

Genoa

TOWNSHIP, OHIO

PARKS & TRAILS MASTER PLAN 2020



Adopted June 4, 2020



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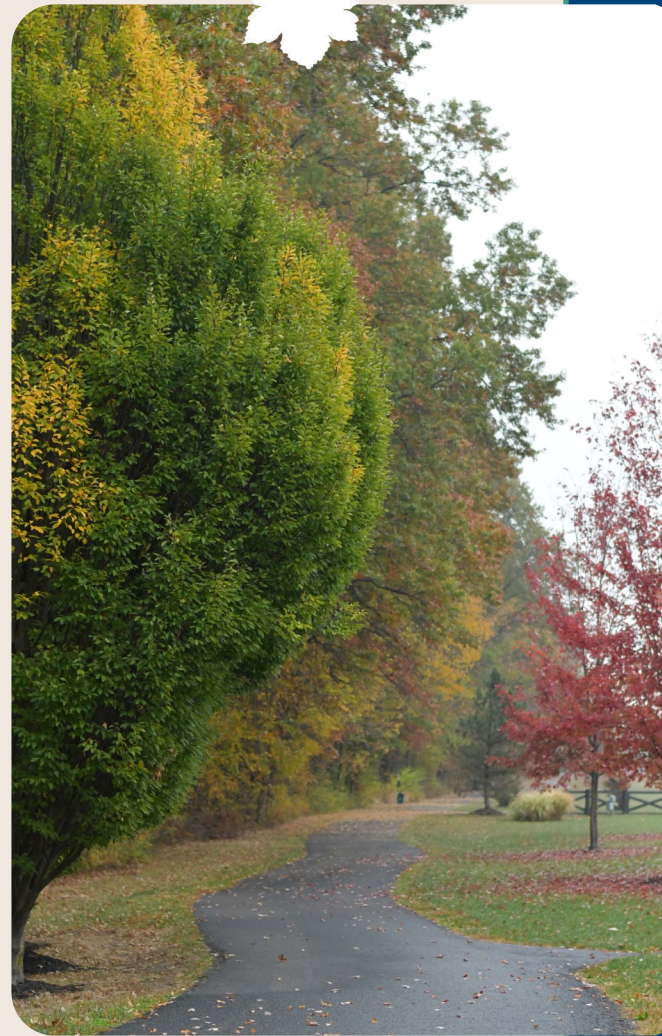


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This updated Parks and Trails Master Plan details visionary recommendations for capital improvements and ongoing management of Genoa Township park properties. Requests made by residents who expressed their wishes for park facilities through community surveys set the plan in motion. These ideas were then further developed into conceptual visions for each individual park, reimagining each with a unique identity and signature amenities.

The following principles guided the plan during all phases:

- Leverage parks to foster a greater sense of community identity and opportunities for fellowship.
- Stay true to the character of the Township which includes nature, water, local history and a rural charm.
- Take a thoughtful approach to placement of park features, large or small, to maintain an aesthetically pleasing and functional layout.
- Differentiate Genoa Township from peer communities with placemaking park features uncommon elsewhere.
- Include facilities to appeal to the interests of all age groups.
- Prioritize accessibility for individuals with physical and mental limitations. Recreation is for all people and should be accessible, safe, and comfortable.
- Act as environmental stewards, improving not just recreational amenities within the parks, but also restoring natural systems to support water quality and biological diversity.
- Avoid proposing redundant park features. Compiling an inventory of existing facilities in and around the Township proved helpful in understanding unmet recreational needs.



High quality parks and trails are an important factor in maintaining and improving the quality of life currently enjoyed by residents in Genoa Township. However, as is common among Ohio townships, funding for parks is nominal. Without a dedicated funding source, the visionary ideas throughout this updated Parks Master Plan will never come to fruition.

INTRODUCTION

MISSION: Our core purpose and focus

To provide open spaces for gathering that serve as centerpoints of the community, fulfilling residents' aspirations for health and enrichment.

VISION: Guiding words leading us to future successes

To create a strong sense of community through unique public spaces that reflect the history and natural landscape of Genoa Township.

GOVERNANCE: Community leaders overseeing plan

In 2004, the Board of Trustees established a Parks Advisory Committee to make recommendations for Township parks. This committee was instrumental in writing the Township's first Park Master Plan in 2004 and updating it in 2010 and 2020.

The Parks Advisory Committee, Maintenance Director, Township Administrator, and Board of Trustees work together to ensure the Parks Master Plan is followed or revised to adapt to changing dynamics.

NEED FOR A PLAN



Genoa Township is an affluent community with a population of 27,000 located in the southeastern corner of Delaware County, Ohio. The community maintains a rural charm that is balanced with the convenience of planned neighborhood developments situated within a fifteen-minute drive of Columbus job and entertainment centers.

The Township went through a transformational change between 1998 and 2003 when 3,810 new residential dwelling units were permitted, adding over 7,000 new residents, nearly tripling the population. The growth highpoint during this period occurred in 2002, with 716 new residential dwelling permits being issued that year. More than 8,000 homes now make up Genoa Township, most of which are located within planned residential developments. The growing population highlights the need for greater focus on the current and future needs for parks and recreation in Genoa Township. Further, parks play an increasingly critical role in preserving the rural character and charm that differentiate Genoa Township from surrounding communities.

The quality of a community's parks and trails contributes to overall quality of life. Property values have been found to be higher for those located near quality parks and open spaces than for similar properties located elsewhere.*

*The Economic Benefits of Land Conservation by John L. Crompton for the Trust For Public Land

Parks provide health benefits to residents of a community, addressing health issues such as physical inactivity, obesity, and nutrition. In addition, parks can help to prevent "Nature Deficit Disorder", a term coined by author Richard Louv in his book "Last Child in the Woods" to describe the negative health impacts that occur to children who spend more time indoors than outside. Adults can also benefit from more time in nature, relieving stress and improving mental health. Finally, in a community like Genoa Township which lacks a "town center," parks can help to create a sense of place and gathering spaces to cultivate bonds between neighbors.

Without staff dedicated solely to parks, it has proven difficult to maintain and pursue a consistent vision for the future of Genoa Township's parks. The Parks Advisory Committee (PAC) members can change annually causing further discontinuity. Requests for new facilities are made by residents, and without a thoughtful plan in place, the decision to grant requests or not can become haphazard. Plans such as this one will set a clear course for each of the Township's parks, providing consistent guidance to decision-makers. This document provides a way to analyze which proposed features would fit versus detract from the collective community vision for our parks.

Recognizing that plans require updating and recommitment, the resident-driven Parks Advisory Committee initiated a process to update the 2010 Parks Plan. Currently, parks do not receive any dedicated funding in the Township budget; rather, parks are maintained with modest investment from the General Fund. Staff support comes from the Maintenance Department when members are not working on road projects. The PAC recognized that without an updated Master Plan, the likelihood of obtaining grant funding to supplement investment in the parks would be low.

PLANNING PROCESS

A planning committee made up of Township staff and resident volunteers laid out the framework of the plan and were the primary authors. Throughout the planning process, input was sought from members of the Parks Advisory Committee, the Maintenance Director, the Development and Zoning Director, the Township Administrator, and by surveys of the general public. The planning process included four phases: Evaluate, Engage, Envision, Plan.

EVALUATE

The planning committee assessed current conditions that may impact park usage, availability of recreational options and other relevant factors. Each Township park was toured by planners and a list of maintenance needs assembled.

ENGAGE

Public input is important in creating a plan that incorporates the ideas of the community. With the community's ideas as the basis of the plan, it is more likely to receive public support for the projects envisioned. Planners surveyed the public and studied trends in an effort to inspire a vision for the parks that would be unique to Genoa Township and contribute to developing a sense of place for residents.

ENVISION

Using the data from the 'Evaluate' and 'Engage' planning phases, planners created a thematic vision for each Township park and trail system with options for capital improvements within each.

PLAN

The ideas included in the 2020 Parks and Trails Master Plan were broken down into overarching goals and activities to be used for implementation of the plan over the next 5-plus years.

EVALUATE

STRENGTHS

Hoover Reservoir encompasses over 2,900 acres on the Township's eastern edge and Alum Creek State Park reaches into the Township's western boundary. Most central Ohio communities do not have access to waterways sufficient for recreational boating. This point of differentiation from peer communities makes Genoa Township appealing to residents and visitors.

Hoover Reservoir is owned by the City of Columbus as a drinking water source. Therefore, the City of Columbus maintains preserved open spaces surrounding the reservoir in an effort to filter stormwater and protect water quality. This arrangement has provided additional recreational areas within the Township that the township does not have financial responsibility to maintain. These areas include Mud Hen Marsh and Hoover Meadows, each contributing to the scenic beauty of Genoa Township.

