

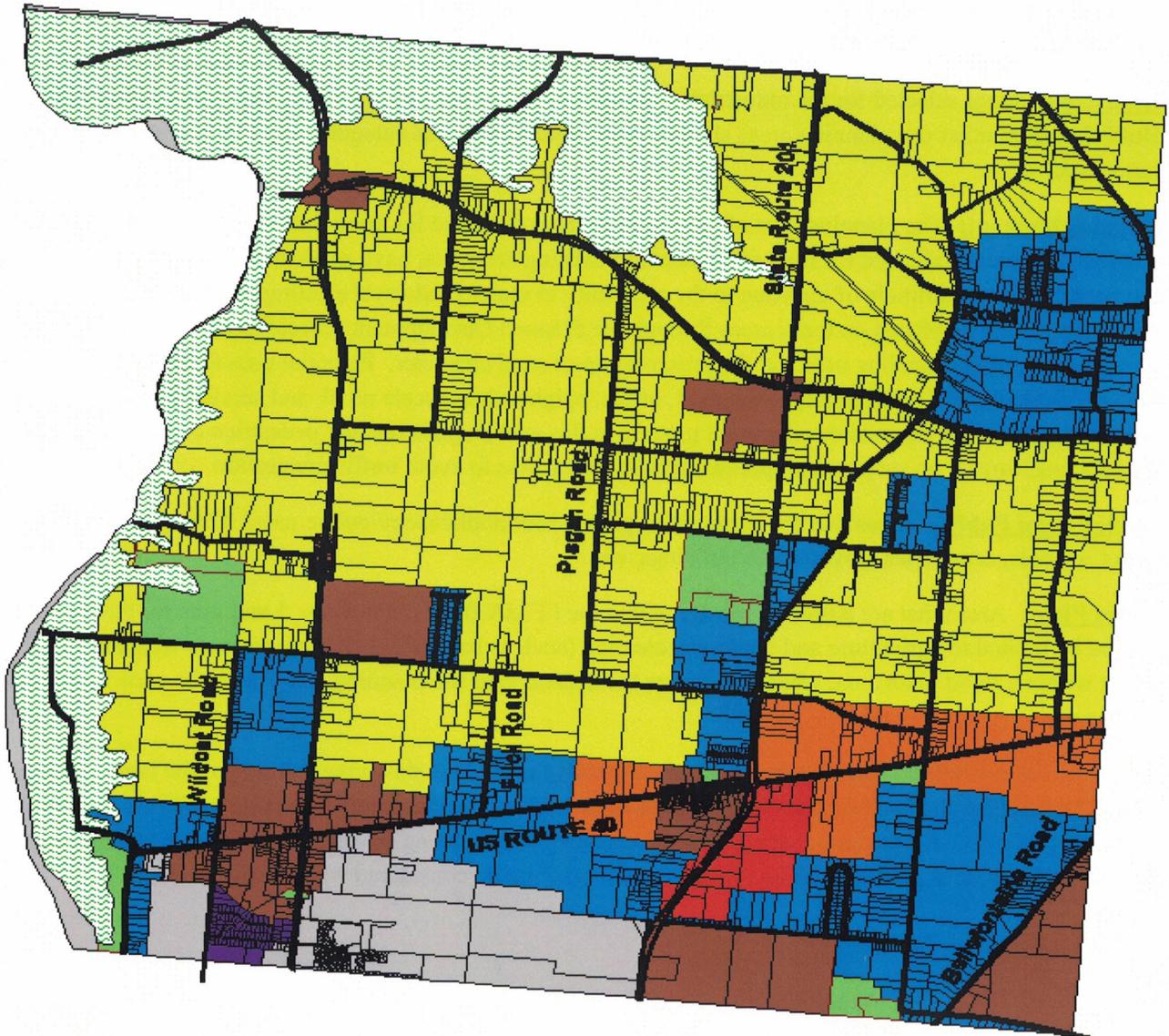
**Bethel Township Strategic Land Use Plan – Citizen Input Sessions  
August 2 and 3, 2021  
Agenda**

