

A photograph of a wooden boardwalk with railings, leading through a dense, green forest. The boardwalk is made of wooden planks and has wooden railings on both sides. The forest is lush with green trees and foliage, and the path leads into the distance. The image is used as a background for the title page.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Bloom Township

Fairfield County, Ohio

August 2026

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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*Thank you to the Mid-Ohio Regional
Planning Commission's Get Ready
Initiative for supporting this planning
process.*

HOLD FOR ADOPTION RESOLUTION

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1

Introduction

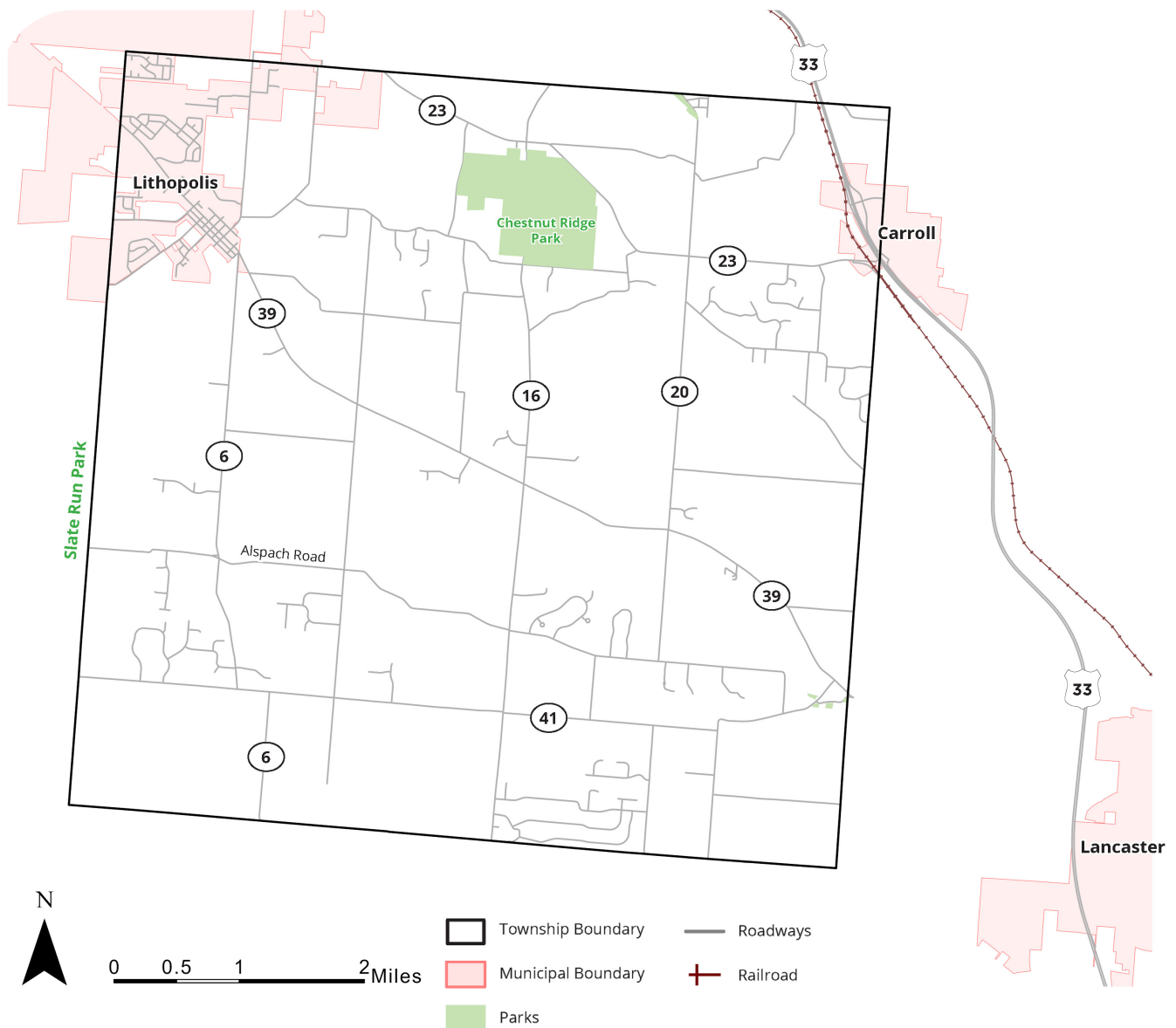
Bloom Township is a community with a valued rural residential character that is situated in a changing region. The area around the Township is experiencing economic growth and new development. This economic and population growth in the region will lead to continued development pressure on Bloom Township but it does not mean the Township cannot take action to also maintain the characteristics that are most important to residents.

This comprehensive plan provides a path to effectively manage change while retaining the core qualities that are important to Township residents.

In 2025, Bloom Township began a process to develop a comprehensive plan. This new plan recognizes this unique moment in time and sets forth a long-term direction for the Township that reflects the community's current values and priorities. The plan is a tool to prepare for change and a guide for decision-makers. It establishes predictability for what the community can expect and it sets clear expectations.

BLOOM TOWNSHIP IN CONTEXT

Bloom Township is close to regional employment centers, quality amenities and services, and rich natural assets. As growth and development intensify in the County and region, Bloom Township is uniquely positioned to create a community-led plan that ensures the Township retains its character and continues to thrive for future generations.



Located in northwestern Fairfield County, the Township is adjacent to Canal Winchester and within close proximity to Lancaster, Pickerington, and Groveport. Both the incoming Intel and Anduril facilities are within driving distance of the community. US 33, a major corridor in the County, passes through the northeastern edge of the Township, while State Routes 6, 16, 20, 23, 39, and 41 provide additional connectivity to the region.

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A comprehensive plan is a long-term guide that expresses a community's values and aspirations for its future physical development. It is the broadest public policy document a jurisdiction can create. It reflects current trends, community priorities, and long-term objectives, incorporating input from residents, businesses, and other stakeholders. The plan also looks beyond its own borders, accounting for planning efforts in neighboring communities, the county, and the region.

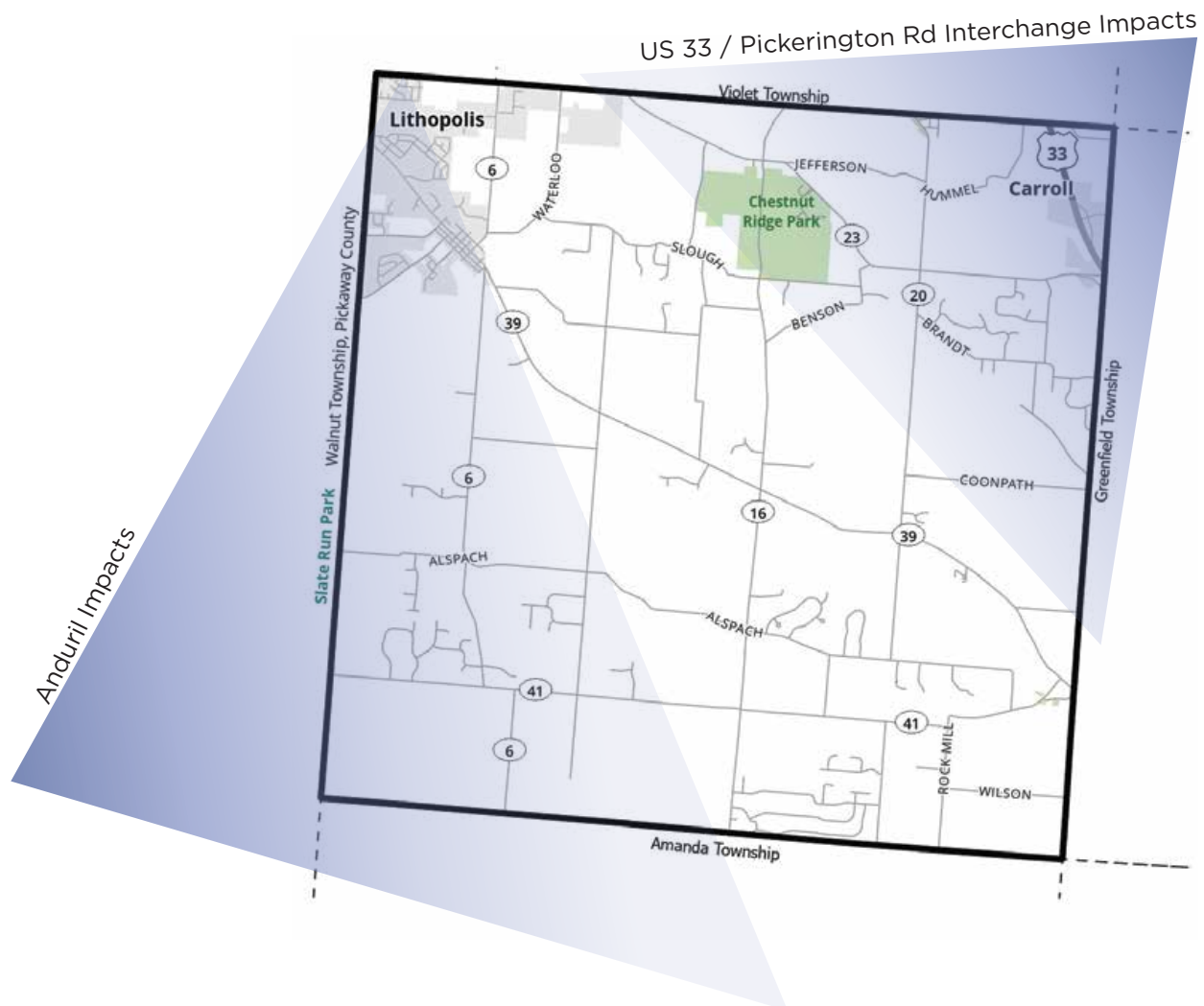
While not legally binding, the plan can inform Township budgets, zoning resolutions, land development regulations, capital improvements, conservation policies, departmental work programs, economic incentives, and private development decisions.



Why does Bloom Township need a Comprehensive Plan?

Bloom Township is experiencing a period of significant transition, with new challenges and opportunities emerging that require thoughtful, proactive management. Such as:

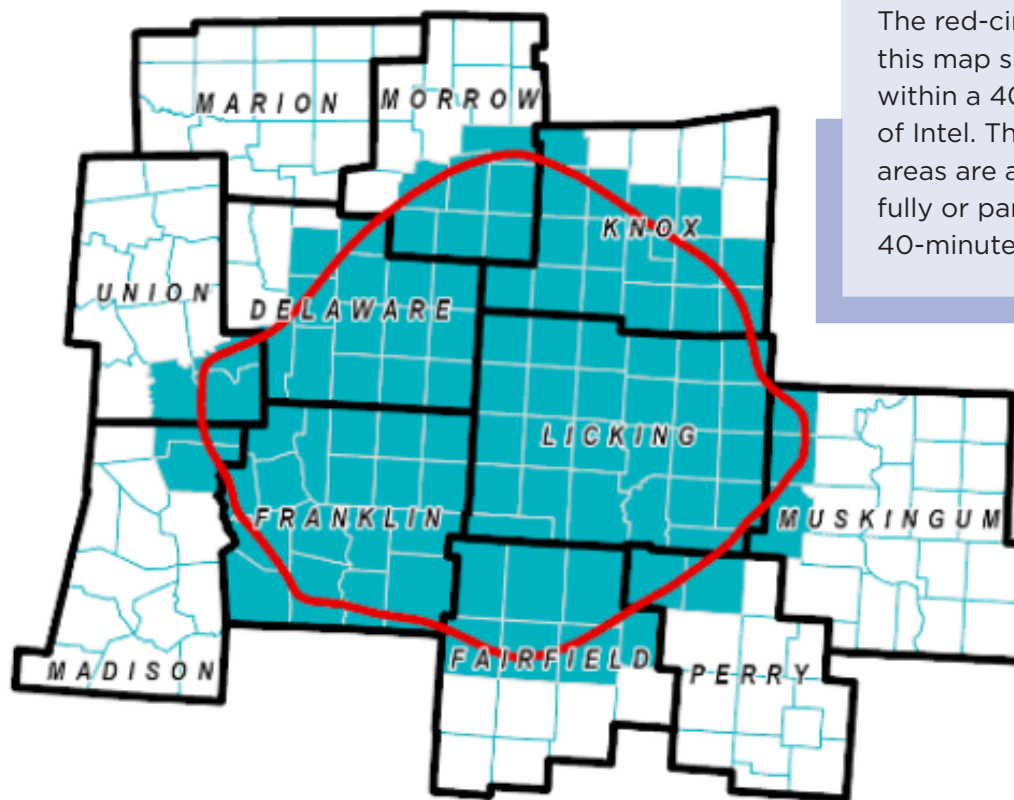
- Intel and the New Albany Technology Manufacturing District (TMD) are about a 40 minute drive of Bloom Township. This \$28 billion investment is expected to create 3,000 jobs.
- Anduril announced it would build Arsenal-1 in Pickaway County. The facility is supported by a \$1 billion investment from Anduril, which will yield more than 4,000 direct jobs.
- Major infrastructure projects such as the new interchange at the intersection of US 33 and Pickerington Road. This dangerous at-grade intersection will be replaced with an interchange designed to today's standards so that there is plenty of time to merge.
- The growth across the Central Ohio Region is increasing traffic along the highways surrounding Bloom Township, and the increasing housing demand, which is magnified in the Township, due to scattered, unplanned housing development over the past few decades.



MORPC'S GET READY INITIATIVE

This plan was funded through the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission's (MORPC) Get Ready Initiative, a long-range planning effort launched in early 2024 in coordination with and funded by ODOT. The initiative addresses transportation infrastructure and planning needs within a 40-minute drive of Intel and the New Albany Technology Manufacturing District (TMD). It was shaped by conversations with local communities across the region that needed planning assistance, with the goal of developing a Comprehensive Plan for one community that could serve as a model for others. Once this model plan is complete, a regional workshop will be held to share key insights and lessons learned to help other jurisdictions develop their own plans.

Through a competitive selection process, Bloom Township was chosen as the model community in August 2025. The selection reflected the significant development pressure the area is experiencing following the arrival of Intel's facility in Licking County, as well as Bloom Township's proximity to the new Anduril facility in Pickaway County. MORPC identified this growth as creating a clear need for targeted planning support. MORPC and ODOT covered the full cost of the process, so Bloom Township incurred no direct expense.



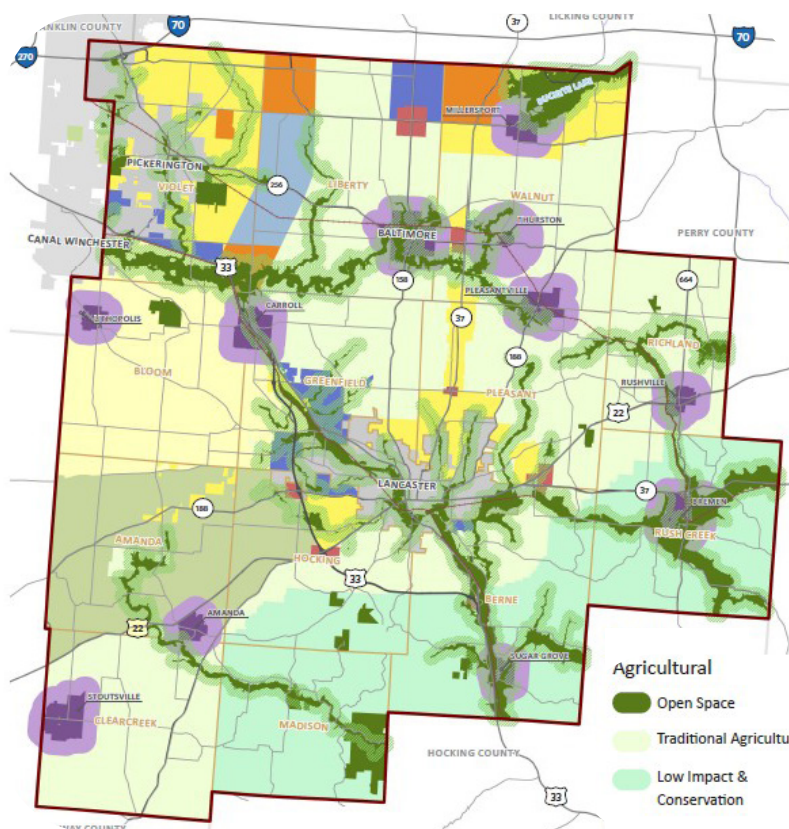
The red-circled area on this map shows areas within a 40-minute drive of Intel. The blue-shaded areas are all townships fully or partially within the 40-minute drive area.

FAIRFIELD COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Fairfield County 2024 Comprehensive Plan establishes a framework for managing significant regional growth while recognizing land as a finite resource. Bloom Township is identified as one of the County's larger unincorporated population centers and a location for continued residential development. The plan designates Bloom Township largely as Rural Residential, acknowledging ongoing development pressure characterized by large-lot subdivisions and limited public utilities, while emphasizing the need to balance housing demand with the preservation of farmland and natural resources. This plan is a guidebook for the Township planning process.