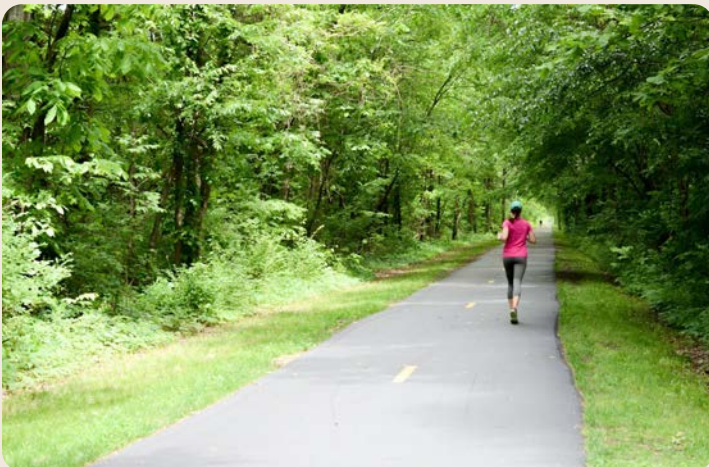
Similarly, the State of Ohio maintains the areas surrounding Alum Creek State Park. The park includes two mountain biking courses within Genoa Township providing access to a sport that is not widely available elsewhere. Swimming, hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, and more are also available just beyond the Township's borders.



Genoa Township is one of only a small group of communities in central Ohio that maintain a trail that has received designation as a part of the Ohio to Erie Trail. The Ohio to Erie Trail is mostly an off-street trail stretching 326 miles from the Ohio River to Lake Erie. It is comprised of a collection of regional trails connecting Cincinnati to Cleveland, passing directly through Genoa Township. The Genoa Township Maintenance Department is charged with brush removal, trash collection, and even snow clearing during winter months along the Genoa Trail portion of the Ohio to Erie Trail. The Township also funds resurfacing of the trail as needed.

Of the ten Delaware County Preservation Park properties in the County, Genoa Township is fortunate to have Char-Mar Ridge Preservation Park within its boundaries. The forested park provides another 128 acres of wooded land for hiking (1.7 mile loop), bird watching, and creeking.

Genoa Township does not rely solely on partner entities to preserve open space and provide recreational opportunities for residents. An additional ten parks totaling 187 acres are held by Genoa Township as preserves as well as parks providing playgrounds, athletic fields and courts, exercise equipment, a community garden and gathering spaces. More than 19.5 miles of trail, including the 4-mile-long Genoa Trail, and 88.2 miles of sidewalks are also maintained by the Township.



CHALLENGES

While Hoover Reservoir is an asset to Genoa Township, offering scenic views and water recreation, it physically divides the community. Residents living on the eastern side of the reservoir are detached from township owned park properties located to the west.



The Genoa Trail, which is also designated as a portion of the Ohio to Erie Trail, runs alongside State Route 3. The highway offers just five opportunities for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross from the west to access the trail, leaving many residents disconnected from this popular trail and statewide attraction. Crossings that link to trail connections include Maxtown Road, Polaris Woods Boulevard, Mt. Royal Avenue, Freeman Road, and Big Walnut Road.



Ironically, the natural beauty of Genoa Township likely contributed to housing demand thus diminishing this sought after quality. The remaining large parcels of land that would be suitable for development as parkland are of high value to sellers, setting Genoa Township at a disadvantage to compete for purchase of these lands. In 2019, the Genoa Township Department of Zoning and Development saw the most activity since 2015, having processed 10 zoning applications through the Zoning Commission and adjudicated 14 cases at the Board of Zoning Appeals.

As is common among peer communities, funding sources for parks are scarce. According to a 2017 Local Government Officials' Perceptions of Parks and Recreation study, "Parks and recreation is likely to be hit with the largest cut in funding when the city/town/county suffers budgetary pressure." However, designing and constructing high quality park features enhances neighborhoods and builds a sense of community. The Ohio Estate Tax was once used to make major park improvements possible in Genoa Township until 2013 when it was repealed. Park improvements and maintenance in Genoa Township have since been completed with a small portion of the general fund:

YEAR	PARKS SPENDING
2015	\$106,689.88
2016	\$207,362.75
2017	\$166,525.03
2018	\$252,299.96
2019	\$210,543.22

EVALUATE

PLANNING CONTEXT

Using data provided by the Genoa Township Development and Zoning Department as well as the Delaware County Auditor, the planning committee referenced population characteristics and land use trends of Genoa Township. This information was useful in better understanding needs for recreation and open space.

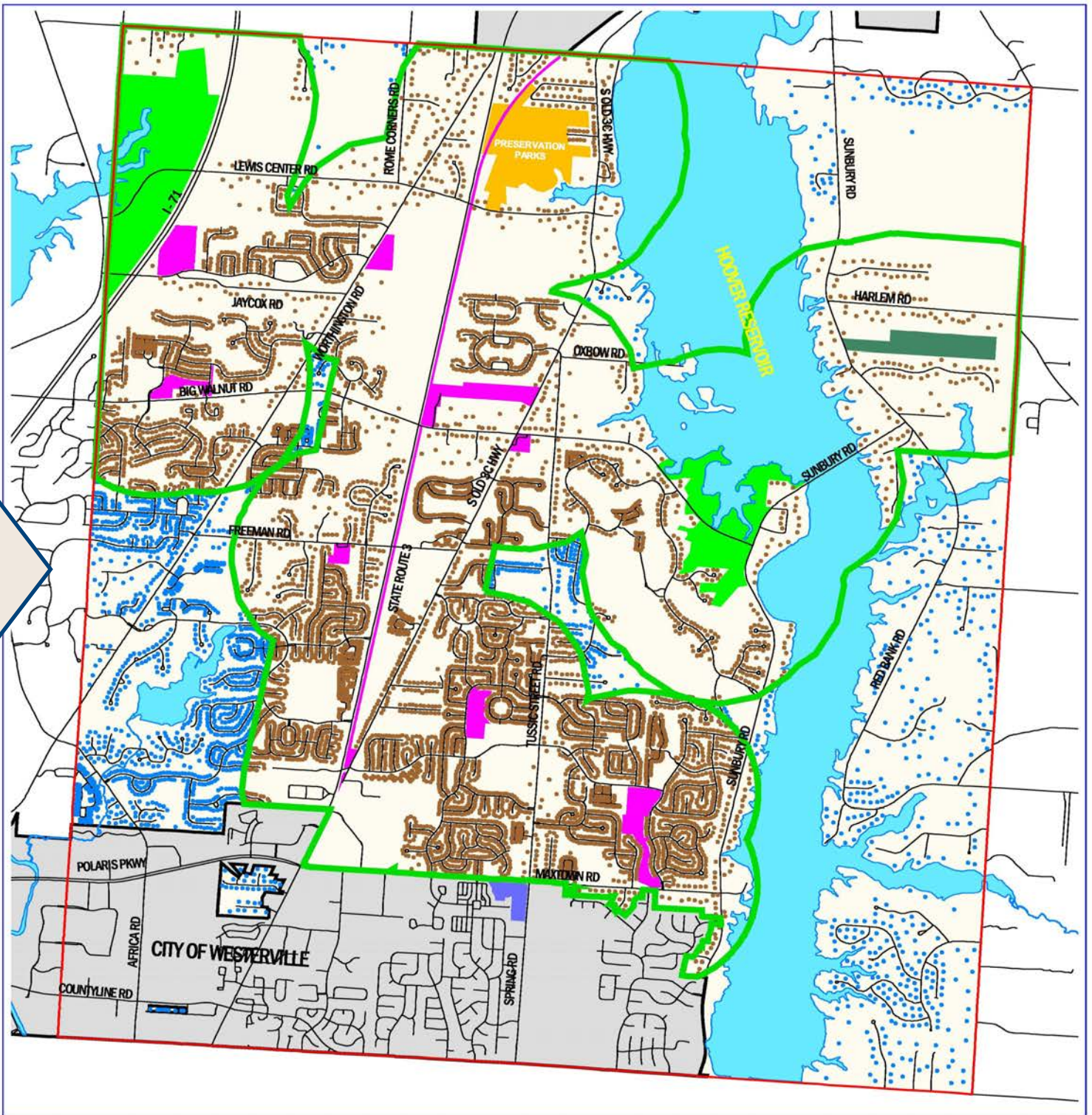
A map was created to illustrate the households served by each park facility within the Township. For a household to be considered served by a park, the address must fall within a half mile of the park. The National Recreation and Parks Association recommends that people should live no more than a half-mile from a neighborhood park. Any households not located within one of these areas are considered part of a 'service gap' or underserved area. Underserved areas should be given priority for facilities when opportunities arise .

For its relevance to the possibility of the future acquisition of park land, most notably, the Comprehensive Plan states that in 2016, just 12.5% of the Township was undeveloped (4.8% Agriculture, 7.5% Residential Vacant Land, and 0.2% Commercial Vacant Land). 33.6% of the Township was preserved in the form of waterways (18.5% Rivers/Lakes/Ponds) and various types of recreational green spaces (15.1% Golf Courses/Parks/Open Space).