1. Introductions
2. Ground Rules
3. Brief overview of the current Township Land Use Plan
4. SWOT process
5. Next Steps

## GROUND RULES

1. This is a citizen input session: No interruptions, No judgements, No debates.
2. Trustees and staff are attending to listen. They will not be making comments or participating in the SWOT analysis.
3. Statements should be concise, but also complete.
4. Purpose of the meetings
  - a. Obtain citizen input for the development of a Strategic Land Use Plan for the Township as part of the 10-year review and update of the Township Land Use Plan.
5. What this meeting is not
  - a. This meeting is not about discussing specific zoning issues, pending cases or other township business/services.
6. What is a SWOT analysis?
  - a. Strengths – What are the positive aspects and advantages of the current plan?
  - b. Weaknesses – What is missing, unclear or needs improvement or clarified?
  - c. Opportunities – What is happening in the community, region, state, or private sector that can enhance the strengths or create advantages in the land use plan?
  - d. Threats – What is happening in the community, region, state, or private sector that creates risks to the land use plan and its implementation?

# BETHEL TOWNSHIP LAND USE MAP



- Rural
- Traditional Neighborhood
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Office/Residential
- Flood Plain
- Public/Semi-Public Use
- Rural Settlement

# Introduction

Bethel Township, located in the southwest corner of Miami County, offers its residents a charming rural community with a vast history and long time residents. Bethel Township offers a unique mix of open country living and isolated areas with a small town feel. There are four distinct major roadways in Bethel: US Route 40 and State Routes 201, 202, and 571. Also, 3 existing hamlets Brandt, Phoneton, and West Charleston lie within the borders of Bethel and each offers a distinct look and feel.



The goal of this document is to provide a guideline for land use decisions in Bethel Township for the next five to seven years. It is the desire of the Bethel Township Trustees to require this document to be reviewed and remain dynamic as change occurs, however; this document is meant to provide a sense of grounding for wishes expressed by the community to keep the rural feel and limit future development to slow and sustainable growth while recognizing the land use rights of individual property owners.

## Background

In May/ June 2009 Bethel Township met with its citizens and community members to introduce an update to the Bethel Township Strategic Development Plan along the US Route 40 corridor. It became apparent that some of the concepts and ideas were not parallel to the direction of the public and that this update did not address the remainder of the Township. Later in 2009 it was decided by the Trustees to conduct an overall land use update. The name was also changed to the Bethel Township Comprehensive Land Use Plan. This update would not utilize an outside consultant and would consist of staff working with a steering committee of Bethel residents.

## Existing Conditions

In 2008 Bethel Township contracted with Jacobs Engineering to perform an update to the Strategic Development Plan along the US Route 40 Corridor. Even though the plan was not adopted it provided the Township with new demographic data that can be utilized. The information contained in this section was based on the data and analysis provided by Jacobs.

According to the estimates and projections, Bethel Township is experiencing modest but positive population growth that is projected to exceed the county and state growth rates by 2013. According to current population estimates, Bethel Township has 1% to 2% more residents in the 55 to 70 age bracket and similarly lower proportions in most of the younger categories, than the state as a whole. Bethel Township's median age is 46.2, significantly higher than the state median of 36.2. Bethel Township's average household size is also projected to decline slightly by 2013, a common characteristic in a maturing community.

Bethel Township's total housing stock in 2000 consisted of 90% single family homes, 5.7% mobile homes, and the remainder in buildings of four units or less. There were no properties with more than 4 units in the Township in 2000. At that time, 89% of Bethel Township residential units were owner-occupied, while 11%

were rental – significantly less than the state average. More than half of houses in Bethel Township in 2000 were constructed before 1969, while over 26% had been constructed between 1970 and 1979. The median housing values in Bethel Township at that time was nearly 1.5 times the median for the State of Ohio.

## The Planning Process

A different approach was taken by staff and the Steering Committee with this plan. Instead of starting with facts and figures of existing land use, transportation usage and routes, and regional trends; the focus was placed on the concerns and desires of the Bethel residents (through the Steering Committee and previous community input). The whole process started with the mapping component. The Steering Committee was given a blank parcel map of Bethel Township and was asked to share with the friends and neighbors to get a feel for where various land uses should be placed. There was a response of about seventy maps returned with the thoughts and opinions of community members. The responses were shared with all of the Steering Committee so that all may get an idea of the desires of the community.

With that exercise complete the Steering Committee started the task of assigning land use planning areas to all of the areas of Bethel Township. This was started in the northern portion of the Township and preceded south. The Township was examined almost parcel by parcel in order to come up with the final draft map.

## Land Use Plan Elements

In choosing future land use types the decision was made to limit the number and type to eight planning areas. These eight planning areas are considered preferred land uses. Each of eight planning areas were developed through discussion and analysis of the existing use, future potential and relation to existing zoning districts.

