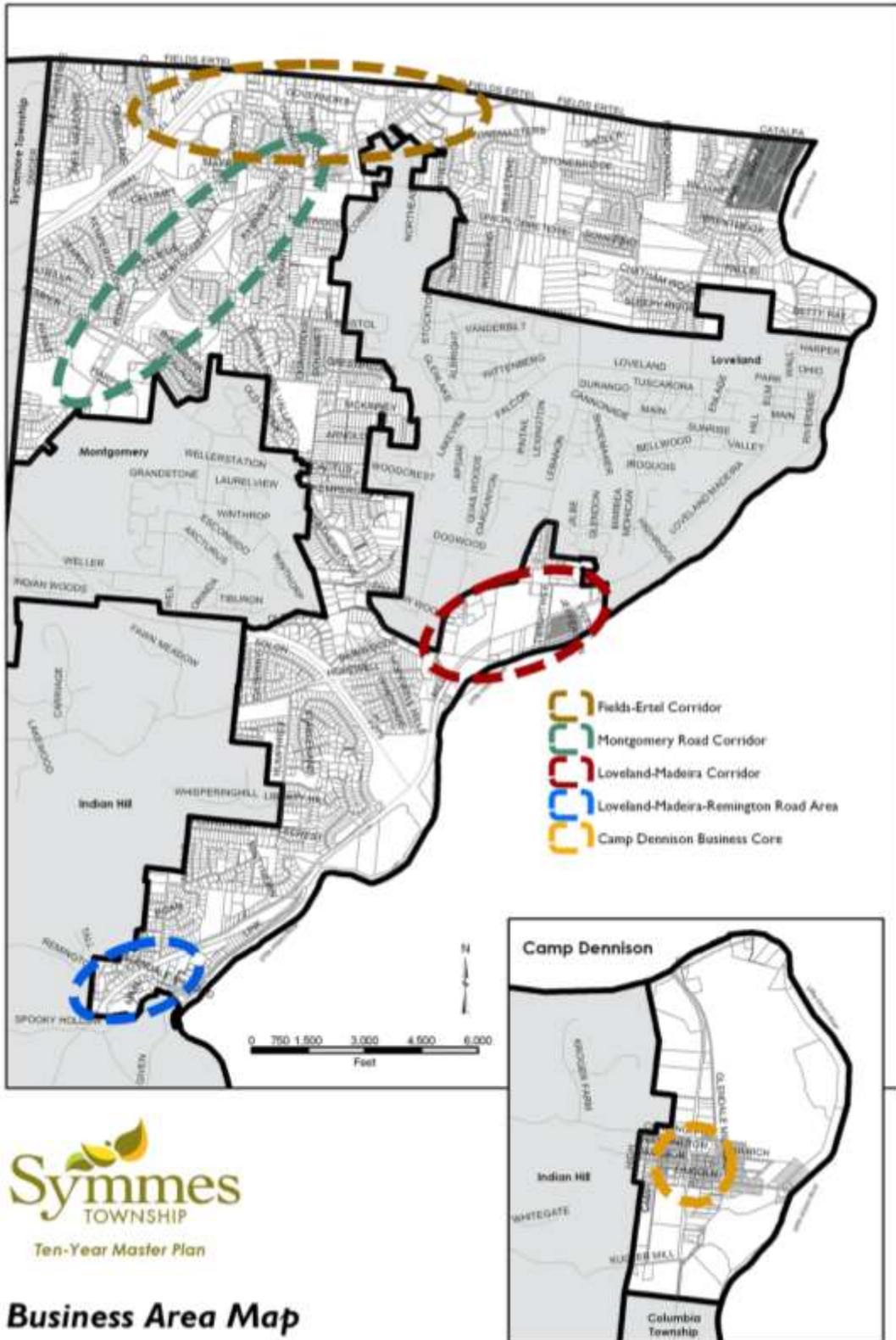
The Camp Dennison Business Core

Camp Dennison is a strong community within the larger community of Symmes Township. Originally the location of a major military camp during the Civil War, the area known as Camp Dennison is now comprised of a mixture of homes, small businesses, parks, recreational areas, and historic sites. The township should continue to maintain this small business core through the preservation of historic buildings and general support of business retention.



The Loveland-Madeira/Remington Road Area

The Loveland-Madeira/Remington Road business area is also an area where a mixture of development has occurred. There are several small-scale commercial and office businesses intermixed with some institutional and residential uses. This area functions more as a neighborhood business area and as such, the township should continue to encourage the retention and development of small-scale commercial and office uses.



CURRENT PLANNING EFFORTS AND ISSUES

ZONING

When it comes to land use and development in the township, there are two main agencies involved: Symmes Township and Hamilton County. Symmes Township adopted township zoning authority in 1996, but contracts the zoning administration (issuance of certificates) and enforcement with the Hamilton County Rural Zoning Commission (HCRZC). This means that staff from the HCRZC reports directly to the township administration when reviewing and issuing zoning certificates in accordance with the adopted zoning regulations. Additionally, enforcement staff provides on-site investigation services when a complaint is filed and will issue a zoning violation in accordance with the direction of the Symmes Township administration. All zoning decisions are made by township authorities and any requests for zoning map or text amendments are ultimately approved and adopted by the Symmes Township Trustees, which in turn are subject to a referendum vote by township residents.

LAND USE PLAN

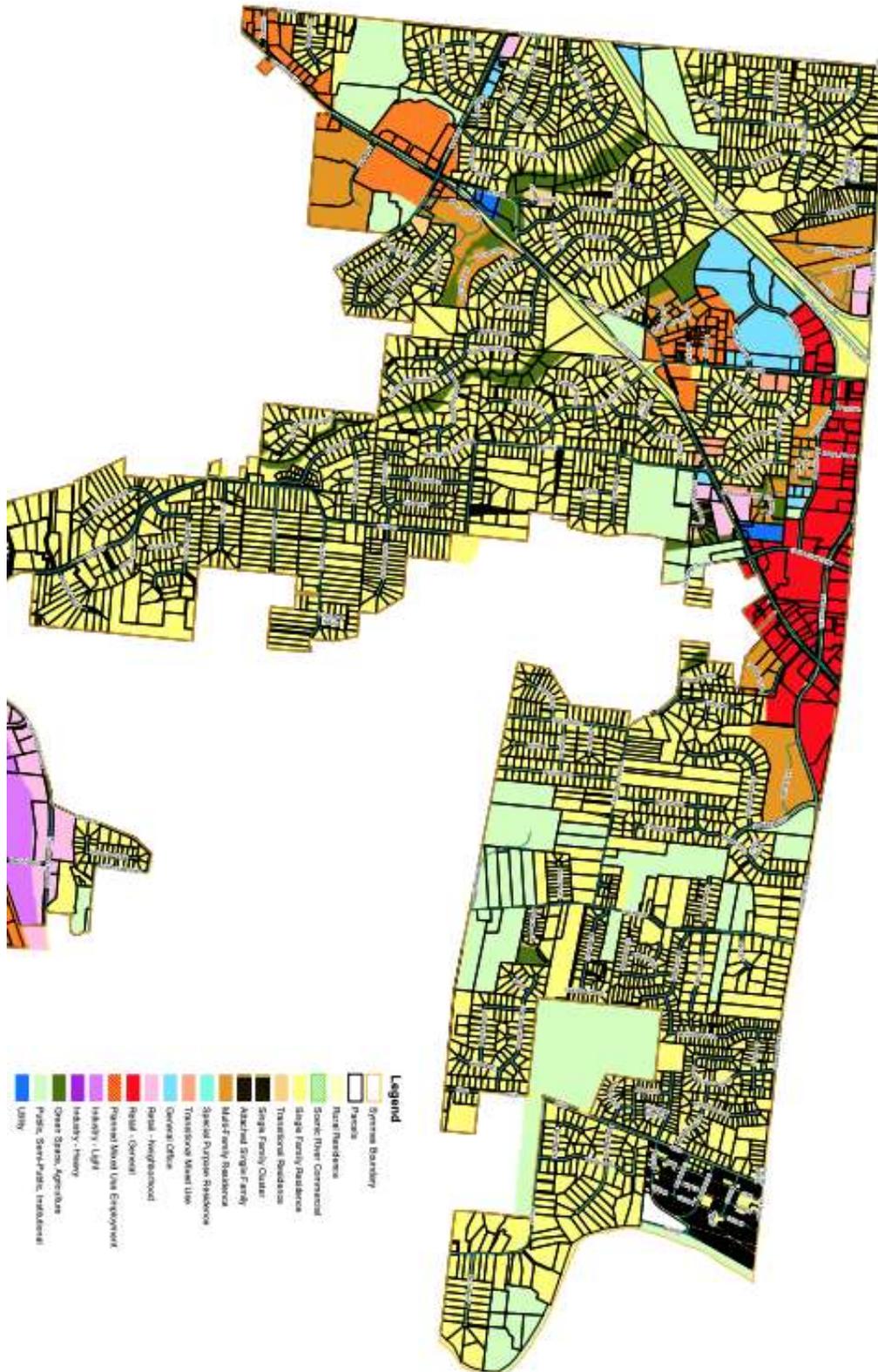
In addition to zoning, the county also maintains a land use plan for the township, which identifies the desired long-term land uses for each property. This too is ultimately adopted by the Symmes Township Trustees but the county does provide assistance in updating and maintaining the plan. While the land use plan is not a law, it does provide a policy guide for any land use decision.

