PRAIRIE TOWNSHIP

2007 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

PRAIRIE TOWNSHIP

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Executive Summary

Prairie Township is a growing community whose future development will be influenced by both the community will and increasingly strong regional interest in the area. In order to respond to the changes on the horizon for Prairie Township, it is critical to have an up to date comprehensive plan.

This document is the 2007 update to the Prairie Township Comprehensive Plan. Originally adopted in 2003 the Prairie Township Comprehensive Plan has served as the voice for the community in both local and regional development issues and has provided a strong voice for Prairie Township.

This update is built upon that plan but incorporates the recommendations of the Big Darby Accord Watershed Master Plan. The resulting update is contemporary and able to adequately address the impending development in the community in a manner reflective of both Prairie Township and the Big Darby Accord.

Big Darby Accord

Prairie Township adopted the Big Darby Accord Watershed Master Plan in September 2006. The major recommendations of the Big Darby Accord Watershed Master Plan include a development strategy that prescribes future development location, pattern and intensity to reduce the impact on the water quality. Secondly, the plan recommends strategies to preserve land in the watershed according to its relative importance to water quality. The plan also provides mechanisms for revenue generation to purchase land for conservation, a utility allocation strategy, and the creation of a panel of local representatives to oversee the implementation of the plan.

Community Character & Land Use

The 2007 update to the Prairie Township Comprehensive Plan recommends four major categories of future land use each with specific policies based on the recommendations of the Big Darby Accord.

- Existing Urbanized
- Suburban Edge
- Town Center
- Rural

Strategies encouraging quality infill and redevelopment are the focus for the existing urbanized portion of the township. Appropriate site design and quality architecture are also recommended to ensure the quality of existing urbanized portion of township is maintained or improved.

Existing Rural Character of Prairie Township

Darby Dan Farm

The town center was envisioned as a critical part of the Big Darby Accord. Development in the watershed is intended to be concentrated in a town center bisecting Prairie and Brown Townships. This development was not previously defined for Prairie Township so this update clearly defines the expectations of a quality town center for the township. It should include a mix of land uses, higher densities, walkable streets, quality architecture and materials, and strong neighborhoods.

Conservation development was recommended in 2003 for the rural portions of the township. For this update the recommended locations and patterns have changed slightly to respond to the Big Darby Accord Watershed Master

Plan. However, the conservation development pattern remains the means to protect environmental features and the rural character of this portion of the township through the preservation of quality open space, clustered home sites and a reduction in infrastructure.

Environmental Protection
This update to the comprehensive plan also incorporates the Big Darby Accord recommendations for environmental protections measures.

One of the highest priorities for all development within Prairie Township is to mitigate the impacts on the water quality of the Big Darby Creek. The recommended land use pattern is one vehicle for this mitigation, however the following tools should be used in all development to further address the impacts of development on the water quality:

- Open space conservation
- Employ Green Buildings techniques
- Protection of riparian corridors
- Preservation/mitigation of wetlands
- Use of Best Management Practices (BMPs)
- Use of appropriate wastewater utility technologies
- Establishment of trails and greenways

One of the most critical elements to protecting the water quality of the Big Darby will be to preserve the riparian corridors for all streams and tributaries from the encroachment of development. This update supports that priority.

Public Facilities
The recommendations for public facilities improvements for Prairie Township did not change significantly from the 2003 Comprehensive Plan. The policies of the township related to provision of parks and recreation as well as the roadway improvements were not significantly changed by the adoption of the Big Darby Accord. The focus remains providing adequate parks, roadways and school services for the residents of Prairie Township.

Economic & Commercial Development
One of the most critical issues for economic development in Prairie Township is the allocation of water and sewer utilities. As a result of the Big Darby Accord process the City of Columbus agreed to extend lines into Prairie Township without requiring annexation. As part of a revenue sharing agreement the township will be able to benefit from the development of the town center. The township will continue to encourage quality development within the township that provides an economic benefit to the community.


Recreation Activities at the Big Darby Creek

Introduction

This document is an update to the 2003 Prairie Township Comprehensive Plan. It is based on the foundations of the 2003 plan and expanded by the adoption of the 2006 Big Darby Accord Watershed Master Plan. The Big Darby Accord Watershed Master Plan was a multi-jurisdictional planning process focused on planning for development in the Big Darby Watershed that would protect the water quality of the creek. Prairie Township was a key player in the Big Darby Accord planning process and adopted the plan in September of 2006. Therefore, the 2003 Prairie Township Comprehensive Plan is being updated for 2007 to incorporate the information and recommendations included in the Big Darby Accord.

Big Darby Creek *source: The Nature Conservancy*

Township Agriculture

The 2007 update maintains much of the language from the 2003 plan with some significant changes to the Community Character and Land Use Chapter as well as some additions to the Environment Chapter. Additional strategies have been included to aid in the implementation of the Big Darby Accord in Prairie Township.

Some of the changes to the Community Character and Land Use Chapter are a result of the recent decision by the City of Columbus to extend centralized services to the townships without requiring annexation. In 2003 the availability of centralized services for development was undecided, therefore that plan provided recommendations for both a high growth scenario that assumed centralized services and a second low growth scenario that assumed centralized services would not be available. The Big Darby Accord concentrated development into a town center that will straddle Prairie Township and Brown Township. The City of Columbus agreed to allow the town center to remain in the township but provide centralized services without requiring annexation. This 2007 update includes an Environmental Chapter that deals with the conservation strategies recommended by the Big Darby Accord.

Planning Foundation

2003 Prairie Township Comprehensive Plan
In 2003 Prairie Township adopted its first Comprehensive Plan. That effort was led by the Prairie Township Comprehensive Steering Committee (PTSC). The PTSC used potential population growth based upon various build-out assumptions as a basis for defining and selecting potential development options. Build-out projections were based upon growth assumptions related to various wastewater treatment strategies, as well as to environmental constraints that exist within the Township. The resulting plan addressed two finalized scenarios. One scenario assumed that no centralized wastewater treatment will be extended to areas where it is currently not available, while a higher growth scenario assumed availability of this service in part of the Township.

Development intensity, or density policies for each policy area were based upon a number of dwelling units per acre, not including floodplains. These were overall site densities, with the expectation that development would be concentrated away from sensitive areas. Single-family homes were expected to be the predominant land use, with the exception of mixed use non-residential / multi-family nodes whose possible locations are generalized on the land use policy map.

The planning process began September 25, 2001 with an agreement between the Township and Franklin County. A steering committee comprised of Prairie Township Zoning Commission members and other selected members of the community oversaw this process. There are 14 members of the committee and they met on a regular basis over the course of 18 months. They were provided technical assistance by the Franklin County Development Department planning staff.

From the goals established by the PTSC specific issues to achieve the goals were determined. The issues are divided among the goals; economic/commercial development, community character, environment, and public facilities. Each of the goal areas contained several priority issues. The issues are located in the Issues section of this chapter. After identifying these issues the steering committee held a series of work sessions to oversee preparation of four working papers, one for each goal area listed above. These working papers include detailed analysis of the issues, as well as a series of policy and action recommendations.

Big Darby Accord

Efforts to protect water quality in the Big Darby Creek-Hellbranch Run watershed are of interest at the state and national levels, as well as at the local level. A series of plans and studies have been undertaken to protect the Big Darby Creek water quality. These efforts include the Environmentally Sensitive Development Area External Advisory Group (ESDA\EAG), the Hellbranch Forum, and most prominently the Big Darby Accord.

In July of 2004 Franklin County jurisdictions in the Big Darby Creek Watershed came together to create a common vision for the development of the area to protect the water quality of the Big Darby Creek. They recognized the impacts that the encroaching urbanized development would have on the biology and habitat of the Big Darby Creek. In order to mitigate these impacts the jurisdictions crafted a plan for development of the study area which concentrated development in less sensitive areas and provided mechanism for the protection of open spaces and environmental features and reduced the impact of development.

Big Darby Accord

In 2004 the jurisdictions located in the Big Darby Watershed in Franklin County came together to consider a joint land use plan. The Big Darby Creek is a national and state scenic river recognized for its biological diversity and is home to endangered species found nowhere else in the world.

These jurisdictions, including Prairie Township, recognized that unfettered urbanization into the watershed would destroy the water quality of the Big Darby Creek. Managing the urbanization to protect the creek could not be accomplished by any one jurisdiction, it was necessary to consider the whole area. In order to allow development while protecting the creek the following needed to be determined:

- *Location of future development*
- *Development pattern*
- *Best Management Practices*
- *Conservation priorities*
- *Utility allocation*
- *Adaptive Management Mechanisms*
- *Revenue and Cost Sharing*

The Big Darby Accord planning process vetted these items through the jurisdictions, stakeholders and residents to create a future development plan that protects the water quality of the Big Darby Creek.

The resulting plan was adopted by Prairie Township in September 2006. The Big Darby Accord informs the future development of Prairie Township and the comprehensive plan should reflect the recommendations of the plan.

This update to the Prairie Township Comprehensive Plan reconciles the community vision for the future with the Big Darby Accord. Prairie Township is now well poised to guide a new development pattern that will protect the Big Darby Creek.

Plan Structure

Planning Policy Areas
The proposed land use map identifies three development areas. These areas are described in Chapter 2 and represent different types of communities in terms of development intensity, form and character. Areas that are at or near build-out are characterized as existing urbanized areas and addressed through one set of policies, while future development areas are divided into the town center and lower density rural areas. While Chapter 2 includes policies that are specific to each of the policy areas, policies contained in Chapters 3 (environment), 4 (public facilities) and 5 (economic / commercial development) pertain to all areas of the Township unless otherwise noted.

Conservation
The plan's conservation policies compliment the land use policy map and are based upon the Big Darby Accord recommendations. The plan lays out a water quality protection strategy that emphasizes open space protection, with the conservation areas map showing the areas that are most important to protect as part of that strategy. The plan requires that this open space be unified. Further, policies require that the open space be connected to open space in existing or possible development. Information of where these conservation areas are and how they relate to one another can assist in designing and reviewing proposed conservation developments.


Existing Rural Character of Prairie Township

Development Standards
There are two types of development standards addressed in the plan. Water quality protection standards call for the use of surface water features that minimize pollutants that might flow to area streams, while also controlling the amount and rate of stormwater flowing off of development. Water quality standards will be based upon the standards and principles laid out by the Big Darby Accord. A summary of the principles can be found in the Big Darby Accord Watershed Master Plan.

Other standards included in plan policies address the form that development takes. As mentioned above, single family development will follow an open space conservation pattern. Non-residential and multi-family nodes should be designed according to urban design principles included in plan policies.

Development standards and form will also be critical to the success of the town center. Those recommendations are included in Chapter 2.

PRAIRIE TOWNSHIP

COMMUNITY CHARACTER & LAND USE

Community Character & Land Use

Prairie Township is currently home to two distinct development patterns; rural and urbanized. With the adoption of the Big Darby Accord there will be an additional development pattern town center which is predominantly located in Prairie Township. Therefore it is critical that this plan advise the maintenance of its existing character and inform the development that will occur in the future.

The Community Character and Land Use chapter is divided into three sections:

- Existing Urbanized
- Town Center
- Rural

There are broad priorities that Prairie Township believes should be incorporated into all development in the township regardless of the pattern:

- Preserve Open space
- Control sprawl
- Include High quality design
- Diversify housing mix
- Balance growth

These priorities informed the recommendations for each development pattern recommended for Prairie Township and should be incorporated into all new development whether in the rural areas or in the new town center.

