

# LAND USE PLAN UPDATE

Pierce Township  
Clermont County, Ohio

*Approved by Board of Trustees November 13, 2013*

# Acknowledgements

This plan update is a result of a number of dedicated boards, commissions, and committees working together for the future of Pierce Township. This plan would not have been possible without the involvement of the following groups and people:

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## Introduction

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Pierce Township has changed due to external influences such as growth outward from Hamilton County and the Village of Amelia. The purpose of this updated land use plan is to encompass the changes that will be necessitated by the loss of revenue from the changes in area businesses and the effects of the recent economic recession on Pierce Township's finances.

The plan is to act as a land use blueprint directing our township officials to attain economic stability and continue peaceful enjoyment for its citizens. Although the plan does not change zoning, or how someone may legally use their land, it points the way for changes judged necessary to meet conditions of the foreseeable future.

### PIERCE TOWNSHIP PLANNING AND ZONING HISTORY

Pierce Township adopted zoning in 1961 and updated those regulations in 2010 to maintain a modernized set of land use regulations that suit the Township's needs. Until the Township established the Land Use Plan in 2007, the Clermont County Comprehensive Plan of 1978 has served by default as the Township's plan.

### EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS OF PIERCE TOWNSHIP

Pierce Township has evolved from a rural farming community into a primarily residential community with a commercial corridor along State Route 125. The Energy Plant on State Route 52 has been a major financial contributor to the Township. Within the Township there is a wide range of terrain, from the steep hillsides of the Ohio River Valley and its tributaries, to the rolling hills and flat plains along the northern edge of the community. This range of terrain and close proximity to the Village of Amelia and S.R. 125 has allowed for development that spans from high-density single-family residential developments to large estates situated on prime hillsides. As growth continues outward from Hamilton County, development pressures increase to protect our existing desirable features and create new ones that respond to current and projected events. The intent of this plan is answering the pertinent question of "How do we want to develop over the next 5 years?" To answer this question, it is first necessary to evaluate where the community has been and how current trends and policies, if they remain unchanged, may affect the community in the future. The following is a brief description of the trends and existing conditions that have made Pierce Township what it is today.

### COMMUNITY VISION

The 2007 community vision of residential neighborhoods with limited commercial areas was facilitated by the tax income derived from the Energy Plant which had afforded Pierce Township the luxury of selective growth.

- Where possible the Township's future development should reflect the existing community character and the physical limitations of the land. The community character that attracted

current residents to the area is largely based on the physical characteristics of the Township, consisting of the hillsides and large lot developments that many have characterized as a “countryside” character.

- ✚ Where possible the Township’s natural environment should be maintained and enhanced in order to avoid its damage or destruction by development, thereby maintaining the scenic qualities and wildlife that makes the Township an attractive and desirable place to live.

## POPULATION AND HOUSING

Unlike neighboring Hamilton County and its communities, Pierce Township, Amelia, and Clermont County have all continued to grow since 1960 with only a minor decline for Amelia between 1960 and 1970 (see Table 1). This can be attributed to the fact that Clermont County is not only seeing new growth as people move into the region, but is also absorbing some of the outward migration from Hamilton County. Pierce Township currently stands with a population of approximately 13,200 as of the July 2005 Census population estimates. That is an 8.1% growth from the 2000 population of 12,226.

Growth continues in Pierce Township with an annual average growth rate of just over 2.15%. This is a fairly significant growth rate even in a time when national trends show an overall decline in household size that has resulted in some of the declining population growth in some communities. While growth in the Township is somewhat constrained by the lack of infrastructure in some areas (see Existing Sewer Map) and steep slopes, there is a significant amount of land that still has potential for new growth. If the Township continues to see an average annual growth rate of 2.15% or more, the Township could see a population of over 20,000 residents by 2025. With the recent provision for higher density housing around Amelia, this rate may increase if the proposed density attracts a significant number of new developments.

