



CURRENT CONDITIONS REPORT

 **Franklin County**
Where Government Works
Commissioners
Paula Brooks
Marilyn Brown
John O'Grady

BLENDON
COMMUNITY PLAN

Produced by:



150 South Front Street
FSL Suite 10
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Tel. 614-462-3094
Fax 614-462-7155
www.franklincountyohio.gov/edp

Blendon Community Plan

Project manager
Benjamin Weiner

Project team
Matthew Brown
Louis Clayton
Elise Yablonsky

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6-15-09

About this report



Land use planning helps improve communities by empowering residents to collectively envision their future.

The planning process involves identifying current conditions for an area, creating a vision for the future and developing ways to achieve that future.

About the Blendon Community Plan

The Blendon Community Plan focuses on the unincorporated areas within the township boundaries, outside of municipal jurisdictions. The planning process is divided into four phases: information gathering, creating a vision, developing policies and writing the plan.

Current Conditions Report

This Current Conditions Report is a product of the information-gathering phase. The project team analyzed published data and conducted stakeholder interviews to develop the report's contents.

Planning Area Boundaries

The planning area is located in northeastern Franklin County approximately 11 miles from downtown Columbus. The planning area's boundaries are roughly bounded by:

- North: County Line Road
- East: Hamilton Road/Schott Road
- South: Morse Road
- West: Cleveland Avenue

The unincorporated area is approximately 5 square miles or 3,200 acres.

Next steps

The project team uses the Current Conditions Report's results as a basis for the remainder of the planning process.

Following this analysis, we will conduct an initial public meeting to gather further input on Blendon Township's current state.

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People and Housing



People

Population: Blendon Township’s population was 7,905 residents in 2000. Projections from the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission show a population growth of 9.5 percent from 2000 to 2030, compared to a 25 percent projected county-wide increase. This table shows the projected population change for the township.

Population density: Net population density for the township is 1,600 people per square mile, lower than Franklin County’s overall density of 1,980 people per square mile. This means that Blendon Township has more land area per person than the county as a whole.

Households: 3,386 total households exist in Blendon Township. The township has a higher percentage of the population in family households than Franklin County, 90 percent compared to 77 percent. The average household size for the township is higher than that for the nation, state and county.

Age: Minors and middle-aged people make up a larger percentage of the population than in Franklin County as a whole. The high percentage of family households in the township likely contributes to this age distribution.

Race: The township’s racial make-up differs from the county, with a higher percentage of whites and a lower percentage of all other races than the county as a whole.

Population and Housing Trends		
	Population	Housing Units
2000*	7,905	3,481
2005†	8,251	3,102
2030†	8,657	3,610
% Change	9.5%	3.7%

Sources: *U.S. Census †Estimates, MORPC

Demographics				
	Blendon Township		Franklin County	
Race	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
White	7,243	91.6%	806,851	75.5%
Black	394	5.0%	191,196	17.9%
Asian	76	1.0%	32,784	3.1%
Other/ Multiple	192	2.4%	38,147	3.5%
Age				
Under 18	2,391	30.3%	268,321	25.1%
18 to 34	1,783	22.6%	308,545	28.9%
35 to 59	2,873	36.3%	353,461	33.1%
60 & above	858	10.8%	138,651	13.0%
Total	7,905		1,068,978	

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Housing

Geographic areas

We divided housing characteristics into the following geographic areas:

- Cleveland Heights
- Huber Ridge
- Sunbury Woods
- Area east of Big Walnut Creek

Housing age

Median year of housing construction shows the basic development progression over time. Median years of construction are:

- Cleveland Heights, 1953
- Huber Ridge, 1969
- Sunbury Woods, 1983
- Area east of Big Walnut Creek, 1971

This information shows a common trend seen throughout the United States. Populations have moved away from central-city areas since the end of World War II.

Occupancy

The occupancy rate for Blendon Township, 97.3 percent, is higher than Franklin County’s, 93.2 percent. Blendon Township has a lower proportion of vacant housing compared to Franklin County overall.

Housing types

Common housing types are single-family, multi-family and apartments. Huber Ridge contains the largest apartment complex in Blendon

township. A new, 120-unit extended-stay hotel is under construction on Executive Parkway.

Rental Units: The table below shows the proportion of renter- and owner-occupied housing units by geographic area. While Huber Ridge has a higher number of rental units than Sunbury Woods, rentals account for a larger share of the overall housing in Sunbury Woods.

Housing units: In 2000, the township contained 3,481 housing units. MORPC projections predict an increase of 3.7 percent from 2000 to 2030.

Employment

Jobs in Blendon Township: Data from the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission shows approximately 3,000 people work in Blendon Township.

Blendon Township residents: According to the 2000 census, most residents work in these industries: Professional, scientific/technical services, retail, education, and health/social services.

Approximately 194 businesses operate in Blendon Township. Business information was obtained from *ReferenceUSA*.

Primary Business Locations:

- Westerville Road from State Route 161 to Interstate 270
- Sunbury Road and Executive Parkway Area
- Pockets along Morse Road and Cleveland Avenue

Most common business types:

- Retail, 46 businesses
- Other services (including personal and auto repair services), 38 businesses
- Real Estate, 17 businesses

Owner and Renter Occupied Housing Units						
	Huber Ridge		Cleveland Heights*		Sunbury Woods	
Owner occupied	1,287	74.1%	791	91.4%	754	71.5%
Renter occupied	449	25.9%	74	8.6%	301	28.5%
Total	1,736		865		1,055	

*Includes portions of Columbus

Land Use and Transportation



Maps on the following pages show spatial data about Blendon Township.