The Township planning process includes a review of all existing plans and relevant policies of the County and Township. Countywide forecasts anticipate

approximately 415 new housing units in Bloom Township by 2032, reinforcing the importance of proactive land use and zoning strategies to avoid excessive conversion of agricultural land and infrastructure inefficiencies. Based on the plan's policies, Bloom Township is encouraged to update zoning and subdivision regulations to support conservation and clustered residential development, prioritize a mix of housing products near villages and existing service areas, protect floodplains and environmentally sensitive lands, and limit utility extensions to targeted growth locations. This is an opportunity for the Township plan to refine the County forecasts and interpret the implications for Bloom Township. The recommendations in the Bloom Township comprehensive plan will establish a detailed land-use strategy unique to the Bloom Township community.



The Fairfield County Comprehensive Plan included a Future Land Use map of the County that broadly depicted how land should be used in the long term. Bloom Township was identified primarily for rural residential uses, with village center and village growth areas around existing population centers, Lithopolis and Carroll.

FAIRFIELD COUNTY HOUSING STUDY

The 2025 Fairfield County and Lancaster Housing Study documents housing trends driven by population growth, household formation, and an aging population. The County is projected to add approximately 21,000 residents and 5,200 households by 2035, requiring sustained housing production and diversification. While much of the study focuses on countywide conditions, its findings are directly relevant to Bloom Township, where housing remains predominantly single-family and owner-occupied.

The study identifies affordability challenges among seniors, moderate-income households, and first-time buyers, as well as an increasing need for downsizing and for accessible, lower-maintenance housing types. For Bloom Township, the study supports proactive steps to encourage a broader mix of housing options, such as smaller single-family homes, duplexes, and clustered conservation developments, while maintaining rural character and minimizing farmland loss. Recommended actions

include updating zoning to allow flexible housing types, supporting rehabilitation of existing homes to aging-in-place standards, coordinating with county-wide programs, and aligning local development standards to reduce housing costs.

The takeaways from this housing study serve as a resource for Bloom Township to gain insight into the amount of housing needed for a balanced market. The growing pressure of development surrounding the community has been broken down by the housing study to gauge how different housing types may impact services. By aligning the Township's plan with the housing study, programs and strategies can be implemented to proportionately distribute the weight of development pressure across the County. This includes recommendations for specific housing types desired by the community, ways to support aging in place, and the infrastructure improvements needed to address regional growth pressures.

2023 CENTRAL OHIO RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION TRANSPORTATION PLAN (CORPO)

Fairfield County is projected to grow by about 33% between 2021 and 2050, increasing travel demand on rural collectors, Township roads, and key corridors such as U.S. 33, with nearly half of all vehicle miles traveled occurring on rural roadways. Although no Bloom Township-specific projects are identified in the CORPO Transportation Plan, the plan highlights the importance of roadway preservation, bridge and pavement maintenance, rural safety improvements, and connectivity to regional

routes. In response, Bloom Township should continue close coordination with the Fairfield County Engineer to advance preservation and safety projects, prioritize improvements on major and minor collectors serving agricultural, residential, and school traffic, and pursue funding aligned with CORPO goals for safety, accessibility, and rural connectivity to manage growth-related impacts while maintaining reliable transportation infrastructure.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

Township Trustees

The Township Trustees provided insights, priorities, and concerns to ensure leadership perspectives guided the process. The Township Trustees also participated in and encouraged community engagement opportunities and adopted the final plan. Comprehensive plans must be formally adopted by the elected officials who play a central role in their implementation.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee represented the broader community and guided decision-making. The committee was a volunteer group appointed by Township leadership. Their direction was crucial to the development of this plan.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders provided focused input from individuals with specific, locally-based, professional knowledge. Stakeholders were consulted throughout the process to provide guidance on key topics and targeted input for the community.

General Public

The public was involved throughout the planning process and provided local, broad insight. Public involvement was vital to the plan's success. Each round of engagement allowed the public to share their thoughts through a variety of avenues.

MORPC and ODOT

The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission and the Ohio Department of Transportation provided the funding necessary to initiate the planning process through a competitive application process, through which Bloom Township was selected.

Township Staff

The Township Administrator provided overall leadership by supporting and coordinating the process with the consultant team. The Township Administrator also provided local knowledge of Bloom Township's codes, policies, and programs, as well as expertise relevant to each element of the plan.

Consultants

The consultants facilitated the planning process and provided technical expertise. This included sharing experiences from other similar communities, as well as planning best practices, while ensuring that the plan reflected the insights of community members.

PLANNING PROCESS

Technical Analysis

In addition to analyzing public input, the consultant team conducted technical analysis to develop the plan's recommendations. Below is a summary of the analysis conducted.

- **Understanding Economics**

The Consultant Team reviewed information from the US Census, MORPC, and the Fairfield County Housing Study to understand workforce trends and how they are influenced by the location of available housing and employment industries. This analysis was compared to demographic data for Bloom Township to determine future trends.

- **Understanding Land Use**

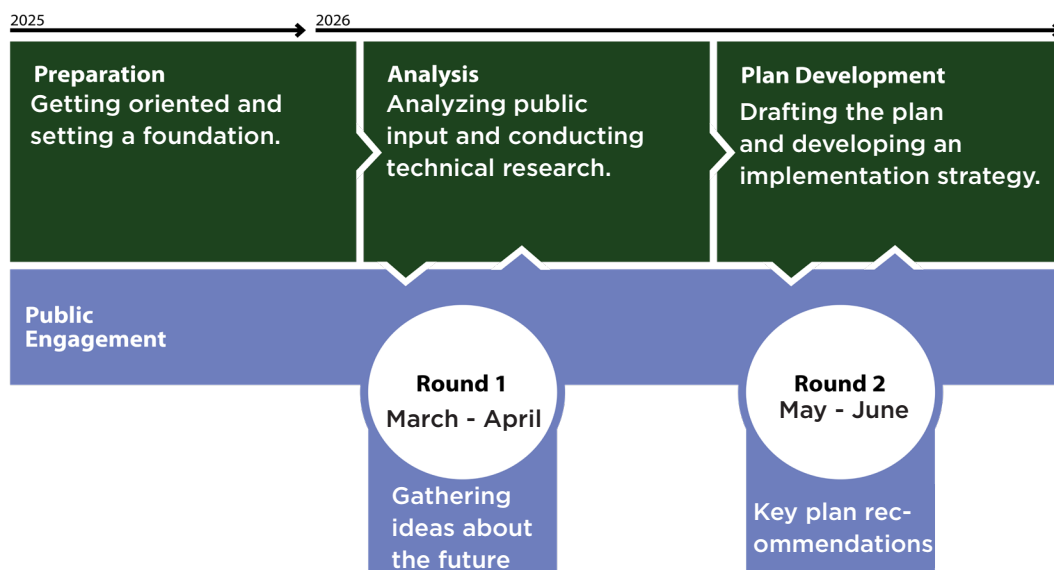
The Consultant Team reviewed existing plans and information from the County Auditor to create an existing land use map. The breakdown of land-use type percentages and locations was compared with community input to identify opportunities for growth/change and where preservation was critical. The future character and land use map was designed to maximize opportunities for sensitive growth/change, address potential weaknesses, and protect the character of the community.

- **Understanding the Transportation Network**

The Consultant Team reviewed data from ODOT, MORPC, and Fairfield County and used modern tools, such as AASHTO (software from a nonprofit, nonpartisan association representing highway and transportation departments), to assess the condition of the local transportation network. This analysis included a review of traffic conditions, road functionality, and the accessibility of sidewalks and bike routes to identify potential improvements.

- **Understanding Utilities and Environment**

The Consultant Team collected information from Fairfield County and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) to identify constraints for future growth. The capacity of utilities and risks from flood hazard areas were identified, mapped, and used to inform the recommendations.



Community Engagement

The Bloom Township comprehensive plan was an open and inclusive process. Two rounds of public input opportunities were held. Anyone who cares about the future of the Township was able to participate and contribute their ideas and insight.

Bloom Township used a multifaceted outreach strategy to spread the word about opportunities to participate. Efforts included postcards delivered to home addresses that could be identified through voting records, use of the Savvy Citizen text messaging services, targeted emails, social media, and delivery of postcards to key organizations and locations in the community.

ROUND 1 - PICTURING THE FUTURE

The first round of engagement, called Picturing the Future, was designed to introduce the public to the planning work and provide a forum for discussion about the Township's future. An in-person workshop was held on April 6, 2026, at the Fire House. After a brief educational presentation about the planning process, conditions and trends, and next steps for the process, participants worked in small groups to answer big picture questions about the future. Then, participants were asked to review the display boards to identify images they would like to see in their community, as well as locations in the community they would like to see changed, improved, or preserved. An online survey hosted on the project website to recreate the in-person workshop.

Feedback from the first round of engagement provided valuable insights into key opportunities and challenges. Public input, along with technical analysis, helped shape a draft version of the plan's goals, objectives, and actions, as well as a draft Future Character and Land Use Map.

ROUND 2 - SETTING DIRECTION

The second round of engagement, called Setting Direction, focused on testing ideas for the plan. An in-person open house was held on May 18, 2026, at the Fire House. Participants explored information displays, draft maps, and the plan's recommendations. Everyone was given an equal opportunity to discuss the draft content with the Steering Committee, Staff, and the Consultant Team. Comment cards were widely available at the event to allow for further feedback. An online survey hosted on the project website to recreate the in-person open house. Feedback from the second round of engagement was used to ensure the draft plan reflected the community's values and vision for the future.



**PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT
BY THE NUMBERS**

 **200+**
in-person participants

 **300+**
online responses

4,000+
unique pieces of input



PLAN STRUCTURE

The desired end result of the Bloom Township Comprehensive Planning process was to create clear and compelling actions that align with a community-supported vision and goals. The vision was affirmed and goals were created through the public process. Building on the vision, the plan's goals articulate desired outcomes for the plan at the highest level.

To achieve the vision and goals, the plan includes specific actions (policies, projects, and programs) and identifies timing and responsibilities for undertaking those actions. The plan's actions, organized under the goals.

The plan also contains map-based recommendations in a Future Land Use and Character Map that indicates the Township's intent for where and how it will use land resources in the future.



VISION

Bloom Township will thoughtfully shape its own future, protecting rural character, small town feel, and sense of connection, while shaping change to enhance quality of life for all.

Goal A: Preserve Agricultural Land and Rural Character.

Protect the Township's working farmland, open spaces, and natural landscapes from incompatible development by prioritizing agricultural uses in rural areas, supporting farm viability, and establishing clear boundaries between developed and undeveloped land.

Goal B: Guide Growth to Appropriate Locations.

Direct new development to areas that are already served, or can be efficiently served, by roads, utilities, and public services, minimizing sprawl and protecting the fiscal health of the Township.

Goal C: Maintain a Safe, Connected, and Functional Transportation Network.

Ensure that roads, intersections, and rural routes are maintained to serve existing residents, and that traffic and road safety impacts are mitigated for new development.

Goal D: Protect Environmental Resources and Natural Systems.

Safeguard the Township's watersheds, floodplains, woodlands, and wildlife corridors from degradation to protect water quality, decrease flood risk, and enhance the natural assets that define the community's identity.

Goal E: Provide for Diverse and Attainable Housing Opportunities.

Ensure that a range of housing options is available to meet the needs of residents at all stages of life and income levels, including young families, aging residents, and a workforce that is anticipated to grow, while maintaining compatibility with the Township's rural character.

Goal F: Sustain Essential Services and Community Amenities.

Ensure that fire protection, emergency medical services, and maintenance keep pace with growth, and support the local schools, churches, volunteer organizations, and small businesses that form the backbone of Township community life.

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Community Profile

Bloom Township is located in Fairfield County southeast of Columbus, Ohio within the Columbus metropolitan area. The Township is part of a growing Central Ohio region and is a short drive from several major employment areas currently under development. These developments, and others, are expected to have a major impact on the Township's growth and development. This community profile provides insights into current conditions and trends related to demographics, transportation, housing, and more; focusing on the unincorporated portions of the Township. The following community profile, along with stakeholder and public input, directly informs the recommendations included in the comprehensive plan.

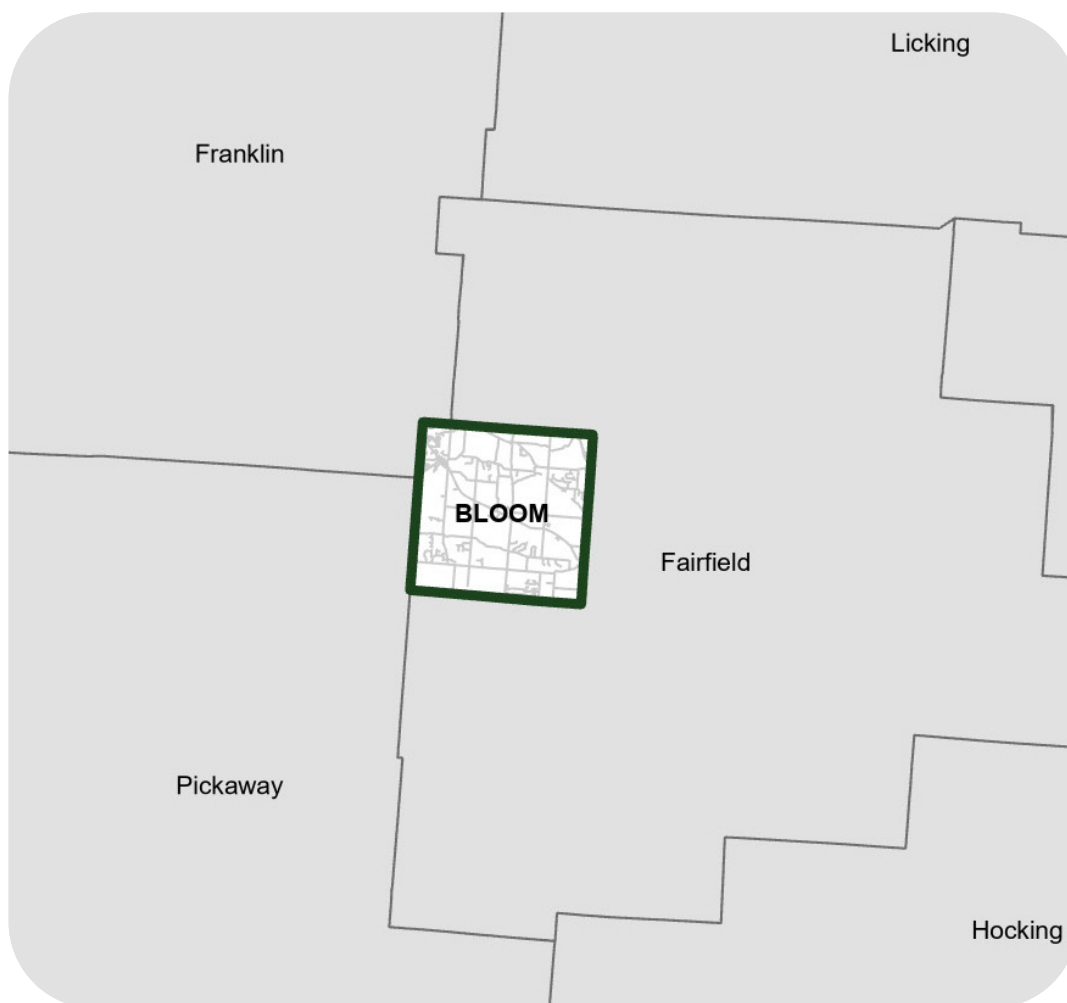
Unless otherwise noted, data was sourced from the U.S. Census.

REGIONAL CONTEXT

Bloom Township is located within a rapidly growing regional economy due to its proximity to several major economic development initiatives within close proximity. The Township is within a 40-minute drive to the new Intel semiconductor manufacturing facility currently under construction near New Albany, Ohio and within a 20-minute drive of the Anduril facility in Madison Township near Rickenbacker International Airport.

These developments, along with general upward population trends, contribute to

development pressures and emerging infrastructure needs. In addition to Intel and Anduril, numerous other planned and active economic development sites lie either adjacent to the Township or within the same 40 minute travel shed. Collectively, these regional developments and growth are shaping long-term land use, transportation, housing, and public service considerations. This enhances the importance of comprehensive planning to guide Bloom Township's future growth and community character.

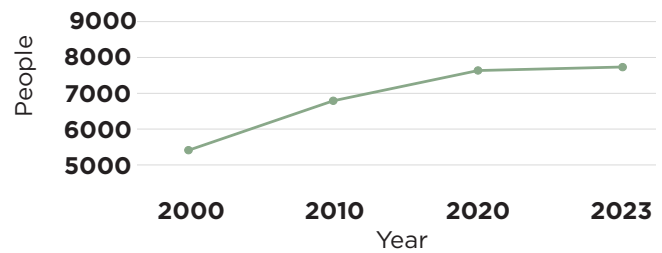


PEOPLE

Bloom Township is growing.