The last land use plan update was prepared in 2009. As part of the update process, the township and the land use plan steering committee, with assistance from the county, reviewed the 2009 land use plan and made recommendations for some minor changes to the plan. The updated, 2019 Symmes Township Land Use Plan was incorporated into the 2009 Symmes Township Ten-Year Master Plan.

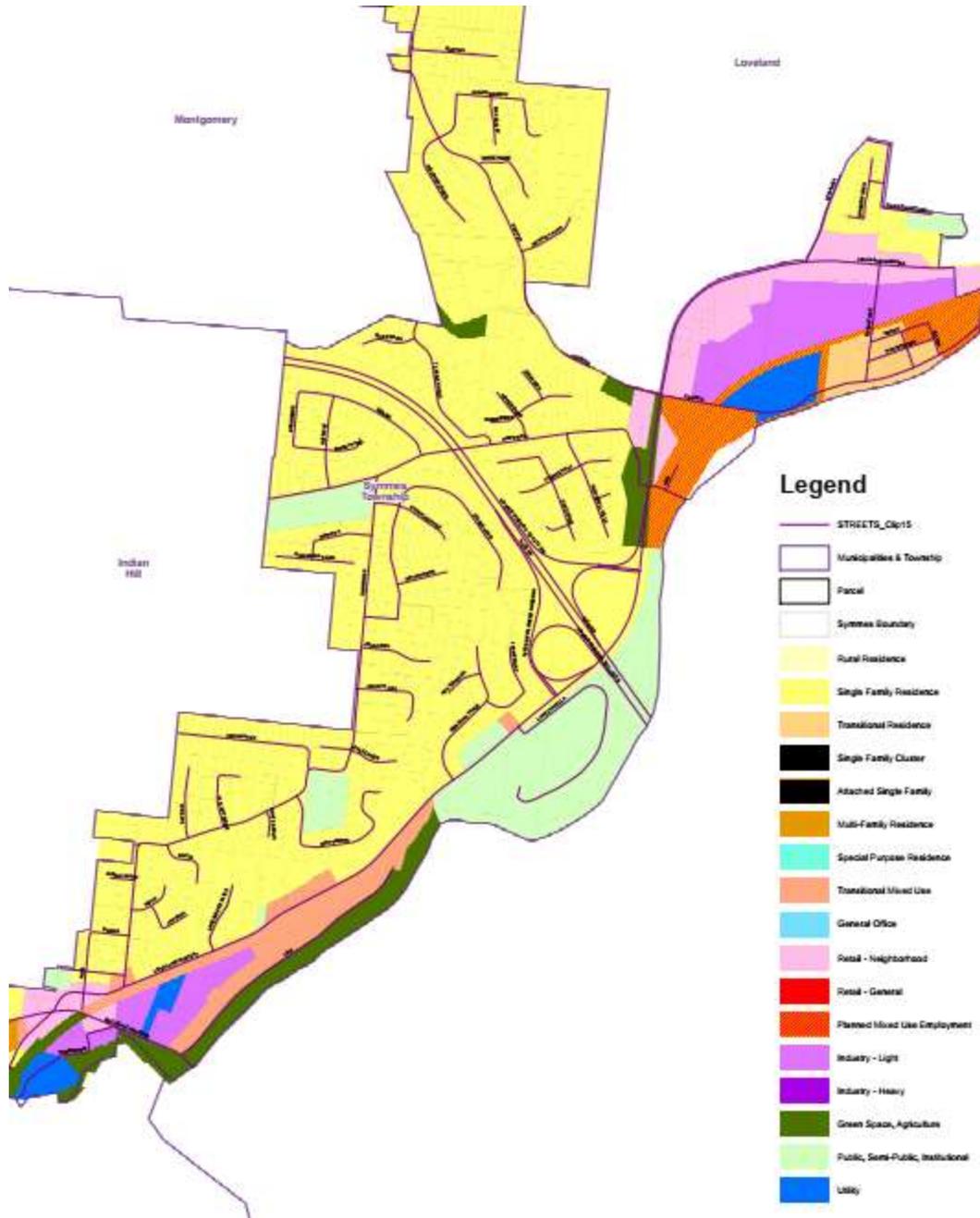
The land use planning process included two committee meetings to develop recommendations, a public open house to gather input on the recommendations, and a committee meeting to discuss possible changes based on public input and finalize recommendations to the Township Trustees.

The land use plan map, provided on the following pages, defines the land uses appropriate for each property in the township. This plan is updated every five years and is used as a guide for decisions related to new development and redevelopment. The land use categories identified on the land use plan are defined in Appendix B.

