



Brown Township, Franklin County Winter 2005

Plan to Encourage Sensible Development

*by: Erin J. Prosser - Planner for the Franklin County Department of Development
Joe Martin - Chairman of the Brown Township Comprehensive Steering Committee.*

Convened in the spring of 2003 due to a recommendation by the 2002 Agricultural Preservation Committee Report, the Brown Township Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee is nearing completion of a new plan. While dealing with the unbelievable development pressures being brought to bear by absentee land owners and deep pocket developers, the steering committee will unveil new recommendations for environmentally responsible developments that will preserve rural character and minimize urban sprawl.

The new plan specifically protects the environment, recommends types of development based on land location and discusses upgrading public facilities within Brown Township. Considering the priorities of Brown Township residents, the steering Committee has defined goals and sets forth recommendations for the township.

Designed as a replacement of the 1992 comprehensive plan and its 1998 update, the 2005 Brown Township Comprehensive Plan will guide Brown Township into the future with recommendations for sensible development that adheres to the goals of the community. The steering committee is preparing to present the 2005 Comprehensive Plan to the Brown Township Board of Trustees at their February 14th meeting. The steering committee is interested in questions and comments from Brown Township residents and landowners.

<http://www.brown.twp.franklin.oh.us/>

Here is an annotated version of the recommendations proposed 2005 Brown Township Comprehensive Plan:

Environment

Stream Corridors (including Big Darby Creek, Hamilton Run and Clover Groff Run) are to be primary resources for conservation in new developments. They should be protected with easements or placed in reserves.

Protection of Natural Areas & Open Spaces is to be accomplished by including the following

priority conservation areas into the zoning and subdivision review process:

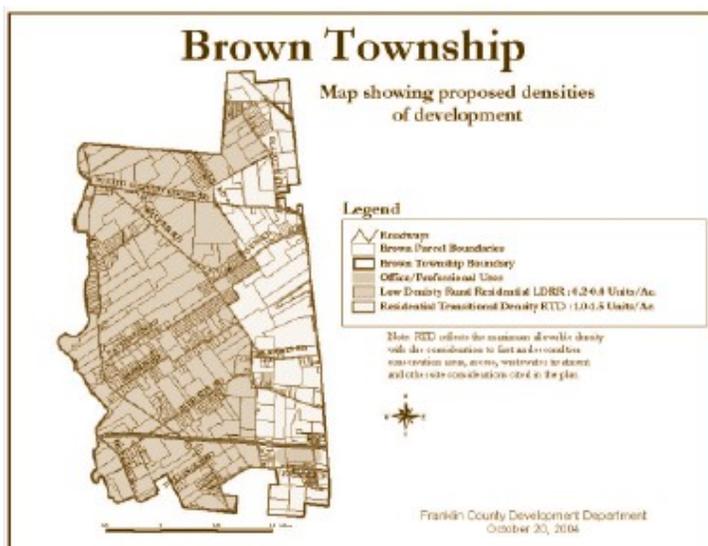
- Stream corridors
- Wooded areas
- Wetlands
- Steep slopes
- Hydric soils
- Farmsteads
- Other historical or archeological sites

Stormwater Management is to be a priority in any new development within Brown Township, large or small. Therefore the current and best practices for stormwater management shall be incorporated into the zoning review process and subdivision review process.

Land Use

Density in Brown Township will remain low density rural residential in the majority of the township. Low density is important to the residents because of the desire to protect the Big Darby Creek, cope with poor soils and drainage concerns in Brown Township and addresses the community's desires for a low-density rural community.

The steering committee recognizes the huge development pressure on the eastern side of the township (proximate to Hilliard and Columbus) and has established a residential transitional density in that area of the township. This density, which is a far lower density than the municipalities' zoning allows, provides an appropriate and conscientious transition from the existing municipality style development to the rural residential found in the remainder of the township.



The new plan specifically protects the environment, recommends types of development based on land location and discusses upgrading public facilities within Brown Township.

The Pattern of development in Brown Township must encourage conservation developments, maintain the Darby Creek Overlay Protection Area, include natural resource protection, respect priority protection areas and meet open space requirements for new developments.

The Types of development that shall be considered include planned commercial office development, or an employment use of similar character and intensity, with architecture that reflects the rural midwestern heritage of the township. Any such developments shall be screened from view, designed to minimize impervious surfaces and create compact nodes, as opposed to auto-oriented strip development.

Public Facilities

Wastewater Treatment can be managed by individual systems, community systems, or a centralized system. The township shall identify appropriate systems for use within the township as the technology becomes available and is proven. The township shall encourage efforts to generate emerging technology for wastewater treatment. Stormwater shall be managed within the township with the best practices available. This is a priority area for the township and, since the science and engineering in this area continues to improve, the township shall promote continued evaluation and utilization of best practices by any landowner or developer.