Big Darby Creek Recreation *source: The Nature Conservancy*

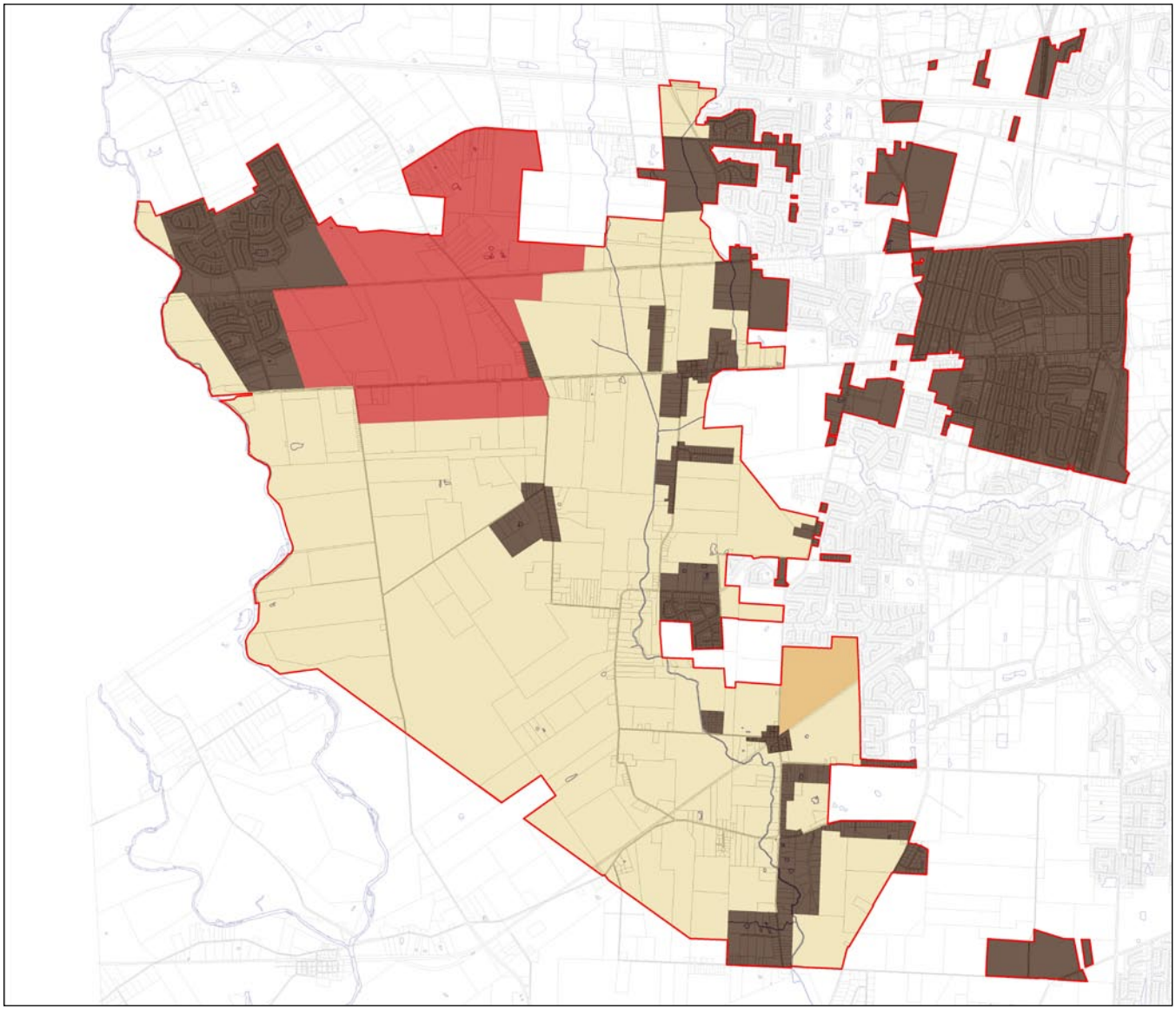
Big Darby Accord Mission Statement

The Big Darby Accord consists of local governments within the Franklin County area of the Big Darby Creek watershed. The mission of the Big Darby Accord is to cooperatively develop a multi-jurisdictional plan and accompanying preservation and growth strategies, capable of implementation, oversight and enforcement, which are designed to:

- *Preserve, protect and improve, when possible, the Big Darby Creek watershed's unique ecosystem by utilizing the best available science, engineering and land use planning practices;*
- *Promote responsible growth by taking measures to provide for adequate public services and facilities and promote a full spectrum of housing choice, as well as adequate educational, recreational and civic opportunities, for citizens of each jurisdiction and for Central Ohio;*
- *Create a partnership that recognizes the identity, aspirations, rights, and duties of all jurisdictions and that develops methods of cooperation among the partners through means which include the cooperative utilization of public services and facilities; and*
- *Capitalize on the results of other efforts by considering local comprehensive plans, as well as the work of the Environmentally Sensitive Development Area External Advisory Group, the Hellbranch Forum, the 21st Century Growth Policy Team and other local planning and zoning efforts, in the development of the plan*

Big Darby Accord

A major influence on the future development pattern in Prairie Township is the Big Darby Accord. Prairie Township actively participated in the planning process to produce a document to guide development throughout the watershed in Franklin County. The result of the process was a plan that balanced the development rights in the area with a managed development plan to preserve the water quality of the Big Darby Creek.



Land Use Map

By adopting the Big Darby Accord Watershed Master Plan the Trustees have agreed to develop in a manner that is consistent with the recommendations of the Big Darby Accord. Therefore the following community character and land use recommendations in this plan are greatly guided by the Big Darby Accord Watershed Master Plan.

Land Use Plan

- Existing Urbanized
- Suburban Edge
- Town Center
- Rural

Conservation Tiers

Like the development patterns in Prairie Township the preservation of environmental features is based on the Big Darby Accord Watershed Master Plan. One of the products of the Accord was the establishment of a tiered system to organize the features critical to the protection of the Big Darby Creek. These tiers rank the critical environmental features according to their relationship to the water quality of the Big Darby Creek. Having adopted the Big Darby Accord, Prairie Township must adhere to the preservation of environmental features according to the tiered schedule as well.

These tiers will be protected at the time of development according to their priority whether the development is occurring in the town center or the rural portion of the township. More information regarding the conservation can be found in Chapter 3, Environment.

Existing Urbanized: Redevelopment & Infill

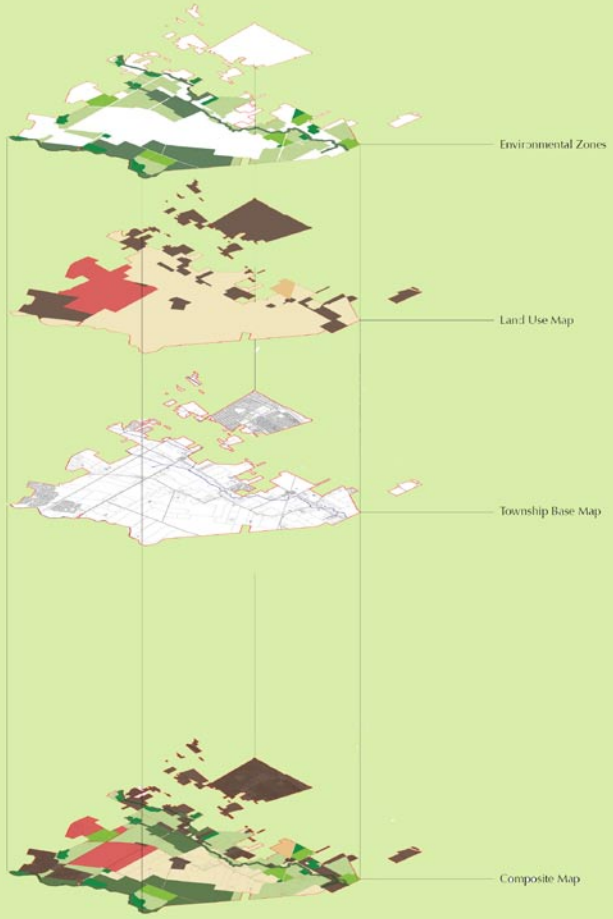
Prairie Township includes an area centered on West Broad Street in the eastern portion of the township which developed at urban densities. These densities were possible because of the availability of regional centralized wastewater treatment through the Franklin County Sanitary Engineer's Office under contract with the City of Columbus. This area stretches along West Broad Street about one-and-one half miles west of Interstate 270 with a north south span of about one-and-one third miles.

This urbanized portion of the township consists of commercial uses along Broad Street including Doctor's Hospital. Behind the commercial uses along Broad Street is a planned residential community developed in 1955 called Lincoln Village.

In the western portion of the township is a second urbanized node comprised of two suburban style subdivisions, Westpoint and Lake Darby Estates, located in the along Hubbard Road north of U.S. 40. These subdivisions are serviced by a wastewater treatment plant run by Ohio American Water.

Because these areas are distinct from the remainder of the township they require a set of policies geared at redevelopment and infill for maintenance and improvement.

Conservation Zones Overlay



In order to achieve all the goals of the township and the Big Darby Accord Watershed Master Plan two layers of recommendations are included on the recommended future land use map. The first layer is the recommended future land uses in the township. Over the land uses are the recommended conservation areas in the township. The conservation layer informs how the land use layer develops.

Infill
Infill development takes advantage of undeveloped sites within our urbanized area. These sites are unique in that they tend to be small, often have challenging configurations as related to the built-out areas. Overcoming these constraints often involves encouraging higher density development of unique types and designs that mitigate possible negative impacts on surrounding development.

Higher densities attract developers to do creative development, while taking advantage of existing facilities and services. Unique designs should both recognize site limitations and mitigate impacts on surrounding neighborhoods and public facilities. While creative design can address infill development potential in terms of these three factors, adequate access and wastewater treatment must be present at a site for any form of infill to occur. Plan policies should facilitate both proper design and address public facilities issues in a way that encourages such development.

Redevelopment
Redevelopment occurs on sites that have been improved in the past, but need some form of further improvement in order to allow for viable, or at least desirable, future land uses. Redevelopment can occur with any land use type present in the Eastern Prairie Township urbanized area.

Township policies addressing redevelopment can range from working with county, state and federal agencies on grants for home repair to becoming a partner in the reuse of large-scale commercial facilities.

Retail that contributes to public space

Diversified Housing Mix
The eastern urbanized area offers a range of affordable housing opportunities. This housing takes the form of both modest single family detached housing and apartments. Protecting these housing resources will be important to ensuring a diversified housing mix as the Township works to provide housing options elsewhere along the housing continuum. However, the mere existence of this housing infrastructure does not ensure that it will be a resource for the community. The quality of this housing must be maintained, while owner-occupancy should be stressed in the single-family units. These strategies would be aimed at preserving the stability of this portion of the Township.

In addition, the convenience of the location may offer some opportunities to redevelop higher range housing near the Broad Street – Interstate 270 interchange at some point in time. However, it should be noted that this should be part of a mixed-use development in order to help secure a balance of land uses in the Township.

The Westpoint – Lake Darby Estates area represents a higher price point on the housing cost continuum. The age and condition of this housing does not suggest that any particular strategy for maintaining this type of housing will be necessary. However, the development anticipated for the town center will be located proximate to Westpoint - Lake Darby Estates. Therefore the town center development should respond to those existing subdivisions and appropriately incorporate those existing houses into the town center master plan.

High Quality Site Design
While this theme applies to all types of development, high quality site design is critical to the success of infill projects. Infill development usually requires the developer to face unique site constraints. The use, density, configuration of lots and streets and provision of amenities can be challenging when developing infill tracts.

All infill and redevelopment projects should pay close attention to environmental features of a given site, just as other development must respect such factors.

Balanced Growth Policy
Creating a planning and regulatory environment that encourages further improvement and development in the eastern urbanized area increases development opportunities for some of the landowners in the area. The Township must be careful to not allow the property values

Composite Map - Land Use with Conservation Zones Overlay

Existing Residential

Composite Map

- Existing Urbanized
- Suburban Edge
- Town Center
- Rural
- Protected
- Tier 1
- Tier 2
- Tier 3

and rights of neighboring landowners to be compromised in the process. This means that the Township must be careful in its flexibility in working on infill and redevelopment projects.

Another opportunity to achieve balance in this area is between residential and non-residential land uses. The Township can do this by encouraging redevelopment projects that maximize employment uses and other land uses and strengthen the local economy and tax base.

Finally, taking the fullest advantage of development opportunities in already developed portions of the Township will help to encourage a physical balance between urban and rural spaces in Prairie Township.

Prairie Township West Broad Street Corridor Partnership
In 2005 and 2006 the Trustees held meetings with other community leaders to discuss what needs to be done to improve the business climate along West Broad Street. Participants in these discussions identified the following priorities:

- Improving Broad Street itself (by addressing the appearance of the street, as well as the pedestrian and transit facilities)
- Identifying and pursuing opportunities to redevelop run-down or under used areas.
- Encouraging economic development by promoting the corridor for appropriate businesses
- Reducing crime and perception of crime
- Pursuing opportunities related to the expansion of Doctor's Hospital and the ODOT US 40 safety project.

These priorities will be addressed in an economic development and market study and a corridor plan dealing with physical improvements that are needed along the street. The township will pursue these initiatives with partners OhioHealth and the City of Columbus. The JEDD will fund efforts to address the priorities listed above through income tax collections from businesses along the corridor. One of the efforts funded by the JEDD will be a community improvement corporation, an entity which will facilitate redevelopment projects in and around the corridor.