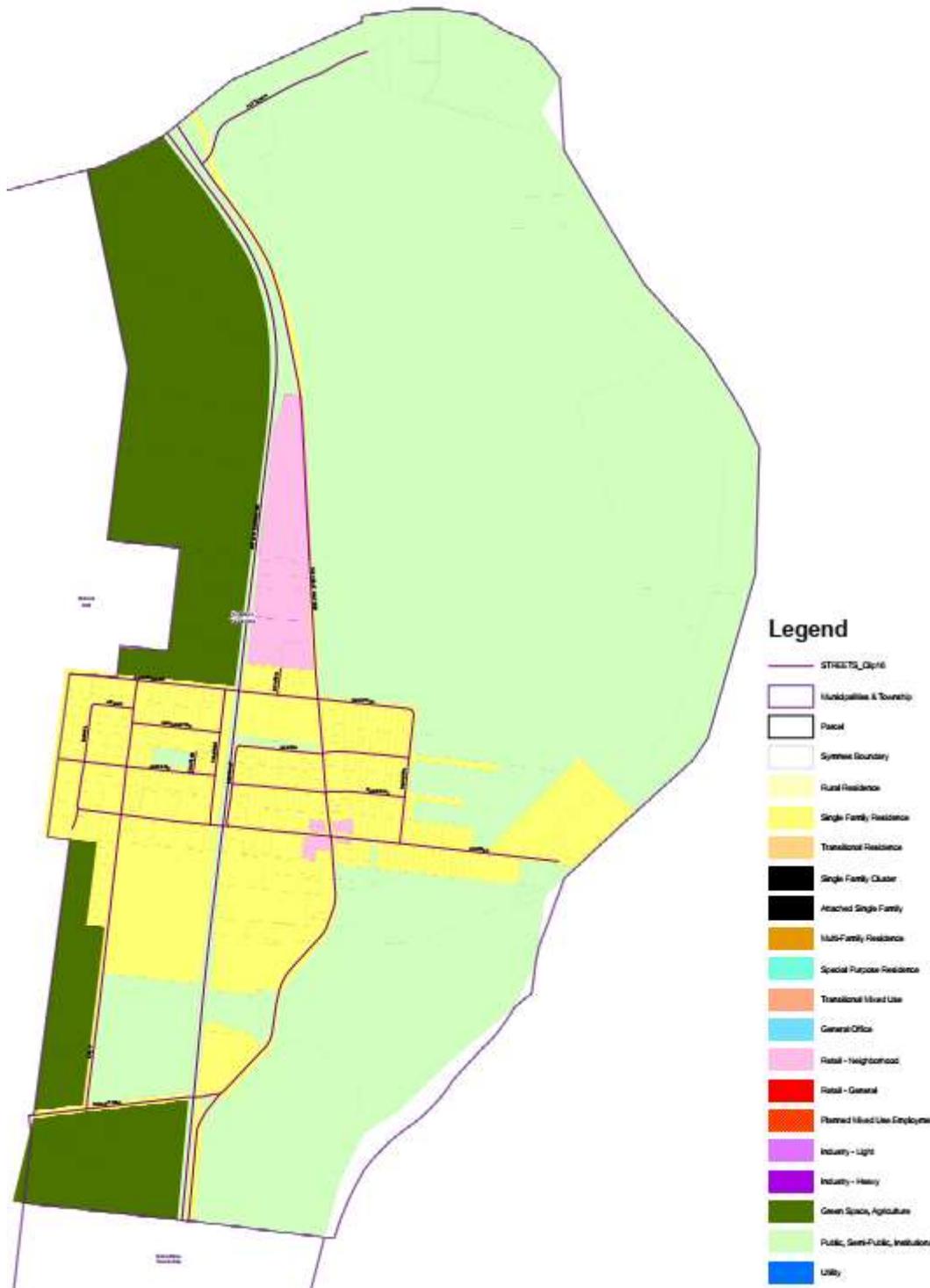
FUTURE LAND USE PLAN NORTHERN SECTION MAP



FUTURE LAND USE PLAN MIDDLE SECTION MAP



FUTURE LAND USE PLAN SOUTHERN SECTION MAP



OTHER PLANS

In addition to planning and zoning efforts by the township and county, land use and development is impacted by other plans that are discussed in other elements of this plan. One example is the Fields Ertel corridor study, which may result in recommendations for major transportation network changes, which in turn can have a direct impact on land use. As these related plans are adopted by agencies, the township should monitor the plans to determine if any recommendations have significant impacts on the recommendations of the land use plan or this plan and determine the need for any amendments to the land use plan or master plan.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

When considering planning efforts or improvements related to land use and development, the township will utilize the following guiding principles in making those decisions:

-  The township will have high standards for development to enhance and protect the overall community character that residents associate with Symmes Township.
-  The township will play a more direct role in the administration and enforcement of zoning and property maintenance regulations.
-  The township will continue to be comprised of strong, attractive neighborhoods of well-maintained housing.
-  The township will have a strong economic base of nonresidential uses that broadens and diversifies the tax base to the maximum extent possible.
-  The township will utilize all tools available to promote the redevelopment of underutilized properties and to capitalize on what little land is available in the township.
-  The township will continue its efforts to protect historic and archeological sites.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 4: Monitor and continue to update this master plan and the land use plan.

The goals and objectives of all communities evolve over time given changing elected officials and involvement from new residents and businesses. To address the changing environment, the township should continue to evaluate its various planning efforts on a regular basis. This plan, along with the land use plan, should be reviewed at least every five years to determine if there is a change in priorities or a need to address certain issues in more detail.

Design Standards

Design standards that the township might consider updating include:

- Architectural Standards (excluding building materials)
- Building Location and Orientation
- Landscaping, Buffering, and Screening
- Off-Street Parking and Loading
- Pedestrian Connections
- General Site Circulation
- Signage Standards

Recommendation 5: Revise the zoning regulations to enhance the design standards and requirements for nonresidential uses.

Relatively recent changes to the Ohio Revised Code (ORC), related to township zoning, now allow townships to establish architectural standards and more intense landscaping requirements for nonresidential uses. While the township is not authorized to establish requirements for building materials, the ORC provisions increase the township’s ability to require higher quality design in the built environment. By revising the zoning regulations to include these standards, the township can “raise the bar” for nonresidential development and redevelopment.

Recommendation 6: Develop a mixed-use zoning district to provide more opportunities for the redevelopment of underutilized properties.

The township already has zoning as a major tool for controlling land use and development. To supplement this tool, the township should incorporate a mixed-use zoning district that would be applied in certain strategic areas of the township. This recommendation serves two purposes. First, by allowing for mixed-uses in areas where there is a high rate of vacancy or where the market is just not as strong as other areas, it provides for the possibility of developing a mixture of different uses that may be more beneficial to both the property owner and the township. Additionally, with the creation of the district, the property owner would not have to apply for the district or go through the planned unit development process (a process currently established within the double letter zoning districts such as “EE” and “DD”) to achieve a mixed-use designation. Second, mixed-use districts tend to encourage a more compact development of residential uses such as townhomes or similar small lot residential uses, situated in close proximity to commercial and/or office uses. This type of development could provide for a more diverse stock of housing and also the ability for the residents of the mixed-use development to walk to the businesses. The mixed-use district in combination with stronger commercial development standards could open up new opportunities for redevelopment fitting within the goals of this plan.

Recommendation 7: Develop sufficient township resources and personnel to administer and enforce township zoning and other related regulations “in-house”.

As stated earlier, the township currently uses the Hamilton County Rural Zoning Commission to administer the township’s zoning resolution. To some, this has created a perception problem where people feel the township is not as involved in the regulation and enforcement of the zoning requirements. It also means that township staff has a less effective role in the administration of township laws. The township should consider hiring appropriate personnel to allow for “in-house” zoning administration and enforcement. This will also allow for easier access to zoning personnel for all residents.

Recommendation 8: Develop planning strategies for each of the township’s business areas.

As stated earlier, the township has several core business areas, each with its own unique character and issues. As part of this master plan, the township incorporated a conceptual planning effort for the Montgomery Road Corridor area (See Appendix A). Similar planning efforts should be undertaken for the remaining business areas followed by more detailed planning efforts where necessary. For example, Appendix A documents conceptual planning actions for the Montgomery Road Corridor area. This conceptual plan will require follow-up planning efforts to define more detailed landscaping and streetscaping plan recommendations.

Recommendation 9: Prepare and adopt a property maintenance code.

The township should pursue the development of a property maintenance code, in accordance with the provisions of the Ohio Revised Code (Section 505.73), to regulate the maintenance of structures and premises of both residential and non-residential properties within the township. The adoption and use of a property maintenance code would give the township increased powers in enforcing property upkeep. The current system only allows intervention by the township when a property can be classified as a nuisance as established in state law and requires a lengthy process of notification and response before the township can step in to clean up a property.