The process of selecting the placement of these planning areas on the future land use map followed existing property lines. There are often times where there are boundaries in which two planning areas border each other. When this occurs consideration should be given to both of the two planning areas when making zoning decisions.



The preferred land uses are just that, preferred. It is recognized that there are times which the land use plan may be deviated from due to specific uses not considered or due to specific characteristics of the land. When this occurs emphasis should be placed on a land use type that is compatible to the existing land uses, surrounding land uses and future land uses preferred within the planning area. There should also be a substantial explanation by any applicants requesting a deviation for the planning area as to the reason for the deviation.

The eight planning areas are:

**Rural:** This is the predominant land use planning area within Bethel Township. The rural land use planning areas should include large lot uses (from 3 acres and up) and encourage the rural feel of the community. Types of uses preferred are: agricultural, single family residential, public/semi-public uses, and agri-business (such as farm markets and nurseries).

**Traditional Neighborhood:** This planning area is the traditional single family plat. The lot sizes would range from ½ acre to 3 acres. Traditional neighborhoods should utilize the entire parcel of land (open space included) and not leave large tracts away from the road frontage. Most traditional neighborhoods will require the creation/ extension of roadways.

**Office/ Residential:** This planning area includes traditional office uses including medical, professional, and specialty offices as well as single and multi family (of 4 units per structure or less) uses. In instances where office areas border residential or agricultural areas; buffering with landscaping shall be considered.

**Commercial:** The commercial planning area lies along State Route 201. This planning area allows for business activity with direct or indirect retail sales. As with the office residential planning area buffering with landscaping along residential boundary lines shall be considered.

**Industrial:** Areas selected for the industrial planning area allow for manufacturing and related retail uses.

Buffering from other use planning areas shall be incorporated with this category either by use of landscape or hardscape.

**Rural Settlement:** The planning area of rural settlement is designed for areas that have the potential for a mix of uses. The areas indicated for rural settlement are existing areas that have an existing “town” setting or have the potential for a multitude of uses due to the proximity to major roadways/ existing mixed use areas. Emphasis should be placed on these areas through the Planned Development process to allow for the consideration of surrounding uses and the preservation of rural character. Potential uses for this planning area include single family/ multi family residential, office, neighborhood scale retail, light industrial and service uses. In addition to considering uses, the planned development process in this area should consider pedestrian connectivity, parking, landscaping, impact on surrounding properties, and limited access to avoid traffic congestion.

**Public/ Semi Public:** Areas that are currently or planned for public/ semi public uses. These uses include parks, schools, cemeteries, government buildings, etc.

**Flood Plain:** Areas that are within or mostly within the FEMA flood plain areas. Land uses for these areas should be limited to agriculture and outdoor recreation (such as ball fields). There are cases where building can occur within a flood plain area, when this occurs the nearest land use planning area should be used for planning purposes.

The figure below (table 1) represents 6 basic zoning uses for land down the left side of the table. Along the top of the table are the land use planning areas as described in this document. The table itself lists in numerical order the preference for the basic uses within the category, with 1 being the highest preference and 6 being the lowest. If the table is marked with an “X” that use should not be considered within that category.

Table 1

	Rural	Traditional Neighborhood	Office/ Residential	Commercial	Industrial	Rural Settlement	Public Use	Flood Plain
Agricultural	1	2	4	5	5	**	X	2
Residential	2	1	2	X	X	**	X	X
Office	X	X	1	2	3	**	X	X
Commercial	X	X	5	1	2	**	X	X
Industrial	X	X	X	3	1	**	X	X
Public Use	3	3	3	4	4	**	1	1

\*\* The Rural Settlement planning area may have any of the uses listed. Approval for other than the current zoning classification of the land must be through the planned development process as outlined in the Bethel Township Zoning Resolution.



# Land Use Planning Principles

The Rural, Traditional Neighborhood, Office/ Residential and Rural Settlement planning areas all allow for residential development. In an effort to preserve the rural character of Bethel Township, consideration should be given to Conservation Development whenever possible.

## Conservation Development



Conservation development is characterized by common open space and clustered compact lots. The purpose of conservation development is to protect farmland and/or natural resources while allowing for the maximum number of residences under current community zoning and subdivision regulations. Conservation development ordinances generally require permanent dedication of 40% or more of the total development parcel as open space. Open space uses may include agriculture, forestry or outdoor recreation.