**Table 1: Population Change by Decade 1960-2010**

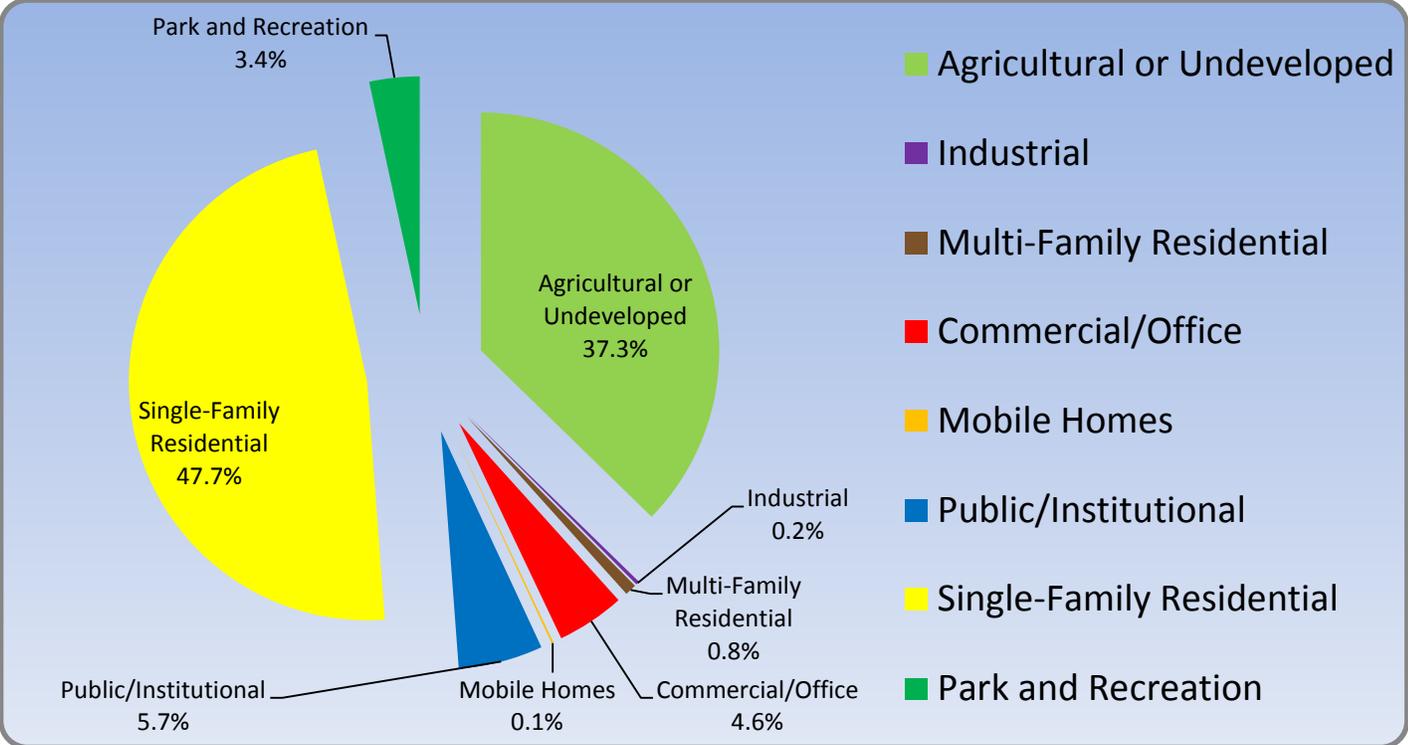
|                        | Clermont County | Pierce Township | Village Of Amelia |
|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1960                   | 80,530          | 4,626           | 913               |
| 1970                   | 95,372          | 5,320           | 820               |
| <b>% Change 60-70</b>  | <b>18.4%</b>    | <b>15.0%</b>    | <b>-10.2%</b>     |
| 1980                   | 128,483         | 7,262           | 1,108             |
| <b>% Change 70-80</b>  | <b>34.7%</b>    | <b>36.5%</b>    | <b>35.1%</b>      |
| 1990                   | 150,187         | 9,589           | 1,837             |
| <b>% Change 80-90</b>  | <b>16.9%</b>    | <b>32.0%</b>    | <b>65.8%</b>      |
| 2000                   | 177,977         | 12,226          | 2,752             |
| <b>% Change 90-00</b>  | <b>18.5%</b>    | <b>27.5%</b>    | <b>49.8%</b>      |
| 2010                   | 201,460         | 14,057          | 4,017             |
| <b>% Change 20-201</b> | <b>13.2%</b>    | <b>15.0%</b>    | <b>46.0%</b>      |
| <b>2015 (Proj.)</b>    | <b>211,273</b>  | <b>14,848</b>   | <b>4,462</b>      |