Recommendation 10: Coordinate planning efforts with adjacent jurisdictions as it relates to the township’s business areas.

As stated earlier, several of the township’s business areas are located along jurisdictional boundaries including the major areas of the Fields-Ertel corridor (shared with Deerfield Township), the Montgomery Road corridor (shared with Montgomery), and the Loveland-Madeira Road corridor (shared with Loveland). This poses unique issues because each

of these adjacent jurisdictions has different standards in development than Symmes. For example, Deerfield Township adopted a new, specialized zoning for the Fields-Ertel corridor in late 2008 that is intended to enhance the design standards for commercial redevelopment along this road. Symmes Township should improve coordination activities with each of the neighboring jurisdictions in an effort to ensure unified development within each of the township's business areas.

Recommendation 11: Coordinate planning and development efforts with other local and regional efforts.

As with other elements of this master plan, coordination and cooperation with county and regional agencies may create more opportunities for the township. Cooperation with the county's planning efforts ensures that Symmes Township's activities are in harmony with the surrounding region. Coordination with the local and regional chambers of commerce supports businesses by providing multiple avenues for attracting new businesses to the area. The township should continue to look for opportunities to coordinate and participate in county and regional planning and development efforts.

Recommendation 12: Utilize the economic tools available for townships to encourage new economic development and redevelopment.

There are numerous economic development tools available to the township to encourage reinvestment and redevelopment of areas that are underutilized or where the township would like to see redevelopment. The township should take an active role in identifying and working to establish economic development tools when they can be beneficial to meeting the guiding principles established in this plan. The sidebar identifies the most common economic development tools used by a township. Each of these tools is further defined in Appendix C.

Common Economic Development Tools

- Tax Increment Financing (TIF)
- Special Improvement Districts (SID)
- Community Reinvestment Areas (CRA)
- Community Improvement Corporation (CIC)
- Joint Economic Development Districts (JEDD)
- Cooperative Economic Development Agreements (CEDA)

See Appendix C for a description of these tools.

While some of these tools, such as a JEDD or CEDA, are typically used in areas where there is potential for new growth (i.e., not commonly used for redevelopment), others such as CRAs, SIDs, and TIF districts are very common in communities, like Symmes Township, where new development and redevelopment is desired.

While any of these tools can be used by the township, the CRA is the one that this plan recommends the township specifically implement in the near future. A CRA allows for a tax abatement on real estate taxes incurred from new construction or the rehabilitation of existing structures for a specified amount of time. This means that a property owner would be exempt from paying the additional real estate taxes that are required because of the improvements made to the property (anything from rehabilitation to new construction). Appendix D provides a boundary map of the approved Montgomery Road Economic

Development CRA. A second CRA for the Loveland-Madeira Corridor is currently under review. Upon approval, a map of the approved boundaries will be included in Appendix D. With the approval of the establishment of these CRAs, a property owner may now apply for tax exemptions for development and redevelopment subject to approval by the county and township. When considering projects that may be subject to CRA tax abatements, the township's review committee should consider the township's land use plan and any applicable focus area plans including the Montgomery Road Corridor Focus Area Plan (See Appendix A.), where applicable. Wherever possible, the township should try to implement the improvements recommended by the focus area plan through the CRA review process (i.e., require that an applicant provide streetscaping or landscaping as identified in the plan).

Beyond the tools described above, other programs and funding may be available through other agencies, such as the Chamber of Commerce or through cooperation with the county.

Transportation

Transportation Related Comments

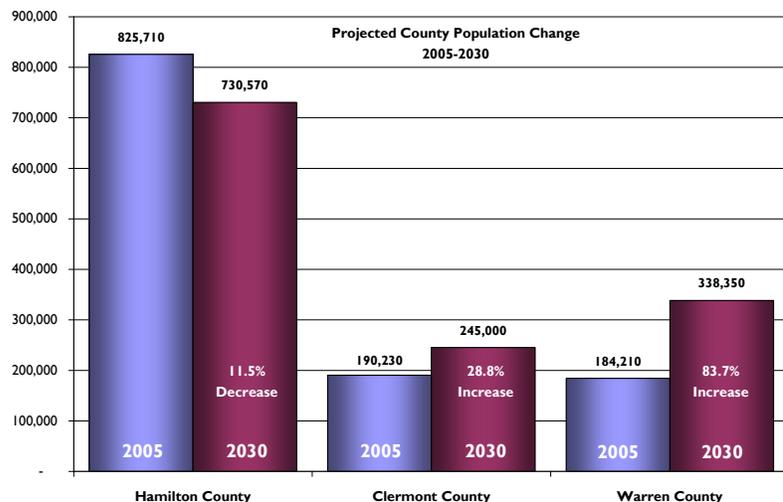
- Traffic on Fields Ertel Road and Montgomery Road
- Need for sidewalks and hiking and biking trails throughout the township
- Transportation options for senior citizens
- Maintenance of roads
- Planned traffic patterns
- Overall traffic congestion and traffic safety

Source: Initial citizen survey and public

INTRODUCTION

No one in the township would dispute that traffic and the transportation network is often in the forefront of almost all residents' minds. They deal with it as they go about their daily routines and fortunately for Symmes Township, it is one of the few "negative" aspects of the community that most residents identified in this planning process. However, the transportation network is not limited to just the roads congested by cars; it also includes other transit related networks including the sidewalks and trails. To be a truly comprehensive document, this plan must take into consideration all of the interrelated transportation networks, how they influence the community, and how the community can strive to improve the network to the benefit of its citizens.

To better understand the issues related to the transportation network, one must first understand the issues and limitations of planning for transportation improvements. The township serves as a major crossroads between the largely developed inner-ring suburbs of Hamilton County and the fast-paced growth areas in and around Warren County. Major regional connectors such as Interstate 275, Interstate 71, Montgomery Road, and Fields Ertel Road criss-cross through the township, providing easy access to businesses and homes throughout the region. While the township itself is considered a maturing community with little room for new development, the explosive growth occurring to the north and northeast of the township has increased, and will continue to increase (see chart), the amount of people utilizing the township transportation network and, in particular, the road network.



Beyond the regional growth impacts on the transportation network, one must also understand that Symmes Township is one of several agencies involved in planning **and** paying for improvements to the transportation network. Key agencies in transportation planning include:

-  **U.S. Department of Transportation:** The federal government maintains authority over the interstate system, including Interstates 275 and 71. The Ohio Department of Transportation maintains and manages the system for the federal government.
-  **Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT):** ODOT maintains authority over the state highway systems, typically identified by numbered highway signs. In Symmes Township, these include roads such as Montgomery Road (SR 22) and Glendale-Milford Road (SR 126).
-  **Hamilton County Engineer's Office:** The County Engineer is responsible for county roads, which are the major arterial and connector roads that are not state highways. In Symmes Township, these include roads such as Loveland-Madeira, Lebanon Road, Kemper Road, Fields Ertel Road, and similar roads.
-  **Symmes Township:** The township is primarily responsible for local roads, which are typically the residential streets that are part of subdivisions, or other low-capacity roads. Symmes Township is also responsible for maintaining sidewalks (see further explanation in next sections).
-  **Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments (OKI):** In addition to these agencies, the OKI also plays an important role in regional transportation planning although they, as an agency, are not responsible for maintaining roads. They are typically involved in multi-jurisdictional planning efforts surrounding the Fields Ertel and Montgomery Road corridors.