According to the National Parks and Recreation Association, the typical park and recreation agency offers one park for every 2,181 residents served, with 10.1 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. Genoa Township's ratio, counting only township-owned properties, is 7.16 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. Adding county and state parks located within the Township (Char-Mar Ridge Park, Alum Creek State Park) increases the ratio to 21.94 acres per thousand.





Parks and Trails

Genoa Township, Delaware County, Ohio

- Township Boundary
- Buffer 0.5 mile from Parks within Genoa
- Genoa Residential Units within Buffer (6891)
- Genoa Residential Units outside Buffer (1889)
- Road Centerlines
- Rivers/Lakes (Auditor's GIS Office)
- Genoa Parks**
- Preservation Parks
- Reservoirs/Parks
- Township Parks
- Municipal Parks
- Other Parks
- Incorporated Areas



EVALUATE

FACILITIES INVENTORY (Non-Township Owned)

Special attention was given to inventory popular existing recreational facilities within a five-mile radius of the Township to ensure the Genoa Township Parks Master Plan fills unmet needs and avoids duplication of services being met by other area agencies unless warranted by demand and feasibility.

Boating	Hoover Reservoir
	Alum Creek State Park
Swimming	Alum Creek State Park
	The Lakes Golf & Country Club
	Medallion Country Club
	City of Westerville, Highland Pool Recreation Center
	Private Pools, Annehurst Pool Jaycee Pool
Tennis/Pickleball	City of Westerville, Hoff Woods Park
Sand Volleyball	City of Westerville, Hoff Woods Park
Golf	The Lakes Golf & Country Club
	Medallion Country Club
Disc Golf	Hoover Reservoir
	Alum Creek State Park
Playgrounds	City of Westerville, Millstone Creek Park Hoff Woods Park
	Westerville City Schools, Alcott Elementary Fouse Elementary Genoa Middle
	Olentangy Local Schools, Walnut Creek Elementary
	Private/HOA owned, Highland Lakes (St. Andrews Dr) Vinmar Farms Vinmar Village
Mountain Biking	Alum Creek State Park, Alum Creek Phase 1 Mountain Bike Trail Gnomewood Skills Park
Hiking	Delaware County Preservation Parks, Char-Mar Ridge Park
	City of Columbus, Public Utilities, Mud Hen Marsh Hoover Meadows Lawrence Woods Hoover Mud Flats
Athletic fields	City of Westerville, Millstone Creek Park Hoff Woods Park
	Westerville City Schools, Alcott Elementary Fouse Elementary Genoa Middle Central High
Dog Park	Olentangy Local Schools, Walnut Creek Elementary
	Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks, Rocky Fork Dog Park
	City of Westerville, Brooksedge Park





EVALUATE

BENCHMARKING OTHER OHIO TOWNSHIPS

Benchmarking comparisons were made to the park services offered by other communities with a focus on those with similar demographics to Genoa Township. Comparisons between these park systems consisted of a number of criteria such as acres of parkland, department functions, staffing, funding sources, facilities offered, and other relevant characteristics.

Township	County	Population	Median Household Income	Median Home Value	Township Park Acres	Parks & Rec Budget
Genoa	Delaware	26,119	\$129,522	\$332,500	187	\$210,543
Liberty	Delaware	17,677	\$146,491	\$378,100	400	\$700,000
Orange	Delaware	29,452	\$117,029	\$316,100	120	\$1,200,000
Clearcreek	Warren	33,000	\$106,000	\$265,000	333	\$600,000
Liberty	Butler	39,000	\$120,000	\$260,000	318	\$800,000

Population, Median Household Income, and Median Home Value are generally 2020 estimates (or actuals not later than 2017), based on availability.

Township Park Acres include only those managed and owned by the townships themselves. Most townships benchmarked also have state, county, and/or city parks and preservation areas within their boundaries, in addition to the township managed park acres.

Parks & Rec Budget represents estimated current annual spending by township for parks and recreation based on publicly available documents for appropriations, forecasting, budgeting, and/or known park levy amounts.



BENCHMARKING (continued)

Most benchmarked townships shared the following park amenities in common with Genoa Township: playground equipment, athletic fields, shelter houses, basketball courts, paved walking trails, a sledding hill, and fishing ponds.

Neighboring Orange Township maintains an aquatics facility for swimming and related activities. Liberty (Delaware), Clearcreek, and Liberty (Butler) townships all have considerably more total park acres, and a greater focus on passive park space for residents (e.g. nature preserves and wooded areas with hiking trails). Genoa Township has a community garden program which appears to be unique among the benchmark group. Park amenities not in Genoa Township parks, but appearing in several of the benchmarked townships include: nature/hiking trails, disc golf, baseball fields, tennis courts, and sand volleyball courts.

Based on review of peer park plans, nearly all the townships have prioritized increasing the amount of walking, hiking, and biking trails.

Township owned Facility	Genoa (Delaware)	Liberty (Delaware)	Orange (Delaware)	Clearcreek (Warren)	Liberty (Butler)
Pool	N	N	Y	N	N
Splash Pad	N	N	N	Y	N
Playground	Y (5)	Y (3)	Y (4)	Y	Y (4)
Basketball	Y (5)	Y (5)	Y	Y (2)	N
Baseball	N	Y (5)	Y	N	N
Tennis	N	Y (4)	N	Y (3)	N
Sand Volleyball	N	Y (6)	N	Y	N
Shelter House	Y (2)	Y (5)	Y (5)	Y (4)	Y (5)
Community Garden	Y	N	N	N	N
Disc Golf	N	N	N	Y	Y
Trails: Paved	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Trails: Nature/Hiking	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Fishing Pond	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Ice Skating	N	N	Y	N	N
Sledding	Y	Y	Y	N	N

Table data were collected from township park websites and satellite park imagery. Websites may be outdated and accuracy of inventory is not guaranteed.

ENGAGE

Surveys were used to create a vision for township parks that cater to the preferences of residents. Recommendations on the prioritization of future capital improvement projects were also made based on survey results.

TRAIL SURVEY– Delaware General Health District

Delaware General Health District conducted a survey regarding use of the Ohio to Erie Trail in 2019. Of the 449 responses received from throughout the county, 39% were received from Genoa Township residents. That survey showed residents’ perceptions of the benefits, barriers, and amenities that would cause an increase in trail use.

Benefits: Physical activity, recreation, connection to nature

Barriers: Safety and security, parking access, ADA accessibility

Amenities that could increase use: More restrooms and signage, connections to neighborhoods and schools

Genoa Township conducted an online ‘Quality of Life’ survey in 2019 which resulted in 190 responses. The significance parks have on quality of life was evident in the responses:

- When asked how satisfied respondents were with the quality of life in Genoa Township in a variety of categories on a scale of 1-5 (5 being very satisfied), parks related categories were highly rated: Opportunities for fitness (walking, biking, etc.) 4.5, Trees and greenspace 4.3.
- When asked what should be top priority for Genoa Township, parks were selected with higher frequency than prioritization of Fire/EMS/Rescue Safety Initiatives. (12% parks, 9% Fire/EMS/Rescue Safety Initiatives).
- In overall satisfaction broken down by department, the Maintenance Department averaged a score of 4.1 on a scale of 1-5 (5 being very satisfied).
- Some respondents used the open-ended comments section to request the following park improvements:
 - ⇒ Bicycle lanes or a painted dedicated bike path along roads, as well as multi-use paths from town to town
 - ⇒ Community pool
 - ⇒ Splash pad / fountain
 - ⇒ Additional trails
 - ⇒ Improvements to the existing trails (nothing specified)
 - ⇒ More activities / recreation for older residents
 - ⇒ Dog park





Genoa Township conducted a web-based parks survey in 2019, which resulted in 203 responses from township residents.

When asked about which township parks the respondent had visited in the past 12 months, most (85%) had been to McNamara, followed by the Genoa Trail (58%), and Freeman (38%).

- 2% had visited all Genoa parks
- 5% of respondents had visited no Genoa parks
- 49% had visited 3 or more Genoa parks

When asked how often respondents visited their favorite park, most respondents (41%) replied that they visit weekly.

When asked their opinion of the condition of Township parks, 87% felt the condition of Genoa Township parks was ‘good’ or better on a scale that included ‘Excellent’ (32%), ‘Good’ (55%), ‘Fair’ (3%), ‘Poor’ (1%), No Response (9%).

Respondents were asked to identify the top 5 reasons they choose to visit Genoa parks. The most frequently selected responses included:

- Close to home/residence,
- Exercise/health,
- Spending time with family/friends,
- Activity with children,
- Relaxation/stress management, and
- Nature/wildlife viewing.