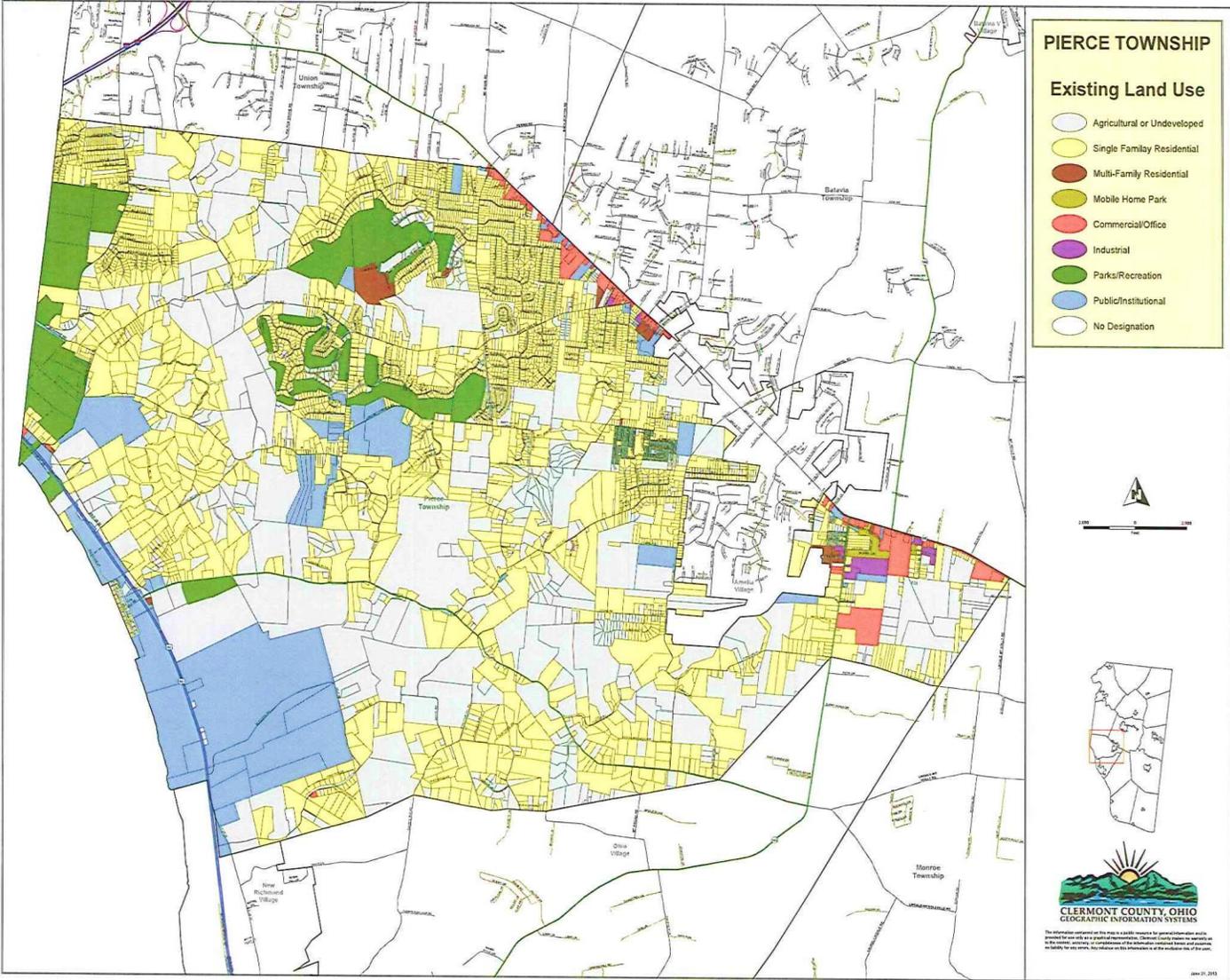
Source: U.S. Census

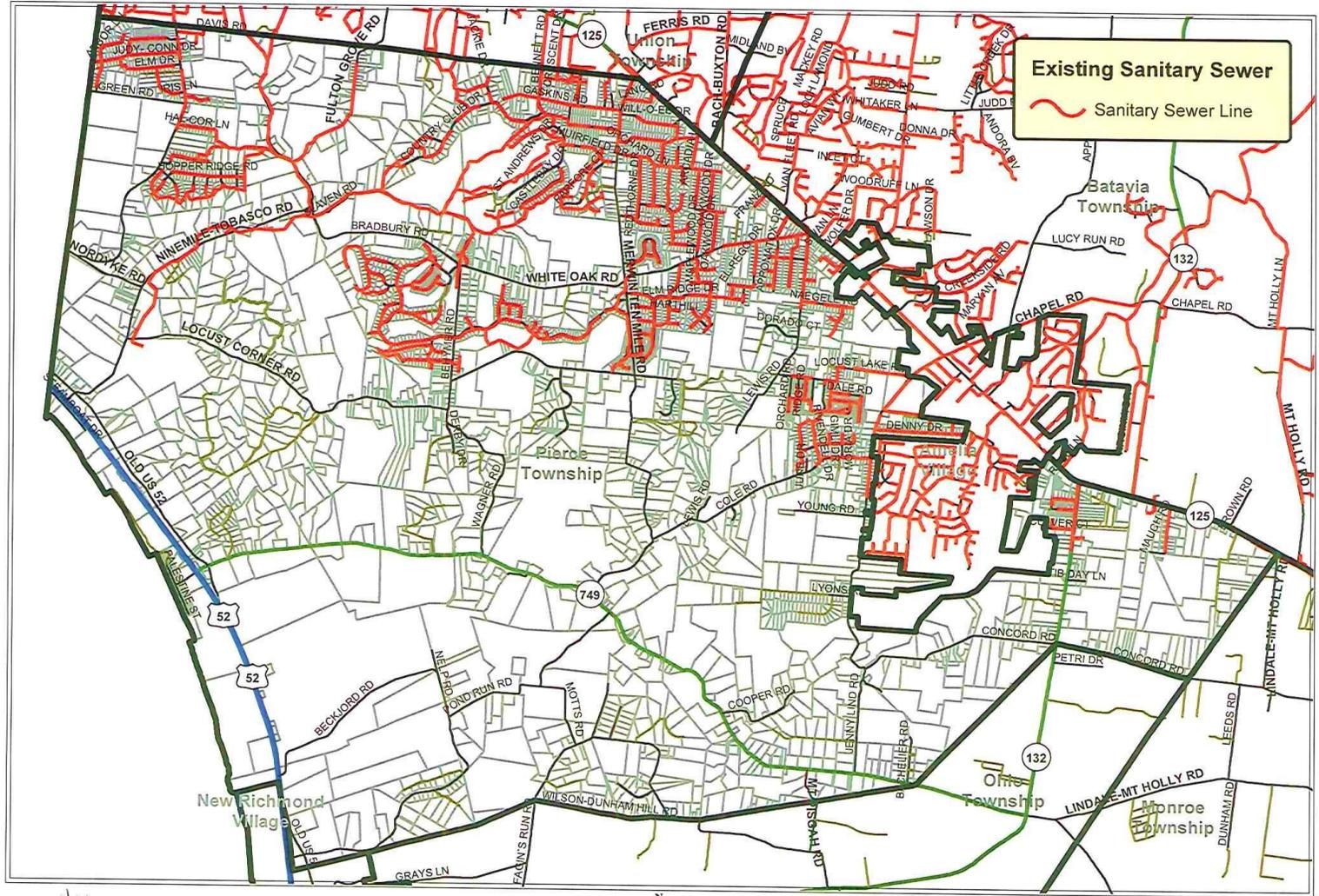
### EXISTING LAND USE

Pierce Township, like many suburban communities, grew in a somewhat predictable manner. During the 1960s, people and families were more mobile, with most households having access to at least one car. With the completion of the interstate system, there was easy access to the core employment centers while residing outside of the City of Cincinnati. Growth pushed outward from the inner city, through first-ring suburbs and most recently has increased greatly within Clermont County. The Existing Land Use Map illustrates the results of this trend, with the highest concentration of residential housing located just south of State Route 125. As residential development increased in the Township, commercial uses followed and formed naturally along the SR 125 corridor. Figure 1 illustrates the general breakdown of existing land uses in Pierce Township.