Under the multi-jurisdictional system described above, the township is typically the first to receive citizen complaints about traffic issues while in reality, they have the least ability of all agencies involved to solely and directly remedy the situation. Therefore, one key strategy for more efficient transportation planning is for Symmes Township to increase coordination and cooperative efforts with other agencies as they have done in recent years.

For reference purposes only, the next page provides an illustration of the roadway jurisdictions in and around Symmes Township. Within the boundaries of Symmes Township, the township only has authority over the local (largely neighborhood) roads.

2019 ROADWAY JURISDICTION and TRAFFIC COUNTS MAP



CURRENT PLANNING EFFORTS AND ISSUES

All of the agencies involved in transportation prepare and maintain their own individual plans for current capital improvements and long-term planned improvements. In relation to the transportation network in Symmes Township, the following paragraphs outline key planning efforts or opportunities that are currently ongoing.

ROAD MAINTENANCE

-  All agencies responsible for maintaining roads develop plans for the basic maintenance of those roads primarily focused on resurfacing (repaving). Symmes Township maintains the 2006 Road Resurfacing Program Report that outlines when all of the local township roads will be resurfaced based on available funding. The county and state agencies incorporate resurfacing projects within their individual capital improvement plans.
-  Symmes Township's current resurfacing program is designed to ensure that all the township roads and curbs will be resurfaced and repaired over a 15 to 17 year cycle.
-  The township residents approved a road/sidewalk levy in 2006 that helps fund the resurfacing and sidewalk expansion programs.

ROADWAY IMPROVEMENTS



-  Beyond planning for continued maintenance, the township does not build new local roads, therefore the township does not have any improvement plans for new roads.
-  Hamilton County has completed improvements along Kemper Road to widen the travel lanes and provide curb and gutter or, where there were no curbs, the county has improved the shoulders. The state is also currently making improvements to widen portions of Montgomery Road within Symmes Township.
-  The County has plans to improve the intersection of Loveland-Madeira Road and Glendale-Milford Road through the addition of left-turn lanes on all approaches. This project is not funded as of the date of this plan.
-  Warren and Hamilton Counties along with Symmes and Deerfield Townships are participating in a study of the Fields Ertel Corridor, (west of the interstate) to identify options for improvement.
-  Warren County is currently heading up an interchange study of the Fields Ertel/Interstate 71 interchange. This study could result in any number of solutions to the traffic congestion in the area but any major changes to the interstate itself are well over 10 to 20 years

Eight Warrants for a Traffic Signal

- Warrant 1: Eight-Hour Vehicular Volume
- Warrant 2: Four-Hour Vehicular Volume
- Warrant 3: Peak Hour Volume
- Warrant 4: Pedestrian Volume
- Warrant 5: School Crossing
- Warrant 6: Coordinated Signal System
- Warrant 7: Crash Experience
- Warrant 8: Roadway Network

Source: Ohio Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices

Planned Sidewalk Improvements

(**Bold Text** = Project Completed)

- Kemper Road – Kemper Woods to Montgomery Road
- Kemper Road – Montgomery Road to Pemmican Run
- **Montgomery/Blong Road – Montgomery/Blong Road to future Blong Road turn-around**
- Montgomery Road – Calumet Way to Seven Gables Road
- Lebanon Road – Carrousel Court to Somerset Drive
- **Lebanon Road – Somerset Drive to Symmes Township Park Overflow Parking**
- Union Cemetery Road – Woodwind Drive to Lebanon Road
- Future Symmes Township Park (Hopewell Meadows Park) – Gateway Drive to Humphry Road
- Humphrey Road – Johnston Lane to Mistymorn Lane
- Humphrey Road – Mistymorn Lane to Pinto Court

away. Smaller solutions that require changes to state, county, or local roads may be implemented in a shorter timeframe.



The county is planning to make improvements to Union Cemetery Road from Governors Way to the Symmes Township Administration offices that could include several modifications from improved turning radii to a traffic signal at Union Cemetery Road and Montgomery Road.

TRAFFIC CALMING AND TRAFFIC CONTROL



Beyond the typical comments related to traffic congestion along the major roadway corridors, residents also have identified what they perceive to be safety concerns along local township roads. In some cases, residents want traffic signals (lights) or stops signs installed while in other cases the desire is to slow traffic through speed bumps, flashing caution lights, or other traffic-calming techniques.



The state, county, or township can only install traffic signals and stop signs upon completion of a special study that shows that the location “warrants” a sign or signal. ODOT maintains and updates a book entitled the Ohio Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (OMUTCD) that specifies what situations (accidents, traffic, delays, etc.) must be present to warrant such traffic control. For stop signs, the OMUTCD states that stop signs should not be installed on major streets unless an engineering study illustrates a need and should not be installed for speed control. For traffic signals, there are eight warrants, or reasons, that could justify a traffic signal and the OMUTCD establishes for specific and very restrictive standards for each of those eight warrants.



Traffic calming features such as speed bumps are strongly discouraged for residential streets because of the difficulty of maintaining the features and the potential damage they inflict on snow plows in the cleaning of streets in the winter.

SIDEWALKS AND TRAILS



Sidewalks and trails are typically installed when new development is constructed. For Symmes Township, much of the land developed long before there were mandatory requirements to install sidewalks, which is why there are numerous subdivisions, and areas that currently do not have sidewalks.



In most communities, the maintenance and replacement of sidewalks is the responsibility of the property owner. Unlike most communities, Symmes Township has taken on this responsibility and it is the township that repairs and maintains residential sidewalks including those that are adjacent to county roads.

-  The township prepared and adopted the Symmes Township Community Enhancement & Safety Sidewalk Plan. The plan identifies and prioritizes sidewalk improvements based on the impact the connections will have on the residents. This plan focuses on sidewalks that will provide connections between residential areas to commercial areas, parks, schools, and other public facilities. The plan also focuses on sidewalks where they pedestrian connection will improve overall safety. The current sidewalk plan includes the recommendations for the sidewalk improvements listed in the sidebar on the previous page with the exception of the last improvement (Humphrey Road – Mistymorn Lane to Pinto Court).
-  The township’s sidewalk plans do not include recommendations to provide sidewalks inside residential neighborhoods unless they provide connectivity to public areas.
-  The county does not install new sidewalks nor do they plan for the installation of sidewalks. However, if the township chooses to, they may pay to have sidewalks installed simultaneously with county roadway improvements.
-  The township residents approved a road/sidewalk levy in 2006 that helps fund the resurfacing and sidewalk expansion programs.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR TRANSPORTATION

When considering planning efforts or improvements to the transportation network, the township will utilize the following guiding principles in making those decisions:

-  The township will continue to expand the sidewalk and trail system to improve pedestrian safety where such connections will provide the highest amount of access for residents to commercial and public uses rather than internal circulation within a subdivision.
-  The township will have a well-maintained and safe network of local roads.
-  The township will be an advocate for local interests as it relates to the improvement to the county and regional transportation system including improvements related to mass transit.
-  When considering traffic control and management, the township will rely on the most recent version of the Ohio Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

RECOMMENDATIONS



Recommendation 13: Continue to maintain and update township plans related to transportation.

As described in this plan element, the township currently maintains two plans related to the transportation network including the Symmes Township Community Enhancement & Safety Sidewalk Plan and the Road Resurfacing Program Report. These documents provide specific guidance related to the resurfacing of roads and the construction of sidewalks. The township should continue to use these key documents in the decision-making process and evaluate each plan every three to five years to ensure they reflect the most current needs of the township.