Current Land Use map, p. 8

Zoning map, p. 9

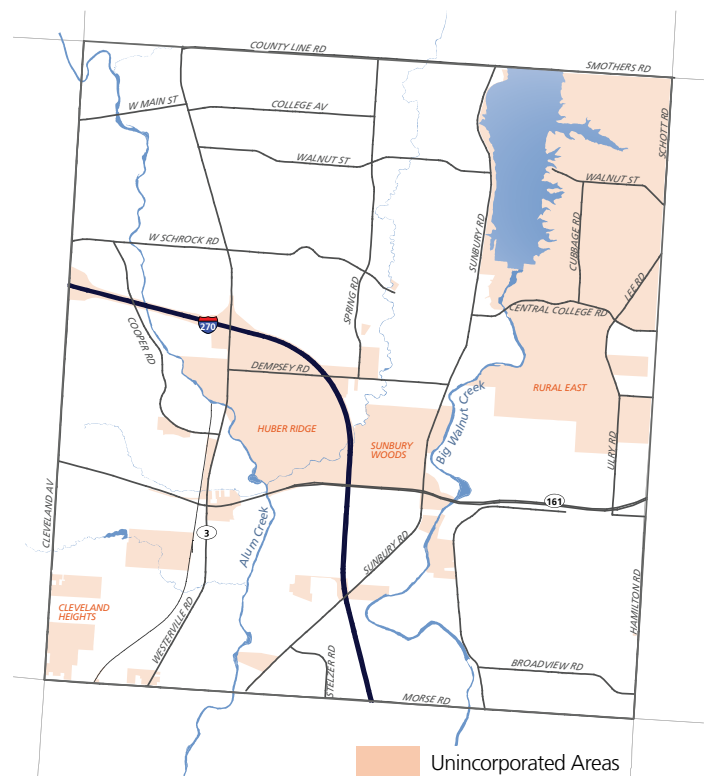
Roads and Transit map, p. 10

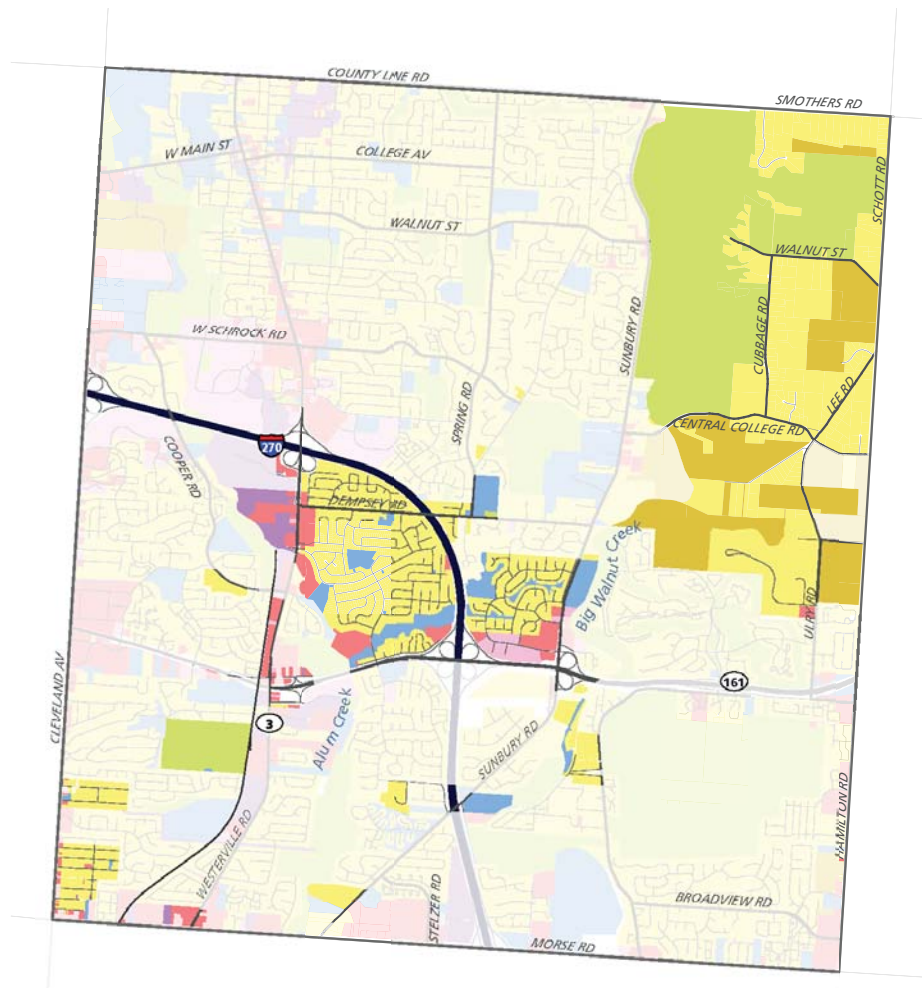
Sidewalks map, p. 11

Bikeways and Paths map, p. 12

Community Facilities map, p. 13

Township Identity map, p. 15





- Current Land Use**
- Residential
 - Commercial
 - Office
 - Public Service
 - Industrial
 - Park/Open Space
 - Agriculture

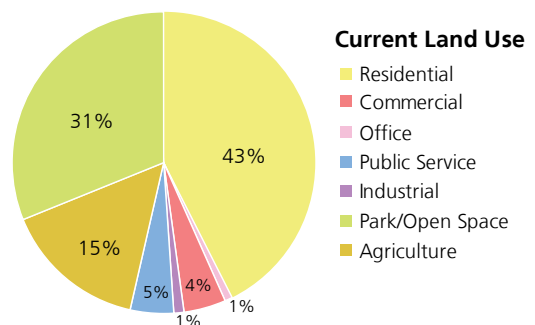
Current Land Use

The current land uses in Blendon Township are shown in this map and figure. Land in Blendon Township is predominately used for residential purposes. Parks and open space is the second-most-common land use.

