

Comprehensive Planning Committee
Vision Report Comments
November 15, 2007

The Genoa Township Comprehensive Planning Committee offers the following comments and analysis of the results of the Visioning process and the Final Report, a copy of which has been posted to the Township Website (www.genoatwp.com). These comments reflect the sentiment of the Committee members as they reviewed the findings and through numerous discussions. As the Final Report gets increased public circulation and as the suggestions and comments therein receive further discussion, the Committee expects additional input by broader populations on specific topics of interest.

The Committee believes that the following five items summarize the main concepts that surfaced from the Visioning sessions. Additional information regarding each topic is noted in the remaining text of this document.

- ***Maintain rural feel*** – Overwhelmingly residents expressed a desire to retain the green space and other conservation areas, reservoirs and wildlife.
- ***Limit retail development*** – There was strong opposition expressed toward “Big Box” retailers and limited support for smaller neighborhood gathering places and small-scale commercial/retail development..
- ***Community/Recreation Center, pool, or library*** – While there was some support for these amenities, others expressed concerns regarding the funding of these items and the adverse impact on the rural feel of the township.
- ***Landmark or Identity*** – The desire to define Genoa Township by creating an entry point or a gathering spot was noted. However, no clear description of such a feature was identified.
- ***Township maintenance and improvement issues*** – A number of items were noted that were not part of “visioning”, but clearly are topics that could be addressed by the township with the goal of improving the quality of life for residents.

The overall feeling conveyed by respondents is that they are pleased with the atmosphere of Genoa Township. Overwhelmingly, they noted the rural feel as being very important. This “ruralness” concept covered a wide range of topics: neighborhood designs; tree-lined roadways; being close to amenities, but not too close; bike and walking trails; green space and other conservation areas; the reservoirs; wildlife; etc. In retrospect, the 1999 Comprehensive Plan and the implementing actions of Township Officials have created an excellent living environment and are two of the primary reasons for the desirability and growth of the Township. Consequently, the 1999 Plan needs more “updating” than “revising” in terms of guiding the remaining development in the Township.

Development was mentioned by some of the groups and there was strong opposition to “Big Box” retailers. A small number of respondents indicated a “planned” community retail center with hidden parking might be considered. They indicated they wanted a place to meet neighbors with areas to congregate, often noting bike and walking path connectors. Although there was some feeling that the taxes generated by these retail

entities would benefit the township, further research has found that most of the benefit would be to the county and other taxing authorities - not the Township.

There was some sentiment for a community center, a recreation center, a pool (indoor and/or outdoor), and a community library. It was noted by the facilitators that there was likely an equal sentiment against these items. Often this was due to the potential for increased traffic and taxes. Related to the recreation issues was a request for more children's sports programs. Residential development comments ranged from slowing down future development to no future development. Additionally, low density housing was clearly desirable over higher density housing. Apartments were specifically noted as undesirable.

Creating a "landmark" or an "identity" was noted as preferable. As part of creating an identity, the Township administration was encouraged to promote the community and to increase the number of community events. Again, tying the community together via bike and walking paths was noted. Additionally, some respondents said linking neighborhoods by sidewalks would increase safety for children as would crosswalks, specifically by schools.

There were some suggestions that fell more into the township maintenance and improvement arena than true visioning. Issues noted were: adding tornado warning sirens, increasing pond aeration, improving dependability and pricing of utilities, improving cable/internet service (price, competition, channels, and access), reducing freeway noise, improving drainage (streets and runoff), and tightening restrictions on flyer distribution and noise levels in general. Also suggested were improving the township's newsletter, website and the overall communications to residents. Some of the suggestions were related to the county, such as improved roads and intersections and a Route 3 overpass. To facilitate this, it was suggested that there be increased cooperation with the county and surrounding townships and cities.

The Comprehensive Planning Committee suggests that further public discussion and analysis be done to determine which items are most desired by township residents. Future topic-specific meetings should be held to obtain residents' input. Items that might incur a substantial cost, such as a community center, will need to have their financial feasibility considered. As further discussion, planning and research based upon the Visioning Report is undertaken, the ability of the Township to provide funding sources for implementing actions will be an important consideration. Current taxing levels are unlikely to provide sufficient resources, and all existing tax levies face referendums no later than 2010. The Committee recommends that a Financial Oversight Committee be established by the Township Trustees and the Fiscal Officer to address long-term financing issues. Credible decisions on the financing of Township "enhancements" should not be made in the absence of a 3-5 year operating expenditure budget and a 10-15 year capital improvements budget. This is especially critical in light of the upcoming tax referendums.

Finally, the Comprehensive Planning Committee encourages all Township Officials, other Resident Committees and all residents to participate in the additional public forums and discussions that should be conducted to gauge the desirability and implementation feasibility of the many suggestions for Township “enhancements” that surfaced during the Visioning process and that have been compiled in the Visioning Report.