For the sidewalk plan, many residents have noted that they feel the sidewalk plan needs to be broader and evaluate all areas of the township where there is a lack of pedestrian connections. Additionally, the plan should discuss the possibility of other types of trails and paths including bike paths and sidewalks or trails that do not necessarily follow roadways. These type of goals should be accommodated in an update to the Symmes Township Community Enhancement & Safety Sidewalk Plan or possibly part of a parks and recreation planning efforts (See Quality of Life recommendations.).

Recommendation 14: Coordinate and participate in county and regional transportation planning efforts.

While the township may not have direct authority, or the funding, to support large-scale changes to the county and state roads and highways, they can be proactive in their efforts to work with other appropriate agencies as a representative of township residents and businesses. The township should continue to look for opportunities to coordinate and participate in county and regional transportation planning efforts.

Recommendation 15: Prioritize road improvements that the township desires to see to improve traffic flow and the quality of life in Symmes Township.

In addition to coordinating improvement efforts with other agencies, the township also has several methods of supporting capital improvements in the township including providing financial support to particular improvements. One of the principal methods of supporting and encouraging certain improvements is through the county's State Capital Improvement Plan/Local Transportation Improvement Plan (SCIP/LTIP) program. By providing certain levels of funding, the township has the ability to help the county get funding for particular improvements. For this reason, the township should maintain a priority list of road improvements that will benefit the township regardless if the road is a township, county, or state road.

For the purposes of this plan, the initial list of improvements the township would like to see accomplished are as follows (outside

agencies involved in the project are listed in parenthesis following the improvement):

-  Reconfiguration of the Fields Ertel/Mason-Montgomery Road intersection to improve traffic flow. This is a long-term effort currently under review as part of Warren County’s Fields Ertel/Interstate 71 Interchange study (Warren County).
-  Fields Ertel Road/Lebanon Road intersection improvements including a traffic signal (currently underway – Hamilton County).
-  Fields Ertel Road/Union Cemetery Road intersection improvements (Hamilton County).
-  Montgomery Road/Union Cemetery Road intersection improvements (ODOT and Hamilton County).
-  Lebanon Road/Union Cemetery Road intersection improvements (Hamilton County)
-  Governors Way/Union Cemetery Road intersection improvements (Hamilton County).
-  Glendale-Milford Road/Remington Road intersection improvements (Hamilton County).
-  Improvements to the area of Montgomery Road where Calumet Way, Redcloud Court and Appleseed Drive intersect to improve traffic flow.



Recommendation 16: Continue to evaluate the need for traffic signals and stop signs as appropriate.

Over the next ten years, there will continue to be requests for the township to assist residents by installing traffic signals, stop signs, crosswalks, and/or traffic calming devices. The township should continue to evaluate each request to determine if there is a need for further detailed surveys. Additionally, the township should continue to utilize the Ohio Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices when evaluating these requests so that each request is considered in an equal manner and to reduce the potential for liability issues for the township.

Recommendation 17: Develop specific access management plans for the major commercial corridors.

Hamilton County and ODOT have established guidelines for access management that are intended to improve traffic flow through the consolidation and elimination of curb cuts. The township should develop access management strategies for the Montgomery Road, Fields Ertel Road, and Loveland-Madeira Road corridors that the township can use in negotiations with property owners.

**Master Plan
Recommendation Summary**

Quality of Life

1. Acquire additional park land and open spaces as land and funding becomes available.
2. Develop a parks and open space plan.
3. Coordinate planning and development efforts with other local and regional efforts.

Land Use and Development

4. Monitor and continue to update this master plan and the land use plan.
5. Revise the zoning regulations to enhance the design standards and requirements for nonresidential uses.
6. Develop a mixed-use zoning district to provide more opportunities for the redevelopment of underutilized properties.
7. Develop sufficient township resources and personnel to administer and enforce township zoning and other related regulations "in-house".
8. Prepare and adopt a property maintenance code.
9. Coordinate planning efforts with adjacent jurisdictions as it relates to the township's business areas.
10. Coordinate planning and development efforts with other local and regional efforts.
11. Utilize the economic tools available for townships to encourage new economic development and redevelopment.

Transportation

12. Continue to maintain and update township plans related to transportation.
13. Coordinate and participate in county and regional transportation planning efforts.
14. Prioritize road improvements that the township desires to see to improve traffic flow and the quality of life in Symmes Township.
15. Continue to evaluate the need for traffic signals and stop signs as appropriate.
16. Develop specific access management plans for the major commercial corridors.

Implementation and Monitoring

Each element of this plan identifies specific recommendations for future efforts to further the planning themes and guiding principles of this master plan. Some of the recommendations, such as those related to property maintenance, are recommendations where the township can take the lead role in a project while other recommendations, such as those related to infrastructure, are ones where township is seen more in a supporting role because the system is managed by another agency.

This plan recognizes that each of the recommendations summarized in the side bar requires some level of commitment of resources from the township, whether that is monetary, staffing, or a combination of both. Because these resources can change significantly from year-to-year, just as priorities can, this plan does not establish a priority or timing for completion of the various recommendations. Instead, the township should evaluate the list of recommendations on an annual basis and establish a list of actions that will be undertaken in the following year based on the availability of resources (See also the following section on plan monitoring.).

PLAN MONITORING

A master plan is a long-term visionary document that looks at a planning horizon of 20 years. This does not mean that the township should wait 20 years before reviewing and/or updating the master plan. In fact, it is highly recommended that the township review the plan, in moderate detail, at least every five years. The following is a recommended schedule for review and discussion of the master plan to help monitor the recommendations of the plan and identify when the township meets or exceeds this plan's guiding principles.

ANNUAL REVIEW AND PRIORITIZATION

The guiding principles of this plan create an effective checklist for monitoring the master plan. Each year, the township decision-makers and staff should meet to determine which recommendations they will work on over the upcoming year. At the same time, the township can look back over the previous year and evaluate what the community accomplished and where there is a need for improvement. This review allows for flexibility in determining the tasks the township should undertake based on budgetary constraints and/or community input.

This annual review can also be used to create specific, quantitative goals for various objectives. For example, if one priority objective is to

increase the amount of township park land in the community, the township might develop a specific benchmark for the year that would state that the township and other agencies will work together to increase the amount of park land by 5%, by the end of the year. Because the benchmarks are quantitative, they allow the township the ability to monitor annual accomplishments. Developing the benchmarks on an annual basis allows the community to consider various factors such as community priorities, budgets, and available staff and resources.

FIVE-YEAR REVIEW

Major changes can occur in a very short time. Because changes in infrastructure, the transportation system, development methods, and even changes in elected officials, state law or other regulations can have a significant impact of the recommendations of this plan, it is necessary to periodically review the document for substantive changes. It may not be necessary to go through a long and intensive review process, but the township should take steps to involve the public in this review process to ensure that the goals and objectives are still relevant. The review should also identify major changes in infrastructure, transportation, and trends that may change the recommendations of this plan.

LONG-TERM REVIEW

This plan is a 10-year visioning document that, while clear on the long-term vision, is intended to be a dynamic document. As time progresses, the township will continue to work toward the overall guiding principles of this master plan and by 2019, will have accomplished many of the specific recommendations outlined in this plan. For this reason, the township should go through an extensive master planning process every ten years, similar to the one that led to the development of this master plan.