**Existing Land Use Pie Chart**



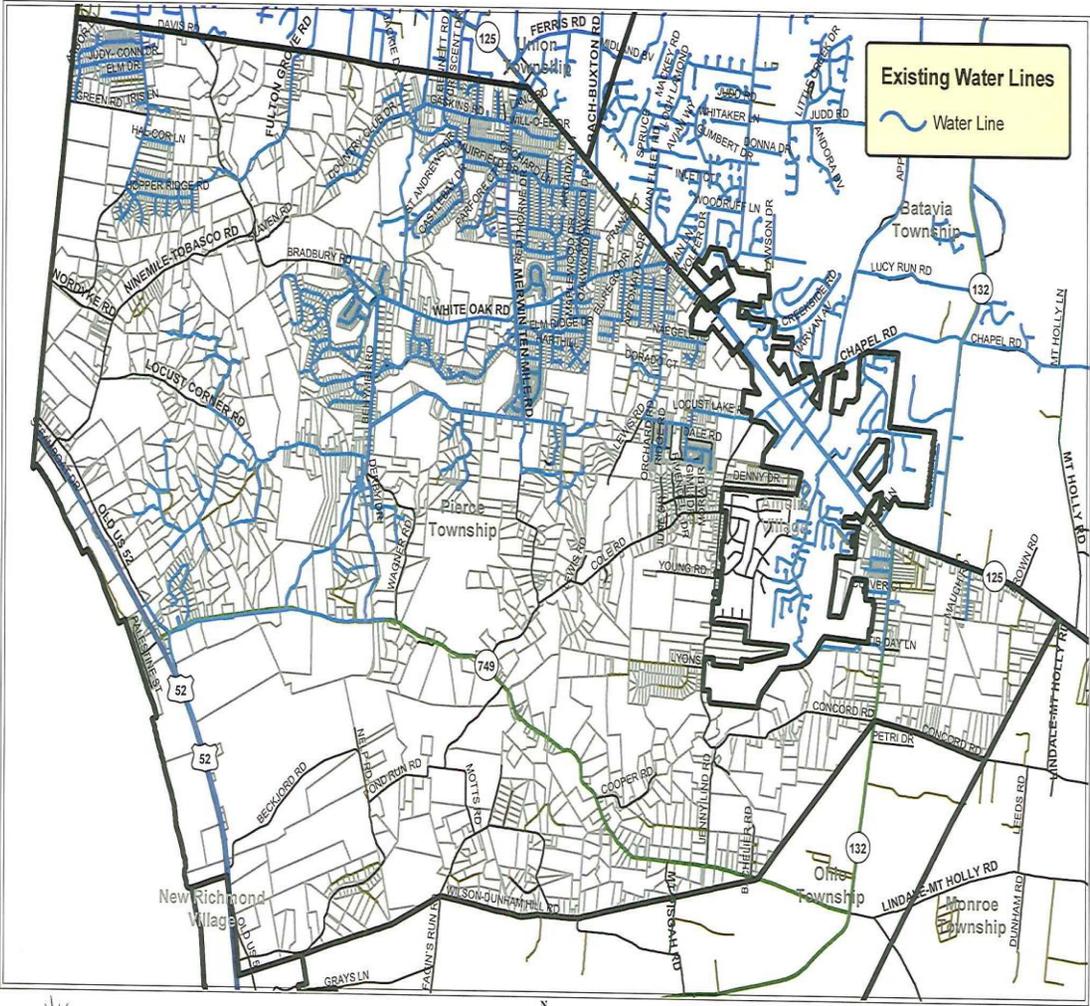




1 inch = 4,000 feet

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**Existing Water Lines**



June 21, 2013



1 inch = 4,000 feet

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# GOALS, OBJECTIVES and STRATEGIES

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## **1. Goal**

Pierce Township will investigate the creation of a Community Improvement Corporation to maximize the use of nonresidential land to expand the tax base of the Township.

### **a. Objective**

Encourage the redevelopment of underutilized properties through proper and flexible zoning.

#### **i. Strategies**

The Township's terrain has limited the areas that are conducive to commercial development. To affirm that, this Land Use Plan has designated certain commercial corridors and neighborhood areas for future development:

- The Industrial Area on Route 52 adjacent to the Ohio River.
- Route 132 in and adjacent to the existing Industrial Zone.
- The existing Route 125 commercial corridor.
- The connecting corridor from Route 125, Route 132 and Route 749 to The Ohio River and Route 52.

Provide for the possibility of mixed use developments along the aforementioned corridors that incorporate retail, office and high-density housing. (The housing will help support and justify the development of commercial and office uses and those same nonresidential uses will help expand the overall tax base of the community.)

### **b. Objective**

Diversify the commercial base while balancing the needs of nearby residential neighborhoods in maintaining the quality of life.

#### **i. Strategies**

The Zoning Resolution adopted in 2010 allows for Neighborhood Business Districts Nodes that restrict the types of business but allow their proximity to Residential Zones.

- The neighborhood business nodes providing convenience and walkability to services.
  - Maddux Farm (Hopper Hill and Davis Roads)

- Ferguson Farm (Merwin Ten Mile and White Oak Roads)
- Nine Mile and Old U.S. 52 Crossroads
- Locust Corner Road at Wagner Road
- Raver General Store (State Route 749 and Cole Road)

The Zoning Resolution adopted in 2010 improved the buffering and landscape requirements to facilitate the development of Neighborhood Business and as a transition between different residential densities.

A Community Improvement Corporation (CIC) or some other means of promoting and causing development activity to occur should be created by Pierce Township.

## **2. Goal**

The natural environment and other favorable existing conditions of Pierce Township will be improved and protected.

### **a. Objective**

The Township will allow for the reasonable development of land while providing increased incentives for the preservation of the natural resources, such as prime farmland, forests, and steep slopes.

#### **i. Strategies**

To maximize the natural resources that constitute the characteristics of Pierce Township we should prioritize those lands that are important to the Township (i.e., general open space, floodplains, woodlands, slopes, etc.) and ensure that there is a balanced “give and take” with prospective developers, so that new developments will be a benefit to the community and quality of life.

Improve existing neighborhoods with lighting and pedestrian arteries that adults and youth may use for improved social interaction, fun and fitness with a priority above parks.

Develop a park, recreation, and open space plan that looks at local and regional parks, corridors, and recreational facilities that may be connected for the benefit of the community. The plan should also identify park and recreational needs for the future.

The 2010 update of the Pierce Township Zoning Resolution Included Planned Unit Developments and Conservation Developments that would allow for the retention of important resources while allowing for development at favorable densities.

The township will work with developers with a goal of a 10% increase in housing units by 2015.

### **3. Goal**

The Township will work with those County and regional agencies that control and manage infrastructure and services so as to provide safe and efficient services to its residents with the understanding that infrastructure, such as sanitary sewer and water, are not under the Township's authority to control.

#### **a. Objective**

Ensure the continuation of the goals and vision of this plan through planning and management of infrastructure and public services.

#### **i. Strategies**

Outline to Clermont County the Townships desire to promote residential development in areas that are adjacent to existing sewer and water infrastructure.

Work with the ODOT, The Clermont County Engineer, Health Department, and other applicable agencies, to assist in planning efforts, as they relate to future highway and infrastructure improvements.