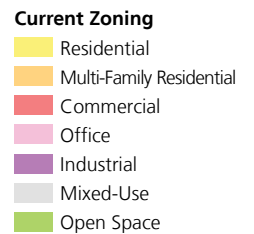
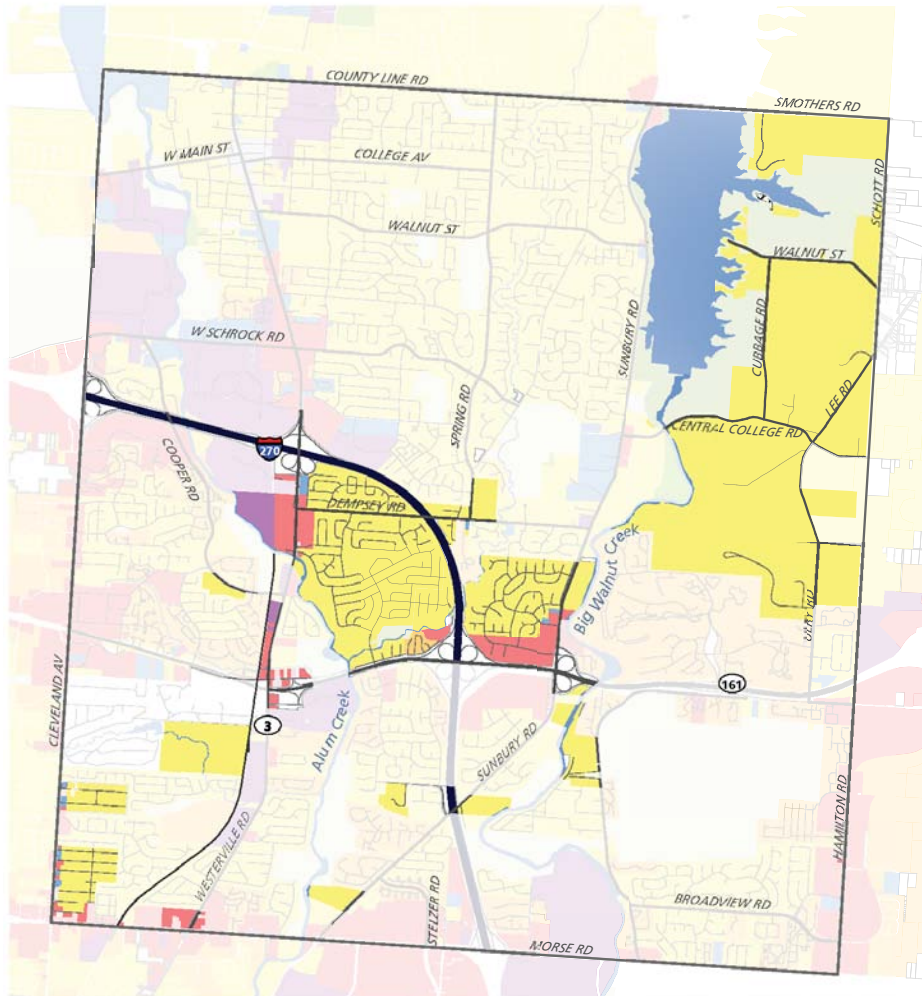
Commercial uses make up approximately 4 percent of the planning area. Commercial uses are primarily found along main roads, especially Cleveland Avenue, Westerville Road and Sunbury Road.

There is a significant amount of office space in Blendon Township, but office uses represent less than 1 percent of the overall land area.

When planning for an area’s future land use, it is important to understand the existing land uses.



- Current Land Use**
- Residential
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Zoning

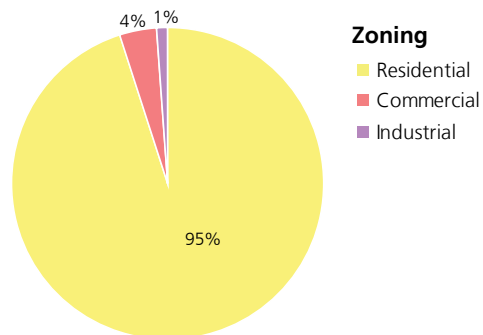
The Franklin County Economic Development and Planning Department administers zoning regulations in the planning area.

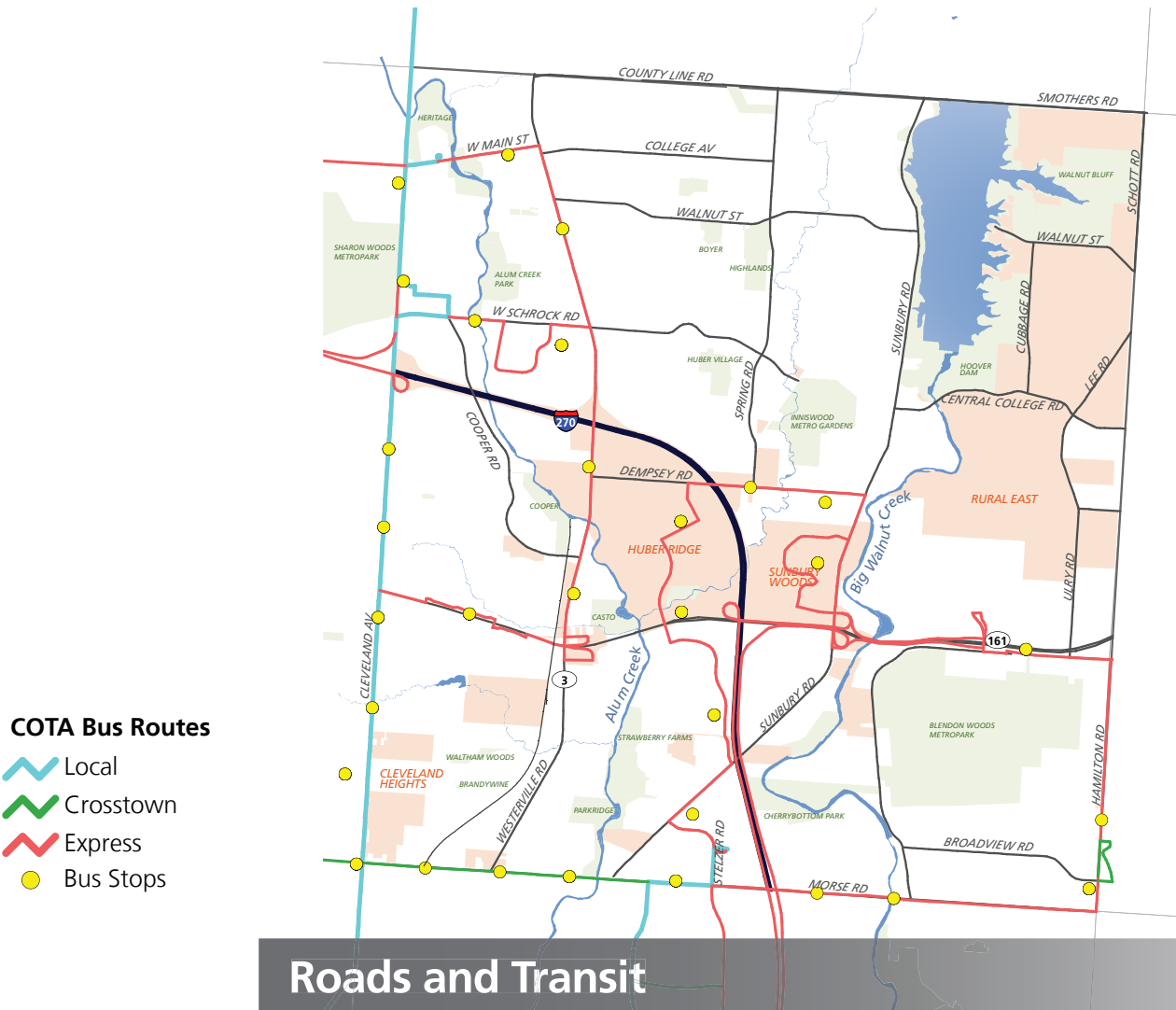
Most land in Blendon Township (95 percent) is zoned for residential and agricultural uses.