Retail that contributes to public space

Residential that contributes to public space

Open Space Preservation

Rural development in Prairie Township should be organized so as to provide the community with open spaces to preserve the rural character and to protect critical environmental resources.

In the town center, well organized urban open spaces will contribute to the success of the development. Open spaces in urban patterns provide recreation, add to the aesthetic, and provide neighborhood amenities for residents.

Transect

A recent concept known as the 'transect' is a tool that focuses on the form of development given its position on a spectrum of development. Ranging from a high density urban condition to a low density rural condition.

This spectrum of development patterns is meant to inform appropriate design and density for development depending on where a community falls within the spectrum. The spectrum is divided into zones ranging from T-1 (Rural Preserve) to T-6 (Urban Core).

Most communities have development patterns that stretch across multiple zones. Prairie Township has areas like the West Broad Street Corridor that would fall into the T-4 zone and the remainder of the township falls from T-3 to T-1. Not only should the zones inform future developments they should also be used to create appropriate transitions between the zones.

The transect will be an important tool to manage new developments throughout Prairie Township.

For more information:
http://www.dpz.com/transect.aspx

Higher Density Residential

DRAWING BY JAMES WASSELL

Transect Illustration

Town Center: Innovative & Sustainable

In order to preserve the water quality of the Big Darby the development in the watershed had to be limited and concentrated. Per the plan the concentration of development is intended for a town center located between U.S. 40 and Interstate 70 straddling Brown Township and Prairie Township. This town center serves to focus the development to protect the creek from sprawling unmanaged development of the land but also provides an opportunity to create a truly great place.

The Town Center, envisioned as a critical part of the Big Darby Accord, is consistent with the goals and desires of Prairie Township. Based on transportation infrastructure, location of sanitary sewers, and the environmental evaluation of the land it was determined that concentrating development in this area would be the most beneficial pattern of development for the protection of the Big Darby Creek. As part of the Big Darby Accord process it was agreed that in order to develop the town center the City of Columbus would extend sewer and water lines into the unincorporated townships. Therefore, Prairie Township will have a prominent role in the design of the town center. It is an opportunity for the township to define the growth of the western portion of the township and ensure that the community goals are met by the resulting development.

For Prairie Township the town center presents a unique opportunity to develop a place that enhances the community character and identity. It allows the for:

- Preservation of environmentally sensitive areas
- Incorporation of historic and cultural resources
- Allocation of community facilities and services
- Quality design and materials
- Access to existing and future transit opportunities

The town center is intended to be a progressive, innovative development that starkly contrasts typical suburban models. It will require diligent planning and active stewardship on the part of Prairie Township.

Town Center

High Density Residential

Town Center

Conservation Development

Prairie Township has been working on a Rural Residential Conservation District for the Zoning Resolution. The recommended district would allow for 0.275 units per acre gross base density with at least 50% of the site to remain in open space.

This is the preferred residential development pattern for all areas of the township outside of the town center and the existing urbanized areas of the township. Not only does it allow for the preservation of key environmental features it also preserves the rural character that the community values. Wastewater treatment facilities will be regulated by the Franklin County Sanitary Engineer to allow for conservation development patterns.

Because of the recommended location of the conservation development and the low expected densities of the developments connection to centralized systems will not be likely. Therefore, the developments will need to be served by community-scale non discharge system.

The township should continue to work with the County, the State of Ohio and the City of Columbus to create mechanisms and regulations to allow for small scale community wastewater treatment systems.

If small scale community systems are used to serve a conservation development disposal areas should occupy no more than 15% of the open space and should be located so as to not fragment the open space.

Conservation Development

Town Center Development Pattern

The town center relieves both environmental and community stresses caused by traditional suburban and ex-urban sprawl. This higher density Town Center thus provides a livable, sustainable place in Prairie Township for people to live, work, and play. The concentration of development also reduces the cost of infrastructure and services by concentrating uses and activities which are typically spread out over a larger area. Additionally, the town center will allow development to responsibly occur by protecting critical environmental features from development.

The goal of the Town Center is to create a walkable village that is designed and developed with the pedestrian in mind. Many new developments are oriented towards automobile use, some of them so much so that they create a dependency on the automobile for access and prohibit other modes of transportation such as biking or walking. The Town Center, while still accommodating vehicular use and access, should put a higher priority on pedestrian accommodation and interaction. A mix of uses, retail oriented streetscapes, and visually appealing amenities should combine to create a safe, attractive, efficient, and walkable area. Nearby residents, public and alternative transit users, and automobile users should all be able to visit multiple destinations by foot. The Town Center should satisfy every day needs and also provide enticements for people to linger and relax, in essence creating a unique sense of place for both residents and visitors.

Town Center development should strive to minimize the impacts to any existing environmental features that currently exist in the area. Furthermore, the Town Center should set a new standard for a sustainable suburban development pattern.

Key characteristics of the Town Center include:

- A mix of land uses
- Compact building design
- A range of housing types and costs
- Walkable, pedestrian friendly, and active streetscapes
- Defined public open space
- A variety of transportation choices

Town Center Master Plan
Although traditional town centers naturally evolved over time, today town centers must be carefully planned and executed since many developments follow policies that have traditionally separated and segmented uses. This has in turn led to disjointed communities. To avoid this and to ensure that a well planned and high quality Town Center is created, a more detailed Master Plan should be pursued.
An important part of this Plan should be a strategy for establishing a base level of density. This base level would allow for a mix of uses to be successful and also would encourage the creation of a pedestrian friendly environment. Based on successful town centers both within central Ohio and from around the country, it is recommended that the core area be developed with a minimum of 8 units per acre to a maximum of 15 units per acre. This and other densities should be further explored and refined as part of the detailed Master Plan recommended for the Town Center.

In compliance with the Big Darby Accord, Prairie Township should immediately and jointly pursue the completion of a Town Center Master Plan. Based on current zoning, the Town Center could be comprised of higher density residential development only. The goal of the Town Center however is to promote a mix of uses including parks and opens spaces, a variety of residential housing types, commercial and office. In order to accommodate this Prairie Township should develop zoning regulations that allow for this mix of uses. Steps should also be taken to encourage development at higher densities in order to maximize the presence of adequate infrastructure.

Open Space

Permitted Uses: passive recreation including trails, vegetative enhancements, reforestation, removal of damaged or diseased trees, stream bank stabilization/ restoration, public utilities, non-structural best management practices, minor disturbances related to construction of the permitted use, land application of wastewater effluent (outside SCPZ or wetlands).

Conditional Uses: Active recreational uses limited to multi-purpose fields, playgrounds

Prohibited Uses: Grading activities, and land uses commonly associated with a development process, development.

Rural: Conservation & Preservation

The western portion of Prairie Township south of U.S. 40 is intended to remain rural according to the Big Darby Accord It is not planned as part of the town center development and is not currently urbanized. Should development occur in this area, it should be organized in a conservation development pattern.

Conservation Development Pattern
Conservation development or cluster development is a form of residential development that clusters home sites on the most appropriate portion of the parcel and preserves the remainder. While the individual lots are smaller the residents, community and environment benefits from the open space provided.

The pattern of development in Prairie Township is the most critical component to achieve the environmental goals of protecting the Big Darby Creek and in the case of the rural portion of Prairie Township the pattern of development will preserve the rural character of that portion of the community. Conservation development pattern clusters the home sites of a residential subdivision into a portion of the site and place the remainder into permanent open space. This technique has been used successfully around the country and within Franklin County to create attractive, appropriate development patterns that preserve rural vistas and open spaces and protect environmental features.

The Big Darby Accord designated the southern portion of Prairie Township for rural character, low density development in conservation development patterns. As development occurs in this area single lot development should be discouraged in favor of well planned conservation developments.

Conservation developments differ from typical residential subdivisions in that they respond to the site rather than altering the site to fit their development plan. A typical residential development will divide a parcel into relatively equal lots setting aside land only for roadway or drainage infrastructure. In a conservation development key elements existing on the site such as a woodlot, steep slopes, a wetland or the like would be preserved and the lots and roadways designed around them. There would also be significant open space preserved usually more than 50% of the site is preserved in these developments. Not only does

this provide a more attractive naturalized development for the community it also makes for great neighborhoods for the residents in the community.

Like the town center development conservation developments in Prairie Township should be innovative and progressive. Single loaded streets, large setbacks, quality architecture, and amenities should be included in all residential developments in this portion of the township.

Services

Development of conservation subdivisions in the township is currently hindered by the lack of centralized services. The Big Darby Accord negotiated the extension of centralized services to develop the town center, but it is not likely these services will be available for low-density development outside of the town center. It is financially prohibitive to extend water and sewer lines for the amount of development anticipated for conservation subdivisions. Therefore, in order to encourage this type of development the township must work with Franklin County to establish mechanisms to allow for package plants, or alternative wastewater treatment systems to service clustered home sites. The current reliance on septic systems and wells in an area dominated by hydric soils requires large individual lots for leach beds. This prohibits the clustering of small lots and therefore the preservation of organized open spaces.

It will be critical for Prairie Township to work to allow safe, reliable wastewater treatment technology to service the preferred development pattern in the rural areas of the township.

Conservation of Natural Features

Existing Urbanized Policies

Redevelopment/Infill
Prairie Township will encourage redevelopment and infill development in the eastern Prairie urbanized area.

Action: Revise the Township Zoning Resolution to accommodate residential and high density mixed use infill development along Broad Street between the I-270 interchange and Doctors Hospital West

Action: Work with the appropriate agencies to ensure that adequate public infrastructure is available at potential redevelopment and infill sites. Discussions will address current and potential service capacities, as well as funding mechanisms including development grants.

Suburban Edge Development
Certain areas that are zoned for 3-5 units per acre and abutting existing subdivisions are designated in the Big Darby Accord for extension of central water and sewer services. These areas should be developed at suburban densities and according to Big Darby Accord Standards.

High Density Housing
Prairie Township will encourage a range of high-density housing options as part of possible mixed-use redevelopment projects or development projects in the town center.

Action: The township will incorporate a range of housing types in the Town Center Master Plan.

Residential Infill
Prairie Township will encourage efforts to complete residential infill development projects.

Action: The Township will incorporate provisions into the zoning code that accommodate appropriate-density infill housing development.

Rehabilitation/Renovation
Prairie Township will promote rehabilitation and renovation of existing housing in the eastern urbanized area.

Action: The Township will work with the Franklin County Economic Development and Planning Department and other county and state agencies to access housing rehab grants for both single-family and multi-family housing in this planning area.

Urban Challenges
Development within the eastern urban area should take into account unique challenges of urban areas

Action: The Township will amend zoning to include provisions for site design review that is consistent with Franklin County's Phase II recommendations. These amendments should address storm water quality and quantity issues.

Action: The Township will include zoning provisions that require street trees, when appropriate, and protect urban streams as part of infill and redevelopment review.

Action: The Township will amend the zoning resolution to permit for flexibility in urban design as part of redevelopment and infill projects. This flexibility will shift the emphasis from regulating uses and lot coverage to one allowing higher lot coverage and diverse use mixes in exchange for more detailed site planning. Special urban design standards will be developed for this purpose.

Balance
Prairie Township will balance the desire to focus higher-density development (in urbanized areas) with the needs of the existing residents of this area.

Action: The Township will require appropriate buffering as part of special redevelopment and infill zoning provisions.

Action: The Township will investigate existing and future capacity issues at the wastewater treatment plant serving this area for the purpose of determining if some of the higher-density residential and non-residential areas should revert to rural density zoning categories.

Town Center Policies

Town Center
A town center should be planned in the location and pattern recommended by the Big Darby Accord Watershed Master Plan.

Action: The Township should engage in necessary steps to result in the eventual development of a town center that reflects the priorities of the Big Darby Accord Watershed Master Plan as well as the character of Prairie Township.

Town Center Master Plan
A master plan for the proposed Town Center should be created.

> Action: The Township will work with neighboring jurisdictions to create a Town Center Master Plan that will prescribe form, land use, phasing, utility allocation, revenue sharing and all other details of the town center development.

Zoning
The zoning code should provide options for town center development to encourage the desired pattern.

> Action: Prairie Township will amend the zoning resolution to allow for the development pattern prescribed by the Town Center Master Plan

Town Center Development Pattern
The town center should be developed is a sustainable pattern that minimizes suburban and ex-urban sprawl and encourages higher density development. The development should be walkable, have a mix of uses, have a range of housing types, preserve open space and minimize the impact on the natural environment.

> Action: The Township should participate fully during the town center development process to ensure that the principles of quality, sustainable, urban design are incorporated throughout.