Bloom Township is experiencing an increase in its overall population. Since 2010, the Township has seen a 24% increase in the population. As of the 2024, the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission projected a 33% increase in population for Fairfield County by year 2050, according to Insight2050. Population growth creates higher demand for additional services and development.

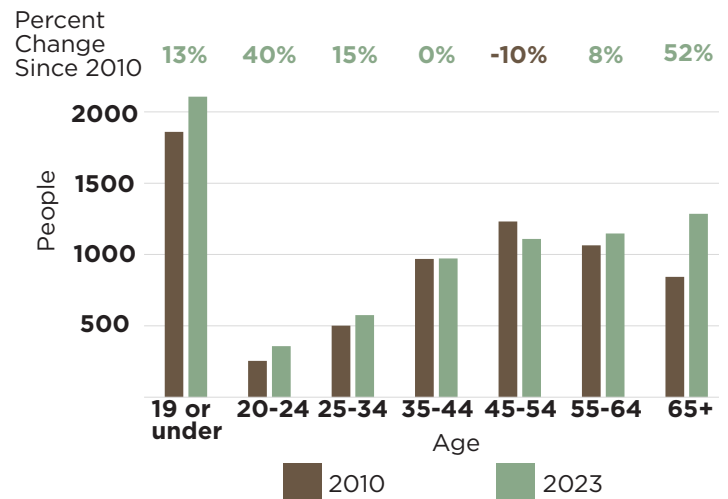
BLOOM TOWNSHIP POPULATION



Bloom Township is aging.

The Township's largest adult age group was 45-54 in 2010, but is now the 65+ age cohort. Ages 65 or older have increased the most since 2010, followed by the 20-24 age cohort. By sheer numbers 65+ increased by far the most. An aging population leads to a greater proportion of residents are not part of the workforce. It also may result in a shift in the kinds of services and amenities needed, as well as the kind of housing that is desired.

BLOOM TOWNSHIP AGE

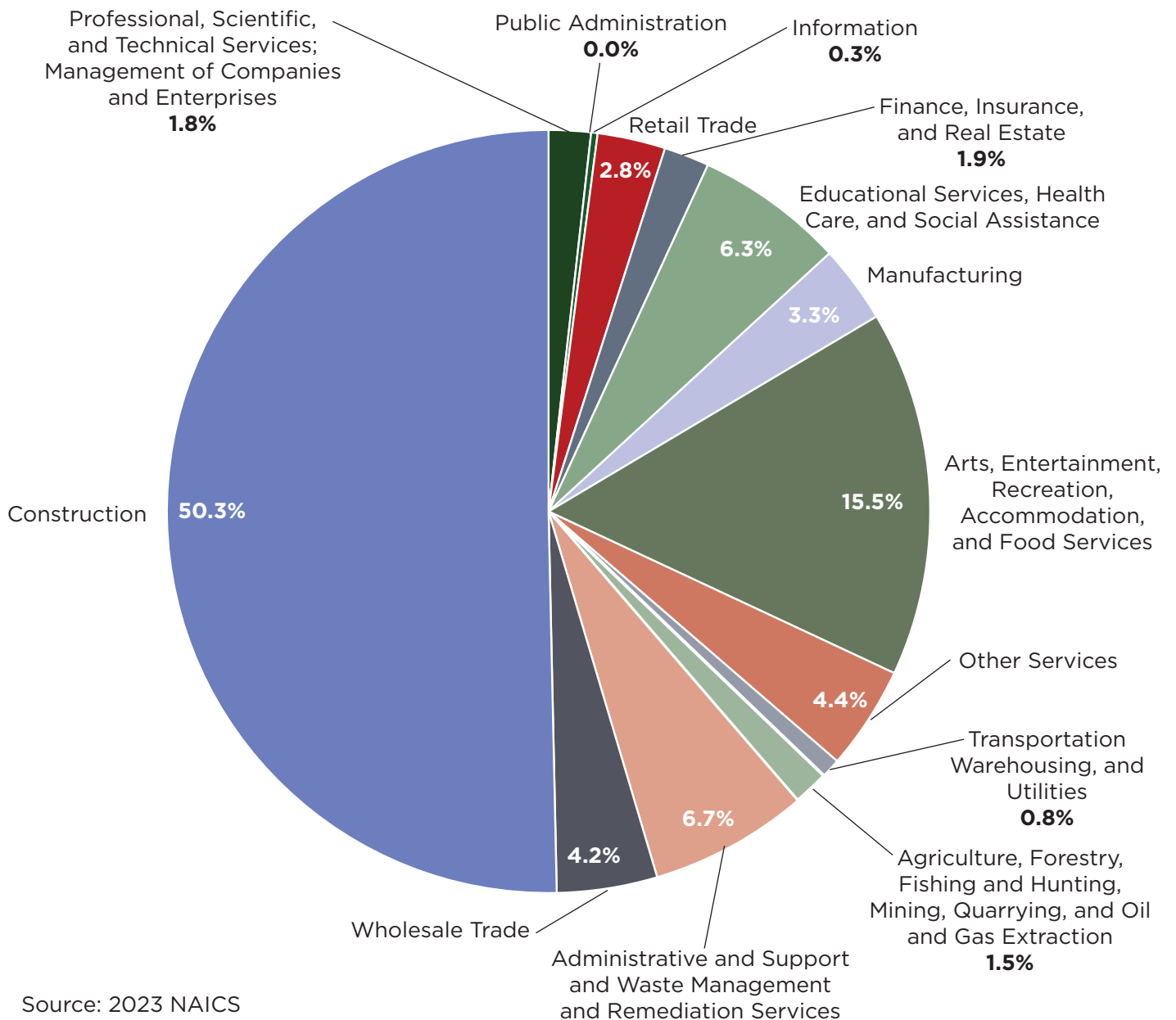


Bloom Township's employment rate and income indicate they are a strong portion of the county.

With 3,696 residents employed, Bloom Township's unemployment rate is 4.3% which is higher than the State of Ohio's unemployment rate of 3.4%, but far below Fairfield County's unemployment rate of 8.0%. The township shows a median household income of \$114,310, much higher than that of the county, which sits at \$87,069.

With just over 700 total jobs, the most prominent employment sector for jobs available in Bloom Township is construction, which accounts for over half of the total jobs available in Bloom Township. This is almost seven times the national average. An important note is that many construction jobs are temporary in nature.

EMPLOYMENT INDUSTRY SHARES



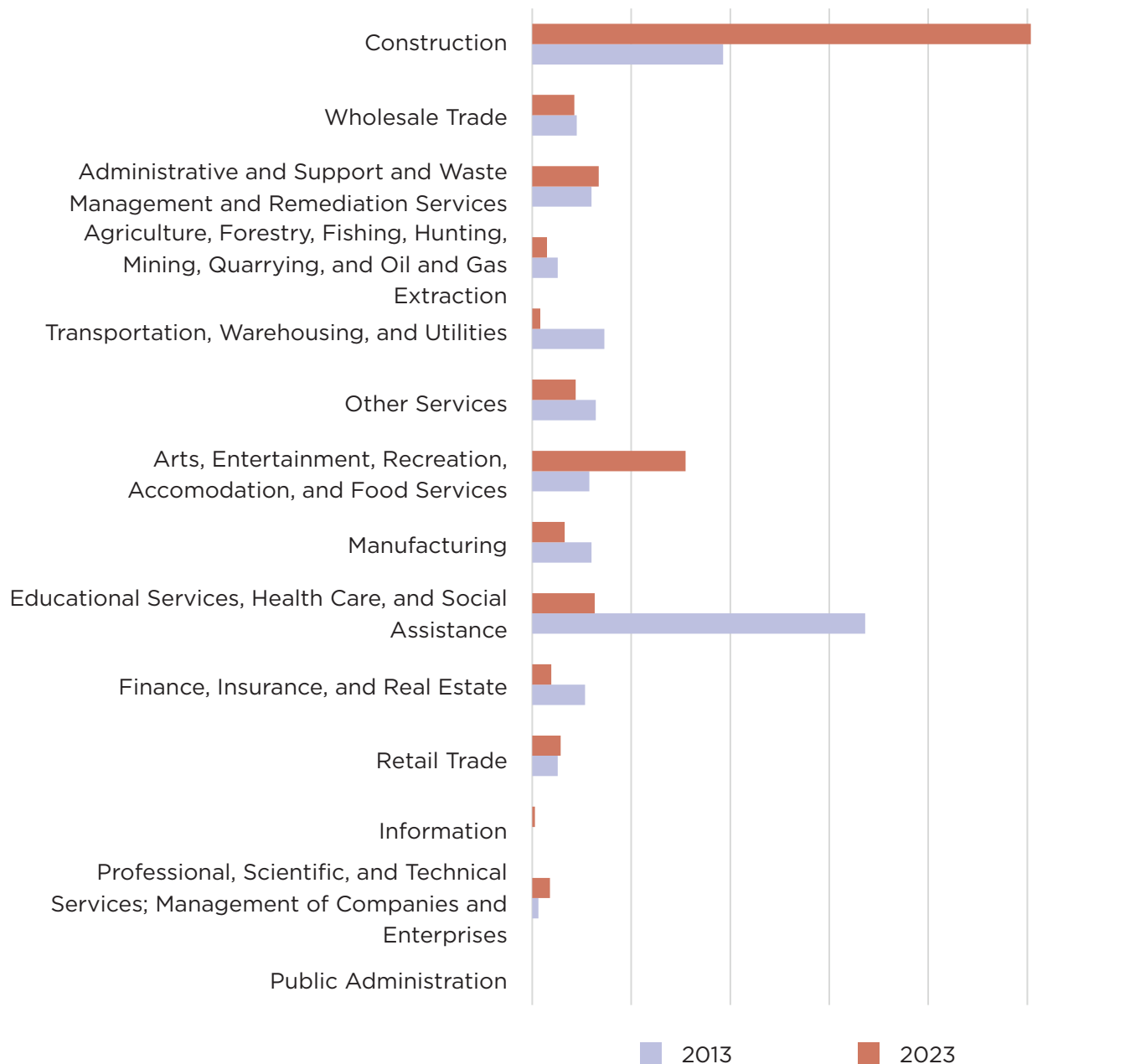
Source: 2023 NAICS

Bloom Township has seen a large shift in its employment sector shares.

The majority of Bloom Township residents commute out of the township for their daily jobs. Of the workers that work inside the township day-to-day, the vast majority are in the construction industry. There has been a considerable increase in construction jobs

since 2013. The change is likely tied to new housing developments within the township and other temporary construction projects. An effort to diversify and bring in a wider variety of employment opportunities may be considered to stabilize employment.

EMPLOYMENT INDUSTRY SHARES 10-YEAR CHANGE



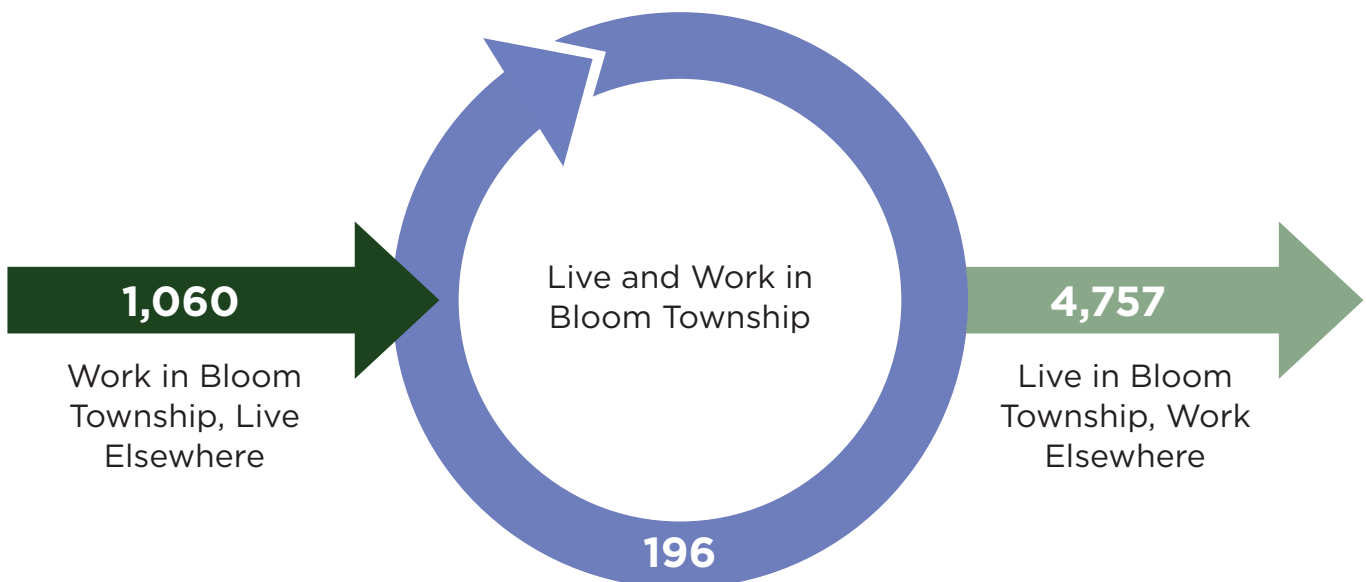
Commuters are primarily utilizing personal vehicles.

Almost 4% of workers see a commute of an hour or more, with the vast majority driving individually. Almost 6% of commuters utilize options like walking, carpooling, or public transportation. 13.5% of the total working population works from home. 34.9% of Bloom Township residents work in the City of Columbus. The high percentage of workers driving to work with long commutes puts a strain on infrastructure, generates high emissions, and leads to a direct monetary loss for commuters spending on gas and maintenance for their private vehicles.

Most workers that live in Bloom Township are employed outside of the Township.

Only 4% of residents stay in the Township for work. Residents traveling outside the Township for work are most likely heading to Columbus, Lancaster, and Canal Winchester. Workers coming into the Township for work are most likely coming from Columbus, Lancaster, or Pickerington. This commuting pattern indicates that Bloom Township functions primarily as a residential community rather than as a self-supporting community. As a result, the Township's economic vitality is closely tied to job growth and conditions in neighboring communities. This shows the importance of transportation connectivity.

WHERE RESIDENTS WORK

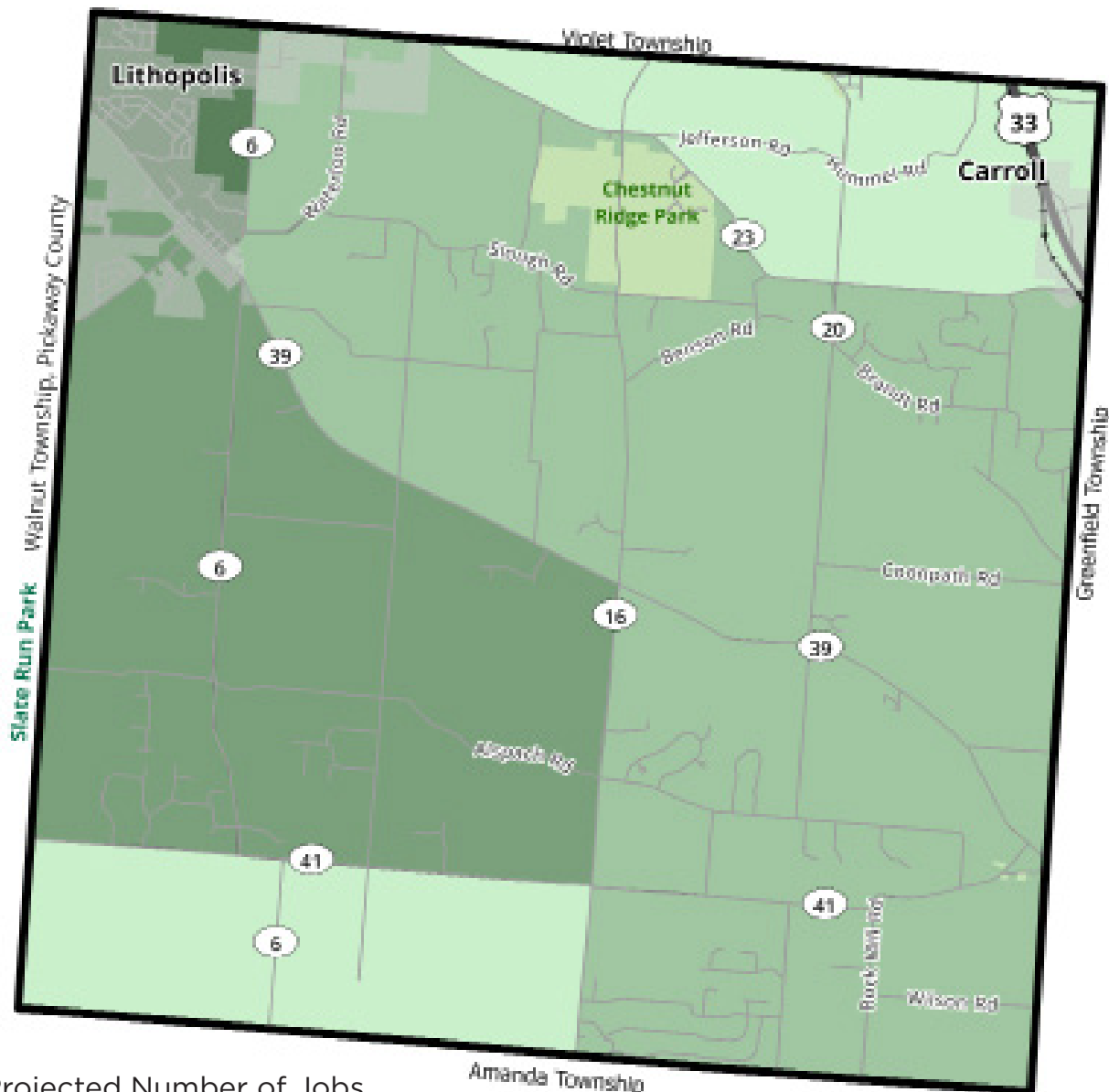


Source: 2023 US Census OnTheMap

Employment is centered around municipalities within and adjacent to Bloom Township.