Encourage a balance between the desire for connectivity of the roadway network, through strategic roadway connections and a minimizing the use of cul-de-sacs in developments where the Township has input on a development.

Continue to ensure effective police, fire, and emergency medical services to all residents.

Continue improvement and maintenance of local storm water systems that fall under the authority and control of the Township Trustees and request Clermont County do the same.

Work with local agencies, for improved and expanded utilities to service existing and new development of land.

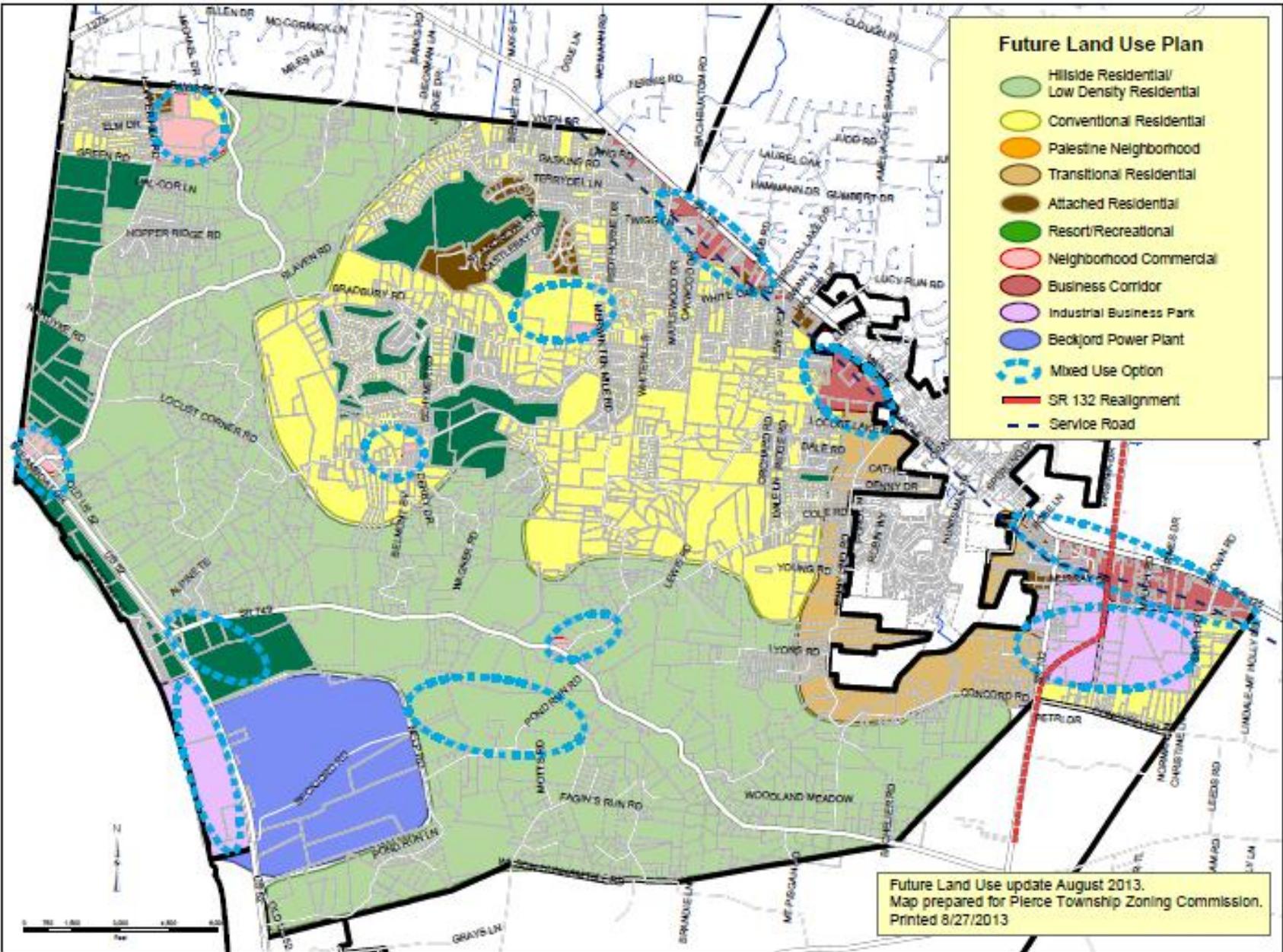
## Future Land Use

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Pierce Township is aware of the changes in governmental structure of the State of Ohio, Clermont County and our adjacent Villages and Townships. Because of the constraints of the cost of maintaining our internal infrastructure, we will work with our neighboring communities to maximize “Shared Services” and consolidate administration where possible.

This is in the expectation that sharing of services and administrative costs will allow the various government entities to serve our residents with the lowest tax burden possible. This land use plan is intended to promote the Township’s values and goals. While this plan is intended to be a 5 year vision of the Township, certain elements may change over the short-term that will require the Township to revisit this plan every few years to ensure it accounts for changes in market, changes in infrastructure, and changes in the general vision of the community by its residents.