Rural Policies

Rural Development Pattern
Prairie Township will establish a rural development pattern that protects networks of farmland and open space and natural resources.

> Action: The Township will amend its Zoning Resolution to include rural conservation options, which encourage development at overall densities consistent with current zoning and that links protected open space from various properties. A 50% minimum open space requirement should be applied in rural areas. This option should be "by-right," with conventional large-lot development requiring a conditional use review.

Rural Infill
The township will establish conditional use criteria that permits more efficient development of areas that have already been fragmented into parcels of 5-20 acres. Density bonuses should be considered for rural infill parcels hooked up to nearby community based wastewater treatment systems created under Big Darby Accord policies. This policy is intended to reduce the number of individual on site wastewater treatment systems in rural Prairie Township.

> Action: The township will formulate and adopt conditional use criteria in the zoning resolution that implements this policy.

High Quality Open Space
Prairie Township will focus on farmland and open space conservation that ensures development of appropriate home sites while assuring high quality open space.

> Action: The Township will incorporate design standards in the zoning resolution that will guarantee that conservation communities cluster development in areas where soils and other resources are appropriate to sustain it, while protecting the most important resources on the subject development tract.

Balance
Prairie Township will balance the need to conserve its valuable economic and rural resources with private property rights.

> Action: The Township will draft conservation development zoning amendments that minimize review times and costs by maximizing cooperation between the Township and county agencies, while building in incentives such as including floodplain and steep slope land as open space Watershed Master Plan as well as the character of Prairie Township.

Town Center Master Plan
A master plan for the proposed Town Center should be created.

> Action: The Township will work with neighboring jurisdictions to create a Town Center Master Plan that will prescribe form, land use, phasing, utility allocation, revenue sharing and all other details of the town center development.

PRAIRIE TOWNSHIP

ENVIRONMENT

Environmental Planning Themes

The highest priorities identified in Prairie Township's 2003 comprehensive planning process concerned water quality, and surface water quantity.

Since then the most influential effort related to water quality was the Big Darby Accord Watershed Master Plan. The conservation strategy recommended by the Big Darby Accord include the following:

- Open space conservation
- Green Buildings/LEED
- Protection of stream corridors
- Wetland preservation/mitigation
- Best Management Practices
- Utility management
- Establishment of trails and greenways

The Darby Accord Plan divided the environmental features located within the watershed into tiers based on their relationship to water quality. Tier One are important hydro-geologic considerations, Tier Two are important resource considerations, and Tier Three are planned parks, open space corridors, and buffers based on habitat.

These conservation priorities should be required during the review of developments within Prairie Township. Also, the recommended Best Management Practices (BMPs) in the Darby Accord Plan should be incorporated into all new development in the township.

Big Darby Creek

Focusing on water quality and water quantity also makes sense from a land use planning perspective, since these are usually the dominant environmental concerns in the local planning and development process.

Environmental Character of the Area

Future land use choices must be cognizant of Prairie Township's unique environmental character. The rural portion of Prairie Township is home to the Big Darby Creek Watershed, a designated National Scenic Waterway. The area of the watershed located in the Township includes the middle section of the Big Darby Creek, Hellbranch Run, Clover Groff, and Hamilton Ditch. Additionally, hydric soils are common in this western segment of the Township. Hydric soils can complicate development and therefore require careful practices.

Big Darby Accord policies should be formulated and implemented in light of the special environmental components found in Prairie Township and care should be used when developing in this vulnerable rural portion of the Township. Focus in this area should also be on open space patterns that preserve agricultural land uses.

Soils

Description of the General Physical Environment

Soils in this portion of Franklin County are poorly drained glacial till, except for associations that tend to be present in some floodplain areas. These soils tend to be poorly suited for development, but can be highly productive for agriculture. Much of the Township is covered with hydric soils, Kokomo being the primary soil type in this category. The western and middle four-fifths or so of Prairie Township are a level to rolling landscape dominated by cropland and pasture punctuated by occasional woodlots. These areas, in the western and middle portion of unincorporated Prairie Township, occupy the middle Big Darby Watershed, a designated National Scenic Waterway. Along with the Big Darby Creek, Hellbranch Run, the Clover-Groff Ditch and Hamilton Ditch are among the waterways draining this section of the Township. This area is predominantly rural except for the Westpoint community in northwestern corner of the Township, which is a sewered suburban enclave.

Description of Soils Associations

The following descriptions are characterizations of areas within the Township that display generally recognizable

Best Management Practices

Best Management Practices recommended by the Big Darby Accord Watershed Master Plan are structural and non-structural techniques or management practices or a combination of both that when used minimize the impacts of agricultural uses or urbanized development on water quality by removing or reducing pollutants prior to the run-off reaching the stream.

BMPs may involve:

- *Post-construction Stormwater management techniques*
- *Green roofs*
- *Pervious surfaces*
- *Rain water harvesting*
- *Chemical and biological treatment*
- *Filtration devices*
- *Hydrodynamic devices*
- *Bioretention*
- *Filtration practices*
- *Infiltration practices*
- *Stormwater ponds*
- *Stormwater wetlands*

Storm Water Plantings reduce and clean storm water

Rain Water Gardens clean storm water run-off

Rain Water Harvesting reduces storm water volume

Green Roofs reduce and filter storm water

Diverse Plant Life

Wetlands and Ponds

Big Darby Creek *source: The Nature Conservancy*

patterns of topography, soils and drainage. These patterns, or soils associations, are included in the Soil Survey of Franklin County (U.S.D.A./O.D.N.R.; 1980) for general planning purposes.

The remaining portion of the Township is heavily settled in a suburban/urban pattern. This area drains east toward the Scioto River via Big Run or minor drainages. Soils in this area are of the Crosby-Kokomo association. These soils have experienced widespread grading and other disturbance resulting from development.

Miamian-Celina Association; This association is present in Prairie Township's portion of the Big Darby Creek floodplain and in the Hellbranch Run floodplain from just above Galloway, south. Unlike soils in the remainder of the Township, these areas tend to be well drained to moderately-well drained. Miamian soils occupy gentle to steep slopes, are well drained, have moderately slow permeability and moderate water capacity. Celina soils occupy level ground and gentle slopes and are moderately well drained. This soil type has slow permeability, moderate water capacity, and a seasonal high water table of 18 to 36 inches. Soils in this association have high to medium capacity as building sites and for on-lot sanitary sewer. Incursions of other soils include Kokomo and Crosby on level areas and near small waterways. Erosion is a primary concern, though wastewater treatment is an issue.
Crosby-Kokomo Association; This association can be found in two pockets in western Prairie Township, near the northwestern corner of the Township and in the southern portion of the Township just west of Hellbranch Run. This soils combination is also dominant in the eastern, more settled portion of the Township. These soils tend to be located in nearly level areas and on gentle slopes, as well as on broad flats with slight rises, knolls and depressions. Within these associations, about 60% of the soils tend to be Crosby, 20% tend to be Kokomo and 20% other soil types. Crosby soils tend to be located on slightly higher ground, are somewhat poorly drained, and have slow permeability. These soils have moderate water availability and a seasonal high water table of 12 to 36 inches. Kokomo soils are found in nearly level areas, are poorly drained and have moderate to slow permeability. Kokomo soils have high water availability and seasonal high water tables near the surface. Soils in this association display seasonal wetness, which limits use as development sites. Limitations for on-site wastewater treatment and low strength limitations also challenge development on these soils.

Kokomo-Crosby-Lewisburg Association; This combination of soils covers the majority of rural Prairie Township. Except for the pockets of other soils associations described above, this group dominates an area from the Big Darby floodplain east to the Columbus corporate limits. This combination of soil types tends to occur in terrain similar to the Crosby-Kokomo association, with the difference that these areas also include discontinuous ridges and knolls, where Lewisburg soils are found. These Lewisburg soils are better drained and tend to display better permeability than other predominant soils in this association. These traits, along with a seasonal high water table down around 24 to 48 inches make these soils better sites for building and in-soil wastewater treatment. Overall, this association can be expected to consist of about 35% Kokomo soils, 30% Crosby soils, 20% Lewisburg soils and 15% other soil types.

Soils and Surface Quality

Soils and associated conditions in most of the Township present difficulties in controlling and treating surface water runoff. As noted above, most of the Township lying outside of the floodplain is poorly drained because of topography and wetness of the soils. Natural ponding, high water tables and adjacent floodplains provide capacity for water as it is absorbed into soils or runs off of the ground surface. Ponding and high water tables are associated with wetlands and provide an important groundwater recharge function. Development of a given area results in exposed, unstable soils that can be easily washed away. This then leads to heavier than usual sediment loads in runoff and in waterways. Planning can address this issue through prescribing responsible land use patterns as well as by recommending proper site design and construction standards. The county has recently completed a non-point source water pollution plan as part of the U.S. E.P.A.'s Phase II requirements. The results of this study, as well as recommendations from the Darby Task Force, provide site design and construction standards. Identification of environmentally vulnerable areas and limiting impervious surfaces through density and land use character policies are policy level areas where this issue can be addressed. Floodplain and other hydric soils contribute to conditions that allow the proper filtration of pollutants from surface water runoff. Altering these soils through grading, impervious surfaces or other means jeopardizes this important function. Lower density development and open space techniques will help address floodplain and surface water runoff issues. Areas which may eventually be served by central wastewater treatment will be under threat of the above types of soil disturbance. Higher density open space design and responsible site design standards should be applied in these cases.

Hydric Soils

Hydric soils are:

- *Soils that formed under conditions of saturation, flooding or ponding long enough during the growing season to develop anaerobic conditions in their upper part;*
- *Soils that are sufficiently wet as a result of artificial measures; and/or*
- *Soils that are no longer wet because of artificial measures, but were hydric under original conditions.*

Hydric soils are a particular challenge to development. These soils present drainage problems, strength limitations and difficulties for on-lot wastewater treatment placement.

While Montgomery Silt Loam and Sloan Silt Loam are common in the Hellbranch Run-Hamilton Ditch-Clover Groff floodplain, Kokomo soils are the dominant hydric soil in the Township. These soils exist in a broad swath between the Hellbranch Run and Big Darby Creek floodplains, as well as in areas east of Hellbranch Run.

Headwaters of Clover Groff Run

Soils and Wastewater Treatment

Soils are of critical importance in considering wastewater treatment for development in rural areas. Hydric soils are not adequate for locating in-soil leaching of wastewater effluent. The slow permeability and very high seasonal water tables associated with these soils prevent this effluent from being properly filtered and introduced into the groundwater. Among non-hydric soils, Crosby soils are a commonly occurring classification that displays slow permeability and relatively high seasonal water tables, resulting in problems for siting on-lot wastewater treatment. Soils that display good characteristics for wastewater disposal tend to be located in the Big Darby floodplain area, where other obstacles to wastewater treatment and other development issues exist.

Any significant level of development will require the use of alternatives to traditional rural wastewater treatment approaches. These alternatives could explore three areas of interest:

- On-site wastewater systems that offer higher levels of treatment;
- Improved oversight and management of rural wastewater treatment, perhaps through use of small community cluster systems; and
- Provision of centralized regional wastewater treatment in all or part of the Township.

Treatment systems, such as Wisconsin mounds and various filtering techniques, that offer a higher level of effluent quality have been introduced in several parts of the country, as well as in pending updated health legislation in Ohio. This legislation has been stalled indefinitely, which complicates use of these approaches. However, some Ohio counties have proceeded with use of some of these technologies. Investigation of the use of these techniques in Franklin County would facilitate the Township's pursuit of this strategy. Furthermore, use of such wastewater treatment may also be pursued as part of clustered development with small scale community wastewater treatment systems. This would help reduce reliance on individual operation and maintenance of rural wastewater treatment systems. Finally, in some areas regional centralized wastewater treatment would minimize reliance on soil conditions.

Big Darby Creek *source: The Nature Conservancy*

Diverse Plant Life *source: The Nature Conservancy*

Soils and Surface Runoff Quantity

Soils and related topography influence surface water runoff quantity for many of the same reasons they affect runoff quality. Soil compaction, impervious surfaces and other soil disturbance exacerbate this issue. Developed areas both contribute to the cause of excessive runoff quantities and create areas most affected by its ill effects. This issue is best addressed through proper education, management of storm water and community design. Communities should be configured to accommodate existing drainage patterns' form and capacity, while minimizing additional quantities. Site design standards can also help achieve this end. Finally, the County Engineer's office is working on possible county-wide storm water management strategies under new enabling legislation adopted by the State of Ohio allowing counties to form storm water utility districts.