The figure at right shows the percent of land in Blendon Township zoned for residential, commercial and industrial uses.

The map above shows the generalized zoning in the planning area. The generalized zoning map consolidates zoning classifications into general categories for residential, commercial and industrial zoning districts. Generalized zoning maps allow us to quickly see the permitted uses for an area.

We consider the existing zoning when making recommendations for future land uses.





Highways, Road and Streets

The planning area has easy access to major highways.

Interstate 270 curves through the center of Blendon Township with three interchanges to the planning area. State Route 161 runs east to west through the center of Blendon Township. Major non-freeway roads include Morse Road, Cleveland Avenue, Westerville Road and Sunbury Road.

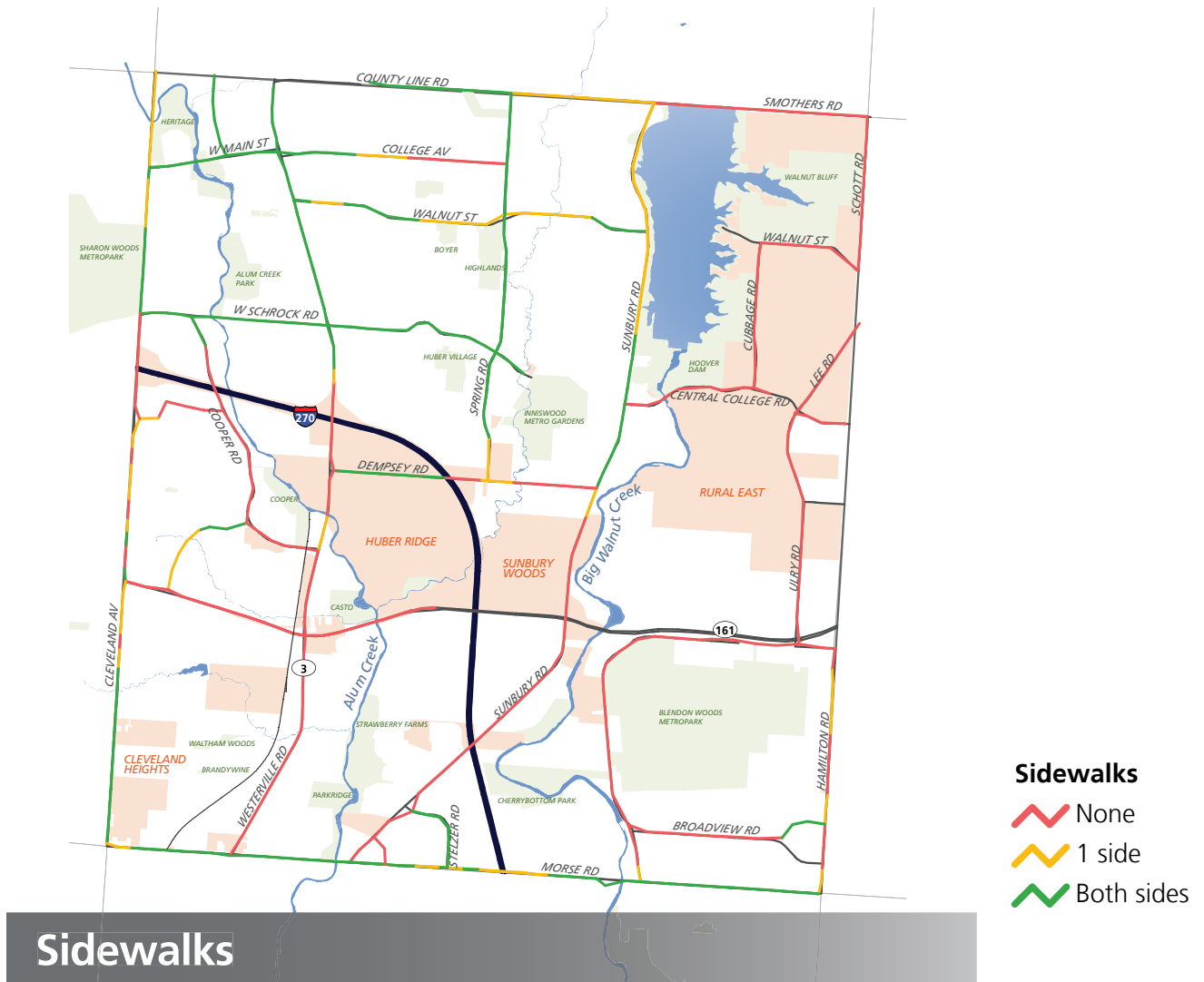
Planned road improvement projects include intersection improvements at Westerville Road and Dempsey Road, road widening and resurfacing on Dempsey Road from Interstate 270 to Sunbury Road, and a bridge-replacement project

on Central College Road at Big Walnut Creek. The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission is conducting a study for Westerville Road, from Morse Road to Interstate 270, to identify solutions for reducing traffic congestion.