Figure 1.1 begins with a 100 acre Undeveloped Site. The existing site contains both woodlands and agricultural uses. It also includes horse pastures and an existing ravine. Within a Conventional Development the transformation of an undeveloped site into a

conventionally developed subdivision usually ignores the natural resources of the existing site. The land is subdivided into one acre lots and yields 100 homes under traditional zoning and subdivision regulations. There is no common open space and no preservation of the previously existing natural features.

Conversely, within a Conservation Development the transformation of an undeveloped site into a conservation development divides the original tract of land into 1/2 acre lots, and yields 110 homes under an open space overlay district. The development contains a slightly higher overall density as the conventionally developed site, however it preserves 50% of the open space and natural features, including the existing farm house and horse pasture. With this type of development, less infrastructure cost is incurred by the developer and the paths and open spaces have the opportunity to be linked with surrounding developments.



# Other Plan Elements

## Annexation

Annexation has seriously impacted the integrity and continuity of Bethel Township planning, management, and control of its future. Issues related to annexation have consistently been identified as high priority for inclusion in the Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The threat of annexation will be minimized when Bethel Township begins to implement reasonable land use policies, is consistent in administration of regulations, delivers high quality services, and provides the necessary infrastructure related to roadway, sewer, and water.

It is important to understand that no single action by the Township will slow or stop annexation. The Township will have to adopt a broad based approach and consistently implement policies which are perceived as being positive to the citizens and beneficial to the private business sector.

## Township Services

With the potential future growth and development within the Township, it is important to reevaluate the various types of Township services including: Fire, Police, Zoning, Park and Recreation, and Township Administration. In addition, the Township should continue to reach out to its citizens with various communication methods such as a newsletter, Township meetings, public involvement and special activity events.



## Infrastructure

Provisions for high quality infrastructure related to roadway, sewer and water are critical elements for the Township. Various opportunities for funding, building and maintaining infrastructure are available to the Township. Each of these should be investigated as appropriate.

## Sewer/Water

Miami County continues to monitor sewer/water needs within Bethel Township. As need arises county sewer/water services may be provided to areas of Bethel Township. When such systems are in place the availability for a mix of uses (such as in the Rural Settlement category) become more sustainable. Emphasis should be placed on maintaining the rural feel of the community when reviewing areas with county sewer/water services.

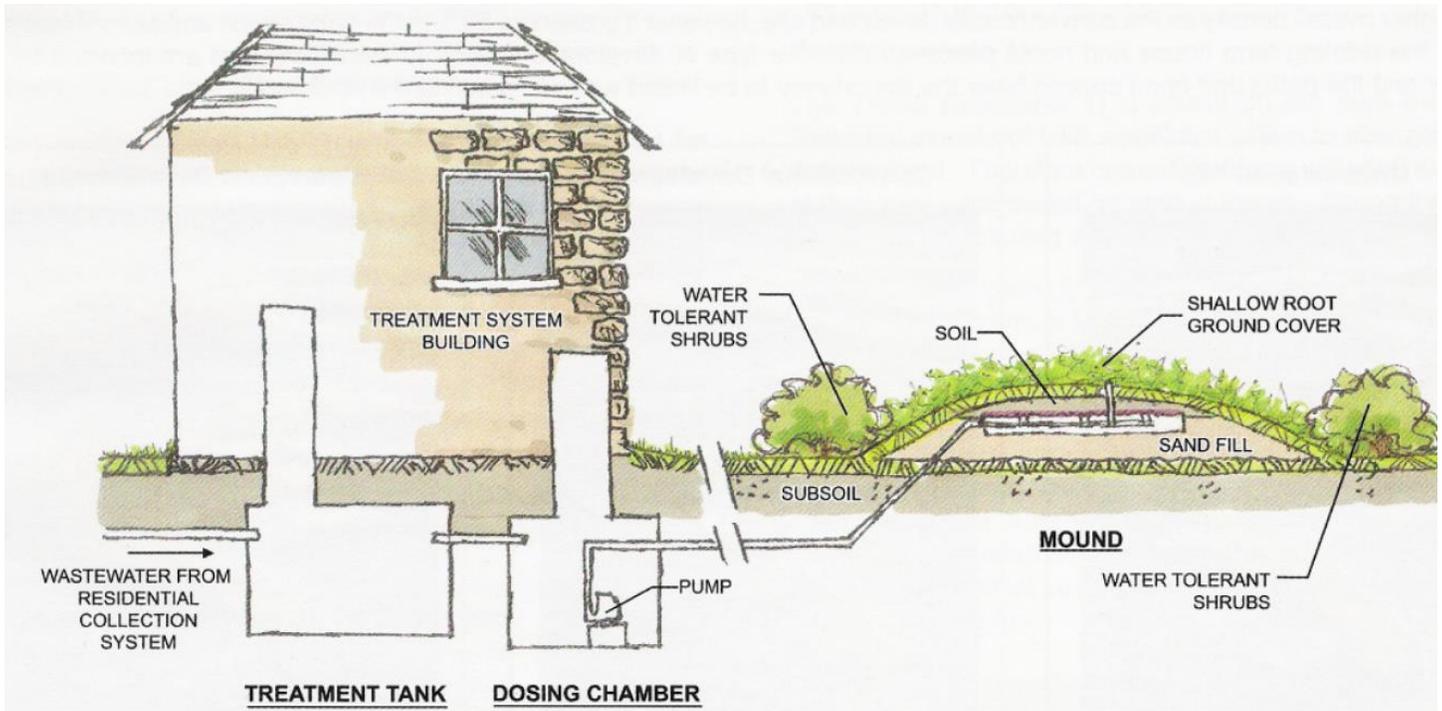
## On-Site Decentralized Wastewater Treatment Systems