Other Soils Issues

Franklin County is completing a land evaluation / site assessment (LESA) model that will focus on water quality and development issues. LESA models balance soil conditions with development pressures, built features and

other natural resources to identify land parcels that are more or less worthy of preservation.

While this evaluation system is typically used with farmland preservation in mind, Franklin County is calibrating the model to focus on water quality and development characteristics. Agricultural features may still be evaluated as a secondary objective. Soils characteristics that will be at the center of this analysis will relate to suitability of soils for on-lot wastewater treatment and suitability of soils for building foundations. Prairie Township should work with the county to use this model to evaluate critical and sensitive water quality preservation areas, as well as prime agricultural areas.

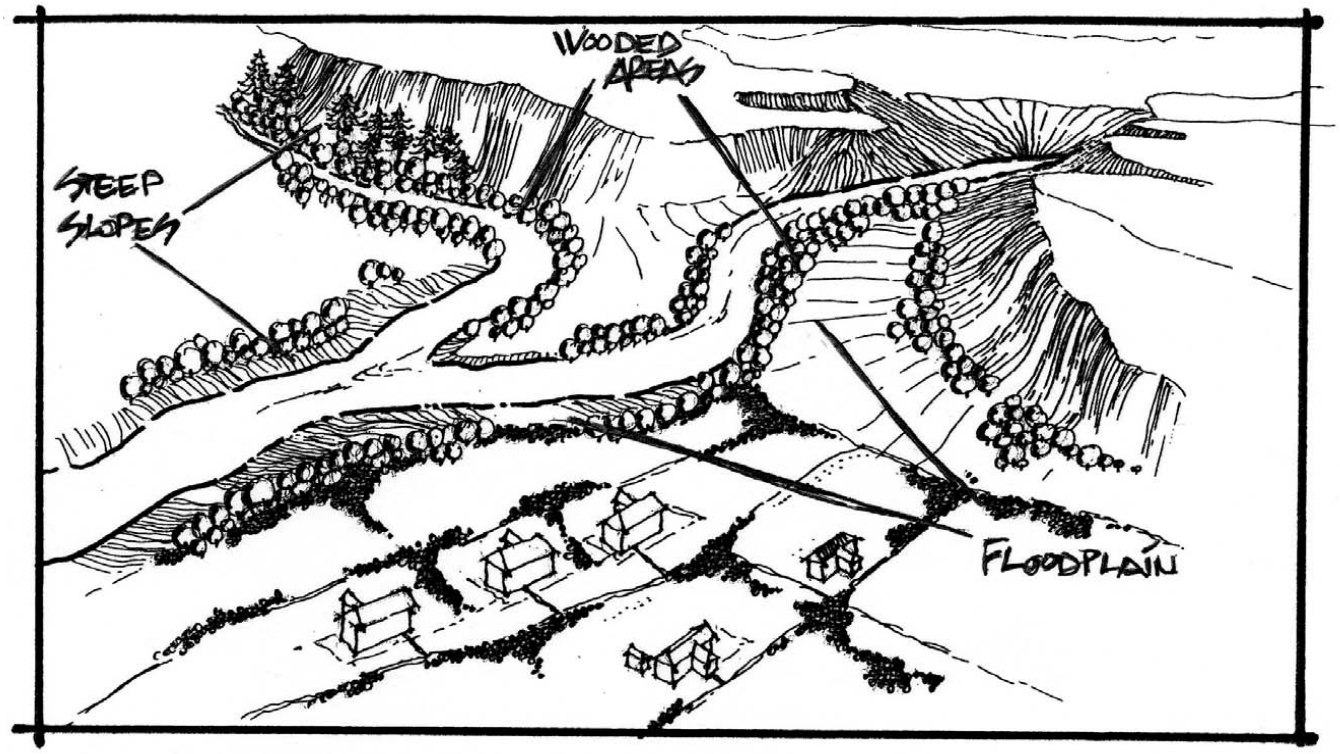
Maintaining vegetated cover on developed or developing areas is also important to avoid sediment overload of runoff and other surface water. Continuing and improving sediment and erosion control policies would continue ongoing efforts to address this issue.
The Township should also pursue strategies for maintaining tree canopies along its waterways. Land use and site design policies should recognize the multiple advantages of maintaining tree cover in stream corridors.

Vegetation

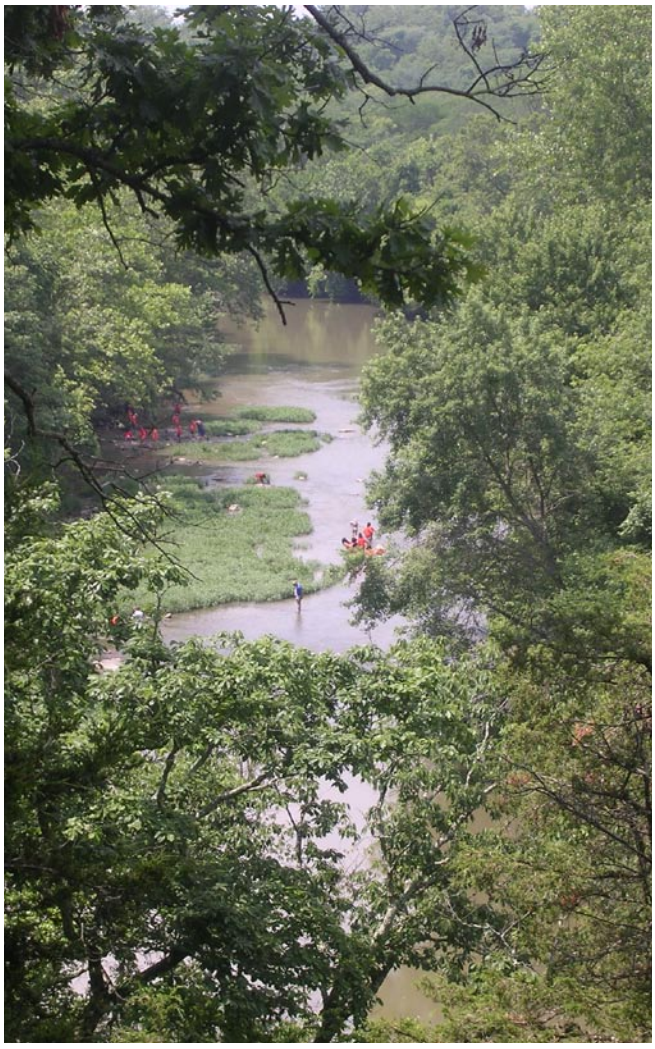
Vegetation/Groundcover and Wastewater Treatment
On-site wastewater treatment requires groundcover that compliments a given soil's ability to filter impurities from effluent, while not interfering with this process or damaging the treatment system via roots, etc… Impervious surfaces are not appropriate in on-site wastewater treatment areas.

Vegetation/Groundcover and Surface Water Quantity
Discussion of vegetation and groundcovers' effect on surface water quality pointed to the importance of the water being filtered by the vegetation through which it flows. Just as the vegetation filters this water, it also slows runoff in order to help control and prevent flooding. Use of natural waterways and vegetative strategies outlined above will assist the Township to maintain this important natural function.

Other Vegetative/Groundcover Issues
In addition to water quality and wastewater treatment issues, vegetation is an important factor in wildlife habitat. The vegetation/surface water quality discussion above included the positive effects of tree canopies over waterways stream habitats. In addition, forest and forest



Overview of a Stream Corridor



Recreation Activities on the Big Darby Creek

edges provide a variety of wildlife habitats, as do open areas in the Township. Open space preservation done in conjunction with water quality strategies help provide undeveloped wildlife habitat areas. This habitat would be strengthened by seeing that preserved open space from various developments is networked into bigger areas. Also, wooded area preserved along waterways would help to provide quality terrestrial, as well as marine, habitats. A side benefit of this last strategy would be creation of a network of natural, wooded corridors.

Slopes

Steep Slopes

Steep slopes are a resource as well as a constraint to development. The characteristics and importance of slope may vary according to where they occur. Slopes along stream corridors, the typical location of steep slopes in Prairie Township, often serve as vegetative buffers to filter storm water and as wildlife habitats.

While Prairie Township is relatively level compared to some places, it does include areas of steep slopes. Steepness of slope is a relative quality. Whether a given slope is considered to be steep or not depends upon where you go. While a 15% grade, a one-and-one-half foot rise over a ten foot run, is considered to be the low-end threshold for defining steep slopes in many places, in some hilly areas this threshold increases to a 25% grade or steeper. A community located on a level to rolling landscape, like Prairie Township, can afford to pay attention to slopes beginning at the 15% threshold.

Description of Steep Slopes in Prairie Township.

Most of the steep slopes in the Township are associated with the Big Darby Creek stream valley, with some being associated with the Hellbranch Run/Clover Groff Ditch/ Hamilton Ditch stream valley. They serve as a transition between the stream and agricultural and residential land uses at the top of the slopes. Although slopes associated with Hellbranch Run, Clover Groff Ditch and Hamilton Ditch are much less pronounced, there are some areas of steep slope associated with these waterways.

Steep Slopes and Surface Water Quality

Steep slopes are important in that they are generally situated along stream corridors. Development along steep slopes can increase the rate of storm water runoff, which may result in increased flooding in low-lying areas. Also, while it has been noted that all areas within or adjacent to stream corridors are sensitive, steep slopes are particularly critical in that alterations in these areas can result in severe erosion. For instance, improper development of steep slopes can increase erosion of stream banks, resulting in severe siltation and pollution. This is especially true in areas where high volumes of cut and fill are necessary to improve a building site. In addition, logging and other forms of removing vegetation can lead to severe erosion when not done properly.

Steep Slopes and Wastewater Treatment
Steep slopes are not favorable locations for on-site wastewater treatment systems. The most obvious reason for this is that these systems should be located on a level area. Soils in cut and fill areas would not be suitable for on-lot systems without extreme measures being taken. Also, erosion is much more likely to cause failures in on-lot systems in these locations. This is especially true since construction of a wastewater treatment system disturbs the land and increases the amount of erosion on a site. The risk of any shortcoming for wastewater treatment system siting is exacerbated by the fact that Prairie's steep slopes tend to be located along waterways. System failures in these areas have more immediate and severe effects on surface water quality because they are adjacent to streams. Finally, development of regional centralized wastewater treatment systems can lead to increased pressures to develop areas in and around steep slopes. The disturbance of the slopes, along with increased runoff on slopes from nearby developed areas, results in increased erosion and surface water degradation.

Other Steep Slopes Issues
Prairie Township's steep slopes also deserve attention because they are poor locations for building sites and because of their association with scenic views. Areas on and adjacent to steep slopes are tempting building sites because of the vistas they can offer. In addition to development-related shortcomings outlined in previous sections, soils on steep slopes are less stable than soils in level areas. Building in such soils is much more likely to result in structural failure or landslides. Also, the scenic quality of rural Prairie Township is eroded when development occurs on, and at the top of, steep slopes. Finally, steep slopes should be recognized as an important element of stream corridors and should be used as an important factor in identifying the boundaries of these areas.

Steep Slopes and Surface Water Runoff Quantity
All development activity leads to some kind of increase in surface water runoff. Steep slopes that are preserved with proper vegetation can help to control the pace of this runoff. Denuded and otherwise improperly managed slopes have significant impacts on the velocity of runoff, resulting in an increased likelihood of flooding downstream. The Township should manage these areas in such a way as to minimize this possibility.

Green Development Practices

US Green Building Council Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)

LEED certified buildings and sites achieve the following:

- Reduce environmental impact
- Enhance occupant well-being and comfort
- Reduce operating cost
- Increase building valuation and return on investment
- Reduce employee absenteeism and turnover

LEED Standards address:

- Site Design
- Water efficiency
- Energy and atmosphere
- Materials and resources
- Indoor environmental quality
- Innovation and design process

Stream Corridors

Stream corridors are a natural resource because they tend to include a unique combination of more specific natural resources and conservation opportunities. These areas tend to be relatively undeveloped because of the presence of floodplains and steep slopes. Stream corridors, especially in the case of the Big Darby Creek corridor, are more likely to be wooded than other areas of the Township, enhancing the area's function as a filter for surface water and groundwater moving toward the stream and providing wildlife corridors. This unique combination of resources also provide conditions that make stream corridors a likely location for valuable scenic resources, as well as historic and archaeological resources. Finally, stream corridors cut across physical and cultural boundaries to connect areas within Prairie Township to one another, as well as to other communities within the Darby watershed.