Transit

The Central Ohio Transit Authority serves the Blendon Township area with five express routes, two local routes and one crosstown route. Bus routes are shown on the map above.

The express routes provide transportation for the morning and evening commutes from Huber Ridge and Sunbury Woods to downtown Columbus. COTA is satisfied with the express



routes' ridership, except route 38 which serves the Huber Ridge neighborhood.

Public transportation is an essential part of a healthy transportation network. Buses provide transportation for a wide range of people: those that do not want to drive, those without access to a vehicle and those unable to drive.

Rail

There are no active rail lines in the planning area. There is an abandoned railroad right-of-way located west of Westerville Road.

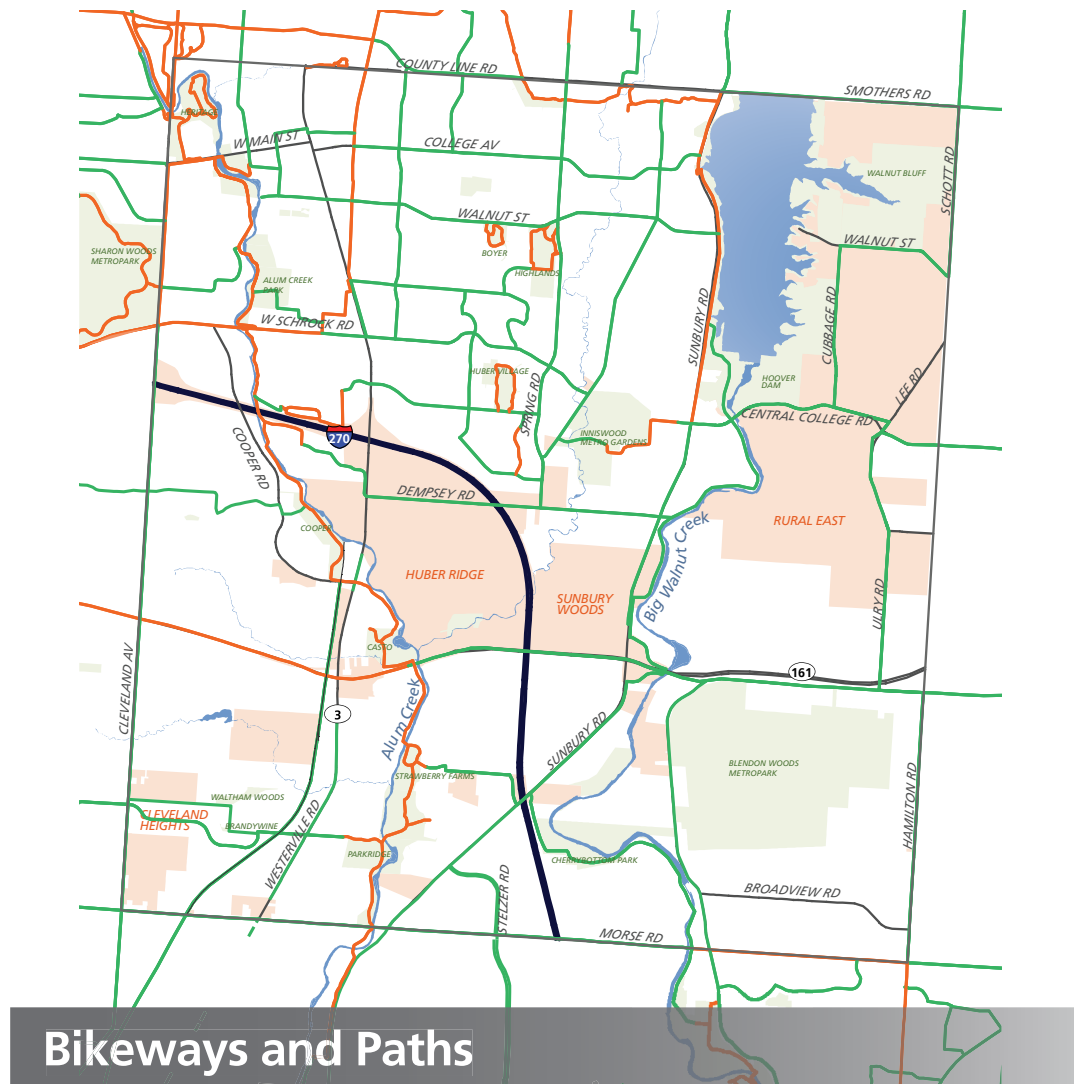
Abandoned railroad rights-of-way have a number of potential uses, including the installation

of bike paths. The Columbus Bicentennial Bikeways Plan proposes a bikeway in this location. Care should be taken to prevent uses encroaching on the railroad right-of-way.

Sidewalks and Multi-Purpose Trails

Sidewalks and trails serve important functions for communities. Sidewalks connect neighborhood residents to services, children to schools, provide opportunities for exercise and serve as an alternative mode of transportation.

The sidewalks map above shows the presence of sidewalks along main roads, whether on both sides, one side, or absent altogether. The Huber Ridge and Sunbury Woods neighborhoods have



Bikeways and Paths

sidewalks throughout. The commercial corridors of Westerville Road, Sunbury Road and Executive Parkway are in the greatest need of sidewalks to allow residents from neighborhoods to access commercial destinations. Sidewalks exist on both sides of Cleveland Avenue.