Similarly, respondents were asked to identify the reasons they do not visit Genoa parks. The most frequently selected responses included:

- Personal schedule is too busy,
- Use services of other agencies (City of Westerville, schools, private gyms, etc.),
- Team sports scheduled at other venues,
- Lack of programs and events, and
- Lack of sidewalk/trails to the park.

Finally, respondents were asked to identify their top three priorities for the parks. The most frequently selected priorities included the following:

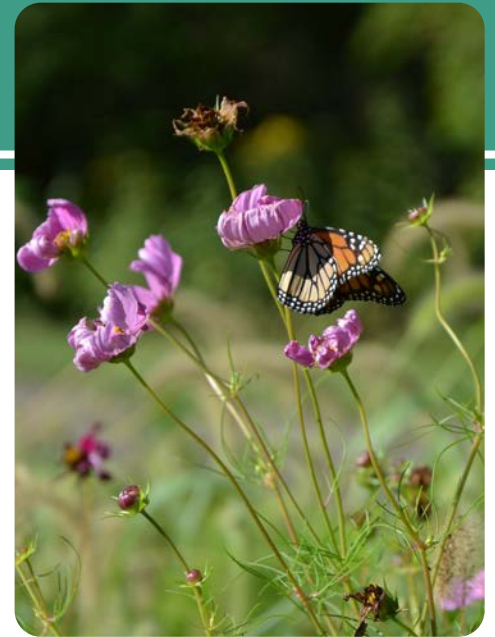
- More walking/bike trails,
- Children’s play equipment - adding new,
- Gardens and flowers,
- Bathroom access, and
- Children’s play equipment - maintenance of existing.

Residents were also given the opportunity to provide open-ended comments. Multiple respondents used this space to request consideration of construction of a dog park, play equipment for older children, and geese management.

In partnership with Delaware General Health District and the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, trail counters were installed for two weeks in select locations during the summer of 2019.

- ⇒ **Center Green** (bridge)
302 Average Users Daily
- ⇒ **Genoa Trail** (Mt. Royal)
294 Average Users Daily
- ⇒ **Center Green** (Spring Run)
95 Average Users Daily
- ⇒ **Freeman Park** (exit)
71 Average Users Daily

ENVISION



Genoa Township owns 187 acres of parkland and maintains 19.7 miles of trails, and 88.2 miles of sidewalks. With a thoughtful plan in place, each park can be molded to fit the needs of the community, each offering a signature experience. These signature experiences would set Genoa Township apart from neighboring communities, creating a unique, identifiable character that will signal to residents they are “home”.

However, without a dedicated funding source, these visionary ideas may be out of reach for Genoa Township. For this reason, a list of basic maintenance improvements that could feasibly be made with the current, modest budget was created after touring each park.

COMMUNITY PARKS

Community parks have popular amenities and are often the setting for large community gatherings which require thoughtful planning for parking and restrooms. These spaces serve the entire township rather than just surrounding neighborhoods.

- McNamara Park
- Jaycox Park
- Worthington Park (community garden)
- Township Hall Park

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

Neighborhood parks serve residents living within a half mile walking distance with amenities and activities.

- Center Green Park
- Hilmar Park
- Freeman Park

PASSIVE PARKS

Pass-through areas which may include benches, but no active recreation options.

- Mt. Royal Park
- Grand Oak Park

UNDEVELOPED PARKLAND

Land owned by the township, but has not been improved for public access.

- Fleur Woods Park
- Alberta Park

TODAY

INSPIRATION

VISION

ENVISION | COMMUNITY PARKS

McNamara Park
7049 Big Walnut Road
Galena, Ohio 43021

29.80 acres

TODAY

McNamara Park has a linear footprint which led to the design of a south entrance from Big Walnut Road as well as an entrance on the east accessed via Old 3C Highway. The Township's historic red barn provides value for its history and as a notable landmark. It is visible from the park's east entrance. Adjacent to the barn is a small restroom with a drinking fountain (open seasonally) and exercise equipment.

The Genoa Trail serves as a portion of the acclaimed Ohio to Erie Trail, a bike route connecting the Ohio River in Cincinnati to Lake Erie in Cleveland, passing directly through Genoa Township and connecting to McNamara Park. The park is ideally situated to serve as a trailhead with ample parking, a large shelter house with grills, restroom, and drinking fountains. From November to April restrooms and drinking fountains are winterized and a portable restroom is placed in the parking lot on the far west end

near the trail link.

Between the two ends of the park lies a playground, athletic fields, and field of wildflowers. A 1.2 mile loop trail connects all of the aforementioned sections of the park. Genoa Township lacks a town center, therefore McNamara's role in serving as the "heart" of the Township is evident primarily during the summer season when residents gather for annual events such as "Movie Night" and "National Night Out".

The Big Walnut Road access is problematic in that it is also used as the primary entrance and exit for Genoa Township fire trucks and maintenance vehicles. Both departments have facilities on the shared driveway prior to entering the park. Users looking for the park may feel that they have gone into a restricted area before finally reaching the park where the driveway dead-ends.

In 2009, a professional master plan was created for McNamara Park by Edsall and Associates, but due to funding shortfalls, was never fully developed. Many of the ideas within the 2009 plan are still relevant today and will be repeated within the future vision for McNamara Park.



BARN HISTORY

Dave Gill was the original owner of the barn as well as a log cabin he lived in. The barn was located on the east side of Old 3C Highway and the log cabin was located on the west side of Old 3C Highway. Ora Gill, who married Howard Bolton, inherited the farm from Dave, her father, and tore down the log cabin and built the present home. On June 28, 1935, Howard Bolton, with help from friends disassembled the barn and moved it across the road to its current location. The barn was carried across the road in four sections plus the rafters. New siding and sheeting for the roof were added.

VISION

One of the most frequently requested amenities on resident surveys is for a “splash pad” or swimming pool. A pool would require a significant park levy for construction, operations, as well as annual membership fees. As stated in the McNamara Park Plan, the linear nature of McNamara Park does not lend itself to the inclusion of a pool and an elaborate “splash pad” is not in keeping with the guiding principles of this plan.

However, a simple nature-inspired interactive water feature is recommended to suit the needs of the public while maintaining balance with the park’s existing uses. A water feature was drawn adjacent to the playground in 2009 renderings and should be revisited.



INSPIRATION *Carmel, Indiana*

The historic barn on the east end of the park is in precarious condition, requiring significant investment to keep it from deteriorating to a safety threat. A structural review of the barn in 2014 showed the building required extensive repair. None of the cited improvements except exterior paint (2017) were completed.

The McNamara Parks Plan proposed converting the barn into a three-season event space. Although repair or reconstruction of the barn would be



costly, the structure is one of the most historically and architecturally significant buildings within the Township. Repairs and stabilization are the priority to preserve the barn; however, as proposed in the McNamara Park Plan, it is recommended to transform the barn for use as a three-season event space; in doing so it may be necessary to deconstruct and rebuild the barn with reclaimed wood.

In keeping with the theme of historical significance, it is recommended that the community’s first Township Hall currently located on the northeast corner of Tusnic and Big Walnut Road be relocated to McNamara Park. The building could be restored for use as a museum and/or meeting space. This historic building could be lost entirely if not relocated due to its lack of setback from Big Walnut Road, which may require widening in the future.

Any future capital improvements or art installations made at the park should be designed with natural-looking materials or incorporate themes consistent with the history of the Township such as farming and railroads. Cultivating knowledge of local history will further develop residents’ knowledge, identity, and pride in their community.

Finally, redesign of the park’s south entrance should be created by a professional landscape architect. Such a design would separate park users and township work vehicles in clearly defined lanes. If an interactive water feature is to come to fruition, a clearly defined park entrance will become all the more essential to direct new park users to the area.