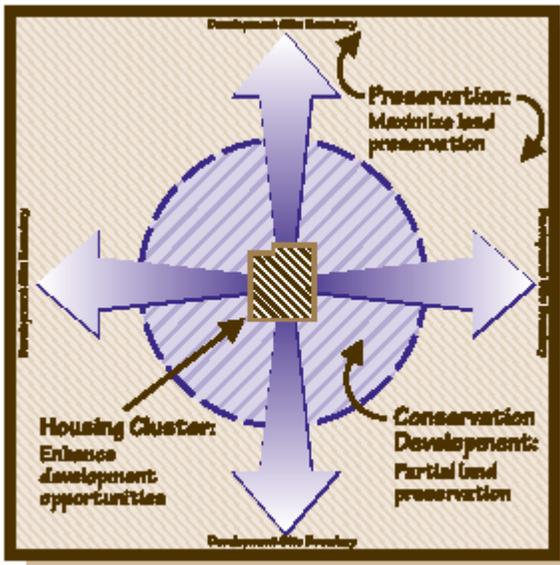
Transportation improvements within the township shall respect existing thoroughfare plans, reduce impervious surface coverage, promote common access drives and provide a network of non-automotive paths for pedestrians and bikes. No existing road in the township shall be designated for bicycle usage until such roads can be modified to accommodate bicycles, two abreast, without infringing upon the existing driving lanes.

Police, Parks, Fire, EMS and Road Maintenance shall continue to be priorities of the township and the trustees. The township shall seek, evaluate and implement mechanisms to reduce the impact of annexations and increased property developments on the performance of these services through creative and responsible financial methods.

Conservation Development in Brown Township

by: Tim A. Richardson - Executive Assistant to the Brown Township Board of Trustees

The 2005 Brown Township Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee is including in its plan recommendations, a focus on “Conservation Development” strategies. A Conservation Development is one that clusters the allowable housing sites on an appropriate section of the original parcel leaving the remainder as dedicated, undeveloped open space. Contrary to conventional style development the lots are sited to protect important environmental features, maintain rural character and reduce environmental impacts of development.



The Conservation Development concept is currently in use in North East Ohio. The Western Reserve Resource Conservation and Development Council, encompassing nine counties, has created a “Countryside Program” in order to implement their Conservation Development model within the planning area (www.CountrysideProgram.org).

This Countryside program encourages “an alternative approach to managing expected development” (Model Regulations for Residential Conservation Development, First Revision 4/03). “It is intended to strike a balance between the development rights of the property owner (developer) and the community’s desire to conserve open space and protect sensitive and/or significant resources”. Maintaining “rural character” is also seen as a primary goal.

Regarding “sensitive and/or significant resources” protection, Brown Township is centrally located within the watershed of the Big Darby Creek, a nationally recognized, ecologically unique stream system designated as a National and State of Ohio Scenic River. Brown’s location prescribes a special responsibility on its citizens and community leaders in the on-going efforts to shape the future of Brown Township as well as protect The Big Darby.

Impacts associated with development and other land use practices have been identified by the Ohio EPA as contributors to the degradation of water quality in the Darby’s headwater streams and tributaries. These impacts include:

- Land alteration activities such as floodplain fill
- Some agricultural practices
- Increases in impervious surfaces resulting in storm water drainage impacts
- Wastewater treatment failures
- Other impacts associated with manmade changes in the watershed

Some of these headwater stream systems are located in Brown Township. Protection of sensitive areas and careful site design through conservation style development strategies could reduce impacts from development.

It has long been recognized that the Brown Township landscape, consisting of flat terrain, poor drainage, extensive “wet areas” of hydric soils and floodplains, and sensitive environmental features presents significant limitations and challenges to all types of development. To help deal with the complex issues involving the opposing challenges of development pressures and environmental protection, the Brown Plan 2005 Draft incorporates a Conservation Development concept as an alternative to conventional development practices.

For example, grouping critical natural areas such as floodplains and associated riparian areas, woodlots, wetlands and other environmentally significant natural areas for preservation under a single ownership provides for coordinated stewardship in perpetuity. Properly managing storm water and related water quality issues associated with development are also key components. A process of first identifying the critical areas for preservation, then determining areas appropriate for streets and dwellings is critical.

The 2005 Brown Plan Draft requires preservation of 50% to 60% open space using Conservation Development strategies. This is achieved through the clustering of residential lots and/or dwelling units while incorporating designated density caps. The 2005 Brown Plan Draft proposes “Low Density Rural Residential” and “Transitional Residential Density” areas to facilitate Conservation Development within the Township.

Preserving both Brown Township’s rural character and the natural resources important to the overall environmental health of the Big Darby Creek seem to be compatible goals. Pressure for more development challenges this dynamic. True Conservation Development as a part of Brown Township’s future has the potential to be an important tool in the effort to achieve the best of both worlds.

Please consider attending the 2005 Brown Plan open house on February 1st to learn more about Conservation Development.