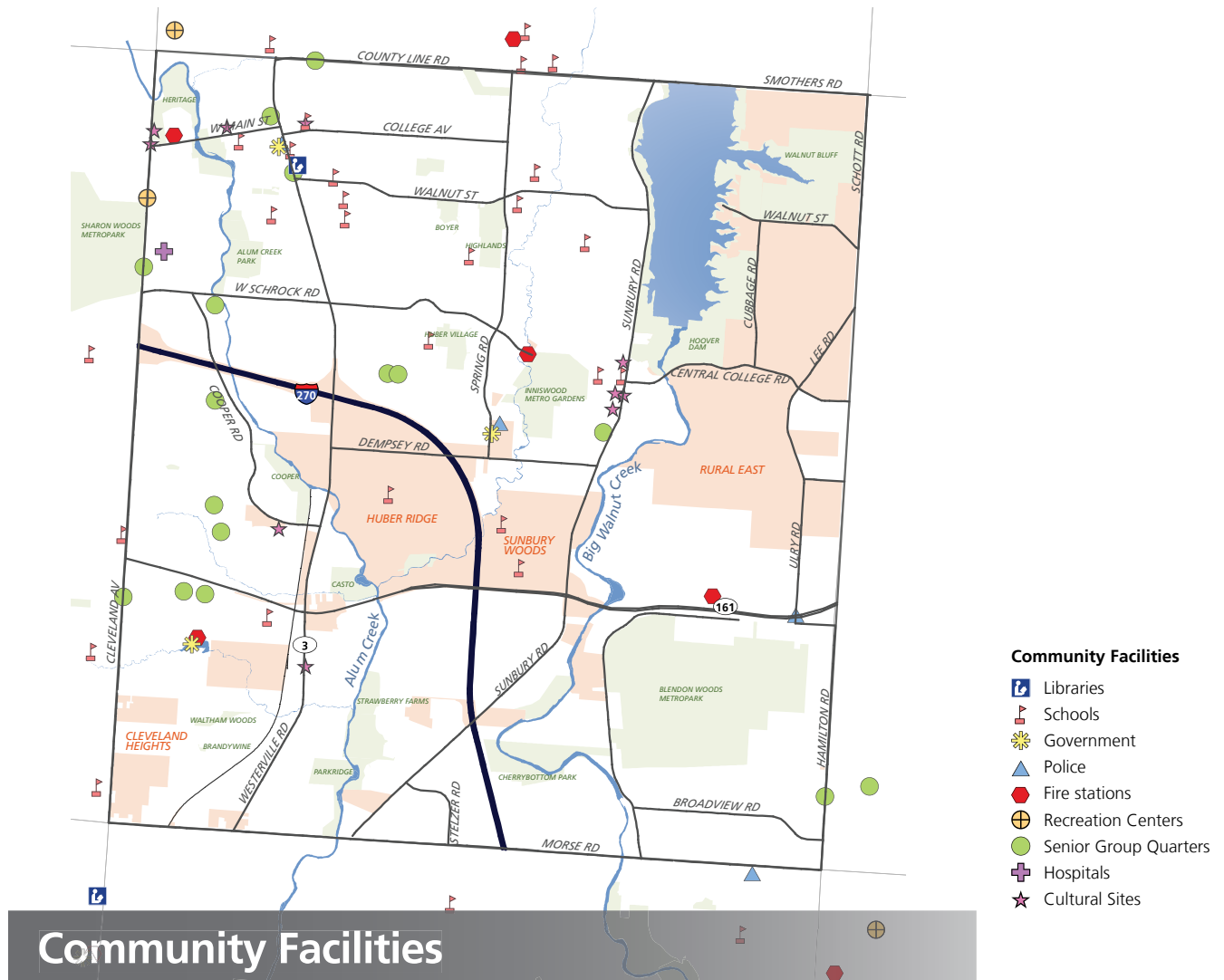
Bikeways

This map shows the location of existing and planned bikeways in Blendon Township. Existing bikeways are intermittent and typically not connected. The longest lengths of connected trails near the planning area are along Alum Creek and west of Hoover Reservoir. No bikeways directly serve Blendon Township.

The Alum Creek Bikeway runs west of Huber Ridge, but the neighborhoods in the planning area do not have access.

Bikeways are proposed along many roads in the area east of Hoover Reservoir that would help connect parks and neighborhoods. Bikeway types can include shared roadway lanes, bicycle lanes along roadway shoulders and separate bicycle paths.

Sidewalk and bikeway priorities will be considered in the Blendon Community Plan.



Parks and Recreation Facilities

Parks: Approximately 1,040 acres of park, parkland and recreational space exists in Blenden Township. Hoover Reservoir, Hoover Dam Park and Walnut Bluff Park account for 1,010 acres. Thirty-one parks encompassing nearly 3,370 acres exist in the planning boundaries.

Recreation facilities: The Blenden Township Board of Trustees owns and maintains a community park in the Huber Ridge neighborhood. The park includes three baseball fields. The Huber Ridge elementary school has basketball courts and a baseball field. Township residents also use recreation facilities located in Westerville.

Recreation facilities are important to community health by allowing individuals the opportunity to be physically active.

Schools

Three school districts serve Blenden Township: Plain Township Local Schools, Columbus City Schools and Westerville City Schools.

The planning area contains two Westerville schools.

Huber Ridge Elementary School: Huber Ridge Elementary serves the Huber Ridge neighborhood with an enrollment of approximately 550 students in grades K-5. Approximately 400

students walk to school each day. Two school buses provide transportation.

The school is located on a one-way street with parking on both sides which has led to motorist-access issues.

Wilder Elementary School: Wilder Elementary serves the Sunbury Woods neighborhood. Attendance is approximately 460 students. Wilder Elementary provides schooling for grades K-5 and offers a special needs preschool program.

Both schools offer after-school programs and are open to various groups.

One private school, Eastwood Junior Academy, is located in Blendon Township on Sunbury Road. The academy provides schooling for grades K-8. The school is operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Three schools of higher education are located in the planning area: Franklin University, Bohecker College and Hondros College. All three schools are located on Executive Parkway.