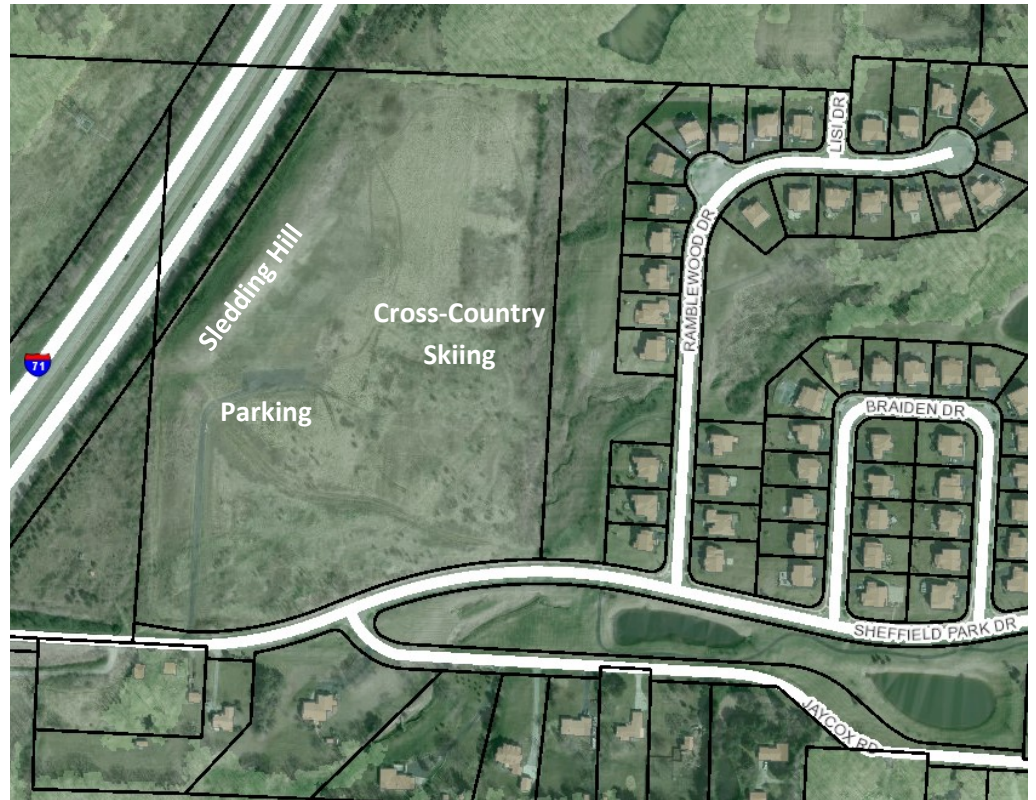
ENVISION | COMMUNITY PARKS

Jaycox Park
Jaycox Road
east of Interstate 71

26.1 acres

TODAY

Athletic fields were once proposed for Jaycox Road Park, but nearby residents opposed the concept. Consequently, the site was not improved and primarily served as a storage area for the Maintenance Department. Residents of the same neighborhood later requested the site be cleaned up and a sound barrier installed to block highway noise. By building a sledding hill on the site, the Township was able to address noise and aesthetic concerns while creating a seasonal amenity for the entire community. A small gravel parking lot serves the sledding hill and a mowed path can be used for cross country skiing in the right winter conditions.



▶▶ VISION

The second most requested capital improvement the Township has received on resident surveys is a dog park. Traditional dog parks require two large dog and two small dog areas. Fields are rotated to allow grass to re-grow. To avoid the high level of maintenance required for a traditional dog park, it is proposed that during warm weather Jaycox Road Park be designed as a dog agility park. In addition, “Pop-up” (temporary) dog parks could be scheduled at neighborhood level parks on specific dates. Agility structures could be removed during winter months to avoid disrupting use of the sledding hill.

To help the adjacent neighborhood access the site, a paved trail connecting to the park is recommended. As is true for all “Community Level” parks, the parking lot should be paved to accommodate visitors drawn to the site as well as to provide improved accessibility.

Shade trees are recommended to be planted on the site in strategic areas that do not conflict with sledding, but provide shade in the summer and an improved aesthetic for the households adjacent to the site.

During cold weather, installation or rental of an ice rink would enhance the ‘winter park’ theming of the site.



ENVISION | COMMUNITY PARKS

**Worthington Park
(community garden)**
4539 Worthington Road,
Westerville, Ohio 43082

10.9 acres

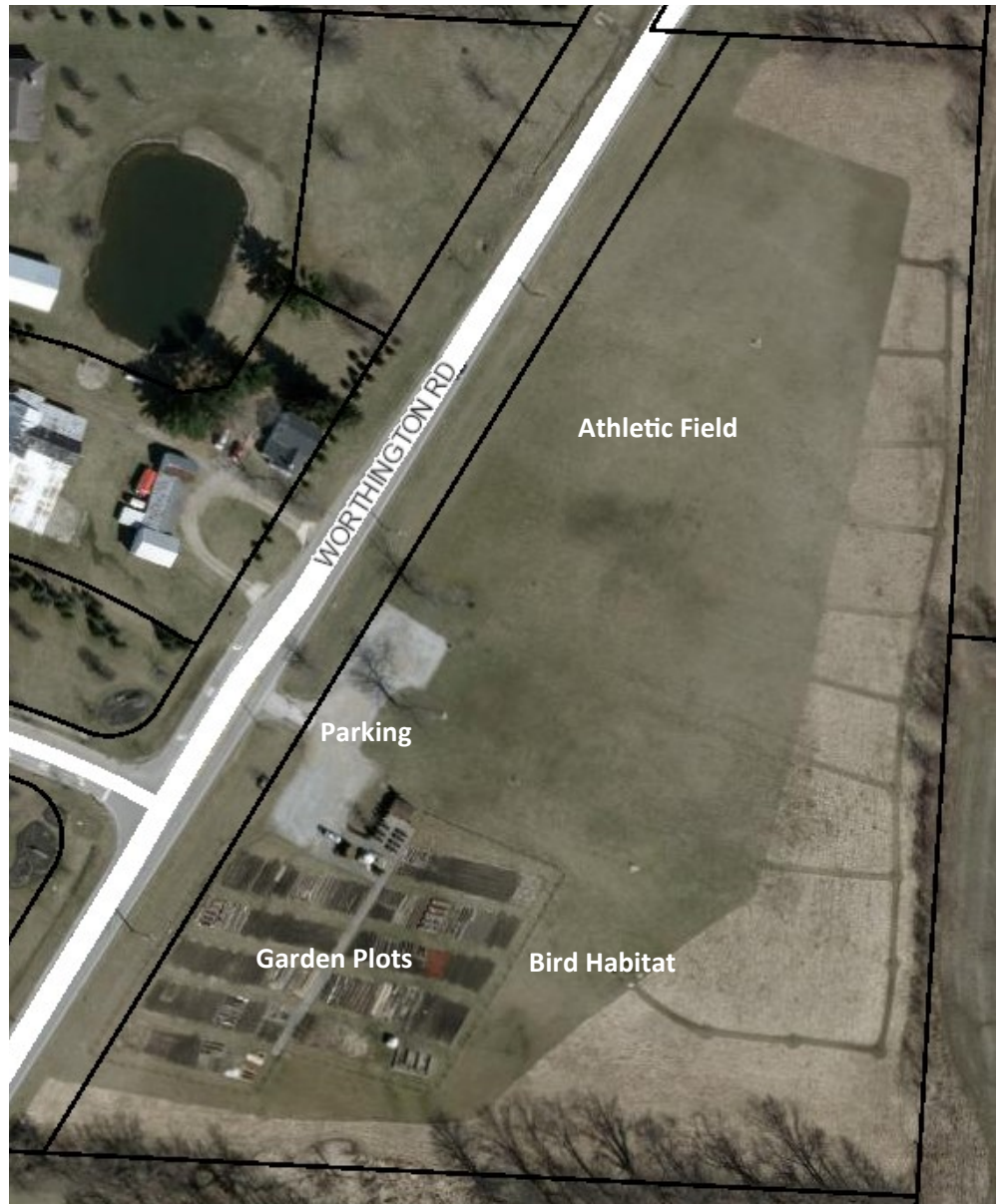
TODAY

The Genoa Township Community Garden is the primary use of this 10.9 acre parcel. Residents rent plots for gardening. A tool shed, water cistern, and compost pile provides shared access to essential resources for registered gardeners.

Along the east side of the property, an array of bird houses are erected to attract Purple Martins. The presence of the birds is intended to help the gardeners be more successful in pest management.

The remainder of the site is used by local athletic programs for lacrosse and soccer practices. Genoa Township currently does not receive any compensation for use of athletic fields to offset associated expenses and upkeep.

The park's gravel parking lot was expanded in 2019 to accommodate both gardeners and individuals participating in athletic practice during times of peak use. A portable restroom is placed between the garden and athletic field to serve both user groups.



WORTHINGTON PARK

▶▶ VISION

It is proposed that the theme of community gardening be expanded to include broader health and wellness features. The park would provide a serene atmosphere to attract and serve the needs of older adults; standing in contrast to the traditional park layout with playground and basketball courts. Additional coordinating park features could include edible landscaping (berry bushes, fruit trees), native plant identification signage, bee hives, bat houses, hoop house/ greenhouse, outdoor grill/oven, labyrinth, rock garden, bocce ball court, yoga, meditation, and exercise-class garden.

To aid in accessibility, the gravel parking lot would require paving and the additional activity on site would warrant a permanent restroom or, at minimum, a surround built to screen the portable restroom currently on site.

Depending upon the site plans, the use as athletic fields may be minimized or eliminated entirely. Athletic fields are available elsewhere and may not ultimately fit the theme and intended use of this park.



INSPIRATION

ENVISION | COMMUNITY PARKS

Township Hall Park
5111 South Old 3C Highway
Westerville, Ohio 43082

5.3 acres

TODAY

Township administrative offices are located on site providing plenty of parking and year-round bathroom access to park users (during normal business hours). The Township Hall can be rented by groups who may also want to make use of the park's basic playground and basketball court.