On-site decentralized wastewater treatment systems allow Bethel Township to explore numerous development opportunities that would otherwise not be possible due to the limitation of centralized or regional sewer systems. However, these on-site decentralized systems must be constructed in a fashion that allows for future attachment to a centralized or regional sewer system network. This concept would require the research of and

conformity with the existing centralized or regional sewer systems on the mandatory regulations and standards regarding the following: proper pipe widths, necessary slopes, etc.

There are multiple types of on-site decentralized wastewater treatment systems that comply with current Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards. These types of systems include: mound (Figure 1.2), spray irrigation, and drip. Anyone of these systems could work for future Bethel Township development.

Each specific development should be analyzed on the basis of its unique characteristics. The type of on-site decentralized wastewater treatment systems will be selected after the appropriate site analysis is completed by Miami County. It is expected that the Sanitary Engineering Department of Miami County will be responsible for maintenance and quality control.



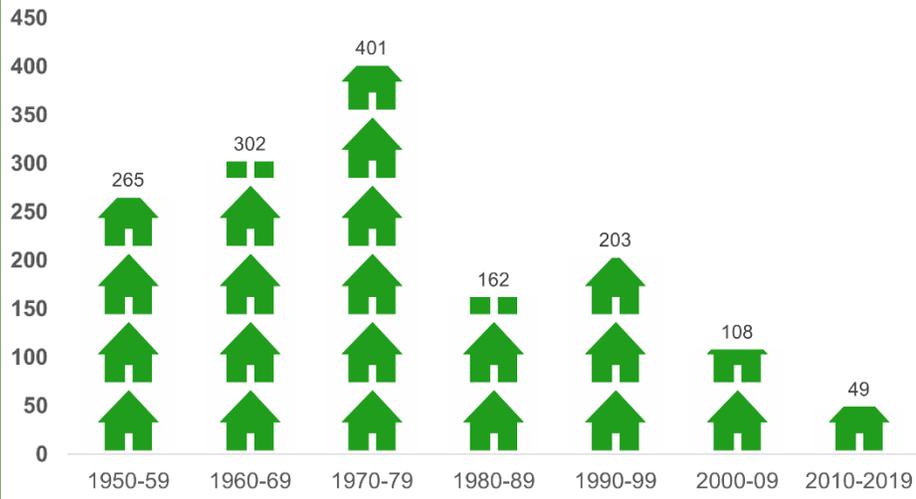
## Roadways

The Miami County engineer is responsible for the majority of roadways in the Township. The Ohio Department of Transportation is responsible for State Routes in the Township. Close coordination and communication should be maintained with both agencies. Township roads should adhere to adopted standards for construction and maintenance. New roadways or development shall comply with the Miami County Thoroughfare Plan and the Bethel Township Access Management Plan.

## Bike Paths

The Board of Trustees should work with the appropriate Miami County agency, the Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission and the Springfield-Clark County Transportation Coordination Committee to investigate and implement plans for adding bike paths to the Township's transportation infrastructure.