Safety services

Fire: The Westerville Fire Division provides fire suppression and emergency medical service to Blendon Township. Three fire stations serve the township, providing a 4-minute average response time. Stations are located on West Main

Street, East Schrock Road and North Spring Street.

Police: Blendon Township provides police services with a 20-member staff that includes 18 officers. The Blendon Township Police Department is located at the township complex on Hempstead Road.

Other Community Facilities

Blendon Township Senior Center: Located at the township complex, the center is open to anyone in the surrounding area that is 55 and over. There are approximately 140 members from Blendon Township. Most members drive to the center although transportation is provided to those unable to drive. The center offers programs Monday through Friday from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM.

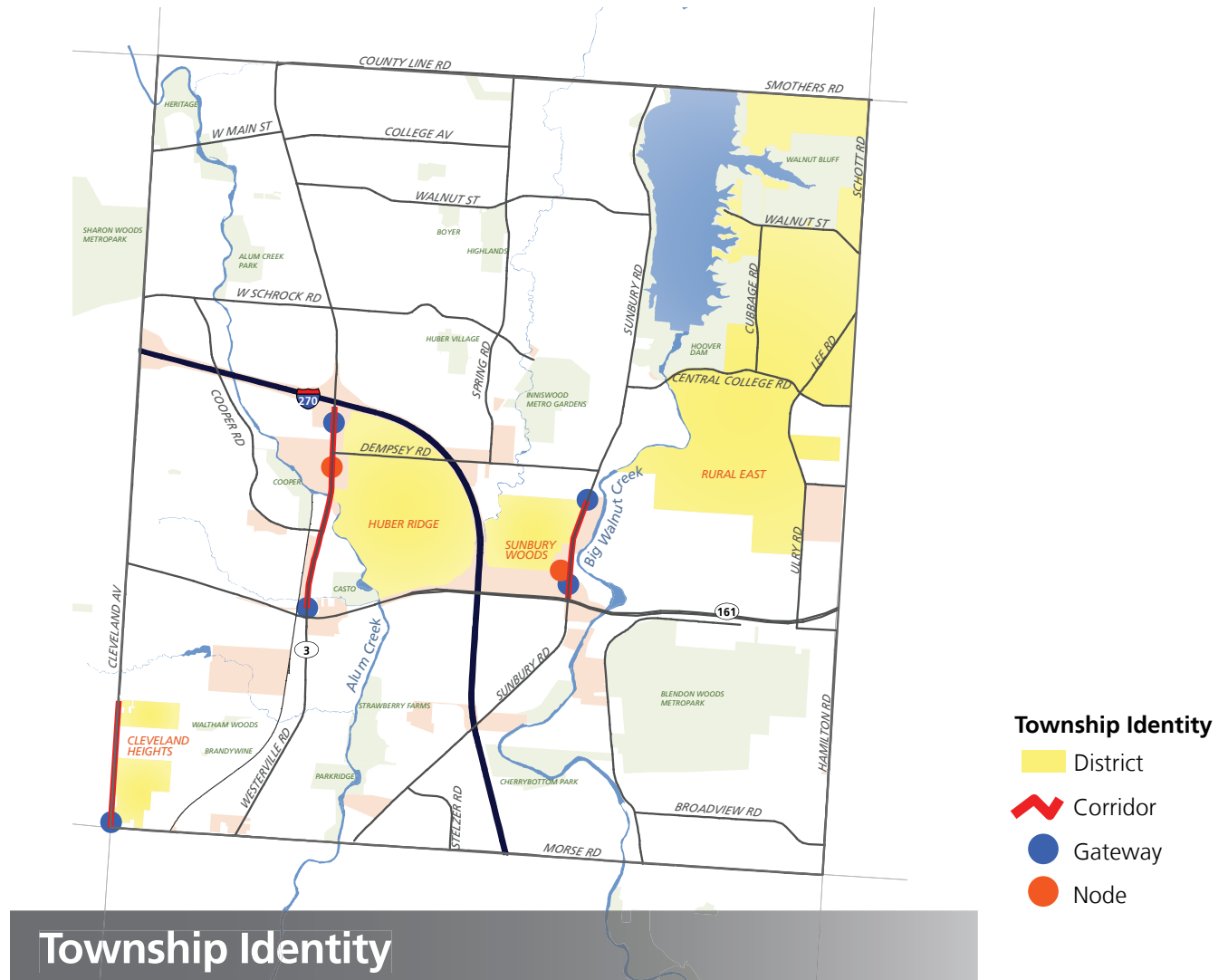
Postal Service: A post office is located at Glen-gary Shopping Center.

No libraries are located in the planning area. The Westerville Public Library is located on South State Street and the Northern Lights Branch of the Columbus Metropolitan Library is located on Cleveland Avenue south of Morse Road.

The preceding map shows the location of community facilities in the planning area.

Wilder Elementary School





Gateways, corridors, nodes and districts are distinct areas that help form a community’s identity. The Township Identity map shows these areas for Blendon Township.

Gateways

Gateways are major entry points to the community and offer a community’s first impression to newcomers. Blendon Township’s gateways lack distinguishing features such as welcome signage or landscape treatments that inform travelers they are entering the area. There are four main gateways to the planning area, as shown on the map above.

Corridors

Corridors also convey a community’s image. Corridors are lengths of roadways that have similar characteristics and business activity.

Cleveland Avenue: A north-south road on the western edge of Blendon Township. The corridor has sidewalks on both sides of the road. Commercial properties lack street presence and many lack green space and landscaping.

Westerville Road: A north-south road through the western half of Blendon Township. Large volumes of traffic travel the corridor. The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission is conducting a capacity study for the portion between State Route 161 and Interstate 270.

Businesses on Westerville Road include restaurants, automobile-related uses and construction contractors. There are no sidewalks. High traffic speeds make travel unsafe for pedestrians. Commercial properties have limited landscaping and buildings are set back far from the road with parking in front.

Sunbury Road: A north-south road located east of Sunbury Woods. Sunbury Plaza is located here. A concrete barrier separates the road and plaza. Sidewalks do not exist and buildings lack street presence.