A wildlife viewing blind is located at the back of the site, but birds are no longer being fed and is seldom used.

The location is not well-known for serving as a trail-head, but does provide a trail link via Old 3C Highway connecting to the Ohio to Erie Trail through McNamara Park's eastern entrance.



TOWNSHIP HALL PARK

▶▶ VISION

Although the park's existing playground equipment is showing its age, its civic theming is appropriate for the site. It is recommended that the theme be further enhanced with complimentary playground equipment such as a police car, dump truck, or township hall playhouse. A "traffic park" featuring a miniature road with traffic light and stop signs around the perimeter of the playground would provide a safe space for kids to ride bicycles and learn about road safety.

A partnership with the local library could bring amenities to the park such as a library book vending machine, where Township Hall staff could easily be available to check inventory and ensure the equipment is secure.

It is recommended that the bird blind currently located on the site be relocated to the Community Garden where Purple Martin houses are located. There are no significant plantings or feeding stations being maintained to attract birds at Township Hall.

The portable restroom should be relocated from the window view of Township Hall and a surround built to screen its view from neighboring properties.



INSPIRATION *New Albany, Ohio*



Whole Foods in the Park | Malibu, California



ENVISION | NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

Center Green Park
7846 Center Green Drive,
Westerville, Ohio 43082

29.2 acres

TODAY

Center Green Park is located within walking distance of the neighborhoods of Harvest Wind, Eagle Trace, Barrington Estates, and Westerville Reserve. It is a linear park with wildflower fields stretching from Maxtown Road along a trail to Center Green Drive. The park features a pond, playground, athletic field, basketball court, gazebo, "Little Free Library", and permanent (seasonal) restroom.

Drainage ditches from nearby developments send rain runoff through the park and into a more natural stream channel ("Miller's Run") along the park's western edge (bordering Westerville Reserve).

The parking lot is paved and right-sized for the draw of the park. Although it is not well known, Center Green Park is an ideal trailhead for those wishing to begin their ride to Hoover Reservoir to the east or along Maxtown Road to the west, eventually connecting to the Ohio to Erie Trail.



INSPIRATION



Governor's Island, New York City, New York

VISION

The pond on the site is already inviting to those who enjoy fishing despite its steep banks. The handicap fishing pier at Hilmar Park has proven to be popular and Center Green Park could benefit from a similar investment and regular stocking of fish to help control algae and mosquito larvae.

Building upon the theme of fishing, it is proposed that the grove of trees and adjacent area north of the pond be transformed into an outdoor exploration zone with natural play area for children and a hammock grove for parents to relax while supervising their children. Natural play areas typically feature hollowed logs for the children to climb through, an all-natural "Teeter-toter", "tree cookie" stepping stones, downed tree "balance beams", tree stump "stairs" and more. If determined feasible by a hydrologist, the cement drainage ditches could be restored to a more natural stream flow benefiting the wildlife such as turtles and fish already observed in the area while simultaneously providing access for children to wade and explore their natural world.

On the opposite side of the stream, near the Meadows at Harvest Wind condos, a pickleball court is proposed to address the requests for this amenity from the older adults among whom the sport is popular. Added trees throughout the park are necessary to shield sight lines and buffer sound from the athletic areas, and provide shade to play structures.



Tujunga Wash, San Fernando Valley, California



Welles Park, Chicago, Illinois

ENVISION | NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

Hilmar Park
6533 Hilmar Drive
Westerville, Ohio 43082

15.3 acres

TODAY

Most of the landscape at Hilmar Park is covered by a large stocked pond, complete with ADA accessible fishing pier. The park's layout has made it a natural home for the Township's annual Fishing Day event. The pond has become both a source of enjoyment for the view and recreational fishing as well as a source of frustration as an overpopulation of Canada geese inhabit the park.

A gazebo and two playgrounds are located within view of the pond. A grove of trees separates a short walking path that connects to Westerville's Alcott Elementary School as well as a basketball court. While there is no parking lot, at this time the street parking along Hilmar Drive provides ample space for the few users who drive to the park; most walk from adjacent neighborhoods.





INSPIRATION

Washington and Lee University



Wheaton College



VISION

The vision for Hilmar Park plays upon the two features anchoring its two far ends. First, the addition of Adirondack chairs along the water's edge would make it more comfortable to enjoy the pond while avoiding geese droppings in the grass. As supervising adults enjoy the Adirondack chairs, children could launch toy boats (assuming the right mix of equipment can be identified). A loop path circling the pond would help residents access existing seating. Geese need to be culled on an ongoing basis to remedy the nuisance overpopulation has brought to the park.

Park users have expressed a desire for a restroom to be located at the park. This addition is recommended, piloting a heated, year-round facility similar to those installed in nearby Delaware County Preservation Parks.

On the park's opposite side, nearest Alcott Elementary School, a partnership with Westerville City Schools would be well suited, expanding their stream learning area with an outdoor classroom, storybook trail, and other educational installations.

Given the abundance of basketball courts within the Township, removing the basketball court at Hilmar may be recommended once it has reached the end of its useful life. Finally, once the older of the park's two playgrounds can no longer be repaired, replacement is not recommended. One playground should be suitable to support the users of a park of this size.

As with all parks, additional trees and wildflower prairie are recommended for planting.

ENVISION | NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

Freeman Park
6460 Freeman Road
Westerville, Ohio 43082

6.3 acres

TODAY

There are two playgrounds located at Freeman Road Park, one is extremely outdated while the other, newer playground is best suited for young children. Digging equipment is popular in a sand pit located alongside the newer playground. A large shelter house is available for rental, basketball courts (large and child size), athletic fields and a loop path with “born learning” activity signs offer opportunities for physical activity. Although it is not well-known, the park serves as an excellent trailhead access point for those wishing to connect along the trail on Freeman Road, crossing State Route 3 to the Ohio to Erie Trail.



VISION

Extraneous asphalt pads formerly used as basketball courts should be removed. In their place, it is proposed that an action park playground be installed. Equipment could include a bouldering structure, zip line, and an obstacle course. These items were selected in response to requests in residents surveys for activities targeted at 'twens and young adults.

Additionally, a sand volleyball court would suit the needs of guests gathering at the large shelter house. Relocate the sand digging area and clearly define this play area with edging and landscaping. As in all parks, buffering and shading the site with additional trees is highly recommended.



Schaper Park, Golden Valley, MN



Bridgedale Park, Riverview, New Brunswick, Canada



Franklin Park Conservatory, Columbus, Ohio



ENVISION | PASSIVE PARKS

**Mt. Royal Park
Intersection of State Route 3
and Mt. Royal Avenue**

0.6 acre

TODAY

The Genoa Trail, a portion of the Ohio to Erie Trail, bisects this parcel. The park is a narrow strip of land clearly visible to many passersby traveling north on State Route 3 into Genoa Township from the City of Westerville. The park appears nothing more than a narrow trail easement, devoid of trees.





▶▶ VISION

Realign the trail to allow space to fit a gateway feature welcoming those entering the Township, visible to State Route 3 as well as the Ohio to Erie Trail. This feature would also provide valuable buffering for trail users from the road. Bike parking and seating would be located behind the gateway feature and trees would be planted to create a shaded pocket park out of this now barren parcel of land. Renderings of this park layout were created by OHM Advisors in 2019.



ENVISION | PASSIVE PARKS

**Grand Oak Park
Big Walnut Road at
Grand Oak Boulevard**

11.5 acres

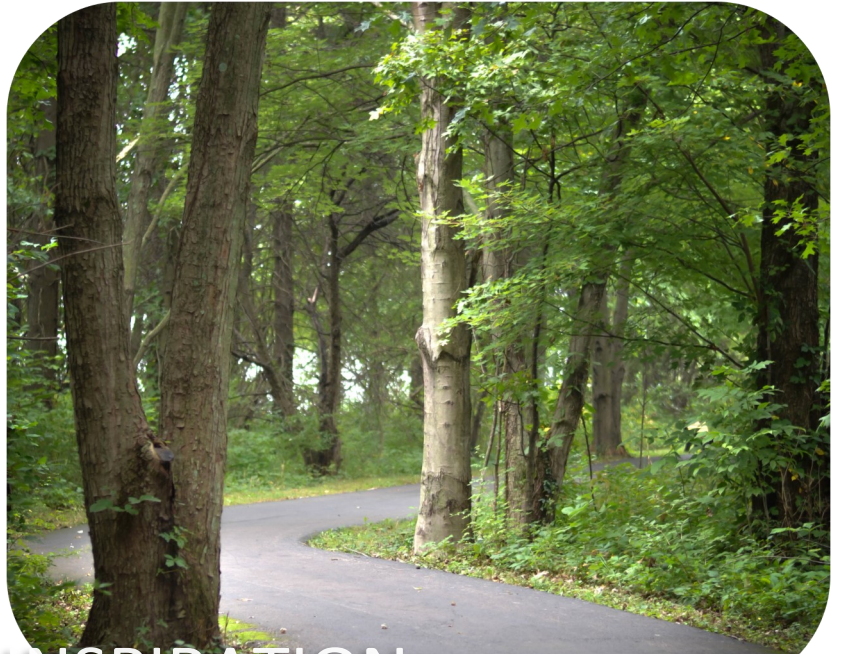
TODAY

The park is located across the street from Walnut Creek Elementary School and consists of two separate parcels. It is currently a passive park with only a linear gravel walking path connecting Grand Oak Boulevard on the west to Grandmere Boulevard on the east. A pond anchors the park on its western end. There is no parking off-street.