The Future Land Use Plan Map is intended to be general in nature, with land use boundaries that are not specific to roads or lot lines. The purpose behind this approach is that only the zoning map as part of the Township Zoning Resolution serves as a specific outline of how land may be used. As the Township evaluates changes in the zoning map, they should evaluate the appropriate land use based on the Future Land Use Map. If the property is situated within or between two land uses, the Township should consider the most appropriate of the two land uses based on infrastructure, the natural resources of the site, and the characteristics of surrounding developments. The future land use categories are defined below.



## HILLSIDE RESIDENTIAL

One significant characteristic of Pierce Township is its extensive hillsides. These hillsides remain largely forested and are one of the qualities of the community that should be protected. However, there will be continued demand for development in these areas, and the Township should allow for high-quality single-family uses in this area under the following conditions:

- ✚ Slope can determine whether a hillside should fall into the Hillside Residential classification, with an overlay being created on the zoning map for all hillsides with slopes in excess of 25%.
- ✚ If centralized sewer is available in the area, developments should be encouraged to allow for clustering of dwellings. The Planned Development (PD) procedure allows for a sliding scale of density. As more slopes and trees are protected, a larger number of housing units may be allowed. In no case should the density of a hillside development exceed one dwelling per two and one-half (2 ½) acres.
- ✚ Higher density housing should only be considered through the use of the PD process, or through Conservation Design as allowed in the Revised Zoning Regulations adopted in 2010.

## LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

Where centralized sewer is not available, on terrain near valley floors with slopes less than 25% and on terrain near the tops of hillsides, where slopes are less than 25%, development should be limited to densities not greater than one (1) dwelling per two (2) acres, a size which corresponds to typical requirements for on-site septic systems as allowed by Clermont County Sewer Regulations.

- ✚ If centralized sewer is available in the area, developments should be encouraged to allow for clustering of dwellings. The Planned Development (PD) procedure should allow for a sliding scale of density. As more slopes and trees are protected, a larger number of housing units may be allowed. In no case should the density of a development exceed one dwelling per acre.
- ✚ Higher density housing should only be considered through the use of the PD process, or through a Conservation Development as outlined in the 2010 Zoning Regulations. These would produce a design which is beneficial to the Township and which protects the natural resources and characteristics of the Township that residents desire to retain in the future.

Both valley floors and hilltops may be protected using a “toolkit” consisting of mutual protective covenants, Greenspace donations, conservation easements, transfers of development rights if feasible, as well as zoning.

### CONVENTIONAL RESIDENTIAL

The areas designated as conventional residential are those areas with minimal slope constraints, accessible to centralized sewer, are serviced by roadways with available capacity, and where a number of existing large-scale developments already exist in the Township. These areas may continue to develop at a density of one half acre per dwelling unit. However, the density may be increased under a Planned Development (PD) or conservation design procedure if an applicant provides open space and/or active recreational areas and parks. The maximum density should be four units per acre based on a sliding scale.

### PALESTINE NEIGHBORHOOD

The Palestine Neighborhood is a unique well-established neighborhood located along the Ohio River that encompasses a number of single-family homes that serve as permanent homes or summer homes. This neighborhood should be protected and should allow for typical recreational facilities that may be associated with the river.

### TRANSITIONAL RESIDENTIAL

The area surrounding the Village of Amelia is one in significant transition due to the potential for annexation and to its proximity to high-density developments found within the Village. For this reason, the Township has provided for similar high density development around the Village to serve as a transition between Amelia and the surrounding conventional developments. The maximum density for these areas is seven units per acre.

### NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL

The Neighborhood Business District provided for in the Revised Zoning Regulation adopted in 2010 provide for small commercial development adjacent to Residential Zones. Development in these areas should maintain a height and scale similar to nearby residential uses so as to blend in better with those nearby developments.

### BUSINESS CORRIDOR AND MIXED-USE OPTION

As noted in Strategic Goal 1 (on page 9), Pierce Township has designated several corridors as the primary areas for potential commercial development.

The Revised Zoning Regulations adopted in 2010 provide for Planned Unit Developments designated as M (Mixed Use) and B (Business) and we plan to utilize this type of regulation to promote future commercial activity in these corridors.

## INDUSTRIAL

While State Route 125 is has traditionally been the primary commercial and office corridor, State Route 132 has several warehouses and manufacturing companies that support an industrial corridor. This is a primary industrial area of the community that the Township should strive to preserve and capitalize and expand on for the long-term protection and enhancement of the tax base.

## ENERGY PLANT

A large group of parcels in the southwest portion of the Township make up the Energy Plant properties currently owned by Duke Energy. Based on regulations issued by the EPA, this plant will cease production of electricity in January 2015. It is our understanding that the properties will be maintained by Duke Energy for the foreseeable future as a distribution center, they remain designated for the continued use as an energy plant.