Appendix A: Montgomery Road Corridor Concept Plan

The portion of the Montgomery Road corridor that centers around Harper's Point and Harper's Station is currently the one business area that is seeing a surge in redevelopment pressures with a planned expansion of the Kroger building and redevelopment of tenant space in Harper's Station. While this corridor and intersection is not the geographic center of the township, it does, in essence, serve as a township center with its immediate access to the interstate, centralized commercial activity, and proximity to higher density housing in and around Symmes Township. Because of these activities and development pressures, the area was chosen as the first business area to be subject to a focus area concept plan. This focus area planning process/exercise examines problems and potential solutions that are principal factors in any urban landscape including: visual connection, physical connection, streetscape, sustainability, retail growth, and residential integration.

The primary issues in for the Montgomery Road Corridor focus area revolve around line of sight issues and overall access to retail. The orientation of retail development and lack of defining streetscape in this study area create a sense of anonymity and inhibit the potential success of the businesses in the area. Awkward angles of approach only magnify these problems. These issues are identified on the Preliminary Analysis Diagram following this narrative.

The Master Plan Goals for the enhancement of the area that address these issues and prioritize an approach to a solution are as follows:

-  Stimulate retail growth with dedicated intersections that allow direct, focused access to businesses. Enhance the intersections with landscape and streetscape elements that direct attention into the development.
-  Utilize a hierarchy of intersections to allow visitors to anticipate a sense of destination. Currently, the main focus is on the intersection at Montgomery Road and Kemper Road, drawing attention away from the businesses.
-  Changes in paving materials and pattern create subtle shifts in perception. Use landscaping and greenery to soften edges, focus views, and establish a sense of arrival.
-  Continuation of the streetscape treatment into neighboring parks and amenities creates continuity and an overriding design theme. This intuitive organizational element helps encourage visual connections between physically separated amenities.

-  Tree-lined streets provide a sense of scale and place for pedestrians and focus visitors to a destination, alleviating the tendency to look beyond the built environment.
-  Pedestrian streetscapes are a high priority. Encourage pedestrian travel between amenities. Where the car has proven to be deficient, pedestrian solutions have a better chance of success.

The following diagrams illustrate the preliminary analysis and conceptual action plans for the Montgomery Road Corridor area. This plan is intended to be conceptual in nature because it is meant to identify key issues within the study area as well as potential actions to overcome those issues. The next step in the planning process will be to develop detailed landscaping/streetscaping plans that can be used for decision-making processes as it relates to this area (e.g., the community reinvestment area). The detailed plans should provide for specific recommendations on the types of landscaping (including tree types and locations), signage, lighting types, and other streetscaping enhancements.

Preliminary Analysis



Conceptual Action Plan

Appendix B: Land Use Category Definitions

The following are definitions for the proposed land use categories.

Single-Family Residence

Low density detached housing and related compatible uses.

Typically, detached dwellings with scale and massing appropriate to protect the character of the surrounding neighborhood and site constraints, and density consistent with the adopted zoning.

Transitional Residence

Low density detached or attached housing and related compatible uses (Excluding office, retail, and industrial) that provide a transition between single-family residential uses and other types of

Typically one and two-story clustered single family, zero lot line, attached two and three family, and townhouse dwellings with scale, massing, average density, layout and specifications compatible with site constraints and character of surrounding single family residential development.

Attached Single Family Residence

Moderate density attached single-family dwellings and related compatible uses.

Typically attached dwellings, such as townhouses or fee-simple condominiums, at a minimum floor are of 1,200 square feet, brick façade, having individual entrances at grade, attached integral garages, that are at a higher density than Single-Family Residence. Massing and scale of attached single-family residences should be similar to that of surrounding land uses.

Multi-Family Residence

Detached or attached housing (apartments or condominiums) and related compatible uses.

Typically two and three-story buildings with scale, massing, density, layout and specifications compatible with site constraints and character of existing residential developments in the surrounding area, and where more than one occupant uses an entranceway for access to individual units.



Transitional Mixed Use

Detached or attached housing, low intensity office (such as conversion of single-family residence) and related compatible uses (excluding retail and industrial) that provide a transition between residential uses and other types of development.

Typically one and two-story structures with scale, massing, intensity, layout and specifications compatible with site constraints and character of surrounding residential development.



General Office

Office uses and related compatible uses at intensities consistent with surrounding development.

Typically one, two, and three-story structures with a scale, massing, intensity, layout and specifications compatible with site constraints.



Retail – Neighborhood

Low intensity neighborhood oriented retail and service uses that provide a transition between residential uses and other types of development or that achieve compatibility and service appropriate to the adjacent residential neighborhood.

Typically one-story structures with a scale, massing, intensity, layout and specifications compatible with site constraints and character of surrounding residential developments.



Retail – General

Community and regional oriented business uses that tend to locate along highways with relatively high traffic volumes.

Typically commercial strips or self contained community and regional retail centers.



Planned Mixed Use Employment

Developments containing some combination of office, retail, light industrial or compatible uses developed with a consistent theme and containing architectural, landscape, streetscape, and signage standards.

Typically a campus-style planned development with multiple uses that are created in separate buildings or within single buildings, sharing a common image and circulation system.



Industry – Light

Smaller scale industrial uses such as warehouses, storage, limited manufacturing, research and development, transit terminals and wholesaling activities in enclosed facilities without offensive emissions or nuisance.

Typically office warehouse uses with convenient access to major roads.



Industry – Heavy

Larger scale industrial uses such as intensive manufacturing activities which may contain outside storage.

Typically industrial or manufacturing uses with convenient access to primary highways or rail system.



Public, Semi-Public, Institutional

Active parks, playgrounds, community centers, schools, churches, country clubs, sports clubs, golf courses, hospitals, and educational, philanthropic, religious or charitable institutions, public properties and buildings with similar uses.

Typically community or not-for-profit uses.



Green Space & Agriculture

Passive activities, agriculture, and related uses - often in flood plain areas - that retain the natural features of the environment.

Typically forests, prairie land, meadows or wildlife reservations farms and farm activities, and cemeteries.



Utility

Facilities for gas, electric, water, sewer, cable television, or other utility.

Typically any use that is controlled by the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio or government service.

Appendix C: Economic Development Tools

The following is a brief description of each of the economic development tools listed in the Land Use and Development section of this plan.

TAX INCREMENT FINANCING (TIF)

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is becoming a popular way to fund public improvements in areas where new development and redevelopment is occurring. The real estate taxes created by the new tax “increment” (the increase in real estate value made by the improvements) generated by new development in a defined area can be “captured” for reinvestment (i.e., sidewalks, roads, etc.) in a designated area around the development.

As much as 100% of the new real estate taxes for a period of up to 30 years can be captured for the improvements. However, permission is required from the affected school district if the tax exemption is greater than 75% or the time period exceeds 10 years.

The developer is required to pay an annual service payment in an amount of up to 100% of the tax savings that is then placed into a Township Tax Increment Equivalent Fund. These funds can be used to make necessary public improvements such as repairing and expanding roads, extending public utilities, streetscaping, and other improvements associated with the development.

Commercial and industrial projects are the only type of project that can benefit from TIF by-right. Residential projects are exempt from the benefits of TIF unless the project is within a blighted area of an impacted city. However, if the township establishes, by resolution, that housing renovations are a necessary public improvement in a TIF district, then money from the TIF fund can be applied to housing renovations.

SPECIAL IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS (SID)

A Special Improvement District (SID) is a district where an assessment is made on each property and the money is used for business recruitment/retention, marketing, special events, maintenance, landscaping, streetscaping, parking, security and other public improvements that will benefit the established district.

A SID can be created by the petition of:



The owners of at least 60% of the front footage (e.g. along Montgomery Road); or



The owners of at least 75% of the total property located within the proposed district.