▶▶ VISION

Given this park's proximity to neighborhoods and a school, the future vision for this park is for it to be improved in such a way that it could be recategorized as a neighborhood park. Further work is required to survey the neighborhood residents to see what, if any, improvements to the park are desired. At minimum, it is recommended that the gravel trail be paved to increase accessibility and additional trees be planted for their shade and beauty.



INSPIRATION

McNamara Park, Genoa Township



ENVISION | UNDEVELOPED PARKLAND

Fleur Woods
State Route 3 north of
Big Walnut Road

Acres 51.75

TODAY

Three wooded parcels make up this park land. The area is not accessible without either trespassing through neighboring properties or parking directly in front of neighbors' homes on Fleur Drive. For this reason, the Township does not advertise the park publicly.



▶▶ VISION

With an agreement from Genoa Baptist Church, access to the site could be provided from Worthington Park (community garden). A loop hiking trail through the woods could be established to allow residents a new option for physical activity and exploration of a never-before-seen natural area in the Township, complete with wetlands, vernal pools, and diverse native trees.



INSPIRATION

Cincinnati Nature Center, Milford, Ohio

ENVISION | UNDEVELOPED PARKLAND

Alberta Park End of Alberta Place

3.8 acres

TODAY

Alberta Park is an unimproved wooded parcel. Local users have made a path to explore the area. There is no parking or welcoming access for users beyond neighborhood residents who have explored on their own. The parcel is almost entirely landlocked by industrial businesses, housing developments and one wooded parcel owned by the Northern Lakes Homeowners Association. A narrow access to the property is available at the southern end of Alberta Place between two houses. The Township does not promote this site as publicly accessible.

VISION

Any improvement to the site that would draw additional users could cause disruption to the adjacent neighborhood; therefore, no significant improvements are recommended at this time.





ENVISION | TRAILS

Existing Trail Miles

19.7 miles

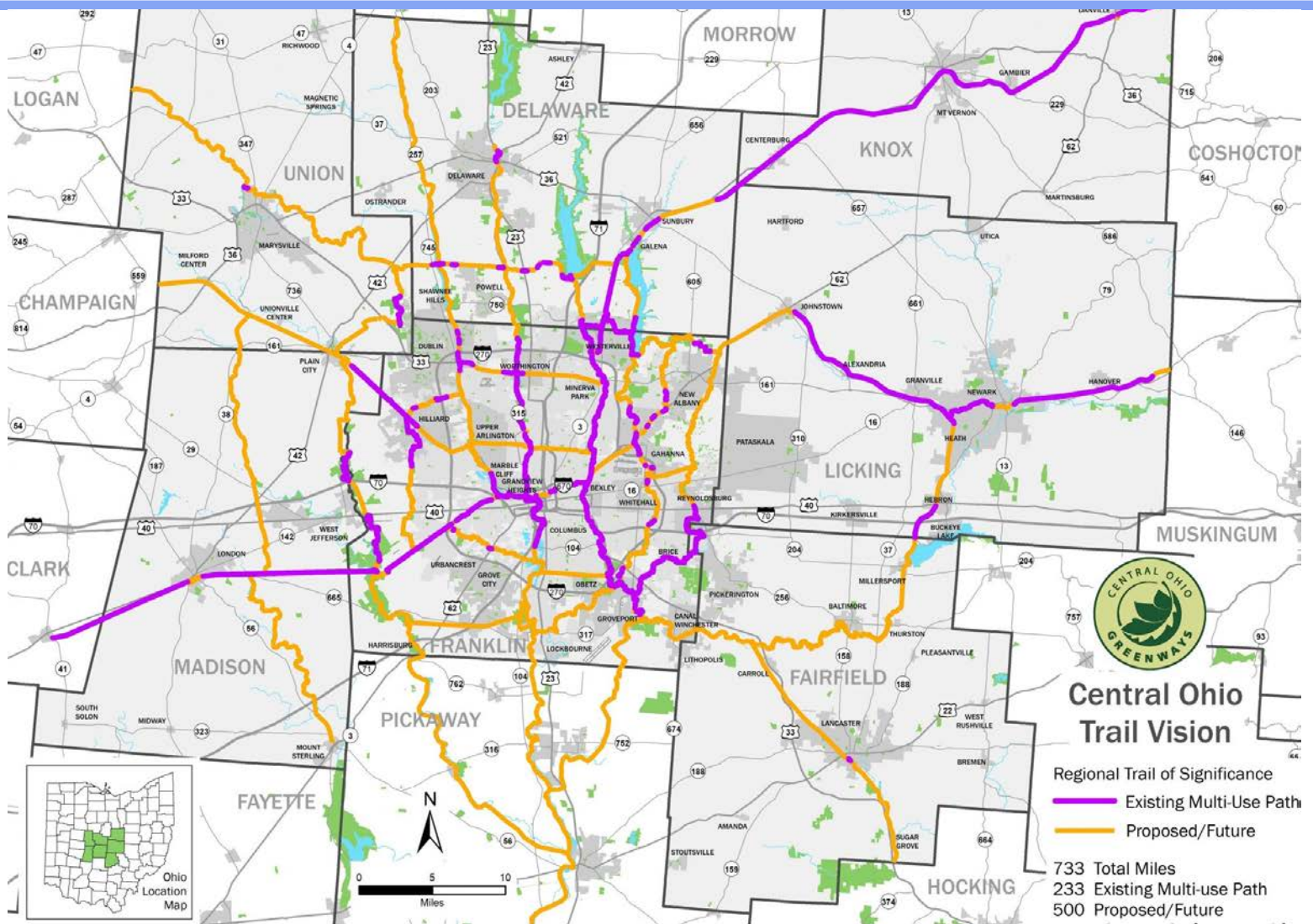
TODAY

Nearly 100 million people in the United States own bicycles. The Bicycle Federation of America estimates that fewer than five percent would qualify as experienced or highly skilled bicyclists. Therefore, the pathway system should accommodate the needs of both experienced and less experienced riders. The less experienced rider is most likely interested in short trips to a destination: such as a neighbor's house or a convenience store. These riders will most appreciate the links to neighborhoods and parks with safe crossings at roadway intersections.

Today, Genoa Township has a robust trail system for a community of its size but lacks a few critical connections to neighborhoods.

Finally, the area is a popular training ground for riders participating in the annual Pelotonia fundraising ride. Numerous cyclists route through the Township's narrow county roads including Sunbury, Red Bank, and Worthington Roads that do not presently have accommodation for cyclists, presenting a safety hazard.





VISION

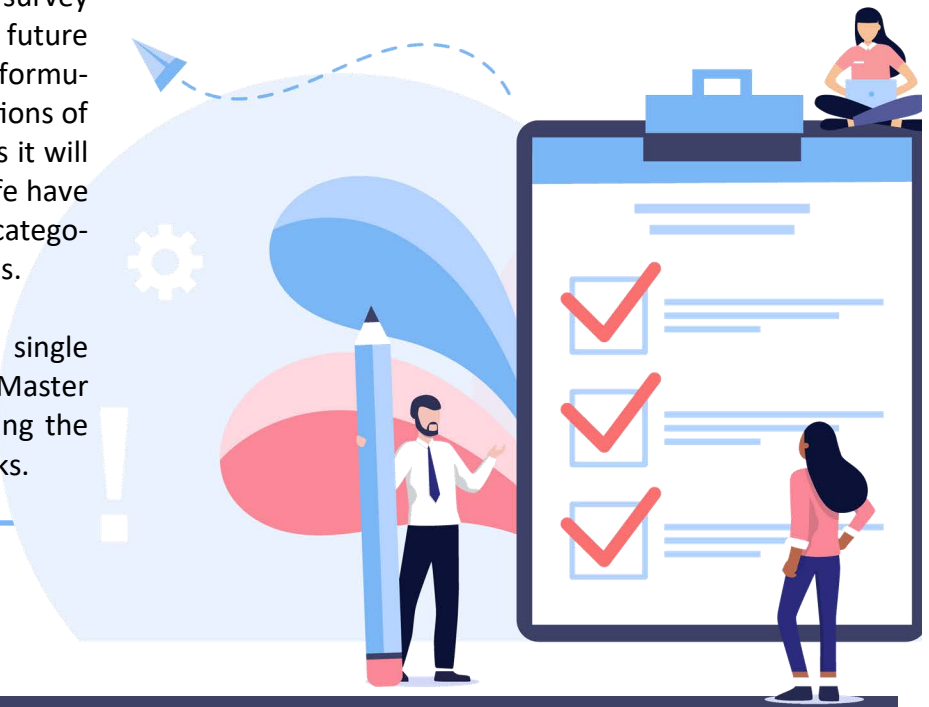
The Trail Plan proposes a series of interconnected trails throughout the township and includes a definition of primary routes and design guidelines.