General Description of Stream Corridors in Prairie Township
Most of Prairie Township is within the Big Darby Creek watershed, an exceptionally important resource given the status of Big Darby Creek as a National Scenic River. Major waterways creating stream corridors in this portion of the Township include the Big Darby Creek on the western boundary of the Township and Hellbranch Run and its tributaries, Clover Groff Ditch and Hamilton Ditch, in the middle and eastern portion of the Township. Many of the waterways within this part of the Township have been channelized or otherwise altered through the years as a result of farming and development activity. These alterations have been focused on moving volumes of water as fast as possible without regard to other functions of stream corridors.

Big Darby Creek *source: The Nature Conservancy*

Hellbranch Run *source: The Nature Conservancy*

The eastern extreme of the Township is the location of much more intense development and waterway alternations. There are no significant stream corridors, in their natural state, in this portion of the Township.

Stream Corridors and Surface Water Quality
Natural features typically found within stream corridors provide an environment that preserves and enhances water quality. While the natural environment is based upon interconnections of all kinds between every element within an ecosystem, the primary features in stream corridors relating to water quality may be classified into two categories. The first of these categories includes features related to the physical morphology of the corridors and the second includes features related to biological features, primarily flora, within the corridors.

Big Darby Accord Conservation Tiers

Based on the sensitivity analysis completed as part of the Big Darby Accord process the land was prioritized for conservation. This prioritization informs developers what lands need to be preserved in their development designs and provides guidance to jurisdictions and applicable agencies as conservation opportunities present themselves.

The priorities are structured as follows:

Protected: Environmental conservation areas protected by current regulations

Existing Parks & Easements: Existing MetroParks, community parks and easements, that are already conserved as open space. Not included on map.

Tier 1: Important hydro-geologic considerations - 100-year floodplain, wetlands, in-stream sensitive habitat areas, critical groundwater recharge and pollution potential zones.

Tier 2: Important resource considerations - highly erodible soils, woods > 3 acres

Tier 3: Planned parks, open space corridors and buffers, based on habitat sensitivity, connectivity, and other planning considerations.

As specified in the 3.0 Land Use Plan of the Big Darby Accord Watershed Master Plan

Conservation Zones Map

Land Use Plan

Protected

Tier 1

Tier 2

Tier 3

The natural floodplain and meandering of a stream within a stream corridor are important morphologic features related to water quality. The natural movement of a stream channel within a stream corridor creates a floodplain, which in turn provides extra water storage capacity when flooding occurs. This pattern happens along all waterways on various scales depending upon the volume of water moving down the stream corridor. In addition to providing a safety function, these floodplains and other areas within natural stream corridors serve as water quality buffers that filter pollutants from surface runoff and groundwater moving toward the waterway. These areas are also important to groundwater recharge. Finally, regular flooding often helps to enrich soils, making floodplains excellent for farming. The meandering of waterways across these floodplains controls the velocity of water moving through a drainage system.

Areas of slower water velocity permit sediments and other pollutants to settle onto the bottom of the stream channel. Preserving and, where necessary, enhancing this function of stream corridors will allow Prairie Township to contribute to its own physical environment, as well as to better water quality downstream.

As noted above, flora within stream corridors also contributes to water quality. Wooded areas along stream corridors contribute to filtration of impurities from surface water and groundwater moving toward the stream and entering the surface water system. Also noted above, tree canopies along stream channels provide shade and shelters the channels, thus helping to moderate water temperature.

The concentration of the morphologic and biologic elements discussed above result in areas that have a big impact on water quality. Development within these areas that results in channelizing a stream; infringing on a floodplain; removing a stream buffer where filtering can occur; and/or removing tree cover or other vegetation along a stream must be minimized if not prevented in the Township. Critical stream corridor resources should be identified and protected through conservation and by incorporating best management practices site design and construction techniques.

Wastewater Treatment and Stream Corridors
Strategies and regulations related to the two basic approaches to wastewater treatment and disposal, centralized regional systems and individual on-lot systems, should pay special attention to stream corridor resources.

Riparian Corridor Protection

The stream corridor protection zone (SCPZ) according to the Big Darby Accord Watershed Management Plan is as follows:

1. Stream belt width determined by

$W = 129 \times DA^{0.43}$
(drainage area less than 16 square miles)

$W = 87 \times DA^{0.43}$
(drainage area more than 16 square miles)

***DA - Drainage Area*

2. FEMA designated 100 Year Floodplain

3. Minimum 100 feet from the centerline of the stream channel on both sides of the watercourse.

Stream Corridor Protection Zone

Permitted Uses:
Passive recreation
Vegetative enhancements
Arterial street crossings

Conditional Uses:
Stream bank stabilization
Public utilities and non-arterial streets

Prohibited Uses
Grading activities
Land uses commonly associated with a development process and land application of wastewater effluent

Centralized regional wastewater treatment systems rely on waterways within these corridors in order to discharge their treated effluent. The Township should be aware of the unique character of stream corridors in the event wastewater treatment facilities are considered in the Township. While the Franklin County Sanitary Engineer and the State of Ohio regulates new facilities such as this, the Township should work with the state and other appropriate agencies to ensure that such facilities are sited in such a way as to minimize the impact on these important ecosystems.

Individual wastewater treatment is not permitted in floodplains and should be kept at a distance from any surface waterway. Pollutants being filtered through the soil as part of most on-site rural wastewater treatment systems, will enter the groundwater and, if near a stream, tend to flow toward that waterway. The nearer such systems are located to a waterway, the less filtration soils are able to provide. This adds to the risk that unacceptable levels of pollutants will enter the stream through the groundwater. Also, in the case of floodplains, exposure of any wastewater treatment system to flooding can have disastrous effects on water quality. Therefore, wastewater treatment facilities should not be located within a reasonable buffer of a stream, especially within areas known to be susceptible to flooding.

Stream Corridors and Storm Runoff Quantity

Stream corridors are natural drainage ways for storm water. Their channels convey water as it runs off, while their floodplains provide extra capacity in the event that runoff occurs in larger volumes. As more development occurs within a watershed, increased impervious surface area and interruptions and changes to drainage patterns contribute to increased storm water volumes and resulting ponding and flooding. The increased development also includes improvements that are subject to damages caused by this ponding and flooding.

Traditionally, the objective of planners and designers has been to move stormwater runoff out of an area quickly. While this approach seems to address the issue of an immediate area, an increase in the speed that runoff moves downstream, especially when coupled with an increase in the volume of water moving downstream, exacerbates flooding problems, while damaging the streams themselves. Prairie Township should work to preserve natural meandering drainage patterns, since they tend to help control runoff speed. In addition, the Township employ the principles included in the Darby Creek Watershed Stormwater Management Strategies and Standards for New Development that was completed in 2001 for CORF's Darby Creek Watershed Taskforce. Finally, protection of stream floodplains is an important way to prevent development from occurring in places where flooding will occur and to minimize the impact of potential flooding downstream.

Other Stream Corridor Issues

Other issues and opportunities related to stream corridors include their value as wildlife corridors; recreation areas; and as scenic and cultural resources. These areas serve as habitats for aquatic wildlife, in the stream channel itself, and for terrestrial wildlife in vegetated areas along the streams. For terrestrial wildlife, stream corridors provide connections between habitats in addition to being habitats in their own right. The fact that these areas are, or should be, left undeveloped means that they provide opportunities for scenic views and outdoor recreation and education. Streams, and the topography and vegetation along streams, have a natural beauty that add to the quality of life in a community and attract residents of nearby communities for activities such as hiking, biking and fishing.

Big Darby Creek Road Signage

Conservation Policies

Open Space
Conserve open spaces according to the tiers recommended by the Big Darby Accord Watershed Master Plan

Action: The township should encourage preservation of open space at the time of development

Action: The township should encourage acquisition of land for preservation of key environmental features whenever possible through public or private mechanisms.

Action: Preserved open space should be placed in permanent easements

Action: The township should consider policies for the maintenance plans for open space.

Residential Conservation Development

Green Building
Building and site design in the township should be designed to minimize impacts on the environment.

Action: The township should adopt incentives to encourage green building and site design for new developments within the township both in the rural areas as well as the town center.

Urban/Town Center Open Space

Stream Corridors
Stream corridors, as defined by the Big Darby Accord, should be protected from encroachment.

Action: The township should maintain stream corridor setbacks for the Big Darby Creek and all tributaries at the time of development.

Action: The township should encourage the preservation and restoration of all stream corridors though public and private conservation efforts

Wetland Preservation
Wetlands should be preserved whenever possible.

Action: The township should require the identification of wetlands on any site for development.

Action: The township should require preservation and mitigation of wetlands at the time of development.

Best Management Practices
Best Management Practices should be used for all new development to reduce impacts on the environment.

Action: The township should require best management practices are employed during construction and post construction.

Trail and Greenways
Land should be preserved to establish a trails and greenways network.

Action: The township should establish a trails and greenways plan based on the open space network (Tier III) recommended by the Big Darby Accord Watershed Master Plan.

Action: The township should require developments plans to respond to the recommended trails and greenways network and set aside land to establish that network.

Soil Policies

Stormwater Runoff
Protect soils from development related runoff by coordinating zoning review with county, state, and federal stormwater and sediment and erosion control measures.

Action: Revise Zoning Resolution to require that new development that disturbs an area of one acre or more complete a stormwater management plan based on the best management practices (BMPs) as recommended by Franklin County's NPDES Phase II process. Work with Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District to draft and enforce this amendment.

Hydric Soils
Prohibit use of hydric soils for on-lot wastewater disposal.

Action: Continue to cooperate with Board of Health and other agencies to prohibit development of wastewater treatment systems on hydric soils.

Action: Incorporate hydric soils as a primary conservation area in guidelines for rural conservation development and a secondary conservation area in guidelines for transition area conservation development.

Alternative Wastewater Treatment
Use of emerging wastewater technologies that employ treatment of effluent before it is released into the soil.

Action: Cooperate with the Board of Health and other county agencies to formulate alternatives to current available technologies. Explore the use of non-discharge technologies as part of small community systems as part of development that is consistent with Township land use policies.

Community Wastewater Treatment
Explore the use of small community wastewater treatment systems or regional wastewater treatment systems in the transition area.

Action: The Township will explore fiscal, technical and management issues related to the feasibility of these options and will work with regulating agencies to gain approvals to accommodate one of these options, if deemed appropriate, in order to implement the land use policies in this plan.

LESA Model
Participate in completing the Franklin County LESA model as a tool for assessing environmentally critical areas

Action: Participate in efforts to formulate the LESA model and incorporate the model into planning and site development analysis.

Hydric Soils
Discourage construction of buildings in hydric soils.

Action: Incorporate consultations regarding soil conditions on proposed building lots into the zoning process. Such consultations could be coordinated with the Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District. Also, include hydric soils as a conservation area for the purposes of review conservation development proposals as suggested under Policy S-2.

Vegetation Policies

Impervious Surfaces
Minimize impervious surfaces at the site level as well as through efficient, compact development that minimizes roads and parking lots.

Action: Along with including a range of conservation development options, as by-right uses, amend the zoning resolution to include development standards aimed at minimizing impervious surfaces.

Slope Policies

Steep Slopes
Development of other land disturbing activity should not occur on slopes with grades in excess of 15%

> Action: Incorporate a prohibition on development of steep slopes into the Zoning Resolution. As such, these areas should be considered as primary conservation areas for the purpose of designing conservation developments.

Steep Slopes
Consider steep slope areas when determining open space ratio compliance as part of a conservation-style development.

> Action: Include incentives for conservation-style development in the Zoning Resolution that give minor allowances in exchange for preserving significant open space.

Stream Corridor Policies

Stream Corridor Protections
Designate and protect critical stream corridor areas in conjunction with efforts to protect water quality, as well as to protect floodplains and other natural features that relate to water quality, wildlife habitat and scenic resources. These features include floodplains, soils, natural vegetation and steep slopes, which will be identified as stream corridor resources and protected in conjunction with a variable setback based upon watershed size.

> Action: Include a stream corridor in the zoning resolution that has a 120-foot natural vegetation protection setback, as well as limitations on development in floodways/100-year floodplains, a variable outer setback based on watershed size and abutting steep slopes and wooded areas.

Conservation Development
Consider stream corridors when determining open space ratio compliance as part of a conservation-style development.

> Action: Include incentives for conservation-style development in the Zoning Resolution that give minor allowances in exchange for preserving significant open space.