All property owners within the SID are included in the assessment, other than churches and properties owned by the township, county, or other political subdivisions (they can be included if they request inclusion in writing). The law excludes all properties owned by the state or federal government from being part of a SID. All of the properties are then assessed a certain amount of money based on the front footage, assessed valuation, a proportion of the benefits resulting from the district, or a combination of all three. The assessment is then used for improvements and programs that will benefit the entire district as mentioned earlier. A non-profit board of trustees governs the SID with a minimum of five members including one member from the township.

The major issue that needs to be considered when discussing the potential for a SID is the impact and assessment on residential properties that are included in the SID boundary. Will residential properties be assessed the same amount as nonresidential properties and/or will the SID discourage future development of additional residential uses?

COMMUNITY REINVESTMENT AREAS (CRA)

Hamilton County, with the consent of the township, could establish a Community Reinvestment Area (CRA) over certain areas of the township. A CRA allows for a tax abatement on real estate taxes incurred from new construction or the rehabilitation of existing structures for a specified amount of time. This means that a property owner would be exempt from paying the additional real estate taxes that are required because of the improvements made to the property (anything from rehabilitation to new construction).

To establish a CRA, a community must survey the conditions of all the structures within the proposed CRA boundaries. The survey must establish that due to blight or other influences, the construction and rehabilitation of structures is being discouraged. The Ohio Department of Development (ODOD) reviews the survey, the findings, and a map of the CRA boundary and decides whether to formalize the CRA. As part of that approval, ODOD must find that any new construction or rehabilitation of existing structures complies with existing zoning.

Once approved, a property owner may apply for tax exemptions. The tax abatements may occur from 10 to 15 years depending on the type and cost of rehabilitation or construction.

A CRA can be an issue for school districts and agencies that are dependent on real estate taxes. Another issue is that property owners must pay a one-time application fee (\$750 in 2004) that does not always outweigh the tax exemption, so some property owners may not

participate. However, this might help to discourage those property owners from only making minor improvements. Theoretically, with increasing improvements in the area, the property values will increase and in turn, this will increase the eventual tax base for the township and county.

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT CORPORATION (CIC)

The township could establish a Community Improvement Corporation (CIC) to help encourage economic and civic development within the community. CICs have the ability to borrow money, acquire, sell, and lease properties, personal property, stocks, corporations, etc. CICs may also make loans to individuals and businesses that have been refused conventional financing.

The CIC must prepare a plan for the area that will be used for commercial, industrial, and research development. The plan must also define the role the CIC will have in implementing the plan. Once complete, the township trustees must adopt the final plan.

JOINT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS (JEDD)

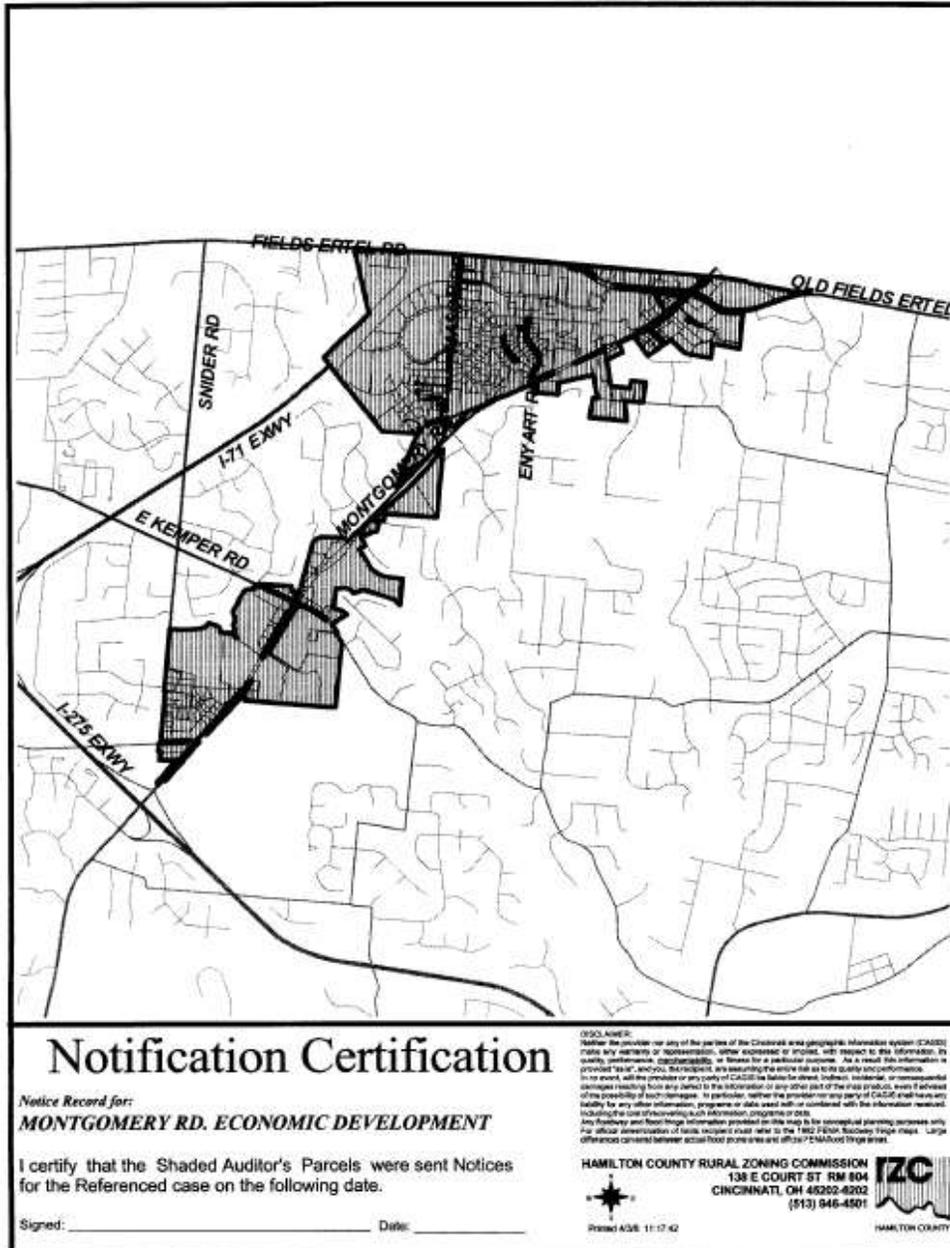
Symmes Township is located adjacent to several municipalities, which opens up the possibility of cooperation for improved economic development. In order to promote economic development within the State of Ohio, the Ohio Revised Code provides for the creation of Joint Economic Development Districts that may be set up between municipalities and townships provided that at least one, in this case a township, does not levy an income tax. Within a JEDD, the involved jurisdictions agree, by contract, to share the costs of improvements in the designated area and at the same time, they share the benefits of any development. Ohio Revised Code Section 715.691 sets forth the exact requirements to establish the JEDDs but the purpose is to minimize or eliminate competition between jurisdictions and provide for better cooperation that can result in an improved economy for the state.

COOPERATIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENTS (CEDA)

As with the JEDDs, Cooperative Economic Development Agreements (CEDAs) allow municipalities and townships to enter into formal agreements governing development in specified areas. Unlike JEDDs, the CEDA is more along the lines of a contract where the parties involved agree upon the provision of services, improvements to be made by each jurisdiction, payment of service fees, issuance of any debt instruments, annexation, payment of taxes, and other development related issues.

Appendix D: Community Reinvestment Area Maps

This map illustrates the general boundaries of the Montgomery Road Economic Development Community Reinvestment Area.



This map illustrates the general boundaries of the Loveland-Madeira Corridor Economic Development Community Reinvestment Area.