- Connect neighborhoods that are disconnected from the network (i.e. Sheffield Park, Marisol).
- Old 3C north of McNamara Park to get to Oxbow, Old 3C in front of Fouse and Genoa Middle School, Mt Royal from Rt 3 to Tussic.
- Connection from the end of Tussic Street at Old 3C, through Vinmar Farms to Genoa Trail (OTET).
- Connect Hoover Reservoir to Alum Creek along Lewis Center Road.
- East-west connection along Big Walnut Road to Genoa Trail (OTET) and Alum Creek State Park.
- Connect Freeman Park west to Worthington Road.
- North-south connection along Tussic Street
- Link Sheffield Park neighborhood to Jaycox Park.
- Where trails are not feasible, consider protected bike lanes to connect neighborhoods to the trail system.
- The regional trail planning group, Central Ohio Greenways, led by the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission has identified a route along the west side of Hoover Reservoir north of Maxtown Road as a future route for the regional trail network.

PLAN

The aforementioned research and survey data contributed to the creation of a future vision for each township park; each formulated to meet the needs and expectations of Genoa Township residents. The steps it will take to make these visions come to life have been broken down into tasks and categorized into one of five overarching goals.

The goals and activities list is the single most important section of the Parks Master Plan, serving as a check-list to fulfilling the future vision for Genoa Township parks.



Goal 1: Ensure the Parks Master Plan is carried out.

Activities (<i>efforts conducted to achieve the goal</i>):		Cost:	Priority Level:
1	Secure a dedicated funding source for Parks.	N/A	1
2	Parks Advisory Committee report annually on plan progress to the Board of Trustees.	N/A	1
3	Establish administrative leadership to keep a permanent focus on the overall quality of parks, trails, and open spaces.	High	1
4	Apply for grants to support the activities of the Parks Master Plan.	Low	1
5	Join the Ohio Parks and Recreation Association and send representatives to attend the annual conference to learn best management practices, discover available resources, and stay aware of industry trends.	Low	2
6	Meet with owners of large tracts of open space annually to plan or react to changing dynamics. Entities include Preservation Parks, City of Westerville, City of Columbus, Columbus City Schools, and the Genoa Township Land Conservation Association.	Low	2

Goal 2: Address resident requests for capital improvements.

	Activities (<i>efforts conducted to achieve the goal</i>):	Cost:	Priority:
1	Design and build interactive water playscape (McNamara).	High	1
2	Design and install dog agility park (Jaycox).	High	2
3	Establish and implement a playground replacement schedule. As age and wear dictate, replace most outdated playgrounds with new equipment and include shade structures.	High	1
4	Install pickleball courts (Center Green). Explore possibility of doing so in partnership with adjacent condos and/or HOAs.	High	2
5	Install obstacle course playground (Freeman).	High	2
6	Install a natural playground (Center Green).	Low	2
7	Preserve and restore historic township buildings (McNamara barn and old Township Hall).	High	1
8	Design a wellness park (Worthington) with features such as yoga, meditation and group exercise garden, bocce ball court.	High	2
9	Install sand volleyball court (Freeman).	High	3
10	Coordinate access to Fleur Woods and install hiking trail.	Low	1
11	Install fishing pier (Center Green).	High	3



Goal 3: Improve park aesthetics, comfort and ease of use

Activities (efforts conducted to achieve the goal):		Cost:	Priority Level:
1	Have a landscape architect layout each park with the selected amenities outlined within in the Parks Master Plan.	High	1
2	Install robust information kiosks with ample space for maps, rules, and community event information. Utilize QR codes to direct park users to more information.	Low	2
3	Add heated, remote locked restroom to Hilmar Park and Worthington Road.	High	3
4	Add character to parks through art installations such as: murals (augmented reality), “tiny-murals,” rain-activated art, “land art,” selfie backdrops for use with GenoaTwp hashtag.	Low	2
5	Select trees for biological diversity (pest resistance) and brilliant fall color to attract leaf peepers. Thoughtfully plant trees in areas to shield sight lights, buffer noise, and provide shade to park users. Install plant identification markers for native species.	Low	1
6	Develop an ADA friendly “Play for All Abilities” playground at one community park and incorporate ADA equipment into all other park projects whenever feasible.	High	2
7	Seating options outside of typical park “benches” placed nearby for parents to supervise children. Consider hammocks, Adirondack chairs and others that compliment the park theming and activities. (Hilmar, Center Green)	Low	2
8	Add public Wi-Fi to parks in partnership with public libraries serving Genoa Township.	Low	2
9	Reconfigure south entrance to McNamara Park.	High	2
10	Pave gravel parking lots. (i.e. Worthington Park)	Low	2
11	Establish policy and update fee schedule to more fairly monetize use of parks for fundraising events, private for-profit groups, residents’ parties, churches, scouts groups, etc.	N/A	1
12	Remove outdated pavement surfaces. (Freeman, Hilmar)	Low	3
13	Relocate, edge and landscape kids sand area. (Freeman)	Low	3

Goal 4: Continually improve trail access.

Activities (<i>efforts conducted to achieve the goal</i>):		Cost:	Priority Level:
1	Increase trail connections from neighborhoods and parks to existing networks (reference page 42).	Low	1
2	Advocate for the inclusion of trails in all Delaware County Engineer road improvement projects.	Low	2
3	Build gateway park for cyclists passing through on the Ohio to Erie Trail as well as motorists on State Route 3 (Mt. Royal).	High	1
4	Continue to conduct trail counts in partnership with MORPC and Delaware General Health District.	Low	1
5	Remain engaged in stakeholder groups such as MORPC’s Central Ohio Greenways, Ohio to Erie Trail, Rails to Trails Conservancy, and Delaware County General Health ad hoc trail group.	Low	1
6	Participate in the “Trail Town program” to encourage businesses to cater to trail users.	Low	3
7	Link Spring Run Drive through Center Green Park to north bridge with walking path as well as around the pond at Hilmar Park.	Low	2
8	Separate the trail and parking lot using bollards, fencing or other suitable material at Center Green Park, Township Hall and behind the Fire Station.	Low	1
9	Add additional crossing from west side of State Route 3 to Genoa/ Ohio to Erie Trail (flyover bridge).	High	3



Goal 5: Serve as responsible stewards of the environment.

Activities (<i>efforts conducted to achieve the goal</i>):		Cost:	Priority Level:
1	Mitigate wildlife nuisance, especially the over-population of Canada Geese.	Low	1
2	Study feasibility of stream restoration at Center Green Park.	High	1
3	Stock each township pond (Hilmar and Center Green) with native fish.	Low	2
4	Control invasive species and incorporate native species into landscaping.	Low	1
5	Acquire new parkland in areas where residents are underserved by parks, where environmentally sensitive habitats have been identified, and where existing parks can be expanded. Set aside funding annually for new parkland acquisition.	High	1
6	Partner with Rumpke and Keep Delaware County Beautiful to manage waste responsibly within parks and during community events.	Low	3
7	Promote plantings that attract butterflies and birds (expanding popular wildflower plantings).	Low	1
8	Install edible landscaping. (Worthington)	Low	2
9	Work with Alcott School to develop the southeastern edge of Hilmar Park with an outdoor classroom.	High	2
10	Relocate bird blind (from Township Hall to Worthington Park).	Low	2



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following individuals provided significant contribution to the planning and writing of this document:



BOARD OF TRUSTEES & FISCAL OFFICER

Connie Goodman, Chair
Renee Vaughan, Vice Chair
Karl Gebhardt, Trustee
Patrick Myers, Fiscal Officer



PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Pictured from left to right are Phil Johnson, Tyson Cline, Connie Goodman, Amy Cashman, Brian Wellman, Mark Wigginton, Molly McHale (Chair), Jennifer Kovach
Not pictured: Amy Barr (Vice Chair), and Marilyn Lundquist (Secretary)

STAFF

Paul Wise, Administrator
Leslie Strader, Communications Director
Joe Shafer, Director of Development and Zoning
Bob Mathews, Maintenance Director
Zach Gilkerson, Parks Maintenance