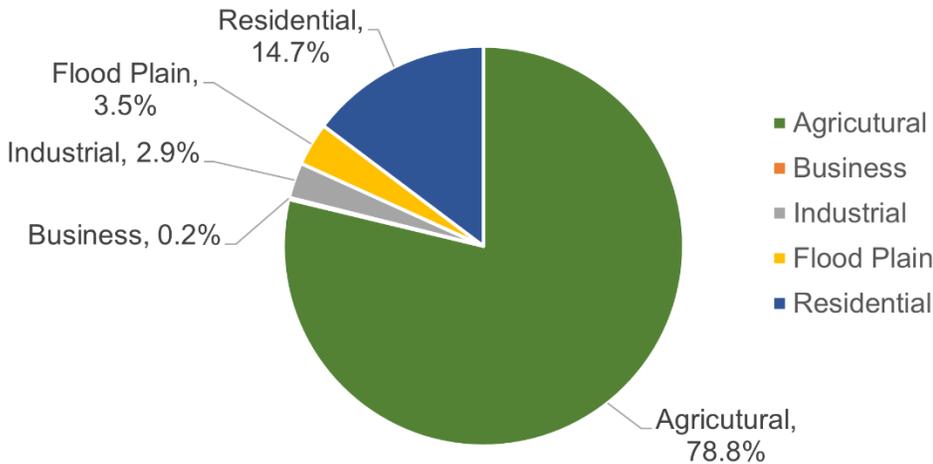
**Number of Homes Built in Bethel Township by Decade**



Bethel Township has approximately 2000 homes. As you can see from the chart on the left, the 1970's were the busiest home building decade, with 401 homes built. 2010 – 2019 was the fewest homes built per decade – only 49 built over the entire 10 years.

All data are from the Miami County Auditor. Accessed June, 2021

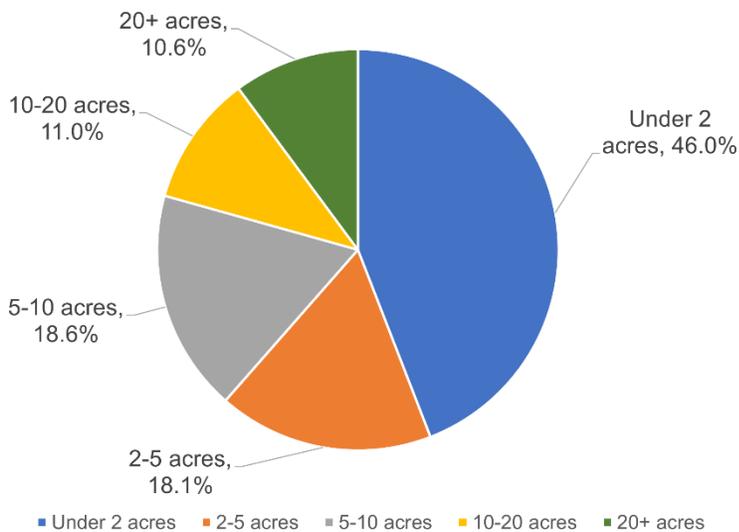
**Bethel Township Acreage by Zoning Classification**



Almost 80% of acreage in Bethel Township is zoned Agricultural – either A-1 Domestic Agriculture (minimum lot size 5 acres) or A-2 General Agriculture (minimum lot size 20 acres).

All data are from the Miami County & Bethel Township GIS systems. Accessed July, 2021.

**Parcel Size Distribution in Bethel Township**



46% of the *parcels* in Bethel Township are less than 2 acres in size. In 2007, the township trustees increased minimum residential lot size from 0.717 acres to 2 acres (1 acre if sewer and water are available).

All data are from the Miami County Auditor. Accessed July, 2021.



## Township Frequently Asked Questions August, 2021

### ***Can a township fight annexation with.....***

**Charter Townships** - Charter townships do not exist in the state of Ohio. Charter townships are only found in Michigan.

**Home Rule Townships** - Home rule townships do not block annexation from a municipality. Washington Township is a home rule township and it is constantly battling annexation issues with the city of Centerville.

**Conservation easements** - Conservation or Agricultural easements are usually permanent easements on the development rights of a property. An easement can be "extinguished" if the property owner files a petition in court, but this seems to be rather difficult and expensive. Case law is very minimal on how annexations affect conservation and agricultural easements. Most easements granted by the Ohio's Farmland Preservation program, are a mile or more from a municipality.

