

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



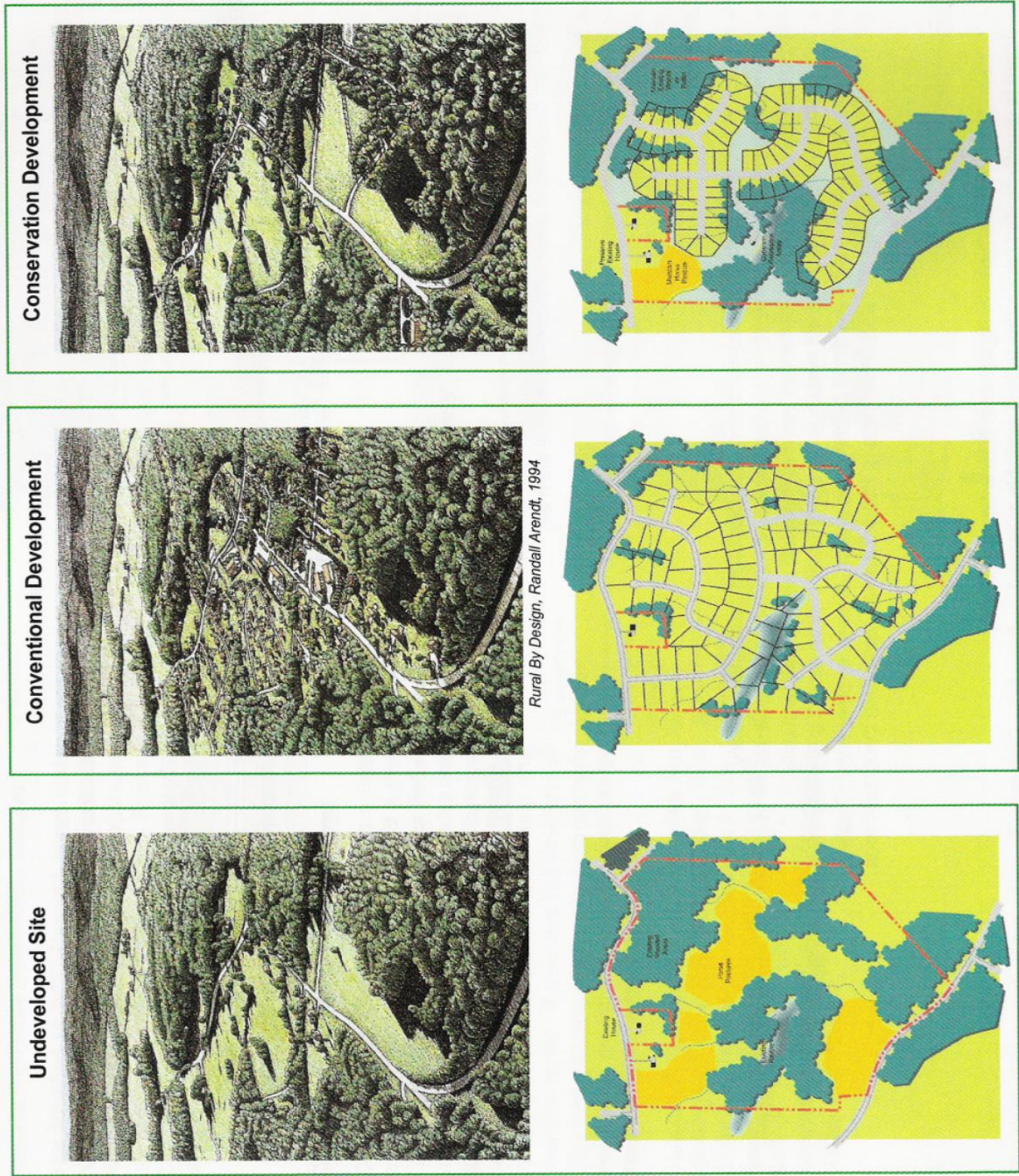
Conservation development is characterized by common open space and clustered compact lots. The purpose of conservation development is to protect farmland and/or natural resources while allowing for the maximum number of residences under current community zoning and subdivision regulations. Conservation 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.

Figure 1.1



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.

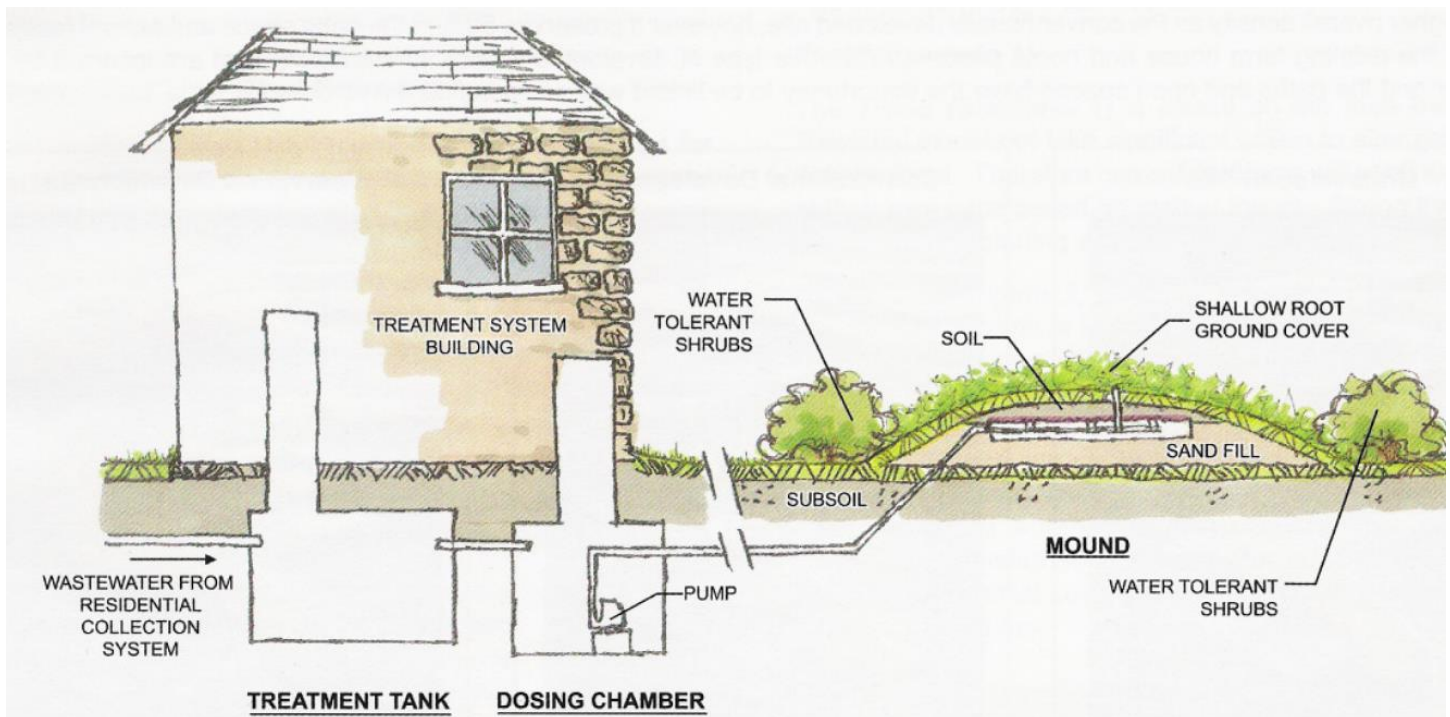
On-Site Decentralized Wastewater Treatment Systems

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.