The western edge of the Township has a higher proportion of the workforce population in comparison to the rest of the Township. This area is projected to grow based on the MORPC's 2050 job growth projections and has been designated in the Fairfield County Comprehensive Plan as a "Growth Area". This has implications for the roadway, housing, and service needs in this part of the Township, as demands can be anticipated to increase.

2050 PROJECTED JOB GROWTH



Projected Number of Jobs



Source: MORPC

HOUSING

Housing continues to be developed, but the number of units, price, and type may not match needs.

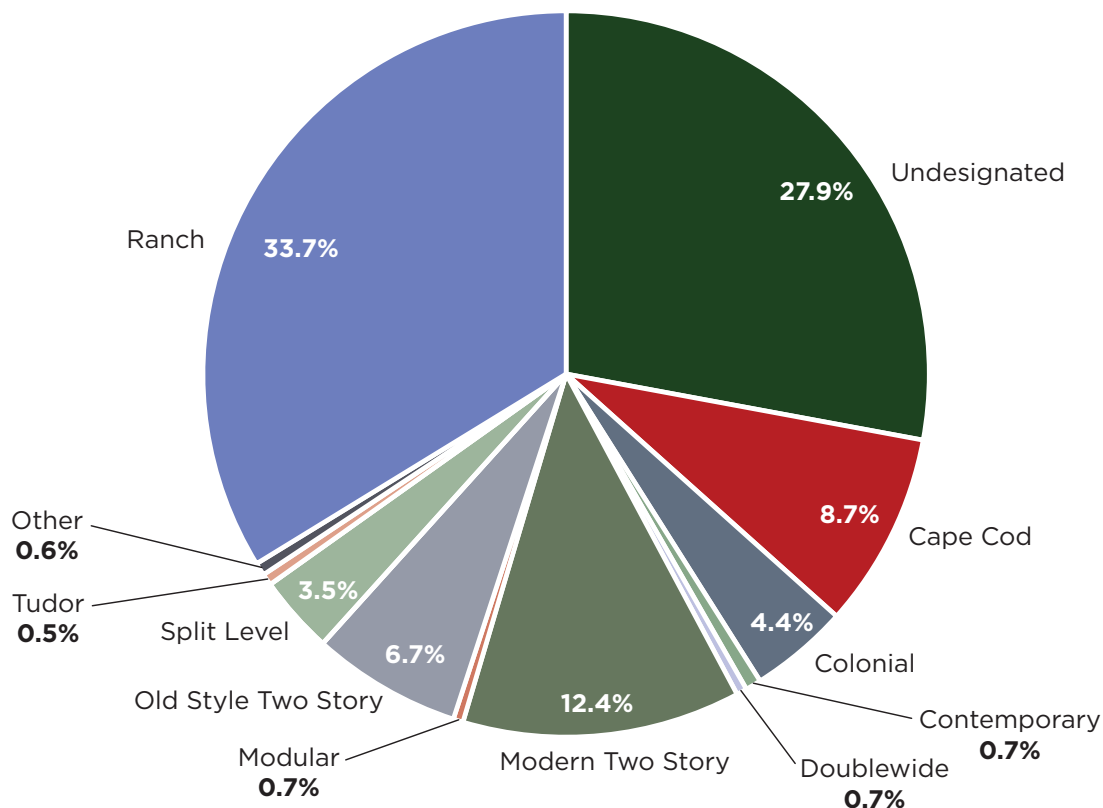
The Township has seen a 13% increase in housing units since 2010. The Township has a vacancy rate of 3% as of 2023. This is a low vacancy rate likely due to the fact that the population is growing at a faster rate than available housing. Of all the units occupied, 91% are owner-occupied.

The median home value is \$354,435, over \$100,000 more than the state's median home value of \$230,734, and \$80,000 more than Fairfield County's at \$272,200. This can be attributed to high demand from the growing population.

The most common home design is a ranch style home, with just over a third of the housing stock consisting of traditional ranches. Ranch style housing, with its single-

story footprint and typically generous lot requirements, consumes land at a faster rate than other housing types, which can strain a rural Township's developable acreage as population growth accelerates. However, ranch homes align well with rural character expectations and serve aging residents and families seeking single-level living, making them a politically and market-viable option where land supply is not yet constrained. The key question Bloom Township is whether its projected growth can be absorbed at ranch-style densities without triggering costly infrastructure extensions or consuming prime agricultural land, or whether a broader mix of housing types is needed to accommodate demand more efficiently.

HOUSING DESIGN SHARE

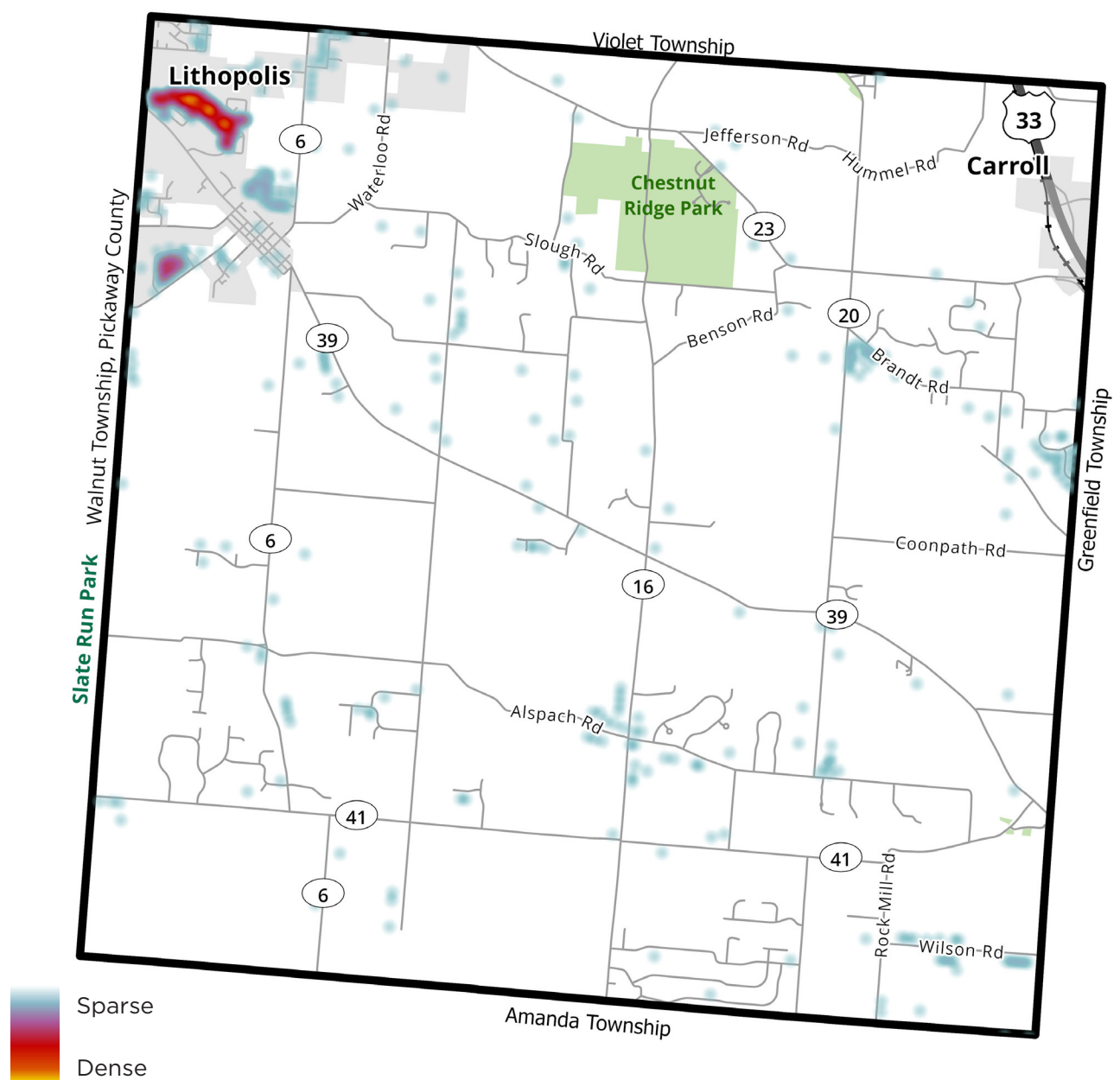


Source: Fairfield County Housing Study

New homes are being built sporadically around the Township.

Inside the township, new builds are concentrated around certain intersections: County Road 20 and Brandt Rd., County Road 16 and Alspach Rd., and Rock Mill Rd. and Wilson Rd. However, scattered, spotty residential development is also evident throughout the Township. This trend continues to fragment farmland and natural areas, and may drive up the cost of providing services like road maintenance, school transportation, and emergency response. If residential development continues in this fashion it may also erode the rural character that often attracted growth in the first place.

HOUSES BUILT SINCE 2010

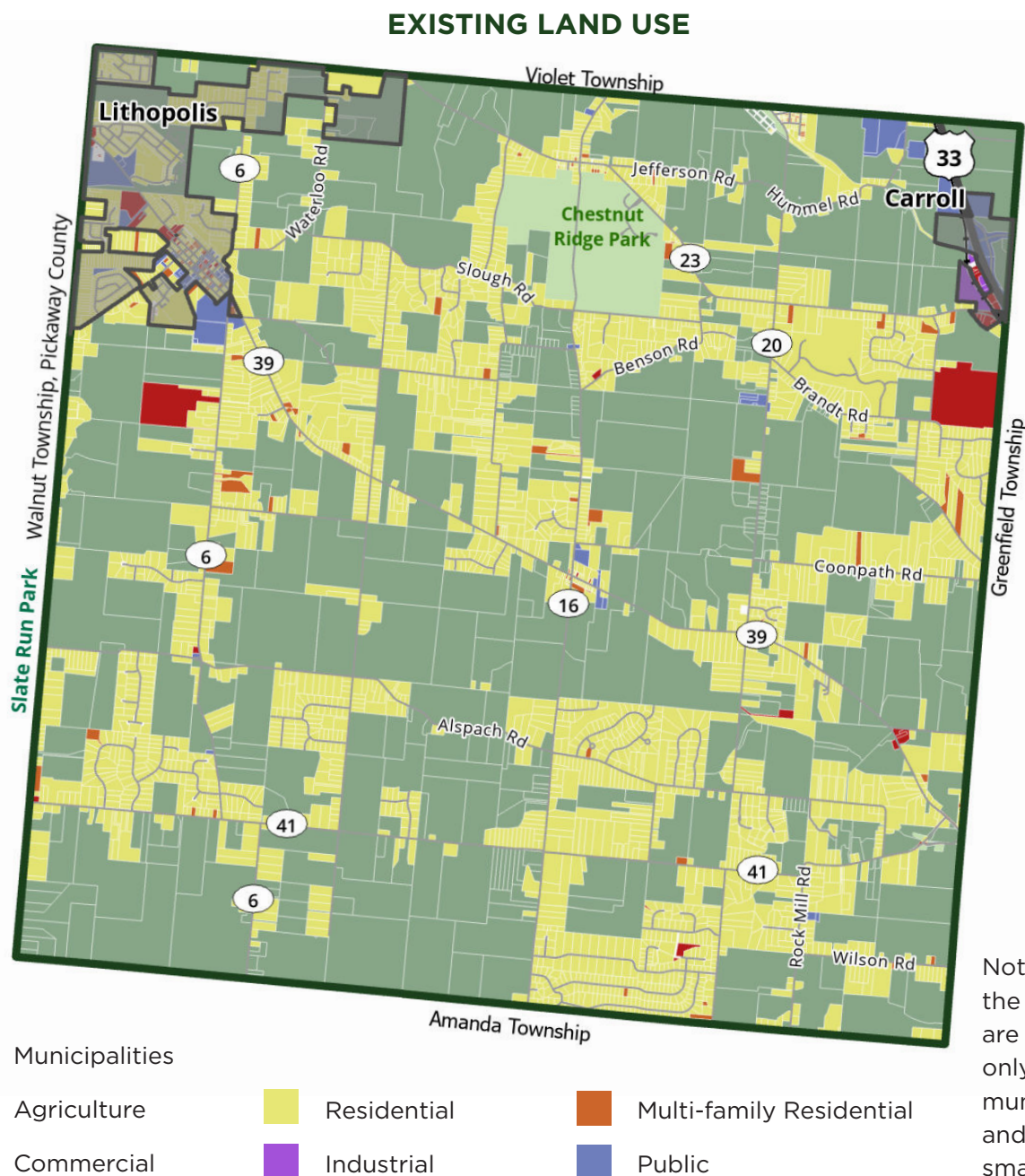


Source: Fairfield County Housing Study

LAND USE AND ZONING

Current land use is focused on agriculture and housing.

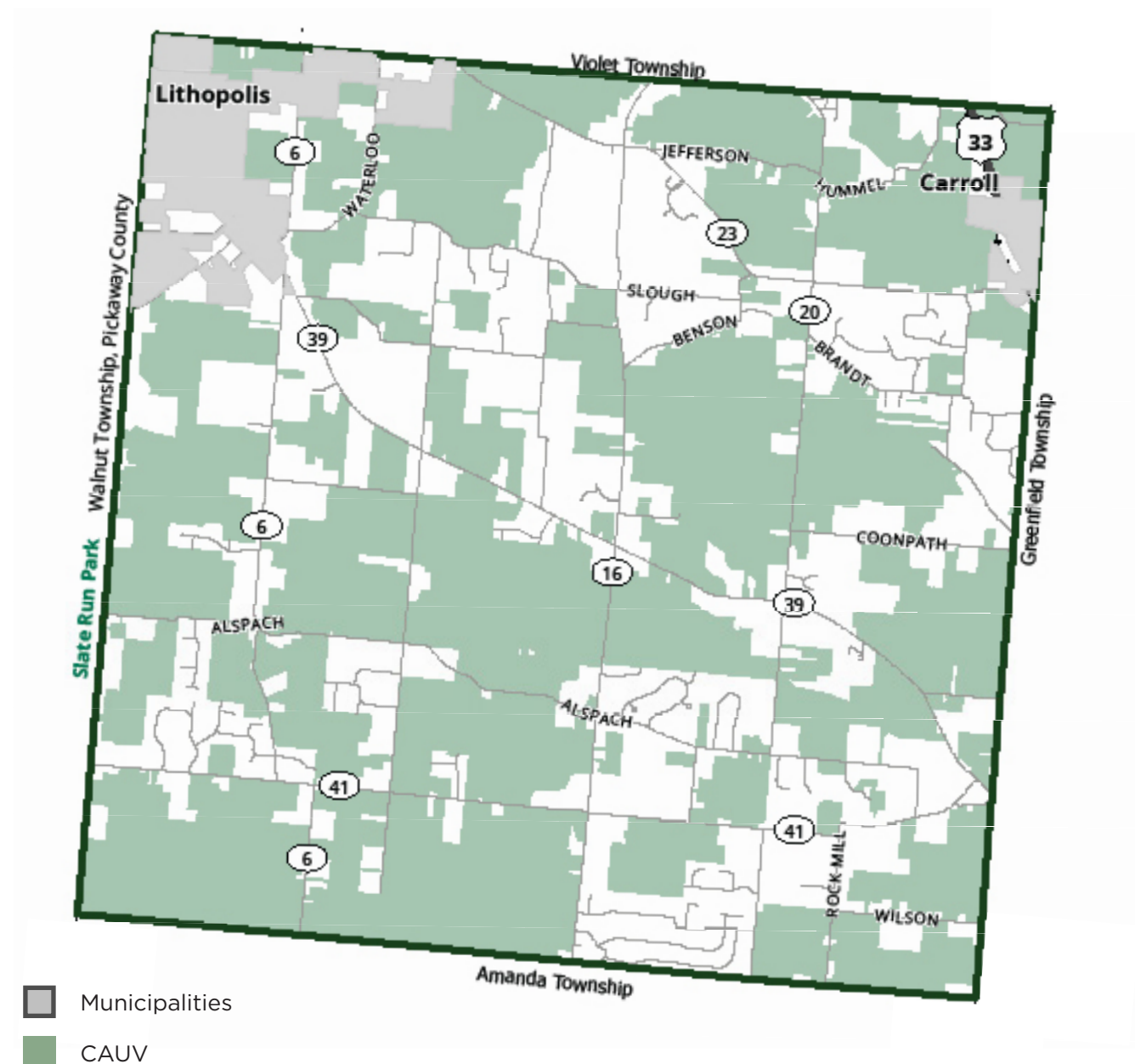
Most of Bloom Township is comprised of small single family housing subdivisions or one-off single-family homes. Development patterns are scattered and irregular. Agricultural land currently surrounds the single family homes. Interspersed rural housing can create an aesthetic that many residents enjoy in some locations but can also fragment farmland and natural areas and have a negative impact on view corridors as individual new driveways and homes are added. Over time, scattered homes can also require longer road, utility, EMS, and school bus networks per household.