Site Review
Consider all functions of waterways, not just drainage of a given area, in updating site review standards and in reviewing site plans. These other functions include:

- floodwater storage
- filtration of pollutants from surface and ground water
- wildlife habitats
- scenic resources

> Action: Amend the Zoning Resolution to include development standards that include the development principles and practices laid out in the Darby Watershed Taskforce Strategies and Standards manual, as well as coordinating site review with implementation of the Franklin County Phase II program.

Existing Watercourses
Prohibit alteration of existing watercourses as part of drainage plans and encourage new drainage features to incorporate natural designs and functions.

> Action: Recognize the water quality and control-related advantages of allowing waterways to function within a natural stream corridor in formulating and enforcing zoning and other development-related standards by coordinating these efforts with the County Engineer's office and the Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District.

PRAIRIE TOWNSHIP

PUBLIC FACILITIES

Parks and Recreation

Prairie Township is concerned about two basic topics related to parks and recreation: provision of a community / senior center and providing other parks that are adequate to service demand in the Township.

Community / Senior Center
This facility is to serve the whole community with a focus on children and seniors. Typically it is thought that such facilities would serve a population of about 25,000 to 45,000.

This means that such a facility in Prairie Township could serve the current population and accommodate the town center and rural conservation growth of the township. This assumes a facility of a typical scale. However, since such facilities are often specialized, general standards are of limited use, other than to confirm that a community scale facility is warranted.

Given that demand is centered in the eastern urbanized area, and that this is where opportunities exist to redevelop commercial facilities into a community center, pursuit of this goal will be defined by space opportunities. These opportunities are concentrated along West Broad Street in the eastern Prairie Township urbanized area. A needs assessment survey is one tool that the Township could use in order to determine how best to use this space once it is located.

Big Darby Creek Recreation Activities

Expansion of Parks and Recreation Facilities
This plan includes a comparison of current facilities to National Recreation and Park Association minimum standards and guidelines. These requirements will be compared to existing facilities in order to define unmet parks and recreation demand.

Standards for Current Population:
Given a 2000 census population of 17,058, NRPA standards suggest that the residents of Prairie Township should be served by a system of neighborhood, community and regional parks as shown in Table 1.

Projected Needs
According to the current requirements of NRPA, the park system can be broadly classified as local parks and regional parks.

As growth continues in the Town Center and rural areas of the township, parks should be considered at an average of 10 acres per 1,000 residents.

Regional Parks
As far as the requirement of the regional/metropolitan park system goes, these should include camping, boating, fishing, picnicking and other related recreational facilities, according to NRPA. The Battelle Darby Creek Metro Park adjoining the southern side of the Township suffices the metro parks area requirement along with the Charles Mentel Memorial Golf Course located immediately to the east of the Township.

Roads and Other Transportation

Prairie Township's network of roads and other transportation links must be planned and developed hand in hand with new land uses in order to prevent traffic congestion and safety problems. Analysis of this planning theme will concentrate on three subtopics:

- planning for new roads and road upgrades
- protecting the usefulness of existing road capacity
- accommodating non-automotive uses on public rights-of-way.

Planning for New Roads and Road Upgrades
Improvements and expansions of the road network are planning topics that are thoroughly addressed on the county and regional levels. At the regional level, the central Ohio Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC). This agency is charged with transportation planning for the region as it relates to federally funded projects. The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the Transportation Enhancement Program (TEP) are on-going efforts to identify and assign priority to transportation projects. The TIP is the tool that addresses road improvements and expansions. The current TIP includes minor improvements on Norton Road from Bausch Road south into Pleasant Township and on Alkire Road from Kunz Road west into Pleasant Township. The TIP schedules these improvements for post-2005. The 2004 to 2007 TIP update is currently being prepared.

The Franklin County Thoroughfare Plan is the county-level plan for roads. This plan designates current and future primary roads as freeways and expressways, major arterials, minor arterials and collectors. The plan reflects the future alignment and status of the subject roads. This is often different than the current status and alignment of these roads, since it reflects a planned future. The plan also designates the location of future freeway /expressway interchanges.

In Prairie Township, Broad Street / Route 40 is the primary major arterial road within Prairie Township. In addition, Hilliard-Rome Road and an extension of Galloway Road running north from Broad Street to U.S. 33 are planned as part of a north-south major arterial spine for western Franklin County. Norton Road would be the southern section of this major artery spine, running south from Broad Street to Darbydale. Sullivant Road, Alkire Road, Galloway Road, Georgesville Road (extended), Darby Creek Road, Alton & Darby Creek Road and Amity Road are the minor arterial roads designated in the Township. Georgesville Road is planned for an extension west to, and across Galloway Road at Alkire and continuing further west on a new alignment to line up with Alkire Road at Alton Road.

According to this plan, Broad Street will continue to be the primary east-west route within the Township, while the new Georgesville Road / Alkire Road alignment will serve as a secondary east-west route to the south. Also, Sullivant Road will provide access from Norton Road east into Columbus.

Big Darby Creek Recreation Activities *source: The Nature Conservancy*

Local Park Infrastructure

The Norton Road / Rome-Hilliard Road corridor will serve as a north-south major arterial. Galloway Road will serve middle Prairie Township as a minor arterial, while Murnan Road could provide access to the town center from areas south of US 40 and Federal Road could link the town center with Alton Darby Creek Road. Darby Creek Road will serve the west and provide a route to the south. The Big Darby Accord Plan map shows a conceptual north-south spine road within the town center that would improve circulation within that area and would connect western Prairie Township to I-70. Amity Road and Alton & Darby Road will provide connections into Brown Township and other areas to the north. Freeway access for Prairie Township and vicinity will continue to be provided via the West Broad Street / I-270 interchange, as well as through the Georgesville Road / I-270 interchange and the Hilliard Rome Road / I-70 interchange.

Designated major arterial roads will provide both north-south and east-west access on a regional scale, as well as good connections to area interchanges. Designated minor arterials complement and extend this network.

The TIP and County Thoroughfare Plan must be actively implemented in order to make a difference. The Township should work with the County Engineer on efforts to secure funding for major improvement projects through the TIP, as well as through locally funded or development funded projects and project funded through sources such as the Ohio Public Works Commission. Development driven improvements may often be partially or fully funded through exactions obtained in the subdivision and development process. The Township should work with county agencies and officials to see that these opportunities are coordinated with zoning reviews, as well as with subdivision and other development applications. Small-scale development, especially in rural areas often takes place on such a scale, and in such a manner as to avoid review and steps that would result in contributions to roadway upgrades. Even right-of-way dedications are only voluntary in most of these cases, and that is in the cases that received any review. The Township should work with the county to better address planning and development guidelines for rural areas. This effort would coincide with efforts to better plan rural land use and wastewater treatment options.

Access Management

Access management is a process for preserving the ability of motorists to move as freely and safely as possible on roads that are designated as the "highest mobility" routes. This process analyzes access options for land uses along primary routes and steers driveways to the less mobile – higher access classification roads. These and other techniques are designed to ensure that access points, and the traffic interruptions that they create, are located on the roads planned to provide higher levels of access, while roads where mobility is the focus will see few traffic interruptions.

The Ohio General Assembly passed legislation in 2002 allowing counties to regulate access directly. The Franklin County Engineer has stated that his office will move forward with efforts to draft and implement access management regulations. Prairie Township should help to ensure proper access management in the Township by ensuring that its roads are properly classified in the access management system. The Township should also monitor efforts to formulate and adopt county access management regulations.

Facilities that Accommodate Pedestrians and Bicyclists

Pedestrians and bicyclists may be accommodated through shared use of vehicular rights-of-way and through the creation of separate rights-of-way. Facilities serving these activities function as recreational opportunities, neighborhood connections and alternatives to the automobile routes.

Pedestrians and bicyclists benefit from routes that are separate from, but coordinated with, conventional automobile routes. They should be separate to minimize conflicts that arise from the different nature of automobile and pedestrian and bicycle traffic.

The Big Darby Accord states streets within the town center would have well proportioned sidewalks along small urban blocks with parks and open space areas to help ensure a strong pedestrian ambiance.

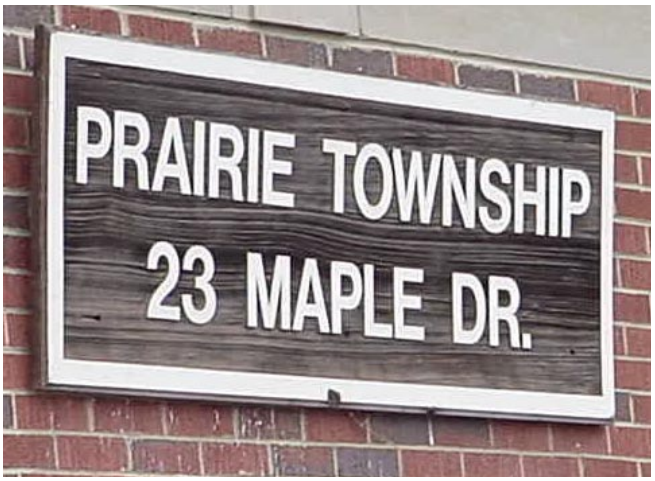
Design of these alternative routes should consider all of their potential functions. The recreational function may be accommodated merely by providing a safe separation from automobile traffic; however, providing routes through scenic areas or providing links to related recreational opportunities enhances this function. To address another of these potential functions, bike / pedestrian paths and

proper links with vehicular rights-of-way can be planned to link new and existing neighborhoods, as well as homes and other uses within these neighborhoods. If designed correctly, this system can address the third function by providing links to commercial and employment destinations where opportunities exist.

The first step toward designing and implementing this system would be to identify existing needs and opportunities in urban areas and to lay out desired routes in transition and rural areas. Routes in urbanized areas will tend to focus on improvements in existing parks and rights-of-way. Routes in transition and rural areas should identify the best, shared use opportunities for conventional rights-of-way, plus networks of paths in preserved open space and/or stream corridors. Finally, it will be important to look at balancing this planning theme with high-priority environmental planning themes when designing these systems. This will mean providing these systems using a minimum of impervious surfaces. Examples of such opportunities are allowing trade-offs with road width under limited circumstances, allowing sidewalks on one side of a street and use of alternative pavement types that are pervious to some degree and following all policies set forth in the Big Darby Accord.

Addressing the Needs of Schools

Providing proper funding is the single most important thing that new development can contribute to a school district. The Township should be aware of the use mix that it is encouraging so as to maximize this funding. Since the overwhelming majority of Prairie Township is in the Southwestern School District, opportunities and pitfalls related to proper use mix primarily effect that district. The interchange at West Broad Street and I-270 anchors a high-profile, easily accessible corridor that offers non-residential development opportunities in the Southwestern School District. Under the community-level service scenario, the Township could provide a modest amount of neighborhood-based non-residential uses. However, the Township would be in the best position to achieve a fiscally balanced land use mix under the regional services scenario. This would facilitate a use mix in the transition area that would include larger scale commercial and employment uses in the transition area.



Prairie Township Facilities

Prairie Township Fire Services

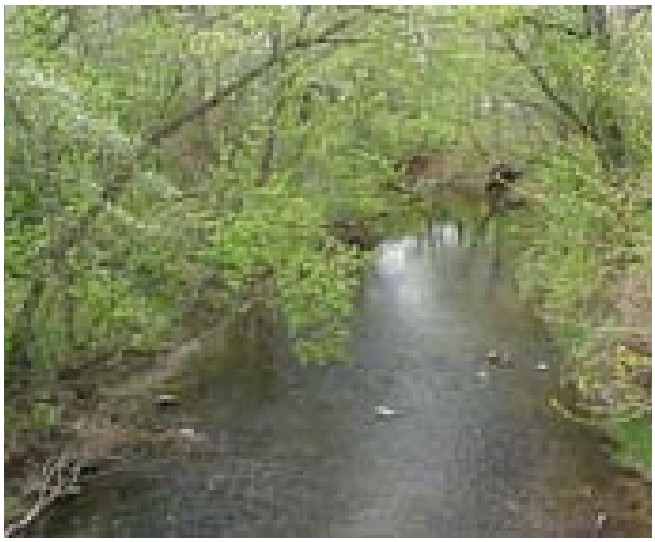
Parks and Recreation Policies

Recreation
Provide adequate space and facilities for the neighborhood- and community-level recreational needs of current and future residents of Prairie Township.

Action: Work with City of Columbus and county agencies to encourage neighborhood-owned mini-parks in new residential neighborhoods. These facilities should be located in condominium complexes, apartment complexes, seniors' communities and similarly high density communities. This effort should include ensuring that applicable zoning and subdivision provisions ensure maintenance of the properties. These requirements will include approval of a maintenance plan for the property.