**Township could purchase property and create a park** - If property is owned by a government entity, it can be used by a municipality to access and annex property on the other side of it. Example - the City of Beavercreek annexed the Beavercreek Township Offices and two parks in 2015.

**Incorporate as a Village** - Per the Ohio Revised Code 707.02 (C) we would need a population density of at least 800 people per square mile. Currently, we have approximately 144 people per square mile. Our initial research indicated a population greater than 5,000 is required to become a village. However, after more research, we found the ORC code requiring the population density.

**Enterprise Zone** - We have an Enterprise Zone (EZ #377C). It is the area south of Ross Road to the southern township border. An Enterprise Zone *applies only to non retail business* and the township is allowed to abate or reduce only the township's portion of the tax bill (34%) to encourage a business to locate here. Once established, there is nothing to prevent these businesses from annexing to Huber Heights if their property is contiguous with the city.

**Create a Privately owned and Funded LLC** - This private company could buy vulnerable properties and hold or develop them within the township. There are currently 1,163 acres that border Huber Heights in Bethel Township. A private group could purchase property and create a privately held "buffer zone". A group of citizens in Beavercreek Township has done this. However, when and if the group decides to sell and/or develop, annexation is still a possibility.

**Create a CIC and purchase vulnerable properties** - A Community Improvement Corporation, as designated by section 1724 of the ORC allows a group of citizens to purchase, develop and sell property with less restrictions than a township. However, a CIC needs seed money to begin to do this. Townships are NOT permitted to fund a CIC.

**Attend a Huber Heights City Council Meeting** - Voice your opposition to future annexations. Let Huber know that the residents of Bethel Township do not want to lose additional acreage to Huber.

**Use a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) agreement** - A TIF is an economic development mechanism available to local governments in Ohio to finance public infrastructure improvements. However, we can only apply a TIF to our portion of the taxes, which is about 34% of the tax bill. Payments derived from the increased assessed value of any improvement to real property beyond that amount are (cont.)

**Use a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) agreement – continued** - directed towards a separate fund to finance the construction of public infrastructure defined within the TIF legislation. In order to establish a TIF, we must enact legislation that (a) designates the parcel(s) to be exempted from taxation, (b) declares improvements to private property within the specified area as serving a public purpose, (c) delineates the public infrastructure improvements to be made that will directly benefit the parcel and (d) specifies the equivalent funds to be created for those redirected monies. Only those public infrastructure improvements directly serving the increased demand arising from the real property improvements to the parcel(s) or an Incentive District are eligible for TIF financing. This *could* be an option for the township in order to pay for infrastructure and we will do more in depth research to see how this financially impacts residents and the township.

**Other Questions.....**

**In the property tax world, what is a “mill”?**

One mill is equal to \$1 of tax for every \$1,000 in assessed value. Rates vary by township, school district, city and county. Because of the differences in assessed value, millage rates in one county or township or city cannot be directly compared to another. For Bethel Township, the current millage rate for a new levy is 1 mill = \$158,961.10. (Source: Miami County Auditor) However, the township did not pass any new levies nor replace existing ones in 2019, therefore NONE of our levies are generating the current millage rate. If property values increase, the state makes adjustments called "reduction factors" which prevents the levies from generating more revenue than what was voted into law. For example, we have a 1.0 Mill police levy, which was passed in 1999. It will generate (approximately) \$112,678.86 for tax year 2019 (calendar year 2020). This is the same annual amount it has generated since it first appeared on the tax bills in 2001. The trustees have decided to put this levy on the ballot this November as a REPLACEMENT. A replacement keeps the voted millage the same (in this case 1.0 mills) but uses home values from the current year to calculate the amount generated.

**Lot Sizes in Bethel Township**

Zoning in Bethel Township started in the 1950's. The earliest zoning code we have a complete record of is from 1973. Contrary to popular opinion, only the land owner can initiate a change to their current zoning. A common misconception among many residents is that Bethel Township has had a 5 acre minimum lot size. This is simply not true. What is true is that in 1981, the trustees changed the A1 (domestic agriculture) minimum lot size from 2 acres to 5 acres.