A large portion of agricultural land is active farm land.

Current Agricultural Use Valuation (CAUV) is an Ohio tax program that lets qualifying farmland be taxed based on its agricultural value rather than its full market value, helping keep property taxes affordable for working farms. A parcel enrolled in CAUV is mostly composed of active farmland, but it can also include a residential land, if someone is taking part in agricultural activities at their home. CAUV enrollment helps to maintain existing agricultural land use by reducing the tax pressure that often pushes farmers to sell to developers.

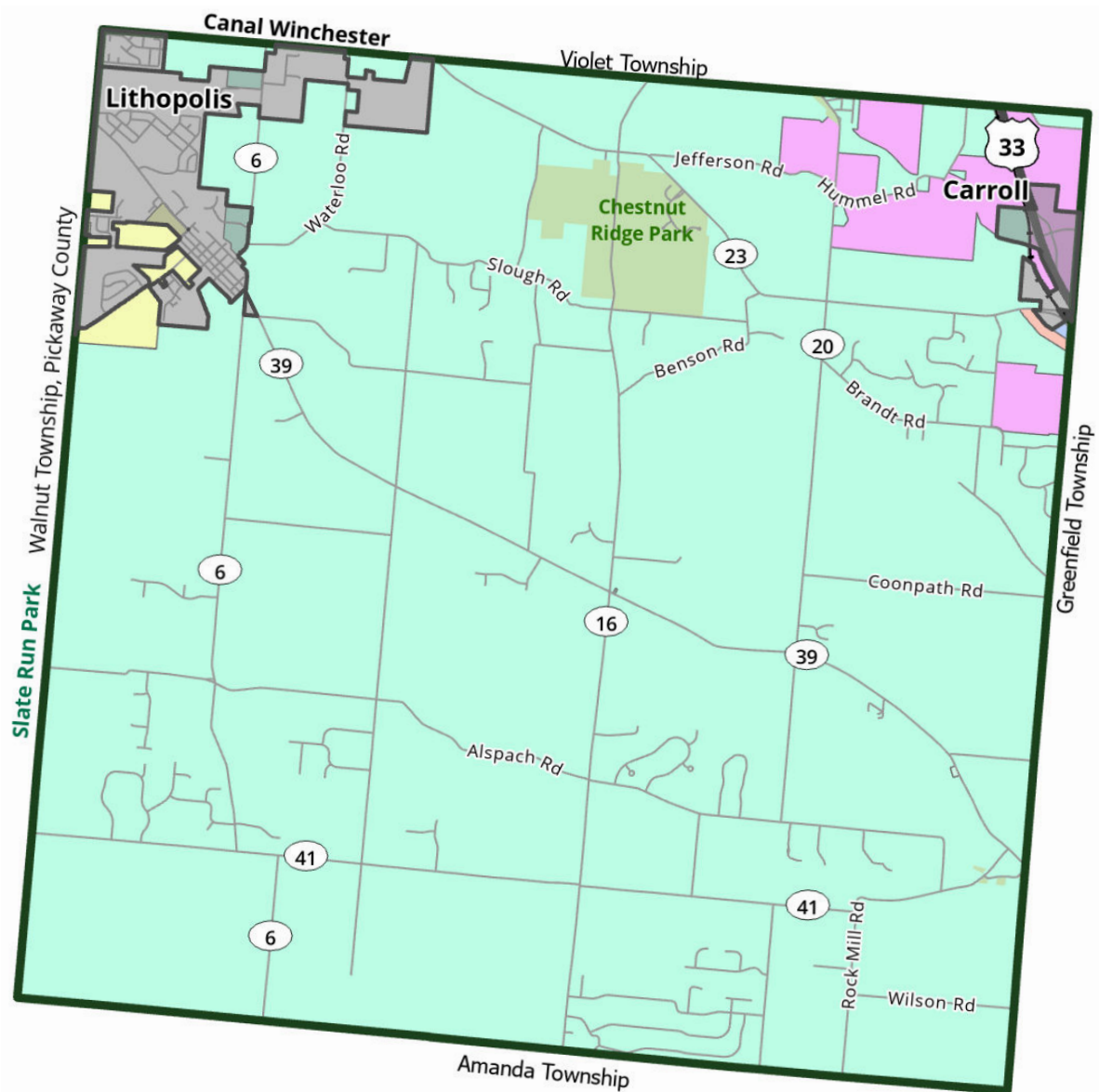
CAUV LAND



Zoning in Bloom Township is majority Rural Residential.

The purpose of the R-R, Rural Residential, zoning district is to provide for single family dwellings on large tracts within areas suitable for agricultural production, and to control indiscriminate urban development in such areas. There is a small concentration of R-1, suburban single family residential, near Lithopolis and B-2, Commercial Business District, near Carroll. The existing pattern gives the Township a baseline to evaluate whether current zoning is still controlling sprawl as intended, or whether changes are needed to better manage growth pressure.

CURRENT ZONING



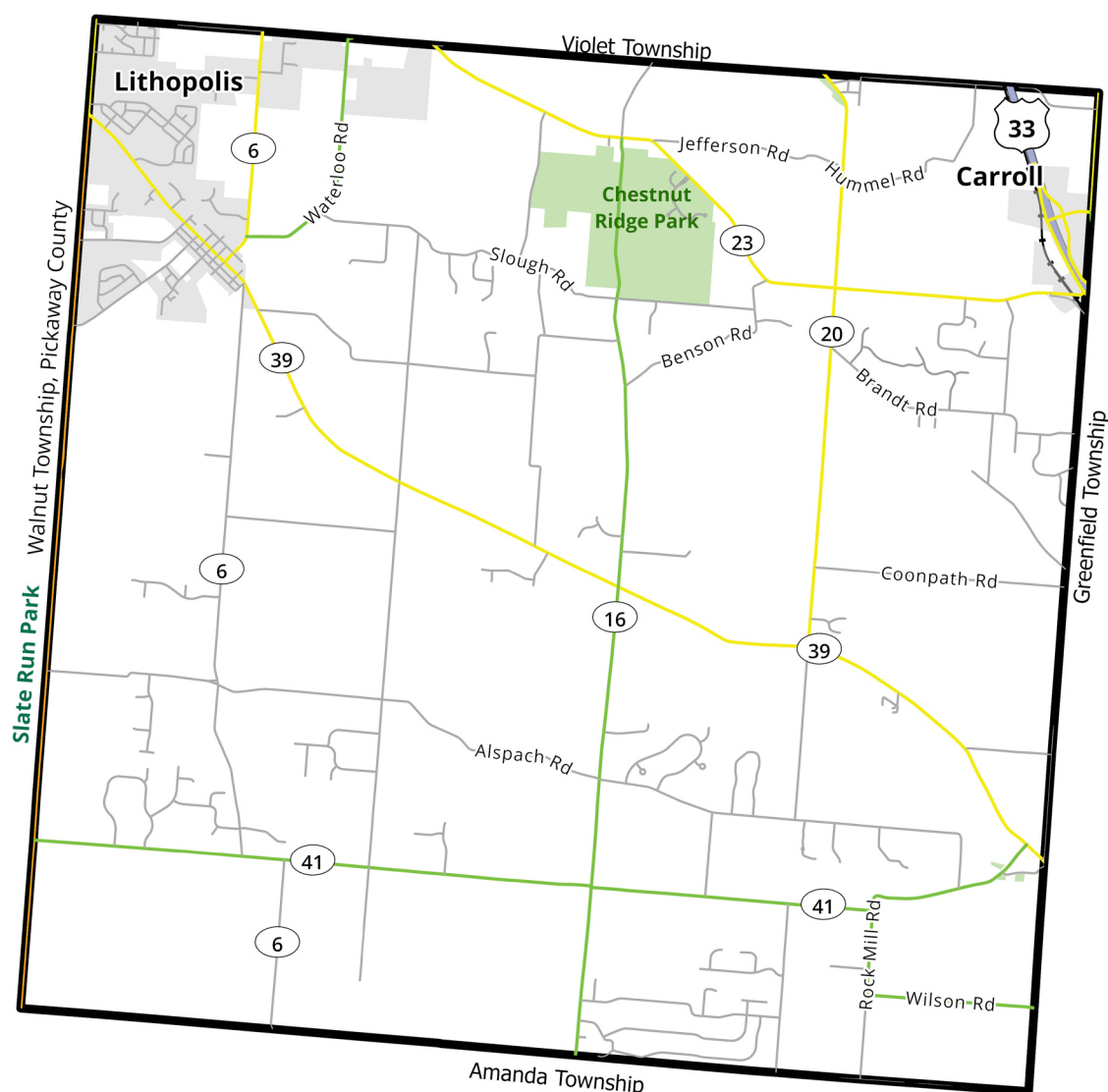
Rural Residential
 Suburban Single Family Residential
 Commercial Business District

TRANSPORTATION

Roadways are primarily rural with two-lane roads.

Functional Classifications are assigned to roadways based on access and the designated speed of the roadway. The highest functional classification is U.S. 33, which is a principal arterial. The next highest is major collector. Collectors are meant to carry traffic from local streets to arterial roads. Most collectors in the Township are at a minimum, two lane, bidirectional roads. Major Collectors include Lithopolis Road, Winchester Road, and Pickerington Road. As U.S. 33 is a major regional route, a large portion of traffic in and out of the Township utilizes roads connecting to it. This adds traffic volume to lower functional class roads around U.S. 33. These areas present safety hazards that can be expected to increase as the population in and around Bloom Township grows, but can be mitigated through thoughtful planning and investment.

ROADWAY CLASSIFICATION

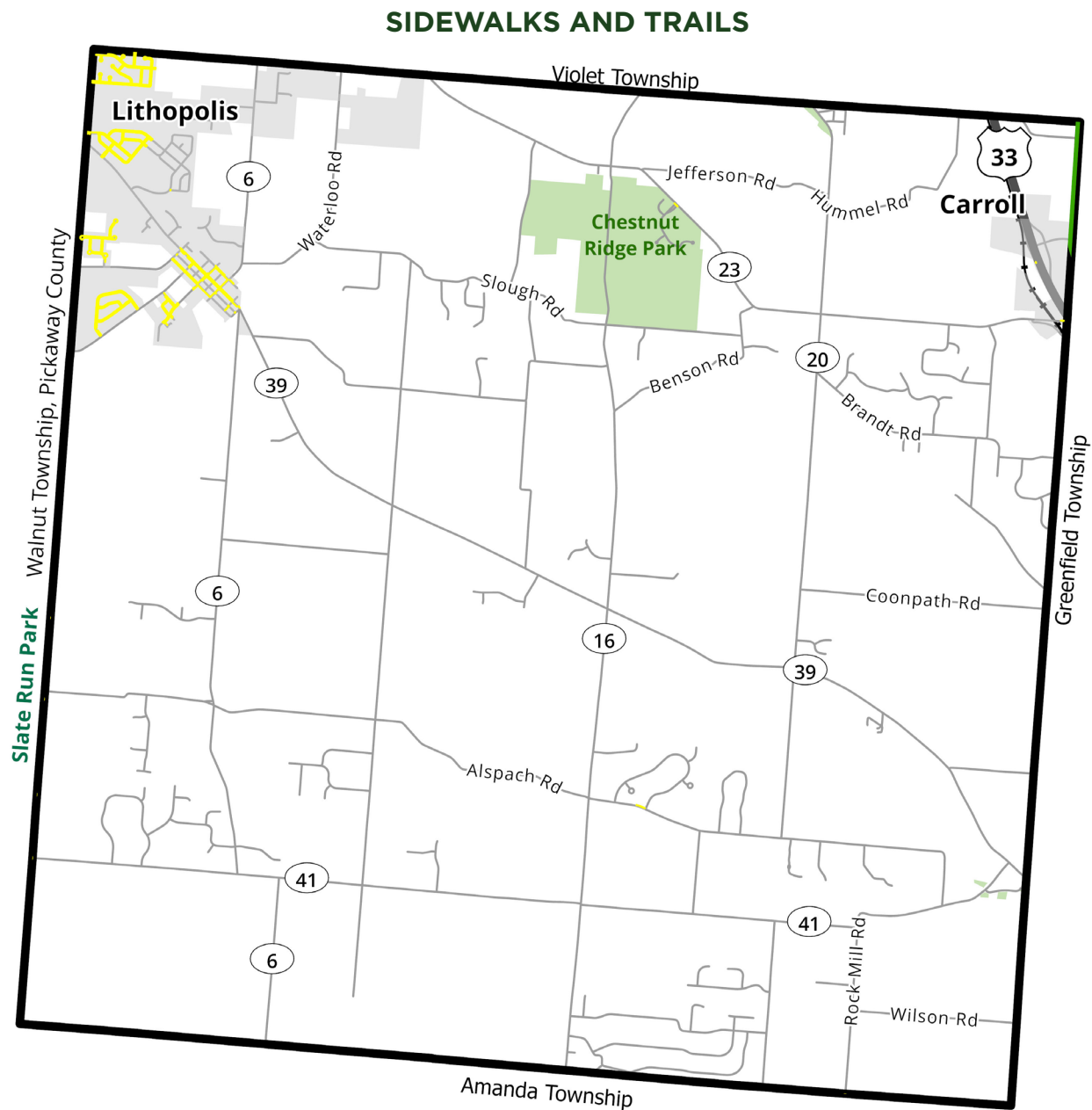


— Principal Arterial — Major Collector — Minor Collector — Local Road

Source: ODOT

Pedestrian and bike infrastructure is scarce in the Township.

Sidewalks and trails are concentrated mainly within municipalities and park areas, while county and Township roads generally lack pedestrian or trail facilities. Several trails and greenways are located just outside the Township boundaries, highlighting opportunities for new connections.



- Sidewalks
- Trails

Busy roads are seeing a high percentage of crashes.

Among non-local roads, Lithopolis Road carries the highest average daily traffic volumes and also accounts for a significant share of the Township's fatal and serious injury crashes, with several crash hotspots occurring along this corridor. Other high-crash areas are along U.S. 33, the intersection of Pickerington Road and Winchester Road, Alspach Road, and along Amanda Northern Road.

TRAFFIC VOLUMES AND SERIOUS CRASHES



Average Daily Traffic (# of Vehicles)



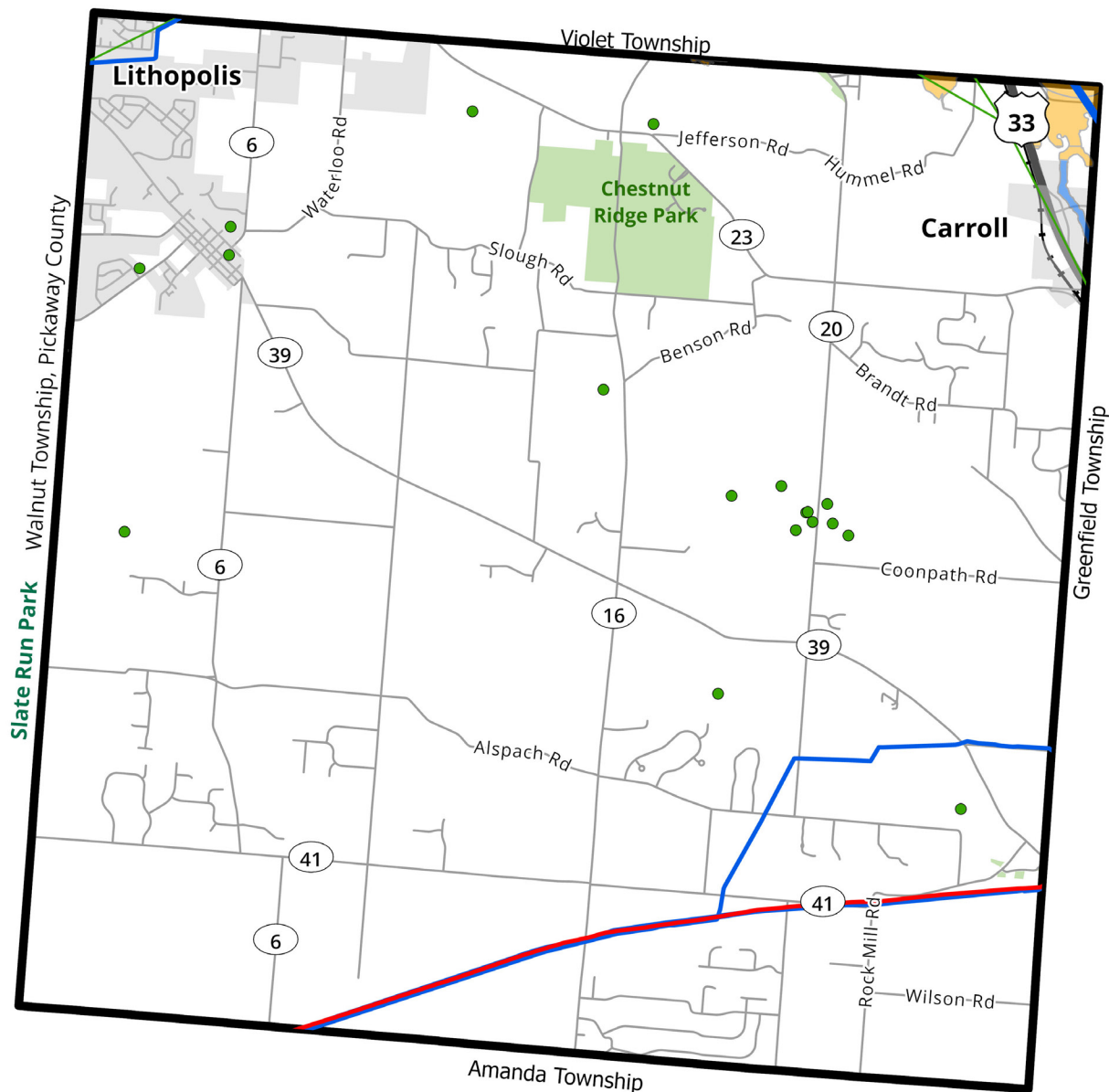
Source: ODOT

UTILITIES AND ENVIRONMENT

Environmental hazards are mostly along the edges of the Township.