Action: The Township should work to develop neighborhood parks in urbanized areas and plan for 10 acres of park for every 1,000 residents in new developments.

Action: Prairie Township will ensure that it has the administrative capacity to manage and maintain the community center, community-scale parks and the neighborhood parks that are not managed by neighborhood associations. Acceptance of such facilities shall be carefully analyzed on a case-by-case basis.



Big Darby Creek

Roads and Transportation Policies

Franklin County Thoroughfare Plan
Prairie Township will plan development that complements the Big Darby Accord and the Franklin County Thoroughfare Plan, while, in the event that the regional services scenario develops, exploring the possibility of upgrading Alton Road, Murnan Road and Hall Road to Minor Arterial Status.

Action: The Township will make the appropriate zoning text amendments to ensure that development density is coordinated with the planned capacity of the road network, as well as work with the County Engineers office on timely implementation of these improvements.

Action: The Township will review plans with the County Engineer's office as a step toward upgrading Alton Road and Hall Road to Minor Arterial status.

Action: The Township will be involved in the subdivision process to ensure that necessary road improvements are secured as part of the development process.

Access Management
Prairie Township will be proactive in cooperating with the Franklin County Engineer to formulate and implement an access management plan.

Action: The Township will cooperate with county wide efforts to ensure that arterial and collector road capacity is protected for the sake of public safety and mobility.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Routes
Prairie Township will identify and pursue opportunities to provide separate pedestrian and bicycle routes in all of its planning areas.

Action: Bicycle routes in the eastern urbanized area connecting schools and the future community center site will be enhanced for safety.

Action: Township zoning will be enforced to ensure that future development will be designed to connect neighborhoods to one another, as well as to schools, parks and appropriate commercial and employment uses via pedestrian and bicycle routes. Where possible this will be done using networking open space, but with a minimum amount of impervious surface.

Action: The Township will work with other agencies to provide bike routes in stream corridors that connect with neighborhood systems in order to form a Township-wide network while providing access to the area's scenic resources. These bike routes will be placed so as to minimize threats to water quality and damage to the bike route from flooding or stream bank erosion.

School Policies

Land Use Balance
Prairie Township will promote densities and use mixes that provide an adequate tax base for growing demands on area schools.

Action: The Township will pursue future development that provides significant commercial and employment uses for the purpose of achieving a fiscally balanced use mix.

Action: The Township will amend zoning for future development that implements its policy of achieving a fiscally balanced use mix.

Action: The Township will support redevelopment projects in the urbanized eastern area that maximize the value of non-residential property in that area.

Darby Dan Farm

PRAIRIE TOWNSHIP

ECONOMIC & COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

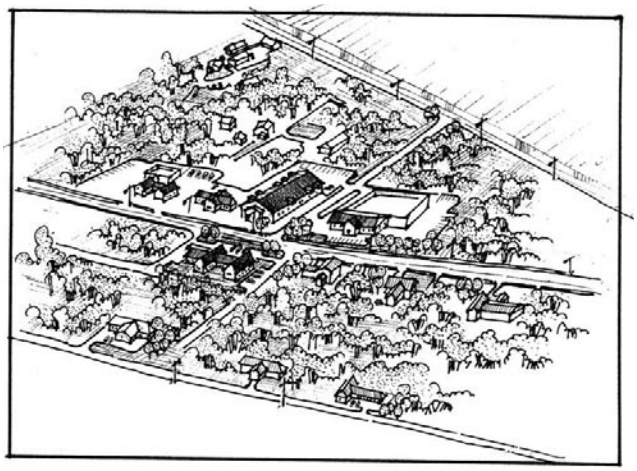
Economic & Commercial Development

Prairie Township recognizes the critical importance of economic and commercial development to the community's future. For this reason the Township is active, and will continue to be active, in efforts to plan and implement economic development projects. As with many aspects of this plan, the economic and commercial development strategy has a component that stresses improvements and redevelopment in existing urban areas and a component that stresses creation of high-quality facilities in areas that have yet to be developed.

West Broad Corridor Improvements and Redevelopment
West Broad Street from I-270 to Rome-Hilliard Road is Prairie Township's 'Main Street,' or business hub. This corridor, which is a little over a mile in length, mixes retail stores with professional offices and medical offices and facilities, including a hospital. Home Depot and Lincoln Village Shopping Center anchor the corridor to the east, while Doctors Hospital and the strip of small businesses between Norton and Rome-Hilliard Road anchor the corridor to the west.

Efforts began in 2005 to identify and proactively address issues facing this corridor in a way that would improve the business climate in the corridor. A group of community stakeholders identified the following issues that must be addressed in order to attain this goal:

- Crime and the perception of crime;
- Design, improvement and maintenance of the street corridor;
- Expansion of the business district through redevelopment efforts in adjacent areas; and
- Improvement of the quality of life in the surrounding community.



Conceptual View of Commercial Area (Note that parking is designed so that it does not dominate the landscape

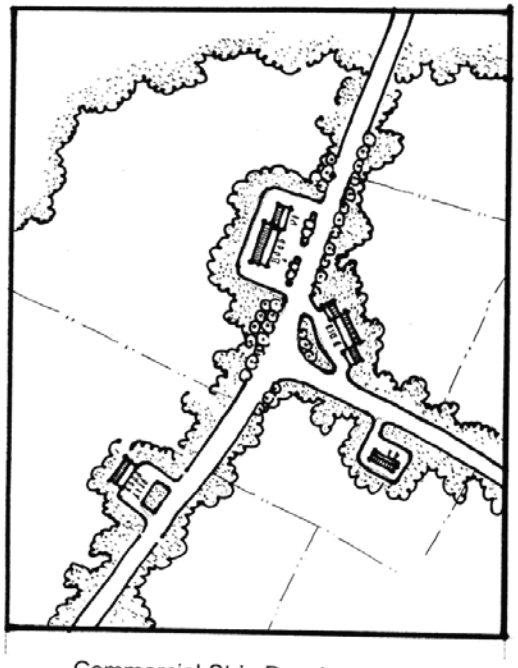
These discussions have emphasized the opportunities that the area faces as ODOT prepares to implement a street improvement project along the complete length of the corridor and Doctors Hospital prepares for a fifty, plus million dollar expansion.

In late 2006, the Township, along with various private and public sector partners, began working on a new phase of this project. This phase involves preparation of a more specific economic development plan and a physical improvements plan for the corridor. The physical improvements plan will build upon improvements planned by ODOT. These combined efforts will take an in-depth look at actions to be taken and resources that will be needed. Doctors Hospital, the City of Columbus and the Westland Area Business Association are important partners is these efforts.

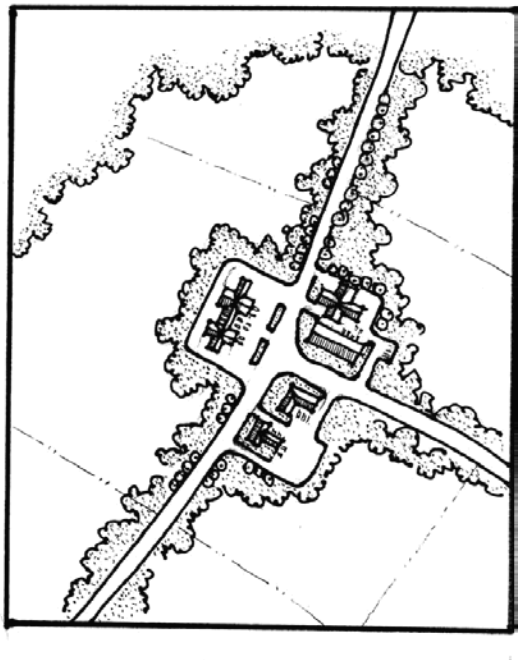
It is anticipated that recommendations coming out of this effort will involve cooperation with Columbus to create a joint economic development district (JEDD) and cooperation with OhioHealth and others to create a local community improvement corporation (CIC). Law enforcement, corridor improvement and maintenance, area redevelopment and creation of a regional recreation facility will benefit from these efforts and, in turn, vastly improve the business climate of the area.

The Darby Town Center
The Big Darby Accord calls for concentrating the bulk of future western Franklin County development in the planned Darby Town Center. While most of this community would consist of various forms of residential neighborhoods, there will be a non-residential component. This component will be significantly smaller in scale than the commercial and employment uses along West Broad Street and be aimed at providing goods and services for residents of the Town Center and surrounding rural areas. Specifics of the Town Center, its design, land uses, utilities, road and other features will be worked out in the Town Center Master Plan process beginning in late 2007 and with an expected completion date in early 2009.

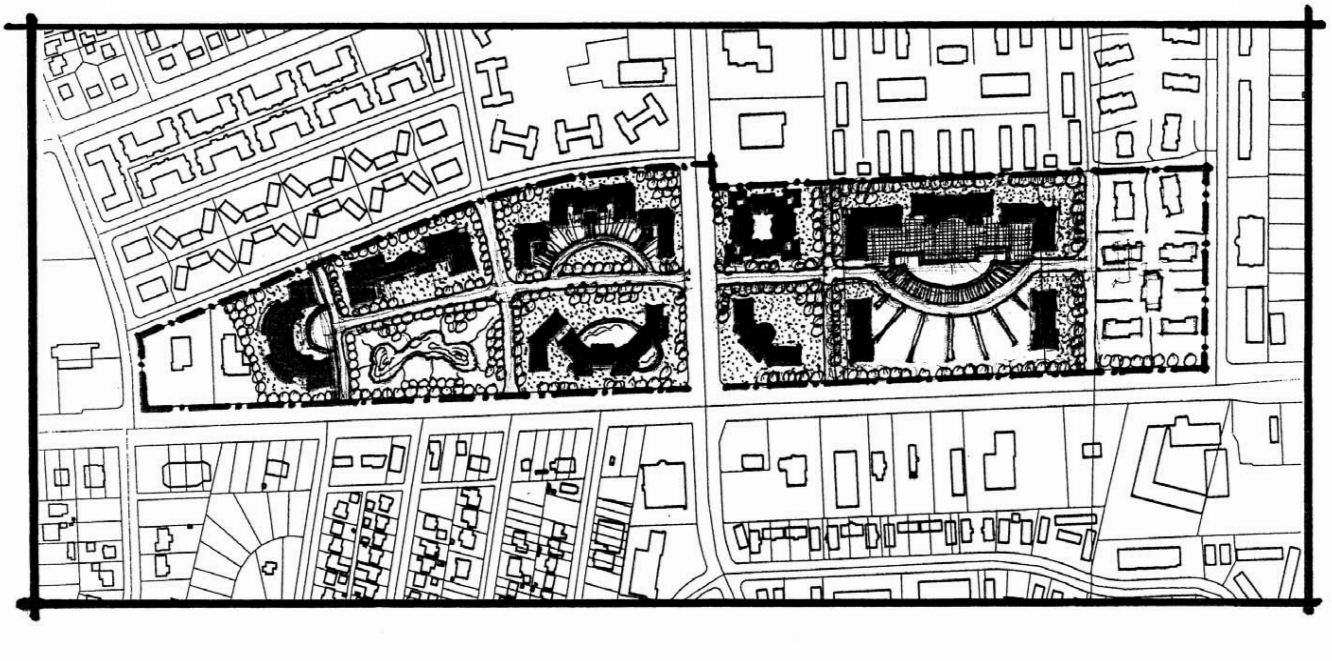
The exact location of uses within the Town Center will be determined as part of the master plan. It is expected that a significant portion of the commercial and mixed



Commercial Strip Development
Discouraged



Nodal Pattern of Commercial
Development - Encouraged



use development will occur near Route 40, in the Prairie Township portion of the Town Center. The plan will also look closely at phasing issues; plan the extension of sewer and water from the City of Columbus system via a contract with Franklin County; and lay out a plan for providing needed road improvements.

Other Areas

Other, more scattered commercial development will take place on a smaller scale or as a township 'pocket' within a municipal area. These developments should be encouraged to the extent that they are compatible with the comprehensive plan, other planning policies and township regulations.

Economic & Commercial Development Policies

West Broad Street Improvement and Redevelopment:
Along with partners such as the City of Columbus, Doctors Hospital and WABA, actively pursue projects and funding to improve the corridor's appearance, provide for better policing, redevelop nearby areas and other initiatives that will improve the business climate in the area.

Town Center
Cooperate as a partner in the Town Center Master Planning project with an eye toward the township's desire to enhance jobs and funding for local services by planning for the proper mix of commercial and economic development.


Existing Office


Existing Residential