Year	R-1AAA Residential	A1 Domestic Agriculture	A2 General Agriculture
Minimum Acreage			
1973	0.717 acres	2 acres	N/A
1981-1998	0.717 acres	5 acres	10 acres
1998-2007	0.717 acres	5 acres	20 acres
2007-2009	2 acres	5 acres	20 acres
	1 acre w/ central sewer		
	0.717 acre w/ sewer		
2009-current	2 acres	5 acres	20 acres
	1 acre w/ sewer		

This may be the source of the 5 acre myth. The trustees have steadily increased the R1AAA minimum lot size from 0.717 acres and 150 minimum feet of road frontage in 1973 to the current 2 acres (or 1 acre if sewer and water are available) and a minimum 175 minimum road frontage.

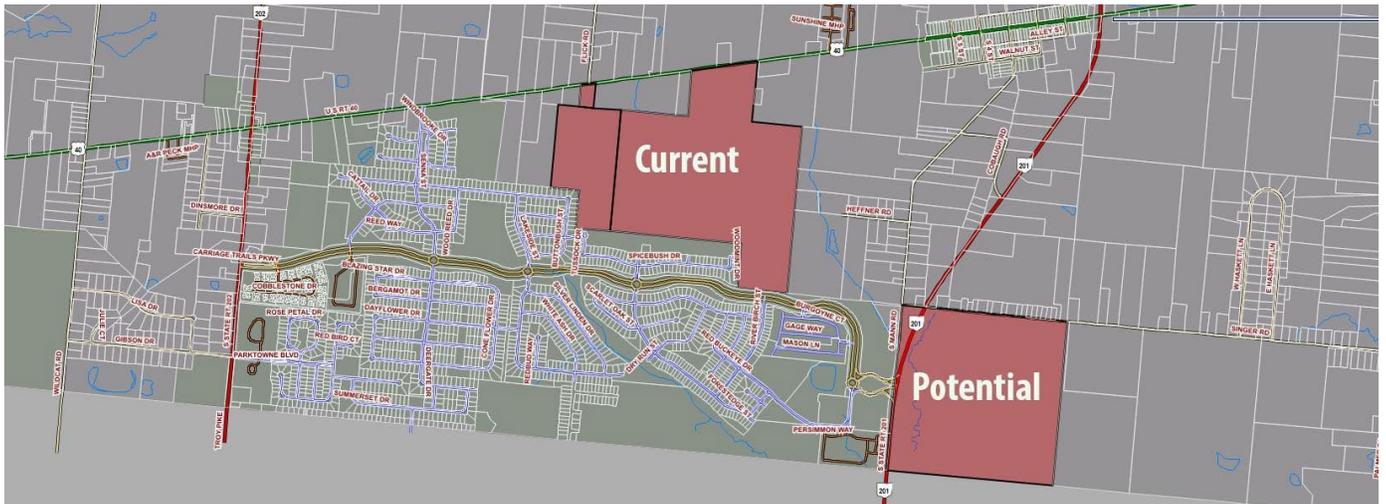
## Other Information

**More Development and Annexation** On April 4, 2021, **Bethel Local Schools** had a conversation with Bill Keethler, president of Carriage Trails Development, indicating 239 acres are "under option" and an additional 150 acres after that. See attachment 1. The township was not a part of that conversation and it is not clear from the meeting minutes who represented Bethel Local Schools. In a meeting with the township, Bethel Superintendent Justin Firks and Bethel School Board President Jacob King, confirmed the information in the document.

The township believes the next 150 acres may be the property on the corner of Singer and 201. The township was made aware of two parcels by the property owner on May 1, 2020.

"Carriage Trails 2" has the potential for 700 new homes on the 239 acres. The additional 150 acres has the potential for 440 new homes (assuming the same density). In order to persuade the developer to not annex the property and stay in the township, we believe the township would have to offer the same deal and allow the same building density. For example, according to the Huber Heights website, (<https://www.hhoh.org/Archive/ViewFile/Item/144>) the Total Project Cost for Carriage Trails \$40.7 million, of which 56% was paid by the developer, 37% by the TIF agreement and 6.9% by a Special Assessment. HH also has an income tax, which is not included in a TIF.

Below is a map of the annexations to date to the City of Huber Heights and the current properties under contract and the potential next annexation.



Thank you all for coming tonight. We hope that this meeting generates some discussion and ideas.

### **Township Trustees**

Beth van Haaren  
Carolyn Wright  
Don Black

### **Fiscal Officer**

Deborah Watson

### **Township Administrator**

Andy Ehrhart