Bloom Township's primary flood risk areas are in the northeast corner of the Township near the Village of Carroll. Major pipelines and gas sources limit development around them due to potential safety concerns. The Township should account for these constraints in future land use planning, directing growth away from the flood-prone areas and maintaining appropriate buffers around pipeline and gas infrastructure to protect public safety and minimize long-term risk.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS



- 1% Annual Chance Flood Hazard
- 0.2% Annual Chance Flood Hazard

- Gas Transmission Pipelines
- Hazardous Liquid Pipelines

- Natural Gas
- Gas/Oil Wells

Source: ODNR

Utilities are scarce within the Township.

Utilities in the Township mostly follow major routes, with the primary pipelines following along the County Road 41 and U.S. 33. Most of the unincorporated areas of the Township are not connected to Village or County water and wastewater utilities and rely on well water and septic tanks. The limited extent of water and wastewater limits development opportunities in the Township, constraining growth to lower-density patterns suited to well and septic systems unless utility extensions are pursued through coordination with neighboring villages or the County.

UTILITIES



— Electric — Water Lines - - County Water Main - - County Sanitary Main

Source: Fairfield County



3

Future Land Use

This chapter presents Bloom Township’s vision for how the community can evolve over the coming decade. Building upon public insight and analysis, the chapter identifies opportunities to guide future change, investment, and conservation. The Future Land Use and Character Map and accompanying character types provide a framework for understanding desired future conditions across the Township while maintaining flexibility.

BENEFITS OF A CHARACTER-BASED APPROACH

Rather than focusing solely on specific land use designations, the Future Land Use and Character Map illustrates a vision for how different areas of the Township can evolve over time. The map identifies locations where investment, development, redevelopment, conservation, infrastructure enhancements, community facilities, and other initiatives may help advance the community’s goals. Because it is intentionally conceptual, it conveys desired conditions and priorities without prescribing a specific outcome for every property.

This approach provides several advantages, including the following.

- It communicates the overall intent and desired outcomes for different areas of the Township, helping decision-makers evaluate whether proposals align with the community’s vision.
- It allows flexibility in how opportunities are achieved while still promoting the character, function, and quality of place desired by the community.
- It provides clear and accessible guidance regarding the types of improvements, investments, and development patterns that may be appropriate in various locations.
- It establishes a foundation for future planning efforts, policy decisions, capital improvements, zoning updates, and partnerships.

RELATIONSHIP TO ZONING

The Future Land Use and Character Map depicts the general pattern of desired future conditions within Bloom Township. This element of the Comprehensive Plan serves as a guide for public and private decision-making and will be implemented through a variety of planning, policy, investment, and development actions over time.

The Zoning Map and Zoning Resolution are legal documents that define the land uses and development standards permitted on specific properties within the Township today. The Zoning Resolution regulates land use, including the types of structures that may be built and how they may be used. Each property within the Township is assigned to a zoning district. According to the Ohio Revised Code, amendments to the Zoning Resolution should be made in accordance with a Township's comprehensive plan.

The Future Land Use and Character Map is not a regulatory document and does not establish specific land use designations. Instead, it provides guidance regarding the vision, character, and desired outcomes for different areas of the Township. Future development, redevelopment, public investments, and planning initiatives should support the overall intent of the opportunities identified on the map and contribute to the community's long-term goals.

The Future Land Use and Character Map will be implemented incrementally through a wide range of public and private actions, including development proposals, infrastructure improvements, economic development initiatives, conservation efforts, capital investments, zoning updates, and community partnerships. The table below distinguishes between the role of the Future Land Use and Character Map as a long-range visioning tool and the role of the zoning code as the Township's regulatory framework.

Future Character

Defines land uses and development characteristics generally (a policy guide)

Not parcel-specific

Not legally binding, but zoning changes should be "in accordance with" the plan

Zoning Resolution

More specific and detailed than the plan, Defines land uses and development characteristics allowed on a piece of land today

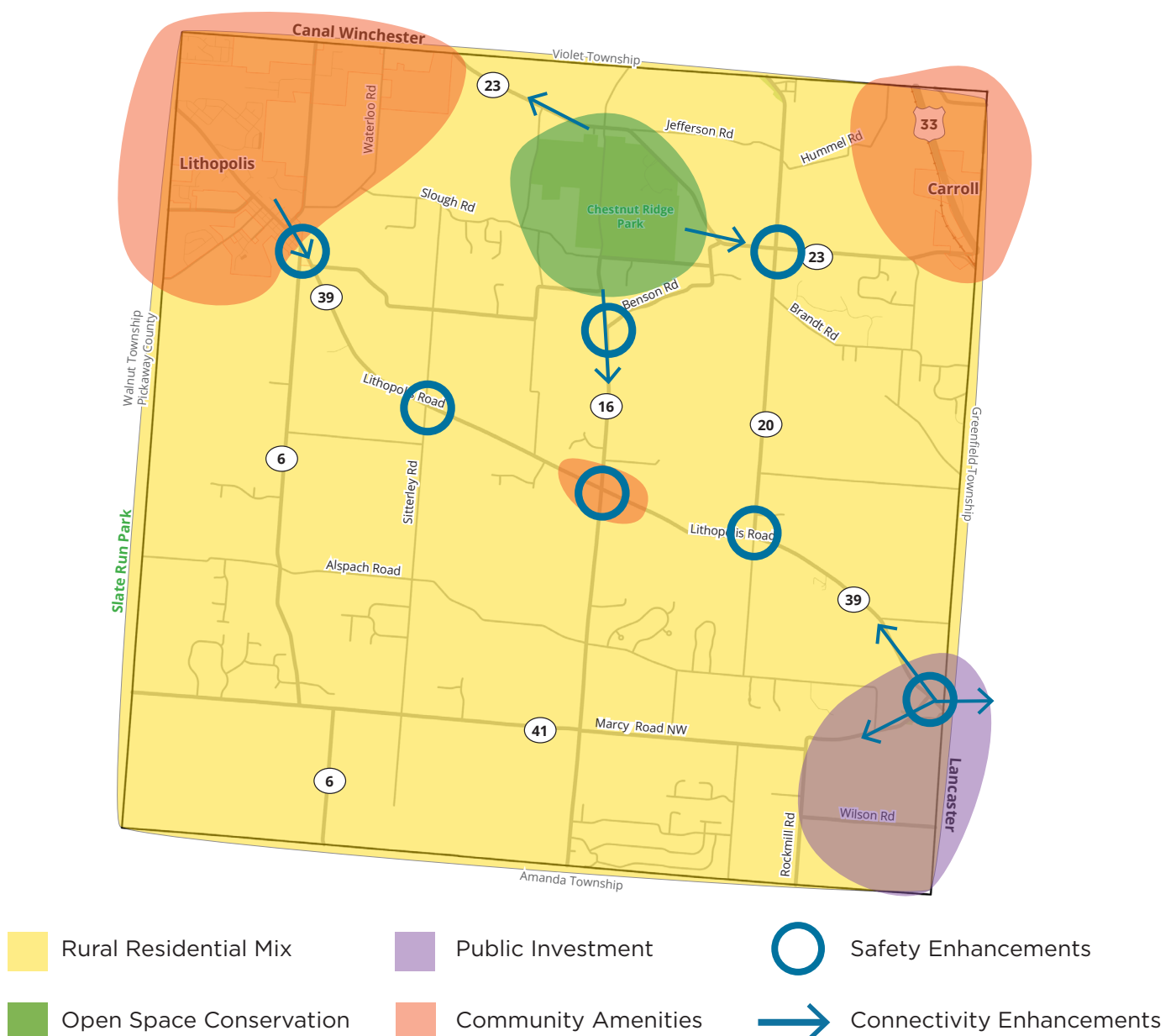
Parcel-specific

Local laws that regulate how land is used and developed. Departure from the zoning resolution requires either a rezoning (legislative process) or a variance (a quasi-judicial process)

FUTURE LAND USE AND CHARACTER

The Future Land Use and Character Map illustrates, at a conceptual level, future opportunities for Bloom Township over the next decade. The map is intentionally diagrammatic, including shaded, colored areas that indicate desired future conditions. The map was created based on input from community engagement and a review of existing plans and studies.

The map is supported by a series of character types. Character types are areas, neighborhoods, districts, or corridors that share similar attributes in their form and function. Attributes include the size and type of buildings and their relationship to the street, the surrounding street and block pattern, parking and access, as well as typical development types.



Rural Residential Mix

Allow housing integrated with agriculture. Focus on shaping residential development to support working farmland and maintaining view corridors.

Proposed Character Types:

- ◆ Traditional Agriculture
- ◆ Rural Residential

Open Space Conservation

Maintain as an amenity for the Township. This includes Chestnut Ridge Metro Park, a cherished amenity among Bloom Township residents, which should be a priority to preserve as a maintained natural area. There may be opportunity to add new entrances to the park to improve accessibility.

Proposed Character Type:

- ◆ Open Space and Conservation

Public Investment

Enhance to make more inviting and improve the sense of place. Rock Mill Park could be improved through expansion, connectivity, and amenities such as picnic tables or restrooms.

Proposed Character Types:

- ◆ Open Space and Conservation
- ◆ Traditional Agriculture



Safety Enhancements

Improve safe and efficient travel between key destinations. Improve to reduce injury accidents.



Connectivity Enhancements

Improve safe and efficient travel between key destinations. Provide direct, efficient travel by car, by bike, or on foot.

Community Amenities

Lithopolis

Lithopolis has seen housing growth in recent years. The small businesses and commercial uses in Lithopolis currently also serve Bloom Township residents. The area around Lithopolis may be a location to allow additional community-serving uses and a variety of housing types in order to concentrate them away from rural areas.

Proposed Character Types:

- ◆ Activity Center
- ◆ Employment
- ◆ Suburban Residential
- ◆ Mixed Rural

US 33

US 33 is one of the most traveled roads in the County. Carroll has seen growth around the highway and a new interchange is being constructed. This may be a location to allow new community-serving commercial uses in order to concentrate them away from rural areas. In selected locations, additional housing types may also be appropriate.

Proposed Character Types:

- ◆ Activity Center
- ◆ Employment
- ◆ Suburban Residential
- ◆ Mixed Rural

Lithopolis Rd and Amanda Northern Rd

Corner of Lithopolis Rd and Amanda Northern Rd is currently home to denser historic development patterns as well as the current civic hub of Bloom Township with the Trustees Office and Fire Station 552. This may be a location where community-serving commercial and public amenities could be concentrated to be closer to Township residents.

Proposed Character Types:

- ◆ Activity Center

OPEN SPACE AND CONSERVATION

Open spaces that highlight the natural features of Bloom Township. Areas intended for recreation or land that is permanently maintained as a natural area. These areas are protected from extensive development and may be improved based on community desire.

Intent

- ◆ Preserve existing green space and natural resources.
- ◆ Protect and enhance natural areas.

Primary Uses

Parks/Open Space

Secondary Uses

Civic/Institutional

Example Character



TRADITIONAL AGRICULTURE

Areas that are primarily in agricultural use and may also include single-family residential, agriculture-supporting buildings, civic uses, and specific small-scale retail. Buildings are generally set far back from the roadway on large lots (over five acres).

Intent

- ◆ Preserve existing agricultural land and limit development.
- ◆ Support transition in scale between denser character areas and Traditional Agriculture to preserve the rural character.

Primary Uses

Agriculture
Specialty Agriculture
Commercial (Agriculture-related, small-scale)

Secondary Uses

Single-family Residential
Civic/Institutional
Agricultural-related Light Industrial

Example Character



RURAL RESIDENTIAL

Single-family homes largely sited individually on larger lots. These areas are largely agricultural in character, but may see more lot splits. Includes some single family subdivisions.

Intent

- ◆ Allow for residential development while conserving agricultural land and open spaces.
- ◆ Provide housing options that accommodate a range of family size and preferences.
- ◆ Respect the natural resources of each parcel and incorporate them into site design (example: avoid clear cutting, protect streams and stream corridors, etc.).

Primary Uses

Single-family Residential
Agricultural

Secondary Uses

Civic/Institutional
Parks/Open Space

Example Character



MIXED RURAL

Blend of agricultural land and residential, commercial, and light industrial development. These areas are largely agricultural in character but may see more large lot subdivisions, lot splits, and suburban style patterns in the rural setting. Buildings setbacks and lot size may vary more widely than in Traditional Agriculture or Rural Residential.

Intent

- ◆ Provide areas for limited residential growth and commercial while maintaining agricultural use.
- ◆ Provide opportunities for agriculture-related commercial activities such as commercial nurseries and farm supply stores.
- ◆ Encourage flexible design that maximizes preservation of agricultural land and open space.
- ◆ Maintain rural aesthetic.

Primary Uses

Agriculture
Single-Family Residential

Secondary Uses

Commercial (locally serving, small-scale)
Parks and Open Space

Example Character



SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL

Single-family homes arranged along curvilinear streets. There is connectivity between neighborhoods and other non-residential areas. Land 'fronts' or is adjacent to other homes. Buildings and lots may range in size.

Intent

- ◆ Allow for single-family residential development organized around connected, curvilinear street networks that link neighborhoods to surrounding non-residential areas.
- ◆ Provide a range of lot and building sizes to accommodate diverse housing preferences while maintaining a cohesive residential character where homes front onto one another.

Primary Uses

Single-Family Residential

Secondary Uses

Civic/Institutional

Parks/Open Space

Example Character



ACTIVITY CENTER

A mix of small-scale commercial, office, and residential uses. These areas may also include institutional and public facilities. Commercial development should serve residents in surrounding neighborhoods and supply day-to-day goods and services. Existing patterns should evolve to become more walkable with shorter blocks, buildings closer to streets, shared parking and connections between residential and commercial areas.

Intent

- ◆ Accommodate small-scale commercial uses such as locally-owned businesses.
- ◆ Coordinate any new development with infrastructure improvements to promote safety.
- ◆ Provide connectivity to surrounding neighborhoods and civic uses.

Primary Uses

Commercial (locally serving, small-scale)
Office
Single-Family Residential
Civic/Institutional

Secondary Uses

Vertical Mixed-use (commercial first floor, residential or office above)
Parks/Open Space

Example Character



EMPLOYMENT

Employment-oriented uses characterized by office and low impact development. Large footprint structures offering flexible space to accommodate market demand for various users. Buildings are oriented to the street and can be adapted to support different uses such as light manufacturing, high-tech industries, and research and development. Buildings are set far back from the roadway and landscaping and buffering are used to minimize impacts on surrounding areas.

Intent

- ◆ Provide flexible space to support a variety of low impact industrial and office activities.
- ◆ Provide buffering through landscaping and building placement when adjacent to neighborhoods.
- ◆ Encourage physical connections to adjacent areas.