## Implementation Strategies

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The purpose of this section of the plan is to provide a description of some general strategies, action steps, and other techniques for achieving the established vision for Pierce Township.

## PLANNING

A plan is the basic tool available to a community to solidify a vision for its future. It is impossible to list every type of plan that a community may develop, because every plan is different in the issues and geographic areas that it covers. As the Township continues to evaluate its future, there may be a need for additional planning efforts. In general, there are three types of plans:

### COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A comprehensive plan is general in nature and looks at numerous issues (growth, housing, transportation, etc.) across the entire geographic boundary of the community and sometimes beyond.

### ISSUE-ORIENTED PLANS

Issue-oriented plans look closely at one particular issue (land use, transportation plan, landfills, housing plan, wastewater plan, etc.) and may look at the entire Township, or focus on smaller geographic areas within the township.

## FOCUS AREA PLANS

Focus area plans look at a specific property or a small area of the community that has common characteristics (State Route 125, the Ohio Riverfront, etc.). The issues addressed in a focus area plan differ depending upon what needs to be evaluated and planned for in the future.

## ZONING

Along with plans themselves, zoning is the most basic planning tool used by a township. Zoning can be used to accomplish the following:

- ✚ Promote economic development by concentrating commercial and industrial properties in particular areas of the Township. This concentration can help to prevent the overburdening of the market that can then work toward lowering vacancy rates and promoting the commercial or industrial core of the community. By concentrating uses such as commercial business together, zoning can help guide these developments into areas of the Township best suited for the use (i.e., because of adequate public facilities and infrastructure).
- ✚ Protect existing residential neighborhoods by controlling densities and restricting the conversion of single-family homes into multi-family units or nonresidential businesses, where such conversions are not desired.
- ✚ Separate incompatible uses with transitional zoning. An example of transitional zoning would be the creation of a new district that buffers the lower density developments of Pierce Township from the higher density development of Amelia.
- ✚ Require landscaping, signage, lighting, and adequate parking that will help improve the visual appearance of an area.
- ✚ Create various levels of regulations, from general to specific, based on what the Township and public wants for the community. General regulations may include standard requirements for lot area, lot width, or building height requirements. Other requirements for parking, landscaping, lighting and signage may address the impact a use has on the community.

Communities are also using zoning as a method of encouraging appropriate development and redevelopment by moving more toward incentive-based zoning. In cases such as a Planned Development (PD), the Township could provide clear standards for increased densities or a waiver of certain standards, if an applicant meets certain criteria. For example, the Township may provide for significant density increases if steep slopes and major tree stands are protected from development. Another example could be in the development of a mixed-use center where the Township would allow for higher density housing, mixed with nonresidential uses which are designed in a uniform, yet unique, style. These are just some examples of how incentives can work as a positive for both the Township and developers of future uses.

## THINGS TO CONSIDER WITH ZONING

- ✚ Zoning will not change things that have already happened unless a property is redeveloped.
- ✚ If the Township Zoning Resolution does not provide some flexibility, or is too restrictive, some developers may build elsewhere.
- ✚ A requirement in the code means nothing unless it is enforced.

## COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATION

This Land Use Plan recognizes that agencies outside of the Township regulate many elements of the community (sewers, water, transportation, and stormwater). In fact, the Township is restricted in its participation in the subdivision review (not zoning) process, which is under the purview of the Clermont County Planning Commission. With so many agencies working in Pierce Township, the Township can best serve as a coordinator and identify ways to make improvements in the community that will be more efficient and benefit the entire region. One of the simplest strategies for implementing many of the recommendations is to communicate with the appropriate agencies, inside and outside of the Township, and inform them of Township policy and the needs of the community.

## INVOLVE THE PUBLIC

Pierce Township consistently attempts to involve the public in every affair of the Township whether it is input for this Plan or guidance on the various activities of the community. Elected and appointed officials of Pierce Township, as well as hired staff, are responsible to the populace of the community. Public input helps assure decisions are made in the best interest of those citizens. As the Township continues to grow, public input will continue to be a key ingredient in the process.

## REGIONAL AND STATE COORDINATION

The Township recognizes that it is not an isolated community, and that what impacts the region, impacts the Township. As such, Township officials and residents alike should make a concerted effort to immerse themselves in regional plans, and the processes of agencies so as to help guide those agency's decisions that will directly impact the Township.

The Township also recognizes that the adjacent communities of Amelia, Union Township, Ohio Township and New Richmond share the same values, objectives and constraints as we do and we will continue to attempt to share services and expertise with our neighbors.

Additionally, the Township should stay active at the state level to lobby for improved control over annexation, zoning, subdivisions, infrastructure, and the general operation of the Township that is currently restricted by state statutes. The Township should continue their involvement in any group that will help address Township interests through planning and progress at the regional and state levels.