Nodes

Nodes are centers of attraction and activity. Glengary Shopping Center and Sunbury Plaza are nodes.

Glengary Shopping Center: The center has been a shopping destination for residents since the 1970s. The center is in a prime location and is fully occupied. Glengary Shopping Center occupies approximately 15 acres with limited landscaping. The center lacks a pedestrian-friendly design. No bike racks or designated walking areas exist.

Green space reduces storm water runoff and helps reduce temperatures in urban environments. Bike racks encourage cycling. Designated walking areas allow safe pedestrian access to stores.

Sunbury Plaza area: The development of the shopping plaza and Executive Parkway began in the 1980s. This is a prime commercial area with access to the interstate system. Sixteen properties including Sunbury Plaza and businesses along Executive Parkway occupy approximately 45 acres.

One undeveloped property remains along Executive Parkway that serves as a buffer to the Sunbury Woods district. The property is zoned for commercial use. Businesses have an abundance of parking and there are no sidewalks. Most properties lack designated walking areas from parking lots to buildings.

Districts

Cleveland Heights, Sunbury Woods, Huber Ridge and the Rural East are districts, or areas with common design characteristics.

Cleveland Heights: Residential neighborhood platted in 1924 and 1925. The neighborhood contains approximately 480 properties of which approximately 370 are undeveloped. No sidewalks exist in the district. Existing homes are scheduled to have sewer service provided in the near future.

The neighborhood has a large amount of undeveloped land. Further utility service extension may be required for future development. Attention should be given to this area to ensure appropriate future development.

Huber Ridge: Residential neighborhood platted between 1960 and 1971. The neighborhood has approximately 1,500 developed properties. Neighborhood sidewalks connect residents to Huber Ridge Elementary and the township park.

Sunbury Woods: Residential neighborhood platted between 1972 and 1981. There are approximately 1,100 developed properties. Sidewalks exist throughout the neighborhood. Throughroadways in the neighborhood are wide and contribute to speeding.

Rural East: The rural area east of Big Walnut Creek has pockets of low to medium-density residential development. There are seven platted subdivisions in this district. A large amount of undeveloped land remains. Central sewer and water is not available. Natural features such as steep slopes, erodible soils and floodplains need attention when determining how the area should develop.

There are no sidewalks and no bikeways. Bikeways are planned for most of the major roads that will help connect residents to parks.

Stakeholder Interviews



The project team held interviews with township stakeholders, which we generally defined as people having an interest in Blendon Township's future. We conducted the interviews to gain a preliminary understanding of people's likes and dislikes. We interviewed residents, business owners, government agencies, environmental groups, neighborhood representatives, developers and others.

Through the interviews, we developed a list of potential issues to address during the planning process. Following our large-scale public meetings the list will be expanded and refined.

Below is a summary of these issues. We divided them into four categories: development, transportation, recreation and the environment.

Development

Land use: The number of automobile-related businesses along Westerville Road is a concern. Westerville Road has over 15 automobile-related businesses.

Additional public input may lead to future land use or development recommendations.

Site development: Many properties along the Westerville Road corridor are not properly maintained and have a poor appearance.

Recommendations for updated development standards are possible with public input.

Lack of housing options: According to many, the Huber Ridge neighborhood lacks housing options. There are a number of rental units but some said they are too costly for retirees. Insufficient housing options can make it difficult for residents to remain in the community as they grow older.

Future land use recommendations to encourage housing options are possible following public input.

Property maintenance: General upkeep of properties, including siding, painting, gutters, grass and trash, was a common concern during interviews.

Maintenance issues are outside the scope of a land use plan. Blendon Township recently adopted a property maintenance code that may help alleviate these issues.

Sunbury Woods: The Sunbury Woods residential and commercial areas are well liked by residents. Residents have a sufficient array of business types to satisfy most needs. Residents enjoy the safety and openness of the neighborhood. The plan can recommend that the existing conditions residents enjoy are maintained.

Transportation

Lack of sidewalks: Businesses lack sidewalks and are inaccessible to pedestrians. This forces people to drive, contributing to traffic congestion.

Public input can lead to the creation of a sidewalk prioritization map.

Speeding: Vehicle speeds are a safety concern to neighborhood residents. Street widths may contribute to the problem.

The plan can include recommendations for traffic calming.

Traffic congestion: Westerville Road traffic congestion is a problem. MORPC is conducting a study to address the issue.

Recreation

Lack of park connections: The lack of connections between neighborhoods and parks concerned residents.

The Alum Creek Greenway Trail runs just west of Huber Ridge with no access from the neighborhood. Bike paths are planned along State Route 161 and Dempsey Road that would connect to the Alum Creek trail.

Public input can lead to a trail prioritization map.

Lack of sports facilities: Concerns exist about the lack of sports facilities in Blendon Township. The only sports facilities in the township are at the township park and the Huber Ridge elementary school.

Further public input may lead to recommendations for additional facilities.

Public parks: Residents are happy with the number of public and community parks available. The plan will focus on connecting residents to the park system.

Environment

Clean streams: Clean and healthy streams is a concern for many interviewed. Interviewees recommended focusing on ways to protect water resources from pollution.

Public input can help develop recommendations for protecting water resources.

Loss of wetlands: Many are concerned about the loss of wetlands to development. Wetlands play a vital role in the overall health of the environment by, among other things, helping to absorb pollutants.

The plan can include recommendations to prevent the destruction of wetlands.

Summary and next steps

Following additional public input, the list of current issues will be finalized and a vision for the future identified. The project team and working committee will then develop ideas to help the community reach its vision.

Public input is necessary during each phase of the planning process.

The project team thanks the interviewees for their willingness to participate in the Blendon Community Plan.

Acknowledgements

The project team thanks the following individuals and groups for input, technical advice and assistance overall with the Blendon Community Plan Current Conditions Report:

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Economic Development and Planning Department
150 South Front Street
FSL Suite 10
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Tel. 614-462-3094
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