Primary Uses

Commercial (locally-serving, small-scale)

Office

Manufacturing

Secondary Uses

Civic/Institutional

Parks/Open Space

Example Character





4

Goals and Actions

GOAL

ACTIONS

- | | |
|--|----------|
| A Preserve Agricultural Land. <i>Maintain priority areas for working farmland, open spaces, and natural landscapes from incompatible development and establish clear boundaries between developed and undeveloped land.</i> | 6 |
| B Guide Growth to Appropriate Locations. <i>Direct new development to areas that are already served, or can be efficiently served, by roads, utilities, and public services, minimizing sprawl and protecting the fiscal health of the Township.</i> | 2 |
| C Maintain a Safe, Connected, and Functional Transportation Network. <i>Ensure that roads, intersections, and rural routes are maintained to serve existing residents, and that traffic and road safety impacts are mitigated for new development.</i> | 4 |
| D Protect Environmental Resources and Natural Systems. <i>Safeguard the Township's watersheds, floodplains, woodlands, and wildlife corridors from degradation to protect water quality, decrease flood risk, and enhance the natural assets that define the community's identity.</i> | 3 |
| E Provide Housing Opportunities to Meet Changing Needs. <i>Ensure that a range of housing options is available to meet the needs of residents at all stages of life and income levels, including young families, aging residents, and a workforce that is anticipated to grow, while maintaining compatibility with the Township's rural character.</i> | 4 |
| F Sustain Essential Services and Community Amenities. <i>Ensure that fire protection, emergency medical services, and maintenance keep pace with growth, and support the local schools, churches, volunteer organizations, and small businesses that form the backbone of Township community life.</i> | 3 |

GOALS AND ACTIONS

Goal A: Preserve Agricultural Land. *Maintain priority areas for working farmland, open spaces, and natural landscapes from incompatible development and establish clear boundaries between developed and undeveloped land.*

- A.1 Update the Zoning Resolution to align with the Future Land Use and Character Map.** The Zoning Resolution is the primary mechanism for implementing the plan's recommendations and the Future Land Use Map and Character Types, including the preservation priority areas for farming. The update will include aligning the Zoning Resolution with the vision and goals set forth by the community. This includes:
- Identifying misaligned parcels, missing district types, outdated standards.
 - Reviewing the zoning districts standards to ensure alignment with the plan's recommendations.
 - Identifying parcels that require rezoning for the new Zoning Resolution.

The rezoning process should build on the public engagement momentum generated by the planning process, so it is recommended that it commence within six months of the comprehensive plan's adoption.

- A.2 Conduct education pertaining to Current Agricultural Use Valuation (CAUV) programs to encourage participation.** Bloom Township already has a considerable amount of land in the CAUV program. To encourage other property owners to avail themselves of the program, the Township should partner with entities such as the Fairfield County Farm Bureau and the County Auditor to develop educational brochures and public workshops that are designed to bridge the knowledge gap. These educational resources and connections can help landowners understand eligibility requirements, the application process, and the concrete dollar savings available to them. Targeted outreach (e.g., postcards that explain the program's benefits and provide directions on how to apply) must be used to collect buy-in from small and mid-size farm owners.

Definition: Current Agricultural Use Value

CAUV is a program in which farmland is taxed at a rate that reflects its value for agricultural purposes rather than its value as development property. It was enacted by Ohio voters in 1973 as a means to preserve farmland. For more information, visit the Ohio Farm Bureau website: ofbf.org/tag/cauv/

A.3 Maintain and enhance the integrity of existing rural areas using techniques such as conservation design standards.

Bloom Township's open farmland, natural corridors, and low-intensity land uses are among its most valued and defining features. As growth pressures increase across the region, protecting this character necessitates proactive, deliberate policy that guides where and how development occurs. Conservation design for subdivisions can be encouraged through zoning to help communities experiencing significant development pressure to preserve agricultural land and rural character. With regional development pressure to build more housing in Central Ohio, a conservation approach to subdivisions allows that growth to occur while protecting the working farmland and open landscapes that define Bloom Township.

The Zoning Resolution update (Action A.1) should include a section allowing conservation subdivisions at locations directly tied to the Future Land Use Map and Character Types. Once adopted, the regulations should be revisited every five years to review their utilization, whether developers are participating voluntarily, and whether the plan's farmland preservation goals are being achieved.

A.4 Create a conservation easement program. Bloom Township should establish a conservation easement program in partnership with the Fairfield Land Preservation Association (FLPA) to permanently protect farmland and rural open space identified on the Future Land Use Map and Character Types. Priority targets for outreach include parcels with prime agricultural soils, active working farms facing development pressure, floodplains and stream corridors (e.g., near Carroll), and open land visible from major corridors such as US 33, Lithopolis Road, and Pickerington Road.

Conservation Easement

A conservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and a qualifying government agency or nonprofit that permanently restricts certain uses or development of land to protect its natural, scenic, agricultural, or open-space values. Ohio law allows agricultural land to be protected for public purposes.

Funding Sources for Conservation Easements

The conservation easements program should be entirely voluntary and rely on interested, willing landowners. The Township's outreach strategy should be tailored to the local agricultural community through direct one-on-one conversations to address potential concerns. These conversations should include an explanation of the legal process and how stewardship of the easements is carried out over time. Possible funding sources to explore include:

- **USDA Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP).** The primary federal program for agricultural easements. The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides up to 50% (or 75% for grasslands of special significance) of the easement's fair market value. The Township or a partner organization must provide the remaining match. Applications are submitted by eligible partner entities (land trusts, local governments), not by individual landowners.
- **Ohio Department of Agriculture Clean Ohio Fund.** This State program provides grant funding for agricultural easements through the Local Agricultural Easement Purchase Program. A certified local sponsor (such as the Fairfield Soil and Water Conservation District or a land trust) applies competitively for funds, and landowners must donate at least 25% of the easement value. Up to 75% of development rights value is eligible for reimbursement, capped at \$2,000/acre and \$500,000/farm.
- **Landowner donation.** Some landowners may choose to donate a conservation easement outright (rather than sell it), which qualifies as a charitable tax deduction equal to the appraised value of the development rights given up. Communication and outreach by the Township could increase local awareness of this option for landowners motivated by legacy.

A.5 Promote the Township as a place for specialty agriculture. The Township is well-positioned for specialty agriculture due to its proximity to urban markets in Columbus, Canal Winchester, Lancaster, and Pickerington. A growing regional workforce creates a ready consumer base for locally grown products. The Township should ensure that the Zoning Resolution and other local regulations do not inadvertently prohibit or complicate specialty agricultural uses or agritourism activities. In addition, clear communication that the Township and community actively support specialty agriculture will signal a welcome for these uses. This could include a statement on the Township website, a topic in future newsletters or community updates, and sharing information about existing resources that support specialty agriculture.

A.6 Restrict large-lot residential development patterns that fragment agricultural land. Bloom Township's rural character is defined by open farmland, scenic road corridors, and clear visual separation between agricultural land and developed areas. Piecemealed large-lot residential development patterns, such as flag lots, blur this separation. While each individual lot may appear modest, these development patterns collectively erode the contiguous open landscape that residents have consistently identified as central to the Township's identity.

Bloom Township should consider adopting deliberate regulatory limits as it updates the Zoning Resolution (Action A.1). Potential considerations include:

- Prohibit flag lots across the Township or limit to Mixed Rural character areas identified on the Future Character and Land Use Map.
- Require that new residential development in agricultural areas proceed through conservation subdivisions (Action A.3), which cluster homes and permanently protect surrounding open land, rather than through individual large-lot splits.
- Establish minimum road frontage standards that prevent the use of narrow access roads to create new residential lots.
- Set a maximum number of new residential lots that may be created from a single parent parcel through deed restrictions.

Flag Lots

A flag lot is a parcel of land with minimal frontage on a public road, with access provided by a narrow strip of land connecting the road. This development pattern is used to generate isolated residential uses in agricultural areas. They create access and emergency-response challenges and establish a pattern that encourages further lot splits over time, further eroding rural character.

Definition: Specialty Agriculture

Specialty Agriculture is the production of high-value agricultural products that differ from commodity crops such as grains, oilseeds, and forages. This could include horticulture, viticulture, winemaking, apiculture, aquaculture, and the production of fruits, vegetables, nursery stock, ornamental trees, flowers, sod, and mushrooms. Existing programs and technical assistance include:

- Ohio Department of Agriculture's Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. The ODA administers this federally funded program, which provides grants to support projects that raise awareness about and increase demand for specialty crops grown in Ohio. More information: agri.ohio.gov
- OSU Extension, Fairfield County. OSU Extension offices provide free or low-cost technical assistance on crop production, soil health, marketing, business planning, and food safety for specialty crop producers.
- Fairfield County Farm Bureau. The Farm Bureau can connect interested farmers with specialty agriculture resources, peer networks, and educational events. The Township should coordinate with Farm Bureau staff when communicating about specialty agriculture opportunities, and can request that the Farm Bureau include specialty agriculture as a topic at county-level events.

Goal B: Guide Growth to Appropriate Locations.

Direct new development to areas that are already served, or can be efficiently served, by roads, utilities, and public services, minimizing sprawl and protecting the fiscal health of the Township.

B.1 Implement and communicate a policy strategy relating to uses with major impacts. While Bloom Township is constrained by topography and lack of utilities in many areas currently, it is important for the Township to recognize that it could be an attractive location for data centers and energy infrastructure in the future due to proximity to other major investments in employment-generating commercial and industrial uses and infrastructure, such as the US 33 interchange. The Township should take the following strategies to establish a clear, proactive position on future development:

- ◆ **Amend the Zoning Resolution.** Adopt clear use definitions for “utility solar,” “agricultural solar,” “residential solar,” “wind farms,” and “data centers”. Permit rooftop and ground-mounted agricultural solar as accessory uses in all appropriate districts. Designate permitted

Data Centers and Other High-Impact Facilities

In recent years, many communities across Central Ohio have sought to proactively understand and address the impacts of data center proposals. Following is a list of potential impacts that the Township should consider in seeking to amend its zoning resolution to address data centers and other similar facilities.

- Consider conditional use permit requirement
- Define data centers as a distinct use classification (or multiple classifications based on size, power thresholds, or other criteria)
- Establish minimum lot size
- Establish setback requirements
- Set noise standards for cooling equipment and generators
- Address water consumption per facility
- Request impact studies, such as for electricity / grid impact
- Require landscaping and screening buffers
- Mandate architectural standards to reduce visual impact
- Restrict data centers in certain locations (e.g. agricultural and residential zones)
- Require annual operational reporting to the municipality
- Require a decommissioning plan

and prohibited locations for utility-scale solar (5–49.99 MW), wind farms, and data centers. Where permitted, require conditional use approval with minimum standards for compatibility with the comprehensive plan. Update these standards periodically as technology and state regulations evolve.

- ◆ **Pursue an exclusionary zone designation.** Request that the Fairfield County Commissioners formally designate Bloom Township as an exclusionary zone for large utility solar projects over 50 MW. While not binding on the Ohio Power Siting Board (OPSB), this designation creates an official record that strengthens the Township’s position in any future OPSB proceeding.
- ◆ **Prepare to respond to proposals.** When the Township learns of a proposal through direct developer contact, OPSB filings, media reports, landowner conversations, etc., the first step is to

determine whether the proposal falls under local zoning or OPSB jurisdiction. Locally regulated proposals (data centers, small solar, small wind) are subject to the Zoning Resolution as amended above. For OPSB-regulated proposals, the Township's most effective response is to formally intervene in the proceeding by filing a petition, retaining legal counsel, and submitting comments documenting conflict with the comprehensive plan. The Township should monitor the OPSB's public docket for Fairfield County filings on an ongoing basis.

- ◆ **Communicate clearly with residents.** The Township Trustees should promptly and clearly communicate with residents when a proposal arrives, including what has been proposed, the Township's authority and limitations, and likely outcomes. This includes hosting public meetings and releasing official statements.

B.2 Support limited commercial or mixed-use development near the US 33 corridor. As the US 33 corridor develops, there may be a growing desire for neighborhood services and small-scale commercial development in Bloom Township. These development patterns should not be expected until additional residential growth in the area creates a viable market. Commercial development in these areas should be small-scale, primarily serve local needs (including restaurants, personal services, and retail), and feature character-appropriate design.

The northeast area near US 33 also falls within the Township's primary flood risk zone. Any commercial development in this corridor should be conditioned on environmental requirements and floodplain buffer standards consistent with Action D.4 of the plan. The Zoning Resolution should be updated to ensure that development remains compatible with the Township's landscape, scale, rural character, and intensity of use that residents have consistently prioritized throughout the planning process.

Goal C: Maintain a Safe, Connected, and Functional Transportation Network.

Ensure that roads, intersections, and rural routes are maintained to serve existing residents, and that traffic and road safety impacts are mitigated for new development.

C.1 Direct resources for intersection safety improvements to locations identified as having more fatal and serious injury crashes.

Bloom Township should direct targeted capital improvements at specific intersections that most need safety improvements. This effort will necessitate coordination with the Fairfield County Engineer's Office, ODOT, and other jurisdictions to address safety concerns through a regional, data-driven approach. Crash data should be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that safety improvements directly address safety concerns. Having a clear plan for safety improvement will improve the ability to secure state and federal funding. Tying this effort to the road hierarchy described in Action C.2 will further ensure that these improvements maximize the use of Township resources to amplify benefits to the community.

The priority intersections listed below are locations with documented fatal and serious-injury crashes where targeted investment can have the greatest impact on community safety.

Priority Intersections:

- Lithopolis Road and Cedar Hill Road/Sitterly Road/Pickerington Road/Rockmill Road
- Amanda Northern Road and Benson Road
- Pickerington Road and Winchester Road

C.2 Strengthen traffic safety through County collaboration.

Coordinate with the Fairfield County Sheriff's Office to increase patrol presence and enforcement attention along key corridors experiencing higher traffic volumes and speeding concerns. Expand this collaboration beyond speed enforcement to encompass overall roadway safety, including visibility, signage, and driver behavior. As the Township continues to grow, maintain ongoing communication with county law enforcement to ensure enforcement priorities keep pace with changing traffic patterns and community needs.

C.3 Establish a clear road hierarchy to encourage traffic on main arterials and discourage it on other roads.

A clear road hierarchy ensures that arterials serve their intended function as through-traffic corridors while local roads remain lower-speed and lower-volume. The Fairfield County Engineer's Office is responsible for managing the road network outside of municipalities and implementing the County Thoroughfare Plan. Bloom Township should work with the Fairfield County Engineer to update thoroughfare recommendations and develop a roadway hierarchy that encourages traffic to use the higher functional-class roads listed as following:

Major Roadways:

- Lithopolis Road
- Pickerington Road
- Amanda Northern Road
- Winchester Road
- Marcy Road

These roads should serve as the primary routes for through traffic. Defining this hierarchy now will improve coordination and allow future land-use decisions, infrastructure investments, and traffic safety improvements to reinforce one another.

C.4 Apply traffic calming measures on roadways identified as having more fatal and serious injury crashes. On roadways where crash data reveals patterns of fatal and serious injury collisions, the community has both the opportunity and the obligation to act. Anticipated development in Central Ohio will directly impact Bloom Township's roadway network, amplifying the need for improvements. The Township should work with the Fairfield County Engineer to implement traffic-calming measures, such as reducing lane widths on local roads, where they would like to minimize through traffic (Action C.2). Priority roads that would most benefit from traffic-calming improvements are listed below. Traffic-calming elements can slow travel speeds, reduce crash severity, and improve the roadway experience for all users.

Priority Roads

- Lithopolis Road
- Cedar Hill Road

Goal D: Protect Environmental Resources and Natural Systems.

Safeguard the Township's watersheds, floodplains, woodlands, and wildlife corridors from degradation to protect water quality, decrease flood risk, and enhance the natural assets that define the community's identity.

D.1 Protect and enhance scenic natural areas using preservation techniques such as conservation easements, buffering, and land acquisition. Bloom Township's open farmland, stream corridors, and rural road landscapes are central to the community's identity and quality of life. Protecting and enhancing these resources is not only a quality-of-life priority; it is also a practical necessity for a community in which many residents and employment centers rely on them. These standards should be incorporated into the Zoning Resolution update (Action A.1):

- ◆ **Conservation easements.** Greenbelt designations along key corridors (e.g., US 33, Lithopolis Road, Winchester Road, and Pickerington Road) would create a protected scenic buffer between developed areas and the surrounding rural landscape. This would allow agricultural and recreational uses to continue without the threat of encroachment by incompatible uses, while also making it clear to developers where potential development could occur.
- ◆ **Buffering Standards.** Buffering standards for new development formalize the protection of these corridors. Minimum setback distances from road rights-of-way, stream banks, and the edges of designated greenbelt areas would establish a vegetated transition zone between new development and the natural areas the Township seeks to protect.
- ◆ **Land Acquisition.** The Township should identify a small number of high-priority parcels on the Future Land Use Map where outright acquisition would provide the greatest long-term benefit: properties at gateway locations, parcels with significant stream frontage, or land that anchors a contiguous stretch of open space. Acquisition could be pursued in partnership with the Fairfield Land Preservation Association (FLPA) or the Fairfield Soil and Water Conservation District, and may be eligible for state funding through the Clean Ohio Fund's Open Space Conservation Program.

- D.2 Partner with entities that promote private conservation efforts, including land trusts and other non-profits that conserve natural areas, outstanding natural assets, and farmland.** A conservation easement program (Action A.4) would be most effective if partnering with an experienced organization, such as the Fairfield Land Preservation Association (FLPA), rather than establishing a new land trust. This partnership can be initiated by sharing the Future Land Use Map and Character Types with FLPA and requesting a joint meeting to discuss which Agricultural and Rural Open Space parcels in Bloom Township would be the highest priority for easement outreach. The FLPA can direct its limited resources toward the areas the plan has already identified as most important to protect.
- D.3 Improve regulations for water testing.** Most of Bloom Township's residents depend on private wells and septic systems, making groundwater quality directly linked to everyday public health. With anticipated development pressure growing, protecting water quality is a conservation priority that the Township should address directly in its Zoning Resolution. Local and County requirements for groundwater protection should be reviewed to ensure that standards will mitigate potential impacts from increased stormwater runoff and other development impacts. A permit requirement for new test wells (before the commencement of any well drilling activity) would give the Township visibility into where new well activity is occurring. These regulations should be coordinated with the Fairfield County Health District to ensure consistency with neighboring jurisdictions.

The Fairfield Land Preservation Association (FLPA)

The FLPA is a Fairfield County nonprofit dedicated to protecting natural features and working farmland through the acceptance or purchase of conservation easements. The FLPA received its federal 501(c)(3) exemption in 2005 and coordinates with the Fairfield Soil and Water Conservation District on farmland preservation programs. More information can be found at <https://fairfieldlandpreservation.com/>

Goal E: Provide Housing Opportunities to Meet Changing Needs. *Ensure that a range of housing options is available to meet the needs of residents at all stages of life and income levels, including young families, aging residents, and a workforce that is anticipated to grow, while maintaining compatibility with the Township's rural character.*

- E.1 Allow single-family home modifications that promote aging in place.** The older adult population is the fastest-growing age cohort in Bloom Township. The Township should develop aging-in-place policies with particular focus on a housing strategy to help older adults remain in the community, living safely and independently. Recently, the Township adopted an resolution allowing accessory dwelling units, which offer additional options to the older population. This effort can be furthered by accommodating aging-in-place improvements, such as by-right permitting for temporary ramps, when updating the Zoning Resolution (Action A.1).
- E.2 Explore a partnership with a developer or organization to build senior or multigenerational housing.** To support downsizing and aging in the community (remaining in the broader Township), new housing to provide options for aging residents is needed so that individuals who may no longer be able to safely or comfortably live in larger homes may stay in the community. Bloom Township cannot build housing on its own. Still, it can study national examples of housing that bring generations together, such as shared homes, cottage courts, duplexes, complexes with integrated services, and communal design features. These housing types can also help support the implementation of Action E.4. Working with both for-profit and non-profit housing developers to facilitate the development of senior housing and multigenerational housing products will free up existing, naturally occurring affordable housing for young families to move into.

Age-Restricted Housing

Age-restricted housing developments are permitted in Ohio. As the community considers expanding its housing options for older adults, pursuing this type of development offers an established path to meet growing demand while diversifying the local housing stock to support aging-in-place and downsizing needs. Bloom Township leaders should research and become familiar with similar developments in the region that both will help the community to meet its housing needs and align with the desired character of the community.

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

ADUs are a small residence that shares a single-family lot with a larger, primary dwelling. ADUs are self-contained living spaces that can be attached to or detached from the main residence. Source: AARP. 2021. "The ABCs of ADUs." See more at <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/housing/info-2019/accessory-dwelling-units-guide-download.html>

E.3 Pursue housing rehabilitation funding tools. A housing trust fund or grant program can provide financial support for the production of more affordable and diverse housing, including senior units, through direct investment, property acquisition and resale, or rehabilitation. Such a program could assist existing homeowners in converting and improving portions of their residences for ADA compliance, such as widening doorways, adding ramps, installing grab bars, and converting bathrooms.

Administering a housing rehabilitation program directly would be a complicated administrative process. Instead, the Township should coordinate with MORPC and Fairfield County to support a future County-level program (as was recommended by the Fairfield County Housing Study). Bloom Township can play an important role in communication for this process to ensure that residents are not overlooked in a county-level housing program.

At a minimum, the Township should maintain a list of available resources (e.g., HUD's CDBG program, Ohio's HOME program, USDA loan and grant programs) so that eligible residents are aware of these assistance options. The aging housing stock in Bloom Township's rural areas, combined with the countywide pattern of older homeowners on fixed incomes, makes the Township's outreach role meaningful in achieving this goal.

ADA Housing

The Fair Housing Act outlines accessibility requirements for housing units in buildings with four or more units. Guidelines from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) detail these requirements, some of which include:

- Accessible building entrance on an accessible route.
- Accessible common and public use areas.
- Usable doors (usable by a person in a wheelchair).
- Accessible route into and through the dwelling unit.
- Light switches, electrical outlets, thermostats, and other environmental controls in accessible locations.
- Reinforced walls for grab bars.
- Usable kitchens and bathrooms.

E.4 Allow housing styles to accommodate young people and older adults in select locations. Bloom Township’s evolving demographic profile includes a growing population of young professionals and working-age residents, as well as a rapidly expanding older adult population. Both cohorts are affected by rising housing costs, indicating an imbalance between housing supply and the types of homes residents actually need. “Missing middle housing” products, such as small-lot single-family homes, townhomes, duplexes, triplexes, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), and multifamily options, are well-suited to accommodate young professionals and working families entering the housing market, as well as older residents seeking to downsize while remaining in the community. The Future Land Use and Character Map identifies select locations near Lithopolis and Carroll as appropriate for increasing and diversifying the housing supply. It is not the intent to allow alternative housing types in all residential zones. Rather, these housing types should be permitted in designated areas where infrastructure, scale, and character can support them. Changes needed to support these housing types include:

- Allowing higher residential intensities in designated locations.
- Reducing lot-size minimums.
- Lowering parking requirements where appropriate.

Bloom Township can maximize resources by coordinating with or partnering with Fairfield County to obtain the technical assistance needed to update the Zoning Resolution, as described in Action A.1. Design guidelines should be included with the zoning changes to ensure that new development maintains appropriate character with existing neighborhoods. Aligning the Zoning Resolution with the plan’s recommendations will set clearer expectations for property owners, produce more predictable outcomes for the Township, and create a more efficient path to realizing the community’s vision.

Key Regional or Nonprofit Housing Organizations

- Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC): serves as the regional planning agency for Central Ohio and provides technical assistance, data, research, and planning resources (e.g., housing needs assessments, age-friendly planning, and land use policy) to communities across the region.
- Homeport: a Central Ohio nonprofit community development organization that develops, finances, and manages affordable housing (including senior housing, homeownership programs, and rental developments) across the region.
- United Way: a Central Ohio nonprofit organization that connects residents to a broad network of social services (e.g., housing stability programs, financial assistance, and referrals through the 211 helpline) that help vulnerable residents, including seniors, maintain safe and stable housing.
- National Church Residences (NCR): one of the nation’s largest nonprofit providers of affordable senior housing and services, with a strong presence in Ohio, developing and managing senior apartment communities and offering supportive services for older adults.

Impact of Development on Local School Districts

School districts in Ohio are primarily funded by property taxes, making land uses that generate high per-acre property values especially important to school revenue. Costs related to land use are largely driven by the number of students generated. But costs are not directly proportional to the number of students and are usually only significantly affected by large changes in student enrollment.

Throughout the Central Ohio region, places with single-family neighborhoods and older multifamily developments, have significantly larger share of units with three or more bedrooms than much of the newer housing that is being built. Regionally, there is demand for housing with fewer units, which typically is marketed to young professionals and move-down empty-nesters. This newer housing with fewer bedrooms generally generates fewer students per unit and per acre than existing housing. In other words, the number of housing units is not the only factor that influences student enrollment, as enrollment largely depends on the type of housing being created. Individual school districts do also conduct their own analysis of the impact of housing on schools, and this analysis should help guide decision-making.

What does this mean for Bloom Township?

The Bloom-Carroll Local School District has been constrained by growth that has occurred since the early 2000s. This comprehensive plan is separate and distinct from a plan for school capacity, but land use recommendations in the plan could impact the school district. Specifically:

1. The Bloom-Carroll Local School District has maintained an adequate general fund balance, indicating good fiscal health. More commercial and employment uses can increase property tax revenue that supports the School District. This can be permitted or encouraged in the areas designated in the Future Land Use and Character Map for Community Amenities, while limiting such uses in the majority of the Township to maintain the predominantly rural-residential mix.
2. Newer housing that is age-targeted (for older adults or young professionals) or housing with fewer bedrooms, which may include smaller single-family, or other housing products, such as cottage courts or duplexes, will help meet housing demand without adding as many students to the school district as other types of housing.

Goal F: Sustain Essential Services and Community Amenities. *Ensure that fire protection, emergency medical services, and maintenance keep pace with growth, and support the local schools, churches, volunteer organizations, and small businesses that form the backbone of Township community life.*

F.1 Study feasibility of locating public services more centrally. Bloom Township currently operates two fire stations that provide fire, rescue, and medical services to the entire Township, parts of Madison Township, Pickaway County, and the City of Canal Winchester. This arrangement reflects the Township's historically dispersed, rural character, in which no single location serves as a clear geographic center of population. As growth continues along the US 33 corridor and in the western portions of the Township, the adequacy of existing service coverage should be evaluated.

The Township should conduct a feasibility study to assess whether the current location of these services optimally supports the existing and projected population. The study should evaluate response-time coverage across the Township's road network, identify areas where coverage gaps may emerge as growth occurs, and assess station locations to determine whether a new station or repositioning of existing resources is necessary. Analysis of the Bloom Township Fire Services should be conducted in coordination with the Fairfield County Engineer's Office and neighboring jurisdictions to better understand the needs of the surrounding area. The results of the study should directly inform future capital improvement planning.

F.2 Explore options to increase capacity of Township

Staff. Bloom Township’s rapid population growth (24% since 2010, with another 33% projected by 2050) is placing greater demands on the Township’s administration, which was structured for a smaller, slower-growing community. More residents mean more development applications, more zoning reviews, more infrastructure coordination, more service trips for the Fire Department and Road Department, and more public communication. The Township’s ability to manage growth proactively, implement this plan’s recommendations, and maintain service quality will depend in part on whether its administrative capacity keeps pace with its expanding responsibilities. The Township should evaluate its current staffing structure and identify where capacity constraints are most apparent. Options may include adding part-time or full-time staff, contracting for specialized services (e.g., grant writing, legal services, parks and recreation) through Fairfield County or a regional planning agency such as MORPC, or sharing staff with neighboring jurisdictions through a formal intergovernmental agreement.

F.3 Explore aggregation of services (e.g., trash). Most residents in unincorporated areas of Bloom Township arrange and pay for trash collection individually, resulting in a patchwork of providers, inconsistent service levels, and potentially higher costs than could be achieved through collective purchasing. As the Township’s population grows, the volume of service demands will also increase. The Township should explore aggregated or coordinated service arrangements that offer an opportunity to improve efficiency, reduce costs for residents, ensure standardized terms, and maximize the Township’s limited administrative resources. Bloom Township could also consider partnering with neighboring jurisdictions when negotiating a service contract. A committee of residents should be appointed by the township to lead this effort.

Service Aggregation

Service aggregation is an arrangement in which the Township, acting as the collective bargaining agent, negotiates a single contract with one or more providers on behalf of all participating residents. Participation can be structured as opt-in (residents choose to join) or opt-out (all residents are enrolled unless they request otherwise). Service aggregation can be provided for trash and recycling services. Examples include Violet Township, Fairfield County; Norwich Township, Franklin County; and Springfield Township, Hamilton County.



5

Implementation

The Bloom Township Comprehensive Plan is a long-term policy guide and action agenda that will serve the community for the next 10 years. The Comprehensive Plan is intended to be used on a day-to-day basis to guide the work of the Bloom Township trustees, boards, and commissions. The plan document will be ever evolving and require monitoring of actions which are completed or progressed. Integration into the Township's annual processes, tracking progress, and periodically updating will ensure the longevity of the plan's vision.

This chapter includes guidance on managing and using the plan along with a matrix that provides timeframes and potential relevant parties that may have some responsibility for implementation for each of the plan's actions.

Short term actions may be implemented within 0-4 years, mid-term actions may be implemented within 5-10 years, and long-term actions may take more than 10 years to implement. The following matrix can be used to guide and track implementation progress over time.

ACTION		TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT
A	Preserve Agricultural Land	<i>Maintain priority areas for working farmland, open spaces, and natural landscapes from incompatible development and establish clear boundaries between developed and undeveloped land.</i>		
A.1	Update the Zoning Resolution to align with the Future Land Use and Character Map.	Short-term	Township Administrator, Trustees	Fairfield County Planning Commission
A.2	Conduct education pertaining to Current Agricultural Use Valuation (CAUV) programs to encourage participation.	Mid-term	Township Administrator, Trustees	Fairfield County Commissioners, Farm Bureau, County Auditor
A.3	Maintain and enhance the integrity of existing rural areas using techniques such as conservation design standards.	Short-term	Township Administrator	Trustees
A.4	Create a conservation easement program.	Ongoing	Township Administrator	Trustees
A.5	Promote the Township as a place for specialty agriculture.	Short-term	Township Administrator	Trustees
A.6	Restrict large-lot residential development patterns that fragment agricultural land.	Mid-term	Township Administrator	Trustees, Fairfield Land Preservation Association (FLPA)
B	Guide Growth to Appropriate Locations	<i>Direct new development to areas that are already served, or can be efficiently served, by roads, utilities, and public services, minimizing sprawl and protecting the fiscal health of the Township.</i>		
B.1	Implement and communicate a policy strategy relating to uses with major impacts.	Short-term	Township Administrator	Trustees
B.2	Support limited commercial or mixed-use development near the US 33 corridor.	Long-term	Township Administrator	Trustees, Fairfield County Economic Development, Fairfield County Engineer's Office

ACTION		TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT
C	Maintain a Safe, Connected, and Functional Transportation Network.	<i>Ensure that roads, intersections, and rural routes are maintained to serve existing residents, and that traffic and road safety impacts are mitigated for new development.</i>		
C.1	Direct resources for intersection safety improvements to locations identified as having more fatal and serious injury crashes.	Short-term	Road Department, Township Administrator	Trustees, Fairfield County Engineer's Office, ODOT, Neighboring Jurisdictions
C.2	Strengthen traffic safety through County collaboration.	Ongoing	Road Department, Township Administrator, Bloom Township Fire Department	Fairfield County Sheriff's Office Trustees, Fairfield County Engineer's Office
C.3	Establish a clear road hierarchy to encourage traffic on main arterials and discourage it on other roads.	Mid-term	Road Department, Township Administrator	Trustees, Fairfield County Engineer's Office
C.4	Apply traffic calming measures on roadways identified as having more fatal and serious injury crashes.	Long-term	Road Department, Township Administrator	Trustees, Fairfield County Engineer's Office
D	Protect Environment Resources and Natural Systems.	<i>Safeguard the Township's watersheds, floodplains, woodlands, and wildlife corridors from degradation to protect water quality, decrease flood risk, and enhance the natural assets that define the community's identity.</i>		
D.1	Protect and enhance scenic natural areas using preservation techniques such as conservation easements, buffering, and land acquisition.	Mid-term	Township Administrator, Trustees, Fairfield County Parks District	Fairfield Land Preservation Association (FLPA), Fairfield Soil and Water Conservation District, Clean Ohio Fund's Open Space Conservation Program
D.2	Partner with entities that promote private conservation efforts, including land trusts and other non-profits that conserve natural areas, outstanding natural assets, and farmland.	Mid-term	Township Administrator, Fairfield Land Preservation Association (FLPA),	Trustees, Fairfield County Parks District
D.3	Improve regulations for water testing.	Ongoing	Trustees, Fairfield County Health Department	Private Testing Services

ACTION		TIMEFRAME	LEAD	SUPPORT
E	Provide Housing Opportunities to meet Changing Needs.	<i>Ensure that a range of housing options is available to meet the needs of residents at all stages of life and income levels, including young families, aging residents, and a workforce that is anticipated to grow, while maintaining compatibility with the Township's rural character.</i>		
E.1	Allow single-family home modifications that promote aging in place.	Short-term	Township Administrator	Trustees
E.2	Explore a partnership with a developer or organization to build senior or multi-generational housing.	Ongoing	Township Administrator	Trustees
E.3	Pursue housing rehabilitation funding tools.	Short-term	Township Administrator	Trustees
E.4	Allow housing styles to accommodate young people and older adults in select locations.	Short-term	Township Administrator	Trustees
F	Sustain Essential Services and Community Amenities	<i>Ensure that fire protection, emergency medical services, and maintenance keep pace with growth, and support the local schools, churches, volunteer organizations, and small businesses that form the backbone of Township community life.</i>		
F.1	Study feasibility of locating public services more centrally.	Ongoing	Township Administrator	Trustees
F.2	Explore options to increase capacity of Township Staff.	Short-term	Township Administrator	Trustees, MORPC, Fairfield County
F.3	Explore aggregation of services (e.g., trash).	Ongoing	Township Administrator	Trustees, Service Providers